



Réseau Suisse  
Éducation et  
Coopération  
Internationale

RECI – Swiss Network for Education  
and International Cooperation

TOGETHER FOR QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL  
Strategy 2021-2024

Geneva, November 5, 2020

## I. CONTEXT

During the last strategy period, the Swiss Network for Education and International Cooperation RECI has further strengthened its institutional basis and quality of work by mobilizing the expertise from different member organisations successfully. This has resulted in numerous technical outputs (events, publications, etc.) who were widely recognized by the network and external partners for their relevance and quality.

A self-evaluation<sup>1</sup> conducted by RECI in 2019 showed a high degree of satisfaction from members with the work of RECI. RECI provides a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences, which is highly appreciated by members. At the same time, the self-evaluation revealed some areas, which could be further improved. They can be summarized as follows:

- **Capitalization and dissemination of results:** While the exchanges during events and working group meetings are much appreciated, RECI members expressed the wish to better capitalize on the results deriving from such exchanges. This could be through follow-up activities, such as trainings, webinars, etc., during which topics discussed could be further deepened. It could also be through the provision of more tangible / adapted / translated products (recommendations, tools, guidelines, etc.), which could be used by representatives of RECI member organisations for dissemination with partners in the Global South or within their own organisations. Thereby, the results generated by RECI could gain a much wider reach and directly contribute to improving the work of RECI members and their partners in the Global South.
- **Advocacy and positioning:** While RECI is a member of various national and international advocacy platforms, the self-evaluation suggested that RECI could enhance its own visibility and impact in the political dialogue around education nationally and internationally. This could build on the advocacy capacity of certain RECI members (for different education sub-themes) and amplify such efforts by adding more legitimacy and wider support through the RECI network as a whole. RECI could also work on improving its visibility through (contributing to existing) campaigns in Switzerland and internationally.
- **Synergies with SDC:** RECI should identify and strengthen synergies with the work of SDC. SDC has its own internal Education Network and there are multiple possible synergies with RECI, in particular in the areas of knowledge exchange/capitalization and policy dialogue, which should be further explored.
- **Communication:** RECI's communication strategy should be revised, as the objectives, the target audience and the various communication instruments need to be clarified and strengthened. This will also contribute to create more visibility for RECI and to better capitalize on the results of its work.
- **Fundraising:** RECI is currently very much reliant on SDC as a main donor. In order to more successfully raise additional funds to sustain and expand the work of RECI, the RECI Secretary General needs more resources for fundraising with other institutional donors.
- **Clarification of RECI mandate and operating model:** RECI has a lot of thematic working fields and its ways of operating could be further improved. Therefore, the self-evaluation recommended to clarify and sharpen the profile and operating model of RECI in the framework of its upcoming strategy process. In particular, the role of member organisations within the RECI operating structures could be strengthened and the functioning of the working groups could be improved. This could include delegating certain responsibilities from the Secretary General to RECI members, e.g. for the facilitation of working groups. Moreover, it was recommended to establish an "expert pool", which could serve to more easily access relevant technical support from RECI members and their respective areas of expertise.

The board of RECI, together with the new RECI Executive Director, has carefully considered these findings and recommendations while drafting the new strategy for the period of 2021-2024. The draft strategy was again discussed with RECI members, first during the General Assembly in June 2020 and again during

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<sup>1</sup> Bilan à mi-parcours de la stratégie 2018-2020 du RECI. Auto-évaluation accompagnée par Rosemarie Lusanne (May 2020).

regional consultation workshops in October 2020. SDC Education team was also consulted, being the main financial supporter and an important strategic partner.

The first part of this document outlines RECI's sharpened Vision and Mission statements, as well as a re-defined theory of change, which is more clearly linked to facilitating concrete results on the ground. The second part of the document describes the strategic objectives for the period 2021-2024, which were developed based on the findings of the self-evaluation under the previous strategy period.

## II. WHO WE ARE

RECI, the Swiss Network for Education and International Cooperation, is an independent, non-profit network of organisations and individuals promoting the *Right to Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for All and Lifelong Learning* in international cooperation. RECI was founded as an informal network in 2007 and constituted itself as an association under the Swiss Civil Code in 2015.

