Regional Launch of the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report

Summary Report

Dakar, 15 September 2016

Introduction

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, formerly known as the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR), is an editorially independent, authoritative, and evidence-based annual report. Its core mandate is to monitor progress towards the education targets in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. The Report is funded by a group of governments, multilateral agencies and private foundations and published annually by UNESCO to serve the international community.

With its renewed mandate in 2015 the GEM Report team launched a new series of internationally focused education monitoring reports starting in 2016. These reports carefully monitor each of the 10 SDG targets, analyze global trends in education and development aid, and advocate for effective education policies and practice in the next decade and beyond. The first report in this series, launched on 6 September, situates education's role in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and discusses the challenges in monitoring the 10 targets in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG4)[1] but also in other SDG targets with an education dimension. The 2016 GEM Report is entitled 'Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all'. Specifically, the Report examines the multi-sectoral and reciprocal links between education, sustainability, and key areas of the Sustainable Development Agenda including, for example, in reference to poverty reduction, hunger eradication, improved health, gender equality and empowerment, sustainable agriculture, resilient cities, and more equal and inclusive societies.

Organized by the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar, in consultation with the West and Central Africa Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 (WCA-RCG4), the regional launch of the 2016 GEM Report for West and Central Africa aimed to 1) disseminate the main conclusions of the report for the region and 2) stimulate dialogue between the regional representatives of UN agencies, multilateral organizations and civil society through two panel discussions. It was held in Dakar on the 15 September, 2016.

Summary of the Regional Launch

Opening address

Ms. Ann-Therese Ndong-Jatta, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and outlining some key findings of the 2016 GEM Report.

She stated that the international community had entrusted UNESCO with the task of ensuring the global monitoring and coordination of SDG4, which specifically aims at an inclusive, equitable and quality education for all and promotes lifelong learning opportunities. Ms. Ndong-Jatta reiterated that the 2016 GEM Report places the role of education at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Report – entitled 'Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All' – demonstrates that if current trends persist, the world will have to wait a further half-century to achieve its targets, which is partly due to the poor performance of African countries.

Despite this poor performance, Africa should not resign itself; it should do more and better if it wants to close the socio-economic gap. Investment in inclusive education is essential for ensuring economic growth and fostering peace in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ms. Ndong-Jatta also stressed the need for education systems to pay more attention to environmental concerns and peace. Environmental issues and climate change have not yet been integrated into the curricula of most countries around the world, and in terms of peace, educational inequality can increase the risks of violence and conflict.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. [1]

This Report, she reminded participants, is not only an opportunity to share facts, but also a chance for reflection; for putting the statistics into perspective and exploring possibilities for change. A radical break with past trends is necessary if education is to have the potential for sustainable growth and peace in Africa. Education may be only one factor in development, but without it, sustainable development is not possible. These agencies must be ready to support countries in their new ways of thinking.

Ms. Ndong-Jatta thanked the WCA-RCG4 members who had organized the meeting and all of the participants in attendance. Her address then finished with a call to action. She called upon the organizations present to agree to work together to realize the SDGs. This call prompted the question of whether organizations are ready to combine their resources in order to achieve results which ensure change, and allowed participants to reflect on the most efficient way for regional partners to collaborate.

Presentation 1: The 2016 GEM Report

Following Ms. Ndong-Jatta's address, Ms. Nihan Koseleci of the UNESCO GEM Team presented the conclusions and recommendations of the Report, with particular emphasis on the findings relating to Sub-Saharan African countries and their responses.

Ms. Koseleci began by providing some background on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One year ago, in September 2015, the member states of the UN agreed upon a new global agenda (SDGs), containing among others a specific goal for education: SDG4. SDG4, through 7 targets and 3 means of implementation, combines and further develops Education for All (EFA) with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the field of education. The international community has given to the GEM Report the mission of monitoring the progress made in the domain of education. They proposed 11 global indicators and 32 thematic indicators to ensure a broad view of this progress towards SDG4. The report is therefore divided into two parts: firstly, monitoring of the education indicators, and secondly, a thematic approach.

Ms. Koseleci then provided examples of specific data from across West and Central Africa to demonstrate the gaps which remain in the quality of and access to education, as well as the disparities between countries. For example, in Ghana, 54% of adults have completed the first year of secondary school, compared to 12% in Mali. In terms of gender equality, in 2014, 38% of countries had achieved gender equity in primary school, compared to 18% in the first year of secondary school and 6% in the second year. Some further troubling statistics from Sub-Saharan Africa were given:

- 31 million children, 24 million adolescents and 33 million young people are still out of school
- 50% of girls who are not currently at school will never go to school, compared with 41% of boys
- Only 55% of children complete primary school, 31% the first cycle of secondary school, and 15% the second cycle of secondary school

Several comments and concerns around the ten targets of SDG4 and the results of their monitoring were then summarized:

- The new agenda has a widened perspective (it also focuses on outcomes, not just universal access to primary and secondary education).
- There are issues with defining the indicators. For example, there is a need for specific indicators at both the global and local level, and certain items such as 'skills needed for decent work' need to be adequately defined (allowing for cultural differences). Targets such as 4.7 (learners have the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and so on) involve identifying all of the related elements – such as human rights, non-violence, gender

equality, tolerance and climate change – to be able to define it. These concepts must also be integrated into curricula, into training handbooks for teachers and in student evaluations.

