



2 nd. HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE



**Enhancing policies and practices to promote
STEM-focused TVET for women and girls**

**24th January 2018,
ADDIS-ABABA | ETHIOPIA**

CONCEPT NOTE



1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The African Union theme of 2017 focused on “*Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth*”. For Africa to realize a demographic dividend, it must make strategic investments and ensure the fight against corruption, which is the AU theme of 2018, “*Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to Africa’s transformation*”. Education, especially that of girls and women is key to achieving these goal.

The number of children in Africa is projected to reach 750 million by 2030, a rise of 170 million from 2017. Without quality and relevant education, the youth bulge cannot be a catalyst for economic growth and lasting peace, and they can become a source for economic instability and conflict. Moreover, educational systems are also faced with the challenge of science and technology education that has declined in quality at a time when human, social and economic development is hinged on the mastery of science, technology and engineering.

A major reason for the shortage of both ICT and STEM professionals is insufficient supply of graduates from upper-secondary and higher education to meet increasing demand. Too few young people are enrolling to study STEM subjects at higher education. Furthermore, entry requirements and dropout rates are high and the participation of girls and young women is low.

Emphasis on the importance of STEM education has also caused many to revisit the role of TVET in preparing future technicians, technologists, and engineers. While normally seen as a separate path of study for students who are not college bound, the perception of the role of TVET in preparing college-bound students is changing. In addition, TVET has always used applied sciences and mathematics in its framework for instruction, and many of the instructional paradigms that are being championed as part of STEM education have been used exemplarily in TVET for many decades.

AU/CIEFFA focuses on girls and young women in both STEM and TVET, with special focus on “traditionally men dominated sectors”, so as to remove all social and cultural barriers to women’s full participation in all areas of human endeavours. The main goal is to seek best strategies to reach girls’ and women’s full potential, and empowerment. Africa must get rid of all type of stereotypes and provide an enabling environment for women and young people to flourish and reach their full potential. This includes looking at teaching and learning environments and resources, teaching contents, change of paradigm but also a strong political support as well as adequate financial resources. It is thus paramount to engage African youth with their governments to capitalize on the youth dividend.

2. JUSTIFICATION

There is a lot of reflection on the necessity to more attract girls and women to education systems in Africa with more relevant and meaningful content so as to ensure retention and quality achievement. The 2018 High Level Dialogue will thus engage policy dialogue and

hopefully reach commitment for STEM or Higher level TVET subjects related to labour markets.

Commitment is needed so as to optimise support towards STEM/TVET teaching and learning materials and environments and to enhance girls and women's retention rates as well as quality learning and achievement in the chosen domains.

From commitment to Action, it is imperative for African States to invest in human capital and financial resources so as to build self-confidence of girls and young women and boost their interest in STEM & TVET. The rhetoric of investing for girls' education should be reinforced with strong legal and institutional frameworks to eliminate gender stereotypes in teaching and learning environments.

It is hoped that all the African leaders recognise the importance of having more girls and women in STEM and high level TVET and professional domains in support to social and economic development in Africa and commit to increase their investment in Girls in STEM.

3. OBJECTIVES

- a. Sharing best practices and challenges on returns on investment in girls and women's education, especially in STEM focused TVET areas
- b. To improve understanding of the necessity to support girls and women accessing STEM and STEM focused TVET;
- c. To generate and engage in policy dialogue among stakeholders on STEM and STEM focused TVET as one of the entry points for empowerment and development of girls and young women; and
- d. Ensure gender inclusiveness in STEM and TVET areas

4. Expected Outputs

- a. Pledge to enhance political support in investing in girls and women's education with a special focus on girls' self-confidence in STEM and TVET
- b. Commitment to gender-reviews of education sector plans, and gender-responsive budgeting, including STEM and TVET education.
- c. Continental review outlining progress made by countries in retention of girls and young women in STEM and TVET as well their future access to labor markets

5. Organisation of the Event

This event is under the auspices of H.E, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson AUC; it is co-hosted by the African Union- International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) and the Royal Norwegian Embassy of Addis Ababa as well as AU partners: UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children.

6. Themes of the High Level Dialogue

- a. Strengthening policies to implement STEM and TVET in view of an inclusive and quality education
- b. Investing in human capital and financial resources to build self-confidence of girls and young women and boost their interest in STEM & TVET
- c. Using legal and institutional frameworks to eliminate gender stereotypes in teaching and learning environments'

d. Participants

This High level Dialogue will be addressed by the AU Chairperson or his Representative, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the Minister of Education, Federal Republic of Ethiopia. Ministers of Education, Gender and Finance from African Union Member States, representatives of national governments, civil society groups, private sector/foundations and representatives of international organizations such as UNESCO, who will be invited to take part in this High Level Dialogue.

e. Dates and venue of Event

The High Level Dialogue will take place on the 24th January 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.