



# Development Progress



## Benin's progress in education:

### Expanding access and closing the gender gap

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## List of abbreviations

<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>AME</b>	Mothers' Associations
<b>DME</b>	Deprivation and Marginalization in Education (UNESCO dataset)
<b>EFA</b>	Education For All
<b>EGE</b>	National Education Conference
<b>EQF</b>	Fundamental Quality School
<b>FTI</b>	Fast-track Initiative
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>GPI</b>	Gender Parity Index
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>HIPC</b>	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IIIG</b>	Inequality Index for Income Groups
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INFRE</b>	Institute of Teacher Training and Education Research
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MEPS</b>	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
<b>NER</b>	Net Enrolment Ratio
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NPE</b>	New Study Programme
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>PASEC</b>	Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems of the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-speaking Countries
<b>PDDSE</b>	10-year Plan for the Development of the Education Sector
<b>PTA</b>	Parent-Teacher Association
<b>PTR</b>	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
<b>SAP</b>	Structural Adjustment Programme
<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Programme

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<b>UNESCO</b>	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	UN Children's Fund
<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Enrolment
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

# 1. Introduction

In October 1990, more than 400 teachers, school directors, parents, government officials, politicians, donor representatives and trade unionists, as well as many others, assembled at the National Education Congress (*États Généraux de l'Éducation*, EGE), to plan and initiate reforms to the country's deeply dysfunctional and inequitable education system. At the time, Benin had one of the world's lowest primary and secondary enrolment rates, with enormous disparities in access to education according to gender, wealth and region. In the 1989/90 school year, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) stood at 49.7% – and only 31% for girls. In the course of the following two decades, Benin almost universalised access to primary education, with the GER reaching 109.1% in 2007/08.<sup>1</sup> The gender gap has been narrowed substantially; in some regions of the country, it has been eliminated. Almost all Beninese children have at least initial access to schools, and there has been a threefold increase in the gross rate of children completing primary school and enrolling in secondary school.

Three interlinked factors have been central to the ongoing process of reform. First, successive governments since 1990 have set addressing the education sector's many deficiencies as a priority, making access to education for all children a constitutional right and a central policy objective. This has been reflected in rising education expenditure and initiatives such as the gradual abolition of school fees for primary school. Second, development partners have had an important role in this process, supporting the government from the outset of the reform efforts and providing substantial funding and technical expertise. Finally, the Beninese government's outreach efforts have been supported by numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working at local levels, which have been instrumental in addressing constraints and increasing demand for education. These organisations have worked with communities to foster normative changes as to the value of education. Working within the context of a patriarchal culture, whereby girls face substantial cultural barriers to education, this has been particularly effective in increasing girls' enrolment.

An overriding lesson from Benin's education reform process is that it is possible to achieve substantial improvements in access and equity in low-income countries with limited institutional capacity if there is sufficient political will, financial support and engagement at local levels. Moreover, the example of Benin highlights the importance and potential gains of engaging with parents – especially mothers – and community elders to increase recognition of the importance of equitable access for boys and girls.

However, many challenges remain: while Benin has made astonishingly fast progress towards universalising access and increasing completion rates for boys and girls, this expansion of the system, paired with substantial existing institutional constraints, has frequently overextended its capacities, with supply not keeping up with demand – a problem that is likely to be exacerbated in coming years by the high rate of population growth. Progression rates are improving only gradually, and teaching quality remains low, with poorly trained – and frequently untrained – contractual and community teachers making up a growing part of the corps. Further, the government remains heavily reliant on donors, both to finance the system and in central planning, raising doubts about the national ownership and sustainability of reform efforts. This will be all the more important as attempts are made to enrol the most marginalised and to focus shifts towards addressing the surge of students completing secondary school and entering the labour market.

While the coming decade may see Benin achieve universal primary enrolment (UPE) – a remarkable achievement in its own right – consolidating the gains of the past 20 years and addressing existing and emerging challenges will be instrumental to ensuring that all Beninese children can receive a higher quality of basic education in the coming years.

<sup>1</sup> The GER in Benin is over 100% owing to the large number of overage and underage students. The net enrolment ratio (NER), which expresses the rate of coverage for the official school-age population only, increased from 38% in 1989/90 to 89% in 2008/09 (92% for boys and 85% for girls).

## 2. Context

### 2.1 An elite-driven post-colonial education system and the rise of Kérékou

Under French colonial rule (1892-196), the Kingdom of Dahomey, the present-day Republic of Benin, had a highly educated and literate elite, which placed a substantial premium on education. However, access to education remained limited to the wealthy. During the colonial era, the education system worked in the interests of the colonial administration, producing only a small number of graduates, who were taught to administer the colony loyally in the interests of France (Imorou, 2010).

In the 15 years after independence in 1960, Benin remained embroiled in political and economic turmoil. The period between 1960 and 1972 was marked by 12 *coups d'état*, 5 of which were successful. Though teachers had been a driving force in the independence movement, changes to increase the relevance and accessibility of education were not a high political priority. The curriculum and the objectives of the system remained highly elite-driven, and closely aligned with the goals designed for the colonial context. State provision of education was minimal, and a large proportion of schools were operated privately or by religious institutions.

The first major reform of the education system followed the successful *coup d'état* in October 1972 by Lieutenant-Colonel Mathieu Kérékou. Integral to Kérékou's 1975 adoption of a Marxist–Leninist ideology in reforming the Beninese state and education system was an effort to confront the inequalities in access to education inherited from the colonial period. A co-financing policy was implemented for primary and secondary education; the state alone was to finance higher education in order to train people for the management of the expanding public sector (Denadi, 2007, in Olukoshi and Diarra, 2007). Primary and secondary schools were opened throughout the country, and enrolment increased substantially.

Central to these efforts, however, was also a move to create a highly ideologically infused curriculum – the *École Nouvelle* – a new education system that distanced itself from the colonial legacy and was 'liberated from foreign domination and all cultural alienation.'<sup>2</sup> Kérékou viewed the existing teaching corps with great scepticism, seeing teachers and the educated and intellectual class as 'enemies of the people, agents of servility and handmaidens of imperialism' (Kérékou, 1987, in Imorou 2010: 13). A new corps of 'young revolutionary teachers' loyal to the regime was created, whose goal was to counter the assumed disloyalty of existing teachers and instil ideological purity and adherence to Kérékou's regime.

### 2.2 The fall of the Kérékou dictatorship

During the course of the 1980s, the Kérékou regime increasingly encountered financial difficulties. From 1985 onwards the Beninese state faced an economic crisis of proportions that were unprecedented in the country's post-colonial era. This sparked increasing unrest within the country, led in part by teachers and their unions (along with university students). Frustration with inadequate salaries (which were often not paid at all), the repression of dissent and systemic corruption and nepotism led to growing protests and strikes. Kérékou countered this increasingly open challenge to his legitimacy by branding the teachers behind the activist movement as leftist anarchists, anti-revolutionaries and traitors. Further, as the state teetered on the brink of bankruptcy during the mid-1980s, an International Monetary Fund (IMF)/ World Bank structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986 forced substantial cuts in the civil service, the closure of teacher training colleges and a hiring freeze within the civil service.

Dire economic conditions led to deterioration of the previously expanding education sector, hitting the poorest parts of the country hardest, with the primary dropout rate reaching 30% in the late 1980s and enrolment and completion rates declining for the first time since independence. In 1989, strikes intensified and schools were closed. Realising that his overthrow would only be a matter of time, President Kérékou reached out to many of his opponents, including teachers, and several were admitted into government. In December 1989, the Kérékou government officially abandoned Marxism–Leninism as the official state ideology and announced the separation of the party and the state. Most significantly, Kérékou promised a national conference of all key actors and institutions in the country, the *Conférence Nationale des Forces Vives de la Nation*.

<sup>2</sup> Ordinance 75-30 of 23 June 1975, pertaining to the Law on the Direction of National Education (*Loi d'Orientation de l'Éducation Nationale*), in Imarou (2010).

The drafting of a new constitution at this conference consolidated the new character of the democratic state and its institutions and initiated a transitional period, culminating in multiparty elections. The *Conférence Nationale* further led to Mathieu Kérékou being forced to cede power to new Prime Minister and former World Bank official Nicephore Soglo, in a power-sharing transitional government. In the 1991 presidential election, Soglo defeated Kérékou. This election, McMahon (2002) argues, 'sent shock waves across the continent as electoral defeats of incumbent African presidents were almost without precedent.' Moreover, the *Conférence Nationale* called for a one-week convention of all key actors in the education system, the EGE. Held in October 1990, this marked the official end of the *École Nouvelle* and initiated a comprehensive reassessment and complete overhaul of the country's education system (see Section 4.1).

The post-1990 change in government following the economic and political crises of the 1980s created an opportunity to fundamentally address the failures and deficiencies of Benin's education system. The most apparent success of the reforms initiated after 1990 is the near-universality of access in primary education, and particularly the enormous strides made in enrolling girls. However, substantial problems in the sector have remained unaddressed, while new concerns have emerged. The remainder of this paper analyses achievements and the remaining obstacles to ensuring education for all.

## 3. What has been achieved

### 3.1 Scale of progress

The education reform process initiated at the EGE has been characterised by both a rapid expansion in access in the years since 1990 and fundamental reform to the curriculum through the New Study Programme (NPE). Following the decline of the sector during the late 1980s, when completion rates reached dismally low levels and the number of students enrolled stagnated, there has been a remarkable turnaround in performance in many areas, particularly in terms of ensuring more equitable access and, to a lesser extent, addressing the low quality of education.

#### 3.1.1 Primary and secondary enrolment

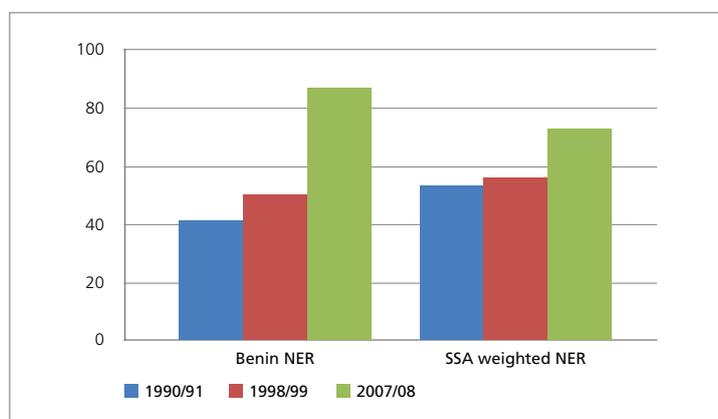
*'The changes in access are enormous – one can see it with the naked eye.'* District school commissioner, Cotonou.

