EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE TEN-YEAR EDUCATIONAL PLAN 2012-2022

Final Report

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This report contains a review of the 2012-2022 Educational Plan of Sao Tome and Principe. This work was developed within the framework of the preparation of documents that accompany the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) that will be submitted for consideration to the Global partnership for Education (GPE) to obtain a financial support fund to provide resources for the implementation of the Ten-Year Education Plan 2012-2022

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Executive Summary of the External Evaluation of the Education Plan 2012-2022 Sao Tome and Principe:

- The Ten-Year Education Plan is well-structured and responds to the educational policies charter for the period of 2012-2022. Its implementation will contribute to achieving the objectives set for the education sector in the coming years.
- The Educational Plan is comprehensive, extensive, but not ambitious. There is a balance between the goals and the means to achieve them. Moreover, previous experience in implementing the three-year plan and the results achieved in that time add an additional element of reliability to the plan.
- While there are risks in implementing the plan, they may arise due to some kind of institutional instability, situations that the country has already experienced and that didn't cause traumatic changes to the education sector.
- Through meetings, reading materials and consultations with various members of the local international co-operative for education- Local Education Group - (LEG), it was ascertained that the preparation process of the Ten-Year Education Plan relies on an active participation both internally from the MECF (Ministry of Education, Culture and Training) and its counterparts, constituting a participatory dialogue, exchange and decision-making process regarding the definition of the strategies and priorities of the intervention.

The evaluation of the Ten-Year Plan of Action for 2012-2022 for Sao Tome and Principe, was held on site between the 5th and 14th of December, 2012 and included an analysis of the documentation provided (Policy Charter, Plan of Action and Diagnosis of the Education Sector-RESEN-), interviews and other information gathered from secondary sources. The relevance of the variables and targets used to build the Simulation Model of the 2012-2022 Action Plan were also analyzed and discussed.

Following the proposed guide, "Guidelines for the Education Sector Plan Preparation and Appraisal", in the paragraph "Appraisal", the following analysis dimensions are summarized in this executive summary:

1. Education sector plan preparation process

The development of the Ten-Year Plan of Action was supported by different agencies and international aid organizations, including the World Bank and Pole Dakar UNESCO/BREDA. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Training (MECF) assumed in this process, through its authorities and technical teams, a strong leadership which in turn allowed them to train the MECF technical staff in such processes.

The objectives of the Action Plan are clearly aligned with the Charter of Educational Policy, which is intended to guide the educational policy of the country. These objectives in turn, are part of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While the Action Plan is already in early stages of implementation, consultations with the various sectors is a common practice, through the network of inspectors and technical teams at different levels of the education sector.

Recommendations: It is suggested that the action plan incorporates an implementation schedule or implementation engineering, to ensure compliance with those critical activities in a timely manner.

2. Stakeholder engagement

The participation of members of the LEG in the plan development process is characterized by the contributions that they made from the specializations of aid being undertaken in the country. That is to say, for example, the offices involved in education and training processes have contributed inputs associated with these interventions. In addition to participation in terms of "specialization of aid" LEG members were always consulted and invited to participate and comment at different levels of the development of the work.

We were unable to verify the participation of the private sector in the development of the Action Plan. Moreover, the absence of Universities and other external and private academic sectors in developing the action plan is due to the characteristics of the country, which has no such institutions in their midst.

Recommendations: Establish a schedule of meetings and analysis points with the various external and internal participants to evaluate the evolution of the implementation of the Action Plan.

3. Education sector analysis

A noteworthy aspect, according to the documents under analysis, corresponds to improving the quality and availability of a wide range of statistical information. The RESEN document is proof of the availability of educational statistics and demographic information (enrollment, education, internal and external efficiency and quality assessment). While the statistics are reliable, the relevance of some of the analysis and its presentation should be reviewed. For more information regarding this issue, you will find references in the chapter of this report dedicated to the analysis of the documents.

Various research studies were used for the development of the Action Plan as indicated in the section of bibliographic references of the RESEN document.

A weakness of the Action Plan is the scarce and almost no reference nor identification of the risks of implementation. This situation has allowed the development of a Plan "B" that would avoid some of the weaknesses or threats that may influence the implementation of the Plan.

Recommendations: 1) Identify those risks and the means to mitigate them with a higher-level of analysis and depth, with the participation of the international cooperation and the other members of the LEG. (The international crisis is, at this time, a condition of bilateral financial support and this should be considered in the risk mitigation strategies)

2) Apply a homogeneous approach in implementing a data base when making international comparisons, and

3) Ensure consistency and allow horizontal comparison and analysis of different documents, particularly in the use of monetary base (in some cases the values are expressed in Dobras and others in USD).

