



FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists
Forum des éducatrices africaines

2nd FAW E INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GIRLS' EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Towards Effective Approaches for Girls' Engagement and Excellence: Preparing African Girls for the 21st Century Skills

Virtual Conference on 18th to 19th November 2020

1.0 Introduction

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)¹ finds herself in a very dynamic environment where socio-political trends, particularly in the educational sector in Africa, call for responsiveness to contextual changes. FAWE identified international conferences on girls' education as a key means of sharing and learning different skills that female students across Africa may acquire and flourish in their different societies.

The first FAWE's International Conference on Girls' Education in Africa was held in Lusaka, Zambia in 2017 with the theme *"Towards Gender Equality in Education: Positioning youth to Champion Africa's Education Agenda"*. The event was founded on the conviction that for over two and half decades, FAWE has made significant contributions and changes in the education sector in Africa yet FAWE did not have a structured and driven international platform to reflect on her work. The conference provided an opportunity to celebrate FAWE's successes with different stakeholders and outline strategies on scaling up of the organization's interventions. Further FAWE got an opportunity to advocate for the need to situate gender in Africa's education development agenda so that girls and women become fully integrated in Africa's human resource pool. Key outcomes from this conference were the launch of the i) Out of School Campaign, ii) launch of the African Girls Education Fund (AGEF) and iii) ministerial engagement on enhancing youth engagement in gender responsive education policy development. The conference informed the need for stakeholders to get together regularly to share experiences, reflect on contribution towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), CESA 16-25 and Agenda 2063.

FAWE is now organizing the 2nd International Conference on Girls' Education in Africa as a continued reminder of Agenda 2063 which emphasizes on *"building an Africa whose development is driven by Africans, especially women, youth and children"* and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) that calls to *invest in inclusive education and quality education that prepares students for 21st century*. The policies further highlight that girls and women are the greatest untapped population to become the next generations of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professionals. The conference will focus on STEM and Education policies that would enhance girls' uptake of STEM subjects. FAWE will share the lessons drawn for the successes of FAWE Uganda STEM project (2017-2020) supported by Dubai Cares.

Similarly, the conference comes at a time the global community has been hit by the COVID 19 pandemic heavily disrupting education in Africa. Most players were caught off guard with no plans on how to respond to such crisis, and majority African Governments not prepared to insulate the Education System. The conference will provide an opportunity to share strategies that were implemented in various countries to remain afloat and approaches being adopted for the education system post COVID 19 crisis. It is expected that the lessons learnt will not only apply to pandemics but any other unexpected crisis.

2.0 FAWE's 2020 International Conference on Girls Education in Africa

FAWE's second International Conference on Girls Education will be hosted online on **Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th November 2020** targeting over 300 participants drawn from FAWE Network (Chapters,

¹ Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE) is a pan African membership organisation that operates through 34 national chapters spread in 33 African countries. FAWE's mission is to promote gender equity and equality in education in Africa by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes towards girls' education.
<http://fawe.org/about-fawe/>

Alumni, Members), Researchers, Education and Gender Experts, National, Regional and International Civil Society Organisations, Bi-lateral and Multilateral organizations, Development partners, Philanthropists, Private sector, African Union Commission, Ministers of Education and relevant Government officials, Teachers and Students drawn from at least 7 African Countries with FAWE's presence, education practitioners and other education stakeholders to participate in a conversation that interrogates Africa's education preparedness in achieving the 21st century skills.

The Conference Theme: *“Towards Effective Approaches for girls’ engagement and excellence: Preparing African girls for the 21st century skills”*

Sub Themes: The discussions will focus on four critical areas (Sub - Themes);

