Wambui Gathenya
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BREAKING BOUNDARIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL: NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INNOVATIONS IN KENYA

In the keynote address, I hope that my input will provide useful insight into how policy-based research feeds back into national education policy reform and relevant programme implementation. I plan to highlight the successes and tensions in non-conventional attempts to build bridges between research, policy and practice and between the formal and non-formal education (NFE) sectors, establishing new linkages in environments that range from keen interest to forge stronger partnerships to mutual suspicions about the key reform players' intentions. Besides contemporary research, the presentation draws practical examples from ongoing education reforms in Kenya within national strategic plans to realize the goals of "Education for All" (EFA) by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals, and Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender parity by 2005. The focus is on major the NFE delivery approaches or " the third channel" in attempts to reach the out-of-school children, the hard-to-reach and other children in extremely difficult circumstances. Of interest are the non-conventional, mandated or voluntary organizational partnerships and related transformations in the attempts to "mainstream" the NFE community-based and other initiatives while "flexing" the formal school model and without compromising quality, equity and relevance. I hope to share Kenya's experience of the "Free" Primary Education initiative introduced in January 2003 and that brought back 1.3 million out-of-school children into the school system within the first two months of the reform. Kenya's experience is being cited globally as a success story. My aim is to highlight some of the triumphs and challenges in implementing the programme. Mention is made of emerging flexible school models including the mobile, the shepherd (shift system) and the feeder/cluster school models.

Wambui Gathenya works with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Kenya. She is currently a Senior Assistant Director of Education and Kenya's National Coordinator for Non-Formal and Continuing Education, and the Education of the children from the nomadic pastoral communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) and children living/working on the streets and in the informal urban settlements ("slums"). She is also in charge of the Gender desk in the same Ministry where she has worked in various capacities for nearly three decades. Current duties involve working with different Government, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations, and Community/Faith-based organizations, all engaged in provision of basic education through formal and non-formal delivery channels. Within and outside the Ministry, Wambui is currently involved in the development of a national NFE Curriculum and Database, Policy Guidelines on NFE, Open learning and Distance Education, and the education of children engaged in child labour and of orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC), as well as implementation of the Children's Act (2001)'s stipulations related to the education of all children. In 2003, she obtained a PhD degree in Education Administration (theory and policy) from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto (Canada). Other academic qualifications include, a M.Ed. (1993) from the University of Bristol (UK), a P.G.D.E.A. (1985) from the University of Leeds (UK), and a B.Ed (1976) from the University of Nairobi (Kenya). Official educational/training tours include, the US, South Africa, China and Botswana   Twice a Commonwealth Scholar (Britain (1991-92) and Canada (1997-2003)); British Technical Cooperation Award (1984-85); Recipient of the University of Toronto Alumni/Gordon Cressy Award (2003), OISE/University of Toronto Dean's Commendation Award (2001) and OISE/University of Toronto Special Award for Most Innovative Project Proposal in the Community Teaching Project (2000).