4) Add a chapter to RESEN intended to further analyze the balance of teacher training. A study to determine the rate of replenishment of teachers (study of supply and demand) would also be recommended.

4. Plan design

It has already been mentioned that the plan is well structured and that the identification of priority intervention strategies cover most of the needs of the sector. However, due to the absence of risk identification, an alternative plan has not been formulated that would allow continued implementation of the critical activities of the action plan.

4.1. Policy priorities

1. The plan was developed in line with the identification of the main problems identified in the education sector diagnosis, RESEN. However, it is noteworthy that the analysis of the situation of the education sector is not enough (training levels, supply and demand of qualified teachers, as this is one of the weakest points of the Sao Tome educational system.)
2. The sustainability of the Action Plan was verified through the use of a simulation model that was developed for this purpose. Different scenarios were established and an intermediate alternative was chosen between the maximum and minimum values for key variables (economic growth, population development, wage levels, and outcomes of schooling)
3. The quality and diversity of this data has proved a valuable source for the development of the action plan.

Recommendation: Develop an alternative plan that may help mitigate the risks that are most likely to occur.

4.2. Program design and prioritization of strategies

Sao Tome and Principe have recently implemented an Aid Fund intended to help achieve the goals of Education for All. Both the Catalytic Fund (CF), as well as the project for the Improvement of Basic Education funded by the World Bank concluded successfully, both surpassing the targets set at the beginning. This previous experience has enabled them to incorporate the lessons learned into the development of this new plan.

In this sense, one of the highlights in the development of this plan has to do precisely with previous experience and knowledge about the viability and sustainability of the proposed interventions.

In addition, the Action Plan identifies the inequality in the distribution of educational services for each of the districts. That is to say, the shares are regionalized in order to guarantee a fair offer. Likewise, studies show the situation of women in relation to their enrollment and the different levels of education, and provide strategies to ensure

the enrollment and retention of female youth in schools. Inclusive education, with special attention to children and adolescents with special educational needs.

The Action Plan clearly incorporates references to the importance of nutrition and early stimulation in the educational process of children into its development.

Interventions destined to the attention of the most vulnerable sectors of the population are clearly identified and outlined in the Action Plan as well as strategies for the prevention of HIV/AIDS by incorporating educational content related to sexual and reproductive health.

The evaluation of learning has a special chapter in the RESEN document. The findings of the studies, from different sources of information, served as input to establish strategies to continue to improve the quality of learning.

While there is not explicitly an identification of a problem tree and the interventions needed to confront them, the sequence and wording of the proposed activities are proof that a logical framework has been used to identify the strategies of the intervention.

Recommendations: 1) The Action Plan should include a reference to intermediate indicators, which allow more accurate tracking of implementation and thus could make necessary corrections or rescheduling.

2) The Action Plan should have, as already mentioned above, a chapter that summarizes, in a plan and implementation schedule, the time, financial means, human factors and material resources needed to achieve the proposed results.

4.3 Plan financing

The financial plan presented is sustainable, in regards to the scenario adopted after having tried different simulations, corresponding to an intermediate expectation, using average values, corresponding to the evolution in the last years of the main variables that determine the funding needs of the Action plan.

In this sense, both economic growth, budgetary allocation to the sector, cost of production factors - teacher salaries among others-, increased supply, improved retention, increased access and enrollment rates at different levels of education have been calculated on the basis of the experience of the last ten years.

Financing of higher education students studying abroad is expected to change, and the internal distribution of funds between educational levels to be fairer and more reasonable.

Recommendation. Two aspects require attention in relation to the financial plan.

1. Set, in detail, the financial assistance commitments from the international cooperation committed to the implementation of the Action Plan. What amount and how gradually it will receive contributions from donors to finance the gap to present the project.
2. Develop a contingency plan to ensure that if presented with an unforeseen problem, the implementation of actions that compromise interventions and critical results do not stop.

4.4. Monitoring and evaluation

There does not exist, strictly speaking, a system of Monitoring and Evaluation. If, on the other hand, there is a good system of education, finance, accounting and administration statistics it would be possible to build a system of M&E.

The Action Plan has a results table that is sufficiently ample and that establishes indicators for the final outputs.

The intermediate outputs as well as the identification of outcomes are not present in the project.

The monitoring and evaluation strategy is not described in the project and is one of the weakest factors presented in the Action Plan.

The results table of the Action Plan is comprehensive and includes all of the GPE Results Framework indicators and others that are specific to the Action Plan have been added.