Benin's improvements in primary – and to a lesser extent secondary – enrolment represent the most remarkable success in the country's education reform process. Following declining enrolment rates in the late 1980s, the system has expanded massively, and almost all Beninese children now have access to education.

The number of students in primary school increased at a rate of 6% p.a. between 1993/94 and 2006/07, with growth in enrolment increasing almost twice as fast as the rapidly growing population (which has been increasing at a rate of between 3% and 3.5% p.a.).<sup>3</sup> Fewer than 500,000 students were enrolled in primary education in 1989/90. This grew to almost 1 million by the end of the decade, and in 2008/09 total enrolment in primary school was over 1.7 million. The GER was under 50% in 1989/90; by 2008/09 this had increased to 109%.<sup>4</sup> The gross admissions rate for Grade 1 was over 150% in 2007/08, a result of the abolition of school fees in the previous year, as well as of a policy making it possible for significantly younger children to attend (many as young as four). However, even discounting underage and overage children, access in the first two grades has become almost universal in many regions of the country (Garnier et al., 2009).

The NER, which arguably provides a more accurate picture of the system's coverage and progress towards UPE, more than doubled from 38% in 1989/90 to 88.6% in 2008/09. Over this time period, it passed and exceeded the population-weighted average for sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) through 2007/08 (Figure 1) and performed well in comparison with other countries in West Africa.

Figure 1: NER for Benin and SSA population-weighted average, 1990/91, 1998/99 and 2007/08



Source: UNESCO (2010).

<sup>3</sup> As is discussed later in this paper, this has created and continues to pose enormous challenges for the budget, as well as for quality improvement efforts.

<sup>4</sup> As we have seen, a value in excess of 100% does not necessarily imply full enrolment, owing to the inclusion of a high number of overage and underage children as well as repeaters. The NER is generally seen as a better indicator to assess progress towards full primary enrolment; the boys' and girls' GER tends to provide a better overview of progress towards the achievement of gender parity.

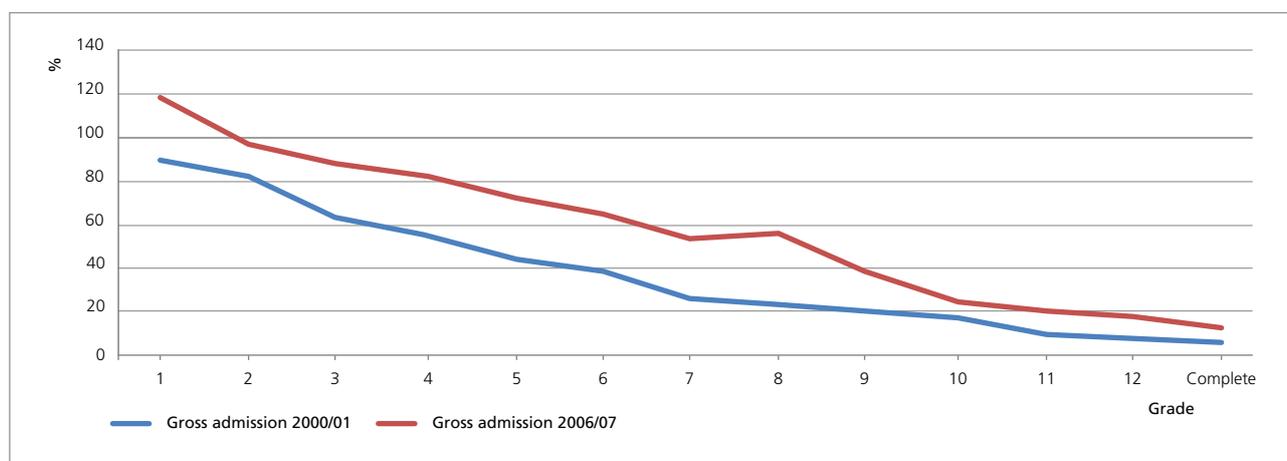
Growth in post-primary and preschool enrolment has also been substantial. This has been driven in part by an expansion in the private schooling system. Enrolment rates have increased substantially for all subsectors, and exceed the regional average in all post-primary subsectors. The number of children in preschool more than quadrupled between 1993/94 and 2006/07 (8% increase p.a.), with the pre-primary GER increasing from approximately 2% in 1990/91 to 8% in 2008/09. A significant factor in this growth was fee abolition for pre-primary in 2006/07.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.1.2 Attainment and progression

In addition to getting more children into school, Benin has also achieved success in keeping them there. Fewer children are dropping out or repeating grades and more are completing a full primary cycle. While the internal efficiency of Benin's basic education system remains relatively low, it has increased substantially in recent years. Gross primary completion was at 65% in 2008/09, increasing from below 20% in the early 1990s and 37% at the beginning of the previous decade. Cohort Grade 5 survival rates have also increased, from a low baseline of 55% in 1991/92 to 72% in 2005/06. Beninese children spend more years in school (7.3 on average) than children in more than three-quarters of African countries, and only Togo performs better in this regard among West African countries (World Bank, 2009).

Progression rates have increased substantially, particularly because of a reduction in repetition rates and, to a lesser extent, dropout rates. The curbing of repetition within primary sub-cycles and the virtual elimination of repetition in Grade 1 account for the most significant part of this drop. This improvement in retention is relatively consistent across grades (see Figure 2) and also places Benin among the higher performers in the region.<sup>6</sup> However, despite high gross Grade 1 intake rates, net Grade 1 intake is only around 50%, indicative of the high concentration of overage and underage children.

Figure 2: Intake rates by primary and secondary school grades, 2000/01 and 2006/07



Source: World Bank (2009).

Fewer than 20% of those who start school complete it at the correct age. This owes in part to high dropout and repetition rates. The dropout rate was at almost one-third in the late 1980s, during the system's crisis; it remained high at over 19% in Grade 1 in 2008/09. Repetition rates remain high in later grades, particularly as many schools have incomplete cycles.

While many of the causes of dropout are being addressed through demand- and supply-side initiatives such as school construction, the provision of books and materials, fee abolition, policies to reduce repetition, school feeding programmes and latrine construction, high (and stagnating) poverty rates, particularly in rural areas, and low quality of teaching continue to constitute a substantial barrier to tackling student dropout and achieving higher rates of completion (see Box 1).

<sup>5</sup> Between 1993/94 and 2006/07, enrolment in the first and second cycle of secondary quadrupled (13% and 12% growth p.a., respectively); enrolment in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) tripled (9% p.a.) and university enrolment increased almost six-fold (15% p.a.). Among 10 West African countries, Benin has the second-highest university enrolment rate and ranks third for the first cycle of secondary school.

<sup>6</sup> The coefficient of internal efficiency, which is calculated by dividing the minimum number of years of schooling to reach the end of a cycle by the number of years required increased from 54% to 76% between 1998/99 and 2006/07. This places Benin among the highest performers on the continent. The bulk of these improvements owe to reductions in repetition. However, the internal efficiency of the first cycle of secondary school has declined with the increase in student numbers over the past decade.

### Box 1: Causes of dropout in Benin

Benin's high school dropout rate constitutes a substantial barrier to ensuring that more children can benefit from education. Meanwhile, the low, albeit gradually improving, internal efficiency of the system constitutes a substantial loss in resources.

Studies examining the causes of the high dropout rates in Benin have found that these are largely similar to those in many other low-income countries. According to most studies and interviews, the single most significant factor is the substantial opportunity cost of schooling and the need for children to support household incomes. Large distances to school exacerbate this. A study in 2002/03 (in World Bank, 2009) found that those who lived more than 30 minutes from school were almost twice as likely to drop out than those who lived less than 30 minutes away. Long distances to school increase not only the time spent commuting (and thus the opportunity cost), but also the risk of children, and particularly girls, becoming victims of assault and sexual violence on the way to and from school.

Other factors influencing dropout include the age of the child, payment of direct and indirect fees, perceived lack of usefulness of school, high levels of dissatisfaction with teachers, high rates of teacher absenteeism and high repetition rates (it is estimated that a 1% increase in the repetition rates translates to a 0.6% increase in dropout). Conversely, the factors influencing retention include declines in repetition, availability of fresh water at schools, the abolition of fees and the character of teachers (a higher percentage of female teachers and of trained civil service teachers has a positive influence on retention).

Source: Atanasso (2010); World Bank (2009).

## 3.2 Equity of access

A central goal of Benin's education reform has been to make schooling more equitable, and particularly to tackle low rates of girls' enrolment. While the enormous increases in access are indicative that much has been achieved in this regard, most notably in the promotion of gender equity, socioeconomic, gender and geographic disparities remain substantial.

Access to education in Benin depends heavily on individuals' socioeconomic characteristics and their gender. Uneducated populations are predominantly female (59% of the uneducated population is female), rural (in 2005/06 a child from an urban area was 20% times more likely to go to primary school than a child from a rural area) and poor (a child from a poor household has a 55% chance of going to school vs. the 90% chance of a child from a household that is better-off). The disproportionate representation of male, urban and wealthier populations increases with the level of education.

### 3.2.1 Substantial improvements in girls' education

At the beginning of the 1990s, Benin's gender parity index (GPI) was one of the world's least equitable, with less than one-third of girls attending primary school. Measured according to the GER, the country reached a GPI of 0.92 in 2008/09. This represents an enormous step towards the achievement of gender parity (see Table 1). Two of Benin's six regions (Mono/Couffo and Atlantique/Littoral) have a girls' GER above 100%, and one region (Borgou/Alibori) has a higher GER for girls (76.8%) than boys (75.2%), although the value is substantially below the national average.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Gross primary enrolment rates for boys and girls between 1989/90 and 2008/90**

Year	Girls' GER	Total GER	GPI (i.e. ratio of girls' GER to total GER)
1989/90	36	50	.50
1995/96	52	68	.61
2001/02	76	90	.73
2002/03	82	98	.72
2003/04	84	96	.77
2004/05	84	95	.80
2005/06	92	98	.88
2007/08	99	104	.91
2008/09	105	108	.92

Source: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS) data; Attanasso (2010).

<sup>7</sup> The achievement of parity in Borgou/Alibori owes in large part to the high dropout rates among boys, caused by the centrality of cotton farming and animal husbandry in these areas, which take many boys out of school prematurely.

