



# Belgian Support to Basic Education: Mapping the Way Forward

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# Preface

After years of relative silence, basic education has recently been placed back on the development agenda. Unfortunately the budgets don't yet follow suit. The seemingly positive signs in terms of access to basic education in the global South and the emergence of new development themes had pushed the theme of education into the background. However, the establishment of international educational initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Ban Ki-moon's Global Education First Initiative is a hopeful sign that education is on the way back. Closer to home, in Belgium too we have recently experienced a revival of the education theme with the launch of the EDUCAID platform.

Plan Belgium, although we say it ourselves, has been one of the contributors to the education revival in the Belgian development sector. Since 2010, we have been actively campaigning for more attention to be paid to quality basic education in the South. Plan Belgium's education campaign experienced a provisional high point last year when Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee addressed Belgian MPs at the invitation of Plan Belgium on the importance of education for girls in the South.

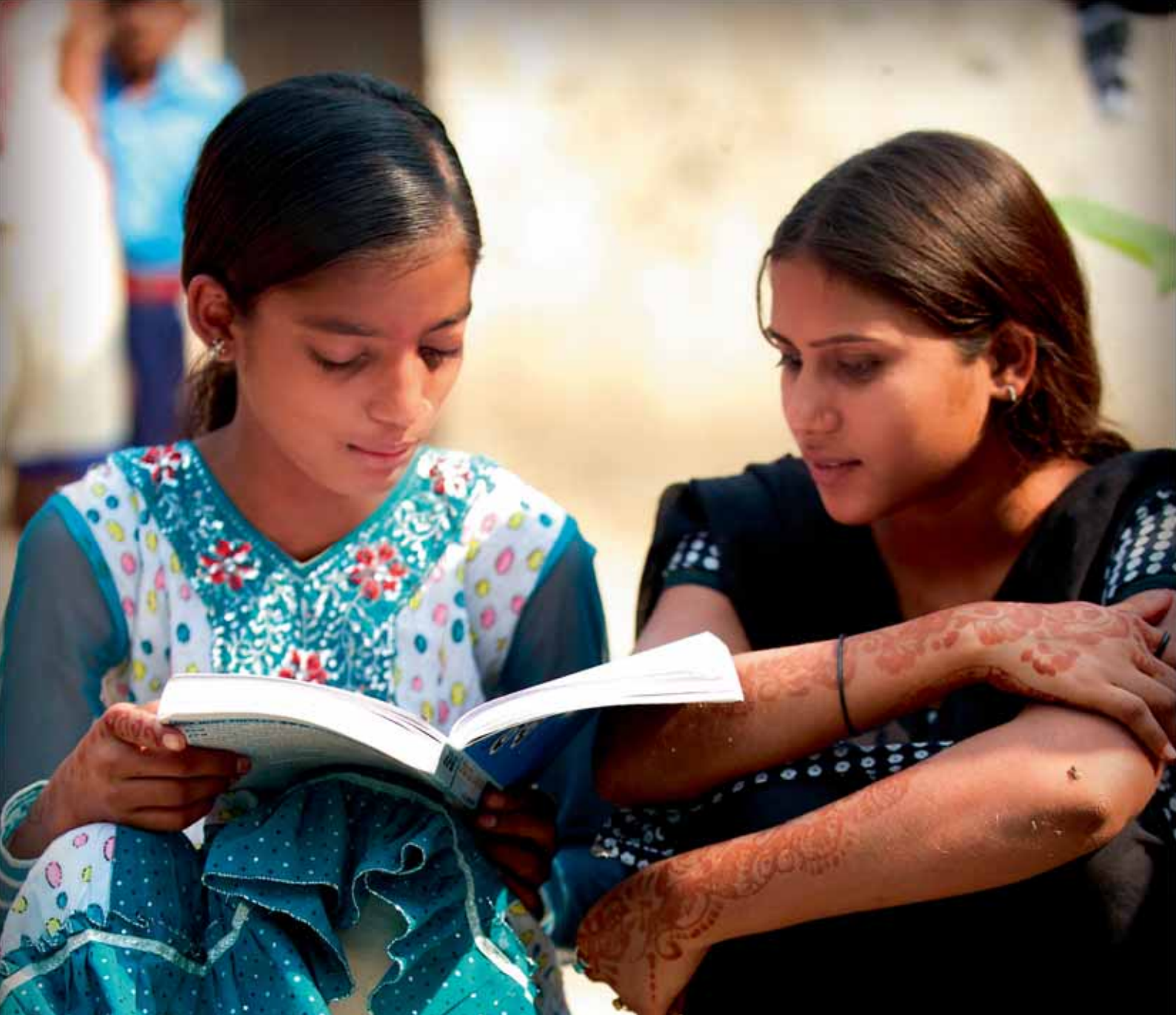
This year, Plan Belgium's efforts on basic education will result in the international conference "Basic Education for Change". With this conference, we aim to give a constructive boost to the discussion about the future of Belgian development cooperation in basic education. This report, based on a scientific analysis of international and Belgian donor policy in this area, offers a starting-point. After the conference too, and looking ahead to a new political legislature, this report will offer the necessary inspiration for Belgian development policy in basic education.

In the conviction that we can help improve the realisation of children's right to education in the South, I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Dirk Van Maele  
National Director  
Plan Belgium

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## Abbreviations

<b>APEFE</b>	Association pour la Promotion de l'Enseignement et de la Formation à l'Etranger	<b>GAVI</b>	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation	<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Association
<b>BE</b>	Basic Education	<b>GNP</b>	Gross National Product	<b>RTE</b>	Right to Education Act (India)
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa	<b>GMR</b>	EFA Global Monitoring Report	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>BTC</b>	Belgian Development Agency	<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education	<b>SE</b>	Secondary Education
<b>CRS</b>	Creditor Reporting System OECD-DAC	<b>HLF</b>	High Level Forum OECD-DAC	<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>IOB</b>	IOB Evaluation, Policy and Operations Evaluation	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility		Department, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>CIUF-CUD</b>	CIUF-CUD Institutional University Cooperation	<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals	<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Education
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development, UK	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation	<b>VfM</b>	Value for Money
<b>DGD</b>	Directorate General for Development, Belgium	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance	<b>VLIR-UOS</b>	VLIR-UOS Institutional University Cooperation
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	<b>OECD-DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	<b>VVOB</b>	Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education		Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper	<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All	<b>PRSP</b>		<b>WBI</b>	Wallonie-Bruxelles International

# Executive Summary

This report, commissioned by Plan Belgium, is an input to the international conference *Basic Education for Change*, organised by Plan Belgium in collaboration with HIVA-KU Leuven, UNICEF Belgium and VVOB in Brussels on 14 May 2013. The report examines the broad trends in the support of Belgium to the education sector in developing countries over the last 25 years, and then looks at how Belgium has engaged with basic education as an important sub-sector. This analysis is used to 'map the way forward', resulting in recommendations for the future principles and modalities, and the proposition of three possible scenarios for the future Belgian support to basic education. It is a constructive contribution to the Belgian post-2015 dialogue, with the aim of stimulating the debate and adding focus to the collective effort of Belgian development actors in education.

The research for this report involved a brief literature review; a critical analysis of policy documents, reports and other data sources from various development actors and leading international institutions; an in-depth analysis of the original ODA database from the Belgian Directorate General for Development (DGD); complemented with selected interviews with various practitioners and educational experts. The findings and recommendations should be read in a context of intensifying debates about the post-2015 framework with increased attention for quality and equity in education; and the financial crisis with shrinking ODA for education.

## The main findings of the report are:

- Belgium<sup>1</sup> has invested consistently in the education sector over the last three decades, with an average of about 8% of the total ODA going to education, comparable to the 10,3% for the health sector

and 9% for agriculture and forestry (DGD, 2010). However, since 2009 aid to education is in decline.

- While Belgium has a relatively complex institutional landscape of development actors in the education sector, five actors take up more than 4/5 of the total budget for education in 2011: the university councils VLIR-UOS & CIUF-CUD (56%)<sup>2</sup>, BTC (18%), and VVOB & APEFE (8%).
- The total budget for NGOs accounts for only 8% of the ODA going to education. The number of Belgian NGOs active in education is limited, and the majority of NGO ODA for education<sup>3</sup> is going to TVET and informal training.
- Interestingly, the broad political endorsement in Belgium of Education for All (EFA) and the MDGs since 2000 did not lead to higher shares of ODA going to education, nor to higher shares of educational ODA going to basic education (14% in 2003 compared to 11% in 2011).
- Belgian educational aid is dominated by its support for higher education (almost 70% in 2011), which in turn is made up for more than 50% of scholarships. A large majority of the higher education programmes are not targeting the education sector in developing countries as such.
- Policy making by the federal government (e.g. sector policy note of 2002) has focused mainly on its bilateral support for basic education, while other well funded areas, such as the scholarships and TVET are receiving much less policy attention.
- Since the end of the 1990s, Belgium has continuously renewed the bilateral support mechanisms for basic education, including through its attention for sector budget support, more thematic and geographic concentration, and the improved policy dialogue with its partner countries. It has also supported the set-up of

the EDUCAID platform, which groups the main Belgian development actors in education. Despite decreasing its ODA levels for basic education in general, Belgium is increasing the support for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2009.

## The main recommendations are the following:

- The report argues that Belgium can play a larger and more strategic role in the support of basic education, transforming the clear policy intentions on basic education into actual policy. The report suggests that quality of education and equity could be two central themes that are in line with Belgium's identity (small donor) and existing expertise.
- In terms of principles for future support to basic education, the report recommends a more integrated approach with a long term perspective, clear policy targets, and improved theories of change.
- In terms of modalities, the report recommends more specialisation; harmonization between development actors in the South rather than at the Belgian level; increasing the resources and capacities at ministry level; a debate about what should be coded as education sector support and what not; and a review of part of the scholarships schemes in support of basic education.

To trigger the debate about the Belgian support for basic education post-2015, the report suggests three different scenarios, each time with an analysis of the approach, the implications, and a SWOT analysis:

- Scenario 1: Full integration in the upcoming post-2015 framework (with the Global Partnership for Education)
- Scenario 2: Specialising in filling-up some of the missing links of the upcoming post-2015 framework
- Scenario 3: Advanced thematic specialisation, decoupled from the post-2015 agenda

1 Here we refer to the total Belgian ODA to the education sector, which is channeled through the bilateral and multilateral channel and various indirect actors (university councils, NGOs, VVOB/APEFE, ..).

2 This number includes additional scholarship costs imputed on the ODA budget

3 Other NGOs such as Plan Belgium work on basic education, but largely on funds coming from other sources (not formal ODA)







# 1. Setting the stage

**This report looks at how Belgium as an OECD-DAC donor has been supporting the education sector in developing countries, and examines a number of different scenarios for the way forward. It aims to stimulate the debate between Belgian actors working on basic education in development, and offer some input for an international conference being held on the same topic in May 2013 (Box 1).**

The report starts by briefly examining the bigger picture: what do we know about basic education and its role in development? What does the literature tell us about what works in which context? Which trends can be observed amongst the development partners supporting basic education? Subsequently, the main part of the report hones in on Belgian aid for basic education, reconstructing the key elements that have shaped the past and reflecting on what could be scenarios for the future. It maps out the financial flows, the main actors and their activities. In doing so, it should not be read as a formal evaluation of the Belgian policies on basic education, nor as an impact assessment of the activities on the ground. It does not attempt to be exhaus-

tive, nor enter into minute detail<sup>4</sup>, but rather sketch out the main components of the diverse landscape of Belgian aid for education. It is a first step in bridging the gap in collective memory about this important area of development work.

A number of methodological steps were involved in compiling this report. The study contains a literature review of key resources on basic education and development, mainly from leading research institutes and international institutions. Because of the importance of obtaining a helicopter view, we looked for studies that offered a broad overview of basic education, and in the second instance secondary education, TVET

and higher education. For the review of donor practices internationally, and in Belgium more specifically, a wide range of secondary material was reviewed systematically, either from sources that are publicly available or obtained upon request from the relevant institutions. This varied from policy documents to programme documentation and monitoring and evaluation reports, some were existing studies and online databases (e.g. on fourth pillar initiatives). For the analysis of the financial flows, extensive use was made of the OECD-DAC online CRS database, and the original DGD ODA database, which is managed by the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD, February 2013). A selection of key resource personnel from international institutions in addition to academics and practitioners were interviewed.

<sup>4</sup> For example, due to time constraints, the study could not focus extensively on trends in domestic funding and policies, nor on a thorough analysis of the policies at the multilateral level.

## **Box 1: How the study feeds into the international conference Basic Education for Change, Brussels, 14 May 2013**

This conference is organised by Plan Belgium and looks at Belgium's role in supporting basic education in developing countries. Together with this study, a range of international experts, researchers and policy-makers shall contribute to the event, all with the aim of providing a platform for continued exchange and critical reflection on how small donors such as Belgium can contribute to basic education. Afternoon sessions will explore in-depth cases studies on key aspects of quality basic education.



## Preface – some facts & figures

- In 2009, the average public spending on education per person per year was 22 USD in low-income countries and 1,792 USD in high-income countries
- Progress in reducing the numbers of children out of school has stalled since 2008
- Some countries have seen spectacular increases in enrolment in primary education (e.g. Ethiopia from 3 million pupils in 1995 to 15.5 million in 2009)
- At the same time, the quality of education remains a major challenge in many developing countries. For example, in Mali in 2010, over 80% of students in grade 2 could not read a single word in any of the four national languages (GMR, 2012, p.130)
- In an ongoing global survey about the priorities for the future development goals (post-2015), education is emerging as the top priority (My World, Feb 2013)



# 2. Basic education & development

## 2.1. Defining basic education in this report

This report starts with the observation that there is quite a broad interpretation of what basic education is or should be, and as yet there is no convergence towards a shared understanding of the term (UNESCO, 2007). In line with the Global Partnership for Education and other actors, we choose to use the term basic education rather than primary education to work with an inclusive understanding of the range of educational activities (including lower secondary education and out-of-school education) that should provide the foundational skills which all children and adults require. To examine the financial flows, we make use of the coding according to OECD-DAC (CRS-disbursements) because this is used by all OECD-DAC donors, including Belgium. To calculate sub-sector totals we combine sub-sector codes according to the UNESCO formulas. We make one exception to the UNESCO formulas, by adding the budgets for lower secondary education (50% of the code for secondary education) to those of basic education<sup>5</sup>. More details on these calculations can be found in section 3.1 (Level of investments).

In our report, we also touch upon different types of skills to be acquired at different ages and for different types of education. We make use of the distinction put forward by UNESCO (GMR, 2012) between foundation skills (basic education level), transferable skills (post-primary level) and technical/vocational skills (post-primary level).

## 2.2. Does education lead to development?

### Highlights

- **Research confirms the positive returns of education on development, while stressing the importance of context and other factors outside the education system.**
- **Good quality education is a condition, but is not sufficient to bring about development.**
- **Evidence is particularly strong regarding the impact of education at the level of the individual (socio-economic), economic growth and regarding health and well-being.**
- **Research is less conclusive about the returns of education on reducing social inequality and in terms of improving democratic attitudes, fostering peace and reconciliation, and environmentally-sound behaviour. The lack of substantial evidence in these areas is also related to methodological challenges in isolating the effects of education from other factors.**

### Is the jury still out?

For people outside the educational community, debating whether investing in education contributes to human and economic development tends to be a strange experience at first. In our societies, education is seen as such an obvious right that its existence is not ques-

tioned. Education as a human right has been a growing argument in defending investments in education as already put forward in the Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948, but more recently also bolstered by the work of authors such as Amartya Sen (1985). Once confronted with the enormous challenges in developing countries and the limited resources with which to address them, however, discussions about priorities and focus areas can literally become a debate about life and death. How much should governments invest in education versus health, agriculture and other sectors? Which educational levels should be addressed first? Lastly, should the focus firstly be on access or is quality more important? This line of thinking has resulted in the viewing of education in terms of its contribution to development.

Over the years, a growing body of research has examined the returns of education. A recent study for the Dutch Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB, 2011), in the context of the comprehensive evaluation of the Dutch support for basic education, has brought together an extensive amount of literature on this topic. The literature was clustered around different types of returns of education. Broadly speaking, the IOB study shows that the returns of education are especially tangible at the micro-level, on macro-economic growth and in terms of the effects on health. Evidence is less clear regarding the re-distributional effects, its impact on democracy and peace and regarding environmentally responsible behaviour. The next section presents a summary of the results of the IOB study<sup>6</sup>, highlighting where possible the specific findings on basic education.

### Types of returns of education (based on the IOB review, 2011)

#### a. Micro level returns: conclusive evidence

Education brings benefits for the individual, in terms of earnings and increased employability and productivity. This finding is

<sup>5</sup> In those cases where we deviate from these formulas, it will be indicated explicitly in the figure.

