FAWE
FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALISTS
FORUM DES ÉDUCATRICES AFRICAINES

African Union International Center for Girls & Women's Education in Africa

Gender Framework for the Continental Education Strategy for Africa

2026-2035



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This publication is a product of extensive consultation and research commissioned by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AUCIEFFA).

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Foreword

Education lies at the heart of Africa's transformation. It empowers individuals and communities, dismantles cycles of inequality, and drives the continent's progress toward inclusive growth, peace, and sustainable development. Within the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its Aspiration 6: *"An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children"* and in alignment with the global commitment to Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, we recognise that no nation can advance sustainably without harnessing the full potential of all its people.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026–2035 (CESA 2026–2035) reaffirms education as both a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of Africa's social and economic renewal. Yet, despite the progress achieved under CESA 2016–2025, gender disparities persist across access, participation, learning outcomes, leadership, and labour market transitions. In many contexts, these inequities are deepened by poverty, conflict, harmful sociocultural norms, disability, climate-induced vulnerabilities, and displacement. The response of African Union Member States must therefore move beyond numerical parity to the transformation of systems.

This Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035 provides the blueprint to operationalize Strategic Area 6 on Gender, Equity, and Inclusion across all pillars of the continental education strategy. It envisions education systems that are inclusive and just in outcomes, embedding gender equality into policy, curriculum, financing, leadership, research, and innovation. By advancing gender-responsive governance, accountability, and financing, this Framework ensures that gender equality becomes a measurable performance dimension of Africa's education agenda. Importantly, it builds on the lessons of the Gender Equality Strategy for CESA 2016–2025, while harnessing new opportunities presented by EdTech solutions, artificial intelligence, green and resilient education, and a growing youth population. It adopts an intersectional lens that addresses the complex realities shaping learners' experiences, acknowledging that gender interacts with disability, geography, socioeconomic status, and other dimensions of identity. It also redefines inclusivity by engaging boys and men as critical partners in advancing positive masculinities and shared responsibility for equality.

The success of this Framework depends on our collective resolve. It requires the political leadership of Member States; the technical expertise of our partners; the commitment of our teachers, researchers, and innovators; and the voices of our young people, who stand at the centre of Africa's future. Through the coordinated action of the African Union Commission, AUCIEFFA, FAWE, the Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability Cluster, Regional Economic Communities, and, most critically, AU Member States, we will translate these commitments into tangible change where every learner can participate, thrive, and lead.

As we embark on this new CESA decade, accelerated under the AU Decade of Education and Skills Development (2025–2034), let us reaffirm that gender equality in education is not only a developmental

priority but a foundational pillar for building an Africa that is prosperous, peaceful, and anchored in justice. By institutionalising gender-transformative education across the continent, we lay the groundwork for generations of Africans who will realize their fullest potential and shape the Africa We Want by 2063.



Prof. Gaspar Banyankimbona

Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

African Union Commission

Preface

Education remains one of the most powerful levers for achieving gender equality and inclusive development across Africa. The *Gender Framework for the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2026–2035* represents a renewed and forward-looking commitment by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the African Union International Centre for Girls and Women Education in Africa (AUCIEFFA), and partners, including members of the Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability Cluster, to ensure that education systems across the continent become truly equitable, inclusive, and transformative.

This Framework builds on the lessons and achievements of earlier strategies, notably the Gender Equality Strategy for CESA (2016–2025). It responds to the shifting educational landscape, marked by demographic transitions, technological innovation, climate change, protracted crises, and widening inequalities, by strengthening the integration of gender, equity, and inclusion lenses throughout education systems. It recognises that gender equality will not be achieved without addressing the broader structural inequities and intersecting forms of disadvantage that shape learners' experiences and outcomes

Anchored in the aspirations of Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDGs 4 and 5), and the CESA 2026–2035 framework, this Gender Framework positions education as a key driver of Africa's transformation. It moves beyond traditional measures of parity to address systemic barriers such as harmful norms, child marriage, school-related gender-based violence, and discrimination that hinder equitable access, retention, performance, and progression. In this way, it expands the understanding of gender from numerical balance to structural justice.

The Framework also emphasizes that while advancing girls and women education remains a core priority, boys and young men also face vulnerabilities that must be acknowledged and addressed. It adopts an inclusive and intersectional approach that accounts for diversity across gender, disabilities, socio-economic conditions, geography, and displacement status, ensuring that no learner is left behind. By centering gender as a spectrum of social power relations, it calls for education systems that not only include all learners but also transform the structures that perpetuate inequality.

A major strength of this Framework lies in its focus on accountability, leadership, and systems change. It provides governments, ministries of education, and partners with tools to institutionalise gender-responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation; to integrate gender and inclusion across curricula, pedagogy, and governance; and to reinforce evidence-based decision-making. It encourages sustainable financing, robust data systems, transformative school leadership, and meaningful youth engagement to ensure that commitments translate into measurable results.

The Framework is the outcome of a consultative process led by FAWE and AUCIEFFA with support from diverse African education stakeholders, including Ministries of education, teachers, researchers, civil society, and youth representatives. It builds on the collective vision that education must catalyse equality,

peace, and prosperity. Its implementation will depend on the collaborative resolve of governments, development partners, and communities to act boldly and continuously toward gender-transformative education.

As we move toward 2035, this Framework serves both as a call to action and a practical guide for reimagining Africa's education systems to be more inclusive, equitable and resilient. The future we seek for our learners, girls and boys, women and men, depends on how we use education to challenge the injustices of the past and cultivate agency, innovation, and leadership for the future. Together, we reaffirm our shared vision of an Africa where gender equality in and through education is a lived reality.



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AAU	Association of African Universities
AU	African Union
ACDE	African Council for Distance Education
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AfECN	African Early Childhood Network
AFTRA	African Forum for Teacher Regulatory Authorities
ANAFE	African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education
ANCEFA	African Network Campaign on Education For All
AUC	African Union Commission
AUCIEFFA	African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa
AU-ESTI	Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development
AUF	Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
AWARD	African Women in Agricultural Research and Development
CAMES	Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GEI	Gender Equity and Inclusion
GEID	Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability
GF	Gender Framework
GES4CESA 2016-2025	Gender Equality Strategy for CESA 2016-2025
GF4CESA 2026-2035	Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
RUFORUM	Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

Glossary of Key Gender Concepts

Agency refers to an individual's (or group's) ability to make informed choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes.

Diversity is the presence of a broad range of human qualities, attributes, and experiences (such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic background), within a group, organization, or environment. Diversity enriches perspectives, decision-making, and creativity.

Equity is the fair allocation of resources and opportunities, based on differing needs and starting points, to address structural barriers and achieve comparable outcomes for all.

GEDS refers to an integrated Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) approach that ensures policies, programmes, and systems actively promote gender equality, address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, and advance social inclusion for all marginalised groups.

Gender-sensitive approaches recognise that learners experience school differently because of gender norms and roles. They focus on awareness. Teachers, materials, and school practices avoid bias and ensure that no learner is disadvantaged, but it does not actively correct existing inequalities.

Gender-responsive approaches go beyond awareness to action. It identifies specific gender-related barriers to access, participation, safety, and learning and puts in place concrete measures to address them. These include tailored policies, pedagogy, infrastructure, and support systems designed to reduce gender gaps and improve outcomes.

Gender Marker is a self-assessment tool in development and humanitarian programming (e.g., CARE, IOM) that measures how projects address gender inequalities. Projects are rated on a Gender Continuum, typically 0–4: 0 being Gender Blind/Harmful; 1 – Gender Aware; 2 – Gender Sensitive; 3 – Gender Responsive; 4 – Gender Transformative.

Gender Transformative is an approach that goes beyond addressing symptoms of inequality and seeks to shift the underlying norms, power relations, and institutional practices that disadvantage learners based on gender (the root causes). It moves from action to structural change. In education systems, this means challenging harmful social norms, strengthening girls' agency and leadership, promoting positive masculinities, and embedding gender equality into governance, accountability, and long-term reform.

Inclusion is the practice of intentionally engaging with diversity to ensure that individuals or groups who might otherwise be excluded have equal access, participation, and a sense of belonging. Inclusion goes beyond equality of opportunity to actively transform norms, policies, and systems that create barriers, fostering authentic participation for everyone, regardless of gender, race, ability, or other characteristics.

Intersectionality is a framework that examines how overlapping social identities, such as gender, ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation, displacement status, language, or rural/urban location, overlap and interact to shape their unique experiences of both privilege and oppression. An intersectional gender analysis recognises that gender interacts with other interconnected social inequities and therefore cannot be examined in isolation.


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1.0 Background and Context

1.1 Overview of the Gender Framework

This document presents this Gender Framework for the CESA 2026-2035. This is the detailed full-length version, providing a detailed overview of different considerations and proposals aimed at integrating gender in the new CESA. This document also provides a high-level synopsis of the performance of the previous gender equality strategy that accompanied implementation of the CESA 2016-2025. An abridged version of this Gender Framework is available, which provides a comprehensive summary of all critical components.

1.2 The Centrality of Education in the African Union Development Agenda

Since its establishment in 2002, the African Union (AU) has championed Africa's development agenda. The AU was established by African Member

States as the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which had promoted unity, supported decolonisation, and harmonised sectoral policies since 1963. The AU represents a renewed commitment to continental progress. It carries forward a legacy of Pan-African cooperation while addressing contemporary challenges.

Through the African Union Commission (AUC), Member States collaborate to articulate shared priorities, mobilize evidence, and align national and regional efforts toward a coherent continental vision. At the heart of its development efforts is the AU's overarching development blueprint, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.* This strategic vision charts a 50-year pathway toward inclusive growth and sustainable development across the continent.[1] Education is central to advancing these goals, supporting skills development, innovation, and the structural change needed for self-reliance and long-term growth.

Agenda 2063 provides a guiding reference for regional and national planning across all sectors. In education, the development framework provides continental leadership that guides how education systems contribute to Africa's development.[2] Education is a core priority under Aspiration one, which envisions a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. The AU's Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation leads the delivery of this Aspiration.

Building on this foundation, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) is the AU's central framework for guiding the continent's education agenda. Following the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea (2015), where global education leaders endorsed the Education 2030 Framework for Action and agreed on regional benchmarks aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the AU developed the CESA 2016–2025.[3] This marked the first AU Decade of Education under CESA, aimed at transforming education systems to advance sustainable development across the continent. Its vision is closely aligned with Agenda 2063, which envisions *a peaceful, prosperous, and integrated Africa -- led by its citizens and positioned competitively within the global community and knowledge economy*.[4]

As a continuation of these efforts, the AU launched a new Decade of Education and Skills Development (2025-2034) in October 2025.[5] This accelerated 10-year initiative is designed to fast-track the transformation of education and skills development across Africa to meet labour-market demands and advance the goals of Agenda 2063.[6] The decade serves as an umbrella framework unifying CESA, TVET, STISA, and other continental instruments into a coherent, actionable agenda. The current CESA 2026-2035 builds on lessons from the previous CESA 2016–2025 and incorporates findings from its review, ensuring

Agenda 2063 provides a guiding reference for regional and national planning across all sectors. In education, the development framework provides continental leadership that guides how education systems contribute to Africa's development.

[1] African Union. (2015). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. African Union Commission.

[2] African Union Commission. (2016). Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25). African Union.

[3] African Union Commission. (2016). Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25): Education and skills for accelerated development. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union Headquarters.

[4] AU. CESA 2016-2025.

[5] AU. CESA (2026-2035).

[6] AU (2025). Information & Communication Directorate.



that the successor strategy builds on a stronger, evidence-based foundation for transformative education on the continent.[7]

CESA 2026-2035 is organized around six strategic areas and 20 objectives, including a dedicated Strategic Area (SA) 6 on gender and inclusion.[8] This architecture makes it possible to trace gender commitments across the system rather than confining them to SA (6) alone and thus enables a more rigorous analysis of coherence and transformative potential. CESA 2026–2035 presents a forward-looking vision that creates a strategic opportunity to support Member States and partners in operationalising gender equality, monitoring progress, and embedding actionable, innovative interventions throughout the education system.[9]

1.3 The CESA-Human Rights Nexus

[7] African Union Commission. (2025). *Review of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025).*

[8] SA1 (Resources and the enabling environment); SA2 (Teachers, educators, and caregivers); SA3(Pre-primary to secondary education); SA4 (Higher education and TVET); SA5 (Second-chance programs and lifelong learning); and SA6 (Gender, equity, and inclusion.

[9] African Union. (2025). Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026–2035: A framework for action. African Union Commission.

Education is a legally protected right under several African human rights instruments, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child[10].[11] While CESA 2016–2025 did not explicitly refer to the right to education or broader perspectives on human rights, it drew upon Agenda 2063, which affirms these principles. In contrast, CESA 2026–2035 firmly establishes education as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of Africa's sustainable development and prosperity. It explicitly recognises governments as the main duty bearers, representing a significant advancement in the AU's commitment to rights-based education frameworks.[12] This includes recognizing gender equality in education not merely as a policy objective but a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for a sustainable, peaceful, and prosperous continent.[13]

Ensuring gender equality is central to the fulfilment of the right to education as it guarantees that all learners can access, participate in, and benefit from education on an equal basis. Achieving this requires structured coordination between ministries of education, national gender mechanisms, and national human rights institutions, supported by relevant AU agencies. Key institutions include the International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AUCIEFFA), the Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (AU-ESTI),[14] the Pan-African Institute for Education for Development (IPED), and the African Union Gender Observatory (AUGO), in partnership with regional gender and education organizations such as FAWE.

These bodies should coordinate reviews and provide technical support to ensure that education policies and programmes are fully aligned with human rights obligations. This includes developing harmonized gender indicators, guidelines, and data collection tools that integrate CESA 2026–2035 objectives with international and continental human rights reporting requirements. They should also provide targeted training for government officials on gender-responsive, rights-based data management and reporting while facilitating peer learning and technical exchange among Member States to embed human rights analysis within education sector reviews and national reports.

Complementing these continental efforts, UN agencies, particularly UNESCO, UNICEF, UN Women, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), play a critical role in reinforcing the recognition of education as a fundamental human right across AU Member States.

Drawing on their comparative advantage in bridging normative frameworks, technical guidance, and global-to-local reporting coherence, these agencies support Member States in systematically collecting, analyzing, and reporting gender-disaggregated data within national EMIS and human rights frameworks. They also harness their convening power to collaborate with AU policy organs, including the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) to advocate the explicit integration of gender and education rights in national reporting and peer-review mechanisms.

[10] ACERWC.

[11] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

[12] AU. CESA (2026-2035).

[13] UNESCO (2019). From access to empowerment UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025.

[14] OAU/AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols & Charters.



2.0 Review of the Previous Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2016-2025

2.1 What Worked About the Previous Gender Strategy 2016–2025

The primary achievement of the GES4CESA 2016–2025 was establishing gender equality as a political priority within Africa's continental education framework. The strategy demonstrated strong relevance through its alignment with the broader CESA implementation agenda, ensuring that gender considerations were integrated into continental education planning. At the programmatic and country level, it drove tangible change where FAWE and partners maintained close, program-linked engagement. These changes included the integration of gender into sector plans, budget allocations, and classroom practices. Progress was most pronounced in contexts where FAWE chapters sustained continuous support and where the strategy complemented ongoing initiatives, such as UNICEF's Gender at the Centre programme.

