UNESCO, Italia launch media campaign on migration issues

UNESCO, in collaboration with the Italian Agency for Development Co-operation (AICS), launched on 13 July 2019 in Dakar a project on migration issues. Covering eight countries (Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal), the 3-million EUR project aims to better inform young people in West and Central Africa about the opportunities and challenges of international migration. The project will focus on capacity-building activities for young journalists and media representatives with a view to producing reliable information and creating a more balanced coverage of migration issues. "This project aims to inform young girls and boys not only about the dangers of migration, but also about the opportunities available to them in their home countries, in the broader region as well as in Europe", explained Mr Dimitri Sanga, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa. Moreover, the project will provide a space for dialogue between African and European journalists and support African artists who intend to inform young people about migration challenges and local opportunities. The project also aims to promote greater safety for journalists and a more gender-balanced approach by giving a stronger voice to migrant women. Women and young people between 15-24 years of age represent 47.1% and 16% of migrants respectively. More than 80% of African migration takes place within the African continent, involving nearly 19 million people, including 6.7 million in West Africa and 3.5 million in Central Africa.
ECOWAS AIMS TO TACKLE ELECTORAL CHALLENGES

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In preparation of the 6th ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions Biennial General Assembly (ECONEC), the ECOWAS Commission organised a symposium on 5 August 2019 to brainstorm on how to achieve greater participation and representation of women, youth, and disadvantaged citizens in politics and electoral processes. Young people below the age of 25 make up more than two-thirds of the region’s population. Despite many efforts, women and the youth remain both largely underrepresented in politics. “We must remain mindful that inclusive participation in political processes leads to sustainable peace and stability in the West African region”, declared Ms Finda Koroma, Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission. On the sidelines of the event, the ECOME Commission launched a study on the cost of elections in the ECOWAS region, including information on Benin, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Senegal. It also released an ECONEC activity report, which takes stock of the actions undertaking in support of greater inclusiveness in electoral contests. In parallel, a regional conference focused on electoral security in ECOWAS member countries. In 2017, one in four elections in Africa was characterised by violence and disruption. The next ECONEC General Assembly is scheduled to take place in Praia, Cabo Verde in 2021.

MALI: INTER-COMMUNITY DIALOGUE TO FOSTER PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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The government of Mali, with the support of the UEMOA Commission and its international partners, multiplies efforts to bring back peace in its fragile border regions. They held a three-day workshop to launch an inclusive dialogue on peace, security and development issues in Mali’s border areas. The inception workshop was held in Sikasso, in southern Mali, from 15-17 July bringing together representatives from the national government, local and territorial authorities, customary chiefs as well as civil society representatives with a view to preventing crisis and restoring peace. Mali’s Prime Minister Boubou Cissé participated in the opening ceremony. Similar consultations will be organised in other border regions. As a concrete outcome, communities of central Mali signed a peace agreement on 25 July aimed at ending intra-community violence (The massacres in the village of Bankass caused some 150 fatalities in March 2019). Different communities (Samogo, Fulani, Dogon and Bozon) now commit to renew dialogue and exhort armed groups to stop the violence. A similar peace agreement was signed on 1 August in the Djenné area. However, Islamist terrorist groups have not been involved in these dialogues and are not signatory of the peace agreements. This clearly weakens the fragile prospects for lasting peace.

A DIGITAL MARKETPLACE FOR INVESTORS IN AFRICA

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Within the African Investment Forum, the African Development Bank launched a new digital platform to better connect private sector representatives and potential sponsors with investment opportunities in Africa. The database has a bilingual interface and provides information on private and public-private partnership projects, investment opportunities in Africa as well as many other investment support services, trainings, guidelines and tips. The platform aims to become Africa’s premier digital marketplace for accessing an ecosystem of investment stakeholders, projects and services providers. It covers multiple sectors including agriculture and agro-industries, education, energy & power, financial services, health, hospitality & tourism, industrial & trade, ICT & telecoms, infrastructure and transport, utilities, and urban development.
MUST READ

Border Cities & Climate Change: A practical guide to legal & financial levers

This practical guide, produced by the SWAC Secretariat, offers many insights on the legislative and financial levers for developing cross-border initiatives on resilience to climate change. An online version provides easy access to information on the following four steps: 1) project planning process; 2) development of local and national climate change strategies; 3) establishing a cross-border local development strategy; and 4) setting up a cross-border project. It also includes information on climate financing tools and draws on two case studies from Dori (Burkina Faso) and Tera (Niger). The guide intends to promote more sustainable governance of border territories. It is designed for local authorities, SWAC members, development partners, as well as regional and international organisations. The work was developed in collaboration with the Transfrontier Operational Mission (MOT).

MUST READ

Creating opportunities for rural youth

Where do rural youth live and how do they engage with the economy? How can young rural women be empowered? How can rural youth prosper in changing agrifood systems? What makes climate change a youth issue? The IFAD Rural Development Report 2019 analyses key challenges of the rural transformation process and opportunities available to rural youth while encouraging thinking differently about investing in rural youth. “Neither rural development policies and investments nor youth-specific interventions can be effective in ensuring the inclusion of the young population unless they are considered as a part of broader development efforts. An effective approach to rural youth policy and investment is therefore one that strikes the right balance between creating broader rural opportunities and fostering youth-specific ones”, conclude the authors.

OPINION

How can the demographic transition in the Sahel be achieved?

The empowerment of girls and young women, promoted by a large number of development programmes and contraceptive awareness-raising campaigns, face many barriers that are rooted in local, societal and religious norms. “They are generally not adapted to popular circles and often perceived as a Western conspiracy against African fertility, the only source of wealth for the poor. These deeply rooted resistances should not be underestimated”, explains Assiatou Diarra, a doctor and anthropologist from Niger in an article published by Le Monde diplomatique.
Nigeria accounts for 80% of the health infrastructure in West Africa. Following the Ebola crisis, Liberia and Sierra Leone increased their investments in the health sector on a massive scale. Sierra Leone now has more hospitals than Côte d’Ivoire, even though that the country’s population is three-times larger. Disparities are even greater within countries. Abuja, Bamako, Ouagadougou and Niamey seem to be pockets with developed health infrastructure within larger less-favoured regions. There are some 830 health establishments located less than 20 km from a land border, leading to the development of cross-border health care. The gaps in the medical infrastructure are particularly visible along the Niger-Nigeria border (Katsina Maradi or Birnin Kebbi-Dosso).

Moreover, border cities currently have a surplus of medical centres and a deficit of hospitals and maternity facilities in relation to the urban population size. Closer collaboration between border cities could facilitate the development of cross-border health facilities and better meet needs of the region as a whole.

Prior to her nomination, she was the chairperson of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) in Cabo Verde, a position that she occupied since May 2015. Ms Lopes Pereira Goncalves also served at the civil court of first instance in the region of Santa Catarina, Santiago Island, in 2008. She was appointed to the court of first instance of Praia in 2014. She holds a law degree from the University of Lisbon.

A Cape Verdean lawyer becomes the head of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC). On 7 August 2019, Maria do Rosario Lopes Pereira Goncalves from Cabo Verde was elected ECONEC president for a two-year mandate. She takes over from Professor Mahmod Yakubu, Chairman of INEC Nigeria and will be in charge of overseeing the affairs of ECONEC along with the steering committee members.