



Report (TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH VERSION)

Second Consultation Meeting of the Western and Central Africa Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030

Location: UNESCO Office in Dakar

Date: 16 June 2016

Time: 10:00 – 12:40

Background

The Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 for Western and Central Africa (WCA-RCG4) was created May 19, 2016. This mutual engagement for the implementation of SDG4 gathered regional representations of UN agencies, other multilateral organization and civil society active in educational development in western and central African countries. During the inaugural meeting, it was agreed that the WCA-RCG4 would meet periodically (twice monthly or quarterly), except that the second meeting would be organized a month later to operationalize the coordination mechanism.

Meeting objectives

The objectives of the second meeting of the RCG4-WCA was to discuss and adopt the terms of reference (TOR) of the group and agree upon a number of joint activities.

Participants

In attendance at this meeting were representatives from a number of the regional representations of the UN as well as multilateral organizations and civil society such as UNICEF, UNHCR, World Bank, Save the Children, Plan International, African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), Conférence des ministres de l'Education des Etats et gouvernements de la francophonie (CONFEMEN), Réseau pour l'excellence de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique de l'Ouest (REESAO), IIEP-Pôle de Dakar, UNESCO Institute of Statistics, UNESCO-Dakar and UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) was represented by its national branch in Senegal.

Some of the group's participants present at the first meeting could not attend such as UN Women, CONFES, CAMES and Handicap International. The regional Forum for African Women Educationalists and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) also expressed their regrets for not being able to attend the meeting.

Introduction

The second meeting of the coordination group began with brief presentations of the participants in attendance followed by information on the activities led since the establishment of the WCA-RCG4:

- Production of the report on the inaugural meeting and publication of an article on the web portal of the UNESCO Dakar office
- Collection and analysis of information provided by 15 participants through an online survey on the type of organization and its coverage, SDGs that are supported directly or indirectly, activities perceived important for the WCA-RCG4, proposals of priority thematic areas and activities already implemented in support of the integration of SDG4.
- Elaboration of a first draft of the TOR taking into consideration the numerous interactions and comments provided by the members.
- Contact with potential new members having a role in education development for western and central African countries, including those who had not followed up on the invitation to the first consultation meeting: ADEA (Association for the development of Education in Africa), ANCEFA, AfDB (African Development Bank), ILO (International Labor Organization), ERNWACA (Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa), African Union and UNFPA. The Secretariat has also led a series of in-person as well as virtual/phone consultations with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which expressed its wish to actively take part in the coordination and provide comments on the draft TOR. ANCEFA and ILO have also shown interest in becoming members of the WCA-RCG4.

The meeting's agenda was then presented.

Global coordination perspective for SDG4 and partnerships

The representative of the UNESCO headquarters in Paris presented on the global coordination perspective for SDG4 and partnerships integrating the WCA-RCG4 within a global perspective and bringing relevant elements for the pertinent implementation of the coordination:

- The prerequisite to the creation of such a coordination system is the definition and agreement on the appropriate functions of coordination mechanisms, the actors and their respective roles and responsibilities and the functioning modalities.
- The guidelines consist in utilizing existing structures in support to country level implementation.
- The expected characteristics of the coordination group include coherence and synergy of actions and support to countries, collaboration and cooperation, sharing of responsibilities and a joint working plan with results and clearly defined indicators.
- The consideration of lessons learned from previous EFA coordination mechanisms for the improvement of new mechanisms.
- The proposed key structures of global level coordination are the following: the steering committee, a Global Education Meeting (GEM), a collective consultation of NGOs on SDG4-Education 2030, E9 ministerial meeting review (pending discussion), and regional meetings (pending discussion).
- The involvement of the African representatives who are part of the SDG4-Education 2030 Global Steering Committee as well as the regional organisation representing African countries within within the Committee, namely ADEA, is important to facilitate and harmonize information between global and regional levels.
- The Regional Coordination Group plays an essential role in articulating the efforts between global and country levels.

