

# Policy Brief

## East African Community (EAC): Reviewing the Region's Progress in Reaching the Goals of the Second Decade of Education for Africa



### Introduction

*Africa continues to make significant gains in its economic transformation, with an estimated 5.2 per cent rise in growth expected in 2014 for the Sub-Saharan region. Foreign investments account for a big chunk for this, especially in the extractive and tourism sectors.*

*Focussing on the East African Community, Burundi's real GDP growth rose by 1.4 percentage points in 2010 to 5.3% in 2013. Kenya's recent commercial oil discovery is estimated to generate about \$10 billion over a 30-year period, thereby growing the country's economy at an average yearly rate of 0.83 per cent. With significant gas production poised to commence after 2022 in Tanzania, the government aims to rake in \$2.5 billion per year. Uganda may realize over \$2 billion a year in oil revenues once production starts, translated from 2.5 billion barrels, an amount beyond its donor aid. Rwanda ranks 32 out of 189 economies in 2013 in the World Bank's ease of doing business index and her real GDP growth is projected to 7.4% in 2014. And despite challenges of tax evasion, capital flight and taxation competencies, such growth particularly presents enormous potential for the continent's youthful population.*

*An appropriately skilled workforce coupled with reasonable earning levels can significantly stabilise a society and mitigate the effects of corruption, illiteracy, poverty and disease. This is why, for example, "strategic reforms are needed to expand young people's access to science-based education at both the country and the regional level, and to ensure that they graduate with cutting-edge knowledge that is relevant and meets the needs of private sector employers." In resonance, African Heads of State have made education and training a priority of the African Union's Plan of Action for Education in the Second Decade.*

*This brief explores the EAC partner states' progress in achieving the goals set by the continental strategy, which stretches from 2006 to 2015, in order to help answer the "what next" question in the post-2015 agenda.*

### Scope of the Challenge

Like many other African countries, EAC countries are on different trajectories in terms of their socio-economic development due to the countries' heterogeneity. It is clear, however, that consistent actions at the various levels are harmonising and strengthening the region's ability to tackle its challenges.

Since the inception of the AU Plan of Action, the region has made significant progress over the past six years. Access to education based on the 2012 gross enrolment ratios has improved by 10 per cent at the primary level and 7 per cent at the secondary level. Challenges persist, however, in gender equality and equity at post primary levels upwards, availability of comprehensive education statistics, access to early childhood education, TVET and higher education and improving the quality management in education delivery. A study by Uwezo in 2013 showed that 20 per cent of school children in the region who are in their last grade of primary school possess Grade 2 level literacy and numeracy skills. The region therefore needs to upscale the quality of education for more children to grasp concepts that enable them adapt to secondary education.

### Key Regional Trends

The EAC region has instituted various educational reforms such as the harmonization of the education and training curricula, standards and assessment as well as the evaluation

### Growth Projections:

- Burundi: real GDP growth rose to 5.3% in 2013.
- Kenya: \$10 bn in oil revenues over 30 years
- Rwanda: mining sub-sector increased at 41% in 2013.
- Tanzania: \$2.5 bn in yearly gas revenues from 2022.
- Uganda: \$2 bn in oil revenues annually, from 2.5 bn barrels.



of education and training programs. It has established the East African National Examination Council which oversees the standardisation and quality assurance of education and training in the region. Concrete plans are in place for more reforms at the lower education levels. In 2013, a meeting for the region's Sectoral Council of Ministers of Education endorsed the technical committee (TECHCOM) formed to oversee the smooth operationalization and execution of the recommendations of the Regional Report on the Harmonization of the East African Education Systems and Training (RRHESTC).

In terms of promoting the provision of quality data, ADEA assessed the region's Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) capacity in 2012 and developed a capacity building strategy jointly with the EMIS Technical Committee, whose adoption paved the way for the customisation and endorsement of an EAC EMIS Norms and Standards Assessment Framework to be used to benchmark partner states' ability to provide quality education statistics and information. The first peer review is set for 2014 using this framework.

