

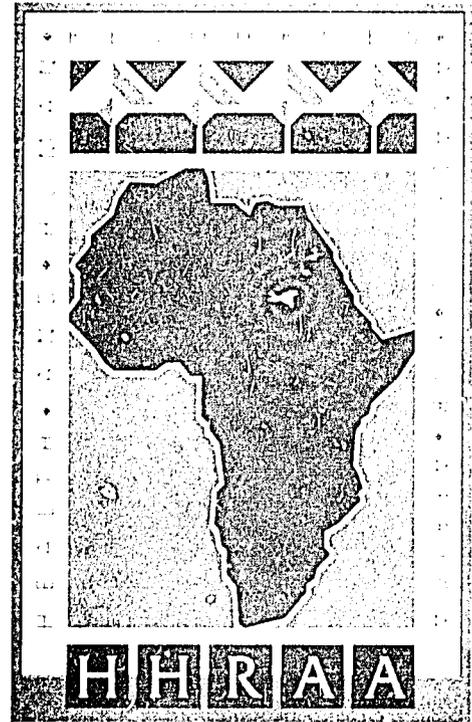
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Setting Priorities for
Research, Analysis,
and Information
Dissemination on

**BASIC EDUCATION
IN AFRICA**



**A Strategic Framework for
Setting Priorities for
Research, Analysis, and
Information Dissemination
on Basic Education in
Africa**

Prepared for the

**Bureau for Africa
Office of Sustainable Development**

by the

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Acronyms

ABEL	Advancing Basic Education and Literacy
AERA	American Education Research Association
AFR/SD/HRD	Africa Bureau/Office of Sustainable Development/ Human Resources and Democracy (USAID)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Action Committee
BRIDGES	Basic Research and Implementation in Developing Education Systems
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
DAE	Donors to African Education
DFA	Development Fund for Africa
EE&C	environmental education and communication
EDI	Economic Development Institute (World Bank)
EFA	Education for All
ERNWACA	Education Research Network for West and Central Africa
GDP	gross domestic product
HHRAA	Health and Human Resources Analysis for Africa
NESIS	National Education Statistics Information System
NGO	non-governmental organizations
OYB	operational year budget
REDSO/WCA	Regional Economic and Development Support Office for West and Central Africa (USAID)
R&D/EID	Research and Development, Office of Economic and Institutional Development (USAID)

SARA	Support for Analysis and Research in Africa
SHARE	System to Help Access Reports of Effective Education
SID	Society for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGES	Working Group on Education Statistics

Background

In simple terms economic development means improving people's living conditions. A more developed country has a more literate, healthier, more productive, and wealthier population. Education contributes to development in two essential ways. People with more education are in general more productive, have greater access to wage employment, and earn higher incomes. They also have been shown to live longer and healthier lives and to have lower rates of fertility and infant mortality. It has also been demonstrated that a society reaps even greater economic and social returns if its girls and women are educated.

On the basis of the evidence of the relationship between education and the indicators of development mentioned above, it is widely agreed that education is a necessary, though not sufficient by itself, element for economic development and improved quality of life. In addition, recent research demonstrates the importance of the positive intergenerational effects of basic education. In effect, the sons and daughters of educated parents are more likely to attend school also and to live longer and healthier lives. This is especially true for educated mothers.

As Africa undergoes rapid political, social, and environmental change in the 1990s, education will also be the principal vehicle for responding to emerging needs. Be it redefining the roles of citizens in nations establishing democratic institutions, curtailing the spread of AIDS, or promulgating environmentally sound agricultural, commercial, and industrial practices, primary education will provide the means to shape future generations' capacity to confront these challenges.

Status of Education in Africa

At independence most African countries inherited education systems that offered schooling to a small percentage of the population. In addition, the primary objective of the education provided was to train low- and mid-level civil servants for the colonial administration. The post-independence development of education attempted to redress the former limitation of these systems. However, instead of training for the administrative needs of the colonizers the emphasis shifted somewhat and training personnel for the burgeoning newly forming civil service was now the primary goal of the education program.

Newly independent African governments made a concerted effort to expand formal education through an increased allocation of government resources to education. As a result, the 1960s and the early 1970s witnessed a remarkable increase in the percentage of eligible children enrolled in school. Between 1960 and 1983 the primary enrollment rate for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole increased from 36 percent of the age-eligible population to 75 percent. Similarly for secondary level schooling, the overall enrollment rate increased from 3 to 20 percent.

While the educational accomplishments during the first 15 to 20 years of independence were remarkable, continued educational development in most of Africa has been hampered by the continent's high population growth rate and by its persistently low rates (in some cases negative) of economic growth. Recent experience in basic education in many African countries follows two general trends: a stagnation of enrollment rates and a decline in the quality of education delivered to those children who are enrolled.

Access: Enrollment growth in African school systems has slowed dramatically, especially during the last decade. In absolute terms, for much of Africa the numbers of additional students able to be accommodated by formal school systems has declined as funds for expansion have dried up. In terms of the percentage of school age children gaining access to public education, population growth has outstripped the rate of expansion of schooling, with the average gross enrollment rate for the continent dropping from 79 to 71 percent over the decade from 1980 to 1990. Furthermore, 14 African countries still only enroll less than half their girls in school.

Demand for primary education will continue to increase as a result of growing population pressure. School systems will need to grow at least as quickly as population just to maintain their already unacceptably low enrollment rates. With an estimated overall growth rate of 3 percent, efforts to expand access to a greater percentage of the school-age population will further stress the system.

Financing: In addition to the burden of continuous expansion, African education systems for the most part have suffered from a reduction in available resources. During the 1980s African countries were subject to three types of external shock: export prices of major commodities fell, interna-

tional flows of capital decreased substantially, and real interest rates rose dramatically. The economic effects of these shocks drastically constrained, among other things, governments' capacity to finance non-salary inputs to education. Primary education, lacking a politically vocal constituency, suffered most from this reduction of financing. In the poorest of the low-income countries, unit expenditure on primary education between 1980 and 1990 dropped from US\$15 to US\$25 per pupil. What minimal levels of unit non-salary expenditures did exist were consumed by growing salary budgets as teachers were hired for expanding school systems. Add to the equation the relatively high rates of inflation experienced in most of Africa and the net result has been a reduction in real per student expenditure, especially for material inputs.

Quality: As could be expected, educational quality in Africa has declined severely. This erosion of the quality of primary schooling is characterized by shortage of classroom spaces and materials, long distances between schools and homes, high costs (direct and indirect) of schooling relative to incomes, insufficient and overburdened teachers, deteriorating buildings, and a schooling experience that is increasingly perceived as inappropriate or of poor quality. The poor quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa, which produces the world's highest repetition and dropout rates, and the world's lowest levels of literacy and numeracy acquisition, is taking its toll on the demand for schooling and on schools' capacity to efficiently produce literate graduates.

Management: The demographic and economic impact on educational quality and access is exacerbated by poor management of the limited resources available for education. Mismanagement of education systems characteristically includes over subsidization of higher levels of education at the expense of the primary subsector, large salary budgets with little or no provision of operating expenses, and over-staffing in administration or secondary and tertiary education concomitant with undersupply of primary teachers. In addition, administrative inefficiencies are evident in the over-centralization of authority, lack of rational planning and budgeting, insufficient systems for monitoring expenditures and evaluating programs, and in general, inadequate collection and use of information for decision-making. Donor and government investments in education have had little impact on management capacity because system administration has not traditionally been addressed by education projects, and where it has been addressed, donors' interventions have often been fragmented. What little resources

have been available recently for education in Africa are, as a result, being wasted through poor management and the lack of adequate administrative capacity.

