



## Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in West and Central Africa

Final report | Dakar, Senegal (20-22 January 2026)

*Accelerating the Transformation of Early Childhood Education and Development Systems in West and Central Africa: From Scientific Evidence to Policy Implementation*

The Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED), held in Dakar from 20 to 22 January 2026, brought together government representatives, regional organizations, technical and financial partners, and civil society actors from West and Central Africa. With five years remaining until the 2030 deadline, discussions highlighted the urgency of accelerating the transformation of ECED systems in the face of persistent constraints, including underfunding, institutional fragmentation, shortages of qualified personnel, and insufficient actionable data. The meeting emphasized the need to move from a logic of commitment to a logic of implementation, grounded in strengthened governance, coherent financing, improved service quality, and the integration of crisis resilience. The discussions resulted in the development of an operational Roadmap in preparation for the 2026 Ministerial Conference.

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## Acknowledgements

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We would like to express our deep gratitude to all the institutions and partners who contributed to the success of this Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development in West and Central Africa, 20-22 January 2026, Dakar, Senegal.

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge the institutional support and warm welcome extended to this meeting by the Senegalese Ministry of National Education. We would also like to thank the representatives of the Ministries of Education and Health of West and Central African countries for their active participation and commitment, whose contributions enriched the discussions and strengthened the regional scope of this initiative.

Our thanks go to the partners who organized the event: UNESCO, the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO). The participation of the African Union, which graciously gave us a continental dimension in advocacy and partnership, was appreciated and invaluable.

Our gratitude also goes to civil society actors, whose involvement and perspectives broadened the debate and ensured an inclusive and participatory approach. Their commitment reflects a shared desire to promote early childhood education and development as a strategic priority for the future of the region.

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## List of abbreviations

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Abbreviation	Full title (English)
<b>AfECN</b>	African Early Childhood Network
<b>ECCE-PATT</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education — Progress Assessment Tool for Transformation
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>ECED</b>	Early Childhood Education and Development
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>WAHO</b>	West African Health Organization
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation, Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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## Context

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[The Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development \(ECED\) in West and Central Africa](#)<sup>1</sup>, held on 20-22 January 2026, in Dakar, Senegal, is part of a regional effort to accelerate the achievement of equitable access to quality services for the holistic development of children from birth to age 8. It was held under the auspices of the Senegalese Ministry of National Education and co-organized by UNESCO, the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO).

With five years to go until the 2030 deadline, the meeting reaffirmed the urgency of accelerating progress towards the targets related to SDG 3, SDG 4.2 and SDG 16, in a context marked by multiple crises: climate shocks, security tensions, forced displacement, socio-economic pressure and the weakening of public systems. This meeting had a dual ambition: to move from "why invest" to "how to transform". It combined an evidence-based approach (child development science) with a systemic approach (governance, financing, quality, staffing, data and resilience) in order to provide countries with relevant tools for operational decision-making that promotes realistic scaling up.

The meeting is designed as the technical segment of the initiative "Accelerating Early Childhood Education and Development in West and Central Africa by 2030 and Beyond", which aims to generate contributions and recommendations for the political segment of the Ministerial Conference scheduled for 2026.

Discussions during the Expert Meeting were structured according to a logical progression:

- **Aligning knowledge and priorities** (scientific foundations, frameworks and regional trends);
- **Strengthening the understanding of systems** and the appropriation of analysis and steering tools;
- **Planning the next concrete steps** for the 2026 Ministerial Conference, with a roadmap and deliverables.

## Opening policy messages: an urgent need, a human development imperative, and a common agenda

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The opening speeches highlighted a strong convergence of views: Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) is the foundation of well-being, learning, human capital and social cohesion; and every child has the right to quality care, protection and education from early years onwards. It can no longer be considered a "complement" to education, but rather an imperative and a structural investment that determines academic success, the reduction of inequalities, resilience and the human development of societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Documents and materials related to this meeting can be found at: [https://linktr.ee/ECED\\_Dakar](https://linktr.ee/ECED_Dakar)

### Three policy messages have emerged:

- **ECED as a lever for human development and equity:** early childhood lays the foundations for human development and is one of the few areas where public action can massively reduce inequalities from the outset, particularly for children who are poor, vulnerable, displaced or living with a disability.
- **ECED as a collective responsibility:** ECED is, by its very nature, multisectoral. It requires effective coordination between actors involved in education, health, nutrition, protection and care, as well as synergies with communities, partners and other stakeholders.
- **Funding allocated to ECED as an indicator of credibility:** without increased domestic resources and significant budget allocations, ECED will remain a stated priority rather than a real one.

