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ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN COMMONWEALTH AFRICA – LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

A study for the Commonwealth Secretariat

Contents

**ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN
COMMONWEALTH AFRICA – LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE**

"The person who asks questions doesn't lose their way"

Nigerian proverb

1. INTRODUCTION

The Question

1.   This report asks and tries to answer one question: *How can Commonwealth developing countries, once having attained Universal Primary Education (UPE) – assuming they will be successful – maintain it?* Some have attained it before, but have had setbacks and have not been able to maintain it. Their experience can provide guidelines for education policy-makers on what directions to take and which pitfalls to anticipate and, preferably, avoid. These guidelines should obviously be useful in informing strategies for *reaching* UPE as well.

2.   All Commonwealth countries have committed themselves to the establishment (or re-establishment) of UPE by the year 2015. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report for 2006 has raised serious doubts, however, as to whether a number of countries, particularly Africa can reach that goal, [1] They say progress towards UPE has been slow overall since the World Education Forum in Dakar." Yet some of the nations now apparently struggling have in the recent past come near to UPE, at least in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs). Moreover, there has been important progress since the Dakar conference. Kenya has moved up 13 points on UPE., Tanzania 40 points, Zambia 17 points and Ghana 8 points (these represent four of the countries studied for this project – see below).

3.   Our enquiry into the vicissitudes of primary education in five African countries was undertaken to learn from collective experience, for the benefit of Commonwealth policy-makers. It has tried to reclaim memory, (which has been in danger of getting lost), of what happened in some diverse African countries, and to look at what lay behind their achievements in UPE and the setbacks they subsequently underwent.

4.   Every country obviously has specific political, socio-economic and cultural circumstances, which will affect educational demand and colour educational provision; so no one would claim that there is a universal magic formula for arriving at UPE and staying there. But from the experience of five very different countries it has been possible to draw up some general lessons and basic principles. Their validity derives from the concrete examples studied.

5.   The five countries were chosen for their diversity. They are geographically spread, Ghana and Nigeria from the West, Kenya and Tanzania from the East and Zambia from the Central-South. They also entered into independence after the colonial period in very different circumstances. While Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria each had a sizeable educated class, Zambia

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[1] Countries rated to have a low chance of achieving the goal are (Commonwealth countries underlined):
Benin, <u>Botswana</u>, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, <u>Gambia</u>, <u>Ghana</u>, <u>Kenya</u>, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, <u>Namibia</u>, Niger, Senegal, <u>Swaziland</u>, <u>United Republic of Tanzania</u>, <u>Zambia</u>, <u>Zimbabwe</u>

had only 106 graduates. While Ghana had good reserves mainly from cocoa and minerals and Nigeria and Zambia had the economic advantage of substantial mineral resources which enriched them at the time, Kenya and Tanzania were less favoured, Tanzania, having almost no financial reserves to fall back on. Nigeria, with its very large population, differed from the rest in its government structures, having a complex federation within which to evolve and administer education policies. The ruling ideologies have also varied, ranging from African socialism and *ujamaa* to pragmatic capitalism.

6.   Three of the countries – Ghana, Kenya and Zambia – were studied in greater depth, and there was relatively plentiful information about all of them - solid statistical evidence and continuity of data. Two other countries were selected for less intensive study. It was believed to be important to gain at least some understanding of what happened in Nigeria because of its size and significance in Africa (despite the paucity of reliable data there) and also in Tanzania because of its achievements in the face of very strained resources. Had time and resources allowed it, it might have been appropriate to add other countries, e.g. Malawi and Uganda.

7.   *This paper is about the general lessons drawn from the five case-studies.* The detailed studies will be published in book form by the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2007. References are not constantly given here since this would interrupt the discussion, but all the conclusions came from the research. *The paper first looks at some major contextual and analytical issues for policy-makers, then describes some of the common aspects of past UPE efforts and then goes on to a detailed look at factors likely to help or hinder the sustainability of UPE – i.e. what plans and strategies should work.*

UPE in International and Commonwealth Context

8.   In the 1960s, drives towards UPE were fuelled by visions of nation-building. There was *determined political leadership and social will.* These two factors remain crucial. UPE always depends on committed political leadership and active community participation and support. Such stories as those of the early days of *harambee* in Kenya and *ujamaa* in Tanzania can still teach us this.

9.   The wider context is now very different. There is a much greater <u>international</u> commitment through agreement on Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals. This has provided the momentum for a renewed drive to UPE in developing countries and prompted the devotion of substantial new external resources to it. Paralleled with debt relief, African countries have therefore more financial resources to achieve their aims. There is, however, a serious question as to whether, in the enthusiasm of international gatherings, Commonwealth African countries may have entered on unrealistic undertakings. Given the realisation that UPE programmes require very long-term lead times (e.g. it takes many years to build permanent classrooms and train adequately the numbers of teachers for the expanded admissions), perhaps African countries have been tied to the reins of an international juggernaut and need to reflect on ownership of their UPE programmes, setting their own targets and pacing themselves on what looks actually do-able. That is not to say that an international framework isn't helpful. The EFA programme has rekindled interest and provided inspiration, but unrealistic targets can foster unrealistic planning and a constant lagging behind targets can be discouraging.

