



Study on Governance Challenges for Education in Fragile Situations

Democratic Republic
of Congo Country
Report



Foreword and Acknowledgements

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It is hoped that this analysis will be a useful contribution to the development of education in DRC in the coming years. It is also hoped that the analysis accurately reflects the views and analysis of those consulted and relevant documentation. The lead author of this report is Ms Erika Boak with inputs from Dr Harvey Smith, designated consultants for the DRC case study. The Study and consultancy team has been managed by Euro-Trends.

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term/Acronym	English/French
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
ANAPECO	<i>Association Nationale des Parents d'Elèves et Etudiants du Congo</i> (Congo's National Parent and Student Association)
CISE	<i>Commission Indépendante Stratégie d'Education</i> (Independent Education Strategy Commission)
CNDP	<i>Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple</i> (National Congress for the Defence of the People)
COPA	<i>Comités des Parents</i> (Parent Associations)
CTB	<i>Cooperation Technique Belge</i> (Belgian Technical Cooperation)
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DSCR	<i>Document de la Stratégie de Croissance et de Réduction de la Pauvreté</i> (Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper)
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> (Armed Forces of DRC)
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MEPSP	<i>Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel</i> (Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education)
MONUC	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo</i> (UN Mission in DRC)
PAP	<i>Programme d'Actions Prioritaires</i> (Priority Action Programme)
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PROVED	<i>Chef de Division Provinciale</i> (Head of Provincial Office)
PURUS	<i>Projet d'Urgence de Réhabilitation Urbaine et Sociale</i> (Emergency Urban and Social Rehabilitation Project)
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> (Congolese Rally for Democracy)
SECOPE	<i>Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants</i> (Central Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring)
SECOPEP	<i>Service de Contrôle et de la Paie des Enseignants Provincial</i> (Provincial Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring)
SMC	School Management Committee
SYECO	<i>Syndicat des Enseignants Congolais</i> (Union of Congolese Teachers)
TENAFEP	<i>Test National de Fin d'Etudes Primaires</i> (National End of Primary School Test)
UCOP	<i>Unité de Coordination des Programmes</i> (Programme Coordination Unit)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics



1. Historical Perspectives: Sector Performance and Resilience

1.1 Analysis of Long-Term Sector Performance and Resilience

Country context. The Democratic Republic of Congo (called DRC or DR Congo) is the third largest country by area in Africa (2.4 million km²), with an estimated population of around 66 million and comparatively low population density of only 28 people per km², creating intrinsic difficulties for education service delivery. Historically, DRC has suffered extensive political instability and civil war since independence, although a transitional government was elected and a constitution approved by voters in 2006. Conflict has continued over 2006/2009, with continued security/political fragility, contributing to a death rate of around 0.5 million per year since 2004, due to disease or famine. The reach of the conflict is very high, with an estimated three-quarters of the population, reporting themselves as conflict-affected.¹ Much of the conflict has been concentrated around the eastern borders with Rwanda and Uganda.

In theory, DRC operates under a degree of decentralisation to the 11 current provinces. The exact nature and details of the planned decentralisation reform are still being discussed. For such a large population, there are only 9 cities with a population of more than half a million, ranging from Boma (0.6 million) to Kinshasa (7.5 million). The DRC operates as a Presidential democratic republic with a bicameral legislature and a government led by a Prime Minister. The government, not the President, is responsible to Parliament. There is a prospect of provincial governments, with creation of provincial parliaments, overseen by an elected provincial governor.

DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world with a GDP per capita of around US\$ 173 (2009) and an HDI ranking of 176 (2009). DRC has enormous mineral and other natural resource wealth under utilised during years of conflict. Malnutrition affects about two-thirds of the population. DRC is religiously diverse with Roman Catholics (50%), Protestant (20%) and others (30%), with church-based organisations being the predominant providers of education. French is the official language of the country for formal communication, with 4 other languages having national status.

Education is organised and governed as primary, secondary and tertiary education through three ministries namely the Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel (MEPSP), Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et Universitaire and Ministère des Affaires Sociales, but only MEPSP has provincial reach. More than 70% of schools are managed by churches, 20% by the state

¹ International Committee of Red Cross, 2009. Report on Conflict Affected Population.

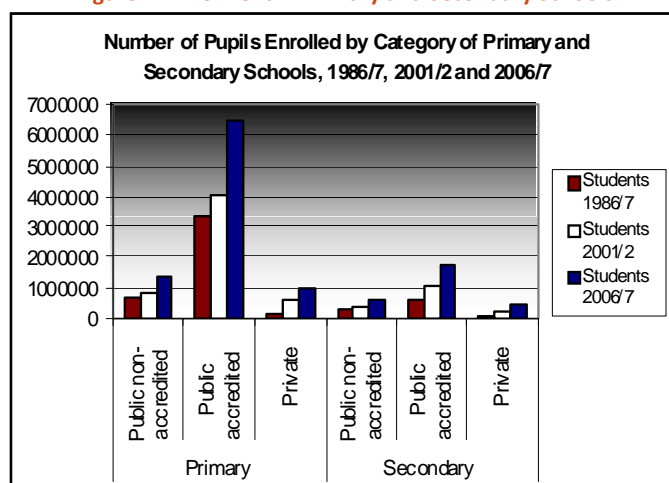
directly and the rest are private schools. In theory, the state provides salaries and operational costs to all schools under the 1977 Convention and Framework Law 1986 for education.²

Education sector context and performance. Interestingly, DRC was hailed as a regional success story in the early 1980s due to its unusually high enrolment rates, which have not been recovered since. Escalating violence affected primary education disproportionately during the second half of the 1990s: in 2001/02 the primary Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) had not recovered to the levels of 1995/96. There was a dramatic decline in primary enrolment in 1998/99 and 1999/2000, the first two years of war³. Faith-based missions remain the most important education service providers in both primary and secondary cycles over the course of the two decades, with the greatest capacity to enrol pupils.

When discussing fragility in DRC it is important to note that, despite the fact that the situation in the East has been most publicised and benefits from much international aid, various provinces throughout the country have been affected by insecurity, not least the border areas with Angola and the Central African Republic (six provinces), including the area where the Lord's Resistance Army is currently creating disruption⁴. However, the present study is limited to the situation in the East as well as the centralised aspects of the education system, and focuses on fragility in education sector governance as a result of the previous and continuing conflict.

There has been an increase in enrolment in all types of schools in both primary and secondary levels between 1986 and 2007 (see graph⁵), well beyond the population growth of approximately 3.1% per year. The growth in nearly all types of schools⁶ was more marked between 2001/02 and 2006/07 than between 1986/87 and 2001/02 despite the shorter time frame, partly owing to the reduction of fragility in the country following the formal end of the chronic crisis in 2003. In primary schools there was an average increase of 38% in

Figure 1: Enrolment in Primary and Secondary Schools



² World Bank, 2008. DRC Public Expenditure Review

³ World Bank. 2005. *Le Système Éducatif de la République Démocratique du Congo : Priorités et Alternatives*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank

⁴ Of the 11 provinces in DRC, 8 are directly affected by violent conflict: Bas-Congo, Equateur, Province Orientale, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Kasai-Oriental and Katanga, of which the Kivus and part of Province Orientale are the most unstable.

⁵ The data for the graphs have been taken from various sources: 1986/1987 and 2001/2002 data from the 2004 World Bank Country Status Report which draws on the 2001 UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey as well as the Statistical Directory and the SECOPE database. The 2006/2007 data are taken from the Primary, Secondary and Technical Education Statistical Directory, 2006/2007 Academic Year. The data need therefore to be treated with caution given the differing methodologies used for data collection.