- Some indicators and monitoring tools are too limiting or simplistic. For example, it is necessary to go beyond literacy and obtain appropriate data which includes the level of competence of adults at each level (not currently available in Sub-Saharan Africa). When measuring gender equality, the proposed overall indicator is the parity index, which is easily calculated. However, parity does not mean equality. Gender equality also means having non-discriminatory textbooks, taking into account domestic work and considering school-based violence. To measure quality, we must look at textbooks, teacher interventions and teacher training, as well as outcomes.
- There is a lack not only of data – as collecting data on areas such as adult education is problematic – but also a lack of capacity for data collection.
- Some targets, such as target 4.2 (universal access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education), have more than one global indicator. These have different requirements from one country to another. Also in relation to early childhood services, available statistics do not take into account the diversity of early childhood services, which must be reflected in the indicators.
- Some targets have a negative perception, such as providing scholarships, as they have the danger of reinforcing inequalities.

Key measures to strengthen SDG4 monitoring at the national level

Ms. Koseleci presented 6 key measures to strengthen SDG4 monitoring at the national level within the next 3-5 years. She recommended that ministries are encouraged to put in place a national evaluation framework in order to ensure that efforts to improve learning results are quality-driven. She then outlined the connections between education and the 16 other SDGs, in 6 groupings: planet, peace, prosperity, place, humanity, and partnerships.

On a similar point, Ms. Koseleci explained that open and collaborative forms of educational development can drive more constructive political processes, peaceful demonstrations and even prompt individuals to access political information and participate in political activities. For partners, an integrated approach to resolve contextual and collective issues was recommended.

Strategic recommendations for effective contribution of education systems to sustainable development were the following:

1. Collaboration between different sectors and partners;
2. Consideration of formal and non-formal education and training as essential for schools to tackle trans-sectoral issues;
3. Acknowledgement that education can reduce income inequality, but is not sufficient on its own;
4. Education systems need increased and more flexible funding;
5. Acknowledgement of the benefits of gender equality in education;
6. Rethinking education: to take into account the need for civic education and education for peace and sustainability in the middle and long term when developing policy, in terms of skills. Civil education and peace and sustainability programmes can be key levers to achieve the SDGs.

Discussion

A question-and-answer session followed the presentation, during which several pertinent issues were discussed:

- The need for, and challenge of, elaborating national monitoring reports on SDG4. This will require that each stakeholder invests in and contributes to effective monitoring and reporting.
- The remaining challenges in terms of quality education: that countries should be aware of the extent of their inequalities, and that the importance of culture needs to be underlined. It is a cultural issue, rather than a lack of knowledge. A multi-sectoral approach is key to tackle this issue, which considers global regimes, economies and so on.
- The teaching language issue is also key in Sub-Saharan Africa, because "we speak French and/or English, but we dream in another language" (CODESRIA). The language of instruction is not just an educational issue, but a political one, and should be considered at all levels.
- The strengthening of partnerships and synergies is crucial given the extent of the issue and the limited funds. Communication is vital for strengthening these partnerships, for example by disseminating the Report findings to all stakeholders in the educational field.
- Education should be considered as an investment rather than a cost by high level decision makers. Countries should adopt policies which move towards innovative financing, to cover the running costs in addition to teachers' salaries. The Report recommends addressing the absence of a link between investment in education and the economy. Governments' interests are in the economy, but the economy cannot grow without higher education. States must have the necessary funds to provide young people with the life skills to support their country.

Presentation 2: Implications of SDG4

The next presentation was delivered by Mr. Sobhi Tawil, Chief of Section for Partnerships, Cooperation and Research at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, and focused on the implications of SDG4. The Education 2030 Agenda is centered on sustainable development, which is a broader vision than the Education for All (EFA) agenda based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All levels of education and lifelong learning are included, beyond the basic education focus of EFA. In the new Education 2030 Agenda, the emphasis on 'equity, inclusion and equality' is made more explicit. The question of quality learning at all levels is also revisited, with implications for how it should be evaluated. Beyond quality, there is also a focus on the relevance of learning for both the world of work and civic life.