Recommendations: The Action Plan must contain a monitoring and evaluation module, which can be developed from the guidelines suggested in phase 7 of the Guidelines for Education Sector Plan and Appraisal.

4.5. Development and financing of an action plan

Evidence of the existence of an implementation plan for the next three years was not verified, nor for the development of an annual action plan.

However, the level of detail of the Simulation Model that was used would allow, from the information available, to develop both the three-year Action Plan and the Annual Action Plan.

Both the Action Plan for the next three years as well as the Annual Action Plan must be consistent with the strategies set out in the Action Plan for the next ten years.

These annual and triennial plans shall contain a higher level of detail, forming what we mentioned about the "implementation engineering" of the Action Plan, identifying resource sources for each activity, generating information that allows tracking and monitoring, and the identification of those responsible for the completion of each stage of the implementation plans.

Recommendation. Develop triennial and annual plans, in line with the guidelines of the Action Plan.

5. Appraisal of Implementation Readiness

5.1 System capacity

The Action Plan assigns a prominent space for institutional strengthening to ensure a successful implementation in the various areas of intervention of the plan.

Both the training needs and the amount of qualified human resources have been provided for the development of the Action Plan.

Due to the absence of an Annual or Triennial Implementation Plan it has not been possible to verify whether or not there exists a precise allocation of responsibilities for each intervention.

The strengthening of the decentralized entities is developed in the statement of the Action Plan.

Recommendations: Establish and assign responsibilities for the implementation of different interventions of the Action Plan.

5.2 Governance and accountability

The best evidence of the ability to manage the proposed Action Plan can be found in the recent successful implementation of the Catalytic Fund and Improvement of Basic Education Program funded by the Fast Track Secretariat and the World Bank, respectively.

However, precise communication strategies are not presented in this Plan of Action, even though the plan has been shared with the different actors involved in the education system.

While there is no evidence about liquid resource transfers to sub-national levels, if it can be said that the Action Plan sets out interventions in different districts, creating a regional trade-off approach based on a distribution that meets the needs of vulnerable populations.

The Plan includes actions to compensate for gender inequality.

Recommendations. The Action Plan should include the following elements:

a. A set of rules about monitoring of services that enable accountability to beneficiaries
b. Determination of moments and characteristics of external evaluations.
c. Criteria for evaluating educational expenses.

6. Risks to implementation and the mitigation of risks

This aspect is one of the main weaknesses of the Action Plan. There is no precise identification of the risks of neither the Plan nor the mitigation strategies.

Recommendation. Identify key risks and establish a contingency plan that may help mitigate the negative impact that could cause an unwanted situation over the implementation of the Plan.

Table: Summary of Appraisal

			Very Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Room for improvement	Comments
Education Plan Development Process	**Education Plan Preparation Process**		X			• The Plan requires the incorporation of an implementation plan, schedule, and implementation engineering.
	Stakeholders Engagement		X			• The Plan requires a schedule of monitoring and supervision meetings with counterparts.
Education Plan	**Education Sector Analysis**			X		• Incorporate risks • Incorporate homogeneous values of a date base • Incorporate a study of the supply and demand of teachers
	Plan Design	**Policy Priorities**		X		• Develop alternative strategies to mitigate risks
		Program Design and Prioritization of Strategies		X		• Incorporate definition of intermediate indicators • Engineering Implementation of the Action Plan is recommended
		Plan Financing		X		• Develop a financial contingency plan • Identify aid amounts and times of counterparts
		Monitoring and Evaluation			X	• Develop a module for monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan.
		Development and Financing of an Action Plan			X	• Develop three-year and annual action plans that include funding allocations for each intervention
	System Capacity			X		• Establish and assign responsibilities for the implementation of different interventions of the Action Plan
	Governance and Accountability				X	• A set of rules about monitoring of services that enable accountability to beneficiaries • Determination of times and characteristics of external evaluations. • Criteria for evaluating educational expenses
	Risk to implementation and Mitigation				X	• Identify key risks and establish a contingency plan

Presentation

Between the 5th and 14th of December in 2012, a technical assistance mission was held and coordinated by the UNICEF office in Sao Tome and Principe (in its capacity as the coordinating agency of the Local Education Group LEG) The main objective of this mission was the development of an evaluation report containing a detailed analysis of the country's education plan that will, among other things, ensure that the activities proposed in the Educational Policy Charter 2012-2020 are aligned with the policy priorities of the country and can be adopted and implemented.

The work methodology included an analysis of documents provided for this purpose (Educational Policy Charter and Rapport d'Etat du System Éducatif National–RESEN) and interviews with education authorities and representatives of various agencies cooperating with the country.

