



# LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMON HIGHER EDUCATION AREA: Priorities, Trends, and Future Perspectives



**Presentation at the 4th Meeting of the  
Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue  
(Rome, 17-18 February 2026)**

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# Presentation Purpose & Outline

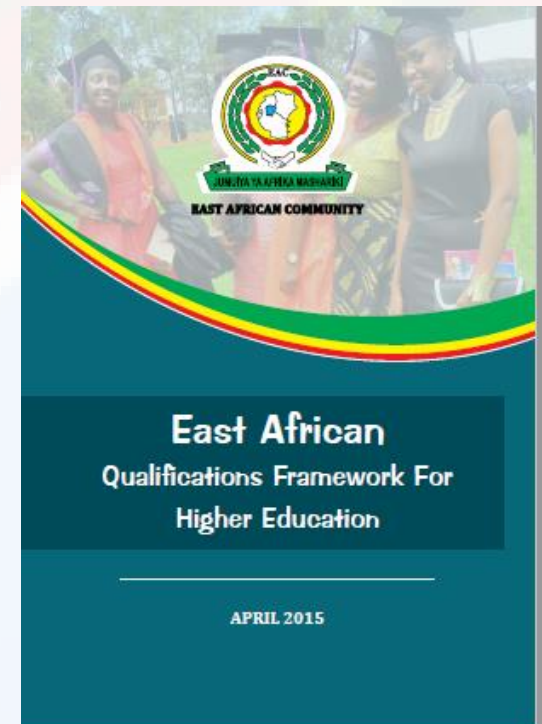


## Key Questions to be Addressed:

1. What is the priority of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in the East African Common Higher Education Area (EACHEA)?
2. What trends are emerging in Lifelong Learning in East Africa, and how will they evolve?

## Presentation Outline:

1. Context of Lifelong Learning in EACHEA
2. Legal and Policy Framework for LLL in EACHEA
3. Key Priority Areas of LLL in EACHEA
4. Emerging Trends in LLL in EACHEA
5. Conclusion – Future Perspectives for Cooperation





# Introduction



- ❖ Lifelong Learning is no longer a peripheral issue in East Africa.
- ❖ LLL is rapidly becoming a strategic priority of the EACHEA for regional integration, skills development, social inclusion, and economic transformation.
- ❖ LLL is firmly entrenched in key legal and policy frameworks for higher education and ministerial commitments.



## The 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Ministerial Conference on the EAC Common Higher Education Area

H.E. Yoweri Kagame Museveni,  
President of the Republic of Uganda | Chief Guest

Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni,  
First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports  
Conference Convener

H.E. Vanessa M. Ndlovu,  
Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC)

Hon. John Christopher Muganyizi,  
State Minister for Higher Education Uganda

Professor Mary J. M. Chiswicki,  
Chairperson, Forum of CEOs of National Councils/Commissions for Higher Education in East Africa

Professor Gaspard Sangahambusa,  
Executive Secretary, Inter-University Council for East Africa

**THEME:**  
"Enhancing Regional Integration through Harmonized Higher Education Systems for Sustainable Development in East Africa"



# Context of LLL in EACHEA



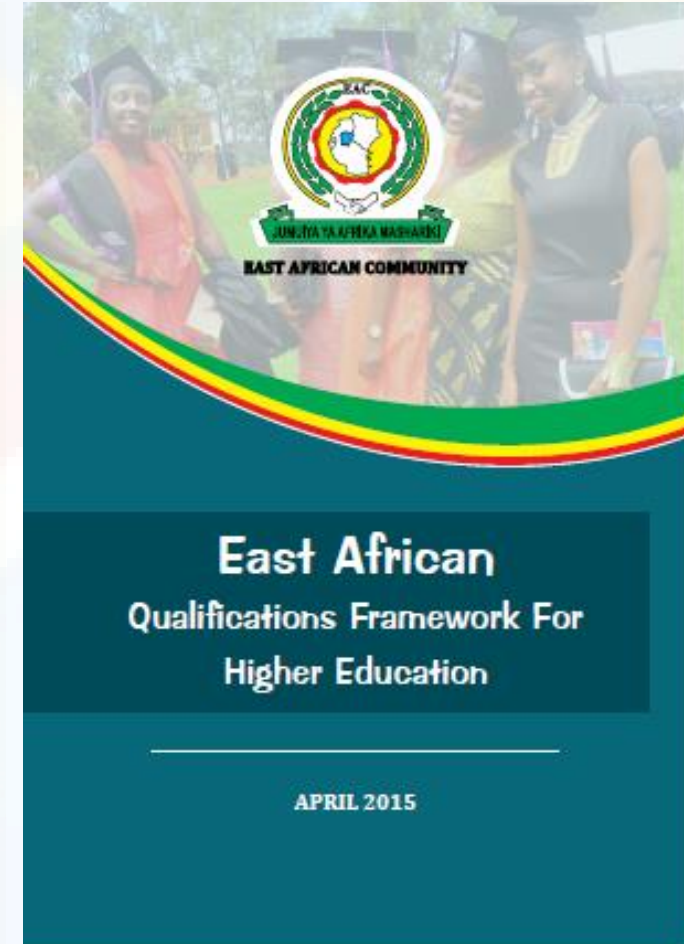
- Why Lifelong Learning is a Regional Priority in the East African Context?
  - ❖ Young and mobile population
  - ❖ High levels of skills acquisition outside formal education
  - ❖ Large informal economy
  - ❖ Growth of digital and cross-border learning
  - ❖ Presence of refugees and displaced persons



