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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**MID TERM EVALUATION OF
THE SECOND DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR AFRICA**

**CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE
VALIDATION MEETING**

To be held

23-25 NOVEMBER 2011

MAURITIUS

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality education is a core necessity for the attainment of equitable and sustainable human and economic development. It is a key instrument for realising the collective African vision of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa driven by its own citizens. This fact is clearly recognised by the heads of state and government of the African Union, as evidenced in major decisions and declarations they have made over the last decade, concerning education, science and technology.

In January 2006, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union declared the Second Decade of Education for Africa, 2006 – 2015. This followed extensive consultations among African ministers of education through the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF II), and development partners. Such consultations had been necessitated by the realisation that the original decade of education for Africa (1997-2006) was coming to an end before its goals had been achieved. As instructed by COMEDAF in their ordinary session in April 2005, the Commission of the African Union (AUC) carried out an evaluation of the decade of education and confirmed the need for a second collective effort towards raising the levels of education quality, access and relevance in Africa.

It is important to note that Africa has not acted in isolation. The African effort came about during a decade of much international attention to education as a human right and a basic need. Thus the UN brokered Dakar Framework on 'Education for All' (2000) focussed on ensuring that everyone had access to basic education. In the same year, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also included attainment of primary education as prerequisite for sustainable development.

2. THE SECOND DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR AFRICA

The AU declaration of a Second Decade of Education for Africa therefore noted that in spite of the existing global compacts for education, it was clear that Africa needed to do more if the full value of education as an engine for development and growth was to be realised in Africa. Therefore, COMEDAF identified areas of focus that went beyond contemporary prescriptions. Under the leadership of the AUC, the seven areas of focus were developed into a Plan of Action by experts from Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), supported by key partners, including: Association of African Universities (AAU), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the UN agencies: UNESCO and UNICEF, and the World Bank.

Seven areas of focus were identified in 2006 for the Second Decade of Education:

- (i) Gender and Culture
- (ii) Education Management Information Systems
- (iii) Teacher Development
- (iv) Tertiary Education
- (v) Technical and Vocational Education and Training, including education in difficult situations
- (vi) Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Materials
- (vii) Quality in all its Ramifications

In 2009, COMEDAF IV added Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD) as the eighth area of focus.¹

An evaluation of the first Decade of Education for Africa showed that in spite of much effort, the goals of the decade had not been achieved. The evaluation report proceeded to list probable causes for the inadequacy of achievements. The greatest challenges were to do with weaknesses in accountability and reporting mechanisms, publicity of the collective vision and therefore ownership of the goals, and partnership approaches. The report also cites lack of clarity of focus, so that too wide a spectrum of issues was being addressed.

Having this witness of what did not work and why, the second decade was supposed to be structured in such a way as to build on the strengths and success of the first, while avoiding the pitfalls and addressing the identified challenges. Despite a relatively slow take-off of the actual implementation of the Second Decade Plan of Action, already there are signs of hope and optimism that the goals of the Second Decade are in sight. New reporting mechanisms have been put in place, more RECs are actively involved in implementing the continental programme at regional level, thus increasing domestication at Member States level, strategic collaboration with key partners is bearing much fruit, and the COMEDAF Bureau has firmly stepped into its oversight role.

However, it is not clear how far and which of the goals are being achieved, and what potential there is for full attainment by 2015. It is therefore necessary to carry out a deliberate assessment of the current status. The overall aim of the mid term evaluation was therefore to provide a complete picture of the actions taken at continental, regional and national levels to execute the Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa; and their tangible impacts in order to inform interventions for the remaining years of the Decade

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

The expected outcome of the evaluation will be a revised approach where necessary; and new catalytic interventions to accelerate the attainment of the decade goals.

The evaluation exercise has three principal goals:

- i) Provide a complete picture of the actions taken at continental, regional and national levels to execute the plan of action of the Decade,
- ii) Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing coordination mechanisms, including statutory structures for reporting and accountability
- iii) Determine the impact of the Decade on educational development on the continent, in search of appropriate lessons for the second half of the Second Decade of Education for Africa

The evaluation seeks to provide information on the following:

- i) To what extent the Member States, RECs and African institutions owned the Decade

¹ *The lack of direct mention of pre-school, primary and secondary education has led many, without reading the full text, to assume that these levels of education are not covered. However, reading the Plan of Action clearly shows that all the areas of focus address issues at every level of education. Indeed, even tertiary education is in the plan required to show support to other levels of education.*

- ii) How far the Decade's goals and activities were incorporated into the regional and national education action plans
- iii) How entrenched the Decade's goals and activities have been within Regional Economic Communities
- iv) How far the execution followed the rate and modalities of the decade's work plan
- v) The extent to which activities were reviewed in response to changing needs,
- vi) The availability of activity reports at all levels: national, sub-regional, regional.
- vii) Lessons that African States can share on the implementation of the Decade
- viii) Response of partner agencies
- ix) How the plan of action influenced partner priorities, approaches and activities
- x) How supportive partners have been at the continental, regional and country levels towards implementation of the POA
- xi) Which continental or global programs, if any from partners, conflict with the implementation of the Decade POA
- xii) What additional resources have been mobilized in response to the AU initiative
- xiii) How judiciously were those resources used
- xiv) How ready and capable has the AU HRST Department been in its leadership of the whole process
- xv) To what extent there was learning of lessons from the first Decade of Education

4. AIMS OF THE VALIDATION MEETING

The validation meeting will consider the evaluation report and critically discuss it to ensure that the intended objectives are adequately met; and agree on the way forward for the remaining half of the decade.

Thereafter, the validated report and recommendations will be presented for consideration to the next conference of ministers of education of the African Union (COMEDAF V).