

# **KENYA: CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING 2003**

## **JOINT DONOR STATEMENT ON EDUCATION**

### **Introduction**

As development partners, we wish to congratulate the Government of Kenya for the decision to increase the opportunities for all Kenyans to access education by introducing in January 2003 the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy and for the determination and vigour with which the policy is being implemented, in the face of significant challenges. It is clear that the cost burden for poor households has been reduced and that the policy is an important step towards Kenyans' aspirations for a better life for their children and to the achievement of the MDGs and EFA goals.

The role of education and skills in the fight against poverty is summarised in the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007 as "an important exit route from poverty", by improving "people's ability to take advantage of the opportunities that can improve their well-being as individuals and (enabling them) to participate more effectively in the community and market". Thus the guarantee of quality education and training for all is a vital responsibility for government and its partners.

### **Recent Positive Developments in the Education Sector**

The government has put considerable efforts into planning and policy work for the sector. This has resulted in the publication of two significant documents: the Report of the Education Sector Review and Development Direction and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2003-2007, both in September 2003. The government has worked in a spirit of openness, inviting a considerable degree of participation by a wide range of stakeholders. Further consultations will take place at the National Conference on Education in November 2003, which will involve all MPs amongst many others.

A massive increase of enrolments in government primary schools at the start of the school year, from 5.9 to 7.1 million, inevitably caused some confusion especially in urban areas and has resulted in overcrowded classrooms and many other serious strains on the system. There can be no doubt that the surge in demand for education in most areas, although less dramatic in the North and North East than in Nairobi, was directly linked to the abolition of fees and levies.

From the beginning, implementation of FPE involved the direct disbursement of per capita grants to primary schools with a firm emphasis on improving accountability and controlling corruption at school and other levels. There was also a rational policy of first raising Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs) rather than recruiting teachers proportionately to the increase in enrolment. The MoEST has continued to roll out curriculum reforms and to prioritise the

provision of teaching and learning materials to improve teacher effectiveness while easing the burden on children.

## **Key Challenges facing the Education Sector**

The education sector faces some difficult challenges and immediate dilemmas:

- to expand the system and improve equity and quality, while at the same time increasing efficiency and reducing unit costs so that the system is sustainable and affordable;
- to prioritise and balance what could be competing demands within the sector;
- to develop integrated decentralised strategies that optimise the participation of all partners and stakeholders within a central government-led policy framework;
- to rebuild an education system which offers opportunities for all at a time when poverty, hunger and illness are heavy burdens for so many Kenyans.

The issue of affordability is of key importance. As the 2003 Ministerial Public Expenditure Review noted, education sector expenditure is high (now at 39% of total government recurrent voted expenditures and 6% GDP), wages and salaries consume an overwhelming share of the recurrent budget and development expenditure is very low. Sector expenditure trends have not historically reflected policy priorities, including allocations between the sub-sectors. Unit costs are high, as indicated for example by Pupil Teacher ratios as low as 16:1 in secondary and a government expenditure of KSH 135,800 on each university student. However, there are also high rates of wastage through drop out and repetition, unsatisfactory levels of learning and completion and great disparities in enrolment, class size, provision of teachers and facilities across the country and even within districts.

There is significant scope for improving efficiency so that enhancing access, equity and quality may be affordable. However, there is pressure from many quarters to spend more: on salaries and benefits, on various institutions, on infrastructure, on bursaries for poor students, on the expansion of secondary education and the reduction of costs borne directly by households across the sector. Access to good early childhood care and education is widely recognised as an important way of equalising opportunity for poor and disadvantaged children when they enter schools. In addition, the need to reinvigorate the Technical and Vocational sub-sector is seen as a necessary contribution to the Economic Recovery Strategy and the best way to bring around one million out of school youth into education and productivity. Universities have a high level of subsidy per student in proportion to the rest of the sector and to the majority of learners but are regarded as also needing significant investment. It is difficult to plan because only the primary and secondary sub-sectors have been costed so far.

The case for making parallel savings in some areas will need to be made strongly by government as well as the determined management of all parts of the system to achieve the prioritised objectives over time. In order to address the significant gaps between the status quo and declared targets, the sector will require strategic reform rather than incremental investment across the sector on the basis of the current allocation of resources. Strategies will need to be sequenced carefully and political consensus won. There is a legacy of political patronage in the sector and many key issues are highly sensitive. The National Conference on Education in November could risk raising stakeholders' expectations that may not be fulfilled, so will need careful management. Similarly, early efforts to balance the distribution of teachers according to need have met some resistance. There are indications that policy options involving for example, revised staffing norms and new forms of contracting, will be considered soon and will be necessary alongside further recruitment to address shortages. Rigidities in teacher provision mean that the sector cannot assume perfect deployment of teachers and this will limit efficiency savings for some time.

