

Group works to end gender imbalance in African education

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - Africa can not achieve better education or effective learning unless gender constraints in the continent's educational systems are seriously addressed, according to the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

FAWE, which plays the leading role in promoting girls education in sub-Saharan Africa, is one of the civil society organisations participating at the current 2006 Biennial Meeting of African Ministers of Education, agency representatives and educational professions in Libreville, Gabon.

FAWE chairperson Simone de Comarmond told participants at the meeting, with the theme "More and better education - what makes effective learning?" that the organisation is present in 32 countries "taking various interventions to address rampant gender imbalance in education".

She disclosed that the Nairobi-based FAWE had developed three models to help create a more gender responsive educational environment in Africa.

The models include strategies for transforming schools to gender-responsive environments, empowering girls and boys with tools to eliminate gender constraints and equipping teachers with skills for gender responsiveness.

"The models have been piloted in a number of schools and have shown effective results in removing gender imbalance in education," de Comarmond said.

"Our role basically is to demonstrate what works in improving girls' education," she said, appealing to Ministers of Education to pay more urgent attention to mainstreaming FAWE models.

FAWE's membership is drawn from high-level policy makers, including female ministers of education and vice chancellors of universities.

Libreville - 28/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Copyright Notice](#)

AU to set up Education Observatory

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - The African Union (AU) is to establish a Pan-African Education Observatory as part of measures to ensure the success of the second Decade of Education in Africa, due for launch in September, according to AU Commission chairperson, Alpha Oumar Konare.

The observatory will work with regular education development structures of member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Konare said, in a paper delivered on his behalf by the AU Human Resources Commissioner Nagia Essayed at the ongoing 7th Biennial Conference on Education in Africa at Libreville, Gabon.

"The observatory will be instrumental in needs assessment and capacity building of Member States and RECs in implementing the Second Decade of Education for Africa," the AU chief added.

In recognition of the status of education in Africa, the sixth ordinary AU summit in Khartoum, Sudan in January, reached a decision to launch the Second Decade of Education for Africa.

The decision followed the unsatisfactory outcome of the first Decade of Education in Africa launched in 1997.

"In spite of high ideals and intentions, the first Decade of Education for Africa was less than successful. Indeed, Africa entered the New Millennium with an education deficit at every level, formal and non-formal," Konare affirmed.

However, he said, the second Decade would capitalise on the modest gains from the first Decade, while seeking to avoid the pitfalls, including late adoption of the Plan of Action.

"It will accord special attention to strategic areas of educational development, which will be closely linked with Culture and all other development sectors being promoted by the African Union, in line with the AU Vision and Mission," the AU chief assured.

"The Decade will also take cognisance of global developments and goals in the area of education, and seek to develop synergies, while establishing leadership of Africa's own initiatives," he added.

The Framework for Action for the Decade will address a deliberately limited number of areas - educational Management Information Systems; Quality of Education, Girls' and women's education; Science and technology; Higher education, the education of vulnerable children and young people and education in difficult situations.

Libreville - 28/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)

12 African countries get financial support on UPE

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - Twenty countries, including 12 from Africa are receiving increased financial and technical support for their education programmes under the global "Education for All - Fast Track Initiative (FTI)" to assist developing nations achieve one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Universal Primary Education (UPE), by 2015.

According to a report distributed by FTI communication official Abby Spring, at the ongoing 7th Biennial Meeting for African education stakeholders in Libreville, 14 more African nations are expected to sign on to the initiative by 2007.

The report also showed that eight other countries on the continent have indicated interest, but are yet to give the dates they will join the initiative.

African countries with FTI-endorsed, country-led programmes are Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique and Niger.

Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Mali, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal are expected to be endorsed by the first half of 2006 while Angola, Chad, DR Congo, Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Zambia will come on board in 2007.

Central African Republic, Eritrea, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Togo have not indicated the dates of their endorsement.

To receive FTI-endorsement, a country must have a poverty-reduction strategy and a sound education sector plan that addresses key challenges to accelerating UPE in areas of policy, data, capacity and financing.

