



Association for the
Development of
Education in
Africa



PAL NETWORK
People's Action for Learning



RELI
Regional Education
Learning Initiative

The Inaugural East African Community Regional Education Conference 2024

Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Collective Action for Quality, Inclusive and Lifelong Learning

August 12th – 15th, 2024

Arusha, Tanzania

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Background

Education in Sub-Saharan Africa has seen significant improvement over the past few decades, particularly in enrolment rates. Despite these advancements, an astonishing 98 million¹ children remain out of school, many of whom are from marginalised groups/communities. Additionally, an estimated 90% learning poverty rate² across the continent means that the vast majority of the children who are going to school are not learning. Ultimately, Africa is behind track in achieving targets set in the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25), Sustainable Development Goal number 4 on education (SDG4), the 2030 global agenda, and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

To respond to this educational crisis, East African countries have reformed their curricula from content to competence based. The aim is to get learners to demonstrate skills and behaviours needed to learn, work, and thrive in the 21st century. This move expands the focus of education to other relevant skills such as problem solving, collaboration, and self-awareness, as well as values such as respect and honesty. However, the achievement of this shift has faced numerous challenges including teacher capacity, parental engagement, system-wide alignment, etc. Moreover, the lack of awareness about the importance of 21st-century skills and the subsequent lack of opportunities to nurture and assess them, means they are less prioritised during teaching and learning. The Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) report of 2023 established that less than a fifth of the adolescents (13-17 years) in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda could demonstrate full competence in problem-solving, collaboration, self-awareness, and respect³.

Africa Union's Year of Education

To highlight the centrality of education to Africa's social and economic transformation, the African Union (AU) has dedicated 2024 as the Year of Education. The move was intended to keep the momentum going from the commitments made by African Heads of State and Government to implement the recommendations committed during the Transforming Education Summit taking place in New York, and subsequent Ministerial declarations in high-level forums such as the ADEA 2022 Triennale, the High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum on Foundational Learning in 2023, and the HCA Roundtable meeting in 2024.

¹ UIS 2022: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382577>

² World Bank: The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update

³ ALiVE (2023) Regional Report. [Alive-Report-Long-Version.pdf \(ziziafrique.org\)](https://www.ziziafrique.org/Alive-Report-Long-Version.pdf)



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As the youngest continent globally, with 70% of its population below the age of 30, Africa must prioritise and emphasise the importance of education in order to prepare the next generation of youth who are vital for the continent's current and future economic growth, innovation, peace, and security.

By placing this special emphasis on education, AU calls for effort and dedication from governments, civil society, regional organisations, development partners, and private sector actors across the continent to revitalise and transform education in Africa to ensure all children, particularly the most marginalised, are able to acquire relevant quality education and skills fit for the 21st-century demands. The Union envisions achieving this under the theme: **Educate an African fit for the 21st Century - Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa.**

The Inaugural East African Community (EAC) Regional Education Conference 2024

The East African region lacks a regional coalition amongst government and civil society to progress the education agenda in the region. East African governments have made efforts to improve education in their respective countries and across the region, but this still faces various barriers. On the other hand, CSOs and development partners are working to address issues specific to their agendas and areas of interest, with little collaboration across the region. This status quo is no longer sustainable as persisting challenges have reached crisis levels. Against this context, this conference seeks to leverage the AU's rally for transforming education on the continent, to call for collective, decisive, and strategic actions to tackle head-on the education challenges specific to the East African context.

The 2024 Year of Education for Africa has inspired the EAC partner states- in partnership with the Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI-Africa), the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network, the African Curriculum Association (ACA), and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)- to organise a conference and a call to action towards achieving holistic learning for all children in the region. Rather than be-labour challenges, the conference adopts a solutions-focus, sharing innovations and evidence on what has worked in our context, with a strong call to commit for our children.

The theme of the conference will be: **“Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Collective Action for Quality, Inclusive and Life-long Learning in East Africa”.**

The conference seeks to achieve five objectives:

- I. To facilitate progressive dialogues on building **resilient educational systems** that are equipped to respond to the full diversity of learners' needs and deliver quality education to improve learning outcomes for each child in the EAC.
- II. To facilitate discussions on the **best practices** for implementing evidence-based innovative, feasible, and sustainable solutions for education transformation.
- III. To establish and inaugurate a **regional network** to strengthen the multi-sectoral partnerships for education in the EAC region.
- IV. To enhance clarity on, share responses, and commit to fulfilling the right to education for the **children left furthest behind** in the EAC region.
- V. To come up with concrete actions, including sustainability of this conference in the EAC.



