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**REPORT OF ACTIVITIES
AU CIEFFA
2017**



AFRICAN UNION
International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa
UNION AFRICAINE
Centre International pour l'Education des Filles et des Femmes en Afrique



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Introduction

The African Union - International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) is a specialized institution of the African Union since 2004, dealing with women and girls' education following Decision Assembly/AU/DEC.44 (III). The centre is located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

AU/CIEFFA has been established under the Department of Human Resources Science and Technology at the African Union Commission to coordinate the promotion of girls and women's education in Africa, with a view of achieving their economic, social and cultural empowerment.

The centre works closely with AU member States and government, civil society and international partners to implement its programme and activities and maintains specific working relationship with UNESCO to ensure a strong partnership in the implementation of its programs.

This report outlines the activities undertaken by AU/CIEFFA in 2017; it comprises two main parts:

1. Operationalization of AU/CIEFFA
2. Activities addressing AU/CIEFFA's mandate

1. OPERATIONALIZATION OF AU/CIEFFA

The following three main activities are underway in 2017 activities areas, but these have been on-going at the AU / CIEFFA since 1st September 2016 (Date of assumption of the AUCIEFFA international staff). This report will cover the period from January 2017 until now and will cover the following aspects:

1.1 Moving of AU/CIEFFA offices

- ✓ Negotiations have been on-going with the Government of Burkina Faso since February 2016 to move to another office for AU/CIEFFA. The old office was visited by AU Security and Maintenance in 2016 and was deemed unsuitable as there are water leakages and hanging wires.
- ✓ New office equipment has been purchased by AU/CIEFFA to replace those already existing but obsolete. In addition a service provider has been hired through AUC procurement procedures to install cabling for Internet and telephone network in the new Office.
- ✓ This move has been very challenging due to many administrative procedures such as procurement of IT equipment, office equipment. There is no procurement officer and it is very difficult for the finance assistant to handle all these issues.
- ✓ AU/CIEFFA has formally acknowledged the efforts and support of the Government of Burkina Faso

1.2 Status of local staff

- ✓ AU/CIEFFA has twelve local staff members, civil servants, comprising of professionals and General Staff seconded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of

Burkina Faso (*Ministère de l'enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de l'Innovation –MERSI*) to AU/ CIEFFA.

- ✓ The AU Department of Human Resources and Development (AHRD) sent a secondment letter to each local staff informing them of their status. This situation has created a crisis among the national staff members who had hoped to be integrated directly in the AUC structure and become fully fledged AU Staff members, with all the AU benefits and privileges.
- ✓ Several meetings have been held where the Coordinator explained the recruitment procedures of the AUC Staff, which was based on a structure system as well as quota per country.
- ✓ H.E. Dr Martial De-Paul IKOUNGA, Commissioner, HRST sent a letter in February 2017 to the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of Burkina Faso requesting to hand over some of the local staff whose profile did not match the technical aspect of the current mandate of AU/CIEFFA.
- ✓ Following the Minister's reply to this letter, another reply from the Commissioner is expected in order to finally resolve the issue of seconded staff from MERSI.

1.3 Recruitment of International staff and consultants

- ✓ The recruitment of a finance and administrative Officer, a bilingual secretary and a driver for AU/CIEFFA is long overdue. The process of recruitment started in April 2015 and still has not been finalized by the Division of Human Resources of the AUC. Despite the fact that interviews for these three positions have been finalized since 2016, these have been re-advertised because APROB rejected the chosen candidates for lack of enough women being interviewed.
- ✓ A new shortlisting process was completed in May 2017 and the interview will be conducted in Addis and Ouagadougou to fill the above-mentioned positions.
- ✓ The recommendation is that this process be finalized urgently to enable AU/CIEFFA to fulfill its work.

2. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES OF AU/CIEFFA

Girls' and women's education remain the most powerful weapon to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa, in order to promote and sustain the desired changes in the community and society. African Union (AU) Member States have placed education at the center of their development programs and have established national institutions to directly work to develop and implement actions to improve access.

However, discussing challenges related to girls' and women's retention in the educational system and their performance, engaging serious and in-depth debates in this area and meaningful participation remain difficult matters for many countries. The current issue being addressed as a momentum in 2017 is the theme of the year, known as "*Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth*". The AU/CIEFFA will support countries, organizations and various initiatives to implement the approved frameworks such as Agenda 2063, SDGs, CESA, etc. while mobilizing strategic and technical partnerships.

