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International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

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Strengthening Africa's Educational Institutions   www.unesco-iicba.org

Brief Look at IICBA

Position in the UNESCO System

Established in 1999, the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) is one of six UNESCO Institutes and Centres under the direction of the UNESCO Secretariat. The only UNESCO Institute in Africa, it is mandated to strengthen the capacities of teacher education institutions of its 53 member states, and promote international cooperation for the development of education through the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union. The Institute derives its distinct comparative advantage within the UNESCO family from the following attributes:

- Its leadership in building and strengthening Africa's capacity in teacher education;

- Its networking and outreach capacity that links Africa to specialist research and development and training on teacher education worldwide;

- Its ability to utilise open learning and distance education to train and develop a critical mass of teachers, with the best expertise available, and in the most cost-effective manner;

- Its access to policymakers and opinion leaders for advocacy on critical teacher education issues; and

- Its critical partnerships with African intergovernmental organisations and nongovernmental institutions to identify and execute comprehensive strategies for Africa's educational development.

Organisation of IICBA

IICBA has a staff of 24, comprising professionals with a wide range of experience. Two sub-regional nodes in Dakar, Senegal and Pretoria, South Africa contribute sub-regional perspectives to the work programme and support the Institute's outreach in Western and Southern Africa.

Support to African Member States

According to its mandate, IICBA's core mission is achieved by engaging four main modalities and services to support its member states: capacity building and training, research and development, networking, and information dissemination.

Capacity Building and Training

IICBA is one of the few institutions dedicated specifically to capacity building. Capacity building includes not only individual capacity building but also institution building, defining institutions to include organisational culture, practices, and processes.

Research and Development

Educational policy relevant analytical research is central to the overall work of IICBA. To help design and implement polices and programmes aimed at meeting the needs of Africa in the area of educational management, curriculum development, teacher education and distance education, the Institute engages in policy relevant research and provides policy advice through on-demand advisory services, training workshops and seminars, and based on resources, implements small infrastructural projects. Drawing on its findings and from those of similar organisations, IICBA serves as a policy advocate on critical educational issues, to encourage the initiatives and reforms necessary for educationaldevelopment and the attainment of both Education for All and NEPAD goals in Africa.

Networking and Outreach

IICBA is also a network organisation linking together key institutions in Africa, particularly Ministries of Education, educational planning departments, teacher training institutions, and research institutions. As an educational network, IICBA is able to benefit from the strengths of its network partners. At the same time IICBA is able to respond to the needs of its partner institutions. By keeping in close touch with its members IICBA will be better able to devise research and development and training programmes which are customised to suit members' needs.

Communication and Dissemination

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are overwhelmed with major tasks related to access, finance, quality, and internal and external efficiency and are therefore unable to meet the demand for education. Following global trends, in order to respond to these challenges, African countries have recognized that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can play a critically important role in assisting Africa to tackle many of the problems they are presently facing, including expansion and improvement of their education systems through the use of distance education. One of the key objectives of the open and distance learning programme is to adapt the courses within African countries. In this way, the country and region will be able to master and maintain the programmes on a long term basis, by training personnel even after IICBA has withdrawn its support.

Thematic Programmes and Activities

The Institute is organised around four substantive programme areas: Teacher Education, Cost-Effective Use of ICT for Education, Quality Education for All, and Educational Policy and Leadership.

Teacher Education

Establishing and Running the Teacher Education Network (TEN)

IICBA has been tracking Africa's educational development through establishing and running the Teacher Education Network. Acknowledging that teachers comprise one of the most critical and essential inputs into education, the improvement of teachers' academic and professional skills, teaching methodologies and contribution to the improvement of educational systems are the main reasons for establishing TEN. Over time TEN would be used to update teacher education curricula in primary and secondary schools, and teacher education institutions, and to improve mathematics, science, and technology among teacher educators, teachers, and students.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (PGDE and MADE)

One of IICBA's key achievements in the area of initial and in-service upgrading of the skills of high-level educational professionals was the provision of distance education (DE) programmes and degrees. Cognisant of this fact, and as part of its capacity building initiative, IICBA is currently cooperating with African countries, including Ethiopia, in training DE specialists at postgraduate level. In cooperation with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) of India, study programmes leading to a Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and Master of Arts in Distance Education (MADE) are underway in Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Ghana, the Gambia, and Sierra Leone.