2.2 Challenges and Gaps

A review of the GES document revealed that the strategy was considered as an overly complex and cumbersome structure that impeded accessibility and user engagement. The bulky design manifested in excessive length that made it difficult for stakeholders to quickly locate relevant information or understand key priorities. The strategy also employed highly specialized terminology and complex technical language that created barriers to comprehension. This linguistic complexity was particularly challenging for non-gender technical users, and hence it alienated non-specialist audiences including government officials, community-level stakeholders, grassroots organisations, and citizens who should be active participants in gender equality initiatives.

In addition, despite being a gender equality strategy, it portrayed a limited interpretation of gender concept, with an overemphasis of some Ministries of Education focusing on access and performance indicators, paying inadequate attention to structural gender inequalities (including harmful norms, school-related GBV, and child marriage), thereby constraining systemic gender norm change. The review further revealed a narrow operationalization of gender, focused mainly on girls while overlooking boys' disadvantages. it also exposed a binary framing that neglected other gender identities (e.g., intersex) and intersectionalities. This limited the Strategy's ability to address gender as a spectrum of social power relation and to implement fully transformative, inclusive interventions that benefit all. The framework further experienced limited integration of the Strategy into AU systems, national education sector plans, and budgeting processes; Further, it reported insufficient monitoring, evaluation, and learning architecture, with no structured mid-cycle reviews or standardized reporting requirements; it also reported weak operational design in some Ministries of Education, including the absence of costed implementation plans, clear targets, timelines, and accountability mechanisms. Additionally, due to capacity and financing gaps, particularly at national and sub-national levels, these factors undermined its implementation fidelity.

2.3 What is different in the new Gender Framework?

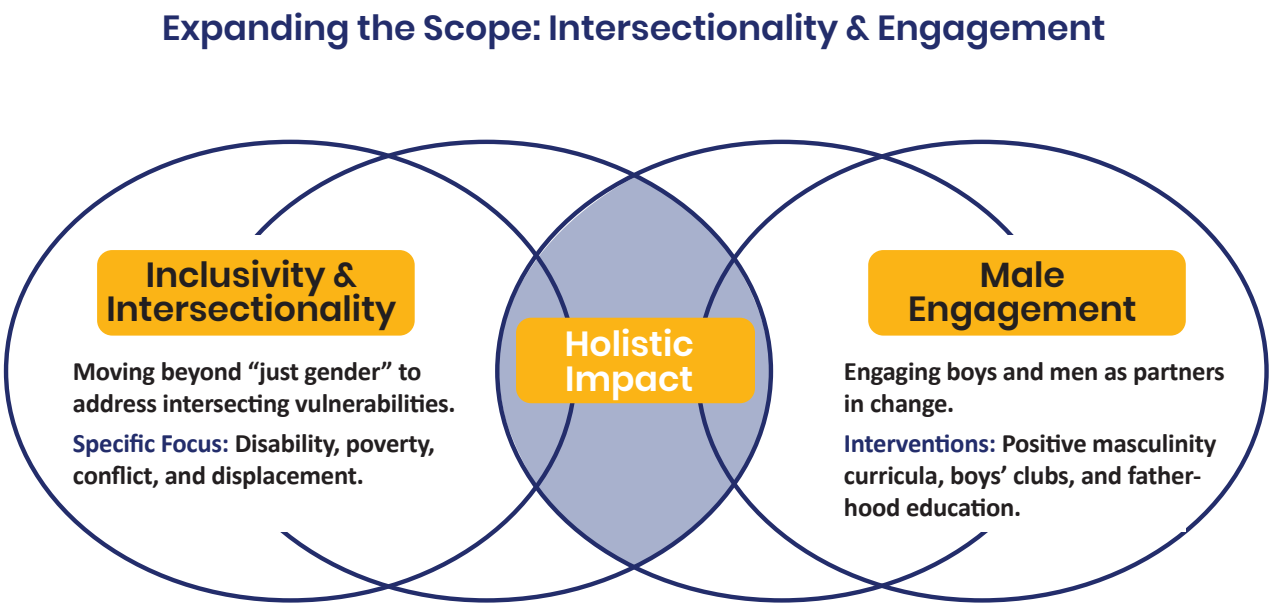
The new Gender Framework under CESA 2026–2035 is designed to move beyond a narrow, access-driven interpretation of gender and to reposition gender equality as a systemic, structural, and transformative agenda within education systems across AU Member States. It directly addresses the conceptual and operational gaps identified in the previous cycle through the following shifts: Previous implementation often equated gender equality with parity in enrolment, retention, and performance indicators. While these remain important, they are insufficient. The new framework explicitly broadens the lens to address structural gender inequalities that shape educational trajectories and life outcomes.

> **The primary achievement of the GES4CESA 2016–2025 was establishing gender equality as a political priority within Africa's continental education framework. The strategy demonstrated strong relevance through its alignment with the broader CESA implementation agenda, ensuring that gender considerations were integrated into continental education planning.**



In addition, while girls' education remains a priority, the review highlighted a narrow operationalization that overlooked boys' disadvantages in certain contexts and failed to account for gender diversity and intersectionality. The new framework adopts a more inclusive and analytically robust approach: addressing boys' vulnerabilities, moving beyond binary framing, applying an intersectional lens, systematically considering how gender interacts with disability, poverty, geography (rural/urban), displacement, conflict, language, and other forms of marginalization; and promoting inclusive school environments. This reorientation strengthens the framework's capacity to deliver gender-transformative change that benefits all learners while maintaining a clear focus on persistent inequalities affecting girls and women. Furthermore, the new framework strengthens institutional accountability to ensure gender equality is embedded in system design rather than treated as a standalone initiative. In doing so, it aligns more closely with AU continental priorities, human rights commitments, and the ambition of CESA 2026–2035 to deliver sustainable, systemic change in education across Africa.

Figure 1: Expanded interpretation of gender concept





3.0 The Case For a Dedicated Gender Framework

A Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035 is necessary because gender, equity and inclusion cannot be delivered through rhetorical mainstreaming alone; they require a dedicated system instrument with operational authority. The new framework therefore shifts from a strategy model to an implementation accelerator that directly interfaces with education sector planning processes, public financial management, teacher policy, institutional governance, and continental monitoring platforms.

Within CESA 2026–2035, gender, equity and inclusion are positioned as foundational system enablers rather than thematic add-ons. Gender equality functions as a multiplier across access, quality, financing, governance, and learning outcomes. Progress across all six Strategic Areas depends on whether gender-transformative approaches are embedded in policy design, institutional arrangements, resource allocation, pedagogy, data systems, and accountability frameworks.

Without a dedicated framework to drive this integration, gender risks dilution across competing reform priorities.

Strategic Area 6 provides the normative and technical rationale for a distinct framework. As the ethical anchor of CESA, it defines the principles (equity, rights, inclusion, fairness) that must guide reform choices and resource decisions. As the technical integrator, it translates those principles into enforceable standards, institutional roles, financing commitments, and measurable indicators across all Strategic Areas. A separate Gender Framework is therefore not duplication; it is the mechanism that ensures ethical commitments are operationalised within system design and performance management.

In practical terms, the Gender Framework establishes clear accountability lines, financing expectations, performance metrics, and monitoring tools that make gender equality measurable and enforceable within the broader CESA architecture. It safeguards coherence, prevents fragmentation, and institutionalises adaptive learning. Without such a framework, gender would remain vulnerable to episodic attention and uneven uptake. With it, gender, equity and inclusion become structural determinants of system effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability across Africa's education reforms.



Gender equality functions as a multiplier across access, quality, financing, governance, and learning outcomes. Progress across all six Strategic Areas depends on whether gender-transformative approaches are embedded in policy design, institutional arrangements, resource allocation, pedagogy, data systems, and accountability frameworks.



4.0 Gender Framework's Overarching Goal

The CESA 2026-2035 is explicitly designed to be Africa's roadmap for achieving the education-focused Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly, SDG 4 *"to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"* and SDG 5 *"to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls",* while mainstreaming gender across all the other 17 SDGs. CESA translates global education targets into a concrete, continent-wide framework aligned with the AU's own Agenda 2063. Accordingly, the Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035 aims to operationalize CESA's commitment to SDG 4 and SDG 5 by providing a clear, results-oriented framework to systematically integrate gender, equity and inclusion across all the Strategic Areas.

4.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Gender Framework

The main purpose of the Gender Framework is to support AU Member States in mainstreaming gender, equity, and inclusion across all six CESA 2026-2035 Strategic Areas (SAs). The framework provides guidance on monitoring, evaluating, and transparently reporting progress, which will establish accountability, implement adaptation mechanisms to enhance learning, support continuous improvement, and strengthen evidence-based policy decision-making. Furthermore, it provides guidance for developing education systems that respond to emerging challenges and trends, such as digitalization, climate change, and education in emergencies, thereby enabling adaptive, evidence-informed approaches that deliver sustainable, measurable impacts for all learners, communities, and education systems across Member States.

Specific objectives

01 **Support Member States and partners** to use evidence, build capacity, and mobilize resources to address barriers in education and create opportunities that enhance equitable and inclusive access to quality education and learning outcomes.

02 **Increase participation, leadership,** and agency of women, girls, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups, ensuring equitable and inclusive benefits across all education levels.



03 **Integrate gender, equity and inclusion** across all the six CESA 2026-2035 Strategic Areas, including teaching, learning, and institutional management.

04 **Guide and support Framework implementation** across all thematic CESA Clusters, providing strategic technical knowledge, and alignment with continental and national priorities.

05 **Strengthen gender-inclusive-responsive monitoring,** evaluation, and learning systems by generating actionable, disaggregated evidence, to support adaptability and accountability for advancing gender equality, equity, and inclusion across all Strategic Areas.

06 **Institutionalise gender, equity and inclusion** as core system performance dimensions through GEI indicators, gender- responsive and inclusive budgeting and accountability mechanisms within global and continental scorecards, national education sector plans, and reporting to AU policy organs.

Operational Objectives

01 **By 2030, all AU Member States and stakeholders will integrate gender, equity, and inclusion** priorities into policies, plans, curricula, pedagogy, institutional governance, and education sector management across all six CESA Strategic Areas.

02 **By 2035, AU Member States and stakeholders demonstrate measurable** increases in the participation, leadership, and agency of women, girls, and other marginalised groups as learners, educators, and decision-makers, with equitable and inclusive benefits reflected across all education levels.

03 **By 2032, at least 75% of AU Member States and stakeholders, supported by the designated AU Cluster** (on Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability), and partners, will apply gender-responsive evidence, capacity-building tools, and financing strategies to remove barriers to access, retention, completion, and equitable learning outcomes across all education levels.

04 **Throughout 2026–2035, the relevant Cluster** (on Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability), will provide coordinated leadership, strategic guidance, and technical support across all CESA Clusters to ensure effective implementation of the Gender Framework and alignment with continental and national education priorities.

05 **By 2028, and sustained through 2035,** AU Member States and partners will generate, analyze, and report actionable sex, equity, and intersectionality-disaggregated data through CESA-aligned MEL systems to support adaptive implementation and strengthen accountability for gender, equity, and inclusion outcomes.

06 **By 2035, AU Member States will institutionalise gender, equity, and inclusion** as core performance dimensions in education system effectiveness by embedding Gender, Equity and Inclusion (GEI) indicators, gender-responsive budgeting, and accountability mechanisms within continental scorecards, national sector plans, and reporting to AU policy organs.

4.2 Targeted Audience

The framework targets AU Member States as its primary audience because they hold the legal mandate and responsibility to design, implement, and monitor national education policies and systems. In addition, the framework provides guidance to the following key stakeholders

- **The AU Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability Cluster** (formerly the Women and Girls Education Cluster)[15] – which is co-led by AUCIEFFA and FAWE): the cluster

[15] The cluster model was revised to ensure stronger strategic alignment with the renewed CESA 2026–2035 priorities. The number of clusters was streamlined from twelve to ten to enhance coherence, focus, and coordination. These include: (1) Early Childhood Development and Foundational Learning; (2) Teachers, Educators, and Caregivers; (3). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), STEM, and Entrepreneurship; (4). Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (5). Lifelong, Non- Formal, and Alternative Learning; (6). Digital Education and Artificial Intelligence; (7). Education in Emergencies and Resilience; (8). Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability; (9). Education System Governance, Policy, and Finance; (10). Curriculum, Assessment and School Health.



is strategically positioned to facilitate coordination, offer technical and advocacy support, and promote knowledge sharing across countries

- **Other CESA Thematic Clusters:** their role in coordinating efforts, offering technical guidance, and supporting monitoring across countries.
- **Education Ministers:** because they drive policy decisions, oversee implementation, and allocate resources within national education systems. Their engagement is critical to ensure that the principles of the framework are operationalized through concrete policies, programmes, and reforms.
- **Partner organizations (national, regional, continental):** contribute expertise, capacity, and resources to implement gender-responsive education initiatives.

4.3 Scope of the Gender Framework for CESA 2026-2035

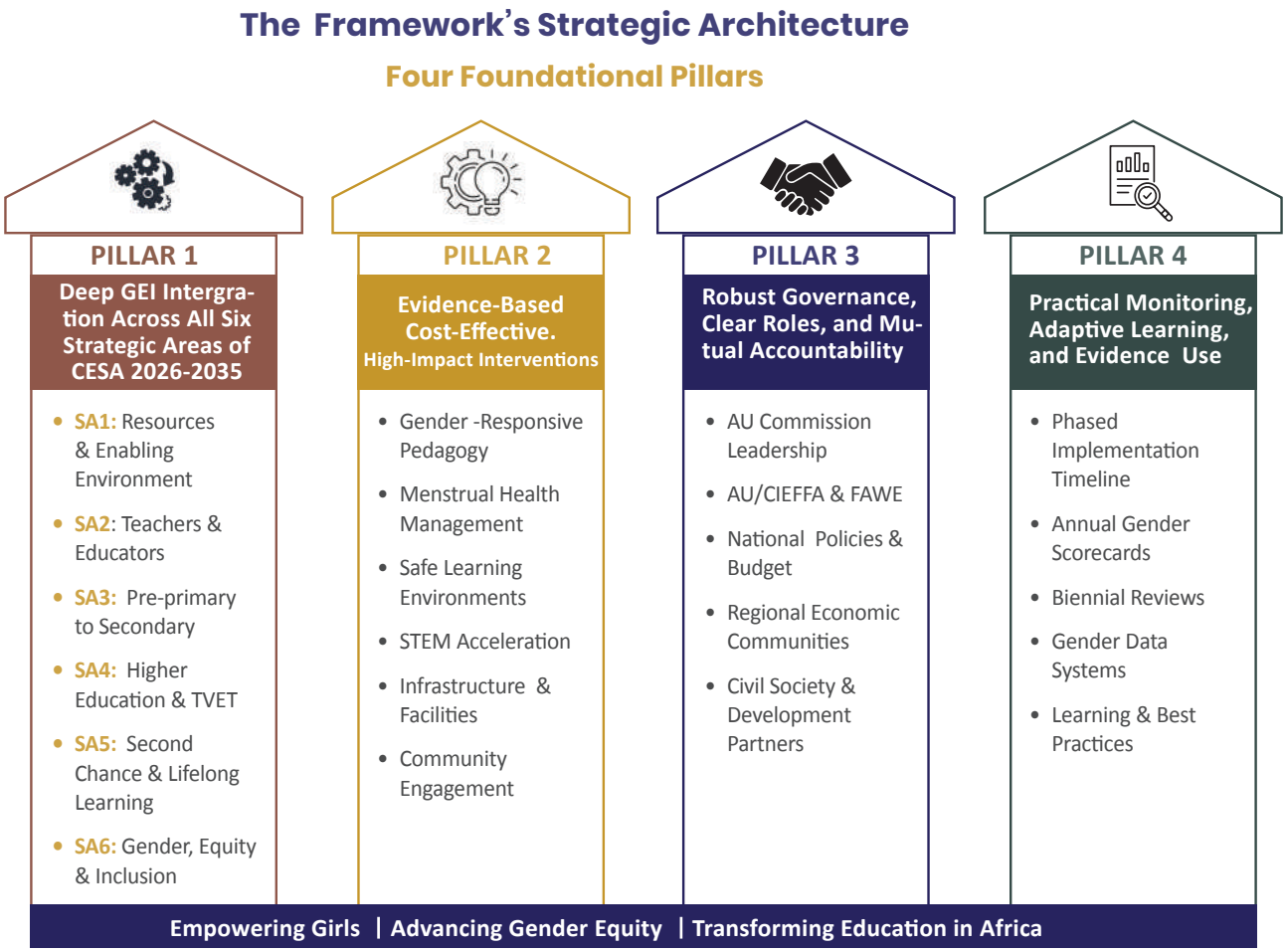
The GF4 CESA 2026-2035 is a guiding instrument that supports FAWE and AUCIEFFA in advancing the commitment to gender equality and promoting equitable, inclusive participation of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups within education systems. It fast-tracks integration of gender equality and social inclusion within CESA 2026-2035 and is aligned to relevant continental and global gender and education instruments, including the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063. The GF4 CESA 2026-2035 will be updated during the mid-term review based on learnings from its implementation. It will be operationalized by an Action Plan and Communication Plan tailored to meet specific education and gender needs and challenges of different country contexts. It defines the FAWE/AUCIEFFA approach to gender education programming, work culture, organizational management structures and systems. It seeks

to deepen and improve knowledge across CESA 2026-2035 implementers among the partners and Member States.

