

Background paper prepared for the  
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006  
*Literacy for Life*

## **New focus on France's aid programme to education**

Jean-Claude Mantes  
2005

This paper was commissioned by the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* as background information to assist in drafting the 2006 report. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* or to UNESCO. The papers can be cited with the following reference: "Paper commissioned for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life*". For further information, please contact [efareport@unesco.org](mailto:efareport@unesco.org)

## THE NEW FOCUS OF FRANCE'S AID PROGRAMME IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION

The French Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID), at its meetings held on 20 July 2004 and 18 May 2005, confirmed the main thrust of France's official development assistance (ODA) policy, particularly in terms of objectives and financial commitment:

® France is now restructuring its aid programme with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the Member States of the United Nations system in September 2000.

® At the same time, at the Monterrey Conference in March 2002, France undertook to increase its official development assistance from 0.42% of GDP (2004) to 0.5% in 2007, and to 0.7% (ratio recommended by the United Nations system) in 2012.

### **A new international context promoting Education For All**

France has made an active contribution to the drawing-up and implementation of a number of international initiatives and commitments (Dakar World Education Forum, United Nations Millennium Declaration, Fast Track Initiative) to promote basic education.

In view of the challenges and implications arising from this new context, France has started to realign the focus of its aid strategy, and the ways in which it carries out its work, in an effort to better incorporate its actions in international governance arrangements aimed at stepping up, coordinating and bringing into line efforts to promote EFA.

### **Currently reorienting strategies**

*Refocusing on MDGs....*

The two education MDGs – **ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education by 2015** (MDG 2) and **eliminating gender disparity in education by 2005** (MDG 3) – carried over from the Dakar World Education Forum held in April 2000, are at the heart of the EFA Fast Track Initiative and are now the object of a worldwide consensus. France has made these two goals a main priority and has started to radically realign its aid arrangements in the area of education, **refocusing with particular emphasis on universal primary education (UPE)**, which is now a priority objective.

*... Around four main areas of action*

France's aid programme in the area of education, realigned around the MDGs, now has four main areas of work:

- **Capacity building** for designing and overseeing **effective sectoral policies**;
- **Promoting access to education** by addressing problems of **supply** but also those of **demand**, in order to reduce disparities and ensure proper schooling for the most vulnerable population groups;
- Improving **quality** of education;
- Supporting the introduction of **participatory school management**;

Particular attention will be paid to the schooling of girls, the impact of AIDS on education systems, and consideration of linguistic issues.

Implementation of this strategy entails clear and sustainable choices concerning the financial resources raised, how the aid is organized, and the concentration and selectivity of actions.

#### **Greater financial commitment for EFA**

Currently, an annual amount of €80 million is given over to funding the development of basic education in developing countries.

Realigning France's official development assistance – which is a political priority for the French Government – will entail the increased, sustainable harnessing of aid to promote basic education. Volume of aid is thus expected to double, from €80 million to €160 million a year in 2007.

## How aid is implemented

### *Developing a sectoral approach*

France is applying a sectoral approach to the provision of aid, which is more suited to the overhaul of education systems and is more likely to improve the effectiveness of aid.

Accordingly, work is based on the following five main principles:

- Incorporating education policies into **development strategies** and poverty-reduction strategies;
- **Appropriation** of sectoral policies and reforms by partners;
- Priority given to **results**;
- **Dovetailing** actions with those of other sponsors in the framework of sectoral programmes;
- Taking into account the **education system as a whole**.

### *From project aid to sectoral budgetary aid*

- **Project aid** remains necessary for countries that do not yet have a coherent, sustainable sectoral policy. It is the main instrument used for national capacity-building, particularly in the areas of sectoral analysis, defining and overseeing policies.
- Since 2002 France has been involved in **programme aid** in the form of **basket funds** or **sectoral budgetary aid** to fund a single expenditure programme.

The "*Contrats de Désendettement Développement*" (C2D – development debt-relief contracts) have enabled budgetary aid to be assigned to **Mauritania** (**€7.76 million**, 2002) and participation (**€4.25 million** in 2003) in a basket fund in **Tanzania** in the education sector.

In 2004 France also set up sectoral programme aid schemes for Niger (€12 million) and Burkina Faso (€15 million + €10 million), under the Fast Track Initiative.

For France, sectoral aid forms part of a pluriannual approach, aimed at fostering dialogue on education policies by drawing up a medium-term public spending framework and monitoring the effectiveness of aid on the basis of the reconciled results indicators of the main financial sponsors.

#### *Realigning Technical Assistance*

In addition to, and in conjunction with, project aid and programme aid, a network of technical assistants (180 in 2004 – 90% in Africa, of whom 86% in French-speaking Africa) focus their efforts on implementation of EFA plans. In addition to an end to "substitution cooperation", significant work has started on the redefinition of profiles, with gradual transition from mainly teaching-related activities to those of national capacity-building in planning, programming, management and sectoral analysis.

France has also set up a facility for regional expertise, based at the UNESCO Dakar office, in the form of a **centre of expertise for sectoral analysis**, which is to be shared. This new instrument, which covers all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, is designed to support UNESCO in providing follow-up to the Dakar World Education Forum and technical support to the national teams in charge of sectoral analysis and drawing up, implementing and monitoring EFA action plans.

#### **Geographic concentration and selectivity of French aid**

- Bilateral French ODA targeted at developing primary education is largely concentrated on sub-Saharan Africa (90%), the region most affected by poverty and the one most lagging behind with regard to MDGs.

Africa is, and will remain, a priority action zone for France's aid programme. The process of concentrating resources on the **low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa**, particularly the French-speaking countries, will be continued.

- This geographical concentration of aid on Africa is governed by a **process of selectivity** based on performance. The selectivity criteria chosen will be based on: assessment of the global performance of countries in the areas of governance and poverty reduction; the credibility of education policies in line with the Fast Track Initiative; stated priority areas for concentration in the sectoral policies of French assistance and the *Documents Cadres de Partenariat* (DCP – Partnership Framework Documents) drawn up in conjunction with beneficiary countries.

#### **Development of strategic partnerships**

- With the multilateral institutions, the European Union and the Fast-Track Initiative partners, France will participate in the global governance of the Education For All initiatives. In particular, France wishes to provide support to UNESCO in the follow-up and coordination of Education for All initiatives, at both global and local level.
- French contributions to multilateral bodies for basic education will be increased from €1.5 million in 2003 to €17 million in 2007, as part of a process of increased coordination and harmonization. They will take the form of special partnerships with the European Union and the World Bank; as well as multi-sponsor funds for programme aid under the Fast Track Initiative.
- Stronger partnership with the different civil society players will be encouraged. This will involve, in particular, capacity-building of NGOs and local authorities in countries of the South.

France's action to promote basic education comes within the framework of the EFA commitments made in Dakar and the Fast Track Initiative centred on the achievement of the

MDG for universal primary education. Within the **Fast Track Partnership**, which France strongly supports, France is contributing to the implementation of the "Monterrey Consensus" by: (i) increasing its funding for basic education; (ii) backing the improvement that is necessary in the coordination and harmonization of assistance and (iii) helping beneficiary countries draw up sustainable and credible sectoral strategies. In this framework, France's action has already resulted in technical support and financial backing (€4 million over three years) to the three African countries elected under the Fast Track scheme (Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger) and this commitment will continue as new member states are elected to the initiative.