An FTI-endorsement signals to the international community, including potential investors, that a country's education plan is sound, sustainable and therefore a good investment.

The Washington-based FTI, was launched in 2002, and groups major donors for education - more than 30 bilateral, regional and international agencies and development banks.

Libreville - 28/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Copyright Notice](#)

Expert highlights positive trends in education in Africa

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - Education expert Birger Fredriksen has highlighted "five major positive trends" in education in Africa that African education ministers and their partners should reinforce.

In a presentation at the 7th Biennial Conference on African Education convening here, Fredriksen, a former senior adviser at the World Bank, said the positive trends were the "remarkable progress" towards Universal Primary Education (UPE) and growing political commitment to address other EFA (Education For All) goals apart from UPE.

Others are the heightened commitment by development partners to support Africa; the increasing effort by African countries to learn from and help themselves in reforming their educational systems and the catalyst that the accelerated progress toward EFA will be for post-primary education.

Elaborating on some of the positive trends, Fredriksen said the current Biennial forum was the first to be held in a context of rapid growth in primary education in most countries in Africa.

He said the General Enrollment Ratio (GER) had increased by 24 per cent between 1998/1999 and 2002/2003, changing the challenge in reaching EFA in sub-Saharan Africa from how to address stagnation to how to sustain and reinforce renewed progress towards EFA.

Explaining the use of statistics dating back three years, he said there was always a time lag in the reporting of international education statistics.

On political commitment to other EFA goals, the education expert said while UPE is the single most important of EFA goals, reaching EFA also includes gender equity, expansion of early childhood education and a 50 per cent reduction in adult illiteracy.

"I would in particular like to stress the urgent need to address the fact that almost one in three, or 140 million, African adults are illiterate," he said.

"Adult literacy is of critical importance for both national and personal development, and the emergence of knowledge societies makes literacy even more critical now than in the past," Fredriksen added.

Libreville - 29/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)

ADB plans more support to higher education in Africa

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - The African Development Bank (ADB) plans to increase support for higher education, science and technology in a marked shift from the current massive support by African development partners for the provision of qualitative basic education on the continent.

"In order to give more focus and relevance to the Bank's support to this sub-sector, we are in the process of developing a higher education, science and technology strategy that will guide our collaborative efforts to fight poverty effectively," ADB Vice President Zeinab El-Bakri said in Libreville, Gabon, venue of the ongoing biennial conference on education in Africa.

The 27-31 March conference focuses on a major challenge facing education in Africa: increasing the effectiveness of learning.

Explaining the shift in focus to higher education, Bakri said investing in higher education, science and technology research had a significant positive impact on economic growth and poverty reduction.

"The East Asian experience is there for us to learn from. Focusing on higher education is also important for capacity building in public administration," she said.

The ADB official warned, however, that the focus on higher education must not be done at the expense of quality basic education, adding: "The challenge is how to find the right balance between the two, given our resource constraints."

Bakri disclosed that the ADB had committed US dollar 3 billion in loans and grants to finance all levels of education in 21 years since 1975.

She also said the bank is currently financing the African Virtual University, the African Institute of Science and Technology, the revitalisation of higher education in UEMOA countries in West Africa and the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology in Rwanda.

Libreville - 29/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)

Biennial conference on education in Africa opens in Libreville

By Segun Adeyemi
On Special Assignment

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - The 2006 Biennial conference on education in Africa opened here Monday with more than 400 participants, including three Heads of State and Government and scores of Ministers in attendance.

Host President Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, President Pedro Pires of Cape Verde and Namibian Prime Minister Nahas Angula joined over 60 African Ministers of Education, representatives of donor agencies, researchers and other educational professionals in sub-Saharan Africa at the five-day conference.

Declaring the meeting open, Ondimba called on participants to fight the deficiencies in Africa's educational system, especially the training of teachers and inadequacy of educational tools.