For the development of this assessment, activities were carried out to provide evidence to policy makers about the quality, relevance and sustainability of the ten-year education plan developed by the country.

The following is a breakdown of the activities:

1. Strategies for preventing HIV/AIDS and gender equality policies were investigated and researched.

2. An analysis and additional interpretation of the indicators presented in the RESEN document were provided and a series of recommendations that could be used for future work of this nature were created.

3. The strategy of long-term development of the sector in regards to its relevance to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was analyzed.

4. Recommendations were established to implement the plan in the short and medium term.

5. The final consulting report was created.

Introduction

First, it is important to highlight and congratulate both authorities and members of the community of donors (LEG's) for their achievements in the country in terms of material access and coverage of the school-age population.

The documents analyzed, particularly for the diagnosis of the education system (RESEN), provide important and detailed information about the evolution of different enrollment rates, schooling and internal efficiency of the education system of Sao Tome and Principe.

Following that, we develop a synthesis about the analysis dimensions and evaluation of this consulting work.

1. **Situation Analysis of Education Sector:** This section is an analysis of the factors that affect both the recent developments in the education sector of Sao Tome and Principe as those that could determine its future development. This analysis serves as an input to analyze the relevance of the actions identified in the Ten Year Plan of Action 2012-2022
2. **Analysis of the quality and relevance of the education sector diagnosis document (RESEN).** This section analyzes the quality of this document in relation to the relevance of the information used (selected indicators) and the main strengths and weaknesses in this report.
3. **Analysis of Educational Policy Charter:** We analyze the educational policy charter based on the timeliness and consistency between the diagnosis and the selection of objectives, outcomes and strategies that have been defined to achieve them.
4. **Analysis of the Ten-Year Action Plan:** This document is, in some way, the realization of the policy charter into an operational plan. It is the instrument that guides the passage of the desired and necessary to the possible and enforceable.
5. **Conclusions.** This last chapter refers to the main findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy and the documents that were reviewed. From these findings, we close with a section that gives some recommendations.

Section One: Analysis of the Situation of the Education Policy

1.1 The Demographic and Socioeconomic Context

Sao Tome and Principe are part of a country that is in full demographic transition due mainly to decreased fertility, birth and death rates.

Currently, the annual cumulative population growth rate average is close to 1.79% and is expected to continue to decline and reach 1.69% in 2020.

This situation will soon place the country in a condition of a demographic bonus, that's to say a window of potential opportunities will open for the country, at all levels, when the largest proportion of the dependent population, the group comprised of 0-14 years, decreases, and the remaining population, the economically active (16-65 years) remain practically constant. This decreases the dependency ratio (ratio of the dependent population aged 0-14 and 65 and older, divided by the population between 15 and 65).

It should be clear that the window that opens with the "demographic bonus" is temporary, as lower fertility and increased longevity accrue over time the weight of the elderly and, consequently, the dependency ratio will rise again, creating other kinds of demands on social services.

The demographic bonus should be understood as an opportunity for development as well as a challenge to ensure the inclusion of a greater proportion of the population into the labor market.

Although the bonus suggests that a growing number of working-age people will be involved in economic activity, many of the benefits of the demographic bonus are not guaranteed, as they depend on the ability to manage the country's economic policies to create jobs in the period in which this process occurs. So, to take advantage of the demographic bonus it is necessary to focus on the training that will allow inclusion of young people and adults in the labor market. Otherwise, the bonus will become an additional burden for the country, expressed as a strong pressure from the population seeking employment, which could result in increases in unemployment, frustration and likely social crises.

The demographic bonus can be achieved based on a strategy that includes the following dimensions:

1. *Education*. The transformation of a young population into a productive workforce will require greater investment in all levels of education and in particular in the field of vocational training for youth and adults.
2. *Economic Policy*. An older and better trained workforce will yield benefits only if new workers can find jobs. Government policies that lead to stable macroeconomic conditions are related to the growth of a productive and remunerative work.

3. *Good Governance.* To benefit from the demographic bonus, this may require modifications to the existing legal framework for regulation of recruitment practices. Government efficiency, reducing corruption and accountability are essential elements to extract the greatest benefits from this situation.

Failure to take the necessary precautions increases the risk of turning this opportunity into a threat, consolidating a structure of the adult population from low-level technical and professional qualifications.

The key to benefiting from this demographic condition is to prepare, starting with educational, production and employment policies, the conditions to incorporate a suitably qualified workforce into the labor market, who are socially and politically protected.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that the macroeconomic environment in the country is favorable. Since 2008 the country has come to integrate itself in the first installment of the countries called MIC's[1] (middle-income countries) countries whose inhabitants' incomes are between U.S. $ 1,000 and 4,000 dollars per capita.

