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**AFRICA BUREAU BASIC EDUCATION AND
TECHNICAL TRAINING ASSISTANCE STRATEGY
PAPER**

**Africa Bureau
Office of Technical Resources
Education and Human Resources Development Division**

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy paper is to provide guidance to Africa Bureau personnel, field missions and regional offices in planning education and human resources assistance for Africa. It is also to assist USAID and AID/W personnel, in collaboration with African educators, to identify, define and analyze human resources problems as they relate to economic and social development. Additionally, the paper is to provide information to other donors, organizations and agencies in the U.S. and abroad concerning the Africa Bureau policies and priorities in this sector.

This strategy is an explicit attempt to deal directly with a major problem facing most developing countries but which is particularly severe in Sub-Saharan Africa -- low levels of education for society in general and widespread shortages of adequately skilled or trained people required to accomplish essential economic growth and development. As African governments have attempted to respond to the strong social and economic demands for rapid expansion of education and training systems, the quality and relevance of instruction and the efficiency of these systems have generally deteriorated.

This strategy recommends a significant increase in Bureau efforts to improve basic education and technical training opportunities. Though it is in the first instance addressed to activities within the education and human resources sector, the strategy recognizes that the shortage of adequately trained human resources as well as the low levels of literacy and numeracy affect strategies in all sectors. It therefore encourages collaboration across all sectors in efforts to identify and define human resources deficiencies and to improve education and training systems.

Complementary to this strategy paper on Basic Education and Technical Training, the Africa Bureau is preparing a strategy paper on Participant Training and one on Development Management; the latter strategy will provide guidance for improving the management of development institutions and national management capabilities in both the private and public sectors.

II. Agency Policy and Strategy for Basic Education and Technical Training

- A. The Agency Policy Paper on Basic Education and Technical Training accords priority in the education sector to increasing the efficiencies of basic formal education. The essential elements in this strategy are: (a) to identify inadequacies in existing educational systems, (b) to test technical and strategic options for overcoming inadequacies,

and (c) to implement cost efficient programs. Guidelines for AID assistance to basic education programs provide for support to programs and projects which:

1. encourage private schools as well as public schools in the provision of quality instruction;
2. give priority attention to retention, promotion, and efficiency measures within primary schooling rather than to expansion at the existing level of efficiency;
3. utilize host country experts in collaboration with AID to examine the efficiency of the education system and to reform and improve the basic education system, including addressing inefficiencies at the secondary and higher levels of education.
4. encourage positive discussions and reform initiatives of other donors prepared to assist the basic education system, even in those countries where AID itself has not assigned a high priority to funding educational programs.

The Agency Policy Paper on Basic Education and Technical Training strongly discourages requests to support:

1. programs which promise only marginal improvements or which contribute mainly to maintenance of qualitatively inadequate, inefficient, or ineffective systems;
 2. programs which do not increase opportunities for females, minority groups, poor, and rural children;
 3. programs in preschool education in those countries which have not reached acceptable levels of basic school enrollment and completion;
- B. Priority programs for vocational education and technical training as outlined in the Agency Policy Paper should be designed to:
1. increase the productivity of the individual, leading to increased income;
 2. increase employment opportunities of individuals resulting from more diversified productive capacity based on a broader skill base;
 3. increase the productivity of enterprises using the trained employee;
 4. improve the productive performance of public sector agencies;

5. strengthen the technical and administrative capacity of training agencies through training of their staff and extension workers;

The Agency recognizes that further development of vocational education and technical training capacity in LDCs will require explicit attention to three critical issues:

1. how best to support training for self-employment in small and medium scale enterprises;
2. how best to strengthen local technical training capacities; and
3. how to involve employers in implementation of vocational and technical training programs.

AID will concentrate on vocational education and skills training relating to employment (including self-employment) and improving economic productivity in key development sectors. The policy is to avoid relying exclusively on any one medium or organization as the main vehicle for supporting or implementing skills training programs. Preference will be given to supporting initiatives of indigenous community organizations, including groups of employers. Training programs which do not provide for participation of women will not receive support.

