Meeting of Donor Agencies on  
“Success of achieving primary EFA in Africa: What are the consequences for donor support in junior and senior secondary education?”

“Only a more balanced education and training sector development can spur economic and social growth and safeguard primary EFA achievements. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) who are making good progress in realizing EFA goals are under pressure to make adjustments to their secondary education and training levels. Financing of expansion of secondary education in Africa probably is the single most important issue in the secondary education debate since financing constraints will dictate many other key choices. The problem is to establish "rational" priorities for public resource allocation for this level of education. This requires more up-front technical assistance and research into “what works”, international best practices, and sustainable national strategies for post-primary education sector development.”

Objectives and Program of the Meeting on October 15th 2004

1. This is a meeting among donor representatives to discuss the impact and follow up of the Education For All (EFA)\(^1\) initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa. The objectives of this \textit{one-day brainstorming meeting} are to (a) bring together a forum of international donors and education practitioners to discuss the implications of primary EFA success in Africa; (b) demonstrate the need for a more balanced education sector approach in SSA countries where primary EFA is making progress; and (c) increase awareness among donor agencies of the urgency of giving more attention to secondary education and provide targeted technical assistance, capacity building and research on junior and senior Secondary\(^2\) Education In Africa (SEIA).

2. There is an emerging urgency to help countries in (i) developing strategies for addressing the increasing demand for junior and senior secondary education resulting from achieving EFA, in a manner that addresses the social, economic, financial and equity concerns; and (ii) help support increased investments in the sector. The program will include key-note presentations by Mamadou Ndoye, Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development of Education In Africa (ADEA), Prof. Keith Lewin (University of Sussex Education Faculty), and Prof. Alain Mingat (IREDU, France) and a “Forum Discussion” with policy makers, educational practitioners and researchers. Program details can be found below and will be kept updated on the special Meeting Website at \url{http://www.cis.vu.nl/seia-seminar}. Information on the SEIA initiative from the World Bank can be found at \url{http://www.worldbank.org/afr/seia/index.htm}

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\(^1\) The Dakar 2000 agreement for EFA in Sub-Saharan Africa refers to primary education by 2015.

\(^2\) The definition of Secondary Education used here includes general, technical and vocational junior and senior secondary education and training. It focuses on the age group of roughly 12-19 years of age. The term “Basic Education” follows the OECD definition.
Rationale and Background

3. As one set of challenges is being solved in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve primary Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with assistance from the international community, another equally large task is being created. In countries where primary EFA gets underway the demand for junior secondary education is increasing rapidly. Current completion rates for junior and senior secondary education in Africa are only about 15-25% of the relevant age groups and over 50% of the population is under the age of 20 years. Lack of education opportunities and poverty increase the risk of HIV/AIDS, conflict and war. To combat poverty, fight HIV/AIDS and get sustainable economic and social growth³ Africa needs a critical mass of skilled youth with the relevant key competencies.

4. SSA governments rightly continue to focus on achieving primary EFA goals. Several countries are well underway; for example Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. Others follow close behind. But lack of secondary education development is now threatening these achievements. In SSA countries where EFA is delivering results expansion of EFA objectives into a Basic4 Education framework can be a logical next step (as a gradual transition.) However, SSA governments first need to address the crippling wastage due to high repetition and dropout and change the outdated curriculum and assessment practices. Without improving the quality and relevance of what is taught and learned expansion of access will not be financially sustainable. While there is an urgent need to give more attention to the quality of pre- and in-service teacher training, the main obstacles are the lack of (1) management and effective use of teachers; and (2) budgetary capacity of governments to recruit the teachers once trained.

5. Lessons can be learned from successful middle-income countries over the past decade in Asia, Europe and Latin America, where primary and junior secondary education is rapidly becoming universal with private and public funding. Africa needs sustainable primary and secondary education provision. It also needs to adapt to international standards and secondary students should be able to make flexible transitions between levels.

