



**Association for the Development of Education in Africa**

**Biennale on Education in Africa  
(Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006)**

**Effective ECD Programs that can be scaled up**

**Parallel Session C-1  
Getting Schools Ready  
for the Child**

---

**From the Bisongo to the Satellite School, a response  
to the needs of integrated development of children  
in Burkina Faso**

---

**Working Document  
Draft  
PLEASE DO NOT DISSEMINATE**

**DOC C-1.2**

• Original version in french •

This document was prepared by ADEA for its Biennial Meeting (Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006). The views and opinions expressed in this volume are those of the authors and should not be attributed to ADEA, to its members or affiliated organizations or to any individual acting on behalf of ADEA.

The document is a working document still in the stages of production. It has been prepared to serve as a basis for discussions at the ADEA Biennial Meeting and should not be disseminated for other purposes at this stage.

© Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) – 2006

**Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)**

International Institute for Educational Planning

7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix

75116 Paris, France

Tel.: +33(0)1 45 03 77 57

Fax: +33(0)1 45 03 39 65

adea@iiep.unesco.org

web site: [www.ADEAnet.org](http://www.ADEAnet.org)

## THEME

### *From the Bisongo to the Satellite School, a response to the needs of Integrated Development of Children in Burkina Faso*

## ABSTRACT

The Bisongo and the Satellite School are educational innovations created in 1995 in response to the challenges of Education For All in Burkina Faso. The Bisongo is a village educational setup for the integrated development of early childhood. The introduction of the Bisongo is an accelerated strategy for the education of the girl-child, because providing care for little children gives their elder sisters the time to go to School. The Satellite School is a three-class school established within a community not having a traditional school. It is situated in a village of more than 3 km from a traditional primary School and enrolls children from 7 – 9 years of whom, at least, 50% are girls. The Satellite School is a positive complementary educational alternative enabling a village without a School to have a three-class School attached to a traditional mother school which is often more than 5 km away. One of the cultural and psycho-pedagogical particularities of the Satellite School is the use of the child's mother tongue as the medium of instruction right from the first year such that it becomes complementary, on equal footing, to French. Due to the advent of the satellite School and the Bisongo the enjoyment of the rights of thousands of Burkinabe children, particularly girls, was achieved since 1995. It is also an appropriate and adequate response to community involvement in the management and running of the School, a sine qua condition for their sustainability. Presently, there are 291 satellite Schools with a total number of 30,063 children (15,906 boys and 14,157 girls). In addition to this dimension of access, emphasis must be laid on the contribution of the Satellite School to the reduction of the disparity between boys and girls. The success of the Satellite Schools places them within a scaling up process in Burkina Faso, hence the present consideration given to EFA planning (PDDEB).

## THEME

### *From the Bisongo to the Satellite School, a response to the needs of Integrated Development of Children in Burkina Faso.*

#### Introduction

At the time we met at Jomtian in 1990 for the first World Conference on Education For All (EFA), the Burkina Faso Educational System was beset with several obstacles, of which the most worrying are: low school attendance, low level of quality indicators and inadequate management schemes. In response to these concerns, which are always made known during important meetings held in the country, three alternative formulas were created and implemented. They are the Bisongo, the Satellite schools and the Non-formal Basic Educational Centres to somehow check the low enrolment and to ensure the general development of the educational system. For the purpose of this exposé, we will concentrate more on the satellite schools as structures for the promotion and acceleration of EFA.

This paper will cover the following:

1. Context and Justification
2. Experience of the Bisongo and the Satellite Schools
3. The way forward.

#### I. Background and Justification

The Satellite Schools and the Bisongo were created through the co-operation between UNICEF, the government of Burkina Faso and other partners in a particular context marked by major obstacles observed in terms of access, quality as well as management capacity of the educational system. In fact, in 1990, more than 70% of children of school going age were not attending school in Burkina Faso. The TBS was 28.9% of which 22% were girls. Moreover one notes the huge disparities between regions and sex. Indeed, in 1992/1993 whilst a Province like Gnagna, situated in the east of the country, recorded 8.5% of TBS, Kadiogo with Ouagadougou as the provincial capital was rated first with a TBS of 82.4%. The number of girls represented 38% of the figure in the whole country with differences between rural and urban areas: 28 to 45%. The rate of repetitions and drop out was particularly high: 1.09% in class1 (CP1) and 26.73% in class 4 (CE2). In short, besides the low enrolment is the poor internal efficiency. In terms of early childhood development, until 1997 the proportion of children enrolled was less than 1%. In 2004, the rate of pre-school enrolment was estimated at 1.17%. The state, which is the main provider of education is itself saddled with lack of resources, despite a large part of its budget allocated to the sector.

It is in this unfavourable pre-school and school environment that the recommendations of the Jomtier Conference on the diversification of the alternative formulas were made by the National Conference on Education (NCE: 1994). Thus, the political authorities on the

eve of the devaluation of the CFA franc (1994), put on the agenda the issue of human resource development. A series of innovations were since then undertaken, of which among others were Multigrade Classes (MGC) Double Stream Classes (DSC), Non Formal Basic Education Centres (NFBEC), Satellite Schools (SS), the Bisongo etc.

Considering, for this biennial event, only the last two, that is to say, the satellite schools and the Bisongo, Burkina Faso has thus just invented two of the best strategies of the EFA, which is now the pride of the whole of the educational community. It must however be noted that considering all the segments of population marginalized by the educational system, the Non-Formal Basic Educational Centres were thought of and established to solve the problems of prevocational education of adolescents who have dropped out or have never attended school.

