



## AFRICAN UNION EDUCATION PARTNERS MEETING

### COMEDAFVI

21 April 2014-Yaounde , Cameroon

## Education in Western and Central Africa

**WCAR countries** are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, DR Congo, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo

### Key Achievements in the situation of the African child

In 2000 when the World Education Forum took place in Dakar, West and Central African countries had among the lowest enrolment and completion rates in the world across all levels of education. In over a decade, remarkable progress in school enrolment was achieved.

- 1) **Intakes in preschool have more than doubled over the period** with gross enrolment rates increasing from 13% in 2001 to 28% in 2012 while rates vary from a mere 1.8% in Chad to nearly 100% in Ghana.
- 2) **Despite the rapid growth in school-age population, most countries were able to increase primary school enrolments by more than 20 percentage points over the last decade.** The number of children enrolled in school increased by 60% from 37.8million in 1999 to 60.2 million in 2010, and the primary education gross enrolment rates rose from 85% in 2001 to 105% in 2012 across the region.

### Remaining Challenges

- 1) **Many children do not complete primary cycle and MDG2 will not be achieved in majority of countries:** Severe inefficiencies and inequities affecting the education system and exclude children from completing basic secondary education. Today, 21 out of 24 countries in the region have their primary completion rates below 75% and **the goal of universal primary education by 2015 remains out of reach in the region.** Despite progress, countries are still struggling to provide quality education to a rapidly increasing number of children. The education systems suffer from major structural weaknesses and generate poor quality and inequitable outcomes.
- 2) **Out of School Children are still too many:** On average across the region, 38% of school-age children remain out of school (7% in Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, 29% in DRC, 38% in Nigeria, to 55% in Burkina Faso and Mali.). Only half of the primary class 6 children has access to lower secondary school. Only one in four complete the lower secondary education and a mere 14% enter upper secondary school. Compared to the rest of the world where school enrolment increased at a faster pace, out of the 57 million primary school age children currently out of school worldwide, 21.3 million (37%) live in West and Central Africa, nearly half of them in Nigeria (10.3 million) and DRC (2.9 million). 8.6 million children of lower secondary school age are neither in secondary nor in primary.
- 3) **MDG 3 (gender parity in primary and secondary education) will not be achieved, and inequity persists:** GPI (gender parity index) in primary school for the region stands at 0.93 (0.75 in CAR to 1.10 in Congo). Moreover, gender, wealth and geographic disparities intersect to leave girls from the poorest households living in rural areas with a 30% probability of completing primary school only. Gender disparities worsen beyond primary school, with the gender parity index decreasing to 0.82 at lower secondary level, and further down to 0.73 at upper secondary level. Chad and the Central African Republic have the worse gender disparity in secondary education (0.62).
- 4) **The quality of education continues to suffer:** Learning conditions and learnings achievement remain a major challenge. Crowded classes (with 1 teacher for 41 pupils on average, but up to 60 in Chad or CAR) are being taught in sub-standard infrastructures by teachers who lack professional training. On average, only one-third of primary school teachers in the region are trained. As a consequence learning achievements remain poor: test scores in French and Mathematics are characteristically low. In Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso or Mali, only 50% of the 22-44 years old are literate even after six years of schooling. There are many factors underlying poor learning achievements, and among

them, delayed entry as well as frequent grade repetition result in a large proportion of children in primary and lower secondary schools aged up to 17-18 (10% and 24% respectively) who are at high risk to drop out while little gain is observed on learning achievement.

- 5) **Recurrent naturel disasters and complex emergencies disturb education:** Recurring Sahel crisis and recent political crisis in Mali and CAR remain barriers for children's schooling. These situations also affect neighbouring countries with influx of refugees. It was estimated that the Malian crisis affected schooling of 800,000 children with consequences in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania.
- 6) **Lack of capacity in producing reliable educational data:** Many countries in the region do not have reliable and up-to-date education statistics. The most problematic is the age-specific population data which is vital in calculating enrolment ratios. There is often a substantial difference between the data at the country level and the international data.
- 7) **Demographic dividend adversely affect education:** The education systems in the region are struggling to cope with the rapid natural increase in the population of school-age children (2% to 3% p.a), which rose by an overall 35% over the past decade from 133 million children in 2000 to 180 million in 2012 (Figure 1). Rapid increases in the school-age population pose considerable challenges in the education systems as well as household expenditures.