Equity: All African education systems confront the problem of equitable provision of access to schooling for diverse population groups. In some African countries, where enrollment rates are among the lowest in the world, those children who do attend primary school tend to be from the most advantaged segments of the population (urban, relatively wealthier). The majority of the population—rural, low-income—is denied access to schooling either because of under-supply of school places in their areas of the country or because of demand-side constraints such as the need for children's contribution to household work or income-generation or inability of families to support the direct and indirect costs associated with school enrollment.

In other countries equitable provision of basic education is confronted by the particular constraints on girls' enrollment in primary school. Parental and societal attitudes and the heavy demands placed on young girls' time conspire to limit their access in many countries. In addition, schooling often perpetuates inherent biases against girls' successful participation and persistence in school (i.e., teacher classroom behavior, gender-biased materials, education of girls seen as less important).

Similarly, other ethnic and regional groups within the population may be traditionally under-served by the education system. Nowhere on the continent is this more of a challenge than in South Africa and Namibia. As attempts to construct an equitable society occur, one of the greatest challenges faced by a democratically elected post-apartheid government will be to provide equal educational opportunity to all populations, especially those that had been previously disadvantaged.

In conclusion, African primary education systems can be characterized as underfinanced and poorly managed and suffering from poor quality with inherent inequities in access and general insufficient supply to serve growing populations. As a result, the foundation for human resource development in Africa is sorely lacking. Compared with other regions of developing countries, Africa ranks lowest in terms of the quality of its stock of human capital. This is even more significant when one considers that Africa comparatively expends a larger share of GDP on education. Be-

cause the population over 25 in Africa has had on average only 2.4 years of education, with just 7.6 percent of the people having completed primary school, this poorly educated pool of human resources may represent the continent's most important constraint to economic and social development.

Main Issues

The most critical challenge facing education systems in Africa is how to make the best and most equitable use of available resources to effect concrete classroom-level improvements in the quality of the learning experience for an increasing number of students. Experience in the education sector in Africa and a review of the literature have raised several key questions concerning how African education systems can meet this challenge.

One facet of the challenge referred to above confronts education systems with the need to deliver a better-quality product. This issue addresses the quality of the teaching-learning interaction that occurs in African classrooms. It is primarily dependent on teacher behavior, the culture or atmosphere of the school, and the availability of key inputs. The crux of the challenge, from the perspective of the education system, can be captured in the question, How can the administration and management of education systems promote, incite, or lead to the development and promulgation of effective primary schools? Or how can the administration of the sector focus on improving what takes place inside primary school classrooms?

Another aspect of the challenge relates to the need to make the best use of a limited pool of resources. Key questions arising in relation to this issue include, How can resources be used most efficiently? Are resources being allocated to education in a way that obtains the best possible value for the money in terms of impact on the quality of the school environment? Is the system being managed so as to eliminate waste and inefficiency yet still promote equity? These questions address management of the education sector in the broadest sense; in terms of allocative decisions, rational planning and efficient and equitable resource use.

USAID'S Current Efforts and Focus

A number of factors combined to lead USAID to adopt a new approach to assist the development of primary education in Africa. The Development

Fund for Africa (DFA) and the basic education earmark were legislative mandates. Another driving force came from the lessons learned from the weaknesses of previous approaches in USAID and other bilateral and multilateral agencies.

A recent review of USAID experience carried out by AFR/SD/HRD concluded that the complexity and interrelatedness of the problems facing basic education require a system-wide approach to improving the delivery of educational services. As a result, USAID has moved away from project assistance to program-level assistance. Similarly, a World Bank study of its role in the development of human resources in sub-Saharan Africa concluded that one positive recent trend has been a focus on a systems approach (or a focus on the "whole package of inputs") and a greater emphasis on policy change as necessary for successful long-term development of the education sector. Both studies concur on three general conclusions:

- ◆ a focus on developing the institutions that will serve as the foundation for sustainable capacity to implement policies and programs; and
- ◆ the necessity to view the education delivery system as a whole, to work on the package of inputs and institutions, and not to focus simply on individual components.

In addition to these lessons, a more pragmatic evaluation of the possibilities for educational development has begun to emerge. While the 1960s and 1970s saw developing countries and donors agree on the call for universal primary education, the harsh economic realities of the 1980s made it obvious that the financial constraints to achieving this were considerable. Following the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, the objective of universal primary education is still supported, but discussion of what measure of access to primary education is achievable in a given country and within a given time is framed by what can realistically be financed.

USAID's approach to assisting education in the Africa Bureau represents an attempt to link development of basic education to the fiscal constraints and real resource allocation decisions faced by most sub-Saharan countries. This model for assisting the development of education embraces the means to improve on previous approaches to projectized assistance, especially through the following four types of interventions:

- ◆ Linking development of the education sector to sustainable government allocative decisions within the framework of macro-economic constraints,
- ◆ Talking with governments about the policy changes required to create the environment most conducive to the attainment of education sectoral objectives,
- ◆ Concentrating on the development of the administrative, managerial and technical capacities of ministry of education institutions (as well as other key actors in the sector—communities, parent associations, NGOs),
- ◆ Working within the context of a sectoral reform, with consideration to the education system and the interaction of the different policies, institutions, processes, and inputs affecting the delivery of basic education and their links to desired student attainment and achievement.

The goal of educational reform in countries where USAID supports basic education is to increase the number of children entering and completing primary school and to improve the quality of their learning in efficient and sustainable ways. This goal has four dimensions, not mutually exclusive, to which each country, and each USAID program, gives varying emphasis, depending on the country's level of development and other contextual factors. These goals, which are not mutually exclusive, are to:

- ◆ increase access to and participation in basic education;
- ◆ improve equity;
- ◆ enhance the quality of schooling; and
- ◆ improve efficiency, including management efficiency and internal and external efficiency.

The design of the USAID education programs since the creation of the DFA has been governed by new thinking about how to enhance sustainable education system reform. In eight of eleven countries where USAID has an education program in Africa, support to basic education is provided through non-project assistance. In keeping with the management prin-

ciples of the DEA, all of these programs have focused on broad systemic policy and institutional changes.

USAID'S Objectives Supporting Basic Education

The inauguration of the DEA in 1987 established as the overall goal for USAID's Africa programs to encourage economic growth that is broad-based, market oriented, and sustainable. The Bureau-wide action plan elaborated in 1989 established a strategy for achieving this goal with the following four objectives:

- ◆ Improving the management of African economies by redefining and reducing the role of the public sector and increasing its efficiency,
- ◆ Strengthening competitive markets to provide a healthy environment for private sector-led growth,
- ◆ Developing the potential for long-term increases in productivity in all sectors,
- ◆ Improving food security.

The Agency's assistance to improving basic education in Africa contributes to two of the DEA's strategic objectives. Under the first objective, USAID has been working generally to improve public sector management and specifically to improve equity and efficiency in providing key public services such as basic education. In addition, the third strategic objective of long-term increases in productivity also contains an education-related sub-objective: improvement of job-related skills. These two DEA strategic objectives define the context within which USAID is supporting basic education.

As identified by the third DEA strategic objective, basic education assistance contributes to an overall goal of **improving Africa's human capacity**. Basic schooling is essential to the development of the human capital base that will facilitate Africa's economic and social development.

This overall goal is supported by the sub-goal that relates more directly to how education contributes to improving human capital. Namely, it seeks to **increase the percentage of the population who are functionally literate and have basic competencies**. To make the long-term improvements in human

capital, African countries must raise the proportion of their populations that has a basic education.

