

**Concept Note**

**Terms of Reference for a study on the relevance of Education and training systems in West and Central African countries**

1. **General Rationale**

*What we know about education and employment globally*

Education is a human right and an important driver of economic development. Educated societies can spur economic growth by promoting innovation and facilitating the adoption of new technologies, thereby raising productivity and economic output. At the individual level, good quality education would in principle equip people with the skills they need to join the labour market and ensure adequate employment and income opportunities. On the other hand, these relationships are hardly straightforward.

Although in certain economic contexts higher levels of education are associated with better opportunities of employment and higher income, more years of education do not necessarily guarantee these positive outcomes. Much depends on the type and the quality of the education acquired and a combination of other factors outside education, such as the macroeconomic conditions, labour market institutions, employment policies and programs, local labour market dynamics, social, cultural or political barriers, etc. Consequently, gains in educational attainment do not necessarily lead to improved labour market outcomes, including for youth. Youth unemployment rates are consistently higher than adult unemployment rates despite their increasing educational attainment.

Youth are also overrepresented among the working poor. The ILO estimates that over 40 per cent of the world’s active youth population are either unemployed or living in poverty despite being employed. With very difficult school to work transitions, many young people become discouraged and disengage altogether. Surveys carried out by the ILO in 28 countries show that about 25 per cent of youth between 15 and 29 years are neither employed, nor in education or training (NEET).

The level and kind of skills obtained are central in a knowledge-driven economy. In an environment of rapidly changing skills requirements for employment, education and training systems are compelled to equip young people with cognitive and non-cognitive skills that allow for increased adaptability to new technologies and work processes. Demographic growth and an unfinished agenda of expansion of basic levels of education in some regions add to the complexity of this challenge. It is particularly the case for the West and Central African region.

*The particular situation of the West and Central African region: an extremely young population with education, training and employment issues.*

With approximately two third of the population under 25 years of age[[1]](#footnote-1), sub-Saharan Africa, and more specifically West and Central Africa, are the regions of the world with extremely young populations (see Table 1 below).

*Table 1: Demographic figures, Sub-Saharan Africa, West and Central Africa, and World*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2015** | **2020** | **2025** | **2030** |
| **Total population** |   |   |   |   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 969 234 251 | 1 106 572 881 | 1 256 239 744 | 1 418 333 150 |
| Western & Central Africa | 506 356 586 | 581 538 157 | 664 712 240 | 756 217 017 |
| World | 7 383 008 820 | 7 795 482 309 | 8 185 613 757 | 8 551 198 644 |
| **Group of [15-24 years]** |   |   |   |   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 190 808 033 | 219 823 278 | 251 846 538 | 284 827 992 |
| Western & Central Africa | 97 349 958 | 113 718 416 | 133 163 013 | 153 530 688 |
| World | 1 194 505 566 | 1 198 939 078 | 1 243 830 068 | 1 296 185 701 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **% of [15-24 years]** |   |   |   |   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 19,7% | 19,9% | 20,0% | 20,1% |
| Western & Central Africa | 19,2% | 19,6% | 20,0% | 20,3% |
| World | 16,2% | 15,4% | 15,2% | 15,2% |
| **% of [0-24 years]** |   |   |   |   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 62,8% | 61,9% | 60,7% | 59,2% |
| Western & Central Africa | 63,7% | 63,3% | 62,5% | 61,3% |
| World | 42,3% | 40,9% | 39,8% | 38,8% |

Source: calculations with population data from United Nations Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, custom data acquired via website.

Education and training remain a major challenge in this region, along with unemployment. The region has the high proportion of young people who are not employed world-wide. The employment-to-population ratio in recent years shows that on average, only 62.5% of the working age population are employed and this figure drops to 40.9% among youth(see Table 2).

