



Cameroon

Country Context

The Cameroon education system is composed of two sub-systems: the Anglophone and the Francophone sub-systems. This education system reflects colonial heritage from Britain and France. Efforts have been underway since 1985 to harmonise these two systems. Formal education is under three ministries: the Ministry of National Education (from nursery to secondary education); the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training; and the Ministry of Higher Education. The administrative structure in Cameroon is centralised requiring endorsement of the central government, represented by line ministries. The Ministry of National Education at the national level makes education policies and at the Provincial and Divisional levels there are the Delegations of Education with inspectorate support at the sub-Division or District levels. There is however no known education policy document, the process of putting one in place commenced in 1995 when the National Education Forum was held.

There are four main actors involved in education in Cameroon. These include government at the National, Provincial, Divisional, Sub-Divisional, District and Village levels; civil society, international development agencies and the Private sector. Civil society organisations both local and international play very limited or no role in the education policy process. The Cameroon government has demonstrated its will to promote Education for All goals. The National EFA plan has however not entered the implementation stage despite the setting up within the Ministry of Education of an EFA Permanent Autonomous Technical Unit for the implementation of this plan. Cameroonians even at the Ministry of Education (especially at the external services) do not yet have access to this National EFA Plan of Action.

In 2000, the school age population at the primary level (6-12 years) was about 2.8 million. In 2000/2001, 2.69 million pupils enrolled, an enrolment comprising children aged less than six years, and especially those aged more than 12 years. A good number of school age children are therefore not attending school. This state of affairs is due to several factors like inadequate funding of education leading to parents paying user fees; paucity of classrooms (20% of which are temporary and improvised structures) and partly to insufficient number of teachers, with a 1 to 63 teacher - pupil ratio, a ratio that the Ministry of Education plans to reduce to 1 to 47 by 2011. The gross enrolment rate for formal education dropped from close to 100% in the 80s to 71% in 1995/96 and rose slightly to 78% in 1997/98. The gross enrolment rate for pre-school children is low (about 10.6%) and lower in the provinces of Adamawa (5.3%), North (4.5%) and the Far North (0.7%). Between 1996 and

2000, enrolments in private schools doubled. School enrolment is not matched by teacher supply.

Key Achievements

- ❑ Establishment of COSCEC as national education coalition with 60 members
- ❑ Stronger relations between civil society and government developed
- ❑ Production and Distribution of the draft national EFA plan by COSCEC in French and English
- ❑ Celebration of the GWA in Cameroon for the first time.

Breakdown by Criteria

CRITERION 1

Resources in Cameroon have been refocused to concentrate solely on criterion one. CEF helped to put in place a coalition called COSCEC (Coalition of Education Civil Society Organisations in Cameroon), which comprises over 60 members and has received recognition from UNESCO and the Ministry of Education in Cameroon. The EFA week was celebrated in remote areas of the country as well as in the capital city. A leaflet has been produced and exposure visits taken place to share information and best practice, and it is recognised that capacity must be transferred from the CEF secretariat to the coalition secretariat. The MTR comments on better communication between CSOs, NGOs and Government but mentions that Government expectations are not always being met. The MTR reports some significant challenges that still remain. Decision making within the coalition has remained at a very high level and there hasn't been enough information dissemination to members - namely documentation of COSCEC plans and activities. The identification of CSOs is limited and to date partnerships with Government and NGOs have not been formalised. The MTR presents a very frank assessment of progress including a list of the internal and external problems. Importantly, some contextual difficulties are also listed. The report explains that CEF could benefit from greater institutional support from the administering agencies and that to an extent the CEF and the coalition have become indistinguishable, resulting in coalition failures tarnishing CEF. Key lessons include the following:

- It takes a lot of time and is a complex challenge to build partnerships and confidence when introducing a new programme.
- Poverty and the search for funds have made many CSOs uncomfortable with partnership and coalition.

Case Study: Implementing the Global Week of Action (GWA)

The Kilum Strategic Development Group (KISDEG) is a local education/human rights 'NGO' with headquarters in the remote Oku in Bui Division in the North West province of Cameroon. KISDEG is working in North West, Centre and West Cameroon. It was created in 2000 and its education actions have concentrated on access for nomadic children.

During the coalition building meeting and CEF Cameroon workshop organised in February 2003 KISDEG learnt about EFA, MDGs, and of course CEF. Since then, on a purely voluntary basis, they have carried forward the discussions based on this meeting. They have facilitated Global Week of Action activities in all three provinces where they have activities since 2003. They have maintained relations with other NGOs, conversing regularly with the coalition secretariat, to support networking and liaising with other networks, especially during the organisation of main events like the GWA.

During the GWA 2004, they gathered the posters and working tools for the week through networking with Global March Against Child Labour. They then went ahead to organise activities in very remote and rural areas in the provinces in which they are represented. They succeeded in bringing MPs, Mayors and other authorities to schools in these areas.

In their search to get street children participate in the GWA 2004, they encountered Adjike Godwill. He left school in class 4 primary, and then left Nigeria at the age of 13 to sell in Bata in Equatorial Guinea. Chased out along side other Cameroonians from Equatorial Guinea he was found living in the streets. Discussions were engaged with the Nigerian embassy in Cameroon, and this child has been sent back to Nigeria, to his home in Abia state. It is not clear whether he'll go back to school or continue in business but at least he has reached his home and is no longer a stranded street child.