

A New Breath of Life for ERNWACA

ERNWACA is still acquiring maturity in its adolescence – 15 years' existence already, since Freetown in 1989. Working as a network is certainly not always easy, particularly when it is carried out with self-sacrifice on a volunteer basis, and because we believe in what we are doing, in those who accompany us, and in the reasons for which we are working.

What can be retained in 2003 and 2004?

We are pleased to note the launching of trans national research on new themes, reinforcement of our communications culture, the growing implication of women and the dynamism of national coordination offices.

Research on the use of computers and Internet in 40 pioneering schools has already shown us that **new technologies**, when certain conditions are met, can dynamise teaching and learning, facilitate teacher training, reduce the impact of the lack of some textbooks and thus contribute to reinforcing the quality and relevance of education. Our review of policies and research on **HIV/AIDS** in connection with our education systems shows us the urgency with which we must sensitise our governments, coordinate our efforts to control the pandemic, reinforce the capacities of researchers in this domain, and launch studies of its impact on teaching.

The ERNWACA national coordinating offices, inspired by a new spirit of entrepreneurship, are playing an active part in developing educational policy in our member countries. They are more and more sought after to lead studies linked to our priority research themes and participate in national committees for development of policies and monitoring their implementation.

In addition to the Ministries of Education in member countries, we have collaborated in the context of our trans national work with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, Unesco, Paris, France) and the University of Montreal (Canada). We are supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Dakar, Senegal and Ottawa, Canada) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DSC in Berne, Switzerland ; Bamako, Mali; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso). In 2003 we also collaborated with the SARA project of Academy for Educational Development (USAID-funded) as well as the University of Quebec in Montreal (Canada). And we continue to work in partnership with the Network for Studies and Research on Education and Training Policies (NORRAG) and the Association for Educational Development in Africa (ADEA).

Prospects for 2005 and 2006 ?

To promote African expertise, ERNWACA must pay attention to the quality of research and create a **publication** culture. To bring critical perspectives to national educational systems, **financial autonomy** is imperative. So, let us work to facilitate publication by our member researchers of research results. Let us also start a campaign for resource mobilisation. We encourage all our members and partners to take part.

We also hope to see the renaissance of the national coordinating office in Sierra Leone – ERNWACA's birthplace – which has been in abeyance since the war.

It is up to each and all of us to make the network live!

The Regional Coordinator