Building education systems through projectized assistance

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Background

- Projects remain a means for supporting the right to education in fragile situations

- They may have been in place before the crisis erupted

- They often are a very quick way of ensuring additional funding on the ground

- They can be a technical response to particular political objectives

This presentation

- Experience of one organization in

- Six countries

- In two continents

- Over at least two decades

- With one donor--USAID

Based on research and a paper by Dr. Felix Alvarado

Purposes

- To share observations

- To share lessons learned

- To show advantages and challenges inherent in a project-based approach

- To learn from others

. . . In an attempt to improve education on the ground through appropriate funding mechanisms

The six countries

- El Salvador (1994)

- Guatemala (1974)

- Honduras (early1980s – education 1986)

- Nicaragua (1993)

- Ethiopia (1995)

- Namibia (2000)

El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia have all experienced internal conflict; Honduras and, to a certain extent, Ethiopia, regional conflict; Namibia conflict from an external force; Honduras suffered more than the rest of the Central American countries from Hurricane Mitch in 1998; and Ethiopia frequently experiences very severe drought

Project aid can be effective when:

- There is strong and consistent MOE leadership (El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia)

- Education is part of the long-term discussion about and plan for national development (El Salvador, Ethiopia)

- There is good multi-stakeholder dialogue based on education data and information (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Namibia)

- Project objectives are carefully aligned (and may need to be re-aligned) with MOE and national objectives (El Salvador, Ethiopia, Namibia)

Project aid can be effective when:

- The overarching objective is to help build an education system whether from the "center" (El Salvador) or from the "bottom up" (Honduras, Nicaragua, Ethiopia)

- There is a need for initial coordination and "institutional memory" to be '"carried" by an external partner for some period of time (Guatemala, Nicaragua)

- Projects provide a "protected" environment for much needed innovations to grow that would not survive otherwise

- Projects enable the quick injection of important technical expertise in a timely fashion

Challenges presented by project approach:

- May not sufficiently acknowledge the national agenda or the necessity of allowing this to be set—in spite of project timelines

- Assistance may be too closely tied to political objectives of the country providing the support

- Funding may not be predictable

- Funding cycle may be very different from others in operation

The last two of these making a systemic approach to building an education system very difficult

Challenges presented by project approach:

- Lack of alignment means that countries do not always lead

- Continuity of policy and practice may rely on donor continuity

- Key projects may be re-oriented to short-term objectives and lose long-term direction

- Transaction costs

- Potential for duplication—wastage

- Scatter gram approach—lack of coherence

Additional roles of implementer

- Builder of bridges among multiple stakeholders

- Mediating role between different mechanisms of two governments

- Technical continuity over time and space

- "Bridge" from the donor across changes in national leadership

- Assistance with building trust relationships
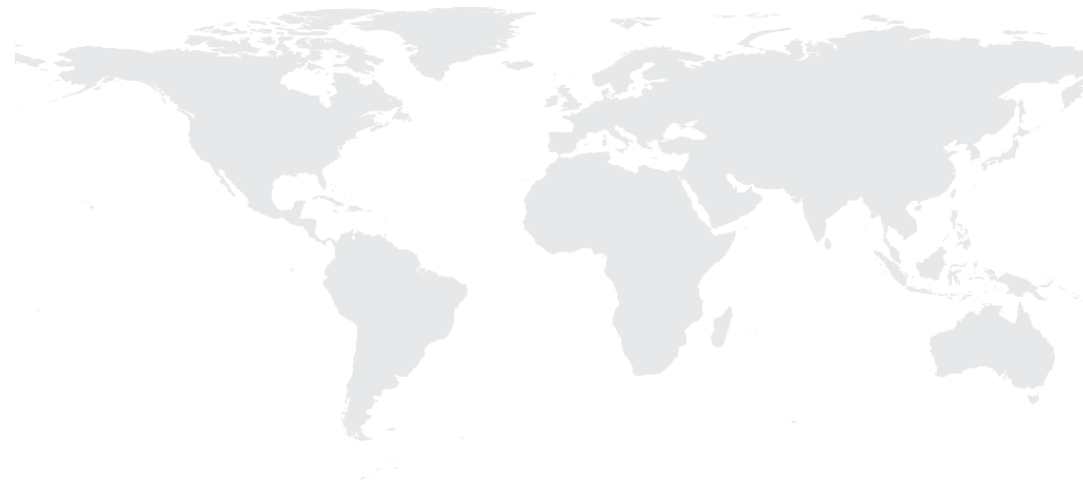
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