

Title: "Role of International Financial Institutions in financing a liveable environment: IFIs and ECOWAS Countries Collaboration for Home Grown School Feeding Investment"

Background: The average Human Capital Index (HCI) for the Sub-Saharan Africa region is at its lowest, with several West African nations facing compounded challenges in building human capital. The ECOWAS HGSF Conference in Dakar on 21 - 23 May 2024 provides a strategic platform to address these challenges. Recognizing the crucial role of International Financing Institutions (IFIs), including the African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and others, a dedicated event will be organized to facilitate collaboration and mobilize financial support for HGSF national programs in ECOWAS countries.

Rationale: The convergence of global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and external conflicts, has intensified the need for targeted investments in human capital development. IFIs play a pivotal role in supporting nations facing fiscal pressures, contributing to poverty alleviation, and promoting sustainable economic growth. This event aims to harness the collective expertise and financial resources of IFIs to address the specific challenges faced by ECOWAS countries in implementing and scaling up their HGSF initiatives.

Objectives:

1. Enhance Regional Stability and Sustainable Investments:

- Foster a collaborative environment between IFIs and ECOWAS countries to enhance cooperation in designing and implementing effective HGSF programs, contributing to long-term regional stability and sustainable economic growth.

2. Showcase IFIs Impact on Development Goals:

- Share success stories and best practices from HGSF initiatives financed by IFIs, demonstrating their impact on human capital development, poverty reduction, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Present Funding Opportunities Aligned with Global Agendas:

- Provide a platform for IFIs to present various financing mechanisms and opportunities available to support HGSF national policies, budgets, and plans in ECOWAS countries, directly aligning with global agendas such as the SDGs and the regional School Meal Coalition goals.

4. Collaborative Framework for Risk Mitigation and Market Expansion:

- Facilitate knowledge exchange through panel discussions, presentations, and interactive sessions, promoting a mutual understanding of challenges and solutions in HGSF implementation. This includes addressing long-term risks through human capital investment and opening economic opportunities in local markets.

5. Strategic Framework for Building Stronger Partnerships:

- Collaboratively develop strategies and frameworks to optimize IFIs' support for HGSF initiatives, emphasizing the building of stronger and lasting partnerships that contribute to positive socio-economic development.

6. Explore synergy opportunities between IFIs to optimize resources and support large-scale impacts

- Discuss all eventualities in term of funding complementarity, joint financing and parallel financing to address the needs in the ground through a comprehensive way to take advantage of each IFI's comparative advantages.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Increased Collaboration for Sustainable Impact:
 - Strengthened partnerships between ECOWAS countries and IFIs, fostering mutual collaboration for sustainable HGSF investments.
2. Informed Decision-Making and Positive Influence:
 - Enhanced understanding among ECOWAS country representatives of the available funding mechanisms and best practices in HGSF, showcasing IFIs' positive influence on informed decision-making.
3. Mobilized Financial Support with Global Recognition:
 - Concrete commitments and pledges from IFIs to finance HGSF national programs in ECOWAS countries, enhancing their global recognition for contributing to impactful initiatives.
4. Strategic Framework for Ongoing Collaboration:
 - Development of a strategic framework outlining specific actions and timelines for implementing HGSF programs with IFI support, ensuring ongoing collaboration and impact.
5. Well-articulated co-financing approach to support the HGSF approach.
 - Set up mechanism to better improve collaboration and co-financing mechanism between various IFIs (where it's relevant)

Event Format:

The half-day event at the technical conference will feature a dynamic mix of panel discussions, expert presentations, and interactive sessions. The event will be structured as follows:

1. Opening Session:

- Welcome remarks and introduction of the event's objectives.
- Keynote address by a representative from an IFI emphasizing the importance of collaboration for sustainable development.

2. Panel Discussions:

a. Panel 1 - Best Practices in HGSF Implementation and Regional Stability:

- Representatives from IFIs and ECOWAS countries share success stories and lessons learned, emphasizing the impact on regional stability and sustainable development.

b. Panel 2 - Funding Mechanisms, Opportunities, and Global Alignment:

- IFI representatives present various financing mechanisms and opportunities available for HGSF programs, aligning with global agendas and development goals.

3. Interactive Sessions:

a. Language-Based Breakout Groups:

- Participants organized into breakout groups based on language groups (English, French, Portuguese) for focused discussions on specific themes or challenges.
- Facilitators proficient in each language guide discussions, ensuring effective communication within each group.

b. Multilingual Q&A Sessions:

- Thematic Q&A sessions allowing participants to pose questions in their preferred language.
- A multilingual moderator facilitates discussions, ensuring questions from all language groups are addressed.
- Open mic opportunities with language indicators for direct participant engagement.

Closing Session:

- Summary of key insights from panel discussions, breakout groups, and Q&A sessions.
- Preparation of Commitment statements from IFIs and ECOWAS country representatives for Ministerial Summit.
- Call to action for continued collaboration and implementation of HGSP programs.