

GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT (GEWE) POLICY PAPER 2025

**A POLICY PAPER ON ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
GAPS AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL THROUGH EDUCATION COMMUNITIES**

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations.
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States.
EF	Egunec Foundation.
EU	European Union.
G-VAP	Gender Violence Awareness Project.
GEWE	Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment.
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence.
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRGBV	School Related Gender Based Violence.
UN	United Nations.
UNDP	United Nations Development Program.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund.
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund.
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls.
WARIF	Women at Risk International Foundation.
WHO	World Health Organization.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper places a spotlight on implementation gaps that plague gender equality policies in Africa and the role education communities can play in bridging this gap especially at the grassroots level. It explores the design mindset and insights of leading social inclusion and policy development facilitator Osegi Albert Chuks Jnr, in leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 as a design platform and inspiration in designing the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) for the Centre for Gender Studies at Veritas University Abuja, Nigeria.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 recommends for an integration of content on gender equality into curricula at all levels of education, whether public or private. This recommendation is at the heart of this policy paper because it creates an innovative opportunity for grassroots implementation of gender equality policies through the active engagement of young persons and civic platforms in education communities.

Using the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) and Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria as a case study, the policy paper revealed the opportunities created by leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 and the role that education communities can play as grassroots policy implementation platforms for gender equality policies. The opportunities include enhanced partnership relationship between the education and development sector on gender equality policies, enhanced and streamlined focus and attention on gender policy implementation by education communities, increased capacity building for young persons as channels of gender equality policy implementation and improved gender equality mindset in education communities.

This policy paper points out that education communities are essential platforms for implementing gender policies that will accelerate the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment. It argues that education communities in Africa have the potential to enhance the implementation of gender equality policies at the grassroots level. Through partnership with young persons in education communities, gender equality norms and policies can be implemented and modelled holistically through a gender partnership model. This leads to building a sustainable structure that facilitates acceleration towards gender inclusion and equality in Africa.

This policy paper goes a step further to identify four key enablers that will facilitate the effective utilization of education communities as channels for gender equality policy implementation. The first enabler is the need to incorporate within the design approach, the strengthening of civic platforms within education communities to serve as an enabling platform for gender equality policy implementation. Second enabler is the need to strengthen the capacity of young persons as gender equality policy implementation partners and facilitation partners of civic platforms within education communities. Third enabler is gender partnership. Maximizing the gender equality policy implementation potential of education communities will need a potent partnership between different genders in education communities. With partnership unity, they will become a powerful force that drives the implementation of gender equality policies at the grassroots level. Fourth enabler is the need to channel funding that pays attention to the gender policy implementation opportunity present in education communities.

This policy paper concludes by recommending that the gender equality policy implementation potential, of education communities in Africa, be taken seriously by scaling from an individual to an institutional design approach based on the recommended enablers. It also recommends that the CEDAW Committee maximizes the implementation opportunity of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, and that other gender equality policies take a cue from CEDAW in incorporating mechanisms that unlock the implementation potential of education communities.

2. POLICY BACKGROUND

Gender inequality can be defined as the social phenomenon in which people are not treated equally on the basis of gender, often caused by gender discrimination.¹ Despite progress in some countries, gender inequality remains prevalent and deeply rooted in Africa.² Women face ongoing human rights violations, limited access to education, healthcare, employment, decision-making, leadership, and economic resources. These obstacles are compounded by violence against women which remains a pervasive issue.³

Due to the challenges of gender inequality in Africa, policies have been developed to alleviate the situation. They include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as gender-relevant indicators in other SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063.⁴ Others include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) adopted in 1981; the Women's Rights Protocol of 2003; the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) adopted in 2001.⁵

The domestication of the above agreements has translated into some progress towards achieving gender equality in Africa. However, despite the existence of these gender equality policies, there has been a gap in implementation in Africa as a result of poor governance, lack of political will, prevailing patriarchal culture, inadequate

¹ Wharton, A. (2004) *Handbook of Social Problems: a Comparative International Perspective*. [Online]. United States: SAGE Publications, Inc.