This opening sequence thus anchored the Meeting in a logic of transformation: the field of ECED must be better constructed, better funded and better managed.

## Regional findings: real progress, but hampered by systemic bottlenecks

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The regional framing session highlighted notable progress in several countries, but insufficient in relation to needs. Discussions converged on a central observation: ECED in West and Central Africa continues to face structural constraints that limit access, quality and equity.

Several challenges were widely shared:

First, health and nutritional vulnerabilities continue to affect children's development trajectories, with direct impacts on learning abilities and entry into basic learning. The mortality rate for children under 5 is the highest of all African regions: 91 out of 1,000 children in West Africa and 73 out of 1,000 children in Central Africa, according to reports from "[Countdown to 2030](#)."

Furthermore, access to pre-primary education remains insufficient and highly unequal, particularly depending on household income and geographical location. According to data available from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the net enrollment rate for early childhood education will be the lowest of all African regions in 2024 (or thereabouts): 14% in Central Africa and 22% in West Africa. In several contexts, urban/rural disparities and poverty-related gaps remain decisive factors.

One cross-cutting barrier was identified as critical: the lack of reliable and usable data. Participants highlighted the obsolescence or incompleteness of certain indicators, the lack of harmonization between sectors, and the difficulties in producing information that can be used for planning, targeting, equity and the efficient allocation of resources.

Finally, two bottlenecks emerged strongly:

- chronic underfunding, which is often fragmented and unpredictable;
- a shortage of qualified and sustained personnel, limiting the quality of practices and the capacity for scaling up.

## The science of ECED: Why investing in the early years of life is important

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The scientific session reinforced a widely shared conviction: investing in early childhood is first and foremost a requirement for the realization of children's rights, and secondly an evidence-based development imperative. The early years of life – up to the age of 8 – represent a period of maximum plasticity in brain and socio-emotional development. They have a lasting impact on learning abilities, health, autonomy and social skills. The discussions highlighted that children exposed to malnutrition, toxic stress, insecurity or unstimulating environments accumulate delays that can lead, in the long term, to persistent academic difficulties, increased vulnerability and a reduction in human potential.

The discussions confirmed that educational success is not solely determined in the classroom: it begins before children start school and is built through daily experiences, stable interactions and protective environments within the family and community. With this in mind, participants reaffirmed the relevance of an integrated approach focused on the real needs of the child, based on the logic of attentive care, which combines in an inseparable way:

- good health,
- adequate nutrition,
- safety and protection,
- early learning opportunities,
- attentive and responsive care in daily relationships.

A cross-cutting approach has emerged: improving ECED also involves strengthening the child's immediate environment and the conditions for daily support. This includes supporting families, caregivers and carers, promoting positive parenting, and better integrating psychosocial well-being—including mental health and stress management—particularly in fragile and crisis-affected contexts.

## Strengthening systems: from intention to implementation

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The meeting emphasized the need for a profound transformation of systems, recalling that quality ECED does not depend on a single factor or actor, but on coherence between several pillars: governance, financing, standards, quality of services, personnel, data and accountability.

Participants highlighted a key challenge: many countries have policy frameworks or strategies relating to these key areas, but their implementation faces persistent obstacles such as institutional fragmentation, insufficient coordination, weak implementation mechanisms at local and national level, and inadequate human and financial resources.

In this context, some key diagnostic tools<sup>2</sup> were presented as a decisive lever to help countries:

- objectively identify bottlenecks,
- prioritize reforms,
- sequence realistic measures,
- and strengthen accountability through indicators and monitoring mechanisms.

