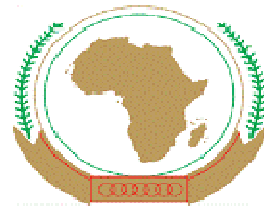




Association for the
Development of
Education in
Africa



Press release

For immediate release

Monitoring the African Union Second Decade of Education Action Plan

Abuja, Nigeria – Wednesday 25 April, 2012

The African Union Commission (AUC) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) have released a comprehensive outlook report to monitor the state of the Second Decade of Education on the African continent. This report was produced for the Fifth Conference of African Ministers of Education of the African Union known as COMEDAF V, currently taking place in Abuja, Nigeria.

Presenting the report in Abuja on Monday 23 April, 2012 to a group of African education policy makers, experts, activists, and journalists as well as representatives of many of Africa's development partners, Angela Arnott from the ADEA Working Group on Education Management and Policy Support (WG EMPS) told the gathering that although it is still premature to determine impact, some lessons have been learnt for the second half of this Second Decade on Education in Africa. She noted that there have been sizeable achievements of countries and regions in reaching some Second Decade goals, and that some of the positive changes in education and training developments aligned to the Decade's goals can be explicitly linked to the Plan of Action.

However, there remain considerable challenges. Whereas successful partnerships and coordination mechanisms have been established in recent times between countries, organizations and other stakeholders, to establish monitoring mechanisms for monitoring the Plan of Action, there are significant challenges on the ground to ensure adequate progress. According to the report, despite progress in developing Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) nationally and regionally, many countries lack critical data on key education issues.

The report registered several milestone initiatives, strategies and policies at the continental level. In the area of higher education, the development of a continental quality rating mechanism, and the establishment of the Pan African University (PAU) to support research collaboration and enhance science and technology capacity across the continent are notable achievements. In addition, the African Union's Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarship Scheme enables young Africans to study in leading African universities while requiring them to work in any African country for at least two years after graduation. However, inequity in higher

education remains a challenge with fewer women and students from rural areas and vulnerable groups gaining access.

According to the report, many countries are unlikely to reach universal primary education for all by 2015 partly because of a lack of teachers. Some 26 African countries face severe teacher shortage, while an additional 11 countries have moderate teacher shortages. However, overall African teacher qualification profiles are improving. But among the most important challenge is teacher migration resulting in a brain drain, insufficient numbers of female teachers and the dire lack of mathematics and science and technology teachers.

There is progress but uneven trends in gender equity across countries. The report stated that women make up 63 per cent of Africa's 203 million illiterate people, and of the 33 million African primary school-aged children out of school in 2009, 18 million were girls, down from 20 million in 2006. The trend remains that girls from rural areas are far less likely to go to school than either rural boys or urban boys and girls. However, a new trend is that proportionately more girls than boys reached the last grade of primary schooling. The report registered a marked increase in female secondary school enrolments, albeit from a low base. With few country exceptions fewer girls gain access to higher levels of education than boys. Chad, Congo, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have as few as 3 female students for every 10 male students.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) was introduced as a new priority area of focus in 2009, and proposed actions remain to be elaborated. The report contends that major efforts are still required for the continuous development of more ECD policies and the inclusion of ECD in other multi-sectoral and sectoral policies and strategic plans. Although African countries are showing declining infant and child mortality rates, and declining population growth rates and fertility rates, stunting, wasting and underweight children remain a problem in many regions. The challenge of un- and under-qualified teachers working in ECD centres remain. Low salaries and inadequate incentives contribute to the increasing employment of unqualified staff at these centres. This is in addition to inadequate teaching and learning materials and minimal supervision and monitoring of ECD services.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) remain a poorly recognized and underfunded sector by mainstream education players. The report states that 60% of Africa's youth are unemployed, and that the urban and agricultural informal sector which employs up to 90 % of the working age population is under-qualified and the sectors and occupations with high potential for the future lack adequate levels of skills. There are over 51 million illiterate youth in Africa, of which 59 % are female. Typically, females are under-represented in TVET programmes overall and where they are participating it is mainly in traditional low skill programmes. The report recommends a bigger role for the private sector not only in financing skills-development but also participating in shaping its character.