### **Key interventions essential to the continuing agenda for children in WCAR**

- 1) **More coordinated development efforts for children:** 21 out of 24 in the region are GPE countries and the policy level dialogues are done in a more systematic way with better coordination with the active local education groups (LEGs). UNICEF is M/E in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Chad and CAR. In many other countries, UNICEF assumes a role of Coordinating Agency to lead LEGs. UNICEF's role in emergency and fragile states is well recognized and appreciated through the work in GPE. Chad is benefiting from EAC funds at the moment for improving access to education and a few countries including DRC and Ghana are in the process of receiving the support from Qatar.
- 2) **More analytical works for children's education:** Equity analysis in education is used in analysing situations and programming for education. The education bottleneck analysis and SEE model has been a great asset and used in MoRES education. The Education bottleneck analysis has been done in majority of the countries in the region. UNICEF works closely with Pole de Dakar to enrich Country Status Reports. OOSC also enriched the education analyses in the region.
- 3) **UNICEF leadership in the education sector:** In addition to UNICEF's field presence, the capacity to lead with the knowledge from analytical works and field reality make UNICEF an effective leader in the education donor groups at the national level.
- 4) **UNICEF's role in emergencies and fragile states:** In CAR, UNICEF is leading the efforts for Back to School and other emergency and development efforts in education. In Mali plus, UNICEF has been active as a front-line responder for both Mali and refugees in the surrounding countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania). At regional level, UNICEF and Plan lead the education cluster and support the countries effectively.
- 5) **Peacebuilding and education advocacy:** WCAR has five countries with PBEA (Chad, DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone). The country situations and activities vary, and the initiative has been helping these countries. The knowledge and experience from these activities are also helpful to other countries in the region.
- 6) **UNGEI:** The region has over ten countries with active UNGEI. The partnership has evolved into a more dynamic and diverse groups for the national and local level advocacy for girls' education.
- 7) **Schools for Africa for the quality education and learning achievement:** The initiative started in 2006 in ESAR has extended to five countries in WCAR (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone). The initiative has
- 8) **Making schools a safe place:** With the support from the French government, regional and national activities to combat gender-based violence in schools are carried out in Burkina Faso Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger.
- 9) **Analytical works to promote ECD:** ECD Prototype was piloted to strengthen analysis of young children's competencies at the primary entry and also the parental behaviour and knowledge on child development. The prototype also includes a costing model to explore scaling up of preschool and parental education. Pilot countries in 2013 includes Mauritania, Togo, Cape Verde, Sao Tome, Congo, sierra Leone

### **Works to be done in near future**

- 1) **Youth and adolescents:** Education and training is essential in order for the young population to be an asset for Africa's future. The work should be done in partnership with governments, other UN agencies, bilateral agencies as well as AU and RECs (Regional Economic Communities, such as ECOWAS). Strong advocacy and convincing policy options are needed.

- 2) **Post-primary efforts:** While the region still has over 21 million children of primary school age out of school, the demand for post-primary education is increasing rapidly. Work on post-primary education is likely to improve the primary school completion and contribute to the productive citizens in the countries.
- 3) **More efforts in learning:** In the past, access was our major concerns but with the approach of post-2015 development agenda encourages us to do more work on learning. Current education systems are not doing justice to the young children who are in school. Improvements are needed in teacher qualification and motivation, teaching and learning materials, relevance of curricula and syllabi, and time on task, all of which are contributing factors to education.
- 4) **Demographic dividend and education:** Many WCAR countries have not gone through demographic transformation and the increasing school-age population has been the burden for the countries. A study is being carried out since 2013 and education is central part of this study and analysis.
- 5) **Value for Money in education:** While majority of countries devote sizable shares of the government budget to the education sector, the issues of inefficiencies and governance remains. Development partner funding also needs to be looked at the value for money lens.