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PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE AND POLICY

FOUR COUNTRIES THAT ACHIEVED UPE:
HOW DID THEY DO IT?



Acknowledgements

Any product of this nature is the result of a range of important contributions. EAC would like to express its gratitude to Professor Michael Morrissey for taking on the challenge of identifying practical approaches countries adopted from the four detailed case studies. Dr. Mark Ginsburg of FHI 360 undertook the enormous task of identifying the four case study authors all the way through to finalizing the studies. (Please see www.educateachild.org.qa.) EAC provided the original idea and outline for the pertinent findings from the case studies to be presented in such a succinct way.

Foreword

Despite all the odds, some countries have managed to meet, or come close to meeting, their commitment to primary education as a universal right. How did they do this? What problems did they overcome along the way? And, what challenges still remain to keep the commitment to a primary education for all?

Working with FHI 360, these are questions that Educate A Child (EAC) set out to explore. The case studies are a review of the development of primary education over several decades in four countries: Botswana, Brazil, Lebanon and Malaysia. Continents apart, and each very different in its history, culture, economy, and social structures, these countries, among others, have stayed the course and attained (or come very close to) universal primary education (UPE).

This EAC publication is a synthesis of lessons learned in achieving UPE for these four countries, with the full case study analysis as background. The purpose of the study was to identify the key elements or drivers that made UPE possible, and that may serve to inform decision-making at a national level. These case studies may also spark conversation and debate regarding how other countries might find a catalyst to meet their commitment to Education for All (EFA). In particular, EAC was interested in the practical outcomes from the experiences of the four countries rather than a review of the expected drivers that one might garner from the research literature.

Each case study is an interesting read, looking at several dimensions and how each is played out in the particular country context. In addition to the case study, we have provided a fairly detailed executive summary of each country's progress.

At a meta-level there are a number of interesting observations:

- The criticality of vision and commitment
- The importance of understanding and providing the financial investment
- The key role of leadership, which can come from many different places
- How education contributes to building national unity
- How to bounce back from adversity

No country had a simple trajectory. Each had setbacks and unexpected impacts—from conflict, to the discovery of diamonds, to parental commitment to support education, to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Each of these had to be managed. And in some cases, challenges such as conflict and the pandemic remain and possibly threaten hard won gains.

Clearly, there is not a simple answer to achieve UPE, but it seems that there are some principles that can guide us as we strive to enable every child to fulfill her or his right to a quality primary education. We hope you enjoy this series of studies.

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Introduction

Purpose

This analysis is of four developing countries, one each from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Latin America/Caribbean region, which demonstrate that UN Millennium Development Goal 2, Universal Primary Education (UPE), is achievable.

This global commitment in 2000 was to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. This translates at country level to UPE. A measure of UPE success is that the number of out of school children (OOSC) in a country is negligible. The case studies commissioned were of four countries that had achieved, or were close to achieving, UPE.

The 2013 United Nations Report on the Millennium Development Goalsⁱ concluded that, “Too many children are still denied their right to primary education. Between 2000 and 2011, the number of children out of school declined by almost half - from 102 million to 57 million. However, progress in reducing the number of children out of school has slowed considerably over time”.

This is the context in which the case studies were commissioned by *Educate a Child* (EAC) a program of the Education Above All (EAA) foundation of Qatar, in collaboration with FHI 360. The case study research sought to determine factors that contributed to the success of some countries in reaching UPE, and to identify lessons from these four countries that may be applicable in other countries still challenged with meeting the target of UPE by 2015.

Four developing countries' UPE performance studied

Global 2011 net enrolment data for primary education demonstrated the difference between developed and developing regions of the world. For developed regions net enrolment rate (NER) was 97 per cent (up from 96 per cent in 1990; for developing regions it was 90%, up from 80 per cent). Sub-Saharan Africa was behind all other regions in 2011 with an overall NER of 77%.

