SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

ACQF

African Continental Qualifications Framework

ACQF and SADCQF: synergies for better skills, and transparent qualifications frameworks Africa - overview

HAQAA Webinar

16/11/2026



Speaker: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Key messages

ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework

KEY MESSAGES

ACQF and SADCQF – synergies for transparent, trusted and future-oriented qualifications frameworks in Africa

SADC
Southern African Development Community



1. **ACQF and SADCQF are complementary frameworks** that strengthen transparency, trust and comparability of qualifications across Africa.
2. They support **lifelong learning, inclusion, mobility, recognition and employability** across education and training systems.
3. **Shared priority areas** include referencing, quality assurance, recognition of prior learning, credit systems, micro-credentials and digital tools.
4. **Continental–regional cooperation, capacity development and peer learning** are essential for effective implementation and impact.
5. Together, ACQF and SADCQF contribute to a **trusted qualifications space** for Africa's green, digital and social transformation.







Working together for a trusted African qualifications space.

ACQF – SADCQF: comparison

Dimension	ACQF African Continental Qualifications Framework	SADCQF Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
History	• Launch of project 1: 09/2019; Feasibility Study: 2020; • ACQF Peer Learning Webinars (15); 10 Guidelines + 10 Training Modules; Main Policy document: approved 07/2023, 33 MS at AU HQ. • Launch of project 1: 07/2023-till 12/2026. QCP, Governance, continental Forums, country workshops.	• 2016: SADCQF; 2017: Booklet; 2021: Review study, approved ESTI Ministerial Meeting in Malawi 06/2022; • 05/2023: new Roadmap 2023-2026; 06/2025: Progress report to ESTI Ministerial, 06/2025 in Harare; decided to start Revision; • 09/2025-06/2026: 3 workshops, approved new SADCQF.
Scope	• All AU countries. Most active: 20-24. • All levels and subsystems of Education and Training. • Micro-credentials (light reference).	• All 16 MS. • All levels and subsystems of Education and Training. • Micro-credentials.
Levels and descriptors	• 10. Knowledge-Skills-Autonomy-Responsibility.	• Similar to ACQF. 10. KSAR. Skills: more detailed, updated list.
Policies and Guidelines	• 1. Learning outcomes; 2. Level descriptors; 3. Referencing; 4. RPL-CATS-Recognition; 5. QA & TVET QA; 6. Registers qualifications; 7. M&E; 8. Communication; 9. Innovation & Technology; 10. NQF systemic view. RPL Handbook; Micro-credentials Handbook; CBT Handbook.	• Revised SADCQF – Policy and Guideline • RPL, CATS, Referencing, Micro-credentials, Green Skills. • In discussion: digital-AI-Cybersecurity Skills Guideline; QA in SADCQF context.
Meetings	• Advisory Group; Forums; Presidency Troika; Clusters.	• TWG, TCCA. New Thematic Groups in preparation.
Digital tools	• ACQF Website; Skills Data Focus interactive dashboards – Green skills, Occupational; QCP.	• SADCQF space on ACQF website.

ACQF – SADCQF and Quality Assurance (QA)

Quality Assurance (QA): a strong, transversal component for the trust, credibility and transparency of qualifications and credentials.

QA is strongly supported by both ACQF and SADCQF

ACQF | African Continental Qualifications Framework

SADCQF
Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework

- Explicitly mentioned in the **objectives, principles** and **scope** of both ACQF and SADCQF, and in the **Vision** of SADCQF.
- In the **Referencing** to ACQF and to SADCQF: **criterion 4**, and the linked **8 Principles** of QA of referencing. The **8th Principle:** alignment with ASG-QA.
- **ACQF:** specific Guideline and Training Module (N°5).
- **SADCQF:** Technical Note on QA in the context of SADCQF-NQFs (not overlapping or competing with QA Standards and Guidelines, but supporting the role of QA Agencies).
- QA: **wide scope** – all levels and sub-systems of education and training.