4.4 The Gender Framework 2026-2035 Strategic Focus

The transition from GES4CESA 2016-2025 to GF4CESA 2026-2035, represents a deliberate shift from narrowly framed and insufficiently institutionalised strategy to a system-level transformative framework. Unlike its predecessor, the new Gender Framework is explicitly designed to operate as a cross-sectoral implementation accelerator, directly interfacing with education sector planning, public financial management, teacher policies, institutional governance, and continental monitoring platforms. This repositioning responds to a critical lesson from CESA 2016–2025: that gender equality gains cannot be sustained through isolated projects or advocacy alone, but require structural anchoring within education system reforms, backed by enforceable standards, performance metrics, and financing commitments. These lessons have fundamentally shaped the design of GF4CESA 2026-2035. This framework endeavours to address the shortcomings of its predecessor while building on proven successes. Figure 1 below show the GF4CESA 2026-2035 strategic architecture:

Figure 2: Gender Framework Strategic Focus





The figure above presents a four-pillar strategic focus designed to operationalise gender, equity and inclusion (GEI) across CESA 2026–2035. The architecture integrates system-wide mainstreaming, targeted interventions, governance mechanisms, and accountability systems into a coherent implementation model. It reflects a deliberate shift from high-level policy commitment to structured implementation, ensuring that gender equality is embedded in sector planning, budgeting, delivery, and performance management.

The transition from GES4CESA 2016-2025 to GF4CESA 2026-2035, represents a deliberate shift from narrowly framed and insufficiently institutionalised strategy to a system-level transformative framework.

The four pillars are mutually reinforcing and embed gender, equity and inclusion across all six CESA Strategic Areas (SAs) to prevent siloed implementation and strengthen institutional ownership. The framework prioritises a focused set of evidence-based, cost-effective interventions that address structural barriers affecting girls and marginalised learners. It establishes clear governance arrangements and shared accountability across continental, regional, and national levels, anchored in national policies and budgets. Through phased implementation, performance scorecards, and strengthened data systems, it institutionalises monitoring and adaptive learning to ensure measurable and sustained impact.



5.0 Domestication and Institutionalisation

Strategies developed for dissemination and domestication of gender, equality and inclusion should be repositioned to ensure that the Gender Framework informs educational policy and financing. This will be through integration into national sector plans, budgets, monitoring systems, and reform cycles. The embedding process should be structured to enhance visibility, foster ownership, and reinforce accountability at all levels of the education system. **Key proposed strategies include:**

- **Build collective national capacity through large, multi-sector training cohorts** (education planners, finance officers, gender ministries, M&E specialists, subnational authorities) to create a critical mass of implementers and reduce reliance on individual focal points.

- **Integrate the Gender Framework directly into the CESA 2026–2035 architecture** (as an attachment or companion section) to prevent marginalization and document fatigue and ensure automatic visibility in all CESA implementation processes. Create a QR code for accessing the framework embedded in CESA documents; complement the framework with practical visibility tools such as digital summaries, and interactive dashboards to ensure easy access and routine reference.



- **Expand outreach beyond policymakers** by developing youth- and child-friendly versions including an annotated version developed in collaboration with UNICEF to engage children. Organize digital campaigns, and school-level engagement strategies so that the Framework reaches learners, youth networks, and student leaders, reinforcing accountability from the ground up.



- **Revitalized Cluster Architecture for CESA 2026–2035:** CESA clusters have been revised to align strategically with the renewed CESA 2026–2035 priorities, introducing ten thematic clusters across six strategic areas, each with clear mandates, leadership, and operational focus. The revised structure ensures stronger collaboration across clusters to leverage synergies across strategic areas and avoid fragmentation. The Gender Framework is designed to ensure all clusters systematically integrate gender, equity, and inclusion. This coordinated approach prevents fragmentation, strengthens alignment, and reinforces the quality and consistency of interventions across the education ecosystem.



- **Strengthen the Thematic Cluster's technical and bridging role:** CESA clusters are essential mechanisms for implementing the Gender Framework, bringing together AU education partners around focused technical expertise. While they have historically served as platforms for information exchange and event coordination, clusters are well positioned to advance evidence generation, technical learning, and stakeholder mobilisation. To maximize impact, they require operational autonomy coupled with clear accountability, defined performance expectations for cluster leaders, and strengthened inter-cluster collaboration to leverage synergies across strategic areas and prevent fragmentation: through structured follow-up mechanisms, policy advisory support during sector planning, and alignment of continental indicators with national monitoring systems.



- **Reposition the Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability (GEID) Cluster** as the

[16] AU Department of Education, Science, Technology, Innovation. Consolidated and Refined CESA 2026-2035 Thematic Clusters Architecture by Groups for the Proposed (Final) Cluster Recommendations.

[17] Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026-2035: A Framework for Action.



technical authority and coordinating hub for implementation, providing policy guidance, supporting contextual adaptation, and aligning GEID indicators with national systems. The GEID Cluster (formerly the Women and Girls Education Cluster)[16], which is co-led by AUCIEFFA and FAWE) has been strategically positioned to facilitate coordination, offer technical and advocacy support, and promote knowledge sharing around integration of GEID in education across the continent. This Cluster can organize dedicated side events to showcase the priorities, progress, and strategic relevance of the Gender Framework. It can also convene coordination meetings among Member States to facilitate peer learning, knowledge exchange, and alignment on implementation approaches. Highlighting

[18] The cluster model was revised to ensure stronger strategic alignment with the renewed CESA 2026–2035 priorities. The number of clusters was streamlined from twelve to ten to enhance coherence, focus, and coordination. These include: (1) Early Childhood Development and Foundational Learning; (2) Teachers, Educators, and Caregivers; (3). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), STEM, and Entrepreneurship; (4). Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (5). Lifelong, Non- Formal, and Alternative Learning; (6). Digital Education and Artificial Intelligence; (7). Education in Emergencies and Resilience; (8). Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability; (9). Education System Governance, Policy, and Finance; (10). Curriculum, Assessment and School Health.

good practices from countries that have successfully institutionalised gender-responsive education reforms will provide tangible examples of feasible pathways, reinforcing both political commitment and practical applicability.

- **Member State Inclusive Engagement and Leadership:** Member States hold primary responsibility for contextualizing and implementing the Gender Framework within national policies, plans, budgets, and programmes. The GEID Cluster should actively engage all countries—including both high-performing and capacity-building states—to facilitate peer learning, leverage existing regional and partnership networks, and use targeted entry points such as Rwanda, Gambia, South Africa, Senegal, Cameroon, and Burundi, selected for their demonstrated progress in gender equality, existing programmatic partnerships, bilingual or regional representation, and leadership in innovative or scalable initiatives, to strengthen implementation and collaboration across linguistic and regional contexts.



- **Leverage continental and regional platforms to disseminate the framework through relevant channels** (conferences (e.g. FAWE's International Girls Conference), AU events and platforms such as the African Union Pan-African Conference on Girls and Women's Education (AU/PANCOGED), AU ESTI Department, AUCIEFFA Focal Points, FAWE Chapters, development partners, local education groups, and other platforms (such as financing forums) to report on indicators). These continental and regional convenings provides platforms to amplify visibility, showcase country implementation examples, best practices, convene peer-learning sessions, expand partnerships, and link technical work with political momentum. The GEID cluster should be responsible for Institutionalizing structured follow-up, documentation, and accountability mechanisms to move beyond ad hoc workshops.



Strategies developed for dissemination and domestication of gender, equality and inclusion should be repositioned to ensure that the Gender Framework informs educational policy and financing. This will be through integration into national sector plans, budgets, monitoring systems, and reform cycles.



6.0 Conceptualising The Gender Framework For CESA 2026–2035

The African Union's commitment to gender equality is deeply embedded in its continental vision. Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6 envisions *"An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children."* In line with this vision, the African Union affirms gender equality through the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE 2018–2028), which champions women's full inclusion in Africa's development agenda.[17] The Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) leads and coordinates the Union's efforts to advance gender equality, including the monitoring of Member States' commitments under the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). However, while GEWE sets the overarching framework, it does not address the sector-specific barriers,

[19] Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

dynamics and needs within education systems. This gap created the rationale for developing a dedicated gender framework under the CESA 2026-2035 implementation period.

With a CESA 2026-2035 in place, the transition from GES4CESA 2016–2025 to GF4CESA 2026–2035 reflects a deliberate evolution from strategy to system instrument. Unlike its predecessor, the new Gender Framework is explicitly designed to operate as a cross-sectoral implementation accelerator, directly interfacing with education sector planning, public financial management, teacher policies, institutional governance, and continental monitoring platforms. This repositioning responds to a critical lesson from CESA 2016–2025: that gender equality gains cannot be sustained through isolated projects or advocacy alone, but require structural anchoring within education system reforms, backed by enforceable standards, performance metrics, and financing commitments.

The new gender framework is thus designed to provide a clear and accessible reference point for advancing gender, equity and inclusion (GEI) across education systems under CESA 2026–2035. It translates these three dimensions into a practical implementation strategy with clear operational measures and annual indicators for monitoring change. In doing so, the framework shifts from general commitments to concrete, accountable, and scalable actions that strengthen education systems and ensure that all learners, regardless of gender or intersecting identities, benefit equitably. The framework is designed to translate GEI commitments into a coherent and operational tool that can guide Member States in advancing transformative change across their education systems.

6.1 Conceptual Framework: Implications of Gender Integration into CESA 2026-2035

A GF4CESA 2026-2035 structural guide adapted from the theory of change (TOC) model to support application, practice and to railroad implementation along the CESA 2026-2035 SAs as shown below.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework: Implications of Gender Integration into CESA 2026-2035

IF SA6 is systematically integrated across all CESA Strategic Areas (SA1–SA5) through coordinated action in five reinforcing domains:

- ***Governance, Policy and Financing –*** Gender-responsive laws, sector plans, budgets and school governance are complemented by enforceable accountability mechanisms, including gender budget tagging, equity-sensitive performance benchmarks, and transparent reporting aligned with CESA continental scorecards.
- ***Teaching, Curriculum and Pedagogy –*** Gender-responsive curricula, learning materials and teacher development challenge stereotypes, strengthen girls' agency and promote inclusive, learner-centred pedagogy.
- ***Institutions, Infrastructure and Safety –*** Education institutions provide safe, accessible and gender-responsive environments, including WASH, SGBV protection, disability-inclusive design and climate-resilient facilities.
- ***Access, Transitions and Labour-Market Linkages –*** Gender-equitable pathways support girls, women, boys and men; especially in marginalised and fragile contexts; to enter, remain in, complete and transition through education into decent work and lifelong learning.
- ***Data, Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability –*** EMIS, learning assessments and reporting systems generate disaggregated data that guide planning, support adaptive management and ensure accountability for gender and equity outcomes.

THEN Education systems across all levels; ECDE, basic education, TVET, higher education and life-long learning, will become:

- Equitable in access and resourcing, with targeted investments addressing gender, poverty, disability and displacement;
- Gender-responsive in teaching and learning, enabling all learners to participate, perform and thrive;
- Inclusive and safe, protecting learners' dignity, wellbeing and right to education;
- Institutionally accountable, with leadership, staffing, financing and performance systems aligned to gender and inclusion objectives; and
- Evidence-driven, using disaggregated data and learning systems to identify gaps, correct course and scale what works.