The education-specific strategic objective pursued by the Africa Bureau contributes to the attainment of this sub-goal. Governments need to develop a sustainable capacity to provide good-quality basic schooling to all segments of society. They must give opportunities to more children, especially those from segments of the population that had previously been disadvantaged, to attend and complete primary school. At the same time, they need to deliver the best possible quality education within the constraints of their limited resources. Therefore the strategic objective can be stated as:

Sustainable, equitable provision of quality basic education.

This strategic objective is being pursued through USAID-supported efforts targeted toward the following accomplishments:

◆ *Improved instructional systems:*

Teaching, textbooks and materials, curriculum, and student assessment.

◆ *Broader, more active stakeholder participation:*

In policy formation and implementation, resource allocation decisions, system and school management, etc.

◆ *Better management:*

Policy analysis and dialogue, information management and use, planning, budgeting, financial management, etc.

◆ *Equitable distribution of goods and services:*

Of distribution of educational goods and services.

◆ *Increased availability and accessibility of school places:*

Availability to more children of school places near their homes and quality instruction.

Purpose of the Strategic Framework

The purpose of the strategic framework is to place analytic agenda activities within the broader framework of what the DEA and USAID hope to achieve in Africa. The strategic framework links education and human resource development—the purpose of USAID’s efforts in supporting basic education—to the broader DEA goal of sustainable, equitable economic development and social well-being. The strategic framework derives from the analysis of the linkage between education and development, the linkage between program interventions and educational reform, and the specific organizational objectives of SD/HRD education. These include:

- ◆ *To analyze the processes and contexts of change in African education* to better understand and design programs that effect systemic, sustainable change. This research and dissemination of findings will inform the development of educational programs in Africa and other bureaus. It will also serve as a useful tool to host country educational leaders, ministries, and researchers.
- ◆ *To provide technical assistance to missions and to USAID/Washington.* Activities include technical participation in field missions to assist with program design, management, and evaluation; conducting workshops and regional conferences; and providing a network for dissemination of relevant analytical literature on education reform. This support is designed to provide close linkage between analytic and management issues in the field and Washington, D.C.
- ◆ *To establish USAID’s links to the African, international, and domestic professional communities.* This audience of scholars, researchers, and policy leaders includes African and donor institutions, regional and international professional associations, and leading U.S. research organizations. Key groups include the Donors for African Education (made up of more than 45 ministers of education and over 40 donor organizations with seven active working groups), the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), the American Education Research Association (AERA), the Education Research Networks for East & Southern and West & Central Africa, the African Students Association, the Society for International Development (SID), and the African Studies Asso-

ciation. These linkages will enable the SD/HRD Education team to monitor research taking place in the United States and elsewhere that is relevant to the African context, enhance collaboration and dialogue with African researchers, and present USAID's analytic agenda and experience in African education to the international and domestic community.

The Africa Bureau's comparative advantage in research and analysis in education is twofold. First, the Office for Sustainable Development, because it is also mandated to provide technical support to USAID operations in the field, is well positioned to draw an analytical foundation from practical experience in supporting development of education systems in Africa. Second, because it is in the Africa Bureau, SD/HRD focuses on the issues most relevant to the African context.

Given this comparative advantage, the defining framework for the AFR/SD/HRD Education's analytical work is that it be rooted in the issues relevant to African education systems, institutions, and personnel, that research activities be operationally oriented—from the perspective of African efforts to improve primary education and USAID's capacity to support those efforts, and that they promote sustainable education system reform.

Issues Identification Process

Over the past year, the SD/HRD education team has engaged in a comprehensive process of identifying key issues for a strategic framework for educational analysis and research. The steps in this process that have been completed include: 1) consultation and input on specific research agenda areas from the Missions; 2) consultations with African policy makers and the international donor community; 3) a survey of the literature on improving primary school education in Africa; and 4) internal analysis of SD/HRD resources and capacity.

Consultations with Missions

The first input into the development of a strategic framework has been consultations with Missions. Two activities have contributed to this process. First are the technical field visits that all members of the SD/HRD education team regularly make to countries with basic education programs. These visits have specific scopes of work, but always include identification

of analytic issues specifically related to implementation of the USAID education program. These issues are:

- ◆ Greater understanding of the process of educational reform and better appreciation of intermediate, system-level changes that lead to lasting student-level impact.
- ◆ Stricter definition and application of criteria for where and when to implement an education reform support program; analysis of the political and economic context.
- ◆ The best use of time and effort, up-front and at every level throughout a program, in assisting the process of policy dialogue.
- ◆ The most appropriate means of donor collaboration.
- ◆ Better coordination between project and non-project assistance to mutually reinforce the objectives of sustainable, system-level improvements in education.
- ◆ Refinement of methodologies for determining levels (and types) of assistance and for setting sectoral expenditure targets.
- ◆ Means of building flexibility into program targets and conditions while insisting on consistent interpretation of results and compliance.
- ◆ Identification of key policy and institutional reforms as the targets of program conditionality, and guidance in avoiding use of conditionality as a mechanism for implementation monitoring.
- ◆ Recognition of the management demands of the program approach and, in response, adequate staffing of concerned Missions.

A workshop for all Africa USAID staff in the education sector held at Kadoma, Zimbabwe, January 17–21, 1994, was a second activity to gain input in the process. Workshop participants examined the current state of USAID's experience supporting basic education reform programs in Africa, and formulated recommendations on how to maximize the impact of our efforts through improved design, management, and evaluation of the education programs. One specific objective for the workshop was to "con-

tribute to the formulation of the Africa Bureau framework for research on basic education, and establish consensus on research priorities.”

One session of the workshop was devoted to defining the SD/HRD framework for the analytical agenda for FY95 research activities. Mission education staff were asked to respond to a questionnaire that identified areas of analysis and research in which they were seeking more information on available research and information. They were also asked to identify areas they would support with program funds and/or management services. Finally, they were also invited to describe up to two specific analytic/research activities they would like to see undertaken over the next two to three years.

Regarding research and information issues, Mission education staff gave highest priority to three broad areas:

- ◆ improving learning achievement,
- ◆ strengthening institutional capacity, and
- ◆ improving teaching.

They gave second priority to:

- ◆ improving equitable access to education,
- ◆ strengthening the resource base (education financing), and
- ◆ improving policy-making and implementation.

Within the broad categories, three sets of specific topics received the most attention:

- ◆ teacher training (pre-service and in-service) and motivation/incentives,
- ◆ evaluation (measuring learning and monitoring progress), and
- ◆ strengthening the local school resource bases (increasing community resources and encouraging private schools).

Consultations with African Decision-Makers

The second step in the process has focused on consultations with key African policy makers and the donor community. The SD/HRD/Education staff have used two channels for these consultations. The first is the Donors for African Education (DAE), an active consortium of African ministers of education and some fifty international, national, and private development and donor agencies. The consortium was formed in 1988 to provide a forum for policy dialogue, consultation and joint planning focused on education and training in sub-Saharan Africa.

USAID has worked with the DAE in three types of activities.

- ◆ The first is a continuing policy dialogue, between African ministers of education and scholars, and the international, national, and private donor agencies supporting educational development. This dialogue is conducted through regular and special meetings of the DAE Task Force.
- ◆ The second activity supports analysis and research on key issues, identified by the Task Force, through the DAE Working Groups. Working groups have been formed around such key issues as sector analysis, female participation, examinations, education statistics, textbooks, teacher management, higher education, vocational education, and education financing.
- ◆ The third DAE activity is the dissemination of the results of the working groups' deliberations and the debate on policy options for education in Africa through a newsletter and sponsored publications.

