



Association for the
Development of
Education in
Africa



Save the Children

USA

Making Africa's Youngest Children a Top Priority

Pan-African conference in Dakar will gather Heads of State, First Ladies, Ministers of Finance, Education and Health and experts to promote expansion of programs for young children across Africa

Dakar, November 5, 2009: Recognizing the urgent needs facing millions of impoverished African children, senior government officials — including Heads of State, First Ladies and Ministers of Education, Finance and Health — from Africa and around the world are gathering next week in Dakar, Senegal, to highlight the importance of broadening health, education and protection programs for young children across the continent.

The “Fourth African International Conference on Early Childhood Development (ECD): A Call to Action,” which will take place November 10–13, 2009, at Dakar’s Hotel Méridien Président, will bring together policy-makers, experts and innovators to work toward rapidly expanding and improving services for young children, particularly vulnerable children; strengthening policies to support and protect young children; and increasing investments in quality programs and bringing them to scale.

Ministers of Education, Finance and Health from 36 African countries are expected. First Ladies will also be in Dakar and will conduct a colloquium on early childhood development. The conference will close with a celebration of young children at Stadium Marius Ndiaye.

Senegal’s President, His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, will open the proceedings on Tuesday, November 10, at 4:00 pm.

Over half of Africa’s 130 million children ages 0–6 live in poverty and suffer multiple challenges that result in high rates of developmental delay, malnutrition, chronic illness and disability. Meanwhile HIV/AIDS, malaria, endemic violent conflicts and severe poverty affect young children and mothers the most. The global economic crisis is exacerbating these challenges.

Still, despite the difficulties they face, governments across Africa have recognized the importance of early childhood development for the economic success and development of their countries. This conference will allow them the opportunity to explore ways to increase investments in programs for the young children who are so important to their nations’ future.

ADEA Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD)

UNESCO BREDIA

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The conference is jointly organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) and the government of Senegal. It is sponsored by a wide range of organizations including the following: UNICEF, the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, Plan International, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Aga Khan Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (WGECCD), the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.

For additional information on the conference and its program visit: <http://www.ecdconference.org>

About ADEA's Working Group on early Childhood Development (WGECD)

The Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) was created by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in 1993. It is currently led by UNESCO BRENDA and coordinated by Save the Children USA. Today, it stands as the leading framework for consulting and orienting the main technical and financial partners for ECD in Africa. Its purpose is to influence policy related to the development of the young child (0-8 years) and thus contribute to expanding and improving sustainable and appropriate ECD provision in Africa. WGECD promotes and supports the holistic development of young children by building bridges between the different actors involved in ECD at both regional and national levels. Within its overall mandate, WGECD's focus is on advocacy and mobilization of political and public support; contribution to the knowledge base on ECD in Africa by facilitating research, capacity and knowledge building, dissemination and exchange; stimulating policy review, development, implementation and monitoring; motivating partnership building and networking. For more information on WGECD, visit the ADEA web site: <http://www.adeanet.org>

Dakar, November 5, 2009.

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