



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILDHOOD  
JOURNEE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ENFANCE AFRICAINE  
INTERNATIONALER TAG DER AFRIKANISCHEN KINDHEIT  
INTERNATIONALE DAG VAN DE AFRIKAANSE JEUGD  
DIA INTERNACIONAL DE LA INFANCIA AFRICANA  
....and its YOUTH - IDAY - [www.1606.eu](http://www.1606.eu)

**FEBRUARY 2008**

## NEWSLETTER N°2

« *It takes six months to organise elections, ten years to achieve a functional market economy, but a generation to create a civil society. Yet, without civil society, there is no democracy.* (Ralf Dahrendorf) »

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### LATEST NEWS

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1. ***IDAY-international's meetings and activities - minutes available on the website of IDAY-international***
  - 5.-19. November: visit of Mr Schul to Burkina Faso, Togo and Mali to promote the construction of local groups
  - 21 December: meeting in Paris with UNESCO
  - 13. December to 13 January: visit of Ms Catherine Lievens to Senegal and Mali to promote the establishing of groups. 4 important points:
    - o Civil society organisations enthusiastic regarding IDAY's project
    - o Difficulties regarding the cooperation of the different organisations (personal interests hindering the collective projects)
    - o Statements from local authorities and civil society organisations regarding the counter-productive effects of foreign aid. The submitted sums are occasionally too large and the strategies fail to encourage collective work with other concerned bodies (civil society or government)
    - o Village of Magnabougou Coura in Mali : « *One talks about this day at the European Parliament, it should also be discussed in the village* ».
  - Approval and signing of statutes by notary. Publication in the near future.
  - Participation of Ms Valérie Dubois to the preparatory reunion of the Global Campaign for Education in November 2007 in Oslo, and to the General Assmebly of 21.-24. January 2008
  - 14 January 2008: Signing of a « Memorandum of Understanding » between the network of the Nigerian diaspora<sup>1</sup> and IDAY. (Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation Europe (NIDOE), for more information, see : [www.nidoeeurope.org](http://www.nidoeeurope.org) )
  - Participation of Mrs Codou Diaw, Executive Director of the Federation of African Women Federalists (FAWE [www.fawe.org](http://www.fawe.org)) to the Honorary Committee of IDAY and to the Seminary at the European Parliament on 12 June. NB: the scholarship of Ms Marième Diop, who

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<sup>1</sup> The IDAY representative to the World Assembly of the GCE received une marque d'interet pour joining IDAY on behalf of the coalition of the 400 Nigerian NGO's working with education. To be confirmed.

represented the African youth at a number of IDAY ceremonies in 2006, was granted by FAWE.

- IDAY-international is working on its website. All ideas and comments are welcomed

## **2. IDAY-national meetings and reunions - minutes available on the websites of the groups concerned**

- Structuring of IDAY-Luxembourg (7 organisations under the aegis of Unity Foundation). Contact with the Ministry regarding financing of a sensibilisation project. Setting the dates for IDAY activities 2008
- 21 December and 11 January: reunions of IDAY-France during which an effective structure was set and the activities of 2008 planned
- 22 December: General Assembly of IDAY-Benin permitting a refining of their goals. Official structuring and composition of the internal regulations. Conception of the IDAY-Benin brochures
- Advancement in the structuration of IDAY-Togo : territorial division and e-mail address
- 31 December: presentation of the project before civil society organisations in Mali
- 14 January: meeting of IDAY-Belgique
- 16 January: launching reunion of IDAY-Guinée with e-mail address.
- 17 January: meeting of IDAY-Mali
- 30 January: reception of a participation request from an organisation active in a rural area in Zimbabwe

## **3. Financial aspects**

IDAY-international, in collaboration with member organisations, will respond to a grant application to the European Commission in February. Meeting of dialogue to be held on 26 January in Luxemburg.

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## **AGENDA**

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### **1. IDAY – international :**

- 27 February until 10 March: Visit of Mr Schul to Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya
- 21.-27 April 2008: Global Action Week. Theme « Officials and journalists return to school! » see :

[http://www.campaignforeducation.org/action/2008/action\\_2008.html](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/action/2008/action_2008.html)

We encourage all groups to contact the partners of the GCE regarding eventual collaboration. The contact information of GCE members can be found at the following website: [http://www.campaignforeducation.org/about/about\\_member\\_list.html](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/about/about_member_list.html)

On 23 April, the GCE will attempt to enter the Guinness book of records by organising the largest class under one theme.