Umea University, Critical Practitioner Inquiry Method

As part of IICBA's initiative of training and upgrading teachers through the distance mode, negotiations were reached with Umea University in Sweden to implement the Diploma and Master's Degree programme in teacher education. Known as the Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) method, it is a regional in-service programme for teacher-practitioners which combines distance education with short face-to-face courses, all geared towards improving the teaching methods of schools. It was recently introduced in Ethiopia with the first face-to-face training taking place in May 2003. There has been substantial interest and follow-up on this innovative education practice in Ethiopia. IICBA is using the experience gained from this programme to scale it up to Tanzania, and later to other African countries.

University of South Africa, Advanced Certificate in Educational Management (ACEM)

IICBA has been concerned about the management of education at lower primary and basic levels for many years. In collaboration with the University of South Africa (UNISA), IICBA has been offering this leadership and management programme known as the Advanced Certificate in Educational Management to five Ethiopian National Universities since January 2003. The beneficiaries are primary school principals and Woreda (district) education officers selected on the basis of an entrance examination. IICBA intends to offer this programme to other African countries including post-conflict states such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Gambia.

University of South Africa, M.Ed in Mathematics

From various research and observations, it is well known that many students worry about mathematics, indicating that the quality of teaching mathematics is very poor. To alleviate this problem, IICBA initiated the Master's Education in the Teaching of Mathematics. As in the previous case, this is a distance education programme from the University of South Africa (UNISA). Launched in 2003 in Ethiopia, the first group of 21 students was selected on the basis of an entrance exam from UNISA.

Skylight (Primary and Secondary Science and Mathematics Teaching)

IICBA has been one of the few entities working to foster science and mathematics teaching in Ethiopian schools. With financial assistance from USAID/Ethiopia, IICBA is planning to introduce a new MA programme in the teaching of mathematics using distance mode in collaboration with the College of Education, Addis Ababa University. The programme began in September 2004 with an initial intake of 25 students recruited from the various teacher training institutions in the country.

Short courses on how to write a textbook (Multigrade education)

Training workshops on textbook writing were carried out for the Amhara and Oromia Region textbook writers and professionals. The workshops covered a variety of topics such as theories of learning, curriculum development, classroom management, teaching methods, concepts of multigrade classes and single teacher schools, as well as how to prepare interactive learning materials for multigrade classes.

Cost-Effective Use of ICT in Education

In order to ensure that Africa and African workers are not relegated to unskilled work, which requires only primary education in the global economy and in global labour markets, it is absolutely essential for African countries to have access to information and communication technology. The education systems of African countries must therefore incorporate ICT into their curricula.

Moreover, ICT offers opportunities to African member states to improve both access to and quality of education at all levels. IICBA's strategy has been to concentrate firstly on ensuring that teacher education institutions in Africa have access to skills development in ICT. Given that there are relatively few teacher education institutions in Africa, this has been a practical and attainable goal.

University of Pretoria (MEd in ICT for Education in Addis Ababa, Makerere, and Cape Coast Universities)

In order to address the great need for ICT professionals in the education sector, IICBA has introduced as a pilot project the MEd in Information and Communication Technology. Initially the pilot project will run in three universities in SSA: Cape Coast University

(Ghana), Makerere University (Uganda), and Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia). Once IICBA gains adequate experience in running the programme it hopes to expand to other universities in Francophone countries using the experience gained from the pilot phase.

