

**Support Program for Quality Education  
in Mother Tongues for Primary Schools in Senegal,**  
implemented by ARED in partnership with Ministry of Education of Senegal and with  
financial support from Dubai Cares

**Findings from the External Evaluation**  
Conducted by Miske Witt & Associates International, USA for Dubai Cares

## **Background**

ARED implemented a simultaneous bilingual program in collaboration with the National Education Ministry (MEN) of Senegal from December 2014 through August 2018, building on a successful pilot project implemented from 2009 – 2013. The Hewlett Foundation’s external evaluation of this program conducted by Dalberg found that pupils in ARED’s bilingual program outperformed pupils in traditional schools (ARED, 2014). Hence, Dubai Cares provided funding to scale up the model to 99 schools in three regions, from December 2014 to August 2018, to contribute to bilingual education expansion as part of Senegal’s national strategy for educational quality improvement.

The objective of the ARED program was for bilingually educated learners enrolled in grade 1 to 4 following ARED’s model to demonstrate comparatively better results in reading and mathematics at the end of the program.

The ARED bilingual model is a “real time” bilingual education model.” It consists of simultaneous use of a child’s mother tongue or first language (L1), Wolof or Pulaar, and French, the second language (L2). The learner first develops literacy skills in the national language, then transfers these skills to master French. The model aligns with all subjects in the curriculum and does not require any reform in the existing basic education curriculum.

Key program elements were:

- (1) teacher professional development;
- (2) the development of Teaching and Learning Materials (in Pulaar and Wolof, also in French) and Teachers’ Guides;
- (3) awareness-raising among communities, focusing on parent involvement in school management committees; and
- (4) a high-quality monitoring and evaluation system.

## **Evaluation objectives**

The primary purposes of the external evaluation conducted by Miske Witt & Associates were to:

- provide an external assessment of program achievements;
- highlight key lessons learned;
- assess the sustainability of the bilingual model;

- offer recommendations to inform future decision-making and scaling up of the bilingual model in Senegal.

## Evaluation findings

Students who participated in bilingual education had significantly higher scores than students who participated in traditional education.

- Bilingual students who participated in bilingual education from CI to CE2 significantly outperformed traditionally taught students on the 2018 CEFEE.
- In 2016-2017 (trimester 3), bilingual classrooms CI to CE2 outperformed traditional classrooms on almost all subtests, and they had higher averages for language and communication, math, and ESVS;
- In 2017-2018 (trimester 3), bilingual classrooms outperformed non-bilingual classrooms on *all* sub-tests, and they had higher average language and communication, math, and ESVS scores.

*This implies that the difference between bilingual and traditionally taught students remained strong over time.*

- Data from the innovative writing assessment (Benson, et al., 2018) collected during fieldwork showed that, for the sample of schools/classrooms, bilingual students scored significantly higher on both the L1 (Pulaar/Wolof) and L2 (French) assessments than traditionally taught students.

Findings from the three assessments together suggest that ARED's bilingual education model appears to have led to greater learner achievement than the traditional model by building a foundation of L1 literacy and facilitating transfer to French literacy and content.

The bilingual program's three sub-goals were: (1) for teachers, school directors and inspectors to demonstrate mastery of ARED's bilingual teaching and learning strategies, (2) to develop and distribute high-quality bilingual materials that facilitate use of the bilingual approach, and (3) for MEN policymakers, primary school inspectors, teachers, and community members to gain confidence in and support the bilingual model.

Stakeholders met or exceeded the targets for each of the sub-goals and indicators.

ARED met or exceeded the assigned targets for the sub-goals and indicators. As of May 2017, 80% of teachers had mastered ARED's bilingual teaching model; 86% of teachers and 93.9% of pupils reported using the materials; 72.5% of headmasters and 90% of inspectors had mastered the ARED bilingual model. The government had also made two decisions or initiatives in favor of implementing or scaling up bilingual curriculum.

Stakeholder satisfaction with the bilingual model and with ARED's work at all levels of implementation were also very positive:

- There were positive spillover effects in the program:
  - Bilingual students taught their peers in traditional classes some L1 literacy, and bilingual teachers shared their L1 knowledge and teaching strategies with their colleagues teaching in traditional classrooms.
  - There was unexpected synergy between schools and communities. Bilingual students taught family members how to read and write in their own languages, and family members reported starting to help children with their homework in Wolof or Pulaar.

- A raised awareness of the importance of the national languages of Senegal was articulated at all levels – not only for those whose own languages were Wolof or Pulaar but also for those with other mother tongues, who discovered that bringing Wolof and Pulaar into formal education made their own languages more visible and valuable.
- The structures for training and professional development worked well; specifically, the two-tier cascade model for training and for teacher support, and the pedagogical days and pedagogical circles that promoted collaboration between and among teachers and inspectors to find linguistic and pedagogical solutions to implementation issues.
- Teachers highly valued the materials. Those interviewed for the evaluation reported continuing to use the bilingual materials in teaching, even though the model was not being implemented.
- Stakeholders at all levels engaged and participated in the program, including high-level MEN officials, IA and IEF inspectors including the bilingual focal points/trainers, members of the *Comités de Gestion de l'École* (CGE or School Management Committees), parents, bilingual teachers, and bilingual learners.
- Stakeholders consider ARED's bilingual model superior to other forms of primary education, due to its progressive, systematic, curriculum-based and coherent approach. Nearly all stakeholders interviewed called for *generalisation* (expansion throughout the country) of ARED's bilingual model, including expansion into additional languages. Cited as particularly important was that students learned in all subjects through L1 and French.
- ARED engaged comprehensively, even exhaustively, in the implementation process, as evidenced by provision of trainings and follow-up; timely provision of textbooks, distributed in appropriate quantities; and the capacity to adapt and make improvements where needed (e.g., involving CGEs/SMCs).

Program challenges included:

- Teacher mobility makes it important to find sustainable ways to train both bilingual trainers and bilingual teachers, to provide them with recognition or certification of that training, and to assess (or allow self-assessment of) their languages and literacies for appropriate school placement;
- A reassessment of the time demands made on Inspectors to do classroom observations and write reports in addition to their other responsibilities is needed;
- The linguistic heterogeneity in some communities makes it important to consider training SMCs (CGEs) in participatory decision-making strategies.

Technical challenges included:

- A need for more bilingual methods and strategies for teaching curricular content
- A need to develop strategies in both languages to encourage speaking and writing skill development as well as listening and reading;
- The need to assess L1 literacy as well as using the L1 (or L1 and L2) to assess all curricular content (e.g., mathematics and ESVS).