

Call for Papers: AU ECHO 2024 Edition

October 03, 2023 to October 26, 2023



The Year of Education

THEME: "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa"

Introduction:

2024 is the year of education. Recent reviews of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and Education 2030 Framework for Action, the AU-UNESCO continental report of the CESA and SDG4 and a joint AU-UNICEF report on Transforming Education in Africa, point to the fact that over the past ten years, African governments have undertaken a wide range of programmes and policy-level efforts to ensure that no child is left behind in access to education. There have been substantial efforts on the continent to ensure access, completion, and quality of basic education for all.

Overall, the proportion of out-of-school children had decreased until around 2010. The completion rates had improved in primary and lower secondary education, as well as the access to and the participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). There was also noticeable progress in the access to pre-primary education and in adult literacy and lifelong learning. With regards to school feeding, low-income countries have doubled their national budget expenditures to Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) from 17 percent to 33 percent between 2013 and 2020. In lower middle-income countries, national budgets now account for 88% of school meals financing, up from 55% in 2013.

However, despite efforts and progress made, three main indicators ring a warning bell:

- Although the out of school rate, i.e. the “proportion of children and young people in the official age range for the given level of education who are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary, secondary or higher levels of education” keeps steadily decreasing, especially for the primary level, the absolute number has reached the alarming global estimate of 98 million in Africa.
- The learning poverty rate, i.e. “the share of children who cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10 was the highest in sub-Saharan Africa before the COVID-19 pandemic, at 86%. This rate is likely to have worsened after the pandemic, estimated now at 90%. This means that nine out of ten children cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10.
- Africa will need 17 million additional teachers in order to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

At the global level, and within the Global Education Coordination Mechanism framework, led by UNESCO, the African Union has been a key player in the regional coordination of CESA and SDG4 support for and cooperation among countries. This is through convening Member States and partners and making critical contributions to promoting evidence use, priority setting, peer learning and monitoring mechanism. Similarly, at the African Union’s Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (STC-EST4) held on 1st and 2nd September 2022, Ministers, in their declaration on Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, requested the AU Commission to facilitate the adoption by the AU of an education related theme for the year for 2024, to address the burden and disruptions caused by COVID-19 on education systems, promote the systematic implementation of transforming education in Africa and for accelerated implementation of CESA 2016-2025 and SDG 4.

Progress in education has a far-reaching impact on all the other aspects of human capital development. The large population of young people in Africa is a powerful source of economic growth and progress, provided it receives quality education and skills for the 21st century job opportunities. Investing in education is thus, the most effective investment in the fight against poverty, reducing gender inequalities, enabling people to survive and thrive, and helping to improve socio-economic development. Education is also associated with more peaceful communities, greater civic engagement, and stronger democracies.

Year 2024, dedicated to education in Africa, will be an opportunity for the African Union to re- galvanize Member States towards the achievement of CESA and SDG4 targets. Importantly, this will come as a follow-up to the STC-EST4, AU Declarations,

the Urgent Call for Action by the SDG4 High-level Steering Committee and the UN Secretary General's Vision Statement on Transforming Education. It will engage the AU Commission to mobilize governments and development partners to rethink the models of education and skill development needed for the Africa We Want in the 21st century.

The Call:

Referencing decisions or declarations of the AU as well as other documented pronouncements and actions by the African Union, and in line with the theme of the year, interested parties are hereby called upon to submit for the 2024 edition of the AU ECHO, incisive and evidence based articles on the potential of and progress made in the implementation or mainstreaming of AU decisions in the field of education as well as initiatives that are being undertaken at institutional, country and continental levels to promote education, based on the AU's decisions and declarations. Articles may also be dedicated to activities held to celebrate the African Day of School Feeding i.e. 1st March in their countries or regions.

Submissions should be based on the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25). <https://au.int/node/29514>

To support their arguments, writers should reference

- Agenda 2063, available here <https://au.int/agenda2063/overview>
- Relevant treaties of the AU <https://au.int/en/treaties>

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Other useful source documents are:

- Statute of the Pan-African University (PAU) <https://au.int/node/33127>
- The Continental TVET Strategy <https://au.int/en/documents/20181022/continental-strategy-technical-and-vocational-educational-and-training-tvet>
- Statute of the African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) <https://cieffa.au.int/sites/default/files/files/2022-04/statuteau-cieffaeng.pdf>
- The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment <https://au.int/node/36195>
- View previous editions of the AU ECHO : <https://au.int/en/documents/1148>

Submission Requirements & Deadline:

- Original contributions will be accepted from institutions, organs and employees of the African Union, AU member states, African academic institutions, think tanks, civil society organisations and representative groups (e.g. women, youth), industry experts and the wider African public. The editors reserve the right to reject papers they deem to be inconsistent with the guidelines outlined in this call for papers.
- A connection should be made to the theme outlined on this concept note, and its objectives
- Languages: Articles for publication may be submitted in English or French.
- Word count: Not more than 1500 words per article.
- Images: Pertinent photographs and other illustrations that enhance the articles are welcome and should be sent in the same email as the article. These must be original to the author and/or be under a creative common license. Authors must confirm their ownership of such illustrations and captions must be provided. Photographs should be a minimum 1mb in resolution and should be sent as a separate attachment to the article. Embedding photographs in a word file may lead to disqualification. No PDF submissions will be accepted.
- All submissions must contain the full name and contact details of the sender, his/her organization / job title (if applicable), and a brief summary of the article.
- Submissions will only be accepted through email which **must be titled** as given below and can only be submitted through the email accounts listed below for consideration.

o **Title/subject of email: SUBMISSION-AUECHO2024-(INSERT TITLE OF ARTICLE)**

o **Receiving emails:**

Send all manuscripts and correspondence to GamalK@africa-union.org copying the Managing Editor at MusabayanaW@africa-union.org and DIC@africa-union.org

Deadline for Submission

Manuscripts must be received before or by **17.00 East African Time (GMT+3) on Thursday 30th November 2023**

About the AU ECHO:

The AU ECHO provides a platform for the 55 Member States of the African Union, and African citizens to profile the successes of Africa, and to impart knowledge and experiences borne from African led initiatives, based on the instruments and

decisions of the African Union. It is published on an annual basis by the Directorate of Information and Communication of the AUC with content largely related to the AU's Theme of the Year.

The AU ECHO is distributed to AU Heads of State and Government, Ministers, senior policy makers' delegates, and media during the AU Summits and other substantive meetings and conferences as well as to offices of the African Union. Distribution is also made to development partner organisations and consulates / embassies in Addis Ababa. Soft copies are posted online on <https://au.int/en/documents/1148>