Furthermore, girls are attending school for longer, according to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Deprivation and Marginalization in Education (DME) dataset. Girls who were 23-27 in 2005 went to school for 2.1 years, whereas girls aged 17-22 went for 3.37 years. Similarly, 34% of girls aged 7-16 in 2005 had never attended school (23% for boys) while this value was 52% for women aged 17-22 (25% for boys) and 68% for women aged 23-27 (39% for boys).<sup>8</sup>

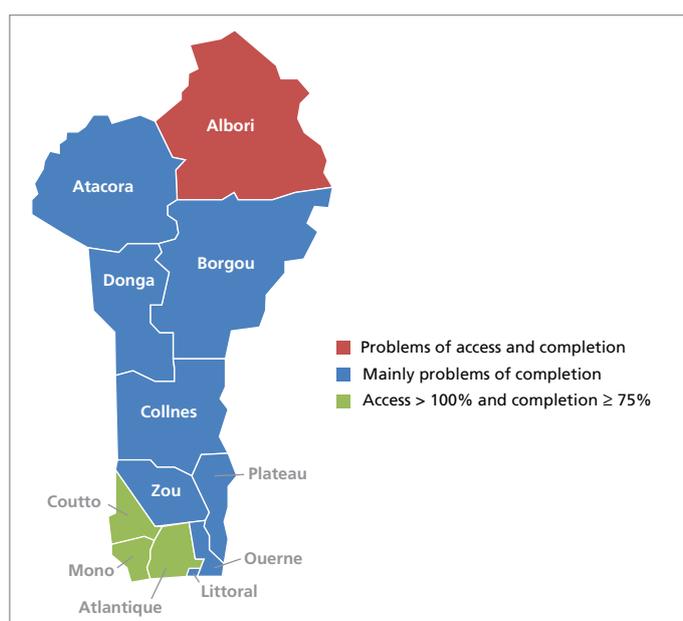
Despite these improvements in general access, girls are much more likely to drop out early than boys. Thus, while a general awareness of the importance of girls' education is successfully being transmitted, girls are still much more likely to be pulled out of school to support the household financially, or for socio-cultural reasons (such as marriage). Gender differences in education seem to be rooted at least in part in Benin's patriarchal society, where the role of women is frequently confined to reproduction and looking after the house. The disparity in gross completion rates is substantial: in 2008/09, the difference was almost 16% (72.6% for boys and 56.8% for girls). Thus, despite near-parity in gross admission rates (142.0% for boys, 137.9% for girls), for each 10 boys that complete primary school only 8 girls do so.

### 3.2.2 Improved socioeconomic and regional equity, but with disparities remaining

Socioeconomic disparities – while still substantial – have also been narrowed in recent years, with access to education increasingly being democratised. According to the Education For All (EFA) Inequality Index for Income Groups (IIIG), Benin has one of the widest disparities between the richest and the poorest in terms of access to education.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the country has rapidly reduced these disparities, with the ratio of educational achievement between the richest and poorest population quintiles reduced by more than 30% between 1999 and 2006 (UNESCO, 2008). Further, disparities based on household economic situation have declined significantly since 2000, particularly in terms of primary school completion rates and secondary school enrolment. In 2000/01, poor children were five times less likely to finish primary school and start secondary school than their wealthier counterparts; in 2005/06, this probability was between 2.5 and 2.8 (World Bank, 2009).

Access to education has improved substantially in all six of Benin's regions, although progress has been uneven.<sup>10</sup> Poorer areas of the north still face a greater degree of education deprivation (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Regional variations in access to education



Source: World Bank (2009)

<sup>8</sup>. Less than 1 in 10 girls in the poorest quintile aged 23-27 in 2005 (thus the age cohort that was of primary school age at the height of the 1980s financial crisis) attended school at all, according to DME data.

<sup>9</sup>. With a 0.37 score on the Gini index, Benin also has a relatively high rate of income inequality.

<sup>10</sup>. Each region consists of two departments.

While Mono/Couffo, one of the lowest-access regions in the early 1990s, has made enormous strides in enrolling students, the northern region of Borgou/Alibori lags behind (see Table 2). In Alibori, which also faces high levels of severe malnutrition, the gross intake rate for the last grade of primary is only 36%, compared with a national average of 66%; the NER is 50.4%, compared with the national average of 88.6%.

**Table 2: GERs by region, 1989/90 and 2008/09 (%) (male/female)**

Region	1989/90	2008/09
Atacora/Donga	35 (47/21)	107 (112/100)
Atlantique/Littoral	62 (72/51)	114 (116/112)
Borgou/Alibori	34 (42/24)	89 (87/92)
Mono/Couffo	37 (51/21)	121 (132/110)
Ouémé/Plateau	67 (85/56)	111 (118/104)
Zou/Collines	56 (68/37)	114 (119/108)
<b>Benin</b>	50 (62/36)	109 (114/105)

Source: Attanasso (2010).

Inequality is exacerbated when several features of marginalisation reinforce each other. For example, the Peul people, a pastoralist group in northern Benin, face severe educational disadvantages. According to DME statistics, 94% of Peul children of primary age (96% of girls) in the poorest income quintile do not attend school, and over 90% of 17-22-year-old Peul in this quintile had fewer than two years of education in 2005. Thus, while equity has improved substantially, and while enrolment rates suggest that Benin is approaching UPE, this varies significantly according to gender, socioeconomic background, ethnicity and region. Addressing these disparities will require targeted initiatives to address numerous economic, socio-cultural and geographic constraints.

### 3.3 Quality of education

The quality of Benin's basic education system remains low according to most available indicators and to interviewees. According to the director of the Institute of Teacher Training and Education Research (INFRE), 'the quality of education has been in decline and addressing this will be the next step [of the reform process].' Improving quality was a key priority of the post-1990 reforms, but many of these efforts have fallen victim to financial, institutional and political constraints and are being implemented only gradually. This is all the more problematic as low learning outcomes and negative perceptions of schools and teaching quality are a major reason for dropout. However, while quality has not improved substantially in the past two decades of reform efforts, it arguably has not deteriorated either, and efforts are now being made to gradually prioritise the teaching quality.

In the past 15 years, learning and educational attainment of primary school children has been evaluated several times, using different methodologies (Garnier et al., 2009).<sup>11</sup> In 1995, a Canadian educational specialist tested children in Grades 2 and 5 and found only 20% performed at grade level. In 2005, the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems of the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-speaking Countries (PASEC) obtained similar results for children from Grades 2 and 5. The PASEC is particularly interesting because it allows for some (limited) cross-country comparisons: Benin is in the lower mid-range among francophone West African countries.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>. According to World Bank (2009) analysis, with six years of education, it is slightly less than 70% likely that someone between 22 and 44 will be able to read. In this sense, the Beninese system is more effective than that of many other African countries. However, some countries (e.g. Rwanda, Mozambique and Burundi) have scores in excess of 90%.

<sup>12</sup>. This ranking should be interpreted with some care. Most countries have been tested only once, and not in the same year. Further, as the PASEC is standardised across countries, it does not necessarily test learning of the specific content of the Beninese curriculum. The PASEC study on Benin furthermore suggested the importance of ensuring availability of textbooks, an area where Benin has made substantial progress in aggregate. Grades 1 and 2 students have 'almost one' book on average for French and Maths, although these are poorly distributed and almost a quarter of students do not have access to their own textbook. Furthermore, there is a substantial shortage of books in higher grades, with 40-50% of students having to share books.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education (with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)) tested Grade 6 students in French and Mathematics. The test results were virtually identical: 20% of students performed at grade level. The tests also documented significant differences between schools, allowing for some analysis as to why some schools were effective and most were not. The factors that stood out as associated with satisfactory teacher performance included assiduity, grading of homework, well-planned lessons and regular summaries of the main points. According to Garnier et al. (2009), approximately 10% of public primary schools in Benin currently fully meet the state's criteria of providing a fundamental or minimum level of quality.<sup>13</sup>

While on the whole pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) are not extraordinarily high (below 50), this ratio has been maintained only through the hiring of contractual teachers and poorly qualified community teachers, who are frequently paid by parents. The PTR increased from 48 to 54 between 1990 and 1999. It has since dropped to approximately 45 at primary level and 32 for secondary, which is now slightly below the regional average. However, this varies from region to region and school to school, with some communes having PTRs of up to 100.

In order to keep up with rising demand, communities began to recruit their own teachers. However, many of these had themselves completed only secondary school (and in some cases only primary school) and proved ill-equipped to teach, particularly following curriculum reforms and the introduction of the NPE.<sup>14</sup> Thus, while the number of teachers has been increasing steadily in recent years, going from approximately 18,000 in 2000 to 38,321 in 2008/09, this has owed almost entirely to an increase in contractual and community teachers.<sup>15</sup> As a result, only 40% of teachers currently have the necessary qualifications to teach – in 1995 over 87% were qualified.

Given the country's financial constraints, it would have been extraordinary if Benin had managed to embark on a rapid expansion of educational opportunities without experiencing substantial problems. Garnier et al. (2010: 10) argue that, 'even if far greater financial resources had been available, difficulties would have remained because many schools would have had to be built and thousands of teachers trained.' The major organisational stresses caused by rapid growth were thus predictable and are a relatively common feature among countries that have rapidly expanded their education system. However, many of the problems are not uncommon in low-income countries, and nonetheless constitute a substantial problem to improving education outcomes (see Box 2).

In part, these endemic problems are being addressed through the reopening of the teacher training colleges (*écoles normales intégrées*) in 2005, as well as through extensive donor programmes (most notably a large Fast-track Initiative (FTI) programme) to improve in-service training, ensure greater availability of school books and didactic materials and extensive capacity-building support to the Ministry of Education to facilitate the implementation of its 10-year Plan for the Development of the Education Sector (PDDSE).

<sup>13</sup> One of the central aspects of Benin's education reform process was an effort to determine a minimum level of education quality, i.e. what would constitute a Fundamental Quality School (EQF). This was based on extensive diagnostic research on the necessary requirements for a higher level of learning among primary students and quality education for all. Studies documented a close link between the presence of certain inputs, textbooks for example, and learning. These would in turn help school inspectors and planners identify the schools that lacked the essential resources and organise their acquisition. Based on this, the most important elements of an EQF included a sufficient number of well-trained, motivated and supervised teachers; close collaboration between the school and families as well as community involvement in the school's management; the availability and usage of basic documents, such as the content of the programme for each grade, books and pedagogical inputs, such as blackboards, maps, etc.; efficient usage of time and adherence to the curriculum; and the availability of a basic infrastructure and furniture fostering a pleasant setting in which to learn. While the majority of schools are still far away from achieving EQF status, the recognition of these obstacles and key components constitutes an important step towards improving the ability of the system to provide quality education.

<sup>14</sup> Imorou (2010) notes that teachers were among the group most affected by the SAP implemented after the economic crisis. Many certified teachers (as well as teachers-to-be) were subjected to forced unemployment. The state resorted to using non-permanent personnel to meet its education prerogatives, recruited in a bottom-up fashion. This may have contributed to the loss of value attached to the teaching profession today (ibid).