An economic growth of 60% over the past 10 years speaks for itself about the dynamics of development. This growth is expected to stabilize at a rate of 5% a year, regardless of the inputs, which for the moment are uncertain, but that could come from the oil sector.

In turn, this economic growth has been reflected in the resources allocated to finance spending in the education sector. The total education budget in 2010 represented 9.5% of GDP. This evolution has been maintained annually since 2002, the year in which they spent 2.7% of the GDP on education. The financing of the education sector grew 3.5 times over a period of eight years. This growth has been made possible by a greater transfer of state resources (current and capital) to the education sector, from 6.9% in 2002 to 18.6% in 2010. The education sector in 2010 received 41.1% of the state's current spending. This trend indicates the priority that the government has given this service in recent years.

1.2 Schooling and Educational Offerings.

While the Education Act of Sao Tome and Principe (Law No. 2/2003) provides Pre-school, Basic, Secondary and Higher-Level Education, only Basic Education is compulsory and covers all children aged 6 to 12 years of age. Access and attendance in the rest of the levels is optional.

The gross enrollment rate in pre-school doubled in nine years, from 15.7% in 2001/02 to almost 31% in 2010/11. At the basic level, the gross enrollment also increased, dramatically improving the values for the second cycle of this level of education, from

[1] World Bank Classification

94.3% to 139.2% for the same period 2001/02-2010/11. At the secondary level, growth has also been very important, the first cycle of secondary education which has shown more development, going from 59.8% to 82.9% in the same period previously reported.

Notably, these growths have seen a major boost in recent years, due probably to the investments made in the sector aimed at the expansion of the school network in all levels of the education system.

We can say that today, Sao Tome and Principe have achieved universal basic education. Improving transition rates between years of education is one of the factors contributing to consolidate these gains. Dropouts and repetition have declined at this level of education. Today, the rate of enrollment[2] for the last year of basic education is 116%.

Things change when we analyze the situation of secondary education, and while the first cycle shows a satisfactory evaluation, the second cycle is one of the main weaknesses of the education system. With an enrollment rate of 84% in the first year of lower secondary education in 2011, Sao Tome and Principe is above the average of 10 countries compared.

In terms of means and resources available to ensure the growing demand of enrollment of students, the supply remains low at the secondary level as well as in the first cycle and second cycle and also in the pre-school level.

At the level of basic education, the reorganization of the school network remains a challenge. Only 16.7% of schools offer a full primary cycle (first to sixth grade), over 68% of schools offered only the first cycle of basic education (first to fourth grade). The dispersion and fragmentation of the school system does not contribute to the consolidation of the achievements in enrollment and retention of students. A major challenge will be to reorganize the educational provisions so that most schools work double shifts that in return offer a basic education from first to sixth class.

In terms of human resources, the situation in Sao Tome and Principe continues to be one of the most troubling weaknesses that require an urgent solution. 60% of teachers have no teacher training. The level of remuneration of teachers is very low compared to other countries in the region. This situation discourages people to pursue a teaching career and only pursue one when the amount of jobs in other areas is scarce.

1.3 Internal efficiency and quality of learning

There has been significant progress in the country in terms of internal efficiency. At the Basic Education level repetition rates have declined and this is due to the

[2] This is calculated as the ratio of new entrants to a certain degree (excluding repeaters) divided by all children of legal age for that year of study

implementation of strategies in passing to the next grade level which includes automatic passage to the next cycle. Repetition has declined in basic education in the last 8 years, from 28.7% to 12.4% today. Moreover, there are no dropouts in primary schools. The combination of these situations, reduced repetition and dropout eradication at the basic level put Sao Tome and Principe in a privileged place compared to 20 other African countries.

At the secondary level, the situation is still very fragile. Even though an international comparison shows that it lies within the average compared to other African countries, the difference in the level of basic education is notable. Repetition and neglect are very high. It's noteworthy, in connection with dropouts, that while some inquiries are made "ad-hoc", the causes of youth and adolescent drop-outs are mostly due to economic reasons (the need to enter the labor market) and not the location or shortage of educational offerings, it is conceivable that one cause can be associated with the other. This is a matter of debate and analysis to improve the retention of students in secondary schools and thus improve the situation of both repetition and dropouts.

1.3 Quality of Education

The information used to assess the quality of education, beyond the internal evaluation processes used by educational institutions to grant passage from one grade or year of study to another, was to determine the reading ability of young people between 22 and 24 years by level of educational attainment and number of years of schooling. While a quality approach would be more comprehensive, this uniform and homogeneous indicator allows a measurement of the impact on learning that is achieved according to the passage from one grade to another granted by the school.