See [http://www.campaignforeducation.org/action/2008/action\\_2008.html](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/action/2008/action_2008.html)

- 12 June 2008: official ceremony of IDAY at the European Parliament. The programme may be consulted on the IDAY website.
- 13 June 2008: General Assembly of IDAY with one representative per group. The conditions of representation have been distributed per e-mail and are also available on our website.
- 9. - 20 June 2008: events of the International Day of the African Childhood in Europe and Africa, organised by IDAY members under the theme of universal primary education for all by 2015.

## **2. IDAY Groups :**

- 1 February: meeting IDAY – Belgium
- 2 February: meeting IDAY – Germany
- 2. - 27 February: a number of meetings scheduled; preparation of activities by IDAY – Cameroon
- 24 April: seminary IDAY – Belgium
- 31 May: conference in Paris under the theme of education and the Day of the African Childhood by IDAY - France
- 14 June: Activities by IDAY - France in Sarcelles, Day of the African Childhood
- IDAY - Central Africa: a number of meetings scheduled in Gabon, Tchad, Burundi, Congo Kinshasa and Congo Brazzaville (for further information, contact Mrs Gwet : [idayafrique\\_centrale@yahoo.fr](mailto:idayafrique_centrale@yahoo.fr))

### **Documents to be submitted by all groups as soon as possible:**

- Official notice of structure and functioning mechanisms (internal regulations)
- Group form (members having signed the Chart)
- Candidature form
- Minutes of the meeting where the representative was elected for the General Assembly on June 13
- Programme of activities in April (GCE) and June

**URGENT: creation of BLOGS or WEBSITES** of each group in order to render all documentation accessible (minutes of meetings, organisation documents, member lists...) The blogs or websites are indispensable for the creation of the network and the exchange of good practices. The websites/blogs will also enable contacts between European and African schools. The following links provide easy guidance to the setup of blogs (french version):

- <http://www.canalblog.com/public/>
- <http://www.over-blog.com/inscription-blog.html>
- <https://www.blogger.com/start>

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### 3. DOCUMENTATION AND LINKS

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- Website regarding the advancement of the Millenium Goals (French/Dutch version only): <http://www.ipsnouvelles.be/deadline2015.php?ts=1&lang=fr>
- Report of Pôle de Dakar on Education for All «Dakar + 7 Report - Top priority for integrated sector-wide policies » (English vesion) <http://www.poledakar.org/spip.php?rubrique39>
- A network of civil society information d'information société civile ACP – EU : <http://acp-eu.euforic.org/civsoc/>

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### 4. REFLECTIONS

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#### **AFRICA: EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION !**

*Text wrote by M. Schul, IDAY-international's Coordinator*

Al Gore's campaign against global warming succeeded in mobilizing the international community - and rightly so - to get the authorities to take measures to reduce greenhouse gazes. An equally preoccupying and perhaps more urgent humanitarian problem would seem to deserve similar treatment: give 70 million African illiterate youngsters access to basic education by 2015, as promised. They represent 40% of the upcoming generation in Africa and half of the illiterate youngsters in the world and unless their number is rapidly and significantly reduced, this soar wound in humanity's flank may become ever more difficult to heal.

The issue is not new and laudable efforts have raised education budgets in Africa by 5% and primary school entrances by 36%. Five more African countries are now said to have reached gender parity in primary schools. However, 2/3 of the 25 countries in the world that remain far from reaching Education for All (EFA) and the bulk of the 58 countries that are today identified as unlikely to reach that goal by 2015 are African. Most preoccupying: qualitative standards remain dreadfully low. To achieve quantitative goals, teachers' training is shortened, the number of pupils per school class and per school book explode. In Africa, only 63% of the primary school students reach the last year - compared to 80% in the rest of the world - and many who do, can often barely read and write: even less make it into secondary education.

As a result, youth and adult illiteracy in Africa is rising, contrary to a reduction or stagnation observed on other continents. Experts agree that drastic measures are needed if Africa is to avoid once more lagging vastly behind the rest of the world on such a fundamental objective as the education of its children.

What are the consequences? First, Africa would continue to trail behind the other continents in terms of economic wellbeing. Education is a precondition of sustainable economic growth. Without education, people cannot participate in the fundamental economic choices of their country. The globalisation of the world economy has increased general welfare, but it has benefited primarily the skilled manpower; unskilled workers are the victim of tougher competition, have greater difficulties finding jobs and, when they do, barely earn enough to feed their families. Furthermore, the coexistence of "extreme prosperity (and) extreme poverty is not good for any globalization system" declared Mrs. Hauwa Ibrahim, Sakharov Price 2005. It threatens our open society.

