



UNESCO Associated Schools Network reinforced in Sub-Saharan Africa:

the Windhoek Workshop for Capacity Development and Orientation of National Coordinators

REPORT



Participants of the ASPnet Windhoek Workshop

About this report

This report serves as a summary reminder of the flavour, emerging issues and key outcomes of the UNESCO ASPnet workshop for those who were present as well a brief overview for those who were not. More detailed information, including the agenda, presentations, a full participant list and a photo-gallery can be found at (<https://aspnet.unesco.org>).

A community gathering

ASPnet is one of UNESCO's oldest and most successful networks, linking today 11,500 schools in 182 countries around the world to promote education for global citizenship, peace building and sustainable development. As a community of like-minded schools and a 'laboratory for ideas', ASPnet encourages teaching and learning through innovation and through dialogue and sharing of ideas amongst network members.

The workshop was a manifestation of these principles, bringing together a range of participants in a programme which included opportunities for dialogue, reflection, peer learning and problem-solving through innovative means. The gathering included National Coordinators from member countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Secretaries-General of National Commissions in non-participating countries as well as new National Coordinators from countries in other regions, including Vietnam, Serbia and Estonia. The meeting was facilitated by the UNESCO ASPnet International Coordination team, with the support of UNESCO staff in the African region, and took place in Windhoek, Namibia, from 26 to 28 June 2018.

Growing capacity, providing orientation

The *purpose* of the gathering was to *strengthen, reconnect and inspire* ASPnet in Sub-Saharan Africa by *reminding* delegates of the importance and relevance of their work in pursuit of peace and sustainable development in the world; by *introducing* the recently updated UNESCO ASPnet Guide for National Coordinators as well as new subject guides for teachers and learners; by providing opportunities for *direct learning* on the Online Tool for ASPnet (OTA), by *strengthening capacity* of participants to manage and support their member schools and by *encouraging greater collaboration* regionally and internationally. In all of the above, there was a dual emphasis on developing capacity of more experienced National Coordinators and providing orientation to new Coordinators and National Commissions.

Africa first

The hosting of this first Regional Capacity Development Workshop in Namibia underlined UNESCO's commitment to giving priority to Africa and acknowledged the critical role of schools, teachers and students in Africa in contributing to UNESCO's global objectives of defending peace and of transforming their societies.

In her opening remarks, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of Namibia's Ministry of Education Arts and Culture and Deputy Chairperson of the Namibian National Commission for UNESCO, Ms Veno Kauaria, acknowledged the challenges that educators in sub-Saharan Africa face.

However, she also underlined their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how Target 4.7 resonates with aspirations in the sub-continent to play a part in global peace building.

Day 1: Setting out the UNESCO ASPnet stall

Joining the representatives from Namibia's Ministry of Education Arts and Culture during the opening, Dr Jean-Pierre Iboudo, Head of UNESCO Windhoek Office and Ms Soo-Hyang Choi, Director of the Division for Peace and Sustainable Development at UNESCO Headquarters, underlined the importance of ASPnet as a vehicle for forwarding UNESCO's mandate under SDG4, particularly target 4.7. In promoting the 'humanistic, ethical, cultural and international dimensions of education' and by providing a 'laboratory for innovation', the overall quality of education in schools can also rise.



Ms Soo-Hyang Choi, in her keynote presentation, placed the global education agenda lead by UNESCO in its historical context, tracing the evolution from the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien in 1990, with its focus on *access* (are they in school?), through the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, which added *quality* (do they learn?), to the current Education 2030, which includes emphasis on *content* (what do they learn?). In moving forward, however, the continuing importance of EFA in some countries is acknowledged, giving space for the 'unfinished business of EFA' to remain a priority.

In unpacking Target 4.7, Ms Soo-Hyang Choi spoke about its mutually reinforcing themes of Education for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 4.7

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through **education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality**, promotion of a culture of **peace and non-violence, global citizenship** and appreciation of **cultural diversity** and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”

(ESD), Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Cultural Diversity and Heritage, with gender equality cutting across.

ASPnet is a critical vehicle for achieving Target 4.7, focusing primarily on ESD and Global Citizenship and ‘translating global concepts into innovative practice and pilot projects’. She underlined that educational outcomes under Target 4.7 are not only about what education can do for individuals, but what it can contribute to the wellbeing of the world.