<sup>15</sup> While over two-thirds of teachers in 2000/01 were state teachers, the largest group by 2006/07 was made up of community teachers (*communaux*), with the prevalence of less-trained teachers greater in rural and remote areas, and particularly in the north. Similarly, the number of teachers on temporary state contracts (*contractuels*) has also been rising. In recent years, efforts have been undertaken to integrate community teachers into the corps of state-contracted teachers (*agents contractuels d'état*), but 40% of teachers remain non-state funded, most frequently by parents and through community funds.

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## Box 2: Understanding the deficits in education quality

Numerous systemic problems, which have been exacerbated by the rapid expansion of the system, all contribute to low levels of learning in Benin's schools. These pertain primarily to 1) substantial limitations on teacher recruitment and training following a hiring freeze; 2) low levels of morale and frequent strikes among teachers; and 3) low levels of staff retention and administrative capacity at ministry and central government level.

Following the closing of teacher training colleges in the late 1980s, virtually no trained teachers have been recruited in the past two decades. This has been addressed only inadequately through the hiring of poorly trained and unqualified contractual and community teachers. The ratio of students to qualified teachers (exempting community teachers) exceeds 70:1 at primary level, and in 2005/06 it was a staggering 200 pupils per qualified teacher for the first cycle of secondary.

In addition to the problems caused by an increasingly less well-trained teachers' corps, dissatisfaction among teachers has also been on the rise. Complaints include the rapidly growing numbers of students in classrooms, an increasingly heterogeneous student body, poorer teaching conditions (in terms of the provision of essential resources) and the introduction of a new, foreign-developed curriculum. The NPE has been a particularly contentious issue for teachers (see, for example, Fichner, 2009), as its constructivist 'child-centred approach' differs substantially to the highly hierarchical approach and curriculum that most teachers were taught under. Moreover, the introduction of new categories of non-trained teachers has in the eyes of many teachers devalued their profession, and many feel that they have been abandoned by the state (Welmond, 2002).

The combination of these factors has increased dissatisfaction and the frequency of strikes. Today, teachers are heavily represented by trade unions and strikes have become increasingly common and protracted. While teachers and their unions have traditionally been a strong force in Beninese public and political life, they have in recent years taken a disproportionately large and disruptive role and hardly a year has passed without extended teacher strikes, frequently lasting several months. Through strikes, civil service teachers have secured substantial increases in their salaries – most recently a 25% raise in 2009 – and Benin's state teachers are now among the highest paid in Africa (6.3 times gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, or more than twice the FTI benchmark). However, the substantial salary increases granted to civil service teachers has not only strained the education budget, but moreover has increased the gap between these teachers and contractual teachers (whose salary is one-third that of civil service teachers) and community teachers (who only earn one-sixth the salary of civil service teachers).

The difficulties in improving the quality of teaching have been linked to substantial administrative capacity constraints at the level of central and regional governments. Both interviews and available data suggest that the deployment of teachers and the allocation of teaching materials and funds have been far from optimal, with exacerbating existing inequalities. The allocation of budgetary resources for education is a case in point. The most educated 10% 'use' 48% of resources allocated to education. The poorest 20% of children and youth only reap the advantage of 5% of resources, while the richest 20% use 60%. Thus, the World Bank's education sector analysis (2009) concludes, 'inequality is [...] partly structural in nature.'

Many informants raised concerns about substantial institutional fragmentation within the education system. Education portfolios are currently split across four different ministries, and ministers have changed very frequently, often serving less than one year. This has led to instability, lack of policy coherence and detrimental impacts on implementation capacities. There have also been concerns that policymaking in the education sector is 'overly politicised,' while concerns over the lack of accountability in sector governance and weak audit and information management structures are common among experts (Attanasso, 2010).

### 3.4 Progress in other areas of social and economic development

Progress in education is likely to have contributed to, and in part been supported by, improvements in other areas of social and economic development. Enrolment rates are correlated with improvements in child and maternal health, infant mortality and morbidity rates and, particularly rates of malnutrition, which can significantly undermine learning abilities.

Many indicators of human development have improved since the early 1990s, albeit from low baselines.<sup>16</sup> Rates of undernourishment declined from 28% in 1991 to 19% in 2006.<sup>17</sup> Prevalence of underweight children under five declined by approximately one-fifth between 1996 and 2006 (from 29.2% to 22.6%); under-five and infant mortality rates both declined by about one-third between 1990 and 2008, from 184 and 111 per 1,000 live births to 121 and 76, respectively. Maternal health indicators have improved slightly during the past two decades. Access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities also improved between 1990 and 2008. Substantial progress has also been made in Benin on maternal health, where the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel increased from 60% to 78% between 1996 and 2006, making Benin one of the top 10 performers among developing countries in this area in terms of absolute progress (ODI, 2010).<sup>18</sup>

While the country's GDP has doubled since 1990, the high rate of population growth means GDP per capita has been rising only gradually over the past two decades, at approximately 1.4% p.a. More disconcertingly, the poverty rate has stagnated since 1990 or, depending on the metric used, increased. This points to a relatively unequal distribution of gains, a fact that is borne out in the country's high level of inequality, particularly between urban areas (where poverty has stagnated) and rural areas (where the national poverty rate, according to MDG indicators, increased greatly, from 25.2% to 46%, between 1995 and 2003). On the one hand, these disconcerting developments demonstrate the effectiveness of demand-side measures in education, as well as the remarkable willingness on the part of Beninese parents to bear the opportunity costs entailed in sending their children to school. However, they also suggest that the barrier poverty represents in ensuring access to education needs to be addressed more effectively in future years.

<sup>16</sup> All social and economic development data are from the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Database.

<sup>17</sup> Iron deficiency, which affects brain development, has been observed among 78% of children under the age of five, and every year an estimated 10,000 Beninese children are born with iodine deficiency, which can reduce intellectual capacity by 10-15%. Requirements by the Beninese government to ensure that all imported salt is iodised may go some way to addressing iodine deficiency and its deleterious effects (World Bank, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> According to a ranking aggregating progress across the MDGs, and using indicators for poverty (1.1), hunger (1.8), access to education (2.1), gender disparity in education (3.1), child mortality (4.1), maternal mortality (5.2), HIV/AIDS (6.1) and access to improved water sources (7.8), Benin is one of 4 West African countries among the top 20 most improved developing countries, according to absolute progress achieved between 1990 and 2006 (ODI, 2010).

## 4. Drivers of progress

Three key factors have contributed significantly to Benin's progress in education: 1) strong political will to universalise access, with a particular emphasis on girls' education; 2) substantial funding and support from development partners; and 3) effective outreach and enrolment efforts at local levels to address demand-side constraints and socio-cultural barriers.

### 4.1 Political will to universalise access and initiate systemic reforms

The initiation of comprehensive reform efforts at the beginning of the 1990s represented a willingness by most stakeholders to rebuild the education system from scratch, guided by the overriding objective of ensuring that all children attend school. There was, in the words of one informant, 'a new vision of what the education system should look like' and a commitment to initiating the necessary measures to ensure this could be achieved.

While many of the reform efforts have not had the desired success, efforts initiated at the EGE to universalise primary access have been sustained and refined throughout the past two decades, enabling the remarkable increase in access (and completion rates) at primary and lower secondary level detailed in Section 3.

#### 4.1.1 The EGE and initiating education reforms

*'The central question for all of us was, "How will we teach our children?"'* EGE participant.

During the waning days of the Kérékou government, the realisation that the regime was failing the population was becoming increasingly widespread. Popular discontent over the curtailing of basic freedoms, paired with the country's economic crisis and growing poverty, greatly facilitated the transition towards democracy. The state of the education system was a particularly stark reminder of the country's dire situation. In the 1989/90 school year, enrolment declined for the first time in decades and the primary GER fell below 50%. The GER GPI in the early 1990s was the second worst in the world, at 0.50. Less than one-third of girls were in school and progression rates through primary and into secondary for both boys and girls were dismal.

The February 1990 *Conférence Nationale* recognised that all 'school and university students [...] must receive urgent prioritisation and attention through exceptional measures' (Tévoédjèrè, 1990). Given the dire state of the education system, and widespread awareness of its importance for the 'New Benin,' it was decided that a further congress just for education stakeholders was required in order to conduct a thorough assessment of sector performance and initiate a comprehensive reform process. The EGE was held on 2-9 October 1990, with over 400 attendees: officials from the new government, students, professors, education specialists and administrators, parents and representatives of the teachers' unions, civil society and development partners, among many others.

In the lead-up to the EGE, a number of thorough diagnostic audits of the education system were prepared to facilitate the process. This series of studies, commissioned by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO and carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, covered all subsectors, examining issues ranging from the policy framework to constraints to access, sector management, costs and financing.<sup>19</sup> These allowed for the identification of the system's most important inefficiencies, constraints and challenges, including, among others, the inability of many parents to pay school fees; the high opportunity cost of schooling; the long distances between many rural households and schools; socio-cultural and religious values and traditions; low regard for the value of education; and scepticism about the 'rate of return' on investments in education. These studies, Welmond (2002: 90) argues, 'introduced the idea of *systemic* reform to Benin.'

<sup>19</sup>: In total, over 200 separate analytical and diagnostic studies and reports on the Beninese education system were published by UNDP/ UNESCO between 1989 and 1993 (generally in cooperation with MEPS) (see UNESCO, 1999 for an overview).

On the basis of these assessments, the EGE created the foundation for a comprehensive reform process and further provided a mandate for their initiation.<sup>20</sup> The prioritisation of education also manifested itself in the country's new constitution. Articles 10 through 14, adopted by referendum in December 1990, stipulate the duty of national and local authorities to educate children. Article 10 makes education a constitutional right and Article 13 makes primary education compulsory and demands that 'the state shall progressively provide education free of charge.' In recognition of the important role of religious and private schooling in the country, and their suppression under Kérékou, Article 14 stipulates that 'private, secular or religious schools can operate with permission and supervision of the state, which may subsidise them in a manner defined by law.' The government's January 1991 education policy defined the overarching aims of the reform process as ensuring that education can 'create an educated, competent population' to 'promote the development of Benin' and function as a 'means of transformation of society for all.' The government defined six objectives for the reform process: ensuring equal opportunities in terms of access to education for all children; improving the quality of teaching; improving the state of the country's education infrastructure; teaching independence (*auto-emploi*); regulating flow rates; and ensuring adequate financing for education (République du Bénin, 1991).

