

Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Guideline in Kenya's Recognition of Prior Learning Framework

Stakeholder-based approach to embedded gender into RPL



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ACRONYMS

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CDACC	Curriculum Development Assessment and Certificate Council
CICan	Colleges and Institutes Canada
COEs	Centers of Excellence
GBA	Gender-based analysis
GE	Gender Equity
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
HRBA	Human-rights based approach
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KEFEP	Kenya Education for Employment Project
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
KNQF	Kenya National Qualifications Framework
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFC	Mastercard Foundation
MoE	Ministry of Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning (PLAR)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TVETA	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority
YAW-K-TVET	Young African Works-Kenya: Youth Employability Through TVET
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (RPL)
PWDs	Persons with disabilities

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assessment tools¹: are instruments that assessors will use to assess the skills and knowledge of candidates against set criteria or standards. These would facilitate consistency and quality assurance of the assessment processes.

Assessor²: is the one who carries out the assessment to ascertain the claimed competencies based on evidence submitted and/or observed. The assessor determines the comparability of learning against the standards. The RPL assessor should show professional judgement in assessing the value of experience vis-a-vis formal learning.

Accessibility: includes all supports, services and accommodations that service providers make to mitigate challenges and barriers faced by people from disadvantaged groups. This includes physical supports such as accessible design in infrastructure and technological devices, financial supports, flexible pathways, inclusive policies, language support, mental health, and trauma-informed services.

Decent work³: is the availability of employment in conditions of freedom, equity, human security, and dignity. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Empowerment⁴: is the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their

own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion: or Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a term used to describe policies and programs that promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals, including people of different ages, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations.

Formal Education⁵: is institutionalized, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and, in their totality, make up the formal education system of a country.

Gender⁶: refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc

1. <https://www.knqa.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Guidelines-for-RPL-2020.pdf>

2. <https://www.knqa.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Guidelines-for-RPL-2020.pdf>

3. ILO Decent work; United Nations Economic and Social Council (2006) The right to Work, General comment No. 18.

4. Adams, Robert. Empowerment, participation and social work. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

5. Unesco.org

6. [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#)

Gender analysis⁷: is a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities, and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys in certain situation or contexts. Gender analysis examines the relationships between females and males and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other.

Gender bias: may be subconscious or conscious beliefs that influence a person's actions and behaviours about how a person is or must act a certain way based on the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender/sex disaggregated data⁸: is the collection of information and the analysis of results on the basis of gender, e.g., data on the status and socioeconomic roles of different groups of men and women or data based on the biological attributes of women and men.

Gender discrimination: is providing differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. This involves systemic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources, and participation in decision making.

Gender equality⁹: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Gender equity¹⁰: is the process of bring fair to men and women with emphasis on the equality of results. Gender equity may involved temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic biases. It is about the fair and just treatment that takes into account different needs, cultural barriers and discriminations.

Gender focal point¹⁰: are change agents whose overriding role is one of advocating for increased attention to and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in his or her agency's policy and programming and in the related work of development partners. Gender focal points serve as a hub for new information on gender equality and as a conduit for information on what has worked well in the organization.

Gender inclusive: describes a process, practice or activity that includes a deliberate

Gender mainstreaming¹¹: is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Gender norms¹²: are ideas about how men and women should be and act. We internalize and learn these "rules" early in life. This sets up a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotyping. Put another way, gender norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture, and community at that point in time.

Gender responsive: focuses on an intervention or action that is responsive to an inequality or disparity for a marginalized group of people based on their gender, primarily women. The intent of the action is to correct or create equity between the disadvantaged group and the norm.**Gender sensitive:** describes an intervention or action that includes a gender lens or gender perspective into its fundamental design. Gender is not the main focus, but consideration to inclusion of gender has been embedded in the creation of the intervention.

Gender¹³: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.

Intersectionality: provides a framework for understanding how a person's identity is multifaceted and interconnected. This means that people who belong to multiple marginalized groups (such as women, person of disabilities, rural, etc.) do not experience inequities in isolation. Instead, these experiences are compounded and must be addressed with a comprehensive understanding and approach.

Informal Learning: takes place outside schools and colleges and arises from the learner's involvement in activities that are not undertaken with a learning purpose in mind. Informal learning is involuntary and an inescapable part of daily life.¹⁴

Jua Kali: refers to the informal sector of traders and small business owners running shops on the street or in open market spaces.

Non-formal Learning: takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organizational framework. It arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a particular activity, skill or area of knowledge and is thus the result of intentional effort. But it need not follow a formal syllabus or be governed by external accreditation and assessment.¹⁵

Recognition of Prior Learning/Prior Learning Assessment Recognition¹⁶: are the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated, and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

Sensitization: is a process of exposure and training to raise awareness towards a topic such as gender and accessibility. The goal of sensitization is to normalize and/or mainstreaming of these topics.

Stakeholders: are a group or individual who is affected by or who can affect the success of an organization or project. It also includes those who have an interest in the outcome of the organization or project.

7. UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. [Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You](#)

8. The African Development Bank Group Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2021 - 2025

9. UN Women, [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#)

10. UN Women and ITC-ILO. 2013. Blended course for UN System Gender Focal Points.

11. UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. "Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You", ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2

12. UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. ["Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You"](#).

[^] UNICEF, Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf>

13. unwomen

14. [Council of Europe](#)

15. [Council of Europe](#)

16. [NQFPedia.pdf \(saqa.co.za\)](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, Kenya released the National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy Framework in Kenya to address the skill labour gap for underemployed workers. Through this policy, workers who gain skills outside the formal education system can earn credentials recognized by public and private organizations to increase economic opportunities, especially for youth. As government agencies, education and training facilities and assessment centres, worker associations, private sector employers and members of the community start to create and interact with RPL processes, it is vital that gender mainstreaming and gender equality practices are embedded in the foundation and messaging of RPL in Kenya. This document provides guidance and insights informed by various local and international stakeholders to organizations and agencies in Kenya developing gender-responsive and equitable RPL practices and procedures.

While young Kenyans face numerous challenges that impede their ability to access formal education and training, women and girls face additional barriers. Issues include patriarchal social norms surrounding work, social assumptions about what type of work is suitable for women, early pregnancy, the burden of domestic chores, and gender-based violence. The result is that young women are more likely to face unemployment, work in the informal sector, work in low-paying sectors, and lack formal qualifications when compared to male peers.

RPL thus has tremendous potential to benefit women and address issues of gender inequality through enhancing women's employability, facilitating their transition to formal sector employment, improving access to further training and education, encouraging lifelong learning, as well as the intangible benefit of promoting women's dignity and self-esteem by offering them formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already have.

RPL systems should be designed with the overall goal of enhancing gender equality at multiple levels, whether at the macro, national level or micro-level of local communities. At the same time, it is equally essential for the RPL services, procedures, and tools themselves to be gender-responsive in their design and implementation. Gender-responsive tools mean that the full range of RPL services can anticipate and accommodate the myriad of issues that young women may face to ensure RPL is equally attractive, accessible, and beneficial to women.

This strategy has been developed through the Young Africa Works – TVET 02 project, implemented by Humber College, NorQuest College, and Red River College (a consortium of Canadian colleges) with funding from the Mastercard Foundation in partnership with Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan). This project focuses on supporting implementing of a vital Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system in Kenya and introducing RPL services at TVET institutions. Gender Equality (GE) is a cross-cutting theme of the project to ensure that the RPL process is gender-responsive.

The first section introduces the concept of RPL, presents why RPL can be used as a tool for women's empowerment and enhancing economic opportunities for women and other vulnerable groups, and analyses a series of stakeholder interviews conducted at international, national, institutional and community level to identify challenges, solutions, and gaps for women in the existing RPL framework.

The second section outlines four guiding principles informed by RPL stakeholder consultations: i) gender-inclusive design, ii) intersectional identities, iii) systems thinking, and iv) Kenya's socioeconomic context. Stakeholders should embed these guiding principles in gender-responsive RPL policies, practices, and procedures at the institutional and organizational levels.

The third section examines how and why gender equality practices should be embedded within all levels of the RPL system in Kenya. It addresses prevalent challenges stakeholders face at the national, institutional, and community levels when implementing gender equality within the existing education and skills training infrastructure and mitigating strategies.

The fourth section highlights best practices and approaches organizations can use when operationalizing gender equality practices and procedures.