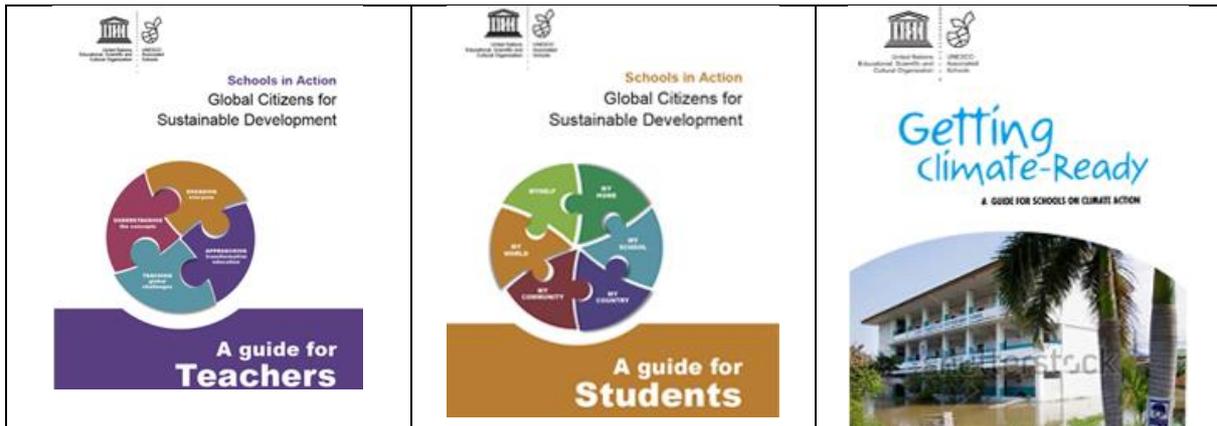
During subsequent discussions, some important clarifications and guidelines were highlighted to the participants:

- It is not always necessary to develop new curricula for ESD and GCED at your country level. Find entry points or where the topics are covered in existing curricula and use ASPnet materials to amplify and make links with 4.7.
- If it is sensitive to talk about global citizenship as such, apply the key values and topics.
- Remember that leaders of all countries, including yours, have committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and are signatories to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights!
- ASPnet guides can be customized, by ministries, national commissions/coordinators or principals and teachers to suit any context.
- Special conditions in countries experiencing conflict are acknowledged, where primary focus on sustainability of livelihoods may be most relevant. New strategies and supporting materials are under development.

Ms Sabine Detzel, ASPnet International Coordinator, led sessions introducing key elements of the new ASPnet Guide for National Coordinators, highlighting the alignment with SDG 4, Target 4.7 and the four pillars of education – learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and, most importantly for ASPnet, learning to live together. A light was also shone on the tightening of criteria for ASPnet membership, including fixing the term to 3-5 years, with assessment at the end to determine whether conditions for renewal are met. In order to increase impact and promote visibility, cohesion and networking, new requirements include school-wide celebration of at least two UN days and participation in one global or regional UNESCO activity. Demonstration of innovation and annual work plans and reporting are also required. Surfacing during subsequent group discussion were the common challenges around turnover of National and School Coordinators, lack of resources and IT penetration as well as concerns relating to the ‘wearing of two hats’ by those who fulfill National Coordinator as well as National Commission roles. However, the dialogue also stimulated a rich exchange of innovative ideas and good experiences, including holding ASPnet camps for school coordinators, use of community radio to amplify messages and effect community reach, developing local partnerships for resource mobilization, decentralizing ASPnet structures in larger countries.

Teacher and student resources were also introduced.

These were developed by UNESCO at the request of National Coordinators and members and can be downloaded from the ASPnet platform (<https://aspnet.unesco.org/en-us/Pages/publications.aspx>) or ordered from the office of the International Coordinator.

