



Regional Bureau for Education in Africa
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Welcome to the EFA Africa electronic Bulletin

MEETINGS

The eighth Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States: MINEDAF VIII

The eighth Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (MINEDAF VIII) will be held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from 2 to 6 December 2002.

The Conference takes place after important recent developments such as the creation of the African Union and the adoption of NEPAD, which sets a new framework for education in Africa. Furthermore it is held two years after the World Education Forum in Dakar, and coincides with the 2002 deadline of the Dakar Framework for Action for the development of national action plans for Education for All. MINEDAF VIII should thus constitute a symbolic moment for all partners to demonstrate that the collective commitment to Education for All will be sustained.

The purpose of MINEDAF is to contribute to mobilizing world opinion, decision-makers and the international community in favour of the promotion of Education for All. The intended outputs of the conference are a Statement of Commitment and a Plan of Action.

Among the major themes to discuss at the conference are: Changes in education to meet Regional commitments in the context of AU and NEPAD; strategies for universalising Education for children and adolescents; issues and strategies for the promotion of adult education in the context of long life learning; issues and strategies in secondary and higher education; improving the relevance and quality of education, mobilising and managing resources for the implementation of EFA; and regional Co-operation in Education.

For further information, please consult the MINEDAF web site: www.minedaf.org

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NGOs and civil society prepare for MINEDAF VIII in Malawi from 30 September to 2 October 2002.

A Regional Consultation of non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) took place in Lilongwe, Malawi from 30 September to 2 October, with the purpose promoting participation of civil society in education in Africa, and strengthening political will and momentum for partnership building between governments and NGO/CSOs in preparation of MINEDAF VIII.

A total of about 100 civil society participants (international and regional NGOs/Networks and National NGOs/CSOs/networks working in the field of education) discussed and validated a document on civil society perspectives on EFA in Africa, which include an assessment of civil society participation in EFA processes and recommendations on advancing the EFA goals in African societies. The document will be one of the official working documents in the MINEDAF VIII conference. Furthermore they prepared the participation of NGOs/CSOs in the MINEDAF general sessions, thematic panels and a Special Session between Ministers and NGOs/CSOs.

The organisers of the meeting were the government of Malawi, the UNESCO Secretariat, members of the Africa Group of UNESCO and the Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA (CCNGO/EFA)

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COUNTRY ACTIONS

International literacy day at BREDA: an initiative to be pursued

Like in other regions of the world, the Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA), in collaboration with the Senegalese government, chose a concrete and symbolic way of celebrating **International Literacy Day**. The event, held at BREDA office on Friday 6 September, was chaired by the Minister of Technical Education, Professional Training, Literacy and National Languages who received an important set of literacy materials from the BREDA Director. The said donation was meant for the 10 Educational Research Centres (ERC). The Minister further received, on behalf of his ministry in charge of preparing the national literacy week, a set of self-training books for State officials and posters for the awareness campaign scheduled from 8 to 14 September 2002

The ceremony organised to deliver the said books was meant to provide material support to the ERC and the Department of Literacy and Basic Education, which plays a crucial role in the fight against illiteracy among the Senegalese population. These books will enable a wider

public to improve and complete their acquisitions in arithmetic and reading and to sensitise the public about the importance of literacy.

The theme focussed on this year for the celebration of the International Literacy Day in Senegal is: « **National languages for local governance of quality** », while at the international level, the following theme was dwelt on: « **Literacy, source of freedom: a challenge for the 21st century**».

Today, there is no doubt that illiteracy is constantly rolling back in the world (from 22.4 to 20.3% in 5 years) and this regression is even more encouraging as concerns adult women, particularly in Africa. These changes are however extremely slow and there is need to redouble our efforts if we want to take up the Dakar 2002 bet.

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Integration of health issues in the National Action Plans

'If the bodies of the learners are healthy, then their minds will be more receptive to learning. By ensuring the health and education of our people, you are offering them the strongest tool of all for the eradication of poverty.' Koïchiro Matsuura, Director General UNESCO

For UNESCO, an organisation with an educational mandate, health has become a crucial issue. As stated by the Director General: 'Health is an essential condition for teaching and effective learning, and is also an outcome of quality education. Combating diseases, therefore, must be a key element in efforts to achieve **Education for All**, and health must be high on the agenda of the education sector at all levels'.

