



2008/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/76

Country profile prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008
Education for All by 2015: will we make it?

Burkina Faso

Country case study

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2007

This profile was commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report as background information to assist in drafting the 2008 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 profile can be cited with the following reference: "Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, Education for All by 2015: will we make it? For further information, please contact efareport@unesco.org

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EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

Country case studies

BURKINA FASO

SUMMARY

Burkina Faso, a landlocked territory in West Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 174th out of 177 on the UNDP Human Development Index. Burkina Faso adopted a *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, one of the major features of which is the advancement of basic education, to which end the country has been implementing a Ten-year Basic Education Development Plan (PDDEB) since 2002, aimed generally at achieving, by 2010, a gross enrolment ratio of 70% and literacy rate of 40%.

Undeniable progress has been achieved in improving access, particularly in terms of infrastructure – with an increase of more than 37% in the number of classrooms since 2001 – and teacher training and recruitment, with an increase of more than 47% in the number of teachers since the beginning of PDDEB. Despite these advances, the educational provision cannot keep up with the rate of demand and, as a result, general teaching and learning conditions have tended to deteriorate: overcrowded classrooms, absence of basic classroom materials, lack of drinking water, sanitary facilities and canteens in most schools, insufficient teacher training, and so forth. In addition, the education system is not yet in a position to manage learning outcomes appropriately.

The difficulties are so great that Burkina Faso is unlikely to achieve education for all by 2015. The country faces significant challenges with regard to the development of basic education, in particular:

- the challenge of setting itself ambitious but realistic goals in cooperation with its partners;
- the challenge of accelerating the programme for the development of the formal and non-formal education infrastructure;
- the challenge of prioritizing and improving the status of teachers;
- the challenge of strengthening efforts to provide education and literacy training to girls and women;
- the challenge of achieving realistic reform of the education system;
- the challenge of coordinating and harmonizing all initiatives taken by technical and financial partners.

The greatest challenge of all, faced by both the countries and the technical and financial partners, remains the capacity-building of the ministerial bodies in charge of managing basic education.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to provide an analytical overview of the current situation of basic education in Burkina Faso. It will review the progress made since the *World Education Forum* (Dakar, 2000), positive initiatives taken, difficulties encountered and the challenges facing the country. The analysis will be based mainly on official reports of the ministry responsible for basic education, various sectoral studies and reports of joint missions conducted to monitor the *Ten-year Basic Education Development Plan* (PDDEB).

1.0 BACKGROUND

This chapter will present the main features of the country and a brief description of the Burkina Faso education system.

1.1 MAIN FEATURES OF THE COUNTRY

Burkina Faso is a Sahelian country situated in West Africa and has an area of 274,000 km². It is bounded to the North and West by Mali, to the East by Niger and to the South by Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin and Togo. The population is predominantly agricultural, with 87% living in rural areas.

The country is divided into 13 regions, 45 provinces, 350 departments, 301 communes (49 urban communes and 252 rural communes) and over 8,000 villages. The population totals some 13.5 million and is expected to double in the next 30 years. It comprises some 60 linguistic groups, the main languages spoken being Moré, Dyula and Fulfulde. The official language is French and the main religious groups Muslims (52%), Christians (24.3%) and animists (23.3%).

The national economy is based essentially on the primary sector, with agriculture and animal husbandry accounting for 35% to 40% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The secondary sector accounts for 20% to 22% of GDP. The informal sector plays a predominant and prominent role in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, its share of GDP being estimated at 33%. Over 46% of the population lives below the poverty line, with poverty rates highest in rural areas. Life expectancy is 47.9 years (placing it in the 152nd position globally). The main social challenges remain education and health. In 2006, Burkina Faso had a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.342, ranking 174th out of 177.¹

1.2 THE BURKINA FASO EDUCATION SYSTEM

Burkina Faso's education system is organized into the following forms and cycles of education, with responsibilities divided between three main ministries: the Ministry for Social Action and National Solidarity (MASSN), the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) and the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESSRS). Specific responsibilities are entrusted to the ministers in charge of literacy and non-formal education and technical and vocational education. Basic education currently comprises pre-school and primary education.

- **Pre-school education.** Pre-school education, which comes under both the MASSN and the MEBA,² is provided to children between the ages of 3 and 6. There is very little provision for formal pre-school education, which is confined essentially to urban areas. The number

¹ Source: *Human Development Report 2006*, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, 2006.

² There is still some ambiguity as to exactly which institution in the Government of Burkina Faso pre-school education is attached.

of pre-schools and pre-schoolers has risen in recent years owing primarily to private sector initiatives. According to available MEBA data, the pre-school enrolment rate in Burkina Faso was 1.2% in 2006.

- **Primary education.** Primary education caters for children between the ages of 7 and 12. It is a six-year cycle, divided into three two-year sub-cycles (CP1-CP2, CE1-CE2 and CM1-CM2). The medium of instruction is French and the primary school certificate (CEP) is delivered at the end of the primary cycle. The use of national languages is currently being tested and studies on ways and means of using them more widely are in progress. Primary education is the responsibility of the MEBA.
- **Non-formal basic education.** Non-formal basic education concerns all organized forms of educational provision dispensed outside the formal school system, primarily literacy courses and training activities designed to improve living standards and provide continuing vocational education. Non-formal education is provided under the responsibility of the MEBA in Permanent Literacy and Training Centres (CPAF) for illiterate adults and by other means – such as the Non-Formal Basic Education Centres (CEBNF) – for out-of-school young people between the ages of 9 and 15.
- **General secondary education.** General secondary education, provided under the MESSRS, consists of two cycles, the first covering a four-year period (*collège* or lower secondary education), at the end of which a certificate entitled the *Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle* (BEPC) is delivered, and the second covering a three-year period (*lycée* or upper secondary education) leading to the *Baccalauréat* school-leaving certificate.
- **Technical and vocational secondary education.** Technical and vocational secondary education comprises three cycles and is the responsibility of MESSRS.
- **Higher education.** Higher education comes within the purview of the MESSRS and is provided in three kinds of institution – universities, higher education institutes and the special higher education institutes with competitive entrance examinations known as *grandes écoles*.

2.0 EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN BURKINA FASO

The development of education, and primarily basic education, has been established as one of the major priorities of the Government of Burkina Faso. This priority is enshrined in the country's Constitution, which stipulates that all citizens have the right to education, and in a number of official documents, including the primary texts below.

2.1 THE EDUCATION POLICY LAW (013/96/ADP)

Passed by Parliament on 6 May 1996, the Law establishes basic education as a national priority, compulsory schooling for the 6-16 age group and the right of everyone to education without discrimination on grounds of sex, social origin, race or religion.

2.2 THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY WHITE PAPER

The government's strategy for the development of the education sector is set out in the educational policy white paper of 2 May 2001 (2001-179/PRES/PM/MEBA). It contains the findings of the studies and technical discussions that culminated in the Education Congress (*États Généraux de l'éducation*) in September 1994, and is compatible with the Educational Policy Law.

Burkina Faso intends “to promote education that is accessible to the greatest number, relevant to the needs of society and the individual members of society and conducive to progress while preserving the national cultural heritage”.