The countries selected for case study had in 2011 reached the net enrolment levels of developed countries overall, with the exception of Botswana which had achieved a primary enrolment level way ahead of the sub-Saharan Africa average. This is the performance of the four countries selected:

- Botswana's NER increased from 44% in 1970 to 93% in 2012
- Lebanon's NER increased from 91% in 1990 to 95% in 2011
- Malaysia's NER increased from 84% in 1970 to 98% in 2000
- Brazil's NER increased from less than 60% in 1960 to 98% in 2010ⁱⁱⁱ

For each case study, an eminent educational expert of the country was commissioned by EAC, with FHI 360, to analyse the equity of access and retention in the context of evolving political and economic systems and evolving education sector policies, strategies and targets, and to draw conclusions on the drivers of change and achievement. These studies are the basis for this analysis. They are available on the EAC website, www.educateachild.org.qa

The four case studies commissioned by EAC in 2013 on Success in increasing access and retention in primary education

Lebanon by Hana Addam El-Ghali

Brazil by Divonzir Arthur Gusso

Botswana by Agreement Lathi Jotia

Malaysia by Lorraine Pe Symaco

The commissioned work was directed by Dr. Mark Ginsburg

This analysis uses the data, findings and discussion of the four case studies in order to answer the question: *What is the story behind the success of these four countries in their achievement of UPE?* First we will look at commonalities in approach. Second, we will look at a major barrier that each country had to surmount along its way to UPE. For none of these four selected countries was it 'smooth sailing'. We hope these stories will be an inspiration to other countries with a UPE vision, including those whose progress has been interrupted by a major calamity.

How did these countries do it?

Drivers

The case studies suggest a number of common drivers for governments to seek to achieve UPE. In these cases, these drivers predated the global commitments to the Education for All challenge and MDG2, although no doubt the international commitments spurred these four countries to be high achievers in international terms.

The drivers are as follows:

- to foster national unity
- to enhance economic growth
- to address ethnic inequalities
- to address regional inequalities

Approaches common to all cases

We have identified ten approaches that were employed by the four countries which led to their achievement of UPE. All of these approaches were responses to the internal drivers of change. The details of approach and strategy vary according to country context and resources. We will look at each in turn and illustrate from the four case studies.

The approaches used by the four case study countries that enabled UPE to be achieved

1. Provide constitutional, legislative and regulatory mandates
2. Develop medium and long term planning, targeting and strategies
3. Commit to public investment
4. Eliminate tuition fees
5. Increase system efficiency
6. Subsidize participation by the very poor
7. Respond to minorities who face barriers as a result of particular characteristics
8. Harness contributions of non-government partners
9. Find solutions for the remaining excluded
10. Make good use of international experience



Provide constitutional, legislative and regulatory mandates

All four countries, through constitutional reform or legislation, established that primary education should be made available for every child. This provided an overarching political commitment that transcended changes in government. Compulsory school legislation “represents both an important enabling condition and a significant political intention in national attempts to universalize access to basic education”^{iv}.

Botswana declared that primary education would be compulsory and free for all in 1977 and abolished school fees in 1980. Its national policies on education of 1977 and its 20 year long term vision of 1997 placed emphasis on inclusion of all in primary schooling.

Lebanon’s first law on compulsory and free primary education was enacted in 1959 and the commitment was restated in 1998 and 2011 legislation.

Malaysia included the provision of free education for all at the primary level in its Education Act of 1961 and made primary education compulsory in 2001, making parents accountable for participation of their children.

In the case of Brazil, the 1946 constitution stipulated compulsory primary education and involvement of large private companies in its delivery. In 1961, Brazil set out in its national education law the requirement that 12 per cent of national revenue and 20 per cent of states’ revenue be allocated to education. Brazil reinforced its position by the inclusion of education as a social right in its new constitution of 1988.

Develop medium and long term planning, targeting and strategies

While constitutional and other legal mandates may signal country vision and direction, UPE will not be achieved unless sufficient funding is mobilized. The financial requirements for most developing countries to reach UPE were enormous challenges. The response of each of these “success story countries” was to secure or at least pipeline national resources by including universalization of primary schooling targets in medium and long term strategies and budgets.

