

## **Inaugural Meeting of the West and Central Africa Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030**

**Location:** UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar

**Date:** Thursday, 19 May 2016

**Time:** 10:00-12:30

### **Background**

Recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of sustainable development, the international community adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the fourth goal devoted to education. SDG4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and its corresponding targets constitute the core of a single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious, aspirational, transformative and universal, leaving no one behind. It attends to the ‘unfinished business’ of the EFA agenda and education-related MDGs, and further stresses the need to scale up efforts towards improved access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach.

### **Meeting Objective**

The gathering aimed at launching the West and Central Africa Regional Coordination group on SDG4 (WCA-RCG4), bringing together regional representations of WEF2015 convening agencies based in Dakar, as well as other relevant regional institutions and civil society organizations, to establish a regional platform for dialogue, exchange of good practices, communication and advocacy. Where necessary, the group may also work to design and implement joint regional projects for technical backstopping, capacity development, M&E and resource mobilization for support (through agencies’ country teams or Local Education Groups) to national education development.

### **Meeting proceedings**

In attendance at this meeting were representatives from a number of the regional representations of the UN and other multilateral organizations, such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Save the Children, Conférence des ministres de l’Éducation des États et gouvernements de la francophonie (CONFEMEN) together with Programme d’analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), Conférence des Ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports (CONFEJES), Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES), Réseau pour l’excellence de l’enseignement supérieur en Afrique de l’Ouest (REESAO), Handicap International, together with the UNESCO team based in Dakar (UNESCO Dakar Office, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and IIEP-Pole de Dakar). Some agencies, such as ILO, could not attend the meeting because of unexpected incidents.

### Introduction

The inaugural meeting of the West and Central Africa Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 began with welcoming remarks from UNESCO, expressing its desire for the inclusiveness of the group and thanking the participants for their presence.

After a brief introduction of the participating organisations, key milestones of coordination processes in recent years were presented and the process of transition from the MDGs and EFA to the SDGs and Education 2030 was described, with an emphasis on the central place of education in the achievement

of all SDGs. The overall vision of SDG4-Education 2030 as One Education Agenda was also emphasized, underscoring the importance of integrating SDG4 targets into national education sector plans.

Meeting participants were subsequently invited to the tour de table, during which each organization briefly presented their activities and role as they relate to SDG4. These wide ranging activities included efforts focusing on equity, ITC use, TVET, and other thematic issues, as well as varying focuses on key populations.

#### Presentation of potential strategies and experiences from other regions

UNESCO shared a number of lessons taken from the past experiences of EFA coordination, and emphasized the importance of multi-level communication and clearly defined partnership roles. A series of suggestions for an effective coordination of the regional group in support of national education development with links between regional, national, and international partners were presented.

The results from a survey conducted by UNESCO Dakar and UIS on Education 2030 indicators/data gaps and national education sector planning in 40 respondent countries in SSA was presented, highlighting the importance of effective national sector dialogue mechanisms for the integration and implementation of Education 2030 within education sector plans, and identifying national capacity gaps as areas for consideration by the RCG4. The presentation also shared perceived country challenges and suggestions to overcome them, including funding, weak capacities notably of teachers and sector managers, and the need for technical guidance, advocacy and communication on the new education agenda and its integration into national policy formulation and implementation.

The experience thus far of regional coordination mechanisms in the regions of Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States, as well as the lessons that such experiences can provide for this group, were then shared and discussed. The close links between SDG4 and the other SDGs were again stressed, highlighting the importance of multi-level and multi-sectorial coordination.

#### Discussion of the role and objectives of the group

After presentation by UNESCO of various lessons and strategies, a debate was launched regarding the role and objectives of the RCG4. Participants converged to agreeing on the need for a regional coordination that is relevant and specific to the WCA region while learning from experiences from other regions.

UN Women suggested that the group select 3-4 thematic issues that are relevant to the region to work on in order for the group to have a concrete effect. He also noted the importance of notifying the regional undg and the countries that constitute the regional groups. Save the Children shared experiences from the old interagency working group that overly focused on overly abstract objectives and not enough on concrete activities. She offered to share the terms of reference of this old group as well as an explanation of its shortcomings with the group.

A clarification was demanded regarding the group's coordination with the African Union (AU). UNESCO responded by explaining that AU's education strategy is aligned with SDG4 and the regional coordination mechanism, such as SDG4 coordination, will use existing UN structures and mechanisms to support and connect with the AU's agenda.

