
[Kigali: Lessons learned on the city's strategy to achieve SDG4](#)

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Microplanning of education

Education and development

Cities play an instrumental role in implementing the United Nations' [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), including Sustainable Development Goals 11 – sustainable cities and communities - and 4, which aims to ensure universal access to quality education.

The research project of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) '[Local challenges, global imperatives: Cities at the forefront to achieve Education 2030](#)' aims at exploring the key role of cities in educational planning and management, as local elected authorities and privileged partners of ministries of education. Based on a wide range of interviews at the city level with main education stakeholders, the research aims at learning from the experience of cities committed for education and that have developed innovative strategies to address main education challenges at the local level.

First implemented during a pilot phase in [France](#), in 2021-22, the research extended to other regions in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, [SHLC](#) (Centre for Sustainable Healthy Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods), and the [city of Medellin \(Colombia\)](#): [Kigali \(Rwanda\)](#), [Manila \(Philippines\)](#), [Dhaka and Khulna \(Bangladesh\)](#), and [Medellin](#).

Following the completion of the field research and analysis in each city, a series of webinars is being organized by IIEP-UNESCO, the University of Glasgow, national research partners and city authorities to discuss the main research findings. In Rwanda, the research was conducted by the [University of Rwanda](#) in close collaboration with the City of Kigali (CoK) authorities. A dissemination webinar was organised on 19 October 2022 to share the main lessons learned from the field work with the local government and partners.

Engaging Kigali's city authorities and education stakeholders

The event gathered fifty participants including city representatives and education stakeholders. Among them, both elected officials and Heads of Departments at district and city levels, the district education officers (DEOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and school head teachers attended

and contributed to the discussions.

The webinar presented the opportunity for all the stakeholders involved in the project to discuss the main challenges and opportunities when designing, implementing and monitoring the city education strategy, particularly, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentations and discussions contributed to explore critical areas of quality education improvement and strategies to achieve the city's future education objectives successfully.

Kigali's role and education duties

In Kigali, the city is in charge of ensuring access to quality education from nursery to adult education at the local level. In coordination with the Ministry of Education, who mainly formulates the education policy nationwide, the city implements the national curriculum and conducts regular school inspections within its territory. The local authority also mobilizes financial resources to improve school infrastructure, pay and train teachers, monitor and evaluate the budget implementation and education performance at lower territorial levels.

In terms of administrative organization, there is no elected official with a specific mandate for education at the local level. Instead, the provision of education is led by the Directorate of Social Development and Good Governance with one Education Specialist, the city focal point, which provides support to districts to implement the education strategy.

This strategy is embedded to the city's Integrated Development Strategy (IDS) rather than stand alone as a unique document. As part of the Social Transformation pillar, it aims to improve access quality of education for all citizens.

Main strengths of Kigali's local education strategy

One of the main strengths highlighted during the field work is having a local education strategy aligned to national, regional and global agendas with goals focused, primarily, on vocational and technical training, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for female students, teacher's development, and the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) facilities as new learning tools. The research shows that the education strategy was based on collaborative work between local education officers and CSOs, as well as on administrative information reported by schools.

Multi-party collaboration is also visible during the implementation process. Within the local administration, the CoK, through its Directorate of Social Development and Good Governance, cooperates with other directorates to provide school infrastructure and equipment, organize sport activities, and sensitize the community about violence, nutrition and early pregnancy. The CoK also coordinates and partners with CSOs and NGOs to implement inclusive education initiatives, related for instance to youth and girls empowerment, training of teaching and non-teaching staff on special educational needs, and financial support to low-income students. Particularly in terms of digital inclusion in education, the city prioritised distance learning through TV/radio and training teachers in ICT skills to successfully switch to an online teaching environment as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledging the city's strategy implementation challenges

In Kigali, as in other cities, implementing the local education strategy comes with some obstacles, particularly in a context of crises. Public officers from the local government raised concerns about education not being the first priority of the city, compared to the infrastructure sector, for instance.

In the City's overall development strategy, education does not come first as a key priority since the infrastructure is the priority of the city. However, while putting much emphasis on infrastructure development, education benefits from the fact that well-built schools are being constructed and equipped with modern school materials (Social Affairs staff, CoK)

In addition, the field work revealed that the design and consultation processes tend to exclude parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, even though both play a key role in the implementation of the local strategy. Private schools also stressed that the formulation phase fails to include them despite their express of interest in participate. One participant in the webinar highlighted the following:

There is a need to strengthen the process of collecting the ideas, needs and aspirations expressed through the above-cited forums while designing the Kigali education strategy or the national education strategy (Head teacher from a private school)

Limited financial resources are also a constraint to a more effective implementation. In addition, education authorities of the city lack of a reserve of budget available in case of crises or unpredicted events which may lead to delays in implementing timely responses. This was the case of the recent health pandemic during which schools reported scarce resources to deal with the early reopening of schools. The lack of technology devices, internet connectivity and ICT facilities to support the transition to online learning were some of the main barriers for promoting effective distance learning.

The sanitary crisis also evidenced other challenges that teachers and schools had to deal with: poor learning environment at students' home, cases of unplanned pregnancies, high dropout rates, child violence, as well as a lower rate of parents' participation in school meetings. Acknowledging these more common social issues outside schools represents an opportunity to regularly revise the local education strategy and create solutions to address them.

The research provides insights on how planning and managing education at the local level works in Kigali. Sharing and discussing the research findings with a wide range of local actors is a key strategy to bring about a common reflection on local education strategies, and to highlight the key roles played by cities in this regard, in collaboration with local partners.

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