- i. **Increasing girls’ participation in STEM** - STEM pervades every part of our lives and STEM careers are often referred to as the jobs of the future, pay higher, drive innovation, social well-being, inclusive growth and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2017) yet, girls still remain under represented in STEM subjects. FAWE continues to make significant contribution to reduce this gap in Africa by facilitating scholarships and encouraging girls to pursue STEM, enhancing girls’ interest, participation and performance in STEM subjects while encouraging them to pursue careers in STEM fields. The conference will critically evaluate impact, point at innovations and trends for improvements. Experiences, creativity and technological skills of seasoned and aspiring female scientists and teachers will form a highlight of the event.
- ii. **Responsive and Quality Technical and Vocational Education (TVET):** African Union implores its members to innovate ways to create decent jobs for all in the future. One of the most important frameworks associated to this assignment is the Continental strategy for TVET to foster youth employment. This strategy promotes supporting young people to acquire professional skills in all areas of training and learning through TVET programs. The conference will seek to explore the strategies available, provide recommendations/solutions to the glaring gaps issues that impede success showing the work of our youth. There will be specific focus to provide practical examples related to quality, relevance, and employability; curriculum and training; academic and physical infrastructure development; instruction materials, training equipment and tools; TVET management and institutional leadership; partnerships and linkages with industry and the private sector; attractiveness of TVET; TVET strategy and policy formulation; financing; gender equality; and knowledge management.
- iii. **Teacher Capacity building (Gender Responsive Pedagogy) for STEM:** Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are confronted with the formidable challenge of realizing quality, inclusive and equitable education for social transformation and development. Governments throughout Africa are addressing gender disparities in education by adopting national gender strategies, implementing legislative reforms and working to create more gender responsive schools, curriculum and gender sensitive learning environments. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the direction young people’s lives. FAWE’s Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) is an instructing style that reinforces equality and inclusion in education. GRP impacts gender skills for instruction and targets teachers to inspire generations of youth and challenge norms that perpetuate gender stereotypes that limit girls’ active participation in the learning experience. With strengthened capacity in GRP, a teacher can transform a classroom into an effective learning space for girls and boys and increase participation of girls in STEM which for decades has been viewed as a preserve for boys. The conference will discuss successes of GRP in STEM and inclusive strategies such as curriculum reviews to include a gender lens, rewriting

textbooks to remove gender stereotypes, creating gender-responsive school environments, constructing separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls, promoting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and recruiting more female teachers to achieve gender balance.

- iv. **Education Policies for STEM:** Having gender responsive policies in a number of African countries and governments committing to supporting and promoting women's education has not necessarily translated to the aspired action. There is need for improvement in policy interpretation and implementation. The conference will target getting high level commitments from Ministers and government officials present. An outcome document will be submitted to the African Union with the aim of dissemination to its members. FAWE and its partners will further use the conference to reflect on the achievements and integration of the Gender Equality Strategy (GES) for CESA 16-25, which aims to ensure that education policies take into account the continental gender perspectives as well as member states operationalization of the gender principles in the CESA 16-25 as they translate into national strategies/plans/programs.
- v. **Lessons and opportunities on education management during a pandemic: Lessons and opportunities on education management during a pandemic:** The impact of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) is so far one of the most devastating pandemics in the world that has affected learning leading to low learning outcomes, high dropout rates and low resilience to shocks. Hard-won gains in access to education could stagnate or reverse with the extended school closure. Girls and young women are particularly vulnerable due to increased exposure to risks of sexual exploitation, child labor, child marriage and early pregnancy just to mention a few. FAWE is interested in discussions on preparedness and gender responsive approaches during the crisis in the education sector. The conference will also offer a platform to review the challenges and opportunities for virtual learning for African Countries.

3.0 Objectives of FAWE 2nd International Girls Conference on Education in Africa

- i. Take stock of the value of FAWE's and partners' contribution in promoting STEM for girls and women in Africa.
- ii. Generate knowledge for effective replication and/or scale up of successful STEM interventions, Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) and TVETs in Sub-Saharan Africa
- iii. Facilitate dialogue between teachers, policy makers, selected successful female scientists, youth and educationalists on effective strategies for promoting girls' STEM education;
- iv. Showcase the girls' STEM innovations and celebrate STEM teachers and role models.
- v. Explore lessons, opportunities and strategies for education management during a national and/or global pandemics or crisis.

4.0 Expected outcomes of the conference

- i. Accelerated learning and sharing of knowledge and evidence for effective policy influence and increased stakeholders' commitment to invest in STEM, GRP and TVET for improved learning outcomes among girls.
- ii. New and/or Strengthened partnerships including commitments by private sector, development agencies and individuals.
- iii. Shared strategies on resilience during pandemics and/or other crisis that impact on education systems in Africa.