THUS Africa will achieve, through CESA 2026–2035, gender-transformative education systems that:

- Strengthen the social contract between education systems and communities by restoring trust, dignity, and agency, particularly for girls and marginalised learners whose educational pathways have historically been disrupted by inequality, violence, poverty, and exclusion
- Guarantee every child's right to quality, safe and inclusive education;
- Enable women, girls, men and boys to realize their full learning, leadership and economic potential;
- Shift harmful gender norms, unequal power relations and discriminatory institutional practices; and
- Generate sustained improvements in learning, wellbeing, social cohesion and economic opportunity, in alignment with Agenda 2063, SDG 4 and SDG 5





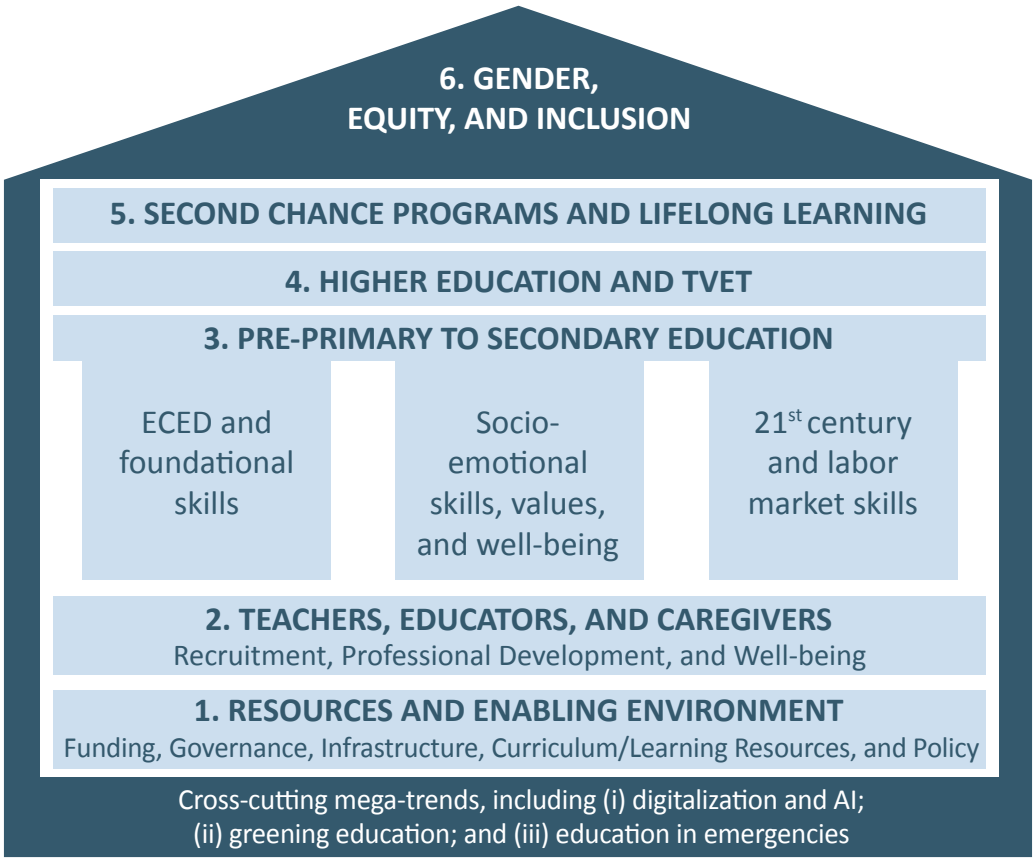
7.0 Locating Gender, Equity and Inclusion Within CESA

CESA 2026–2035 organizes its framework for action around six Strategic Areas (SAs) that address critical dimensions of Africa's education system. Complementing the core SAs are several cross-cutting themes and emerging megatrends, such as digitalisation and artificial intelligence, greening of education, and education in emergencies, as illustrated in Figure 1.[18] Within CESA 2026–2035, gender, equity and inclusion are not positioned merely as thematic priorities but as foundational system enablers that determine the effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of all education reforms. Gender equality functions as a multiplier across learning access, quality, governance, financing, and outcomes. Consequently, progress across all six Strategic Areas is contingent upon the extent to which gender-transformative approaches are embedded

[18] AU (2025). Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026-2035: A Framework for Action.

in policy design, institutional arrangements, financing mechanisms, pedagogy, data systems, and accountability frameworks. In this regard, **SA 6** serves as both the ethical compass and the technical integrator of the CESA architecture, ensuring that equity considerations shape not only who accesses education, but how education systems are governed, resourced, and evaluated, and whose voices, agency, and lived experiences inform reform processes.

Figure 4: Diagrammatic representation of CESA 2026-2035 Strategic Areas (Source: CESA 2026-2035)



As figure 4 above shows, **SA 6** is positioned at the apex of the CESA framework, this demonstrates a deliberate shift from additive gender mainstreaming to systemic gender transformation. This implies that all Strategic Areas must be interrogated through a gender, equity, and inclusion lens at three levels: (i). at the design level to ensure it addresses the question of who benefits and who is excluded; (ii). at the delivery phase to ensure it reflects how interventions are implemented and experienced by diverse target groups; and at the (iii).) at the outcomes level, to confirm the extent to which results have reduced — or inadvertently reproduced — gender, equality and inclusion disparities. Accordingly, **SA 6** is not implemented after or alongside other Strategic Areas, but through them, serving as a continuous quality-control mechanism for equity and inclusion across the education system lifecycle. Thus, leveraging **SA 6** as a strategic entry point enables the Gender Framework to function as a systems integrator, aligning reforms across foundational learning, teacher development, skills formation, higher education, and lifelong learning with shared equity objectives. This approach ensures coherence between policy intent,

institutional practice, and learner experience, particularly for girls, learners with disabilities, displaced populations, rural communities, and other structurally marginalised groups.

By operationalising **SA 6** through clear interfaces with **SAs 1–5**, the framework reinforces CESA's ambition to deliver inclusive learning pathways across the life course, while addressing persistent gender gaps in access, completion, transitions, and labour-market outcomes. Accordingly, **SA 6** is situated as the pinnacle of the education system, symbolising its overarching role in embedding gender, equity, and inclusion across all Strategic Areas. **SA 6** is designed to operate across schooling, teacher development, higher education, TVET, and lifelong learning, reflecting the recognition that gender outcomes are produced system-wide and must be integrated at every level of the education system through gender-transformative approaches that permeate all Strategic Areas. This cross-cutting design underscores the centrality of **SA 6** within the CESA 2026–2035 architecture as it is the only Strategic Area that is explicitly dedicated to gender, equity, and inclusion. It is the most comprehensive component addressing these priorities within the framework.

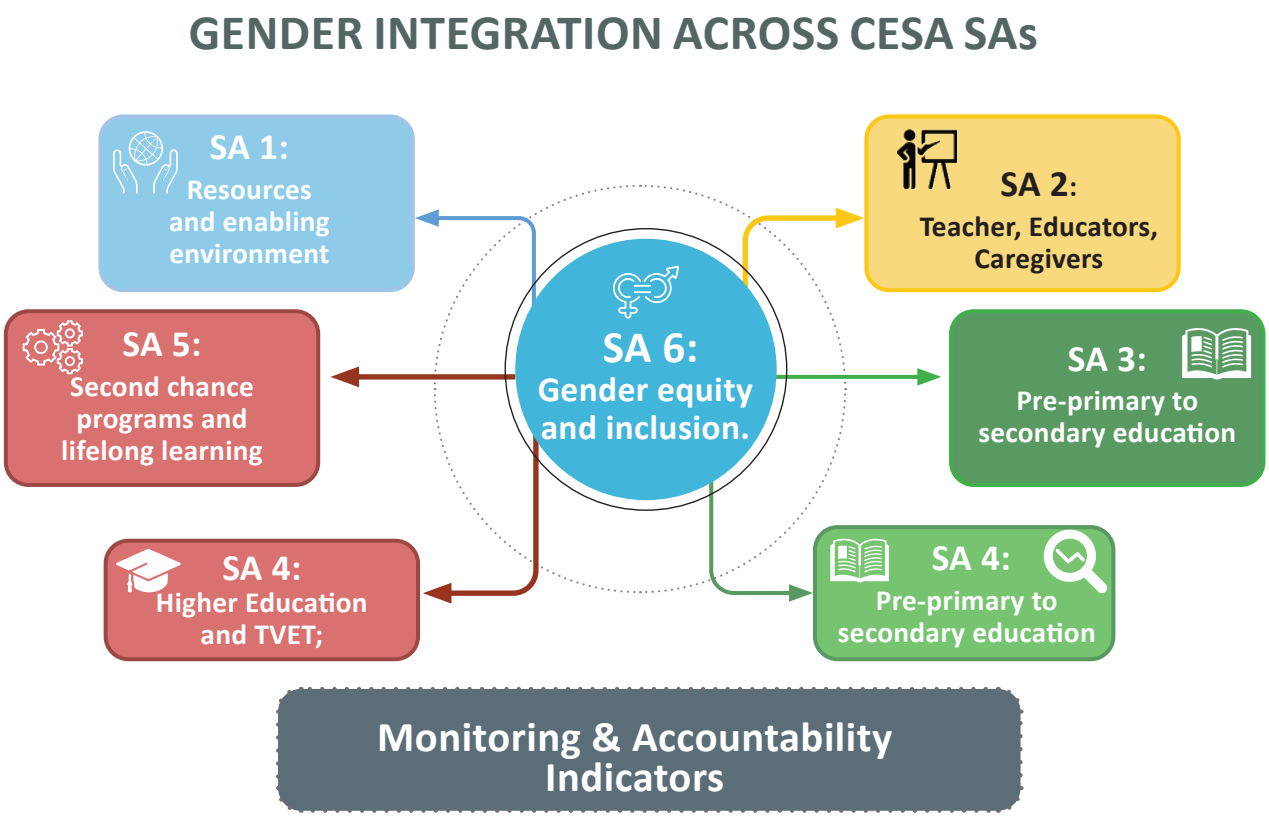
7.1. Leveraging SA 6 as A Strategic Entry Point

Within CESA 2026–2035, **SA 6** is designed to serve as the technical and operational engine for mainstreaming gender, equity, and inclusion (GEI) across **SAs 1–5**. As illustrated in **Figure 5, SA 6** occupies a central position both visually and conceptually within the strategy's architecture. It functions as the strategic foundation for gender equality, while **SAs 1–5** serve as the primary delivery platforms. This central placement underscores the fact that gender equality is not a standalone goal but a structural imperative that must inform, shape, and strengthen implementation across all Strategic Areas. **SA 6** thus anchors the entire framework, ensuring that gender-transformative approaches are systematically embedded into resource allocation, teaching practices, curriculum development, tertiary education, and lifelong learning pathways.

Leveraging **SA 6** as a strategic entry point enables the Gender Framework to function as a systems integrator, aligning reforms across foundational learning, teacher development, skills formation, higher education, and lifelong learning with shared equity objectives. This approach ensures coherence between policy intent, institutional practice, and learner experience, particularly for girls, learners with disabilities, displaced populations, rural communities, and other structurally marginalised groups. By operationalizing **SA 6** through clear interfaces with **SAs 1–5**, the framework reinforces CESA's ambition to deliver inclusive learning pathways across the life course, while addressing persistent gender gaps in access, completion, transitions, and labour-market outcomes.

Building on this central role of **SA 6**, the Gender Framework for CESA 2026-2035 (GF4 CESA 2026-2035) seeks to accelerate the attainment of a gender responsive education across all the CESA 2026-2035 Strategic Areas (SAs): **SA 1:** Resources and enabling environment (funding, governance, infrastructure, curriculum and learning resources and policy); **SA 2:** Teacher, Educators, Caregivers (recruitment, professional development and wellbeing); **SA 3:** Pre-primary to secondary education (ECDE and foundational skills, socio-emotional skills, values and wellbeing); **SA 4:** Higher Education and TVET; **SA 5**: Second chance programmes and lifelong learning; **SA 6**: Gender equity and inclusion. All the SAs integrate cross-cutting trends; a) digitalization and AI, b) greening education and c) education in emergencies.

Figure 5: The conceptual design and centrality of SA 6 across the SAs



As illustrated in **Figure 5**, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is a critical function that must be systematically embedded across all Strategic Areas. MEL should be guided by clearly defined criteria, robust metrics, and standardised reporting expectations. Indicators must be designed to align with CESA's commitment to disaggregated data, capturing gender and other multiple intersectionality's such as age, disability, geography, socioeconomic status, and other relevant dimensions of marginalisation. This approach enables Member States and key stakeholders to engage in evidence-informed planning, track progress comprehensively, identify gaps, and implement corrective measures in a systematic and accountable manner.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is a critical function that must be systematically embedded across all Strategic Areas. MEA should be guided by clearly defined criteria, robust metrics, and standardized reporting expectations.



8.0

Implementation of The Framework: Translating Mandates into Action

This section outlines the implementation strategy for operationalising gender integration across all Strategic Areas. It defines clear, actionable approaches to embed gender considerations systematically within planning, delivery, and oversight processes. The section further establishes a set of meaningful annual indicators to enable robust monitoring, evaluation, and accountability. It also recommends cost-effective and evidence-based interventions, such as gender-responsive pedagogy, strengthening female leadership in schools, inclusive and accessible infrastructure, and the promotion of safe learning environments, to support measurable and sustained gender equality outcomes within education systems.

8.1 Key Strategies

The key strategies that guide the overall implementation of the gender framework articulate how Member States and key stakeholders will translate the commitments into coherent action across policy, programming, resourcing, and accountability, while ensuring that gender equality, equity, and inclusion are systematically embedded throughout the education sector instead of being treated as stand-alone interventions. The Gender Frameworks' key strategies are:

a) Formulation of gender-responsive educational policies and practices

- This involves policy advocacy and influencing to monitor and reinforce legal frameworks/instruments.
- Build capacity of Member States, RECs, CSOs, to implement gender-transformative policies through governance structures and accountability mechanisms.
- Strengthen the ability of Member States, RECs, CSOs, and educators to implement gender-transformative frameworks that engage boys and men as partners in achieving gender equality.
- Track, assess, and strengthen the implementation of policies and practices addressing girls' and boys' educational challenges, including dropout prevention, learning outcomes, and behavioural and well-being issues, using sex- and age-disaggregated data and other relevant intersectional markers to inform timely corrective action.
- Document and disseminate evidence-based practices that demonstrate measurable impact on gender equity outcomes, showcase innovative and successful practices for broader learning and replication.

b) Adoption of Human Rights-Based Approaches to Education

- Apply rights-based approaches for gender responsive education.
- Support educational policies and practices grounded in human rights principles, ensuring gender equality, equity, and inclusion across all levels of learning.
- Advocate and monitor rights-based legal frameworks and policy instruments that advance gender-responsive education across all levels.

c) Generation of gender-responsive curricular and teacher education

- Sensitize learners and educators on gender-responsive teaching/learning and resources.
- Support creation of gender responsive learning environment.
- Integrate gender-responsive practices into pre-service and in-service teacher education, ensuring educators acquire competencies to address gender bias and promote inclusive pedagogy.
- Develop and deploy gender-responsive curricula and learning materials from pre-primary through secondary education that challenge stereotypes and promote equitable participation.

d) Increased labour market skills development including ICT, AI, STEM & TVET

- Innovative and transformative (mindset shift) 21st century teaching/learning methods.



- Scale up women's and girls' participation in 21st century skills pathways, including ICT, AI, STEM, TVET, and higher education through targeted interventions that address systemic barriers.
- Promote innovative, transformative pedagogies and flexible lifelong learning models that respond to evolving labour market demands, including digital economy opportunities and entrepreneurship.
- Establish partnerships with relevant labour market networks, professional associations, alumni groups, artists, and role models to provide mentorship, career pathways, and market linkages for female learners.
- Expand pathways and support structures for male learners by promoting participation in non-traditional career fields/ traditionally female-dominated areas.

e) Ensure inclusive and safe learning environments

- Establish safe and inclusive learning

environments that promote the holistic development of all learners, encompassing socio-emotional, foundational, and 21st-century skills.