² UNECA (2023) *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* [online]. Available from: <https://www.uneca.org/gender-equality-and-empowerment-women>.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ejumudo, K. B. O. (2013) Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: the Desirability and Inevitability of a Pragmatic Approach. *Developing Country Studies*. 3 (4), 59–66.

public awareness, and absence of adequate productive capacity that will create opportunities for women's empowerment and development.⁶

Therefore, there is a need for a functional action-based approach that will translate gender equality policy instruments and conventions into reality especially at the grassroots level.

2.1. THE CEDAW CASE STUDY

As earlier stated, several policies have been developed to promote gender equality in Africa. Among them is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which is often called the “international bill of rights for women”.⁷ This convention implores every administration to take matters of gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination seriously, to incorporate equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones to prohibit discrimination against women, and establish public institutions and tribunals that will ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination.⁸

The CEDAW Committee recommends how administrations that partner with them can fulfil obligations under the Convention.⁹ These recommendations cover gender-based violence, women and health, economic rights, and education. The CEDAW Map measures the responses of administrations in implementing the recommendations and identifies the areas in which they are failing to act, including collecting data on the

⁶ Okeke, C. (2020) Challenges in the Enforcement of Women’s Rights in Nigeria. *African Human Rights Law Journal*. 20 (2), 513–532.

⁷ Melander, G. et al. (2004) ‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’, in *The Raoul Wallenberg Institute Compilation of Human Rights Instruments*. [Online]. Brill | Nijhoff. pp. 223–237.

⁸ United Nations (1979) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Vol. 1249. New York: United Nations Treaty Series. [online]. Available from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

⁹ UN Women (1979) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* [online]. Available from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

drivers of violence against women, developing gender-equal laws, and improving access to health care for underserved women.¹⁰

Just as was observed with gender equality policies generally, it has also been observed that there are implementation gaps with CEDAW. There has also been a lack of action, a need to improve the review system of the CEDAW Map, and a need to strengthen accountability.¹¹

The CEDAW Committee adopted its General Recommendation No. 35 on 14 July, 2017 to update General Recommendation No. 19, which is centered on violence against women.¹² There was a need to adopt the General Recommendation No. 35 twenty-five years after the General Recommendation No. 19 because the CEDAW was created in 1979. At the time, there was little to no “recognition of violence against women as an issue falling within the ambit of international human rights law”.¹³ General Recommendation No. 35 was adopted to provide more comprehensive guidance to fast-track the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 also goes ahead to recommend an integration of content on gender equality into curricula at all levels of education, whether public or private. This recommendation is at the heart of this policy paper because it creates an innovative opportunity for grassroots implementation of gender equality policies through the active engagement of young persons and civic platforms in education communities.

Most gender equality policies face the challenge of implementation; translating its impact from the shelf to the field.¹⁴ One of the challenges of gender mainstreaming in

¹⁰ Shanthosh, J. (2021) *Launching the CEDAW Implementation Map on Women's Health. Progress on the Journey Towards Health and Human Rights for All Women*. 8 – 13. Australia: The George Institute for Global Health.

¹¹ Manya, M. (2024) An Analysis of the Legal Framework for the Protection of Women Against Discriminatory Practices in Nigeria. *East African Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*. 1 (1). [online]. Available from: <https://journal.kiut.ac.tz/index.php/eajlpg/article/view/108>.

¹² Vijayarasa, R. (2020) CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 35: a Quarter of a Century of Evolutionary Approaches to Violence against Women. *Journal of Human Rights*. [Online] 19 (2), 153–167.

¹³ McQuigg, R. J. A. (2017) The CEDAW Committee and Gender-Based Violence against Women. *International Human Rights Law Review*. [Online] 6 (2), 263–278.

¹⁴ Ayamba, I. A. et al. (2024) National Gender Policy in Nigeria: Uncovering the Core Issues. *Socialscientia: Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*. 9 (2). [online]. Available from: <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/article/download/2820/2597/4499>.

Africa is the lack of political will which cripples a Top-down approach.¹⁵ For example, despite the advances in gender equality policy frameworks in Mozambique, challenges remain in implementing policies that translates into effective protection and empowerment for women, particularly in rural areas where enforcement is weaker.¹⁶ Through education communities, we can address the limitations of a Top-down approach to gender policy development through a complimentary grassroots civic empowerment approach that focuses on young persons and civic platforms in education communities as implementation vehicles for gender equality policies.

