KEY MESSAGES

- **Importance of quality education for poverty reduction**: Evidence suggests that quality education bears significant benefits for the individual and the whole of the country. Individual benefits may be higher wages, societal benefits are a better-educated workforce, higher productivity and GDP growth. In Burundi, similar to other countries, completion of secondary education of the household head means lower levels of poverty. Furthermore, particularly true for Burundi, education is an important contributor to social cohesion and teaches universal values such as tolerance, respect for difference and dialogue.

- **26.7 per cent of total national resources allocated to the Ministry of Education**: Resources allocated to the Ministry of Education increased by 13 per cent from 2016 to 2017 and amount to 274.8 billion BIF (164 million USD) according to the 2017 Financial Law. Additionally, 185 million BIF (111,000 USD) and 2.79 billion BIF (1.67 million USD) are made available to the Minister of Civil Service and Labour to finance literacy and professional training, respectively. Additionally, a ‘Fund in Support of Education’ was introduced and has a budget of 7.2 billion (4.3 million USD) at its disposal. They only donor support allocated to the Ministry of Education is channeled via the Common Fund for Education.

- **Early childhood development interventions are currently underfinanced and need special attention**: Basic education interventions benefit from 49.8 per cent of available resources in 2017, followed by 3.8 per cent allocated to secondary education. Pre-schooling and other components of the education program receive each less than 1 per cent of the available resources. Early years of life are the most rapid period of development in the life of a human and is the basis for future well-being and learning. Furthermore, economic analyses have found that investing in the early years yield some of the highest rates of return.

- **Literacy programs and professional and technical trainings, responsibility of the Minister of Civil Service and Labour, are equally underfinanced**: Literate mothers and caretakers of children are an important contributor to advancing the realisation of child rights. Moreover, despite officially low unemployment rates, youth in Burundi is under-occupied and needs to be equipped with the necessary skills and opportunities to contribute to the country’s economy.
Access to education in Burundi

Access to education and training is prerequisite for human and socio-economic development and key to fight poverty. Evidence for Burundi, similar to other countries, strongly suggests that with increasing level of education of the head of household, poverty rates decrease (see Fig. 1).

A recent analysis of different forms of vulnerabilities of children in Burundi identified that 28.3 per cent of 6-15 year old children do not attend school and more than half of 16-17 year olds (56.2 per cent) have not completed primary education. Guaranteeing access to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education to the more than 4.26 million girls and boys aged between 3-19 years in Burundi, has been reinforced as priority in the post-2015 development agenda (see Fig. 2). The Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for the maximization of efforts to ensure equity and quality in education, aiming to ensure relevant and effective learning outcomes. Burundi’s high demographic growth rate is expected to further increase pressure on Burundi’s education system.

Burundi’s education sector has been subject to important reforms over past years, most notably the abolishment of school fees for primary education in 2005, reducing costs for households. However, families may still face informal costs for e.g. school materials, etc. Another important improvement of the sector is the recent merger of primary education and the first three years of secondary education into a system of nine years of basic education.

While pre-schooling is still rather rudimentary developed in Burundi, gross enrolment rates in primary education are high, but fall drastically for the both cycles of secondary education (see Fig. 3.). Moreover, it needs be taken into consideration that gross enrolment rates may be high (even higher than 100 per cent), since many children are enrolled in primary education although according to their age they should not be: while some parents inscribe their young children to early in primary school due to lacking opportunities for pre-schooling, a majority of pupils start primary education at age 7 instead of age 6 (58%, RESEN 2016). This delay in commencement of education is likely due to high rates of stunting (56%, DHS 2016). Furthermore, completion rates need to be improved (see Fig. 4).

1 3-5 years for pre-schooling, 6-15 years for basic education, and 16-19 years for secondary education.
According to the Government report on the national education system (RESEN 2016), main reasons for non-access are children being too young (likely related to the high levels of stunting), followed by 33.9% of respondents indicating that costs are too high (see Fig. 5).

Already in 2000, World leaders came together in Dakar, Senegal to commit to guarantee access to ‘Education for All’. My committing to The Dakar Framework for Action, Governments recognized funding gaps that hamper the attainment of universal access to education, acknowledged the strong political will necessary to ensure allocation of appropriate domestic resources and pledged to improve the situation: “no countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources” (Article 10, Dakar Framework for Action).

In 2015, the World’s decision makers gathered in Incheon, South Korea to reinforce their commitment to ensure appropriate education financing, vowing to allocate at least 4-6 per cent of their countries’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and at least 15-20 per cent of total public expenditures to education.

“We recognize that the success of the 2030 education agenda requires sound policies and planning as well as efficient implementation arrangements. It is also clear that the aspirations encompassed in the proposed SDG 4 cannot be realized without a significant and well-targeted increase in financing, particularly in those countries furthest from achieving quality education for all at all levels. We therefore are determined to increase public spending on education in accordance with country context, and urge adherence to the international and regional benchmarks of allocating efficiently at least 4 - 6% of Gross Domestic Product and/or at least 15 - 20% of total public expenditure to education.”