Malaysia, for example, prioritized education from the beginning of its medium and long term planning processes, beginning with the 1965 five year plan, continuing with the country’s New Economic Policy of 1971, and more recently in the 1991 Vision 2020, a 30-year plan to graduate Malaysia from developing country status. Its focus from 1970 was to reduce access and performance inequalities among ethnic groups; in the 2011-2015 planning period its focus was on rural and eastern Malaysia investment to address major regional inequalities.

Similarly, Brazil’s 1st and 2nd education sector plans for 1972-1974 and 1975-1979 included provisions for increased access and retention in rural areas, while its 3rd plan (1980-1985) placed a focus on inclusion of the poor and decentralization of responsibility for education services delivery to the regions.

These medium term and long term strategic plans create an agenda of agreed priorities that influence the annual budgeting processes, so that resources need to be reserved in order that strategic targets are achieved.

Commit to public investment

As inferred above, in discussing the institutional setting, legislation and state planning provide the rationale for public investment. UPE demands sustained capital and recurrent expenditure.

For example, in response to the Botswana government’s commitment to UPE in the mid-1970s, it invested heavily in school construction, increasing the number of government primary schools from 353 in 1978 to 583 in 1991. Similarly, Lebanon invested in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 1200 primary schools when its civil war ended in 1990. Reference is made below to Brazil’s huge investment in addressing regional disparities.

Eliminate tuition fees

All four countries have intervened in the area of tuition fees for public primary schooling.

- Botswana abolished school fees in 1994. The NER for the 7-13 age group hovered around 90% from 1997 to 2011 and then trended upward toward 93% in 2012.
- In Brazil a 1948 proposal to make primary education free (and provide government funding to religious private schools) caused controversy, because of fear of government control over schooling provided by religious organizations, and the proposed legislation was not passed. Nevertheless, elementary school enrollment increased in the following 60 years, in part because of substantial government funding for education as well as government programs to improve the economic conditions of lower socioeconomic status families. Such programs essentially eliminated school fees for the poor.
- The Lebanon case is interesting in that primary schooling was declared free in 1959, and this may have contributed to the relatively high enrollment rate observed by 1974. Nevertheless, since that time the major contributor to enrollment has been fee-based private schools (versus either free government or non-fee-based private schools). This results in part because of limited funding for education and the preference among some parents for sectarian-based institutions, but it is also a consequence of a general perception that government schools are of lower quality and mainly attended by those without financial means.
- Malaysia had a policy of free primary education since 1961. This may have contributed to the relatively high NER by 1970 (85%) and to the gradual increase in NER witnessed at least until 1982, when it reached 96%. However, government schooling is only available to children with citizenship documents; there is a sizeable population of non-citizen children in Malaysia who do not benefit from the policy.



Increase system efficiency

The four countries have also sought out inefficiencies and addressed them, so that throughput of primary students to program completion is improved and more students can be accommodated in the same physical infrastructure or taught by the same teachers. Various strategies are reported in the case studies:

- a shift to *automatic promotion* to reduce repetition and drop out (e.g. Botswana instituted automatic promotion of students from grade 1 in 1977 irrespective of academic performance; Malaysia did so in 1996);
- provision of *pre-school education* to improve performance in the early grades of primary especially in the context of multiple mother tongues in the country (e.g. Malaysia's Education Act of 1996 introduced pre-schools);
- provision of *extra lessons for low achievers* to promote promotion and completion (e.g. Malaysia launched a Tuition Aid Scheme in 2004 to provide extra lessons during the weekends or after school for government school students with low achievement who belong to households that fall below the poverty line);
- utilize school facilities *for two shifts* to double capacity (e.g. implemented by Botswana in 1977 as a stop-gap measure until its construction investment delivered new schools and classrooms);
- reduce drop-out through provision of *guidance and counselling services* in primary schools (e.g. instituted for Botswana schools in 1987); and
- *improve program delivery quality* through national curriculum, standardized textbooks and national examinations to promote primary school completion (e.g. under Lebanon's sector reform of 1997).