In Sao Tome and Principe, in a sample of approximately 5,000 young people between 22 and 24 years, only 39.9% of respondents were able to read the full text, only 33% a part of the text and 27.1% were not able to read anything.

If this analysis incorporates the variable of years of education attained, the results are more encouraging. 82% of young people between 22 and 24 years who completed six years of basic education can read the full text (one sentence) and this figure rises to 98% when they have attained eight years of study.

This assessment put Sao Tome and Principe at the top when compared to other countries in the region.

1.4 Funding in Education

The Funding of Education and its distribution between levels is one of the factors for analyzing the degree of equity in the allocation of resources. A fact that becomes again a motive for observation has to do with the high allocation of funds that the country

allocates to higher-education students abroad. This causes low-funding in preschool, primary and secondary levels.

42.13% of the education budget is intended to fund overseas studies to a total of 1.55% of the students in the system! Almost half of the education budget is allocated to an uncertain professional training that does not guarantee that the students will return to the country. It is incredible that a poor country directly transfers their scarce resources to rich countries to educate their young!

Observing this, the conclusion that emerges is that Sao Tome and Principe do not need more money to fund its education plan, but simply they need to rearrange the allocation of funds and resources available.

Section Two: Analysis of the quality and relevance of the education sector diagnostic document (RESEN).

Firstly, I wish to highlight the important work done by the authorities and technical teams at MECF and Pole de Dakar UNESCO/BREDA for the development of this document.

This report on the state of the national education system (RESEN) is an essential tool for decision making in medium and long-term educational policy. This research has led to progress in identifying priorities and consolidating these findings in the development of the Charter in Policy and Action Plan 2012-2022. In later sections of this report, it also incorporates the main findings related to these documents.

The RESEN document is well structured, which facilitates reading and analysis and interpretation of the different dimensions that characterize the educational system of Sao Tome and Principe.

The following summarizes a number of observations that could be useful to correct or clarify aspects that may cause misunderstandings in the document.

1. It would be appropriate to further deepen the analysis on the challenges of Sao Tome and Principe's situation in the process of demographic transition. That is, warn about what might be the opportunities and threats.
2. The charts and graphs in which international comparisons are made should be corrected, ensuring that they provide comparable information regarding the dates of comparisons. For example, in Figure 2.7, page 36, an international comparison (10 African countries with a GDP per capita between 700 and 1800 dollars) is made. In this case, except for Sao Tome and Principe whose information is from the year 2011, the remaining countries are shown from the years 2008 and 2009, when data for the same years for Sao Tome and Principe do exist (on page 35, access rate to first cycle secondary year in 2008 was 57.2% and in 2009, 61.7%). As can be seen, the other would be the situation regarding Sao Tome and Principe (located in the fifth position, below the average of the group of countries rather than the first as shown in the figure). The same goes for Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. A valid alternative, when there is the possibility of incorporating more updated data, is to add the corresponding data in the same bar for comparison (same for the remaining years), and a bar superimposed over the current data.
3. In Table 2.6 an international comparison is made from a measurement (correct) obtained by dividing the school life expectancy by the average public expenditure on education as a % of the GDP in the last decade. This type of analysis is confusing and from a conceptual standpoint is wrong, as

this value is referred to as the "coefficient of efficiency" when in fact, the internal efficiency of an education system does not consider the time spent by students in system, but the achievements and the time necessary to attain it (years completed throughout the school year). The school life expectancy, only considers the expected time that a child entering the education system remains there, whether the student repeated one or more times and/or abandoned it one or more times and re-entered. Moreover, in the particular case of this international comparison, we have seen that the dropout, repetition and enrollment rates are very different between countries, which we cannot hypothesis as a homogeneous behavior in the remaining rates that use this "factor" as a valid measurement of both calculation and comparison. The following example, from a comparison may be wrongly interpreted as expressed previously. We have two countries, "A" and "B". The country "A" has an average, in the last ten years, of spending 4% of the GDP on public education, while in the case of "B", it has been 3%. The school life expectancy in country "A" is 9 years and for the country "B" it is also 9 years. The average number of years that students spend along their way through school in country "A" is 8 years, in the country "B" it is 7 years. According to the proposed analysis, the coefficient of efficiency of country "A" would be 2.25 and in country "B" of 3.3. According to these calculations, it might be that country "B" is 46% more efficient than the "A" (3.3 / 2.25 * 100)? A country that spends less, and gets less results is more efficient than another. Returning to the example presented in Table 2.6, and consulting with those who know the reality of some countries in this table, can Guinea Bissau be presented as a role model? That's to say, for example, that Guinea Bissau is more efficient than Tunisia, Ghana and Cape Verde? In any case, ultimately, such comparisons should be made between countries that have reached at least the recommended minimum values of education spending, that is equal to or above 4% of GDP. **I suggest removing this table as it does not add value to the report and only leads to confusion that can harm the education sector against misinterpretation due to inappropriate analysis from other areas of government (Ministry of Economy and Public Finance, for example).**