*Table 2: Employment-to-population ratio, West and Central Africa*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Employment-to-population ratio |
| 15-64 years | 15-24 years | 15 years and over | 25 years and over |
| Benin 2011 | 70,8% | 40,6% | 70,0% | 83,3% |
| Burkina Faso 2014 | 63,2% | 47,4% | 61,5% | 68,6% |
| Cameroon 2010 | 73,8% | 53,3% | 73,1% | 83,6% |
| Cote d'Ivoire 2013 | na | 47,6% | 72,1% | 82,1% |
| Cape Verde 2010 | na | na | 52,8% | na |
| Gabon 2010 | 39,9% | 11,7% | 38,8% | 52,7% |
| Gambia 2012 | 54,6% | 36,0% | 53,4% | 63,0% |
| Ghana 2013 | 76,0% | 51,4% | 74,5% | 85,1% |
| Liberia 2010 | 56,8% | 30,7% | 56,3% | 67,9% |
| Mali 2015 | 67,3% | 48,0% | 65,1% | 72,9% |
| Mauritania 2012 | na | na | 40,0% | na |
| Niger 2011 | 80,1% | 70,0% | 78,6% | 82,6% |
| Nigeria 2013 | 53,1% | 21,2% | 53,2% | 68,5% |
| Senegal 2015 | 44,0% | 25,8% | 42,4% | 50,7% |
| Sierra Leone 2014 | 55,3% | 26,1% | 54,3% | 69,1% |
| Togo, 2011 | 77,5% | 62,7% | 76,2% | 82,9% |
| **Average WCA** | **62,5%** | **40,9%** | **60,1%** | **72,4%** |

Source: Downloaded from ILOSTAT website. The employment-to-population ratio is the number of persons who are employed as a percent of the total of working age population.

On the other hand, the labour market in the sub-region is mainly informal. As a result, the majority of youth, whether they are well trained or not, skilled or not, fail to find decent jobs or to engage in self-employment. Within the sub-region there is a growing rate of irregular migration among youth who seek opportunities elsewhere. These youth are also at risk for radicalization.

The issues of illegal immigration, radicalization and unemployment among young people are raising questions about the role and capacity of education and training systems to fit the needs of the population, as well as the local economy.

The Education 2030 Agenda reflects this issue through its focus on lifelong learning, as well as within its various targets:

* Target 4.1 refers to “relevant and effective learning outcomes;”
* Target 4.3 states: “by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university;”
* Target 4.4: “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship;” and
* Target 5 aims at ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable.

At this juncture, supporting countries to develop and implement education and training systems that provide youth with relevant skills in line with the needs of the local economy is as a key challenge in the region. It is in this respect that the present study is proposed.

1. **Purpose of the study (the in-depth analysis)**

Although labour market outcomes depend on a myriad of factors (household labour supply decisions, the influence of the product market on the labour market, the investment climate in a given country, growth and productivity, financial markets, foreign direct investment…), education and relevant skills remain the main determinants of good labour market outcomes for individuals. A country’s development and competitive edge in the global economy, therefore, depend on the creation of a highly skilled workforce with the ability to access, adapt, apply, and create new knowledge and technologies. Education plays a central role in preparing individuals to enter the labour force, to become productive members of society who live together in peace and in equipping citizens with the skills needed to engage in lifelong learning experiences. It is

Given the importance of the labour market relevance and outcomes of education systems, it is important to regularly undertake analysis on the topic and develop recommendations that can help West and Central African countries to ensure that students develop knowledge and skills that support good labour market outcomes.

The overarching policy question is “what can West and Central African countries do to ensure that graduates develop the skills needed for good labour market outcomes?”

The **aim** of the in-depth analysis is to assist West and Central African countries in improving the labour market relevance and outcomes of their education systems through a better understanding of:

* the links between the knowledge and skills developed in education systems and graduate outcomes; and
* how policies and practices can stimulate and enhance the development of more knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market.

The **main objectives** of the in-depth analysis are to:

* identify the knowledge and skills needed for success in the labour markets of countries, taking into account other factors that are beyond the realm of the education sector;
* assess how well education sectors are developing these labour market relevant skills;
* identify approaches in education sectors that facilitate the development of labour market relevant skills;
* explore the potential of policy levers that policymakers can utilize (individually or in combination) to influence the development of labour market relevant skills in education and good labour market outcomes for graduates; and
* identify concrete policy options that could help improve the labour market outcomes of education system graduates.
1. **Methodology**

The methodology of the implementation of the study will be structured around five main steps:

1. a preliminary phase;
2. organization of a technical regional workshop on methodologies for the analysis of the relevance of education and training;
3. elaboration of a series of national studies on the relevance of education and training;
4. organization of a regional workshop for the sharing of the results of national and regional studies; and
5. publication and dissemination of a regional report on the relevance of education and training in West and Central Africa.

Terms of references for each of these steps will be produced. Below are some preliminary details on these steps.

* 1. Preliminary phase

As a first step, a **regional task force** will be created, composed of two to five specialists from the [Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 in West and Central Africa (RCG4-WCA)](http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/regional-coordination-group) or colleagues from their respective organizations. An international consultant will be hired by the RCG4-WCA to support the regional task force.

In addition to setting up the regional task force and hiring the international consultant, the [RCG4-WCA](http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/en/regional-coordination-group) will also select the countries to be considered for the study, which will be influenced by financial resource mobilization.