10.   UNESCO has recently called a meeting to reassess the EFA targets. *Within the Commonwealth, it is suggested that, to reassert ownership, the Commonwealth initiates a*

consultative process among its poorer members to help them assess what targets would be more realistic for them.

The Big Picture

11.   The last half century witnessed many fluctuations in primary enrolments, for reasons which we will discuss later; they include loss of political will, economic or political instability, planning deficiencies, civil war, natural disasters and the arrival of HIV/AIDS. The picture, though, in almost all Commonwealth African countries, is one of expanded school populations and of an upward movement of Net Enrolment Ratios (NERs) – which indicate how far school provision has kept pace with population overall.

12.   Since the late 1990s, when the world community took up the flag of Education for All (EFA), most Commonwealth African countries have crept forward in net enrolment. The Appendix to this paper shows what happened between 1999 and 2005. We have figures for 12 countries; nine of these show positive change (Zambia outstandingly) and the other three (Malawi, Mauritius and South Africa) are already hovering around the 90% mark. Our research has given us figures showing outstanding progress also in Tanzania.

13.   This is modestly encouraging, though there are three *caveats* to enter into the picture. *One* is that most countries have populations which are left out or "hard to reach". Enrolments are low, for instance, in Kenya's North Eastern Province, among the Maasai in Tanzania and the nomadic Fulani and others in Nigeria (estimated at some 9 million people). In Zambia, its very scattered low-density rural population has less opportunity for education than the easy-to-reach urban children. On the other hand, in Tanzania, urban children may have less access to schooling than others. Countries setting their sights on UPE come to realise that "the last 10%" will be the hardest to involve – the last stage in climbing the mountain will be more difficult and require more effort and ingenuity than the earlier stages. This is already the challenge for South Africa and is becoming so for all the countries studied here.

14.   The *second caveat* is about figures. Children who arrive in school may not necessarily stay there and it is incumbent on education ministries to look also at *attendance* statistics and at transition from one level to another. Dropouts (or pushouts) and repeaters must also be monitored. This isn't only about understanding the real dimensions of primary education (and not being lulled into false complacency by the enrolment figures), but also about studying the reasons for drop out and repetition, in order to overcome these problems. Such monitoring has produced quite worrying information in the five countries studied here. In Kenya, cumulative dropout in the decade to 2005) was 37%. Overall, it seems that nearly a quarter of children enrolled do not stay in school long enough to acquire permanent literacy and numeracy skills – regarded by many policy-makers as a tragedy for them and a poor use of public resources. *Any claims to have reached UPE based only on initial enrolment will be bogus.*

15.   The *third caveat* is that numbers don't tell anything about quality. Education policy-makers are all concerned about ensuring that the education to which children are exposed is worthwhile. This is partly about a suitable *physical environment,* partly about *appropriate curricula* and learning materials and also quite largely about *teachers.* It is recognised that an adequate number of well-trained teachers is essential, but not always recognised that teachers need reasonable pay and also opportunities for continuing professional development. Teachers who don't have any chance to catch up with younger more highly trained entrants to the profession, or who aren't helped to understand new curricula, will not only lose morale

and interest, in this work, they will be unable to deliver quality. One of our research team suggests that to enlist teachers fully in any drive for UPE, their unions should be fully consulted. They need to have a stake in UPE and feel that its achievement is their success.

16.   *The picture then is one of some progress, but of a need to move beyond basic enrolment to stable school populations increasing at a more regular rate of growth; beyond the mainstream children to those hard to reach; and beyond simple numbers to good quality teaching and learning.*

2.   "NEAR-UPE": HOW WAS IT REACHED AND HOW DID IT CHANGE TO "FARTHER-FROM-UPE"?

Political Decisions and Public Demand

17.   In all the cases studied, there was a political impetus to UPE. Political leaders around the time of independence regarded education as of major importance and it featured much more strongly in declared policies than such other social provision as health. Some politicians made sustained campaigns, as in Western Nigeria on the cusp of independence, where UPE proposals were in the manifesto on which the government was elected and where there was extensive and widely report debate among elected members before the legislation was passed. Later in other cases, the policy was simply announced by the Head of State as in the Federation of Nigeria in 1972 when General Gowan promulgated universal free and compulsory primary education – inevitably it did not happen, but his successors pushed it forward, as the case-study shows.

18.   The story in all the countries is one of successive jolts towards UPE. Changes of regime tended to bring about a renewed commitment, as the Ghana case illustrates. The Nkrumah government's Education Act of 1961 established the legal basis for compulsory primary and middle school education; the NLC regime in the late 1960s, Colonel Acheampong's government in 1972, the Rawlings government of 1981 – 91, the NPP elected in 2000, all in turn undertook educational reforms with some relation to primary education. Such constant new starts were partly because education has often been high on political leaders' agendas and partly because of setbacks or loss of momentum along the road to UPE.