He said effective schools were the "most powerful weapons" against most of the continent's problems, including poverty, ignorance, diseases, illiteracy and intolerance.

The Gabonese leader also urged participants to integrate in their deliberations concerns on the environment and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In his comments, Pires said there was a global consensus that education or the quality of human resources was the foundation of human development.

"Education provides the most solid support for economic and social development. We may have different strategies, but all countries that have been successful in development have given education a priority," he added.

He described the Biennial education meetings as a "catalyst" for debate in education in Africa, saying they contributed to the building of national capacities and mobilising external resources for education on the continent.

The meetings, rotated among African sub-regions every two years, have been described by organisers as the most significant regional encounters for educational co-operation on the continent.

The Libreville conference will consider a major challenge facing education in Africa - increasing the effectiveness of learning, according to Mamadou Ndoye, Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development in Africa (ADEA), organisers of the conference.

"This theme pursues and extends the extensive work on improving the quality of education undertaken for the last Biennial Meeting (in Mauritius), with the focus now shifting to learning outcomes - those produced by the basic schools; literacy programmes and early childhood development programmes that have proved effective in African contexts," he added.

The meeting will break into plenaries and working sessions for an In-depth deliberation on the theme: "More and better education: What makes effectively learning?"

UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development in Africa

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - The UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) was formally launched in Africa Tuesday at the ongoing biennial conference of African Education Ministers and other stakeholders in Libreville, Gabon.

At a ceremony attended by Ministers of Education from sub-Saharan Africa and their development partners as well as representatives of UN agencies, the Ministers pledged their support for the decade, billed to run from 2005 to 2014.

"We accept to support the development of strategies for setting up the decade in our countries," said Rosalie Kama-Niamayoua, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Republic of Congo, and Chair of the Bureau and Caucus of Ministers of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

The Ministers also pledged to support the integration of African culture, language and way of life into the programme for the decade, and called on the coordinating agency, UNESCO, to carry along all African countries.

Speaking on the decade, Peter Smith, who stood in for UNESCO director general Koichiro Matsuura, said its (decade) overall goal is to "integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all".

He said the decision to declare the decade was taken after the 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"The international community confirmed that education is central to achieving sustainable development, and hence the 57th session of the General Assembly resolved in December 2002 to proclaim the 10-year period beginning January 1st 2005," Smith said.

Explaining the connection between education and sustainable development, Smith said: "Education for sustainable development lies at the heart of the quest to solve the problems threatening our collective future - problems of poverty, nutrition, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, global warming, urban decay; inordinate population growth, gender inequality, health-related issues (including HIV/AIDS), armed conflict, terrorism and the violation of human rights."

Also speaking at the occasion, Akpezi Ogbuigwe, who represented UNEP's Executive Director Klaus Toepfer, said the agency had signed a joint statement with UNESCO for collaboration during the decade in the context of its motto - 'environment for development'.

She said for Africa to make a significant showing in the decade, there was need for a critical appraisal of its developmental challenges with a view to identifying educational policy options for action.

"The DESD gives Africa the opportunity to take the bull by the horn and redesign its educational structures to provide answers to these challenges. What is the purpose of education if it cannot produce answers to Africa's debilitating problems?"

HIV+ teachers detest stigmatisation

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - HIV positive teachers from Kenya Friday appealed for support from African education stakeholders to save them and other teachers in their situation from stigmatisation, as the five-day biennial conference on education in Africa rounded off in Libreville, Gabon.

"The virus is eating us, the community is eating us. Our stigma is killing us more than the virus," national chairperson of Kenyan network of HIV positive teachers, Margaret Wambete, said in an impassioned plea that touched participants.

The 47-year-old Wambete, who has been living with HIV for the past 10 years, said she had been subjected to massive stigmatisation by her pupils, their parents and other teachers at the Sostani primary school at Eldoret, some 380 km west of Nairobi.