Discussion and adoption of the TOR of WCA-RCG4

The TOR proposal of the WCA-RCG4 was conceived from the online survey responses and comments received from members of the group, which brought to light key functions: provide a platform for dialogue and sharing, implement joint programs of activities, and serve as a link between the global process and country level activities. Faced with the various geographical coverages of member organizations, the R/UNDG geographical division was selected.

The proposed TOR prompted a number of comments from members and their presentation by the UNESCO Dakar Office during the meeting allowed discussion and review of key points.

- ***Members and management of the WCA-RCG4***

The plenary group is composed of the focal points of the different member organizations who will ensure the link between the WCA-RCG4 and their respective organizations. Focal points for each organization remain to be designated. It was agreed that the group will meet every trimester, and multiple monitoring activities were proposed and will be re-discussed such as:

- An annual retreat to reflect on the progress, strategies and activities of the WCA-RCG4.
- An annual report on activities led by the group.
- A report on the monitoring of education in the western and central African region, which could be required every two or three years by the global coordination. This will be redefined at a later date. UNICEF had suggested Pole de Dakar/IIEP-UNESCO to be in charge of drafting this report on monitoring. The representative of Pole de Dakar has noted this proposal and will further discuss it with his team.

The TOR provide three levels of management: **a Secretariat, a steering team and task teams.**

Even though the steering team remains to be determined on the basis of expressed interest of member organizations, it will consist of 5 members including the coordinator and 4 focal points of member organizations representing for example a regional multilateral organization, a United Nations agency, a civil society organization, etc.

Multiple questions and suggestions concerning the functioning and complementarity of these different levels were put forward:

- UNHCR raised the question about the functions of the steering team, to which the response was that the steering team is a decision body in charge of monitoring activities between the various meetings and to share information on a more frequent basis.
- The representative of the CONFEMEN questioned the ability to have multiple representatives of the same organization on the task teams. The response provided indicated that it was indeed possible to have multiple representatives for each member, but there can only be one focal point and deputy for the plenary group.
- CONFEMEN and UNHCR both suggested that the structure and relation between the three management components be clarified through a visual functioning schematic.

Concerning the members of the RCG4-WCA:

- Gorgui Sow (independent consultant with extensive experience in the domain of regional coordination through his participation in the EFA coordination group) noted that the private sector, youth, and ministries of finance should be represented in the coordination group. The Secretariat responded that organizations representing governments such as CONFEMEN and CONFEJES are already members of the WCA-RCG4 and that the possibility to engage Regional Economic Communities was to be explored. Regarding the inclusion of other actors, such as the private sector

and the ministries of finances, the secretariat requested that concrete suggestions of representative regional organizations be made to be better able to invite them to participate in the WCA-RCG4.

- The representative of the UNESCO headquarters in Paris suggested that Member States, for example through those who are members of the “Global Steering Committee” (Benin with respect to WCA), also be represented in the coordination group.

The Secretariat also noted that the integration of new organizations in the coordination group is possible and open to suggestions.

- ***Structure of Task Teams***

Four possible ways to structure the task teams were proposed based on the online survey: by theme, by SDG4 targets (proposal of GPE), by subsectors, or by a combination of themes, targets, and subsectors.

Save The Children noted that the creation of task teams according to targets seems to be the most pertinent solution since it allows specificity and encourages the organizations to work together. This type of structure would also allow dialogue and report facilitation according to the exchanges between GPE and UNESCO but it will not be possible to work on all the targets. CAMES expressed its wish that a task team on higher education and research be put in place. According to a specialist from UNESCO Dakar who has experience with regional coordination, it is difficult to work with more than 3 or 4 task teams and have them all be effective. Before establishing any task teams, it would also be important to define the priorities by means of a diagnostic based on data in order to respond to the most urgent needs in the region. Collected strategic information will thus allow to determine the activities and to support advocacy. It was also suggested that if everyone agrees on the option of structuring the task teams by SDG4 targets, it may be necessary to put in place cross-cutting task teams. These task teams would monitor or do joint work with Member States, working to define a minimum number of regional indicators, with the lens of ensuring comparisons between countries for the creation of reports.