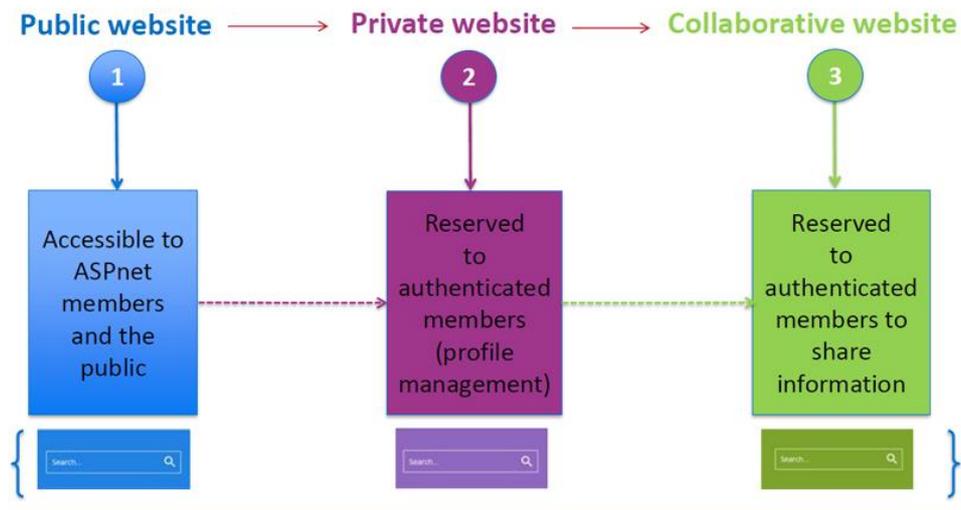


The growing importance of the Online Tool for ASPnet (OTA) for stepping up network management, visibility and member collaboration was explained by Ms Fouzia Belhami.

3 spaces are hosted on OTA – public, private (where only authenticated members can connect) and collaborative (for the exchange of information, ideas, events and photographs amongst members). Updating of the country information at least twice per year is now mandatory.

Since the launch of OTA in October 2016

- 95 national coordinators** updated school information
- 2500 schools** were marked inactive
- 1200 schools** made requests for membership
- 530 resources** were uploaded/shared
- 280,000 pages** were viewed



Hands-on sessions were held with participants at different points in the programme, combining general training on OTA with addressing specific country problems and questions.

Day 2: What sets an ASPnet school apart?

Through visits to two of the 27 Namibian ASPnet schools, both located in Windhoek (David Bezuidenhout Secondary School and Waldorf Primary and Secondary School) and guided by questions on what to observe and ask, National Coordinators were able to take a step back to look objectively at what sets an ASPnet school apart. The visits were not only enjoyable and interesting, but stimulated deep reflection and discussion, including about the schools and activities in their own countries.

[The visits] “provided an opportunity to see the reality on the ground and what we can add. As coordinators, we know not all schools are at the same level. What we have seen should enable us to act.”

In both schools, delegates noted a variety of excellent activities and approaches which demonstrate UNESCO and ASPnet philosophy. These included learners taking the lead during visits and in certain school activities, positive interaction between learners, teachers and school management, care of the school environment and efforts at recycling, an awareness of ‘giving back to nature’ by planting trees and composting, diverse school populations and a culture of learning to live together, gender awareness and concern about school violence.

However, delegates also noted the lack of specific linkage of these activities and approaches with the work and objectives of UNESCO. Furthermore, despite visibility of UNESCO and ASPnet logos, activities showed little sense of connection to the wider world and learners seemed to be unaware of the global network to which they belong. Delegates were also able to see how, with small effort and little or no resources, these links could have deepened understanding and multiplied action.

Some examples identified by delegates:

If the school’s active and successful debating society selected UNESCO-related topics and initiated, researched and used UNESCO or ASPnet materials to prepare debates on global citizenship, peace or climate change in their own contexts, they would not only deepen their own understanding but also share such understanding with learners at other schools.

Although the whole school is mobilized for occasional clean-ups of the school environment, only 30 environment club members are involved in recycling and understanding the global implications of plastic waste. Mobilising the whole school community, including families, to understand the benefits of reducing single use plastic and recycling waste, would multiply the benefit and the learning.

Both schools have planted trees, but the learners did not know the names of the trees nor their properties. To label the trees, know if they are indigenous, how much water they need to thrive and what particular benefits they could bring to the school (e.g. repelling mosquitos) would enable students to explore and understand concepts like biodiversity, sustainable development and climate change.

In the wake of these discussions, answers to the question: *what sets an ASPnet school apart?* were developed.

The general consensus was that an ASPnet school is not just an ordinary school doing interesting and innovative things, but one which can demonstrate the link between their activities and the UNESCO values, areas of work and objectives as well as an awareness of their connection to global challenges.

This discussion linked well to a short presentation on the ‘whole school approach’, where the International Coordinator motivated the greater emphasis being placed on this approach by UNESCO. The concept is defined in section 8.5 of the ASPnet National Coordinators Guide and has been successfully piloted in 25 countries, focused around climate change and supported with new materials. The approach is holistic, targeting the school culture and embracing all of UNESCO’s themes together to achieve change. Other benefits include less reliance on specific individuals to maintain momentum.

