



ACCESS TO QUALITY ECED SERVICES WORKING GROUP

QUARTERLY REFLECTIVE MEETING

THURSDAY, 11TH AUGUST 2022
15.00-16.45 HOURS EAT, GMT +3

1.0 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

A child's earliest years are the most critical period for development, and therefore children need access to supportive and stimulating environment during their early years. Evidence from a range of disciplines confirms that a child's earliest years are a critical time to invest in building foundational skills. Children's brains develop faster and are more malleable during Early Childhood Development (ECD) period especially within the first 5 years. In this regard, children need a range of inputs during this critical period, including nurturing care, which includes adequate healthcare and nutrition, protection from violence including stress, responsive caregiving and opportunities for early stimulation and learning (Black et al. 2017; World Health Organization 2018).

Over the past few years, great progress has been made in improving Human Capital Outcomes on the African continent. Countries across the continent have developed policies, plans, resources, and programmes to strengthen and improve the knowledge and skills base of their youth. However, more still needs to be done ensure that education systems in the region meet the needs of a fast changing national, regional, continental, and global work environment. In this regard, the African Union (AU) developed the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA16-25)-A strategic intervention for realizing the African Union's (AU's) vision for education as articulated in Agenda 2063 which calls for universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education, ensuring that no child is left behind, and that the potential of every child is nurtured. CESA 16-25 emphasizes the need to "reorient Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels". The need to focus on improved educational outcomes that are relevant to a fast-changing world cannot be overemphasized.

CESA16-25 identifies ECED as a neglected sub-sector that deserves special attention. Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) is recognized as the pillar for future learning and identified as the next frontier if Africa is to realize sustained quality education and training. This is important since much attention continued to be placed on improving the efficiency of the education system through curriculum reforms, continuous learning, strengthened capacity of teachers and improved infrastructure at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, with less attention given to ECED sub-sector despite being the foundations upon which an effective and efficient system must be established. In this regard, the African Union Commission established and launched ECED Cluster was on 4th September 2018 to support the implementation of CESA 16 -25 objectives related to the early years.



BOX 1: Specific objectives of CESA ECED Cluster

1. **Intensified action to improve equitable access to quality ECED programmes and services.** This objective contributes towards the achievement of: CESA 16-25 SO 2: Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure, and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy, and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, to expand access to quality education).
2. **Revitalize the ECED workforce to ensure quality and relevance.** This objective contributes towards achievement of i) CESA 16-25 SO1: Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education ii. CESA 16 -25 SO
3. **Increased advocacy to strengthen political will for policy development and sustainable implementation.** This objective contributes towards achievement of CESA 16-25 SO1: Formulate appropriate policies conducive to expansion of ECED
4. **Strengthened partnership and collaboration across all key stakeholders including state and non-state actors.** This objective contributes towards achievement of CESA 16-25 SO12: Set up a coalition of stakeholders to facilitate and support activities resulting from the implementation of CESA 16-25.
5. **Knowledge generation and sharing to support improved efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance.** This objective contributes towards achievement of CESA 16-25 S09: Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research, and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness) and CESA 16-25 S011: Build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and improve the management of education system as well as the statistic tool, through capacity building for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and usage.

2.0 STRUCTURE OF ECED CLUSTER

The Cluster is chaired by the African Union Commission, with the Government of Mauritius, which is also the Coordinator of the Inter Country Quality Node on Early Childhood Education as the Co-Chair. The African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) acts as coordinator and Secretariat to the Cluster. To operationalize the cluster and further streamline operations, during the Cluster's first technical committee, held in Mauritius, four working groups were formed namely: i) Policy, advocacy, and communication; ii) governance and accountability; iii) access to quality ECED services; and iv) knowledge generation and dissemination. Each working group has a Member State serving as chair and a development partner as the convener. The chairs and conveners of each working group as well as AUC, AfECN and Inter-Country Quality Node (ICQN) together form the technical Committee.