Thus, in addition to some clarifications concerning the main structure of the WCA-RCG4 and the formation of task teams, the TOR were validated and adopted by the members present. The final version of the TOR will be sent after revisions and modifications have been done due to the discussions that have taken place. The TOR will, however, stay flexible and evolving concerning the themes of the task teams since there has not yet been a consensus. The organisations wishing to put in place a task team are invited to come forward.

Joint Activities of the RCG4

Possible joint activities were presented under different categories: management and knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication, capacity building, mobilization of resources, and joint activities by task teams. Some of these points were detailed and discussed between the different member organizations.

Management/Knowledge Sharing

A web portal dedicated to managing information and providing knowledge on Education 2030, called Education in Africa, has been created and was presented during the meeting by the UNESCO Dakar Office (<http://www.unescoafrica.org/edu/index.php/en/networking/sdg4-coordination>). The web portal, which is still under construction, currently contains a “News” rubric, a “Documents” rubric, and a discussion forum for partners. The web portal is available in both English and French. Once the web portal is fully operating, usernames and passwords will be sent to group members to allow them to access the discussion forum. Members are invited to look at the web portal’s platform and provide feedback on how to improve it.

UNHCR proposed that the web portal provides country level data on SDG4. CONFEMEN suggested that all led activities to support countries in integrating SDG4 could be put on the web portal and that the links for different agencies' sites could also be included.

The proposal to develop policy briefs was supported by all the members. They will form a common working tool for advocacy activities. The documents will be short (four pages maximum) and will be published and shared with countries and their partners.

UNICEF proposed to develop policy briefs on each of the SDG4 targets in order to inform decision makers or policy makers. Given that each member already produces a lot of information, the group will have to move in favour of knowledge sharing rather than knowledge production.

Other suggestions were made, such as the need to make the indicators accessible in a more easy-to-understand French, to elaborate on a working plan with attainable outcomes for the agreed-upon period, and to create a mapping of major events for the region on advocacy.

The policy briefs could also be developed for each agreed-upon thematic area as well as for all common issues in the region.

Advocacy and Communication

Proposals for participation of the WCA-RCG4 in international days was discussed and approved. The proposal to jointly organize an activity during the Nelson Mandela International Day that will be celebrated by the South Africa Embassy on July 18 was not agreed upon given the short time period left for planning. Save the Children proposed that the group focus on the International Day of the Girl Child, October 11, since the members' agenda takes on gender issues and the date gives the group the necessary time to organize a joint activity. UNICEF supported this idea and proposed to design some dynamic activities for the international days.

Mobilization of resources

The question asked was on how members are going to support the work of the group.

Joint Activities

UNICEF also suggested establishing a 2-year working plan with concrete outcomes. In terms of advocacy, the group could recognize the major events of the African Union, the ADEA Triennial meeting, etc. For REESAO, the working plan has to define different working modalities. Plan International suggested to agree upon a limited number of high impact activities and that the group's priorities should be knowledge sharing and advocacy. UNESCO Headquarters mentioned the feasibility of enumerated activities and encourages the importance of south-south collaboration in order to facilitate knowledge sharing.

It was proposed that TALENT, "Teaching and Learning: Educator's Network for Transformation," led by UNESCO (conceptual note was shared with all participants), establish a task team. The member organizations will be expected to communicate their interest in taking part in it. A call of proposals was sent out so as to allow organizations to form task teams.

A small group, consisting of Plan International, CONFEMEN, UNICEF, and UNESCO, was established to develop a working plan that will cover the time period until December 31, 2017. It will then be shared among other members for feedback and eventual proposals of other activities.

Conclusions

The second meeting of the WCA-RCG4 saw the adoption of the TOR, the exchange of proposals for joint activities, and the on-site agreement of a small group that will be in charge of proposing a working plan lasting until the end of 2017. Despite the discussions, certain points still need to be clarified, such as the structure of the task teams and the composition of the steering team.

It has been acknowledged that the member organisations have:

- to forward their intention to be part of the steering team
- to forward the complete and official name of their respective organization,
- to confirm the name of the focal point

The next meeting of the WCA-RCG4 will take place on September 15, 2016, once the working plan created by the small group has been reviewed by the members of the regional coordination group.

Reported by UNESO-Dakar

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