⁶ Public 'non-accredited' schools (*écoles non-conventionnées*), also known as official schools, are directly managed by the state; public accredited schools (*écoles conventionnées*) are faith-based schools accredited by the Ministry; there are no non-accredited faith-based schools.

enrolments across school types during that time, but in the same period there was an increase of 74% and 88% in enrolments in private primary and private secondary schools respectively.

It is difficult to explain the reasons for such a dramatic increase in enrolments in private schools, particularly given the economic difficulties suffered by Congolese people during that time. Where private schools are providing better quality education at a cost which parents feel is worth the increase (beyond the fees paid in public schools) that may explain some of the increase. It is also testament to the fact that a particular sector of society had increased resources allowing them to afford private education.

There has been a similar increase in the supply of teachers between 2001/02 and 2006/07 and the increase in teachers has also been most marked in private schools (36% and 47% for primary and secondary schools respectively). This increase can partly be attributed to the fact that many teachers in public schools also teach in private schools in order to top up their meagre incomes. It is estimated that there are currently between 350,000 and 450,000 teachers although no accurate up-to-date data are available. It is thought that up to 60% of the teaching force may be due for retirement, while up to 140,000 teachers are not on the government payroll⁷.

There does appear to be a significant correlation between political, security and economic/administrative governance features and education sector performance. Primary school enrolment rates are lowest in the more eastern and southern conflict-affected regions, where gross attendance rates are between 60-80% compared to 100-110% in more central provinces; net enrolment rates are roughly half these figures. The same picture applies for secondary education, perhaps more so with enrolment rates being only one-fifth to one-sixth of primary education figures.⁸

For the purposes of this study, the particular situation of education in the East will be examined, however it will also include an analysis of the national governance challenges, particularly since all of the developments concerning sector planning and governance improvements are taking place in Kinshasa.

1.2 Analysis of Factors Affecting Sector Resilience and Fragility

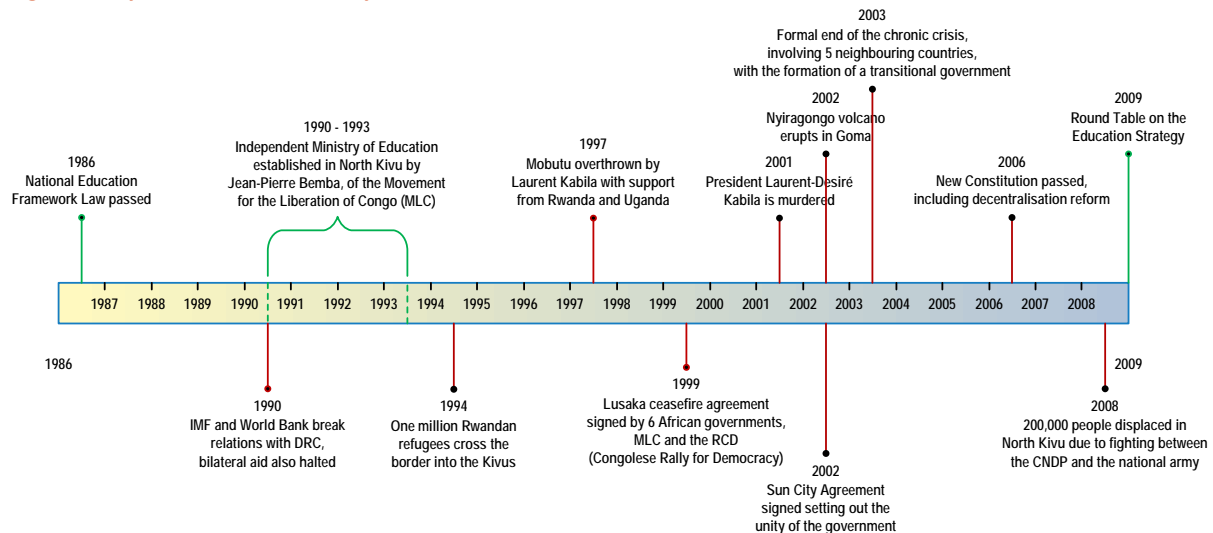
Given the size of DRC, sector performance can be compared across fragile and more stable provinces. The whole country is awaiting the peace dividend as real development is arrested throughout the country due to localised fragility and widespread poor governance. There was unanimous agreement amongst all informants interviewed on the negative national ramifications of the ongoing conflict in the East. In spite of high expectations regarding an improvement in conditions during the transitional (2002-2006) and post-election (2006 onwards) periods, steps in addressing and reversing negative social trends have been sluggish, in part because of the near total collapse of state services and ongoing outbreaks of conflict, particularly in the East.

⁷ These teachers are *non-mécansisés*. This estimate presupposes that all teachers in accredited schools are paid by the government which is not necessarily the case.

⁸ Education Policy and Data Centre, 2009. DRC Education National Profile

The past two decades have been characterised by the gradual and now almost total removal of the state from the financing of the education sector. Prior to the war, the East was better developed than the West of the country and North Kivu was in fact known for its good quality education, but it has never been able to regain its pre-war levels. Indeed the trend has been one of overall deterioration with only pockets of good practice in relation to increasing the supply of education and localised quality improvements due to targeted international or local support.

Figure 2: Key Events in DRC's History



In North Kivu alone it is thought that there are between 800,000 and 1 million internally displaced people (IDPs). In 1991 and 1993, soldiers looted buildings including schools, badly damaging infrastructure and furniture, and in the East, schools continue to be used by IDPs as shelters and school furniture as firewood. The dilapidation of road infrastructure has resulted in the increased isolation and subsequent abandoning of schools in rural areas. Livelihoods have been badly affected by the conflict and as a result population groups are forced to move to different areas in search of food, further affecting children's participation in school. Host and emergency schools do not have the capacity to enrol all categories of children: host populations, long term IDPs and recently displaced populations. This leads to extreme overcrowding in classrooms and many out-of-school children.

Children in the East remain vulnerable and many are orphans or homeless. The phenomenon of child soldiers is very much a reality: thousands of children have been recruited into the armed forces. The use of rape as a form of psychological and physical torture inflicted on girls and women has been well documented. There is an additional devastating impact on girls' education as they may fall pregnant and are disowned by their families. When children and families flee the fighting they often lose their report cards (*bulletins*) which are required in order to enrol in the following school year. Despite this, education is perceived as the route out of poverty and therefore demand remains high.

Owing to the decades of instability which the Congolese people have suffered they have developed very strong coping and adaptation mechanisms. Certain groups are repeatedly displaced from dangerous areas; however they find ways of settling into new areas comparatively rapidly. This

adaptability and resilience is also seen in the local supply of and demand for education. The strong role played by the Catholic and Protestant churches also undoubtedly contributed to building the system's resilience to shocks including the collapse of state infrastructure at the central level and the increasingly minimal role and mandate of the national state as provider of basic services.

Overview of main fragility factors:

- Inadequate education coverage in the East, compounded by ethnicity issues and people's access to land and resources feeds a vicious fragility cycle.
- DRC's large and unwieldy civil service in the education sector together with its complex and highly bureaucratic decentralisation structure serve to reduce the Ministry's service delivery capacity, while paradoxically approximately a third of all teachers in public schools are not on the payroll.
- The total government budget itself is many times smaller than what it should be, of this a high proportion is spent on security which impacts negatively on the education budget, placing the financing burden on parents' shoulders; high dependence on private financing creates harmful incentives resulting in maintenance of high levels of exclusion and marginalisation.
- Ongoing violence in the East and border areas casts a shadow over national stabilisation and development; The UN Mission in DRC (MONUC) lacks capacity to stabilise the East, compounded by an unruly and poorly paid national army.