The regional task force will in turn set up **national teams** in each of the selected countries. Each national team will be compose by two individuals: one official appointed by the main ministry in charge of education and training of the country and one national consultant recruited by the regional task team. The mandate of the national team will center on the preparation of a national study on the relevance of the national education and training system.

The regional task force will be charged with the consolidation of the national reports produced in each of the selected countries in order to produce the regional report. In particular, the regional task force will:

* produce all the methodological tools and approaches that will be used in the framework of the whole study (the terms of reference of the country study, the country survey sheets, the outline of the country reports, etc.);
* conduct quality assurance of the case studies carried out at the national level by the national teams;
* compilation of country reports to produce the regional report;
* organization and facilitation of the two regional workshops.
	1. Organization of a technical regional workshop on the methodology for the analysis of the relevance of education and training

A technical regional workshop will launch the initiative in Dakar, with the participation of each of the national teams. The regional task force will organize and facilitate the workshop. The objective of this technical workshop will be threefold:

1. strengthen the capacities of national teams on methodologies for analyzing the relevance of the education and training system;
2. finalize the methodological approach/tools (questionnaire, country report template, etc.); and
3. ensure a shared understanding of the initiative's objectives by all country teams.
	1. Elaboration of a series of national studies on the relevance of education and training systems;

Each national team will be responsible for conducting a study on the relevance of their education and training system. The country studies will be carried out in light of the methodologies and tools adopted during the regional workshop. This will ensure the relevance and comparability of results in the selected countries.

The methodology will emphasize the necessity to combine quantitative analysis and documentary review with interviews and/or questionnaires to gather opinions from a variety of stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers, training organizations, employers', workers' organizations and graduates.

Next, a national workshop for the finalization of the national reports will be organized. This will be an opportunity to share the preliminary results with all stakeholders and to gather the necessary comments and inputs for the finalization of the country report. The national team, when finalizing the country report, will also take into consideration the recommendations for improvement provided by the regional taskforce.

* 1. Organization of a regional workshop to share results of national and regional studies

The RCG4-WCA taskforce will capitalize on the country studies as part of a meta-analysis to produce a first draft of the regional report on the relevance of education and training systems in West and Central African countries. A regional workshop to finalize and share the results of the country and regional exploratory analyses will then be organized. The workshop will bring together participants from different West and Central African countries. In addition to the national teams, one high-level decision-maker (Permanent Secretary at least) will be invited.

The regional workshop will be an opportunity for national teams to share the main results achieved in the countries. The regional workshop will also be an opportunity not only to present the results of the regional analysis, but also to receive the necessary inputs and amendments for the finalization of the regional report. High-level decision-makers will be involved in order to share with them the main recommendations resulting from the country studies and from the regional study. Together, the workshop will be an occasion for the participants to adopt a regional action plan to improve the relevance of education and training systems in West and Central African countries.

* 1. **Publication and dissemination of the regional report on the relevance of education and training in West and Central Africa.**

Following the regional workshop, the regional taskforce will finalize the report. The regional report will provide an overview of the relevance of education and training systems in different countries and will make recommendations for strengthening the relevance of the education and training system in West and Central African countries. It aims at sharing experiences, good practices, or emerging ones, in different countries but also to draw on international experience to inform policy dialogues in the region that seek to reform and strengthen the relevance of education and training.

This step will involve not only publishing and disseminating the results and recommendations but also finding appropriate mechanisms to support the implementation of the adopted regional action plan for the strengthening of the relevance of the education and training system in West and Central Africa.

It should be noted that the ambition is that this regional report will be the first in a series to be produced every three years.

1. **TIMEFRAME**

*Table 3: Time frame*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Phases** | **Responsables** | **Calendrier** |
|  |  | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Déc | Jan and + |
| Preliminary phase  | RCG4-WCA |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| First regional workshop  | Regional Task team |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Production of nationals studies | National team |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Second regional workshop  | Regional Task team |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Publication and dissemination | RCG4-WCA |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. **BUDGET**

The detailed budget will be estimated by the RCG4-WCA depending on the number of country case studies to be included in the publication. Ideally the majority of countries will be included.

A tentative budget for five countries was estimated around **120 000 USD.**

1. Calculations based on the United Nations Population data show that in 2015, young under 25 years account for 62.8% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 42.3% for the world. Similar observation applies for Western and Central Africa, where 63.7% of the population are under 25 years. Calculations also show that this picture will not change a lot over the time, at least until 2030. (cf. data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects, the 2017 Revision, custom data acquired via website). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)