USAID, through SD/HRD/Education, participates actively at all levels of DAE activities, contributing experience, research, and analysis to the policy dialogue, and benefiting from the collaborative consultations among ministers, senior African decision makers, and other donors. This participation enables SD/HRD to identify key policy issues from the perspective of African leaders.

In October 1993 a Task Force meeting was held in Anger, France. Forty ministers of education (many accompanied by permanent secretaries) and

some 70 representatives from multi-lateral, bi-lateral and non-governmental organizations attended this three-day meeting. Participants were seeking new approaches to improve the implementation of policies, programs, and projects.

A central concern that emerged from the discussions was *ownership* of policies and programs. The nature and quality of participation in policy analysis, formation, program design, and implementation was seen as critical. Reiterating earlier analysis, the Task Force consultations emphasized the need for African countries to formulate coherent *national education action-plans*. Such plans should be developed through a process of widespread consultation until genuine consensus is reached among all parties concerned—teachers, parents, communities, NGOs—on the goals of education. Wider debate is seen as essential in such issues as, *Education for what? For whom? On what?* In this way a sense of *ownership* can be created that will facilitate mobilizing support and resources to implement plans of action. One implication of this analysis is that a longer time frame is necessary to establish a policy context conducive to program implementation.

The second channel is regional and sub-regional workshops and conferences that have provided useful input into the development of the strategic framework.

In February 1993 REDSO/WCA co-sponsored a workshop on Basic Education with the African Development Bank. The issues discussed at that workshop, and the response to a questionnaire that identified central research/analytical concerns, were synthesized and presented in a report commissioned by SARA, *Report to Health and Human Resources Analysis for Africa Bureau, USAID on the Basic Education Workshop* (February 1993 Abidjan, Ivory Coast). The broad issues and concerns of participants are:

- ◆ parent and community participation in schooling,
- ◆ decentralization of financing and authority,
- ◆ monitoring and evaluation,
- ◆ curricula and instruction,
- ◆ teaching math and science, and

- ◆ support for teachers.

In June 1995 SD-HRD Education participated in a sub-regional conference sponsored by the Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland Education Research Association, at which more than 100 papers from African education researchers were presented and discussed. Key areas for analysis included:

- ◆ planning and managing reform,
- ◆ sustaining reform,
- ◆ equity among boys and girls,
- ◆ education outside primary school, and
- ◆ intersectoral reform.

Since 1993, the Africa Bureau has also been assisting the formation of a West African research network called the Education Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA). This network is being formed to 1) share research among countries in the region and conduct regional research activities, 2) improve the educational research capacity of the region, 3) build bridges between anglophone and francophone educational research communities, and 4) improve the research ethos of member countries and help research to be more practical and play a greater role in education policy decision-making. Africa Bureau assistance to ERNWACA has been through two channels: the REDSO WA Office in Abidjan and the SARA project of M/R SD-HRD. Members of ERNWACA have identified four transnational research topics to be implemented during the network's second phase. These are:

- ◆ Factors affecting access and retention of pupils in The Gambia and Ivory Coast.
- ◆ Effects of community participation on access to and quality of basic education in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, and Mali.
- ◆ Analysis of the impact of community participation on quality of education in Togo and Senegal.
- ◆ Complementarity between formal and non-formal education in Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso.

Literature Survey

The SD/HRD/HHR staff commissioned a survey of key issues related to basic education reform in Africa. Completed in December 1993, the report on the survey addresses three questions:

- ◆ What key issues were identified?
- ◆ What research is being conducted on those issues?
- ◆ What are the key documents in these areas?

The survey focuses on Africa and examines literature published in the U.S. academic and international donor communities. The latter are documents from The World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO, and African region- and country-level research and analysis. The comprehensive study, *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries*, which was prepared in draft for the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) and published in 1991, provides the organizing categories for the literature review.

This literature review covers overviews of research done for the World Bank—notably the 1988 policy study, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion*, and more recently, *The World Bank's Role in Human Resource Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, Education, Training, and Technical Assistance* (1993), the analytic overview provided for the Donors for African Education, the policy research/analysis software system (SHARE) developed by the Harvard Institute for International Development under the BRIDGES program, and the summary of research carried out through USAID's ten-year centrally funded project, Improving the Efficiency of Education Systems (IEES). A rich source of information on current research and analysis was compiled for the 1990 World Conference on Education for All and documentation for subsequent meetings such as the recent Nine Country Summit on EFA held in December 1993 in India.

The literature review first identifies the unifying themes on priority policy concerns (access, quality, equity, and efficiency) and then identifies the strategic issues and research related to the means of attaining policy goals. The major categories of issues (following the **Improving Primary Education** organization) are: improving learning achievement, strengthening institu-

tional capabilities, improving the preparation and motivation of teachers, improving equitable access, and strengthening the resource base.

Within each of these categories the review indicates the amount of research on that issue that is cited in the pre-1990 literature, and citations of research published or available after 1989 on that issue. The literature survey concludes by identifying major gaps in the research, and identifies areas that would benefit from concerted research efforts that USAID might support. Gaps that have been identified through the literature review, which would benefit from concerted research efforts that USAID might support, include:

- ◆ Implementation of reform. Problems of moving from policy decisions and program design to effective, sustainable implementation of reform. The available research base seems to lack empirical studies analyzed in the context of theoretical models.
- ◆ Schools as units of analysis. The **Improving Primary Education** overview argues that the most successful reform efforts focus on the school as a whole unit rather than on curricula, teachers, students, or administrators in isolation. Yet much research focuses on the effectiveness of inputs (textbooks, teacher training, and management) across countries. Some of the effective schools researchers are now advocating that research be site-specific and culturally situated.
- ◆ Intersectoral cooperation. Although nutrition, health, and family and community welfare are included in models of effective schooling, little research appears on how schools can incorporate other sectoral programs into their own goals and activities.
- ◆ Community links to schooling and increasing community support for basic education.

Priorities in Issues and Information Needs

This section begins with a summary of the issues raised in the issues identification process, sets forth the overall framework to prioritize those issues, and then describes criteria for selecting specific research and analytic studies. Issues will be classified by the elements of the Africa Bureau objective tree, and the first order classification will consist of topics for possible areas

of research and analysis. Research concepts within each topic will be identified. Concepts represent the genesis of actual analytical activities. However, not all concepts will be translated into specific activities in any given year. They are intended to mark the areas in which the SD/HRD education team, through the consultative process described above, has determined that the IHRAA project could support analytical work.

Summary of Issues Identified

The preceding section related issues on basic education in Africa that have been raised in three main sources of expertise: USAID missions, African educational leaders, and the recent literature. Presentation of these issues varies in several ways. Some are general, such as “improving learning achievement,” while others are more narrowly defined, such as “improving math and science curricula.” Some relate to classroom activities, while others relate to USAID procedures.

This variety is a result of the differences among forums in which issues were raised, the role and viewpoint of those who raised them, and the manner in which the issue-raisers were probed. The concerns of USAID education officers, for example, are expressed in a structured survey, formal discussions, and interaction with SD/HRD Education staff during the course of program designs and studies. African educators’ viewpoints, come from formal meetings and a structured survey. And the literature reviewed ranges from statements of larger issues to studies on specific topics.

For the purpose of putting order into this uneven assortment, the issues are expressed below simply as topics and organized in terms of the Objective Tree depicted below.

The SD/HRD staff has selected from this list an even more limited set of items or concepts, based on certain criteria:

- ◆ The concept must fit within the Objective Tree (all of these do).
- ◆ The concept must be of concern to many USAID education officers in the missions.