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The conference objectives will be realised through the following sub-themes:

- I. **Stronger and Resilient Education Systems:** Regional coordination and collaboration is critical in strengthening education systems within countries and across the region. Education systems need to respond to the diversity of learners' needs to ensure that all systems are equipped to deliver quality education to improve learning outcomes for each child. This sub-theme will further explore how the harmonisation of EAC education systems can be better operationalised through enhanced coordination and collective action by various actors.
- II. **Effective Implementation of Competency-Based Curricula:** This sub-theme recognises the progress made by countries which have undertaken curricula reforms with a focus on the competency-based curriculum and spur debates to inspire action and implementation at all levels and sub-sectors in the system with special attention to the classroom. Critical to this theme will be the exploration of challenges surrounding teachers and training for implementation of CBC.
- III. **Strengthening teacher capacity to deliver Foundational Learning and Secondary Education using EdTech:** Technical conversation on strengthening education resilience at the foundational level by leveraging/ deepening the use of EdTech in learning delivery. This will address a major gap in EdTech uptake by focusing on case studies of EAC countries or initiatives in the EAC region that may have done this well. This sub-theme will also have an aspect of examining how EdTech can be used to enrich secondary education.
- IV. **21st Century Competences for each child:** African Union's Year of Education acknowledges the need to educate for the 21st century. While CBC curricula are focused on this, these competencies are relatively new and present unique complexity. The competencies are referred to differently across the countries, with concepts including core competencies, generic skills, value-based education, life skills, and so on. Under this sub-theme, the conference will explore questions around how we define, deconstruct, and prioritise these competencies for East Africa's context, as well as methods, approaches, and tools that have worked for nurturing and assessing these competencies in the context of East Africa.
- V. **Data and Accountability for SDG 4.1.1:** This sub-theme will seek to address and explore the persisting learning gaps at the foundational level. It will highlight the gap in evidence collected amongst East African countries as well as across the continent. The sub-theme will address the implications of the lack of data and evidence and seek to propose concrete actions among member countries and other stakeholders to reverse this trend.
- VI. **Children Furthest Behind:** With this sub-theme, the conference will aim at demystifying the perceptions of children left behind - what we (think we) know and redefine children furthest behind for the EAC region. The sub-theme will explore limited data on exclusion, legislative frameworks, and promising innovations for reaching the children furthest behind in the region.
- VII. **Confronting the Language Question:** Language of instruction has been central in debates on education and learning in East Africa over the years. While there is evidence that children learn best in a language they understand and that carries their cultures, most countries have adopted foreign languages as the main language of instruction. The conference will seek to assess progress in language policy and implementation and showcase examples where progressive language policies have yielded to foundational learning.



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VIII. Regional Strategies for Youth Employability: Articulating TVSD, Secondary Education, and Innovation:

Exploring modalities of developing coordinated and working regional strategies that articulate the development of technical and vocational skills in secondary education. The emphasis will be on identifying innovative and sustainable solutions to improve youth employability and career choices. This includes discussions on how governments, educational institutions, the private sector, civil society organisations, and development partners can collaborate to support young people's transition from education to employability, considering the economic and environmental realities of the East African region.

IX. Harmonisation of TVET and Development of a Regional TVET Qualifications Framework:

The EAC has prioritised TVET as crucial for the socio-economic development and regional integration of the region thus the need for a coherent, integrated and coordinated regional TVET system. This requires, among other things, the harmonisation of TVET curricular and development of regional qualification frameworks to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications and strategies to facilitate the development of required skills, quality enhancement, collaborations, and mobility of key actors in the TVET sector including students. The EAC and the partner states have recorded several developments in TVET to enable them benefit from the current youth advantage. This session will discuss the critical role of TVET in regional economic growth, regional integration, employment creation, poverty reduction, strengthening the productive sectors and value addition and also stemming some of the social vices associated with the youth.