Result: Trust, credibility and transparency in qualifications and credentials, for lifelong learning, employability and inclusion.

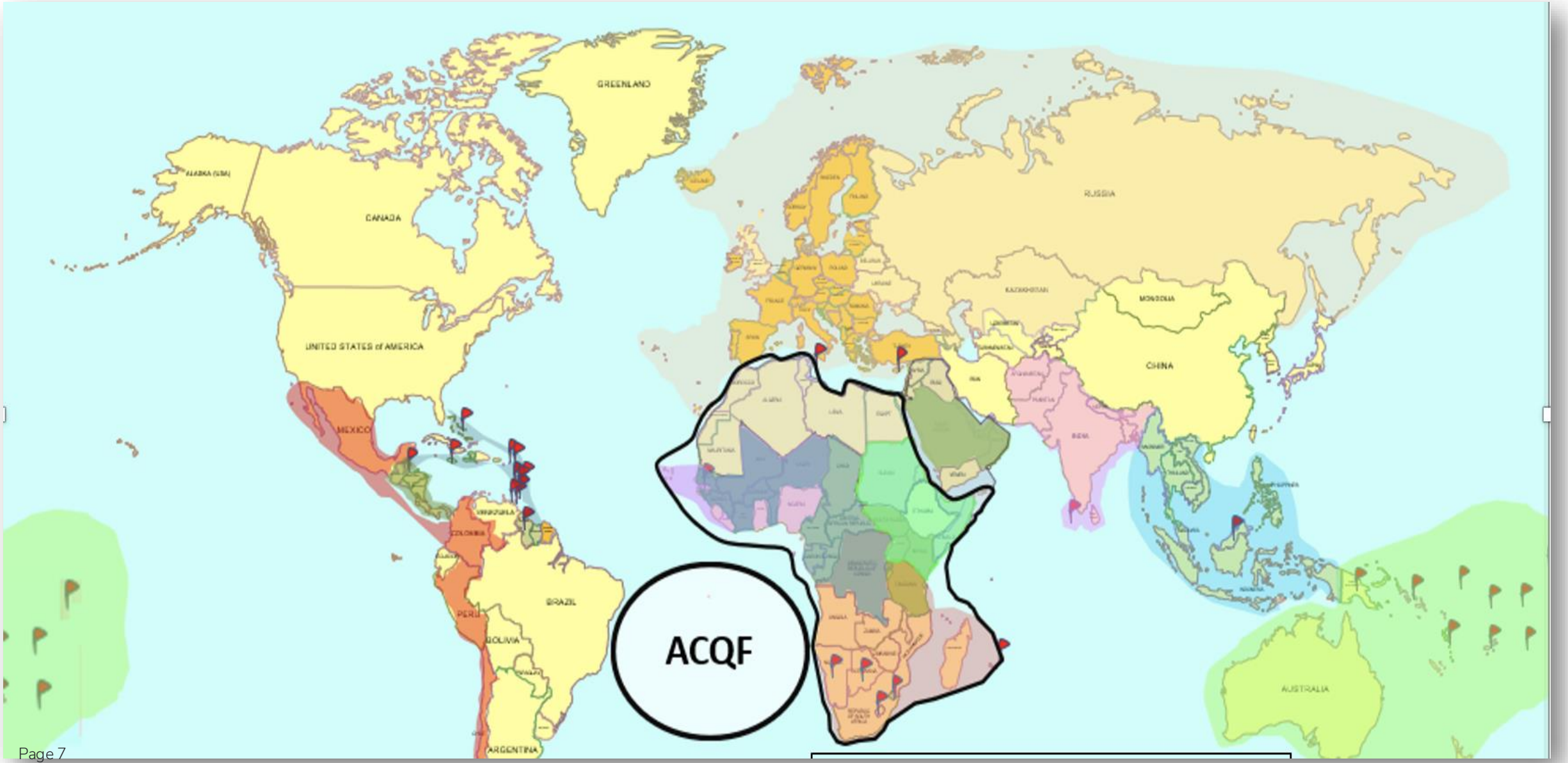
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ACQF – African