Similarly, the distribution of schools and classrooms are not well matched to the population and the needs of children to access schools within walking distance. Water and sanitation facilities are lacking in many areas and this affects access and retention, especially of girls. Children and their families face many constraints to participation in the education system, including poverty, hunger, ill health (including HIV/AIDS) and the particular difficulties of living in ASAL areas and slums. Particular efforts will be necessary to ensure that the poorest, pastoralists and slum-dwellers, girls, children with special needs, orphans and other vulnerable children are able to benefit from quality education and take advantage of increased opportunities. The impact of HIV/AIDS on the system as a whole requires a committed and carefully targeted response.

Again, the key issue will be to develop strategies to maximise efficiency and effectiveness within an affordable and sustainable level of resources. The fuller participation of parents, communities, especially in the management of the schools and to guarantee accountability and voice, will be critical to the success of any strategy. Strengthened partnerships with private and NGO providers are considered to be an important part of the overall strategy but some barriers will need to be lowered for this to be effective. The contribution of each stakeholder, especially government, households and communities, to meeting the costs of pre-primary and post-primary education will also require clarification and agreement.

The teaching force is the key front line in the delivery of quality education, so the management and professional development of teachers through in-service training will need to enhance their motivation to rise to the challenges. At the same time, however, it will be vital to ensure that salaries and benefits are a declining proportion of the budget and that there is a stronger relationship between performance and incentives.

## **Donor Harmonisation**

Donor coordination has been good, with several donors building on projects and systems that had already been developed. It is agreed now that the opportunity and the need is to move to a new level of joint working, with the Government of Kenya driving the process. It is hoped that Government will take the lead in building support for the emerging priorities of the Education Sector Strategic Plan through a Sector Wide Approach, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of funding and technical support and of reducing transaction costs for both the GoK and the development partners. A variety of funding modalities will be possible but ways of working should increasingly be co-ordinated. For instance, the MoEST and Ministries of Finance and Planning may wish to lead consultations with development partners so that existing and new support are optimally designed. Information, including that produced with Technical Assistance, should be shared and development partners should be encouraged to use government systems, harmonise reporting requirements and work through joint missions as far as possible.

## **Priority Actions Required to Address the Challenges**

The key priorities can be discussed under the three headings of access, equity and quality; efficiency and integration.

### **1. Access, equity and quality**

In the context of the National Forum on Education to be held at the end of November it is vital that strategic planning and implementation should aim to align policy and resource allocations for the most effective impact on key objectives and targets. Central among these is the necessity to consolidate the gains and make further progress on universalising primary education. This will need carefully focused prioritisation and sequencing in the context of costs and available resources. Planning and implementation needs urgently to be informed by a considerably strengthened EMIS, M&E activities and research, with particular attention to the most important gaps between the status quo and the targets.

There is also a need to strengthen institutional capacity for service delivery with a focus on the key objectives at all levels: central, district and school. M&E should focus energetically on the completion of the primary stage as well as on enrolment, with the aim of ensuring that all Kenyan children achieve the desired standard of knowledge and skills. Since many constraints to reaching these objectives are on the demand side, especially for poor people, for educationally disadvantaged learners and in remote and marginalised areas of the country, specific strategies at a decentralised level will be necessary, accompanied by clearly defined roles, responsibilities and devolved budgets.

Costed policy options will need to feed into the budget for planned initiatives such as the absorption of out of school youth in TVET institutions, the support of orphans, school feeding, slums and ASAL areas. Development

expenditure on infrastructure, including the vital requirement for latrines as well as classrooms, should take maintenance and rehabilitation of existing stock carefully into account as well as policy on viable school size and travelling distance. Again, a focus on historically neglected areas will be needed. Policy on poverty targeting, especially for bursaries but also addressing the issue of recurrent expenditure in secondary schools, will be needed for the Government to ensure that subsidies reach those who need them most.

## 2. Efficiency

A key priority is to ensure that teachers are working in the most effective ways possible. This will necessitate a possible revision of staffing norms, further attempts at redeployment, consideration of performance management measures and retraining for those affected by curriculum revision. Pupil Teacher Ratios merit continued monitoring and initiatives to keep class sizes to a manageable level, such as better use of existing equipment and infrastructure and shift working could be useful, as well as multi-grade teaching for small and remote schools. It will also be imperative to keep the level of expenditure on teachers' salaries and benefits under control.

Further efforts to improve the enabling environment for private sector and NGO provision of education, especially for post-primary, for special groups of learners and in urban informal settlements, would be beneficial with Government retaining responsibility for quality assurance and regulation. Lastly, it will be important for the MoEST to examine pending bills and stalled projects.

## 3. Integration

Education and other aspects of children's rights are the responsibility of more than one ministry and so it is important for the MoEST to co-ordinate and integrate its activities and roles with the rest of GoK. Legislation will need further harmonisation with clarification of roles and responsibilities at all levels. Some cross-cutting issues, such as HIV/AIDS and child protection, merit and require full-scale effort by all relevant agencies.

The MoEST should ensure its continuing effective involvement in Government-wide processes and policies, especially the MTEF and budget process and the Public Expenditure Reviews and should strengthen strategic linkages with the ERS and associated poverty reduction initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

The government has made very credible progress on its education strategy during its time in office and gives reason for confidence that, despite facing serious challenges, the commitment and determination exist to achieve further successes and fulfil its promises to the people of Kenya.