3.0 ACCESS TO QUALITY ECED SERVICES WORKING GROUP

Access to quality Early childhood Education and Development is critical to sustainable development due to its multiplier effects on child development but also on socio-economic development of a



country. However, expanding access without quality may not realize positive child outcomes. This calls for concerted efforts targeted at expanding access to ECED services with quality.

BOX 2: Objectives of the Quality Improvement Working Group

Objective 1: Intensify action to improve equitable access to quality ECED programmes and services. Realization of this objective contributes to achievement of:

- **CESA 16-25 Sub Objective 2:** Build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure, and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy, and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, to expand access to quality education.
- **CESA 16-25 Sub Objective 5:** CESA 16 -25 SO 5: Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity.

Objective 2: Improve Quality of ECED systems, programmes, and services. Realization of this objective contributes to achievement of:

- **CESA 16 - 25 Sub Objective 1:** Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education.
- **CESA 16 - 25 Sub Objective 3:** Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems.
- **CESA 16 - 25 Sub Objective 4:** Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration.
- **CESA 16 -25 Sub Objective 7:** Strengthen the science and the math curricula an disseminate scientific knowledge and the culture of science in the African Society.
- **CESA 16 - 25 Sub Objective 5:** Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity.

3.1 QUARTERLY REFLECTIVE MEETING

Quarterly Working Group meeting is a forum provided for, in the working group Terms of Reference and conducted every three months to review progress and achievement of the working group as well as challenges and lessons learnt. It also provides opportunities for members to share significant updates including sharing of knowledge on topical issues. It is based on the above that the Core Team of the Working Group at a meeting held virtually on 12th April 2022 to discuss strategies of operationalizing the Disability Committee considered the need to hold a quarterly reflective with members of the Access to quality working group to update members on the key activities including introduction of the disability committee. It is based on the aforementioned that Quarterly Reflective Meeting with members of the Access to Quality ECED Services working group is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 11th August 2022: 3:00 - 4:45 PM EAT, GMT +3.

3.1.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the meeting is to provide update on the progress of the working group. The meeting will also provide a platform to share experience on implementation of Nurturing Care services in



humanitarian settings in Uganda. Specifically, the meeting is intended to achieve three (3) key objectives:

1. Provide update on the progress of the working group.
2. Provide a brief about the Disability committee and its role in advocating for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education in the region.
3. Share to share experience on implementation of Nurturing Care services in humanitarian settings in Uganda.

3.1.2 Expected Outcomes

1. A report on the activities of the working groups
2. Members feedback on the Terms of Reference of the disability committee
3. Direction/resolutions on strategies of deepening engagement of members to accelerate access to quality, inclusive and equitable ECED services on the African continent.

3.1.3 Methodology

The meeting will be virtual and consist of power-point presentations, plenary discussions as well as question and answer sessions.

AGENDA: Thursday, 11st August 2022: 3:00 - 4:45 PM EAT, GMT +3

| TIME | ACTIVITY | SPEAKER |
|-------------|--|--|
| 3:00 - 3:05 | AfECN Advocacy Video | AfECN |
| 3:05 - 3:10 | Welcome Remarks | Tenguella Ba, Chair, AU CESA ECED Cluster's Access to Quality Services |
| 3:10-3:15 | Opening Remarks | Josephine Ferla, Convener, AU CESA ECED Cluster's Access to Quality Services |
| 3.15 - 3:30 | Update of 2022 Activities | Damaris Wambua Co-Convener, AU CESA ECED Cluster's Access to Quality Services |
| 3:30 - 3:45 | Introduction and an overview of the Disability Committee | Given Dhaka & Moses Abiero, AfECN |
| 3:45 - 4:05 | Knowledge Exchange: Experience on implementation of Nurturing Care services in humanitarian settings in Uganda. | Save the Children, Uganda |
| 4:05 - 4:20 | Q & A Session | Joan Mutinda, AfECN |
| 4:20- 4:30 | Way Forward and Next Steps | Josephine Ferla, Convener, AU CESA ECED Cluster's Access to Quality Services |
| 4:40 - 4:45 | Closing Remarks | Hien Lucien Co-chair, AU CESA ECED Cluster Access to Quality Services Working Group |