A very large Regional Qualifications Framework

- African Union Policy Initiative
- Based on AU policies (CESA-25, AU Free Movement Protocol, AfCFTA)



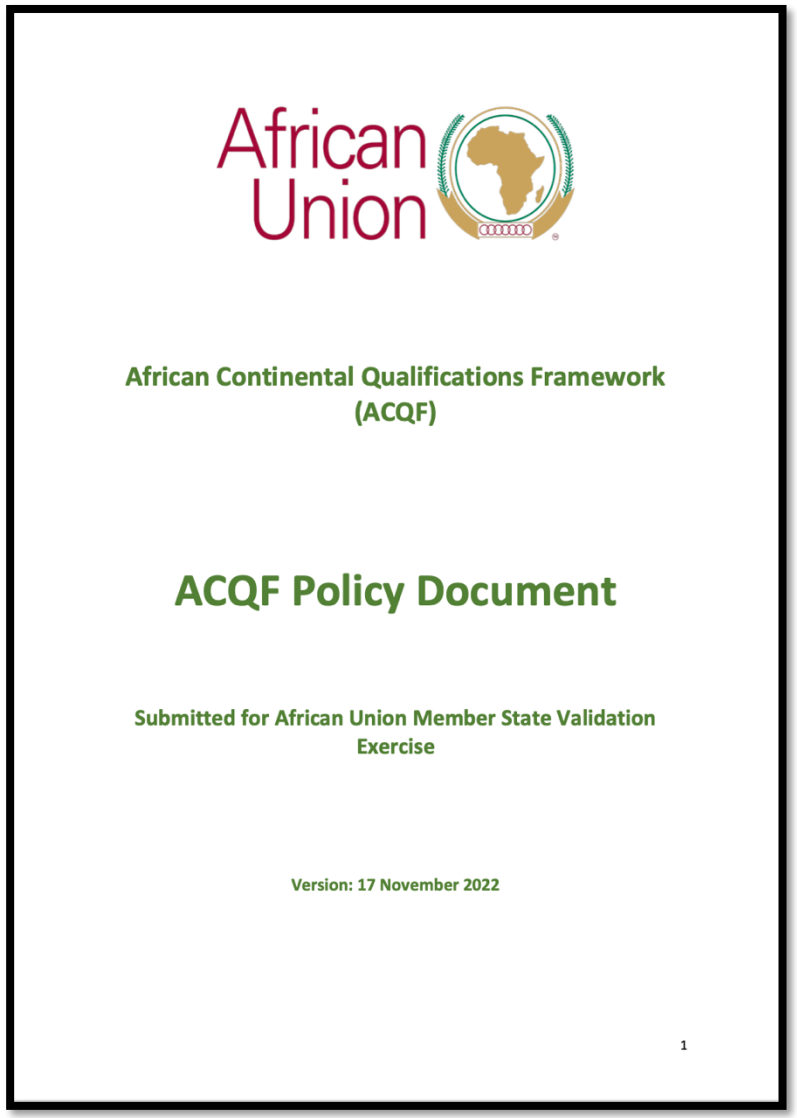
ACQF

African Union Political and legal basis

- Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan
- CESA 16-25
- AfCFTA
- AU Free Movement Protocol
- PAQAF
- TVET Strategy



ACQF



African Union

African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

ACQF Policy Document

Submitted for African Union Member State Validation Exercise

Version: 17 November 2022

1



African Union

Cadre continental africain des certifications (ACQF)

Document de politique de l'ACQF

Pour validation par les états membres de l'Union Africaine

Version du 17 novembre 2022

1

https://acqf.africa/resources/policy-guidelines/acqf-policy-document-upon-validation-by-au-member-states-en-fr-pt



African Union

Quadro Continental Africano de Qualificações (ACQF)

Documento Político do ACQF

Para validação pelos Estados-membros da União Africana

Versão: 17 de novembro 2022

1

ACQF | AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

ACQF: underpinnings, purposes, principles



UNDERPINNINGS



PURPOSES OF ACQF

1. **Enhance** — Enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications of all types and levels, support people's lifelong learning outcomes.
2. **Facilitate** — Facilitate validation of learning, recognition of skills, diplomas and certificates and mobility of learners and workers.
3. **Cooperate** — Work in cooperation and complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks and support African continental integration and creation of African common space of trusted qualifications.
4. **Promote** — Promote cooperation and referencing between qualifications frameworks (national, regional) in Africa and worldwide.