(2) Available Resources for Education

In 2017, the Government of Burundi has demonstrated its political will to advance its education agenda by introducing a new financing mechanism in favor of education interventions. The Education Support Fund (Fonds de soutien de l’éducation) is placed under the auspices of the Minister of Finance and disposes of 7.2 billion BIF (approximately 4.3 million US Dollars) as indicated in the 2017 Financial Law.

Since 2015, the two Ministries previously in charge of education and professional services were merged into a single Ministry of Basic Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research. Professional and literacy training was added to the responsibilities of the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor.

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1 The Incheon Declaration is online available: https://en.unesco.org/world-education-forum-2015/incheon-declaration (last accessed on 24/3/2017).

2 UN Operational Rates of Exchange, 1 February 2017: 1 USD = 1673.683 BIF
According to the Financial Law 2017, enacted by the President of the Republic on 31 December 2016, in 2017, total allocations to the Ministry of Education (MoE) are 274.8 billion BIF (164 million USD), representing a share of 20.1 per cent of total allocations (see Fig. 6). If only national resources are considered, 26.7 per cent of the total are allocated to the Ministry of Education. In addition to resources allocated to the Ministry of Education, resources benefiting the education sector are allocated to the Ministry of Civil Service and Labour: in 2017, were 185 million BIF (111,000 USD) and 2.79 billion BIF (1.67 million USD) were allocated to the Ministry of Civil Service and Labour for literacy training and for professional training, respectively. From 2016 to 2017, resources allocated to the Ministry of Education increased by 13 per cent from 2016 to 2017, demonstrating the political commitment to ensure access to education for Burundi’s children. However, the 2017 are still lower than available resources in 2015 and if inflation is considered, the increase from 2016 to 2017 is less significant (see Fig. 7). 20.3 per cent more resources are made available for professional trainings (Ministry of Civil Service and Labour) and allocations for literacy training increased by 2.3 per cent.

Generally, allocations to the Ministries in charge of Education have been increasing since 2009 with the exception of 20164 (see Fig. 8a). However, after the considerable drop in 2016, which affected the total State Budget, allocations to the Ministry of Education increased again in 2017. Furthermore, allocations to the education sector are in line with what African Governments committed to as part of the Incheon Declaration. There is no official data available for Burundi on Government expenditures, but the allocations to the education sector as share of GDP have been constantly 5 per cent or higher, which is in conformity with the international benchmark (4-6 per cent of GDP; see Fig. 8b). Allocations per student have increased despite schooling population growth – however, with a gross enrolment rate higher than 100 per cent, considerably more children are accessing services and the available resources are split over more heads. Also, allocations/expenditures are not distributed equally between students – pre-school education is less expensive thus less resources per pupil are available (see Fig. 9b).

4 Prior to 2016, the Ministries for Higher Education and for Basic Education were to separate Ministries; for comparison purposes, the resources of these two Ministries have been combined for the years 2009 to 2015.
In 2017, the great majority of resources to the Ministry of Education are internal resources. As illustrated Fig. 10, only 1.67 per cent of allocations to the Ministry come from the exterior: the financial support of the sole contributor, the Common Fund for Education, amounts to 4.6 billion BIF (2.75 million USD). The Common Fund for Education is financed by the Global Partnership for Education, France, Belgium and Norway. UNICEF has acted as managing entity for the Fund, but will hand over its mandate to the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développment) by mid-2017.

After 2015, the share of donor support to the education sector, channelled via the Government of Burundi, dropped significantly. In 2015, the highest level of aid to the sector was recorded since 2008; however, in 2016, foreign support dropped due to the activation of article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement\(^5\), which resulted in the withdrawal of aid. While donor support was still at 5.28 per cent of the MoE budget, it dropped to 1.67 per cent in 2017 (Fig. 11).

### (3) What are resources spent on?

Similar to previous years, the vast majority of available resources in the education sector (both within the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labour) are dedicated to the promotion of basic education – the 9 years first years of schooling.

Pre-schooling remains very underfinanced at 0.02 per cent of available allocations in 2017 (see Fig. 12), despite the reinforcement of the importance of Early Childhood Development in the SDG agenda. SDG 4 – the education goal – also calls for access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (SDG 4.2). 30.76 per cent of available resources are allocated to interventions supporting secondary education. This is particularly important when taking into account, as mentioned earlier, the impact completed secondary education has on poverty reduction.

Furthermore, literacy programs only receive a little share of resources in spite of a considerable illiteracy rate. It seems important to also prioritize programs enabling literacy of mothers and caretakers to ensure that they can provide their children with the necessary support. Technical and professional training are also underfinanced; two

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\(^5\) Art. 96 of the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries makes "respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy" a precondition for development support.
Fig. 12: Share of 2017 education allocations, by level of education (%)

- Basic Education, 49.77%
- Secondary Education, 30.76%
- Higher Education, 15.87%
- Pre-schooling, 0.02%
- Professional Training, 1.00%
- Technical Training, 0.11%
- Literacy, 0.07%
- Administration, 2.40%

Fig. 13: Recurrent costs vs. Investments, Ministry of Education, 2017 (%)

- Salaries, 72.5%
- Purchase of goods and services, 2.2%
- Investments, 2.2%
- Social welfare payments, 0.0%
- Grants, 13.6%
- Other expenses, 9.5%

Source: Financial Law 2017, Ministry of Finance, GoB