



CAFOR



AFRICAN UNION

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

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CONCEPT NOTE

CAFOR Project - Quality Education

1. Project Summary

This project will improve education in 10 selected African countries for the most vulnerable children scattered across the five regions of the continent by creating a safe environment for up to 2,000,000 children and improving the teaching skills of 2,000 teachers. The project will have a strong communication dimension from the bottom-up, with progressive community leaders, local partners, and others. Each school formulates and enforces a code of conduct, and the children participate in decision-making via a child-led council.

CAFOR will liaise closely with the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovations of the African Union Commission and the selected member governments of the African Union to provide suitable learning materials, train teachers in innovative teaching and learning methods that would enable children to learn to read better and increasing parental and community involvement in the education of their children. The project will also give refresher training to teachers and teacher trainers to monitor learning outcomes. Significantly more children will be able to read fluently, the project will better monitor pupils and teachers' presence, and the number of violent students will have decreased.

Since independence in the 1960s in sub-Saharan Africa, rapid population growth, conflicts, and economic stagnation have impacted educational services. Another probable effect of these economical, security and demographic trends is the erosion of quality in education. The goals of schooling encompass, however, more than just academic achievement. Quality also pertains to how well the school or school system prepares students to become responsible citizens who are also well designed for the labour market. It instils attitudes and values relevant to modern-day African society. Schools do achieve these goals, and they are important ones. Quality encompasses how well the education system accommodates modern, market-oriented skills to traditional, home-based values and needs. Policies for the achievement of these qualitative objectives include:

- i. adjusting the school calendar to take account of the child's economic functions at home,

- ii. giving first instruction in the child's mother tongue,
- iii. integrating subjects around the life of the child and his community, and
- iv. involving students in applying theory so that learning has utility beyond that of qualifying individuals for the next level of education.

These changes encourage children to look at and react to their environment in new and more productive ways.

2. Problem Relevance

Over the past two decades, Africa has experienced some of the most dramatic increases in primary school enrolment rates of any region worldwide. Though there is still room for progress, the fact remains that more children are going to school, adolescents stay in school, and girls are increasingly enjoying the same educational opportunities as boys. But that does not necessarily make school mean more learning and better lives. Researchers and policymakers have become concerned that there is an unintended consequence of the increase in the number of children going to school: a decline in education quality and the well-known benefits of education. As more students enroll, they are being squeezed into existing schools rather than in newly built institutions. When there are more children in a single classroom, already scarce educational resources are spread thin, and learning may suffer.

Today, the cognitive achievement of African students remains low by world standards and the evidence points to a decline in recent years. However, much of this evidence is indirect. It focuses on quantities of particular inputs (mostly books and other learning materials, management, and maintenance of capital assets) and their recent decline relative to other inputs (especially teachers).

However, providing quality education is more than just a question of resources. From parents and pupils' points of view, quality education requires relevance to local needs, adaptability to local conditions, and flexibility in addressing cultural obstacles.

Another reason for the low education rates in Africa is the lack of proper schooling facilities and unequal education opportunities across countries. Many schools across Africa find it hard to employ teachers due to the low pay and lack of suitable people. This factor is particularly true for schools in remote areas. Most people who manage to receive education would prefer to move to big cities or overseas where more opportunities and higher pay await. Thus, there will be overly large class sizes and a high average number of students per teacher.

Moreover, the teachers are usually those unqualified with few teaching aids and textbook provision. Due to this, children attending schools in rural areas typically attain more unsatisfactory results in standardized tests than their urban counterparts. Those taking the tests in rural areas score much lower than those in small towns and big cities. This phenomenon shows a lack of equal education opportunity given to children from different parts of the same country. With teachers being less qualified than others in urban areas, the teaching to learning environment takes effect. In one instance, in a rural school in a Southern African country, teachers took the same test as their students, and three-fourths of them had failed. Also, those that do not receive the same education as those in the bigger cities have trouble even after graduation with reading, writing, and doing math.

In many African countries, ineffective teachers are a constraint on learning, and this problem deserves attention from policymakers. In most of these countries, in-service training is likely to prove more cost-effective than alternative pre-service training programmes in alleviating this problem.

