

Equality and Equity: CESA 16-25

This research brief is part of the series compiled by the GCE Secretariat to disseminate and present findings and summarized information from the published report entitled, “*In Search for A Place in Implementing the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)*”. The research was commissioned by GCE to understand how the African Union (AU) and its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) engage with the theme of education, and to identify what spaces and opportunities exist for civil society education groups in Africa to interact with those bodies in the service of more equitable and democratic public education systems on the continent. This brief summarizes the research findings and provides more information relating to the coverage and inclusion of equality and equity indicators in the CESA framework, including recent developments in addressing the gaps identified by the lack of equity and inclusion.

Equality and Equity Integration

The focus on equality and equity in CESA 16-25 is believed to some extent to mirror the Agenda 2030's. The joint UNESCO-AU publication, [Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy](#) points out that both frameworks drive the agenda of the 'holistic, inclusive and equitable education with good conditions for lifelong learning. However, the CESA framework has a strong emphasis on gender equality, as seen from the elaboration of gender equality a specific strategic objective, and in the detailed gender strategy and indicators for the CESA framework to operationalize CESA's objective on gender equality.

The various forms of inequalities and discrimination in education on the African continent receive minimal mentions in CESA. References to sources of disparity occur in CESA's overview of the different education sub-sectors, where 'regional location, minority groups, pastoral communities, and the poor' are made in the overview of primary education; 'social class, geographic location, minority groups, and disability' in the section on tertiary education; and 'marginalized and vulnerable groups' when CESA covers informal and non-formal education.

Key Findings

1. The CESA framework has a strong emphasis on gender equality, as seen, both in terms of according to gender equality a specific strategic objective, and in the detailed gender strategy and indicators for the CESA framework produced by FAWE and CIEFFA to guide all AU member states on mainstreaming and integrating Gender perspectives as they implement CESA 16-25.
2. Despite all the positive aspects to the Gender Equality Strategy of CESA, and the added value of the gendered indicators to supplement the CESA indicators, there have been no annual reports to monitor the implementation of the Gender Strategy or to show how progress is made by different countries using the gender indicators.
3. Other forms of inequality and discrimination in education on the African continent receive minimal mentions in CESA framework.
4. The Nairobi Declaration address inequalities in education in Africa more explicitly and can also be seen as a significant refinement of the CESA 16-25 framework and a supplement to it through its commitments to “quality lifelong learning for all at all levels”.
5. The first joint CESA-SDG4 continental report [Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy](#) was published in February 2023 as a joint UNESCO-AU effort which built on the earlier endeavors to align the two frameworks, to develop joint indicators that fill the gaps in each framework while remaining responsive to African priorities as expressed in the CESA agenda.

GENDER EQUALITY IN CESA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The CESA [Gender Equality Strategy](#) was developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA), in collaboration with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), with the focus on both gender-sensitive teaching programmes and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education among other issues.

The strategy was intended to provide "detailed guidance to all AU Member States on mainstreaming and integrating Gender perspectives as they implement CESA 16-25". It recommended entry points and concrete measures for integrating gender into all the 12 CESA strategic objectives. It also recommended "leadership, financing, and management arrangements to ensure accountability, integrity, and impact".

INTEGRATING GENDER INTO CESA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Entry Points & Concrete Measures AU Member States

—S01 Revitalise the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels.

- Prioritise the integration of gender into the teaching profession by integrating gender responsive pedagogy modules into teacher training, introduce Affirmative Action Policy, put in place gender sensitive national policy on teachers working form and living conditions, integrate gender dimensions into national frameworks, create a regional compendium of Assessment of Learning Frameworks that integrate gender and develop a system for identifying and rewarding dedicated and innovative teachers.

—S02 Build, rehabilitate, preserve and develop policies that ensure permanent, healthy, and conducive learning environment.

- Include gender responsive infrastructure in learning and training institutions by providing national infrastructure development policy which considers gender needs of females and males, integrating gender in administrative and legislative instruments, designing a school health, hygiene, sanitation and nutrition policy frameworks that considers gender differentials and designing equity programmes to address female specific and male specific access constraints.

—S03 Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems.

- Formulate Affirmative Action policies in building ICT capacities of female and male learners and teachers.

—S04 Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as and improved completion rates at all levels and groups.

- Establish Gender Sensitive Assessment of Learning Frameworks and gender mainstream quality assurance mechanisms.

—S05 Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity.

- Develop and scale up mechanisms and successful evidence based innovations addressing girls' access and participation.

—S06 Launch comprehensive and effective literacy programmes across the continent to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy.

- Campaign with a focus on increasing literacy rates of girls and women and attaining gender parity.

—S07 Strengthen the science and math curricula in youth training and disseminate scientific.

- Mainstream gender in Curriculum Frameworks for science, develop gender sensitive national programmes and gender responsive curricula.

—S08 Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems.

