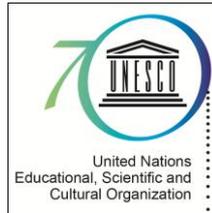


Republic of Rwanda



Ministry of Education



African Union

Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015 Kigali, Rwanda 9-11 February 2015

Press Release

For immediate release

The sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education post 2015 ended in the Rwandan capital, Kigali on Wednesday 11 February, 2015 following the issuing of a joint statement by all the partners concerned. This regional conference saw the presentations by various stakeholders that included governments, United Nations Agencies, bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation partners, civil society organizations, Youth Representatives and the media.

A total of 45 sub-Saharan African countries presented profiles on the progress made so far in education since the year 2000 as well as national reviews in preparation for the post 2015 education agenda in their respective countries. The issues discussed ranged from Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), to Universal Primary Education (UPE), to the educational needs of youths and adults, and adult literacy. Attention was also given to issues regarding quality, equity, inclusiveness, and gender parity in education on the African continent.

The conference noted that remarkable progress has so far been made on ECCE in terms of support from external agencies due to strong social mobilization, and the political commitment that has evolved since then. A major weakness noted in this area is the lack of national financing.

The area of universal primary education has seen considerable community participation since the year 2000 with very high political commitment and significant public investment, with many countries offering fee-free primary education. However, serious quality challenges were noted, and these included issues with teachers as well as equity issues, as well as high drop-out and repetition rates. The conference noted that secondary completion rates have improved since 2000 at both lower and upper levels. Also noting a significant expansion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the conference revealed that coverage in this area has almost doubled from 356 to 606 learners per 100,000 inhabitants. Higher education has also almost tripled from 217 to 636 students per 100,000 inhabitants on the continent.

The conference called for additional political commitment in this area of TVET as well as national financing, and the need to match skill with the labour market needs. Participants also

called on the general public in sub-Saharan African countries to change their negative perceptions of TVET. The Conference noted that there remains much more to be done in the area of adult literacy, and called on additional efforts to be made by governments and all partners and stakeholders in this sub-sector. While noting the lack of political commitment in this area, and the fact that this has not been a priority goal for many countries, the conference called for more social mobilization so as to stir acceptance of this sub-sector.

The conference noted that despite the progress made in the area of gender parity due to the fact that gender has been incorporated in education policies in almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, policies continue to stumble against entrenched cultural stereotypes, with early marriage and pregnancy still rampant on the continent.

The conference noted that education quality have been compromised in many respects. Whereas education ministries have been mobilized to focus on quality issues with considerable effort from external cooperating partners, resulting in many ways in curricular improvement and reform, there remain a number of weaknesses. Principal among them have been the almost neutral or in some cases negative evolution of financing over the period.

There has also been low teacher motivation which has compromised quality in education in sub-Saharan Africa. The fact of having a widespread recruitment of contract and community teachers, with little or no supervision has left much to be desired. In addition, the question of the availability or non-availability of textbooks has negatively affected educational quality in sub-Saharan African schools. In places where they are available, they may not always be adaptable to new curricula.

Noting the low levels of learning outcomes in some countries, the conference pointed out that the CONFEMEN Education Systems' Analysis Programme known as PASEC revealed how too few people reached the minimum level, particularly in reading in West Africa (35% of primary Grade 5 pupils achieve the minimum level in reading in 5 countries). In addition, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality known as SACMEQ also revealed greater issues in maths, particularly in Southern Africa (with 28% of the pupils in Primary Grade 6 reaching the minimum level in Maths in 9 countries).

This sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education post 2015 has been held against the background of a global movement that is mobilizing towards defining the post 2015 development agenda. In order to inform this global agenda that would also focus on the education sector, the member states of UNESCO are critically reviewing the progress made in attaining the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the targets set in 2000. Following consultations with education stakeholders, agreement has been reached to anchor the post-2015 education agenda in a lifelong and sector-wide perspective that would address access, equity and quality for all – children, youth and adults - at all levels of education from ECCE to higher education and adult learning, and across formal, non-formal and informal modalities.

The Africa region has also been organizing to ensure that an African perspective is captured in the post 2015 global sustainable development goals. The African Union has therefore galvanized Heads of State and Government to drive the articulation of the Common Africa Position Post 2015 (CAP), which document was launched jointly by the African Union Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. It is worthy to note that the CAP captures education, training and research, and considers

education not just as a human right but also as the most important tool for achieving the full spectrum of development goals through human capacity development and building of scientific, technological and innovation capability.

UNESCO in partnership with the African Union Commission, the Government of Rwanda, and other EFA partners, has organized this sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015 in Kigali, Rwanda from 9-11 February 2015.

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