- C. More operational guidance on implementation is provided in the Agency Sector Strategy for Education (approved January, 1984), which is summarized below.

In response to AID's Education Sector policy, the Education Sector Strategy will focus on measures to increase (1) the efficiency with which education resources are used; (2) the quantitative and qualitative outputs of education and training investments; and (3) the effectiveness of the education and training system in supporting economic and social development objectives.

In those countries where the host government and mission have agreed to concentrate on the education sector as one of the priority areas for U.S. assistance, the first step should be a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the basic education system and its constraints.

In selected countries, major long-term, high impact basic education programs will be initiated.

Innovative techniques (radio, paraprofessionals, new methods of instructional design) proven effective in pilot studies will be further explored and, where appropriate, be incorporated into educational programs AID supports.

Skills training will be pursued which is aimed at increasing the productivity of those employed and at preparing those seeking

employment in the wage economy or through self employment.

The participant training program is one mechanism that can be used to support basic education and skills training programs as well as components of other development projects.

III. Basic Education and Technical Training Problems and Strategic Options in the Africa Region

A. The General Problem

A literate and numerate society is among the fundamental requirements for institutional development at all levels, facilitating the diffusion and adaptation of new technology and ideas and enabling individuals to make better informed choices and participate more fully. Raising the general levels of education in a society is among the priority strategic tasks for key development objectives including increased agricultural productivity and reduction in birth rate. In addition, countries require a wide range of skilled technicians and professional personnel. Without both of these essential human resource components, development programs in African countries will remain relatively unsuccessful and impotent.

Based on current trends, the following critical problems will be common for most countries of sub-Saharan Africa throughout the 1980-2000 timeframe.

- population levels will increase substantially, though at different rates and with different patterns in each country, with the total approaching 680 million by year 2000;
- availability of public funding for education and training will remain relatively constant in real terms;
- agricultural development will be constrained by difficulties in staffing agricultural research, extension and production programs and by inadequate education and training opportunities available to farm families;
- a wide range of other development initiatives in areas such as health, population, energy, and forestry as well as small-scale entrepreneurship and other market activities will be constrained by shortages of researchers and experienced managers as well as inadequately trained extension workers and technicians. In some countries, the absolute shortages are expected to ease over the next decade or so, but all countries will continue to have substantial needs for specialized training in selected fields.

The constraints outlined above have also been identified by African governments as areas requiring attention and support. In

most countries, efforts are already underway to alleviate these conditions through substantial national budgetary allocations and coordination of donor assistance.

B. Specific Problems

a) Limited Access The basic education system remains the major means of providing literacy, numeracy, and other basic education in Africa. Adult literacy rates over the next few decades will be the lagged result of the numbers of children able to obtain basic education today. Yet access is limited and the schooling capacity which does exist is distributed unequally, with rural persons and females being the most disadvantaged. The prospects are not good for significant improvement in access to basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa without significant donor assistance.

Projections indicate that 28 of the 46 African countries (77% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa) will have less than 80 percent enrollment of the 6-11 age group in school in 1985.

b) Internal Inefficiencies There are extensive problems of grade repetition and examination failure leading to dropout, additional costs for remedial education at higher levels or excessive years for completion of the basic education cycle. All of these result in costs that African countries can ill afford, using resources which could be reallocated for school expansion and improved access. Many of these problems can be traced to poor quality instruction, inadequate instructional capacity, outdated policies affecting pedagogic and testing practices and ineffective resource allocation and management. Worldwide, LDCs enrolled about 70 percent of the 6-11 year old children, while Africa enrolled about 60 percent. This percentage is deceiving, however, due to the widespread patterns of grade repetition and overage enrollment in African schools. While the situation varies widely within Africa, the typical pattern is for 15 percent or more of the enrollment at each grade level to be repeaters and for up to 50 percent of all students entering to drop out before completing, with many not completing even the 4 years needed to obtain basic literacy and numeracy. In Africa, for those students who do complete the basic education cycle, the average time spent in the six-year cycle is more than nine years and the average total number of years invested for each successful completer may be several times six years.