- ◆ African educators and the literature reviewed must agree that the concept is of serious concern and represents a gap in analytical and research studies.

Based on these criteria, the concepts that the SD/HRD Education staff has placed on its analytic agenda are outlined according to the objective tree framework and topics at the strategic objective and target levels.

In relation to the Africa Bureau's education strategic objective two topics summarize the possible areas of research concerned with the reform of education systems. Within those topics, several concepts have been identified.

Strategic Objective

Sustainable, Equitable Provision of Quality Basic Education

Topic: Development of National Programs of Educational Reform
Topic: USAID's Support for National Reform Programs

Target 1

Improving Instructional Systems

Topic: Teaching and Instructional Methods

Topic: Teacher Training

Topic: Teacher Management, Support, Incentives, and Motivation

Topic: Evaluation: Measuring Learning, Exam Systems, and Assessment in the Classroom

Topic: Textbooks and Curriculum

Target 2

Participation of Stakeholders

Topic: Increasing Participation

Topic: Links between Schools and Communities

Topic: School-based Participation

Topic: Decentralizing Financing and Authority

Target 3

Better Management

Topic: Monitoring Progress Toward Goals

Topic: Policy Implementation

Topic: Planning, Information Systems, and Decision Making

Topic: Educational Finance

Topic: Strengthening Institutional Capacity

Target 4

Equitable Distribution of Goods and Services

Topic: Incentive Programs for Increasing Equity

Topic: Female Participation

Target 5

Increased Availability and Accessibility of School Places

Topic: Student Flow

Strategic Objective: Sustainable, Equitable Provision of Quality Basic Education

Topic: Development of National Programs of Educational Reform

Concepts:

- ◆ *A Framework of Basic Education Reform*—The intent is to re-examine the attempt to develop a framework that will assist USAID to analyze the design, interventions, impact, and outcomes of its education programs. Three lines of investigation are suggested: 1) review literature and experience in the U.S. and Europe on education reform; 2) draw on emerging contemporary theory and insights on organizational development and social system change (such as complexity theory, cellular automata, neural networks, etc.); 3) analyze of the experience of policy reform in Africa, building on the initial comparative study of five countries (Evans, 1994) and our own work in tracking the process of reform within the twelve countries USAID is assisting.
- ◆ *Improving the Policy Analysis and Dialogue Process*—Develop an approach for facilitation of policy dialogue as part of program development and implementation. Focus on issues of stakeholder analysis and participation, information availability and use, negotiation, consensus building, strategic planning, etc.
- ◆ *Conditionality: Analysis of Intent, Compliance and Results*—Examine experience with design and application of conditionality in conjunction with education sector reform programs (USAID and World Bank experience). Analyze intent and nature of conditions compared with results of compliance (or non-compliance).
- ◆ *Policy and Strategy Formulation*—Identify successful patterns of process leading to committed action on the part of government and private sector toward educational improvement. Assuming a process that includes the following steps, the content would address 1) how to identify the groups that should be involved in national strategy development, 2) how to arrive at an empirical and shared definition of the problem, 3) how to reach consensus on attainable goals, 4) how to develop a strategy that encompasses

policy reform and program intervention, and 5) then how to put it into effect and keep it going.

- ◆ *Education Expenditures in Reforming Systems*—Analyze changes in education budgets and expenditures during periods of reform accompanied by external budgetary support (USAID and World Bank). Examine details of non-salary expenditures. What was money budgeted for, what was it spent on, what was the result?
- ◆ *Decentralization*—A variety of possible actions and policy changes are covered by the term decentralization, so it is necessary to be concrete to be useful. This activity could develop several things: a map of potential policy options for decentralization, a set of conditions and linkages necessary for these policy options to work, a description of decentralization reforms that have been attempted in Africa, and, so far as possible, an analysis of what has worked, has not worked, and why. In this regard, it seems particularly important to consider the capacity of those to whom decisions are being decentralized.

Topic: USAID's Support for National Reform Programs

Concepts:

- ◆ *Program Design Process*—The content of a program design document has been identified and codified. The different analyses and information required are clearly stated in a PAAD outline and its table of contents. What is lacking, however, is a sense of how these elements are sequenced and combined to produce a coherent analysis of sector problems and constraints to inform program definition, and—subsequently—justification of the program itself. Analytic guidance that choreographs the program design process would assist Missions to plan and improve program design. The purpose is to explicate the approach implicit in the PAAD outline, explain the role and use of various analyses to program development, and outline the sequence, time, and resources needed at each stage. Included would be guidance, examples, and suggestions of how government personnel are integrated into the process so that ultimate program design is as much a product of the government as of USAID.

- ◆ *Economic Analysis of AID Education Programs*—The objective of this study is to provide guidance on the use and conduct of economic analysis in education program design and planning by identifying and discussing the multiple roles and purposes of the economic/financial analysis required of all AID education program designs. The study would review the conceptual and practical problems hindering analysis, articulate the generic analytic questions posed by education program design, and examine the various analytical methodologies used to justify program design in the past, as well as attempt to clarify expectations of design review committees.

At the target level, where issues are delineated more specifically, topics have been identified in reference to all five targets. Within those topics, different research and analytical concepts have been put forward.

Target 1: Improving Instructional Systems

Topic: Teaching and Instructional Methods

Concepts:

- ◆ *Development of Child centered Instructional Systems*—This research would build on SD's earlier study of African success in using primary and secondary curricula to prepare children for leading more healthy, wealthy, and wise lives. The study would round out analysis of current programs in Africa in this regard. In addition, it would seek to capture success stories from around the globe in using new pedagogical methods in primary and secondary schools to sharpen basic skills while raising understanding and problem-solving skills related to AIDS, environmental protection, and family planning.
- ◆ *Schools as the Unit of Analysis*—The most successful schools see inputs in a holistic way rather than through identification of discrete aspects that make up an overall learning program and classroom environment such as curriculum, assessment, subject matter, teaching practices, etc. Current reform movements in the U.S. look at the school as the unit of analysis and input. This shift in perspective places critical importance on the role of the principal or head teacher in developing a positive working environment in which school-based forward planning and site-based

management is implemented. It also re-examines the role of the classroom teacher and places higher priority on the non-classroom activities that empower and legitimize the contributions of practitioners. Research that looks at this issue in a Third World context is badly needed. The position of the school, as a microsystem in the larger educational hierarchy, needs to be identified to assess how site-based management can be successful in highly centralized educational systems.

- ◆ *Rethinking the Roles of Principals, Head Teachers, and/or Inspectors*—Many improvements in school quality depend on action at the school and local levels, yet little research and policy attention has been devoted to enhancing the roles of principals and inspectors. If local education leaders are to be actively involved in school improvement efforts, it would be useful to think through what policies and training programs might improve school quality through increasing the instructional leadership function of local school authorities, as opposed to their enforcement and bureaucratic roles.

Topic: Teacher Training

Concept:

- ◆ *Cost-effectiveness of Teacher Training*—Comparative analysis of cost-effectiveness of pre-service and in-service training and/or different approaches to in-service delivery. Examination of ways in which pre-service and in-service training are linked to comprehensive professional development programs for teachers.

Topic: Teacher Management, Support, Incentives, and Motivation

Concepts:

- ◆ *The Teaching Profession*—Descriptive analysis of teaching career structures (pay, salary scale, training, work load, etc.) and examination of links between those structures and quality of instruction.
- ◆ *Teaching Support Services*—Methods for training inspectors and administrators in techniques for supporting teachers and schools

and for using them as resources and information generators for policy and planning decisions.