### Gender and Culture

There is visible progress towards promoting gender equity and equality through the formulation of appropriate regional policy frameworks. Slow country level implementation, however, means girls and women continue to lag behind in educational advancement. The proportion of girls and women in the region who are illiterate is predicted to remain high by 2015; with 50 per cent of female youth between the age of 15 and 24 years still being illiterate despite an expected 4 per cent age point improvement.

Generally, access to primary education is much higher compared to secondary education with primary gross enrolment ratios almost double those for secondary education as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have introduced free primary education. This signifies the partner states' concentration on achieving the Millennium Development Goal number two of achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE). The region has also made significant progress in ensuring that every child goes to school. Between 2006 and 2012, all EAC countries reported large reductions in the number of out of school children with figures ranging from 50 to 75 per cent. Countries like Burundi reported a reduction of 270 000, resulting in only 80 000 children being out of school in 2012.

All the reporting EAC partner states achieved gender parity at the primary level in 2012. The situation, however, seems to decline in favour of boys as the level of education rises with the gender parity index ranging from 0.4 to 0.7 in tertiary education for all partner states, which would imply failure to effectively implement affirmative action related policies.

Credit must be given to the region for making Kiswahili a major official language that is also used a medium of instruction in schools since the 1970s, with Tanzania and Kenya being the pioneer states. The language has played a unifying role through the establishment of a Kiswahili Commission under EAC.

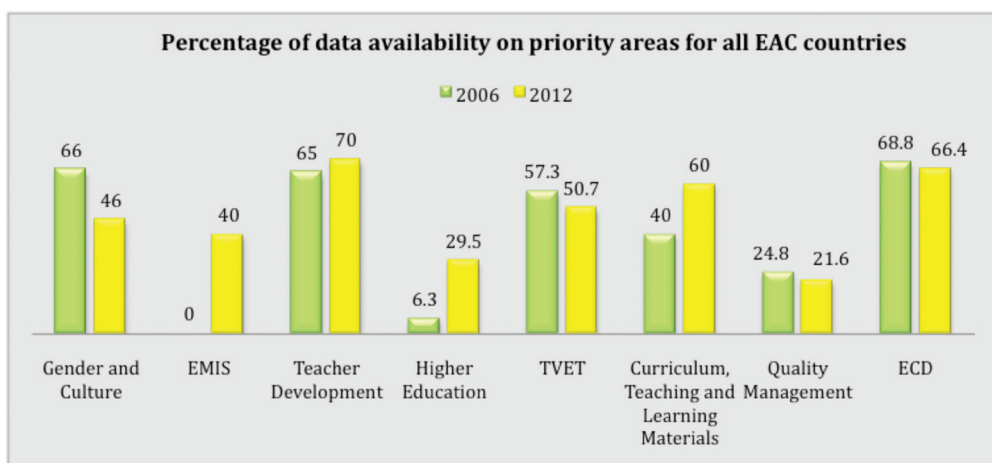
The region now needs to fully exploit the potential of cultural industries. Not only will this reaffirm its commitment towards realising the goals of the Plan of Action, it will also help the partner states to realise greater economic gains.

### Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)

The African Union adopted the strategy for the harmonization of statistics (SHaSA) in 2010 to generate timely, reliable and harmonized statistical information, aimed at integrating all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural sectors continentally. This has prompted AU member states to push for the use of national data for planning where National Statistical Offices are directly involved in ensuring the provision of information. This initiative complements the COMEDAF reporting, where regional economic communities are expected to report on progress in implementing the Second Decade's Plan of Action using national and internationally sourced data.

In 2012, the region began implementing this priority area by evaluating the EMIS capacities of its partner states. A validation meeting of EMIS experts in Nairobi that validated the assessment report noted challenges related to institutional, organizational, human, material and technical deficits as well as weak data coordination and reporting mechanisms. The EAC EMIS technical committee subsequently finalized the EMIS regional capacity building strategy in 2013 and drafted a customized Norms and Standards Assessment Framework to be used to undertake peer reviews on partner states' ability to provide quality or acceptable statistics.

