



PSIPSE East Africa Regional Convening Synthesis

March 24-26, 2014 | Best Western Premier Hotel| Nairobi, Kenya

The aim of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) is to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development in selected countries. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, with grants awarded to innovations that can help inform the imminent expansion and transformation of secondary education. PSIPSE seeks to increase the knowledge base in this area, and draw out and apply important lessons which can inform programming and policy making. Results for Development Institute (R4D) serves as the Learning Partner for PSIPSE, and collaborates closely with a regional partner in each of the three regions where the donors' grantees are based.

On March 24-26, 2014, R4D and the Center for Social Sector, Education, and Policy Analysis (CSSEPA, the East Africa regional partner) brought together stakeholders engaged in the secondary education space in East Africa in order to share knowledge and experiences, discuss best practices, and encourage peer-to-peer collaboration.

Overview

The convening had four stated goals:

- i. Share information, results, and lessons in innovation in secondary education in the countries of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC.
- ii. Explore possible solutions for addressing challenges and constraints in this space.
- iii. Identify areas of collaboration among PSIPSE projects in East Africa, and support peer-to-peer networking, particularly across key thematic areas.
- iv. Provide PSIPSE projects with targeted support and assistance around technical areas such as monitoring and evaluation and scale up.

The event spanned two and a half days, with a World Café event, four presentations, seven panel sessions, and three informal networking opportunities. The first and last day were designed for the internal PSIPSE community (PSIPSE-supported projects, donors, and learning partners) while the second day was for a larger audience of the PSIPSE community, local and regional innovators, academics, and representatives of the ministries of secondary education in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The first and last days provided PSIPSE-supported projects an opportunity to share their own work, learn about other projects' work, identify areas for internal project improvement and future collaboration between projects, and learn about donor learning goals through a World Café exchange, project-led panel sessions, and small break-out session. The second day focused on country- and regional-level priorities in secondary education and how individual organizations can maximize their project impact through policy influence and scale-up.

Overarching Themes

Over the course of the event, several common themes revolving around project strengthening and sustainability, as well as improvement of the larger secondary education sector, emerged. The following section outlines major takeaways from panels, presentations, and participant discussion.

1. East Africa's drive for economic growth and global participation, coupled with demographic pressures of youth bulge and underemployment have increased the importance of secondary education across the region.

- The international community has largely overlooked secondary education, instead focusing on primary and tertiary education. However, secondary education is the level at which individuals are entering the workforce. By better understanding how we can improve the access, quality, and relevance of secondary education, we can positively contribute to regional well-being, improved health outcomes, social equality and responsibility, environmental stewardship and economic growth.
- The diverse members of the PSIPSE community (project implementers, researchers, donors, and learning partners) are responding to these issues within secondary education. By creating a community of innovators, PSIPSE hopes to catalyze change in approaches to secondary education in the larger East Africa region.
- Many challenges lie ahead. Both non-governmental and governmental participants expressed challenges with access to teacher training, provision of teaching and learning materials, availability of qualified science and mathematics teachers, inclusion and mainstreaming of students with disabilities, and teacher strikes. Collective ownership from implementers, policymakers, and community-level stakeholders is essential to achieving project success.

2. To achieve impact, organizations must work with communities at the grassroots level. Engagement of community stakeholders is crucial to ensuring success of a project. Ultimately, local ownership is one of, if not the, largest factor in determining program longevity and sustainability.

- Within communities, local leaders act as gatekeepers. By involving community leaders and chiefs in planning, they become a part of, support, and have ownership of the education project.
- In order to engage community stakeholders, projects often draw on partnerships with community-based partners. It is a challenge to know whether or not community-based partners are credible and are able to deliver on project implementation. Community-based organizations are often internally-focused and may need external capacity building measures. Planning for these capacity-building measures should be anticipated at the outset of the project.
- It is important to understand how to most accurately measure community-level attitudes, especially given that community engagement is an integral part of project success. Some projects, like Cordaid, have experienced such high rates of community-level satisfaction that they question the validity of their measurement.