1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) presents a pathway for women's empowerment in Kenya and supports inclusive economic opportunities for underprivileged groups, including communities with intersectional identities. However, historic barriers to education have left women without access to formal training programs, and, as RPL gains momentum in Kenya, they are also being left behind in gaining certification and recognition of income-generating skills learned through domestic or informal work. As the government of Kenya implements a national RPL system, it is vital to ensure gender mainstreaming is embedded in all levels of effort and that stakeholders have the capacity and awareness of gender equality practices when conducting RPL activities. Addressing the challenges for gender equality in a national RPL context depends on valuing inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, intersectional considerations, participation of community members, national agents and international partners, the formal and informal private sectors, and the potential of all women in Kenya to achieve sustainable and equitable economic growth.

Without a comprehensive gender strategy, stakeholders and organizations interested in RPL will have difficulties designing and implementing cohesive RPL policies, programs and initiatives that are gender sensitive and gender responsive. Having a unified goal for gender equality that aligns with the national gender and economic development vision also helps create evidence-based decisions and monitor the success of new strategies and approaches. A shared understanding of gender equality ensures commitments from stakeholders and brings together all organizations under the same vision.

Although there are international standards and approaches to gender equality, there is no singular gender strategy that can be universally applied to all contexts – nationally, institutionally, and locally. The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance and insight for various stakeholders, including skills development programs, TVET institutions, public agencies, private sector organizations and community leaders when addressing gender inequalities within education at their organizations. It will support developing practices that allow more women to engage in meaningful employment. These practices may include:

- Policy and procedures developed and relating to RPL at national, institutional and community levels
- Gender-inclusive materials, such as curriculum and training guides, at TVET institutions
- Assessment tools, procedures, processes and guidelines for test-makers and assessors
- Identification of sectors for RPL, especially industries that have gender disparities
- Supports and services for vulnerable test-takers, including women, people with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, and linguistic minority groups
- Guidelines for building linkages between national agencies, institutions, private businesses, and communities
- Gender sensitization for RPL professionals and related implementers
- Creating communication strategies and campaigns for RPL

This guide is informed by consultations conducted with female and male stakeholders at multiple levels: government, civil society, local women's organizations, worker's organizations (i.e., unions), and Kenyan gender experts. Communicating with community stakeholders and local leaders creates a better understanding of the local, lived perspectives of women's issues that hinder them from accessing RPL services. The scope of this guide is mainstreaming gender in RPL to achieve gender equity and realize gender responsiveness.

1.2. Objectives

- To strengthen institutional frameworks for gender equality.
- To ensure compliance with the Constitution on gender.
- To increase awareness of gender in the implementation of RPL.
- To integrate gender in programs, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting.

1.3. Rationale

Understanding RPL

RPL is the process of recognizing knowledge and skills gained outside of the formal education system. It identifies, reviews, and assesses the skills learned through lived experience and matches them against prescribed standards or qualifications (Miguel 2016, Aggarwal 2015). This validates an individual's knowledge and skill and provides a certification or credit value that is often required for entering formal education, further learning and training, and professional growth and upgrading. The term "RPL" refers to the entire recognition, assessment, and certification process, including advising, counselling, future program recommendation and/or workforce engagement (SAQA 2013, Hlongwane 2019).

RPL in Kenya

The need for RPL in Kenya stems from the structure of the colonial education system, which left many with significant gaps in their education, training, and development. This situation has led to inequality of opportunities, illiteracy, and unemployment. While there have been efforts to address these issues, skills development outcomes still do not match market needs due to a mismatch between skills produced and labour market needs. Demographic trends show that unrecognized skilled persons, such as in Kenya's youth, have acquired competencies through informal and non-formal means. However, those skills cannot be utilized due to lack of certification and formal recognition (KNBS 2019).

Kenya's RPL policy recognizes the fact that people who work in formal, informal, non-formal and jua kali (informal worker) sectors gain knowledge, skills, expertise, and attributes through practice and should have the opportunity for the recognition of their acquired knowledge and skills against exit-level outcomes as set out in the Kenya National Qualifications Framework. Therefore, the policy will target different categories of people in society who are seeking access to certification regardless of their educational background, age, status in society, disability, race, religion, or nationality.

RPL: a pathway for empowerment and gender equality

While young Kenyans face numerous barriers that impede their ability to access formal education and training, women and girls face an additional layer of barriers, such as patriarchal social norms surrounding work, social assumptions about what type of work is suitable for women, early pregnancy, the burden of domestic chores, and gender-based violence. Therefore, young women are more likely than young men to face unemployment, work in the informal sector, work in low-paying sectors, and lack formal qualifications.

Women are already working within vital sectors that drive the Kenyan economy but face a lack of pay and recognition for their work, which has led to a lower standard of living. By formalizing their work through RPL, women have the potential to gain enhanced employability, transition to formal sector employment, enhanced access to further training and education, more lifelong learning, and improved dignity and self-esteem. Therefore, RPL systems should be designed to improve gender equality at the macro (national) and micro (local communities) levels. RPL should also be gender-responsive in its design and implementation to anticipate and accommodate all women’s issues and make the systems equally attractive, accessible, and beneficial.

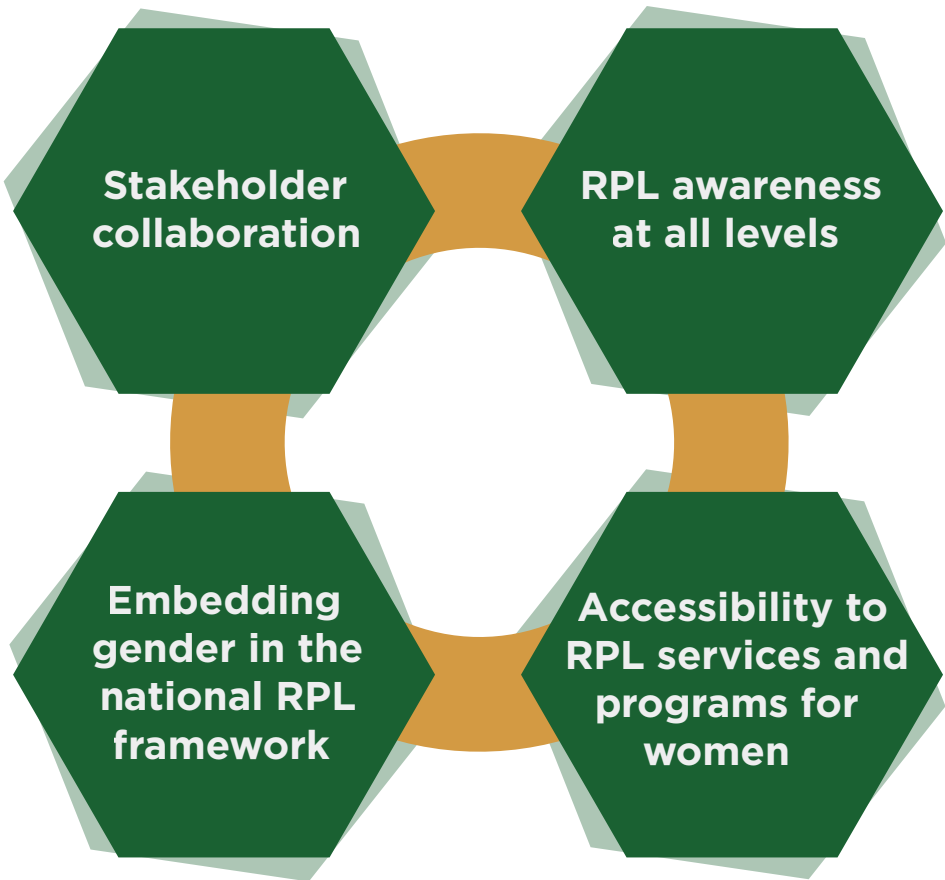
1.4. Methodology

As part of this gender guideline’s innovative and collaborative approach, stakeholders at varying levels of power, influence, and interest in the RPL process in Kenya were consulted in its creation. These stakeholders include government agencies, educational institutions, private sector organizations, students, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and other interested parties. The inclusion of diverse segments of Kenyan and global society ensures the viewpoints used to inform the integration of gender equality into the national RPL framework are holistic and represent multiple interests.

Interviews were semi-structured around an impact gap model with a gender lens to uncover challenges women face in the education system and RPL, solutions and resources used by key players, and gaps in the system that need to be addressed. The valuable insights provided by stakeholders were used to identify needs, critical areas of intervention, and opportunities where gender-equitable practices would have the most significant impact.

1.5. Summary of findings

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders found that RPL has the potential to be a viable and valuable pathway for underprivileged groups, especially women and women who belong to multiple identified groups, including PWDs, out-of-school youth, refugees, and young mothers. Through RPL, women can attain economic empowerment by accessing better employment options, enhanced economic opportunities, and entry or reentry into further education. Stakeholders with experiences and expertise in RPL and gender issues reported issues that fell under four thematic areas that highlight significant opportunities to address gender inequality.