# Legal and Policy Framework for LLL in EACHEA



- **EAC Treaty** (Articles 5 & 102) – Cooperation in education and training
- **EAC Common Market Protocol** (Article 11) – Free movement of labour and services
- **EAC Vision 2050** – Human capital development and skills for competitiveness
- **IUCEA Act (2009) and Strategic Plan** – Harmonisation of higher education systems
- **East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education** (EAQFHE)

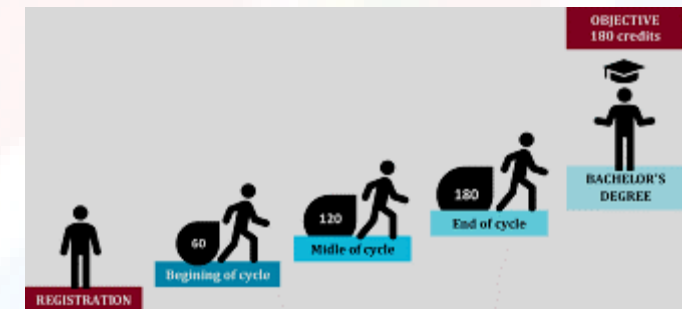


# Key Priority Areas of LLL in EACHEA

**1. Priority Area 1 – Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**



**2. Priority Area 2 – Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS)**



**3. Priority Area 3 – Mobility, Inclusion and Equity**

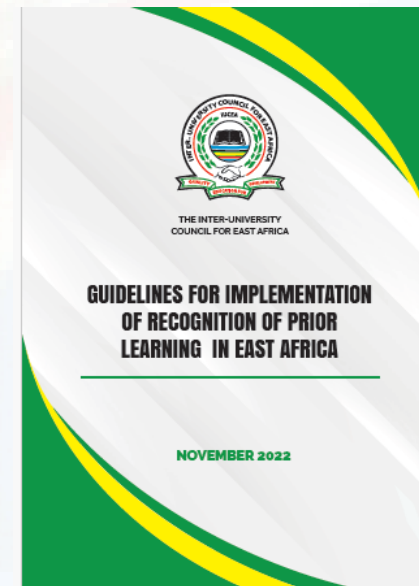
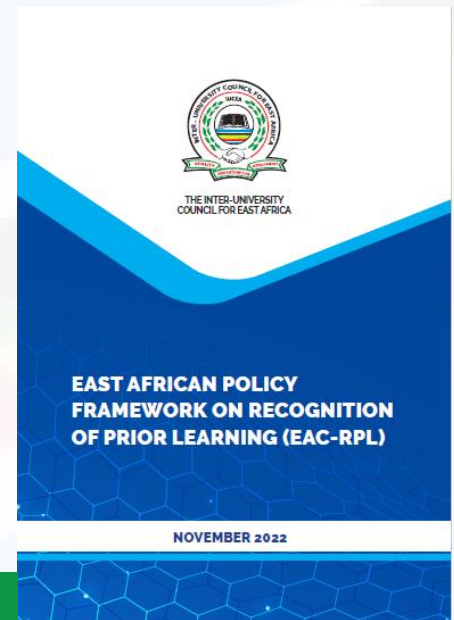




# 1 – Recognition of Prior Learning (EAC-RPL)



- Recognition of Prior Learning is a **cornerstone** of Lifelong Learning in the EAC region.
- Many East Africans acquire valuable competences through **work, apprenticeships, community practice, and self-learning**
- RPL supports **flexible entry, progression, and credit transfer**
- **Regional RPL Policy Framework and Guidelines** are in place
- Several Partner States have begun embedding RPL in:
  - ❖ National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)
  - ❖ TVET–higher education pathways
  - ❖ Refugee education and skills recognition initiatives