19.   Political leaders and public officials working to achieve UPE had a head start because of public demand. Recent history has shown is that there is no lack of demand for education in Africa. Where there have bee no inhibiting demographic, cultural or religious forces, people have wanted education. Even when the quality has not been very good, even in times of disruption (such as civil war), they have sent children to school. Both in Tanzania and Zambia, the story is of pent-up demand, demonstrated by popular involvement, through *ujamaa* in early days in the former and the recent Community Schools movement in the latter. In Zambia, it was noted as striking that though 70% of the population live below the absolute poverty line of $1.00 a day, the schools are full and rates of attendance and transition high. (This does not mean that poverty isn't an inhibiting factor – see below).

Trends in UPE

20.   Political will and public support were factors in the general increase in primary school populations throughout the decades between 1960 and 2000. The following figures show the increases in three of the countries studied:

Table1. Primary School Enrolments in Three Countries

	1970	**2000**
Kenya	1,427,589	5,730,669
Tanzania	856,213	4,042,568
Zambia	694,670	1,590.000

21.   Bearing in mind the earlier *caveat* about raw enrolment data, these figures show that the trend was substantially upwards. It was not smooth and as the Tanzanian case-study emphasises, an upward trend may still equate to a hidden decline in coverage when set against population increases. All the countries studied reached a point where population growth out-stripped educational provision.

22.   Some countries had severe difficulties owing to miscalculation in planning of the actual size of the population. In Ghana, for instance, on the eve of independence, Dr Kwame Nkrumah declared that Ghana had a population of five million, with nearly half a million children in primary education. In the event, the 1960 census showed that the population was around 7 million, so that the goal of UPE was further away than had been thought or hoped.

23.   In some cases, even while enrolment was expanding, Gross Enrolment Rates and Net Enrolment Rates (GERs and NERs) [2] still went down (Tanzania and some states of Nigeria).

24.   Population increases still remain a critical issue foe most developing countries and demographic trends will continue to need careful scrutiny by educational planners if they are not to defeat them. Table 2 gives some data for the five countries studied.

Table 2. Demographic Trends in Five Countries

	Population (millions)			**Annual Growth Rate % From 2003**	**Population under 15 as % of Total**
	1975	**2003**	**2015**		
Ghana	10.2	21.2	26.6	1.9	35.2
Kenya	13.5	32.7	44.2	2.5	26.0
Nigeria	58.9	125.9	160.9	2.0	41.3
Tanzania	16.0	36.9	45.6	1.8	38.9
Zambia	5.2	11.3	13.8	1.7	43.7

Source UNDP Human Development Report 2005.

24.   In common with most developing countries, these five have a demographic profile in which the under-15 cohort is a very significant proportion; in three out of these five, over $^2/_5$

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[2] *Gross Enrolment Ratio*: total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education
Net Enrolment Ratio: Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education who attend school in that level, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group. Quoted from the Global Monitoring Report, 2006. The GER may be significantly higher than the NER which there are "bulges" due to over-age entrants, and for instance where there are large numbers of repeaters.

of the population is under 15. Overall growth rates have slowed down since the 1975 – 2003 period, but they still face these governments and others with major problems of keeping pace in educational provision.

Policies and Plans

25.   Policies for UPE have been framed with reference to a mainly economic purpose, with an emphasis on basic and technical skills: and for parents and guardians education gave hope of leading to paid employment (often in government service).

26.   A more wide-reaching policy rationale is given by the researchers on Kenya:-

"The vision of the Kenyan Government on education is to provide every Kenyan the right to primary education, no matter his or her socio-economic status, through the provision of an all-inclusive quality education that is accessible and relevant. This vision is guided by the understanding that quality education contributes significantly to economic growth and the expansion of employment opportunities. [It] is in tandem with the Economic Recovery Strategy Paper (ERS), which provides the rationale for major reforms in the current education system in order to enable all Kenyans to have access to quality lifelong primary education."

27.   They go on to comment on:-

"the realization that provision of education to all Kenyans is fundamental to overall development because education is the key to wealth creation and self-esteem; it is through education that we learn to value ourselves and then enhance the ability to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gain and sustainable livelihoods. Having promised to eliminate poverty, disease and ignorance at independence in 1963 and subsequently through the sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya, the Government invested and continues to invest heavily in education through various initiatives." (De Souza and Wainaina).

28.   There are several significant points in this statement. *First is* the decision to frame educational policy in the light of overall economic and social policy, relating education to wealth creation and livelihoods, and to the fight against poverty. *Second is* the shift from discourse about employment in the past to a discourse more realistic for most contemporary African economics about livelihoods. *Thirdly* are the non-economic elements included, such as self-esteem. *Fourthly*, the quality of education is underlined. In the last quarter-century, quality has often had to be sacrificed to quantity – now governments are encountering the issue of how to balance quantity with quality. *Fifthly*, the word "lifelong" is used and dealing with those past school age without ever having access to schooling has led some countries, as we shall see, to move from the concept of UPE to UBE.