- Develop gender sensitive Labour Market Information Systems, TVET and polytechnics strategy including quota systems to increase a number of women nontraditional skills areas and put in place incentives scheme.

—S09 Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness.

- Develop gender mainstreamed National Investment Plans for Research and Innovation, national strategies for increasing the number of women in Centres of Excellence, incorporate gender quotas in access to competitive grants and awards; and strengthen gender sensitivity and quality of post graduate education.

—S010 Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups.

- Incorporate gender concerns in policies and legal instruments for peace education; formulate gender responsive training curriculum, teaching and learning materials including training various education stakeholders as peace actors and mediators, document ongoing innovative peace building experiences that take into account gender concerns; and gender mainstream the initiatives and activities of the Inter-Country Quality Node on peace education.

—S011 Improve management of education system as well build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and use.

- Establish gender responsive regional and continental Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and education observatories, produce and disseminate regular publications that feature girls and boys, youth, women and men and written by females and males, incorporate at least 30% of women in education think tanks; and provide gender budget to support education research, dissemination and communication.

—S012 Set up a coalition of stakeholders to facilitate and support activities resulting from the implementation of CESA 16-25.

- Produce directories of education stakeholders including gender oriented organisations, develop analysis tools to identify and develop strategic initiatives, identify and mobilise champions to leverage priority areas of the strategy and publicise achievement.

EQUITY INDICATORS IN CESA STRATEGY

The Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action 2018

The 2018 Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action were significant developments for injecting an emphasis on equity into the CESA goals and indicators which are largely absent in the CESA strategy. Other than gender equality, the various forms of inequality and discrimination in education on the African continent receive minimal mentions in CESA. The only reference to the sources of disparity is made in CESA's overview of the different education sub-sectors, where 'regional location, minority groups, pastoral communities, and the poor' are made in the overview of primary education; 'social class, geographic location, minority groups, and disability' in the section on tertiary education; and 'marginalized and vulnerable groups' when CESA covers informal and non-formal education.

Not only does the Nairobi Declaration address inequalities in education in Africa more explicitly, but it can also be seen as a significant refinement of the CESA 16-25 framework and a supplement to it. The commitments to "quality lifelong learning for all at all levels"; to integrated early childhood development, care, and education, with particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable children; to "reaching the unreached", including those with disabilities, through adequately resourced learning policies and programs; to effectively address the problem of out-of-school children and all forms of exclusion; to promoting mother-tongue education; and to the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national education systems – all those commitments were not explicit in CESA and did not have indicators to monitor them in the list of CESA indicators.

In February 2023, the first joint CESA-SDG4 continental report, [Placing Equity at the Heart of Policy](#) was published to provide deeper reflections on equity as the bedrock of achieving agenda 2063 aspirations and SDG4 through education as a joint UNESCO and AU effort.

The report presents the baseline situation analysis of both CESA strategic objectives and SDG4 targets in a consolidated framework organized around six equity topics: 1) early childhood education (ECE), 2) primary and secondary education, 3) skills for work (with a focus on technical and vocational education and training [TVET] and tertiary education), 4) teachers, 5) education facilities, and 6) means of implementation.

To view this brief online, visit <https://campaignforeducation.org/en/resources/gce-reports>. GCE conducts policy-oriented research to generate evidence that inform credible and informed influence in national, regional, and international education policy processes aimed at ensuring that governments and the global community fulfil their commitments to deliver the right to education and achieve the SDG Goal 4 of the Education 2030 agenda.

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EQUITY COMMITMENTS

1 LIFE LONG LEARNING

To promoting quality **lifelong learning** for all at all levels, using diverse and relevant modes of learning with flexible pathways between formal, non-formal and informal education and training models, including strengthened systems of recognition and equivalence, to cater for all **children, youth and adults** in and **out of school**.

2 EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE

Integrated approaches to **early childhood development, care** and education policies, programming and financing with an emphasis on holistic development including literacy and numeracy with particular attention to **marginalized and vulnerable children**, with the commitment to progressively ensure at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education and with the active participation of families, communities and local governments.

3 REACHING THE UNREACHED

Implementing and adequately resourcing diversified and appropriate learning policies and programmes, inclusive and gender-responsive curriculum, promoting **multilingual education, sign languages and Braille**, to **reach the unreached**.

4 OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

Ensuring that education sector planning effectively addresses out-of-school children, young people and adults who never enrolled in formal schooling or dropped out early, as well as all forms of exclusion, including among others disabilities and albinism, and that data and indicator systems are adequately disaggregated and owned at continental, regional, national and local levels.

5 INCLUSION OF REFUGEES AND IDPS

Making our educational systems more responsive, flexible and resilient to include refugees and internally displaced people, and increasing investment for Education in Emergencies and Crises.

6 PROMOTING MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION

Promoting teaching and learning in the mother tongue, especially in early years of education; and developing policies to safeguard and raise the status, esteem and value of indigenous African languages.