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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

**AFRICAN UNION CONTINENTAL EDUCATION STRATEGY
FOR AFRICA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER
(AU CESA ECED CLUSTER)**

**Theme: *“Delivering Quality Inclusive Early
Childhood Care and Development (IECD) Services in
Africa and Asia Pacific Regions”***

Thursday 26th January 2023

Provisional Concept Note



**AU CESA
ECED CLUSTER**



AfECN
Africa Early Childhood Network



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood

1.0 Introduction/Background

Available evidence shows that there are nearly 240 million¹ children with disabilities in the world. These children often face attitudinal, physical, and institutional barriers that result in multi-dimensional poverty, exclusion, and marginalization. A UNICEF Report² indicates that children with disabilities are 25 % less likely to receive early stimulation and responsive care; 25% less likely to attend early childhood education; 16 % less likely to read or be read to at home; 49 % more likely to have never attended school.

When children living with disabilities miss out, on the opportunity to access necessary services during early years, their ability to realize their full developmental potential is compromised. This is critical as access to disability-inclusive ECD services promote equal opportunities for children to attend, learn, develop and participate in learning and social activities; respects and celebrates diversity and differences; value all children equally³ There are both supply and demand side barriers that lead to exclusion of these children from services. Promoting inclusive ECED services is the preferred approach as this respects and celebrates diversity; aims to remove barriers to and promote equal opportunities for learning and developing.

Through Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25), the African Union has been explicit in its commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable opportunities for children with disabilities. Agenda 2063, which is the continent's strategic framework, aspires for a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all and ending inequalities in opportunities. It also aspires for Africa, to be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man is left behind.

In response to Agenda 2063, the CESA 16-25, was developed as a strategic intervention for realizing the African Union's (AU's) vision for education. The strategy is driven by the desire to set up a "qualitative system of education and training to provide the African continent with efficient human resources adapted to African core values and therefore capable of achieving the vision and ambitions of the African Union. One of the principles that guide the implementation of the Continental Strategy targets provision of holistic, inclusive and equitable education with good conditions for lifelong learning for sustainable development. Strategic Objective 2 of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) is to build, rehabilitate, preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a conducive learning environment for all.

In 2018, the Heads of the African Union Member States signed the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa. The protocol further confirms the commitment of the African Union Member States to strive towards promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human and people's rights, by all persons with disabilities. One such fundamental right, is the right to education for every person with disability. With this commitment comes the obligation of the AU, member states and all stakeholders to ensure that children with disabilities are provided with opportunities for inclusive early childhood care and development and education.

To implement CESA 16-25, the African Union Commission (AUC) adopted an Implementation Platform that constitutes twelve thematic clusters. In 2018, the ECED Cluster was established to support implementation of CESA 16 -25 objectives related to the early years. 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 ICQN together form the technical Committee.

2.0 About the Webinar

¹ As above

² Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities, UNICEF

³ <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/quality-inclusive-early-childhood-education>

In June 2022, the Access to Quality ECED Services working group established a sub-committee to support and advance policy discussions and advocacy around inclusive Early Childhood Development (IECD). In this regard, the Quality Working Group in collaboration with the Knowledge Generation and Dissemination Group plans to jointly convene a webinar focusing on inclusive early childhood care and development. The webinar to be held on 26 January 2023, will interrogate issues in the delivery of quality Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Development services in Africa. The webinar builds on the findings of the Disability Landscape Analysis in Africa, and presents an opportunity to draw lessons from practice in delivering IECD services on the African Continent as well as Asia-Pacific regions.

This webinar will address existing challenges such as issues of access and quality in childcare and IECD services for children with disabilities, and spotlight challenges faced by parents/caregivers of children with disabilities. The webinar will also provide insights into some of the innovative interventions in place for advancing IECD for children with disabilities. The event will benefit from insights from experts, practitioners, researchers and a parent living with a child with disabilities.

2.1 Objectives of the Webinar

The webinar to be jointly convened by the Access to Quality and the Knowledge Generation and Dissemination Working Groups, will be held on 26th January 2023, under the theme:

“Delivering Quality Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Development (IECD) Services in Africa and Asia Pacific Regions.”

The objectives of the webinar are;

- Disseminate the findings and recommendations from the Africa Region Disability Landscape Analysis Report.
- Share implementation/field experiences from Africa & Asia Pacific regions and draw on best practice in delivering IECD programmes and services to children with special needs.
- Identify key issues in relation to inclusion for future research, innovations, policy advocacy, strategy formulation and programme implementation by various stakeholders.

2.2 Expected Outcomes:

The expected outcome of the webinar will be increased knowledge on (i) the status and provision of IECD services to children with disabilities and (ii) policy related issues and innovative intervention strategies for delivering IECD to disadvantaged groups.

2.3 Methodology:

The Webinar will be held through virtual means and consist of power-point presentations, panel discussions and plenary/question and answer session.

There will be keynote speakers from Africa and Asia region to share latest research/analysis in relation to disability inclusion in their regions. Followed by a panel discussion which will bring in perspectives from 3 country settings (Kenya, Uganda, and from the Asia Pacific region); and bring out the voice from real-life experience of a parent of a child living with a disability.

2.4 Participants:

The Webinar will bring together members of both the Access to Quality and Knowledge Generation Working Groups and other working groups; experts, field level practitioners, researchers, government policy makers, development partners and other stakeholders.

3.0Agenda: The programme for the Webinar will be as follows:

DAY /TIME	ACTIVITY	SPEAKER
Thursday 26 January 2023 11.30 EAT, GMT +3		
11.30 – 11.35	AfECN Advocacy Video	AfECN
11.35 - 11:40	Welcome Remarks	Tenguella Ba , Chair, AU CESA ECED Cluster’s Access to Quality Services
11.40 -11.45	Opening Remarks	Mr Hambani Masheleni, A.g. Director, Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation , African Union Commission
11:45 – 12.15	<p>Setting the Scene:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Voice of a Caregiver /Parent. 2. Landscape Analysis for Children with Disabilities. 3. Guide for Monitoring Child Development (GMCD) - an evidence based, family centered way to monitor ECD <p>Q/A Session (5 min)</p>	<p>Moderator: Josephine Ferla, Convener, AU CESA ECED Cluster’s Access to Quality Services</p> <p>Parent of a child with Special Needs</p> <p>Prof. Alecia Samuels - Researcher, University of Pretoria</p> <p>Dr. Vibha Krishnamurthy, Founder & Executive Director, Ummeed Child Development Center</p> <p>Chat management– Gracie Ratemo, AfECN</p>

12.15 – 1:00pm	<p>Panel Discussion (Experts, Practitioners):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interventions for Disability in Early Childhood (IDEC) Project: UNICEF Uganda. 2. Study on Special Needs (Mental Health) Aga Khan University 3. Understanding Learning Differences 	<p>Moderator: Dolorence Were, Chair Disability Committee</p> <p>Daphne Mugizi, UNICEF Uganda</p> <p>Dr. Vibian Angwenyi, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Institute for Human Development, Aga Khan University, Kenya</p> <p>Lina Njoroge Mutua, Inclusion Education Expert</p>
1.00 -1.15pm	Plenary / Q & A Session	Gracie Ratemo, AfECN
1:20 – 1.25	Way Forward and Next Steps	Professor Seth Oppong, Knowledge Generation Working Group
1.25 -1.30pm	Closing Remarks	Mr Hambani Masheleni, A.g. Director, Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation , African Union Commission