Education is said to be an effective tool used to evoke transformation, development, and progress.¹⁷ Education communities in Africa have the potential to enhance the implementation of gender equality policies at the grassroots level. An education community in Africa has an average of 500 – 5000 young persons in her community. In 2024 alone, Nile University, a private university in Nigeria welcomed over 3000 young persons as students.¹⁸ The youth population in education communities represents a very potent human capital asset for gender equality policy implementation. Young persons in tertiary institutions in Africa, possess youthful energy and knowledge capital that can be leveraged to facilitate the implementation of gender equality policies. Their youth and knowledge capital positions them as powerful advocates, peer models for their generation, and role models for younger generations and those in the grassroots, and positions them as powerful ambassadors of gender equality policies when they evolve to the workspace.

Through partnership with young persons in education communities, gender equality norms and policies can be implemented and modelled holistically through a gender partnership model. This leads to building a sustainable structure that facilitates

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Fundação RESET (2025) *Gender Equality in Mozambique: Progress and Challenges* [online]. Available from: <https://www.reset-foundation.org/en/post/gender-equality-in-mozambique-progress-and-challenges>.

¹⁷ Ikoni, U. D. (2009) *The Challenges of Poverty in a Globalised World: Perspective on the Nigerian Situation*. Lagos: Longman Publishers.

¹⁸ Oseghale, J. (2024) Nile University Welcomes over 3000 Fresh Students. *Nile University of Nigeria*. 30 April. [online]. Available from: <https://nileuniversity.edu.ng/nile-university-welcomes-fresh-students-at-its-15th-matriculation-ceremony/>.

acceleration towards gender inclusion and equality in Africa.¹⁹ Engaging young persons as the focal point of policy implementation through education communities can help accelerate policy implementation through seamless transmission of values, knowledge, and the development of human potential and skills.

With CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, a concrete link was established between education communities and gender equality policy implementation. This link was explored in the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) of the Centre for Gender Studies Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria.

¹⁹ Arman, P. (2023) *Strategies for Higher Education Institutions to Strengthen Gender Equality*. Times Higher Education (THE) Campus. [online]. Available from: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/strategies-higher-education-institutions-strengthen-gender-equality>.

3. THE VERITAS UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY

The Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) in Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria provides a concrete and practical case study on how young persons and civic platforms in education communities in Africa can be engaged as platforms for gender equality policy implementation. Education communities, because of their youth population and community structure, provide a fertile ground for gender policy advocacy. This was an insight that was gained from the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) designed by the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria.

The Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University Abuja is a civic platform in Veritas University Abuja, Nigeria, mandated with the power and authority to develop and implement projects and policies that will advance the gender equality vision of the university. The Gender Violence Awareness project (G-VAP) was a policy advocacy project designed by Osegi Albert Chuks (Jnr), a leading social inclusion and policy development specialist for the Centre. Osegi Albert Chuks (Jnr) is a leading social inclusion, policy, and organizational development facilitator with over a decade experience consulting for public, private, education and policy platforms. He is also the director of the Gender Equity and Women Empowerment (GEWE) program at Egunc Foundation. He served as the designer and lead consultant of the Gender Violence Awareness project (G-VAP).²⁰

In 2022, the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria saw an urgent need to prevent violence against women from becoming a culture in her community in light of the observations from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), intimate partner violence is by far the most prevalent form of violence against women globally affecting around 641 million women.²¹ This violence starts early as 1 in 4 young women (aged 15 – 24 years) who have been in a relationship, would have already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they reach their mid-twenties.²² Young women in tertiary

²⁰ Osegi, A. (2024) Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) 2021-2024 Report. Egunc 26. [online]. Available from: <https://eguncsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/G-VAP-Report.pdf>.

²¹ World Health Organization (2021) *Devastatingly Pervasive: 1 in 3 Women Globally Experience Violence* [online]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>.

