

BASIC EDUCATION IN AFRICA PROGRAMME INFORMATION PAPER

BACKGROUND

The UNESCO Basic Education in Africa Programme (BEAP) has been formulated as a result of a number of activities recently conducted under the auspices of international organisations in Africa. These include Regional Seminars on Reforming Secondary Education in Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 2005 organised by UNESCO/BREDA and Accra, Ghana, April 2007 organised by the World Bank) and the Regional Workshop on Extending Basic Education in Africa conducted in Kigali in September 2007.

The last activity referred to above addressed two major themes within the context of basic education in Africa:

- 1 The extension of basic education provision to a minimum of nine years, with emphasis on a one- or two-year pre-school education.
- 2 The incorporation into the curriculum of skills and competencies that would prepare young people for work.

At the conclusion of the Kigali workshop, the delegates had input to and endorsed the 'Kigali Call for Action' (see Appendix 1). This paper summarised the urgent issues facing curriculum developers and education administrators as they face the challenges of preparing students for satisfying and productive lives in 21st century Africa. It also encouraged all agencies and organisations to mobilise and focus its resources in a coordinated way to meet country needs.

Very significantly, an underlying theme of the Kigali Call for Action was urgency – a clear message that Ministries are aware of the need for change within their systems and that UNESCO and its partner organisations want to provide support as soon and as efficiently as possible.

The BEAP is an implementation instrument of the Kigali Call for Action. In interpreting the Kigali Call for Action, the programme's design and plan are built on a number of important fundamental principles, including:

- 1 Change must be initiated as a matter of urgency.
- 2 The supporting effort of UNESCO and its partner agencies must be coordinated, efficient and focused on country needs.
- 3 Any change initiated by the programme must be sustainable.
- 4 In the spirit of South-South cooperation, the programme should encourage the exchange of experience and expertise between the countries involved in the programme and between those countries and others in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The programme in its early phases also acknowledges the significance of the ADEA Biennale to be held in Maputo, Mozambique in May 2008. In its early pilot phase, the programme aims to develop country-specific plans and structures that demonstrate the enthusiasm and commitment of both Ministries and UNESCO to well-planned, well-documented and sustainable strategies that will lead to improved learning outcomes for students and models for change from which other countries can benefit. It is intended that pilot countries report on their progress towards these goals to potential partners at the ADEA Biennale.

The first pilot country will be The Gambia while Rwanda and Ethiopia will act as observers. In this process, The Gambia will draft plans for the implementation of a program focusing on

its highest priorities in basic education. Rwanda and Ethiopia will observe the process and begin consideration of their future participation.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The objectives of the BEAP are to

- 1 Support the improvement of existing curriculum for Basic Education by
 - a. extending basic education where necessary to a minimum of nine years with emphasis on a one- or two-year pre-school or kindergarten before the commencement of formal schooling
 - b. ensuring that curriculum is designed in a modern way with an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills, generic competencies, values and attitudes outcomes
 - c. including early childhood education within the conceptualisation of Basic Education wherever possible
- 2 Incorporate within curriculum products and methodologies, wherever practicable, the latest curriculum-related initiatives and research (including, for example, those arising from the Enhancing Learning programme and the work and life skills study undertaken by the IBE under contract to GTZ, entrepreneurship education, Maths, Science and Technology and career guidance)
- 3 Supplement existing in-country resources and initiatives so that the improvements and priorities identified by pilot countries can be addressed. To this end, the BEAP will encourage the participation of a wide range of partners to ensure that technical expertise, funds and relevant aspects of current initiatives are coordinated and focused on country needs and that issues of sustainability will be addressed
- 4 Build in-country capacity in such areas as
 - a. curriculum development knowledge and methodologies
 - b. curriculum related, system wide planning
 - c. Teacher training programmes
 - d. Assessment, examinations and certification
- 5 Support pilot country teams in assessing the funding implications of implementing improvements to Basic Education provision
- 6 Encourage South-South cooperation and sharing of available expertise
- 7 Ensure a proper ownership at national level of the BEAP

PHASES

There will be two phases in the BEAP, the Pilot Phase and the broader Implementation Phase.

1 Pilot

a. Summary

The Pilot Phase will involve three countries which will pilot planning and implementation processes with a view to establishing best practice in curriculum change management in an African context.