- ◆ *Teacher Motivation and Incentives*—These studies need to focus on ways in which teachers as stakeholders are provided a voice in the reform process and given the opportunity to take an active role in professional development, policy formation, and administrative decision-making. In addition, given the economic pressure in most African countries, a range of low-cost or free incentives needs to be explored as mechanisms to improve the morale of the teaching force and increase the supply of competent candidates willing to work in the profession.

Topic: Evaluation: Measuring Learning, Exam Systems, and Assessment in the Classroom

Concepts:

- ◆ *Linkages among Assessment, Support Systems, and the Teaching/Learning Process*—Activities that can take place under this heading include 1) continuing work in pulling together international experience and practice in the development of effective assessment mechanisms and procedures—informed by learning theory (e.g. Capper 1994); 2) working with selected country/USMID programs to develop model practices and disseminate the results of those to other countries through DAE and other (African) institutions; and 3) providing training/dissemination workshops/forums.
- ◆ *Qualitative Measures to Assess Activities at the School Level*—Although quantitative research can provide some information about what takes place there, this research approach is seriously limited in ferreting out and highlighting daily practices that influence learning and teaching. Although there are few agreed-on canons for conducting qualitative research, recent efforts have been made to address concerns and a codification of the ground rules in conducting research is developing. Unfortunately, the movement to develop these skills has been somewhat limited in the African context. The findings of outstanding qualitative research that focuses on the African context must be disseminated and Af-

rican educators must improve their skills or learn new ones to use and apply this research approach.

Topic: Textbooks and Curriculum

Concepts:

- ◆ *Health and Education Linkages*—Many of the instructional problems faced by schools are related to the health and nutritional status of the child—i.e., child quality—as well as to the quantity and quality of school inputs. This study seeks to provide policy makers and donors with a handbook on school-based health and nutrition interventions, especially in the African context. Such a study might 1) review existing literature and projects on school-based health interventions, 2) describe existing projects and the range of intervention options, and 3) discuss issues of cost, design, and implementation.
- ◆ *HIV/AIDS Education and Teenage Pregnancy*—HIV/AIDS statistics present a grim picture throughout Africa. Like much of the rest of the world, children are engaging in sexual activities that put them at risk for STDs and HIV/AIDS at younger ages. In addition, the percentage of young girls who are becoming pregnant and single parents is on the increase. Initiatives need to focus on prevention activities and to emphasize educating school-age children about protection to prevent disease and pregnancy. To accomplish this more information is needed about sexual practices and activities, highly sensitive and traditionally taboo topics. Research needs to be conducted that demonstrates what kinds of risk behavior exist and how curricula can be developed that will enable students to make informed decisions.

Target 2: Participation of Stakeholders

Topic: Increasing Participation

Concept:

- ◆ *Definition of Participation*—Given the importance and the interest in participation issues, it would be useful to think carefully about what this means for USAID's education work in Africa. Such an

undertaking would involve an elaboration of the term participation and its various meanings; some thought as to why and how the various concepts are important in relation to African education; a detailing of ways in which participation can be promoted; a description of hindrances to participation and suggestions for overcoming such problems.

Topic: Links between Schools and Communities

Concepts:

- ◆ *School-Community Relations (How do we positively or negatively affect them?)*—Examine how USAID interventions affect school-community relations and develop approach for sponsoring NGO support to improve school-community relations and increase capacity for school-based management. What percentage of school operating costs is contributed by communities and through what means? What are those resources used for? What roles do communities play in managing school level-resources?
- ◆ *Role of NGOs in Education*—New AID directives emphasize use of NGOs to support and deliver AID programs. Several Missions are considering (or have embarked on) the use of NGOs to carry out activities in the education sector. This study would explore AID experience with NGOs in education to determine how to make most effective use of their services by developing a typology of uses, categories of NGOs, and a roster of issues to be considered in their employ.
- ◆ *Role of Parent-Teacher, Parent-Student Associations in the Reform Process*—Parent-teacher or parent-student associations provide the nexus between the school and the community (or household). As such they may be key to achieving educational reform objectives. For example, improving quality may depend largely on teacher performance which depends on teacher accountability, which may emanate from parents and the community. Similarly, these associations may distribute subsidies or educational supplies to targeted populations or administer school improvement grants. This study would examine such questions such as 1) what the traditional role of PTAs, 2) where they have played a key role

in the reform process, 3) how ministries and donors have attempted to use APEs, etc.

Topic: School-based Participation

Concepts:

- ◆ *Policy Change through Grassroots Developments*—Outside of Africa a growing number of examples and initiatives illustrate a process of reform that links grassroots, school-level improvements to national policy change, in which school-based reform is articulated as a strategy for policy reform. Examples include the Community Schools in Egypt, Escuela Nueva in Columbia, and additional projects in Guatemala, Bangladesh (BRAC), among others. There could be three types of analytic activities within this concept: 1) pull together, analyze, and synthesize experience outside of Africa in which grassroots innovations and reforms contributed to national policy reform; 2) examine experiences in Africa, particularly within the countries with USAID basic education support; 3) provide technical support and an analytic/research framework to those Missions that support this approach through government and NGOs. This activity would build on work taking place at The World Bank (Heneveld) and UNICEF.

- ◆ *Teachers as Policy Brokers*—Although teacher behavior is significantly influenced by culturally-defined templates of the role and responsibilities of teachers, their isolation and ultimate autonomy in the classroom places them in a critical position to implement and redefine educational policy and reform initiatives. Research in developed countries on this issue has demonstrated the necessity of including teachers in the policy dialogue and forum to outline reform agendas. Research in African classrooms needs to be conducted in this area to determine 1) the impact of teacher as policy-broker and how this role influences educational reform initiatives; and 2) what effort can be made to better prepare teachers for this critical role.

Topic: Decentralizing Financing and Authority

Concept:

- ◆ *Private and Community Financing of Primary Schools*—The purpose of this study would be to better understand the extent to which communities and the private sector in Africa can be expected to finance (primary) education, the more probable types of support, and methods for encouraging support and managing interventions in this area. This study would look at the state of private primary education in Africa, the studies that have examined shifting the finance burden, and notable cases of private and community financing both spontaneous and initiated by donors. From AID's perspective, the study would examine programs that have addressed the question of private (such as Mali, Guinea, etc.). It will describe the interventions and their status; how community support was generated (if applicable); the context, investment criteria, and analyses implemented to justify intervention; the evaluative framework; how they are managed; etc.

Target 3: Better Management

Topic: Monitoring Progress Toward Goals

Concept:

- ◆ *Guidelines on Impact Assessment: Identification of Process Indicators*—People-level impact—or improved student outcomes—may be too far down the line in the life of an AID education support activity to provide a valid measure of the activity's success, viability, and contribution to the reform process. In follow-on to the arguments presented in the Basic Education report, guidance would be provided to education program designers and evaluators on the various benchmarks at the system level associated with educational reform and a set of the more compelling intermediate and process indicators developed, based—where possible—on program experience. These indicators would be accompanied by a discussion of why they have proven or could prove that student level change is imminent. Further, the indicators could be tied to a loose chronology of steps of system reform, which could con-

tribute to a series of templates based on the various starting points of the different education programs.

Topic: Policy Implementation

Concepts:

- ◆ *Policy Implementation Process*—The routes taken by policy reforms, from their formation in central ministries to their implementation in the context of school and community, have many points during that process where obstacles, reinterpretation, re-routing, etc., occur. To assist in the speedy and consistent implementation of policy changes, research is needed into the routes policy changes generally take and analysis of what types happens along these routes, what personnel are involved, and what could be done to improve implementation at each juncture.
- ◆ *Decentralization*—What role does decentralization of administration and management play in the successful planning and implementation of educational reform? How much of the relative success of different reform programs (or different aspects within a given program) depends on the degree to which their development and implementation was managed in a decentralized way?