Stakeholder collaboration/relationships

Throughout the interview process, the central theme of miscommunication between stakeholders led to duplication of efforts, confusing or ambiguous terminology, mistrust of the RPL process and practices, inequitable services for women, and lack of decision-making opportunities by groups most impacted by RPL. These issues created incompatible systems that excluded stakeholders, especially those with high interest but low power, such as community-based groups. Increased effort is needed to develop a shared understanding of concepts and procedures to allow stakeholders to benefit from a more significant collaborative effort. Some opportunities suggested by stakeholders include:

- Stakeholder mapping
- Bridging gaps to include all stakeholders (private sector, jua kali, administration, secondary schools, women groups, men)
- Embedding gender-sensitive RPL in existing policies and practices at organizations such as KNQF, national development departments, CoEs, and learning centres.
- Standardizing gender mainstreaming policies in TVET institutions
- A national reporting system for RPL
- Localizing RPL in Kenya with consultation and focus groups of SMEs, policymakers, and implementers at the service level
- Stakeholder engagement during outreach, recruitment and Human Resource policies recognizing and promoting gender in RPL

RPL awareness at the community, institutional and market sector level

The lack of awareness of RPL and its potential to increase women's livelihoods was common throughout the interviews. Information is not effectively communicated to women in the choice of channels and accessibility of the message and language. This area also included how decision-making stakeholders such as business owners, TVET faculty and staff, and policymakers used different terminology and concepts of how RPL functions nationally. Market and economic systems are traditionally viewed as gender-blind or gender-neutral¹⁷. Because RPL operates near market and economic spaces, there has been a tendency to impose a gender-neutral lens on RPL, which has left women unable to access resources available to men. Some strategies to address raising RPL awareness include:

- Building pathways for vulnerable women groups (ex., parents, dropouts, rural, refugees) to RPL
- Marketing RPL to women with a focus on building awareness of the advantages of RPL and self-esteem
- Targeted campaigns to communities/leaders, especially religious groups, parents, husbands, men, and rural populations
- Engaging stakeholders in what RPL is and its impact on women in the private sector, institutions, primary/secondary schools and professional organizations

Embedding gender in the national RPL framework

Although RPL has become a priority area for the Kenyan government to formalize workers' skills, a lack of interventions targeting women within larger systems and processes persists. This type of intervention occurs top-down and must be addressed within all levels of service providers, institutions, and organizations. Segregating gender issues duplicates the effort needed to implement changes, so gender mainstreaming, gender-based policies, gender-responsive programming, and gender sensitization within public agencies, institutions and the private sector are approaches to benefit all stakeholders and be efficient with limited resources. Other and more specific strategies include:

- Gender-sensitive training for assessment centres to address gender bias
- Building capacity for RPL in women-dominated sectors (health, childcare, textiles, culinary, etc.).
- Increasing women in leadership/assessment roles
- Increasing gender-friendly STEM courses in secondary school
- Monitoring with gender-disaggregated data
- Embedding gender sensitivity in quality assurance and assessment procedures

Accessibility to RPL services and programs for women

Accessibility to RPL is often expressed as physical accommodation, such as travelling long distances or disability-friendly childcare spaces, and in its gender-inclusive approach, such as gender-inclusive language, linguistic profiles, levels of certification and flexibility of testing etc. For many women, the barriers that forced them to drop out of secondary school will continue to act as barriers to accessing RPL services and using them as a pathway for further education. For women to use RPL as empowerment, the RPL infrastructure needs to ensure it is not being modelled by the same inequalities in formal education. Some areas of concern included:

- Financial assistance, including transportation to and from assessment centres, costs of tests and materials, accommodations, and wages and time lost
- Gender-friendly facilities, including childcare, maternal care spaces, and access to sanitary and hygienic spaces
- Location of facilities, especially for women in rural areas
- Flexible pathways, including partial credentials or bridging programs, to aid with reentry to the education system and/or workforce
- Flexible testing times that coincide with women's daily schedules
- Gender-sensitive language translation and interpretation for information about RPL and the assessments
- Facilities with front and administrative staff with gender-sensitive training



The choice of sectors and programs is crucial when examining accessible pathways for women in the RPL system. Selection of sectors should include both those where women are typically underrepresented (non-traditional sectors), such as STEM, applied tech, trades, higher ranking culinary arts, etc., as well as the selection of industries where women are overrepresented such as early childhood education, childcare and domestic work (i.e., nannies), and agricultural-allied sectors.

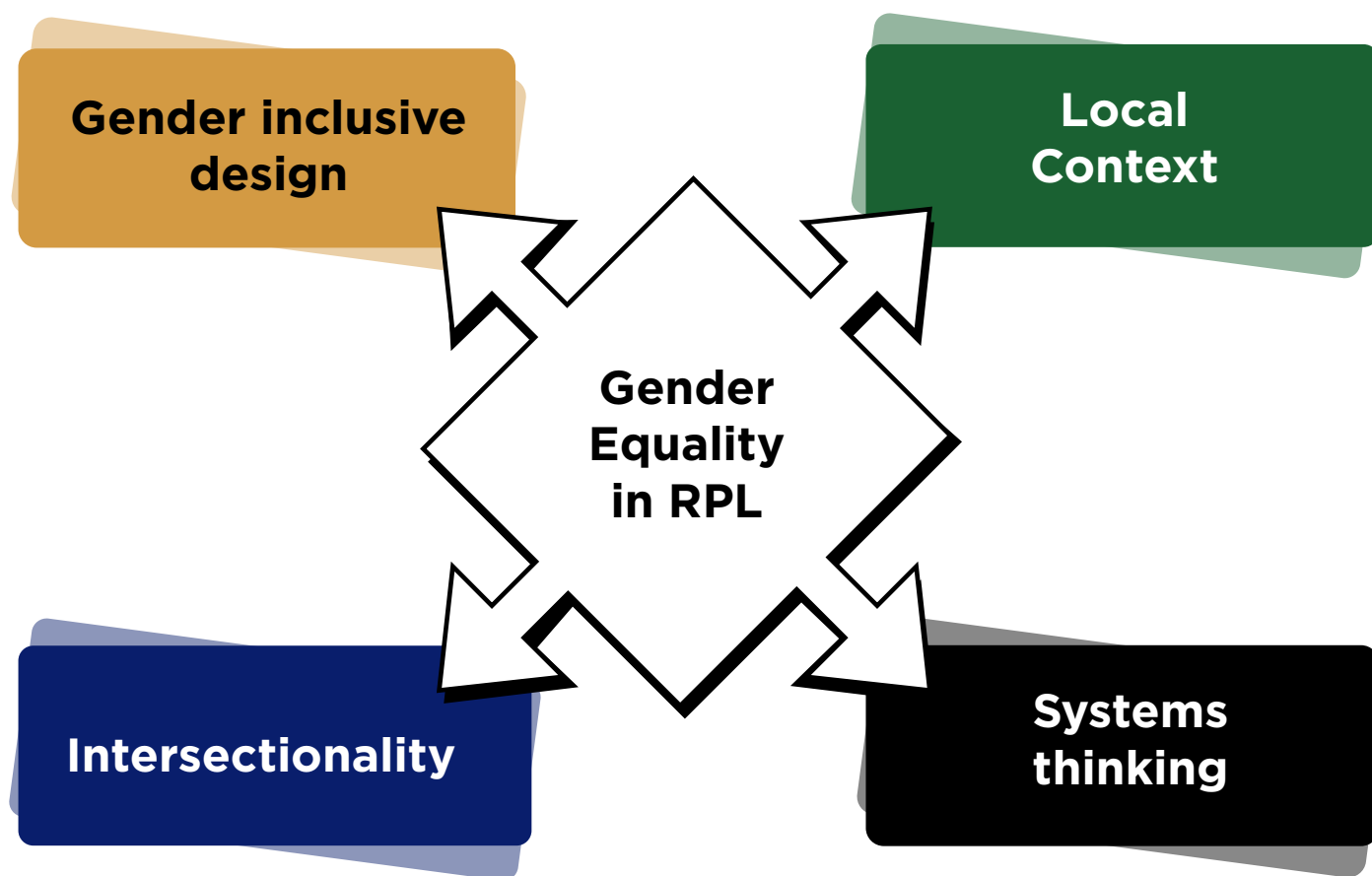
These traditionally feminine sectors are often informal, undervalued, and lack pathways to formal education and training. RPL offers an alternative stream for credentials which formalizes the sector and raises its market value.

