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# When Governments get Creative: Adult Literacy in Senegal. Education Notes.

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# Education NOTES



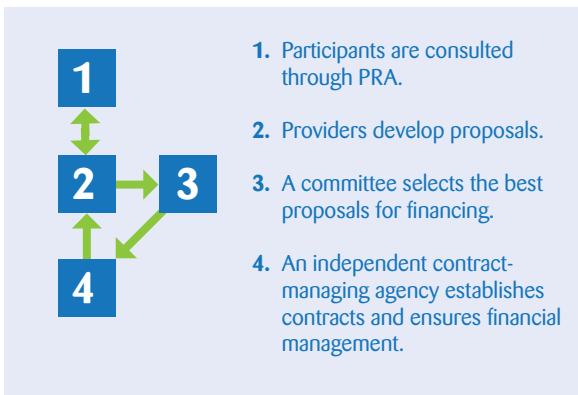
## When Governments Get Creative: Adult Literacy in Senegal

The Education for All (EFA) goal of increasing adult literacy by 50 percent reflects two simple facts: first, primary school attendance has positive effects, including better family health and increased productivity; and second, when parents learn to read, more children go to school. So why haven't more countries and donors supported adult literacy programs as a routine part of their EFA planning? One reason is that government programs tend to be too expensive, with weak content and high drop-out rates. [Despite these constraints, Senegal appears to have found a way to implement a successful adult literacy program.](#)

In 1993, Senegal established a new policy for literacy programs based on partnership between civil society and the state:

- The state ensures policy leadership, overall coordination, monitoring and evaluation;
- The providers (civil society organizations, such as non-profits, village associations, and language associations) implement local literacy activities;
- An independent contract-managing agency handles contracts and rapid transfer of funds to providers.

The learners are the most important actor in the partnership approach. They are actively involved in the design of the literacy course through the providers' use of participatory rural appraisal methods (PRA). An independent committee evaluates the providers' proposals and selects the best ones for financing. The process of selecting proposals is depicted in the diagram below:



In step 1, the potential provider, using PRA methods, establishes a learning plan based on local needs and demand. In step 2, the provider develops a proposal for a literacy program covering ten to twenty villages. In step 3, a committee selects the best proposals. In step 4, the contract-managing agency establishes contracts with the selected providers and trains them in financial management. Upon the completion of step 4, the selected providers conduct literacy courses in the concerned villages. The contract-managing agency ensures financial monitoring of the providers' activities

and the government's basic education division provides technical monitoring and evaluation.

Senegal's main financial partners were the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

## Achievements

The World Bank financed project achieved the following results, which were similar to those achieved by CIDA:

- About 190,000 participants, of which 87 % were women, enrolled in literacy classes over a five-year period;
- Capacity in government and civil society organizations improved consistently;
- The dropout rate averaged 15 % (much lower than for most adult literacy programs);
- Most participants achieved learning mastery levels for reading (although not for math).

The results of the literacy training exceeded target levels. Learning outcomes systematically improved as a result of two factors:

- Providers became more experienced;
- Research led to improved procedures.

The quantitative improvement is depicted in the table below (indicating learning mastery by participants over the period 1997-2000):

Subjects	1997	1998	1999	2000
Reading	56%	54%	57%	75%
Writing	28%	34%	44%	63%
Math	6%	19%	29%	44%

The improved learning results are mainly due to the establishment of a new type of course, which aimed at integrating literacy and different poverty alleviating activities. The unit cost for one enrollee in an inte-

## LITERACY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

**Literacy and post literacy integration:** Post literacy and income-generating activities are planned and implemented at the same time as literacy activities.

Post-literacy activities aim to ensure the sustainability of participants' new skills, in part through a 'relay person' trained to monitor learning when the provider organization ceases its intervention.

**Policy integration:** The literacy courses take into account local development plans and coordinate actions with other projects. The courses complement and strengthen ongoing local development activities.

**Integration with village women's associations:** The literacy courses build the capacity of local village women's association leaders; help the association to obtain legal status; and assist with connections to other organizations and development projects. The literacy courses also strengthen income-generating activities of the women's association.

grated program is US\$50, which corresponds roughly to the cost of one year of primary schooling.

According to evaluations conducted, the integrated program has obtained greater impact than other literacy approaches tested. The use of a 'relay person' has enabled learning activities to continue throughout the year, even during the rainy season when traditionally all literacy activities cease because the provider cannot access the village and the villagers are involved in agricultural production.

## Challenges

The emergence of new providers in response to the program was a key marker of success, but it outpaced the ability of the system to effectively monitor and evaluate

the literacy programs offered. Weak monitoring and evaluation contributed to the following shortcomings:

- Re-financing of low-quality providers;
- Lack of information about impact.

As a result of the above problems, some of the literacy courses did not provide adequate learning for the participants.

## Lessons Learned

- Political support is needed to implement the partnership approach. The government should guarantee transparency, grassroots involvement, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems;
- Village associations and participants must be involved during all phases of planning and implementation to ensure that the program is not provider-driven;
- Provider associations must ensure fairness in selection and in conflict resolution;
- An independent contract-managing agency can ensure timely transfer of funds;
- Decentralized monitoring and evaluation are key to high-quality project performance;
- Poor implementation performance or misuse of funds must be linked to a system of sanctions, rigorously implemented;
- Results improve when literacy training is linked to other development activities;
- Peer tutoring and group-work methods ensure better and more rapid acquisition of reading and writing skills.

# Education in Senegal

## Socio-Economic Indicators:

Population (millions)	10 (2002)
GNP per capita	US\$ 470 (2002)
IDA/IBRD	IDA/IBRD
PRSP	Yes
HIPC	Yes

## Education Indicators:

Adult illiteracy rate (population 15 and older)	61% (2002)
Primary gross enrollment rate	75% (2002)
Primary completion rate	41% (2000)
Secondary gross enrollment rate	17% (1998)
Tertiary gross enrollment rate	4% (1998)
Total education spending as % of GDP	3% (2000)

**This note series is intended to summarize lessons learned and key policy findings on the World Bank's work in education. The views expressed in these notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank. For additional copies of Education Notes, please contact the Education Advisory Service by email at [eservice@worldbank.org](mailto:eservice@worldbank.org) or visit the web site: <http://www.worldbank.org/education/>**

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