

ROLE OF U.S.-BASED NGOs IN PROVIDING SUPPORT TO AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS IN STRENGTHENING THEIR EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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PART I: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

I.1 Some Stylized Facts about Sub-Saharan Africa

- Not all parts of Sub-Saharan Africa share the dismal picture painted in the world media.
- SSA is not a monolith; it is not a country but a sub-region with a population of over 780million people and it is much diversified. There is significant variation in achievements and socio-economic indicators among countries and within each country.
- Significant progress has been recorded by many countries in the political, social and economic spheres.
- Average weighted growth rate in SSA fell from 3.9% in the 1960s to 3.8% in 1970s to 1.7% in the 1980s and increased from 2.5% in 1990-2000 to 4.7% in 2000-06. Per capita GDP grew by 3% in 2005/6.
- FDI increased 13-fold between 1990 and 2009 from \$1.2b to \$16.5b
- In 2007, half of the countries in SSA made at least one positive reform to make doing business easier, putting SSA in fourth place in business reforms.
- Trade in goods grew by an average annual rate of 18% between 2000 and 2006.
- Globalization and Democratization are providing opportunities and impetus for accelerated development.
- SSA is a region in transformation and with diverse performers.

- Successes have been recorded education and health care but HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria remain serious problem.
- Significant progress has also been made in democratic governance.
- Thus while it is still difficult to predict the course of development of SSA, there are indications for optimism.

I.2 Progress Towards EFA and MDGE Goals in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Steady progress made since 1990 towards UPE and gender parity.
- Efforts to achieve Education for All have resulted in substantial gross enrolment ratio of primary education, which reached 93% in 2004, from 72% in 1990. Primary completion rate rose to 62% in 2004, from 51% in 1991. But gender disparities persist in many countries.
- Primary school enrolments have increased.
- Girls' primary enrolments have risen rapidly in many countries.
- Public spending on education has increased in many countries, although still inadequate.

But,

- SSA still lags behind other regions of the world in educational attainment. 45m kids out-of-school, of which 52% are girls.
- Many African countries are still “at serious risk” or have “low chances” of achieving universal basic education by 2015. Only 5 out 45 have reached UPE and only 12 have achieved gender parity.

I.3 Some Challenges to Basic Education in SSA

- Funding – Inadequate to meet the EFA and MDGE goals.
- Low completion rates - Although enrolment rates are high and increasing, retention and completion rates are relatively low; primary completion rate is about 60% but GER is about 90%.
- Inadequate Teachers - in numbers and qualification: About 1.6million additional teachers need by 2015 to achieve UPE. Attracting qualified individuals into teaching profession, retaining them, providing continuous education and motivation for optimal performance remain serious challenges.
- Youth and Adult literacy rates still relatively low (Youth 73% T, 76% M, 66%F, 36m illiterate; adult 61%, 71%M, 55%F, 144m illiterate) and attention is inadequate

- Relatively high household cost of education discourages enrolment and retention. Cost of fees, uniform, books, etc are high in relation to income.
- HIV/AIDS - depopulation of teachers, loss of parents, diversion of funds
- Early childhood care and education are inadequate.
- Low parental involvement in schools and support for kids' education.
- Paucity of textbooks and other learning inputs.
- Poor learning infrastructure and environment.
- Decreasing but still high gender disparity (gap) in some countries. Girls more likely not to attend school and to drop out.
- Multiplicity of local languages and instruction in foreign languages instead of mother tongue.

PART II: ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL NGO'S IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES TO BASIC EDUCATION IN AFRICA

II.1 About NGOs

- NGOs: "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development." (World Bank)
- NGOs have emerged as the "third sector" of the economy and play an increasing role in international development.
- Astronomical increase in the number of NGOs and development assistance channeled through NGOs. There are now close to 50,000 international NGOs worldwide! Between 1984 and 1994, the British Government increased its funding to NGOs by almost 400%. Same applies to many developed countries, bilateral and multilateral organizations and private companies.
- NGOs fulfill development needs.
- Strong development intermediaries bridging the gap between donors and beneficiaries.
- Work in areas and sectors neglected by (or not attractive to) the business sector.
- Adopt cost-effective and sustainable approaches to Development
- Demonstrate adaptability and innovation in their work.

II.2 About NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa

- "The Role of NGOs in Africa has been to fill the gaps (Gap fillers) left due to the withdrawal of the regime (i.e. government), or work in

collaboration with the regime to further the latter's objectives" (Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa: Lessons from Uganda, by P. Sooryamoorthy, J of Third World Studies, Fall, 2003).