Broad timeline for the Pilot Phase will involve a needs analysis and the development of a four part strategic plan for each country. The implementation of those plans will occur in the ensuing period.

b. Objectives of the Pilot Phase

- 1 Consult and involve all stakeholders in a selected number of 3-5 countries
- 2 Identify priorities to be addressed with initial focus on
 - a. Exploring the concept of curriculum framework and its possible application to existing curriculum policy and organisation
Note – Issues to be discussed and clarified include:
 - Definition and purpose of a curriculum framework
 - Existing curriculum structures and responsibilities in basic education
 - Integrating policy and practice through a curriculum framework
 - b. Entrepreneurship education in the curriculum
Note – Issues to be discussed and clarified include:
 - Definition and scope of entrepreneurship education
 - Models for integrating entrepreneurship education into the basic education curriculum,
 - Implications for curriculum support materials and teacher training
 - c. Skills development and apprenticeships as components of accredited curriculum
Note – Issues to be discussed and clarified include:
 - Definitions of skills, competencies and related concepts (such as generic work skills, vocational skills, life skills, learning skills)
 - Models for integrating skills into basic education curriculum
 - Definitions of apprenticeships, traineeships and related concepts
 - Issues in school based apprentice/trainee- employer relationships and on job training, dual accreditation of school curriculum, integration of school based courses with national training and qualifications framework, etc.
- 3 Develop programs that can be supported by the programme and will address these priorities such as
 - a program to evaluate current curriculum structures and organisation, and to develop a new/revised curriculum framework

- entrepreneurship education program as a curriculum component for
 - (i) supporting the BEAP
 - (ii) linking the current curriculum to revised curriculum and its implementation through training teachers in new approaches, and
 - (iii) integrating entrepreneurship education and skills development and apprenticeships
- 4 Build on and facilitate the implementation of existing strategic plans by identifying areas for system improvement and removing impediments to progress.

i. Expected Outcomes

As a result of the first activity,

- Amended and endorsed Implementation Plan and Road Map
- Confirmed programme budget
- Approved general methodology
- General understanding of the education systems of the pilot countries, the goals and general objectives of each country's reform agenda
- Identified capacity gaps for strengthening for a proper implementation of the Road Map

2 Broader Implementation

In the Broader Implementation Phase, the processes developed in Phase 1 will be applied and adapted to the needs of a range of other countries.

The scope and methodology for Broader Implementation Phase will be determined by the success of the Pilot Phase both in bringing about substantial and sustainable improvements in the pilot countries and in attracting additional funding from donor agencies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Integral to the planning of the BEAP will be a continuous Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This strategy will include the provision of progress reports against the Programme Plan at significant points during the Pilot Phase.

APPENDIX 1 – Kigali Call for Action

An expanded vision of basic education for Africa

HIGH LEVEL seminar on basic education

Kigali – September 25th to 28th 2007

THE KIGALI CALL FOR ACTION

Since Jomtien (1990) and after Dakar's Forum on EFA (2000) most of the stakeholders have invested mainly in primary education, and carried out reforms in lower and upper secondary levels without looking at education as a system in a holistic manner.

Recently, UNESCO and its Education partners, among others, the African Union, ADEA and the World Bank, have supported different initiatives and have organized regional consultations on important themes, including Regional Seminars on Reforming Secondary Education in Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 2005 organised by UNESCO/BREDA and Accra, Ghana, April 2007 organised by the World Bank), and came to the conclusion that a thorough, sector-wide reform of basic education in African countries is required. Introducing a basic education of a minimum of 9 years, that is holistic, inclusive, coherent and seamless, and giving priority to the preparation of clear policies and national plans towards its implementation is considered urgent for the achievement of EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This reform consists of two major points:

- A necessary extension of basic education to a minimum of 9-10 years duration viewed in a holistic vision, and
- An indispensable reform of basic education, responding to the evolution and exigencies of the African societies. UNESCO and its partners have supported initiatives to reform education systems in Africa, and more recently have articulated visions and formulated proposals to mobilize national authorities in charge of education to commit themselves to promoting the development of a holistic, integrated and inclusive competency based spiral curriculum framework relevant to the needs of children and youth in Africa for an uninterrupted period of 9 to 10 years for life-long learning.

The 115 participants from 15 countries, including Ministers of Education or their representatives, Directors and Policy makers, curriculum specialists, teacher trainers, United Nations officials, development partners and civil society organisations, gathered in Kigali, Rwanda from 25th to 28th September, pledged commitment to reorienting and/or creating a new architecture or strengthening efforts towards expanding basic education in Africa.

Several presentations on overviews, experiences and perspectives on enlarging and expanding basic education based on the right to education and democratisation of education from countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America enriched the discussions, mainly, focusing on critical issues of content, developing curriculum frameworks for basic education that are

skills and competency-based, as well as on strategies for mobilization of financial partners to ensure full implementation.

The expanded basic education will provide the knowledge base and competencies to the learners to improve their lives and facilitate their entry into the world of work, prepare them through skills training to contribute to social and economic development of their country and/or continue to further studies. The participants expressed commitment to creating the necessary conditions for establishing a minimum of 9-10 year basic education in their respective countries, both in formal and non-formal settings, and identified a range of important priorities for national, regional and international actions.