Group discussions gave delegates the opportunity to delve deeper into each of ASPnet’s main themes and to share experiences and ideas on implementation at the school level while reflecting on the whole-school approach.

Under *global citizenship and a culture of peace and non-violence*, main issues surfacing were the challenges of working in countries experiencing conflict and extremism; the need to find sensitive and innovative ways to identify areas in existing and new national curricula which can carry relevant learning; using international days and commitments to SDGs as entry points for mobilisation and advocacy; promotion of non-violence at the school-level; partnership with local radio to amplify and broaden reach, use of weekly school assemblies to talk about key topics.

“All stakeholders help decide and implement + permeate total school environment
=
whole school approach”

Several of these ideas overlapped with the theme *intercultural learning and appreciating of cultural diversity and heritage*. Additional issues and ideas emerging included supporting teachers to talk about tolerance and respect for other cultures or religions in their country; using media, such as videos, to facilitate discussion; encouraging school visits to museums; community peace-building events; using the arts to build intercultural understanding.

Delegates spoke about the importance of using context-specific ways to talk about *sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles*, including management of resources, leaving enough

“Teach our children the theory of enough: only take what you need for today and leave the rest for tomorrow.”

for the next generations, understanding that current and future access to resources such as water can cause conflict, that plastic waste from one country can land on the shores of another. Exchanges of experiences and ideas for implementation included school and community projects for recycling, gardening, cleaning of environments including rivers and limitation of single use plastics. Such projects not only promote local

change but give learners practical insights into academic subjects as well as skills and knowledge for the future.

In general, ASPnet encourages involving families, to enable messages to reach the home and wider community. Linking with schools in other countries regionally and internationally to discuss areas of similarity and difference links the local to the global. Focusing on the notion of *learning to live together* is key for all of the thematic areas.

Day 3: Taking the temperature, looking ahead

As a way of gathering the views of participants on the performance of ASPnet and on its actors, including themselves, and ranking their challenges, training needs and views on critical success factors, an interactive polling application was used. Though challenging and slow to use in limited bandwidth, the approach was extremely innovative – enabling delegates to vote on 9 questions using their mobile devices and to see the % results in real-time on the big screen. In all, 214 votes were cast on the 9 questions, providing critical information to UNESCO and to the National Coordinators for future planning.

In general, National Coordinators are satisfied with the support and assistance from the International Coordinator and from their National Commissions, although some National Coordinators wear both hats. Issues arising were slow responses from the International Coordinator and difficulties for new Coordinators to get started, due to lack of handover, resources and orientation. The way the National Commission is structured and the level of interest of the Secretary-General are seen as critical factors.

Although 67% of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that they are in regular contact with their schools, a sizeable minority is experiencing problems due to geographical distance and spread of their schools as well as practical problems with communication.

56% of National Coordinators felt they were more than adequately meeting expectations of their job, with 22% reporting average performance and 9% below par. In addition to IT and financial challenges, reasons for average and below average assessments included lack of government support, frequent turnover of actors at all levels, high workloads with other roles and schools not always being in session.

71% of National Coordinators identified lack of financial resources as their biggest challenge. While this was acknowledged as a problem at all levels of the Network, delegates challenged each other to look for the many things that can be done with little or no money. The training seen as the most needed by delegates is in the thematic areas of ASPnet (38%) and on OTA (25%).

Teachers with innovative ideas were voted as the most important success factors for an ASPnet school (42%), followed by leadership at the school level (38%). Interestingly, resources received 0% of votes.

The most popular ‘asks’ from National Coordinators to UNESCO were for training and coordination (46%), pedagogical guidance (25%) and technical improvement of mechanisms, including OTA (21%). Finally, when asked for the top of mind association with ASPnet, a clear majority (59%) identified innovative projects.

The final session saw delegates meeting in regional groups to discuss establishing mechanisms for regional communication and collaboration and the possible role of the regional UNESCO offices. A number of concrete ideas were discussed and agreed, including the setting up of regular communication platforms through skype and WhatsApp, twinning of schools within the region, exchange visits, annual regional meetings and cost effective mutual support for training.

In parting and moving forward

Delegates posted their remaining questions and their country commitments in a box for follow up, emphasizing that the end of the workshop marked a pause in the conversation, to be continued.