<sup>6</sup> Being a summary of a large (but inevitably incomplete) body of research, it is likely not to do justice to the details of these studies, but also to research that was not considered in the IOB study.

➤ increasingly and consistently repeated in a multitude of studies. The effects of education are influenced especially by the quality of the education rather than the number of years of schooling, and depend on the demand for specific skills in the labour market. Because of the discrimination that exists in the labour market in many developing countries, men end up benefitting more from education than women. In many developing countries, the returns from primary education are still there, but they are generally decreasing compared to a few decades ago. This is explained by the growing group of people educated with primary education diplomas, the low quality of primary education, and changing demands on the labour market (IOB, 2011). Research in India and other countries (Beatty et al., 2012) confirms that in some countries universal free education went hand in hand with a drop in the quality of primary education. Focusing on primary education of a higher quality would be one way of increasing its returns. At the same time, research shows that the returns from post-secondary education also depend significantly on the quality of primary education, because primary education lays the foundation for what follows.

#### **b. Macro-economic growth: substantial evidence**

While the causal relationship between education and economic growth has been questioned by some authors (e.g. Pritchett, 2001), more recent research by Hanushek and Woessmann (2009) and others concludes that “quality education, generating both basic and higher-level skills, reinforces economic growth”. (IOB, 2011, p. 24)

The IOB study also refers to the frustration that has been observed in some policy areas that investments in the education sector do not seem to have led to spectacular improvements in economic growth or poverty reduction. This lack of visible results is explained partly by the fact that the impact of education takes several decades to materialise. In

addition, the quality of education and the relevance of the skills acquired are essential conditions for any macro-economic impact and both are lacking in many countries.

Regarding the question of which educational level should be the focus, simulations by Hanushek and Woessmann (2009) attempt to calculate the difference in impact on economic growth of increased investments in providing basic education for all versus providing higher education to top-performing students. The study shows a higher return of (merit-based) access to higher education, but the authors caution that the second strategy is more difficult to achieve, and indicate that economies need a workforce that is at least equipped with basic skills to implement imitation and innovation strategies anyway. Unbalanced support towards one single level of the education system will most often not be the solution.

#### **c. Returns on health, and well-being: conclusive evidence**

A third area where there are spectacular findings on the impact of education is around health and well-being. More education leads to a better health status and lower mortality risks, as observed in both developing and developed countries. For many decades research has consistently shown, for example, that improved education of mothers reduces child and maternal mortality, and improves the health of the mothers’ children. Education of young girls has a positive impact on reproductive health and fertility control, through improved contraceptive use and therefore smaller families, HIV-AIDS prevention and less exposure to violence and sexual abuse.

#### **d. Other effects of education: mixed findings**

In other areas of the returns of education, research is less conclusive; sometimes findings are conflicting, or there are methodological challenges in measuring the actual returns.

The fact that the studies’ findings do not converge does not necessarily mean that there are no positive effects, but at least there is no consensus around them.

#### *Distributional effects of education*

Distributional effects refer to the extent to which education contributes to reducing inequality in society, and therefore improving the socio-economic positions of disadvantaged groups in terms of gender, income, disability or ethnic origin. Many studies conclude that improved “access to education in itself is insufficient to overcome a variety of important contextual causes of exclusion... that sustain existing inequalities” (IOB, 2011, p. 28). In other words, poor quality education systems tend to reproduce existing inequalities rather than addressing them. Factors outside the education system can also limit the returns of education. For example, while in developing countries the economic returns of education might be higher for women than for men, they still tend to lose out on the labour market due to the lower wages offered to them. Studies show that the situation is even more problematic when it comes to ethnic-based educational inequality, including in developed countries.

#### *Democracy and peace, and the environment*

Two final areas that have received attention are related to democracy and peace on the one hand and the impact of education on the environment on the other. Research has identified a number of positive relationships between equal access to (higher levels of) education and democratic attitudes, observed for example in voter behaviour and levels of participation in community activities. But the relationships are complex and are affected by various parameters outside of the education system. In terms of education’s contribution to peace-building and reconciliation and environmentally sound behaviour, the number of studies is limited and the findings are still somewhat fragmented, according to the IOB literature review.

## **Box 2: What US immigrants teach us about the impact of education on economic growth**

In response to claims that the quality of education and economic growth would actually improve together, rather than education being a significant contributor to growth, Hanushek et al. (2009) conducted an interesting experiment. They compared US immigrants who were educated in their country of origin with immigrants educated in the US, and managed to single out the effects of education on economic growth. The results were clear: the quality of education is an important contributing factor in terms of impact.



## 2.3. Key areas of attention

### Highlights

- **More attention for equity issues at different levels of the education system is a precondition for education to realise its full potential regarding social mobility.**
- **Growing youth unemployment in developing countries triggered a renewed interest in the link between education and the world of work.**
- **Education can play an important role in bringing normality in conflict-affected societies, but this aspect of humanitarian work is rather low on the priority list of the donor community.**

Amongst the multitude of issues that affect the individual and societal relevance of education, we have already highlighted the issue of access and quality. In this section, we shall briefly describe three key areas which are high on the agenda in the development community: equity, the world of work and emergencies.

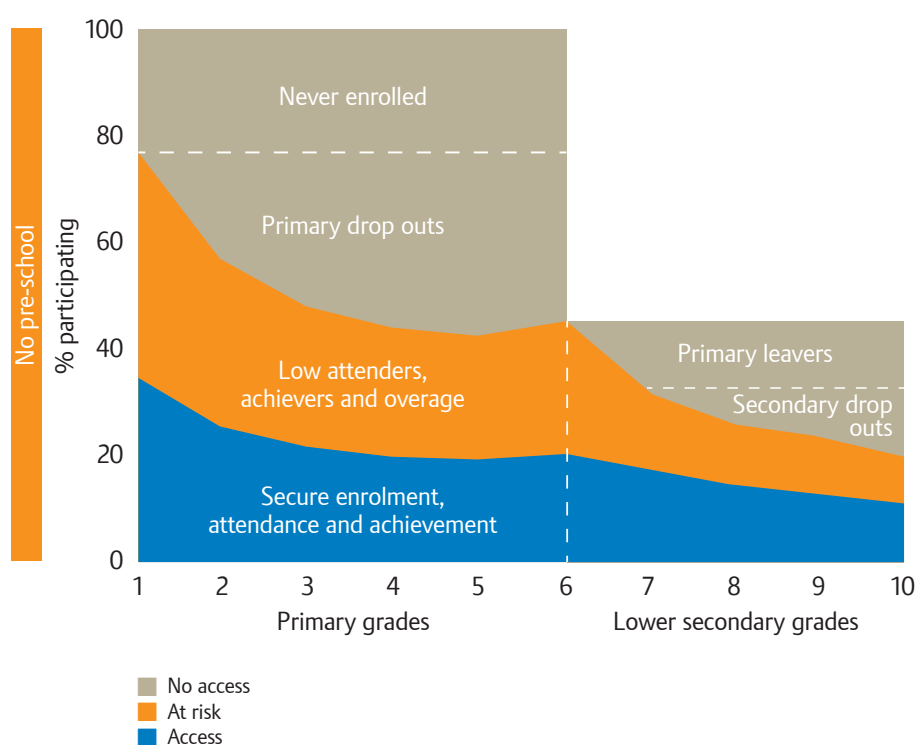
### Equity

Equity is closely related to the issue of inequality and the re-distributional power of education, as also described in the previous section. It looks at the extent to which various disadvantaged groups such as disabled children, girls and children from poor backgrounds and/or ethnic or religious minorities are able to access education and, equally as importantly, can actually improve their situation through education. Essentially, it is about fairness and inclusion in education (OECD, 2007). The literature review in section 2.2 demonstrates that it cannot be assumed that education by itself improves social mobility. The existing international EFA goals and MDGs have been criticised for not sufficiently considering equity beyond equitable access. Targeted actions need to be taken to ensure that education realises its potential for all. Equity is therefore one of the major themes in the debates on the post-2015 agenda (see also section 3.1), especially looking at the way in which the provision of education can address the widening global inequality. Other aspects, such as the problem of education 'reproducing' poverty, missing adult education and out-of-school youth are receiving less attention. Figure 1 illustrates that equity is not only about access to primary

education, but that there are at least seven possible zones of exclusion in the education system (Lewin, 2007), starting with a lack of participation in pre-schooling and ending with low quality learning at secondary education level. Transitions between levels of education are typically critical bottlenecks in many education systems.

Addressing equity involves, as a minimum, involvement in the design, actual practices and the resourcing of education systems (OECD, 2007). It is about limiting early streaming in secondary education, managing choice of schools, offering second chances, proving targeted support at school level and at home and directing resources to students in need.

**Figure 1: Zones of exclusion obstructing equity in access to education**  
(adapted from DFID, 2010, and based on work of Keith Lewin, CREATE, 2007)



### Box 3: The success of targeting ethno-regional minority groups in Nigeria

Nigeria has a history of critical tensions and conflict around the dominance of certain ethno-regional groups in occupying critical public service positions. A governmental programme to improve access to higher education for other ethno-regional groups is reported to have been successful in terms of training qualified personnel for these public service positions, and avoiding violent conflicts (Ukiwo, 2007).



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## > Education and the world of work

Extreme levels of youth unemployment in developing and developed countries in recent decades have increased the attention focused on the critical link between education and the world of work (GMR, 2012; Mc Grath, 2012). In addition to linking this debate with basic education, leading international institutions have placed technical and vocational education and training (TVET) back on the policy agenda inside and outside of the development scene after many years of neglect, such as the OECD (2012) and the Asian Development Bank (Maclean et al., 2013) but also at the level of the G20.

For example, the influential Global Monitoring Report (GMR) from UNESCO selected skills development as the central theme of the 2012 edition. It highlighted the vagueness and lack of attention paid to the third EFA goal, namely, 'ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes'. The report calls for a broad understanding of skills development, beyond TVET in formal settings. It draws attention to several problems at the level of basic education, demonstrating that many young people leave the school system without even acquiring foundation skills, which include basic literacy and numeracy skills. The report advo-

cates greater efforts in strengthening foundation skills, both inside and outside of the formal schooling system, the latter having been largely neglected up to now. In the context of the post-2015 preparations (see also section 3.1), UNESCO, together with the Brookings Institution, convened the Learning Metrics Task Force in an attempt to build consensus around the areas in what every child should learn. At this stage (February 2013), there is a growing consensus that attention should expand beyond literacy and numeracy, but also include other domains of learning: physical well-being, social and emotional issues, culture and arts, communication, learning approaches and cognition, mathematics and science and technology.





## Emergencies

Humanitarian aid is typically less associated with education than with the provision of food and health. It is a constant struggle to keep it on the international policy agenda, and as a consequence the share of funding for education compared to the total humani-

tarian ODA, gets stuck at around 2% (GMR, 2012). At the same time, studies (Bensalah et al., 2002) have shown the importance of restoring educational activities as much as possible during periods of conflict or soon after. In addition to the basic right of children in conflict-affected areas to access education, it also brings stability and structure

and helps the rehabilitation process. While education can play a bridging role between the immediate post-conflict situation and the rebuilding process, in reality it often loses out in terms of funding (see Box 4). It is no surprise that as a consequence progress against the EFA goals is problematic in conflict-affected countries.

### Box 4: Falling through the cracks

**“Conflict-affected countries are the most off track in efforts to achieve EFA. Many fall through the cracks in the international aid structure, with their education systems receiving neither long-term development assistance nor short-term humanitarian aid.”**

(EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2012, p.151)





# 3. Trends in funding of the education sector

## 3.1. Recent developments in the aid landscape

### Highlights

- The MDGs and EFA goals have been a partial success and have been especially positive in terms of enrolment and gender parity in education.
- Regarding the post-2015 agenda, there is a broad agreement within the education community that quality of education and equity should play an important role, in addition to bridging the remaining gaps in terms of access. In other areas there is less agreement.
- There are, however, worries in the education community that education will not receive the attention it deserves from policy-makers in the post-2015 agenda.
- After many years of growth, external funding for basic education was stagnating in 2010 and slowly decreasing in 2011. Further cuts are expected.
- The Global Partnership for Education is the largest multilateral effort in support of the EFA goals. It received additional pledges at the end of 2011, but the financing gap for basic education remains large and is estimated to be around 12 billion USD.
- Domestic resources for education in development countries are increasing, but for some countries aid for the education sector will remain necessary for the mid-term.

Education is traditionally a sector that has received a fair amount of attention from OECD-DAC donors. Learning, whether in formal education systems or through other means, is rightfully seen as a building block for sustainable development. While this seems to be evident to many, we will discuss at a later stage the fact that some of the new important players in development, the emerging donors and the large foundations, have been much quieter on the education front. Other dilemmas in the current debate on education and development will also be flagged.

This section briefly discusses the international frameworks that have dominated the debate on the development scene, and looks ahead to the discussions surrounding the post-2015 agenda. We shall briefly highlight some major trends in the international funding of education.

### Preparing for post-2015

#### • Education for All & the Millennium Development Goals

Education has been a fixed component of the development agenda for the last 50 years, but its prominence has changed over time. The international community has struggled to get to grips with the huge educational challenges in developing countries. One way to deal with the complexity has been the setting of targets. Early target-setting efforts within the education sector in the 1960s did not succeed and follow-up processes, including Education for All

(EFA) starting in the 1990s, were 'eclipsed' by the influential process of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The first review process of the EFA goals in 2000 overlapped with the growing momentum around the MDGs. Both processes mutually influenced each other, resulting in six EFA goals and two educational MDGs. However, there are important differences, with MDG2, for example, not including the conditions that universal primary education should be free, compulsory and of good quality (as in EFA goal 2).

With less than three years to go before the 2015 deadline, the outcomes are mixed. The greatest amount of success has been achieved on the EFA goals for universal primary enrolment and the goals towards gender parity (at all levels). Only 29 out of 212 countries are at risk of not achieving universal primary education (GMR, 2012, p.59). Recent numbers (GMR, 2012) do reveal that the progress regarding enrolment is stagnating.

There are a number of methodological challenges around the measurement of the other four EFA goals, but the data indicate that there was progress regarding the international resource transfers needed for education (until 2010, with some reverse trends since then), and regarding the domestic funding of education. Three goals are not moving forward: early childhood care and education, youth and adult literacy, and skills and quality. Table 1 lists some of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current international framework.

**Table 1: Strong and weak points in the international framework for education (EFA & MDGs)**

Strong points	Weak points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EFA goals with clear targets brought focus and coordination to the international efforts in education.</li> <li>• EFA goals and MDGs are good instruments for communicating with the general public and policy-makers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An over-emphasis on access to education has compromised the quality of the learning process in some countries.</li> <li>• The focus on measurable goals was difficult to reconcile with a comprehensive view of education improvement (e.g. teacher recruitment leading to many unqualified teachers in education systems).</li> <li>• Target-setting was not taking into account local realities (e.g. starting situation in Niger and Mali was very different from, for example, Ghana).</li> </ul>

## • Post 2015-agenda

The discussion on what the future development goals should look like has been gaining momentum for over a year. Up to now, the debates have been especially active in parts of the aid community and amongst specific research institutes, although lately with the engagement of some high-level politicians<sup>7</sup> the debate has been slowly opening up. The diversity of ideas and proposals brought forward is rather overwhelming. A mapping exercise by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) arrived in March 2013 with a list of more than 160 proposals, put forward by different stakeholders. Key areas of debate include the extent to which there is a need to explicitly link the MDGs with climate change or not (sustainable development goals - SDG), the actual content and focus of the goals, and the agenda-setting and governance of the SDGs (ODI, 2013). At the time of writing, approximately 12 of the 160 proposals for the future development goals focused on education or skills (Bergh, 2013).

A profound concern in the education community is whether education is sufficiently high on the agenda of policy-makers. Observers fear that education might be losing its priority status because of the relative success of the two existing educational MDG goals. In addition, there is the fear that the current development paradigm is much more about growth & jobs, rather than about education and health. At the same time, education remains a global concern as can be illustrated, for example, by the first findings coming out of the global MY World survey (UN, Feb 2013), where education is voted as the top priority at this stage. Within the education community there is strong support for new educational goals, but the what and the how are still to be determined. Burnett and Felsman (2012) mapped out the post-2015 educational goals debate in order to gain insights into the existing policy positions. Interestingly, they also interviewed 21 education ministers from developing countries and compared their priorities with those of the donor community. Table 2 provides a summary of the main issues for debate, and who is actually pushing them on the agenda.

At the time of the Burnett study, the lobby for *early childhood care and education* (ECCE) was present but less dominant than the other themes in Table 2. The Global Compact on Learning (Brookings Center for Universal Education) in particular is ensuring that this features on the agenda. More recently, a growing number of actors such as UNESCO,

<sup>7</sup> e.g. David Cameron, the Prime Minister of the UK, who in April 2012 became Chair of the UN committee which has been tasked with establishing new development goals.