Calculated by ADEA WGEMPS



The 2014 EAC Outlook on Education Report presented at COMEDAFVI on partner states' performance on implementing the objectives of the Plan of Action noted an overall reduction in the data available for monitoring these objectives in 2012 compared to 2006. Data coverage for teacher development, however, increased marginally while coverage in the priority areas of EMIS, higher education and curriculum, teaching and learning materials showed significant improvements of between 20 and 40 percentage points.

As the figure below shows, partner states like Rwanda and Tanzania have drastically improved their data availability on the AU priority areas, with reporting rates above 60 per cent. The provision of data in Kenya for all priority areas, however, deteriorated to a mere 9 per cent in 2012, a 29 percentage point reduction compared to 2006 levels.

### **Teacher Development**

This is one of the relatively more successful priority areas of the Plan of Action for EAC, which has benefitted from the work of the Pan African Conference on Teacher Education and Development, a specialized agency established to facilitate the implementation of teacher-related goals in the Plan.

Through TECHCOM, concrete plans are underway to establish an East African Examination Teachers Council / Board that will, among others, harmonize examinations among the region's partner states and develop guidelines for recruiting and monitoring teacher performance within the region. This indicates EAC's resolve to improve teacher quality. The region is also co-ordinating teacher quality and supply improvement efforts with partners such as UNESCO and ADEA, with some positive results. All countries reported increments in teacher supply of between 19 and 70 per cent in 2012. The share of trained teachers has increased over the six year period and all countries reported figures above 80 per cent. High attrition rates due to low teacher remuneration may be a factor preventing any of the EAC partner states from getting 100 per cent qualified teaching workforce. This is despite the fact that teachers' salary generally account for between 70-90 per cent of national education budgets in the region. To their credit, national teacher unions have been able to negotiate better conditions of service packages for teachers with governments. Financial challenges, however, make it difficult for governments to fully honour such agreements, instead meeting them in stages.

### **Higher and Tertiary Education**

The African Association of Universities and UNESCO have been some of the catalysts on the continent for raising the quality of higher education in Africa and strengthening its contribution to African development by fostering collaboration among institutions and promoting consensus-building around, issues affecting higher education and the development of Africa. Regional initiatives include the establishment of the EAC Harmonized Quality Assurance Strategy which was adopted in 2006 by member states.

For EAC, student enrolment at this level has grown from 190 000 in 2006 to over 300 000 by 2012. An unanticipated growth of private institutions has also been realised with countries like Uganda having 75 per cent of its university

education being provided by private players. The same is seen in Kenya which has additionally increased higher learning opportunities by setting several online and distance learning or digital campuses linked to the country's traditional public and private universities. Due, however, to the unavailability of adequate funds and incoherent policies regarding private university education in this sub sector, the provision of quality education is somewhat compromised.

Inequities in gender appear also to be common in this sub-sector; for example, women constituted less than 35 per cent of students in tertiary education in 2007 in East Africa. While considerable efforts are being made to address them through affirmative action, a lot more remains to be done to bring gender parity in the tertiary sector to an acceptable level.

### **Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

New conceptions of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) recognise the need to have multiple training pathways which allow learners an opportunity to acquire skills from different learning and work situations. The Inter-Country Quality Node on technical and vocational skills development, established by ADEA in 2012 and hosted in Cote d'Ivoire, has been instrumental in promoting national policies targeting skills development. An enabling environment has been created by the partner states where countries with a significant TVET component in their curricula, like Tanzania, are equipping learners with the necessary tools aimed at ending poverty through increased opportunities for employment and employability. This is in addition to including the recognition of qualifications arising from relevant technical and vocational courses into national qualification frameworks. On average, the region has less than 11 per cent of its secondary curriculum courses focused on technical subjects. Tanzania has a significantly huge component of TVET in its upper secondary curricula, with a 58 per cent representation.