Target Audience/Participants

The conference will bring together participants from the 8 Partner States of the East African Community (EAC) as well as select participants from other African and non-African countries that are contributing to education development in the EAC. The target audience will be policymakers and high-level officials (Ministers or Principal/Permanent Secretaries), senior officials (directors, curriculum officers, ministry officials, parliamentarians), teachers, students, development partners, regional organisations, civil society organisations, and research/academic institutions.

Host Country

The host country for the conference is the United Republic of Tanzania.

Organisers

The African Union Year of Education Inaugural East African Community Regional Education Conference 2024 is organised by the East African Community (EAC), in partnership with the African Curriculum Association (ACA), Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI-Africa), People's Action for Learning Network (PAL-Network), and Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

Call for Submissions

The Inaugural East African Community Regional Education Conference 2024 is inviting submissions for individual papers, panel sessions, workshops, creative sessions, and posters/exhibitions. To maximise participation in the conference, each individual is only a named presenter on either an individual paper or a panel session submission. In case you wish to present in one of the above and a creative session or workshop, you will need to let organisers know if both of these are accepted for proper scheduling.

Call for submission deadline: 23:59 (EAT time) Friday 24th May 2024

Dates of conference: 12th - 15th August 2024

Location: Arusha, Tanzania



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Submissions guidelines and review process

Individual Papers

Please provide an abstract of up to 500 words along with 3 bullet-point key recommendations for the audience, each limited to a maximum of 100 characters (including spaces). Ensure clarity on how your work relates to the main conference theme and the specific sub-theme you are addressing.

Individual papers will be organised by the conference committee into sessions spanning 60-90 minutes. Sessions will typically consist of 3-5 presentations, with each presenter allotted 10-15 minutes for their presentation. Following the presentations, there will be approximately 25-30 minutes designated for discussion within each parallel session.

Panel Sessions

Please submit an abstract of up to 1000 words, accompanied by 3 bullet-point key recommendations for the audience, each restricted to a maximum of 100 characters (including spaces). Additionally, briefly indicate the intended structure of your session in your abstract.

Ensure clarity on how your work relates to the main conference theme and the specific sub-theme you are addressing. Panel sessions will run for 60-90 minutes, ideally featuring 3-5 presenters. While we encourage diverse session formats, presentations should be limited to 45 minutes, with the remainder allocated to discussion.

We particularly encourage submissions that involve East African early career researchers in the presentation team.

Posters and Exhibitions

Please provide an abstract of up to 300 words. We welcome traditional academic posters, as well as other visual representations of work suitable for display in our exhibition space.

Ensure clarity on how your work aligns with the main conference theme and the specific sub-theme you are addressing.

Workshops and Creative Sessions

Please submit an abstract of up to 800 words. We encourage diverse formats and structures as long as they emphasise people coming together to communicate, reflect, and learn. Workshops and creative sessions will range from 120 to 180 minutes and will take place on Day 1 (Pre-conference meeting). Kindly indicate your preference.

There is no restriction on the number of presenters, but a minimum of 3 is required.

We particularly encourage submissions involving East African early career researchers in either the presentation or facilitation team.

Ensure clarity on how your work connects with the main conference theme and the specific sub-theme you are addressing.

Author Bio

Each submission should be accompanied by a bio of 125 words for each presenter.

Additional Abstract Guidelines

- Ensure your abstract demonstrates a clear connection to the overall conference theme and chosen sub-theme.
- Avoid including references unless absolutely necessary (note: references count towards the word limit if used).
- Utilise clear and concise language, as English is the official language of the conference.
- Have your abstract proofread before submission.



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- Provide sufficient context in your abstract, such as the country(ies) of focus, the level of education addressed, type or period of research, etc.
- Adhere to the specified word count for your submission type.
- Avoid overly lengthy titles for your abstract.

Abstract Submissions

Abstracts and bios must be submitted by the specified deadline using the online form available at the following link:
<https://reliafrica.org/EAC-Education-Conference/paper/>

Abstract Review Process

Each abstract will undergo review by at least two members of the Conference Committee, evaluating against the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** Does the paper directly address the conference theme and the chosen sub-theme and its relevance to the East African context?
- **Originality:** Does the submission offer new thoughts, arguments, findings, methodologies, or approaches to the topic?
- **Clarity and coherence** of the inquiry, activity, or conceptual framework.
- **Significance** for educational practice, policy, or theory.

Decisions regarding abstracts will be communicated to authors by **June 14th, 2024**.