3. Mentorship and experiential training hold the potential for low-cost, high-impact programming for both secondary school-aged children and secondary school teachers.

- Managing expectations of youth participants or trainees can be a big challenge for programs. It is important to address the goals of the mentorship and/or training exercise at the outset with both the youth and the trainers, and indeed, recognize that both parties may be able to learn from each other's experiences.
- When establishing training sessions, projects should begin with a survey of local market demand. Topics for training must be relevant and desired by youth and teachers. Trainings must take in account local context and community needs (apprenticeship pairing with local businesses, timing of agricultural seasons, etc.).
- Opinion is divided on whether or not trainings should be incentivized (monetarily or otherwise). On one hand, monetary incentives can offset the opportunity costs of attending the training and can show appreciation for attendance, while other organizations believe that new knowledge gained is sufficient for incentivizing participation in trainings.
- Although mentoring is a core component of many PSIPSE-funded projects, it is difficult to ascertain the impact of mentoring, as it is almost always used in tandem with other project approaches. More work needs to be done to understand the impact of mentorship in education programming.

- Because teenage girls face gender-specific barriers to education, many programs focus solely on mentorship for girls. However, many programs expressed concern that teenage boys are also being left behind and not enough is being done to engage them in education and training.

4. Girls not only face particular challenges in access, but also in completing and succeeding at the secondary level. Programs committed to promoting secondary education for girls must be carefully designed to account for the many financial, social, and cultural barriers girls encounter.

- Key strategies for promoting improved educational outcomes among girls at the secondary level include:
 - Assurance of opportunities for further studies and/or employment after school
 - Creating friendly school environments: well-oriented teachers, non-violent/abusive environment
 - Addressing social practices that negatively impact on girls' education such as early marriage, household chores, gender stereotypes, etc.
 - Increasing the presence of role models and mentors girls can look up to
 - Community-based affirmative action to purposefully promote girls education
- Getting girls into school is only the first hurdle. Given the high costs of secondary education relative to primary education, programs must also ensure that they are addressing issues of retention and developing mechanisms for ensuring that girls both stay in school, or if they do drop out, are able to re-enter and complete their studies.
 - In particular, drop-out due to pregnancy is one of the most significant challenges faced at the secondary level. Carefully designed programs are needed in order to support pregnant girls or girls who have dropped out due to pregnancy through the completion of their secondary education. Indeed, some research is already underway to further understand the linkages between school-aged pregnancies and drop-out (e.g. ICRW research project in the West Nile).

5. Teacher training is key in improving the quality of secondary education, where both pedagogy and curriculum are more complex than at the primary level.

- While there has been much excitement around the potential of ICT to improve educational outcomes at the secondary level, effective incorporation of ICT into the classroom or the school requires careful teacher training. Innovative strategies for providing teacher training include training of trainers models.
- While teacher training is very important, so too is school leader training, including school administrators, student leadership, and teachers involved in school leadership. The type of training required by the two groups is different, and programming should account for this.

- The success of teacher training programs can hinge on the support the program receives from school management. Engaging closely with school leadership and ensuring their buy-in to the program is critical for success.

6. Policymaking is a dynamic, incremental, and complex process and engaging with policymakers can serve a dual purpose. Policymaker buy-in to a project can work to ensure project sustainability. Likewise, organizational involvement in MoE priorities can ensure that the needs of organizations are reflected in larger, country-wide policies.

- Before the proposal stage of a project, it is important to understand existing policies that can support implementation of a project. During the project implementation stage, it is crucial to connect with the relevant, specialized departments within the Ministry of Education. These measures ensure that programs operate in tandem with education policies and programs.
- For political buy-in and project sustainability, it is important to bring policymakers in at every stage. Project implementers should begin with the end in mind when engaging policymakers. Initiating engagement with policymakers at the proposal stage will increase likelihood of policymaker interest and ownership in a project as it grows and evolves. Policymakers respond well to evidence-based results and when project goals are aligned to existing Ministry of Education priorities and political and financial capital.
- Policy influence is affected by many factors and is a slow process. Building trust takes time, but is sensitive to changes in political power, devolution at the state and county level, and slow feedback processes.
- No meeting with policymakers is too big or too small. Everything from one-on-one meetings, to seminars, clinics, and conferences, as well as participation in taskforces and working groups can be pathways to project and policy impact.