4. Despite the importance to revise human resources in the management of educational services, this is a dimension that has not been addressed in sufficient depth in the report. The situation of teachers without a pedagogical title is one of the elements that must be analyzed in order to give, from improvement strategies, timely and relevant attention to differential deficits that different districts could present at different levels of education.

5. Finally, the values reported in Table 3.7 and Table 2.1 should be checked, as the data on numbers of students are different in each table.

Section Three: Analysis of Educational Policy Charter

The Educational Policy Charter of 2012-2022 was developed in collaboration with the World Bank and Pole de Dakar UNESCO/BREDA. Its development not only served to realize the educational policy decisions for the next 10 years, but also as an exercise that helped strengthen the professional skills of the staff and authorities of MECF in implementing work methodologies that resulted in the production of this document.

The policy charter is very well structured, and addresses most of the priority issues on which the country wants to advance in education over the next 10 years.

It seems clear that there is a direct relationship between what was stated in the policy charter and what is analyzed in the RESEN document. Here, we evaluate the relevance and usefulness of this diagnosis in the identification process of policy guidelines and definition of intervention strategies.

It's surprising to not have found, despite the methodology in the way this document was created, which includes discussion forums and exchanges with various internal and external managers of education services, an analysis with higher levels of self-criticism about the need to resolve the situation of scholarships abroad, as soon as possible. This issue, because of its magnitude and the importance that it implies on the country's financing of education services, should be of special treatment, where strategies and decisions would be indentified to be taken in the medium term to correct the current inequity in the distribution of public resources in education.

In the same manner as mentioned in Section 2 of this document, it would be appropriate to consider the pertinence of removing, on page 22, Table 5, due to reference to a measure of international comparison that has no theoretical basis, which does not add any value and can only be confusing to authorities outside of MECF about the effectiveness and desirability of sustaining current levels of education spending in the country.

The strategy set for each of the priority issues addressed in the document is correct and responds as identified to each of the levels. Overall performance indicators and targets set, judging by the results achieved in recent years, are feasible and sustainable.

Here are some aspects that should be corrected in the document to ensure complete internal coherence.

1. On page 5, the calculation for the ratio of students per teacher is confusing. No one can say that the pupil-teacher ratio is 26 when this calculation includes teachers working just 10 hours. In these cases what should be done, to have a clear idea of the situation of students per teacher, is only include only teachers who work a minimum of 30 hours. Thus this ratio would rise to 40 students per teacher, which would place Sao Tome and

Principe in the average compared to other countries. While it is necessary to improve the management of teachers, so that most of the teachers work a minimum of 30 hours, it is important not to provide an inappropriate calculation that shows an erroneous overview on the situation of the country.

2. It would be important to include, within the training alternatives, both at secondary and higher educational levels, unconventional offerings supported by the use of ICT's.
3. The idea should be reinforced that while the country is now considered a middle-income country (MIC), there are still serious problems related to the precarious living conditions of a large segment of the population (64% living in poverty).
4. Care must be taken with the hypothesis of "urbanization" when making decisions. Often urbanization not only refers to the "migration" of rural areas to urban centers, but also to a greater growth of urban areas and an expansion of the urban and rural borders.
5. Moreover, it is also important to take great care with the information about the passage from a low-income country to a middle-income country, when 80% of the funds come from external financing. That is, if the condition of middle-income country meant a decline in aid, the country would be a low-income country. That is to say that today the country has not made it out of a situation of external financial dependence.
6. On page 25, "conclusions" in the fourth paragraph, when mentioning the favorable aspects, it is mentioned that the political will given to the priority to the country is a positive aspect, while on page 12, in point 1.2, which refers to the aspects to overcome, it is mentioned in section 2 as an obstacle with "lack of political will." This item should be removed in Section 1.2

Section Four: Analysis of the Decennial Plan of Action 2012-2022

This document, like the two discussed above, is well organized and its layout is suitable for monitoring the proposed intervention strategies, in line with what both RESEN and the Educational Policy Charter mention. In fact, this document is an annex to the policy charter.

The implementation proposal addresses each of the issues that were highlighted as priorities in both the RESEN document and the Educational Policy Charter. In this sense, the document is organized based on the description of the strategy implementation in 14 programs.