- Advocate the adoption and implementation of safe learning declarations by AU Member States that protect education access during crises and conflicts.

f) Build resilience for women, girls, boys at risk and other marginalised groups

- Implement accelerated learning programmes and second-chance pathways for out-of-school girls and marginalised populations, including leaners with disabilities, refugees, displaced population, minorities, and those affected by emergencies.
- Promote innovative and context relevant catch-up strategies and safe learning for girls and marginalised with no access to learning.
- Design flexible, context-appropriate training programmes that address the specific barriers faced by marginalised groups while building labour market-relevant competencies.

g) Monitoring, evaluation, leaning and accountability

- Institutionalise MEL&A within national education governance. Integrate MEL indicators into Education Sector Plans and Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks.
- Use a standardized yet adaptable set of indicators capturing access, retention, learning outcomes, safety, wellbeing, and transitions.
- Strengthen data systems for quality, timeliness, and use. Improve EMIS, learning assessment systems, and administrative data to generate reliable, actionable evidence.
- Embed learning and adaptive management and use MEL findings to inform continuous improvement and policy adjustment.
- Commission periodic independent evaluations of priority reforms and flagship programmes.
- Enable participatory accountability mechanisms by incorporating social accountability and rights-holder feedback into MEL.
- Implement targeted training on gender-responsive MEL, evaluation methods, and utilization while partnering with national research institutions and RECs for peer learning and technical backstopping.

h) Embed gender-responsive system reforms within education financing, governance, and accountability architectures

- Integrate GEI benchmarks into education sector performance reviews, public expenditure tracking, and results-based financing frameworks.
- Align national reporting on CESA 2026–2035 with continental gender scorecards to strengthen mutual accountability between Member States, RECs, and the AUC.
- Incentivize system-level reforms by linking progress on gender equality and inclusion to recognition mechanisms, peer learning platforms, and targeted technical support.



9.0 Governance, Communication and Monitoring

This section outlines the governance architecture and accountability mechanisms and the roles of CESA operational committees. The CESA 2026-2035 governance structure includes a Steering Committee and an Operational Committee with five sub-committees for

(i) Resource mobilization;

(ii) Implementation (events, pilot projects, etc.);

(iii) Monitoring and reporting;

(iv) Research and knowledge (e.g., production of guidance related to specific CESA objectives); and

(v) Communication and advocacy.

Figure 6: Governance Structure



9.1 Membership and Roles

- **The steering committee:** for purposes of operationalising the gender framework the committee should be co-chaired by the Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability (GEID) Cluster leads and the African Union Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Commissioner. Other key members should include regional Ministers of Education, REC representatives, continental and international partners, and gender and equity experts. This committee will serve as the apex body providing strategic direction and oversight to ensure that all CESA 2026–2035 policies, programmes, and resources advance gender equality, equity, and inclusive education across the continent.
- **The operational committee:** co-chaired GEID cluster lead and the Head of Education in AU/ESTI and comprising members from other thematic CESA Clusters and other key stakeholders selected for their expertise and commitment. This committee serves as the executive body driving CESA 2026–2035 implementation of GEI commitments, coordinating sub-committees, and ensuring that all activities, from resource mobilisation to research, advocacy, and program execution, promote GEI in education across the continent. The Operational Committee has five sub-committees, each integrating GEI considerations into their functions: Resource Mobilization: Ensures financing prioritises gender equality and inclusion in education programmes; Implementation (events, pilot projects, etc.): Designs and executes interventions that are responsive to the needs of girls, women, and marginalised learners; Monitoring and Reporting: Tracks progress against gender equality targets and ensures accountability for outcomes; Research and Knowledge: Produces evidence, guidance, and best practices to support gender-responsive education planning and policy; and Communication and Advocacy: Raises awareness, influences stakeholders, and promotes investment in inclusive and equitable education initiatives.

9.1.1 Accountability and System-wide Enablers

Central to effective implementation and realization of the GF *are political will, technical capacity, accountability and organisational culture,* prerequisites for responsive governance as detailed hereunder:



a) Political commitment: typified by support of senior management leadership to actively integrate gender, commit staff time and resources and institute requisite laws, policies and procedures.



b) Technical capacity: entails institutionalisation of gender sensitive organisational systems structures and procedures that remain permanently engraved in educational institutions.



c) Accountability: denotes "carrots" and "sticks" for encouraging and reinforcing desired behaviours and practices. Ultimately, it demands building responsibility for gender integration into job descriptions, work plans and performance assessments.



d) Organizational culture: addresses gender and social cultural norms and nuances embedded in institutional norms and attitudes.

9.2 Guiding Principles

The Gender Framework will be guided by AU Principles outlined hereunder:

i **Country ownership, leadership, and subsidiarity:** Member States are responsible for their education systems and thereby for adapting CESA 2026-2035 to their own context.

ii **Autonomy and accountability:** Stakeholders have autonomy in using the CESA 2026-2035 guidance, but with accountability for the CESA implementation team.

iii **Adaptability:** CESA provides adaptable and flexible guidance that suits changes in the education landscape and workplace and remains relevant and effective over time; and

iv **Advocacy:** CESA is a strategy advocating more and better investments in education.

9.3 Communication and Advocacy Mechanism

The CESA 2026-2035 provides that the Operational Committee shall convene biannually and may establish sub-committees as needed. Beyond their Steering Committee representation, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have other responsibilities including promoting awareness and advocating gender-responsive education priorities among Member States, development partners, educational institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organisations. Member States similarly undertake communication and advocacy responsibilities at the national level, promoting awareness of gender mainstreaming approaches and advocating the implementation of gender-responsive policies and practices among national stakeholders, including educational institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organisations. By extension, RECs and Member States will naturally be responsible for enhancing awareness and advocacy of the GF4CESA 2026-2035 and ensure its integration across CESA 2026-2035 initiatives.

AU Specialized Agencies play a critical role in promoting gender integration in education by leveraging their specialised mandates. AUCIEFFA supports advocacy and communication on girls' and women's education; AU/IPED contributes data, research, and monitoring insights to inform evidence-based messaging; and AU/PAU focuses on higher education engagement. As coordinators or members of CESA clusters, these agencies facilitate knowledge sharing, champion pilot projects, and provide technical guidance to Member States and RECs. Their rotating representation on the Operational Committee ensures that gender-related advocacy remains informed by sectoral expertise and aligns with implementation priorities.

CESA clusters serve as strategic platforms for gender-focused communication and advocacy by coordinating partners around thematic expertise. Beyond information sharing and event coordination, they actively support the generation of evidence on gender equity, provide guidance to RECs and Member States, and mobilise stakeholders to advance the gender framework. The Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Disability (GEID) Cluster, co-chaired by FAWE and AUCIEFFA, plays a central role in communication and advocacy, promoting gender-responsive education policies, sharing best practices, and supporting awareness-raising initiatives at regional and national levels. Clusters shall promote cross-cluster collaboration to address gender, equity, inclusion and other intersectional issues, advocate gender-responsive resource mobilisation, and hold themselves accountable for advancing gender equality targets through regular monitoring and reporting. This coordinated approach will ensure clusters leverage synergies and amplify advocacy impact.

International and continental partners are key stakeholders that support communication and advocacy by contributing technical expertise, implementing projects aligned with CESA 2026-2035, and mobilizing resources. They reinforce AU-led messaging, provide platforms for disseminating gender-sensitive policies, and strengthen partnerships that enhance visibility and uptake of the Gender Strategy at regional and national levels. Their engagement ensures that advocacy is informed by global best practices and contributes to broader support for gender-transformative education initiatives.

9.3.1 Integration and Communication Mechanisms

To enhance visibility and uptake, dissemination and implementation of the framework shall be jointly undertaken by AU Member States and partners through the relevant gender and education institutions and structures. The policy shall be anchored within national, regional and international gender and education legislative frameworks including laws, policies, treaties, instruments and/or protocols. For effective dissemination and consumption, Member States should consider the following recommendations:

- Advocating for gender responsive Member States' budgets, financial quotas and targets for gender specific education interventions;
- Establishing innovative gender mainstreaming financing models e.g., matching funds, education bonds, debt-for-education swaps, solidarity levies, and grants;
- Co-designing flexible gender and education partnerships that allow external support without conditionalities that compromise AU priorities;
- Organizing continental gender and education campaigns to sensitize policy makers of Member States about the GF4CESA 2026-2035;
- Developing evidence briefs for ministers of

finance, education and gender, validating a strong business case for gender equality in education investments;

- Integrating gender into existing gender and education accountability and reporting mechanisms of Member States and partners;
- Supporting gender audits for education budgets and expenditures and provide actionable feedback to Member States for implementation;
- Equipping Member States gender tracking tools or templates and support data collection for effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
- Building the capacity of Member States and partners to comprehensively understand and appreciate the GF4CESA 2026-2035 and to support its full implementation;
- Mobilizing Member States and partners to support gender integration into education through existing AU institutions, structures, systems and platforms.

9.4 Capacity Development and Partnerships

Effective implementation of the Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035 requires targeted capacity development and strengthening across institutional levels and strategic partnerships to translate policy commitments into practice. While recognising variations in Member States' institutional maturity, resources and technical capability, the Gender Framework defines minimum standards for gender integration across all CESA Strategic Objectives and prioritizes practical, context-sensitive support to meet these standards. This recognises that while gender integration is articulated in policies, inadequate technical capacity and practical guidance have historically constrained implementation.

Evaluations of AU and UNDP programmes show that although technical capacities for gender equality have improved, they remain uneven across member states.[19] This unevenness is evident at the classroom level, where the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) found that many teachers reported inadequate preparation to implement gender-responsive pedagogy.[20] These gaps between policy commitments and practical implementation underscore the critical need for sustained, targeted capacity development interventions.

Capacity development for effective implementation of the GF4 CESA 2026-2035 prioritises three interlinked domains

1. Institutional and technical capacity of key actors to translate gender commitments into measurable action. At Member State level, this includes sustained capacity building for Ministries of Education, teacher training institutions, national statistical offices, and relevant agencies strengthened to conduct gender analysis, integrate gender into sector-wide planning and budgeting, and operationalize gender-responsive policies.
2. Addressing pedagogical capacity through practical guidance and training on gender-responsive pedagogy, formative assessment, and inclusive teaching practices in responding to documented shortcomings

[19] UN Women (2024). Evaluation of the Partnership between UN Women and the African Union Commission.

[20] African Population and Health Research Center. (2023). *Advancing gender equality in Kenyan education: Key findings from the 2023 gender mainstreaming study*. Nairobi, Kenya: APHRC.

in teacher preparation.

3. Strengthening data and systems capacity to ensure the collection, analysis, use, and dissemination of sex- age- and disability-disaggregated data, aligned with SA 6, and anchored in robust education data systems (EMIS) and education statistics systems, including through collaboration with AU/IPED. This also includes developing comparable, accurate metrics across diverse settings and populations as well as enhanced data communication and utilization for evidence-based decision-making.

Given that digital transformation is a cross-cutting enabler, the framework provides guidance for Member States to leverage ICT through affirmative action policies and in-service training for teachers, especially female teachers, managers, and administrators to bridge the digital gender divide and improve planning, monitoring and service delivery.

Partnerships are central to scaling and sustaining gender integration under the GF4 CESA 2026–2035. The partnership architecture is structured to balance minimum continental standards with contextual adaptation. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) serve as critical intermediaries, providing technical advisory support for Member State ownership, integrating CESA gender commitments within regional priorities, and facilitating regional networking for knowledge, tools, and resource sharing. This role will be reinforced through RECs designate Focal Points for coordination with the AUC on CESA 2026-2035 gender mainstreaming matters.

Member States will operationalize the framework nationally by integrating gender priorities into sector plans, promoting coordination across government, civil society, private sector, and education institutions, and fostering national learning networks. Designated national focal points within ministries responsible for education will ensure alignment, coordination with the AUC, and systematic feedback to strengthen implementation over time.

Continental partners, including AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, and AU/IPED, will support policy harmonization on gender-responsive education, provide technical assistance for strengthening data systems that capture intersectional dimensions of gender, disability, location, and socioeconomic status to inform equitable and inclusive education planning, and facilitate thematic networks and regional centres of excellence for sharing gender mainstreaming practices and innovations. This integrated approach ensures minimum standards for gender integration are achieved while respecting differential developmental levels, resources, and technical capacities across Member States, while creating a comprehensive ecosystem for sustained gender mainstreaming in African education systems.

9.4.1 Role of AU Thematic Clusters in Implementing the Gender Framework

The African Union Commission (AUC) CESA 2026-2035 thematic cluster mechanism provides a strategic framework for implementing gender mainstreaming across all CESA 2026-2035 strategic areas. Building gender integration capacity across all thematic clusters is essential to ensure that gender considerations are embedded throughout education systems rather than being isolated as a standalone concern. This requires equipping cluster leaders and members with skills in gender analysis, intersectional approaches, and gender-responsive planning to translate framework objectives into actionable interventions. Through this mechanism, the Gender, Equity, Inclusion

and Disability cluster (co-chaired by FAWE and AUCIEFFA), plays a catalytic role as the primary technical anchor for the Gender Framework. It provides leadership on gender analysis, generation and synthesis of evidence, and development of practical guidance, so that Member States and RECs can achieve minimum gender integration standards across CESA strategic objectives.

To ensure system-wide coherence, all thematic clusters shall integrate explicit GEI deliverables within their annual workplans and report progress against agreed gender indicators. This shifts gender integration from a voluntary commitment to a shared institutional responsibility, reinforcing the principle that gender equality is a collective outcome of the entire CESA implementation ecosystem.

9.5 Operationalising the Gender Framework: Key Imperatives

The section below provides additional considerations for ensuring the smooth operationalisation of the Gender Framework, aimed at effectively and holistically addressing the challenges experienced during implementation of the GES4 CESA 2016-2025. These are aimed at easing the buy-in, ownership, coordination, and evidence building for the Gender Framework:

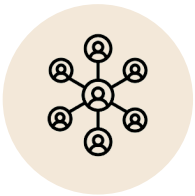


Shared roadmap for gender mainstreaming: This is largely a coordinated approach to gender mainstreaming where stakeholders form a coalition around an agreed platform aiming to move the policy interventions into concrete gender actions at country level. This roadmap would ensure that all stakeholders are rallied towards one direction, have full ownership of the GES4 CESA 2026-2035's flagship initiatives and have localised them at country level. Specifically, the priorities in the action plan would ideally be implemented by various stakeholders driven by comparative advantage. For instance, the ministries of education have country-level national education strategies, which are resourced through the national budgetary processes ensuring that key CESA initiatives are resourced, localised and implemented.

Stakeholders with experience in advocacy could ideally take lead in amplifying the priority gender interventions to boost equity and equality in access, enrolment, infrastructure and opportunities for improvements. Financiers would be rallied to ensure a coordinated funding approach so that none of the gender priorities are left out. This roadmap will also ensure that the activities as sequenced in the action plan are implemented in a timely manner, sufficiently resourced with the requisite expertise and resources, and outputs and outcomes are duly documented and reported.



Common monitoring, learning and evidence building framework: The common monitoring framework stems directly from the roadmap above where stakeholders would build a platform for coordinated gender reporting. As a sub-component of this roadmap, it would help stakeholders to jointly reflect on emerging evidence for learning and continuous improvements. There is a dearth of documented case studies or snapshots of good practice examples from different countries and regions on what works for gender mainstreaming in the context of limited financial resources and institutional capacity. This would also anchor continuous engagement for knowledge exchanges and communication among partners.



Enhance coordination approach between clusters and Regional Economic Blocs- such as EAC, ECOWAS, SADC, among others. For instance, the EAC has various committees that oversee various issues such as legal frameworks for cooperation, agriculture, tourism, conflict resolution, among others, but not education. ECOWAS has a standing committee on education, among other sectors, while among the SADC committees, there is none that explicitly focuses on education. Riding on the existing regional frameworks for cooperation, the GF4CESA 2026-2035 could be included as one of the areas on which member countries would make periodic reports to regional parliaments aimed at building greater momentum and motivation for implementation.



