

**Award of the Jan Comenius Medal to
The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium
for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ):**

**Acceptance Speech by Saul Murimba, Director of SACMEQ
(IBE, Geneva, 10 September 2004)**

SACMEQ is an organization of 15 ministries of education located in Eastern and Southern Africa. It started its life fifteen years ago as a small-scale training initiative for Zimbabwe's educational planners and researchers.

In recent years SACMEQ has matured into a strong and valuable independent international non-governmental organization that is legally registered with the aim of building the capacity of ministries of education to monitor and evaluate the quality of their education systems.

SACMEQ's success has been based on four foundations:

1. An intense focus on improving government policies related to improving the quality of education,
2. A relentless determination to employ the world's best research methodologies,
3. A "working style" based on UNESCO's traditional mission of encouraging many people from different countries and cultures to work together and to learn from each other, and
4. A strong circle of friends.

And here I must express SACMEQ's sincere thanks to:

(a) The Netherlands Government: for its loyal support and active interest over many years - especially in the early days when SACMEQ was slowly and carefully building its training and research programmes; and

(b) Several of SACMEQ's most important supporters: the Honorable Naledi Pandor (Minister for Education in South Africa and President of the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers), Professor T. Neville Postlethwaite (the father of international comparative educational research on the quality of education and SACMEQ's guide on technical research matters), Dr Gudmund Hernes (Director of the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and SACMEQ's gateway to accessing the training programmes that have transformed SACMEQ from a dream into a reality), and Dr Kenneth Ross (Head of the IIEP's Monitoring Educational Quality Division and SACMEQ's advisor on many strategic issues).

In accepting the Jan Amos Comenius Medal we, as SACMEQ, regard this as our finest moment. We are overwhelmed by the honor bestowed on us, and by the confidence that has been shown in the worth of our endeavors.

We see this award as an acknowledgement that SACMEQ provides an excellent example of how cooperation among nations can energize and strengthen the global movement towards a better world. We therefore invite you all to share with us the deep joy associated with this very, very special moment. We thank you all.