Currently, only 50% of all primary-aged school children found in Africa, approximately 33.4 million of them and 3 million children fewer than in 2006 attend school. This reduction fuelled by improvements in the IGAD region is, however, offset by the fact that the ECOWAS and, to a lesser extent, the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, are worse off than in 2006 with more children out of school. There were at least 9 African countries with more than half a million children out of school in 2009. Nigeria alone was home to almost 9

million out-of-school children or 37 % of its primary school-aged population. However, many other countries have made notable progress. During the last decade, the share of out-of-school children has declined by more than 30 per cent in 6 countries largely through the abolition of school fees. Even with children in school there is a problem with retention. There are some 8 African countries where fewer than half of their learners survive to the last grade of the primary cycle. Some countries, including the Gambia and Rwanda, have however, realized significant inter-cycle transition and have increased the access to secondary school in a very short time period. Rwanda recently reported a 40 per cent increase in transition.

The report shows that curriculum development and teaching and learning materials are limited at the regional and continental levels, despite numerous countries having undertaken major curriculum reviews. Many remain wedded to their curriculum inherited through their colonial legacies, whose content and pedagogy often does not sufficiently address the needs of diverse learners. The challenges in employing properly qualified curriculum research and development personnel and finding the sustainable and innovative mechanisms for undertaking regular reviews persist. The provision of adequate teaching and learning materials also remain a challenge for the continent.

Following the presentation, Angela Arnott stressed the need for the African Union Commission to assume a much more dynamic and complete leadership role and ensure the smooth functioning of a coordinated network of regional players, who will ensure that there is uptake of the full spectrum of activities of the plan of action. The report highlighted the need to institute an effective communication strategy that keeps information flows on progress at various levels in order to improve regional and continental synergy and accountability. ADEA's Working Group on Communication will now take the lead in reviving an initiative undertaken to assist the AUC in finalizing a new communication strategy. The report concludes with the need to integrate priority goals into regional and national education strategic plans. It recommends the mobilization of adequate resources, and the urgency to facilitate an annual gathering of partner organizations and lead implementing agencies to ensure coordination and synergy. Greater attention must be given to ECD, Gender and Culture, TVET and Quality Management, areas where many weaknesses were found. The report also recommends the establishment of an AUC-administered African Education Development Fund to assist RECs and partner organizations to secure funds for specific initiatives that will advance the Second Decade of Education. Considerable feedback was received during discussion of the contents for the report from the audience with several observations noted by the experts, government policy makers and partners.

“We are conscious that the frank and open exchanges among African ministers of education, senior officials, stakeholders from civil society and the private sector are essential in promoting common understandings of the challenges and progress for achieving the continental goals,” says Ahlin Byll- Cataria, ADEA's Executive Secretary. “ The availability of relevant data is a sine qua non for informed decision making and public discourse, and the development of information systems is an essential part of the transformation of our Ministries of Education into responsive learning organizations capable of solving the critical development issues in Africa” he concluded.

It will be recalled that in May 2006, Heads of States and Governments of the African Union launched the Second Decade of Education in Africa, and Education Ministers adopted a Plan of Action, as a collective act to propose Africa-led solutions to African challenges.

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For more information on the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), please log on to:

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For more information on the COMED Working Group, please log on to:

www.adea-comed.org

For more information on the AU Outlook on Education Report, please contact:

Esther Azaa Tankou, Senior Editorial Officer, Directorate of Information and Communication (DCI), African Union Commission

Tel: +251 11 551 77 00 Edt. 1018

Email: Yamboue@africa-union.org

Or

Lawalley COLE, Coordinator, Working Group, COMED

Tel: +229 95 29 51 55

In Abuja : +234 816 320 5658

Email: l.cole@afdb.org