UNICEF highlighted the importance of avoiding parallel coordination processes and of focusing on concrete, attainable objectives. They also proposed the drafting of a calendar of deliverables to encourage the efficaciousness and concreteness of the group. Fawe stressed the need to clearly define the role and objectives of the group as well as its coordination mechanisms. Fawe's

representative emphasized the importance of creating strategic thematic groups that address the most pressing issues of the region. She also suggested that for the inclusion of country voices in the coordination process, the group should ask the countries themselves to determine how they are represented at the regional level.

UNHCR further stressed the importance of being realistic in terms of achievable goals and objectives. She also suggested that future meetings be scheduled further in advance of the meeting date. CONFEMEN suggested that the next meeting include the precision and definition of the roles and objectives of the regional coordination group and any thematic sub-group deemed necessary. CONFEMEN stressed that the role clarification should be done in a systematic manner based on the experience of what has already been done with past regional groups.

In sum, participant agreed that the RCG focused on a limited number of themes, activities, objectives or even results, with a focus on pragmatism, realism and technical issues rather than political or theoretical ones (FAWE, Save the Children, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women). Several thematic areas that could be addressed by the RCG were evoked, including data/indicators, E2030 integration into national policies, rural education, integration of ICTs, or neglected areas such as TVET, early childhood, NFE (...). The group should also share information or report on its activities to various relevant instances, including WCA UNDG, UNECA, AU, and the Education 2030 Steering Committee.

### **Next steps and meeting close**

A short questionnaire pertaining to thematic objectives and the functioning of the group will be sent to all participants, the results of which would be used, together with the exchanges during the present meeting, as a basis for drafting the RCG4's Terms of Reference (ToR) by a smaller task force composed of UNESCO, UNICEF, FAWE, and Save the Children. Participants designated UNESCO to circulate the first version of draft ToR to the Regional Coordination Group by 31 May for a final consolidated version to be shared with the wider partners' group by 10 June, ahead of the 16 June meeting (proposed).

Following agreement on future steps the creation of the Group was officially declared, and participants voluntarily signed an agreement (in annex) representing their collective commitment to the implementation of SDG4.

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## Summary of tour de table presentations