Similar situations are found elsewhere in the world, but the situation in Africa is particularly preoccupying because of the concentration of uneducated poor and because climate change are projected to impair most severely its future productive capacity. No comfort can be taken from the recent faster economic growth observed in Africa. It has been achieved largely through rapid depletion of Africa's most valuable assets: its natural resources that must also serve future generations while climate change is expected to handicap most severely its agricultural productive capacity. African population of 700 million today is projected to exceed 2 billion before the end of the century. Raising rapidly the education levels of the African population would not only allow a greater part to benefit from the current income growth, but, since educated women are known to have a more balanced family planning, it would also avoid an unwanted demographic explosion.

Secondly, generalised low levels of education leads to intolerable human situations. Some parents, particularly the illiterate ones, take their children out of school to cultivate the family farm. At times it is the teacher himself who does so for his own fields to make a more decent living (teachers in the village of Hawe (Togo) are paid by the local villagers who built a community school to give a proper education to their children; they earn on average 7.5€/month). Furthermore, millions – their exact numbers are unknown because most of them are not registered - of abandoned children live in the streets, or are enslaved as household children, become soldier children, or disappear in the children trade, or are killed, maimed or regarded as outcasts because of some misfortune befalling their family or community totally beyond their control: the so-called “witch” children. How many girls will continue to be forced into marriage even before ending school? Some of these heart-breaking situations exist in much of the Third world, but nowhere to the extent observed in Africa. As long as it persists, it will tarnish Africa's image.

Thirdly, the lack of education strains foreign aid efficiency. Evaluations suggest that aid does not *per se* contribute to economic development. Aid will only help people who develop themselves and economists show that only the active participation of the population in long term economic decisions can bring about sustainable development. It remains therefore surprising that foreign aid would be granted to countries that do not give top priority to the education of their population. Better education is also fundamental to improved health, for instance. Patients who can read make a better use of their prescription. A survey found that after 10 years of campaigning against AIDS, infection rates dropped by 20% among uneducated rural women, by 50% among those with primary education and by 85% among those with secondary education.

This is not to argue against financing health care : sick children, parents or teachers will reduce school attendance. With, however, on average, public expenditures on health consuming 20% of African government budgets while education receiving only 5%, the impression is that unless investments in education are boosted, the health bill is likely to remain a bottomless pit.

What is to be done? First, whatever foreign aid is available, needs to be better managed. Donors need to simplify disbursement procedures (partly achieved with a growing share being channelled through budgetary allocations - 40% of the coming EU aid programme). Local governance needs to be improved : only 20 to 40% of official foreign aid allocated to education is actually reaching its targets.

Secondly, amounts of aid to education in Africa needs to be increased : in fact it has been dropping since 2005. Youth in Africa represents more than half the population and poor countries cannot finance the education requirements without the support of foreign grants. In Malawi, for instance, one of the better performing African countries in terms of education, the number of primary teachers need to be more than trebled to give all Malawian 6 to 12 year old a full cycle of quality primary education. Clearly, the Malawian budget cannot finance this extra cost on its own resources at this stage.

Assuming that the cost of primary education is 200€/year and literacy training 100€/year, the amount of extra aid needed totals about 9 billion € (14 billion US\$) per year over the next 6 years. This is well within reach of the international donor community.

Improve aid efficiency remains, however, crucial even if only because African governments will need to cover progressively a growing share of the costs of basic education in order to free foreign resources to pay for rapidly surging costs in secondary and university education. This can only be achieved by empowering the local civil society, in this case, local organisations that manage education projects. The Commonwealth Education Fund concludes its 5-year evaluation by recommending that 3% of aid volume should be reserved to reinforce local non-governmental organisations working in education. Independent evaluation units of governmental education programmes, under control of those associations must be established in all African countries. UNESCO has together with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) started to set up a network of such organisations. In some countries, they would benefit from the participation of smaller grass-root organisations that are closer to realities and more independent.

IDAY was created to raise the profile of these small local organisations carrying out education projects. IDAY is an international network of these organisations both from donor and from recipient countries in Africa. In the donor countries, they are issued mainly from the African diaspora. By organising together the international day of the African youth in Europe as well as in Africa around the theme of the need for basic education for all in Africa, stronger media and political clout will be achieved to get donor and recipient countries to pay greater attention to the critical need for raising rapidly education levels in Africa. Unless donor assistance for this sort of campaign is not increased significantly, it is unlikely to achieve soon its pan African and pan European dimension needed to reach the sort of impact that Al Gore obtained against global warming.

Jean-Jacques Schul et Catherine Lievens  
IDAY-International.