**Table 2: Different educational items to be included in post-2015 framework (adapted from Burnett & Felsman, 2012)**

Post-2015 item	What is it about?	Promoters (in order of interest)
<b>1. Access versus quality and the education level to focus on</b>		
From increasing access to improving quality (based on learning outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of basic education is low and needs much more attention.</li> <li>Need to define specific learning outcomes through <i>learning goals</i>.</li> <li>Discussion about use of international tests (PISA, ...).</li> <li>Discussion about what should be measured: maths and literacy only or more?</li> </ul>	<i>Overall consensus</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donors</li> <li>Northern NGOs</li> <li>Southern education ministers</li> </ul>
Extending to secondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrolment in SE still low in many countries.</li> <li>Growing demand for SE because of increase in access to primary education.</li> <li>Discussions around cost and effectiveness of SE.</li> </ul>	<i>Mainly Southern concern</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern education ministers (most often cited)</li> <li>Neglected by donors</li> </ul>
Role of higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Missing in the discussions, while receiving a lot of ODA.</li> </ul>	<i>Limited public discussion</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very few public promoters, some education ministers</li> </ul>
<b>2. About the aim of education and its content</b>		
Equity	3 dimensions: (1) Provision of education as a way of addressing widening global inequality. (2) Concerns over education 'reproducing' poverty, and lack of adult education. (3) Reaching out to out of school youth.	<i>Partial interest</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donors and ministers showed only interest in (1)</li> </ul>
Skills and transition to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driven by concerns over youth unemployment.</li> <li>Reference to critiques of employers on skills acquired in secondary education.</li> <li>No consensus about skills needed.</li> <li>UNESCO refers to importance of transferable skills (confidence, communication,...), and technical skills.</li> <li>Some argue for renewed interest in TVET.</li> <li>Push to define concept of education beyond the classroom.</li> </ul>	<i>Mainly Southern concern</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern education ministers</li> <li>Attention through GMR 2012</li> <li>Limited take-up in donor community</li> </ul>
<b>3. About financing of education &amp; monitoring</b>		
Education as a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear that education will not be a priority in the post-2015 framework.</li> <li>Arguments made for better communication on growing body of evidence on the importance of education.</li> <li>Arguments made for an integrated approach (related to jobs, health, ..), thus moving beyond sectoral silos.</li> </ul>	<i>Donor priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donors</li> </ul>
Financing of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring education expenditure remains a priority at the country, regional and household level (more important than expanded ODA).</li> <li>Arguments for more empowerment work by CSOs to ensure downward accountability.</li> <li>Need to mobilise funds from new players (private foundations, BRICS countries).</li> </ul>	<i>Very few promoters</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nobody</li> <li>GMR 2012 points at weak input of new donors</li> </ul>
Better use of data & statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for indicators which take into account context, equity, starting level of a country, maybe using 'the individual' as unit of analysis.</li> <li>Need for more disaggregated data: by sex, age, migrant status, rural-urban, .. (including qualitative indicators).</li> </ul>	<i>Donor priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donors</li> </ul>



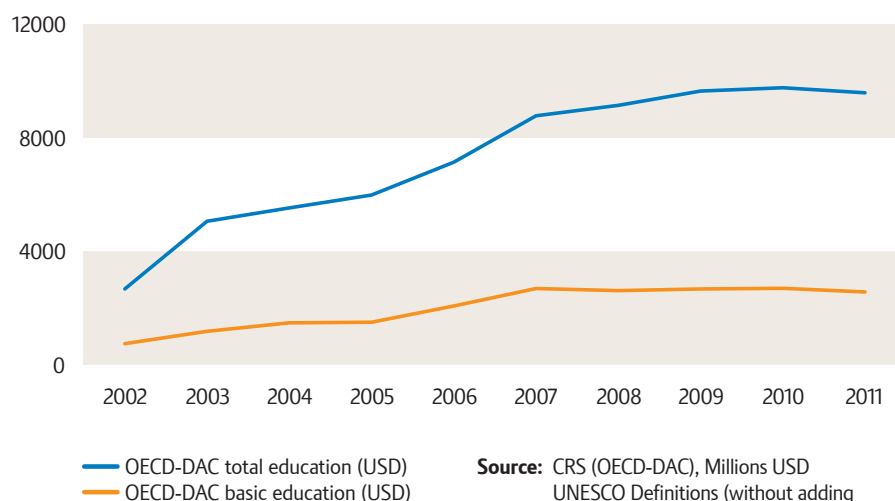
UNICEF, and GPE are recognising the importance of ECCE. Expectations are that this important theme might be incorporated through the goal on learning outcomes, and/or through the goal related to equity.

Also operational issues for the future goals have not yet been resolved, including agreeing on the number of goals, the target data (2030 or 2040), the definition and measurement of the learning goals, universal or country determined goals, appropriate accountability mechanisms and goals for international resource transfers.

Two influential international NGOs, Amnesty International and ActionAid, together with the Global Campaign for Education<sup>8</sup> are trying to push through a post-2015 agenda on education which is much more rights-based, building on “renewed commitments to deliver on the education rights already embedded in legally-binding international conventions”. (ActionAid, 2012, p.143)

Table 2 referred to the issue of ‘financing of education’ and the fact that few donors and policy-makers are pushing hard to raise awareness of the importance of mobilising domestic resources. This confirms the trend within the aid community to over-estimate the importance of international transfers, compared to other resource flows. This aid-centred focus is becoming less appropriate, especially in view of the decreasing aid dependency of many developing countries, and the potential boost that might be given to a range of African countries from the discovery of natural resources (in East-, West and Southern Africa). The focus on aid is also reflected in the way discussions about the new international framework are being organised. Several observers (King, 2012; Mc Grath, 2012; Burnett & Felsman, 2012) have pleaded for more and direct involvement of developing countries.

**Figure 2: Total volumes of OECD-DAC aid for basic education versus total aid for education (in million USD)**



**Source:** CRS (OECD-DAC), Millions USD  
UNESCO Definitions (without adding 50% of SE to BE)

## Level of investments

After several years of increasing aid volumes for basic education<sup>9</sup>, the situation has been changing since 2010 and funding is now slightly decreasing (Figure 2). The share of basic education compared to the total aid volume for education has also gone down.

This can be explained in different ways. A number of important donors in basic education have seriously cut in their funding, for example, the Netherlands, USA, Canada and Spain. Some other donors are maintaining or even increasing their spending on education such as the UK and Australia, but this does not compensate for the withdrawal of other countries.

For some countries, reducing the funding for

education is clearly related to the financial crisis, as is the case for Spain for example (see Box 5), which saw its total aid budget fall by 50% since 2008. For other countries such as Canada and the Netherlands, other processes seem to be at play. The Netherlands has made significant changes to its portfolio almost unilaterally since 2011 in terms of themes and partner countries. Some observers see this as breaching the spirit of the EU Code of Conduct, because there were few negotiations with other development partners before making these drastic changes. In Canada, the current government is very explicit about its instrumental views on aid. It has declared on several occasions that aid programmes should serve the commercial and diplomatic interests of Canada and, for example, facilitate the work of its mining industry. This policy went hand in hand with cuts in the aid budget for education by about 30% from 2010 to 2011, and further cuts are expected. This illustrates that, while a number of global challenges require concerted efforts and more multilateralism, a growing number of Western countries are re-nationalising their aid and avoiding risks in an attempt to increase visibility and satisfy growing accountability demands at home.

<sup>8</sup> The Global Campaign for Education is a global civil society movement with as members more than 120 national coalitions and international and regional organisations that advocate for quality public Education for All.

<sup>9</sup> This information is based on the official OECD-DAC CRS database (accessed in February 2013), using the disbursement figures (not commitments). Sub-sector totals are calculated following the UNESCO GMR formulas. Total support to education equals Total Sector Education (CRS) + 20% General Budget Support (CRS). Basic Education equals Subsector Basic Education (CRS) + 50% secondary education (excl Vocational training) + 50% level unspecified (CRS) + 10% general budget support (CRS). Secondary and post-secondary education (CRS) are calculated in a similar way, but with 25% level unspecified + 5% General Budget Support.

## Box 5: Impact of crisis on Spanish ODA

After several years of growth, Spain has seriously cut ODA spending from 0.43% of GNP in 2010 to only 0.23% in 2012, the sharpest reduction of all OECD Member States. Within its foreign policy budget, ODA has received the largest cuts due to the crisis. Future aid activities will focus much more on countries with the strongest political and cultural ties. The Spanish ODA for education halved from 510 million USD in 2008 to 268 million USD in 2011.



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Due to the financial crisis and the insecurity around new austerity measures many OECD-DAC donors are vague about their future commitments towards the financing of education. Some donors, such as the UK are planning to increase their support to basic education significantly, but a large majority is either planning to stick to existing budget levels or making further cuts.

In geographical terms, aid for basic education is not enough directed to countries with great EFA needs. Only one third of the total aid budget for basic education was allocated in low income countries, and the additional educational aid to low income countries was concentrated in few countries. (GMR 2012, p.161) Afghanistan and Bangladesh have received about half of the additional funding for basic education over the last few years, while funding to nineteen low income countries with large EFA needs has actually fallen.

Two other developments are important in the area of financing basic education. The

first is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the largest multilateral partnership. It was established in 2002 as the Fast Track Initiative, a form of cooperation between a group of more than 50 developing countries and a range of development partners (state and non-state) in support of universal basic education (EFA). The total financing gap of 16 billion USD to provide universal basic education<sup>10</sup> was reduced to 12.5 billion USD, after GPE was promised an additional 1.5 billion USD from a large pledging conference, an amount to be supplemented by 2 billion USD from developing countries<sup>11</sup>. There is then the question of how the remaining financing gap can be addressed, especially in view of the additional financing needs for the expanding secondary education and TVET. Some look towards new players, but contrary to the health and agricultural sector, education has not received structural support from the large foundations or from emerging donors, such as China and India. Both are providing large scholarship schemes, but there is hardly any real support for education systems.

A second major trend is the growing amount of domestic funding for education as described in the GMR 2012 report. In a majority of the low- and middle-income countries, the share of the national budget spent on education increased in the past decade. GPE and UNESCO advise governments to work towards allocating 5% of the GNP for education, and half of that amount for basic education. Low income countries have made significant progress, by increasing public spending on education from 3.1% to 4.6% in ten years' time. In absolute figures, the differences between rich and poor countries remain disturbing, with the 4.6% of GNP in low income countries corresponding with investments in education of only 22 USD/capita, compared to 1,792 USD/capita in high income countries. A recent paper by UNESCO (Legault, 2012) concludes that current data sets do not allow the trends in the share of donor funding compared to the total national budgets to be documented, but overall decreasing levels of aid dependency are probably a good indication of lower dependency on aid in the education sector as well. However, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, external support will still be required in the mid-term, as aid represented more than 20% of educational budgets over the period 2004-2010 (GMR, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> In these calculations, GPE estimated costs for basic education as the sum of those for universal primary and lower-secondary education.

<sup>11</sup> A commitment which will be very difficult to monitor because of the weak statistical data in developing countries (Legault, 2012)



## 3.2. Changing views on the roles of donors in the provision of basic education

### Highlights

- **Over the last decade, different actors in the aid system have come up with their own principles for aid/development effectiveness. The education sector has been a sector where several of these principles have been tested, with mixed success.**
- **Bilateral donors are under increasing domestic pressure to justify aid spending. Some react by pushing through strict result-oriented frameworks (DIFD), others opt for advanced specialisation (USAID), others re-nationalise some of their activities (the Netherlands, Canada).**
- **Harmonisation efforts between EU-donors are useful, but there are some adverse side effects when donors decide unilaterally to switch theme or country.**
- **Civil society engagement with the EFA process has increased, especially through coordination structures at the national level which contributed towards educational policy-making at national level. Efforts to strengthen decentralised school governance through parent teacher associations have mixed results.**
- **Large philanthropic agencies and new donors such as India, Brazil and China are hardly investing in education.**

### Delivery channels & modalities

The aid effectiveness agenda has been an influential driver of reforms of the aid mechanisms in the education sector. At the same time, different actors in the aid chain have tended to advocate different approaches, all under the banner of aid/development effectiveness. For the bilateral and multilateral channel, the key point of reference in this respect is the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, signed by donor/beneficiary governments and multilateral agencies in 2005. The Fourth High Level Forum in Busan in December 2011 was the last conference on aid effectiveness, and in particular focused on bringing on board new development actors such as China, India and Brazil and working through inclusive partnerships with state and non-state actors. The CSO Open Forum for Development Effectiveness is the most comprehensive CSO-driven initiative which in September 2011 resulted in a set of eight common principles and objectives of CSO development effectiveness.

Within the framework of the Busan HLF-4, a group of educational donors, under the banner of the GPE, endorsed a Statement of Principles on Effective Aid for Education (GPE, 2011). The two-page document builds on earlier work carried out by GPE on educational aid effectiveness principles and indicators. The GPE results framework makes use of sector-specific definitions of the principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing of results and mutual accountability. The 2012 GPE monitoring report exercise reviewed the practices in place in 36 developing countries and concluded that, broadly speaking, indicators around the principle of ownership (national educational policies implemented), and harmonisation (joint missions and joint sectoral analysis) are progressing well. For other principles, such as regarding alignment (use of country procurement systems and use of national public financial management systems), managing of education results and mutual accountability, the results are negative or mixed.

The next few sections shall be taken up with a brief analysis of the various trends in the different channels of the aid system.

### • Bilateral channel

The initial enthusiasm around the turn of the millennium for the EFA agenda and the MDGs has been wearing off for a number of years. This can be witnessed in terms of the trends in funding (see earlier), but also by the extent to which EFA is central in future donor strategies. In section 3.1 we described the impact of the financial crisis and the increased public scrutiny of ODA spending. We observed a trend amongst some donors towards a partial re-nationalisation of aid. The latter can result in strategies to make sure that a country's own bilateral efforts can be distinguished from those of others, and allows more freedom to make aid also contribute towards own national interests. Basic education is at a disadvantage in this respect because its economic and other societal returns are indirect, take long to emerge, and depend on many other issues (such as the state of the labour market), and therefore less attractive.

Some of the major donors that decided to remain active in support of basic education, responded to this domestic pressure with a strong results-oriented discourse. DFID (2011) has opted for the Value for Money approach (VfM). VfM aims to instil a strong results-oriented slant in the DFID programmes, by working with evidence-based theories of change, and by making sure that the proposed strategies are the best value for money compared to their alternatives. DFID's activities in the education sector have been at the forefront of the VfM reforms. Criticism of the VfM agenda has centred around the problems with using this managerial/business-oriented approach to steer complex social development (Green, 2013b), such as for programmes focusing on institutional development or policy and advocacy work. The UK is also experimenting with an approach that makes the aid volume depend on the results achieved by the Southern government. For example, in Ethiopia the government is rewarded financially for each extra student passing a secondary school examination. UNESCO argues that this approach does hold some risks for poor countries, especially in view of the influence of external factors they might not be able to

### Box 6: Hiccups in the funding for basic education in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is scoring badly on the EFA goals, and is highly dependent on donor funding for its education system. The Netherlands was providing almost one third of the basic education budget up to 2010, but is planning a withdrawal. Unfortunately, three additional donors have reported to be withdrawing from Burkina Faso resulting in major financial insecurity for its education system.

- control (GMR, 212, p.20). Other donors, such as USAID, have responded by focusing their efforts on a limited number of themes.

In terms of modalities, the earlier excitement about the new aid architecture, with general budget and sector budget support as important components, has also partially cooled down. General budget support is particularly difficult to reconcile with domestic pressure for more accountability and visibility of the aid. Sector budget support is likely to remain, alongside typical projects and programmes, which have never really disappeared. Arguments have been made about the added value of a mixed portfolio of sector budget support and specific projects in remaining connected with the reality on the ground.

As a follow-up to the Paris Declaration, at the EU-level donors agreed to improve the harmonisation of their efforts through a division of labour in terms of themes and countries (EU Code of Conduct, 2007). An important positive effect resulting from the Code of Conduct is that Southern governments are now confronted with fewer development partners to negotiate and work with for a given sector. On the other hand, there are indications that EU donors are increasingly changing their priorities unilaterally, and because there are now fewer actors in a given sector, the uncoordinated withdrawal of one or more donors can have a huge impact on these countries which are highly aid-dependent (see Box 6). The GMR report 2012 (UNESCO, 2012) therefore outlines concerns about the predictability of the funding.

- Multilateral: vertical funds & initiatives**

At the global level, the establishment of the Fast Track Initiative in 2002, which in 2011 transformed into GPE, has been a game changer in the area of support for basic education. It has resulted in better coordination between partner developing countries, participating bilateral and multilateral agencies; and has increased focus and visibility. It was deliberately not set up as a vertical fund (such as the GAVI fund in the health sector), but the intention rather was to work towards optimal country ownership and alignment with local policies, procedures and structures. At the same time, there have been challenges with the implementation of this large-scale initiative. On the ground, GPE is faced with the decreasing implementation capacity of bilateral agencies. This is said to be due to, on the one hand, the EU Code of Conduct which results in fewer donors following up on a specific field in a country and, secondly, the fact that a number of important donors have reduced their programmes. The pressure is on GPE to

find solutions for this capacity and implementation gap.