During the closing session, Dr Jean-Pierre Ilboudo, Head of UNESCO Windhoek Office, assured National Coordinators of UNESCO’s continued support for ASPnet. He announced that a further Regional African training event for principals or teachers will be held in 2019 in order to “maintain the momentum we have generated during this meeting”. He further announced the support from the Chinese government in establishing a UNESCO Category 2 Center for ASPnet dedicated to research, training, IT support, conferences and student encounters.

7 take-aways

Your work is important

- by supporting ASPnet schools, you are part of a crucial, global effort towards peace and greater sustainability through Target 4.7
- Your role as National Coordinator is central to this effort
- Through engaging with the Network, you are modeling global citizenship

What makes an ASPnet school?

- A school which is doing innovative projects linked to ASPnet themes
- A school which seeks to be part of a global network for change
- A school which is striving to adhere to ASPnet requirements

International days as an entry point

- Celebrating international days helps with visibility & mobilisation
- Provides opportunities for whole school & community engagement
- Look for calendar, guides & resources on the ASPnet website/OTA

Sustaining through innovation

- Use what is freely available : ASPnet guides, materials, ideas + examples from other countries on OTA or shared in your region
- Look for efficiencies in structure, outreach and training + innovative, budget-neutral project ideas
- Develop local partnerships for resource mobilisation

Whole school approach

- Involving the whole school multiplies impact and learning
- The whole school approach changes the culture of the school
- Less reliance on individual teachers = greater sustainability

OTA is the way forward

- OTA is *your* platform for global networking!
- It is increasingly ASPnet's way of doing business
- Use it for sharing success, learning from others, receiving ASPnet news
- Please keep your country and members' information up to date

Regional collaboration

- Encourages communication and learning amongst countries with aspects of commonality - e.g. geography, language, history
- Facilitates training efforts, twinning and exchange
- Leverages support available at UNESCO regional offices

Annexes

Annex 1: “Let’s Work Together in our region” - Notes from sub-regional discussions

1. ASPnet in the Eastern Africa Region Group Discussion

Nine countries from the Eastern Africa Region (13 countries) as well as Sudan (Arab region) participated in this group discussion.

Ideas for collaboration

1. There should be sharing of good practice by the region including through field visits
2. Establish a platform of communication between all the Eastern Africa countries through social media: e.g. whatsapp, Emails/ Community of Practice (COP)
3. Uganda will initiate the Community of practice communication via email with all Eastern Africa countries, including the Sudan/Khartoum
4. Once all ASPnet schools have been activated and running good projects, the plan is to hold a sub-regional conference
5. All countries in the group should play a supportive role through the sharing of project ideas for example.

2. ASPnet in the Southern African Region Group Discussion

Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in this group discussion around the question: **What will you be doing right after the workshop (Way forward)?**

1. Building a sustainable Sub -Regional Network for ASPnet (Southern Africa Region). Namibia to create the group.
2. Regional Capacity building Workshop for ASPnet teachers (proposal to be submitted to HQ/ROSA)
3. Briefing for relevant authorities on ASPnet in the member states
4. Biennial meeting of National Coordinators and Principal/ Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Education in the Sub-region.
5. Media Platform or involvement to disseminate information on ASPnet and its activities (Development of a communication strategy on ASPnet.
6. Approach relevant government ministries to see to it to what extent they can assist the ASPnet.
7. Twinning ASPnet schools as a channel to keep the sub-region together.
8. Peer learning / visits to other successful ASPnet schools in the sub-region
9. Celebration of International days and display of promotional materials (materials can be sourced from the UNESCO HQ).

3. ASPnet in the Central African Region Group Discussion

Angola, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon participated in this group discussion.

Ideas for collaboration

1. There should be permanent communication, on a weekly basis among Central Africa, considering that there is violence on a daily basis in DRC
2. Coordinators can communicate among themselves and with UNESCO using text messages/WhatsApp or emails
3. There is need to improve the different ways being used by UNESCO to network
4. There is need to revive sub-regional ASPnet platforms and networks
5. All Secretary Generals of National Commissions for UNESCO should be engaged so as to agree on the way forward
6. Gabon and DRC will take the lead and coordinate the initial network building exercise (gathering emails and phone numbers of coordinators), with the help of Congo Brazzaville
7. Other regions will be engaged once the sub-regional network is established
8. Yaoundé will serve as the central information hub, with the support of the UNESCO office.