## ECCE-PATT: adoption, added value and implementation expectations

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Discussions highlighted the very favourable reception given to Early Childhood Care and Education-Progress Assessment Tool for Transformation (ECCE-PATT), which is seen as a structuring tool for strengthening the coherence of ECED policies and supporting analysis-based transformation. Several national delegations emphasized that ECCE-PATT meets a concrete need: to provide a clear, readable and operational framework for identifying bottlenecks, establishing a shared diagnosis, and placing ECED within a systemic logic, at the intersection of governance, financing, access, quality and personnel. Participants particularly appreciated the tool's potential to create a common language between different sub-sectors and facilitate a more concrete discussion on trade-offs and priorities.

At the same time, countries expressed high expectations that the ECCE-PATT would contribute to tangible results beyond the diagnostic phase. They emphasized the need for methodological and technical support to ensure effective ownership, particularly in facilitating the self-assessment process, ensuring the genuine involvement of multisectoral stakeholders, and promoting the participation of stakeholders at the devolved and decentralized levels. Several country delegations highlighted the most decisive stage: transforming the results of the ECCE-PATT into operational decisions, with realistic, quantified priorities integrated into existing national processes and frameworks (ECED strategies, sectoral plans, budgetary frameworks, platforms and monitoring mechanisms). Finally, participants emphasized the importance of establishing a dynamic exchange of good practices, communities of practice and peer learning, so that ECCE-PATT becomes a relevant tool for steering and accountability.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, [CATCh-ECE](#), [ECCE-PATT](#), [Early Childhood Development Financing Toolbox](#).

## Crises and vulnerabilities: integrating resilience into ECED responses

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The thematic sessions confirmed that resilience is becoming a central requirement of ECED in the region. Crises are no longer exceptional shocks: they now shape the living conditions of young children and the functioning of services.

- **Climate shocks and environmental stress**

Discussions showed that the impacts of climate change directly affect early childhood: food insecurity, health risks, family stress, service disruptions, infrastructure degradation, displacement and increased vulnerabilities. Participants stressed that the specific needs of young children are still insufficiently integrated into responses to climate change, despite the existence of regional and continental frameworks.

Among the priorities discussed were: the explicit integration of ECED into risk management plans, the strengthening of resilient infrastructure (including WASH), the continuity of essential services (nutrition, protection, learning), staff training and the use of adaptive social protection mechanisms.

- **Conflict, displacement and protection risks**

Discussions on conflict and displacement reiterated a fundamental principle: the right to education and protection applies to all children, regardless of context. Crises increase the risks of violence, disruption to learning, stress and trauma, making emergency measures and integrated responses essential.

The solutions discussed included the establishment of appropriate learning spaces, child protection, psychosocial support, access to educational kits, household support and community mobilization. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening intersectoral coordination in order to move from ad hoc responses to sustainable continuity of services.

## Financing ECED: gradually improving implementation engineering

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The in-depth session on financing allowed for a direct, pragmatic discussion focused on concrete solutions, highlighting a widely shared frustration: even though the strategic importance of ECED is now better recognized, the resources mobilized remain insufficient, unpredictable and often fragmented, limiting countries' ability to plan structural actions with confidence and scale up.

A strong message emerged: the main challenge lies not only in the overall level of budgets, but in the ability to build a coherent financing architecture capable of supporting holistic ECED (health, nutrition, protection, early learning) and ensuring continuity of services, including in crisis contexts. In this regard, the discussions identified several recurring obstacles: insufficient data on costs or results achieved, fragmentation of interventions between different sub-sectors, budgetary mechanisms that

are ill-suited to integrated services, and the difficulty of ensuring sustainable and equitable funding in the medium and long term.

The session also highlighted the value of the Early Childhood Development Financing Toolbox, presented as a concrete lever for moving from a general diagnosis to an operational financing strategy. This toolbox was appreciated as a structured approach to clarifying needs, mapping services and target populations, improving efficiency, identifying options for resource mobilization and, above all, sequencing financing choices (short, medium and long term) in line with countries' institutional capacities. Participants emphasized that the challenge is to move away from a "project-based" financing approach towards more coherent mechanisms that are better aligned with national systems and capable of producing equitable, high-quality results over the long term.

The shared objective at the end of the discussion is clear: to support countries towards realistic and sustainable financing trajectories by strengthening both resource mobilization and the capacity to transform these resources into integrated, high-quality services for the benefit of the most vulnerable children.