The World Bank has been another important player in the education sector in recent decades, especially through their promotion of what they describe as 'short route accountability' reforms (Mundy, 2008). The majority of their programmes in primary education involved financial decentralisation processes from national to local government, and the introduction of school level management mechanisms. In these reforms the national state, its bureaucracy, and other collective actors (such as trade unions) were essentially seen as undemocratic and unresponsive to equality issues (Mundy, 2008, p33). The programmes therefore emphasised the power of client-citizens as the main form of political agency in the education sector. The idea was that the involvement of parents in school-based management, together with the provision of better information on school performance to parents and communities, the introduction of school choice mechanisms, and the expansion of NGO and public-private service provision would stimulate competition and efficiency (Mundy, 2008). The section on civil society actors describes some of the challenges with regard to these programmes.

- Non-state actors**

- Civil Society organisations*

Earlier debates about the role of civil society in the support of education in the 1980s and 1990s, centred mainly around the role of development NGOs, often Western NGOs and INGOs. In this period, many donors started funding Northern NGOs to take up service-delivery roles for the provision of educational services. This was a response to compensate for budget cuts in the education sector by governments in the South, who were under pressure from the World Bank and IMF to cut back on their spending in social sectors. NGOs were argued to be more cost-effective, flexible, in touch with communities, more innovative, and of a higher quality (IOB, 2011). Donors also had more influence over the NGOs that they funded compared to the slow and bureaucratic state apparatus. By the mid 1990s criticism grew that NGOs were actually replacing the role of the state in ways that could never be sustainable, nor coordinated. By now, NGOs were argued to be 'too close for comfort' to the donors (Edwards & Hulme, 1998). Consensus grew that NGOs should limit their service delivery work to exceptional cases, and increasingly focus on lobbying & advocacy work for improved service delivery from the state; community development via, for example, parent teacher associations, and

capacity development of community-based organisations.

In the last decade, the debate has shifted in two main ways. Firstly, the Education for All agenda offered up new perspectives on the roles of civil society in education (Mundy et al., 2010). The understanding was that inclusive partnerships were required in which civil-society at different levels would increasingly play the role of a watchdog in monitoring the implementation of the EFA's activities. The role of local civil society became even more important in view of the large-scale World Bank programmes in many African countries towards decentralised governance of the education sector (Mundy, 2008), as described in the previous section. Based on extensive field work in four African countries, Mundy et al. (2010) indeed observed an increased "recognition of governments for more regular consultation with civil-society groups, a greater interest among donors in funding the advocacy and policy watchdog roles played by civil society groups and in some cases evidence of mounting civil society capacity for effective engagement in debates about national education policy". (p.495) However, many challenges were identified at the community level, with 'short-route' or 'downward' accountability often reduced to superficial budget monitoring. The connection between local groups and the national level was also missing. Extensive efforts to strengthen the supply side through improved school management at the local level brought mixed results.

Part of civil society has systematically critiqued the EFA and MDG frameworks from a human-rights based perspective on education for being too narrow in focus and not legally binding. More recently, leading advocates for this human-rights based view have been sharpening their critiques and approaches through a range of new publications (Action-Aid, 2012; Amnesty International, 2012).

Secondly, there has been a shift from looking at NGOs in the narrow sense to looking at civil society as a whole. Many developing countries have experienced an explosion of civil society organisations over the last few decades. In the educational sphere, this includes local community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, national parents' associations, trade unions, private providers and the business community. Some of these actors have been systematically overlooked or ignored. In the case of the World Bank (and GPE to some extent), for example, teachers' unions, who tend to have the largest constituency amongst the civil-society actors, were viewed with suspicion and were seen to be problematic political actors. More





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recently, some large international NGOs are increasingly stressing the potential of trade unions as agents of change in the education sector (ActionAid, 2012)

Recent research by ODI (Booth, 2012) argues that many good governance programmes are actually caught up in a type of principal-agent thinking which does not respond to needs on the ground. The assumption is that more training of the state (the principal) will lead to more effective supply of services, and that the empowering and organising of civil society (the agent) will lead to more demand for quality services. Their research shows that many development problems are actually collaborative action problems, in which different types of principals, agents, and other stakeholders need to be brought together in a negotiated and facilitated process to work towards finding solutions that satisfy their mutual interests. In response, Oxfam (Green, 2013) has argued for a brokering and convening role for CSOs to facilitate these kinds of processes.

#### *Philanthropic actors*

Several authors highlight the virtual absence of funding from the growing group of large foundations for the education sector (GMR,

2012). Compared to investments in the health and agriculture sectors, these new actors have been reluctant to invest seriously in education. Several reasons have been put forward, often related to the weak lobbying & advocacy efforts from the education community, and the problem with the fact that educational change is slow and the effects can only be observed in the long term, which does not attract the 'high-impact' philanthropists.

#### *For-profit providers*

The aid community is experiencing a growing interest in the role of the for-profit private sector in development. Currently a range of drivers are being seen to trigger a renewed interest in the private sector (Vaes et al., 2012), as diverse as the financial crisis and the possible implementation of alternative financing mechanisms that might mobilise private sector funds for development; the prevailing assumption amongst policy-makers in government and the private sector that business would be good (or even better) at delivering on aid effectiveness; and the central role the private sector plays in the development strategies of some emerging economies (e.g. China and India).

It is clear that especially Western governments are actively calling for inclusive partnerships for development. Several donors such as the Netherlands and the US are increasingly looking at Public-Private-Partnerships as a way of exploring this field. Of course, social sector programmes, for example in education, are a difficult and sensitive area when venturing into advanced private sector engagement. The World Bank has also been a visible advocate for more private provision of education. This is also illustrated by the fact that within the World Bank group, the IFC, which is supporting the private sector in emerging markets, adopted education as one of its key pillars in 2004 (Mundy et al., 2012). However, the authors identify a disjuncture between the World Bank policies and operational practices. They reviewed the World Bank's operations and looked at the Education Sector Strategy 2020 and concluded that, in budgetary terms, there are very few components that actually support the expansion of private provision. The author concludes that "over the past two decades, the WB's policies have arguably overrated and oversold the contribution that private participation can make to equity in education".



### 3.3. Learning about what works in which context

#### Highlights

- **A growing body of literature is available about what works in which context, for now biased towards technical interventions. An overview of some findings is presented below (based on IOB work in 2011).**
- **Additional important insights have been documented for good governance programmes in the public sector, decentralisation, and judicial activism.**

#### A difficult exercise...

Evaluations and studies show that educational reform is complex and in many cases the outcomes of programmes are disappointing. This realisation has triggered a range of 'best practice' and 'what works' initiatives. However, strengthening education systems is an area of development work where simple recipes or blueprint approaches are of little value. Influential experts (Pawson & Tilley, 1999) have argued for an approach that looks at 'what works for whom in which context', to take contextual issues much more seriously. The identification of successful strategies then becomes a search for a 'best fit approach', rather than a best practice approach.

The literature review that was conducted for the Dutch Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB, 2011), described in chapter 2, provides a good overview of what

studies identify as successful strategies in different areas. This material is presented here in a synthesised way. There are four important remarks to be made before actually presenting the material:

- Some important areas of educational development are not covered by the IOB study. There is, for example, very little research into the effectiveness of different teaching and learning methods in developing countries, or into the institutional strengthening of educational institutes. The fact that these strategies are covered less in studies has to do with the complexity of measuring their impact and identifying critical success factors.
- The research presented relates mainly to technical interventions. Less attention is paid to institutional change or policy-making. We have added some examples in the area of good governance, based on work by the World Bank and ODI.





- While the IOB study systematically refers to the importance of context, the results are most often not really presented in the form of ‘what works for whom in which context’<sup>12</sup>, which is an area of attention when applying the findings in practice.

- The IOB researchers indicate that in most cases, a mix of interventions will work better than stand-alone projects.

A final health warning must be issued for when using the material. One risk with over-emphasising short-term measurable results

is described by Mc Grath (2012): “The risks for further marginalisation of education are heightened as donors look for scientific certainty and short-run value for money in an area characterised by long-term effects and huge complexity”.

The material is subdivided between traditional inputs, teachers, healthy learning, cost-reducing measures for pupils, policy choices outside of primary education and management and governance.

<sup>12</sup> Recent reports in other areas of development have tried to do this. For example, the 2013 World Development Report presents different types of strategies for job creation, depending on the context. This results in different strategies for agrarian economies, conflict-affected countries, urbanising countries, resource-rich countries, small-island nations, and countries with high youth employment.

**Table 3: Findings from the IOB literature review and other studies**

Findings from the IOB literature review (2011, p72 - 74)	
<b>1. Traditional inputs</b>	
Books and learning materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbooks are an effective input for student learning in developing countries.</li> <li>• One book per pupil in core subjects, and no less than one book for every two pupils otherwise.</li> <li>• Other teaching aids such as teacher manuals and wall charts are also useful inputs.</li> <li>• The evidence for the usefulness of computers is mixed. Computers, where feasible, might enhance learning if they complement rather than substitute teaching.</li> <li>• Books and teaching aids have to be used effectively, after they have been distributed to pupils (with accompanying teacher manuals).</li> </ul>
School infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is very limited evidence that expensive school infrastructure has a significant impact on performance.</li> <li>• There is some evidence that a minimum standard for classrooms is important (for example, a roof). Given that infrastructure can easily become a high expenditure item, it would be more cost-effective to ensure that basic requirements for learning are met.</li> <li>• Insufficient evidence of the impact of water and sanitation facilities on girls’ participation and performance.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Teachers</b>	
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing pupil-teacher ratios only generates a modest impact up to a threshold of about 50-60 pupils in primary education. Once below this number, the impact of reductions is limited.</li> <li>• Double shifts are found to reduce effective teaching time and do not lower costs (when shifts are done by different teachers).</li> <li>• Contract teachers can have a positive impact, but not always and the sustainability of this approach is doubtful.</li> <li>• Private tutoring has an impact on learning, but raises equity concerns given the cost.</li> </ul>
Teacher training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training can improve performance of pupils.</li> <li>• Quality of training for teachers, both at pre- and in-service level, is far more important than the number of years spent studying.</li> </ul>
Incentives for teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some cases, incentives and effective control (based on teacher inputs and test results) are found to have reduced absenteeism and improved students’ performance.</li> <li>• Community and parents’ monitoring can be a useful addition to accountability mechanisms.</li> <li>• Accommodation and improved access to schools is found to reduce absenteeism.</li> <li>• The effectiveness of incentives is more evident in developing countries (where, amongst others, standard salaries are lower).</li> <li>• However, incentives should be designed carefully and closely monitored in order to avoid negative side-effects (such as concentration on final tests, better pupils).</li> </ul>
<b>3. Inputs for healthy learning</b>	
Nutrition, school meals, iron supplementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective in improving attendance and enrolment.</li> <li>• Mixed evidence of impact on performance.</li> <li>• May produce unexpected effects when school meals reduce class time.</li> <li>• Full school meals are costly in terms of food and effort.</li> <li>• Therefore, snacks of high nutritional value as an alternative to a full meal might be more useful.</li> </ul>
Other health: deworming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular deworming improves attendance and performance for pupils at primary level.</li> <li>• Only relevant in high prevalence areas.</li> </ul>

➤ **Table 3 (continued)**

Findings from the IOB literature review (2011, p72 - 74)		
4. Cost-reducing measures for pupils		
Conditional cash transfer programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is evidence of impact on enrolment and on increasing years of schooling when targeted at pupils who are otherwise unlikely to enrol.</li><li>• The evidence on performance is inconclusive.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experiments are mostly in Latin America (which has a relatively large private sector), so it may not be possible to replicate them elsewhere.</li><li>• Requires careful assessment against alternative use of resources for improving education access and quality, given considerable expense and lack of evidence of impact on performance.</li><li>• Requires careful design (for example timing and targeting of transfers).</li></ul>
School vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only applicable where there is excess capacity in the private sector.</li><li>• Though reducing costs, mainly intended to improve quality. Yet, limited evidence of effect on quality of increased choice.</li><li>• The evidence on attendance and performance is inconclusive.</li></ul>	
Scholarships and school fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Abolition of school fees has a major effect on school enrolment.</li><li>• Merit scholarships can improve attendance and learning outcomes.</li><li>• Has positive effects on peers.</li><li>• Has been combined effectively with rewards for teachers, parents and pupils.</li><li>• Again, careful design is required taking into consideration side effects and considering context as it may not be possible to replicate uniformly.</li></ul>	
Financing school uniforms (where relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Found to be effective in reducing absenteeism, and improving performance.</li><li>• Only applicable in countries where school uniforms are required (social pressure can exist even if they are no longer obligatory).</li></ul>	
Other observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost-reducing interventions are generally effective in increasing demand for education in developing countries.</li><li>• Additional targeting might be required for particular disadvantaged and excluded groups of children.</li><li>• (Perceived) quality and relevance of education also affect demand for education (see role information below).</li><li>• Need to consider side effects, both positive and negative, on other pupils and children in the household.</li></ul>	
5. Policy choices outside primary education		
Early childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly effective in promoting cognitive development and school readiness, improves performance in school at higher levels.</li><li>• Though costly, still more cost-effective than remedial programmes.</li><li>• Spin-off effects on health and parental involvement in schooling.</li><li>• Of particular benefit to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li></ul>	
Technical and vocational education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In selected countries in East Asia and Latin America, vocational education can provide employment opportunities (but often at relatively high costs per student).</li><li>• It has a mixed impact on gender differences in the labour market.</li><li>• There is limited evidence for other developing countries and an absence of research for early TVET compared to post-secondary TVET.</li></ul>	
6. Management and governance		
Education management (e.g. decentralisation, inspectorates)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effectiveness depends on capacity of sub-national government levels, schools, parents and communities. Improving capacity of district or municipal officers can improve school performances.</li><li>• Important to monitor equity implications arising from varying financial and institutional capacities.</li><li>• School inspections can reduce teacher absenteeism and improve performance of pupils.</li></ul>	
School-based management (head teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhanced school management (head teachers, directors) improves learning, for example, by improving teacher attendance and teaching and can enhance the use of resources.</li><li>• Head teacher supervision, combined with inspections, can improve teaching processes.</li></ul>	
Parent and community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can affect pupil and teacher attendance.</li><li>• However, participation has to have clout, i.e. authority to act rather than merely being involved in school activities.</li></ul>	
Information (e.g. on school tests results, budgets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information has an impact on access to education and quality of education, through its use in management and governance (for example monitoring and signalling).</li><li>• Information requires careful design (with regard to the content, use, avoidance of misuse and manipulation).</li></ul>	
7. Interventions for girls		
General policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General policies affecting distance to school, cost of education and quality of education improve girls' enrolment and performance.</li><li>• Given that there is often a different effect of interventions for girls and boys, it is important to monitor the impact of education policies on both girls and boys.</li></ul>	
Specific gender policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific gender policies that are effective include having female teachers and incentives for households to enrol girls in school.</li><li>• Research has identified that inadequate menstrual care forms a barrier to schooling for girls. However, further research is needed to identify what interventions remove such barriers to girls' participation and performance (including provision of sanitary pads, single sex toilets).</li></ul>	



**Table 3 (continued)**

Other studies	
8. Good governance reform in the public sector (principal – agent interventions)	
Collaborative action problems (Booth, 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See also section 3.2 (civil society).</li> <li>• Evidence links successful good governance reform with processes which manage to create spaces in which different governmental and non-governmental actors can negotiate solutions which satisfy their main interests and address important concerns. Capacitating the public sector and/or empowering civil society is not enough to improve performance.</li> </ul>
9. Support for CSOs	
National policy and watchdog initiatives (Mundy, 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the context of EFA, in several countries national civil-society groups were strengthened and financially supported to play a watchdog role towards the EFA implementation.</li> <li>• Research in four African countries found evidence of increased government recognition for more regular consultation with national civil-society groups, and increased capacity of those groups to influence national education policy.</li> <li>• At the grassroots level, the strengthening of PTAs showed mixed successes.</li> </ul>
Judicial activism in India (Green, 2013; Beatty et al., 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India has a long tradition of Supreme Court rulings obliging the government to guarantee specific socio-economic rights. In 2009, the Right to Education Act (RTE) was passed, requiring amongst others, for Private Schools to reserve 25% of places for lower castes.</li> <li>• Civil society activists have been successful in getting the Supreme Court to rule on socio-economic rights, and then later on mobilise around the actual implementation of the rulings.</li> <li>• In practice, research has shown that quality of the implementation of RTE has been uneven. In some areas, the quality of primary education has dropped significantly, due to a combination of factors.</li> <li>• Grassroots organisations are finding it difficult to have the different components of the RTE activated, because PTAs are sometimes not established or ignored.</li> </ul>





# • डोअर स्टेप स्कूल •

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# 4. Belgium's activities in the education sector

Over the years, Belgium's aid<sup>13</sup> for the education sector has experienced considerable changes in terms of institutional set-up and the aid modalities used. At the same time, however, it is also characterised by a number of remarkably stable features and trends. The relationship between the policy discourse and its translation into strategies and budgets can be described as complex. It is difficult to find evidence that the changing views regarding the importance of basic education amongst Belgian policy-makers and specialists actually had a significant impact on budget allocations. This section outlines four distinct periods in the history of Belgian aid for education, and then systematically describes specific features of the Belgian aid for (basic) education in terms of the financing, the actors, modalities and the geographic distribution.