PRINCIPLES

Inclusiveness:
all levels and types of qualifications, all modes of lifelong learning

Innovation:
future-proof, new demands, emerging skills, green skills, transversal skills

Openness:
participation of all stakeholders, good practice, lessons learned (African, global)

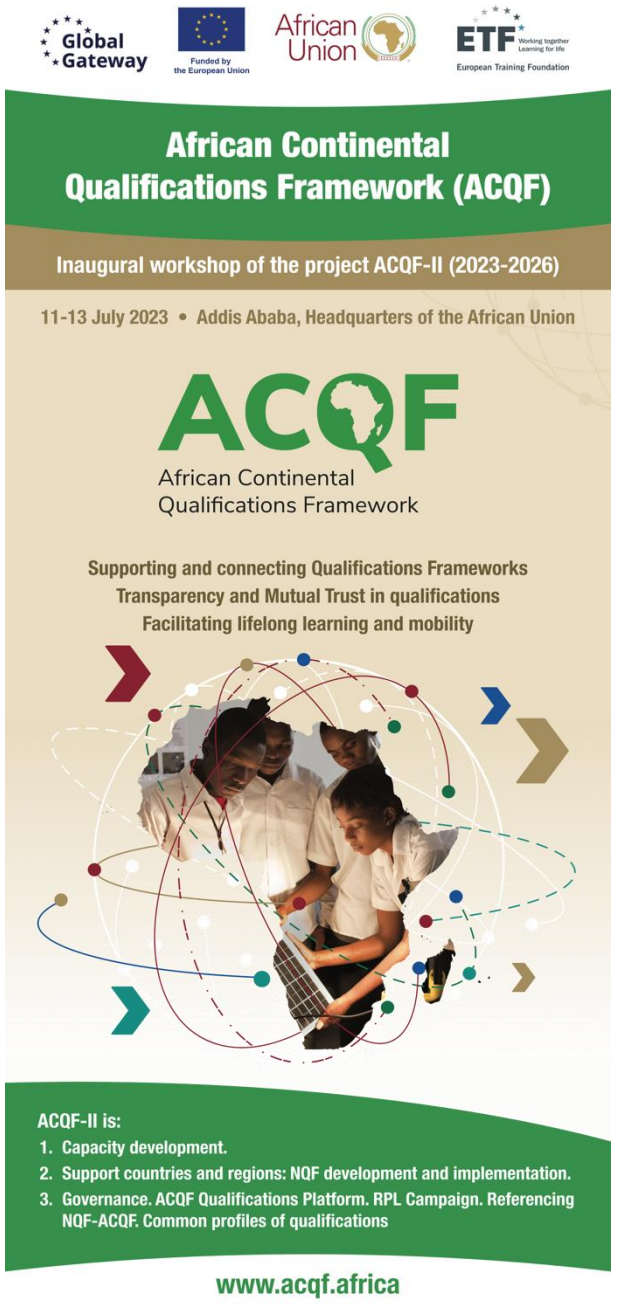
CONCEPTUAL TECHNICAL DESIGN OF ACQF



ACQF is underpinned by Quality Assurance

Transparency and Trust in Qualifications
Includes processes and procedures to ensure qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet high standards