RECI members are 26 Swiss-based NGOs and academic institutions and several individual experts working in education and international cooperation. Through its members, RECI reaches out to more than 60 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

**Vision:** RECI envisions a world in which everyone's right to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning is realised.

**Mission:** RECI is a Swiss-based network, which unites and promotes expertise in inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all in the frame of sustainable development and international cooperation with the purpose to increasing its impact on international practices and policies.

### Our guiding principles:

RECI bases its work on international agreements and recognised standards on the right to quality education for all. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Article 26 on the right of every person to education, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), specifically its Articles 28 and 29 on the right to access to quality education for all.

RECI works in the frame of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development with a focus on Goal No 4, to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Beyond this specific goal, the 2030 Agenda recognises education as the foundation and prerequisite for achieving the other goals; it postulates education as indispensable to sustainable development.

The SDGs are guided by the principle to "leave no one behind". RECI places a particular emphasis on the right to education for people who are affected or threatened by exclusion or discrimination, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its article 24 on equitable and inclusive education.

RECI understands itself as the network of its members. Their joint needs and expectations determine the agenda, their expertise and inputs shape the content and quality of the RECI's debates and work.

In its cooperation within the network RECI is guided by the principle of equal participation. The exchange within the network is oriented towards high standards and the mobilisation of expertise. RECI aspires to transparency within the network and towards partners. RECI provides transparent information about its work and finances. It makes careful use of the funds entrusted to it.

RECI is a strong voice for the right to education for all in good quality and advocates for these values in strategic and political debates.

To improve the impact of its work and to strengthen the community of actors advocating for the right to quality education for all, RECI is committed to cooperation and participation in networks in Switzerland and internationally.

### Our USP:

RECI is the only network in Switzerland specialising on education and international cooperation. As such, it has a **unique strategic position**, which is reinforced through its outreach as a network of NGOs with their respective partners in the field, academic institutions and individual experts, and through its strategic partnerships with key institutions in the areas of education, international cooperation and complementary areas.

RECI is known among its members and expert partners as a platform, which **unites broad and strong expertise and experience** in its thematic focus area.

### III. OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

In order to contribute to its vision, the realisation of the right to quality education for all worldwide, RECI, through the work of its members, aims at impacting on governmental and non-governmental actors in the Global South to be equipped and willing to provide quality education for all, by working towards two main programmatic outcome areas:

1. **Improved international practises** in the provision of quality education for all by developing, bundling, sharing and building of expertise on the right to quality education for all in the frame of international cooperation.
2. **Improved international policy frameworks and funding** by advocating, raising awareness, advancing knowledge and understanding of the crucial role of quality education for all (SDG 4) for sustainable development (all other SDGs).

RECI reinforces and disseminates the **knowledge, experience and expertise** of its members by promoting exchange and mutual learning between its members and other actors of international cooperation. Based on these resources, RECI conducts **research and develops recommendations and practical tools**.

Through its national and international advocacy, RECI fosters the political dialogue around the right to quality education for all. By amplifying the positions of its members, it represents as a **strong Swiss voice for the right to quality education for all**.

Everything that RECI does and achieves is done through **cooperation and mutual learning of its members**. Effective network functioning (communication, diverse forms of cooperation and mutual exchange), including with other actors and strategic partners, is therefore key for its success.

Vision	All people enjoy the right to quality education				
Impact	States and other actors on the ground provide quality education for all				
Outcomes 2 and 3	Contribute to improved practices for quality education for all by members, their partners on the ground and other actors			Contribute to improved national and international policies and funding for quality education for all	
Measurable results	Members report improved technical capacities and practices of themselves, their local partners and actors to support quality education for all.			RECI has established strategic partnerships for national and international advocacy to raise awareness and support for quality education worldwide	
Areas of intervention	Bundling of expertise, mutual learning, dissemination of information	Capacity building	Development and bundling of evidence, standards, tools	National policy dialogue and advocacy	International advocacy
Outcome 1	RECI has become a visible and vibrant network with increased members' participation, thus enhancing the achievements of outcomes 2 and 3.				
Network functioning	Governance, coordination, internal and external communication, fundraising				

## IV. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2021-2024

### 1. Visibility, position

During the new Strategic phase 2021-2024, RECI intends to increase its visibility, especially among organisations that might be eligible as members.