Gender parity has not been achieved in this priority area, with all countries reporting parity levels below 48 per cent, a reduction in the representation of females compared to the situation in 2006. The proportion of TVET programmes in the entire secondary education level is less than half compared to those available for upper secondary, which also increased significantly. Countries like Burundi reported a 4 per cent proportion for total secondary and 15 per cent for upper secondary. On improvements in literacy rates, EAC is performing better than the rest of the continent, with rates predicted to be higher by 6 percentage points by the end of 2014.



In spite of all the developments at national level, there is need for the region to develop an integrated policy framework covering all partner states to further grow TVET, in line with its regional integration and harmonization strategy. Partner states also need to progressively develop resource mobilizations mechanisms to increase funding for TVET and sustainably address issues of relevance, equity, quality and access.

### **Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning Materials**

As mentioned earlier, the region is moving ahead with its education and training curricula reform, through the harmonization national curricula of respective partner states guided by the East African National Examination Council.

As part and parcel of the AU's commitment towards the promotion of African languages, the African Academy of Local languages was established in 2006 to promote the use of African languages in member states. EAC embraced the use of African languages by establishing the Kiswahili Commission which promotes the development of the language for regional and international interaction for the political, economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific and technological development of the region. Kiswahili is one of the official languages of the African Union which include English, French, Arabic, Portuguese and Spanish.

Kenya and Uganda have made notable progress in aligning their school curricula to the trends of the 21st century by integrating both ICTs and HIV/AIDS education as subjects in their education system. Further, the Kenyan government has displayed its commitment towards ICT in education by purchasing 1.2 million laptops for school pupils.

### **Quality Management**

Managing education quality remains a challenge for all EAC partner states, with issues of efficiency and effectiveness impacting on the provision of education and training. The Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and Uwezo continue to spearhead initiatives that test learners' reading and numeric capabilities. According to Uwezo's research work done in EAC in 2013, about 20 per cent of learners who reach the last grade of primary education lag behind in literacy and numeracy skills as they are ranked at grade two level. The study attributed this to teacher absenteeism; one in every



10 teachers is absent from work on any given day and pupils lose valuable learning time to grasp essential concepts. Authorities need to address these issues by improving teacher conditions of service and increasing the provision of learning aides like text books.

Primary enrolments for school-going age groups have improved in all partner states by at least 15 percentage points, and it is likely that the region will meet universal access to primary education by 2015. The situation at higher levels of education is the direct opposite, with all countries reporting secondary net enrolment ratios below 30 per cent in 2012. Partner states have demonstrated their commitment towards achieving holistic education by establishing post-secondary non- tertiary programmes on a small scale, and countries like Kenya reported an increase of 14 000 students in 2012 for non-formal classes, from an enrolment of 61 000 in 2006. These programmes need to be up-scaled to further reduce the number of youth who are still out of school.

It is worth mentioning that all EAC governments are spending at least 30 per cent of their financial resources towards the education sector, with the larger proportions going to primary education. Countries like Uganda and Burundi report figures of between 50 and 60 per cent of their education budget going to primary education.

### **Early Childhood Development**

At the continental level, bodies such as the ADEA Working Group on Early Childhood Development promote the holistic development of young children on the continent by strengthening and supporting partnerships between different actors involved in ECD at both regional and national levels. The environment for early childhood education has not been conducive throughout the region and the continent, judging by the low gross enrolment ratios (GERs).

Pre-primary education programs in the region face numerous challenges in terms of inadequate equipment, scholastic materials and inadequate teachers and administrators. Parents are reluctant or unable to pay fees/levies for their younger children in nursery classes, while the older ones are learning 'free' of charge. On average, GERs for EAC and the continent were 30 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, in 2012. Enrolment rates for pre-primary education were slightly above half of the rates at the primary level. This sub-sector is still, however, largely dominated by female teachers, with more than three quarters of the teaching force in the region being female in 2012, even though the female proportion declined by 5 per cent since 2006.