7. While viewed by many as the ultimate goal for project sustainability, scaling is an inexact science and many factors must be taken into account when taking a project to scale.

- Education systems' progress in achieving access to schooling has been uneven between and within countries, and access cannot guarantee learning. Importantly, not all programs can or should be scaled.
- There is no one definition of scale, however a common understanding of the basic tenets of scale can help standardize thinking around what a project going to scale means and the work it involves. A basic concept of scale includes a project achieving sustainability, reach, transformative impact in a manner that is equitable, quick, and efficient. There are many pathways to scale and many business models that lead to

sustainable scale. In the quest to achieve scale, programs face challenges managing, balancing, and supporting growth.

- Practices like building an evidence base for pilot success, simplifying the model as much as possible, including cost in planning from the beginning, and aligning project goals with Ministry of Education priorities can positively affect the outcome of a scale-up. More data is needed on cost and cost-effectiveness to provide evidence for scale up and expansion processes. Scaling up can take place within the government or outside the purview of the government.

8. While often considered an afterthought in project planning and implementation, M&E is crucial to determining project success and lessons learned and is a critical tool in demonstrating impact to external audiences.

- Allocating a set budget and human resources to M&E at the outset can ensure effective measurement of outcomes later in a project. Having robust M&E systems in place can help organizations measure the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of a project. Therefore, SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) indicators within the project framework should be defined and agreed upon early enough and mechanisms put in place to collect, analyze, store, retrieve and communicate results.
- Given the high turnover rate of M&E officers within organizations, institutionalizing M&E can be a difficult process. Organizations can mitigate these challenges by creating a management culture of M&E. Developing an M&E framework should be a collaborative process, and knowledge of a project's M&E framework should be integral to everyone with the project team.
- Evaluations are a valuable way to demonstrate impact to outside audiences. When considering an external evaluation or impact evaluation for a project, it is easier for an evaluator to join the process earlier, rather than later.

Conclusion

Due to the participation of diverse organizational backgrounds and expertise, the PSIPSE East Africa Regional Convening was viewed as a success. Feedback for the event was positive, with participants expressing their appreciation of an event where they can meet organizations working in topic areas similar to their own. The event was an effective way of connecting innovators and sharing lessons and ideas. R4D and CSSEPA plan to leverage the momentum of the convening in the following ways:

- Share all information from the convening (participant contact information, presentations) via a [Dropbox link](#), and for members of the PSIPSE Community, on the Community of Practice. To access the community of practice, you can login here: <http://www.educationinnovations.org/initiative/psipse>. If you have misplaced or require a password, please contact Jordan Worthington at jworthington@4d.org.

- Promote continued engagement between East African projects, as well as engagement with project implementers in Nigeria and India through the PSIPSE Community of Practice.
- Encourage individual meetings with directors of secondary education in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as identify more specialized contact points with each country's ministry. Projects in DRC and Rwanda will also be supported in reaching out to their respective Ministries of Education.
- Perform a skills audit of the PSIPSE-funded projects in East Africa to increase knowledge of each project's technical strengths and expertise.
- Produce analytical content responsive to the interests and demands of PSIPSE-funded projects. To propose a topic for future analytical work, please email Jordan Worthington at jworthington@r4d.org and Margaret Kwame at cssepa@gmail.com.

Contact

For more information on R4D's work as learning partner for the PSIPSE collaborative, please visit <http://r4d.org/focus-areas/partnership-strengthen-innovation-and-practice-secondary-education>. For further questions on R4D's work within PSIPSE, please contact Shubha Jayaram at sjayaram@r4d.org or Jordan Worthington at jworthington@r4d.org. For questions on CSSEPA's work within PSIPSE, please contact Margaret Kwame at cssepa@gmail.com.