- ➔ In the frame of a new communications concept (see section 6): identify RECI's public communication niche, positioning itself as a player complementing and/or reinforcing members' communication activities.
- ➔ In the frame of the network development activities: reach out to potential new members

*By 2024 RECI has further strengthened its position in Switzerland as a key player on the right to education for all and is known for raising awareness on the topic of right to education and international cooperation and on the work of its members.*

### 2. Activities and products

RECI **promotes the cooperation and exchange of expertise and experience** among its members and other actors interested in education and international cooperation. The cooperation and exchange are aimed at **mutual learning, capacity building**, joint development of **evidence, recommendations and tools**, and for discussing and developing **advocacy** positions and statements.

RECI uses different **approaches** to enable this exchange:

- Events (face to face or remote) for members and a broader interested public (conferences, workshops, seminars, training courses, webinars)
- Facilitating for members to cooperate in working groups or task forces (see section 4)

Members expressed the needs to work more in-depth on certain topics, to have a stronger capacity-building edge and to promote more involvement of partners on the ground. Also, members see a need for RECI to provide more concrete advice and support in their specific projects.

- ➔ Promoting more, but smaller-scale events, such as regional workshops and online discussions, webinars, online space for chat and meetings.
- ➔ Providing more concrete capacity building activities
- ➔ Establish a pool of RECI experts, who can be accessed by members for specific advice and support, develop terms and conditions.

RECI bundles joint expertise, results of the cooperation and exchange among members and partners, as well as jointly developed advocacy statements and makes the information – **publications, studies, practical tools, statements** – accessible to its members and a broader public. All of these products and especially the practical tools have shown to be highly appreciated by members and their partners on the ground.

- ➔ Promote the development and production of concrete products, that can be shared and discussed widely outside of RECI, such as publications, tools, video-recordings, etc. for all thematic work. Especially more concrete tools.
- ➔ Promote systematic dissemination of products within member organisations and by members to their partners and collect available information on outreach and results, as well as feedback relevance and quality for the work of members and their partners on the ground.

RECI follows **developments and debates at national and international levels** with regard to the right to education for all, engages in them and regularly shares relevant information to members and a broader public.

- ➔ To edit and transfer relevant information in order for RECI members to include them into their own work.
- ➔ Identify objectives, channels and levels of engagement for national and international advocacy.
- ➔ Clarify involvement/responsibilities of members in advocacy (working group? Task force?)

In the past strategic phase, RECI focused on the following main themes:

- Education in Emergencies
- Teacher Training for Quality Education
- Education and Migration
- Continuum “basic education – vocational training - work and employment”

The thematic focus, as well as the duration, depth, formats and intended results of work on each theme are based on members’ needs and capacities. For the Strategy 2021-2024, RECI will continue to orient its thematic focus on the needs and interests of members. Rather than identifying fixed topics on the strategic level, RECI therefore focuses on ensuring that the network functions smoothly to be able to respond to these needs.

- ➔ Clarification of criteria, ToR and responsibilities for working groups and task forces (see section 4)
- ➔ Needs and capacities assessment among members, to identify main themes and potentials for thematic focus.

*RECI’s thematic work is oriented towards the members’ needs and capacities, including exchange of concrete experiences on the ground, and produces high-quality practical products and tools, that are used by members and other partners on the ground.*

*RECI’s advocacy at national and international levels is proportionate and effective through clearly identified objectives, channels and levels of engagement.*

### 3. Governance

The General Assembly is the highest organ of RECI. It elects the board and entrusts it with the strategic leadership of the organisation. The operational work, coordination, administration, communication and fundraising is delegated to the executive director in a part-time mandate, that can be complemented by additional human resources, when workload requests and finances allow.

RECI has had a stable composition of committed board members throughout the past years. However, the workload of board members has been very high. One reason for that was, that both the board and the executive director had been closely involved in operational work. With the increase and systematisation of member involvement in RECI’s activities, RECI intends to establish a clearer distinction between operational and strategic work.