Organizations	Description of programs and activities relative to education	Organization's future priorities in relation to SDG4, esp. in the region
CAMES	<p>The CAMES is an institution working for the harmonization of higher education policies and systems in 19 countries in Central Africa, in West Africa and in the Indian Ocean. As such, it aligns with any dynamic partnership for the promotion of higher education, research and innovation. This means, therefore, that it fully supports the initiative of the coordination group on the SDG4 supported by UNESCO-BREDA and its partners.</p> <p>In terms of converging actions, CAMES adopted in 2013 a Strategic Development Plan with 7 features that seek to promote the development of higher education, research and innovation in all of its member countries.</p> <p>In this sense, the institution signed on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, an agreement with UNESCO Paris to carry out joint projects in order to improve quality in the following areas of higher education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the implementation of internal quality assurance cells and national quality assurance agencies;</li> <li>• Quality assurance and long-distance and online education;</li> <li>• Professionalization of teachers;</li> <li>• Professionalization of curricula;</li> <li>• Admission of students in internships and employability;</li> <li>• Admission practices in higher education.</li> </ul> <p>In any event, in accordance with its missions and in line with its strategic development plan, the CAMES will work towards actively participating in the West and Central Africa regional coordination group on SDG4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the UNESCO-CAMES convention</li> <li>• Advocacy for the implementation of the activities of the plan in the context of a dynamic partnership</li> <li>• Advocacy for the creation and facilitation of a thematic group on higher education</li> <li>• Advocacy for the funding of higher education in Africa</li> </ul>
CONFEMEN	<p>The missions of CONFEMEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform its members on the development of educational systems and the ongoing discussions;</li> <li>• stimulate reflection on topics of common interest for actions to be undertaken in cooperation;</li> </ul>	<p>CONFEMEN has convened in December its Ad Hoc Committee to reflect on the contribution of the structure for the implementation of the Framework for Action Education 2030.</p> <p>The theme chosen by the ministers for the next ministerial session is based on the indicators of the Framework for Action.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitate dialogue between ministers and experts to develop common views and formulate recommendations to support regional and international education policies.</li> </ul> <p>CONFEMEN organizes regular meetings; one of which is the ministerial session every two years, that brings together the ministers and their experts around a current and relevant theme in the field of education and training; and the ministers agree on recommendations, and often, on policy frameworks for improving educational systems</p>	<p>The activities (technical meetings, debates, ministerial session) provided in the 2016 -2017 action plan are based on the framework's indicators. CONFEMEN proposes to support member countries in updating their sector-wide programmes.</p> <p>CONFEMEN intends to work with UNESCO and any other structures for the coordination and monitoring of SDG4.</p>
REESAO	<p>We discussed the harmonization of the work defined as a priority action by the REESAO CRPDG (Conférence des Recteurs Présidents et Directeurs généraux des Institutions membres) on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2016. We have focused on the goals of this process and stressed the result already garnered in the fields of Sciences &amp; Technologies. We also registered as partners: WAEMU, UNESCO, OAAS, CAMES and AfDB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement harmonized curricula (Health Sciences and Sciences and Technologies) in the REESAO member universities;</li> <li>• Continue to harmonize curricula in other areas of training.</li> </ul>
FAWE	<p>FAWE is working for gender equality in education and in that sense, has focused its attention on the SDG4 and also, for obvious reasons, the SDG5. The organization also directs its work towards contributing to the achievement of objectives of the continental education strategy (CESA 2015-2025).</p> <p>Thus, FAWE has worked to build the capacity of its 33 national branches in terms of integrating gender issues, articulating and advancing effectively the gender agenda during review, monitoring and evaluation and implementation of sector-wide education plans.</p>	<p>Also, its strategic plan seeks to "enable a positive change in girls' education in Africa." To do so, the following two main strategic objectives were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To enable girls across Africa to access high-quality education, complete schooling, and perform well at all levels.</li> <li>2. To ensure knowledge and learning of gender and education are managed and shared for the benefit of all working in this field.</li> </ol> <p>More specifically, and based on its analysis of development challenges in Africa, FAWE has placed particular programmatic emphasis on the participation of girls and women to TVET and STEM.</p>
Save the Children	<p>Save The Children is committed to contributing to the SDG4 through its global breakthrough on education: "all children learn from a quality basic education by 2030". In West and Central Africa Save The Children is working towards this goal through education programs in 11 countries. The programs focus on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Basic Education and Youth Empowerment. They aim to improve children's access to education and the quality of their learning, while making sure that they are learning in safe, protective and health-promoting environments. In</p>	<p>In its 2016-2018 regional education strategy Save The Children expresses the ambition to focus on the most deprived and marginalized children, in order to make sure that ALL children have access to quality education. This means we will focus our actions on young adolescent girls (ages 10-14), children affected by conflict and emergencies and children on the move. We will prioritize ECCD and Basic Education programs. Save The Children expresses the explicit wish to engage with education partners in the region in order to achieve results at scale.</p>

	2015 Save The Children directly reached 7 251 384 children in West and Central Africa.	
UNHCR	<p>UNHCR has offered a webinar, briefing notes and guidance to country operations on how to engage in the SDG4 process – and will continue to do so. The UNHCR Education Strategy 2012-2016 provides guidance for the operations suggesting integration of refugee learners in national education systems of host countries to avoid expensive, parallel systems – where possible. Given this broader strategy the SDG4 process as well as the recent agreement between UNHCR and the Global Partnership for Education provide new momentum for UNHCR to engage in Local Education Groups (LEG). UNHCR in this respect is fairly new to the “development side” and will greatly benefit from the cooperation and support from experienced partners such as UNESCO, UNICEF and others at the country-level. Traditionally, LEGs have included development partners to the exclusion of humanitarian partners; however, where protracted displacement is an issue or returnees are present, UNHCR’s participation on the national LEG is critical to ensure that refugee children, otherwise invisible on the national planning radar, are accounted for.</p>	<p>The launch of SDG 4, and commitment to refugee education in SDG 4 policy documents, represents a critical window of opportunity to engage all partners in ensuring that refugee and stateless children and youth are accounted for in national education sector plans, with mainstreaming of refugee children and youth in the national education system, where possible, as UNHCR’s goal. Mainstreaming refugees into national systems in close collaboration with national authorities and partners is consistent with UNHCR’s Alternative to Camps policy, and is considered to be the most sustainable option for education service provision for refugees in protracted displacement settings. The Regional Office will provide technical support to operations to effectively participate in the SDG4 process and the LEG over time.</p>