### 1.1 The Bisongo

“Bisongo is a familiar village setting for children between the ages of 3-6 years to ensure their protection, security, intellectual development whilst allowing their mothers to attend to their daily activities and their sisters to go to school. Bisongo also aims at better preparing that child for life and ensuring normal education for him/her”<sup>1</sup>

Bisongo, in the local mooré language literally means “a child who feels fine” as if to more properly reflect the entire programme that is run there: an integrated approach to the development of the little child.

As a matter of fact, it is a formula adopted in order to ensure an integrated management of early childhood (3-6 years). So the Bisongo aims at giving these children the minimum package of integrated services in health/nutrition, water/hygiene/sanitation, psychomotive, cognitive and affective awareness for their survival, growth and harmonious development. The Bisongo programme focuses on the child, his rights, concerns and identity. The training there is ensured by «aunties» or «uncles» (only one is left now) who are people from the village community that benefits from the Bisongo.

Generally, the Bisongo is built near existing formal and non-formal educational structures (Traditional Schools, Satellite Schools, NFBEC etc) with the view to progressively establishing an educational continuum. It is established upon request and with the participation of the communities which also contribute to the running and management, through the “aunties”, the Managements Committees (MANCOM) and the Associations of Mother-Educationists (AME).

Presently, there are 33 Bisongos sited close to Satellite Schools, Traditional school or NFBEC with a total of 2,418 children of which 1,269 are girls (representing 52% of the number).

---

<sup>1</sup> YARO, Y (2005): The impact of burkinabe early childhood management initiatives on education and the protection of girls in Burkina Faso: the case of the Bisongos, FASA/CEFODES.

## 1.2 The Satellite Schools

A Satellite school is a three-class School established in a community without a Traditional School. It is situated in a village of more than 3km from a Traditional Primary School (Mother School) and enrolls children from 7-9 years of whom at least 50% are girls.

Its objectives are:

- To facilitate access to School by children in rural Areas
- To increase enrolment rate of girls.
- To ensure the security of children (especially girls) by reducing the distance between the school and their homes.
- To culturally keep pupils close to their locality

The establishment and running of the satellite school strongly depends on the participation of the community as expressed by the request for the satellite school. This request is further expressed by the establishment of the MANCOM and the AME.

At the linguistic and socio-cultural level, the Satellite schools enabled the creation of a certain cultural and affective symbiosis between the community and the schools through the use of national languages and the consideration given to the socio-cultural values of the locality. In fact, in the first year of the satellite school, the pupils start learning in the local language with the progressive introduction of French from the second year. This symbiosis is reinforced by the formation and regular provision of refresher courses for teachers and tutors as well as the endowment of the pupils and their teachers with adequate school and teaching material.

At the socio-economic level, the content of the education given in these schools depends on the socio-professional and economic realities of the locality, and this makes the satellite school an establishment that is more responsive to the concerns of the underprivileged rural communities.

Community participation, at the time of planning, construction, operation, management as well as at the follow-up/assessment stage of the satellite school, ensures actual ownership by the communities and a guarantee for the sustainability of these educational structures.

Finally, the Satellite Schools promote equality opportunity for boys as well as for girls in terms of access, progression and success at school. That is why at the time of enrolment in the first year, it is required that as much as possible 50% should be girls and 50% boys.

In terms of pedagogical approach, the Satellite Schools practise transfer bilingualism, which is not the case in the traditional schools. The commencement of learning in the national language has a double advantage: on the one hand, it facilitates acquisition by the children and on the other hand, makes them more confident. The transition to French is done in a flexible and progressive manner. This shows the school is prepared to receive the child as he is.

To date, there are 291 Satellite Schools with a total population of 30,063 pupils, of whom 15,906 are boys and 14,157 girls.

## **II. Impact of the Satellite Schools, in terms of accessibility, progression, completion and relevance of the education provided.**

The Satellite Schools are based on 2 common fundamental principles: integration of educational structures into the locality and the fight against all types of disparities, in conformity with the rights approach. A summary of the impact today centres around the following points:

- access by the majority of under-privileged children, especially girls, to quality education: 80.9% of parents interviewed confirmed having the same considerations for boys as for girls, which indicates a great change of mentality not only in the enrolment of girls, but also in allowing them to complete their studies<sup>2</sup>;
- reduction of distances that children are made to cover daily;
- providing greater security for children on the way to school, thanks to the proximity of the school. That encourages parents to enrol and keep their children in school, particularly the girls;
- acceleration of the attainment of the objective of boys/girls parity in enrolment. Most Satellite Schools have achieved that;
- providing greater empowerment of the communities through their grass-root structures such as the MANCOM and AME. Through these structures the community contributes to and takes ownership of the Satellite School.
- acceptance of bilingualism by a majority of the stakeholders in view of the comparative advantages highlighted by numerous studies undertaken.
- high interest in these structures reflected by increasing numbers in enrolment.
- provision of quality education to under-privileged communities in rural areas.

## **III. The way forward**

The way forward for the two innovations is in two important directions:

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 72

- the passage from the concept of Satellite School to that of a local bilingual school where pupils will also be kept till the 6<sup>th</sup> year (CM2) of Primary education.
- scaling up Bisongo, thanks to the implementation of the PNDIPE being adopted by the government.

## CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding their modest contribution to the national educational system, the Satellite Schools and the Bisongos have ended up demonstrating their place within the national educational system in terms of communal participation, inter-sector participation in the funding of education through endogenous resources and quality improvement. Aiming at integration within the locality, they are the real instruments of educational democratisation in the service of EFA and especially of EFA/Girls within the framework of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).