A key source of information for this section of the report was an extract from the original DGD-database (February 2013), managed by the statistical unit in the ministry (28,890 entries). It has 3,450 entries related to the sector code 'education' (CRS code 11\*\*\*\*) for the period 1987-2011. The quality of the entries, for example, regarding the coding of sectors and sub-sectors, is described as 'rather inaccurate'<sup>14</sup> before 2002, but has improved since then, especially in 2005 when DGD added additional quality control procedures and switched to a relational database. The database works with disbursements, not commitments<sup>15</sup>. In addition, a range of studies, reports and evaluation reports were consulted and complemented with selected interviews.

## 4.1. Four periods in Belgium's support of education

### Highlights

- **Education is a priority sector in the 1999 Law for Development Cooperation. It is appearing again in the new Law for Development Cooperation (2013), which was at the time of writing in the stage of final approval by parliament.**
- **Belgian aid for the education sector between 1980 and 2013 can broadly speaking be divided up into four periods which have been especially influenced by changes in the Belgian institutional set-up, problems in the partner countries, and international trends in the thinking about educational aid.**

For over two decades, support for education has been covered by the Belgian Law on Development Cooperation of 1999. At the time of writing a new law was in the process of being approved by parliament. In this new law, education is once again put forward as one of the four key priority sectors for governmental development cooperation. Broadly speaking, Belgian support for education since the 1980s can be described by four distinct, though partly overlapping, phases.

### Mid 1980s: new regional actors in education (first wave of institutional reform)

The first major institutional shake-up of the Belgian landscape of educational aid came with the creation of APEFE and VVOB at the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s. They were founded by the regional executive of Flanders and Wallonia, as a part of the gradual rebuilding of Belgium into a federal state. Education was one of the powers for which the regions became responsible at that time. VVOB and APEFE were set up as quasi-governmental players, focusing on education and training, initially mainly by sending out expatriate teachers in substitution roles in basic and secondary education. These new regional actors were primarily funded from the Federal ODA budget. As a response, funding for bilateral education programmes was gradually reduced in subsequent years. This period therefore marks the start of the growing dominance of indirect actors (non-state actors) in the provision of Belgian educational aid.

### Mid 1990s: leaving Central Africa, efforts for role division (second wave of institutional reform)

In the mid 1990s educational spending patterns were negatively affected by the governance crisis in Central Africa. Due to concerns over corruption and political turmoil, Belgium decided to leave the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. This period was also marked by institutional reforms in the bilateral channel, based on the German development cooperation model. It resulted in the total make-over of the old ministry of development cooperation (AGCD-ABOS) into two new entities: one responsible for overall policy development and the policy dialogue with partner countries (DGCI-DGIS), and one for the implementation of the bilateral programmes (BTC).

<sup>13</sup> When we write about the aid of Belgium for the education sector, we refer to the activities of all the Belgian actors which are funded by the Belgian educational ODA budget.

<sup>14</sup> However, the coding is accurate enough to sketch out broad trends and developments. Where large changes were observed from one year to another, we looked into the original description of entries in the database for explanation.

<sup>15</sup> Since 2009, DGD has added the support to multilateral agencies (such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and the EU) to its education sector numbers. OECD-DAC does not follow this logic for its CRS database, and therefore we decided not to take these amounts into account in our calculations.

➤ Towards the second half of the 1990s a drastic change in the federal development cooperation policy by the then Secretary of State, Reginald Moreels, forced all development agencies in the education sector to specialise in sub-sectors. The international cooperation between universities and the support for higher education gradually moved towards the inter-university councils, VLIR-UOS and CIUF-CUD. VVOB/APEFE and BTC were pushed to reduce their activities with universities significantly. In the same period, the Belgian development actors<sup>16</sup> were expected to move away from substitution work and in-line ministry positions in ministries and schools, and evolve towards project-based approaches. In the 1990s the number of Belgian expats working in the education sector dropped from about 750 in 1990 to only 223 in the year 2000. Finally, a growing group of fourth pillar initiatives started to appear, mostly on a small scale, and many of them in basic education.

### 2000s: EFA en MDGs on agenda, but not resulting in significant changes in allocation

By the end of the 1990s, the international debates about the Education for All agenda (EFA), the MDGs and aid effectiveness, started to find their way into the Belgian development cooperation. The 2002 sector policy note on education (DGCI-DGIS, 2002) and many other policy documents underscored Belgium's commitment to these international goals. Also the debates about new aid architecture in the context of the Paris Declaration and follow-up conferences, with their focus on sector budget support and general budget support, influenced policy-making in Belgium. Following on from other OECD-DAC donors such as the Netherlands, UK and some Scandinavian countries, Belgium decided to start experimenting with sector budget support

in the education sector. In addition, in the context of the EU Code of Conduct, Belgium decided gradually to concentrate its bilateral educational support on only 4 out of 18 partner countries. Institutional (capacity) development became a growing area of attention in the work of many development actors.

The share of funding going to higher education continued to grow, due to the funding of the university councils, and through the expanding scholarships programmes. Broadly speaking, the data suggests that Belgium's policy intentions regarding EFA and the changing aid architecture were mostly visible in the changing instruments used in the bilateral channel. The influence on budget allocation was limited (see also 4.2).

At the end of the 1990s, Flanders' ambitions and funding in the area of development aid increased significantly. The money and programming linked to this growth in Flanders was initially channelled through VVOB, but later on Flanders decided to set up a wholly new development agency. In this new Flemish agency, education was not a key area of action. As a result, VVOB remained largely dependent on financial support from the federal government. In Wallonia, APEFE is more structurally linked with the Walloon agency for development cooperation, Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI). However, also for APEFE, the large majority of the funds come from the federal government.

### 2010–2013: new coordination efforts, third wave of institutional reforms and modest multilateralism

In 2010, the main Belgian development actors active in the education sector (governmental and non-governmental) launched

EDUCAID, a new platform for the exchange of knowledge, improved coordination and stronger lobbying and advocacy efforts. The platform is supported by the government and hosted by APEFE and VVOB, and was a response to the frequent calls for greater coordination and sharing of knowledge between the different actors in education. In addition, its ambition was to place education higher up on the political agenda in the development community.

At the bilateral level, in 2011 DGD initiated a comprehensive internal institutional reform, with the aim of arriving at a more consistent approach with fewer organisational silos and more cross-pollination within the organisation. The relationship between the DGD and the executing agency BTC is governed through management contracts. At the time of writing, the negotiations on the fourth management contract were being finalised.

In 2012, a dormant but far-reaching political agreement about the further de-federalisation of the funding for the indirect actors in development cooperation (university councils, VVOB/APEFE and municipal cooperation) became the topic of political discussions. At the time of writing, this issue was creating insecurity for the actors involved. In essence, the debate is about whether the annual budgets for these institutions would follow from the federal to regional level, or whether the regional government should be finding new resources. There are fears that, in the context of strong austerity measures due the financial crisis, politicians might be tempted to make cuts in the funding for these agencies.

At multilateral level, after many years of limited funding for multilateral educational initiatives, in 2009 Belgium decided to increase its support for the new Global Partnership for Education. By 2011, the GPE was receiving approximately 6 million euros from Belgium per year, about 3% of the budget for education.

<sup>16</sup> When we refer to development actors, we mean the different governmental and non-governmental actors which operate in the education sector. In the case of Belgium, it refers to organisations such as BTC, APEFE, VVOB, DISOP, Via Don Bosco, ...



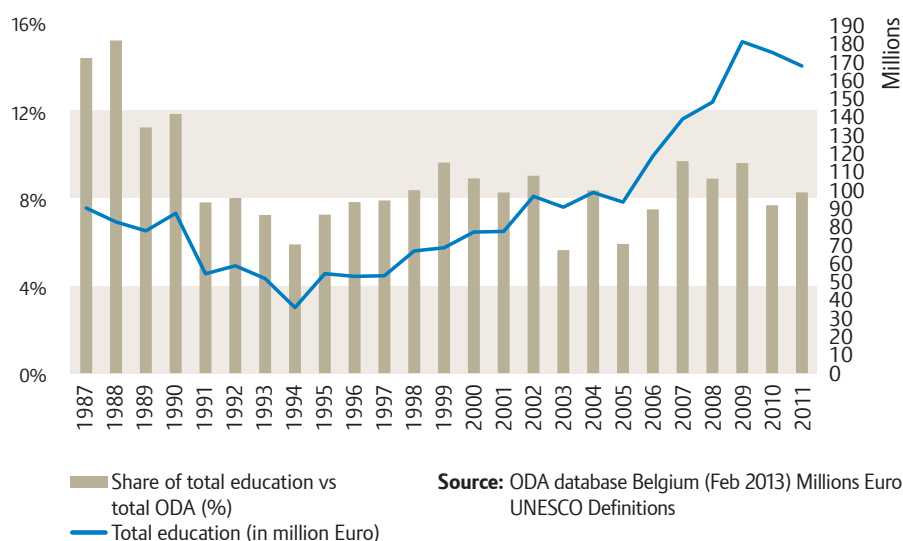
## 4.2. Facts and figures

### Highlights

- **Belgian aid to education peaked in 2009, after continued increases since 1997, and is now in decline.**
- **Whilst the 2002 education sector policy note and the report of the large thematic evaluation of 2007 both advocated a higher share of spending on basic education in support of EFA and the MDGs, the trend has actually been the opposite. The budget for basic education has been up and down since 2004, but the relative share of basic education in the overall education ODA went down year after year since 2004.**
- **In financial terms, over the last few decades Belgian educational aid has been dominated by the higher education sector, primarily through the university councils (VLIR-UOS and CIUF-CUD), but also through scholarship programmes at BTC.**

The only sector policy note<sup>17</sup> on educational aid dates back to 2002. It is a comprehensive document (70 plus pages), with many references to the debates on EFA and the MDGs, and overviews of the allocation, actors and strategies of the Belgian support for the education sector. It contains a number of policy intentions (DGCI-DGIS, 2002):

**Figure 3: Relative share of the budget for education against the total Belgian ODA (%) and the Belgian total education ODA in absolute terms (in million Euro)**



- Belgium reconfirmed its commitment to the EFA goals and the MDGs and intentions to invest more in basic education
- In the context of the ministry's policies to focus on complementary aspects, coherence and coordination, the note argued that Belgian educational activities should be based systematically on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).
- A short section of the report discusses the importance of higher education. The note argued that university education should focus especially on the training of qualified teachers to strengthen the educational capacity of education systems. It stated that university scholarships should be aligned more with the development programmes and should be organised locally or regionally as often as possible.
- More attention for adult education (literacy training) was suggested, especially through NGO channels.

A sector-wide evaluation in 2007 (EfC et al., 2007) is critical about the note and its application. It concluded that the policy note lacked clarity about how the policy recommendations would be made operational. The 2007 evaluation is also hard on the efforts of Belgium to redirect more of its funding towards basic education, and concludes (EfC et al., 2007, p.33):

The high percentage of disbursement targeted at higher education (52.1%) contrasts with the relatively small percentage (11.9%) targeted at basic education (with 6.8% to primary education), which is the policy priority in pursuit of the MDG. This is an enormous, and ultimately untenable, mismatch between policy and practice.

Figure 3 shows the history of Belgian support for education since 1987, as a share of the total ODA. Since 1995, the budget for education has increased in parallel with the

<sup>17</sup> At the time of writing (March 2013) the ministry was finalising a new sector policy note for education.

### Box 7: Support to education and training outside the education budget

This study only looks at support to education which is coded under the CRS codes for education. In the 2007 evaluation, a calculation was made for the period 2001-2005 on the budgets going to education and training activities undertaken in other sectors than education. The study concluded that it corresponded with an additional amount equivalent to 13% of the educational ODA.

- overall Belgian aid budget, but its relative share fluctuated between 5% and 9%, with an average of about 8% going to education. Support to education peaked in 2009 with an amount of about 179 million euros (Figure 3). Since then it has been in decline, and continued cuts in aid budgets indicate that further reductions can be expected.

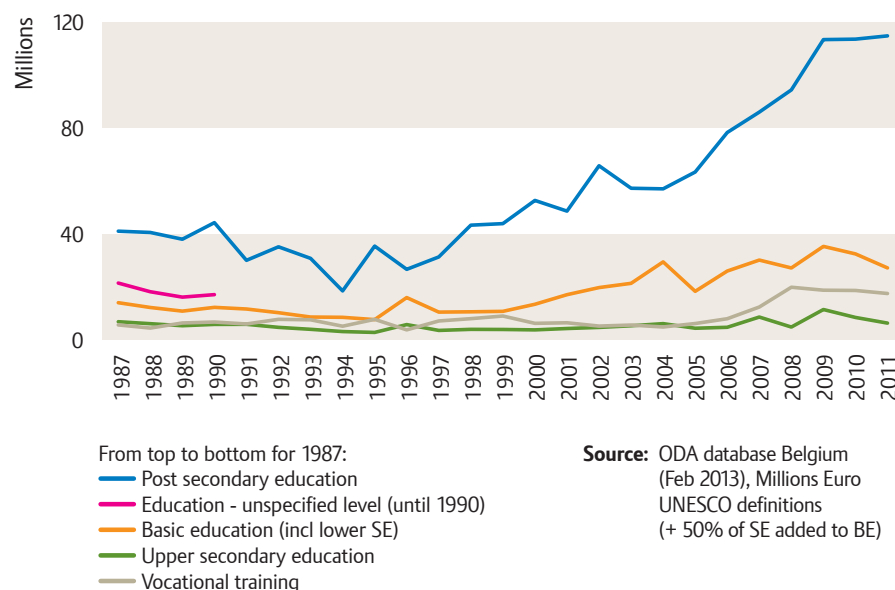
A closer look at the data in Figure 4 shows that the aid to post-secondary education has absorbed by far the largest share of the increased budgets for education since 1996. The budgets for basic education<sup>18</sup> went up gradually in the period 1999-2009, but since then it has gone down, and the relative share of basic education compared with the total ODA for education is already decreasing since 2004 (14% in 2003 compared to 11% in 2011). Within the budget of basic education, only a very small portion goes to early childhood development.

The limited increase in basic education funding between 2002 and 2011 is remarkable in view of the fact that EFA and the MDGs were occupying a very high place on the agenda of Belgian policy-makers since 2002. This raises the question of whether this was part of a broader tendency amongst the OECD-DAC donors, or something in which Belgium was rather isolated. Figure 5 shows that Belgium was drifting away from the OECD-DAC average after 2004, and systematically decreasing its share of basic education.