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## Advocacy for transformation

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The advocacy session brought together panelists from various stakeholders to examine how to strengthen early childhood education and development (ECED) across Africa, both at the continental and national levels.

It highlighted the leading role played by the African Union in promoting a continental strategy, supported by thematic groups and ministerial platforms that encourage its implementation in all Member States. Although ECED often competes with other priorities, participants emphasized its role as a powerful multiplier for economic growth, youth employment, gender equality and social cohesion. They noted that effective advocacy requires evidence-based messages that demonstrate both the long-term impact and short-term benefits for teachers, women, communities and the workforce.

It was emphasized that advocacy must be complemented by local activism and testimonials to amplify the voices of parents and families and create momentum. Key principles include clarity of roles, strategic communication, strong relationships with decision-makers, patience, perseverance and accountability. Civil society was recognized as essential in bridging local realities with national and continental agendas to ensure that commitments translate into action.

Practical approaches adopted by national networks included: providing evidence and visibility to influence government decisions; building consensus from the ground up; engaging communities through awareness campaigns and regional collaborations; and calling for the creation of a unified multisectoral platform.

The importance of data, local languages and community leadership in holding governments accountable, in the spirit of 'Africa for Africa', was also highlighted. Overall, the session highlighted that harmonizing continental frameworks, national networks, local activism and evidence-based advocacy is essential to position ECED not as a competing priority, but as the cornerstone of Africa's social and economic transformation.

## Roadmap and next steps

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At the end of the meeting, participants agreed on an operational [roadmap](#) designed to maintain momentum beyond the expert meeting and to rigorously structure preparations for the 2026 Ministerial Conference. Discussions focused on a key issue: transforming general agreement on the importance of the ECED into a structured process based on clearly sequenced steps, measurable deliverables and a rigorous division of roles and responsibilities. The shared objective is to ensure that the Ministerial Conference is underpinned by a robust technical basis, realistic priorities and credible commitments.

It was thus agreed that each country should, in the near future, undertake a national consolidation process, led by a designated Focal Point and supported by a multisectoral National Team of Experts, tasked with producing a document outlining: the main bottlenecks, the priority reforms to be undertaken, the support needs of the partners and the conditions for the successful implementation of the roadmap. Participants emphasized that the ECCE-PATT self-assessment provides a common methodological basis for organizing this work, provided that it remains firmly action-oriented, effectively involves the relevant actors (including at the devolved and decentralized levels) and leads to operational decisions. The discussion also highlighted the need for a regional synthesis consolidating national contributions in order to identify common trends, shared priorities and strategic options to be taken forward at the political level. Finally, participants emphasized the importance of preparing an Outcome Document, to be validated and adopted at the Ministerial Conference, reflecting the collective commitment and accountability for the transformation of ECED in the region.

[Participants recommended several measures](#) to facilitate countries' preparations for the Ministerial Conference, including: the creation of WhatsApp groups to share experiences and advise each other on conducting national self-assessments; the receipt of letters from the organizers to senior authorities regarding countries' preparations and commitments; the use of technical assistance from the organizers to conduct the self-assessment and prepare the national report through training sessions and online exchanges.

## Conclusion

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The Dakar meeting established an essential point of convergence: accelerating ECED in West and Central Africa depends not only on expanding access to services, but also on systemic transformation based on governance, financing, quality, staffing, data, resilience, and partnership with families and communities. The main achievement of the meeting was to refocus the debate on implementation: rigorous diagnosis, prioritization, sequencing, financing, monitoring and reporting. In a regional environment exposed to multiple shocks, ECED appears to be not only an education, social and economic investment, but also a tool for stability and cohesion.

The meeting called for refocusing on a few key priorities:

- **Strengthening governance and intersectorality:** Institutionalize ECED coordination, clarifying mandates, strengthen regulatory mechanisms and ensure effective coordination between central and territorial levels.
- **Build coherent, equitable and sustainable financing:** Improve the targeting of resources, increase domestic financing, improve the efficiency of financing expenditure, reduce fragmentation, integrate ECED into budgetary frameworks and strengthen mechanisms adapted to shocks (climate, emergencies, displacement).
- **Invest in staff quality and professionalization:** Develop competency standards, structure initial and continuing training, strengthen support and supervision, and improve working conditions, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- **Use data for steering:** Harmonize indicators across sub-sectors, improve data availability and quality, and strengthen the use of evidence to better target, monitor and report.
- **Integrate resilience as a minimum standard for ECED:** Ensure the continuity of essential services, strengthen infrastructure, develop crisis-responsive mechanisms, and strengthen the protection of young children and their families (e.g., resilient infrastructure, WASH, adaptive social protection, educational continuity, psychosocial support).