These examples also demonstrate that the cost of achieving UPE may be at the expense of "luxuries" (repetition lost to automatic promotion; the use of school facilities for non-formal after-school activities lost under double shifting). They also demonstrate the relationship between quality and retention; without quality learning the motivation to complete the primary program is compromised.

Subsidize participation by the very poor

Countries have increasingly come to the conclusion that incentives have to be in place to enable the children of the poor to participate in and complete primary schooling. The family's economic status shapes its decisions about school attendance. Poverty limits a family's ability to pay direct and indirect costs of schooling, creates a bigger burden from the loss of child earnings or household labor, and because malnutrition and other factors may lead to lower achievement and dropping out of school.

Malaysia has employed various targeted subsidies, including provision of scholarships, materials, and transportation for the poor. For example, since 1976 the government has given supplementary food to students from low income families who come to school without breakfast and are malnourished. Additionally, since 1975 there is a government program of lending textbooks to students from low-income families.

More than 75% of children enrolled in primary school benefit from this textbook-on-loan scheme. Also contributing to increasing access and retention among students from poorer families is the Supplementary Food Program administered by the Ministry of Education since 1980. This program seeks to improve the nutritional level of primary students from poor households and has resulted in improved rate of attendance for these children.

The Education Department of Sabah, Malaysia's poorest state, began in 2012 organizing weekly meetings, known as *Hari Bertemu Pelanggan* (Client Interface Day), to help people from poor households. This program has attracted many parents to bring children who have not attended school to the department of education office. The Malaysia case study author concluded: "These programs have likely reduced the financial pressures that may cause children and youth to drop out, thus enabling Malaysia to maintain its relatively high primary school net enrolment rate (96% in 2005) and its relatively high rate of survival to year 6 (96% from 2005 to 2010)".

Pro-poor policies have been used by other countries to address non-enrolment or early drop-out by the children of low income families. In 2006, for example, the Botswana government introduced a program whereby District Councils provide funds through their Social and Community Development units to parents who are on welfare and would otherwise be unable to pay supplemental schools fees. This may have contributed to the upward move of the NER for 6-12 year olds between 2009 and 2012.

Brazil^{vi} addressed access and retention for children of poor families by linking to policies addressing poverty and income inequalities. District governments piloted in 1995 a cash transfer program for poor families, which was conditional upon the children in these families attending school. This program's success resulted in going to scale nationally in 2001 as the *Bolsa Escola* Federal Program; by 2002, almost all the municipalities in Brazil were participating in the program which reached nearly 5 million children.

The initiative was developed further as the *Bolsa Família* program in 2004 under the management of a new Ministry of Social Development and Combat against Hunger (MDS). This program targeted the entire population of poor and extremely poor families. *Bolsa Família* comprises three components: (a) direct distribution of income, promoting immediate relief of poverty by means of financial support given directly to families via a bank card; (b) conditionality, reinforcing access to basic social rights in the areas of education, health and social welfare; and (c) complementary actions and programs, seeking to overcome other factors of social vulnerability in the families.

Other programs, developed jointly by the Ministry of Education and MDS, were operated by municipal educational administrations. These developed the basic operational conditions of schools, especially equipment and availability of school material and books. An important parallel role was given to the *Sistema Presença*, by which the Ministry of Education (beginning in 2005) monitored access and attendance for each student in every school. A recent evaluation, making use of this data, confirmed that promotion rates in elementary schools increased from 81% to 84% between 2008 and 2011 and that the dropout rate decreased among pupils assisted by *Bolsa Família*.



Respond to minorities who face barriers as a result of particular characteristics

The countries studied also took into account the barriers that minorities face and developed strategies to address these. These include barriers such as disabilities, a mother tongue different from the language of instruction, and cultural traditions of a minority nationality or ethnicity.