#### 4.1.2 Progress on implementation and an increased political focus on access

The implementation of reforms was driven ahead by the government with strong assistance from USAID and the World Bank.<sup>21</sup> A series of action plans were developed under the following three broad headings, each consisting of 15 core sub-activities:

1. *Improve institutional capacity*, to cover the Ministry of Education's organisational, financial and personnel management, allocation of equipment, administrative training and the promotion of public participation in the system;
2. *Improve quality*, to cover curriculum reform, teacher training and support services and examination of testing, textbooks and pedagogical documentation;
3. *Improve planning*, to cover equitable access, the development of minimum quality standards (the EQF), an education map and a management information system.

All action plans were in turn assigned to sub-committees consisting of experts in each of the areas for implementation. This allowed for clearer coordination with development partners to facilitate funding in line with government priorities. Efforts to reform the organisational structure of the system have been slow, however, and many of the other ambitious reform efforts, including a new primary curriculum and implementation of the NPE, have been plagued with delays and have, on the whole, been disappointing.<sup>22</sup>

One of the areas that quickly received political prioritisation was girls' education. While initially introduced by funding agencies as a priority issue, Welmond (2002: 105) argues that 'the Beninese leadership quickly adopted the goal of girls' education with an astonishing fervor.' The 1993 decision to waive school fees for girls in rural areas had a rapid and strong impact on girls' enrolment, and studies showed compliance by most schools. Nonetheless, there was a distinct lack of planning in the implementation of this directive, and the decision sent shock waves through the system, as it deprived schools of income at the precise moment that enrolment was swelling.

Following a change of administration in 1997, when President Soglo's lost power to former President Kérékou, the new minister of education, Padonou, prioritised education roundtables as a means of taking stock of reform programmes and bringing together the diffuse education reform goals, programmes and funding. Their main outcomes, much like those of the 1991/92 action plans, were a series of activities arranged around objectives (guaranteeing equitable access, reinforcing quality, reinforcing the institutional framework, developing vocational training, developing instruction in national languages and managing resources in a more efficient manner). While many of these activities were never fully implemented, the structure and increased coherence they gave to the process of systemic reforms allowed for gradual progress and significantly improved education outcomes, particularly in terms of guaranteeing more equitable access, in subsequent years.

<sup>20</sup> There were some differences between the issues emphasised at the EGE and those emphasised by UNESCO. For example, the former put a much greater emphasis on secondary education and on the valorisation of the teaching profession. Further, the need to rebuild and modernise crumbling school buildings was seen as more essential by EGE participants, and particularly education ministry officials and political representatives, who were said to have dominated the EGE (Welmond, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Central milestones in this process this were the signing of the 1991 USAID assistance agreement and the 1993 loan agreement with the World Bank, which both required official government backing and thus had top-level support (see Section 4.2).

<sup>22</sup> There were numerous reasons for initial problems, although Welmond (2002) also points to strict stipulations in USAID's assistance, which overly complicated disbursement procedures and were removed from the political economy of the reform agenda. Welmond further argues (2002: 116) that, 'Although the funding agencies provided constant, if not always fruitful, support for the action plans, the Ministers set their own goals and found the resources to meet them. Sometimes this meant diverting resources from the systemic reform agenda. Sometimes it meant tacitly supporting that agenda.'

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Implementation received further impetus through the development in the early 2000s of the PDDSE 2006-2015 (see Box 3), which aims to address many of the areas that have been neglected. It focuses more extensively on capacity building in the areas of planning, management, evaluation and recruitment; enhancing teaching quality (especially through the professionalisation of initial and in-service training); developing a school map; establishing a career monitoring and advancement mechanism linked to performance assessment and rational job assignments; setting up a policy of affirmative action for girls and for disadvantaged groups and regions; and expanding the role of the private sector and local communities in the provision of education. The PDDSE is currently being implemented, albeit behind schedule.<sup>23</sup>

### Box 3: Main initiatives of the PDDSE

The PDDSE 2006-2015 aims to redress imbalances through strong budgetary commitments and detailed affirmative action plans for girls and disadvantaged groups and regions. The main problems that the PDDSE intends to address include the scarcity of preschool facilities; a primary education system characterised by low retention rates and poor performance, especially for girls; the limited scope of higher education; and the threat posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

At the primary and secondary levels, the main goals are to 1) boost the elementary school completion rate to 100% by the year 2015; 2) substantially improve retention of pupils during the cycle, particularly by ensuring educational continuity over the six years of instruction; 3) reduce grade repetition, especially within two-year cycles; 4) support private education through subsidies from 2007 onward; 5) improve the quality of teaching; 6) improve the retention rate for girls in the school system; 7) generalise the system of financial aid sponsorship for the schooling of girls; 8) promote residential homes and high schools for girls and orphans; 9) substantially improve teachers' working conditions; 10) adapt the school map to regional requirements; 11) develop environmental education programmes; 12) provide incentives to promote the training of girls in educational tracks in which they are underrepresented; and 13) improve the system for the gathering and processing of educational statistics.

In addition to the successive abolition of school fees, the reopening of teacher training colleges and the planned implementation of decentralisation law, a central pillar of the PDDSE is the promotion of girls' schooling. Measures include an intensification of grassroots interventions involving teachers, local elected officials, women's groups and NGOs in order to help remove the handicaps facing girls in their schooling, help them perform better in exams and at the same time increase their representation and ensure their safety in educational establishments.

While the PDDSE is characterised by substantial ambition – both programmatically and financially – its implementation at the halfway mark has only been a partial success at best, particularly in the achievement of goals to build management and planning capacity, enhance teaching quality and develop a performance-based career advancement system for educationalists.

Source: IMF (2008); République du Bénin (2005).

#### 4.1.3 Increased resources to finance expansion of primary education

*'After the EGE, there was an obsession with education among many policymakers and politicians. Budget and long-term planning were increasingly oriented towards education.'* Education specialist, Plan Benin.

The Beninese government's prioritisation of the education sector has also manifested itself in substantial increases in education expenditure. Expressed in current prices, there was nearly a six-fold increase in total public expenditure on education between 1992 and 2006, and spending more than doubled in 2006 prices (see Table 3). The greatest increases are observed in the most recent years for which data are recorded. In terms of its current expenditure levels on education, Benin outperforms many of its neighbours in the region. These are impressive achievements considering its weak macroeconomic performance over the same time period.

<sup>23</sup> A significant factor in this delayed implementation is the frequent change of ministers and top-level officials in the education ministries. Thus, many of those who worked on the development of the PDDSE no longer work for the ministry. One frustrated education advisor argued that the PDDSE 'is a beautiful document, but nobody cares within the government to ensure that it is implemented properly.' It is also argued that many of the targets are overly ambitious.

**Table 3: Education expenditure, 1992/93-2006/07**

Year	Total expenditure in current prices (FCFA billions)	Total recurrent expenditure in constant 2006 prices (FCFA billions)	Recurrent expenditure per 6-15-year-old child (FCFA '000s)	Expenditure (recurrent and capital) as % of total expenditure (excluding debt)	Total expenditure as % of GDP
<b>1992/93</b>	15.6	35.3	24.2	16.6	2.8
<b>1996/97</b>	29.7	40.4	24.1	18.0	3.1
<b>2000/01</b>	44.9	52.8	28.0	17.2	3.3
<b>2004/05</b>	70.7	73.4	34.8	19.8	3.9
<b>2005/06</b>	82.6	84.2	39.0	18.1	4.0
<b>2006/07</b>	86.0	86.0	38.7	18.1	3.9

Source: World Bank (2009).

Current expenditure on education as percentage of GDP increased by more than one percentage point between 1992/93 (2.8%) and 2006/07 (3.9%), although this has largely stagnated as a percentage of total expenditure. This can be explained largely by the country's increased ability to raise revenue, which – at 17% of GDP – is high when compared with other low-income countries. Given high levels of revenue collection, relatively high education expenditure (at or near 20% of the budget) and a high relative allocation towards basic education, Benin, according to UNESCO analysis (2009), has been close to its best-effort threshold in terms of resource allocations to basic education. However, this neglects the fact that the country has had very low execution rates for its capital budget (generally less than 80% and frequently 30-40%).<sup>24</sup>

A second key factor that helped enable increased education expenditure was Benin's partial debt cancellation under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, which lowered the country's debt servicing payments from over 20% of total expenditure to approximately 2%. As a result, social sector budgets more than doubled within three years. It appears progress has also been made in terms of the efficient use of resources: 1% of GDP dedicated to education generated an average of 2.1 years of schooling in 2005/06, compared with 1.8 years in 2000/01 (World Bank, 2009).

Primary (and to a lesser extent tertiary) education has been the priority sub-sector within the education budget. More than 50% (and as much as 60% in some years) of education expenditure has been dedicated to primary, which has likely been influential in allowing the country to absorb the large increase in students. This is more per student (as a percentage of GDP per capita) than the regional average and, despite rising student numbers, per student expenditure in primary increased between 1996 and 2006. This increased education expenditure has been highly effective in increasing enrolment, most notably through the abolition of school fees (see Box 4). However, it is important to note that this has come at the expense of an underinvestment in secondary education.

<sup>24</sup> Further, as discussed in Section 3.3, a high proportion of recurrent expenditure is composed of rising personnel costs, most notably for teacher salaries.

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#### Box 4: Addressing financial constraints through fee abolition

Recognising the important barrier that cost represented for parents, the 1990 Beninese constitution called for progressive elimination of school fees for primary school. This has successively been achieved over the past years, beginning with the abolition of school fees for girls in low-access rural areas during the mid-1990s. This greatly accelerated enrolment rates for girls in these areas, which had been lagging behind boys' enrolment rates and was accompanied by substantial outreach activities by the government and NGOs.

Fee abolition was later extended to boys in these areas, and in 2006 school fees were abolished for all students in primary and pre-primary school. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06, the number of students in primary school increased by 2.9%; in 2006/07, there were 8.2% more students than in the previous year. School fees were replaced by grants paid to schools and were accompanied by extensive classroom construction projects, the reopening of teacher training colleges and measures to improve conditions for teachers. Fee abolition has also recently been extended to the first two years of secondary school for the 2010/11 school year, although parents must still pay 'subscription' fees, which have recently been raised.

While fee abolition has been an important factor in enabling access to education, it provides only some relief. According to World Bank (2009) simulations, fee abolition is likely to lead to a 7% decrease in household costs for primary education and a 20% decrease in costs for preschool education. This is because block grants are frequently insufficient to cope with rising demand, resulting in the need for parental contributions to finance additional teachers or classroom construction. Further, there have been frequent complaints about a lack of reliability in the disbursement of block grant payments.

Source: Atanasso (2010); World Bank (2009).

