

# Primary Schools and Money

## What does Government say about fees and contributions?

According to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP), the Government has abolished all primary school fees and compulsory contributions as of January 2002. This means no child can be turned away from school because of inability to pay. The school or village authorities are not allowed to force anyone to pay cash for primary education for fees, desks, construction, textbooks, meeting costs or any other kind of activity. The Government has done this to ensure that all children, including the poor, are able to access primary education.

Parents and communities are, however, encouraged to be actively involved and contribute what they can. What is important is that any contribution must be voluntary. For instance, communities can provide valuable labour in constructing teacher houses, toilets and water facilities. They can also support teachers in schools with extra curricular activities.

## So where is the money going to come from?

Parents, guardians and communities continue to bear the responsibility of providing food, clothing, shelter, love and care to their children. They also need to take an interest in what each child is doing in school, and to support them in their efforts.

The Government is committed to increasing funding for primary education. Recent improvements in revenue collection mean that more resources are now available for education from the taxpayers. The donor partners have also agreed to increase funding. Government and donor funds are to be put together, rather than spent on separate projects run by different donors. A large portion of these funds will be sent to schools and local councils.

## What money is sent to the schools?

There are two main types of funds sent by the Government to school bank accounts:

- **Development Grant:** This is the money for major construction such as building additional classrooms, teachers' houses, water facilities and toilets. It may also be used to conduct major renovations. The amount of money sent depends on actual needs in districts and schools. The districts that have larger shortages receive more funds. They in turn decide how to send them to schools by prioritizing schools that have the greatest needs.

In the PEDP document the 'unit' cost of a classroom is US dollars 4,000 (about Tshs 4 million). Depending on their needs, schools have generally been provided with money for 1 to 3 units. It is up to the school committee to decide how best to use this money for construction, and how much of it should go for classrooms, toilets, water, etc. Communities are encouraged to contribute their labour. The money can be 'stretched' to build more for the same amount, as long as quality standards are observed. This is important for the safety of school children and teachers, and to ensure that the classrooms will last for a long time.

- **Capitation Grant:** This is the money to improve quality at the school level. It may be used for books, examinations, teaching materials and basic administration, as well as simple repairs and maintenance. The capitation grant is based on the number of pupils enrolled in a school. Starting 2002 each school is to receive 10 US dollars (about Tshs 10,000) for every enrolled child every year. This means, for example, that a school with 400 pupils

should receive Tshs 4 million every year. In the initial years of PEDP implementation, however, US dollars 4 (about Tshs 4,000) of the capitation grant will be retained by the District Council to purchase books and learning materials for the schools. In other words each year schools should receive about Tshs 6,000 in funds and Tshs 4,000 worth of books and materials for every pupil from the District Councils.

It is up to the school committee to decide how best to use this money in the interests of the pupils. This is because Government policy recognizes that the people at the local level know their situation best and therefore should decide themselves, instead of having it be done for them by an official at the district or national level. However, the money may only be used for quality improvements. It may not be used for construction or salaries.

## Are there other funds sent to the local level?

There are three other kinds of funds sent to the local level for primary education:

- **Capacity Building Grant:** This is money to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of actors at community, ward and district levels to implement PEDP. Special emphasis is put on capacity building of the school committee, which according to PEDP is to receive US dollars 500 (about Tshs 500,000) per year for this purpose.
- **Personnel Emoluments:** This is money for teachers' salaries. According to a Presidential directive, teachers are meant to be paid on time. Salaries should be sent no later than the 25th day of each month.
- **Other Charges:** This is the money sent for items other than salaries. It is sent to the District Councils and is to be used for primary education. A good portion of this money should benefit schools. The amount sent varies from district to district, but it is published in the newspapers every three months by the Ministry of Finance. District officials are meant to post this information in public places so that citizens can know how much money is being sent to them.

## How does accountability work?

In order to promote school development and ensure funds are spent well, each school is meant to prepare a school plan and budget. The plan is to be developed and managed by the school committee, in consultation with teachers, pupils and other members of the community.

One of the most important aspects of PEDP is transparency and accountability. School committees are to provide reports to the ward and district authorities, but also to the community. Plans and budgets should be accessible to all citizens. Information about funds received and how they were spent should be posted publicly and made available to all, including parents and pupils. In September 2002, President Mkapa emphasized this point strongly:

"In order to strengthen democracy, each school is required to provide reports on incomes and expenditures to the Village/Mtaa Government every three months at the Council meeting. At the same time as providing reports to various meetings, the Council and schools need to account for funds received, and their use, on notice boards of the Council, school and other public places. Every citizen now must know how much was received by her or his Council and school, and how it was used ... This is the transparency, accountability and good governance that we want" (translated by HakiElimu).

## How can I follow up?

Everyone has a right to information, and everyone has a right to know about PEDP finances. Now that you know the basics about them, you can assess the situation in your community, ask questions and give constructive ideas. For example, you can check to see if school finances are posted on notice boards. You can ask if the full amount for capitation grant is made available and if the funds are used well. You can discuss the information with others. You have a right to ask questions, and get clear answers. According to Government reforms, it is no longer acceptable for leaders just to give orders and not listen to the people. Of course change takes time, and one cannot expect everything to be perfect right away. But you have a right to see progress being made.

You can get information on PEDP from the head teacher, District Education Office, your Ward Counsellor or Member of Parliament. You can ask for information at the Village/Mtaa Assembly or at Council meetings. You can also ask NGOs that are active in your area, or contact HakiElimu.