Overview of main resilience factors:

- The existence of committed School Management Committees (SMCs, known as *comités de gestion*) and Parent Associations (COPAs) has proved key to maintaining education provision throughout the country's various phases of fragility, while households' willingness to pay for education has served to maintain not only schools but also the administration and management of parts of the education system.
- The adaptability and tenacity of displaced populations in providing community-based schools has maintained provision in the absence of the capacity or desire of MEPSP to do so.
- The maintenance of the state apparatus and systems together with the Ministry's commitment to continuing assessment of children's learning have contributed to promoting the resilience and efficiency of the system.

2. Education Sector Fragility Assessment: Status and Outlook

2.1 Key Features of Sector Resilience and Fragility

The key features in improving security and political governance for education include i) the stabilisation of the political environment that is slowly allowing government to operate in more areas of the country; ii) the strong political commitment to education, as evidenced by statements by the President and Prime Minister in Parliament; iii) the importance accorded to education in the PRSP; and iv) greater attention being accorded to implementing more decentralised education service management in the provinces, especially through MEPSP.

Box 1: Ecole Primaire Uamushu

Ecole Primaire Uamushu was established outside Goma in North Kivu in 2003 by displaced people following the eruption of Nyiragongo. It is an accredited Adventist school and the land was provided by the church. Community members provided materials for the school and since its establishment it has received support from various NGOs. Even though the school is in an illegal IDP camp it is called a 'resident school'. It has an emergency wing which hosts hundreds of children who fled the conflict towards the end of 2008. The emergency wing is now much bigger than the resident school. It was planned that community members, children and teachers would move on from the emergency wing to another camp following the TENAFEP. The establishment of Uamushu Primary School reveals the tenacity and initiative of Congolese people to provide and mobilise support for education where no formal schools exist.

Key features of economic/administrative governance that should enable, at least in the medium to long term education sector resilience, include i) promising overall economic growth, allowing the potential for increased public expenditure on education (still low at 6% in 2002 and 9% in 2005); ii) efforts to streamline teacher payment processes through increasingly ICT based systems; iii) efforts to strengthen the capacity of SECOPE, a public entity responsible for managing teachers; and iv) introduction of a more inclusive and participatory annual budget preparation process, including use of budgetary ceilings and envelopes, including for education provision. Nevertheless, many of these initiatives are still in the early stages of design/implementation.⁹ Notwithstanding, the continued disparities in access to education opportunities are predominantly poverty-related.

Overall, the key features of sector resilience and fragility present a mixed picture as illustrated by the following: i) many *schools and learning spaces* are still targeted by armed groups in the East and are therefore unsafe; ii) in relation to *teachers*, the governance of the teacher payroll is one of the foremost concerns of parents, teacher unions and donors and has a detrimental effect on the quality of the whole education system; iii) owing to the inadequate government salaries, teachers are forced to find additional work, in urban areas they often teach in several schools and provide private

⁹ World Bank, 2008. Public Expenditure Review, summarises the status of many of these initiatives.

lessons to supplement their income with negative effects on the quality of public education; iv.) current education plans are insufficiently conflict-sensitive or adapted to the particular needs of the East or indeed the fragility of the whole country. In summary, *access* to primary and secondary education remains limited owing to limited government financing of education and the widespread practice of charging obligatory school fees.

Box 2: Payment of Teachers

Given the dearth of banks in the provinces, the transfer of teacher salaries involves huge risks. Numerous channels revolving around the following key stakeholders are used, SECOPEP, MEPSP, banks, the Ministry of Finance, school networks and the Pay Commission, often resulting in significant delays. SECOPE sends details of the teacher payroll to SECOPEP by plane. Funds are transferred from the central bank to regional branches. The Central Bank makes a formal transfer order instructing local banks to make the payment with details of amounts and the names of recipients. SECOPEP is contacted and the list is checked by the PROVED, SECOPEP and the Credit Manager. The latter issues a payment order payable to

The development of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees presents an important long term opportunity to increase access, particularly for poor children although is unlikely to capture the very hard to reach children. Another, often overlooked factor, is the role of the DRC diaspora, who it is estimated send several hundred million US dollars home each year, much of which is used by households for payment of school fees.¹⁰ Owing to the plethora of major challenges with Congo's education system, *learning content* is not a strong focus of national or donor support despite the fact that content is not deemed to be sufficiently relevant.

The strong demand for education amongst Congolese people continued throughout the many crises the country has faced. Given the important revenue streams which schools provide there is a strong incentive amongst state and non-state actors to continue establishing and managing schools even during unstable times. The survival of the education system during and following the Mobutu regime is almost entirely due to community financing, not only of schools, but also of the administration of the system. Indeed parents are currently financing school running costs, the administration of school networks, the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of offices, the training of teachers and Inspectors, the organisation of exams and more¹¹. One informant aptly named schools 'cash cows'. The SMCs are in some cases highly motivated and have played a crucial fundraising and community mobilisation role in this regard.

In fact a mere 35% of the fees collected are spent at the school level, the rest is sent upwards to top up the inadequate salaries of Ministry officials at provincial and even national levels¹². The continued community financing of the system and staffing of education through the country's phases of fragility is the core reason for its survival and growth to this day. It is also the reason for which the links between sub-national education authorities and schools are comparatively strong and that there is a level of oversight and control by MEPSP over schools.

¹⁰ IOM, 2008. Remittances in the Great Lakes Regions, indicates that officially the diaspora remittances are around US\$ 100 million per year, several times this figure through informal channels.

¹¹ UNICEF. 2008. *Restitution de l'Etude sur la Politique et la Pratique des Frais Scolaires en RDC*.

¹² World Bank; Government of DRC; DFID 2008. *DRC Public Expenditure Review*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

2.2 Overall Education Fragility Status Assessment

The government recognises itself as fragile owing to systemic governance challenges, the limited technical capacity of its education institutions, the absence of participatory democratic practices and a lack of financial resources. As a result it is unable to meet the basic needs of the Congolese population: “this important discrepancy between the state’s capacity and society’s basic needs presents one of the main sources nurturing instability and internal conflicts”¹³. Indeed it is estimated that the levying of school fees together with the gap between the supply of and demand for schools has resulted in the exclusion of 5 million children from school nationwide¹⁴; other estimates are nearer 7 million.

It is difficult to categorise DRC owing to the very different levels of development and fragility encountered in different parts of the country. Kinshasa and parts of the West of the country could come under the post-conflict reconstruction phase while the East and other provinces affected by conflict would fit into arrested development. Particular areas within the Kivus and Province Orientale¹⁵ would be classified under the deteriorating category due to sustained clashes and the complete lack of control over those areas by the Armed Forces (FARDC) or MONUC. The ill-disciplined nature and poor regulation of FARDC, and its poor reputation amongst Congolese people owing to human rights abuses and imprudent alliances made with different armed groups at different times, further reduce its capacity to establish and maintain peace in the East.

“DRC... will need around half a century of peace at its present rate of growth simply to get back to the income level it had in 1960. Its chances of getting 50 continuous years of peace with its low income, slow growth, dependence upon primary commodities, and history of conflict are, unfortunately, not high. This country is likely to be stuck in a conflict trap no matter how many times it rebrands itself...”¹⁶. This analysis however is very much linked to the positive association between economic growth and fragility reduction. Indeed, DRC can most easily be categorised in the post-conflict reconstruction phase despite the comparatively fragile political stability in Kinshasa as well as the existence of pockets of arrested development and even deteriorating stability in the East. This is due to the cessation of hostilities on a national scale in 2003 and the holding of the first national democratic elections since independence in 2006.