2.3 POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER (PRSP)

Burkina Faso drew up its first poverty reduction strategy paper in 2000 to meet its eligibility requirements for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.³ After being implemented for three years, the strategy was revised in 2003 for the 2004-2006 period.⁴ Its three main lines of action are as follows:

- acceleration of growth based on equity;
- guaranteed access for the poor to basic social services;
- expansion of employment opportunities and income-generating activities for the poor;
- promotion of good governance.

In its poverty reduction strategy, the Government of Burkina Faso refers to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The development of basic education is a major PRSP strategy and the government is relying on the support of the international community to achieve that goal.

2.4 TEN-YEAR BASIC EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDDEB)

The PDDEB was approved by the Council of Ministers on 23 June 1999, adopted under Order No. 99-254/PRES/PM/MEBA on 20 July 1999 and effectively implemented as from late 2002. Set in a long-term perspective, the PDDEB was put forward as a means of finding solutions to identified problems. It was also designed to put an end to the “project approach” practised theretofore and its many drawbacks such as the insufficient duration of the various initiatives taken, the inconsistency and dispersal of multi-partner activities and excessive recourse to MEBA officials by all external stakeholders. Under the PDDEB, a diagnostic review of the basic education system is conducted using coverage, access and quality indicators, and policy-based implementation measures are devised with reference to the socio-economic context prevailing in Burkina Faso. PDDEB entails the elimination of disparities between the genders and among provinces and regions.

PDDEB generally aims to achieve a gross enrolment rate of 70% in primary school and a literacy rate of 40% for the entire population by the end of its implementation in 2010. Specific PDDEB goals, set for both formal and non-formal education for the ten-year period, are to:

- increase basic education provision and reduce disparities between the genders, among geographical regions and the socio-economic levels of pupils;
- improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of basic education and develop coherence and integration among the various levels and forms of education;
- promote literacy teaching and new alternative forms of education, as factors that promote development and support the development of formal basic education;

³ The HIPC initiative is a comprehensive approach to debt reduction for heavily indebted poor countries pursuing adjustment and reform programmes supported by the IMF and the World Bank.

⁴ This review is conducted regularly, each year.

- build capacities to supervise, manage and evaluate central and decentralized units responsible for the sector and capacities to coordinate outside initiatives.⁵

2.5 PROJECTS TO ENHANCE COHERENCE

The organization of Burkina Faso's education system generally lacks coherence, which is detrimental to its operation and unity, as shown by the following examples:

- three ministries – MEBA, MESSRS and MASSN – hold responsibility for education and training, in addition to the two line ministries;
- MEBA and MASSN each hold responsibility in part for early-childhood and pre-school education;
- pre-school and primary education are the responsibility of MEBA while another ministry, MESSRS, holds responsibility for post-primary education, namely junior secondary education.

The Government of Burkina Faso is indeed aware that such incoherence is a constraint on the development of the system; projects are thus being implemented to provide the necessary remedies. The two main projects are:

- **Reform of the education system.** The government held a wide-ranging consultation – of technical and financial partners in particular – on a document entitled Reform of the Education System in Burkina Faso (May 2006), setting out a proposal on the restructuring of the system from pre-school to junior secondary education. The document takes stock of the situation and could constitute a basis for reflection on genuine reform of the education system.
- **The legal framework.** The government is also reviewing laws, decrees and decisions on the organization and functioning of the education system, and held a consultation on the subject in early 2007. A new Education Policy Law will be passed at the end of the process.

3.0 PROGRESS REPORT ON BASIC EDUCATION

Generally speaking, progress has been achieved in basic education in Burkina Faso and undeniable advances were made in the first few years of implementation of the PDDEB, in particular in regard to access to primary education. Such progress does not, however, mean that EFA goals can be achieved by 2015.

3.1 PROGRESS IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Provision for early childhood education in accordance with PDDEB began in 2004 when 50 nurseries were opened in 20 priority provinces out of a total of 180 to be established. Persistent difficulties in relation to institutional responsibility for early childhood education arise from the provisions of the decree establishing the responsibilities of each ministerial department. It was recommended in the external evaluation of the first phase of PDDEB that the decree establishing the institutional responsibility for early childhood education be revised to eliminate the overlap between MEBA and MASSN. This is yet to be done. Generally speaking, priority was not given to early childhood education in the first phase of implementation of the PDDEB, as the kindergarten attendance rate was only 1.2% in 2006. This presupposes an implicit choice made by both the

⁵ The government has not set quantified targets for these goals.

Government of Burkina Faso and the technical and financial partners inasmuch as available resources were allocated primarily for the development of primary education.

3.2 PROGRESS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION⁶

The progress achieved will be analysed in respect of the three PDDEB components, namely broader **access**, better **quality** and changes in **management and guidance**, with 2001/2002 as the reference year and 2005/2006 as the last year for which data are available.

3.2.1 Access

The main data on access concern admission and enrolment rates, enrolment trends and the number of classrooms and teachers in respect of both formal and non-formal education.

Table 1. Formal education: access indicators

Indicators	Year 2001/2002	Year 2005/2006	Variations
New CP1 intake	184,167	305,954	+ 66.1%
girls (%)	42.3	45.1	+ 2.8 p. ⁷
Total primary school enrolment	938,238	1,390,571	+ 48.2%
girls (%)	41.8	44.5	+ 2.7 p.
Gross admission rate	46.9	70.7	+ 23.8 p.
girls (%)	40.3	64.9	+ 24.6 p.
Gross enrolment rate	45.1	60.7	+ 15.6 p.
girls (%)	38.6	55.1	+ 16.5 p
Enrolment rate⁸	33.9	44.6	+ 10.7 p.
girls (%)	29.0	39.8	+ 10.8 p.
Teachers with tenure	18,176	26,558	+ 46.1%
Number of schools	5,389	7,579	+ 40.6%
Number of classrooms	19,252	26,444	+ 37.4%
Shortage of seats	102,069	250,583 ⁹	+ 145.5%

The percentage of women teachers with tenure was 27.5% in 2005/2006.¹⁰

Table 2. Non-formal education: access indicators

Indicators	Year 2001/2002	Year 2005/2006	Variations
Enrolments in Initial Literacy¹¹ (AI)	106,640	188,475	+ 76.7%
women (%)	57.4	61.1	+ 3.7 p.
Enrolments in Further Basic Training¹² (FCB)	31,433	117,571	+ 274.0%
women (%)	46.3	55.2	+ 8.9 p.
Number of Permanent Centres for Literacy and Training (CPAF)	4,601	11,586	+ 151.8%

⁶ Source: Statistical yearbooks of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy.

⁷ p. = percentage points.

⁸ The most recent gross enrolment data available are for 2004/2005.

⁹ The most recent data available on the shortage of seats are for 2004/2005.

¹⁰ Source: PDDEB Implementation Report (eighth report), MEBA, October 2006.

¹¹ Initial Literacy (AI), the first level, consists of an introduction to reading and writing, using an approach developed for adult learners.

¹² Further Basic Training (FCB), the second literacy level, consolidates initial learning, enabling the candidate to be evaluated nationally and declared literate.

The literacy rate in Burkina Faso, according to the World Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006), is 21.8%.