Build the business case and value proposition for gender mainstreaming: The primary value proposition is that gender equality is not just a moral imperative but a transformative force with tangible societal benefit. Benefits from gender equality in education at all levels from ECD, primary, secondary and tertiary transcend various sectors including economic growth and greater innovation and productivity in professional and market spaces due to diverse perspectives. Other arguments for the investment case for gender mainstreaming in education include broader perspectives in policy formulation processes, talent acquisition and retention of employees in education institutions as well as meeting legal and ethical compliance. These benefits could be further elaborated at country-level based on localised needs.



Build multi-stakeholder and multisectoral approaches: This is critical for ensuring collective implementation (among key education stakeholders) monitoring being prioritised, education actors with a gender mandate rallying their efforts and programmes towards shared objectives. In this case their gender interests, resources and expertise build synergies towards agreed interventions. In addition, ensuring that the gender strategy has a high level of endorsement among key education stakeholders is core to implementation and ownership of the GF4CESA 2026-2035.



Build a robust advocacy platform: Amplifying gender in the GEF4 CESA 2026-2035 through enhanced communication, reflections and country-level action plans drawing from the GEF, and having initiatives like the 'HeForShe' campaign, which proved greatly effective in drawing country level visibility, support and funding.[21] The advocacy platform will have various initiatives. Examples include social media dissemination channels and hashtags, continental, gender-focused regional and national campaigns, healthy cross-regional and across-country competitions showcasing 'best practice' examples in different areas, documented and popularised examples of great initiatives based on evidence gathered and shared across regions, among others.

[1] The HeForShe campaign in Africa, was designed by the UN Women as an initiative to engage men and boys as advocates for gender equality across the continent. The campaign received high-profile endorsements from African presidents like Presidents Kenyatta (Kenya) and Kagame (Rwanda), where gender mainstreaming was greatly amplified. It also gained significant visibility and support in other countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and South Sudan. The focus of the campaign was among others, education promotion, including STEM, changing norms around sexual and gender-based violence, and workplace equality. This would be achieved through championing change at universities, governments, and corporations to create tangible progress.

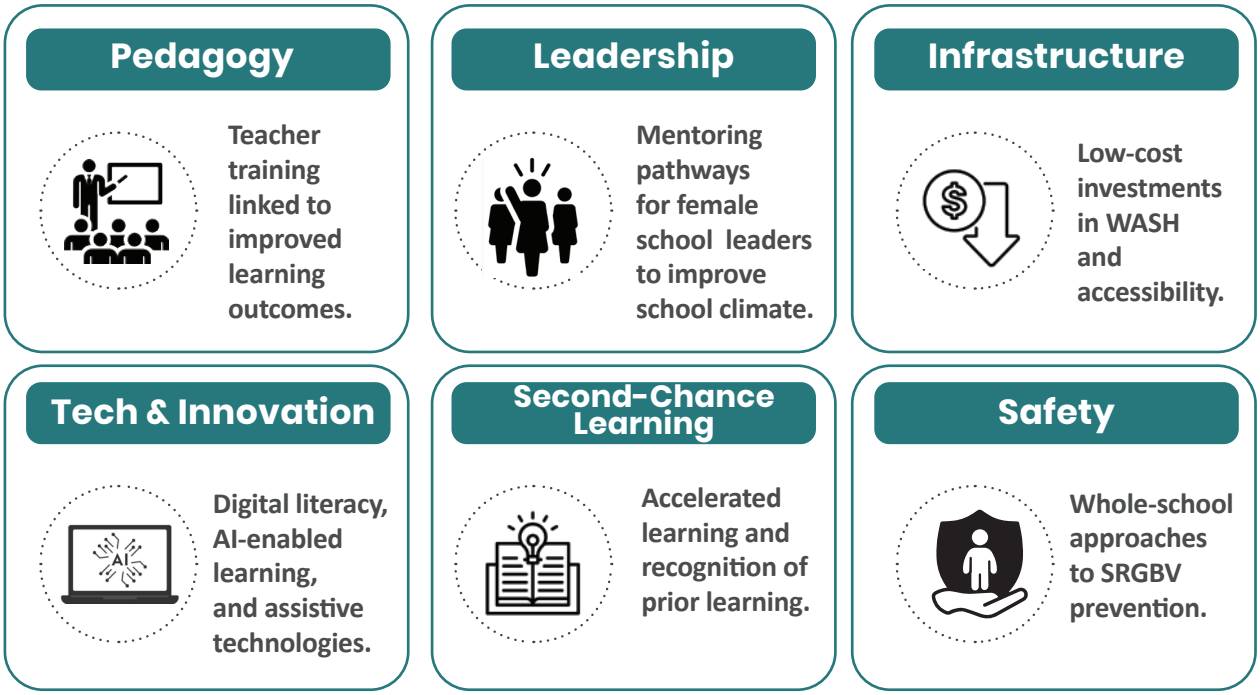


10

Evidence-Based Intervention

The new gender framework is designed as an analytical guidance piece – detailing a menu of evidence-based interventions. It represents a shift from broad strategic documents to an analytical guidance approach. The framework thus functions as a menu of evidence-based interventions organised around specific, actionable challenges that countries confront (see annex 1). This approach represents a fundamental paradigm shift from a prescriptive strategy to a diagnostic toolkit that provides analytical guidance about how similar countries achieved progress in gender, what worked and what failed, replete with the conditions that enabled success.

Figure 7: Evidence-Based Cost-Effective Interventions



10.1 Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions

Translating the Gender Framework into tangible outcomes requires strategic selection and implementation of interventions that are both financially sustainable and grounded in evidence of effectiveness. Member States operate within vastly different resource environments and institutional contexts, necessitating flexible intervention pathways that can be adapted to local capacity while maintaining fidelity to core gender equality principles. This section provides a differentiated menu of interventions designed to accelerate progress in mainstreaming gender across CESA 2026-2035's strategic areas, recognising that effective gender mainstreaming demands not only targeted programs for girls and women but also systemic transformation that engages all learners, educators, and stakeholders in dismantling barriers to equitable education.

Annex 1 presents a consolidated set of cost-effective and evidence-based interventions aligned to each Strategic Area, differentiated by Member State capacity (low, moderate and high). The interventions prioritise gender equality, equity, inclusion, diversity, and intersectionality, including refugees, displaced populations, learners with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, while actively engaging boys and men as partners. The table emphasises system-level integration, innovative resource mobilization, and strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), recognising wide variations in institutional capacity and financing across AU Member States.





11 Costing and Financing Principles

The implementation of the Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035 (GF4CESA 2026–2035) requires strategic, cost-effective and context-responsive financing approaches that strengthen existing education systems rather than creating parallel funding structures. Costing under GF4CESA is therefore framed as a planning and prioritization function, embedded within national and regional education financing processes.

- **Costing Approach:** The approach institutionalises gender, equity and inclusion priorities within national systems, aligns them with domestic resource mobilisation processes, and supports sustainability beyond project cycles. Under this approach, Member States integrate GF4CESA priority actions into existing education planning and financing instruments, including National Education Sector Plans (ESPs) and related annual operational plans; Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) and programme-based

budgets; and sector budget ceilings and performance-linked financing frameworks

- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Budget Tagging:** GF4CESA costing interventions follow the principles of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), enabling Member States to track financing for gender equality without creating separate or ring-fenced funding mechanisms. This includes systematic budget tagging of gender and inclusion-related expenditures across CESA Strategic Areas (SA1–SA6); identification of expenditure gaps affecting girls, women, and other marginalised groups; and the use of budget execution data to assess whether allocations translate into equitable outcomes.
- **Differentiated Costing by Intervention Type:** Recognising the diversity of Member State contexts and fiscal capacities, GF4CESA adopts a tiered costing approach that supports sequenced and realistic implementation, particularly for low- and lower-middle-income Member States. This approach distinguishes between low-cost, system-embedded interventions, including policy and legal reforms, teacher standards, curriculum review, EMIS enhancement, and gender mainstreaming in planning processes; moderate-investment interventions, such as capacity building, leadership development, teacher professional development, curriculum roll-out, and institutional strengthening; and higher-cost but catalytic investments, including gender-responsive infrastructure, digital access, TVET equipment, and large-scale inclusion initiatives.
- **Financing Strategies:** GF4CESA prioritises co-financing, reprogramming, and efficiency gains rather than the creation of new funding streams. Financing strategies therefore focus on the reallocation of existing education budgets to address gender and equity gaps; alignment of GF4CESA priorities with donor-supported sector programmes; and leveraging efficiency gains through improved targeting, strengthened governance, and results-based financing.
- **Linkage to Accountability and Learning:** Costing and financing under GF4CESA are directly linked to the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system, ensuring that expenditures are assessed not only for compliance but also for their contribution to gender-transformative outcomes. This linkage reinforces evidence-based decision-making and adaptive learning throughout the CESA 2026–2035 cycle.

Costing and financing under GF4CESA are directly linked to the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system, ensuring that expenditures are assessed not only for compliance but also for their contribution to gender-transformative outcomes.



12

Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting on the Gender Framework

A structured and accountable monitoring, evaluation, and reporting architecture is essential to ensure that the Gender Framework under CESA 2026–2035 delivers measurable and sustained results. The approach prioritises integration within existing CESA systems, strengthens institutional ownership across AU bodies and Member States, and ensures that progress on gender, equity, inclusion, and disability is systematically tracked, reviewed, and acted upon. It combines routine reporting through established governance mechanisms with independent mid-term and end-line evaluations to assess effectiveness, coherence, impact, and sustainability. Together, these processes will support evidence-informed decision-making, institutional accountability, and continuous improvement across the six Strategic Areas.

- **Framework Monitoring:** Implementation will be assessed against the six Strategic Areas (SAs).
- **Integrated Reporting:** Reporting will be incorporated into existing CESA governance and accountability mechanisms to prevent parallel systems and reinforce ownership.
- **Key Reporting Channels:** One strategic channel would be through CESA thematic clusters & AU specialised technical committees (STCs). The other would include agencies focused on education, science, technology, human resources, gender, and youth; In addition, leveraging AUCIEFFA and FAWE given their continental mandates on girls' and women's education to ensure accountability to AU institutions and support evidence-based reporting; Further, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) provide strategic reporting avenues by supporting regional aggregation, peer learning, and harmonisation.
- **Content of Reports:** Reports should go through the Women and Girls Education Cluster (expanded to Gender, Equity, Inclusion, and Disability Cluster); Include emerging lessons from ongoing initiatives; Document good practice examples of gender-focused initiatives.
- **Implementation of the Gender Framework for CESA 2026–2035** will follow a phased approach (figure 8) to ensure sequenced and sustainable progress across Member States. The immediate phase (2026–2028) will focus on establishing foundations, including dissemination of the framework, strengthening data and monitoring systems, operationalising gender-responsive budgeting, and building capacity for implementation. The medium-term phase (2029–2032) will scale key interventions and strengthen accountability mechanisms, while the long-term phase (2033–2035) will consolidate systemic change, address social norms, and conclude with a comprehensive end-term evaluation to inform the next CESA cycle.

Figure 8: Phased Implementation Roadmap of the GF4 CESA 2026-2035

Phase	Key Focus	Priority Actions
Immediate (2026–2028)	Foundations	Launch and disseminate GF4 CESA 2026-2035; appoint gender focal points; create gender sub-committee; mandate gender balance in clusters.
	Data and Monitoring	Upgrade EMIS 2.0; collect SA 6 indicators; develop regional dashboard; track female school leadership.
	Budget and Financing	Conduct gender budget analysis; cost SA 6 priorities; operationalize gender-responsive budgeting.
	Capacity and Advocacy	Train teachers and stakeholders in GRP; implement advocacy campaigns; engage leaders and media.
Medium-Term (2029–2032)	Scaling Interventions	Expand GRP; implement girls' STEM strategy; increase female school leaders; scale second-chance programmes.
	Labour and Pathways	Address occupational segregation; promote internships, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship.
	Accountability	Conduct mid-term review (MTR); assess effectiveness and scalability.
Long-Term (2033–2035)	Systemic Change	Shift social norms; engage men and boys; harmonize regional standards; strengthen research & knowledge.
	Evaluation and Learning	Conduct comprehensive end-term evaluation; assess institutional performance; inform next CESA cycle 2036-2045.



13

Critical Success Factors

- **Political Will and Leadership:** Gender, equity and inclusion (GEI) require visible, sustained champions at every level. The active involvement of member states is imperative.
- **Adequate, Predictable, and Sustainable Financing:** GEI interventions require dedicated, sustainable financing, not one-off projects or short-term donor funding. The Framework recommends that Member States: Implement gender-responsive budgeting across all education budget lines, ensuring that infrastructure investments, teacher training, curriculum development, and other expenditures advance gender equality; Establish dedicated budget lines for menstrual health management, gender-based violence prevention, girls' scholarships, and gender unit operations; Coordinate development partner investments through pooled funding mechanisms aligned with the six strategic areas.
- **Capacity Strengthening at All Levels:** Member States must systematically invest in building technical capacity for GEI analysis,

planning and implementation right from continental institutions to classroom teachers. This includes: Strengthening gender units within ministries of education with adequate staffing, budgets, authority, and technical expertise; Training education planners, budget officials, procurement specialists, and program managers in gender analysis, gender-responsive budgeting, and gender mainstreaming techniques; Building capacity of national statistics offices and EMIS units to collect, analyse, and use sex-disaggregated data; Equipping school leaders with skills to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, support pregnant and parenting students, and create inclusive school cultures; Training all teachers (pre-service and in-service) in gender-responsive pedagogy, with frequent refresher training; Developing cadres of national and regional gender experts who can provide technical assistance, facilitate learning, and drive innovation; Establishing centres of excellence in gender and education at regional universities to support research, training, and knowledge generation. Importantly, capacity strengthening must be continuous, not one-off training workshops. It requires among other factors, creating communities of practice with regional hubs ensuring sustained support.

- **Strategic Communication, Dissemination, and Ownership:** The GF4CESA will only transform systems if stakeholders know it exists, understand its relevance to their work, and see themselves as implementation partners. This requires intensive, sustained, multi-channel communication and dissemination: High-profile launch events at continental, regional, and national levels with visible participation of political leaders, creating momentum and signalling priority; Translation of the Framework into all AU working languages, key national languages, and production of multiple formats (full document, executive summary, abridged version, infographics, videos, social media content); Development of user-friendly toolkits for different audiences (policymakers, planners, school leaders, teachers, civil society, development partners) with practical guidance on how to apply the Framework in their contexts; Targeted dissemination through professional associations; Digital platforms; relevant forums and events; Media partnership; visible endorsements from African leaders. The GEID cluster will lead communication and advocacy with dedicated resources and professional expertise.

- **Data Revolution:** Strengthening Gender-Responsive Data Systems: We cannot manage what we do not measure. Strengthening gender-equity and inclusion responsive data systems is non-negotiable. This requires: Investment in EMIS infrastructure including data collection tools, data quality assurance systems, and analytical capacity; Real-time data dashboards enabling education officials to monitor gender indicators continuously and respond to emerging issues; Regular gender audits of education systems examining not just enrolment numbers but also learning outcomes, progression rates, leadership representation, resource allocations, and school climate; Investment in research generating evidence on what works, for whom, under what conditions, informing continuous improvement. The AU Gender Observatory, in partnership with AUCIEFFA, will establish a continental gender and education data hub aggregating national data, tracking progress against Framework indicators, and generating annual State of Gender Equality in African Education reports. This data infrastructure will transform how we understand, monitor, and accelerate progress toward gender equality in education.