Mr. Tawil then delineated the five main characteristics of SDG4, along with implications which constitute concrete actions recommended to achieve the agenda. He presented the globally agreed targets that reflect the unachieved EFA agenda (targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6). This was followed by a second set of targets on which there is international agreement, but which need to be set at the national level with consideration of the country context and needs (targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.a and 4.c). Mr. Tawil stressed that it is up to countries to contextualize the targets and decide upon the best strategies for achieving them.

Panel discussion 1: Linking education across the SDGs for West and Central Africa

Two panel discussions followed the presentations. The topic of the first was the connection between education and the other SDGs (for example, those concerning gender equality and decent work) in the West and Central African context. During this session, in light of the conclusions of the Report, participants were invited to speak for 3 to 5 minutes on each of the topics.

Intervention 1: UN Women WARO

- Mr. Cyuma Mbayiha informed participants that the focus of UN Women West Africa Regional Office (WARO) is on mainstreaming gender into all programmes, especially since too few women attend school or leave early with few skills, and thus have limited employment possibilities. Often, he remarked, the curriculum discriminates against women and girls, for example by neglecting to educate children and young people about child marriage and pregnancy. Beyond this, they also work on tackling growing insecurity, violence and threats of violence. It was stressed that the education of women is an important factor in achieving development.
- Three remarks were made: basic education is not enough if we seek to empower women; training in skills which offer opportunities for employment – and thus economic stability – should also be available to women; current societal structures, being based on gender, play a key role in keeping women out of development and acquiring skills. Any solutions, Mr. Mbayiha recommended inter-agency and inter-sectorial collaboration and engaging a range of partners from both within and outside the education sector. UN Women, for example, in collaboration with UNESCO and UNFPA, has launched a joint programme entitled 'SHELF: Security, Health, Employment, Legislation and Finance'.
- Mr. Mbayiha argued that more women at the political level would contribute to education, as well as making schools more conducive to girls' participation.

Intervention 2: ILO DWT/CO-Dakar

- Mr. François Murangira, of the International Labour Organization Decent Work Technical Support Team for West Africa and Country Office for Senegal (ILO DWT/CO-Dakar), started his intervention with the situation of people working by the side of the road, which cannot be called 'decent work' since it does not provide them with the financial means for accommodation, meals, schooling or health care. Mr. Murangira asked how we can support countries in enabling learners who have completed education to find decent work.
- He stated that there is a lack of connections: political offices, for example, do not collaborate; there is a lack of communication between parents and schools; and there is not a smooth enough link between school and work. From today, he urged, we should consider working together in an integrated manner. It should be remembered that development occurs across generations and is never finished, just as education continues at all levels.

Discussion

Some discussions of participants' concerns followed the first two panelists' interventions:

- It is crucial to consider family needs in setting goals, so that education becomes part of their survival strategy. Aligning the education objectives with this strategy would contribute greatly to achieving the desired results. While the targets concerning women and girls are easy to set, the nature of the societal, family and religious values in the region restricts the ability to enact them. It must be asked: do the strategies serve the family?
- Decent work is far less accessible for women, as they are occupied with tasks serving their families' needs.
- Education is leading to skills, not wealth.
- The call for collaboration and synergy between agencies has been repeated over many years, but seem very challenging to be turned into a reality.
- Since many children are in educational poverty, educational prosperity is the first thing we must look for.

- Local knowledge, social situations, and marginalized ethnicities must be taken into consideration when discussing equity.
- The monitoring and evaluation mechanism for SDG4 is lacking some indicators; for example, citizenship and social cohesion are difficult to measure.
- There is a need to change our approach to working with countries.

The presentation finished by inviting participants to reflect on these concerns and how we can develop strategies to arrive at the desired results.

Panel discussion 2: Implications for national education policy and planning

The second discussion topic related to the implications of the education-related goals and targets in the framework of planning and implementation of national education policies.

Intervention 1: ANCEFA

- Ms. Rosa Silva, of African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), began by introducing the organization: it was established in 2000 to champion the cause of quality education for all in Africa, and contributes to the global education agenda debates and goal-setting. In particular, their concern is with the 31 million children who are out of school, of which 10 million have a disability, and advocate for a free, inclusive and compulsory education.
- They have a membership of 37 National Education Coalitions (NECs), and are based in Dakar with further offices in Lome, Lusaka and Nairobi.
- In terms of their role in the Education 2030 agenda, they are involved in advocating for girls' education and the expansion of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), with a pilot experiment on the latter being conducted with NECs in Southern Africa. They also partner with Handicap International and Light for the World – whose focus is on disability – to work on issues of inclusivity. As well as this, ANCEFA contributes to promoting the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) through awareness-raising among stakeholders and critical constituencies; and by supporting planning, monitoring and evaluation framework development to ensure prompt rolling-out of CESA via the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).
- Ms. Silva then made a series of recommendations: national governments should take into account the Education 2030 agenda and the CESA as their education plan; gender-disaggregated data should be sought on a regular basis, to monitor marginalized or vulnerable populations; a process should be developed to monitor CESA and SDG4 implementation with inputs from civil society; an emphasis should be placed on the mobilization of domestic resources, and indeed that 6% of GDP (or 20% of the national budget) should be committed to expanding educational access. This means at least 12 years of free education, of which nine are compulsory.