29.   Policies were enshrined in legislation, with each country passing a series of education acts (or decrees). Ghana went further and enshrined "free compulsory and universal education" in successive constitutions – 1969, 1979 and 1992. In all cases, primary education was defined by a number of years in school, with the length of time shifting when policy changed. The current primary cycles are:

Ghana	-	6 years, followed by 3 Junior secondary
Kenya	-	8 years
Nigeria	-	9 years

| Tanzania | - | 7 years |
| Zambia | - | 9 years (1-4 lower basic, 5 to 7 middle basic and 8 & 9 upper basic) |

30.   Zambia was only able to provide lower basic schools in some places, so that in principle pupils were expected to move on to another school to complete the rest of the cycle; in practice many left the system at that point.

31.   It will be seen that perceptions of primary education were not (and are not) identical. In Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia a model of Basic Education is now being used. Ghana's current policy is Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) with a component of two years' pre-primary, 6 years primary and three years beyond; the institutions for the last three years are to be renamed junior high schools. Nigeria moved from UPE to UBE in 1999; this was a paradigm shift, since UBE embraces pre-primary, primary and junior secondary education and also mass literacy and non-formal education. One of the objectives of UBE is to reduce drop-out from the formal school system. The CEC researcher says: "The major achievement of UBE is that it has remained in force; even in uneasy political terrain" and notes that in the first four years after the inception of UBE, primary enrolments went up and so did completion rates.

32.   All the countries experienced problems in planning. There were perennial problems of: lack of accurate data; pressures by politicians, which caused a rush to implementation before proper programmes had been worked out; lack of understanding of the true financial implications; and misunderstandings about responsibilities between different elements of government. Sometimes, as reported from Zambia, there was a lack of planning and implementation capacity. The World Bank and sometimes UNDP intervened in many African countries to assist with planning, so that there is a certain uniformity about strategies undertaken.

33.   Often, even with the help of the best national and international planners, it was not understood that introducing a new plan is not into a vacuum and there has to be allowance for "lag-time" - left over business from previous provision, such as teachers in the system with other qualifications or pupils enrolled in earlier cycles and needing to take an obsolescent examination. It was also not understood (particularly by politicians) that a plan does not come instantly into effect and there has to be preparation for change.

34.   In the next section, we move from planning to implementation. *Here it must be stressed that adequate planning, based on adequate data is critical to the maintenance of UPE and each country needs its own high-grade planning capacity.*

Perils and Difficulties

35.   Effective planning depends on the availability of good data. Unexciting as it may sound, greater attention is needed than in the past to improving statistical information. This is necessary both at national and local level. Very careful attention is needed to school mapping, that is, the distribution of schools in relation to population distribution. At the present day, with large migrations into towns and cities, there will be constant need for more school places in urban areas.

36.   The perils of "planning without facts", to quote a famous book about planning in Nigeria[3], lead to such mistakes as that of the Ghana Government about the size of likely school populations. It has already been shown that most planners were caught unawares by the upward trend of populations; and the size of additional provision of schools trained teachers etc was in general not fully allowed for.

37.   Perhaps no one would have forecast the economic decline of the 1980s, in which many African countries' peoples suffered hardship and hunger, but governments had simply not appreciated the financial implications of universalising primary education. As already said, additional expenditure was needed, year on year and there were extra costs, often unforeseen' owing to the appearance of many over-age children in classrooms when the UPE schemes were started. The consequences of the intervention of foreign donors were often not foreseen either.

38.   Dr Pius Okigbo, commenting on Nigeria's first national development plan, said:

> "The Nigerian planners did not fully take into account the recurrent burden associated with capital projects. In planning a capital programme, it is necessary to provide for the recurrent cost of running the facility when it is commissioned. The resources for this expense cannot be left to be found when the project is completed; it must be part of the planning. The lure of foreign financing blinded the Nigerian officials to the consequences of seemingly costless capital projects, whose running and maintenance costs must be borne fully by the recipient government in the fullness of time." [4]

39.   With hindsight, some of these mistakes seem obvious, but they were factors in the difficulties experienced by African governments when UPE seemed to fall away from their grasp.

40.   Effective planning requires *continuity* of policy and strategy. Constant lurching from one new initiative to another is not helpful. It reduces the value of planning, makes financial forecasting impossible and detracts from the stability or institutions. Both foreign donors and newly elected politicians are prone to introducing new initiatives – but the message is that continuity is best. If UPE is to be attained and is then to be sustained, only continuity will make it possible. One of the misfortunes of the countries studied has at times been the rapid turnover of personnel, both ministers and civil servants. This has caused the loss of institutional memory and consequent inconsistency in planning.

41.   Crash programmes driven by political urgency, carried their own problems. In 1974, Kenya hired large numbers of untrained teachers to cater for the increased enrolment which followed the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE – see below). The cost per student rose by 500% and later the Government reduced teacher recruitment, raising Pupil Teacher Ratios and arguably reducing educational quality.