## 4.2 Increased donor resources to implement reforms

Benin has a high dependence on foreign aid, and donors have played a central role throughout the education reform process. Aid is estimated at approximately 10-15% of total expenditure and 3% of GDP in recent years. Beginning with the heavy involvement of USAID in the implementation of the post-1990 reforms, the number of donors has increased, as has the quantity of aid to education, most notably through the FTI Catalytic Fund. An equally significant aspect has been the key role of donors in providing technical expertise in the development of plans and in putting pressure on the Beninese government to carry out institutional reforms to improve the sector's effectiveness. This has raised questions as to the extent to which the Beninese government is driving the policy agenda and whether the improvements are sustainable in the long term (see, for example, Essè Iko, 2007, in Olukoshi and Diarra, 2007).

### 4.2.1 Substantial investments to complement the reform process

From the beginning of the Beninese reform process, donors have been highly influential in the implementation of initiatives, and at times in shaping the direction of policy. For example, as discussed earlier, UNESCO and UNDP were involved in providing the necessary diagnostic analysis to inform education reforms. USAID, UN agencies and the World Bank have funded education programmes throughout the country, particularly during the early stages of the reform process.

USAID in particular was an early supporter of Benin's democratisation process (see McMahon, 2002), and has provided substantial resources for the country's education reforms.<sup>25</sup> The 1991 assistance agreement signed between USAID and the Beninese government was the first legal agreement laying out the reform programme. This contributed significantly to the development of the action plans which, in return for several million dollars of 'non-project assistance' (i.e. the promise of financial assistance if certain policies were adopted), the Beninese government committed to implementing. The main objectives of US assistance included improving quality; increasing equity so that all primary-age students could attend schools meeting EQF standards; establishing a sustainable financial resource base for primary schooling; and developing systems for effective and efficient planning and management with widespread public participation (see Welmond, 2002). As a result, the agency's support has been focused on developing the NPE, producing textbooks and teacher guides and teacher training.

<sup>25</sup> The agency's engagement, following the EGE, was in part a 'democracy reward,' coinciding with broader US anti-communist foreign policy objectives. However, Welmond (2002) argues, the main policy priorities that USAID supported were derived from UNESCO's analysis rather than from the EGE outcomes.

The most notable aspect of USAID's involvement has been the success of programmes promoting girls' education. While this was a priority from the start of USAID's engagement, it received a fresh impetus in the late 1990s, when girls' education became a global policy priority for the agency, enabling the allocation of several million more dollars. Most respondents interviewed for a recent evaluation of USAID support stated that, as a result of the combined impact of various programmes, 'girls' enrollment, retention, and success in school is on the rise,' with USAID's role in the education sector 'the most important factor in rebuilding the system' (Midling et al., 2005).

The World Bank has also had a highly influential role in supporting and, to a certain extent, steering the reform process. In a 1993 loan agreement, the World Bank agreed to provide substantial support to school construction, teacher training and the development of institutional capacity. However, attached to World Bank support was the important condition of reducing the teacher wage bill. Containing public sector salaries and promoting education spending was temporarily achieved by means of the large-scale hiring of contract teachers, with significant long-term consequences.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a strong increase both in the amount of aid to education and in the number of development partners involved. The importance of donors is widely recognised: one school inspector working in a low-access area of Alibori said, 'thanks to the development partners, there have been real improvements here. They contribute greatly to ensuring that school materials are supplied and shortages addressed.' Table 4 lists key donors and main areas of activity.

**Table 4: Key development partners and principal areas of intervention, 2001-2007**

<b>Development partner</b>	<b>Principal areas of intervention</b>
African Development Bank	School construction
Belgium	School construction
Denmark	Primary education, vocational training, integration of disabled children in schools
European Union	Vocational training, school/class construction
France	Vocational and technical training, educational management, technical assistance
Germany	Vocational training and apprenticeships
Islamic Development Bank	School construction
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries	School construction
Peace Corps	Girls' education and improvement of students' knowledge of environment
Switzerland	Literacy, vocational training and apprenticeships
UN Children's Fund	Girls' education, community participation
US Agency for International Development	NPE, girls' education, involvement of parents in schools, management of school system resources
World Bank/International Development Association	School rehabilitation, promotion of girls' education, improvement of educational management capacity, provision of school textbooks, recruitment of teachers, budgetary support to the education sector

Source: Midling et al. (2005).

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Aid to education has contributed substantially to the improvement of the schooling system in the past decade. Particularly, the support of NGOs working in low-access areas has been integral to improvements in access (this aspect will be discussed further in Section 4.3), and donors have been instrumental in enabling this work.

Total estimated commitments by development partners for 2001-2007 in primary, secondary and vocational and technical education are FCFA 47.2 billion (\$87.4 million), of which FCFA 31.8 billion (\$58.9 million) was direct support to the Ministry budget. Although Denmark, Switzerland, the International Development Association (IDA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) provide targeted budgetary support, the essential support most financial and technical partners channel to the education sector is project-based (Midling et al., 2005).

According to UNESCO (2009, 2011), the share of education in total aid increased from 10% in 1999-2001 to 14% in 2007/08.<sup>26</sup> Further, total aid to education increased substantially from \$42 million on average in 2002 and 2003 to an average of \$75.5 million per annum in 2007 and 2008. Aid to basic education more than doubled from \$14 million in 2002/03 to \$37 million in 2007/08, resulting in the average primary school-age child receiving \$30 in 2008 (the average for SSA in 2007/08 was \$13.50). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Creditor Reporting System, the most significant providers of aid to education in the past four years (2006-2009) have been France, Germany, the Netherlands, the US, Switzerland, Belgium and the World Bank.

#### 4.2.2 Improving coordination and addressing low disbursement rates

Donor support has been most effective in areas where donors have been able to coordinate activities effectively and have worked in close cooperation with local partners and the government. With the role of donors in the sector increasing, there has been a gradual move towards a focus on greater aid effectiveness and coordination among donors. Since 2003, there has been a coordination group of key development partners in the sector (currently under Danish leadership), which has been effective in helping them avoid duplication and provide a more coordinated policy stance in discussions with the government. Development partners played a key role in the development of the PDDSE, which provides increased policy coherence and planning to help achieve EFA goals.

However, as we have seen, the PDDSE's implementation has lagged behind schedule, and there is a widely recognised need to increase synergies between development partners and the government. Five development partners (the World Bank, France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland) are currently working through a joint financing arrangement providing targeted sector budget support through the ministry. Approximately 45% of aid to education is channelled through government systems (UNESCO, 2009). However, the country's low disbursement and implementation capacity remains a substantial problem, with significant sums – frequently up to half of the capital budget – not being disbursed. Implementation capacity and ensuring efficient use of resources constitute two major obstacles to the improvement of the education system.

The role of development partners is likely to remain significant in the coming years, and direct aid to education has increased substantially, through a \$76.1 million multiyear FTI grant agreed in April 2008. This is substantially more in absolute terms than has been awarded to countries with significantly larger populations of school-age children (Ethiopia, for example, was awarded a \$70 million grant; Ghana received \$33 million). However, disbursement remains a substantial problem in taking advantage of this substantial boost to primary education – estimated at 17% of the total education budget for 2009. Government and NGO representatives complain about the complexity and number of steps entailed in receiving funds, whereas donors feel these are necessary to ensure accountability and feel there is a lack of commitment on the part of the government to ensuring disbursement, particularly by implementing decentralisation reforms.

However, there are also concerns that the heavy engagement by development partners – while necessary to provide funding to the sector – is turning education in Benin into 'a playground for donors' (Fichner, 2009), in which the state is progressively disengaging itself from the education system (Essè Iko, 2007, in Olukoshi and Diarra, 2007). It is thus becoming increasingly unclear to what extent the support development partners are providing promotes a government-owned central strategic vision. It appears foreign aid has been most effective where it has directly supported national priorities – such as girls' education or capital-intensive supply-side investments (e.g. the construction of schools). It has been more varied in qualitative areas, such as curriculum development and institutional reforms. While informants suggest an increasing awareness of this problem, ensuring that the relationship between the government and donors becomes a more effective partnership will be integral to addressing many of the remaining challenges.

<sup>26</sup> However, an estimated 90% of donor funding supports primary education, and there is an increasingly widely recognised need for a better balance in favour of secondary and TVET.

### 4.3 Changing popular attitudes about education at the local level

One of the central achievements of Benin's education reforms has been the rapid expansion of access and the closing of the gender gap. While the government's commitment to this goal and increased government and development partner financial resources to enable its achievement have been necessary, these have not been sufficient on their own. The country's progress towards UPE has also been the product of a continuous effort on the part of the government, and particularly the large number of international and national NGOs, to engage the population on the importance of education and to respond to local socioeconomic and cultural concerns throughout the country that have constrained the enrolment of boys and girls. These efforts to increase the willingness of parents to send their children to school and often to participate directly in the education system have been an integral factor in Benin's improvements over the past two decades.

#### 4.3.1 Stimulating girls' enrolment through outreach and affirmative action

Government efforts to increase access were driven by successful outreach throughout the country to promote enrolment and address demand-side constraints, including socio-cultural concerns on the part of parents, complemented by initiatives that facilitated access – most notably the gradual abolition of school fees. Since 1990, there has been an evolution in people's attitudes, particularly in urban areas, and there is now a shared goal to eradicate the gender divide in education.

Central to the action plan on increasing opportunities for access was an analysis of what was needed to ensure that all children, girls and boys, enrolled and stayed in school. This included addressing the socioeconomic and socio-cultural constraints to enrolment through widespread outreach and information campaigns led by (mostly female) government officials to address views about education held by parents, community elders, religious leaders and out-of-school children. Officials recognised early on 'that the constraints to girls' education were local in nature and that generalizing successful approaches was not necessarily the most effective strategy. Rather it was important to work closely with each community and identify and respond to local constraints' (Welmond, 2002: 105). Officials in turn worked closely with NGOs and development partners to address supply-side constraints and increase school construction in rural areas.

The strong emphasis placed on girls' education contrasted starkly with the highly patriarchal nature of Beninese society, and many have remained sceptical of the value of enrolling girls. Efforts to combat these norms have included the prioritisation of girls (especially in rural areas) during the successive abolition of fees, mentorship programmes in which older girls support the education of young girls, prizes awarded to girls in primary school to promote retention and eventual enrolment in secondary school and secondary school scholarships. In recognition of the dangers that sexual violence poses to girls on the way to school, secondary school boarding houses have been built in rural communes. Increasing the age of marriage as well as stronger penalties for sexual assault have complemented this, although enforcement of these laws has thus far been viewed as insufficient.