3.2.2 Quality

Formal education: results-based quality indicators

Data on quality in the formal sector relate primarily to promotion, repetition, drop-out and completion rates and the primary school certificate (CEP) success rate.

Table 3. Trends in quality indicators

Indicators	Year 2001/2002	Year 2005/2006	Variation
Promotion rate in CP	79.8	84.7	+ 4.9 p.
girls	80.3	84.6	+ 4.3 p.
Promotion rate in CE	73.1	80.4	+ 7.3 p.
girls	74.3	81.7	+ 7.4 p.
Repetition rate in CP	12.7	7.9	- 4.8 p.
girls	12.7	7.7	- 5.3 p.
Repetition rate in CE	17.0	12.8	- 4.2 p.
girls	16.9	12.6	- 4.3 p.
Repetition rate in CM	27.9	23.6	- 4.3 p.
girls	29.2	24.6	- 4.6 p.
CEP success rate	62.9	69.9	+ 7.0 p.
girls	58.8	65.5	+ 6.7 p.
Completion rate¹³	28.0	34.1	+ 6.1 p.
girls	23.6	30.4	+ 6.8 p.

Non-formal education: quality indicators

The principal indicators of quality in the non-formal sector are the drop-out, attrition and promotion rates.

Table 4. Non-formal education: quality indicators

Indicators	Year 2001/2002	Year 2005/2006	Variation
Number of learners evaluated in Initial Literacy Training (AI)	88,483	170,264	+ 81,781
Number of women	52,111	105,626	+ 55,515
% of women	58.9	62.3	+ 3.4 p.
Number of learners evaluated in Further Basic Training (FCB)	25,789	101,679	+ 75,890
Number of women	12,125	55,729	+ 43,604
% of women	47.0	54.8	+ 7.8 p.

¹³ The completion rate measures the proportion of children entering the last year of primary education in comparison with all the children in the country who, by virtue of their age, should officially be in that same year (or the ratio of non-repeaters in CM2 to the population of 12-year old children). (*Report on the implementation of the Ten-year Basic Education Development Plan (PDDEB)*, 6th report, Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, November 2005.)

Number of registered new literates	20,743	89,687	+ 68,944
Number of women	9,722	49,115	+ 39,393
% of women	46.9	54.7	+ 7.8 p.

3.2.3 Management and administration

With regard to management and administration, the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) has made some progress since 2000. Following the organizational audit conducted in 2001 by the consulting firm *Core Advice*,¹⁴ the government restructured the Ministry,¹⁵ so that several components now meet the audit's recommendations. There are still some dysfunctions and lack of clarity within the organizational and institutional plans, such as the overlapping of competencies among the Ministry's various divisions (in particular between the Secretary-General and the PDDEB Permanent Secretary). One noteworthy advance is the computerized management of teachers through the integrated administrative and payroll management system for civil servants (SIGASPE), although the system is yet to be extended to all offices of the Human Resources Directorate (DRH) and, above all, to MEBA's decentralized bodies. There is no centralized system for the management of students. To facilitate the implementation and follow-up of the annual action plans, MEBA has also set up four thematic groups,¹⁶ chaired by MEBA directors and composed of MEBA staff, representatives of other ministries involved in the development of basic education and representatives of the country's technical and financial partners.

MEBA has encountered problems in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, in training and in meeting labour market requirements, and difficulties stemming from resistance to change. Burkina Faso has not yet harmonized conditions and procedures for all of its technical and financial partners. Conversely, its technical and financial partners associated with the "joint fund" for PDDEB implementation have harmonized and aligned their management procedures through the Special Treasury Allocation Fund (CAST), which is yet another important result of the PDDEB support project and raises the effectiveness of the aid provided.

Lastly, one serious and persistent problem is the lack of capacities in government departments responsible for the development of education, and in the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy in particular. The Ministry is obviously experiencing difficulty in keeping up with the rapid development of the system and it has not yet drawn up an overall capacity-building plan addressing structural and logistical issues. Furthermore, the technical and financial partners have not always met the Ministry's implicit and explicit requests for support and the Ministry did not implement a capacity-building strategy concomitantly with the first phase of the Ten-year Plan. It must be acknowledged that, despite their long experience of project management, the technical and financial partners and their executing agencies have been less skilful and effective in supervising and closely supporting activities designed to build the capacities of local officers responsible for the implementation of development plans.

¹⁴ *Plan de Formation des Cadres de Gestion et d'Administration* (Training plan for managers and administrators) (according to the target organizational chart), Core Advice, April 2001, and *Définitions de fonctions par structure du MEBA* (Definition of functions by unit, Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy), August 2001.

¹⁵ Decree 2003-103/PRES/PM/MEBA of 4 March 2003 relating to the organization of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (supplemented by Order 2003-00142/MEBA/SG relating to the organization and operation of the regional directorates for basic education and literacy).

¹⁶ The thematic groups deal with the following four topics: access, quality, administration and financial management.

3.3 ANALYSIS

There has been an undeniable increase in the number of pupils attending school; the enrolment in the first year of primary school is even spectacular in some school districts. There is still a wide gap between rural and urban areas. Inequalities continue to exist between boys and girls even though the parity index, currently 0.79, is improving gradually. In urban areas, where only 20% of the population lives, 96% of boys and 89% of girls go to school, compared with 33% and 21% respectively in rural areas. Furthermore, the enrolment rate in primary school varies considerably among the 45 provinces. For example, the rate is low, 32.2%, in Tapoa (a rural area in the East) while it is close to 100% in Kadiogo (Ouagadougou).¹⁷ Annexed to this document are tables showing trends in the percentage of girls newly enrolled in the first year of primary school, broken down by region (Annex 1), trends in total pupil enrolment in rural and urban areas (Annex 2) and trends in percentage of total number of pupils by area (Annex 3).

The repetition rate has decreased, with girls repeating less than boys in the first, second and third years of primary school, but more in the fourth and fifth years of primary education. The promotion rate has risen in each of the primary sub-cycles and the CEP success rate is improving steadily.

In the non-formal sector, the data show an increase in the number of attendees in initial literacy training (AI) and further basic training (FCB) and a significant increase in women's participation in literacy activities. Nevertheless, the strategy recommended for young drop-outs (9 to 15 years of age), which would involve non-formal basic education centres (CEBNF), has unfortunately not been implemented owing to the lack of necessary resources such as teachers, curricula, educational materials and supervisory staff.

There are, therefore, some promising results and these have been achieved through the dynamic interplay of several positive initiatives launched by the government, some of which are described below.

3.3.1 Developments in education infrastructure

While the pace of construction of new infrastructure does not meet the demand for educational services, it must be acknowledged that after a few years of stagnation in this sector, Burkina Faso, using a new delegated project management approach, is now achieving good results. With the combined assistance of agencies such as Faso Baara and several NGOs and churches and effective partners such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the African Development Bank (ADB) and the technical and financial partners of the joint fund, MEBA recently issued a positive assessment. The number of classrooms built rose by more than 37%, from 19,252 in 2001 to 26,444 in 2006.¹⁸

3.3.2 Training and recruitment of new teachers

Burkina Faso now has five national primary education teacher-training schools (ENEP), located in five of the country's regions. Each school trains more than 500 new student teachers a year, out of a total of over 3,000 new recruits per year, and most of them obtain teaching posts. In the past four years, MEBA has had to recruit an average of 3,150 new teachers each year to meet new needs (including the awarding of tenure, retirement and death), and the number of classrooms without a teacher – although still numbering 800 in 2005/2006¹⁹ – has declined constantly during

¹⁷ Source: Statistical yearbooks of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy.