- **Metaframework:** translation device for referencing, comparison, cooperation between different NQFs
- **Comprehensive scope:** all levels, modes of learning
- **10 levels:** whole continuum of education and training
- **Level descriptors** expressed as learning outcomes
- **Domains of learning:** Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility
- **Learning outcomes orientation** supports:
  - Improve **transparency and comparability** of qualifications of different national systems
  - **Transparency and credibility of RPL** and validation of outcomes from experience, access to quality RPL
  - **Application of credit accumulation and transfer systems** in different academic and vocational pathways.
    - *Access, learning progression, lifelong learning, flexibility,*
    - *In design of qualifications: facilitate transfer of components of qualifications*



Main areas of activity of the ACQF

1.Referencing of national qualifications frameworks and systems to the ACQF, following agreed criteria and procedures.

2. Support recognition of prior learning – for example, the development of common guidelines and approaches, updated inventory of RPL systems on the continent, a wide information and support campaign

3. ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) and management information system

4. Qualifications: Development of qualifications profiles adequate for common continental use (e.g.: related with economic integration / AfCFTA).

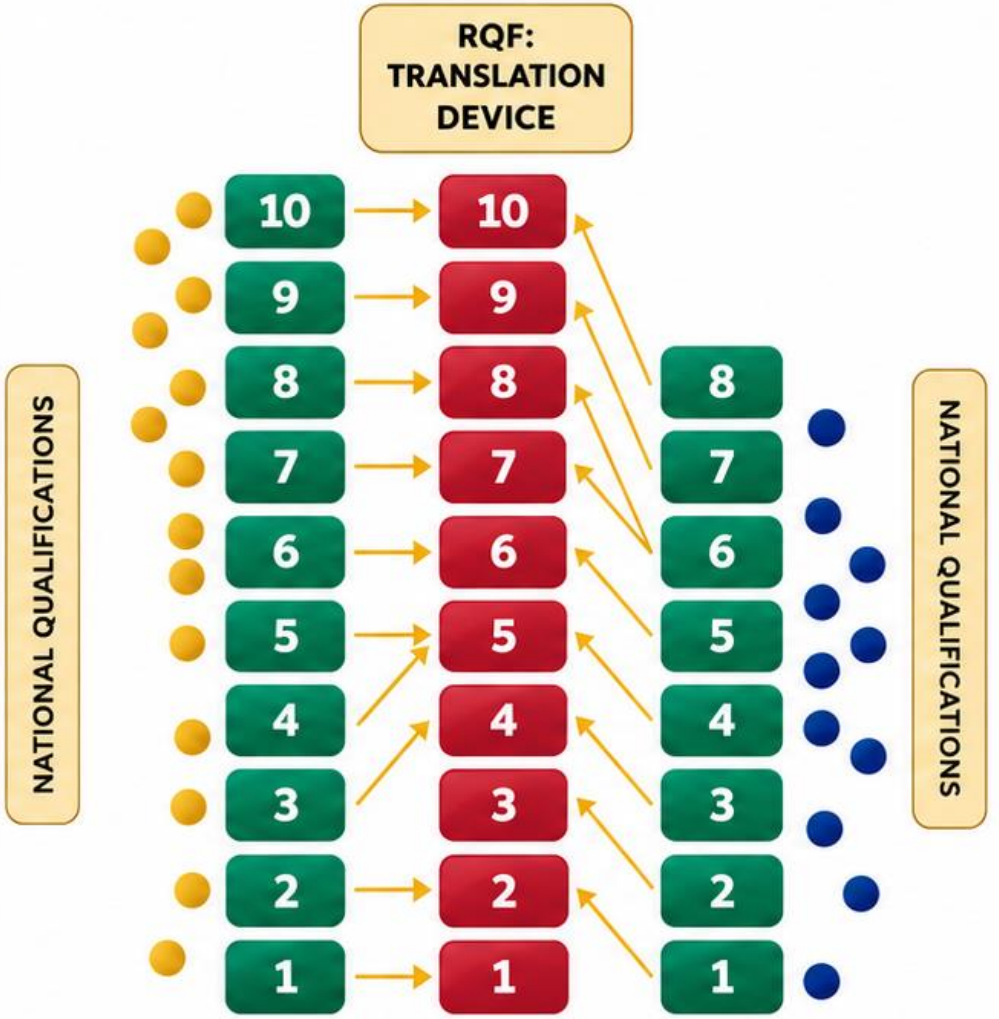
5. Capacity development in relevant areas. Online, onsite, hybrid.