All the participants commit themselves to the following:

I. NATIONAL ACTIONS

To reform education systems in Africa and in line with the decisions taken by the Ministers present at the Conference on Secondary Education in Ghana (Accra, April 2007), we urge

Governments

- To launch a reform and expansion of basic education making it a seamless system based on a holistic and inclusive approach to achieve EFA goals and MDGs;
- To adopt and apply appropriate legal and policy frameworks to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education for every learner;
- To ensure that the national educational objectives respond to local and global challenges;
- To create the necessary policy environment that will enable the introduction and/or scaling up the existing good practices in offering basic education through a clear understanding, articulation of visions and shared conviction among all stakeholders on the importance of a free and compulsory basic education, of at least 9 years, which allows uninterrupted period of learning from early childhood to end of the basic education cycle;
- To prepare national plans, guidelines, strategies and strengthen public-private and civil society partnerships to support the full implementation of the policy;
- To develop or reform their national curriculum and curriculum frameworks, methodologies and assessment tools that are flexible, adaptable, inclusive and promote a solid foundation for knowledge acquisition, skill development and life-long learning;
- To train planners, managers, curriculum developers and implementers (teachers, facilitators, teaching/learning material developers) on approaches that enhance learning, such as the use of research findings on neuroscience, mental health,

nutrition guidance and counselling and teaching using the most appropriate language of instruction and developing the education curriculum through national and regional institutions such as universities, research institutes and centres of excellence

- To promote communication and advocacy strategies, including dialogue within and among all sectors (education, finance, planning);
- To increase existing resources allocated to education, mobilise additional resources from public and private sectors and development partners.

II INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS

UNESCO

- To distribute to all Member States in Africa the *Kigali Call for Action* and the Final Report of the Conference;
- To promote education as a right based on all the principles embedded in UNESCO and other UN conventions;
- To promote the African Community of Practice in Curriculum Development as a platform to facilitate policy and social dialogue and collective action on education and curriculum issues linked to the reform of Basic Education and to the attainment of an inclusive, skills and competencies-based curriculum;
- To provide technical assistance to countries for standard setting, quality assurance, and developing monitoring and learning assessment tools;
- To accompany participating countries in their education reform process for the expansion of basic education (HQ, IBE, UNEVOC, BRED, IICBA, FOs);
- To advocate and assist countries in formulating legal, policy and curriculum frameworks for the expansion of basic education of 9-10years;
- To provide technical assistance and reinforced support for developing the capacity of education planners, managers, curriculum and assessment tool developers, teachers and teaching/learning material developers (IBE, UIL, UNEVOC, IICBA, FOs);
- To provide technical assistance and policy advice to countries in training of teacher trainers, and professional development of teachers and facilitators for inclusive basic education through the TTISSA (BRED, IICBA, HQ)

- To mobilize Global partnership under the E-9, EFA flagships, African Union Second Decade of Education for Africa (HQ, BREDA, COMEDAF, Regional Economic Communities);
- To engage in advocacy and awareness raising through meetings, the use of ICTs and other channels around a broad concept of Inclusive Education to attain all the EFA goals, and as a preparatory activity of the 48th Session of the International Conference of Education (ICE 2008) (HQ, IBE, BREDA);
- To facilitate cooperation within the Africa Region and with other Regions through information and experience exchange, study visits, networking and south-south cooperation;
- To facilitate networking of research institutes, universities, professional associations and development partners committed to developing education in Africa
- To organize roundtables of partners at Regional and Global levels
- To promote regular consultations and collaboration among all education stakeholders at all levels in both formal and non-formal education.

III. UN AGENCIES

- To work together with the UN System and in the framework of UNDAF to develop the necessary synergies to enhance learning through interventions in areas such as health, nutrition, water and sanitation (WASH), HIV/AIDS, environment, peace and school humanitarian emergency interventions, in both formal and non-formal education.

IV. ADEA

- To set up a Regional education network in collaboration with other such regional networks in other Regions, and in coordination with UNESCO African Community of Practice in Curriculum Development;
- To disseminate the *Kigali Call for Action* in the ADEA biennale of 2007, the Education Ministers' meeting and other important meetings;
- To foster political dialogue, analytical research, information and dissemination on basic education of a minimum of 9 years;
- To support all efforts in setting up a basic education cycle of at least 9 years in both formal and non-formal education in African countries.

V. WORLD BANK AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

- To support Governments in implementing basic education policies and national plans, as well as provide policy advice and technical assistance to countries for the design of new policies, adopt feasible financial strategies and other aspects of national plans to execute the reforms and new policy orientations;
- To provide the necessary financial support to all countries that have developed national policy/reform and national plans and introduced a minimum of 9-10 years basic education.

VI. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS/COMMUNITY

- To network and promote social dialogue to facilitate the sharing of information and experiences on a 9-10 years basic education;
- To reinforce the relationship between schools and communities, support non-formal education and create synergies between formal and non-formal education.