Here are some examples:

- With regard to promoting access and retention of children with special needs, Malaysia launched an Integrated Special Education Programs in 1981. Children with special needs were provided with three options for schooling: (a) special education schools primarily catering to children with special needs, such as the visually impaired or other similar disabilities including auditory impairment and physical/mobility handicap; (b) mainstreamed integrated schools with specific classes dedicated to children with special needs, and (c) inclusive education programs, or mainstreamed schools that integrate 1 to 5 children with special needs into mainstreamed classes. Overall, the government estimates that of children identified as having disabilities, about 6% of children are enrolled in inclusive education programs, about 5% attend special education schools, and most (89%) are enrolled in mainstreamed integrated schools. Further, retention is pursued through the introduction of the Early Intervention Reading and Writing Class, implemented in all government primary schools beginning in 2006^{vii}.
- Botswana similarly created a Special Education Unit in the Ministry of Education in 1984 which has played a crucial role in facilitating access and retention of students with special needs. By 1991, 14 government schools catered for learners with a variety of abilities, and NGOs were authorized to establish several specialized centers for children with disabilities.
- Another approach was to permit the adaptation of a national curriculum to better relate to the needs and cultural traditions of an ethnic group. Sabah's State Education Department in Malaysia, for example, started an initiative in 2008 to develop a more practical approach in the teaching of *Bajau Laut* (Sea Gypsy) people, relating it to their life at sea. The initiative was to increase students' interest in learning and increased school attendance.

Harness contributions of non-government partners

Each of the case study countries achieved UPE through government and non-government contributions, although in every case Government established the policy, institutional and regulatory framework. Non-government provision includes schools of faith-based organizations, private educational businesses, and NGOs established to address specific barriers to access (for example, for children with disabilities, linguistic minorities, the children of the extremely poor.) In some countries, there was also external support through borrowing from development banks, accepting grants from donors and inviting participation in the effort by internationals, such as UNICEF or INGOs.

In Brazil, private education plays a very important role and is mainly administered by the Roman Catholic Church. The private sector participates at all educational levels, subject to government approval. When there was no public pre-elementary education, this was developed by the private sector. Of Brazil's 18 million enrolled at the primary level, 14% are enrolled in private sector schools. The case study reveals that, "several NGOs are working to stimulate and to provide technical assistance to local authorities in developing innovative educational approaches and managerial strategies; such efforts are also being supported by private sector companies pursuing social responsibility initiatives".

Botswana's Ministry of Education developed a detailed policy which emphasized integration and collaboration with other stakeholders. Nongovernmental organizations, particularly religious-based institutions, have contributed to expanding educational provision in Botswana. For example, between 1978 and 1991 the number of private primary schools increased from 13 to 50. These primary schools belong to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and the Roman Catholic Church.

Another private organization that has helped increase access, retention, and quality in primary education is the De Beers Botswana Mining Company. The company is actively involved in education from the pre-primary to the tertiary level and runs two private primary schools in the mining area constructed in 1980.

Lebanon's public school system expanded during the first decade after independence in 1958, with the number of schools more than doubling in the first five years. Prior to this most primary schools in Lebanon were related to the various religious organizations, Christian and Muslim. The relative size of the public sector began to shrink in 1955. In 2012, Lebanon had 2,786 schools including 1,282 public schools, 358 free private schools, 1,077 fee-based private schools, and 69 private UNRWA schools for Palestinian refugees. About 29% of students are enrolled in the public sector. The dual system of education in Lebanon, combining both private and public, is a direct consequence of its long historic heritage of education delivery.

In Malaysia, religious organizations were important in the colonial era for providing primary education for different nationalities - Malay, Chinese and Indian. What is perhaps distinctive about Malaysia is its recent policy to involve the private sector in improving the quality and efficiency of educational outcomes relevant to the private sector. As the case study reports: "In 2010, the Ministry of Education launched 'trust schools'. These are public schools that are managed jointly by private organizations/civil society school leaders under the authority of the Ministry of Education, with the objective of increasing access and quality in schools. By 2025, this program is to expand to 500 schools, targeting public schools in rural areas and those which enroll indigenous students and those which enroll students with special needs.



Find solutions for the remaining excluded

Another characteristic that emerges from the case studies is the way each country has sought special solutions for populations which do not fit the general profiles of their children.