²² Ibid

institutions fall within this demographic. The bad situation was made even worse because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which intensified all types of violence against women and girls. The COVID-19 crisis exposed and exacerbated serious pre-existing gaps in the prevention of violence against women.²³

To address the above challenge, the Centre for Gender studies, Veritas University, Abuja in partnership with Egunec Foundation, engaged leading social inclusion and policy development specialist Osegi Albert Chuks (Jnr), to design and develop a project that will increase the knowledge capacity of the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja on global resources helping to prevent violence against women. This led to the design and development of the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP).²⁴

In designing the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP), the lead consultant, Osegi Albert Chuks (Jnr) leaned on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 35 as a policy development and implementation platform. As designer of the project, his design mindset was;

- ❖ How can the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria lean on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 to increase and strengthen the capacity of the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University and the young persons within her community to prevent violence against women?

G-VAP was designed as a gender equality advocacy curriculum to strengthen the knowledge and awareness of the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja and the young persons within the Veritas University community on issues relating to violence against women. This aligned with the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 which recommends an integration of content on gender equality into curricula at all levels of education, whether public or private.

²³ Butler, N. et al. (2022) The Impact of COVID-19 and Associated Measures on Health, Police, and Non-Government Organization Service Utilization Related to Violence against Women and Children. *BMC Public Health*. [Online] 22 (288).

²⁴ Osegi, A. (2024) Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) 2021-2024 Report. Egunec 7. [online]. Available from: <https://egunecesf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/G-VAP-Report.pdf>.

G-VAP was a project that involved a partnership between the Centre, Egunec Foundation (EF), Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF), and other international development organizations under the Spotlight Initiative Project. The ensuing Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) comprised a general symposium and a Capacity Building workshop geared towards strengthening the knowledge of the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, to eradicate all forms of School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV).

Below are some visuals from the symposium and workshops that arose from the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP).



4. LESSONS AND NEXT STEPS

4.1. LESSONS

The innovative strategy used by the lead consultant of the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) to lean on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 to design, plan, and execute the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) was an enlightening experience for the consultant, the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja and Egunec Foundation (EF). The experience had valuable lessons and insights on the opportunity presented by CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 for grassroots policy implementation in education communities in Africa.

First of all, leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 opened up partnership opportunities for the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja as a civic platform within an educational institution. G-VAP served as a policy advocacy platform, establishing an advocacy relationship between the Centre for Gender Studies and development partners relevant to addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).²⁵ CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 gave a policy legitimacy and affirmation to the Centre as she engaged development partners during the design and execution of the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP).

Emboldened by CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, was able to expand her partnership leverage with the development space.²⁶ This was what led the Centre to a partnership with the Spotlight Initiative. The Spotlight Initiative is a global initiative embarked on by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) to eliminate all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).²⁷ It brings focused attention on the issue of VAWG, moving it to the spotlight and placing it at the center of efforts to achieve gender

²⁵ Osegi, A. (2024) Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) 2021-2024 Report. Egunec 16. [online]. Available from: <https://egunecsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/G-VAP-Report.pdf>.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ UN Women (2018) *The Spotlight Initiative: Eliminating Violence and Harmful Practices against Women and Girls [Op-ed]* [online]. Available from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/6/op-ed-joint-the-spotlight-initiative>.

equality and women's empowerment in line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.²⁸

The partnership opportunity that CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 unlocked is critical to gender equality policy implementation. Enhanced and strengthened partnership leverage will go a long way to get more hands on deck in facilitating the implementation of gender equality policies in grassroots communities. This will help address the lack of will power that usually cripples gender equality policy implementation in Africa.²⁹

Another benefit that came with leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 was that it challenged the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, to streamline and channel attention on the issue of gender inequality. It has been stated that for policies to be implemented, it demands an active process embodying proper analysis, goal definition, action programs and monitoring results which need to be implemented, not just passive policies without action.³⁰ When it comes to gender equality policy implementation, all of these processes demand strategic and focused attention that will increase the consciousness of gender equality in a community.

The above was achieved and communicated in the project report for the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP). In the report, the Centre observed that the scope of Gender Based Violence is broad and came to an understanding that, as a civic platform, it was important for her to focus on a theme most relevant to her target audience.³¹ The Centre concluded in their report that this strategy will help her to build capacity faster and galvanize the needed partnerships and resources to protect young women from gender based violence.³² So, by leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 to design, plan, and execute the Gender Violence Awareness

²⁸ Razavi, S. (2016) The 2030 Agenda: Challenges of Implementation to Attain Gender Equality and Women's Rights. *Gender & Development*. [Online] 24 (1), 25–41.