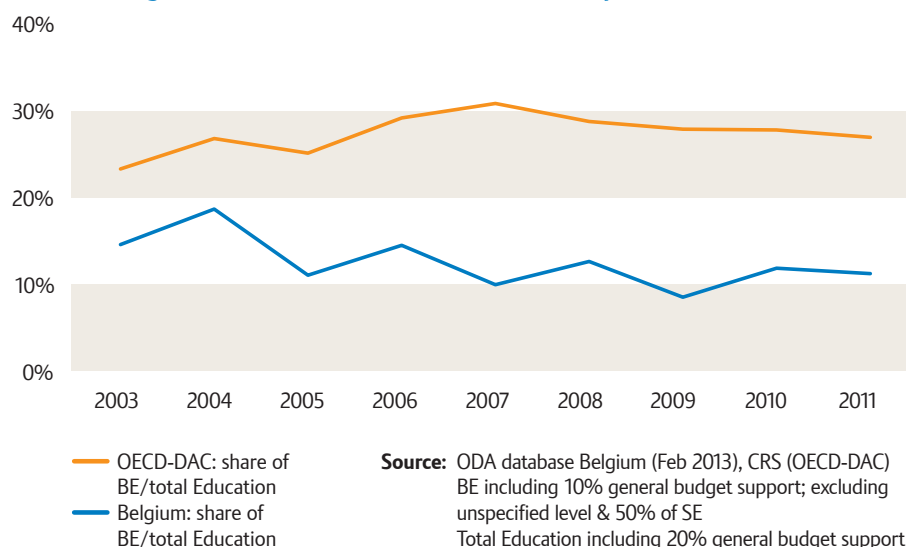
## A complex institutional picture

The institutional structure of Belgian aid for education reflects the peculiar constitutional set-up of the Belgian federal state. Since the mid 1980s the majority of the funds have been disbursed to different indirect actors (or non-state actors), which are linked to the regions of Flanders and Wallonia. Between 1987 and 2011 about 115 development actors received education funding from the Belgian Government. This ranged from university councils, the bilateral and multilateral channels, but also small NGOs and municipalities. However, a large majority of those organisations were receiving very small grants. In 2011, a group of five

**Figure 4: Belgian aid to education divided by sub-sectors (in million Euro)**



**Figure 5: Relative share of basic education compared to total education ODA for Belgium versus all OECD-DAC countries for the period 2003-2011**



organisations (VLIR-UOS, CIUF-CUD, BTC, VVOB, APEFE) were receiving 82% of the overall education budget (Figure 6). Of that

group, the universities (VLIR-UOS/CIUF-CUD & university scholarships) accounted for about 56% in 2011, the bilateral channel (BTC) for 18%, the technical specialised education agencies (VVOB/APEFE) about 8%. Besides that the NGOs accounted for 8%. From the multilateral channel (7%), the funding of the Global Partnership for Education accounted for 3% in 2011.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to repeat that by choosing to calculate aid to basic education in this way (UNESCO formulas + 50% of secondary education), we have chosen for an estimate that covers most of the modalities that support basic education directly or indirectly (except for the core support to some multilateral institutions). In this way, it takes into account many of the critiques brought forward towards other ways of calculating, which are argued to be underestimating the share of basic education.



## University councils

University cooperation covers a wide group of different activities and actors. The relative share<sup>19</sup> of university councils<sup>20</sup> in the total educational ODA went up from about 21% in 1987 to 56% in 2011. As described earlier, a significant part consists of different types of scholarships, for which no strategic government policy note exists. In 2010, the Belgian university councils signed a new agreement with the ministry, covering some of the future principles and modalities of the university cooperation, but the scholarships were not covered by this agreement. The majority of the scholarships are allocated to masters studies and PhDs for students from developing countries. The VLIR-UOS/CIUF-CUD scholarship programmes are the largest component of Belgian educational aid, but one of the most difficult to capture in terms of inputs and effects due to the limited amount of publicly-available information. There are no systematic tracer studies to study the effects of the education and training opportunities offered. The VLIR-UOS/CIUF-CUD budget also covers the institutional capacity building programmes with selected universities, and different types of research-based cooperation programmes between Belgian research units and their counterparts in the South. The proportion of research programmes with faculties of education could not be established in detail<sup>21</sup>, but from the available data one can conclude that it is limited. To conclude, it needs to be repeated that both the scholarship system and the university cooperation programmes were never established as instruments to strengthen education systems in the South, but serve different purposes. As a consequence, their contribution to basic education systems in the South is rather limited.

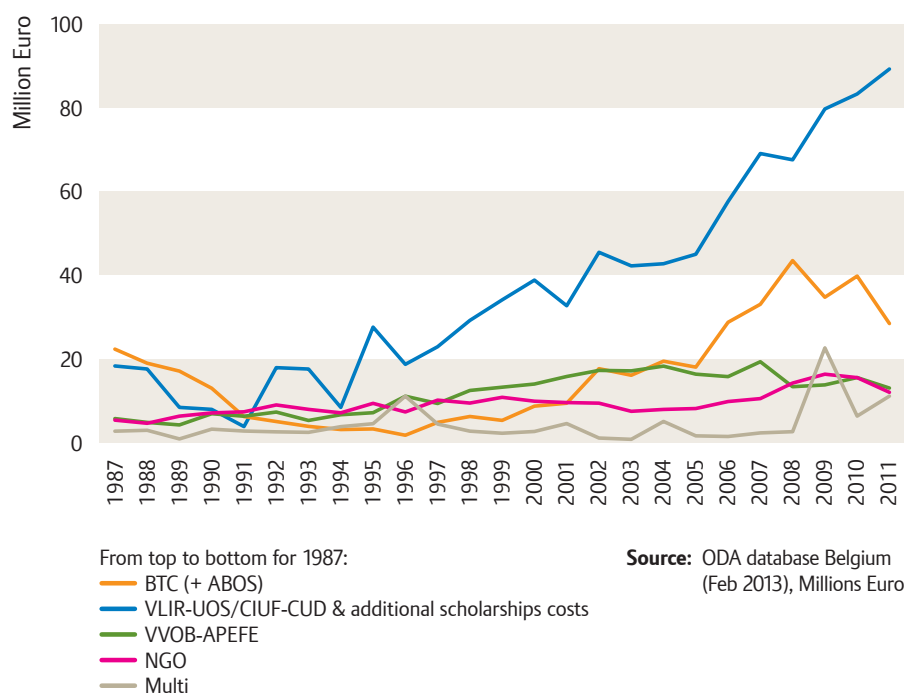
19 This includes additional imputed scholarships costs which are appearing in the DGD budget, but are not included in the annual VLIR-UOS/CIUF-CUD budgets.

20 In addition to these amounts, it needs to be highlighted that a significant part of the BTC budget for education are also scholarships, of which again about a quarter is based at Belgian universities (Damino database BTC, 2012).

21 The CIUF-CUD annual reports includes thematic overviews for the overall portfolio. In 2011, it reported that only 2.2% of the activities were in 'psychology and the educational sciences'.

22 In its own annual reports, BTC reports separately on the scholarship programme, and does not include it with its education sector budget. In the OECD-DAC CRS database it does appear as educational aid.

**Figure 6: Overview of the 7 largest beneficiaries of Belgian ODA for education (1987 – 2011)**



## Bilateral channel

Bilateral cooperation underwent an enormous dip during the crisis in Central Africa in the mid-1990s. Because a large part of the education funding was going to DR Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, the withdrawal of Belgian bilateral aid from these countries had a huge impact on the budget. After these events, bilateral support for education was gradually reconstructed, with educational programmes

in many different countries. Later on, in several rounds of increased geographical concentration, and strengthened by the EU Code of Conduct (2007), the Belgian cooperation opted for larger educational programmes in fewer countries. At this stage, there are full educational programmes in the DR Congo, Burundi, Uganda, and Palestine and some smaller programmes in other countries.

BTC's scholarship programme has increased significantly since 2004 and currently makes up about 50% of its total educational budget<sup>22</sup>. After observing that the scholarship programme did not align very well with the development programmes, a drastic reform of the scholarship programme was initiated in 2010-2011 with the aim of bringing the instrument more in line with programme needs, making

## Box 8: How do scholarships contribute to basic education?

This is difficult to assess because the scholarship systems were not set up with the aim of contributing to the respective education systems. Also the lack of information complicates the issue. On a more general level, organisations such as OECD-DAC and UNESCO have questioned the direct relevance of international scholarships as an approach to strengthening the education sector in the South. At the same time, many donors (new and old) keep on investing significantly in scholarship schemes.

Estimates are that around 40% to 50% of the Belgian educational aid goes to scholarships. The most comprehensive mapping of the scholarship programmes was carried out by BTC (2010) for the period 2006-2008. The study showed that only about 3.5% of the 8,443 scholarships offered over the period 2006-2008 were in the educational sciences.

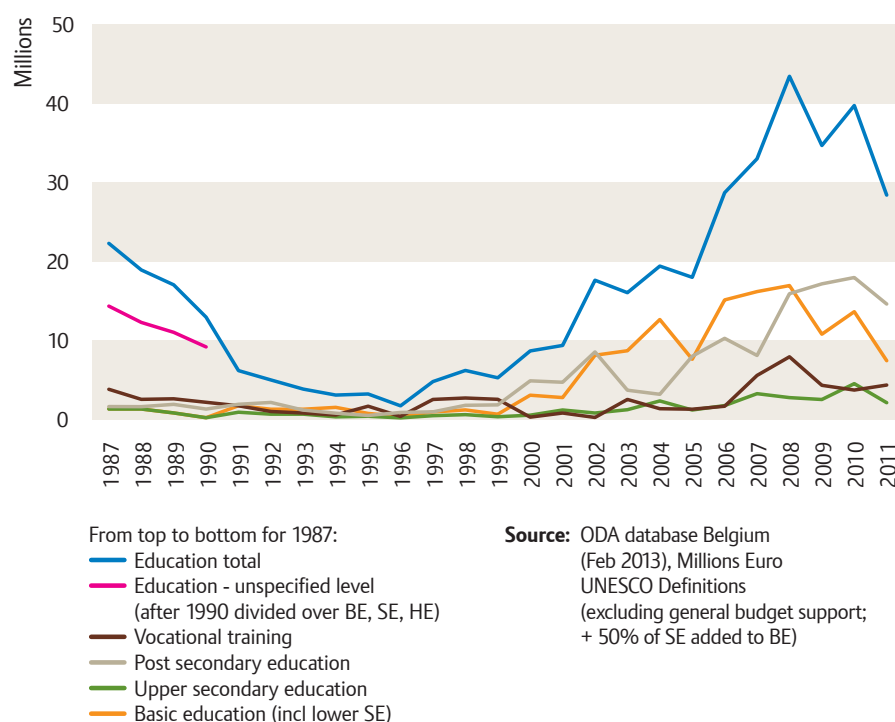
- greater use of regional training options and offering a broader set of capacity development instruments. The new approach is gradually being introduced in the various country programmes.

The bilateral basic education budget has decreased quite significantly since 2008 (Figure 7).

Other important changes in Belgian bilateral support to education have been:

- The evolution from project-based support to a combination (portfolio approach) of programme support, sector budget support and projects. Belgium is reluctant to continue with general budget support.
- The growing importance of formal policy dialogue between the partner country and the representatives of the Belgian ministry, resulting in long term engagements around specific sectors.
- The influence of the Paris (2005), Accra (2008), and Busan (2011) agenda, with more alignment with local procedures and structures, and fewer parallel implementation units
- From many small programmes to few large programmes concentrated in one sub-sector of education due to two simultaneous developments: (1) the reduction of the number countries per theme but with bigger budgets for each programme, (2) the increase in BTC budgets between 2000 and 2010.
- More cooperation with academic institutes to support the implementation of the programmes.
- The educational programmes have moved from a multitude of different activities, some which included large investments in textbooks (e.g. DR Congo & Palestine) to a larger focus on institutional development.

**Figure 7: Bilateral channel allocation to different sub-sectors in education (AGCD-ABOS/DGD until 2006 + BTC starting from 1992)**



**Source:** ODA database Belgium (Feb 2013), Millions Euro UNESCO Definitions (excluding general budget support; + 50% of SE added to BE)

## Multilateral channel

After several years of low investments, since 2009 there has been some increase in the funding of the multilateral channel<sup>23</sup> through the increased contribution to the Global Partnership for Education. Because of time limitations and the limited publicly available information, no further analysis could be done on the education component of Belgian core-contribution to organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the EU.

Belgium is modest in its support of education in emergency situations. The new Belgian strategy for humanitarian aid (DGD, 2012) does not mention education in its list of thematic focus areas<sup>24</sup>. This is a missed opportunity, especially in view of the large presence of Belgium in fragile states and the role that education can play as a bridge between humanitarian aid and structural support.

## Regional governments (Flanders / Wallonia)

While VVOB and APEFE are regional development agencies (see next paragraph), the bulk of their funding comes from the federal government (DGD). The Flemish and Walloon regions have their own development administrations and agencies, but have only modest

<sup>23</sup> These calculations are incomplete since we follow the CRS classification (OECD-DAC) and therefore do not consider the allocations made to multilateral organisations, which are not specifically earmarked for educational activities. In addition, some of the spikes in figure 6 for the multilateral channel refer to one-off payments to multilateral institutions, in response to some urgent demand brought forward.

<sup>24</sup> A press release by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (8 March 2013) did refer to Belgium's support for education in conflict-affected countries through the core-funding of UNICEF, and to intentions to support international efforts which give education a higher priority in humanitarian situations.

## Box 9: BTC scholarships in figures (based on the Danimo database, year 2012)

- About 4,000 scholarships
- Total budget 15.7 million euro
- About 20 to 25% of scholarships based at Belgian universities
- 75% of scholarships take place in low- or middle-income countries with South Africa and Uganda as popular training destinations
- About 15% of scholarships are in the educational sciences





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activities in the education sector. The educational component of the Flemish ODA decreased from 16% to 11.6% over the period 2009-2011 due to the decreasing number of international activities by the Flemish ministry of education. On the Walloon-Brussels side, there are strong institutional linkages with APEFE. Education and training is reported to be one of the key areas for support from the regional government (WBI). The exact support by WBI for the education sector could not be retrieved from publicly-available data.

## VVOB/APEFE

VVOB and APEFE were already introduced in previous sections. Both organisations started off with similar kind of activities but have developed quite differently over the years. The relative share of VVOB and APEFE in the total education ODA has decreased from about 20% to 8% over the last decade. In the education sector, APEFE is mainly working on TVET and informal types of education. The organisation also has programmes in health,

sanitation, and agriculture. Part of the budget (30%) for APEFE comes from budgets outside of education. VVOB has specialised increasingly in sub-sectors of education (primary education, teacher training, TVET and recently also early childhood education). According to the DGD database, in 2011 approximately 13% of VVOB activities were going to basic education. In reality this is probably higher because some of the programmes in teacher training (for primary education) are calculated as higher education. For their new multi-annual plan 2014-2017, VVOB plans to focus six out of eight country programmes on early childhood education and primary education.

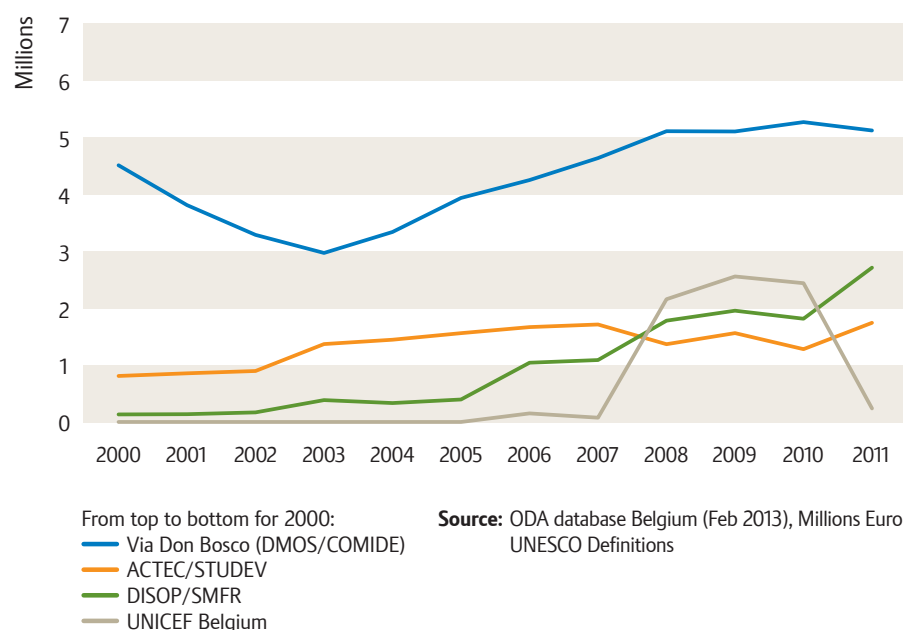
## NGOs/CSOs

Belgium channels limited ODA funds for the education sector via the NGO channel. As of 2011, the NGOs count for less than 10% of the education sector budgets<sup>25</sup>. Two decades ago, Belgium still had a significant number of NGO activities in the education sector.

Between 1987 and 2011 about 55 Belgian NGOs and NGO consortia received funding, complemented with rather small budgets for a group of Southern NGOs. By 2011, out of that total group only 11 still receive funding. At the beginning of the 1990s, events in the DR Congo triggered an in-depth reflection about the role of NGOs in education (EfC et al., 2007). At that time, a significant number of NGOs provided teachers, were building schools and organised primary education within communities. The failure of the Congolese State triggered debates about the role of NGOs in education. An implicit consensus grew that NGOs should not substitute the state in its obligations towards the education sector and alternative NGO roles were to be supported. The few Belgian NGOs that remained active in education were expected to focus more on adult education and literacy programmes or educational support activities (teacher training or curriculum development). Some of these new activities were then funded through ODA budgets outside of the education budget (agriculture, health,...). In the mid 2000s, rights-based approaches to education started finding their way into the Belgian NGO scene, but remained limited in scope compared to some other countries. In

<sup>25</sup> This does not include the funding for educational programmes in the context of humanitarian work (small budgets), or education/training activities imputed on other sector budgets.

