



Consultation on Life Skills and Citizenship Education in MENA

Amman – Jordan

8-10 November 2016

Key Highlights

The MENA Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) Initiative represents a collaborative endeavor towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” through the development of shared vision and programmatic approach that mainstream life skills and citizenship education (LSCE) within the context of national education systems in MENA

The Initiative is a partnership constituted of education stakeholders from 15 MENA countries, together with regional representation from ALECSO, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, the WB, and the Arab Institute of Human Rights (AIHR). The consultation provided an opportunity for joint reflection on the work accomplished so far with regards to the findings of the Analytical Mapping (AM) of LSCE in MENA and the development of the Conceptual and Programmatic Framework (CPF) for LSCE. The Consultation had the following **objectives**:

- To review the findings of the MENA Analytical Mapping and Conceptual and Programmatic Framework on Life Skills and Citizenship Education and agree on a process towards finalization.
- To define the process and tools to further support the operationalization of the Initiative at country level.
- To discuss and agree on a proposed Ministerial Conference for endorsing and launching the CPF on life skills and citizenship education in 2017.

To this end, the Consultation was structured around presentations, discussions and group work articulated around the following **eight sessions**:

- 1- Introduction:** The introduction outlined the purpose of the Consultation and provided an opportunity for countries and partners to highlight the joint engagement in the Initiative. It particularly introduced LSCE as a means to improve learning outcomes, to ensure employment and entrepreneurship, and to achieve civic engagement in MENA.
- 2- Making the case for LSCE:** This session set the stage on the relevance of the Initiative. It presented how LSCE engages with global debates on quality learning and how it seeks proactively to address the employment challenges facing the region. It further explored the human rights-based values intrinsic to practices of citizenship conducive to social cohesion, highlighting the need for national education systems to engage children and youth as key agents of positive social transformation.
- 3- Introducing the LSCE Initiative and naming the Initiative:** This session provided an overview of the LSCE Initiative and introduced the main components of the CPF. In this session participants were also asked to suggest an attractive Arabic name for the Initiative and choose the title for the CPF.

- 4- **Analytical Mapping of LSCE in MENA:** This session introduced the key “takeaways” of the AM in relation to the working definition of LSCE as well as programmatic interventions reviewed through the AM in 15 MENA countries. Participants also worked in groups to further validate the findings of the AM, and reflect on their relevance related to the vision and programmatic approaches to LSCE at country level.
- 5- **The identification of core life skills for the MENA:** This session introduced the Conceptual Framework in relation to the UNESCO Delors Report and the four dimensions of learning (the cognitive, the instrumental, the individual, and the social dimensions). It included an in-depth analysis of each of the twelve core life skills identified as part of the Initiative in terms of relevance in the existing evidence and rationale for their inclusion in the LSCE CPF. Participants were further engaged in group work to provide comments on the 12 core skills and discussed their relevance for MENA context.
- 6- **Travelling the Road and the Programmatic Framework:** This session introduced the multiple pathways and systems approach to LSCE programming, building on global and regional practices included in the draft CPF document. Participants brainstormed in groups about the progress made at country level and provided tailored recommendations for the CPF document as relevant to national contexts.
- 7- **Measuring LSCE:** This session showcased existing approaches and methodologies for measuring learning outcomes in relation to life skills, with a focus on employability skills and citizenship education. A way forward was presented for developing a generic methodology for the measurement of the twelve core skills identified in the CPF. This included a general understanding on the steps needed for the development of the methodology.
- 8- **Way forward:** At the end of the Consultation, participants agreed on a timeline with key steps for the finalization of the AM and CPF draft documents. Furthermore the proposal of a Ministerial Conference in 2017 was discussed and agreed upon.

Over **80 participants** actively contributed to the Consultation throughout the two and a half days, including country delegations from the 15 MENA countries, regional and international education partners, and experts. The meeting provided an opportunity to consolidate the partnership among ALECSO, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, the WB, and the Arab Institute of Human Rights (AIHR) towards a holistic vision of quality education through life skills and citizenship education.