In addition, RPL can support bridging the wage gap between women and men who experience different pay for similar work. For example, women often learn cooking skills through domestic work, but the hospitality industry is partial to employing male chefs and kitchen staff.

2. Guiding principles

These Guiding Principles offer a tool to create a common framework on which stakeholders with different interests, capacities, resources, and desired outcomes within the RPL process can enhance efforts to increase gender equality within their organizations. By keeping these principles embedded in all actions, women who go through different stages of the RPL process, from accessing information, taking tests and assessments, and entering the workforce or further education, will experience consistent gender-inclusive practices. Successful experiences throughout the RPL process are vital in empowering women to value their skillsets and build confidence that the system can lead to a proficient workforce.

All RPL and gender strategies should center around stakeholders to ensure they are relevant to Kenya, meet beneficiaries' needs, and encourage buy-in from all parties. The recurring themes raised by stakeholders inform the following principles and sections. These themes are central to enhancing women's experiences accessing RPL in Kenya. Although there is no one-size-fits-all gender strategy for organizations to implement RPL, the following four concepts ensure any new or existing gender-based practices are grounded in principles relevant to the community and target groups.



2.1. Recognition of intersectional identities

Understanding that women and other gender identities face multifaceted discrimination that compound barriers and challenges to attaining sustainable and dignified livelihoods is integral to gender equity and equality. Projects or supports designed to empower women must realize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Any gender-based or gender mainstreaming intervention must be flexible to accommodate women who belong to multiple underprivileged groups. The following is a non-comprehensive list of identifiers reported by stakeholders which impact how women face barriers to education, formal training, and entry to the workforce.

- Visible and invisible disabilities
- Religious, cultural, and ethnic identities
- Socioeconomic status
- Migrant status
- Marital status
- Single and young mothers
- Mental health and trauma
- Drug and substance abuse
- Gender identities (LGBTQA+)¹⁸

2.2. Gender-inclusive and accessible design

Gender-inclusive and gender-friendly services and supports are rooted in universal and inclusive design practices formed from sectors ranging from architecture to digital tools. At the centre of gender-inclusive designs are women as the system's primary users; however, inclusive design principles ensure that adaptations for women result in better systems and services for everyone trying to access RPL. Segregated services can be unsustainable, especially in wide-reaching contexts, due to the cost of resources to maintain parallel systems. Striving for gender-inclusive and mainstreaming practices increases the likelihood that changes are manageable.

For the RPL context, gender-inclusive designs are embedded within physical structures and technical processes that allow women to access higher economic and educational pathways. For example, portfolios are a standard assessment method in RPL; however, this is an inaccessible practice for many women because the documentation materials may be too expensive or out of scope for many workers. Other examples include:

- Appropriate and diverse assessment options, including considerations for literacy and education
- Facilities that are:
 - Easily accessible via local transportation
 - Considerate of rural populations and cost of time and transport to urban testing centres

- Provide childcare on-site or with local childcare centres
- Hygiene and sanitary facilities for women
- Physically accessible for PWDs
- Front-facing staff and faculty within institutions who have received gender sensitization training, especially concerning attitudes towards women in non-traditional sectors
- Assessments in multiple languages or with interpretation services
- Financial support to accommodate for informal workers and low-income wages
- Flexible scheduling to work with women's daily lives

2.3. Integrating system thinking

Systems thinking is an approach that describes the importance of understanding how different components, both internal and external to a specific discipline or discourse, impact each other through complex interconnecting and interdependent networks. Changing a single systemic element can positively and negatively affect different sections, even though the two units may seem disconnected. Establishing a fixed goal is one strategy for creating positive outcomes within a system. By becoming goal-orientated, strategies can help to define key players and stakeholders, predict behaviours, devise interventions, and measure impact based on the desired effect (Arnold and Wade, 2015). Using system thinking to integrate gender into RPL will guide holistic, sustainable, and wide-impacting outcomes for women.

It is essential to keep systems thinking at the forefront of RPL processes in Kenya because RPL exists in multiple contexts worldwide. Therefore, as it is introduced and formalized in Kenya, it is crucial

to retain best practices learned in other countries. Then, stakeholders can adapt RPL to the local context to ensure the changes are intentional, long-lasting, and sustainable by interested stakeholders with various interests, influences, and capacities.

To ensure RPL is centred in the local contexts while being mindful of the widespread influences, gender-based policies and procedures should situate the outcomes of people who access RPL first¹⁹. This priority means making value-based decisions that position recipients of RPL certification, especially female recipients, at the centre of the design. Although organizations will be designing strategies that serve their communities and needs, ensuring that changes benefit test-takers will keep consistent and positively resonate throughout the local, national, and international hubs.

The following are examples of goal-orientated strategies or policies that demonstrate how different stakeholders can use systems thinking to

achieve a common outcome:

- Sustainable Development Goals
- The Big Four Agenda and Vision 2030, plus other gender politics and national development policies in Kenya
- International gender strategies and frameworks (such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy)

2.4. Kenyan socioeconomic context

Any intervention must be localized and informed by decision-makers and beneficiaries to make activities meaningful and sustainable. Gender equality strategies should align with long-term national goals. This section summarizes Kenya's current socioeconomic situation that should be considered during the development and implementation of RPL projects.

Vision 2030 and the Big Four agenda

The Kenya Vision 2030 aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized, middle-income country by 2030 that provides a high quality of life and a clean and secure environment to all citizens. As a part of this vision, the Big Four Agenda is the third medium-term economic blueprint from 2018-2022 that focuses national resources and attention on four major sectors: food security and nutrition, affordable universal health care, affordable housing, and manufacturing. Vision 2030 and the Big Four Agenda also emphasize education and training, leading to a skilled workforce; however, there is a skills mismatch between graduates and labour market demand. Therefore, RPL programs and practices should be sensitive to new and evolving strategic plans, especially relating to economic needs and directives, as the Kenyan government rolls them out.

Kenya's National RPL Framework

The Kenyan National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) developed the national RPL Policy Framework in 2020 to provide an umbrella framework for all RPL activities in Kenya. It integrates RPL into the existing legal and policy infrastructures in the education and training sectors by i) aligning RPL to the Kenyan National Qualification Framework (KNQF); ii) providing objectives and outcomes of RPL; iii) defining roles and responsibilities for institutions; and iv) outlining the process of implementing RPL in Kenya. Included in the RPL Framework is a directive for inclusivity, non-discrimination, and gender-responsive policies and practices that address obstacles to women's employability, formal sector employment, access to education and training and promoting dignity and self-esteem.

The government of Kenya has been supported by two international partnerships that have collaborated with KNQA to establish and roll out RPL in the country. The Young Africa Works TVET-02 project, funded by the MasterCard Foundation through CICAN, supports RPL policies, procedures and rollout to TVET institutions, who will use RPL to provide candidates pathways back to formal education. Humber College leads this project in partnership with NorQuest College and Red River College. The PROSPECTS partnership, a collaboration of the ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, IFC and the World Bank with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Netherlands, aims to enhance the employability of refugee and Kenyan youth through recognition of skills and prior learning. This project supports the value of RPL to move the informal economy to the formal economy, especially for the jua kali sector and refugee communities.

Impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 had a significant impact on the education infrastructure, involving lowered revenue for educational institutions, permanent closures of private institutions, and higher enrollment demands on public training institutes and remote learning platforms (MoE, 2021). In addition, students face more substantial mental health and substance abuse challenges due to the pandemic, increasing absenteeism, dropout rates, and inconsistent enrollment. Also, there have been higher pregnancy rates, especially for girls and young women, accelerating the need for gender-friendly facilities and support. A significant focus of RPL is helping people enhance job opportunities as they search for better employment. However, RPL can also help students who have had their studies interrupted due to the pandemic or other unpredictable event reenter the education system.

3. Embedding Gender Equity in RLP Practices and Procedures

3.1. GE in National Framework

Strategies and rationale

Several policies and gender-based strategies exist within various contexts and agencies in Kenya's public sector (See Appendix 2). By having overarching directives and mandates, implementers of RPL have a cohesive framework to build equitable programs and initiatives. In addition, successful gender mainstreaming approaches include orientating policies and processes with broader national policies and development objectives such as Vision 2030 and international benchmarks such as the SDGs²⁰.

By aligning with overarching, macro-level goals, duplication of efforts is lessened, and it is easier to build relationships between stakeholders. Alignment with national-level policies also increases the efficiency of monitoring and assessing programs that serve the general population and support targeted, vulnerable people. Gender-based policies must be established at the national level and utilized, monitored, and enforced throughout programs and projects.

