Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika

الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا

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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

Qur'anic Schooling and Education for Sustainable Development in Africa: the case of Kenya

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1. ABSTRACT

1. This study explores the role of Qur'anic schooling, as an alternative approach to conventional education, in enabling Kenya to attain the goals of Education for All (EFA). Using desk study and field work in selected regions, the research reviewed the extent to which this type of schooling addressed the educational and socio-economic needs of the disadvantaged children. It also explored possible ways of improving the relevance of the curricula to respond to the dynamic needs of the labor market.

2. A key finding is that in Qur'anic schooling, like with the secular education system, there is a dichotomy between inadequately resourced traditional madrasas on the one hand and modern Islamic schools that have successfully integrated the State and religious curricula on the other hand. Communities from predominantly Muslim areas in the arid and semi-arid regions are more likely to enroll their children in traditional Qur'anic schools than fee-free State schools despite the perception among those interviewed that the former lacks sufficient emphasis on producing the appropriate labor market skills. Currently, *madrasas* use different syllabi and have no centralized examination and evaluation system. It happens, however, to offer poor and marginalized communities an opportunity to ensure that their children are provided with the basics in functional numeracy, literacy and Muslim values.

3. Arguably, there is a strong case to formalize this sub-sector of education provision, not only to ensure harmonization of curricula and equity in education opportunities in some of the less resourced Qur'anic schools, but also to recognize the contribution it makes in ensuring that the EFA goals are being realized. It could also be argued that wherever formalization is not adapted to the local socioeconomic conditions of the targeted groups (such as nomads), initiatives could be undertaken to improve the curriculum of traditional Qur'anic schools, re-train teachers accordingly and explore new opportunities that arise with the new technologies to improve teaching and learning conditions. In this regard, Kenya could learn from other experiments like the UNESCO supported Islamic schools and the "Tsangaya" model in Nigeria in which secular subjects – such as Mathematics, English language, Social Sciences and Science – are successfully integrated to the religious curriculum to make sure that the learner is equipped with a full range of basic quality education before leaving the learning centre.