c) External Inefficiencies Low quality and poorly distributed education limits access to available employment, reduces worker productivity, constrains the availability of qualified workers in some geographic areas, slows the Africanization processes, and limits the receptivity of workers to technological change. While some of these inefficiencies are gradually being resolved as access to basic education in-

creases, there are increasingly serious problems for secondary education and technical training.

d) Ineffective Instruction Inadequate numbers of effectively trained and experienced teachers combine with a general lack of basic instructional materials and curricula inappropriate for the living conditions and work environment of both rural and urban Africa to create a qualitatively poor and ineffective instructional environment. At the primary level, 50 percent or less of the teachers have achieved the standard level for qualified teachers in their countries. However, the costs of teacher training and of increased salaries for qualified teachers seriously inhibit much improvement in increasing the numbers of qualified teachers. Textbooks are scarce, out-dated and often inappropriate and there are few supplementary instructional materials. Few schools have libraries or even simple laboratory equipment.

e) Inadequate Physical Capacity Contributing to the problems of access and of ineffective instruction is the general poor quality or total absence of physical capacity ranging from basic school buildings to other essential infrastructures such as warehouse capacity for books and other materials and administrative offices for effective supervision and management. School buildings are too few and poorly distributed and those that do exist are often in poor repair.

f) Administrative and Management Problems The education and training systems are among the largest systems of any kind in most countries and have correspondingly large administrative and management problems. In many countries, management is over centralized with relatively rigid policies. While some progress has been made, there is still limited logistical support such as transport for school supervision and materials distribution and a lack of trained supervisors to staff decentralized supervisory and administrative systems.

g) Inadequate Data/Data Analysis Most countries have both an immediate need for improving the data base and a need for institutionalizing and making effective use of stronger analytic capacities. Effective management of education systems requires the collection and dissemination of large amounts of data on a reliable basis throughout the system. Much of this data must be collected on a regular basis (e.g., enrollment data and test scores) and maintained for considerable periods of time (e.g., student records, personnel). In most countries, the essential data necessary for effective management and for analysis of available options for reform or reallocation of resources is incomplete, unreliable, not collected systematically or not available at the levels responsible for decisions. In addition to the data collection for which the education system itself is normally responsible, there are also weaknesses in other data systems for which other public agencies are responsible (e.g. censuses, vital records systems, manpower and labor market

surveys). Finally, there is a need to strengthen data processing and retrieval capacities and to ensure that the available data is used in an ongoing process of systems analysis and improvement of the management and instructional systems.

h) Recurrent Budget Constraints The level of investment in education and training is high for most African governments. As a percentage of public expenditure, these systems receive over 25 percent in most countries and up to 35-40 percent in some. As percentages of GNP, total expenditures range up to 5 percent, with most countries in the range of 4-4.5 percent. These relatively high rates of investment reflect the priority most governments give to education and the fact that GNP levels are relatively low. A primary factor contributing to high costs are teacher salaries (90-95 percent of education budgets are expended for salaries) By contrast, expenditures per student at the primary level are exceptionally low, \$30-\$50 per year per child in most countries and generally too low to provide a minimally adequate instructional environment. There is little prospect of reducing the unit costs at the primary level and most strategies for improvement either of total output or of other internal efficiencies require additional inputs or resolution of system weaknesses.