Some examples of how gender equality can be embedded in national frameworks include Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy \(FIAP\)](#). FIAP has embedded six gender-related action areas that all international assistance must adhere to when designing and delivering programming and aid:

- Core Action Area: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls
- Human Dignity (health and nutrition, education, humanitarian action)
- Growth that Works for Everyone
- Environment and Climate Action
- Inclusive Governance
- Peace and Security

These action areas ensure funding is not just bridging gaps in service but addressing the root problem of inequality. This policy also ensures that gender is brought into every project, no matter the topic. It normalizes the concept that gender inequalities exist systemically worldwide and must be addressed at every level and in all sectors.

Challenges

Owing to the large number of organizations and public agencies participating in the RPL process in Kenya, it can be challenging to facilitate meaningful communication between stakeholders, especially those from rural and hard-to-reach areas. Without an intentional focus on knowledge sharing and equitable communication methods, policymakers in education and economic sectors can be disconnected from local gender advocates²¹. Therefore, measures are necessary to ensure all parties from local communities are involved in developing RPL through an open dialogue.

3.2. GE in Institutions

Strategies/rationale

Establishing relevant gender equality practices within organization structures should prioritize the context of the local communities. Therefore, strategies and priority areas to embed GE will differ between institutions. However, consistent standards and outcomes within an institution will increase women's and girls' access to certification. Organizations may also be client-facing, such as TVET institutions, women's centres, training and assessment centres, and private businesses, so gender policies and procedures will greatly impact women's experience in RPL.

Gender mainstreaming best practices direct organizations to have clear roles and responsibilities, mandates, and accountability procedures within the institution and between governmental and oversight agencies²². Because the capacity and resources to facilitate gender equality activities may vary and be limited across institutions, activities, whether implementation or recognition of certification, should account for gender-based actions such as Gender Committees and gender focal points. Organizations and institutions also have opportunities to collect gender-disaggregated data that can then be used to inform evidence-based decision-making that will impact local communities and national and international scales.

Gender equality at educational institutions involves changing gender norms in subject and career choice and increasing women's

participation in male-dominated sectors. It also includes changes to washrooms, childcare facilities, and other infrastructure, which facilitate women's participation in education and training

Gender inequalities within the internal hierarchy at organizations are also the reason for the lack of women in leadership. Underrepresentation affects how decisions are made, including policies that fail to acknowledge the needs and roles of women. Industry players promoting RPL among their workers need to ensure equal opportunities for women, that women who gain certification through the RPL route are compensated as per their skill level, and that women who are looking to enter formal employment through RPL credentials be taken seriously by employers.

Some other concrete actions institutions can take to embed gender equality in their practices are: gender-sensitive training of all staff; promoting gender-inclusive language from leadership; providing services to support women's mental health and wellbeing, enforcement of sexual and workplace violence policies and procedures; engaging with women and men to gain feedback when designing and implementing policies and procedures; creating schedules for regular review of current policies to ensure they are up-to-date; and engaging community members to uncover hidden biases or underrepresented intersectional groups who may be excluded from the RPL framework

Challenges

Establishing gender equality practices at the institutional level often fails because of where the intervention occurs in the structural hierarchy and the limited resources for gender equality initiatives. If the staff responsible for gender-based activities is too low in the hierarchical system, it becomes difficult for gender-responsive decision-making to take hold²³. Gender equality activities should be holistic and include senior leadership and staff interacting with female test-takers or trainees to create lateral change within an institution.

3.3. GE in Community and Individual Level



Strategies/rationale

Gender perceptions at the community level direct women’s roles at the household level and their ability to exercise their agency within the family and in the world of work. For gender mainstreaming to be effective, there needs to be a change of perception at the community level on gendered roles and norms. RPL provides pathways for women in the informal sector to gain credentials; however, their skills may be undervalued or disregarded at the community level, so they may be discouraged from accessing RPL.

Gender training at the community level will not only see more women accessing RPL for skill recognition, but it will also lead to increased participation of women in formal education and training. Traditional gender roles at the household and family levels lead to many women dropping out of secondary education. As necessary as the need for gender-friendly institutions, it is equally vital for the community to facilitate and promote women’s access to quality education and employment. Gender mainstreaming at the community level involves a multi-stakeholder approach, partnerships between community-based groups, community leaders and elders, household members, and the engagement of men and boys.

Additionally, gender attitudes at the community and household levels strongly influence a woman’s perception of her abilities. Therefore, promoting gender equality at the community level will lead to more women gaining confidence to access RPL to get their skills recognized. Furthermore, formal credentials will mean that women can have increased participation in formal employment, enter male-dominated sectors like STEM, and have more opportunities to enter the political and governance sphere.

Challenges

Changes to the status quo are most often met with resistance. A participatory-based approach to training increases awareness-raising, and involving local stakeholders effectively can get the message across. It can also be hard to initiate change at the individual level, as women can be cautious about disrupting things or lack the self-confidence to access RPL. Identifying champions of both genders become a motivating factor in getting others to follow.

4. Operationalizing GE strategy in Kenya

This section recommends specific activities to ensure gender equality within the RPL context in Kenya. The practical application of gender equality is complex. There is no universal approach that will meet the needs of each community; therefore, this list is non-exhaustive and should be adapted to the needs and capacity of the RPL service provider. New and existing RPL activities should continually use gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation to constantly assess women’s situation in RPL.

4.1. Stakeholder relationship and management strategies

Approaches and Strategies

Gender Equality Senior Leadership

Gender-inclusive initiatives must start at or be supported by the senior leadership level, who will be champions for gender equality. Gender equality leadership is based on three major principles: leadership, inclusion, and transparency. Those goals are foundational in how senior leadership approaches embedded gender equality in an organization’s infrastructure. Some activities leadership should imbue in their organizations include²⁴:

- **Leadership**
 - Embedding values of gender equality in visions, mission statements, strategic plans, and organizational culture.
 - Ensure current policies are gender-sensitive by identifying factors that impede women from accessing RPL within the organization and how those factors impact women differently from men
 - Review the organization’s governance structure and hiring practices to identify and mitigate gender biases or discriminatory practices.
 - Be informed with gender-responsive data and oriented towards gender equality goals as decision-making near the top of a hierarchy permeates all levels of an organization.
- **Inclusion**
 - Create awareness about gender equality, norms, biases, and stereotypes through appropriate training, resources, and other education for employees.
 - Engage with other RPL and women’s advocacy and empowerment stakeholders when developing strategies, policies, and procedures to ensure gender equality is considered holistic and supports women’s empowerment.
 - Establish and maintain goals and targets for gender equality with performance indicators relevant to the local context and aligned with national objectives.
 - Engage men in gender equality discussions to ensure that all members support change in the organization.

24. Adapted from the Gender Equality [Blue Print Blueprint for Gender Equality Leadership in the Canadian Private Sector](#) ([globalcompact.ca](#)) and Women’s Empowerment Principles. [High-Level Corporate Leadership | WEPS](#)

- Implementing gender-sensitive language in all documents, organizational structure, and company culture.
- Inclusion of all stakeholders, such as employers, workers, and the labour market, to ensure that skills match training requirements.

• Transparency

- Establish tools and processes that are sustainable within the organization for regular data collection, goal setting, evaluation of RPL processes, and reporting
- Collect, measure, and analyze gender-disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data to gain a well-rounded perspective on the effectiveness of the gender strategy, RPL services, and gender equality progress.
- Maintain open internal and external communications about gender equality practices and processes to ensure relevant stakeholders can be informed and participate in gender equality progress.

Participatory approach

Participatory approaches and methods are used in a range of activities to integrate all voices into the development of a project, design, or other initiatives. It is often utilized to counter traditional top-down methods by making the beneficiaries of a project influential in all stages of development. Within Kenya's RPL framework, beneficiaries and stakeholders are far-ranging. They include women in informal occupations, RPL policymakers, assessment centres, community leaders, religious leaders, educational and training institutions, professional worker organizations, financial institutions, women in leadership positions, community experts, women's advocacy groups, refugee communities and people with disabilities. Some strategies for using a participatory approach to increase gender equality in the development of RPL practices include:

- Identifying stakeholders relevant to the scope of the project using a gender lens
- Including women's voices from multiple focal points at all development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages.
- Creating safe spaces to allow stakeholders to give constructive feedback anonymously or without backlash.
- Using clear language to inform all participants of the goals, values, and outcomes of the RPL process being initiated and encourage active participation.
- Having accessible and flexible methods for beneficiaries to participate and providing skills upgrading opportunities for RPL candidates

A participatory approach increases agency and ownership of beneficiaries in the RPL process, improves the capabilities of stakeholders to engage with RPL, and allows stakeholders to enact influence on the development of an RPL system that is localized in Kenya²⁵.