Each program has a detailed description about the costs that the implementation will require in a period between 2012 and 2022. In the first pages of this Action Plan it can be seen, after the synthesis, a table that allows us to determine the size of the investments that will be needed to finance the implementation of each of the programs. However, there is not throughout this document, information to that would allow us to assess the financing gap, i.e. the gap that the MECF faces to carry out these actions.

It is suggested for the purpose of allowing a linear comparison, to use the same monetary unit of measurement in the tables. That is, if in the RESEN document, like the Educational Policy Charter, where the budget values are expressed in Dobras, they also should expressed as such in the Ten-Year Action Plan document.

From a calculation I made personally, the education budget in 2010 was U.S.$ 19,476,850, equivalent to 352.531.000.000 Dobras. Thus, if the total cost of the program in 10 years requires an outlay of U.S. $ 279,353,173, this is approximately the amount of U.S. $28 million per year, compared to the resources allocated in 2010 this would suggest a deficit of approximately u$8 million per year. While growth is expected in the economy in the coming years, it is not said how this deficit can be financed.

While the information presented for each of the 14 selected programs is generally complete, we suggest incorporating a chronogram with more detail. That is to say, an outline of the "engineering of the implementation of the actions." This will also help the authorities to identify potential bottlenecks in the implementation process due to limitations of MECF's own management (shortage of skilled human resources, sequence and relationship between different stages, often in order to start one stage another one must be already finished-etc.).

Section Five: Recommendations

The following summarizes the main recommendations arising as a result of both external evaluations of the documents produced by the country, as well as the education sector strategy of Sao Tome and Principe for the next 10 years.

1. First, back to a topic that the author of this document considers a priority, which is the status of funding for the training of higher-level education abroad. In this sense, the author agrees with what is stated in the Program 6 of the document "Ten-Year Plan of Action 2012-2022", in reversing this situation and strengthening gradually the offerings of this kind in the country. Moreover, it is suggested, as this happens, to transfer scholarship abroad funds to another sector, for example foreign affairs or foreign affairs ministry, or ministry of production, etc. That is to say that is out of the part of the education budget that the MECF doesn't "rule" and to clean and whiten the actual state of the education budget. There is no point in allocating 7.2 of the GDP for education when in reality the responsible person for managing educational services has just a little less than 4% that is freely available, and the rest is taken by the scholarships and worse, only 844 students receive about the same amount for their training as 53,000! This situation must be resolved soon as there is no argument that can explain or support this situation and most likely there are not many who, when viewing this situation, are willing to contribute more resources available when they are already not properly managed.
2. In relation to the situation of the education sector in the coming years, in light of the demographic transition in the country, it will be important to incorporate strategies to:
    a) Ensure that technical education and vocational training constitute a viable and sustainable option for young people and adults.
    b) Ensure that secondary education enables the development of skills in handling numerical operations and for self-learning of operating new technological tools, particularly in communication and information.
    c) Build capacity in the education and training system to form specific skills in labor fields, in close coordination with production and service companies.
    d) Reform secondary education, expanding access to technical outlets directly from the completion of the basic cycle of secondary education.
    e) Redefinition of the responsibilities and powers of the bodies conducting technical education and vocational training, as a service provider of technical and vocational training, and as a regulator of educational policies at this level and supervisor in private offerings in this field of education.

3. Strengthen the actions corresponding to the areas that have been identified as priorities, such as:
    a) Expansion of the supply of preschool and early childhood care.
    b) Consolidate the results achieved in basic education, this means continuing the process of reorganization of the school network, ensuring that most schools can offer the full basic level, i.e. first and second cycle in the same school, or in schools that are within a radius of student access.
    c) Expand the enrollment at secondary level, particularly in the second cycle of secondary education.
    d) Improve the training of teachers at all levels of the educational system.
    e) Give a definitive solution to the situation of higher education in the country.
4. Regarding the documents analyzed, it is suggested to:
    a) Correct the few inaccuracies that were mentioned to ensure 100% consistency between the documents.
    b) Remove those analyses that do not add value and instead may generate misleading interpretations (international comparison of the efficiency of education systems.)
    c) Use the same currency in all reports.
    d) Develop a schedule or plan for implementing the plan of action to establish the sequence of the actions.
    e) Add a synthesis of the simulation model to Action Plan document.
    f) Develop a Plan of Action alternative, which incorporates only those actions that cannot be delayed (preschool expansion, teacher training, expanding secondary schooling and higher education). Accompany this alternative plan with a simulation about the financial impact that could lead to its implementation.