42.   Several of the authors of the case-studies expressed doubt over the quality of education at the time of major expansion. A balance was not kept in, among others, Ghana and Zambia, between quantity and quality and in the long term, UPE will only be sustainable if it delivers acceptable quality. Peter Williams has argued in the past that rapid "jumps" in numbers are important in creating political commitment and public enthusiasm and are

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[3] Wolfgang Stolper (1966) *Planning Without Facts,* Cambridge, Mass. Harvard UP
[4] Pius Okigbo, *National Development Planning in Nigeria, 1900-92*, London, James Currey & others.

maybe justifiable in terms of overall political impact [5], but once UPE is neared or attained, it will need to be associated with appropriate learning outcomes and a worthwhile experience for the children.

43.   A very different kind of difficulty, partly associated with haste in implementation, emerged in the sometimes fraught relationships between different government structures. In most countries, the chief actor has been the Ministry of Education, with greater or lesser degrees of decentralisation. In Kenya, for instance, the responsibility is divided between central and local government and the private sector and a similar system exists in Zambia. In the latter, there has been concern about accountability.

44.   In the more complex Federal system in Nigeria, the division of responsibilities has varied. Initially the centre was weak and major educational responsibilities rested with the Regions, but the arrival of military rule shifted the balance to a very strong central government with control over resources. The states have a large measure of autonomy, with various coordinating mechanisms. Arguments over who had control of funds and direct intervention by the Federal Government in the 1980s in primary education and adult literacy led to inefficiencies. Lines of authority can be unclear; theoretically the Commissioner (Minister) of Education in each State has charge over the whole education sector, but alongside him/her is a State Primary Education Board, headed by an executive chairman who reports directly to the State Governor – a Federal official. Greater clarity is now emerging as a result of judicial decisions when cases of jurisdiction have been referred to the courts.

45.   *In sum, demographic, planning, financial, timing and structural problems have all been encountered in the road towards UPE and in efforts to maintain the achievements of all the governments.* Facing and understanding these issues, what lessons from experience can be carried to the future by Commonwealth Africa?

2.   **PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING UPE**

Major Lessons from the Recent Past

46.   Summing up past experience, we can deduce the following list of principles:

a) Political will and public support enabled countries to move nearer to UPE and they are still crucial, in a   context in which post-independence euphoria is a distant memory;

b) Providing more school places doesn't necessarily mean reaching or holding on to UPE; provision has to keep pace with population increase;

c) Education needs to be framed against economic and social policy and embedded in plans – this is both rational and also may help education maintain its place against other budgets;

d) UPE needs to be defined for each country – length of schooling may range from 6 to 9 years;

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[5] Peter Williams (1979) "Universal Primary Education and the Future" in R L Smith (ed) *Universal Primary Education: Report of a Workshop,* London, Institute of Education.

e) UPE may be supported within a framework of UBE;

f) Good educational planning depends on having competent national planners and good data for them to work on (including demographic data);

g) Governments need to face squarely the financial implications of continuing expansions of the educational system, until populations stabilise;

h) Expansion and crash programmes pose the danger of concentrating on quantity at the expense of quality; at some stages this may be inevitable, but stabilising the system requires a quality acceptable to the public over the generations;

i) A clear definition and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different parts of the government structure are essential.

Demand and Supply in UPE: Fees, Advocacy and Finance

47.   It has been recognised how well-supported UPE programmes have been, but if UPE is to be sustained, public enthusiasm cannot be taken for granted without other action. Critical action in pushing up demand has been *making primary education free.* In Tanzania enrolments in primary schools tripled between 1973 and 1981 after the decision to abolish fees. In Kenya they went up by one-third when fees were no longer levied and by almost another quarter when the building fund was stopped. Free education is perhaps the major motivating measure and keeping it free will sustain motivation. Free education of course, means more than abolition of tuition fees. Other charges, such as a building fund, costs of uniforms etc, also have a negative impact on enrolments. The difficulty is that once fees have been remitted, it will undoubtedly have a negative effect on demand if they are brought back later.

48.   Sustaining demand will depend on *continuing political advocacy* – the enlistment of the media, the educated classes, local communities – and *regular consultation* with the various people concerned with education: parents, guardians, local leaders, teachers and others. Lip-service may be paid to advocacy and consultation and ministries may have a public relations unit, but the two activities have to be taken very seriously indeed if public interest in and support for UPE are to be kept alive.

49.   It goes without saying that the quality of education will have to be sufficient for parents or guardians to be convinced that their dependents will benefit from it.

50.   Turning from demand to the supply side, all programmes to attain and maintain UPE depend on appropriate finance.

51.   First, since schools cost money and expanding school provision will cost more money, it is likely that ambitions for UPE will be impeded if the economy is stagnant or disrupted in any way. A buoyant economy, on the other hand can favour UPE if it is translated into a buoyant education budget. Although Tanzania showed what could be done to maintain education "on the cheap", budgets for education are pressed in hard times – and sometimes national priorities shift away from education (e.g. to military expenditure).
In all circumstances, it helps to embed education into wider economic and social planning.