It is therefore a priority for UNESCO to **ensure that health issues are adequately addressed in the National Action Plans** now being developed by governments. For instance to ensure this, UNESCO/BREDA has provided technical assistance to Guinea Bissau during a workshop with national authorities that took place from 24-29 June 2002 in Gabu. A school health expert from Senegal participated at this meeting and assisted the national authorities in identifying, and effectively addressing, health and nutrition problems.

In the National Action Plan from Guinea Bissau, the provision of food to schoolchildren has been foreseen through school cantinas supported by the World Food Programme. Because micronutrient deficiencies among school children are known to affect school performance, an effort to eliminate such deficiencies is a valid, and probably necessary strategy for achieving the EFA goals.

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The process of preparation of the EFA-NAP nearly completed in Liberia

The following activities relating to the preparation and finalising of the EFA plan for Liberia have been completed:

An EFA plan preparation has been completed, covering the education sector. Political consultation with validation has been done, and new legal steps have been taken for EFA since Dakar. Additionally, the EFA Forum has been established. A number of EFA consultations with the law makers have taken place, especially the Legislative Committees on Education, as well as the civil society organizations.

The Technical preparation of the plan has been completed, taking into account education sector analysis, macro-economic and social framework, a long-term strategic plan for education in general and EFA in particular, as well as a medium-term operational plan for education in general(MTP) and EFA in particular.

It is important to add that the Education Co-ordination Committee set up by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, comprising members from the NGOs and UN agencies that are involved with the education sector is also reviewing the Draft EFA Action Plan for finalization. UNICEF\Liberia has taken the lead to provide technical and material assistance in getting the draft finalized.

The first meeting of the EFA Forum was held on August 27, 2002, to brief members on the EFA and the National Action Plan. The second meeting took place, September 5, 2002 to discuss launching possibility of the Forum, and it is expected to be launched by 15 September 2002.

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EDUCATION IN AFRICA

UNESCO pledges co-operation with G8 on Universal Education

Dakar, Senegal (PANA) - Dakar - 09/07/2002 - UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura has written to Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien in the aftermath of the G8 Summit in Kananaskis pledging the UN agency's co-operation with the group of the world's industrialised countries in their support of Universal Education.

Congratulating Chretien for "the highly successful outcome" of the Summit, Matsuura said it pointed to "accelerating progress towards Universal Primary Education." "I welcome in particular the G8's strong endorsement of the report of its Task Force on Education and its commitment to increase significantly, bilateral funding for developing countries that have demonstrated a strong and credible policy and financial commitment to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE)," a UNESCO release quoted the Director General as saying.

"This reinforces the Monterrey Consensus and provides the financial backing for supporting countries selected for the fast-track initiative for achieving UPE," Matsuura added. He pointed out that "this represents an important step in meeting the pledge we made at the World Education Forum at Dakar (Senegal) two years ago, that no countries seriously committed to Education for All (EFA) will be thwarted in the achievement of this goal by a lack of resources." Recalling that "UNESCO continues to play its assigned role in promoting the broad vision of EFA as enunciated by the international community at Dakar," Matsuura said: "We look forward to working closely with the G8 in translating the pledges made at the Kananaskis Summit into reality".

He also expressed the hope that UNESCO would "sustain the constructive engagement of the G8 in education, particularly basic education, all the way up to the target date of 2015 for achieving the goals of EFA."

African governments urged to introduce bursaries for girls

Nairobi, Kenya (PANA) - Nairobi - 10/07/2002 - To meet the educational requirements of all needy girls, African governments are urged to replicate the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) bursary scheme and other financing mechanisms. FAWE's executive director Penina Mlama told at the end of the group's 5th general assembly in Nairobi in July 2002, that access to education for an increasing number was threatened by poverty.