4.2. Intersectional, inclusive, and accessible practices

Approaches and Strategies

Human rights-based approach

The human-rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework based on international human rights standards and primarily aims to promote and protect human rights. At the heart of the HRBA is addressing inequalities, discriminatory practices, and imbalances within systems of power that impose barriers on groups of people from accessing development projects²⁶.

HRBA is anchored in internationally recognized treaties, laws, policies, and rights and obligations relating to civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. International development projects governed by organizations such as the United Nations require projects to integrate fundamental notions into the design of a project. A significant outcome is the promotion of gender equality and enhancing women and other vulnerable groups to participate and benefit from development initiatives and frameworks.

Adapting HRBA into RPL practices and procedures means increasing RPL distributors' capacity to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and fulfill state or duty-bearers' obligations to respect, protect, and improve the rights of people, especially women seeking RPL. It also encourages people seeking RPL certification to recognize and participate in strengthening their rights within society.

There are four foundational principles in HRBA:

- **Universality and indivisibility of human rights:** Every person is entitled to enjoy fundamental human rights by virtue of human rights. All human rights (civil, cultural, economic, political, and social) are equally important, and there should not be a hierarchy of importance. For example, RPL is a pathway to improve women's economic opportunities; however, there are other instances in which RPL can improve women's overall lives, such as empowerment and self-esteem, that should also be embedded within gender equality practices and policies.
- **Equality and non-discrimination:** People must enjoy human rights without exclusion based on race, sex, language, religion, political affiliation, or another status. Within a gender-responsive RPL system, it is not enough to simply allow women to take an assessment but also ensure gender or other intersectional identity is not a factor for success.
- **Participation and inclusion.** All people are entitled to participate in society and social change to their full potential. Therefore, women must be included in the decision-making process in developing, delivering and maintaining RPL practices.
- **Accountability:** This recognizes that service providers have legal and ethical obligations to oversight agencies and beneficiaries. Within an RPL context, all stakeholders must bring attention to inequalities, especially for women, as they arise in the RPL process and work to address change. Accountability includes administrative, social, political, legal, and international dimensions²⁷.

Gender-based analysis

A gender-based analysis (GBA) aims to understand the power dynamics and how they are linked to the outcomes for women and girls through a comprehensive investigation of gender-sensitive qualitative and quantitative data. Using a GBA, institutions and other organizations can assess and carry out recommendations informed by gender-disaggregated data within their capacity²⁸.

26. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

27. Elevating Rights and Choices for All: Guidance Note for Applying a Human Rights Based Approach to Programming. UNFPA, 2020

28. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/gender_equality_toolkit-trousse_outils_egalite_genres.aspx?lang=eng&ga=2.195500908.1590495202.1643724344-80654195.1632422270#tool_4

Successful GBA practices also include disseminating data to internal and external stakeholders who can use the information to inform future decisions in RPL on the latest and most accurate evidence.

4.3. Community engagement and awareness

Approaches and Strategies

Developing communicative strategies depends on local context factors such as the needs of the private sector, capacity levels of RPL service providers, financial institutions, linguistic and cultural profiles, and community resources, such as women’s centres, childcare centres, religious communities, and adult education programs. The following are suggestions for building community relationships to lower the stigma of women in the workplace and inform RPL prospects about relevant and available opportunities.

Engaging through leadership

RPL initiatives should seek support through local, community-based efforts such as women’s organizations that already promote women’s empowerment by contextualizing RPL processes and benefits. Because RPL is often misunderstood by the general public, endorsing trusted organizations or leadership increases women’s willingness to see RPL as meaningful to their lives. In addition, facilitating linkages and collaborations between community-based organizations and the private sector boosts RPL pathways’ validity. These partnerships strengthen RPL through end-to-end, holistic processes.

Gender targeted campaigns

It is vital to reach women instead of expecting them to go out of their way to engage with a new system. Therefore, any marketing or communication campaign targeted toward women should conduct local gender-sensitive marketing research to ensure it will effectively reach women. Some areas of consideration include:

- **Time:** Women often have domestic obligations that direct a typical day. Making sure information about RPL is available when women have fewer responsibilities, such as in the evening, will increase the chance women can engage with information.
- **Place:** Identifying places where women gather, including community centres, places of worship, cultural events, and other common areas, remove the burden of women having to seek out information about RPL on their own.
- **Channel:** Media campaigns about program offerings or marketing about RPL should be aware of what media women are most likely to consume, such as radio, TV, social media, print media etc.
- **Community:** Power dynamics within religious communities, cultural identities, family units and obligations, rural and urban contexts and other considerations involving women’s interactions with their environments impact how women interact with communications. Beyond just engagement with women themselves, efforts to include women in RPL should consider how external factors influence how women receive and act upon issues regarding empowerment, employment, and education.
- **Relevancy:** Through gender-sensitive labour market research, RPL information campaigns should target sectors and skills that are relevant and localized to the demographics, including gender-sensitive language and linguistic and cultural profiles. Additionally, RPL that aims to increase women in non-traditional sectors should ensure that messaging is appropriate and streamlined for women.

Engaging men

Combatting gender inequalities in RPL should involve investment from all stakeholders, including men and male leadership, by including all voices. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) emphasizes the need for a “transformed partnership” between women and men. Sustainable transformation is “the principle of shared power and responsibility... at home, in the workplace and the wider national and international communities”²⁹. Framing men as stakeholders in gender equality places men as active agents in changing RPL to a more inclusive system that benefits all. In addition, tackling inequalities that impact women indirectly dismantles toxic masculinity and changes norms about men’s societal roles.

When engaging men in gender equality discussions, past projects have found that group-based workshops work well. Topics include more equitable decision making in the home and relationship dynamics, increased communications in domestic partnerships, income gain for the family with dual incomes or formalized work opportunities for women. Building alliances with advocacy groups not focused on women also has an increased chance of normalizing and mainstreaming gender equality in multiple areas of men’s lives.

4.4. Capacity building

Approaches

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)

Gender-responsive budgeting is an approach that incorporates a gender-based perspective into the development of budgetary processes. GRB merges gender-sensitive RPL policies with budget practices to embed macro-level decisions into practical applications³¹. This strategy does not just allot separate considerations or expenditures for women but includes the analysis of budget allocations, spending, and other financial considerations with the goal of reducing gender inequalities. In public budgets, this may include taxation.

Gender policies and committees at TVET institutions

The National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) enhanced positive attitudes towards gender mainstreaming in TVET institutions; however, there are still challenges in fully implementing gender policies in organizations³². Even with gender mainstreaming policies in place, cultural stigma and gender stereotypes still restrict women from entering non-traditional fields. Activities such as gender committees work to change the campus culture towards gender and work alongside policy to make it practiced.

Gender Training

Gender sensitization training within an institution has a multiplier effect³³. When more than one person works for gender equality, gender-equitable activities normalize across the institution. Normalizing non-discriminatory attitudes standardizes gender equality practices, including an organization’s capacity to conduct gender analysis, scale training to other institutions, provide technical assistance for GE to other institutions, budget allocation for GE, and increase the valuation of GE on the ground. Gender training includes topics such as prevention of sexual violence in the workplace, gender-inclusive language, and gender equality training.

31. NGECE, Guidelines for Gender Responsive Budgeting in Kenya, 2014

32. Omukhulu, Dorcas Mulongo et al. “Gender Mainstreaming in TVET Institutions in Kenya. Africa Journal of Technical & Vocational Education & Training, 2016, 1 (1), 21-30

33. [COMPENDIO_UNU-M-WEB.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

Gender-based monitoring and evaluation

Gender-based monitoring and evaluation of RPL practices and processes are used to reveal whether those practices address different priorities and needs of women and men and to keep practices relevant to the current situation. It should commit to reducing gender inequalities through a results-based management approach. In the ongoing monitoring phase, a gender-based analysis should be used to ensure measurable, gender-based outcomes (i.e., outcomes that result in an intended change for women and men) and identify gender-based indicators. Indicators can be further classified as person-related (measures areas such as number of enrollments, behaviours, knowledge, success rates and factors etc.) or non-person-related (measuring gender mainstreaming policies, frameworks, women's empowerment initiatives and more, including gender-based supports such as childcare, adapting schedules to fit women's schedules, women-concentrated sectors)³⁴. Besides indicators that measure explicit gender-based outcomes, general indicators should be disaggregated using an intersectional lens when possible.