The following are the key highlights/takeaways of the Consultation:

- There was a **general consensus on the overall vision and theory of change** presented in the draft CPF, particularly on the urgency of ensuring a holistic and transformative approach to education based on a common ethical foundation, and inspired by the UNESCO Delors Report which has defined the essential functions of life skills for life-long learning as back as 1996 through four pillars of education: ‘learning to know’, ‘learning to do’, ‘learning to be’ and ‘learning to live together’.
- Regional partners and country delegations **agreed on the importance of joint partnership and coordination frameworks** at regional and country level. While recognizing the leadership role of Ministries of Education, great emphasis was placed on the need to utilize existing coordination mechanisms within countries (education sector groups, education clusters, etc.) as well as to

identify key focal points within government institutions (different ministries), and private sector institutions interested in moving forward the agenda for a successful implementation of LSCE agenda.

- Participants at the Consultation recognized the **relevance of the AM findings to the regional and national contexts**. Discussions further defined the need for conducting additional research in the future particularly on gender related analysis of curricula and LSCE programs, as well as to generate evidence on the impact of LSCE on foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy.
- There was a **general consensus on the common definition and identification of the twelve core skills** presented in the draft CPF. A common understanding included the fact that these skills are interrelated and mutually reinforce each other, and therefore should not be represented in a hierarchical way. Further reflection from group works highlighted the need to reinforce the social dimension within the twelve core skills, possibly by reducing the number of skills related to the individual dimension. It is also important to highlight how the acquisition of core skills is instrumental in buttressing foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy as well technical skills including functional ICT skills.
- There was general consensus that the **Life Skills and Citizenship Education Initiative is not a ‘value neutral’ Initiative**. Principles of Human Rights stand at the core of the vision of LSCE and they relate to all four dimensions. This means that, for instance, in the case of the instrumental dimension, students and learners ought not only to know about their responsibilities in the work place, but also be empowered in their rights as workers.
- There is a need to have **technical guidance on how to operationalize the identified core skills** through teaching and learning approaches that re-frame the roles of the teacher in fostering experiential and active learning. Operationalization also needs to cater for age appropriate interventions as well as interventions that focus on gender, also recognizing contextual differences across countries and the need for sharing of experiences across the region.
- The **importance of clearly articulating a multiple pathways and systems approach** was reiterated across the Consultation as the way to ensure relevance, scalability and impact of interventions towards mainstreaming LSCE within national education systems. The identification of entry points also defined during the Consultation as “pressure points” was found critical to incrementally ensure the systemic change in MENA. In this regard, it was highlighted that the CPF constitutes an overarching framework to be further adapted and contextualized at country level.
- The **measurement of life skills and citizenship education is an important tool for improving learning**. Participants agreed on the need to develop a generic methodology for the measurement of the twelve core skills identified in the CPF. The focus on measurement was highlighted as an integral component of quality learning, and not for the sake of student ranking or country comparison.
- **Partners and Country Delegations agreed on the organization of a Ministerial Launch of the CPF and LSCE Initiative in 2017** in order to sustain political will and commitment for the Initiative. Different suggestions were made including the organization of back-to-back technical and

ministerial meetings to showcase different experiences in MENA and ensure pledges from Ministries of Education for the operationalization at country level.

- **A process for the finalization of the CPF draft document** was agreed including the following:
 - National consultations will be held at country level to review the CPF and submit recommendations by no later than February 15, 2017. Partners (AIHR, ALECSO, ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA and WB) will coordinate to support the consultation process at country level.
 - UNICEF MENARO will share English and Arabic versions of the revised 12 core skills as well as a short summary of the LSCE Initiative by mid-December 2016 to support the national consultations and the Ministries buy-in process.
 - The final CPF draft will be shared with countries and partners for endorsement by end of March 2017.