

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Press Release No: 003/2021

Date: Tuesday, 17 June 2021

Venue: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

**AU/CIEFFA HOSTS INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE TO HONOR THE DAY OF THE
AFRICAN CHILD**



Intergenerational panel comprising of children from AU Member States, a member of the ACEWRC and representatives from UNICEF Burkina Faso, and Plan International Burkina Faso

Ouagadougou, 16 June 2021 – The African Union International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) convened a special intergenerational dialogue in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to celebrate the Day of the African Child (DAC) on the 16th of June under the theme *“Safeguarding the future of our children by ensuring the return of all African girls to school in the context of COVID-19”*.

The Celebration was opened by Dr Rita Bissoonauth, Head, AU/CIEFFA and the First Lady of Burkina Faso, H.E Madam Sika Kaboré followed by the panel discussion moderated by Mrs Simone Ouattara-Yankey, Senior Policy Officer, AU/CIEFFA.

The panel session included three girls and a boy from Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad and Rwanda together with Hon. Theophane Nikyema, a Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Burkina Faso, Mrs Rasmata Ouedraogo, Director of Promotion of Inclusive Education, Girls' Education and Gender, Ministry of National Education, Literacy and Promotion of National Languages (MENAPLN), Burkina Faso, M Clément TRAORE, Education advisor, Plan International, Burkina Faso and Mrs Felicite Sawadogo, Education Expert, UNICEF, Burkina Faso.

Dr Bissoonauth in her welcoming address highlighted that AU/CIEFFA'S theme for DAC 2021 is an extension of the institution's #AfricaEducatesHer campaign, launched in 2020, which is a rallying call for AU Member States and education stakeholders to take actions to ensure that all girls continue learning and return to school and safeguard their rights to access education.

She further invited participants, including members of the diplomatic corps, international development organisations and civil society organisations to take the key points raised in the panel discussion as recommendations for use in decision making in their respective countries when it pertains to children and specially girls' right to education.

In her opening remarks, H.E Madam Sika Kaboré noted the importance of the intergenerational dialogue in including children in the development of the Africa we want. She highlighted that Africa cannot achieve its vision for human development if it does not ensure that all children, girls and boys, are well educated.

“Education must continue and must be recognized as a fundamental right of every child, after the right to life, because having the right to education is having the right to life,” she emphasized.

Key questions among many others asked by the child panellists centered on finding out the strategies and actions being undertaken by the AU Member States to fulfil their commitments to ratify and domesticate the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and how different educational stakeholders are supporting AU Member State's efforts to provide inclusive and quality education for all, especially for marginalized girls and children living with disabilities.

The panel of education experts acknowledged that there are still a lot of gaps that need to be covered to achieve equal access to education for all children but hailed the AU Member States for the progress made in ratifying the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well implementation of national policies as in Burkina Faso.

Hon. T. Nikyema, from the ACERWC underlined that 50 out of 55 states have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child with national policies in place protecting children and their right to education. They have also developed inclusive and

gender-sensitive education policies as a show of commitment to safeguarding girls' education.

Mrs R. Ouedraogo shared some strategies that her Ministry is implementing to re-integrate children living with disabilities in Burkina Faso including providing financial support, teacher training and sensitization of communities and families on the need to get all children in school.

Mrs F. Sawadogo, responded by highlighting some of the campaigns on children's and girls' education being run by UNICEF. She outlined one of their campaigns which comprised getting girls back to school and identifying children who have dropped out of school due to COVID-19, natural disasters or conflicts.

M. C. Traore added that they had identified 7 861 pregnancy cases among school girls in Burkina Faso during the school year 2019-2020, which represents 39 percent of school drop outs in the country. In response to these cases Plan Burkina Faso has launched school-based clubs to teach sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) to young girls and an advocacy campaign targeting families and key education stakeholders focusing on the right of all girls, including pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, to access education.

On behalf of H.E. Mr Stanislas Ouaro, Minister of National Education, Literacy and Promotion of National Languages (MENAPLN), Mrs Yvette Dembele, Technical advisor to MENAPLN, praised the children on the panel and in the room for the enlightening questions they posed and the confidence in which they expressed their expectations for a quality education regardless of the current pandemic or possible crises.

"Your expectations formulated on behalf of all children are shared with all stakeholders and with due respect to your right to education. We hope in return that we showed you what your responsibilities as future leaders will be and the need to prepare now." Stated Mrs Dembele.

To complement the event the AU/CIEFFA also launched the remix theme song for the #AfricaEducatesHer campaign titled *I am an African Girl (Let Her Know)* by Afrie, award-winning Ugandan musician and songwriter featuring soulful Nigerian musician, Ife, and Smarty, an award-winning Hip-Hop artists and UNICEF Burkina Faso Goodwill Ambassador.

The three musicians delivered a powerful performance of the song that speaks on the importance of girls' education and calls for the African society to empower the African girl child. It also calls on African men and boys to stand with girls in their bid to access education to ensure Africa achieves Agenda 2063.

Background on African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa

The African Union International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) is a specialized institution of the African Union under the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology. The Centre aims to promote girls' and



African Union International
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women's education with a view towards their full participation in the eradication of poverty and the edification of a peaceful world for sustainable human development. <http://www.cieffa.org>

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