CONCEPT PAPER

Reaping the demographic dividend:

Investing in girls and women’s education

JUNE 2017

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
1. Introduction

African governments need to be aware that efforts to create a demographic dividend are likely to fail as long as vast portions of girls and young women are denied their rights, especially their rights to education, health, and their reproductive rights. Countries will fail to reap a demographic dividend unless they meet a minimum of pre-requisites in terms of policy and institutional settings including human capital development, delivered only through quality education.

Policies to improve and strengthen girls and young women’s education are not only critical, but economically sound. When combined with employment, they have the potential to expand the social and economic capacity of countries through the contributions of the youth workforce. Girls’ and women’s education thus remain the most powerful weapon to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment in Africa, in order to promote and sustain the desired changes in the community and society.

African Union (AU) Member States have placed education at the center of their development programs and have established national institutions to directly work to develop and implement actions to improve access. However, discussing challenges related to girls’ and women’s retention in the educational system and their performance, engaging serious and in-depth debates in this area and meaningful participation remain difficult matters for many countries.

AU/CIEFFA, as per its mandate, addresses the above mentioned matters by building partnerships and networks to communicate, inform and share education related issues, interventions, needs, success, challenges with stakeholders. However, AU/CIEFFA needs the support of decision makers, media, and all other stakeholders to advocate for wider awareness and constructive engagement from all in ensuring investment in girls and women’s education.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this meeting are as follows:

a. Address funding matters on human capital and financing social development to achieve the demographic Dividend
b. Define strategies enhancing women’s participation as a prerequisite to economic growth
c. Outline changes in policy and institutional settings in Member states on human capital development

3. Expected Outcomes

a. Pledge for further investments in girls and women’s education in Africa from AU Head of State or Representative
b. Best practices on returns on investment in girls and women’s education
c. Policies underlying to return on investment in human capital
4. **Format of the meeting**

The meeting will comprise brief discussions relating to the objectives outlined.

5. **Participants**

Participants will comprise of Member States, partners, funding institutions, religious leaders and members of the media.

6. **Dates and venue of Event**

The meeting will take place on the margins of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during the 4\textsuperscript{th} High Level Panel, in collaboration with the Department of WGDD on 30 June 2017.