Malaysia's regulations, for example, provide for enrollment for children with Malaysian citizenship identification, but not for those without. Indonesian children, who accompany their parents across the border into Sabah for work are unable to enroll. However, the case study reported that the Malaysian government had recently reached an agreement with the Indonesian government for the latter to send over 100 Indonesian teachers to work on plantations to teach children in the learning centers operated by *Humana* (Borneo Child Aid), an NGO which focuses on the rights of children of undocumented migrants. Humana has opened 128 learning centers (designated as such because they are not officially accredited as schools) which provide instruction to more than 12,000 students.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has operated a school system in Lebanon as the main provider of basic education to Palestinian refugee children since 1950. The UNRWA's 69 schools provide basic education for around 33,000 registered refugee children free of charge up to age 15. UNRWA schools in Lebanon follow the Lebanese curriculum, which provides their students the opportunity to pursue further education and other employment opportunities in the country. Recently, Palestinian refugees from Syria were also enrolled at the UNRWA schools.

The Botswana case study refers to the exclusion of children of one minority population, the Basarwa, located in remote areas. The Basarwa do not view schooling as a priority in the context of their hunting and gathering culture. Their schools are poorly resourced and tend to have unqualified teachers. The language of instruction and the curriculum do not reflect their culture. Other schools sometimes use corporal punishment, which is abhorred by the Basarwa. The government response has been relocation of the Basarwa to settlements and provision of hostels for Basarwa children to enable them to acculturate to the language of instruction and mainstream Setswana culture. Such policies, however, are not without opposition from some of the Basarwa and organisations that advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples.

In Brazil's case, the issue was of regional disparities in access. The response of the government was to focus investment on disadvantaged regions. The case study reports that regional disparities were addressed by implementing the *Monhangara* and *Edurural* programs so that regional differences in access and retention rates had all but disappeared by the early 1990s. The remaining regional differences in enrollment rates were eliminated by the late-1990s through the *Fundescola* initiatives.

The *Edurural* program (1981-1987) focused on 218 municipalities in the northeastern states and the *Monhangara* program (1984-1992) focused on 25 municipalities in the north and mid-west regions. Both Federal Government programs were supported by World Bank loans. These programs were aimed at municipalities with greatest socio-economic and educational needs. The programs provided financial assistance in: a) building schools; b) training teachers, supervisors and administrative support staff; c) developing curricula and distributing of books and learning materials; d) providing

school meals; e) supporting municipal education management agencies; and f) implementing monitoring and evaluation systems.

Based on lessons learned from *Edurural* and *Monhangara*, the Federal Government designed an even bigger initiative of over \$500 million with World Bank support - the Northeastern Basic Education Project. It was prepared during 1992-1994, and was launched in 1995 and ended in 2004. The project was managed by a special planning and operational agency, called FUNDESCOLA. The project targeted the North and Center-West regions; net enrollment rates in targeted areas increased by almost 50%.

These examples demonstrate how the case study countries applied creative solutions to address issues of access to primary education for particular populations in respect of the legal, political and geographical issues.

Make good use of international experience

The countries made use of international skills, advice and evidence along the paths followed to UPE, although international influence was not necessarily a driver.

When the civil war ended in 1990, Lebanon benefitted from technical assistance and financing for the education sector from several international organizations, including *Agence Française de Développement*, the European Union, the Islamic Development Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, and the World Bank. The case study reports that these organizations worked in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with local organizations and institutions to improve access and retention in schools, enhance student achievement by improving educational facilities and equipment, providing capacity building for teachers, and increasing stakeholder engagement in public schools.

The Botswana case study reported that international organizations supported increasing access, retention, and quality in education. These include UNESCO, the European Union, CIDA and USAID. Brazil leaned heavily on World Bank and USAID expertise (as well as loans and grants) over several decades as it designed various elements of its strategy to reach UPE.





How these countries each addressed a major setback on the path to UPE

Countries with vision, commitment and persistence that have each used a range of strategies to achieve UPE. However, each one had to address not only their heritage but also major setbacks on the way to universalization.