The meeting produced **three concrete outcomes** with immediate value for public decision making:

1. A common and consolidated understanding of the scientific and systemic determinants of ECED, aligned with a holistic child-centred approach.
2. An understanding of the ECCE-PATT, widely welcomed as a structural tool for diagnosing bottlenecks, setting priorities and monitoring progress. Countries expressed clear expectations: technical guidance for self-assessment, participation of decentralized levels and conversion of results into sequential and quantified plans.
3. An operational roadmap towards the 2026 Ministerial Conference, based on milestones and expected results: national consolidation (diagnosis and prioritization), regional synthesis, and preparation of an adoptable "final document".

## Annex : Participants List

Country	Organization	Participant name	Title
Angola	Ministério da Educação	Joaquim Antonia GOLA	National Director of Preschool and Elementary Education
	Ministério da Saúde	Mansitambi Joao LUZ	Coordinator of the National Women's Health Programme
Benin	Ministère des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire	Chellon Pierre HOUNKANDJI	Director of Primary Education
	Ministère de la Santé	Conrad Essoh-Dhè-Sou DEGUENON	Director of Basic Sanitation and Community Health
		Minton Eude Edith DJENONTIN épouse KOTCHOFA	Head of Family Planning Servicesq
Burkina Faso	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales	Lucien HEIN	Inspector General of Early Childhood Education, Deputy Director General for Access to Preschool and Primary Education
		Yéri TRAORE	Director of Family Health
	Ministère de la Santé et de l'Hygiène publique	Eliane Florine BASSOLE ZOUADIE	Pediatrician at the Family Health Department
		Children Believe	Saidou DIALLA
	WAHO	Alain SAYI	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
		Achille BATONON	Technical Operations Manager
		Bienkouma Ulrich KI	Accountant
		Die Marie TRAORE	Secretary
		ErmeI JOHNSON	Programme Research and Academic Institutions
	WHO	Lionel SOGBOSSI	Primary Healthcare and non-Communicable Diseases
Ramatou SAWADOGO WINDSOURI		National Professional Officer, Maternal and Child Health	
Burundi	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Recherche Scientifique	Paul HAKIZIMANA	Director General of Basic and Post-Basic Education and Pedagogy
		Claver NIJIMBERE	Chief Executive Officer of Research, Science, and Technology

	Ministère de la Santé publique et de la Lutte contre le SIDA	Innocent RIYAZIMANA	Head of the malnutrition department at PRONIANUT
	ECD Network	Juvenal BATUNGWANAYO	Deputy Coordinator
<b>Cameroon</b>	Ministère de l'Éducation de Base	Madeleine Virginie ABOUI épouse BINDZI	Inspector of education in charge of preschool education
	Ministère de la Santé publique	Lisette A. KWAMBITE NGALEU épouse WOUBONNOU	Senior Nurse Specializing in Childcare
	ECD Cameroon	Jeanne KIBOUM	Vice President
	UNESCO	Vevanje NJOH	Programme Officer
<b>Central African Republic</b>	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale	Horty KPEFIO née DOUNIA DOTE	Preschool Education Inspector
<b>Cape Verde</b>	Ministério da Educação	Alcinda ANDRADE	National Coordinator for Early Childhood Education
	Ministério da Saúde	Maria José MARTINS PEREIRA	Coordinator of the National Child Health Program
		Meliza Helena MENDES CARDOSO	General Practitioner; Health Delegate
<b>Chad</b>	Ministère de la Femme et de la Petite Enfance	Djimadoum BEMBAYE	Head of Early Childhood Development Division
	Ministère de la Santé publique et de la Prévention	Mahamat BECHIR	Director of Food and Nutrition
<b>Congo</b>	Ministère de l'Enseignement préscolaire, Primaire, Secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation	Geneviève Clémence MVOUAMA née LOULENDO	Director of Preschool Education
	Ministre de la Santé et de la Population	Clautaire ITOUA	Director General of Population
	WHO	Janet KAYITA	Team Lead, Family and Reproductive Health, WHO Regional Office for Africa
		Mhike JESCAH	Administrative Assistant
<b>Democratic Republic of the Congo</b>	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et Nouvelle Citoyenneté	Michel OTTO	Inspector for the National Education System and New Citizenship
<b>Equatorial Guinea</b>	Ministère de l'Éducation, des Sciences, de l'Enseignement professionnel et des Sports	José Bonifacio OBAMA MOLO	Director General of Specialized Early Childhood Education, Preschool, Primary Education, and Literacy
	Ministère de la Santé et de la Protection sociale	Teodora Alene NFA NCHAMA	National Director of Primary Health Care
<b>Ethiopia</b>	African Union (AU)	Sophia ASHIPALA	Head of Education Division