14 Recommendations

Protect and track financing: This involves safeguarding and systematically monitoring allocations for gender-responsive interventions within national education sector budgets to ensure they are implemented as planned. It requires integrating gender priorities into budget planning and execution processes, using tools such as gender-responsive budget tagging, and regularly tracking expenditures to identify gaps or underfunded areas. By doing so, Member States can ensure that resources intended to advance equity, inclusion, and gender equality are effectively deployed and contribute to measurable outcomes in line with the CESA 2026–2035 Gender Framework. Strengthen accountability: Institutionalise measurable GEI indicators and regular reporting within continental and national review mechanisms.



Invest in institutional and human capacity: Build sustained technical expertise within ministries, teacher training institutions, and education agencies.



Promote adaptive learning: Systematically generate, analyse, and use evidence to inform continuous improvement and policy refinement.



Legislative and policy reforms: Effective operationalization of the GF4CESA 2026–2035 requires a comprehensive policy and legislative foundation to address persistent gender-based barriers in education, including child protection, harassment, and gender-based violence (GBV). This entails aligning national reforms with existing international and regional commitments, as well as leveraging continental and national legislative frameworks and platforms to reinforce policy coherence and enforcement.



Education sector gender-responsive policies, plans, and programmes: Education sector policies, strategic plans, and programmes must be explicitly gender-responsive, ensuring that curricula, teaching practices, and institutional processes promote inclusion, equity, and protection for all learners.



Institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming: Institutional mechanisms, such as dedicated Gender Units within Ministries of Education and other relevant bodies, are critical for coordinating mainstreaming efforts, providing technical guidance, and embedding GEI priorities into sector governance.



Sustainable financing is central to translating policy into action: Gender-responsive budgeting should include dedicated allocations for GEI interventions, complemented by innovative financing approaches that go beyond traditional budget lines, ensuring that resources match strategic priorities and support systemic transformation.



Data Systems and MEL Frameworks: Robust data systems and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks underpin evidence-based planning and accountability. This includes strengthening comprehensive Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to capture mandatory disaggregated data, including by sex, disability status, geographic location, and socioeconomic background, enabling policymakers and stakeholders to track progress, identify gaps, and guide adaptive interventions across the education system.

Annexes

Annex 1: Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions

Strategic Area	Cost-effective and Evidence-Based Interventions		
	Intervention	**Evidence**	**Outcome**
SA 1: Resources and Enabling Environment (*Obj. 1–3: Policies, governance, funding, curricula, infrastructure)*	▪ **Resources:** Conduct gender impact assessments before resource allocation. ▪ Integrate fully costed gender mainstreaming plans into national education sector plans and budgets. ▪ **Develop 2-3 priority partnerships** with clear co-financing arrangements. ▪ **Funding:** Leverage existing budget and governance systems; well-structured partnerships to increase resources by 15-30%. ▪ **Gender-responsive public financing linked to results**: Implement simple gender budget tagging in 2-3 priority areas (WASH, scholarships, materials). ▪ Establish one gender focal point in ministry with protected budget. ▪ **Gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP)/ Curricula:** Leverage low-cost interventions like revising stereotypical images in textbooks to reduce gender inequities; establish national centres of excellence for gender-responsive curricula. ▪ **Inclusive infrastructure:** Gender-segregated sanitation facilities, ramps and accessible classrooms for learners with disabilities; integrate renewable energy and climate adaptation in all infrastructure. ▪ **Governance/ female leadership in schools:** Mandate minimum 30% women in school management committees. ▪ **Safe learning environments** to prevent and respond to school-related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV).	Generate robust data on educational outcomes to guide policy and boost investment in the education sector.[22] Integration of FAWE's GRP approaches that demonstrate measurable improvements in classroom equity. Provision of gender responsive curricular for teachers and learners. Targeted infrastructure investments consistently improve girls' attendance and retention at lower cost than large-scale new builds. Established institutions and structures e.g., Gender Focal Point, co-financing partnerships, Provision of gender resource quotas i.e., budgets and human resource	Systematic curriculum reform shows measurable improvements in student outcomes within 3-5 years. Improved learning outcomes for girls and boys from pre-primary to Higher Education and tertiary levels. Inclusive education and reasonable accommodation of both girls and boys as well as learners with disability and in emergencies. Safe learning environment for girls and boys.

[22] UNESCO (2025). Investing in education increasingly requires domestic resource mobilization.

Annex 1: Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions *Continued*

Strategic Area	Cost-effective and Evidence-Based Interventions		
	Intervention	**Evidence**	**Outcome**
SA 2: Teachers, Educators, and Caregivers *(Obj. 4–6: Teacher policy, attractiveness, leadership)*	▪ **Teacher training:** Train master trainers who cascade through existing networks rather than hiring external trainers; integrate GRP into national education plans and teacher competency frameworks.[23] ▪ **Remove biased promotion criteria** to increase women's advancement. ▪ Gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogy in in-service training: target early childhood educators for gender training where gender socialization begins. ▪ Provide incentives for deployment to underserved areas; create teacher awards recognizing excellence regardless of gender. ▪ Leadership development through mentorship and peer networks is low-cost with high multiplier effects on institutional culture and student outcomes.	The African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL), a collaboration between ESSA, VVOB, ADEA and FAWE was founded to promote leadership through partnership.[24] School-based CPD results in stronger learning gains at lower cost than traditional workshops. Professional development and workload management resulting in improved retention and advancement of female teachers.	GRP offers a concrete, practice-based approach for tackling inequities by equipping teachers to create inclusive classrooms through balanced interaction, gender-sensitive lesson planning and non-discriminatory language.[25] Removal of barriers female teachers face including lack of maternity benefits and unsafe transportation affecting retention.[26]
SA 3: Pre-Primary to Secondary Education (ECED and Foundational Learning; SEL, Health & Well-being; and 21st Century and Labour Market Skills) (*Obj. 7–9: Foundational learning, well-being, 21st century skills)*	▪ *Foundational learning:* Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL); pre-primary education expansion; mother-tongue instruction. ▪ Integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) into existing instructional time costs less than standalone programmes. ▪ Gender-responsive STEM pedagogy from early grades. ▪ Addressing the digital gender divide and ensuring device access has high impact on girls' STEM/digital participation at scale.	Structured Pedagogy and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) results in "Great Buys" and are strongest cost-effective. [27] Integrated SEL and school health results in improved retention, learning and well-being, particularly for girls and displaced learners.	Early investment is consistently more cost-effective than remedial interventions later.

[23] VVOB (2025). "Teacher Professional Development for Gender Responsive Pedagogy in Sub-Saharan Africa: An evidence Review." VVOB – education for development.

[24] ESSA (2025). Why Partnership is Key to Transforming Education in Africa. https://essa-africa.org/node/2055

[25] FAWE. (2024). Scaling gender responsive pedagogy: Insights from the inaugural regional workshop.

[26] UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. 2024. Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. Paris: UNESCO.

[27] World Bank (2020). Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning.

Annex 1: Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions *Continued*

Strategic Area	Cost-effective and Evidence-Based Interventions		
	Intervention	**Evidence**	**Outcome**
SA 4: Higher Education and TVET *Obj. 10–12: (TVET–labor links, access, research)*	▪ **Financial aid for poor and marginalised women:** Provide targeted financial support covering tuition, transportation and childcare. Targeted scholarships for women, refugees, and marginalised groups; bridging and re-entry programmes; safe campus policies. ▪ Distance learning and recognition of prior learning (RPL) reduce costs while expanding access for women unable to relocate; mobile training units can dramatically increase rural women's access at modest cost; hybrid delivery models; establish mobile training units reaching rural women. ▪ **Structured mentorship programmes:** mentorship programmes cost little but significantly improve women's research career persistence. ▪ Apprenticeship quotas for women. ▪ Mandate minimum 30% women in TVET management and sector skills councils.	Finances are provided to Economically empower and included women. Increased women's research productivity and leadership.[28] improved girls' access to high-wage sectors; collaborative learning environments with girls thriving in STEM.[29] Gender-responsive governance and labour market links for sustainable skills development.[30]	Countries with gender-equitable higher education show stronger innovation capacity and economic growth. Countries investing in women researchers see stronger research output, innovation, and evidence-based policymaking. 21st century graduates with relevant labour market skills.
SA 5: Second Chance Programmes and Lifelong Learning *(Obj. 13–15: Second chance, adult literacy, lifelong learning)*	▪ Second-chance, rights-based learning systems: accelerated learning in safe spaces works best in safe spaces with flexible scheduling and tailored support addressing dropout reasons; as do flexible delivery / blended and digital adult literacy platforms. ▪ Community-based models /community learning centres: Leveraging trained community volunteers with structured curricula and supervision delivers quality at lower cost than formal teachers. ▪ Childcare facilities for young mothers. ▪ Trauma-informed support: Address early pregnancy/ marriage for girls, economic necessity for boys, heightened GBV risk for displaced girls, boys' recruitment risk into armed groups. ▪ Accredited pathways to formal education: Recognition of prior learning enables women to enter formal sectors where credentials currently exclude them. ▪ Financial literacy and career guidance integration: Programmes must move beyond functional literacy to content empowering women economically and socially.	Functional, cost efficient second-chance education programmes and approaches for re-engaging marginalised women and strengthening their economic agency.[31] Second-chance learning resources (i.e., curricular, budgets, infrastructural facilities, instructors or teachers) for the different categories of learners.	Flexible pathways recognising women's informal skills enable formal labour market entry and economic advancement. Addressing childcare enables sustained participation with high economic returns. Increased number of second-chance learners with relevant market skills with opportunities.

[28] AWARD. https://awardfellowships.org/#:~:text=About%20AWARD,environment%20to%20enhance%20gender%20responsiveness.

[29] UNESCO. Boosting gender equality in science and technology in TVET. https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Boosting+gender+equality+in+science+and+technology+in+TVET.

[30] AU. African Continental TVET strategy 2025-34. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44941-doc-AU_TVET_2025-2034_Strategy_ENGLISH.pdf.

[31] UN Women (2023). Second Chance Education (SCE) Signature Features.

Annex 1: Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions *Continued*

Strategic Area	Cost-effective and Evidence-Based Interventions		
	Intervention	**Evidence**	**Outcome**
SA 6: Gender, Equity, and Inclusion *(Obj. 16–18: Gender equality, cost of schooling, inclusiveness)*	▪ Conditional cash transfers. ▪ Male engagement programmes: Gender-transformative curricula explicitly challenge harmful masculinities and engage boys as allies. ▪ Menstrual health management programmes providing reusable sanitary products, private changing facilities, and pain management. ▪ Technology-enabled adaptive learning platforms. ▪ Intersectional data systems. ▪ Curriculum decolonization initiatives that centre African women's contributions to science, leadership, and innovation. ▪ Teacher recruitment strategies targeting women in STEM fields, men in early childhood development education, and teachers with disabilities through scholarships and accelerated certification pathways. ▪ Comprehensive sexuality education integrated across curricula that addresses consent, bodily autonomy, gender norms, and healthy relationships has reduced teen pregnancy. ▪ Alternative pathways for overage and out-of-school boys who face stigma, labour pressures, or conflict exposure, combining accelerated learning with vocational skills and psychosocial support. ▪ Positive masculinity curricula that deconstruct harmful gender norms affecting boys and girls, address boys' mental health, challenge violence as conflict resolution, and promote caregiving roles. ▪ Male teacher and mentor recruitment specifically targeting underserved communities provides role models for boys lacking positive male figures. ▪ Boys' and girls' clubs operating in tandem that address gender-specific vulnerabilities separately while creating joint spaces for dialogue and collaboration. ▪ Fatherhood and caregiving education for adolescent boys that challenges breadwinner-only masculinity and develops nurturing skills. ▪ Assistive technology lending libraries providing low-cost tools like screen readers, hearing aids, Braille materials, and adaptive writing. ▪ Inclusive teacher education that embeds disability pedagogy, sign language basics, and differentiated instruction into pre-service training rather than treating it as specialised knowledge.	Embedding gender, equity, and inclusion metrics into leadership performance contracts transforms rhetoric into action. Availability of adaptive positive masculinity curricular and programmes. Female STEM teacher, leaders and male teachers in ECDE recruited . Availability of sanitation products and comprehensive sex education curricular for learners. Provision of inclusive education programmes for teachers and learners.	Gender-equitable and inclusive education transforms individual trajectories and national development. Improved learning outcomes for girls and boys including learners with special needs and those in emergencies.

Annex 1: Suggested Cost-Effective and Evidence-Based Interventions *Continued*

Strategic Area	Cost-effective and Evidence-Based Interventions		
	Intervention	**Evidence**	**Outcome**
Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation (*Obj. 19–20: Implementation mechanisms, MEL)*	▪ Intersectional gender, equity, and inclusion indicators. ▪ Simple school- and system-level equity snapshots; scorecards. ▪ Strengthened CESA Clusters. ▪ Conduct annual sector reviews with intersectional analysis.	Equitable g classroom participation of girls and boys. Active involvement of CESA clusters.	Performance-linked MEL systems; adaptive learning; informing policy and resource allocation.
Cross-cutting Mega-trends (across all SAs)	Digital Literacy: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled learning systems; basic climate literacy; climate-resilient infrastructure; green skills, and EiE integrated into curricula and teacher training; inclusive emergency-safe learning spaces; crisis-ready education governance.	Digital literacy, basic AI, climate education, and emergency preparedness integrated into core curricula not standalone subjects to achieve higher student competency in critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	Africa positioned for digital economy, climate leadership, and to achieve Agenda 2063.

Annex 2: Tracking Gender, Equity and Inclusion (GEI) Integration in CESA 2026–2035

Strategic Area	Gender Integration Continuum				
	Gender Harmful/ Exploitative (0)	Gender Neutral / Blind (1)	Gender Sensitive (2)	Gender Responsive (3)	Gender Transformative (4)
SA 1: Resources and Enabling Environment	Policies and governance perpetuate or reinforce existing gender inequalities.	Policies and budgets do not consider gender; curricula and infrastructure designed without gender and intersectional lens.	Gender disparities acknowledged in education policies or budgets, but not systematically addressed.	Policies, budgets, and infrastructure actively promote GEI but do not yet challenge underlying power dynamics, transform social norms, or embed equitable decision-making across education systems.	Education governance and financing actively challenge discriminatory norms, redistribute power and resources, and institutionalise accountability for GEI outcomes.
SA 2: Teachers, Educators, and Caregivers	Teacher policies assume neutrality and ignore gendered power relations.	Policies and professional development do not address GEI.	Gender gaps in recruitment, deployment, or leadership are recognised but weakly addressed.	Teacher education, deployment, and career progression address barriers for women, men, and marginalised groups, but gaps remain in transforming policies and leadership structures to challenge systemic gender inequalities.	Teaching workforce policies transform norms around leadership, care work, safety, and authority, promoting equitable representation and influence across genders.
SA 3: Basic Education	Curriculum and pedagogy perpetuate stereotypes; learning environments unsafe.	Standard curriculum and teaching, no GEI consideration.	Teaching and learning recognise gender and marginalised learners.	Learning materials, pedagogy, and school environment actively support GEI; mentorship for girls.	Transformative learning reshapes gender norms, equitable participation, and leadership; socio-emotional and foundational skills reinforce equality.
SA 4: Higher Education & TVET	Admission and career pathways exclude women, marginalised groups, or displaced learners.	Access and programmes are uniform without gender consideration.	Policies and programmes recognise barriers for women, marginalised, and displaced learners.	Gender-responsive access, scholarships, leadership opportunities, and labour-market linkages.	Transformative integration of GEI in higher education/TVET; systemic equity in research, leadership, and labour-market readiness.

