

Education Sector Strategy on Category 2 Centres 15 August 2012

1. CONTEXT

Currently, there are eight Category 2 Centres attached to the Education Sector:

1. Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) in Seoul, Republic of Korea (established in 2000);
2. International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (established in 2005);
3. Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA) in Lilongwe, Malawi (established in 1998);
4. International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED) in Beijing, China (established in 1994);
5. Regional Centre for Education Planning (RCEP) in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (established in 2003);
6. Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in the Arab States (RCECCE) in Damascus, Syria (established in 2009);
7. South-East Asia Centre for Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development (SEA-CLLSD) in Manila, Philippines (established in 2009);
8. South Asian Centre for Teacher Development in Meepe, Sri Lanka (established in 2012).

Category 2 Centres are recognized as an important extension of UNESCO's programme delivery arm and a means to raise UNESCO's profile in Member States. All Category 2 Centres in education contribute to one or more of the Sector's priority areas of teachers, literacy, TVET, and sector-wide planning.

Category 2 Centres also provide opportunities to showcase and share the capacity, technical expertise, and knowledge of Member States. They can facilitate regional networking and have the potential to act as resource hubs in specific education fields.

2. COORDINATION STRUCTURE

The Education Sector aims to maintain a manageable number of high-performing Category 2 Centres. An overall coordinator for Category 2 Centres in education is placed within the Executive Office. The Sector has also established a network of focal points for Category 2 Centres comprising colleagues from Headquarters, regional education bureaux and field offices. A database of relevant agreements, reports and documentation has been set-up and is regularly updated. The Sector also organizes biennial Education Category 2 Centres meetings in order to strengthen networking, programme alignment and knowledge exchange. Category 1 Institutes and regional education bureaux are represented at these meetings to ensure maximum sector-wide cooperation.

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The coordinator has the following strategic responsibilities:

- (i) Programme alignment
 - Ensures Centres' strategies and activities are in alignment with UNESCO programme priorities;
 - Ensures Centres' activities are reflected in SISTER and that reports are submitted in line with UNESCO's reporting periodicity.

(ii) Networking

- Encourages collaboration and joint activities among Centres, between Centres and the Sector, and between Centres and other parts of the extended UNESCO family (e.g. ASPnet and UNESCO Chairs);
- Facilitates communication among Centres and the Sector, ensuring that key documents are shared and that Centre Directors are included in relevant mailing lists.

(iii) Visibility

- Supports the production and dissemination of a six-monthly newsletter on Centres' activities;
- Maintains dedicated portal for Centres linked to the Education Sector's website. This portal is currently being updated.

(iv) Compliance and Assessment

- Ensures compliance of Centres' Statutes and Agreements with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for Category 2 Centres (which is contained in document 35 C/22);
- Oversees feasibility studies and renewal reviews.

4. OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

To ensure quality, the Sector proposes the following:

- **Stricter criteria** for establishing new Category 2 Centres

80 per cent of all Category 2 Centres were approved by the General Conference within the last ten years, with half of them in the past two biennia. For the Education Sector, four new proposals for Category 2 Centres have been received, of which one is proposed to be established during this biennium. This increased proliferation of Category 2 Centres carries a significant risk for the Organization and the network, and poses a potential unmanageable burden on the Secretariat.

To address this situation, the Sector will ensure that all proposals for new Centres fully comply with the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, with clear definition of how each Centre contributes and adds value to UNESCO's education programme. Feasibility studies will be thorough and rigorous. The Sector will also cooperate closely with Member States to ensure that criteria for establishing new Centres – including alignment with Sectoral priorities, adequate and sustainable funding, strong national backing and regional support – are fully met before final endorsement of the proposal.

- Ensure **rigorous performance evaluations** of Category 2 Centres as a condition for the renewal of agreements, and implement **Sunset clause** to terminate designation for low-performing Centres

There are marked differences in the performance and capabilities of the education Centres, which threaten the credibility of the network and pose reputational risks to UNESCO. This is largely a result of varying degrees of national support (human, financial, infrastructure) towards the Centres, as well as their own institutional capacity.

As part of the process for the renewal of Agreements, the Education Sector will carry out a rigorous and thorough assessment of the Centres' activities to ascertain whether they are in conformity with existing Agreements and if the Centre continues to contribute to the Organization's goals. Renewal of Category 2 Centres' Agreements should be made conditional upon satisfactory compliance of all evaluation requirements. Results of these evaluations will be posted in the Education Sector's website.

To address the situation of low-performing Centres, the Sector proposes applying a sunset clause when Centre agreements come up for renewal. Low or non-performing Centres will be

given a 2-year period to improve their performance. If performance objectives are not met, measures will be put in place to terminate their designation as Centres operating under the aegis of UNESCO.

- **Clear definition of expectations**

At the start of each biennium, a plan should be developed outlining expected results to be achieved from each Category 2 Centres and expectations for joint-cooperation against which both the Director of the Centre and the sector focal point will report at the end of each year.

- **Role of Focal Point**

The Job Description of Sector Focal Point should include their role as coordinator of Category 2 Centers as part of their performance appraisal.

5. CHALLENGES

The Sector views Category 2 Centres as genuine assets and is committed to maximizing their potential. However, there are challenges to realizing this Strategy that need to be addressed by the Organization as a whole.

- **Cost**

It is clear that to implement the Strategy a specific amount of resources must be set aside. The direct costs (post of overall coordinator, travel and participation of UNESCO representatives at the Centres' Governing Board meetings...) and indirect costs (staff time for liaison and oversight...) are considerable. There needs to be a house-wide discussion on how to recuperate these expenses. One option would be to request a minimal financial contribution to the Organization from the host governments of each Centre, and to include this as a requirement within Centre agreements.

- **Sustaining engagement**

Given the autonomous nature of Category 2 Centres, there is a limit to their legal obligations to comply with UNESCO's requests and to UNESCO's ability to influence their activities. Ultimately, efforts at sustained cooperation depend on the goodwill and commitment of both parties as there is no binding tie for either to maintain and nurture the relationship. The challenge for UNESCO is to identify in more concrete terms the mutual rewards of cooperation, in order to better incentivize sustained engagement.

- **Category 2 Centres as service providers**

The Category 2 Centres should be seen as service providers to be approached to commission studies, generate reports, and conduct extensive research. Within their areas of expertise, UNESCO may wish to hire experts and staff members of the Centres as consultants to implement programmes. The challenge would be for UNESCO to consider the Category 2 Centres as potential resource of expertise and partners for implementation.