France	OMEP (Organisation mondiale pour l'éducation préscolaire)	Gilles PÉTREULT	Representative of OMEP-Global to UNESCO and President of OMEP-France
	UNESCO	Rokhaya DIAWARA	Programme Specialist
Gabon	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement intégré et de la Culture	Pascal MASSANDE	Director of Primary Education, Ministry of National Education, Civic Education, and Vocational Training
Gambia	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	Aboubacarr LANGLEY	Education Officer
		Abdul Kadri SANNEH	Principal Education Officer
	Ministry of Health	Musa MARENA	Director Family Health
		David MENDY	Deputy Program Manager, Primary Health Care
	National Early Childhood Development Network	Abdoulie FR JADAMA	Executive Director
	University of The Gambia	Hamidou JAWARA	Research Manager
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Isaac ATTA-BAAH	Principal Programme Officer, Early Childhood Education (Pre-tertiary Directorate)
	Ghana Education Service	Adisa TASSA	Director of Early Childhood Education
	Lively Minds	Fayudata YAKUBU	Ghana Country Director
Guinea	Ministère de l'Enseignement Pré-Universitaire et de l'Alphabétisation	Djiguiba SACKO	National Director of Preschool Education
		Fatoumata KEITA	Head of Evaluation Department at the National Service for Evaluation
		Mouctar BLONDIAUX	Deputy Director National Service for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes
	Ministère de la Santé et l'Hygiène publique	Ibrahima Sory DIALLO	General of the Institute for Nutrition and Child Health
		Tohanize GOUMOU	Head of Community Health Division
Julius Nyerere University of Kankan	Ablam AMOUZOU	Lecturer	
Guinea-Bissau	Ministério da Educação Nacional, Ensino Superior e Investigação Científica	Aite DA COSTA	National Coordinator for Public and Community Kindergartens

	Ministério da Saúde Pública	Maria de Fátima GOMES BARBOSA SOUSA CORDEIRO	Assistant Physician to the Director General of Maternal and Child Health
		Paulina GOMES BETUNDE	Director of Community Health Services and Traditional Medicine Prevention
	Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (INEP)	Mamadou JAO	Coordinator
	Rede Nacional Dos Jardines De Infancia da Guine-Bissau	Quecuto INDJAI	Coordinator
Ivory Coast	Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'alphabétisation et de l'enseignement technique	Anne Marie YAPO	Secondary education inspector responsible for preschool and primary education
	Ministère de la Santé et de l'Hygiène publique	Adjoba Françoise KADJA	Community Health and Health Promotion Department
Kenya	AfECN	Lynette OKENGO	Executive Director
		Elizabeth GITONGA	Programs Manager
		Penuel ONGWAE	Operations Manager
	African Population and Health Research Center	Patricia WEKULO	Researcher
		Silas ONYANGO	Researcher
Liberia	Ministry of Education	B. Augustine KULLIE	Early Childhood Education Specialist/Director, Bureau of Early Childhood Education
	Ministry of Health	Nuntia K. GBANLON-NUAHN	Director Family Health
		Wiyata Tamara DIGGS-KOKER	Technical Assistant Community Health Services Division Ministry of Health
	Early Childhood Development Alliance	Yvonne CAPEHART	Coordinator
Madagascar	WHO	Eugénie Siga Diane NIANE	Nutrition Multicounty Assignment Team member
Mali	Ministère de l'Éducation nationale	Maria COULIBALY SANGARE	National Director of Preschool and Special Education
	Ministère de la Santé et du Développement Social	Aminata Oumar TOURE	Head of Department
		Lala N'drainy SIDIBE	Pediatrician, member of AMAPED