Affirmative action programmes have also played a central part in the PDDSE, most visibly through the 2005-launched *Toutes les Filles à l'École* ('[Enrol] All Girls in School') campaign led by the government and 22 development partners. These efforts target communes where the primary GER for girls is under 60%. Campaigns attempt to mobilise stakeholders in areas with high disparities through outreach activities, school feeding, improvements in school infrastructure, adult literacy programmes and revenue-generating activities for parents, particularly mothers.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Substantial NGO presence to work at highly local levels

A central aspect of ongoing enrolment efforts has been the increased involvement of local communities, supported by NGOs (often with financial assistance from development partners). This has been highly influential in the past two decades in engaging parents and complementing government efforts. In the words of one informant: 'Regardless of what happens in Benin's education system, we can always count on the fact that in Benin there is a strong civil society.'

Similarly, a recent study examining substantial progress in Mono (Affo, 2003), where the girls' GER increased from 29.1% in 1991/92 to 96.9% in 2001/02, found that the role of NGOs, as well development partners such as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), was instrumental in this change, through their responsiveness to particular community-specific needs. Affo points to the enormously important role played in increasing enrolment by teacher training, gender sensitisation initiatives, programmes enabling revenue-generating activities for women and extensive cooperation with parent-teacher associations (PTAs) on infrastructure and teacher hiring.

<sup>27</sup> While this campaign has been highly successful in increasing enrolment figures, the government has responded to concerns that this was promoting reverse discrimination by changing the focus to all children rather than just girls. The campaign has been renamed *Tous les Enfants à l'École*.

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While the substantial efforts of civil society and government organisations to persuade parents to send their children to school have contributed to increased enrolment, this has also put strain on educational facilities. Given the country's severe resource constraints and institutional problems, NGOs have been innovative in creating cost-effective solutions to address qualitative issues based on the problems and concerns specific to rural villages and schools; they have, in the words of one NGO programme director, functioned as 'education laboratories piloting new ideas.' NGOs have further proven to be particularly effective at increasing parental participation in schooling – most notably through the establishment of mothers' associations (AMEs) (see Box 5). Moreover, as NGOs tend to be made up of Beninese staff, frequently local to the areas they are working in, they are creating opportunities for capacity development that is likely to work in favour of sustainability.

#### **Box 5: Empowering women and increasing enrolment – mothers' associations**

A particularly innovative approach that has been scaled up substantially in Benin has been the empowerment of mothers through the creation of mothers' associations (AMEs). AMEs were piloted in Benin in 2003 by the NGO World Education, based on a model that was successful in Burkina Faso. As existing PTAs were dominated by men, and were viewed as only moderately effective in monitoring schools and promoting education, AMEs were created to ensure a focus on the specific demand-side constraints entailed in enrolling boys and girls. There are now more than 500 AMEs throughout Benin, with many working in the most disadvantaged areas.

AMEs are set up following a thorough diagnostic and participatory planning process in order to engage as many women as possible. They meet regularly and facilitate the work of the school headmaster and of the PTA in ensuring that deficits are recognised and addressed. One male PTA member interviewed for this study said, 'while we were sceptical at first, we have understood the importance of women in our community and in the education of our children.' AMEs have since helped collect funds for construction projects and the hiring of additional teachers. More importantly, they have created an opening for women to engage within the community and take a more active role in school management. Participation in AMEs also facilitates collaboration in other areas of women's lives. For example, some groups take turns taking care of young children. This enables women to maintain their economic activities without burdening their daughters. Some also engage in collective income generating activities.

Source: Kora (2010); Midling et al. (2005); interviews.

#### **4.3.3 Decentralisation as a means to increase participation?**

The effectiveness of past outreach campaigns has had a substantial impact in terms of ensuring that increased government and development partner resources devoted to education result in higher enrolment. Even after fee abolition, parents still finance as much as a quarter of total expenditure on education and are in charge of hiring additional community teachers. A very slow process of decentralisation and de-concentration to lower levels is complementing this greater parental participation in the education system. Improving the effectiveness of decentralisation efforts provides a substantial hope among many for further progress in the coming years.

As stipulated in the 2005 Decentralisation Law, decentralisation currently provides only for commune involvement in the allocation of equipment to and construction and maintenance of primary schools through grants. It is argued that this is in part because of an unwillingness of the ministry to devolve adequate responsibility, and further because of a lack of capacity in commune administrative bodies. Elected municipalities are generally only tangentially involved with the financing and management of schools (de Grauwe et al., 2005).

However, it is assumed that over the coming years this will be broadened to encompass greater local involvement in school financial and human resource management. It is further envisioned that decentralisation will gradually aim to ensure greater fiscal equalisation between communes. Since 2008, the establishment of a countrywide financing and equalisation mechanism – the *Fonds d'Appui au Développement des Communes* – has been underway. Transfers consist of several shares, including a block grant, an equalisation grant and a performance grant. The equalisation grant is calculated according to population, surface area, poverty and urbanisation, whereas the performance grant is distributed according to the performance of local governments, based on the quality of operations of local government organs and municipal administration, as well as the ability of local governments to increase their own revenues (Boschmann, 2009).

Many informants argued that, given substantial outreach efforts in recent years, there is a desire to ensure greater involvement of decentralised authorities, including mayors, regional education offices and PTAs/AMEs. The recently initiated process of holding elections for mayors could create a more effective means of ensuring that parents can voice concerns over school conditions to locally elected representatives.

## 5. Conclusions

Benin has made remarkable progress on many fronts in improving access and equity in the education system. The country may be on track to achieve UPE with gender equity in the coming years – something that will likely elude most of its West African neighbours.

### 5.1 Key lessons

- **Achieving the most within a constrained environment:** Benin's ambitious education reforms have not been universally successful. However, in its enormous expansion of access to primary and secondary education, the country provides an impressive example of what can be achieved in a resource-constrained country with relatively low levels of central and local institutional and planning capacity, through sustained political and budgetary prioritisation in a relatively short time.
- **The importance of extensive and evidence-based consultation:** Extensive diagnostic studies (both by the Beninese government and by UNESCO/UNDP) of the education sector provided an important basis for reforms and allowed for the establishment of a consensus on what priorities should look like and how highly context-specific, socio-cultural and economic constraints to access could be addressed. Further, the EGE and the establishment of the action plans were based on extensive debates among all stakeholders. While this is not a sufficient condition for their successful implementation, the urgency with which many Beninese view improving the quality and equity of the education system is striking and is likely to create pressure to improve existing deficiencies.
- **Development partners are important, but cannot substitute for the government:** The role of donors and NGOs has been central to Benin's improvements. Benin's education reforms have attempted to create a fundamentally new system from scratch, and extensive external involvement and resources have been central to this. This has not functioned well throughout, but has been most effective when top-level government aims have matched donor programmatic priorities (as with the expansion of girls' education). Creating an acceptable level of basic education for all will be a long process that will require sustained momentum and increased resource commitments beyond 2015; willingness on the part of the government to clearly spell out priorities and develop effective planning mechanisms to achieve these; and acceptance on the part of development partners of the need to better understand political processes and constraints and to engage constructively.
- **The importance of girls' education:** There has been growing recognition among all stakeholders, and increasingly among parents, that the education of girls plays a central role in the country's development prospects. Efforts to prioritise girls' education mean hundreds of thousands of girls have now had the opportunity to at least complete primary school, and many have advanced to higher levels of education. Given the strong correlation between maternal levels of education and the likelihood of children going to school, this has created a foundation for a more educated populace that is likely to pay dividends down the line.

### 5.2 Challenges

Despite ongoing improvements in access, further progress in education remains constrained by deep-seeded political, institutional and economic problems. The enormous post-1990 expansion has placed severe stresses on the system which are being addressed only gradually. Challenges over the coming years include the following:

- **Ensuring supply keeps up with demand:** Particularly in rural areas, many schools remain incomplete and are severely understaffed, while poverty continues to constitute an important barrier to education. The importance of ensuring that these obstacles are addressed through an effective combination of demand- and supply-side measures remains vital. Even if initial access to primary school is almost universal, dropout rates remain high and progression to secondary is low. Over 700,000 Beninese children between the ages of 10 and 16 are out of school. While the country remains resource-constrained, its low absorption capacity further magnifies this problem, and it will be important to focus more comprehensively on the specific nature of planning and political constraints in the administration of the education system.

- **Addressing the low quality of teaching:** The impressive quantitative strides made over the past two decades have exacerbated a quality crisis. While the country has fundamentally reformed the curriculum and effectively diagnosed many of the problems holding back education quality, any improvements in this regard can occur only if teachers are better prepared and more motivated to teach, particularly in rural areas. The reopening of teacher training colleges is an important first step, but frequent strikes, teacher absenteeism and a lack of incentives for improved performance constrain progress. In the words of one informant, 'there is a continued need to emphasise student learning. If children cannot read or write when they finish school, it's as if they never had access in the first place.' While efforts to increase teacher familiarity with the NPE are progressing, the new curriculum alone will not provide a higher level of quality in the absence of sufficient teacher training, lower PTRs and a more equitable allocation of teaching materials and textbooks.
- **Engagement at ministry level:** There is widespread concern over an increasing politicisation of the education system and a lack of stability and policy continuity owing to frequent ministerial reshuffles. This has led to a lack of recognised and continuous leadership in the sector, with capable technocrats retiring early to work for development partners or losing motivation. During fieldwork, almost every office in the education ministries had televisions blaring during work hours, and morale was said to be low among officials. This has made the effective implementation of plans a near impossibility, a situation that has been reinforced by the multiple parallel implementation units for donor programmes and wariness among development partners of government systems. While the heavy engagement of foreign donors has been an important driver of progress in the sector, there are legitimate questions as to the extent to which the Beninese government at this point 'owns' the policy agenda and is driving key priorities, including implementation of the PDDSE. Increasing decentralisation efforts may be one means of creating a more directly accountable administrative system, although at this point institutional capacity at local level remains low.
- **Demographic pressure and the sustainability of progress:** High fertility rates mean that the education system needs to keep growing at a rapid pace. According to some estimates, 10 additional classrooms need to be built each day just to maintain current rates of enrolment. This will put substantial strains on the national budget. Sustainability, in terms of long-term budgetary demands, is questionable considering the high salaries of teachers, the end of the hiring freeze and efforts to integrate contract/community teachers into the civil service. While a return to pre-1990 conditions is highly unlikely, it will be vital to sustain and expand current levels of government and donor expenditure, while making more efficient use of these resources. An increased reliance on non-state service provision may provide an effective means of containing expenditure, but does not provide an equitable alternative to a national public education system. However, as some interviewees have pointed out, there is a strong case to be made for the development of privately run teacher training colleges to complement the currently insufficient number of government-run training opportunities and the high demand for training positions in these colleges.
- **Neglect of secondary education and skills development:** There is still an insufficient focus on secondary education in the context of the country's development priorities. As one informant said, 'among the political class there is a feeling that, as long as everyone goes to school, they have done their job.' Benin's formal sector is only 5% of GDP – half of the average for SSA. However, the lack of private sector jobs and an inadequate focus on skills development and vocational training means that many students are leaving school without any viable prospects of joining the labour force. This has become an increased priority in recent years, but resource allocation remains highly inequitable, with secondary education and vocational training under-funded and highly reliant on private institutions. Tertiary education – with one of the highest enrolment rates in Africa – remains free and continues to receive a disproportionate share of resources.