6. Advocacy, communication, networking and cooperation: African stakeholders (education and training, employment, social partners) and other RQFs globally

7. Analysis, monitoring and evaluation: for continuous improvement.

Referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to ACQF

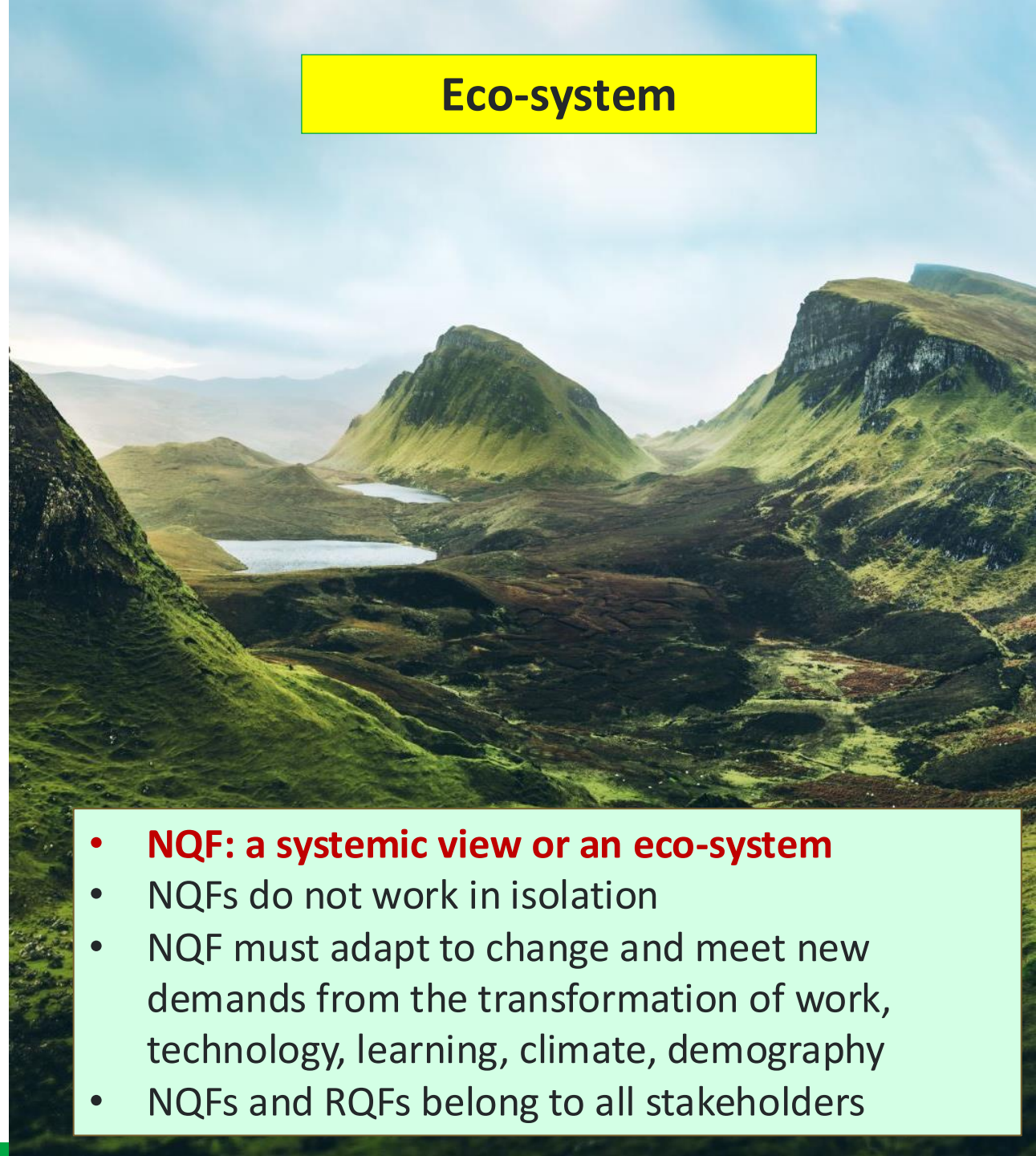
- ACQF aims at **connecting** the African national (and regional) qualifications frameworks. This core function is based on the process of **referencing to ACQF.**
- **Referencing:** process aimed at comparing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the ACQF following criteria and procedures (ACQF Guideline 3).
- **4 main criteria and 6 procedures.**
- At **national level**, referencing contributes to self-assessment of the status of the national qualifications framework or system, and to self-improvement.
- At **continental level and between countries,** referencing to the ACQF of a significant and increasing number of national qualifications or systems leads to the creation of a **common area of trusted qualifications** and enables the transformative potential of the ACQF for the continent.
- **Following referencing to ACQF:** countries use ACQF levels on newly issued documents related to qualifications and in registers / databases of qualifications.