"I am a teacher like any other, but because of HIV I am not effective," she said, explaining that her teaching sessions as well as regular clinic sessions were becoming stressful. Wambete told the gathering that her pupils call her Miss HIV while her colleagues refer to her as a "walking corpse", adding that some parents had pushed for her transfer from the school while others had sought to withdraw their children from the school.

She also said some unscrupulous non-governmental organisations had exploited the HIV positive status of the over 3,000 teachers living with the virus in Kenya.

"We need your support. We need to get education on how to disclose our status to our children and family," said Wambete, who teaches mathematics to a class of 80 pupils.

Wambete contacted HIV through female genital mutilation. Responding to the plea, Ahlin Byll-Cataria, outgoing chairperson of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), said ADEA's ad-hoc working group on HIV/AIDS would work with HIV positive teachers in Africa in developing a strategy to fight stigmatisation.

"We purposely gave Wambete a chance to speak at the session because we believe we have to make people feel that the issues we addressed belong to them, and also for them to contribute to the development of strategies and

policies," Byll-Cataria said in response to a question from PANA.

More than 400 participants, including African Ministers of Education, agency representatives and educational professionals, attended the meeting, the seventh in the series.

The Gabonese Minister of Education, Jean Norbert Diramba, expressed the hope that the high-level discussions at the summit would contribute to the improvement of education practices in Africa.

The conference explored a major challenge facing education in Africa: Increasing the effectiveness of learning.

Libreville - 31/03/2006

Your Feedback

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Copyright Notice](#)



Book launched in honour of Nigerian envoy to UNESCO

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - A book written in honour of Nigeria's Ambassador/Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Michael Omolewa, was launched here Thursday on the sidelines of the 7th Biennial

Conference on Education in Africa.

Titled "Widening access to education as social justice", the 490-page book is a collection of essays reflecting international perspectives for expanding access to education and the successes and failures of such efforts.

"The chapters have been written by eminent scholars carefully selected from all regions of the world," said book editor Akpovire Oduaran of the Department of Adult Education, University of Botswana.

Speaking at the launching, Nigeria's Minister of Education, Chinwe Obaji, said Nigeria was happy to be associated with the book "not only because it is written in honour of Omolewa but also because Nigeria believes that education is the inalienable right of everybody".

He said the federal government, under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, has taken measures to ensure free and unfettered access to education by its citizens, including the

Universal Basic Education Act which provides free and compulsory nine-year basic education to all Nigerians.

The Director of Primary and Secondary Education, Anthony Nwadike, represented the Nigerian education minister at the launch.

In remarks, Omolewa described the book as a "testimony of my gratitude to the Almighty God... who has made it possible for my friends, colleagues and professional associates to conceive and initiate the project".

Libreville - 31/03/2006

Your Feedback



TV programme to help Africa fight illiteracy

Libreville, Gabon (PANA) - Sub-Saharan Africa will be among the early beneficiaries of a novel international project which will use the power of television to fight illiteracy and poverty, the project organisers said here.

Organisers ABCD Foundation said ALFA B TV, established in October 2005 by

educational experts and audio-visual professionals, is aimed basically at illiterate populations, "primarily women and unschooled teenagers, adults living in rural zones and who do not usually have access to educative facilities".

The Foundation used the opportunity of the 27-31 March Biennial Conference on Education in Africa in Libreville, Gabon, to publicise the project, setting up a stand at a fair organised as part of the conference, the most important gathering of African education stakeholders.

ALFA B TV's objectives are to ensure that the illiterate population learn to read and write, while bringing them solutions to essential issues such as education, health, hygiene, nutrition and environment, an official told PANA.

"The TV will also provide them know-how skills and useful knowledge directly related to their daily life," the official added.

The project, which is due to start by the second half of 2007,

will first cover sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world, broadcasting in English, French and Arabic, before extending its coverage to the Indian sub-continent and to South East Asia.

In order to reach rural populations usually deprived of electricity, ALFA B TV has conceived the "self-sufficient reception stations" equipped with solar panels, satellite dishes, TV receptors and computers.

Libreville - 31/03/2006

[Your Feedback](#)