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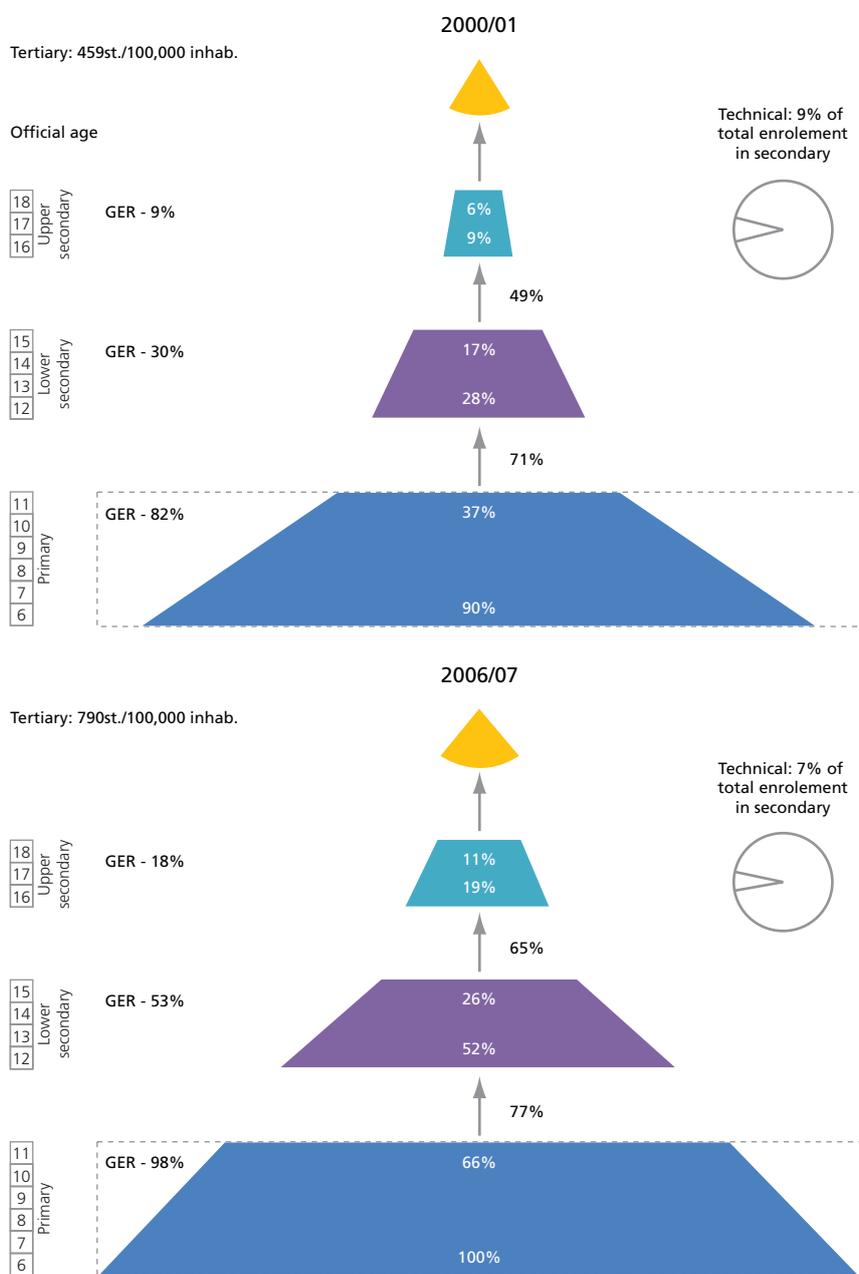
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# Annex 1: Education pyramid 2001/02 vs. 2006/07



Source: World Bank (2009).

## Annex 2: Education data – comparing Benin and its neighbours

### Progression and completion indicators in West Africa

Country	Gross Grade 1 admission	Gross primary completion	Gross Grade 7 admission	Gross completion first cycle secondary	Gross Grade 10 admission	Gross secondary completion
<b>Benin</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>
Burkina Faso	81	33	20	11	9	6
Cameroon	112	62	37	33	17	10
Côte d'Ivoire	72	48	29	22	13	12
Ghana	95	72	68	53	23	18
Guinea	75	60	39	25	23	10
Mali	68	43	33	21	8	6
Niger	58	28	18	6	3	2
Nigeria	117	76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Togo	90	72	61	42	21	9
<b>Avg. 10 countries</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>African avg.</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>

Note: Data for most West African countries are for 2004/05  
Source: World Bank (2009).

### Progression and completion indicators in West Africa

Country	Gross primary enrolment rate (%)		
	1990/91	2006/07	Growth: 1990/91 and 2006/07
<b>Benin</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>
Burkina Faso	33	71	38
Cameroon	91	110	19
Côte d'Ivoire	75	72	-3
Guinea	34	91	57
Ghana	74	104	30
Mali	27	83	56
Niger	29	53	24
Nigeria	83	97	14
Togo	109	97	-12
<b>Avg. 10 African countries</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>26.6</b>

Source: World Bank (2009).

### Regional comparison for post-primary enrolment rates

Country	First cycle secondary GER (%)	Second cycle secondary GER (%)	TVET (students per 100,000 inhabitants)	Tertiary (students per 100,000 inhabitants)
<b>Benin (1998/99)</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>Benin (2006/07)</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>790</b>
Burkina Faso	19	7	175	240
Cameroon	35	19	2,533	623
Côte d'Ivoire	29	15	N/A	604
Ghana	64	21	99	330
Guinea	38	26	91	280
Mali	35	10	348	278
Niger	12	3	37	80
Nigeria	37	32	N/A	1,024
Togo	62	20	338	372
<b>Avg. 10 West African countries</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>418</b>
<b>Avg. sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>299</b>

Note: Data for most West African countries are for 2004/05  
Source: World Bank (2009).

### Progression and achievement indicators in West Africa

Country	Gross Grade 1 admission	Gross primary achievement	Gross Grade 7 admission	Gross completion first cycle secondary	Gross Grade 10 admission	Gross secondary completion
<b>Benin</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>
Burkina Faso	81	33	20	11	9	6
Cameroon	112	62	37	33	17	10
Côte d'Ivoire	72	48	29	22	13	12
Ghana	95	72	68	53	23	18
Guinea	75	60	39	25	23	10
Mali	68	43	33	21	8	6
Niger	58	28	18	6	3	2
Nigeria	117	76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Togo	90	72	61	42	21	9
<b>Avg. 10 countries</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>African avg.</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16</b>

Note: Data for most West African countries are for 2004/05  
Source: World Bank (2009).

**PASEC results for select African francophone countries**

Year	Country	Grade 2			Grade 5		
		French	Maths	Total	French	Maths	Total
1995/96	Burkina Faso	56.2	53.0	54.6	44.3	46.9	45.6
1995/96	Côte d'Ivoire	57.5	44.7	51.1	50.9	41.2	46
1995/96	Senegal	43.2	45.1	44.2	34.6	37.2	36
2003/04	Mauritania	N/A	31.2	N/A	18.7	20.8	19.7
2003/04	Chad	41.1	42.5	41.8	28.9	33.0	30.9
<b>2004/05</b>	<b>Benin</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>35.1</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>30.4</b>
2004/05	Cameroon	66.5	55.8	61.2	45.8	46.4	46.1
2004/05	Madagascar	55.6	58.8	57.2	34.5	54.9	44.7
2005/06	Central African Republic	N/A	N/A	N/A	23.8	27.8	25.8
	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>37.4</b>

Source: PASEC (2005).

**Comparison of unit costs by education level (in % of GDP per capita)**

	Primary	Secondary, first cycle	Secondary, second cycle	TVET	Tertiary
<b>Benin 1996</b>	11.8	22.6 (total)	84.6	305.2	44.3
<b>Benin 2006</b>	13.1	10.9	31.9 (14.3 total for secondary)	120.7	133.5
<b>Avg. 11 countries in West Africa region</b>	11.7	29.5	65.6	128.6	222.1

Source: World Bank (2009).

## Annex 3: List of interviewees

The following expert informants were interviewed by the authors prior to, during, and after a two-week field-visit in Benin (2-16 October 2010):

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Leonard Wantchekon	Director, Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy, New York University and Cotonou
Steen Sonne Andersen	Senior Technical Adviser and Focal Point for Education, DANIDA
Clemence Fatoke	Director, Promotion of Education
Cynthia Taha	Basic Education Team Leader, USAID
Pierre Kamano	West Africa Education Advisor, World Bank
Joseph DeStefano	Interim President, Center for Collaboration and the Future of Schooling and former consultant for USAID in Benin
Mahoudi Johnson	Permanent Technical Secretary of the Plan Decennal de deDéveloppement du Secteur de l'Éducation, MEMP
Emmanuel Gnahoui-David	Education Program Advisor for DANIDA and Former Director of Decentralisation in Education and international Cooperation, MEMP
Eric Sossouhounto	Education Advisor, Netherlands Aid
Agnes Boco-Ali	Team Leader of Plan d'Action Accès (1993-2003)
Gabriel Dossou	C/CS Cotonou Lagune
Focus group of 4 teachers	School in Cotonou Lagune
Anseleme Amoussou	Primary School Headmaster, Cotonou
IssaouGado	Director, Institute of Teacher Training and Education Research
Roch Ahokpossi	Head School Inspector for Atlantique/ Littoral region
Hyacinth Gbaye	Education Advisor, World Bank Benin
Sulpice Dossou	UNICEF Education Expert
Djossou Deha Victorine	Education Advisor, Plan Benin
Djibril Debourou	Professor at University Abomey-Calavi and Deputy of National Assembly, former coordinator of education projects for UNDP/UNESCO (1989-1993)
Tchilao Yollou Salamou	Director of Primary Education, MEMP
André Dedocoton	School inspector, Malanville
Name to be confirmed	Multi-Grade Classroom Teacher, Malanville
Latifou Yessoufou	Program Director, World Education
Alidou Salaam	Mayor of Malanville
Ca. 20 parents	PTA and AME, small town outside Malanville
Maurice Garnier	Education consultant and professor emeritus (University of Indiana)
Alan Miller	Project Director, World Education, Parakou