The assembly brought together 31 FAWE members, 15 African education ministers, 21 representatives of donor agencies and 33 FAWE national chapters. Among other things, the meeting discussed the progress of the education for all (EFA) policy by the year 2015 as outlined in the Dakar declaration of 2000. Mlama disclosed that FAWE has attempted to influence policy in favour of girls' education, adding that it had managed to convince a number of countries to highlight some of its concerns into their education policies and plans. For example, several countries including Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal and Burkina Faso have adopted policies that allow pregnant girls to return to school after delivery, Mlama disclosed.

Mlama bemoaned the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on society noting that it had dealt a particularly big blow to the education systems throughout sub-Saharan Africa and more so to the girl child. "The majority of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa are occurring among young people; especially women aged 15 to 24. Girls bear the brunt of all these negative aspects including poverty, teenage pregnancy, cultural practices such as early marriages and sexual harassment," she lamented.

Senegal to begin teaching local languages in primary schools

Dakar, Senegal (PANA) – Dakar- 9/07/2002 - Education authorities in Senegal have decided to begin teaching national languages in primary schools beginning next October, The Division for the Promotion of National Languages (DPLN) has announced.

In the first year of primary education the languages will be exclusively taught during the first semester to enable pupils to read, write and do arithmetic in them. French will be introduced during the second semester, but it will only be taught orally," Babacar Diouf, director of DPLN told PANA. Diouf explained that French and the national languages would be taught

simultaneously beginning from the second year of primary school, and he added that the teaching of national languages "will enable us to improve the acquisition of French in our schools. We want to make the cohabitation between French, the country's official language, and our national languages to be a dynamic one."

Senegal has 27 local languages, 11 of which have the status of national languages after having been codified, DPLN said. National languages have been taught at public kindergarten schools and the University of Dakar since the early 1970s.

World Bank supports education in DR Congo

Kinshasa, RD Congo (PANA) - Kinshasa - 22/08/2002 - The Democratic Republic of Congo is among the countries that should benefit from the "Accelerated Programme", launched by the World Bank in favour of Education For All (EFA), the UNESCO Kinshasa Office has announced. The release issued from the said office states, that the new programme intends to concentrate EFA funding efforts in 18 countries considered as the most favoured which fulfil the required conditions, and to intensify assistance to 5 other countries, namely Bangladesh, Tanzania, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and DR Congo.

Quoting UNESCO Director General, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, the release further pointed out that if increased support to education should depend on a large-scale reform of the governance system, then education could be unfairly penalised. It would, thus be preferable to link assistance to education to the reform of the education sector, its good governance and transparency, the same source states.

Forum on education to be held in Congo soon

Brazzaville, Congo (PANA) - Brazzaville - 08/08/2002 - A Forum on education will be organised in Congo, with the aim of formulating reform strategies for the Congolese education system, the adviser in higher education at the ministry of primary, secondary and higher Education, Mr. Elenka Camara, disclosed.

« This forum could be held in November, at the earliest, and in the first quarter of 2003, at the latest," Mr. Elenka Camara said, adding that the purpose of the meeting is to identify efforts to undertake, the preparation of a national education programme by 2010, reforms to be effected per sector. It will be organised by the Congolese government with support from UNESCO. As regards basic education, the themes selected for discussion include the improvement of learning quality, youth and adult literacy and that of dropouts of the education system. At the secondary level, participants will examine education-training policies, and those relative to reconstruction and school equipment, partnership dynamics and education funding. Teaching conditions will also be looked into, the same source said.

A technical guide to fighting poverty recommended

Bamako, Mali (PANA) - Bamako - 09/08/2002 - The national co-ordinators of the UNESCO network of associated schools has recommended in Bamako the translation into French and several African languages of a technical guide titled « Feed people, fight famine ».

The recommendation was made following a sub-regional meeting held in August on teaching materials between UNESCO intermediaries and teachers from four West African countries of Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. Participants also recommended the use of the guide as new teaching tool to enable pupils to combat famine. During the meeting organised by UNESCO, development partners like UNICEF, FAO and WFP pledged to support the project to make easier its implementation in West African educational systems.