The implementation of the mandate of AU/CIEFFA, for now, is mainly focusing on the sharing of information and expertise to Member States, various stakeholders and strategic partners on one side, and research and consultancies on the other side. Below is activity report for the year 2017.

The following are the major meetings organized by AU/CIEFFA in 2017.

2.1 High Level Dialogue

The High Level Dialogue on "*Gender equality and Education*" was held on 26 January 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the margins of the 28th AU Summit. This one-day meeting brought together Ministers in charge of Higher education and scientific research, Ministers of Gender and very high level personalities and experts, including partners. The meeting addressed areas such as: i) Realizing the rights to Education as a key to harnessing the demographic dividend, ii) Education in Emergencies, iii) Creating the future: Economic empowerment for young women.

Among the numerous recommendations of the HLD, the following were the main outcomes for the way forward:

- i) Institutionalizing the High Level Dialogue on Gender Equality and Education annually on the margins of the January AU Summit by AU/CIEFFA and partners;
- ii) Appointment of an AU Special Rapporteur on Girls' and Women Education with a political mandate on the rights of girls to access schools and complete at least secondary schooling in spite of eventual break-ups in their schooling;
- iii) Sharing of best practices and challenges faced in retaining girls and young women in schools and universities;
- iv) Addressing gender stereotypes in the curricula and from the environment such as from parents, teachers and the community;
- v) Developing strategies to access to formal and informal education for socially vulnerable girls and young women.

2.2 Dialogue with religious and traditional leaders

Given the important role played by the religious and traditional leaders in Africa, and specifically towards advocacy on social issues, AU/CIEFFA organized in Burkina Faso on 26 May 2017 a Dialogue with the local leaders on "*Retention of girls at school*" as a first step of a long process. The goal was to foster and accelerate the involvement and accountability of the key players who are essential to the desired changes. Together with these community representatives and stakeholders, there was an in-depth examination of the problems of girls' education and retention at school, drawing on their experiences to implement approaches Innovations to eradicate barriers and address the challenges of education and empowerment of girls and women.

Specifically, the dialogue led to the clarification of global perceptions of girls' and women's access to education inside the local communities, identification of persistent obstacles as observed, efforts to propose strategies that could help to improve the retention rates of girls in school. The dialogue led to the definition of the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders.

2.3 Enhancing Institutional and Legal Environments for the Rights of Girls and Women's Education

AU/CIEFFA organized a capacity-building session at the Headquarters of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) in Midrand, South Africa on 13 May 2017 to acquaint parliamentarians on the status of existing legal instruments, policies and any other frameworks pertaining directly or indirectly to girls' and women's education in Africa. The title of the workshop was "*Enhancing our Institutional and Legal Environment for the Rights of Girls and Women's Education*". The session aimed to i) present a Compendium on global, continental, regional and national legal framework and policies, relating to education; ii) identify existing national and regional legal and political frameworks pertaining to girls and women's education adopted and ratified; iii) share best practices on existing policies taken by national Parliaments and Governments, and outline the reasons that explaining why retention, transition and achievement rates are still very low in Africa; iv) identify key strategies for reinforcing legal instruments/frameworks in Africa for girls and women's education in Africa

The achieved outputs are as follows: i) Better understanding of legal aspects on frameworks/instruments relating to girls and women's education, ii) clearer formulations of strategies, actions and mechanisms to enrich the strategy in view of improving inclusion in education conducting proper analysis of implementation and effectiveness of legal frameworks related to girl's education in Africa, iii) recommendations for additional Legal tools to enhance girls' and women education; iv) elements for drafting a document like a Protocol or a Convention pertaining on girl's and women's education in Africa.

2.4 Breakfast Meeting

AUCIEFFA held a breakfast meeting on "*Reaping demographic Dividend: Why invest in girls 'education'*" on the margins of the 29th AU Summit in Addis Ababa on 30th June 2017. The participants comprised of members States, journalists, partners and few observers. The objectives of this meeting were as follows: a) address funding matters on human capital and financing social development to achieve the demographic Dividend; b) define strategies enhancing women's participation as a prerequisite to economic growth; c) outline changes in policy and institutional settings in Member states on human capital development.