On the strategic governance level, this requires a few adjustments and clarifications in the statutes, ToR and functioning of the board. In order to shift more operational work to members and activate members more in the work of RECI, efforts will be undertaken to strengthen the broader network functioning (see section 4)

- ➔ Review of statutes and development of ToR for the board focusing on governance function.

*RECI’s governance structure and well-defined roles and responsibilities of its organs are efficient and effective to guide the implementation of the strategy.*

### 4. Network development

RECI has 26 institutional and 6 individual members, who have been increasingly engaged in initiating and participating in RECI activities in the past years. The **open exchange, mutual learning**, and the opportunity to establish **new links for cooperation** are highly appreciated by members. Many members signal their interest and readiness to engage more. Working groups have been identified as a platform that facilitates commitment of members to contribute.

Currently, much of the work is done by few people and members. In order to increase the participation of more members, the benefits need to be sharpened. The returns of participation are networking, visibility,

capacity building, access to relevant knowledge and tools. Members, who assume long-term responsibilities by convening a working group will also receive partial monetary compensation. As another return of their engagement members would like to see more capitalisation of their contributions through systematic dissemination and follow-up.

A key question of the organisation relates to how to organise standing and ad-hoc cooperation effectively. Working groups have been important platforms for advancing thematic work in the past years. While this format has proved to be a success, the challenge remained, that it was a rather small number of people who were engaged actively, including board members. Since the time these members were able to commit was dependent on their fluctuating workload within their organisation, and where thus not reliable for RECI to count on.

The aim during the new strategic phase is to build on the positive experience in the past years, to capitalise on the ideas, suggestions and capacities of the members more coherently, and to **increase members' commitments and contributions**.

In order to achieve this, the functioning, processes and responsibilities of different forms of cooperation, such as working groups and task forces, will be more clearly defined.

Working groups are formed to work on a theme for a longer period of time and under the leadership of one or two member organisations. Working groups are initiated by members and proposed by the board for approval by the GA. Working groups establish an annual work plan, which is an integral part of the RECI overall annual work plan. Members of the group commit to be part of the group on an annual basis. The conveners of the working groups are partly compensated for their leadership role.

For short projects, such as the organisation of events or the development of a concept or the like, task forces can be created. Any member of RECI, working groups or the secretariat and board can create task forces and call for participation to the whole network. Members who sign on to be part of a task force commit themselves to contribute actively until the end of the project.

- ➔ Review membership criteria and consider active outreach for new members.
- ➔ Develop mechanisms for systematic dissemination and follow-up of RECI learning and products on the ground, and for more involvement of partners working on the ground to the discussions.
- ➔ Assessment of needs and capacities to identify priority topics and potential conveners of working groups.
- ➔ Terms of Reference for working groups and working group conveners: processes, responsibilities, budget?
- ➔ Develop approach for effective and participatory advocacy work of the network

*Thanks to a communication and outreach strategy, RECI has integrated more and relevant members.*

*RECI members are engaging more effectively, regularly and permanently to contribute to the work of the network.*

## 5. Funding

RECI has made significant progress in its funding situation through the agreement with SDC, where in-kind contributions of members count towards matching the 50% core funding. Also, RECI has increased its membership fees in 2019, which has augmented the unrestricted funding by 50%. In addition to that, RECI has been successful in securing financial support in relation to concrete thematic events.

For the new strategic period RECI works in two ways to strengthen its funding situation: Reorganise to be able to do more with the finances available (see section 4) and increase income through reinforcement of fundraising and extended membership.

- ➔ Resource development/ fundraising plan
- ➔ Outreach for potential new members



*RECI's structure and communication ensures sustainable funding and functioning of the network, aligned with the activities derived from the strategy 2021 – 2024.*

## 6. Communications

For RECI, being a network of organisations and individuals, internal communication is an important function to activate and make the organisation work effectively. In addition to that, strategic and public communication is used to advance advocacy and awareness raising of the causes that RECI stands for.

