SUCCESS STORY

Complementary Education at 2006 ADEA Biennale

Nearly all countries in sub-Saharan Africa contain regions in which the gross enrollment rate is near 100 percent and the vast majority of the population is literate. However, other regions and populations within the same countries display dismal education indicators. Achieving Education for All (EFA) in Africa requires more effectively reaching the populations that are most underserved, including children in rural areas, children from poor families, and children of uneducated parents. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2) has spearheaded research into the complementary education movement, a promising model through which countries have cost-effectively increased access to, quality of, and learning outcomes from education in underserved communities. Community-based complementary education programs currently reach some 3.5 million otherwise underserved children in sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2006 Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Biennale was held in Libreville, Gabon from March 27 to April 1, 2006. At this venue, the EQUIP2 team led by Mr. Joseph DeStefano of the Center for Collaboration and the Future of Schooling (CCFS) and Dr. Audrey Moore of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) presented findings from and case studies on current research into complementary education in Africa and abroad. The goals of the presentation were to share new knowledge, engage a larger audience, and connect directly with Ministers of Education and members of the international development community around the role of complementary models in the development of effective schools around Africa. The EQUIP2 team also participated in discussions and attended other information sessions to gain feedback from, learn about new practices in, and promote the precepts of effective complementary education.

An audience of more than 150 people attended the EQUIP2 presentations on “Complementary Education Programs in ADEA Countries: Effective Schools for Disadvantaged and Underserved People,” including representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the Africa Union Commission, and USAID, as well as Ministers of Education from Swaziland and Mozambique. Immediately following the presentation, representatives from the World Bank and the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa contacted Mr. DeStefano and Dr. Moore to begin dialogues concerning the application of EQUIP2’s complementary education models in their programs.

The topic of complementary education framed much of the Effective Schools theme of the ADEA Biennale. The opening plenary comments referred to favorably to the impact and potential of complementary education, which remained a consistent discussion topic throughout the course of the meeting. The ADEA Biennale summary on Effective Schools included findings from EQUIP2’s research and emphasized the value of having a variety of educational approaches in order to more effectively reach underserved populations. The summary, which included commentary from funding agencies and African Ministries of Education, demonstrates how the idea of complementary education has been embraced as a successful approach with which to increase the overall effectiveness of education in Africa.

For more information on EQUIP2’s work in complementary education, please contact Joseph DeStefano at jdestefano@ccfschooling.org or Audrey Moore at amoore@aed.org.