4. ASPnet in the West African (Sahel) Regional Group Discussion

Participating countries : Gabon, Rwanda, Rep Congo, Niger, Burkina Faso et Senegal

1. Cameroon suggested to the participants to work together in order to introduce more collaboration and exchange among ASPnet members in the RESEAO countries
2. Burkina is the Chair of the RESEAO for 2019 and the participants agreed that it is time to revitalize their subregional Network, through reinforcing the partnership among National Commissions and ASPnet National Coordinators; and sharing of experiences on ASPnet management and governance
3. A PP will be presented for the next RESEAO meeting (already supported by Senegal, Gabon and Niger. Others will follow.)
4. It is also planned to review the RESEAO Strategic Plan 2020
5. It has been suggested that the NC recruit assistants, not only to help in managing the network but also to take over the role in case of changes/retirement of an NC.
6. Participants agreed to update the email list for exchange and communication among the RESEAO members.

5. ASPnet in the West African Regional Group Discussion

Out of the eight member states of the West African region, the following six countries participated in the group discussion: Benin, Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone. It was agreed that:

1. The National Coordinators within the UNESCO Abuja Region, in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office and National Commissions for UNESCO, should hold a strategic development plan meeting to develop a road map for ASPnet schools in the region.
2. The SG NatCom in countries where the National Coordinator is the SG NatCom should appoint a substantial coordinator to enable total commitment of the coordinators.
3. The national coordinators, in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office in Abuja, should explore international and local donors to mobilize resources for the funding of the ASPnet schools within the Abuja region.
4. A meeting for ASPnet schools administrators, teachers and critical stakeholders within the UNESCO Abuja regional office should be organized for effective monitoring and evaluation of the activities in the schools at country level.
5. An Email or WhatsApp group should be created for all the coordinators, for effective communication.
6. Good practices should be shared among coordinators for emulation.

Annex 2: Commitments for follow-up actions (from the “Commitments Box”)

- Rendre compte à l’hierarchie supérieure/aux collègues de la ComNat/au Ministère de l’éducation
- Organiser une rencontre avec les représentants des écoles membres pour faire une restitution, partager les nouvelles connaissances, leur faire savoir ce que l’UNESCO attend d’eux
- Contacter par correspondance toutes les écoles associées à l’intérieur du pays
- Préparer un plaidoyer au niveau de l’Etat pour renforcer le soutien à la ComNat et à la Coordination du réSEAU
- S’investir pour faire aboutir de nouvelles demandes d’adhésions
- Projeter les activités à mener en tenant compte des nouvelles recommandations et de l’outil en ligne OTA
- Organiser un atelier pour engager des nouvelles écoles et pousser les membres à plus d’initiatives
- Visiter les écoles du pays
- Je vais collaborer avec 3 pays d’autres sous-régions
- Follow-up on Membership status
- Induct new schools
- Organise a competition on Intangible Cultural Heritage for ASPnet schools
- Conduct research on cultures from other regions to work on intercultural understanding
- Faire un évaluation des activités des écoles et par la suite renseigner la base de données (OTA)

- Placer dans les écoles les documents que nous allons télécharger à partir du site afin que toutes les écoles soient au même niveau d'information
- Compile all the available resources/guides and send them to ASPnet school focal points, using their emails
- Initiate an institutional manual on the 3 new thematic action areas of ASPnet
- Get more involved in order to help intensify th activities in schools.

Annex 3: Questions à considérer/traiter (from the "Questions Box")

- Quelles stratégies mettez-vous en place pour appuyer les coordonnateurs nationaux sur le plan financier pour mener à bien leurs tâches ?
- Est-ce qu'on peut accéder à d'autres fonds, sans attendre le Programme de Participation (PP)?
- Personnellement, j'ai beaucoup appris et il ne me reste qu'à l'appliquer.
- Je voudrais savoir si, en dehors de la demande de participation et du projet, il y a un autre document à fournir pour une adhésion au réseau ?
- The success of the network is dependent on how well-informed schools are. It is therefore suggested that UNESCO adequately train National Coordinators, so that they will be in the capacity to train school coordinators.
- The International Coordinator should try to engage regional UNESCO offices in Africa to commit some funds from their Regular budget to assist ASPnet programmes and activities within the region.
- Can UNESCO organise a next, but inter-regional meeting of ASPnet National Coordinators?



<https://aspnet.unesco.org/en-us/capacity-development-workshop-in-sub-saharan-africa>