2.3 Sector Fragility and Resilience: Outlook, Opportunities and Risks

DRC’s route towards improved resilience and stabilisation differs between different education sector variables. Using the categories of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Progressive Framework, the following are the key opportunities and challenges in relation to stabilisation and fragility reduction:

- In relation to security, schools in parts of the East continue to be pillaged and burned or used as recruitment or training centres by the armed forces. Nevertheless formal IDP camps managed

¹³ MEPS. 2009. *Plan Stratégique de Développement du Sous-secteur de l’Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel* Page 8 (author’s translation).

¹⁴ World Bank; Government of DRC; DFID. 2008. *DRC Public Expenditure Review*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank

¹⁵ Areas such as Rutshuru, Masisi, Walikale, Kibati, Aba and Beni

¹⁶ Collier, P. 2008. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can be Done About It*. New York: Oxford University Press (p34)

by UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council have strict rules regarding security and access to the camps and schools.

- In relation to governance, there are measures for institutional strengthening through the World Bank-funded unit within the Cabinet of the Minister. Responsibilities and functions will be substantially re-organised within the Ministry under the proposed decentralisation reform.
- In relation to social issues, there is increasing stakeholder participation in education policy development and strategic round tables through the National Parent and Student Association (ANAPESCO) and the Union of Congolese Teachers (SYECO), as well as measures to promote access and community involvement, particularly in IDP camps and host schools.
- In relation to economic issues, the education system is very poorly aligned with the needs of the economy. This is a grave source of ongoing and future fragility. In addition, the high proportion of IDPs and the likelihood that further displacement is imminent, undermine potential links between education and employment in the East.

The fact that a Ministry of Education was established and staffed in the East during the chronic crisis meant that education formally continued. Indeed some of the current senior provincial staff have worked through various political regimes, staying in the same position throughout. This has provided an important level of continuity and has anchored systems, regulations and rules.

Although up until 2003, the Eastern provinces were not under the control of the central government, the state exam, taken at the end of secondary school was held in all parts of the country and served to reunify and stabilise the system, ensuring that children's learning was assessed at the secondary level. This demonstrates the importance and feasibility of seeking to maintain the assessment of student learning according to the formal curriculum even during times of extreme insecurity, such as the arrested development phase with large numbers of IDPs.

During the field visit to Goma it was clear that the main concern of provincial education authorities and school directors¹⁷ was that as many children as possible should sit the National End of Primary Examination (TENAFEP). There was clear collaboration between the Head of the Provincial Office (PROVED) and international NGOs regarding the substantial logistical arrangements to be made. The commitment amongst senior national and provincial education officials, as well as school directors and teachers, to maintaining at least the skeleton of the assessment system has proved key in the resilience of the overall education system and ensuring that children are being promoted through the system. This also serves to increase children's motivation to persevere with their education.

¹⁷ School Directors are known as *Chefs D'Etablissement*. All schools have a Director and he or she does not have any teaching responsibilities. The Directors come under the category of local managers (*gestionnaires*)

The difficulty faced by IDPs in developing a livelihood (since they are not legally able to own land) makes it even harder for them to pay the multiple school fees levied. This obviously means that households with six children or more have to make difficult decisions regarding which children to send to school, thus reducing the actual demand for education. That being said, it is clear that there is an inadequate supply of schools in the East in relation to the demand.

Box 4: Alpha Ujuvi

The Alpha Ujuvi Collective, a local education and protection foundation, was founded in 2002. Initially it provided technical support to the existing government-run catch-up classes (*cours de rattrapage*) for children whose education had been disrupted by the conflict. Later on, Alpha Ujuvi developed a formal curriculum for an ALP in collaboration with the Provincial Inspectors and UNICEF, targeting children who have never been to school. The Programme is designed so that children can sit the TENAFEP at the end. Alpha Ujuvi also supports Literacy Centres in the Kivus which particularly target the many illiterate adults in the provinces. Such grassroots initiatives have contributed to building the resilience of the education system where the Ministry has lacked resources as well as capacity to intervene in the conflict-affected East.

The formerly high level of education in North Kivu has also meant that there is substantial local capacity. This capacity has translated into the existence of well-managed national NGOs with strong technical capacity. Such NGOs have been funded by international NGOs as well as UN agencies to provide targeted technical support to schools and address the needs of the many children whose education has been disrupted by the conflict through Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs), as well as focusing interventions on out-of-school-children. Such grassroots initiatives have contributed to providing a level of stability particularly where MEPSD has had limited capacity, resources or will to intervene.

Box 3 : Changing the calendar

Between August 2008 and January 2009 violent clashes between FARDC and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) resulted in thousands of displaced people. Schools in affected areas in North Kivu were closed for 2 months. The Deputy Head of the Provincial Office (*Sous-Préfet*) developed a special calendar to catch up the days lost in December 2008 and January 2009 and school hours were extended. This shows that despite the highly centralised nature of Congo's education system, there is still a degree of discretion at provincial level in order to promote the resilience of education service delivery and its adaptability to changing circumstances.



3. Education Sector Governance Assessment: Status and Outlook

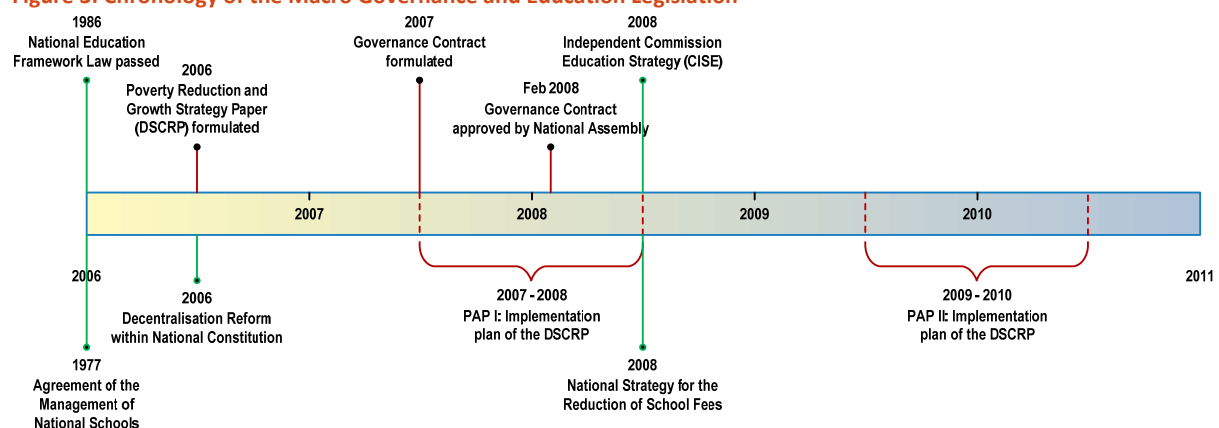
3.1 Summary of Overall Macro and Sectoral Governance Environment

Prior to 1988, DRC was a highly centralised country. Following the disbanding of secessionist movements, the country re-centralised with very little discretion vested in sub-national levels. There is provision for decentralisation reform within the 2006 Constitution and plans for its implementation are being developed in a participatory way through national level consultations. There is a lot of ambiguity and speculation surrounding the reform, however with the delegation of substantial discretion to the provinces (whereby the 11 provinces will be divided to create a total of 26 provinces), it is envisaged that there will be considerable rationalisation of MEPSP's central administration and that staff will move out to work in the provinces. If planned and managed well, the reform is undoubtedly an opportunity for improving the governance, relevance and quality of education, particularly in the conflict-affected East. Nevertheless given the roots of de-facto decentralisation in the conflict, due regard must be paid to the potential destabilising effect of the reform and mitigating mechanisms planned.

The central level will be responsible for setting and enforcing norms and standards while provinces will be responsible for all operational matters pertaining to service delivery. The Constitution also allows for substantial resources to be delegated to provincial and district levels. It is not yet clear whether the reporting structures will also be reviewed so that provincial education staff are ultimately accountable to the Provincial Minister of Education rather than to departmental staff in Kinshasa.