For illustrative purposes, one setback is described, that each country had to face, strategies to overcome it, and how the country continued toward its target of primary education for all. The setbacks we will consider are a pandemic, a civil war, inter-communal conflict, and an unprecedented population growth – problems that many other countries have faced or are facing.

BOTSWANA: the HIV and AIDS epidemic

Botswana's first case of HIV was in 1985. By 2009, the prevalence rate was 25% for the 15-49 year population cohort. It was the country with the second highest prevalence of HIV in the world. The epidemic had many implications for the primary education sector:

- There are many infected primary-aged children;
- It was predicted that in 2010, 20% of all children would be orphaned;
- It was estimated that 10,000 teachers would be lost as a result of contracting the virus;
- School participation would be affected by the involvement of children in caring for infected family members and substituting for them as workers;
- The loss of adults in their productive years have macro-economic implications; and
- Public spending on antiretroviral treatment reduced funding potentially for education services.

Government's initial response was through the health sector, as it was for most countries, but by 2000, the response was multi-sectoral, including the education sector.

The education sector has since then played an increasing role in national HIV prevention and the government has put in place measures to compensate for the loss of teachers and of family contributions to costs of schooling.



Here is an example of one of the Botswana Government's strategies: In 2004, a teacher-capacity building program was developed by the Ministry of Education of Botswana and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in collaboration with the Government of Brazil and with support from the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP). The program aimed to improve the teachers' knowledge, to de-mystify and de-stigmatize HIV/AIDS, and to break down cultural beliefs about sex and sexuality. As part of the project, all primary and secondary schools were equipped with a television, video recorder, satellite dish and decoder and an interactive AIDS education program called *Talk Back*, broadcast twice weekly by Botswana Television. Since its inception, *Talk Back* has reached more than 20,000 teachers and 460,000 students and won accolades for its services, including a nomination for the Commonwealth Education Best Practice Awards in 2009^{viii}.

Botswana did not allow the epidemic to ravage the educational system it had invested heavily in building. Instead it harnessed the education system as one of its strategies to try to reduce the further spread of the HIV virus.

LEBANON: 15 years of civil war

Internal political conflict associated with external developments in the Middle East resulted in the collapse of the governmental authority in 1975 and a civil war which lasted 15 years. There was widespread destruction of infrastructure and high civilian casualties. How was Lebanon able to get its UPE vision back on track? The case study suggests two reasons, one political, the second institutional.

The political explanation is that the notion that education should be free and compulsory was declared in the 1989 Document of National Accord (the *Taif Agreement*) which brought the civil war to an end. In taking this forward, Lebanon introduced in 1993 its first Educational Development Plan, which focused on "strengthening the sense of national pride and unity among citizens, to foster spiritual and cultural openness", and planned for reconstruction of over 1,200 schools.

On the institutional side, the very complexity of Lebanon's education system, shared between the various religious denominations and the government meant that the rehabilitation of primary schooling was shared among several stakeholders. Fee-based private schools numbered 1077 of the 2786 schools in 2012 and these were supported directly by families rather than the government budget. The school system is also supported by a vibrant generally non-sectarian NGO system that has worked alongside government and schools to achieve UPE and regain the quality that earlier characterized the Lebanese system, before the outbreak of civil war.

The message here is that while the *Taif Agreement* created the political space for the reconstruction of the education system, it was multiple stakeholders that enabled this vision to result in UPE.



MALAYSIA: inter-communal conflict and disunity

Malaysia's population in 2013 was almost 30 million. About 99% of the population is comprised of three distinct ethnicities: Malays (66%), Chinese (25%) and Indians (8%). Until Malaysia became independent in 1963, there were four types of vernacular primary schools - English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil (the language of most Indian immigrants).

The English schools were run by missionaries and the government, located in the urban areas and generally with racially-mixed student bodies of affluent, educated families. The Malay schools, which were typically found in villages, focused on vocational or life skills such as farming, fishing and handicrafts. Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium schools were located mostly in towns and estates respectively. These schools followed Chinese and Indian curricula respectively and teachers were from their own ethnic communities. In addition, there were *madrasah* (Islamic schools) where children's learning focused on the *Qur'an*. By the end of the 1960s, inter-communal issues led to civil unrest, and the country was placed under emergency rule.