²⁹ Ayamba, I. A. et al. (2024) National Gender Policy in Nigeria: Uncovering the Core Issues. *Socialscientia: Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*. 9 (2). [online]. Available from: <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/article/download/2820/2597/4499>.

³⁰ Ejumudo, K. B. O. (2008) *Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Policy Gap and Action Dilemma*. Proceedings of International Conference on Research and Development. Ghana: Pan-African Book Company.

³¹ Osegi, A. (2024) Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) 2021-2024 Report. Egune 16–17. [online]. Available from: <https://egunecsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/G-VAP-Report.pdf>.

³² Ibid

Project (G-VAP), the Centre was able to hone in on the needs of the young women in her community and her own needs as a gender equality platform.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 advocates for a curriculum on gender development. Developing an advocacy curriculum required Veritas University, Abuja through its Centre for Gender Studies, to pay increased and streamlined attention to gender inequality within her community.³³ Developing a curriculum will also enhance and strengthen the knowledge capital of education institutions on practices and culture that help address gender discrimination. These are very powerful project development benefits that strengthen the grassroots advocacy and gender policy implementation capacities of education communities.

In the G-VAP report, the Centre concluded that there was a need to enhance the facilitation capacity of the staff and students of the university so they were more equipped to be ambassadors and advocates of gender equality policies.³⁴ This is a mindset achievement that came with leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35. This is a huge win for policy implementation in Africa. This aligns with the theory of change of the “Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms” strategy of the RESPECT Framework developed by the UN Women and WHO to strengthen efforts to prevent violence against women.³⁵ The strategy states that efforts to promote positive attitudes, beliefs and norms about gender are essential to reduce violence against women in a long-term and sustained way, achieve gender equality and create happy, healthier and safer communities. With the mindset achievement that came with leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, the Centre for Gender Studies, Veritas University, Abuja, was able to pay deeper attention to the needs, assets, and opportunities that come with implementing gender equality policies in her community.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ RESPECT (2023) *Transformed Attitudes, Beliefs and Norms* [online]. Available from: <https://respect-prevent-vaw.org/transformed-attitudes-beliefs-and-norms>.

4.2. NEXT STEPS

This policy paper explored the design mindset of the lead consultant of the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) in leaning on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 as a design platform. The design exploration revealed the opportunities created by CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 and the role that education communities can play as grassroots policy implementation platforms for gender equality policies. This is a very powerful and important opportunity for the African continent where policy implementation is weak.

Having seen the opportunities and benefits that come with the design approach of Osegi Albert Chuks (Jnr), it is important for this approach to be replicated formally at a tertiary institution in Africa committed to addressing the weak policy implementation challenges of the African continent. What has been explored thus far in this policy paper, is the exploration of the design mindset of the lead consultant in his individual capacity. With the success of this pilot approach, there is a need to scale to an institutional design mindset. For this to happen, certain enablers have to be integrated into the design and development of this approach for a holistic and sustainable institutional execution.

The first enabler is the need to incorporate within the design approach, the strengthening of civic platforms within education communities to serve as an enabling platform for gender equality policy implementation. Civic platforms in education communities include platforms like law clinics, centres for gender studies, and women-led advocacy platforms within education communities. It is very important that the platform associated with facilitating the implementation of gender equality policies is equipped with project and partnership development capacity needed to sustainably support young persons within her space to express their civic potential to advance gender equality. This was a basis for the “Strong Civic Space for Gender Equality” initiative by UN Women Turkey.³⁶ While the project was not necessarily focused on civic platforms within education communities, it serves as a potential vision board of

³⁶ UN Women (2023) *Strengthening Civil Society Capacities and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships* [online]. Available from: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/turkiye/strengthening-civil-society-capacities-and-multi-stakeholder-partnerships>.

what is possible when it comes to the strengthening of civic platforms within education communities.

The Minimum Standard for Mainstreaming Gender Equality developed by the Gender Practitioners Collaborative recommends the strengthening of organizational culture and capacity for gender equality.³⁷ There is therefore a strong need for projects that strengthen the organizational capacity of civic platforms in education communities so they are equipped with the capacity to fulfil their gender equality policy implementation potential.