Achieved outputs are stated as follows: i) pledging for further investments in girls and women's education in Africa from AU Head of State or Representative; ii) few best practices shared on returns on investment in girls and women's education; iii) recommendation for policies development, underlying return on investment in human capital as the main actor of development.

2.5 Forum on "Strategies for retention and completion of girls and young women in the educational system"

This forum was organized in Mauritius from 10 to 12 July 2017 and is a follow-up of previous meetings held on Retention and quality achievement for girls and young women in education systems in Africa. Previous meetings had underlined the challenges faced in retaining learners at all levels and the "how" in the process of bringing solutions to the challenges. Therefore, the present meeting appears to be the next step to be tackled in order to engage real and sustainable changes. It aims to present proposed strategies on attracting more girls and young women to Science, Technology, Mathematics & Engineering (STEM) and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), inspired by the existing strategies, taking into account the gender sensitivity and equal access, retention and completion that lead to sustainable

livelihoods, innovations, creativity and job creation. Addressing girls and young women in STEM, TVET, men-dominated sectors, and similar domains of study and work appear to be new orientations and next steps to target quality learning within gender sensitive environments while tackling the improvement of legal and institutional environments for safe learning.

Beyond sharing experience through presentations, discussion, exchanges, and various innovations led by women, testimonies were delivered by female role models, participants took note of a **Call for Action**¹, gathering the main recommendations made to fight against the main challenges identified during the three-day debates on the thematic of the forum.

3. RESEARCH STUDIES

3.1. Analysis of gender-sensitive teaching and learning environments in the Pan African University

GIZ undertook a study on the analysis of gender in the Pan African University in 2015. One of the recommendations underscored that *“a certain review of the curricula with a gender lens could contribute to relevance and meeting state of the art standards”*. AU/CIEFFA decided that as part of its mandate, it needed to outline the gender sensitiveness of teaching and learning environments (GSLEs) within the Institutes of the Pan-African University (PAU).

Four components of Gender-sensitive teaching and learning environment were considered in this study: (i) Institutional readiness at the level of leadership and management; (ii) extent of gender mainstreaming in the curricula/programs and faculty training; (iii) students’ perceptions of gender issues and their effects on quality of teaching and learning environments; (iv) observations of students’ learning and living conditions and sociocultural environments.

The study revealed that the Pan African Universities (PAU) are confronted with different challenges in meeting their goals to deliver quality education, as well as taking into account gender sensitivity in their teaching and learning environments. They face the following challenges: persistent gender imbalance especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields which limits women’s participation to advanced postgraduate training and research; poor infrastructure particularly physical facilities such as libraries, laboratories, lecture halls as well as accommodation; lack of appreciation of gender issues in the learning institutions.

3.2. Report of gender stereotyping in Technical vocational Education and Training: assessing the facts, challenging the myths

This paper outlines some of the factors, myths, and educational practices that have hindered access, retention, and success of girls in male-dominated TVET programmes. It is suggested that STEMitization of the curriculum from the lower levels of the education system will empower and expose young girls to a wide array of vocational careers that they can pursue outside the traditionally female-dominated occupations. Targeted research on the role of

¹ *The detailed reports and the Mauritius Call for Action are all available for consultation*

parents, peers, role models, culture and tradition on the choice of TVET programmes by girls will provide evidence-based information and data to minimise gender stereotyping in TVET.

Based on UNESCO's definition, *"TVET is a comprehensive term -referring to those aspects of the educational process, such as the study of technologies and related sciences as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations"* in various sectors of economic and social life and could be accessible to males and females. The report also underlined facts as well as myths surrounding gender-based discrimination in TVET. Despite all the advocacy for greater participation and representation of girls in all sectors of education and training, traditional patterns of occupational segregation still persist. Gender stereotyping in TVET is a complex issue. Female students are not represented or are under-represented in disciplines traditionally associated with boys and men, such as STEM programmes. It was found that STEM factor is important in Girls education because those who take STEM subjects seriously have wider chance of career path in future, including TVET in all sectors of choice.

African educational systems must encourage both girls and boys in STEM subjects at all levels. "STEMitizing" curricula, learning content and teachers training is required. Examples from Universities in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Nigeria showed little progress, far from what was expected. Some figures from developed countries, such as USA, Canada, show that gender stereotyping in TVET, STEM is universal problem and male dominated occupations are not just an "African phenomenon". Some recommendations were pinpointed to start improving girls and young women access, retention and quality achievement in TVET sectors.