

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Venue: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Global Practice Programme Explores Skills of the Future for Girls

The African Union (AU) International Center for Girls & Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA), co-organised a SpaceX event, under the theme, "*Skills of the future: Creating Inclusive Opportunities for all African girls*" during the three-day ground-breaking RewiEd summit at Expo 2020 Dubai.

This critical conversation took place during Expo's Knowledge & Learning week, where the various events explored through expert led dialogue, answers and solutions to the critical and strategic question of 'how the world can harness and challenge current knowledge today to prepare for the future.'

Discussions stemmed on the need for more investments to attract more girls in STEAM and how best to combat cultural barriers, gender stereotypes and norms in education. Also highlighting the importance of using native languages to teach science subjects as it helps develop creativity and design thinking, which otherwise is stifled.

21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy are key in today's fast-moving world and will enable African girls and young women to keep up with the lightning-pace of modern markets. Due to the gender gap in these skill areas and persistent lack of opportunities for the women trained on these skills, more girls and young women need to be encouraged to become active key players, including setting up businesses.

The AU/ CIEFFA assembled panel, presented an opportunity for participants to showcase and share best policy and practice experiences on skills development, Gender-sensitive STEAM and TVET programs. With speakers headlined by the Head of AU/CIEFFA, Dr. Rita Bissoonauth, alongside Senior Youth Advisor in the AU's Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department, Mr. Nicholas Ouma. Ms. Ethel Cofie, the founder of Women in Science Africa rounded up the diverse panel.

"The re-thinking of the African curriculum will allow our young women and men to think about adaptability and creativity in order to help them secure jobs in the future" said Dr. Bissoonauth as she unpacked one of the four strategic axis "*Moving from STEM to STEAM*" as detailed in the CIEFFA's 3rd Strategic plan, running 2021-2025.

The AU-CIEFFA's strategic plan is aligned to the Continental Education Strategy For Africa (CESA 16-25), which is about to enter its final 3 years. Implemented back in 2016, CESA serves as the sector strategy for education. Envisioning the type of education and training systems that need to be in place by 2025 in order to propel Africa towards the attainment of the goals set out in the vision of the Agenda 2063, towards the development of "The Africa We Want".

The Head of the AU/CIEFFA went on to underscore the already expansive gender gap in STEM education, calling for education systems to be more focused on creativity and design thinking. Dr. Bissoonauth also emphasised the critical role that art plays within the sphere of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, also known as STEAM.

Mr. Ouma followed this up by highlighting that human capital development; advocacy and research on STI are at the center of the Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa's (STISA) implementation on developing 21st century skills.

"This strategy specifically calls for promotion of creativity and innovative technologies for wealth creation." he concluded.

Ghanaian Tech entrepreneur and IT professional, Ms. Cofie narrated her lived experience in undertaking STEAM studies. Stating that 21st century skills will equip girls with the skills that they will carry not only through their academic careers but also in their personal and professional lives.

"Twenty-first century education is an ideal that all schools claim to teach, but few have the resources or insights into what that curriculum looks like. Design thinking provides an opportunity for teachers of all disciplines and school administrators to teach these skills in a manner that is engaging and practical for participants, while developing more creative ways to get more gets to venture into STEM fields." Remarkd the recipient of the Top 5 Women impacting IT in Africa award.

The public, media and all other interested parties can keep up-to-date with the latest out of Dubai as well as get all the necessary information surrounding the AUC activities or events by visiting the official AU at Expo 2020 website: <https://africaexpo2020dubai.au.int/en>

Read more about the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 @ <https://au.int/en/documents/20200625/science-technology-and-innovation-strategy-africa-2024>

Read more about the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) @ <https://au.int/node/29958>

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