Senegal: Education Pilot in Support of Female Literacy

The aim of the Senegal Pilot Female Literacy Project was to raise the literacy rates of populations in Dakar and the more developed areas and, most importantly, to remote areas that cannot be reached via traditional mass literacy campaigns. The pilot, begun in 1995 and concluded in 2000, was designed to support the Senegalese government in strengthening efforts through partnership with other groups to raise national literacy rates, particularly for women, beyond the currently stagnant pre-pilot levels of approximately 40 percent. This was to offset the failure of traditional mass literacy campaigns instituted since the 1960s—programs which were only in the French language, not well-adapted to the local situation, and characterized by a lack of post-literacy reading materials.

The broad development objectives of the pilot were to (a) improve education sector goals by providing literacy to both urban and rural populations, (b) raise literacy rates beyond current levels, especially for women, (c) to empower local women with the capacity to improve their standard of living through providing them with relevant skills through education and (d) strengthen the enabling environment for primary school education.

The World Bank’s engagement

The Government of Senegal sought the support of the Bank and initiated a tripartite agreement between the Bank, the Ministry of Education in Senegal, and the AGETIP agency responsible for outsourcing and contract management, including the set-up of financial contracts with providers and for monitoring financial flows and audits; and additionally, the National Committee of Literacy Operators in Senegal (CNOAS) Provider’s Union.

The main sponsors included the government in partnership with civil society, government and public institutions including CIDA, IDA and Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ); this partnership model has been widely used since 1995. The Bank has provided the Senegalese government with financial, technical and capacity building support through its efforts to develop a program which includes a strong emphasis on national ownership, increased accountability and improved efficiency in the provision of education.

Impact on the ground

- Access to education. Literacy programs are now available to both populations in Dakar and the more developed areas, and to remote and difficult areas that cannot be reached through traditional mass-literacy campaigns. Access levels to financial resources for education are also greater through the coordination efforts of AGETIP.
• **Empower local populations.** Basic education in local languages has been provided along with a focus on practical development issues that address the problem of illiteracy at its source. This approach has provided participants with the tools to tackle community issues such as health, hygiene and the environment by relating literacy to community and personal life. The result has been to empower local women with the capacity to improve their standard of living, and to foster increased confidence in their way of life.

• **Improved financial monitoring.** A system of monitoring has been set up which includes checks and balances on the use of resources. This process works to ensure that funds are spent efficiently by AGETIP.

• **Strategic partnerships.** The strategic use of partnerships has fostered an improved system of decentralized decision-making which includes the devolving of financing authority to local governments. The pilot has been built on partnerships between civil society (the learners and private providers), public institutions such as the government (Ministry, Project Coordination Unit and decentralized administrations, DAEB (Government Agency for Literacy and Basic Education), and auxiliary agencies such as the AGETIP and CNOAS Provider’s Union. The partnership strategy has resulted in a general increase in the autonomy and self-sufficiency of literacy program participants.

• **Quality protection.** There are various quality control mechanisms that are carried out through a multi-pronged approach. The providers model project content on the specific needs identified within the villages. A project proposal is then submitted to the local authorities to verify its accuracy. The local literacy committee sends the proposal to the selection committee, which chooses projects for financing. These projects are endorsed by the Ministry and then sent to the Contract Managing Agency. Other quality controls include the testing of participants by the Inspectorate, and regular checks on what is going on at the literacy centers with regard to attendance rates, by a village-level management committee.

**Lessons learned**

• **Strengthen project accountability by creating effective systems of monitoring and evaluation.** The nature of the contract and the accountabilities of key actors should be made explicit by setting up a system of interactive monitoring, rather than policing for results. This will be achieved when the compensation to contractors is results-based.

• **Identify a strong cadre of project leaders.** There is a need for champion leaders; dedicated individuals who will be counted on to stick with a program, embrace the challenge of shaping it, and negotiate both its start and ongoing management.

• **Facilitate community ownership and capacity.** The project should be organized in such a way that each element is characterized by local ownership and involvement, so that the population itself is able to take charge. This can be achieved by facilitating continuity through the participation of local government.

• **Adapt program elements to the local needs.** Each provider should adapt the curriculum to local needs and to the local languages. This program was adapted successfully to local needs by providing literacy in the mother tongue of the population.

• **Provide a flexible approach to program content.** Program content should be continually adjusted according to the feedback provided by project beneficiaries. It should respond to what the local population needs.

• **Seek official support to build trust with the local communities.** Trust will be fostered by incorporating representatives from civil society in the selection process, by explicitly assuring that there is a fair system of third party funds management, and monitoring the process to assure its integrity.

*This article was written by Sharon Watkins, Consultant with the AFTKL division, and has been sourced from the Debriefing titled ‘Senegal Female Literacy Pilot Project’. The Debriefing site can be accessed by Bank staff at http://afr/debriefing. Readers who would like CDs of the debriefing should email swatkins@worldbank.org.*