Sudan University of Science and Technology (MEd in ICT for Education, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria)

IICBA has been supporting an MEd in the Use of ICT for Education at Sudan University of Science and Technology (SUST), the University of Cape Coast, and Addis Ababa University as of last year. Initially the project was partially financed by SUST and the success of the programme has encouraged IICBA to tailor the curriculum to African needs and replicate it in the selected Anglophone universities. The Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria provides the content and the expertise to deliver the curriculum.

Short Courses on How to Make a Website and CD-ROMs

IICBA has been working on how to enable African member states to utilise information and communication technology for education in affordable and cost-effective ways. Workshops on how to make an educational CD-ROM and a website were conducted in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda. Follow up training programmes were done in a number of universities, with a resulting larger number of people benefiting from the training.

Short Courses on How to Make an Educational Video

IICBA has run three training workshops on how to make educational videos, two in Ethiopia and one in Uganda to provide teacher training institutions with the required professional and technical skills in film production. These trainings were given by two individuals from the Media Working Group based in the US, which has specialised staff in community learning video development.

Creating Interactive Educational Programmes on Science

One of the interactive educational materials created by IICBA is the Electronic Library Series. The Electronic Library is expected to provide resources on science education to teacher training institutions, educators, students, and researchers in Africa. The Electronic Library includes resources for primary level mathematics and science in English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic. The secondary level science material is developed in English and the preparation for the French, Portuguese, and Arabic languages are underway.

Quality Education for All

Expanding Multigrade Classes to Meet EFA Needs

The multigrade project is aimed at providing a replicable model of high quality, relevant and cost-effective one teacher schools suitable for remote rural areas. Low enrolment is closely related to problems of distance, the safety of adolescent girls, and the labour needs of the community for older

children. The first phase of this pilot programme in Ethiopia was completed in December 2000 with support from the Norwegian Government. Five new multigrade schools have been established in Ethiopia, with training programmes for administrators, teacher educators, and teachers. A training manual has also been published. Currently IICBA is in the process of disseminating the findings for policy advice for other African countries.

Nomadic Education

UNESCO and UNICEF, with financial support from the African Development Bank, jointly implemented a study of Education for Nomads in six African countries, namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. UNESCO was represented by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and IICBA; UNICEF was represented by the East and Southern Africa Office (ESARO) and the six Country Offices.

The objective of the study was to support the concerned member states in developing policy and programmes to respond flexibly and efficiently to the socio-economic and educational needs of nomadic children, with special focus on indigenous communities and girls. It is also intended to target scarce existing resources more effectively to improve the basic education and income-earning potential of the nomadic population. The intention is for the recommendations to be implemented in the countries, depending on funding possibilities.

Capacity Building for Assessment in Mathematics and Science Education

The pilot phase of this regional project has been launched by IICBA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which is aimed at enhancing the skills and capacities in assessment for mathematics, natural sciences, and English of curriculum developers and teacher educators. After the pilot phase, the project will be extended to 12 African countries where skills for assessment and evaluation are critically short. The project aims at developing expertise in examination construction and utilisation of the examination results to improve the quality of mathematics and science education in Africa.

Education for HIV/AIDS.

In much of sub-Saharan Africa, especially East and Southern Africa, HIV/AIDS has become a serious development challenge. IICBA has therefore taken several measures to study and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on African education institutions. Among the activities undertaken were:

- A workshop on education strategies used in Ethiopian schools;

- A joint development and training programme with the USAID BESO programme to develop materials in Amharic for the use of teachers in Ethiopia;

- An HIV/AIDS Electronic Library, created in order to provide resources related to HIV/AIDS education and policy for teacher training institutions, educators, students, and researchers in Africa;

- IICBA has been collaborating to create videos on HIV/AIDS awareness. The creation of the videos is modelled after the success of many UN agency organisations' videos that have been created in Africa. IICBA plans to use the videos in order to reach school age children and adults throughout Africa.