6. Most donors in Africa exclusively support primary education under EFA. However, EFA needs to be part of a holistic and broad education sector strategy. Exclusive EFA focus on primary education is causing unsustainable pressure on access to junior and senior secondary education, resulting in social and political problems. It takes several years to prepare and implement investment programs in junior and senior secondary education, even if the funding would be made available. Many SSA countries are approaching close to universal intake into Grade 1 (the last EFA monitoring report estimates the average intake rate for SSA at 91% for the year 2000/01). While much remains to be done to improve quality and retention to reach a 100% completion rate in primary education, the number of primary school leavers seeking admission to secondary education is increasing rapidly in Africa. Therefore, it is urgent -- for social, economic, financial and equity reasons -- that governments and their development partners start to explore now how to address this increasing demand in a sustainable and cost-efficient way.


⁴ Basic Education is commonly defined as 9 to 10 years of education in most middle and higher income countries. It is linked to the age group of about 5-16 years. Economic and social evidence points to the importance of providing this age group with general skills for life-long learning and labor market entry.
7. To develop sustainable strategies for junior and senior secondary education will be much more difficult than for primary education, because difficult choices will need to be made on issues such as (i) what is an affordable percentage of coverage for junior and senior secondary education cycles in specific African countries; (ii) what is the most effective mix of general, technical and vocational education and training at junior secondary level in Africa; (iii) how can the curricula and assessment processes be improved; (iv) what is the capacity and accountability needed to provide junior and senior secondary education in a constrained economy; and (iv) how can governments set up effective public-private partnerships for adequate provision of junior and senior secondary education services? Responding to these issues will require civil society consultations leading to a national secondary education strategy, and making difficult political and technical choices. The biggest question is the economy's ability to finance an expansion of secondary education and to provide gainful employment or further learning opportunities for junior and senior secondary graduates.

8. To assist SSA in this reform more needs to be done regarding up-front technical assistance, research into “what works”, international comparative studies, and the development of sustainable national strategies for post-primary education sector development.

The multi-year SEIA initiative

9. To respond to the growing demand for technical assistance in confronting the problems of reform in secondary education, the Africa Human Development Department (AFTHD) started the regional initiative “Secondary Education In Africa (SEIA)” in 2002. It is a multi-year study (2002-2005) undertaken with public and private African educators and stakeholders, and international donors. The SEIA initiative aims to produce and disseminate information and knowledge to assist Sub-Saharan countries in the development and reform of their Secondary Education systems and to promote coordination and exchange of information between African secondary education stakeholders, the private sector and civil society organizations, and the donor community.

10. SEIA outputs are (i) an overview of reform trends and best practices in secondary education in OECD countries, (ii) a comparative secondary education database for operational purposes, (iii) eight thematic studies on specific relevant issues, (iv) three regional conferences for senior decision-makers in African countries and the donor community to disseminate the results of SEIA, and (v) assisting SSA countries with technical assistance and research to develop their national secondary education strategies. Funding for the SEIA initiative by the Norwegian Education Trust Fund (NETF), the Dutch and Irish Trust Funds, and the French Government are gratefully acknowledged.

11. To date five of the eight SEIA thematic studies are nearing completion, several African countries have national post-primary strategies in place, and lending for it is increasing. However, much remains to be done, and demand is outstripping the capacity for support to African governments and education institutes.

12. Organization and Registration
The Meeting will be held on October 15 in the Netherlands at the premises of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA). The one-day donor meeting is organized by VUA in collaboration with the Africa Human Development Department (SEIA team, AFTHD) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in Paris. Travel and accommodation should be arranged independently by donor participants.
Attendance is by invitation. We will be grateful if confirmation of participation is sent to us before September 7, 2004. Please send an e-mail to Marinus Kool at <r.kool@dienst.vu.nl>

Location of the Meeting: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
De Boelelaan 1105
1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Venue: Auditorium, Main Building
Date: 15 October 2004
Time: 09.30 – 17.30

Information and Contacts:
For information on the Meeting: http://www.cis.vu.nl/seia-seminar

For the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam:
r.kool@dienst.vu.nl
Tel. +31-20 444 9090

For the SEIA initiative:
jbregman@worldbank.org or http://www.worldbank.org/afr/seia
Tel: +1-202-473-2457

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Provisional Program

9:30-10:00 Welcome and opening
10:00-11.00 Key note speaker (Mamadou Ndoye)
11.00-11.30 Coffee break
11:30-13:00 Key note speakers (Prof. Keith Lewin and Alain Mingat)
13.00-14:30 Lunch
14:30-16:00 Forum Discussion
16:00-16:30 Conclusions and “The way forward”; Closure.
16:30-17:30 Cocktail