Expenditures for higher education, for specialized technical and professional training and for secondary academic and technical training are very high both on a per student basis and relative to the basic education system. In most countries the university expenditure per student is 50-100 times that for a primary school student and in some countries, the university requires 20-25 percent of the total education budget. A general problem is that at the secondary, technical, and higher education levels, most costs are borne publicly. However, at the primary level, for most forms of adult education and skills training and increasingly for the secondary level there is substantial private financing and contributions in kind by parents and communities. Many estimates suggest that the parents pay at least half the real costs even when the primary schools are public and nominally free. Though this suggests some substantial problems of misallocation of public resources and inequity between the primary level and higher levels, it also affirms the high priority given to basic education by parents and communities and indicates that the potential for exploring alternative arrangements for funding and administering education and training programs at all levels has not been fully explored and may be substantial.

i) Inadequate Training Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth and Adults A variety of out-of-school or adult learning activities exist in sub-Saharan countries. These activities are sponsored by government, by religious or charitable groups, or by other non-governmental and private agencies. These training programs constitute a valuable resource in improving life and employment opportunities. However, in spite of the proliferation of practical skills training activities many of the rural and urban poor are inadequately equipped to improve their lots, and have no access to needed training. Not enough is known about the individual programs in terms of their efficiency and cost-effectiveness. And, not enough is known about the specific skills training needs or aspirations of youths and adults. There is a need for continuing efforts, experimentation and investments to strengthen training and to support coordinating services and organizations.

IV. Africa Regional Bureau Strategies for Assisting Basic Education and Technical Training

A. Cross-cutting Strategies

Since the nations of sub-Sahara Africa are characterized by significant political, cultural, religious, and economic diversity, the AID assistance strategy in each country should take into account the particular factors of that country. Therefore, the Bureau strategy describes a general methodological approach and lays down some suggested broad options to be considered for assistance.

There are four cross-cutting activities which are fundamental to the understanding and improvement of basic education and skills training in any African context:

1) Assessment of constraints and inefficiencies of the education and training systems. In those countries where host government and mission have agreed to concentrate on the education sector as one of the priority areas for U.S. assistance, the first step should be a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the basic education system and its constraints. These systematic overviews can be formal AID sector assessments, host country documents, or other donor documents which identify constraints and inefficiencies within the education and training sectors. Any major program in Basic Education should be preceded by an assessment of the education system; (see technical note on assessments on page 12).

2) Institutionalization and long-term improvement of the indigenous information base and strengthening IDC capability for analysis, resource allocation and policy determination:

3) Development of interventions likely to have the greatest impact on the expansion and efficiency of basic education. These interventions would involve activities such as the training of trainers, the improvement of instructional systems and the application of innovative technologies, where appropriate and;

4) Development of international networking infrastructure. To benefit from other cross-cutting activities, the development of networks to exchange information and expertise within and outside of the African continent is encouraged and supported. Such a networking system would include USAID missions, African governments, donor agencies, and other entities as recommended by missions.

B. Strengthening Basic Education

1. Improved Learning Performance

A key to providing efficient, high-quality basic education lies with improving the productivity of the teaching staff. Any change or improvement which is to take place within the classroom setting must involve the teacher as a central element. The Africa Bureau will therefore place strong emphasis on programming which can demonstrate efficiency in approaches to both pre and in-service training and to provide instructional material support for improving the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. Closely linked to quality instructional programs will be efforts to improve policies and procedures which affect recruitment, training, retention, morale, and supervision of teachers.

A complementary strategy will be to continue to explore and, where justified, implement alternative instructional methodologies which may involve programmed instruction materials and distance-teaching methodologies. This strategy recognizes the continuing shortfall of high quality instructional staff for the basic education system. Upgrading the quality of instruction should take precedence over upgrading physical facilities.

2. Increased Access, Equity, and Efficiency

The Africa Bureau will assist in efforts to provide basic education to those generally not served by existing systems. The strategy will focus first on supporting reforms underway of the existing system to provide better and more realistic access to these populations. Such activities as improved instruction, more equitable distribution of educational resources to needy schools, better adaptation of curricula to local situations, and improved management of the schooling system will be pursued. Any expansion of the present system should take into account the objectives of improving the efficiency of the system and increasing the access of groups not now served with special attention to problems of repetition, enrollment loss and student

cost. Alternative delivery systems, should be considered as a way of reaching the isolated, rural population where simple expansion would generally be too expensive.