52.   At present, education in Commonwealth Africa is getting a good slice of national cakes. In the countries studied, educational expenditure ranges at present between 20% and

30% of national budgets. It is not always appreciated, however, that as populations grow (and they are still growing in spite of HIV/AIDS) and as cohorts of pupils move through the system, budgets cannot remain static (or simply rise in line with inflation). More education will require more money, year on year until UPE is achieved.

53.   As already said, serious planning involves forecasting the financial implications of each accretion to the system. Financial support is best sought from multiple sources – national, local and international. It is, however, not a good thing to become over-reliant on foreign sources of funding. Ideally, policy-makers and planners have to look for long-term commitments, to assure the availability of resources.

Favouring and Negative Conditions for Sustaining UPE

54.   Educationists designing strategies for successful UPE provision must always bear in mind that sustainability depends on *several non-educational factors*.   The state of the *economy, already referred to,* is one. Besides the effects on the financing of education, there are many other ways in which an enfeebled economy has an impact on education.

-     when the economy is weakened by a natural disaster such as drought, there will be hunger among both rural families and the urban poor. Hunger both keeps children away from school and has a deleterious effect on their learning abilities when in school;

-     when there is inflation and salaries are low, teachers will be deflected from their responsibilities in school and impelled to take on outside activities to keep their households afloat;

-     parents and civil society organisations will have less capacity to take an interest in school affairs.

55.   Other conditions to be recognised are *political*.   If there is civil war, as once in Nigeria in 1966, or over-centralisation of authority, the UPE project will be endangered. At present, most Commonwealth African countries, including all those studied here, have stable civilian administrations and basically democratic governments, in which the people are participants.   Democracy favours people's enlistment in promoting UPE, but does not necessarily imply that there are always strong accountable local community organisations ready to take on roles of advocacy and decentralised responsibility; their lack of capacity in the recent past was observed in Zambia.

56.   Allied to political conditions are *constitutional* conditions.   Ghana's example is establishing a constitutional mandate for UPE is a reminder that such a commitment may make for an enabling political climate and is useful in reminding both governments and governed of their obligations; but clearly it doesn't of itself bring about an improvement in educational provision. Legislation making education compulsory will bring the UPE project into disrepute unless it is enforceable.

57.   Social factors will have an impact on the development of primary education and have to be taken into account in educational strategy and provision. There are, for instance, a number of reasons why children may be absent from school. These include:

-     geographical distance and lack of transport facilities;

- family instability owing to HIV/AIDS or migration – orphans having to find means of survival cannot easily go to school;

- gender-assigned responsibilities - at certain seasons, boys may be required to work in cattle-herding, farming, fishing or marketing, while girls may at any time be needed in the household for cleaning, food preparation, child-minding or looking after sick relatives;

- traditional ceremonies such as initiation rites or village or family festivals;

- sometimes, there are cultural impediments to sending girls to school;

- where parents had had no or little education, the home environment is not supportive of children's schooling;

- in some societies, children with a physical impairment such as blindness, are left out of the school system;

58.   All these are non-educational, but affect education. Policy-makers, in understanding such factors in the context of education, face challenges in mitigating their effects and have to take them into account when devising strategies for UPE.

Strategies for success

59.   A variety of measures for sustaining UPE have emerged already in this paper. In this section, some workable strategies employed by one or more of the governments studied are put forward for consideration and are supplemented by suggestions which came out of the research team's discussions and consultation with a number of experts.

a.   The Broad Educational Agenda

60.   A major issue is curriculum. This clearly works best if it is relevant to pupils' social and cultural background and takes account of some of the social factors listed above. If the UPE programme is to reach "the last o 10%", curricula have to be adapted for new categories of learner (cultural and linguistic minorities, children with special needs, less able and under-nourished children). Different delivery mechanisms will have to be devised for large classes and double-shift systems.

b.   Partnership in Provision

61.   Partnerships may be with international donors, civil society organisations and the private sector.

62.   International donors have their own conditionalities. National governments are now accustomed to negotiating with these agencies, but there is need for constant vigilance. In particular, it may be counter-productive to accede to an international partner's intervention in matters of curriculum. There is a cautionary tale from Zambia where the Finnish aid agency provided everything for a Practical Studies course in the primary schools and it was virtually ignored. Further, international donors may often have divergent agendas and if they are to be best enlisted to support national UPE objectives, a government will want to avoid waste and

overlap (and even, sometimes, irrelevance). Kenya is an example of a country which has set up a co-ordination mechanism.

63.   Major civil society organisations include religious agencies which manage or have in the past managed schools on behalf of the state. Each country already has mechanisms in place for working with these groups, but policy-makers may wish to review these mechanisms and ask themselves whether they have sufficient means for regular consultation.