RECI has a website and a public newsletter that is issued 4-5 times per year. This public communication reached members and strategic partners and did not go beyond a rather specialised audience. It mainly focused on information about RECI activities and publications. Within the network, different mailing lists are used for different kinds of communications.

Building on this practice several developments are foreseen during the new strategic phase:

- ➔ Expanding the content and purpose of public communications beyond RECI activities, to include broader information and advocacy messages on the right to quality education for all.
- ➔ Audience: same as above, enlarge the targeted audience to include a broader circle, by establishing presence on social media. A LinkedIn profile has already been set up in 2020.
- ➔ Channels: Due to an upcoming system change, the website will have to be migrated. On this occasion a new website will be conceptualised.
- ➔ Internal communication: Clarify purpose, periodicity, recipients. Consider more other forms of internal communication in relation to the new website, more online exchange through webinars, internal member news "RECIproque"
- ➔ Clarify, which language(s) to use for which channels, audiences

*RECI is implementing a holistic communications strategy, including around the re-conceptualisation of the website and the technological opportunities arising from this.*

## 7. Strategic partnerships

RECI's main strategic partners are other Swiss-based actors working to advancing quality education: SDC's education network, the platform 2030, the Swiss UNESCO Commission, INEE and FoBBIZ. In addition to that, RECI is a member of the Global Campaign for Education.

- ➔ Clarify the purposes, objectives and focus of different strategic partnerships.
- ➔ Consider, how to nurture these partnerships effectively (secretariat, working groups, task forces, Advisory Group, other)

*RECI enters into selected strategic partnerships with defined resources and a clear purpose.*

## V. Strategic Priorities 2021-2024 and Overview of Objectives

### STRATEGIC AREA 1: RECI IDENTITY AND FUNCTIONING AS A NETWORK

*Objective 1: RECI's governance structure and well-defined roles and responsibilities of its organs are efficient and effective to guide the implementation of the strategy.*

*Objective 2: Thanks to an outreach strategy, RECI has integrated more and relevant members, willing to actively contribute to the network.*

*Objective 3: RECI is implementing a holistic communications strategy, including around the re-conceptualisation of the new website and the new technological opportunities arising from this.*

*Objective 4: RECI's structure and communication ensures sustainable funding and functioning of the network, aligned with the activities derived from the strategy 2021 – 2024.*

### STRATEGIC AREA 2: CAPACITIES OF MEMBERS AND STRONGER LINK TO THE GROUND

*Objective 5: RECI's thematic work is oriented towards the members' needs and capacities, including exchange of concrete experiences on the ground, and produces high-quality practical products and tools, that are used by members and other partners on the ground.*

*Objective 6: RECI members are engaging more effectively, regularly and permanently to contribute to the work of the network.*

### STRATEGIC AREA 3: PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

*Objective 7: RECI's advocacy at national and international levels is proportionate and effective through clearly identified objectives, channels and levels of engagement.*

*Objective 8: RECI enters into selected strategic partnerships with defined resources and a clear purpose.*

## VII. STRATEGIC CONTROLLING

By developing and publishing RECI's next strategy, RECI has embarked on a journey that will require time and patience to fully unfold. Its implementation will also depend on how the COVID19 situation develops.

This strategy is a living document that will influence RECI's operations and direction of impact over time. The strategy together with its 4-year strategy implementation plan (including indicators) serves as RECI's compass that is used to define the annual working plans. The qualitative indicators are monitored through annual member surveys.

The annual working plans will be developed by the board and the working groups, based on the 4-year implementation plan, which is updated annually. The working groups together with the secretariat are responsible for the implementation of the working plans. They will report to the board bi-annually. The board ensures the strategic controlling and the alignment between the working plans and the strategy.

The strategy implementation will be reviewed at least once a year by RECI's board. The results are presented annually to and approved by the General Assembly.

RECI will evaluate the strategy and its implementation after two years and towards the end of the strategic period as a basis to define the future direction of the network. The method for the evaluation (e.g. a real time evaluation complemented by interviews) will be decided on in the course of the strategy implementation.

### **Annexes:**

- 4-Year Implementation Plan
- 4-Year Financial plan
- Organogram
- List of members