As shown in *fig.3* below, extensive efforts on macro and education governance initiatives have been undertaken recently.

Figure 3: Chronology of the Macro Governance and Education Legislation



Much of the recent effort over 2006/2008 has been to begin to implement earlier legislative reform. For example in 1977, there was an Agreement of the Management of National Schools, developed under Mobutu, although no new education legislation has been passed and no comprehensive reform of education sector since. Similarly in 1986, a General Law for education was developed by the Mobutu regime.

The urgent need to update the education legislative framework is recognised by MEPSP and development partners alike. A lot of effort and collective planning are currently being focused by MEPSP at central and provincial levels and by development partners on the implementation of the decentralisation reforms. The eventual implementation of this reform will have substantial impact on national and provincial authorities' incentive and capacity to provide education. As shown in the table below, recent efforts and events offer some promise for sector governance if political and economic environments remain conducive.

Year	Event
2006	<i>Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper (DSCR)</i> . Developed under the transition government, focuses on the establishment of macroeconomic stability rather than achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The 3rd pillar is improving access to social services and rebuilding key sectors, including education.
2006	<i>National Constitution</i> . Includes provision for decentralisation reform and delegation of service delivery authority to the provinces.
2007	<i>Governance Contract</i> . Approved in 2008, sets out the government's commitment to good governance and a public dissociation from poor historic governance practices. The Contract emphasises 4 areas: decentralisation, public financial management, public administration and transparency.
2007	<i>Priority Action Programmes (PAP I 2007-08, PAP II 2009-10)</i> . PAP I and PAP II are the implementation plans of the DSCR and seek to align sectoral programmes with the DSCR, improving coherence. However, activities in PAP I were not costed or prioritised and there was no real improvement in PAP II.
2008	<i>Independent Education Strategy Commission (CISE)</i> . To conduct groundwork for developing an education strategy to establish free compulsory primary education and improve education quality ¹⁸ . Helped to harness consensus on the priority steps although actual outcomes less robust.
2008	<i>National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees</i> . Builds on research conducted by USAID/UNICEF, setting out concrete priority short- and medium-term interventions. Key agencies such as DFID, the World Bank, UNICEF and the Belgian Technical Cooperation (CTB) have aligned behind the document.
2009	<i>Sub-Sector Strategic Development Plan of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education</i> . At the time of writing, the plan was essentially a description of education in DRC followed by strategic objectives. Insufficiently adapted to the fragility of the country or of the education sector. The National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees and the plans for decentralisations are inadequately embedded in the Plan.

In terms of education financing, the picture is mixed. The total proportion of the national budget allocated to education was 6% in 2006, 7.7% in 2007 and 8.4% in 2008 but is predicted to drop to 7.1% in 2009¹⁹. Despite bold statement made regarding education being a national priority in the PRSP and the Governance Contract, the actual public resources made available to the education sector do not testify to these pledges. The government pays Ministry and teacher salaries (for those on the payroll) and a small proportion of operating costs²⁰. The absence of any education sector or sub-sector plan means that Ministerial planning processes are based on the previous year's expenditure rather than according to long-term strategic and phased priorities. Planning is also

¹⁸ Ministère de l'EPSP. 2008. *Termes de Reference de la Commission Indépendante chargée de l'Elaboration de la Stratégie de l'Education*

¹⁹ Ministère de l'EPSP. 2009. *Tableau Comparatif des Budgets Alloués à l'EPSP, 2007, 2008 et 2009*

²⁰ PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. 2009. *DFID Fiduciary Risk Assessment for the DFID Education Programme in DRC, Final Report*

highly centralised although it is possible that this will change following the implementation of the decentralisation reform.

The heavily bureaucratic and complex nature of DRC's civil service actually serves to reduce the Ministry's service delivery capacity since a large proportion of education financing, from community members as well as the government, is absorbed by recurrent salary costs for Ministry officials (without even addressing teacher salary costs). There are no data on the total number of personnel working in the Ministry and on the payroll.

Nevertheless salaries are very low resulting in regular demonstrations by civil servants and long absences from work due to the need to find additional work, thus reducing the quality and time spent working for the state. The sub-provincial managers, responsible for monitoring schools, are often poorly paid and this presents an ever-present systemic fiduciary risk related to the correct collection and management of school fees. The lack of clarity characterising the governance of the payroll of teachers and Ministry officials has a detrimental impact on public service delivery due to the reduced funds available at the school level to cover running and development costs.

Owing to the fact that the Ministry has records of nearly all schools, monitoring is feasible. Nevertheless provincial inspectors cannot access schools in violent areas; as a result such schools are entirely dependent upon the effectiveness and commitment of SMCs and COPAs for their management and monitoring. The Ministry requires technical support and substantial funding to collect and analyse education data. The heavy reliance on donor funds means that data are not systematically collected every year. This has a negative effect on the ability to plan, monitor and finance service provision. Further, the fact that there is no rigorous school mapping process means it is difficult to obtain hard data regarding areas of low and high education coverage.

3.2 Analysis of Stakeholder Participation and Interests

Seventy percent of all schools in DRC are faith-based, mainly Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist and Islamic. The relationship between the state and Denominational Associations is a complex one, with historical roots in colonial times. An agreement was signed between denominational associations and the state in 1977; however there are many gaps and it lacks a clear delineation of accountabilities on the part of the different bodies, in particular in relation to the collection of school fees, financial governance and teacher management. All non-private schools belong to the state; however faith-based organisations have substantial discretion in the management and organisation of schools within the context of Ministry guidelines in relation to curricula, class size, teacher qualifications and remuneration as well as the evaluation system²¹. The state should provide a subsidy of US\$ 1 per child in public primary schools and US\$ 1.50 per child in public secondary schools. Good governance in the management of the various Denominational Associations by the state is rendered all the more challenging since they are an extremely heterogeneous group.

²¹ World Bank; Government of DRC; DFID. 2008. *DRC Public Expenditure Review*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank

Box 5: Summary of Illustrative Stakeholders' Roles, Resources and Linkages

MEPSP. Has the core responsibility for education sector policy and strategy development as well as the authority and potential power to reform the current system of private financing. Benefits from technical and financial support from donors. Linked to donors through the Education Thematic Group and to development partners through the Cooperation Committee.

School Directors. As directors of SMCs and purse holders they play a key role in any improvements in school governance and reforms to collection and management of school fees. Hold a privileged position over schools and have a key relationship with sub-provincial Ministry staff. Linked to parents and teachers through SMCs.

COPAs. Provide important checks and balances on the power of SMCs and School Directors, however they lack financial resources. Part of education coalitions. Theoretically linked to the national level ANAPECO however, its representation of grassroots issues is limited. There is still a long way to go before School Directors will open themselves to the scrutiny of COPAs.

DFID. One of the largest bilateral donors in DRC and committed to supporting systemic improvements in the education sector; poor governance and high fiduciary risk prevent it from using national public financial management systems for bilateral aid. Close formal links with the World Bank and collaboration with CTB.

3.3 Education Sector Governance Outlook, Opportunities and Risks

The National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees together with the impending decentralisation reform present the two most constructive opportunities to improving governance in the education sector while benefiting from substantial technical and financial support from a range of development partners.

Associated governance challenges in relation to these initiatives include i) the dearth of strong sector-wide or sub-sectoral plans which are tailored to the fragile environment and current education legislation; ii) the inefficient and inappropriate distribution of skills and functions throughout the education value chain (with poor fit between the background of Ministry staff and their job descriptions); iii) the inadequate administrative and managerial capacity of the Head of the Provincial Office (PROVED) and related provincial education structures; iv) the non-compliance with procedures and rules in the recruitment and promotion of Ministry staff, who represent the majority of education costs²²; v) inadequate regulation of the collection and management of school fees, limited enforcement of Provincial Decrees, and the weak voice of COPAs in holding School Directors to account; vi) the weak capacity of the government and faith-based providers to reach marginalised groups, particularly in the East; and vii) a poorly functioning performance monitoring system.