Annex 2: Tracking Gender, Equity and Inclusion (GEI) Integration in CESA 2026–2035 *Continued*

SA 5: Second-chance & Lifelong Learning	Programmes reproduce inequities; barriers prevent participation.	Programmes are equally available but ignore GEI needs.	Programmes accommodate women, girls, and marginalised learners.	Programmes actively reduce barriers, integrate flexible delivery, and mentorship.	Lifelong learning and second-chance programmes transform access and outcomes for historically excluded learners.
SA 6: Gender, Equity & Inclusion	GEI considered as an add-on or isolated theme/ standalone or symbolic priority.	Policies and programs do not address gender gaps.	GEI objectives articulated but weakly operationalized.	GEI systematically mainstreamed across planning, implementation, and M&E, using intersectional data and accountability mechanisms.	Education systems actively redistribute power, address structural discrimination, and institutionalise transformative GEI outcomes across all SAs.
Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation	Implementation mechanisms and M&E systems do not track gender or intersectionality.	M&E tracks general outputs without GEI focus.	Sex-disaggregated data collected inconsistently; limited use in decision-making.	Gender analysis conducted, gender-responsive MEL systems institutionalised, gender-responsive budgeting; data-evidence linked to national education policies & plans.	MEL systems drive accountability, learning, and reform by measuring systemic change in power, access, and outcomes across all SAs.
Cross-cutting mega-trends (Digitalization, Climate, Demographics, Mobility, Fragility)	Mega-trends addressed without attention to differential gendered impacts.	Responses do not consider GEI implications.	Gendered risks and opportunities of mega-trends acknowledged.	Education responses integrate gender- and intersectionality-responsive approaches to digital access, climate resilience, migration, and fragility.	Education systems leverage mega-trends to transform gender relations, expand agency, and future-proof inclusive development.

Interpreting the Gender Markers (0-4) based on CARE International Gender Marker and Gender Integration Continuum tool. **1. Gender Harmful / Gender Exploitative (0):** Interventions reinforce or worsen existing gender inequalities, unintentionally perpetuating stereotypes, excluding women, girls, or marginalized groups, or strengthening unequal power dynamics. **2. Gender Neutral / Gender Blind (1)**: Interventions ignore gender differences and inequalities, treating all participants the same and missing opportunities to address disparities or advance gender equality. **3. Gender Sensitive / Responsive (2–3):** Interventions recognize gender differences and actively work to reduce inequalities, adjusting activities and approaches to promote fairness, inclusion, and equitable participation, while partially addressing systemic barriers. **4. Gender Transformative (4):** Interventions intentionally challenge and change harmful gender norms, power imbalances, and structural barriers, aiming for lasting gender equality and social change across systems and communities. Tracking gender, equity, and inclusion under CESA 2026–2035 requires moving beyond activity-level monitoring toward system-level performance measurement. The Gender Framework therefore emphasizes harmonization between GEI indicators, the CESA Results Framework, national EMIS, and continental monitoring instruments, including the CESA Scorecard and Africa SDG4 Scorecard, to enable comparability, peer learning, and evidence-informed decision-making.

Annex 3: GF4 CESA 2026-2035 Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation Plan

The results-based framework is designed to help track GF4CESA 2026-2035 implementation progress. It helps in planning and understanding the various facets of gender integration while highlighting the activities/interventions, desired changes, indicators and responsible persons. The specific targets will be determined by respective Member Countries or partners.

Strategic Area	Priority Intervention	Responsibility	Strategic Indicator	Target	Timeline	Data Source
SA1 – Resources and Enabling Environment	Introduce gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in national education sector plans	Ministries of Education (MoE) & Finance	% of education budgets tagged for gender-responsive expenditure	TBD	Annual	National budgets; CESA Scorecard
	Establish gender-responsive infrastructure standards (WASH, safety, disability access)	MoE; Infrastructure Agencies	% of schools meeting gender-responsive infrastructure standards	TBD	Biennial	EMIS; School facility audits
	Establish gender focal points with protected budgets in Ministries of Education	Ministries of Education; AUC	# of Member States with funded gender units in MoEs	TBD	Annual	AU Gender Observatory
	Align national education laws, policies and sector plans with GF4CESA gender and inclusion standards	Ministries of Education; Ministries of Justice; AUC	% of Member States with education laws, policies and sector plans formally aligned to GF4CESA gender and inclusion standards	TBD	Biennial	National legal reviews; Education Sector Plans; AU CESA Compliance Reports
SA2 – Teachers, Educators and Caregivers	Integrate Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) into pre-service teacher training	Teacher Training Institutions; MoEs	% of training institutions implementing GRP	TBD	Annual	Teacher Education MIS
	Mainstream GRP in in-service teacher professional development	MoEs; Teacher Service Commissions	% of teachers certified in GRP	TBD	Annual	Teacher CPD database
	Reform promotion and deployment criteria to eliminate gender bias	Teacher Service Commissions	% of leadership appointments held by women	TBD	Biennial	School staffing data
	Establish mentorship & leadership networks for women educators	MoEs; Professional Associations	# of women participating in leadership mentoring	TBD	Annual	Programme reports
	Introduce gender-equitable teacher deployment, safety and retention policies	Ministries of Education; Teacher Service Commissions	Gender parity index of teacher deployment and retention in rural, fragile and hard-to-staff areas	TBD	Biennial	Teacher MIS; Payroll & deployment records; CESA Scorecard

Annex 3: GF4 CESA 2026-2035 Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation Plan *Continued*

Strategic Area	Priority Intervention	Responsibility	Strategic Indicator	Target	Timeline	Data Source
SA3 – Pre-Primary to Secondary	Implement targeted girls' retention & re-entry programmes	MoEs; Schools; CSOs	Girls' completion rate (%)	TBD	Annual	EMIS
	Expand digital learning access for girls	MoEs; ICT Ministries	Ratio of girls to boys with digital learning access	TBD	Annual	EMIS; ICT surveys
	Implement SGBV prevention, reporting and response in schools	MoEs; Child Protection Agencies	% of schools with functional SGBV reporting systems	TBD	Annual	School safety audits
	Integrate gender-disaggregated learning assessments into national & regional testing systems	Education Ministries; National Assessment Bodies; AUC	Gender gap in foundational and secondary learning outcomes (literacy, numeracy & digital skills)	TBD	Biennial	National learning assessments; AU education monitoring reports
SA4 – Higher Education and TVET	Provide targeted scholarships for women, refugees and marginalized groups	Ministries of Education; Universities	% of beneficiaries who are female	TBD	Annual	HEMIS; Scholarship records
	Introduce quotas for women in STEM and TVET programmes	Universities; TVET Authorities	% of female enrolment in STEM/ TVET	TBD	Biennial	HEMIS; TVET MIS
	Establish structured mentorship and research support for women	Universities; Research Councils	Retention rate of women in the research tracks	TBD	Annual	University HR & research data
	Mandate minimum 30% women in TVET governance and sector skills councils	TVET Authorities; Labor Ministries	% of women in TVET governance bodies	TBD	Biennial	Governance reports
	Track gender equity in post-graduation employment and earnings for TVET and higher education graduates	Ministries of Education & Labor; Universities; TVET Authorities	Gender gap in graduate employment and earnings within 12 months of completion	TBD	Biennial	Graduate tracer studies; Labor force surveys; CESA performance reports

Annex 3: GF4 CESA 2026-2035 Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation Plan *Continued*

Strategic Area	Priority Intervention	Responsibility	Strategic Indicator	Target	Timeline	Data Source
SA5 – Second Chance and Life-long Learning	Implement accelerated learning programmes for out-of-school girls	MoEs; NGOs; RECs	# of girls re-enrolled through second-chance programmes	TBD	Annual	Alternative education MIS
	Establish flexible adult literacy and skills training programmes	Adult Education Agencies	Completion rate of adult women learners	TBD	Annual	Programme MIS
	Provide childcare and psycho-social support for young mothers	Social Services; Education Ministries	% of young mothers completing education programmes	TBD	Annual	Social protection databases
	Track economic reintegration of women and men completing second-chance and adult learning programmes	Ministries of Education & Labor; Adult Education Agencies; RECs	Gender gap in employment, self-employment and income among 2nd-chance programme graduates within 12 months of completion	TBD	Biennial	Tracer studies; Labor force surveys; Adult education MIS
SA6 – Gender, Equity and Inclusion (Cross-cutting)	Establish minimum gender integration standards across all CESA Strategic Areas	AU/CIEFFA; FAWE; AUC	% of SAs meeting gender-integration benchmarks	TBD	Biennial	CESA Scorecard
	Apply a Gender Marker to all CESA-funded programmes	RECs; Implementing partners and AUC	% of programmes rated Gender-Responsive or Transformative	TBD	Annual	Programme appraisal system
	Produce and publish annual GF4CESA Gender Scorecard	AU/CIEFFA; FAWE	Scorecard published and peer-reviewed	TBD	Annual	GF4CESA Scorecard
	Conduct biennial peer-review on gender and equity performance	AU; RECs	# of countries reviewed and action plans adopted	TBD	Biennial	AU review reports
	Track adequacy and equity of financing for gender and inclusion across all CESA programmes	AUC; Ministries of Education & Finance; RECs	% of total education sector spending allocated to gender-responsive and inclusion-targeted interventions	TBD	Annual	National budgets; Public Expenditure Reviews; CESA Gender Scorecard

Annex 4: GF4CESA 2026-2035 Scorecard

The GF4CESA 2026-2035 scorecard is an institutional assessment tool designed to facilitate self-analysis of the results gender, equity and inclusion integration into education. It helps to identify priority areas that require to be strengthened or maintained, and challenges to be addressed through an action plan. It can also be used to track implementation, costs, and beneficiaries thereby enabling better understand and monitoring of resource requirements.

Strategic Area		Indicators	Targeted Outcome Areas	Level of Achievement				Notes
				High Gender Equality	Medium Gender Equality	Low Gender Equality	No data available	
SA 1: Resources and Enabling Environment	1.1	Gender responsive policies	Gender & education laws enacted and implemented					
			Gender analysis done and gender action plans/strategies developed					
			Execution of global, continental and national commitments/protocols					
	1.2	Gender responsive governance structures	Equitable female representation in school boards/managements					
			Active participation of learners, parents & teachers in school management					
			Gender responsive school regulations, reporting and feedback mechanisms					
			Equal representation of women and men in school/college departments					
	1.3	Gender responsive budgets (adequate funds)	Adequate funds allocated and disbursed to schools/colleges					
			Fund availed for strategic gender needs e.g., curricular & learning resources					
			Funds availed for practical gender needs in education e.g., meals, water and toilets					
	1.4	Gender and Education	Equal access to education for girls and boys					
			Equal completion rates for girls and boys in basic education and TVET/ universities					
	1.5	Gender sensitive teaching and learning resources	Gender responsive curricular, text books free of stereotypes					
			Gender responsive lesson plans and classroom management					
			Gender responsive classroom environment					
	1.6	Gender responsive learning environment	Girls/boys have adequate infrastructure e.g., classrooms, labs, library, sports					

Annex 4: GF4CESA 2026-2035 Scorecard *Continued*

Strategic Area		Indicators	Targeted Outcome Areas	Level of Achievement				Notes
				High Gender Equality	Medium Gender Equality	Low Gender Equality	No data available	
SA 2: Teacher, Educators, Caregivers	2.1	Female teacher recruits i.e., STEM, ICT, AI	Deployment of female teachers in STEM, ICT and AI subject areas					
			Increased number of female STEM teachers					
	2.2	Gender responsive teacher training	Gender responsive teacher training curricular					
	2.3	Teacher professional development	Adequate qualified teachers (SGD 4.c)					
			Functional professional code of conduct for teachers					
			Adequate teacher remuneration and benefits					
SA 3: Pre-Primary and Secondary Education	3.1	Improved ECED and foundational learning	Improved ECED/inclusive education facilities/ (SDG 4.a)					
			Provision of safe learning environment (SDG 4.a)					
			Access to free, equitable and quality pre-primary education (SDG 4.1)					
			Access to quality ECD and pre-primary education (SDG4.2)					
	3.2	Socio-economic skills	Provision of life skills education that responds to learner's needs					
			Provide entrepreneurship skills					
	3.3	Labor market skills	Increased number of youth/adults with relevant market skills (SDG 4.4)					
SA 4: Higher Education & TVET	4.1	Strong link between TVET & labor market	Increased transition to market opportunities by TVET/college graduates					
			TVET/university graduates have decent jobs/entrepreneurship (SDG 4.4)					
	4.2	Access to quality Higher education	Expanded TVET/STEM scholarships (SDG 4.b)					
			Access to quality and affordable TVET/ university education (SDG 4.3)					
	4.3	Education research including STEM	Increased funding for education research					

Annex 4: GF4CESA 2026-2035 Scorecard *Continued*

Strategic Area		Indicators	Targeted Outcome Areas	Level of Achievement				Notes
				High Gender Equality	Medium Gender Equality	Low Gender Equality	No data available	
SA 5: Second Chance Programs & Lifelong Learning	5.1	Opportunities for out of school children youth	Increased infrastructural facilities for out of school children and youth					
			Adequate teachers/trainers for out of school youth and learners					
			Innovative					
	5.2	Expansion of adult education	All adults (f/M) achieve adequate literacy/numeracy (SDG 4.6)					
			Adult literacy sustains livelihoods of female and male learners					
	5.3	Support for lifelong learning	21st century market skills for improved employability					
			Skills aligned to the digital revolution and AI for current market needs					
			Established lifelong learning programmes and policies					
SA6: Gender Equity and Inclusion	6.1	Gender integration into education at all levels	Eliminate all forms of gender disparities at all levels of education (SDG 4.5)					
			Intervention enrolment, retention, completion and transition of girls/boys					
	6.2	Reduced cost of schooling	Provision of free primary and secondary education					
			Eliminate gender barriers in education e.g., school uniforms and transport					
	6.3	Provision of inclusive education i.e., emergency, disaster	Education programmes meet the needs on persons with disability					
			Provision of EiE while addressing gender, equity and inclusion					
			Specific gender targeted interventions for women, men, girls and boys					

Note: The Gender Framework Scorecard is Adopted from UNGEI's *Gender Equality in Educa on Snapshot (GES) User Guide (Excel)* and its accompanying GES guidance *Gender Equality in Education Snapshot Tool*. Instructions: For each strategic area (SA), rank the level of achievement as either green, yellow, red or black. **1. GREEN** – depicts GEI has been fully achieved; **2. YELLOW**- means moderate GEI integration achieved; **3. RED** - low GEI achieved; 4. GREY - no progress in GEI achievement. NB: please provide additional information as needed to justify the rankings reviewed against the targeted outcomes based on organizational self-assess and report findings to relevant authorities.

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