Second enabler is the need to strengthen the capacity of young persons as gender equality policy implementation partners and facilitation partners of civic platforms within education communities. Young persons shouldn't be seen as beneficiaries only but they should be seen as partners and focal implementation channels of gender equality policy implementation. This means that young persons should be equipped with policy development and advocacy capacity needed to unlock, fulfil and maximize their policy implementation potential.

Third enabler is gender partnership. Partnership is a key theme when it comes to gender equality policy implementation because it is a foundational enabler. Maximizing the gender equality policy implementation potential of education communities will need a potent partnership between different genders in education communities. With partnership unity, they will become a powerful force that drives the implementation of gender equality policies at the grassroots level. There is therefore a need to actively pursue as a deliverable and core objective, strengthening the partnership between genders as a collective force for implementing gender equality policies.

The book, *the Chalice and the Blade*, is a study of relational dynamics using multidisciplinary approach to review how society constructs roles and relations between genders.³⁸ The book's author, Ryan Eisler presents a conceptual framework that places human societies on what she calls the partnership-domination continuum.³⁹ At one end of the continuum are societies oriented to the dominator or

³⁷ Gender Practitioners Collaborative (2024) *Standards – Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality* [online]. Available from: <https://genderstandards.org/standards/>.

³⁸ Wikipedia Contributors (2024) *The Chalice and the Blade* [online]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chalice_and_The_Blade.

³⁹ Ibid

domination model and a high degree of abuse and violence and at the other end are societies oriented to the partnership model with a low degree of abuse and violence.⁴⁰ The partnership model is important bearing in mind the pandemic of gender based violence.

A gender partnership continuum is key to activating the full policy implementation capacity of young persons in education communities. This ensures that all genders are actively engaged in advancing mindsets and habits that promote gender equality at the grassroots. This is a holistic and sustainable approach to gender equality which aligns with the theory of change of the “Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms” strategy of the RESPECT Framework which states that efforts to promote positive attitudes, beliefs and norms about gender are essential to reduce violence against women in a long-term and sustained way, achieve gender equality and create happy, healthier and safer communities.⁴¹

There is a strong need to establish a gender partnership continuum in education communities in order to sustainably advance a gender equality culture. The youth are popularly known as the leaders of tomorrow, and tertiary institutions are a hub that shape the consciousness of these leaders of tomorrow. By incorporating a gender partnership continuum into projects, we will promote a culture and perspective that empower a new generation of gender equality advocates.

Finally, there is a need to channel funding that pays attention to the gender policy implementation opportunity present in education communities. An implementation partnership between education communities and donor bodies will go a long way in addressing the implementation gaps that plague gender equality policies.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ RESPECT (2023) *Transformed Attitudes, Beliefs and Norms* [online]. Available from: <https://respect-prevent-vaw.org/transformed-attitudes-beliefs-and-norms>.

5. CONCLUSION

This policy paper talks about the challenge of implementation usually associated with gender equality policies in Africa. It zeroes in on university communities and CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 and how they provide an avenue for policy innovation to address the implementation gaps that gender policies face. It shows this innovation in action at Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria.

The success of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 in the design and execution of the Gender Violence Awareness Project (G-VAP) in Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria, is a significant milestone in addressing gender policy implementation gaps in the African Continent. Having seen the opportunities and benefits that come with implementing gender equality policies in education communities through CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, it is important for this approach to be replicated in other educational institutions in Africa.

It is highly recommended that the CEDAW Committee takes advantage of education communities as implementation platforms for CEDAW, and efforts should be made to direct policy attention and funding to this channel for consolidation.

But CEDAW was just a hint of what is possible. Beyond CEDAW, other gender equality policies should take a cue from CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 and create specific unlocking mechanisms that enable education communities play a more prominent implementation role, and more resources and partnerships should be directed at this approach. The results achieved at Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria, is also a hint of what is possible when civic platforms within education communities are effectively utilized as gender equality implementation channels.

Education communities are essential platforms for implementing gender policies that will accelerate the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment. Therefore, it is highly recommended that partnership and resources be invested to replicate this approach in other university communities across Africa.

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