There is growing consensus amongst key stakeholders, including government and donors that the most urgent comprehensive reform needed in the education sector is related to the financing of primary education. Neither national revenue streams nor donor funding are sufficient to meet the demand for education and, as the World Bank points out, “the limited resources available to the

²² Ministère de l'EPSP. 2009. *Séminaire sur l'Evolution Organisationnelle et le Renforcement des Capacités du Ministère de l'EPSP*

education sector are not allocated in line with the priorities set by government policy, nor are they fairly distributed among the country's different geographic areas and social strata"²³.

Furthermore donors are mindful of the fact that without adequate monitoring systems and checks and balances in place, the financial resources provided to the education sector will finance and indeed perpetuate the current predatory management of the education system. In light of this, the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees, developed by DPs and MEPSP, seeks to address the issue of school fees in an innovative way, learning from the lessons of countries which have declared fee-free primary education before having conducted evidence-based research, and without phased and costed implementation plans in order to guarantee the policy commitment.

Despite the difficulty donors face in aligning programmes and approaches (due to the lack of clear national education policies and plans), the shared vision of key donors has made it possible to support MEPSP in making important progress regarding The Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees. It is planned that certain fees will be abolished or paid by the government or donors: up to 50 percent of the *minerval* (school fee), considered unconstitutional, will be subsidised; school insurance will be paid by donors; TENAFEP costs should be covered by the state or international organisations. DFID, for example, is committed to subsidising the different fees levied, reportedly following an analysis of the government's long-term capacity to finance these costs itself. The payment of such fees by donors is extremely complex and bureaucratic, partly owing to the weak organisational capacity of MEPSP as well as donors' internal requirements. DFID is currently seeking to pay the school insurance fees directly to the National Insurance Society. In June 2009 the funds had still not been disbursed despite the fact that they were to subsidise fees for the 2008/2009 academic year. The school insurance fee is a small fee however it demonstrates that the process is possible and may give other donors confidence to finance the strategy.

Ensuring that the Strategy is fully aligned with the decentralisation reform will be essential to its sustainability and impact on access. Securing the requisite commitment to and ownership of the Strategy amongst the Denominational Associations, teacher unions and SMCs will also be essential. The learning from the World Bank's education Emergency Urban and Social Rehabilitation Project (PURUS), which disbursed funds to selected schools to cover operational costs with a strong component of community oversight, will also be instructive as discussions regarding the Strategy go forward.

Despite these promising signs, a number of sector governance risks need to be addressed, especially i) formulating and updating a legislative and regulatory and compliance framework for the implementation of the 1997 Convention and 1986 Framework Law, which underpin the church/state relationship in education; ii) introduction of regulatory and compliance arrangements that ensure teachers benefit from their specific remuneration, without cut-taking elsewhere; iii) greater timeliness of budget transfers, especially to schools, as an incentive for school development and teacher attendance, and iv) regularisation of teacher contracting arrangements, including improved SECOPE capacity.

²³ World Bank; Government of DRC; DFID. 2008. *DRC Public Expenditure Review*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank (page 72)



4. Main Findings: Scope and Diversity of Local and Donor Supported Initiatives

4.1 Summary of Findings: Local Initiatives

Education civil society organisations are better developed in DRC than local education organisations seeking to provide niche education interventions. ALPs targeting children affected by the conflict are a common focus. The development of an ALP by the Alpha Ujuvi Foundation illustrates strengths and weaknesses in relation to governance. There was strong participation, with the curriculum developed by Alpha Ujuvi staff as well as UNICEF personnel and provincial Inspectors; the programme was designed so that children sit the TENAFEP at the end of the ALP thus increasing transparency regarding the value of the ALP since it can result in formally recognised certification. Alpha Ujuvi is accountable to its donor, UNICEF, for working with partners to deliver this ALP in conflict-affected areas. However, there is no accountability to government therefore its contribution to broader state-building is limited.

Given the inadequate supply of schools to meet the demand for education and the ensuing negative impact on stabilisation there is a clear need for a good quality ALP which could be implemented by various education NGOs and indeed the Ministry itself. If Inspectors have been involved in the development of the curriculum this would facilitate subsequent ownership. But there is a risk that such an ALP would be perceived and categorised as non-formal education and therefore not prioritised by the Ministry since ALPs currently come under the remit of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Box 6: Challenges in Promoting Membership of Teacher Unions in the East

SYECO was founded in 1990. The teacher union which existed prior to SYECO was controlled by the state and as a result SYECO defends its independence strongly. In North Kivu there are between 4,000 and 5,000 members of SYECO. Teachers are however under pressure from school directors not to join owing to their opposing interests. Prominent members of SYECO, at provincial and national levels are monitored closely by the government and as a result members often choose to teach in private schools as they feel they are not perceived as such a threat and are less closely scrutinised by MEPSP.

It is also likely that Ministry officials would need to be persuaded regarding the need to provide tailored education courses for children whose education has been disrupted by the conflict due to displacement or because they have been caught up in the conflict. Until ALPs are seen by MEPSP as a sustainable and appropriate way of providing education for out-of-school children and youth, of equal importance to mainstream, formal education, these initiatives will remain marginalised, poorly resourced and on the periphery of the education system.

4.2 Summary of Findings: Donor Supported Initiatives

The absence of sector plans means that donors are not as harmonised and aligned as might otherwise be the case. Nevertheless the key donors have a shared vision, partly through the development of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees. The World Bank is currently providing technical assistance to the Ministry to develop an education sector plan, beginning with the primary sub-sector. The technical assistance is provided in the form of a unit based within the Cabinet of the Minister made up of 2 technical advisers.

It is envisaged that within 2 years, a fully-costed education sector plan will have been developed for submission to the FTI Secretariat for Catalytic Funds. It is hoped that, if successful, FTI funding will also be disbursed to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) to contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees. Despite being a key player in education policy development, the World Bank has a small and short-term education programme in DRC. As a result, funding for the unit will come to an end fairly soon.

Support to the education sector has consisted of small-scale interventions addressing quality issues such as the rehabilitation of schools, provision of textbooks, materials and teacher training²⁴. The Adviser to the Minister of Education Responsible for Cooperation²⁵ confirmed that in the past there was an abundance of Project Implementation Units (PIUs) which served to detract capacity and ownership from the Ministry. In light of this, the development of a the joint National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees and the establishment of a financing modality to address systemic barriers to education within the context of the Ministry's objective to guarantee access to all school-aged children to free and compulsory education, is a commendable and innovative initiative.

As the former colonial power, the Belgian Federal government is the longest standing bilateral donor in DRC, with its largest programme globally of over 800 projects. Perhaps partly due to the colonial history in the country, the Congolese government has a volatile relationship with the Belgians, having in the past stopped formal cooperation with them. There are many Belgian bilateral bodies supporting different areas of the education sector which are poorly harmonised.

Cognisant of the scale of the challenges in DRC, the Belgians are seeking partnerships with other donors. They are providing substantial technical and financial assistance to the development, printing and distribution of textbooks as well as training in their use. They have provided technical as well as logistical support in the area of education strategy development; for example CTB and DFID jointly financed the Round Table in May 2009 regarding the Strategy for Education Development involving a very wide range of stakeholders.