¹⁸ Source: Statistical yearbooks of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy.

¹⁹ Source: Reform of the Education System in Burkina Faso, Government of Burkina Faso, May 2006.

those same four years. In view of its rapid demographic growth and growing educational demand, Burkina Faso should give consideration to increasing the number of students admitted to teacher-training schools. A plan to establish one or two more of these schools is under study.

3.3.3 Bilingual schools

In Burkina Faso, bilingual education means teaching children in two languages, the first being the national African language, which they already master and the second being French, a foreign language that they learn as a second language. The system is based on the central premise that knowledge of the national language and the ability to read and write makes it significantly easier for pupils to acquire academic skills, even if lessons are taught in a complementary combination of French and the national language. There is no doubt that use of the national language, which children have usually mastered by the time they enter school, is a reliable way of achieving a good level of internal efficiency in the education system. Bilingual education is provided in all primary school classes. The enrichment and maintenance model followed consists in using the national language from the start to the finish of education. However, the number of hours during which lessons are taught either in the national language alone or in conjunction with the French language decreases gradually from one term or year to the other, to be replaced by French. Thus, in the fourth and fifth years of school, the national language is used only for reading and language expression techniques, for one-and-a-half hours and one hour per week respectively.

While there are still only a few pilot bilingual classes, supported principally by Œuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (OSEO), pupil enrolment is growing. There are now bilingual schools in Burkina Faso's 13 regions and in 26 of its 45 provinces. The figures for the last two years are as follows:

Table 5. Trends in number of classes and pupils in bilingual schools

Academic year	Number of schools	Number of classes	Number of pupils
2005/2006	98	363	13,565
2006/2007	112	418	15,428

Source: OSEO, February 2007.

The course of study in bilingual primary schools has been reduced from six to five years, mainly because the children face no linguistic barriers and thus adapt more readily to academic situations. The concepts taught do not remain theoretical but are used in various activities including production and cultural activities. According to a study conducted in 2005,²⁰ however, some teachers consider the five-year programme to be very full. The study shows that, in terms of results, bilingual schools achieve higher levels of internal efficiency in that they have a higher success rate and a lower educational wastage rate. For example, the CEP success rate for 2004 was 94.50% in bilingual schools compared to 73.7% nationally and repeat and drop-out rates were also lower. These results should nevertheless be interpreted with caution since these pilot schools provide various favourable conditions, including in-service training and supervision for teachers of bilingual classes, bilingual classrooms well-equipped with educational materials, ongoing support from external partners and fewer pupils per class.

As part of the debate on the reform of the primary school curriculum, the government is now examining the conditions under which universal bilingual education could be gradually achieved.

3.3.4 The establishment of a Fund for Literacy and Non-Formal Education (FONAENF), to which contributions are made mainly by the government and the technical and financial partners,

²⁰ Evaluation of Bilingual Education in Burkina Faso (provisional report), MEBA/OSEO, August 2005.

has contributed substantially to the development of non-formal education through a strategy of outsourcing.

Table 6. Trends in requests submitted to FONAEF²¹

Year	Number of files received	Number of files accepted	Number of files rejected	Percentage of request met
2002/2003	197	91	106	46.2
2003/2004	337	174	163	51.6
2004/2005	410	239	171	58.3
2005/2006	493	304	189	61.6
Total	1,437	808	629	56.2

In the last four literacy campaigns, more than 15,900 non-formal education centres were opened with the assistance of the Fund, which has laid emphasis on basic literacy in order to build up gradually a sizeable potential pool of learners for the optional cycle.

3.3.5 Coordination of technical and financial partners

The progress achieved is also the result of efforts by the Government of Burkina Faso to coordinate and harmonize the work of the technical and financial partners more effectively. The Basic Education Coordination Framework for Burkina Faso (CCEB/BF), introduced in 1996, currently comprises 134 NGOs active in the field of basic education. The purpose of the Framework is to ensure full coordination and consultation among the NGOs and associations in order to encourage and reinforce their contribution to the improvement of formal and non-formal basic education. Civil society is increasingly involved in basic education planning, implementation and follow-up. NGOs and the Framework have contributed to the validation of the MEBA's annual action plan and in the examination of the biannual and annual reports on PDDEB implementation, and they are invited to take part in the biannual joint follow-up missions. Teachers' unions also participate regularly in the joint missions and in the main discussion and validation workshops conducted by MEBA on various themes concerning the development of basic education, such as bilingual education, curriculum reform and continuing teacher training.

The Partnership Framework,²² signed in September 2002 by the Government of Burkina Faso and a dozen technical and financial partners, was designed to provide a framework for cooperation and dialogue between the government and the partners in order to provide more effective assistance to the basic education sector. The objectives included a common approach to procedures, a general framework for action and cooperation, the flow of information and the monitoring of PDDEB implementation. Subsequently, in 2005, seven signatories to the Partnership Framework agreed, on the initiative of the Government of Burkina Faso, to place their funds in a Special Treasury Allocation Fund (CAST), using an aid model based on sectoral budget allocation, and signed a Joint Fund Protocol (PFC).

3.3.6 Follow-up and evaluation mechanisms

Other positive initiatives include the measures taken by the government to follow up and evaluate the Ten-year Plan, which include the adoption, in cooperation with the technical and financial partners, of a Follow-up Chart, the preparation of an annual action plan and budget, the systematic production of biannual and annual reports and the launching, twice yearly, of joint

²¹ Source: PDDEB Implementation Report (8th), MEBA, October 2006, p. 30.

²² Discussions are now under way among the financial and technical partners with a view to broadening and updating the content of the Partnership Framework.

missions to monitor PDDEB implementation. A mid-term PDDEB review was carried out in 2006, which drew attention to the Plan's strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations for the next phase. These follow-up mechanisms have proved satisfactory since they have kept the various partners – the government, the technical and financial partners and civil society – informed of progress and delays and helped them to identify ways of achieving certain targets more efficiently. In both the MEBA's periodic reports and the joint missions, the greatest difficulty for ministry officials and technical, financial and other partners is to define the follow-up targets more precisely. The joint mission reports usually contain too many recommendations, all too often confusing the essential with the unessential.

3.3.7 The role of civil society

Lastly, civil society plays an important role in the planning and execution of basic education policy. Nationally, parents' associations (APE) and associations of mothers who educate (AME) play a role in planning, through the Federation of Parents' Associations. Locally, management committees (COGES), APEs and AMEs participate in the daily life of the schools and non-formal education centres.

While initially limited to meetings for the purpose of exchange and coordination, CCEB/BF has expanded its activities to include action plans and formal programmes, for example, the establishment of close partnerships with the MEBA and the technical and financial partners, involvement in PDDEB implementation and signing of the Partnership Framework, participation in the establishment and management of FONEANF, membership of the National Commission on Private Education and, since 2001, leadership of the National Coalition for EFA.²³

4.0 POLICIES AND STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE EQUITY

The Government of Burkina Faso has shown a will to promote equity in its education provision and its treatment of various target groups. In particular, the aim of this policy is gradually to reduce both adult and child gender inequalities in enrolment rates for primary education services and literacy training activities, to narrow the gap between various regions, particularly between urban and rural areas, and to reduce inequalities based on the socio-economic status of households.

