



Statement to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), 47th Ordinary Session

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is honored to address the African Committee of Experts at its 47th Ordinary Session. We express our sincere appreciation to the Committee for its continued leadership in advancing the rights and welfare of children across Africa. FAWE remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that every African girl has access to inclusive, safe, and high-quality education, recognizing that girls continue to face multiple, intersecting barriers that hinder their full participation and success in education systems.

I. Domestication of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (26-35), the Gender framework, and the General Comment No 9 on education

FAWE wishes to draw the Committee's attention to its continued engagement in previous sessions, during which we called for the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2026–2035) by Member States. As Africa's overarching framework for transforming education systems, CESA 2026–2035 presents a critical opportunity to advance gender equality, inclusion, and quality learning outcomes for all children.

In this regard, FAWE, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa, and the African Union Commission's Education Science Technology (ESTI) Department, developed a Gender Framework for the implementation of CESA 2026–2035. This framework provides practical guidance and accountability mechanisms to support Member States in integrating gender equality across all levels of education systems. We humbly request Member States of the African Union to:

- Strengthen accountability mechanisms through reporting on gender indicators as outlined in the gender framework for the CESA (26-35).

We reiterate our call to Member States to prioritize the domestication and implementation of CESA 2026–2035 and encourage alignment of national education plans with the Gender Framework and its indicators. Furthermore, we commit, as FAWE, to supporting Member States in operationalizing and domesticating CESA, including through technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and knowledge sharing.

II. Integrating Education, Nutrition, and WASH to Advance Girls' Education

In line with the AU theme for 2026 of Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda, FAWE underscores the critical importance of integrated approaches that link education with nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). For many



girls, particularly in marginalized and rural contexts, the lack of safe water, sanitation facilities, and school feeding programmes directly affects attendance, retention, and learning outcomes.

We urge Member States to:

- Strengthen multi-sector collaboration and aligned financing between ministries (Education, Water, Health, Gender, Climate) for integrated WASH service provision and program delivery.
- Institutionalize Gender-Responsive WASH priorities within Continental and National education Frameworks, monitor and implement guidelines, and accelerate the enforcement of existing national and regional commitments.
- Integrate Gender-Responsive and Climate-Resilient WASH into the education curricula and teaching practices to drive behavior change and support inclusive, long-term systemic transformation.

III. Enhancing the safety and well-being of girls in Africa

Globally, with sub-Saharan Africa bearing a disproportionate burden, an estimated 1 in 8 girls experience sexual violence before age 18, with many cases going unreported due to stigma and weak protection systems. These figures likely underestimate the true magnitude, as violence against children remains significantly underreported. School-related gender-based violence, insecurity, and attacks on education continue to undermine girls' right to learn.

We call on Member States of the African Union to

- Sign and ratify the AU Convention on Violence Against Women and Girls (AUCVAWG) as a demonstration of their commitment to protect girls from all forms of violence as captured in the convention.
- Full implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration to protect children from attacks.
- Finance and fully implement the re-entry and retention policies for adolescent mothers and vulnerable girls.

IV. Education of Children with Disabilities and children from conflict afflicted areas

Children with disabilities face compounded barriers to education, with evidence suggesting that they are up to 10 times more likely to be out of school than their non-disabled peers. Gender disparities further compound exclusion, with primary completion rates for girls with disabilities being 10 percentage points lower than for girls without disabilities. Furthermore, in many settings, girls with disabilities face heightened risks of violence, which significantly reduces their likelihood of enrolment and retention in school.



We urge the Member States to:

- Strengthen Education Management Information Systems to collect disaggregated data (by gender, disability, socioeconomic status) and build the capacity of education managers to use this data effectively for planning and decision-making.
- Use of the Gender Framework Scorecard as a monitoring tool to promote data-driven, evidence-based education sector planning.
- Adopt and adequately resource inclusive education frameworks that ensure children with disabilities have access to appropriate infrastructure, assistive technologies, and trained personnel, in line with the General Comment 9 emphasis on equity and inclusion.

Conclusion

As we advance the rights and welfare of children in Africa, FAWE reiterates that girls' education is central to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and sustainable development across the continent. We reaffirm our commitment to working alongside the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Union, Member States, and partners to ensure that every African girl learns, thrives, and leads.

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