The key education donors in DRC have formed a strong consensus and corporate vision on the priority steps to take in the education sector although donors differ on the speed and phasing of the subsidising of school fees. This is clearly demonstrated by the future establishment of a MDTF, to be managed by the World Bank and executed by MEPSP with an Independent Assessment Unit. The

²⁴ DFID. 2008. *DRC Country Plan 2008 – 2010*. London: DFID

²⁵ Mr Jovin Mukadi Tsangala

Trust Fund will disburse grants to Ministry managers who are responsible for overseeing school networks of accredited and official schools. There is a potential fiduciary risk owing to the poor salaries of the Ministry managers.

The grants will seek to substitute the 30% of school costs which the state currently funds. The use of a MDTF as the financing modality has positive aspects as well as drawbacks. It was felt that since DRC is not eligible for budget support, the MDTF was the only financing mechanism which could address systemic issues at an appropriate scale in the education sector. It is also shadow-aligned, however lessons from other fragile contexts such as South Sudan point to the slowness, inefficiency and unresponsiveness of MDTFs in fragile environments.

As with any subsidy, there will be incentives amongst school directors and Ministry managers to over-report enrolment and due checks and balances will have to be established to mitigate this risk, for example by formalising the mandate and authority of COPAs to check enrolment data collected by school directors. DFID will also finance a nationwide teacher census (as well as a comprehensive school mapping exercise) after which it intends to fund teacher salaries, also via the MDTF.



5. Main Findings: Lessons Learned and Good Practice

5.1 Analysis of Local Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned

Schools throughout DRC rely heavily on the involvement of denominational associations, SMCs and COPAs for their establishment, organisation and management. Due to the hierarchical nature of Congolese society, involvement in service delivery is limited to literate members of the community and representation on SMCs is unduly influenced by the school director. There are poorly developed transparency mechanisms, but the recently issued Provincial Decrees regarding the collection of schools fees are important tools in promoting transparency. The existence of COPAs monitoring the accessibility and quality of service delivery promotes accountability and the existence and capacity of such local associations deserve to be strengthened.

Alpha Ujuvi was able to capitalise on internal capacity and strong will to intervene amongst marginalised children who were not being reached by formal schools. It started with niche interventions in Literacy Centres and was subsequently able to diversify its expertise (to ALPs, gender-based violence and child protection issues) as well as its funding sources. Some of the generic conditions which have facilitated its development have been good governance, a clear internal management structure and a strong vision.

Unlike international NGOs it benefits from having entirely national staff (who come from the East) and therefore have a deep understanding of the culture and insight into local dynamics. They also have a historical perspective on education in the region and therefore take more of a long term view on progress, unlike international NGOs, where senior staff are often expatriates who do not stay in conflict-affected postings for long and may have less positive views of what is feasible. Alpha Ujuvi has also been able to set up local projects which are self-financed owing to their comparatively low running costs, and are thus more sustainable.

DRC's good quality education historically has meant that adults in their 50s and 60s are well trained and qualified which has resulted in the formation of strong regional education NGOs. Linkages have been created with provincial inspectors thus building capacity as well as multilateral donors thereby diversifying funding sources. But they remain dependent on external funding for their continuation, and are generally small-scale interventions with limited impact on improving systemic capacity.

5.2 Analysis of Donor Supported Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned

Key donors have done well to capitalise on the comparative political stability in DRC since the democratic elections in 2006. Despite the absence of current education legislation or education

sector plans, they have used the window of opportunity constructively to identify priority areas which need to be reformed. The decision to focus on these areas was helped by robust research conducted on the education sector by the World Bank through its Country Status Report (2005), the Public Expenditure Review (2008) and a USAID/UNICEF study on school fees (2008), amongst others.

Donors are constantly re-appraising decisions made regarding the type of support they will provide based on lessons learned. Even though the pace of institutional change within MEPSP is very slow, the donor context may evolve very rapidly. Donors' decisions to harmonise around the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees as well as the decentralisation reform in the education sector mean that they are able to provide targeted technical assistance on these issues and apply complementary pressure on the Ministry. Scheduled development of an education sector plan, strongly supported by DFID and the World Bank, over the next two years and the planned subsequent request for FTI funds are also positive developments.

The success of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees and the subsequent widening of access to, retention in and completion of primary education are conditional upon the Ministry's ability and will to translate the Strategy into a fundamentally different way of 'doing' education and galvanising a critical mass of support from Ministry staff at all levels of the value chain. The Minister of Education's ability to secure this support will be more feasible if steps are taken to review public sector remuneration, since they will stand to lose if the Strategy is implemented under the current set up. This will require further donor support.

The key finding from the analysis of the development and early implementation of the Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees in Congo is that where parents have borne the cost of education financing during long periods of fragility and poor governance (thus institutionalising community financing), strategies addressing systemic issues to substitute community financing need to be developed. The strategies need to be embedded within appropriate regulatory and legislative frameworks and include short-, medium- and long-term actions. Where community financing is also contributing to the salaries of teachers and Ministry staff, the strategies need to dovetail with reviews and reforms of civil service remuneration in order to secure the necessary leadership and will within the Ministry of Education to implement the strategies. The capacity and mandate of SMCs and COPAs in overseeing and monitoring the use of school fees need to be simultaneously strengthened.

Lessons can be learnt from the World Bank's education PURUS project, which seeks to increase access to primary school by subsidising school fees while building the capacity of provincial and school level authorities to manage and monitor funds according to the principles of good governance. It started in the 2008/2009 academic year and in North Kivu, 2012 primary schools benefited from the project. The objectives of the project are to: contribute to the reduction of school fees; provide supplies and furniture to schools; provide training in transparent management and good governance on the part of school directors, SMCs, COPAs and teachers, according to an Inter-ministerial Decree. The project is implemented through a World Bank PIU: Programmes Coordination Unit (UCOP).

Good practice factors for sector governance include: i) the project is embedded within the wider National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees as well as tailored decrees developed expressly for the project; ii) it is paving the way for effective execution to the province level due to the prescriptive reporting requirements of running, administrative and transport costs, thereby reducing the fiduciary risk; iii) funds are transferred to a bank sub-account, which was the closest alignment possible with existing systems; running costs are disbursed through *CaisCongo* (the provincial branches of the Central Bank of Congo); and iv) transport and administration costs are disbursed through *Mister Cash*, a money transfer company, thus creating a clear division between the 2 flows in order to avoid obfuscation in the reporting of the funds.

Box 7: Challenges of Performance Monitoring

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) has been providing technical assistance in the collection and analysis of statistical data since the 2006/2007 academic year, nevertheless the capacity of MEPS to use the data to proactively monitor the performance of the sector and make informed decisions regarding the priority allocation of resources is minimal. Furthermore despite the fact that UNESCO has supported data collection in 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, the latest available and published data are from 2006/2007 and there are questions over the accuracy of these data. UIS recently conducted an assessment and made recommendations regarding the establishment of an Education Management Information System. However the cost of setting up and running the system exceeded the total government education budget and there is therefore a need to develop a simpler version. Challenges in accessing certain schools in the East make it difficult to monitor performance in conflict-affected areas. The absence of a comprehensive school mapping process as well as data on the total teaching force and the total number of children out of school¹ make it very difficult to analyse the capacity and performance of the sector as a whole. There are also important ramifications on donor planning and monitoring processes.

Other good practice features, especially related to enhanced stakeholder participation include i) funds are withdrawn by the Provincial Office for Teacher Salaries and Monitoring (SECOPEP) and given to the Network Directors (*Chefs d'Antennes*) and then to the school directors, thus building the capacity of these structures in light of the future subsidising of school fees on a national scale; ii) the participation of several key stakeholders (SECOPEP, school directors, SMCs and COPAs) spreads the risk and promotes more participatory behaviours in financial management at local levels; and iii) it includes an innovative mechanism for community members (or others) to report embezzlement or other abuses through text message or email to UCOP.