Strengthening Teacher Education in post-conflict countries of Africa

IICBA is working with UNESCO Education Divisions and Field Offices to support African countries in post-conflict crisis and reconstruction (including Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan) in training and retraining of teachers, HIV/AIDS education, and reinforcing educational networks. The Institute is holding current discussions with the University for Peace to develop curriculum and research on peace education specifically for Africa.

African Academy of Languages

IICBA joined together with the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, and the Government of Mali, to launch the African Academy of Languages. The objective is to support research and development on African language teaching. The launch workshop was held in Bamako, Mali, in May 2001. It brought together some of the top linguists from all over Africa. It is expected that the establishment of this Academy will assist in the furthering of increased utilisation of African languages both in schools and in the professional world.

Education Policy and Leadership

The Education Policy and Leadership programme forms part of the upstream activities of IICBA through which the Institute provides assistance to member states in the formulation of educational policies, the development of programmes and projects, and the design of educational reforms. These activities are geared to national capacity building and involve different types of methodologies and approaches.

Senior Executive Seminar for Ministers of Education

IICBA has held a series of seminars for Ministers of Education in Africa. The seminars were piggy-backing meetings for ministers such as the IBE, ADEA and MINEDAF conferences. Ministers of Education face serious challenges in their every day work, and this valuable knowledge and experience should be shared. These seminars provide the opportunity for Ministers to be in touch with research and share lessons learnt with their counterparts.

The Decade of Education and Support to NEPAD

IICBA is working closely with the African Union and the NEPAD Secretariat on educational issues. One of IICBA's main supports for the AU has been on the Decade of Education, by participating in the running of three sub-regional OAU workshops, and assisting in the production of the twice yearly Decade of Education Newsletter. Substantial development work has also been done on science and technology for industrialisation. An annual workshop will be held on science and technology for industrialisation, including a workshop which is to be held annually.

Education Planning and Economic Development in Africa

The aim of this programme is to encourage and enhance links between education planning and economic development, by improving communication and understanding between the two sectors. Since the relationship between education and economic growth is widely acknowledged, such a programme is essential, particularly in Africa. It is aimed at practicing or potential educational planners involved in policy work, to provide them with a solid background in economics relevant to education, which will serve as a basis for improved cooperation. The programme will involve a Masters course to be implemented by three institutions in Africa, initially by distance learning mode combined with face-to-face sessions. Possible implementing institutions include the Open University of Tanzania, Africa Planning and Development Institute (IDEP), Dakar, and the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

Women's Educational Leadership

Although women comprise a significant proportion of the teaching force in almost every African country, they often play a minor role in the leadership of the education system. One of the aims of this programme is to explore ways and means to enable women to enjoy more opportunities for professional and academic training. IICBA's combination of distance education and short face-to-face workshops is more suited to the situation of women with family responsibilities than courses which require long absences from home. The programme on Women Leaders in Education will work closely with the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) which has established a network of women leaders in education in more than 25 countries in Africa.

Forging Partnerships and Institutional Links in the Work of IICBA

IICBA works within a number of institutional contexts, both inside and outside UNESCO. This includes the various bodies of UNESCO (Education Sector, Institutes, and Regional and Cluster Offices), other UN organisations, academic networks (institutions and professionals), various African governments and Ministries of Education, and multilateral and international programmes.

In the past two biennials, IICBA has worked with IIEP (Paris) on nomadic education; with UIE (Hamburg) to support research and development on African language teaching; with IITE (Moscow) on the use of ICT for education; with UIS on educational statistics; and with the Regional Bureau for Africa in Dakar (BREDA) on teacher training in the Gambia and Sierra Leone. Given its mandate of building the capacity of teacher education institutions in Africa, IICBA has reinforced its cooperation with 32 out of 53 member states of sub-Saharan Africa, through national commissions, IGOs and NGOs, UNESCO field offices, and in direct participation in meetings organized in its areas of competence.