One of the main goals of the PDDEB in 2001 was to increase the basic education provision and reduce disparities between the sexes and geographical regions and in the socio-economic standing of students. From the start it was decided that the main PDDEB performance indicators would comprise separate information on girls and women.

4.1 GENDER EQUALITY

The Directorate for the Promotion of Girls' Education (DPEF), was specially established within the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) to promote activities in order to reduce gender-based inequalities. MEBA also encouraged the participation of women in school life by supporting the establishment and running of Associations of Teaching Mothers. Special initiatives were taken, in particular the waiving of the payment of parental fees to parents' associations (APE) in respect of girls enrolled in the first year of primary education (CP1), the fees being paid by the State.

²³ Information taken from documentation provided to the author by CCEB.

Girls' Parents' Association fees

Ever since payment of parental fees to parents' associations (APE) has been waived in respect of girls in the first year (CP1) of primary education, there has been a strong rise in the enrolment of both boys and girls in the first year (CP1) of primary education. According to a study by the Directorate for the Promotion of Girls' Education (DPEF), there has been an increase of 25% in the 20 provinces targeted.²⁴

In 1997-1998, gross enrolment rates in the Haut Bassin and Centre regions reached 59.2% and 76.1% respectively, while those in the Eastern (18.6%) and Sahel (15.1%) regions still fell far short of the national average. In urban areas the enrolment rate is 76% for boys and 66% for girls, while in rural areas the rates are 33% and 21% respectively.

4.2 THE REDUCTION OF REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Twenty provinces, selected from among the poorest and least developed in terms of enrolment and literacy, were identified as "priority provinces" (the 20PP), designated to receive particular attention and special monitoring. These provinces have been fast-tracked, particularly in terms of the construction of new schools and grants for teaching materials and school supplies, and they are given special attention by some NGOs. Half-yearly and annual ministerial reports provide separate results for the 20 priority provinces in respect of the main indicators, in particular the gross intake rate (GIR), gross enrolment ratios (GER), the number of new entrants, the number enrolled in initial literacy (IL) and further basic training (FCB) programmes, and so on. Monitoring of the implementation of the PDDEB also focuses on the construction of new schools in the 20PP and donations of textbooks and school supplies.

4.3 HEALTH CARE AND NUTRITION IN SCHOOLS

In regard to health care/nutrition in the school environment, a convention on school health care and nutrition was signed on 30 January 2006 with a consortium of three NGOs – Hellen Keller International (HKI), the Foundation for Community Development (FCD) and Catholic Relief Service (CRS). This initiative has already led to the organization of information, awareness-raising and planning workshops in all the regions involved, the acquisition of micronutrients and deworming treatments and the collection of statistical data. The following activities are under way in 2007: the training of various actors, the organization of information days to build awareness of health, nutrition and sanitation, the distribution of micronutrients and deworming treatments, the installation of medical kits in schools and so on. It is still too early to assess the impact of the health and nutrition activities undertaken by NGOs in the school environment.

In respect of HIV/AIDS, a survey conducted in 2004 as part of the VIRUS project shows that the incidence among teachers is 2.7%, which is in line with the estimated national rate. Given MEBA recruitment levels, the number of teachers infected with HIV/AIDS may be evaluated at 686. It is estimated that about 200 primary school teachers have been killed by the virus in the last five years, that is, almost one per week or one per province. It is noteworthy that Burkina Faso has established a Strategic Framework for Action Against AIDS, that a multi-year action plan is being implemented and that a Ministerial Committee on Action to Combat AIDS (CMLS) has been established.

²⁴ Source: *Rapport de suivi de la campagne massive pour la scolarisation des filles 2005-2006 et de la mise en oeuvre de la prise en charge des cotisations des filles* (DPEF, July 2006).

The number of school canteens has also increased in the last three years, the rate of coverage of schools rising from 48% to 52.9% and then to 56.7% in 2005.²⁵ This is due to greater local community involvement in the promotion of endogenous canteens. School canteens not only increase children's access to school but also conduce to the provision of quality education and are often the tangible result of social mobilization around a school.

5.0 THE MAIN CHALLENGES

In spite of undeniable progress, especially in quantitative terms, it must be said that, in view of the current rate of progress, Burkina Faso cannot conceivably achieve primary education for all by 2015. Great difficulties have been encountered and suffice it to identify the greatest difficulty to have an idea of the challenges facing this country in its struggle to roll back illiteracy and raise Burkina Faso's profile in the third millennium.

5.1 THE CHALLENGE OF QUALITY

The rapid growth in the number of students in the system and current demand in excess of provision lead to a degradation in some teaching and learning conditions.

- **Large classes.** The national teacher/pupil ratio, currently 1:52, does not tell the full story. It is not unusual, even right in the centre of Ouagadougou, for class sizes – especially but not exclusively at primary (CP) level – to exceed 80, 100, 150 and even 200 pupils. By all accounts, such a situation has a disastrous effect on learning.

Numbers of pupils: the situation in Kadiogo (Ouagadougou)

On 10 November 2006, in a document entitled *Point de situation des classes à larges effectifs à la rentrée 2006-2007. Région du Centre* (Statement on the situation of large classes at the beginning of academic year 2006/2007 in the Centre region), the regional director for the Centre region gives an overall picture of the biggest challenges facing the region. In particular the document reveals that:

- more than 70 classes in the region have more than 90 pupils, 54 have more than 100 pupils, and 26 have more than 120 (three departments could not give figures for the first year of primary (CP1));
- desks, in several schools, are either in short supply or in very bad condition; in Tangsega, one school had borrowed desks from a neighbouring school that, following an intake boom, had to recover its furniture. The report states that more than 1,500 desks are required.

However, while there are more and more overcrowded classrooms in urban areas, particularly in areas on the periphery of some cities, schools are practically empty in some rural areas, particularly in the Sahel.

Empty schools in the Sahel

At the primary school of M'Bamga, 20 km from Dori, in the north of Burkina Faso, at the start of the new school term in January 2007, in the first and second year elementary classes (CE1/CE2), 16 pupils were present out of the 72 enrolled, the rest having been kept at home by their

²⁵ Source: Statistical yearbooks of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA).

parents. In the Sahel, a largely pastoral and agricultural region, children perform domestic tasks or herd animals in the bush. Enrolment of children in school is not yet part of the mentality ... is not profitable.

Source: *Sidwaya*, 10 January 2007.

- **Challenging physical conditions.** The last PDDEB implementation report (November 2006) showed that the number of outdoor classes is on the rise – 1,094 in 2005/2006 compared to 639 in 2002/2003 – thus creating difficult learning conditions for a growing number of pupils. Other challenging conditions concern children’s access to food and drinking water, school health care, action to combat HIV/AIDS, and access to hygiene. In spite of the progress recorded in recent years, almost half of the schools still do not have school canteens. There is very little access to drinking water.