Topic: Planning, Information Systems, and Decision Making

Concepts:

- ◆ *Use of (Existing) Data*—The effort involved in starting up education information systems is so consuming, it seems, that relatively little attention is devoted to the use of data. As a result, even existing information is rarely used to make policy and decisions, or to understand the status of the school system. This concept would propose developing simple, decision maker-friendly ways in which existing data can be analyzed to raise questions about school systems.
- ◆ *African Education Indicators Database*—The DAE, through agreements with the UNESCO Bureau of Statistics and The World Bank, has compiled a data set on key statistics and indicators for African education from 1980 through 1990. These are currently

only available in summary form in printed tables. Through an agreement with the DAE, AFR/SD has acquired the full data set in spreadsheet form. SD/HRD intends to make this data set available in an interactive micro-computer-based program that allows users to pose and answer questions related to key indicators of educational development.

- ◆ *Indicators of School-level Quality*—The indicators that education policy-makers, planners, and researchers use to monitor the performance of African education systems fall into the category of macro-system indicators, mostly constructed from national aggregate statistics. What is needed are micro-indicators focusing on school effectiveness and measuring the dispersion of quality. These micro-indicators would be designed to help education planners monitor and direct educational resources to ensure that children in every part of the country have access to schools capable of supporting student achievement, and, to that end, that sustainable systems are in place to prepare, manage, and deliver resources and talent. They will measure performance at three levels: school, district or region, and central ministry.

Topic: Educational Finance

Concept:

- ◆ *Finance Mechanisms*—How can central financing mechanisms promote greater equity, efficiency, and instructional quality at the school level? What experience do African countries have in using different financing mechanisms (block grants, matching grants, etc.)? Is U.S. or other OECD experience in using these kind of mechanisms applicable to Africa, and if so, what lessons can be drawn from it?

Topic: Strengthening Institutional Capacity

Concept:

- ◆ *Building Institutional Capacity to Manage Reform*—Develop an approach for including in program design and implementation strategies specific to the development of ministry of education capacity to manage the process of reform. In particular, address

issues of fostering institutional capacity to seek out stakeholder participation and make use of it in decision-making, planning, and budgeting.

Target 4: Equitable Distribution of Goods and Services

Topic: Incentive Programs for Increasing Equity

Concepts:

- ◆ *Formulation of Incentive Programs for Communities, Parents, Students, etc.*—Incentive programs serve as a means of offsetting direct and opportunity costs and effecting income transfers to alleviate the financial and economic burdens frequently associated with non-enrollment and lack of persistence of children, particularly in certain disadvantaged groups—such as girls, ethnic groups, and rural children. While a handful of incentive programs have been successful, we have little notion of the design considerations and implementation arrangements made to ensure their effective operation, nor do we know much about their longer-term implications—such as future willingness to pay, sustainability of costs, etc. This study proposes a detailed look at incentive programs that have been attempted to improve educational participation (whether aimed at alleviating household factors or improving school factors), augmenting the roster with an examination of those implemented by both governments and NGO's and private sector organizations.

- ◆ *Analysis of Social Marketing in USAID Education Programs*—In many African countries where AID has education programs, educational demand by households is low. Frequently, suggestions to address this problem consist of the use of information, IEC, or publicity or social marketing campaigns to encourage parents to enroll their children in school. This study would document the information campaign approaches used in education programs (in Africa and elsewhere) aimed at enrollment/persistence issues and attempt to distinguish among the different types of programs. It would examine the components and different approaches, describe the strategies used, and attempt to determine under which circumstances these programs can be productive. Further, it would provide guidance on the steps necessary to

launch a program and the required resources and time line, and provide a generic evaluative framework.

Topic: Female Participation

Concept:

- ◆ *Process of Translating Girls' Education into Social Change*—Correlations between girls' education and a series of social changes, such as decreased fertility, increased child health, etc., have fueled enthusiasm for educating girls. New programs and policies designed to promote girls' education are beginning to appear in response to the impact suggested by these correlations. Yet, to guide the focus of these programs and policies, little research has been conducted to 1) investigate what aspects of the education process and/or what definition of education (number of years of formal schooling, literacy, etc.) are significant in creating the desired impacts, and 2) what changes in the girl who receives the education (in her social and economic relationships, in her status, in her behavior, etc.) can be related to her having fewer children, having more healthy children, etc.

Target 5: Increased Availability and Accessibility of School Places

Topic: Student Flow

Concept:

- ◆ *Repetition*—Throughout Africa high repetition rates are viewed as one of the major factors eroding the efficiency and quality of education offered and limiting the availability of school places. Reasons given for repetition vary according to country and to who is offering them. Governments want to reduce repetition rates, as they can radically increase the cost of the education system, yet they are often unsuccessful unless they adopt a form of automatic promotion. Research into why students repeat, why parents and teachers often encourage their repetition, whether and how students benefit from repetition, and what effectively discourages repetition would be of great use to governments and donors attempting to deal with this problem.

Criteria for Selecting Specific Studies

Within this framework, the HHR/SD/HRD staff will conduct and commission analysis and research studies. They will determine the subject and scope of each of these studies on the basis of these criteria:

- ◆ Who is the intended audience for the study? Written and other reports on studies should assist Missions, other USAID officials, and governments in their reform efforts. They should be presented in an accessible format and language.
- ◆ Is the study directly relevant to the concerns and programs of at least two African governments? The SD/HRD Education staff have surveyed those intimately involved in the education sector of African countries and listened to their concerns during the course of work on programs and projects. The record of those concerns provided in this document is the basis for determining field-based interest in analysis and research.
- ◆ Is the study grounded in specific contexts? Research should be operational (concerned with specific programs) rather than scientific (seeking general knowledge). The problem in education decision-making for effective reform identified by this review is *not* the lack of information or relevant research. Rather, it is the policy and organizational problems that prevent effective use of information. It is an institutional failure, not a failure of knowledge.
- ◆ Does it build on and make use of existing data? Studies should preclude the need for extensive collection of primary data that entails costly field activities. One of the considerations that emerges from the review of literature, and particularly the wider body of literature on effective learning and educational reform outside of Africa, is that the enormous body of knowledge is seldom applied. This is particularly the case in Africa, where there is a gap between stated intent and action, and where, in part due to the lack of human and material resources, there are relatively few systematic efforts to use a base of appropriate knowledge to develop reform programs.

- ◆ Can it involve Africans as analysts as well as consumers? Research findings are more likely to be used when those in a position to use them feel some ownership of the study or at least some conviction that the results are relevant to their situation. The SD/HRD Education team encourages those who will use the research to be involved in its production. Institutional development is *not* the guiding purpose of the SD/HRD project, although the SARA project, which supports HHR activities, does support African research networks and, through those networks, African research institutes. USAID has often overestimated the capacity for research by some African institutions. The technical objectives of research to contribute to policy dialogue and sector analysis require a longer time frame and more training than is generally acknowledged. The intent here is not to build institutional capacity but to involve stakeholders in these projects.

- ◆ Can it be completed within the time and with the resources available, including SD/HRD's 1996 horizon and budget? This also includes consideration of feasibility in terms of competing demands on AFR/SD/HRD Education staff time.

Although they will be treated as guidelines rather than regulations governing the specific studies put on the education analytic agenda, these criteria will be the prime considerations of the SD/HRD Education team in commissioning analytic and research studies.