Examples:

• *Person-related*

- # of men/women applying for RPL, # of men/women successful with RPL, disaggregated by gender, geography, sector, language, disability status, age, marital status;
- # of women transitioning to formal education through RPL pathways;
- # of women in leadership roles, increasing women's agency within organizations

• *Non-person related*

- # of gender-friendly facilities (breastfeeding facilities, enhanced hygiene facilities, childcare centres established or partnered with; evaluations on said facilities;
- # of financial supports available for women/PWDs seeking RPL;

Monitoring should also be conducted using appropriate instruments. For example, if data is collected through surveys or focus groups, they should be scheduled considering women's daily lives and include provisions such as childcare.

Gender-based evaluation should occur periodically (usually baseline, during and at the end of a program) to determine changes that happen due to implementing gender equality or other new practices. Evaluations can impact programs, organizational changes, resource and budget allocations, and lead to new innovative solutions, so ensuring gender is embedded in reports and recommendations is critical to barriers to RPL³⁵.

In line with establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation system, RPL assessors should give feedback to RPL candidates and incorporate post-RPL support to candidates, institutions and RPL practitioners.

Appendix 1: Additional Consulted Resources

Arnold and Wade (2015) A Definition of Systems Thinking: A Systems Approach. Procedia Computer Science 44

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CIDA booklet, 2012, Gender Responsive Budgeting, https://countytoolkit.devolution.go.ke/sites/default/files/resources/GenderResponsiveBudgeting_booklet.pdf

Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects, Global Affairs Canada () [Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality - Toolkit for Projects](https://www.international.gc.ca/gender-equality/gender-equality-toolkit-for-projects.aspx)

OECD (2017), Systems Approaches to Public Sector Challenges: Working with Change, OECD Publishing, Paris. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279865-en](https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279865-en)

NGEC, Guidelines for Gender Responsive Budgeting in Kenya, 2014

<https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

Elevating Rights and Choices for All: Guidance Note for Applying a Human Rights Based Approach to Programming. UNFPA, 2020

Participatory Communication: A Practical Guide (2009). Tufte, Thomas and Paolo Mefalopulos

OCAD's Inclusive Design Research Centre <https://legacy.idrc.ocadu.ca/about-the-idrc/49-resources/online-resources/articles-and-papers/443-whatisinclusivedesign>

Policy focus	National	International
Overarching policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kenya Constitution, 2010The Kenya Vision 2030The Kenya National Youth Development Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sustainable Development Goal 4SDG 8 Decent Work
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The KNQF Act No. 22 of 2014The TVET Act No. 29 of 2013The Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013The Industrial Training Act Cap 237 (Amendment 2011)Sessional Paper no. 14 - The proposed policy framework on Education and training in Kenya, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025)
Women and gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">National Policy for Gender and Development (2019)Gender Based Budgeting Guide lines, NGEC, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)SDG 5 – Gender EqualityILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-21
Persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Persons with Disability Act, 2003Special Needs Education Policy, 2009The Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)ILO Disability Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023
Other vulnerable populations		<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (2016)

Significant Policies

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW is the pinnacle document for gender equality and is used as the international legal standard and guidance for governments and national and international agencies. It outlines state, organizations, and individuals’ obligations to protect and promote women’s civil, political, economic, social, and cultural freedoms within a framework of non-discrimination and equality framework.

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Framework in Kenya, 2021

The RPL Policy Framework in Kenya aims to guide the implementation of RPL for improved mobility, employability, self-esteem and advanced learning. It also seeks to mitigate the challenges faced by disadvantaged individuals who possess competencies but lack certification, depriving them of fair opportunities compared to those who obtained those competencies through formal education.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for gender equality and non-discrimination in all sectors of the economy. Equality, equity, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination are key principles in Article 10 of the Constitution. Article 27 (1) provides that every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit. Article 27 (3) provides that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. The constitution outlaws discrimination based on sex, marital status, ethnicity or social origin, age, disability, religion, belief, and culture, among others. To realize these ideals, the constitution in article 27 (6) requires the government to take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies, to redress disadvantages suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination. Article 27 (8) compels the state to take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.

National Policy on Gender and Development, 2019

The National Policy on Gender and Development, 2019 recognizes the need for men and women, boys, and girls to access, participate in, and benefit from all forms of development. The policy further acknowledges that the country’s development goals cannot be realized unless institutions ensure equitable allocation and distribution of development resources. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In line with this, the government of Kenya is committed to achieving gender equality and equity in all sectors of development. To realize this, the government has established institutional policies and legislative frameworks to facilitate that goal. The Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programs provides technical support to public agencies on matters related to gender. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) oversees gender equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination.

Related Policies and Legislation

RPL Strategy addresses the goals and objectives of Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya (2010), the National Gender and Development Policy (2019), the Kenya Ministry of Education Gender Policy in Education (2007), the Employment Act (2007).

International Frameworks

- i. Sustainable Development Goals, 2015.
- ii. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 and enforced in 1983.
- iii. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security
- iv. Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, 1985

Regional Frameworks

- i. The East African Community Gender Policy, 2018
- ii. Nairobi Declaration on the African Women’s Decade (AWD), 2010

National Frameworks

- i. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010
- ii. Kenya Vision 2030
- iii. National Policy on Gender and Development, 2019
- iv. National Gender and Equality Commission Act, 2011
- v. Science, Technology, and Innovation (ST&I) Act no. 28 of 2013



Appendix 3: The strategy consultation process

The developers of this guide are part of a consortium implemented by the Young Africa Works in Kenya (YAW-K) projects funded by the Mastercard Foundation (MCF) through Colleges and Institutions Canada (CICan) to aid in the development of the National RPL framework. The consortium includes partners from Canadian Institutions (Humber College, NorQuest College and Red River College) and the Kenyan National Qualifications Authority (KNQA). The process for developing a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Kenya is based on a stakeholder approach to ensure the strategy is inclusive and the result of collective experience and expertise from the parties that most influence and are most impacted by the national RPL framework. The process started by examining power dynamics with RPL concerning gender and contextualizing that information to Kenya’s commitment to reducing poverty, enhancing skills development for youth, strengthening the economic status of Kenya on a national scale, and advancing gender equality and inclusive governance in the education system and market sector.

In alignment with the national RPL framework discussions, developing a gender mainstreaming strategy became essential to ensure Kenya’s RPL framework is inclusive and in line with the national development strategies. The consortium developed a comprehensive RPL stakeholders registry based on power/interest analysis and thematic groupings. Ongoing consultations with focused thematic groups gave firsthand perspectives of the RPL landscape from the educational, industrial, and professional sectors. The team leveraged current market research,

policies, frameworks, and articles in RPL and Kenya to determine gaps and opportunities for RPL in Kenya. Gender mainstreaming was identified as underrepresented, with a high need and potential to enhance the employability of Kenyan youth. Open discussions within the team led to a gender-based stakeholder analysis and mapping activity specific to RPL and women’s needs, including what materials need to be developed for successful gender equality implementation by stakeholders and areas of focus for gender-based and gender-responsive RPL activities.

Between June and December 2021, the team consulted with about 50 stakeholders in semi-structured interviews and conducted one-on-one sessions and focus groups. The list of stakeholders included TVET and government agencies, national agencies and associations involved in education and employment, international development organizations, and other relevant stakeholders from the mapping study. The consultations were conducted primarily over video conferencing software, with each interview taking about 1 to 1.5 hours. The gender team in Nairobi conducted two sets of in-person interviews with two Jua Kali Women’s associations.

After the interview process, the transcripts were analyzed to identify common themes to best create a strategy to address gaps and strengthen areas already showing success in implementing RPL. After developing this document, it was sent to stakeholders for review, and their feedback was incorporated to reflect a collaborative effort.

Appendix 4: Stakeholders Consulted



Baraka Women's Center

Contacts(s): Teresia Mwangi, Manager

Baraka Women's Center is a safe welcoming place that provides vital training and support for vulnerable and disadvantaged women living in the slums of Nairobi and its environs.

<https://www.barakawomenscenter.org/>



CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAPYEI)

Contacts(s): Ndungu Kahihu, Executive Director
Bernadette Kyanya

CAP Youth Empowerment Institute Kenya (CAPYEI) is a non-government organization started in 2011 committed to training youth out of school in entry-level jobs skills.

CAPYEI implements the Basic Employability Skills Training (BEST) model through public-private partnerships for its sustainability and scalability. CAPYEI mobilizes and enrolls a qualified target of youth by involving grass root government officials, local CBOs, networks of youth organizations, youth and community leaders, and religious gatherings. CAPYEI skills training is guided by labor force demand in each area where our training is located as informed by market scan research and revisits.