Access to drinking water

According to the results of a recent study²⁶ conducted jointly by the MEBA and a number of technical and financial partners, out of 6,771 schools in Burkina Faso:

- 330 schools (4.9%) have running water;
- 477 schools (7.0%) have a permanent well;
- 236 schools (3.5%) have a temporary well;
- 2,269 schools (33.5%) have boreholes equipped with handpumps;
- 479 schools (7.1%) have boreholes that are not working properly;
- and 2,850 schools (42.1%) have no access to running water.

According to the study, if schools with dysfunctional boreholes and schools supplied from an unsafe source are taken together, then **59.3% of schools do not have a source of drinking water.**

It is widely recognized that the lack of access to drinking water and separate latrines is an important factor in non-enrolment of girls. It is even considered that around half of the girls in sub-Saharan Africa drop out of primary school because of the lack of sufficient water and sanitation facilities. Yet in Burkina Faso, according to a recent study, 4,042 schools are equipped with latrine blocks, thus giving a coverage of 60%.

5.2 THE STATUS OF TEACHERS

As stated above, Burkina Faso recruits more than 3,000 new teachers each year to meet the new demand and to replace teachers who leave the system. The time devoted to initial training in the National Schools for Primary Teachers (ENEP) was therefore reduced from two years to just one, which is considered by some to be a problem in itself. Moreover, pupil teachers are recruited all too often at Junior Secondary Education Certificate (BEPC)²⁷ level, which is generally considered to be too low. The supervision and continuing training of teachers are difficult because of the scant resources available to educational supervisors – inspectors, educational supervisors and

²⁶ Source: *Alimentation et la santé scolaire au Burkina Faso (L’). État des lieux et plan d’action 2005-2015*, MEBA/DAMSE, PAM, UNICEF, Plan Burkina and CRS/BF, April 2006.

²⁷ In reality, however, it is estimated that three quarters of pupil teachers hold a higher level of qualifications than the BEPC.

head teachers. Attached to the Provincial Directorates for Basic Education and Literacy (DPEBA) and the Basic Education Districts (CEB), the inspection system, which is supposed to ensure the supervision, assessment and ongoing training of teachers, functions very much below par, and as a result, teachers, the backbone of any education system, are left somewhat to their own devices, which does not augur well for the development of the basic education system.

Teachers are now recruited regionally and new teachers, therefore the youngest, are often assigned to difficult large classes and, in most cases, are not provided with any housing. It should also be noted that women teachers, already few in number, are to be found mainly in urban centres. In 2005-2006, they accounted for 46.0% of teachers in urban areas compared to only 24.5% in rural areas. This situation is not likely to encourage girls' enrolment as much as desired.

5.3 THE CURRICULUM – UNSATISFACTORY AND DIFFICULT TO REVISE

Several aspects of the primary education curriculum are outdated and unsuitable. The programmes of study (curricula) do not meet the needs of today's Burkinabé society, the textbooks need to be updated and pupils' basic educational attainment is insufficient. Classroom time, which should be over 800 hours, is just over 600 hours. This situation is due to many factors, such as a late start to the new school term, teacher absenteeism, climatic factors, examination periods and local constraints. Curriculum reform has been under way for more than three years but in reality activities have not begun. The reasons for such inaction are numerous and complex and, in the main, are as follows: limited capacity – particularly in terms of human resources and logistics – of the ministerial bodies in charge of reforms; hesitation by the Ministry to take clear and concrete decisions on the use of national languages in primary education; the lack of policy decision-making on basic aspects of the curriculum such as the subjects taught in various stages of primary education and the time allotted to each subject, the approach to related content (health and environmental education, education on population issues and citizenship education), classroom time and the duration of basic education; the size and complexity of reforms envisaged by MEBA officers (national discussions, skills-based approach and so on) and the consequences for teaching personnel.

Indeed, national discussions currently under way – in the first quarter of 2007 – will probably delay the effective inception of the reform for at least another year.

5.4 ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The assessment of educational attainment – to identify specifically what teachers teach and what children learn – is only now laboriously being initiated. A system has been established at the MEBA but it will be several years before, from an analysis of results over time, real progress made within the education system can be observed. The 2005 assessment report²⁸ on French and mathematics in the first year of primary school (CP1) and the second year of elementary school (CE2) showed that:

- first year primary school pupils (CP1) scored an average of 41.4 out of 100 in French and 34.8 out of 100 in mathematics;
- second year of primary school pupils (CE2) scored an average of 39.9 out of 100 in French and 38.1 out of 100 in mathematics.

In relation to specific variables, the results showed that:

²⁸ *Enquête 2005 sur les acquis scolaires au CP1 et au CE2: le français et les mathématiques*, MEBA, DEP, November 2005.

- there were no significant differences between girls and boys in the first year of primary school (CP1) and the second year of primary school (CE2) in the results obtained in French and mathematics;
- performance was lower among pupils in multiple grade classes;
- pupils in bilingual schools scored higher marks in mathematics;
- possession of reading and arithmetic books had a positive impact on results.

The report also contained observations in respect of the pupils' family environment, teachers and head teachers, and of some characteristics relating to the pupils themselves.

5.5 THE PITFALLS OF DEVOLUTION AND DECENTRALIZATION

Since the start of the new century, responsibility for the management of basic education has been decentralized from MEBA to regional directorates (13 DREBA), provincial directorates (45 DPEBA) and basic education districts (322 CEB). Although the DPEBAs have gradually shown some leadership, in particular by assuming responsibility for the management of school infrastructure – educational mapping, invitations to tender, supervision of building work –, it has to be said that, overall, the decentralized authorities generally lack the means, motivation and sometimes the will or capacity in terms of personnel, to play MEBA's true role in the field.

After the vote on the country's Constitution in 1991, the government launched a process of gradual decentralization, based on the idea that building the capacities of local communities was a prerequisite for the effective delegation of responsibilities. The reticence of some ministries towards decentralization has not encouraged the reform of heavily centralized public administration systems. The new *Code des collectivités territoriales* (Code for Territorial Communities), adopted in 2004, was a turning point in the process and provides for the establishment of two levels of decentralization: the regions and the districts. The *Code* defines six priority areas of responsibility that must be transferred to urban districts, including pre-school education, primary education and literacy. It gives scant information, however, on the implementation of the planned transfer of resources and the enforcement decrees, which should provide clarification, have not all been adopted yet.

The municipal elections, held in 2006, marked a new phase in the execution of Burkina Faso's decentralization strategy. Much uncertainty persists, however, regarding the division of responsibilities and resources, the current financial framework clearly proving insufficient to enable local communities to assume the responsibilities that have been transferred to them; it must not be forgotten that local budgets in Burkina Faso account for only 2.5% of national resources, 60% of which are concentrated in the capital, Ouagadougou. Important field studies are currently in progress in particular to analyse the extent of political, administrative and fiscal decentralization and delivery of water and primary education services locally.