There is strong evidence that increasing instructional materials, particularly textbooks, is the most cost-effective way of raising primary education quality. The scarcity of learning materials in the classroom is the most severe impediment to educational effectiveness in Africa. Undoubtedly, the gap in educational provision between this region and the rest of the world has grown widest. Given that many primary school teachers in Africa have less formal education and teacher training than is usually the case in more developed regions of the world, the use of teachers' guides and other materials designed to assist teachers in the organization of classroom activities could prove incredibly cost-effective. The advantage of such materials is that they supplement the teacher's knowledge and promote the proper sequencing of learning activities in the classroom.

The availability of all such instructional materials has declined in recent years as increased fiscal stringency has led to severe cuts in non-salary expenditures. However, the problem of the scarcity of appropriate teaching materials goes well beyond the availability of funds. Most African countries have yet to develop a national capacity to develop low-cost teaching materials that are pedagogically sound and relevant to the national curriculum.

3. Call to Action:

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) emphasizes "ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning". It creates a conducive learning environment at all levels, including informal and non-formal settings. According to the CESA, significant improvements in learning quality will significantly impact advancing economic growth in countries. Enhancing quality in human capital also means equity, which requires improving and sustaining progress on gender parity at all levels of education, emphasizing secondary and tertiary education.

Governments and institutions must enhance the capacity of the teacher training system in Africa to provide the large number of qualified teachers necessary for the significantly increased enrolment and improve the quality of education. As teachers' effectiveness is a direct reflection of the quality of training they receive in tertiary institutions, sufficient priority must be given to ensure the quality of teacher education and enable the production of qualified, competent, and motivated teachers.

Another vital input into quality education is good quality textbooks and other teaching/learning materials. There is strong evidence that increasing instructional materials, mainly books, is among the most effective ways to raise primary education quality.

African Governments are challenged with rising demands for secondary and tertiary education as they increase primary enrolment. Universities and colleges in the continent are currently under increasing pressure to admit more students than their staff and infrastructure's capacity. Significant consideration should be given to assuring quality besides the enrolment expansion effort for long-term effectiveness.

There is a necessity to assure the quality of education provision and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Mechanisms to ensure quality should be put in place within higher learning institutions to enable them to undertake a critical self-evaluation of their programmes and institutional capacity to improve their education provision. It is also essential to establish practical quality assurance capacities at institutional, national, regional, and continental levels.

CAFOR will work with all its members and partners at the regional, country, and sub-national levels to make a strong case for quality education at the continental level. CAFOR will ensure adequate communication with governments of the member states of the African Union, Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, and the private sector in Africa to ensure that there is an adequate understanding of all the issues about quality education for the continent, using the policy frameworks related to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CAFOR will call for practical action to ensure lasting solutions to these problems.

A. Issues for CAFOR advocacy work with partners

Through its information and communication strategies and working mainly with the international and African media, CAFOR will work with many of its partners (through workshops, seminars, organized debates and symposiums and special media events) to advocate for quality education around the following dimensions:

- (a) Reducing the number of out-of-school children and improving learning outcomes and supporting all children to access education.
- (b) Better preparedness and response of education systems in emergencies to prevent shocks from undermining accomplishments made in expanding access to education and learning.
- (c) Early learning and early primary education to build solid foundations for learning. To this end, cases will be made for cost-effective models for early learning and pre-primary education, with a focus on children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children.
- (d) Implementing early learning models in emergencies, including early learning and school readiness in education sector plans, and an increase in the budget allocation for early learning of at least 5 per cent would make a massive difference for children.
- (e) Quality inclusive education and adoption of positive attitudes and social norms toward girls' education and inclusive education would ensure the equipping of all adolescents with relevant skills and knowledge for work and life in the 21st century.
- (f) Practical alternative education solutions would equip children who are not attending school with relevant skills and knowledge. CAFOR will support any interventions to provide out-of-school children with education options and alternative pathways that enable transfer to formal education.
- (g) Strengthening collaboration between the education and wash (water, sanitation and hygiene) sectors to efficiently and effectively improve water and sanitation solutions in schools, including linkages to school health and nutrition interventions and strengthening the school curriculum.

- (h) A healthy learning environment would ensure that learners are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities.
- (i) Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.
- (j) The content reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention, and peace.
- (k) Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.
- (l) Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.
- (m) Training and better provision of teachers on distance teacher training methods would include correspondence education supplemented by radio and tutorial sessions. In-service training over pre-service training is cost-effectively provided with constructive supervision of the training activity.
- (n) Develop national skills for adapting and editing written school materials. There can be an increased capacity in many countries to write and publish classroom materials as a short-term objective.