However, lessons can also be learned from aspects of the project which are less likely to promote good practice. The project is implemented through a World Bank PIU, UCOP, which reduces sustainability. The nature of the project requires micro-management, close monitoring and follow up which would again reduce the feasibility of scaling up the project. Since the Network Directors and school directors are badly paid, giving them formal responsibility over financial management is a risk. The reporting structure for suspected abuses circumvents the provincial authorities and goes straight to Kinshasa thus reducing the ability and authority of SECOPEP to intervene and enforce disciplinary measures. The reporting of abuses requires access to a mobile phone and a location where there is mobile phone coverage or access to the internet, both of which are unlikely in the very rural or conflict-affected areas.

There are increasing calls for better-adapted tools in order to facilitate the efficiency of financial and technical support provided to fragile states. There is consensus amongst the World Bank, DFID, CBT, UNICEF and UNESCO regarding the implementation of the principles of the Paris Declaration in DRC. The World Bank hosted a meeting in June 2009 regarding aid effectiveness during which the creation of a Partnership Office, whose mandate will be to monitor the use and effectiveness of donor funds, was formally recommended. Such an office could address the instability which characterises the relationship between government and donors due to imposition of international sanctions in the past and the government's strong desire but weak capacity to assert leadership, further hampered by communication misunderstandings.

Given the endemic nature of governance malpractices in DRC, a whole-of-government approach will be necessary, together with alternative and highly responsive forms of technical assistance and capacity development within the education sector²⁶, in order to make tangible improvements to aid effectiveness. Indeed there is an absence of long-term sustainable capacity development measures by donors, such as the provision of technical advisers within technical departments of the Ministry.

In order to encourage bottom up planning and in keeping with the impending decentralisation reform it would be prudent to develop education plans with strong components from provincial levels rather than set in motion a centralised sector-wide planning approach which would be very time consuming given all the bureaucratic trappings of DRC's centralised decision-making apparatus. In this way a national plan could be developed from the provinces up, including a strong component on institutional strengthening to improve governance at national and provincial levels, according to the delegation of functions within the decentralisation reform.

²⁶ Sylla, K. 2009. "DR Congo: Providing Support in a Conflict Zone", In: *IIEP Newsletter Vol XXVII. No.1 (Revised) January - April 2009*.



6. Country Report: Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions and Key Issues

An overarching conclusion is that the performance of DRC's education system is a testament to the strong belief which Congolese people have in education. Its survival to this day is almost entirely due to their continued financing of schools which has maintained not only education provision but also parts of the administration and management of the system. Due to their strong coping capacity, people who have been displaced several times continue to find ways to adapt to new and sometimes hostile environments, setting up schools and finding ways to pay their children's school fees. The capacity and commitment of SMCs and COPAs have been the 'saving grace' of education provision in Congo.

A second conclusion is that the resilience of the academic assessment system and the commitment of Ministry officials, at national and provincial levels, to continue with exams under very difficult circumstances has helped to promote the efficiency of the education system and has served to provide a strong incentive for children to continue with their education.

A third conclusion is that service decentralisation measures are urgent. The very centralised nature of the education sector has served to reduce the Ministry's service delivery capacity at provincial levels. Owing to its roots in the conflict, decentralisation is a thorny issue in DRC. A key enabling factor is that within the Constitution there is provision for meaningful delegation of authority and resources to the provinces. It is expected therefore that the current cumbersome model of decentralisation will be rationalised in order to substantially improve the Ministry's capacity to provide and monitor education while enforcing standards.

Another conclusion is that measures to address access inequities are urgent. The ongoing large-scale displacements of populations are a continuing challenge for education provision in the East since neither denominational associations nor provincial education authorities have the capacity to meet their changing educational needs. In some cases this may also be a question of political will on the part of the Ministry. The growing attention to both demand and supply-side issues is a key entry point for policy and strategic debate.

A further conclusion is that the absence of schools is an additional destabilising factor in parts of the East, owing to tensions between populations groups (host communities, long-term displaced and recently displaced people) for school places with a cross-cutting ethnic dimension, and the additional threat of out of school children's re-recruitment into armed groups. This challenge is perhaps not being addressed as seriously as it deserves. Indeed in a context such as Congo, with

broad linguistic and cultural diversity spread over a huge territory, and with a recent history of marginalisation of certain provinces, the need for donors to engage meaningfully with provincial and sub-provincial structures, without neglecting the central level, is key to the effectiveness and appropriateness of their aid.

Another important conclusion is that the corruption and lack of institutional/organisational integrity, which became endemic throughout the country under the Mobutu regime, is still prevalent today and MEPSD has certainly not been immune to it. This presents one of the greatest obstacles to the provision of equitable and good quality education in conflict-affected as well as more stable provinces.

A related conclusion is that insufficient macro-level political commitment to governance reforms hinders the Ministry's capacity to guarantee legislation, policies and decrees and to translate them into concrete programmes. Under the current system there are still greater incentives amongst Ministry officials, Denominational Associations and school directors for dishonesty, under-reporting, and so on, than for abiding by rules and regulations.

A related conclusion is that ensuring broad-based stakeholder participation in policy discussions and decision making will be critical if governance reforms are to be implemented. For example, in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees, the capacity, authority and voice of COPAs and their links to the national level ANAPECO, need to be strengthened as a matter of urgency.

Another conclusion is that any education policy/strategy development needs to be sector wide, including participation of the three key education/social sector ministries, alongside the finance ministry, development partners and other stakeholders. Without this comprehensive approach, important pathways from non-formal into formal education and from secondary to post-secondary may be overlooked.

A final conclusion is that given the wide range of needs and the many sub-sectors or thematic areas on which donors could have concentrated their support and capacity development activities, their prioritisation of the primary sub-sector and the resulting development of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees was a wise choice. This has enabled donors to begin to address systemic issues through the Strategy rather than adopt piecemeal and unsustainable project approaches, in the interests of aid effectiveness as well as overall improved stabilisation in DRC.

6.2 Key Recommendations: Improved Education Programme Planning/Design

Specific recommendations to MEPSP would be:

- i)** To make further and wider use of the channels which have been shown to be so effective for enabling students to sit exams in spite of the most challenging circumstances, by developing stronger relationships and information flows with the provincial education authorities, Denominational Associations, local managers, school directors and schools.
- ii)** To prioritise the updating of legislation and policies related to the 1986 Framework Law as well as the development of the Sub-Sector Strategic Development Plan, ensuring it is adapted to national fragility and localised instability; to undertake due planning for the decentralisation reform through a fully consultative approach, taking into account the success of COPAs and SMCs which have demonstrated that they are in tune with the local context and are able to maintain the provision of education throughout the crises.
- iii)** To galvanise support for and ownership of the Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees at all levels of the value chain and address potential obstacles to its implementation.
- iv)** To give due value to alternative means of providing basic education and increasing enrolment, such as ALPs, and to ensure that these are prioritised and given equal status (in policy and financial terms) to regular formal education.

6.3 Key Recommendations: Enabling Aid Effectiveness and Sector Governance

Specific recommendations to the international education donor community in DRC would be:

- i)** To provide further capacity development to SMCs, COPAs and ANAPECO which are the greatest asset in continuing education provision during fragile situations, (within the context of the National Strategy for the Reduction of School Fees) as well as local managers and provincial education authorities in strengthening governance at the local level.
- ii)** To continue to support reform of the teacher payroll system and to provide financial support through a reformed system to ensure salaries for teachers, linked to strong mechanisms for monitoring of performance.
- iii)** To support MEPSP in establishing robust systems for regularly collecting and analysing national education data and for school mapping, the absence of which has a negative effect on the ability to plan, monitor and finance service provision.

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