64.   Local communities have in the past made many sacrifices in support of UPE. In Tanzania in the 1970s, the ethos of self-reliance led to huge community involvement, with volunteer teachers and community construction of classrooms and teachers' houses. In future their role will have to be as active partners. However willing and concerned a community is, they will ultimately become resistant to demands on their labour and to constant educational levies, under the discourse of "cost-sharing", when they have no part in the decisions about their schools and other educational facilities. Some chance to play a part in the disposition of funds is to be recommended, following the example of Kenya with its Constituency Development Fund.

65.   The private sector may be involved in financial support, general or specific while some educational institutions are privately owned and run as a business. Donations from companies or rich individuals tend to go more to higher education (company scholarships etc). It would be worth making a serious effort to solicit funds for UPE, urging businesses to help the country to achieve its targets. Capital gifts for new classrooms, new schools, equipment and libraries can be sought. Education taxes levied on business, as in Ghana and Nigeria could also to be deployed towards education, if business people can be convinced that there will be benefits to them in a literate population.

66.   Nationals abroad (the Diaspora) send generous moneys home to families and communities; would there be ways of enlisting a country's diaspora to provide various kinds of support for UPE? Each country's policy-makers might think of their own answers. The amounts might be small, but there would be benefits in terms of fortifying political will.

67.   Privately-run schools or in particular, pre-schools, recognisably play a part in overall provision. Planners need to monitor their contribution and policy-makers need to ensure quality and integrity through a regulatory framework.

c.   Appropriate Teaching and Learning Environments

School Buildings

68.   In countries where there is still a need for a major drive to UPE, there will be a corresponding need for a substantial school building programme. In this case, it may be worth following the example of Zambia, where the Ministry of Education set up its own specialist building unit. In all cases, the siting of new schools and new classrooms will best succeed if it follows the regular monitoring and mapping mentioned already.
A school for comfortable learning requires more than the traditional rectangle of classrooms and dusty playground. It is desirable for it to have access to a water supply (even if only a nearby stream in a rural area) and to have sanitation (separate for males and females). In some areas, security is a problem and fencing for a safe environment will reassure parents, teachers and children. *Maintenance* of school buildings is very often overlooked.

69.   There are of course situations where the learning environment may not include a permanent building. Children of nomadic communities are served by mobile schools. The research brought up little, but it is hoped that ideas will emerge from the report of the Commonwealth Nomadic Education Forum recently held in Garissa.

Furniture and Learning Materials

70.   In times of stringency and economic stagnation, children have been asked to bring their own chairs or stools. The provision of suitable furniture permanently kept in the classrooms should be the accepted norm.

71.   The range and type of learning materials will depend on the kind of school, but some reading materials, posters etc are regarded as the bare minimum. Urban schools with access to electricity may be provided with more sophisticated equipment, but this will mean some secure storage in the building.

d.   Incentives to the Poor

72.   Although we have seen that many families and communities are ready to sacrifice to send children to school, all the cases showed a rise in enrolment when fees were dropped and a further rise when other hidden levies were stopped. "Free" education ideally should be without financial sacrifice by parents or guardians and if it is truly free there are less opportunity costs in losing child-labour for farming and housework.

73.   Other useful incentives include free milk and/or school lunches. School feeding programmes have been shown to have a positive effect on enrolment *and* on retention.

Further, while this may be difficult for some governments or local authorities to envisage, free transport to and from school has also helped enrolment and attendance.

e.   Quality Learning

74.   Ultimately, UPE programmes will be sustained and supported if they are of acceptable quality. Quality depends on appropriate curricula, as already noted, and also on well-trained and motivated teachers, an inspection system and means of support and reinforcement for the main educational provision.

Teachers

75.   We have pointed out already how crucial it is to have a trained, high-morale and reasonably rewarded teaching force. A constant issue which emerged from the cases was that of teacher supply. There were occasions when planners got their forecasts wrong and other occasions when economic shifts led to fewer teachers being trained than were required. Policy-makers and planners do well to keep a constant eye on pupil-teacher ratios. The Kenya study has a poignant quotation from a teacher in a school where there were 5 teachers for 500 pupils:

> "You mark over 500 books through the night – You have to relax and prepare
>   for the following day's work. Even personal attention to weak pupils is
>   impossible"

76.   Among targets for planners, reduction of pupil/teacher ratios has to find a place.

77.   Other tasks for planners and policy makers are to:

- regularly review the teacher education curriculum and consider the inclusion in it of training in ancillary skills, such as adult literacy (a long-standing part of teacher training in Tanzania);
- provide up-grading opportunities for teachers brought in under emergency training schemes;
- provide for regular teacher professional development.

School Inspection

78.   Most countries have a system of school inspection, but reports are that it has often atrophied. It is worth including in UPE provision the reform of the inspection system. Effective and honest inspectors are essential to proper monitoring of the system. It goes without saying that professionalism and honesty are related to both high standards of training and adequate remuneration.