<https://capyei.org/>



Equity Bank Kenya

Contacts(s): Emily Gumba, Program Manager
Margaret Muiruri

Equity's key purpose is to financially empower and elevate communities at grassroots level throughout Africa. Through partnerships with organizations that share our vision and the provision of economic aid, we have transformed how our customer banks and provided access to financial resources that will change lives.

<https://equitygroupholdings.com/>



Equity Group Foundation (EGF)

Contacts(s): Emily A Gumba
Margaret Muhoro Muiruri

Equity Group Foundation (EGF) is a Kenya based not-for-profit foundation established in 2008 as the social arm of Equity Group Holdings. It seeks to transform the lives and livelihoods of the people of Africa. The foundation champions the socioeconomic prosperity of low-income people via economic opportunities and skill and capacity building tools with a range of financial and technological innovations to equip and prepare Africans for the future.

<https://equitygroupfoundation.com/>



Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE)

Contacts(s): Grace Kaome, Manager, Human Resource and Administration

The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) is the national umbrella body and the voice of employers in Kenya. It serves as a platform for the articulation of key concerns of the employers in Kenya in the areas of socioeconomic development. FKE is the most representative employers' organization in the country, representing the employers' interests both locally and internationally. It was established in 1959 under the Trade Unions Act Cap 233.

<https://www.fke-kenya.org/>



Generation Unlimited UN (Gen U)

Contacts(s): Stephen Gichohi, Strategic Partnership Coordinator

Generation Unlimited (Gen U) is a dynamic partnership that includes young people, representatives from governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society, as a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and rooted in the principles of the United Nations' Youth 2030 Strategy. It is connecting secondary-age education and training to a complex and fast-changing world of work. The organization is matching young people with job opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and empowering a generation to fully engage with their societies as active citizens.

<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/generation-unlimited>

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Contacts(s): Geoffrey Ochola, National Programme Coordinator
Anne Wafula

Kenya has been a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 1965. The ILO is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and Labour rights through a decent work agenda.

<https://www.ilo.org/>



Kariokor Syondo Women Jua Kali Association

Contacts(s): Patricia Mwende

The Kariokor Syondo Women Jua Kali Association has over 1000 women businesses dealing in bags, curios, and other items made using locally sourced materials. Patricia Mwende, the association's Chairperson, specializes in handmade kyondos (sisal made bags) from sisal and leather from Machakos and Kitui. She also handmakes jewellery and maasai shukas which she sells locally and internationally. She is part of the National Organizing Committee for EAC Expo which will be held in Tanzania Mwanza in December 2021.

<https://www.facebook.com/mseakenya/posts/1294025104380619> <https://msea.go.ke/kariokor-market-the-mse-handcrafts-and-jewellery-hub/>



Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM)

Contacts(s): Miranda Pendo, TVET Program Coordinator

Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) has been front and center in driving fact-based policy advocacy towards the formation of industrial policies to strengthen and support the country's economic development. Through fact-based advocacy, KAM partners with Government and its associated agencies to ensure a dynamic and flourishing manufacturing sector in Kenya, to realize a double-digit contribution to GDP.

<https://kam.co.ke/>



Kenya Engineering Technology Registration Board (KETRB)

Contacts(s): Alice Mutai, CEO

The Kenya Engineering Technology Registration Board (KETRB) was established in accordance with the Engineering Technology Act No 23 of 2016 Part II Section 3. (1) to set standards for engineering technologists and technicians, register and issue licenses to qualified persons as per the provision of the Act. The Board is also mandated to verify that engineering professional services and works are undertaken by persons registered under the Act as well as ensure that standards and professional ethics for health and safety of the public are observed. The members of the Board were appointed to office on 24th October, 2016 by the CS Ministry of Education.

<http://ketrb.go.ke>



Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations (KNFJKA)

Contacts(s): Nyamai (Chris) Wambua, Head of Programs

The Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations is the umbrella organization representing the Artisans and small manufacturers in the informal economic sector and serving the primary Jua Kali Associations that are spread across all the Counties in Kenya. The sector has artisans operating on different skills levels and has absorbed the majority of the Startups, retrenches, retirees, school dropouts, and the unfortunate dismissals from the private sector companies and organizations. The Jua Kali (Informal) Sector is currently the single largest employer in the Country

<https://juakalisector.org/>



Ministry of Education, Directorate of Technical Education Vocational and Training (TVET)

Contacts(s): Tom Mulati, Ag. Director of Technical Education

The Ministry of Education, Directorate of Technical Education Vocational and Training (TVET) aims to provide, promote and co-ordinate the training sector by assuring quality, inclusiveness and relevance for the enhancement of the national economy and global competitiveness. The main objective of TVET is to develop an effectively co-ordinated and harmonized TVET system that is capable of producing quality skilled human resource with the right attitudes and values required for growth and prosperity of the various sectors of the economy.

<https://www.education.go.ke/index.php/about-us/state-departments/vocational-and-technical-education>



National Industry Training Authority (NITA)

Contacts(s): Richard Nyukuri
Catherine

The National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) is a state corporation established under the Industrial Training (Amendment) Act of 2011. Its mandate is to promote the highest standards in the quality and efficiency of Industrial Training in Kenya and ensure an adequate supply of properly trained manpower at all levels in the industry.

<https://www.nita.go.ke/>



National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC)

Contacts(s): George Wanyonyi, Director of Policy and Programs
Carolyn Munyua
Paul Kuria

The National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC) aims to promote gender equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination in Kenya, especially for special interest groups through ensuring compliance with policies, laws and practice.

<https://www.ngeckkenya.org/>



TVET CDACC (Curriculum Development, Assessment and Certification Council)

Contacts(s): Sophia Ndolo, Principal Curriculum Development Officer
Winfred Mutheu, Quality Assurance Officer
Dr. Lawrence Guantai

TVET CDACC is a body corporate established under the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act, No. 29 of 2013. The Council is mandated to undertake design and development of Curricula for the training institutions' examination, assessment and competence certification and advise the Government on matters related thereto. This is in line with Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 that embraces Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) system.

<https://www.tvetcdacc.go.ke/>



Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA)

Contacts(s): Mary Munyi, Head of the Gender Committee
Evans Kimutai, Member of the Gender Committee
Japheth Mwendu, Member of the Gender Committee

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) is a State Corporation established by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act No 29 of 2013 (Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 44). The mandate of TVETA as a regulatory body is to regulate and coordinate the TVET sector through the accreditation of institutes, programs and trainers. It also assures that quality education and training is imparted and is accessible to all.

<https://www.tveta.go.ke/>



Youth Congress

Contacts(s): Raphael Obonyo, Public Policy Analyst

The Youth Congress is a youth serving Non-Governmental Organization founded in 2007 to provide young people in Kenya with a platform to articulate their issues, explore opportunities for youth participation and leadership to effectively address their interest and concerns and engage young people in social, economic and political processes.

<https://theyouthcongress.org/>

Focus group discussions

Gender Advocacy Institutional Representatives

Am Felister Mumo	<i>Coast Institute of Technology</i>
Asinyen Anjelin	<i>Lodwar</i>
Beatrice Munuango	<i>Kisumu National Polytechnic</i>
Cafeline Omambia	<i>Sigalagala National Polytechnic</i>
Christine M. Mutua	<i>Kabete National Polytechnic</i>
Fredrick Opara	<i>Mawego Technical</i>
Lucy Gacheri	<i>Meru National Polytechnic</i>
Millicent Sagero	<i>Kisumu National Polytechnic</i>
Naomi Kanini	<i>Weru Technical and Vocational College</i>
Pauline Kariuki	<i>Nyandarua National Polytechnic</i>
Violet Atieno	<i>Bondo Technical Training Institute</i>

Youth Group Focus Discussion

Amran Ali	<i>North Eastern National Polytechnic</i>
Esther Kiraha	<i>Sigalagala National Polytechnic</i>
Eunice Waithera Mwangi	<i>Nyandarua National Polytechnic</i>
Jane Pauline Awuor	<i>Kenya Technical Trainers College</i>
Joice Jomo	<i>Kisii National Polytechnic</i>
Joy Ndanu Musyoka	<i>Kenya Coast National Polytechnic</i>
Manasse Mutta Mzungu	<i>Kitale National Polytechnic</i>
Mary Wairimu Kariuki	<i>Nyeri National Polytechnic</i>
Mercy Gathoni Wambui	<i>Kabete National Polytechnic</i>
Monica Wanjiru Njogu	<i>Meru National Polytechnic</i>
Rehema Bosibori Nyabuto	<i>Eldoret National Polytechnic</i>
Sharon Atieno Odhiambo	<i>Kisumu National Polytechnic</i>