

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A PROGRAMME OFFICER-ACCELERATING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN REGION THROUGH STRENGTHENED MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION MECHANISM.

1.0 About the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN)

AfECN serves as a platform to champion excellence and collaboration in protecting children's rights, influence policy and practice, strengthen partnerships, and share experiences and knowledge in ECD on the African continent. The network brings together civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector at national and regional levels. AfECN works through five core programmes to guide collaborative partnership efforts towards the achievement of improved child outcomes for all children in Sub Saharan Africa: Advocacy, Strengthened Partnerships, Knowledge Generation, Improved Practice, and Leadership Development.

2.0 Background and Context

Target 4.2 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for efforts to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Indeed, available evidence indicates that investment in Early Childhood Education within a multi-sectoral framework gives children the best start in life, thus providing a critical foundation for accumulation of human capital¹.

Many countries in West and Central Africa Region (WCAR) have made efforts to develop sectoral policies targeting improved access to quality ECED services. Analysis in MICS reports shows that on average, 57% of young children in WCAR are developmentally on track, with 68%, 67%, and 63% of 3–4-year-olds in Ghana, The Gambia, and Sao Tome and Principe reported to be on track to realize their development potential respectively (UNICEF, 2020).

Though the above indicates a general improvement in child development outcomes in WCAR, regional disparities exist with close to 80% of children in some countries in the region reported to experience at least one deprivation of their basic rights² Similarly, despite a steady decrease under-five stunting levels in the region from 41.1% in 2000 to 33.5% in 2017, the under-five stunting levels still remain as high as 29.2 and 32.1% in West Africa and Central Africa sub-regions respectively. In addition, close to 30% of children in WCAR are reported not to access to pre-primary education³, with ECE reported to be free in only 4 out of 24 countries in the region. In addition, the budgetary allocation to the sub-sector in the region averages 4 % of the education budget, thus limits efforts to achieving target 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the above situation calls for concerted efforts to address the service delivery gaps in the sub-sector in the WCAR. Many countries in the region also face humanitarian crises because of conflicts, repeated droughts, and chronic hunger-exposing children risks of poor developmental outcomes.

Accelerating better ECED outcomes requires a strong multisectoral coordination of partners and efforts at regional, national, and sub-national levels. Over the years, UNICEF, and Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) have collaborated in advancing the Early Childhood Education and Development

¹ UNICEF, Early Childhood Development: For Every Child, Early Moment Matter. [Early childhood development | UNICEF](#)

² UNICEF WCAR Annual Report, 2019

³ UNICEF, A World Ready to Learn Global Report, 2018.

(ECED) agenda across the African region. To strengthen this collaboration, UNICEF WCARO and AfECN have entered into a formal Partnership Cooperative Agreement (PCA) to accelerate better ECED outcomes in WCAR via strengthened multisectoral advocacy and sub-regional coordination mechanism. The specific objectives are:

1. Strengthened co-ordination of ECED across the West and Central Africa Region in support to SDG4/ECED regional Task team.
2. Enhanced advocacy and partnership in support to multisectoral ECED programming in WCAR; and
3. Increased knowledge generation on ECED and dissemination across the region.

3.0 Job Description

AfECN would like to recruit a Programme Officer to support its work in strengthening multisectoral advocacy and sub-regional coordination mechanism in WCAR. The broader tasks include i) supporting stronger engagement of regional and national ECD partners; contributing to improved organizational and advocacy capacities of National Advocacy Partners (NAPs); increased knowledge generation on Early Childhood Education and dissemination across the region.

3.1 Duties of the Programme Officer

Based in Dakar, Senegal, The Programme Officer will work under the supervision of sub-regional networking coordinator Programme manager in supporting AfECN Secretariat to meet the intended the medium to long term aims of the programme (presented above). The Programme Officer will be expected to undertake the following activities:

1. Contribute to the design and execution of the workplan, which includes regional and national advocacy work.
2. Provide support to the management and administration of the programme including input to mapping of partners, development of strategic plans and resource mobilization strategy of sub-regional coordination unit.
3. Co-lead ECD SDG4.2 task team and facilitate collaboration with other ECED related coordination groups in WCAR as well as with AU/ECED cluster.
4. Support policy-orientated research such as landscape analysis of the status of ECD in the region including mapping of ECD actors, policies, and resources.
5. Provide support to knowledge dissemination activities including media production, workshops, webinars, and other peer learning activities.
6. Support outreach activities including networking and engagement with Regional and National Advocacy partners.
7. Contribute to and/or writing and dissemination of reports, policy and advocacy briefs, blog.
8. Contribute to discussions at seminars and conferences linked to the programme activities.

9. Provide support to English and French translations and interpretations to facilitate effective communication across the region.
10. Provide support to other AfECN programmes as needed.

3.2 Required Qualification and Experiences.

1. An advanced university degree (master’s or higher) in Early Childhood Development, Development Studies, Economics, Demographics, Social Policy, or another field relevant to ECE is preferred.
2. A minimum of **Five Years** of relevant professional experience in working in relevant sectors, ideally experience leading or collaborating on Early Childhood Development programs in Rwanda targeting the most vulnerable.
3. Excellent knowledge of, and relationships with, key stakeholders within West and Central Africa Region.
4. Experience engaging with senior government, NGOs, donors, and private sector stakeholders in West and Central Africa Region.
5. Experience collecting, analysing, and synthesizing data sets and information.
6. Experience with or technical knowledge of Result-Based Management is a plus.
7. Developing country work experience and/or familiarity with emergency is considered an asset.
8. Fluency in **English and French** is required. Knowledge of other official African Union (AU) languages (Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish) is an asset.

3.3 Additional Information

Contract	1 year (Renewable based on performance and availability of funds)
Working Hours	Full time – 37.5 hours a week
Location:	Dakar, Senegal
Application procedure	Interested candidates who meet the desired qualifications should submit cover letter, Curriculum Vitae (CV), motivation statement (max 2 pages), testimonials, copies of academic transcripts as a single PDF document to careers@afecn.org . Only successful candidates will be contacted.
Application Deadline	22 nd August 2023