



## Draft Concept Note

### **AU CIEFFA 9<sup>th</sup> High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on Gender Equality in Education under the theme: “Investing in girls education systems as a form of reparation, justice and sustainable development for African communities”**

#### **I. Introduction**

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, 251 million children and youth were out of school globally by 2015 - 71 million were of primary school age, 57 million were of lower secondary school age, and 120 million were of upper secondary school age. Detailed statistics from across the continent highlight that vulnerable groups, in particular girls and young women, face significant obstacles to education.

In assessing some of the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts that hinders girls access and completion rates in the schooling systems, it is important to also acknowledge the role of historic injustices. These injustices, together with present inequalities have dire consequences including forced internal and external displacement, conflict and war, unsafe learning environments, and other inequalities which disproportionately affect girls access to education, and the overall education system. These challenges collectively lead to girls' lower enrollment, retention, and completion rates, especially at secondary and tertiary education levels, which limits their potential and contribution to the sustainable development and growth of the continent.

Linking girls' access to education with reparations and justice for Africans is a powerful way to address the enduring effects of historical injustices and to promote equitable development in African societies. In a broader sense, reparations for the African continent can be viewed as efforts to correct the long-lasting inequalities. Education, as a fundamental human right, is central to the healing process because it equips individuals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to participate fully in society and the economy. While reparations can take many forms, one of the most impactful ways to "repair" the harm done to African nations is by investing in their future—specifically through education. For African girls, reparations could mean: - Financial investment in education systems, deliberate policy reform, investment in safe schools, infrastructure development, generation of data and evidence, promotion of gender responsive education systems amongst other strategies.

To date, various key stakeholders have made commendable efforts in advancing gender equality in education. The African Union Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, through its Specialized and Technical Office, AU CIEFFA (African Union International Center for Girls and Women's Education in Africa), held





its first inaugural Pan-African Conference on Girls or Women's Education in Africa (AU PACONGEd1) from July 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The main objective was to gauge the status of girls' and women's education status in Africa in line with the AU theme for 2024 on Education. The Call to Action and Recommendations emanated from this conference as a key output.

The AU PACONGEd1 Call to Action highlights the need to prioritize legal frameworks and policy reforms to guarantee ongoing education for all children, especially for girls and adolescents in and out of school, which falls in direct alignment with key objectives of Phase II of the continental Campaign #AfricaEducatesHer advocacy. Ten (10) AU member States have launched the Campaign and are implementing it at the national level, while others will join in 2025.

Further underscoring the importance of evidence-based and accountability mechanisms, the Call to Action recommends promoting the generation of gender-responsive indicators and disaggregated data in education management information systems and research on multiple vulnerabilities that impact girls and women's education to inform data-driven advocacy, gender-responsive legislation, and policies. In this view, AU CIEFFA jointly, with the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), is set to publish and launch the first co-produced continental report on the status of girls' and women's education in Africa. Implementing the afore strategies effectively will not only be essential to support wide-advocacy, gender-responsive legislation, and policies but also ownership and liability by Education governmental and non-governmental actors to foster an inclusive and equitable education aspired by the visionary AU Agenda 2063 aspirations and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 & 5.

## II. Rationale

Despite significant progress in improving access to education, structural inequalities, socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, humanitarian crises, and pandemics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to exacerbate gender-based disparities in the education sector. Gender equality in education is a critical issue that requires specific attention from African Union Member States and Education stakeholders. Addressing the root causes of educational disparities and fostering collective action, the High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on Gender Equality in Education in Africa serves as a critical platform to reaffirm commitments to gender equality in education, showcase best practices, peer learning and collaboration, and advocate for sustained investments in gender-responsive educational systems.

This HLD reflects the importance of gathering decisions makers from AU Member States and other stakeholders to discuss the state of girls' education, strategies to use education as a key development and justice tool, strengthening accountability



mechanisms on girls and education in Africa. It is set to be an advocacy platform and opportunity to exchange and learn from countries' commitment to gender equality in education and gauge how key partnerships and resources can be fostered between governments, in particular, Ministries of Education and Gender, in close collaboration with civil society organizations, international development agencies, and other stakeholders to create opportunities to accelerate gender equality to, within and through education.

The 9<sup>th</sup> HLD aims to accelerate Africa's journey toward a future where every child, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to society and contribute to accelerate progress toward achieving gender equality in education across Africa.

### III. Objectives of the 9<sup>th</sup> High-Level Dialogue

The 9<sup>th</sup> HLD aims to:

- Share overall status of girls' education in the continent and make linkages with the repatriation and justice mandate.
- Share best practices of successful strategies, policies, and programs that have established accountability mechanisms for promoting and protecting girls' education.
- Document AU Member States' commitments to gender equality in education and how partners can support efforts to accelerate gender equality in and through education in Africa in line with the adopted Call for Action and Recommendations of the AU PACONGEd1.
- Raise awareness about the importance of promoting gender-responsive policies and practices and their impact on justice, equity, and sustainable development.
- Offer member states and partners an opportunity to commit to supporting, investing in, and funding girls' education in Africa in line with the #AfricaEducatesHer.

### VI. Expected results from the 9<sup>th</sup> HLD

We are expected to achieve the following:

- Understanding of the overall status of girls Education in Africa, and how investing in girls' education is a form of justice and sustainable development.
- Best practices and successful strategies, policies, and programs on accountability mechanisms have been shared and discussed.
- African Union Member States' commitments to gender equality in education in Africa are documented, developed, and agreed upon.



- Awareness advocacy and strategies promoting gender-responsive policies and practices and their impact on justice, equity, and sustainable development are discussed.
- Commitments are made to invest and raise funds to support girls' education in Africa in line with the implementation of the #AfricaEducatesHer.

## **V. Organization and format of the 9<sup>th</sup> HLD**

The African Union Department of ESTI convenes the 9th High-Level Dialogue through the AU CIEFFA and in collaboration with the Republic of Chad, and the Republic of Senegal. The envisioned participants are Ministers of Education and Gender from AU member states, Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), High Officials, Education and Gender Equality experts; Development Partners, Religious and Traditional leaders, Philanthropes, Civil Society Organizations (CSO); Youth and Advocates of Girls and Women's Education.

The two-day meeting format will include keynote presentations, panel discussions, group work on the first day, and a breakfast meeting to mobilize commitments and funds supporting girls' education in Africa.

The meeting will have an interpretation in English and French.

## **VII. Date and venue of the 9<sup>th</sup> HLD**

The 9<sup>th</sup> HLD will take place from 11 to 12 February 2025 at the AUC, on the margins of the 38<sup>th</sup> Ordinary session of the Assembly of AU Heads of States and Governments Summit.

