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**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: How to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems**

**Sub-theme 1**
**Common core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable development in Africa**

## Reaching out to the Educationally Disadvantaged Learner in Africa, with Particular Reference to the Nigerian Case

*A contribution to the ADEA Triennial*
*of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the ADEA Peer Review Teams*

*by*
*Ibrahima Bah-Lalya, Gidado Tahir, Charles Onocha and Kaviraj Sukon*

**ABSTRACT**

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## Abstract

1. A Peer Review exercise carried out in Nigeria revealed that a significant number of marginalized children, youth and adolescents were not benefiting from their Right to Education. The review also observed that the Nigerian situation was common to several other African countries. Poverty, wars, internal conflicts, adverse climatic conditions, cultural/social stigmatizations, uneven distribution of education services, irrelevant curricula, inappropriate classroom practices, weak administration and poor funding were some of the reasons producing and sustaining disadvantage in education. Considerable challenges to effectively address their needs are still not met.

2. Through the analysis of the programs aimed at addressing the educationally disadvantaged learner (EDL) in six sampled African countries, as well as the recommendations emanating from the peer reviews, this study explores ways to provide education and training for sustainable development to the disadvantaged learners in Africa. Using a combination of comparative and case study approaches, it explores the needs of the EDL, identifies pertinent initiatives undertaken to address them, and discusses lessons to learn from this.

3. Three findings clearly standout from the study:

   - EDL socioeconomic and physical needs are so varied that diversification, flexibility, and adaptability are key to effectively developing education, training and empowerment programs for them. Mainstreaming strategies could be implemented wherever possible but out-of-school pathways must be privileged in cases where the EDLs have specific socioeconomic requirements that could not be accommodated within ordinary settings. In all cases, enabling on-site learning environments coupled with the judicious choice of teaching and learning languages and strategies, effective leadership and management play a pivotal role in the empowerment of the EDLs.
   - There is a need to redefine and better use alternative education which should not be just about developing a path to mainstream the unreached, but also about exploring and integrating a full range of vocational offerings and livelihood activities that are robust, relevant, flexible and adapted to contemporary settings;
   - Funding for the disadvantaged is as critical: the "EFA/MDG Revolution" has resulted into a significant increase of student populations, which has significant aftermath impact on the availability of resources, teaching staff, infrastructure and equipment. Therefore, the tendency has been to care for the many and neglect specific programs that deal with smaller entities such as EDL. This trend must be corrected.

4. Based on the findings, alternative policies have been proposed at the end of the report for consideration by national/international policy makers including countries to consider working collaboratively in identifying establishing and implementing appropriate mechanisms for reaching out to the disadvantaged learner through such mechanisms as the Inter-Country Quality Node approach. There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift as in a significant number of cases education must be taken to the EDLs rather than asking them to come towards traditional educational settings. A lot is at stake for anything else.