- "It was really only in the 1980s and 1990s, as structural adjustment programs were imposed across Africa by the international financial institutions and development agencies, that NGOs really flourished, gradually taking over the work of the retrenching state that had been persuaded to disengage from the provision of social services to its populations...The bilateral and multilateral institutions set aside significant funds aimed at mitigating social dimensions of adjustment...This was a period in which the involvement of Northern NGOs in Africa grew dramatically" (Issa G. Shivji: Silences in NGO Discourse: The Role and Future of NGOs in Africa, Fahamu, 2007)

II.3 Some U.S. Based NGOs Supporting Basic Education in SSA

There is significant variation in the size, scale of operation, focus and competencies among U.S. NGOs operating in SSA:

- Academy for Educational Development, operates in about 150 countries worldwide (Total Expenses c. \$300m in 2005).
- World Education, Inc, operates in about 60 countries worldwide, total expenses about \$40m in 2005.
- World Learning, operates in about 90 countries, total expenses about \$80m in 2005.
- Peace Corps, operates in over 100 countries world wide, FY 2005 budget about \$300m.
- Africa-American Institute, operates in about 50 countries in Africa, expenses about \$6m in 2005.
- IFESH, currently operates in 11 countries, expenses about \$10m.

PART III: IFESH'S SUPPORT FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN SSA

III.1 About IFESH

- An INGO, established in 1981 by late Rev. Leon Sullivan
- Mission: To support African countries in their efforts to eradicate illiteracy, poverty, disease, and inequity through self-help partnership programs.

- Has worked in about 34 countries over the past 26 years. Currently operates in 11 countries in Africa including Benin, Djibouti, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria and Senegal.
- HQ in Scottsdale, AZ with staff strength of 17 in HQ and about 100 field staff in the 11 countries.
- Budget varies, depending on funding, but in the \$10m - \$20m range.

III.2 IFESH Education Programs and Recent Projects

Programs

- The International Educators for Africa Program since 1992 in several countries.
- The International Fellows Program since 1992 in several countries.
- The Support for sub-Saharan Africa campaign (donation of education and relief materials) since 1985 in several countries.
- The School Construction/Rehabilitation Program in South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, etc.

Projects

- The African Education Initiative Support program funded by USAID/Washington, DC from 2002 to 2009
- The American Educators for Africa Program (2009 – 2012).
- The CBTEP program in Ethiopia from 2003 to 2012 funded by USAID/Ethiopia.
- The PETTP/PESEPE program in Benin from 1997 to 2008 funded by USAID/Benin.
- The STETP program in Guinea from 2005 to 2006 funded by USAID/Guinea.
- Establishing resources centers for teacher education in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire funded by WCF/The Hershey Company from 2005 to 2007.
- Empowering Cocoa Households Through Educational Solutions (ECHOES) funded by USAID/WCH under the GDA initiative, from 2007 to 2011.
- The iMPACT project in cocoa growing communities in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana funded by Mars, from 2007 to 2011.
- Community Teachers Project (CTP) in Ghana funded by USAID/Ghana, 2009-2011.
- IFESH/Alcoa Support for Technical Education in Guinea, 2008-2010.

III.3 IFESH's Specific Contributions to Basic Education

- Teacher Training (Pre-Service and In-service) in ESL, modern teaching methods, cross-cutting themes including HIV/AIDS, ICT, etc. About 1,000 volunteer educators assigned who have contributed to the training of about 200,000 teachers and who in turn have trained millions of children.
- Policy Support to MoE and Training of School Administrators
- Establishment or Upgrading of Education Resource Centers
- Functional Literacy for Adults in cocoa growing communities in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire
- Promoting Community and Parental Involvement in education
- SOS Program: Shipping donated books and school supplies – Over seventy 40-foot containers of educational and relief materials valued about \$35m shipped to several countries.
- Schools for Africa: Classrooms built or renovated or refurbished in about 200 schools in Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, etc.

PART IV: SOME CHALLENGES FACING INTERNATIONAL NGO'S WORKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- Security – Working in conflict and post-conflict areas
- Inadequate funding to address the myriad of problems identified during project implementation. Constrained to do what donors want and are willing to fund.
- Reaching underserved populations – rural areas, urban slums, OVCs, etc.
- Working with local partners – government, local NGOs and CBOs – with limited financial and institutional capacity.
- Measuring and interpreting results, effectiveness and efficiency
- Dealing with “pretender” NGOs - BRINGO, ComeN'GO, CONGO, CRINGO, FANGO, MONGO, etc.
- Competing in an increasingly market-driven global economy
- Dealing with negative perceptions and suspicions which lead to restrictions – e.g. NGOs interference in local politics? NGOs as spies or agents of neo-colonialism/imperialism? NGOs as “development tourists”? NGOs not interested in sustainability and self-reliance to remain in business?

In Conclusion, I agree with the following statement:

- “Fundamentally, the question is no longer *whether* NGOs should play a role in the education sector but how NGOs are most likely to fulfill their promise to improve the quality, equity, accountability, and pertinence of education in African Countries.” Evolving Partnership: The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa. AED/USAID, July, 2006

But I would to modify it as follows:

- “The question is no longer *whether* NGOs should play a role in the education sector but *what* role and *how* to play it to improve access to and quality of education in African Countries *while being seen as efficient, accountable, grassroots-oriented, apolitical, non-profit, voluntary and filling a gaps/void.*” Emmanuel Ojameruaye

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