In terms of the health and nutritional status of children, the death of children is expected to reduce drastically by rates of between 11 and 22 infants for every 1 000 born alive; the lowest reduction is expected in Burundi and the highest in Rwanda. Generally, the wellbeing of children in most countries, particularly in Rwanda, is improving. Recent estimates by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its partners show that African countries stand to lose between 2 and 16 per cent of their GDP due to stunting of children as a result of malnutrition.

## Recommendations

It is imperative for Partner States to nominate national focal persons to help the EAC Secretariat implement the Plan of Action at REC level. Partner States need to accept responsibility for ensuring effective communication around the Plan and make greater efforts to ensure its uptake. It may be necessary for the region to re-evaluate its role and success rate in implementing the Second Decade, as a method of charting the way forward in post 2015, in terms of funding for educational development.

### Gender and Culture

- Implement policies that ensure inclusion of more students in secondary and tertiary education. Promote affirmative action for greater female participation to enhance gender empowerment.
- Intensify training of girls and women at higher levels of education by providing opportunities for knowledge acquisition to undertake initiatives that contribute to the improvement of their economic and social wellbeing.
- Further explore and exploit aspects of cultural industries to realise more economic gains by promoting cultural studies in the school curricula.

### Education management and Information Systems (EMIS)

- Make a conscious effort to strengthen national EMIS in all the five countries by implementing a norms and standards assessment framework for the provision of quality education data.

### Teacher Development

- Improve teacher working conditions and promote in-service teacher training programmes.
- Develop holistic policies that increase the quantity and quality of teachers as an action plan after 2015.
- Encourage tripartite negotiation forums between governments and teacher unions on how to deal with the issue of contract teachers and conditions of service for teachers in general.

### Higher Education

- Enrol more women and create more women friendly policies to achieve gender equity in higher education.
- Improve the provision of information to facilitate monitoring of the progress made by EAC in higher education.

### Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

- Embrace the paradigm shift from TVET to TVSD, and develop programmes that facilitate the matching of skills development with the constantly changing labour needs.
- Develop an integrated policy framework covering all partner states for the further growth of TVET and TVSD, in line with the regional integration and harmonization strategy.
- Increase skills development programmes in the curricula as well as the proportion of women undertaking TVSD courses.

### Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Materials

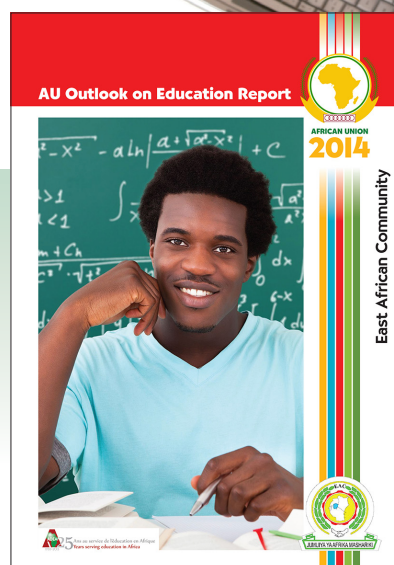
- Mobilize resources towards adopting new technologies such as ICTs and learner centred approaches in the curriculum for the improvement of education.

### Quality Management

- Increase investment in quality management to ensure that the gains in access at primary education are expanded to the higher levels, as most learners fail to gain access to subsequent education levels.
- As per the trend of increased public expenditure on education, allocate more funds need for higher levels of education as a means of improving research and the skills base.

### Early Childhood Development

- Include ECD as an important component by mainstreaming it in all the partner states' education and training systems.



Please refer to  
[www.adeanet.org](http://www.adeanet.org)  
for the full report.

ADEA WGEMPS,  
8 Kennilworth Road, Newlands, Harare, Zimbabwe  
Tel: +263 4 775 776/9

Brief Produced by ADEA WGEMPS