		Ben MOULAYE IDRIS	Director general National Agency of Reproductive Health
Niger	Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'alphabétisation, de l'enseignement professionnel et de la promotion des langues nationales	Nathalie Salamatou ASSOGBA	Head of the Preschool Division at the Directorate of Preschool and Primary Education
	Ministère de la Santé et de l'Hygiène Publique	Issoufa HAROU	Director General of Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Reproductive Health
Nigeria	Federal Ministry of Education	Josephine Chimezie-Nwaobiara OKECHI	Deputy Director, Basic Education Department
	Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare	John Ajiwohwodoma OVUORAYE	Director, Family Health
		Zarah Zambuk UMAR	National Community Health Manager
		Amina MOHAMMED	Director of Child Health Division
	Obafemi Awolowo University	Hannah AJAYI	President, Foundation for the Promotion of Childhood Care and Development in Nigeria
WHO	Chimeziri Joy UFERE-ISIKIMA	National Professional Officer, Child and Adolescent Health	
Senegal	Ministère de l'Éducation nationale	Saliou SENE	Principal Inspector (Exceptional Grade), Departmental Adviser
		Tenguella BA	Director of Preschool Education
		Assane SOW	Director, National Institute for Research and Action for the Development of Education (INEADE)
		Mamadou FAYE	Secretary General, National Institute for Research and Action for the Development of Education
		Khady DIOP MBODJI	Chief of Staff
		Souleymane DIALLO	Head of Cabinet
		Papa Malick NDAO	General Secretary
		Mame Birame BESSANE	Head of Division, Directorate of Education Planning and Reform
		Oumy Marie BEYE	Technical Advisor
		Alassane DIEDHIOU	Education and Training Inspector, National Agency for Early Childhood Development (ANPECTP)
Dominique PREIRA	Education and Training Inspector, National Agency for Early Childhood Development (ANPECTP)		

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	Association Boyam	Fa DIALLO	Founder & CEO
	National Commission for UNESCO	Abibatou SYLLA	Head of Programme
		Dado BA NDIAYE	Head of Science
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		Oumar TANDIA	General Secretary
		Loty GAYE	Member of the RENADPE Steering Committee
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	Ministry of Health	Margaret Titty MANNAH	Program Manager National Quality

			of care/RICH EXPERT
		Elizabeth Magdaline MUSA	National Coordinator Community Health workers
	ECD Network Sierra Leone	Edmond EBIKUNLE COLE	Secretary
	WHO	Ibrahim KAMARA	National Professional Officer, Child and Adolescent Health & Nutrition
<b>Switzerland</b>	WHO	Sheila MANJI	ECD Specialist
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	Ministère de la Santé, de l'Hygiène publique, de la Couverture Sanitaire Universelle et des Assurances	Abdoukarim NABA MOUCGEDOU	Head of the Community Health and Elderly Division
		Makilioubè TCHANDANA	Head of the Division of Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning
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<b>United Kingdom</b>	Theirworld	Ben HEWITT	Senior Campaigns Advisor
<b>USA</b>	Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN)	Elizabeth LULE	Executive Director
		Shekufe ZONJI	Global Technical Lead
	United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Divya LATA	Global Thematic Lead on Early Childhood Education



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## Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in West and Central Africa Final report | Dakar, Senegal (20-22 January 2026)

Organized under the auspices of the Senegalese Ministry of National Education, the Expert Meeting on Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) was held in Dakar from January 20 to 22, 2026, with the support of UNESCO, the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN), and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO).

It brought together government representatives from West and Central Africa, technical and financial partners, and civil society actors to identify strategic and operational priorities for accelerating the transformation of ECED systems.

The meeting resulted in a roadmap in preparation for the 2026 Ministerial Conference.

### Stay in touch



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