

Africa urged to catch up on early childhood ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

African governments have been called upon to show the political will and creativity to make up for the delay in early childhood education and care. According to statistics presented at the opening of the first world conference on childhood education and care, only 15 per cent of children have access to pre-school education in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, "hope to make up for this delay is quite possible," said Hamidou Boukary, senior specialist at the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), who is taking part in the meeting in Moscow, Russia.

"This requires, in addition to the strong political will, some creativity and in this process, we can plan to base on community structures in African villages, for it already exists in our traditional structures, management mechanisms of children by grandparents," Boukary told PANA.

Deploing educational strategies adopted after Independence, he stressed the importance of basic education for the other education sub-sectors.

"The lack of preparation for entry to primary school through a basic education mainly explains the high rate of decline in schools recorded in Africa. Pre-school education is not a luxury; it is the foundation of all other the education sub-sectors," said Boukary, who strongly urged African countries to have a holistic view of education to ensure continuity between different levels of the education sector.

'For a long time, we have focused all our attention on the primary, secondary and higher education, neglecting pre-school. The result is that we end up with a very mixed assessment. We must definitely be convinced that pre-school prepares children for a better school success.' he stressed.

A special session will be held in Moscow Tuesday on the African experience on education and early childhood care and will be attended by Kenyan Minister of Education Sam Onger, who is the current chair of the Conference of African Ministers of Education (COMIFAD).

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They will also discuss the findings and recommendations of the fourth African International Conference on Early Childhood Development, held in November 2009 in Dakar.

Nearly 65 ministers from across the world are attending the first world conference on education and early childhood care.

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Region: International ^[2]

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