C. Other Education Levels

Under the Africa Bureau Strategy, Basic Education is a priority area. However, a high basic education completion rate and an acute shortage of technicians in one of the mission's priority sectors could justify consideration of AID assistance to another educational level. Support for investment in other levels would require a rationale based on the expectation of significant efficiency effects. It should be kept in mind that the combination of high costs and expansion of secondary and higher education often results in the reduction of opportunities for basic education. Consequently, attention to these issues should be given in sector assessments, sector analyses, and LDC education plans.

D. Skills Training

Complementing the efforts within the formal school system will be a series of strategies designed to reach youths and adults who are already in the workforce or who are potential participants in development activities in health, agriculture, population, or other sectors.

Identification of training needs should be conducted on a sector by sector basis. Assessment of the missions' sectors of emphasis should include key institutions with the view toward quantifying available training resources and identifying the shortages of trained manpower and the additional training required for better institutional performance.

1. Occupational Skills

Support will be provided for programs which furnish specific occupational skills to groups with a clearly demonstrated need and opportunity to make use of those skills. The focus will be on assistance to public and private sector training activities which are closest to the participants most likely to apply these skills in the short-term, and hence increase productivity both in the wage and self-employed (informal) sectors. Attention will be paid to the feasibility of the 'service agency' or train-the-trainers approach under which AID assists a central institution in the country to develop its capabilities to serve the needs of a variety of smaller training organizations within the country.

2. Entrepreneurial Skills

AID will emphasize in-service training with a strong and direct role for employers in implementing their own training programs for large-scale modern sector industries. For small and medium

scale enterprises, AID will encourage both in-service training for the existing workforce and pre-service training for new workers and workers needing retraining. Efforts will range from supporting organizations which provide training at the lowest levels of numeracy, simple accounting, and management to organizations which provide structured training for small businessmen operating within the formal commercial sector. For the informal sector, nonformal approaches will be encouraged with support to training activities by community organizations, local PVO's, and producer associations.

3. Literacy and Numeracy Skills

AID will support the improvement of numeracy and literacy training for adults who are self-employed, or where there is a strong likelihood that those trained will retain those skills through employment or other development activities. The Africa Bureau will encourage the use of PVO's and private sector organizations in these activities. Resources should be focused in areas where the potential value of the new skills is most likely to result in increased capabilities to participate effectively in society.

Technical Note:

Sector Assessments and Sector Analyses

The task of identifying priority areas of immediate assistance is necessarily a shorter range task than that of strengthening LDC capabilities for sector management. Sector assessments concentrate on the first objective whereas sector analyses give equal attention to both objectives. The restricted duration of sector assessments (10 weeks to three months) necessarily limits the potential for additional data collection and the development of institutional capabilities. A sector analysis is a multi-year collaborative project aimed at strengthening LDC capabilities in data collection, processing, analysis, policy formulation and management, as well as providing findings of immediate utility for policy. Generally speaking, sector analyses should be preceded by sector assessments.

Wherever possible, sector assessments should cover the three "I" areas": information, institutions, and interventions. The review and interpretation of available information provides AID and the LDC with a better basis for deciding the kinds of interventions most needed. The institutional assessment provides both parties with a better idea of the financial, physical, and human resources available for carrying out activities. The review of LDC and donor programs planned and underway can set the stage for increased donor collaboration and coordination. On the action side, a sector assessment leads to determination regarding the kinds of activities, most urgently needed. On the information side, a sector assessment can lead to any one of three decisions:

1. to conduct no additional inquiry
2. to examine some particular area or subsector more closely
3. to proceed to a full scale, sector-wide, multi-year sector analysis.

As a result of sector assessments, the mission EHR program may take one of two forms: that of one or more project activities, or that of sector support. Projects or a sector support program would address the following interrelated areas:

1. improved learning performance, and
2. increased access, equity, and efficiency