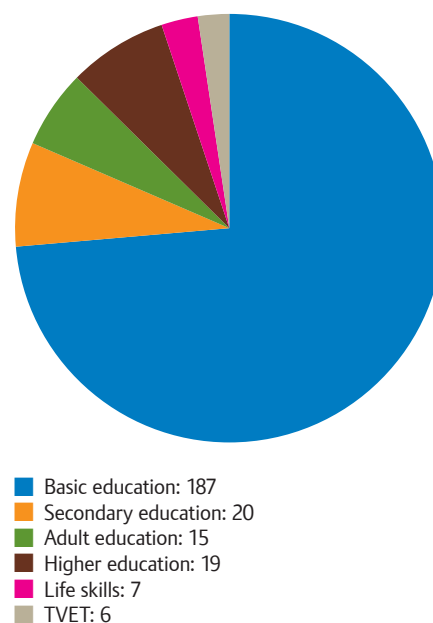
**Figure 8: Belgian ODA for Education to top 4 receiving educational NGOs**



## Fourth pillar initiatives

Some of the activities that established NGOs used to carry out in the education sector in the 1970s and 1980s have now been taken over by the immense group of disparate private initiatives from individual or small groups of citizens. The building of schools, supporting individual pupils and so on are very popular amongst them. But there are some important differences between this and what NGOs used to do. For example, very few of these private initiatives are working with expatriate teachers. None receive funding from the federal government (not recognised as an NGO), but their large number and their specific educational focus make them interesting to discuss in this overview. Their exact numbers are unknown, but in a 2005 study (Develtere et al., 2006) there

**Figure 9: Sub-sector focus in the education activities of 253 Fourth pillar initiatives**



**Source:** HIVA based on 'Fourth pillar initiatives database': [www.4depijler.be](http://www.4depijler.be)

> the current negotiations between DGD and the NGOs (2012-2013), DGD is stressing the importance of improved harmonisation between the different Belgian development actors, including the NGOs. While the intentions are good, there is a real risk that the pressure for increased coordination at the Belgian level, will decrease the flexibility of Belgian actors to actually harmonise their activities with other non-Belgian development actors on the ground.

Interestingly, from the remaining group of NGOs a majority is still active in support of service delivery, either through capacity development of training institutes, or the funding of infrastructure improvement. This can be explained by the fact that the largest NGO, Via Don Bosco, is a faith-based organisation (FBO), with a strong network of TVET institutes throughout the world. FBOs are known

to have strong constituencies and a large training capacity in many developing countries. Unlike in other OECD-DAC countries, very few Belgian NGOs ventured into alternative work around education: lobbying and advocacy, brokering and convening, capacity building of national CSO groups, etc.

Over 70% of the ODA budget for NGOs for the period 2000-2011 went to only four Belgian NGOs: (1) Via Don Bosco (DMOS/COMIDE), which is active in TVET; (2) DISOP, which is mainly involved in informal training; (3) ACTEC, also active in TVET, informal training and capacity development, and (4) UNICEF-Belgium (Figure 8). Plan Belgium is also a relatively large Belgian actor in the education sector (about 3 million euros out of its total annual budget of 12.3 million euros is allocated to education) but only a small portion comes from Belgian ODA.

## Box 10: An example of a Fourth Pillar initiative (Mobile School NPO)

Mobile School NPO is supporting street children through the provision of mobile school carts and the training of local street workers. Presently there are 36 mobile schools in 21 countries, spread across four continents. The organisation works with the motto 'If a child cannot come to school, we will bring the school to the child'. The mobile school is set up as a moving blackboard with hundreds of educational games, designed for mobility, adaptability, durability and resistance to theft. The educational curriculum of Mobile School NPO "does not aim to replace the traditional school curriculum. All the materials and games target an increase in self-respect and identity, the discovery of talents and empowerment".



were estimated to be at least 1,600 fourth pillar initiatives in Flanders. Also in Wallonia and Brussels, studies have documented the growing group of fourth-pillar initiatives (De Bruyn et al., 2010). In this last study, from a sample of 50 initiatives about 70% were active in the education sector. More detailed information could be obtained from the web-based exchange platform, [www.4depijler.be](http://www.4depijler.be), which currently has 509 Flemish initiatives represented. It provides a good overview of the diversity and specific characteristics of these emerging actors. In the context of this study, we reviewed the profiles of the 271 initiatives that stated that they are active in education<sup>26</sup>. Figure 9 shows that a large majority (74%) are active in basic education. Other educational levels each represent less than 10%. Basic education has to be interpreted in the broadest sense in terms of target groups and educational activities (formal/informal, ECE and primary level).

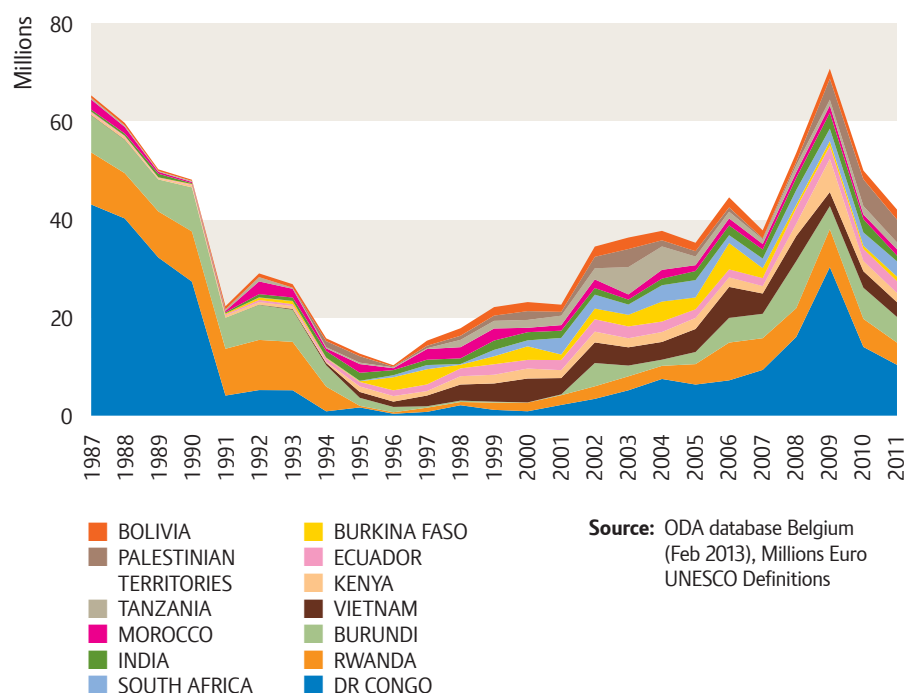
The average initiative<sup>27</sup> typically has some of the following characteristics:

- Small size in terms of activities: ranging from paying school fees for individual pupils, building a classroom or a school, providing some learning materials or specific courses, supporting handicapped pupils, to providing extra-curricular animation.
- Focused on specific target groups: one village, street children or orphans in a specific city, handicapped children, marginalised communities, etc.
- Often combined with small initiatives in health and sanitation or basic infrastructure within the same communities.
- About half of them work in Africa. India, Cambodia and some other Asian countries are also popular.
- A large number were established after travelling for the purposes of tourism or through a study visit to the area.
- Many work with child sponsorship to fundraise for their programmes.

## Geographic analysis

Figure 10 shows the historical geographic trends in the educational funding of some of Belgium's key partners. This includes the programmes of all the channels/actors (including VVOB, APEFE, NGOs and so on). It clearly illustrates the extent to which the education sector was affected by the withdrawal of Belgium from the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi in the mid 1990s. The graph also shows how the cooperation extended to a range of new countries after the mid 1990s, to now slowly cluster again around a limited number of countries.

**Figure 10: Overview of the history of geographic distribution of Belgian ODA for Education over top 13 receiving countries (1987 – 2011)**



**Figure 11: Overview of the history of geographic distribution of Belgian ODA for Basic Education over top 11 receiving countries (including GPE) (1987-2011)**

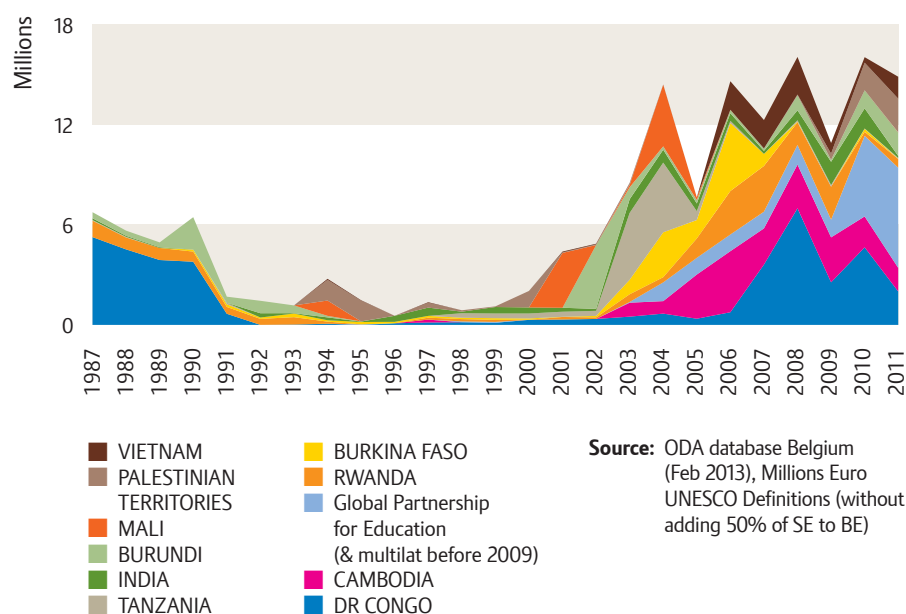


Figure 11 describes the 11 main receiving countries (and GPE) of aid for basic education over time (with DR Congo, Cambodia and

GPE featuring in the top 3), including the support allocated to GPE and other earmarked multilateral funding. The programmes with countries such as Cambodia, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Mali and Vietnam are gradually coming to an end.

<sup>26</sup> From the 271 entries only 253 had clear references to some type of education activities in their profile.

<sup>27</sup> There are some important exceptions in terms of approach and scale, such as Mobile School NPO (see Box 10)

### 4.3. Review of Belgian support to basic education

This section brings together elements and findings of previous sections in an overall analysis of the Belgian support for (basic) education. This is not the result of an extensive evaluation process or a long-term study, but rather a meta-reflection and review of existing reports, studies, databases, complemented with selected interviews. As this is a broad area, the report makes mention of specific issues, without the ambition of being comprehensive.

#### Limited interest in education, but new sector policy note announced

On the positive side, the federal government has invested considerably in education over the years; it has piloted some of the new aid modalities and principles in the education sector (sector budget support, EU Code of Conduct, ..), it is supporting the EDUCAID platform, and DGD also increased the funding of the multilateral GPE initiative. In addition, DGD is expected to announce a new sector policy note on education in 2013. However, broadly speaking, education as one of the key sectors of the Belgian development cooperation has lacked genuine attention and interest from policy-makers and the political class, both at the federal and the regional level. This was one of the findings in the 2007 evaluation, and is again emerging from this study. Three issues stand out: the limited policy development of large parts of the educational ODA (scholarships, TVET and secondary education); the lack of hard policy targets for educational aid; and the limited number of educational experts at DGD head office and in

the field. In addition, for the bilateral channel, education is the sector present in the lowest number of partner countries. Finally, with two out of the four main education interventions located in fragile states (DR Congo and Palestine), and no intentions of introducing education in other partner countries in the near future, there is a risk of continued reductions in the aid for education. At the regional level, the current Education Minister for Flanders has reduced the ministry's activities regarding development cooperation and is displaying a limited interest in giving an active role to aid for the education sector. On the side of Wallonia-Brussels, education and training is listed as key intervention area, but the activities mentioned are primarily those of APEFE.

Reasons for the limited interest are argued to be related to the fact that:

- education is about long-term change and some of the outcomes of education are difficult to measure (except for technical supply side projects related to books or school construction and some of the EFA goals), which leads to a drop in interest from policy-makers;
- the background and expertise of many DGD attachés and BTC country directors relates to other sectors, resulting in less affinity with the education sector;
- as previously stated, the education lobby has traditionally been less organised than that of the health or agriculture sector, for example. The newly-established EDUCAID platform might pay off on this issue in the coming years;
- there is no systematic research on the Belgian experiences with education in development, limited knowledge-sharing, and rather weak knowledge management systems leading to a limited institutional memory for actors such as DGD and BTC. On the positive side, both DGD and BTC

have recently undertaken new initiatives to improve their knowledge management practices.

As a result, within policy circles there seems to be limited knowledge and appreciation of the specific added value of Belgium's activities in education.

#### Support for basic education: does Belgium 'walk the talk'?

Since end of the 1990s, Belgian policy-makers have endorsed EFA and the MDGs on many occasions, and have indicated policy intentions to boost support for basic education but we cannot conclude that basic education has become a key sector in terms of size and strategic support. The problems begin with the weak operational translation of the policy intentions regarding EFA and the MDGs agenda in terms of budget allocation and the lack of operational targets. The funding of basic education has increased over the last decade (starting from very low levels), but its relative share in the total ODA budget has decreased gradually since 2004. Secondly, there is currently no integrated framework to look at how the support to different educational sub-sectors can strengthen them mutually. The biggest sub-sector in terms of support is higher education. Its contribution to basic education could be significant, both directly and indirectly, but is limited by the fact that only a small portion of the scholarships and the university cooperation programmes are related to the educational sciences. Thirdly, the strategies of the ministry towards the educational CSOs could be strengthened, including the broadening of the playing field from NGOs to CSOs, the role to be played by educational CSOs in humanitarian situations, and the support for work around early childhood development.

#### Box 11: Educational aid as a container in the 1980s

In the past, the educational sector budget has been used partly as a container for costs which do not necessarily contribute to the development of the education sector. For example, at the end of the 1980s, approximately one-third of the budget related to costs for Belgian schools (15%) in Central Africa (which catered for the children of Belgian expatriates) and costs related to training of military personnel (16%) from Central Africa (Ministry of Defense). This practice has been seriously reduced since the 1990s, and with the sharp reduction in the number of Belgian expats in Central Africa, Belgian schools currently account for only 0.3% of the education budget.





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## Critical mass of expertise on quality of education in Belgian development agencies

Supporting educational change is complex because it often involves processes of long-term change, taking place in large bureaucracies, and with the involvement of many stakeholders. It therefore requires specialised expertise and capacity. Belgium has gained some interesting experiences with supporting education in at least three channels<sup>28</sup>: bilateral cooperation, indirect cooperation (VVOB/APEFE, university councils, NGOs) and probably also amongst the fourth pillar initiatives (but little is known about their specificity and impact of their work). Regarding the topic of quality of education Belgium can firstly build on the presence of the specialised educational agencies VVOB and APEFE<sup>29</sup>. These agencies

have grown over the years from substitution work to complex programme's supported by specialised experts and process facilitators, and specifically for VVOB in the area of quality basic education. Secondly, the educational unit of the bilateral development agency (BTC) has also attracted new expertise and capacity over the years and is recognised for its expertise in basic education and TVET in Central Africa. Thirdly, the extensive university cooperation through VLIR-UOS and CIUF-CUD is also very specific to Belgium, but the critical mass lies in the scholarship schemes and the long-term research-based cooperation schemes, both only partially devoted to institutional development of the education sector. In this context, some specific research groups have built up relevant expertise on quality and equity in education.

## A small but vibrant educational community, with increased coordination efforts

Traditionally, development agencies in the health and agricultural sector have been much stronger than the educational community in organising themselves as a collective for agenda-setting, knowledge exchange, and lobbying and advocacy work. In 2010, Belgium established the EDUCAID platform, which groups together the key educational actors into working groups on specific areas, organises technical events on specific themes (equity), advises the federal government and is supported by a web-based platform. This initiative provides educational development actors with a face and allows them to engage with policy-makers and others. Key challenges of the platform still relate to the fostering of a shared understanding and agenda of educational priorities for the future, and the exchange with other fora outside the educational sphere and silos (for example health).

<sup>28</sup> The volume of educational aid through the multilateral channel is low

<sup>29</sup> APEFE has a similar size to VVOB but spans considerably more thematic areas than VVOB, including formal and informal education and training as well as health and sanitation themes.





# 5. Recommendations for Belgian aid to basic education

## Highlights

- **Belgium can play a larger and more strategic role in the support of basic education.**
- **This section outlines a number of suggested principles and considerations regarding the modalities of Belgian aid to basic education.**
- **Three different scenarios are suggested as food for thought for future strategies for support to basic education:**
  - **Scenario 1: Full integration into the post-2015 framework**
  - **Scenario 2: Missing links**
  - **Scenario 3: Advanced thematic specialisation, decoupled from the post 2015-agenda**

## 5.1. Should basic education be a priority?

Sufficient elements have been put forward in this report to justify renewed attention for basic education in Belgium's development co-operation system, both in terms of budgets and modalities. If Belgium is serious about its policy intentions regarding EFA and the MDGs, more funds should be going to basic education. The key arguments are as follows:

- There is a broad international consensus that basic education, including early childhood education, is a key building block for other levels of education. Basic education contributes to the wellbeing of individuals, their families, and the broader society in different ways.
- Belgium has developed relevant capacities with regard to basic education in the bilateral channel, amongst VVOB/APEFE, within specialised NGOs and in the form of university cooperation.
- The focus of the international community will gradually shift towards quality of basic education, an area in which smaller donors

can more easily play a meaningful role, without requiring enormous infrastructure budgets. There is a conclusive body of evidence to indicate that the quality of education is more important than years of schooling in increasing the returns of education to individuals and society as a whole.