The unification of the education system had already begun, with the merging of ethnic schools systems of pre-independence. But after the conflict, it became even more urgent to ensure that schools nurtured Malaysian citizens rather than Malays, Chinese and Indians. Education of the post-independence era was therefore designed to promote national unity and a common national school for all ethnic groups and religions was established. All existing primary schools were converted to *national* or *national-type* schools: the Malay-medium schools were renamed as national schools, while English-, Chinese-, and Tamil-medium schools became national-type schools. Malay language was the medium of instruction in the national schools and made a compulsory subject to be taught in the national-type schools. English national-type schools were converted into Malay-medium national schools in stages between 1968 and 1982, while Chinese and Indian national-type schools have continued to operate.

The Education Act of 1961 was key to establishing a national education system, in which primary schooling was to be free for all children regardless of their ethnicity and religion. The primary focus of this act was to "establish a national system of education ... to promote the cultural, economic and political advancement in this country, besides making the Malay language the national language".

It was therefore to address divisive ethnic and language issues that the primary education system was gradually unified and Malay established as the national language through the requirement that it be part of the curriculum of all primary schools.

BRAZIL: providing schooling for a rapidly growing population

One of Brazil's challenges on the road to UPE has been its demographics. For 40 years from 1940, its population grew at about 3% each year, increasing its population of 41 million in 1940 to 119 million in 1980. Its population is now about 200 million. Until around 1980, 20% of the population was of primary school age, although this proportion has been declining steadily to nearer 10% as the birth rate has lowered. Clearly, the problem facing Brazil was keeping up with the ever-growing demand for primary education as the size of the age cohort swelled year after year.

The response in 1970 was (i) to integrate primary and lower secondary schools into eight grade elementary schools, (ii) to decentralize responsibility for elementary school services to the state level, and (iii) to maintain federal responsibility for strategic planning and financing the system. In 1996, the roles of state and municipality in services delivery was further elaborated: a) decentralizing to municipalities the responsibility for educational and logistics management for elementary and early childhood education and b) redefining the role of state government to support and coordinate local policies in these areas and to expand and manage secondary schooling.

Brazil therefore addressed the potential setback of rapid population growth by decentralizing responsibility for UPE first to the state level and subsequently to the municipality level, while maintaining federal responsibility for policy, strategy, equalization investment and standards.



Conclusion

In the words of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser,

“The greatest obstacle to progress would be to do nothing to improve the lives of millions of people who suffer disadvantage.

... education is our key to changing the world. We need the skills and the willingness of able young people to unlock the doors of opportunity.”^{ix}

These four countries have demonstrated their understanding that education is the key to change. Each has been driven by the needs to create national unity within boundaries created by colonialism, to forge economic growth to achieve developed country status and no longer be reliant on others, and to address inequalities among their peoples and places within the national boundaries.

The strategies these countries created and deployed are instructive, and some may be adaptable by other countries desirous of achieving similar ends.

Endnotes

- i See UN 2013 The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, page 5
<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/mdg-report-2013-english.pdf>
- ii Ibid: graph on page 14
- iii data presented in the four case studies
- iv Benavot, A., & Resnik, J. (2007). Lessons from the past: A comparative socio-historical analysis of primary and secondary education, page 127. In J. Cohen, D. Bloom, & M. Malin (Eds.), *Educating All Children: A Global Agenda*, (pp. 123-230). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- vi Gusso, D. A. (2013). *Success in increasing access and retention in primary education: The case of Brazil*. Washington, DC: FHI 360, page 34 of draft
- vii Symaco, L. P. (2013), op cit, page 22. of draft
- viii See more at <http://www.avert.org/hiv-aids-botswana.htm#sthash.LP2HOBMa.dpuf>
- ix Acceptance of the George Bush Award for Distinguished Public Service, Maine, USA September 19, 2013