6.0 THE FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE OF BASIC EDUCATION

The PDDEB implementation budget currently has three sources: (i) the State which finances a large part of the PDDEB from its own funds (State budget); (ii) funds from the HIPC initiative; (iii) all the financial contributions from technical and financial partners (PTF) which are paid into a

“Common Fund”, along with many bilateral projects, initiatives taken by NGOs, associations, local collectivities and so on.²⁹

Reforms to improve the management of public finances were undertaken at the beginning of the 1990s and support the national determination to strengthen governance and improve accountability for the management of public finances. The main programmes currently implemented by the Government of Burkina Faso to modernize the management of finances are the Budgetary Management Reform Programme, the Public Administration Capacity-Building Programme, the Action Plan to Strengthen the Procurement System and the Strategy for the Strengthening of Public Finances (SRFP).

In spite of the constraints, significant progress has been made. The main achievements include: drawing up the budget (new programming tools and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (CDMT)), budget management (modernization of the integrated system for tracking and reporting expenditure), tax revenues (improvement in collection), decentralization of budget implementation: execution of expenditure (speed and transparency) and control (restructuring of the IGE, the IGF and the Court of Accounts). The reforms must be continued but regular assessments by the World Bank, the IMF and Burkina Faso’s main financial partners stress that substantial progress has been made to date. A good indicator of the positive developments in the management of Burkina Faso’s public finances lies in the fact that, since 2000, the country’s main bilateral partners have also given general budget aid in support of implementation of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*. This aid is very significant, accounting for 12.72% of the State budget in 2005, and 35.4% of external aid budgeted in 2005 (CFAF 100 billion, approximately €155 million).

According to the MEBA 2006-2008 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, a review of the estimated current and capital expenditure for this period shows a financing shortfall in basic education by technical and financial partners of approximately €67 million. Efforts must be made to harness financial resources to avoid compromising progress towards EFA goals.

Burkina Faso’s education system is little developed, both quantitatively and qualitatively, even though the State invests 1.8% of GDP in basic education, higher than the average (1.6%) of countries with GDP per capita of under US \$1,000. This level of investment is, however, clearly proving to be insufficient to ensure adequate development of basic education in this country. In regard to good governance, the progress achieved by Burkina Faso in recent years is promising. The World Bank’s *Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA)*³⁰ 2005 gives Burkina Faso an overall rating of 3.8 and therefore ranks it ninth out of 76. In business, the World Bank’s report *Doing Business 2006* places Burkina Faso among the 20 least competitive countries. Burkina Faso has high aspirations and would eventually like to figure in the top 25% of the most competitive countries.

In regard to corruption, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) used by *Transparency International* refers to levels of corruption as perceived by business people and country analysts and ranks countries on a scale of 10 (high probity) to 0 (very corrupt). Burkina Faso’s CPI rating³¹ was 3.2 in 2006, or seventy-ninth in the rankings, while it was 3.4 in 2005, corresponding to seventieth. It is worth noting that Burkina Faso’s place at seventy-nine in the rankings is due in particular to the fact that nine countries shared the seventieth place with a rating of 3.3.

²⁹ In the MEBA *Plan d’action budgétisé 2007*, the budget breakdown was as follows: State budget: 58.0%, HIPC Initiative: 2.9%, common fund (PTF) (CAST): 18.5%, various projects, NGOs, associations and so on: 20.6% (Source: MEBA, *Plan d’action budgétisé 2007*, December 2006).

³⁰ This assessment concerns in particular economic management, structural policies, policies for social inclusion and equity and public sector policies and institutions.

³¹ According to the *Transparency International* 2006 report.

In spite of the progress made in terms of good governance, Burkina Faso is not immune to clumsiness and blunders in the management of its finances. The auditing problems encountered, when the Education Projects Bureau (BPE) closed in 2005, which delayed the effective implementation of the new special appropriations account (CAST) and, especially, new disbursements from technical and financial partners hampered implementation of the PDDEB and therefore the advancement of basic education. There is still a great deal to be done before the country develops a reliable and efficient management system.

7.0 MAJOR CHALLENGES FACING BURKINA FASO IN THE MARCH TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL

Burkina Faso has set itself ambitious goals for the development of its education system. Firstly, the PDDEB aims to achieve a 70% gross enrolment ratio by 2010. Then, in its submission to the Fast-Track Initiative for universal primary education, Burkina Faso targeted universal system coverage. There is tacit agreement among education observers in Burkina Faso – particularly among technical and financial partners – that this country will not achieve education for all by 2015. A Pôle de Dakar mission to Ouagadougou in March 2004, concerning the feasibility of EFA, examined components of financial arbitrage for the education policy in primary education in Burkina Faso and suggested scenarios taking particularly into account (i) the teacher recruitment policy; (ii) the housing policy for teachers; and (iii) the non-formal education strategy. All the scenarios show, to varying extents, the anticipated shortfall and the country's dependence on external funding. Indeed, they show the various options available to the country in achieving its goals in accordance with the indicators in the Fast-Track Initiative Indicative Framework, in particular for pupil/teacher ratios, the GDP per capita cost of teachers' salaries, classroom time and classroom construction costs.

In view of these difficulties, some of the main challenges facing Burkina Faso in the development of basic education and literacy for its population are set out below.

7.1 THE SETTING OF REALISTIC GOALS

On the basis of data and scenarios contained in the support mission report to the 2004 Pôle de Dakar Fast Track, the Burkina Faso Government is duty-bound to engage openly with the technical and financial partners involved in basic education development, to adopt a clear position in respect of the Fast Track Initiative Indicative Framework and agree to ambitious but realistic quantitative and qualitative goals, both for the second phase of PDDEB and for 2015. These goals must be generally considered to be within the reach of Burkina Faso. It is unhealthy to be placed in a permanent state of failure. It must be possible to consider what the issues and consequences would be.

7.2 ACCELERATED SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Rather than slowing demand – which is unrealistic and clearly undesirable – Burkina Faso should accelerate the construction of classrooms and non-formal education establishments. At the same time, minimum and realistic conditions for the school environment must be set, regarding, in particular, the maximum number of pupils per class, a requirement for students to be seated, the need for access to drinking water, separate latrines for boys and girls, textbooks and teaching materials. Real quality begins with decent teaching and learning conditions.

7.3 EMPHASIS ON THE STATUS OF TEACHERS

Rapid improvement in the quality of the education system will never be achieved without a well-chosen, adequately trained and motivated teaching staff. One of the major challenges facing Burkina Faso is that of giving high priority to the status of teachers. In particular this means: raising recruitment requirements for prospective teachers³² – the Junior Secondary Education Certificate (BEPC) is increasingly considered to be insufficient; optimizing initial training content – even if this means extending its duration; allocating the required resources to ensure that the supervisory framework functions properly so that teachers may thus be supervised as teachers required and be provided with quality continuing training; providing reasonable housing for teachers, especially in rural areas.

7.4 GREATER DETERMINATION TO PROMOTE GIRLS' ENROLMENT AND LITERACY FOR WOMEN

The efforts in this regard must be stepped up and not slackened. The MEBA should aim, in particular, to increase the number of women teachers, especially in rural areas, and to appoint more women to posts in central and decentralized basic education administrative units. To give an example, only a very small number of women currently hold posts in the 45 Provincial Directorates for Basic Education and Literacy (DPEBA).