B. Sponsorship and Funding:

CAFOR is seeking sponsorship from partners and multilateral and bilateral agencies, and the private sector to support the management, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of this project in the following ways:

S. No.	SUMMARY BUDGET	Per Annum Unit Cost	Period (Yrs)	Personnel Deployed	Total (USD)
1	STAFF COSTS				
	Internal Staff Costs- Full Time Staff (2 % of total salary costs)	68636.63	5	4	343183
	Field Based Experts Costs - Project Period & Work	30000.00	5	10	1500000
2	PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS				
	Curriculum Development Costs (one time costs)	25000	1		25000
	Teacher Development - Training in Innovative Learning Methods, Refresher Courses, Workshops, Conferences, Direct Support	30000	5		150000
	Learning Materials Costs - including quality text books, instructional materials etc.	30000	5		150000

	Communication Costs- Monthly Mobile Top-Ups, Printouts, Stationery, Shipping, Postage, etc (per annum per person)	3000	5	10	150000
	Monitoring ,Evaluation Costs & IT Costs	4000	5		20000
	Associated Costs (Supplies, Equipment Costs, etc)	50000	5		250000
	Operational Costs - Office Set-up Costs, Office Equipment, Etc	40000	1		40000
	Local community sensitization on quality education for children	20000	5		100000
	Workshops, seminars and other events to advocate for improved quality of education & share best practices	25000	5		125000
	Deployment of field staff / officers (per month)	500	5	20	600000
3	TRAVEL& TRANSPORTATION COSTS				
	Travel Insurance	1350	5	14	94500
	Per Diems per day for internal staff	260	5	14	18200
	Per Diems per day for international staff	260	5	10	13000
	Local Travel Costs per month	1000	5	14	840000
	International Travel Costs	600	5	14	84000
4	TOTAL AMOUNT				4,502,883
5	MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE				
	Calculated at 15% of TOTAL Amount				675,432
6	GRAND TOTAL				5,178,316

Sponsors may expect recognition in a few ways:

- Sponsors may be included in a roll of honour, hosted on the CAFOR website www.cafor.org, with the African Union's recognition.
- Sponsors will be recognized in presentations at conferences and meetings as having supported education in Africa.
- Should a sponsor wish to remain anonymous, this will be respected by CAFOR.

4. Conclusion:

The safest investment in educational quality in most countries is to secure adequate books and supplies. These effectively raise test scores and, almost invariably, have suffered from underinvestment about teachers' investments. Other areas that appear to have potential include:

- i. school feeding and health programmes,
- ii. the intensive use of radio ("interactive radio"),
- iii. teachers' in-service education in subject matter skills, and
- iv. strengthened inspection and supervision systems.

Besides, beneficial strategies that would improve quality in educational provision include regular professional development through brief pieces of training, with follow-up and refresher meetings, changing mindsets from traditional teaching to more active, student-focused approaches, accurate

distribution of classroom materials to schools based on school enrolment data and planning and a sophisticated distribution network.

CAFOR's view is that educational outcomes will continually improve if teachers are effective. The teaching and learning environments should be supported by effective school organization, community involvement, and district support and monitoring. CAFOR will do considerable advocacy work with all its media partners to ensure that governments and institutions pay more attention to quality education with a focus around these areas:

- (a) Stakeholder mobilization in the community to support the improvement programme.
- (b) Planning and organization to improve school management and schools' functioning as organizations, including curriculum management, strategic planning, and financial management.
- (c) Teacher performance, including awareness of teaching goals, focus on learning outcomes, access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources and provision of curriculum planning and delivery materials, school support visits and cluster-level activities.
- (d) Parent involvement through a parent mobilization programme, which includes setting up home study groups monitored by parents and developing a practical guide on how parents should support their children's learning.
- (e) District support provided at two levels, the district office and the circuit involved in the project, to provide additional capacity for planning and programming of school support and monitoring activities and coordination with district-level activities.
- (f) Teacher competence (subject knowledge and teaching skills): monitoring, planning and facilitating of teachers' professional development.
- (g) Research, monitoring and evaluation, including ongoing monitoring conducted by the project schools and district officials.