5.0 Outputs of the Conference

- i. Conference report documenting new strategies that enhances STEM for girls in Africa and response to crisis that potentially halts Education in Africa.
- ii. Communique on common position on promoting girls participation in STEM and acquisition of 21st Century skills
- iii. Publication on Inspirational African women scientists
- iv. STEM online portal accessible to all girls in the continent.
- v. Conference papers on the conference sub theme.

6.0 Structure of the Conference and Adjacent meetings/Side Events

- a. **Call for Abstracts/ Conference Papers:** In July 2020 FAWE sent out a call for abstracts² for individuals/institutions to share their documented evidence of successful interventions, case studies/researches and good practices under the five sub themes of the conference. The ideas must have been successful, scalable and can be pitched with governments and partners for possible replication. A team of external evaluators were identified to select the best abstracts. A total of 13 abstracts were selected and authors requested to develop full conference papers to be submitted first week of October 2020. The papers will be available in both English and French and posted on the FAWE website. The presentation of these papers will be during parallel sessions (break-out rooms).
- b. **Virtual Conference (Date, Venue and Logistics):** FAWE's 2nd International Conference on Girls' Education in Africa will take place virtually via Zoom conferencing application from the 18th to 19th November 2020. Participation is strictly by registration to enhance security. There will be breakout rooms allocated as per the sub themes and at least 2-3 papers presented, use of video presentations and parallel interpretation services. The conference will engage rapporteurs who take note of the proceedings that will consolidated at the end each day materials will be both in French and English, with simultaneous interpretation during conference. Media partners will be invited to give coverage to the conference beyond the online platforms such as radio, newspapers. This publicity will enhance FAWE's Advocacy work.
- c. **Pre-conference Webinar:** There will be a pre-conference webinar to assist interested participants to learn on how to navigate the Zoom conferencing application, particularly with regard to simultaneous translation.
- d. **Official Opening & Closing/ Guest Speakers:** Guest speakers will include Ministers of Education, key education dignitaries and good will ambassadors. These speakers will be expected to champion for support for FAWE's work and effectively push the African agenda on girls and women education.
- e. **Key note Speakers/STEM Experts:** In addition to paper presenters, there will be STEM experts invited to speak on researched topics highlighting new findings/learning, emerging issues in specific thematic areas and presentations on implications of SDG 4 and 5 and CESA 16-25 on girls' education. These experts will also join the sub theme panel of discussants to comment/enrich papers presented.
- f. **Conference Summary Schedule:**
 - a. **Day One, Wednesday 18th November 2020 (14.00hrs – 17.00hrs EAT)**

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- i. Official Opening featuring key note address from invited Ministers of Education, Ministers of Science and Technology, FAWE Board and invited development partners.
- ii. Sharing of key achievements from recently concluded STEM project by FAWE Uganda
- iii. Discussions in breakout rooms aligned to the following sub-themes:
 - Increasing girls' participation in STEM
 - Closing education - market skills gap through provision of market responsive trainings
 - Gender Responsive Pedagogy for STEM
 - Education Policies for STEM
 - Lessons and opportunities on education management during a pandemic
- iv. Plenary discussion (summary of outcomes of the break out sessions)
- v. Close of day

b. Day Two, Thursday 19th November 2020 ((14.00hrs – 17.00hrs EAT)

Side Event: 12.00hrs – 13.30hrs Side discussion with development partner on increasing support for participation of girls in STEM

- i. Recap of day one
- ii. Launch of booklet on successful Africa Female Scientist and FAWE STEM Online portal.
- iii. Panel discussion consisting of representatives of Female Scientists enlisted in the launched case Study, FAWE Development Partners and STEM student Ambassadors from Uganda.
- iv. Official Closing featuring representatives from relevant government agencies, Development Partners and FAWE

7.0 Conclusion

Extreme times call for extreme measures and opening of spaces for new ideas and practices. Researchers, Educationalist, prominent women scientist, Ministerial Stakeholders are encouraged to use the conference space to champion for strategies that will lead to preparing African girls for the 21st century. Girls are the greatest untapped population to become the next generations of STEM professionals hence we must invest in their talent.