7.5 REALISTIC REFORM OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The management of the Burkinabé education system is hampered by institutional dysfunctions. This problem was recognized immediately by the Burkina Faso Government which has implemented comprehensive projects to reform the system, the primary education curriculum and the basic education legal framework. However these projects must be targeted, and over-ambitious reforms that are not fully completed and that leave urgently needed changes incomplete must be avoided. The immediate challenges facing the Burkina Faso Government and requiring urgent attention concern the following fields in particular:

- the need to revise the current situation in which education responsibilities are shared between three ministries (MEBA, MESSRS and MASSN);
- the development of pre-school education;
- the development of post-primary education in order to remove the impediments to the progress of young people at the end of primary education, both formal and non-formal, with special attention for vocational and technical training programmes;
- reform of the basic education curriculum – and curricula – by adopting a realistic approach that takes into account the level of training and needs of the 25,000 primary-school teachers currently employed;
- the enhancement and durability of learning achievement assessment tools in order to monitor pupils' actual learning achievement throughout their education and Burkina Faso's participation in international assessment.

³² While making cautious estimates of the potential cost increase entailed by such a rise.

7.6 COORDINATION AND HARMONIZATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

Efforts have been made by the Burkina Faso Government and many technical and financial partners to ensure that all partners, led by the government, pull in the same direction. There are still, however, too many individual approaches and “corporatist” activities which would be much more effective if they were part of a coordinated and harmonized effort. The various forms of aid for basic education currently provided in Burkina Faso do not facilitate the work of national bodies which have the difficult task of managing one system: general budget aid, sectoral budget aid, the special appropriations account (CAST), various projects, NGOs and so on. The Burkina Faso Government faces the challenge of bringing these scattered activities together and the many PTF are duty-bound to be receptive to the country’s needs in this respect, with a view to efficiency gains and lower transaction costs.

7.7 THE GREATEST CHALLENGE: STRENGTHENING THE MINISTERIAL BODIES IN CHARGE

As stated in the *Paris Declaration*, capacity-building has become essential to the effectiveness of development aid.

Resolutions 22, 23 and 24 of the *Paris Declaration*

Resolution 22. The capacity to plan, manage, implement and account for results of policies and programmes, is critical for achieving development objectives – from analysis and dialogue through implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Capacity-building is the responsibility of partner countries, as donors play a support role. It must be based on sound technical analysis and be responsive to the broader social, political and economic environment, including the need to strengthen human resources.

Partner countries undertake to:

Resolution 23. Integrate specific capacity-building objectives into national development strategies and pursue their implementation through country-led capacity development strategies where needed.

Donors undertake to:

Resolution 24. Align their analytical and financial support with partners’ capacity-building objectives and strategies, make effective use of existing capacities and harmonize support for capacity development accordingly.

Current MEBA institutional capacities do not allow it to take full national responsibility for major challenges in basic education development. Shortcomings in MEBA’s financial management mean that the rate of implementation of education budgets has fallen short of expectations. Aid is available from financial and technical partners but MEBA is not yet proactive enough to make the most of available aid. Moreover, some of the partners’ initiatives are determined more by supply than by demand considerations.

The major challenge, the largest and most urgent, facing the Burkina Faso Government and its technical and financial partners is the establishment of a sustainable programme to build the capacities of the ministerial bodies in charge of the management of all basic education provision.

CONCLUSION

Undeniable progress has been achieved in Burkina Faso in the last five years in the field of basic education: there are more classrooms and teachers and more children, boys and girls, attend school. However, in spite of these advances, the education situation in Burkina Faso remains critical: primary education attendance levels are still among the lowest in the world, the primary completion rate is barely 30%, education attainment levels are low and the illiteracy rate for the population as a whole is still approximately 70%. The State of Burkina Faso still faces considerable challenges in achieving education for all. These challenges vary in nature:

- policy-makers, first of all, face the challenge of keeping basic education at the top of national priorities and allocating to it a portion of the national budget to ensure that the necessary developments will be achieved;
- then there is the challenge of extending access to education to all population groups, in rural areas as well as in towns and cities, to women and girls as well as to men and boys;
- the challenge of providing quality education to all and fostering the educational achievement required to attain autonomy and freedom and promote economic and social progress;
- the challenge of obtaining the necessary resources and aid from the international community to ensure that the education system expands and functions efficiently;
- the challenge of setting goals and targets that are both ambitious and realistic for the education system;
- the challenge of identifying clearly the capacity-building requirements of the public bodies in charge and of adopting strategies to take remedial action where necessary;
- the challenge of improving the management of public finances and procurement in an ethical and responsible way;
- and the challenge of the purposeful decentralization of basic education by providing territorial districts and communities with the means to enable them to discharge their new responsibilities in this field.

The international community also faces responsibilities of its own and must rise to a number of challenges, namely:

- the provision of sufficient resources to Burkina Faso to allow it to aspire towards the implementation of a credible and ambitious development plan for the achievement of education for all as soon as possible;
- the harmonization of various support activities and procedures in order to lessen the burden of coordination borne by the country's administrative bodies;
- and provision of support to Burkina Faso and, in particular, to the bodies in charge of education, with a view to the adoption of a strong capacity-building strategy and to assist it in the implementation of this strategy.

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ANNEX 1

Percentages of girls enrolled in first year of primary school (CP1) by region¹

Regions	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Boucle du Mouhoun	43.27	46.36	45.01	44.48
Cascades	42.46	47.21	44.57	45.89
Centre	49.24	49.27	48.66	49.65
Centre-Est	41.58	45.56	45.28	44.76
Centre-Nord	38.45	42.13	42.33	43.05
Centre-Ouest	41.24	45.43	44.54	43.96
Centre-Sud	43.60	49.75	45.67	44.27
Est	40.51	47.0	45.70	46.11
Hauts-Bassins	42.78	46.43	44.81	45.16
Nord	38.17	41.02	42.81	42.75
Plateau Central	39.47	45.64	43.98	43.93
Sahel	43.44	46.71	47.26	46.13
Sud-Ouest	40.77	45.29	44.77	45.25
National	42.27	45.84	45.05	45.08

¹ Eighth PDDEB implementation report, MEBA, Burkina Faso, October 2006.

ANNEX 2

Progression of total numbers of students by area¹

	Urban			Rural			Urban + Rural		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2002/2003	207,541	188,833	396,374	378,032	237,744	615,776	585,573	426,577	1,012,150
2003/2004	220,220	202,232	422,452	426,823	290,237	717,060	647,043	492,469	1,139,512
2004/2005	230,625	213,491	444,116	484,694	342,027	826,721	715,319	555,518	1,270,837
2005/2006	239,212	224,152	463,364	536,549	390,658	927,207	775,761	614,810	1,390,571

¹ Eighth PDDEB implementation report, MEBA, Burkina Faso, October 2006.

ANNEX 3

Percentages of total numbers of students by area¹

	Urban			Rural			Urban + Rural		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2002/2003	52.36	47.64	100.00	61.39	38.61	100.00	57.85	42.15	100.00
2003/2004	52.13	47.87	100.00	59.52	40.48	100.00	56.78	43.22	100.00
2004/2005	51.93	48.07	100.00	58.63	41.37	100.00	56.29	43.71	100.00
2005/2006	51.63	48.37	100.00	57.87	42.13	100.00	55.79	44.21	100.00

¹ Eighth PDDEB implementation report, MEBA, Burkina Faso, October 2006.