Support and Reinforcement

79.   Reinforcement of the work of primary schools by other institutions has been shown to be effective in maintaining UPE and maximising its benefits. First, *early childhood education* is recommended by many experts and the next GMR will survey data on its provision. One or two of our cases report quite significant numbers of children participating, but it is likely that they are from more affluent and urban families, although there have long been experiments in Ghana or provide pre-school facilities in markets, for the children of traders.

80.   Secondly, *non-formal education* has fallen out of fashion, but adult literacy and various types of community education reinforce and supplement formal provision at very low cost, as demonstrated by the Tanzania literacy programmes in the 1960s and 70s. It has been said that "every child deserves a literate mother"; and provision for family members who have never been to school and those who left school early both ensures equity in access to education and reinforces the learning of children who do go to school. Adult literacy programmes are part of the Nigerian concept of Universal Basic Education.

81.   Thirdly, while in relatively well-off capital cities access to computers has reduced the demand for books, *libraries* are still an essential component in educational provision for most children and young people in Africa. They may be in the school itself, in a community centre or even be mobile, such as the Camel Library in North East Kenya. Often responsibility for public libraries has been devolved to local authorities; if they are to carry out their task, there is need for training, insistence on their importance and also some incentives for maintaining a good library service.

82.   All these may appear obvious, but in practice few UPE programmes include this kind of activity – which is to their detriment.

Stringency and Emergency

83.   If economies turn down or resources are reduced, governments may be forced to adopt alternative ways of keeping UPE on track; and even where there is no immediate stringency, there may be situations of emergency where shortfalls have to be made up. It is always difficult for institutions such as ministries to be flexible, but flexibility and inventiveness have saved UPE programmes in the past.

84.   Among creative strategies which have been used have been double shift or multi-shift schools and use of volunteers to support trained teachers in the classroom.

85.   The main cause of emergency has been shortage of teachers (often owing to miscalculation of numbers needed). Methods employed have been:

-     drawing retired teachers back into service;

-     shortening residential training and completing courses while student teachers are already in the school classroom;

-     part-time emergency training in evenings and at weekends for apprentice teachers;

-     training packages of face-to-face and distance instruction (as in the Nigerian TISRP scheme;

86.   After the emergency period is over and numbers settle down, there will be a surplus of teachers with very basic training. They have to be given the opportunity to upgrade their skills. A large-scale programme is managed by the Nigerian Teachers' Institute, which is offering 100,000 such teachers a chance to upgrade themselves through distance learning.

Special Categories of Pupil

87.   Some possible categories of left-out children have been mentioned. Generally the most visible would be the girls. Gender parity in education by 2005 was one of the MDGs and it has not been achieved, although the primary enrolment records in Commonwealth Africa show males and females not too far apart. Continuation and retention statistics, however, show more girls than boys dropping out. Special efforts can be taken to reassure parents that girls will be safe in school and to help society at large to understand the benefits for girls of access to education. Again, literacy for adult women has been shown to have the effect of encouraging mothers to send their daughters to school.

89.   Another significant category in some countries is that of children in large scattered rural populations. The colonial solution of residential provision was only possible when very small numbers were enrolled. In modern times, small one- or two-teacher schools, with multi-grade teaching is the accepted answer and clearly has to be recommended for the foreseeable future; but the research showed some alternatives are being tried, such as rural transport and mobile classrooms. Now that mobile phones are in fairly widespread use, the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation is suggesting the provision of distance education by that means.

90.   Mobile classrooms have already been suggested for children of nomadic populations, another category calling for special attention. If full-scale mobile schools are not

immediately feasible, at least a cadre of "flying teachers" could be developed to bring a chance of education to the children of nomads; it is understood that this expedient worked well in Somalia in the 1970s.

91.   There are other groups which may be left out and form part of "the last 10%". Each country will be aware of their own circumstances, but everywhere there are "handicapped" children, in some cases including, sadly, children mutilated in wars. Special schools may be provided in larger population centres, with children attending by day. In rural areas the mainstream schools may be the only option, but there are various Commonwealth and international charities with experience of special, often residential, provision for blind and deaf children or lepers.

4.   CONCLUSION

92.   *All these issues, challenges and strategies have been brought into focus by the five case-studies undertaken. At the end of the day, the main lessons learnt take us back to the beginning, to the very great importance of committed leadership and committed and informed policy-makers and planners. Much past achievement in primary education provision has been propelled by such leadership, almost against the odds. But more than adrenalin is needed to attain and maintain genuine UPE, with few drop-outs and of a quality which meets society's expectation. The demand seems to be there, but the communities' interests need to be better valued than at present by using their own ideas and involving them more than at present in monitoring and governing their schools. Further, if demand is to be sustained, there will be no going back on the abolition of fees.*

93.   *Above all, the first requirement for successful UPE is efficient, realistic planning based on good data. Cautious planners may make politicians and the electorate impatient, but it is not caution but realism to understand that UPE will not come just from enthusiasm and hustle. It will take a number of years and will only be maintained if that enthusiasm is itself maintained, but together with the funding necessary and a continued political will.*