THE SOUTH AND EASTERN AFRICA CONSORTIUM FOR MONITORING EDUCATION QUALITY (SACMEQ)

1.0 Background

The South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) is a collaboration between the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and Ministries of Education in Southern and Eastern African Countries. Monitoring Education Quality was started way back in 1993 when the first SACMEQ study was conducted among six (6) member countries Uganda exclusive. The SACMEQ Consortium now has 16 members. These are ministries of Education for Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola.

Activities of SACMEQ member countries are geared towards generating information that can be used by decision-makers to plan improvements in their education systems. SACMEQ’s daily operational activities are managed by the SACMEQ Coordinating Centre which is staffed by the SACMEQ Director and the SACMEQ Data Processing Manager. The SACMEQ Coordinating Centre provides administrative and technical support for the SACMEQ National Research Coordinators and their Deputies. The SACMEQ Coordinating Centre also works with partners to obtain funding for the cross-national co-operative components of SACMEQ’s research and training programmes. These components include: training workshops; technical inputs to sampling and measurement requirements; the production of specialized software systems for sampling, data analysis, and data cleaning; the design and production of technical and field manuals; and meetings of the SACMEQ Scientific and Measurement Committees.

Decisions concerning the overall directions of SACMEQ’s research and training programmes are set down by the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers, which meets at the IIEP in Paris every two years – on the weekend just before the commencement of the UNESCO General Conference.

2.0 SACMEQ’s Mission

SACMEQ's main mission was set down by the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers as follows:

“To undertake integrated research and training activities that will expand opportunities for educational planners and researchers to: (a) receive training in the technical skills required to monitor, evaluate, and compare the general conditions of schooling and the quality of basic education; and (b) generate information that can be used by decision-makers to plan the quality of education.”

This mission statement contained two key elements that have been employed to design and guide SACMEQ’s research and training programmes for over a decade. Firstly, the main target audiences
for SACMEQ’s activities are “educational planners and researchers”. Second, the substantive content of SACMEQ's activities was divided into two main areas: “training” (in technical skills) and “information generation” (for use by decision-makers).

3.0 SACMEQ Objectives

Generally, SACMEQ has two main specific objectives;

(i) to track changes in the quality of education of member states; and (ii) to generate research-based policy advice that can guide decisions on improving the quality of Education in Africa.

4.0 Operational Modalities

SACMEQ has focused its efforts on integrated training and research programmes that apply a philosophy of “learning-by-doing” – in which educational planners and researchers from Ministries of Education develop their applied policy research skills by executing “real” large-scale cross-national studies of the quality of education.

This approach to capacity building has included three important operational modalities:

(a) encouraging educational planners from different countries to work together, to share expertise, and to learn from each other;
(b) ensuring that SACMEQ research addresses the high-priority policy concerns of senior decision-makers in Ministries of Education; and
(c) making every effort to encourage and assist countries to identify and use scientific, computer-based educational research methodologies

5.0 Adoption of SACMEQ by Uganda

Uganda joined the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in 1998 and has since participated in three research studies (SACMEQ II, III & IV)

6.0 The Fifteenth Session of the SACMEQ Managing Committee and 9th SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers

The Fifteenth Session of the SACMEQ Managing Committee and Ninth SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers took place on Saturday 2nd November 2013 and Sunday 3rd November respectively at the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris, France. The Committee is mandated by the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers with the coordination of SACMEQ’s administration and finance. The Committee meets annually to review progress made in the implementation of SACMEQ programmes.

The Committee deliberated over a range of administrative issues. Among these were the admission of Angola as a full member of the Consortium, the location of the SACMEQ Coordinating Centre in Africa
and its financial aspects. Progress made in the ongoing SACMEQ IV Project that was presented by the SACMEQ Acting Director was also discussed. Agenda items which were adopted were presented to the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers for approval. This was the last meeting of the present Committee and new members were elected during the 9th Session of the SACMEQ Assembly of Ministers that was held on 3rd November 2013. The next Committee Session will be held on October 2014.

The 9th Assembly of Ministers was opened and chaired by the Hon Minister for Education of Zambia, Hon. Dr John Phiri. In her statement, the UNESCO Director General Mrs. Irina Bokova reaffirmed UNESCO’s commitment to the Education and recognized the important role it is playing in sustaining the economic rise of Africa. She reiterated that it was UNESCO’s concern to ensure Education is of good quality and relevant. In this respect, the organization has been running various projects in Africa in areas such as HIV and AIDS and teacher education. She congratulated Angola for joining the Consortium. The Director General appreciated SACMEQ as a tried and tested model for capacity development and evaluation to promote educational quality and equity. She welcomed the cooperation with PASEC. The IIEP which has been hosting SACMEQ and donors who have made the project a success were appreciated.

On the PASEC - SACMEQ Cooperation, the President of CONFEMEN who is Chads Minister of Education S. Exec. Madame Albatoul Zakaria appreciated the cooperation between the two bodies in the monitoring of the quality of education and expressed optimism that this will be deepened through the ongoing activities. Other members of PASEC spoke in support of the cooperation. They looked forward to comparing progress in the two organizations and broaden the scope of activities. They also hoped for political support for the ongoing cooperation from the Assembly. PASEC is looking forward to taking this cooperation to a continental level where the Africa Union will be the forum for its coordination. Acting Director SACMEQ gave an overview of the cooperation with PASEC. The first contact between the two organizations was in 2010. In the following year project reports for the just-concluded activities were shared between the two organizations. From the year 2012, the two organizations shared survey methodology, anchor items and pilot study results. It is hoped that results of the ongoing projects will be shared once they are ready. After these deliberations, the President requested the Assembly to note the cooperation. This motion was unanimously passed.
In regard to SACMEQ Location to Africa
The members unanimously approved the Criteria for selection of a host institution. The Assembly also approved a request to select a 5-member committee to oversee the selection process. The committee is constituted by Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda, Mauritius and Zambia. It will review applications by institutions interested in hosting the SCC and make recommendations to the Assembly of Ministers which will decide on the host by May 2014.

The Assembly President paid tribute to the outgoing Chair Hon. Mrs Macsuzy Mondon of Seychelles. The Assembly elected 5 Ministers to sit in a new managing committee. They were ministers of South Africa (Chairing) Zimbabwe (ex-officio member), Angola, Lesotho, Kenya and Tanzania (mainland).

For details please visit www.sacmeq.org