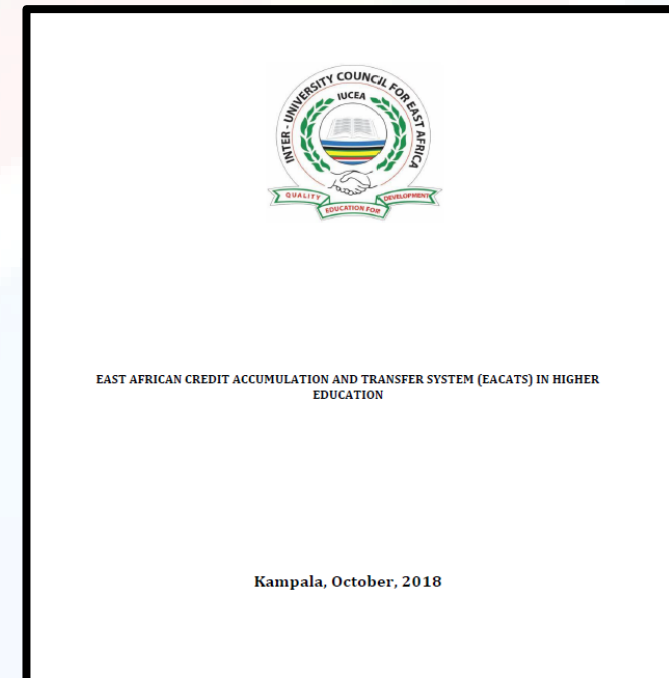
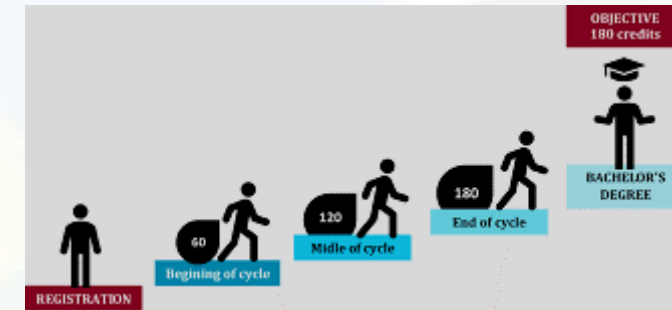




## 2 – Credit Accumulation and Transfer (EACATS)



- ❑ There is growing trend of **student mobility** and **lifelong learning** across East African countries, driven by regional integration, scholarships, and transnational education.
- ❑ **Demand for Flexible and Lifelong Learning Pathways:** Learners increasingly seek flexible, modular, and part-time learning due to work or family responsibilities.
- ❑ **EACATS Policy framework** was developed to allow for accumulation and transfer of credits by learners, thus supporting stackable qualifications.





## 3 – Mobility, Inclusion and Equity- Inclusion of Migrants, Refugees, and Displaced Persons



- East Africa hosts a significant number of **refugees and displaced persons**.
- For these populations, formal certificates are often **lost, incomplete, or unavailable**
- Lifelong Learning approaches—especially **RPL, skills profiling, and flexible credentials**—are essential and initiatives are being undertaken.
- E.G - In 2021, Uganda begun to implement an initiative - **Recognition of Prior Learning Passport** for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).
  - ❖ The passport includes information on the individual's educational background, vocational skills, and work experience, which are assessed and recognized through the RPL process.





# Emerging Trends in LLL in EACHEA



## ➤ **Institutionalisation of Lifelong Learning Policies**

- ❖ Growing integration of LLL into **national education and training policies**
- ❖ Expansion of **National Qualifications Frameworks** to cover non-formal and informal learning
- ❖ Increased dialogue between **higher education, TVET, and industry**

## ➤ **Growth of Digital and Blended Learning**

- ❖ Accelerated by COVID-19, Mobile technology penetration and digital education initiatives
- ❖ Learners increasingly acquire skills through Online platforms, Short courses, and Open and distance learning
- ❖ This trend will require stronger quality assurance and recognition mechanisms and regional and global cooperation on **digital credential frameworks**

## ➤ **Emergence of Micro-credentials**

- ❖ Micro-credentials are gaining attention as Flexible, Skills-focused and Learner-centred relevant for working adults, youth outside formal education and for migrants and refugees
- ❖ We can expect the future directions defined by integration of micro-credentials into NQFs and RQF and stacking of micro-credentials toward full qualifications.



# Conclusion – Future Perspectives for Cooperation



- Lifelong Learning is a **strategic pillar** of the East African Common Higher Education Area
- LLL is now recognized a **regional public good** that advances integration, equity, and competitiveness
- Priority actions:
  - ❖ Strengthen RPL systems
  - ❖ Harmonise recognition approaches
  - ❖ Develop regional guidelines for micro-credentials
- IUCEA's role is critical in:
  - ❖ Policy coordination
  - ❖ Capacity building
  - ❖ Building trust among systems and stakeholders



**Thank You**  
**Asanti Sana**  
***Merci Beaucoup***