Intervention 2: IIEP-Pôle de Dakar

- Mr. Guillaume Husson stated that IIEP-Pôle de Dakar supports African countries in the analysis of their education systems and educational policy planning. Also, since 2015, they have provided technical assistance to countries, training and the production of methodological tools and knowledge.
- Their intervention is based on three themes. Firstly, quality of education: there is a lack of planning and coordination between data production and transformation and education policy implementation. The second theme relates to early childhood development, which is taken into account by IIEP in the analysis of the framework of the RESEN. The third relates to young people's

employability skills. In terms of students' needs for entering the labor market, Mr. Husson stated that IIEP-Pôle de Dakar is working on the development of a methodology which supports African countries in the establishment of a forward-looking plan for education and training. The PEFOP (Platform of Expertise in Vocational Training) supports the implementation of professional training policies.

Intervention 3: CAMES

- Mr. Bertrand Mbatchi, of the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES), informed participants that CAMES is responsible for harmonizing policies on higher education instruction with research at the level of member states of the West and Central African region. The organization adopted a strategic development plan in 2011/2012 which aimed at achieving such targets as seen in SDG4. The weaknesses, when developing this plan, were identified as follows: higher education has been neglected in favor of basic education; a poor approach to internal quality assurance; research has a low impact; an absence or weakness of information systems and a lack of statistics; minimal consideration of gender in higher education; a weak link between universities and the private sector; and a lack of statistical data.
- Several strategies are proposed to combat this: advocacy with partners and decision makers; networking among higher education and research institutions, teachers and researchers; the promotion of a link between employers and higher education institutions and adequate training in searching for employment; qualifications for teachers and researchers; training which offers both face-to-face and distance learning; the implementation of standards for programme evaluation; and the establishment of a data system and regional information platform for the dissemination of information. CAMES currently has tools and a platform which can be shared with partners to accelerate the implementation of the objectives of SDG4.

Discussion

Participants were invited to briefly offer their opinions on the possible improvements which could be made to the education and training systems in the West and Central African region, as well as possible actions that their organizations could carry out to support alignment of regional education policies and planning processes with the Education 2030 Agenda.

- It was reiterated that the issue of data is critical for the monitoring of the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) stated that a survey was finalized in March 2016 in more than 46 countries which compared the level of preparation of countries for responding to the indicators of SDG4. There is a real problem of statistical culture within technical teams.
  UIS's mandate is to collect data for global comparison purposes, although more than half of countries face difficulties in producing financial data. This problem rises to 70% with data related to higher education. There are several reasons: a lack of capacity; a missing culture of evidence-based policy; Ministries of Education are not aware of all existing data sources; and countries are inflexible in terms of adaption of data collection systems. There are also remaining questions of how to measure new concepts and harmonize surveys to make them compatible.
  UIS is highly concerned by the stagnant country responses, despite UIS's efforts to support them. Considering this, it is very important that partners do not financially support national data production.
- Lastly, and in response to these comments from UIS, it was reiterated that there is a need to not only make data available, but also to strongly advocate that decision-makers take the funding of statistical data collection seriously.

<u>Conclusions</u>

Ms. Ndong-Jatta then concluded the meeting by summarizing the discussions, reiterating the key messages of the Report and calling participants to action.

She stated that it is not a problem of capacity, but a question of value-creation, and achieving real policies which lift Africa out of poverty when we do not have sufficient data. We must change our approach to ensure that we are more inclusive and participatory. She stressed the need to engage more with civil society, including with families. Similarly, innovative funding requires engagement in a participatory approach, which raises issues of governance. Ms. Ndong-Jatta asked participants to reflect on whether we, as agencies and partners, are ready to engage in these questions of governance on issues such as human rights, justice, and so on. She recommended that when the West and Central Africa Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 (WCA-RCG4) meet, they focus not on unnecessary reports but on an approach which goes far towards action and fully engaging governments.

She then offered some final points for reflection: what type of education is needed for the development of Africa? What type of curriculum? Why do higher education programmes have no connection to the labor market? Are research studies valued?

Lastly, a call to action: to work together to change the position of Africa, and to reflect on our engagement with the region to learn from what has already been done. Africa must change its mentality of dependence.

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