- In both Wallonia and Flanders there are important centres of excellence in the area of basic education which can provide technical backstopping and support innovation in the development sector (e.g. around topics such as early childhood education, pupil-centred learning, project-based learning, mathematics, teacher training and quality control).

## 5.2. General recommendations

Before presenting a number of possible scenarios for aid to basic education, this report offers some general recommendations that can be considered for future policy-making.

### Aims of the support to basic education

As a small development partner, Belgium probably has the most to offer in the area of quality of education. Larger players, such as DIFID, GPE and the World Bank have the means to invest seriously in access to education.

Equity should be a second overall aim, to avoid working on quality of education becoming a means in itself, and not in supporting more equal access to high quality education.

### Principles

The EDUCAID recommendations (2012) for the Belgian Government provide a range of relevant principles with which to work. Some additional principles that have emerged from this report include the following:

- *An integrated approach with a long-term perspective* - support for basic education should be approached in an integrated way, exploring the ways in which different educational levels on the supply side

(including Belgian universities) can play a role in strengthening basic education systems in the South. It also requires a long-term perspective, with institutional partnerships that go beyond one cycle of 5 or 6 years;

- *Clear policy targets* - Belgian policy-making in the area of educational aid should have clear and specific targets, including in the area of budget allocation and modalities. Well-funded areas of work (such as higher education and scholarships) should receive sufficient attention in sector policy notes;
- *Better theories of change* - there is a need to engage in a more strategic reflection on theories of change that underpin the work in the field. This goes hand in hand with a need to be more realistic in terms of objectives and strategies;
- *Safeguarding the space for 'thick' solutions* - with the growing domestic pressure and questioning of aid, the Belgian Government should avoid reducing its aid strategies towards 'thin' solutions (which show quick results, but which do not necessarily contribute towards structural change) at the cost of 'thick' solutions (which are more complex and messy, but have the potential to address some of the root causes).

### Modalities

Regarding the modalities of the programmes, the following recommendations can be made:

- *Specialisation* - with the proliferation of development actors worldwide, competition for resources is growing, and development actors need to be able to demonstrate their added value more so than in the past. Being a small development player therefore implies the need for advanced specialisation and concentration, in terms of focus on areas of work, mechanisms and methodologies used, geographically, and so on.
- *Harmonisation* - harmonisation should be achieved primarily on the ground, amongst development actors working in a specific country. Where relevant, additional harmonisation efforts between Belgian actors can be explored, but this should not be the main driver in harmonisation efforts.





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- • *Strengthening the internal capacity* - the number of educational specialists within DGD, both at head office and in the field, is limited. There is a need to further strengthen the internal capacity of DGD regarding different aspects of education and development.
- *Starting up the debate on what should be in the education sector budget and what should be under other sectors* - whether aid programmes are coded under 'education' or not, is more than a coding issue. Since many donors, including Belgium, tend to keep the relative share of a given sector within the total ODA rather stable over time (within some boundaries), the decision to code certain types of activities with large budgets as educational aid has implications for the support to other educational levels. Since the 'cake' most often does not grow or shrink substantially over time, there is a financial interdependence between the sub-sectors. The education community as a whole would benefit from more clarity in concepts on what should be considered as education sector aid and what should not. The main consideration should be the extent to which a programme is primarily focused on strengthening the education sector in the partner country or not.
- *Making scholarships work for basic education* – scholarships are likely to remain an important instrument in the Belgian development cooperation portfolio. From a basic education perspective, scholarships could contribute more if a certain proportion of them were:
  - targeted: in terms of (1) themes (educational); (2) target group (linked to staff/students connected to educational institutes); (3) process (scholarships embedded in processes of institutional development); and (4) geographically (linked to ongoing development programmes);
  - merit-based and geared towards equity: building in filters to make sure that scholarship opportunities are offered to those that have potential and are from disadvantaged backgrounds;
  - a partnership perspective: build on the experiences of Germany with scholarships, which would mean viewing scholarships in Belgium not as a one-off exposure but as a lifelong engagement/partnership with Belgian universities.

### 5.3. Three scenarios for future support to basic education

In addition to the general recommendations, we are presenting three possible scenarios for the future support of basic education. They represent different alternatives for the current strategies followed by the Belgian development cooperation<sup>30</sup>, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The scenarios do assume an active role for Belgian actors, more than the transfer of resources, either content-wise or through process facilitation. Each of the three options requires courage and determination in terms of selecting specific policies and leaving out others. Choosing is losing, as they say, but the advantage would be more convergence on the unity of purpose and more clear-cut strategies. These scenarios should be considered as instruments to discuss at a collective level regarding some basic operational principles for the future, not as an attempt to replace independent decision-making in the different organisations. They are presented in black and white, without too much nuance, as a way of triggering a discussion rather than as suggestions which can be directly implemented.

<sup>30</sup> The strategies primarily target the Belgian development actors. The fact that they do not include implications for Southern actors should not be seen as suggesting that they are unimportant, but merely as a consequence of the focus of this study.

## Scenario 1: Full integration in post-2015 framework

### Main components

The post-2015 development goals are still to be decided, both in terms of content and regarding the delivery mechanisms. It is not clear if there will be both educational goals in the overall post-2015 framework and separate follow-up goals of the EFA framework. At the same time, it is very likely that they will at least include some kind of goals regarding the issue of learning outcomes (quality of education) and some equity measures, and will make use of the GPE structure. So, the basic components are already emerging. The scenario with full integration in the post-2015 framework would entail:

- Collective reflection in Belgium, but also at the partner country level, on the role that different actors can play to make an optimal contribution towards the post-2015 educational framework.
- More funding and support for the post-2015 framework, including increased support for GPE. Limiting the investments in other sub-sectors outside post-2015.

### Implications for different actors

Actor	Possible implications
<b>EDUCAID / local fora</b>	Consider possibility of singling out 1 or 2 of the future educational development goals to specifically focus on. Strive for increased coherence between actions of different partners, not necessarily through joint intervention frameworks, but through agreements on the optimal role of different actors in the post-2015 framework, including building support in Belgium for post-2015.
<b>Bilateral channel</b>	Strong alignment of new bilateral educational programmes with GPE country programmes.
<b>University cooperation</b>	Reform part (10–20%) of the scholarship schemes, institutional interuniversity cooperation and the university research cooperation in support of the GPE country programmes (at the operational level).
<b>VVOB/ APEFE</b>	Allocating a substantial share of the country programmes to support GPE work (e.g. as a technical backstopping partner, or in brokering).
<b>Multilateral</b>	Larger budget for the support of GPE and other related post-2015 initiatives.
<b>CSOs</b>	Engaging with Southern CSOs and national networks to monitor GPE implementation failures, and pilot innovative approaches. A broad understanding of CSOs.
<b>Fourth pillar initiatives</b>	Launching dialogue on how small fourth pillar initiatives can contribute towards post-2015 educational goals.

### SWOT for scenario 'Full integration with post-2015 agenda'

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expected focus on quality of education (learning outcomes) for the post-2015 framework aligns well with the Belgian profile and possible role as small donor.</li> <li>• Clear focus and collective agenda for the Belgian educational community with a chance for internal capacity-building and exchange.</li> <li>• Appreciation of international donor community and broader public for loyal 'multilateral' behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For pragmatic reasons, learning outcomes are likely to be reduced to a limited series (such as literacy and numeracy), risking a reductionist interpretation of quality.</li> <li>• Belgium remains a small player in the post-2015 agenda, and its contribution risks disappearing amongst the large donors, with some risk of losing identity over time.</li> <li>• Less flexibility in country programmes to respond to needs outside GPE framework.</li> <li>• Demands a switch from Belgian actors, including for some of the university cooperation, which could possibly conflict with the agenda of research units.</li> <li>• GPE is not active in all the partner countries of Belgium.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on existing experiences with GPE facilitation and interaction in Uganda and Burundi.</li> <li>• Could also attract new funding for Belgian actors from other supporters of the post-2015 agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belgian aid would become dependent on the agenda of large players in GPE framework.</li> <li>• Risk of losing some of the educational expertise in other areas.</li> </ul>

## Scenario 2: Missing links scenario

### Main components

This scenario also aligns with the post-2015 agenda, but follows a different approach. It builds on the argument that, as a small donor, Belgium should be very strategic about choosing its niche. Rather than putting all the eggs in the mainstream basket of the future post-2015 agenda, with the risk of disappearing amongst the larger institutional players, Belgium could try to compensate for some of the missing links. By examining specifically what the overall post-2015 programme is overlooking, Belgium could play a useful complementary role, if well chosen. These could be some of the components:

- A collective analysis is conducted for the new post-2015 framework with in-country partners, identifying structural gaps, for example, regarding the lack of attention for ECCE, a broader definition of educational quality, responding to needs of out-of-school-youth, bringing greater attention to lower secondary education or inset of unqualified teachers.
- Belgian actors select a limited number of themes in dialogue with their partners, themes that are feasible and manageable for a small donor to support. This approach also requires buy-in from other key donors and GPE, to avoid the negative backlash from a perceived 'solo-slim' situation.
- Strategies can differ but would in general be geared towards mobilising other resources to address some of the structural gaps (because of the limited resources of the Belgian aid), and supporting national platforms and policy-makers to improve agenda-setting on these themes.
- For technical actors, technical back-stopping to address shortages or problems with existing initiatives could be a relevant task.

### Implications for different actors

Actor	Possible implications
<b>EDUCAID / local fora</b>	Specialise in analysing the missing links in the post-2015 framework, supported by university research. Facilitate collective reflection between different actors at Belgian and/or local level.
<b>Bilateral channel</b>	This scenario requires very close cooperation with national partners, a role that can be taken up by the bilateral channel. To avoid a disconnection with the work of GPE actors, the bilateral channels also facilitate the dialogue with other educational initiatives. This channel also plays a role in terms of programme execution (cf. VVOB/APEFE: technical backstopping and process facilitation, brokering and convening).
<b>University cooperation</b>	Build research expertise in 'missing link' thematic areas. Reform part (10–20%) of the scholarship schemes, institutional interuniversity cooperation and the university research cooperation in support of 'missing links'.
<b>VVOB/APEFE</b>	Specialise in technical back-stopping, process facilitation, and brokering and convening for specific areas of the 'missing-link' agenda. And possibly, facilitate access between programmes and Belgian research expertise (via VLIR-UOS/CIUF-CUD).
<b>Multilateral</b>	Financial support for GPE is still justified in this scenario, but it would be less than in scenario 1.
<b>CSOs</b>	Through their local CSO networks, CSOs could contribute in the identification of missing links. During implementation, CSOs could contribute through their respective roles: watchdog, lobby and advocacy, community development, capacity development, and service delivery for specific areas.
<b>Fourth pillar initiatives</b>	Starting up dialogue on how small fourth pillar initiatives can contribute to missing links. This could be through experimenting with small-scale innovative approaches.

### SWOT for scenario 'Missing links'

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belgium can play out its role as a small player well by addressing missing links in specific niches.</li> <li>• Relevance of compensating for some of the adverse side effects of large/dominant international frameworks.</li> <li>• Belgium could become more visible through the alternative role it plays on the ground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent on choices being made outside the sphere of influence (Belgium fills up gaps left by others).</li> <li>• Existing policy dialogue between Belgium and the partner country would have to take into account this strategy explicitly to incorporate it into bilateral cooperation programmes.</li> <li>• The choice of countries would show some additional restrictions due to the focus on specific 'missing link' themes.</li> <li>• This strategy is more difficult to communicate to the larger public.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It could build internal capacity in Belgian organisations towards shared frames of analysis, and specialised operations focused on added value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This role is more complicated, and therefore maybe more difficult to obtain long-term and sustained support from Belgian policy-makers and politicians.</li> </ul>



## Scenario 3: Advanced thematic specialisation, decoupled from the post-2015 agenda

### Main components

Some donors have gradually built up their expertise in specific educational sub-sectors, by consequently sticking to their thematic areas, even if the aid system was turning its interests to other areas. Switzerland, for example, has been supporting TVET, also when a large part of the donor community did not consider it a priority. The main advantage of this approach is the fact that Belgian organisations could systematically develop experience and recognition around specific themes and niches. It could entail some of the following steps:

- Collective reflection on relevant themes for the Belgian aid to education: strategic analysis of existing capacities, niches and complementary roles with other actors. Selection of limited number of themes per organisation.
- Advanced specialisation in those thematic areas, largely de-coupled from the post-2015 process. Where relevant, alignment should be sought out, but there is no attempt to follow all the different trends and 'fashions' in the development community.
- Long-term engagement in these themes in specific countries (10 to 20 yrs).

### Implications for different actors

Actor	Possible implications
<b>EDUCAID / local fora</b>	Facilitate the collective thinking on key thematic areas for the overall agenda of the Belgian development actors in education. Facilitate collective reflection between different actors at Belgian and/or local level.
<b>Bilateral channel</b> <b>University cooperation</b> <b>VVOB/APEFE</b> <b>Multilateral</b> <b>CSOs</b> <b>Fourth pillar initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For all actors, it involves the task of carrying out an in-depth strategic analysis to identify a very limited number of key themes. They can differ between Belgian organisations, as long as they are somehow connected to a specific sub-sector or in support of those sectors.</li> <li>• It then requires gradual internal capacity-building, systematic sharing of experiences and so on.</li> </ul>

### SWOT for scenario 'Advanced specialisation'

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual development of capacity in specific areas of education: increased credibility and recognition.</li> <li>• Possibility to engage long-term with partner organisations in a specific country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly, some negative perceptions that Belgium is not sufficiently following the international agenda.</li> <li>• Less flexibility to respond to new themes emerging from the interactions with partner countries.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations such as VVOB and Via Don Bosco are already specialised niche players and engage in long-term partnerships.</li> <li>• After some time, the expertise and credibility in specific areas should translate into access to high quality networks and partnerships and possibly new resources for scaling-up.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be more difficult to attract additional external funding if activities are not linked to the post-2015 agenda.</li> <li>• This approach demands long-term engagement in themes. New political leadership might feel pressure to readjust to the post-2015 framework after some time and let go the idea of specialisation.</li> </ul>

# Situation des effectifs.

Filles	Garçons	Effectifs
32	21	53
27	21	48
16	11	27
19	18	37
12	17	29
10	12	22
116	100	216

## III Conjugaison

« je souffre de cette affreuse maladie »  
les infinitifs: souffre → souffrir → 3e  
répond → répondre → 3e

Ces verbes sont conjugués au présent de l'indicatif.  
Alors: « je souffrais de cette

maladie, liée à la conson

le cholera, la dracuncu

est un fléau parce qu'il touc

de la maladie sont: de  
sont blanc.





# 6. Annexes

## 6.1. List of interviewees and events attended

- EDUCAID meeting, working group on basic education, Brussels, 8 November 2012
- Brian Tomlinson, consultant, Aidwatch, Canada (via Skype), 9 November 2012
- Dennis Sinyolo, co-ordinator in EI's Education and Employment Unit, Education International (EI), Brussels, 8 November 2012
- World Teacher's Day Conference, Belgian Technical Cooperation, Brussels, 11 October 2012
- Wendy Braeken, Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), Brussels, 21 November 2012
- Global EFA Meeting (GEM), a global meeting to critically assess progress towards EFA based on the 2012 Global Monitoring Report and regional and national reports, Paris, France, 22 November 2012
- Kwame Akyeampong, Senior Policy Analyst UNESCO, Paris, France, 22 November 2012
- Elise Legault, Programme Specialist (education finance) at UNESCO Statistics, UNESCO Canada (via Skype), 6 December 2012
- Walter Dhondt, former educational advisor BTC and AGCD-ABOS (ex-DGD), Ghent, 26 November 2012
- Niels De Block, Education Advisor BTC Belgium, Leuven, 30 November 2012
- Antoon Van Broeckhoven, Statistical Unit, DGD, Belgium (technical questions about DGD database), 6-8 February 2013
- Jan Deceuster, Education Advisor, BTC Uganda (via Skype), 3 December 2012
- Karen Mundy, Associate Dean-Research and Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Canada (via Skype), 13 December 2012
- Hans De Greve, medewerker Beleidsbeïnvloeding Plan Belgium, Brussels, 31 January 2013
- EDUCAID meeting, working group on basic education and TVET, 18 February 2013

## 6.2. List of References

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