In addition to the selection criteria for individual activities discussed above, the SD/HRD Education team will try to ensure that the complete portfolio of analytical activities is balanced in terms of the various stakeholders and concerns the Africa Bureau serves. Specifically, balance will be sought in terms of the audiences or clients of the analytical activities, the level of education system at which the activities are targeted, and the nature of the research undertaken by the activities. It is expected that the research portfolio would include items in as many of the categories listed on the following page as possible.

Audiences & Clients:	USAID Field Missions, REDSOs, and USAID/Washington Donors for African Education African Institutions PVOs/NGOs
Point of Intervention:	Policy Formulation Policy Implementation Program and Strategy Development and Implementation School-based Concerns Grass Roots Initiatives
Nature of Research:	Initiating New Theoretical Approaches Field Work Collation and Dissemination of Existing Knowledge Advocacy

Research, Analysis, and Dissemination Approaches

To conduct the analyses and research outlined in this strategic framework, the SD/HRD Education staff will look first to its own staff and next to the SARA project for assistance in commissioning and managing the analysis and research projects. These projects can be sorted into two tiers: 1) studies of USAID's programs and operations and how to improve them, and 2) background, theoretical, and other related studies needed for the first-tier analyses. In most cases, SD/HRD staff will conduct studies on the first tier themselves and work with SARA to commission studies on the second tier.

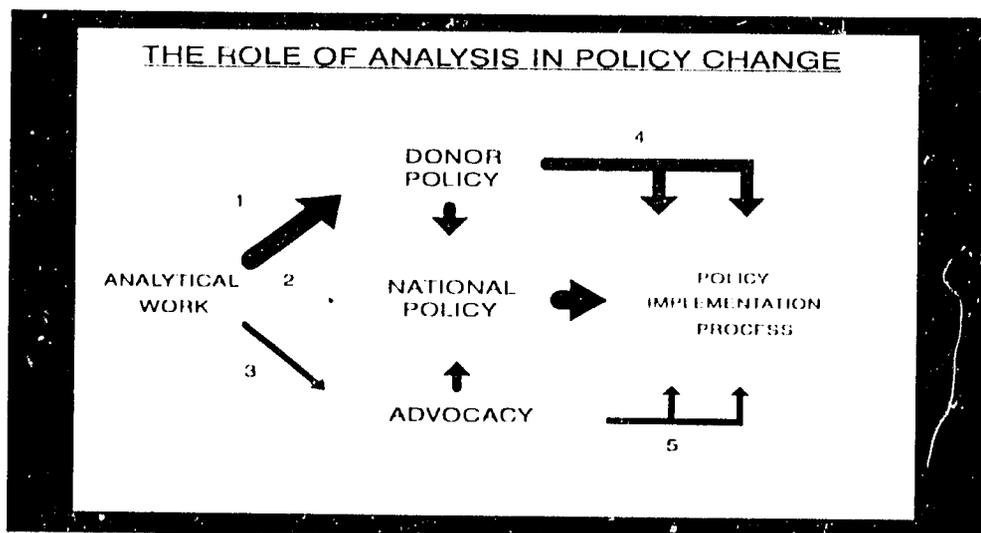
The HIRAA project's intent is to conduct research and analysis that will have an impact on policy formation and implementation in the health and education sectors in Africa. A recent review of the literature on policy formulation and, in particular, on the role of information and research in the policy decision-making and implementation processes underscores the problematic nature of linkage between policy research and analysis and policy decisions. If researchers and analysts hope to influence policy they cannot content themselves with the production of findings that are disseminated by other individuals and groups (Porter and Hicks, 1995). Although analysis and knowledge are critical roles in the formation and implementation of policies, the avenues through which they intervene are

not necessarily direct. Consequently, the role dissemination plays in the process of policy formation cannot be stressed enough.

A simplified conceptualization would postulate that information merely needs to be made available to decisions makers for them to exploit it in the development of policy alternatives. This approach is based on an information-gap-view of the policy process—i.e., if decision makers only had the right information they would make better policy choices. This perspective sees knowledge use only from the supply-side, and fails to capture the true nature of decision making because it does not address the demand-side of the process—i.e., do decision makers see the need for information? What information? In what form?

For these reasons the direct link between analytical work and national policy formation (represented by arrow 2 in the figure below) is depicted as weak. This does not mean that new research findings and knowledge do not influence policy decisions; to the contrary. However, their influence is usually gradual and depends directly on the flow and ebb of priorities or opportunities that drive whether policy brokers are interested in a specific issue. Simply supplying government officials with data (regardless of how it is packaged and represented) cannot by itself place an issue on the policy agenda unless other factors combine to make that topic a priority.

Another vector through which analytical work can affect the policy process is through the policy positions donor agencies advocate. Because donors



have resources to offer in support of programs that are aligned with their priorities, they can persuade governments to adopt certain policy positions. Structural and sectoral adjustment and any policy-based, conditioned financing are predicated on this principle. Although policy positions are not devoid of political or bureaucratic agendas, donor agencies tend to be more responsive to those that are based on an analytical foundation. Therefore, analysis and research can influence national policy agendas through their input into the policy agenda of donors. This arrow (#1) is depicted as more influential than the first arrow in the above figure.

An area gaining wider influence in the policy process in developing countries is the involvement of non-governmental entities in the role of policy advocates (arrow 3). Access to research findings by interest groups, public advocates, coalitions of stakeholders, or the media can influence the policy debate. Providing these kinds of groups with research findings, or the tools to conduct research, polls, or analysis, can enrich the policy dialogue and forum.

These three means through which analytical work influences the policy process focus on the agendas setting aspects of that process. Another area worth exploring is how analytical work can feed into the continuous process of policy implementation, evaluation, and reformulation. Two possibilities are indicated in the figure above:

- ◆ using research and analysis to improve the way donors support development and implementation of programs intended to realize specific policy objectives (arrow 4), and
- ◆ using analytical work to facilitate a continuous dialogue between stakeholders or advocates and policy implementors, helping to ensure greater responsiveness, transparency, and accountability in policy implementation (arrow 5).

HHRAA-funded research and analysis should pursue several if not all of these means of influencing/improving the policy process in African education systems. Some of the analytical work supported by the SD/HRD education team will address USAID's (and other donors') policies regarding educational reform. Research and analysis findings would be intended to improve the Agency's capacity to support the process of education reform, whether that is in helping to set national agendas, developing capacity within government institutions to manage reform, or facilitating the imple-

mentation process. Other aspects of the education analytical agenda could explore the role of advocacy in the reform process and could lead to approaches or methodologies for encouraging stakeholder advocacy of policy positions as well as local government openness and responsiveness to wider participation in policy dialogue and implementation. Still others could pursue both supply and demand-side aspects of policy decision-makers' use of information.

What is critical for the IIRAA project and the analytical agenda-setting process is to recognize that pursuit of policy impact through the various avenues will necessitate different strategies and analytical methodologies. It is not adequate just to employ different dissemination strategies. Instead, it is essential to employ the different approaches in the design and implementation of the analytical work that take into account the potential vector(s) through which the work intends to influence the policy process.

The analytical activities themselves will be designed with the intended vector of influence in mind. For example, little AFR/SD/HRD activity should be directed at so-called pure research. The likelihood for direct impact on decision-making and policy implementation is remote if we content ourselves with simply adding information to the body of knowledge on education in Africa. The dissemination strategies developed as integral aspects of each specific analytical activity will need to take into account the intended avenue of influence; the form, nature, and content of information that would be useful to the intended audience; the modality most likely to maximize the return on disseminating information (return defined as informed policy decision-making); the potential for interaction among different audiences; and the synergies that may be exploited between different research activities and bodies of knowledge (including across sectors).

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