ACQF

The systemic view of NQF





- **NQF: a systemic view or an eco-system**
- NQFs do not work in isolation
- NQF must adapt to change and meet new demands from the transformation of work, technology, learning, climate, demography
- NQFs and RQFs belong to all stakeholders



Definitions are important

ACQF

African Continental Qualifications Framework

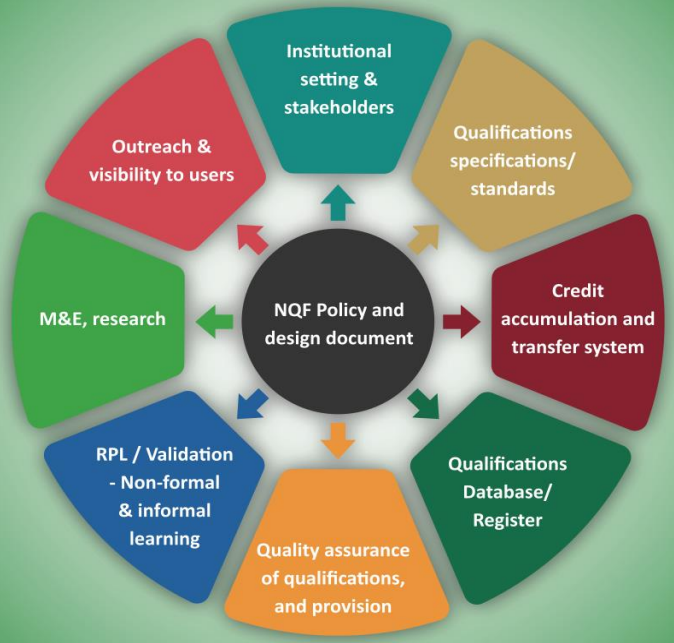


A qualification: means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Source: EQF Recommendation.

A national qualifications framework (NQF) is 'A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

Source: EQF Recommendation



Learning outcomes: Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal and informal.

Source: Cedefop

A national qualification system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These include the means to develop and operationalise national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, **quality assurance processes, evaluation and attribution** processes, **skills recognition** and other mechanisms linking education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems can be more or less integrated and coherent. One of the characteristics of a qualification system may be an **explicit qualifications framework.**

Source: OECD, Bridges to Lifelong Learning, 2007

Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of a Qualifications Framework that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Source: SAQA, NQFPedia

A regional qualifications framework (RQF) is a broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region.

A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications **to relate** to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.

Source: ASEAN

QRF: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, A Practical Guide and All you Need to Know.

And much more on ACQF website for stakeholders, policy makers, education and training providers, learners and experts interested in themes and issues related to national and regional qualifications frameworks and their related systems, tools and governawnce.







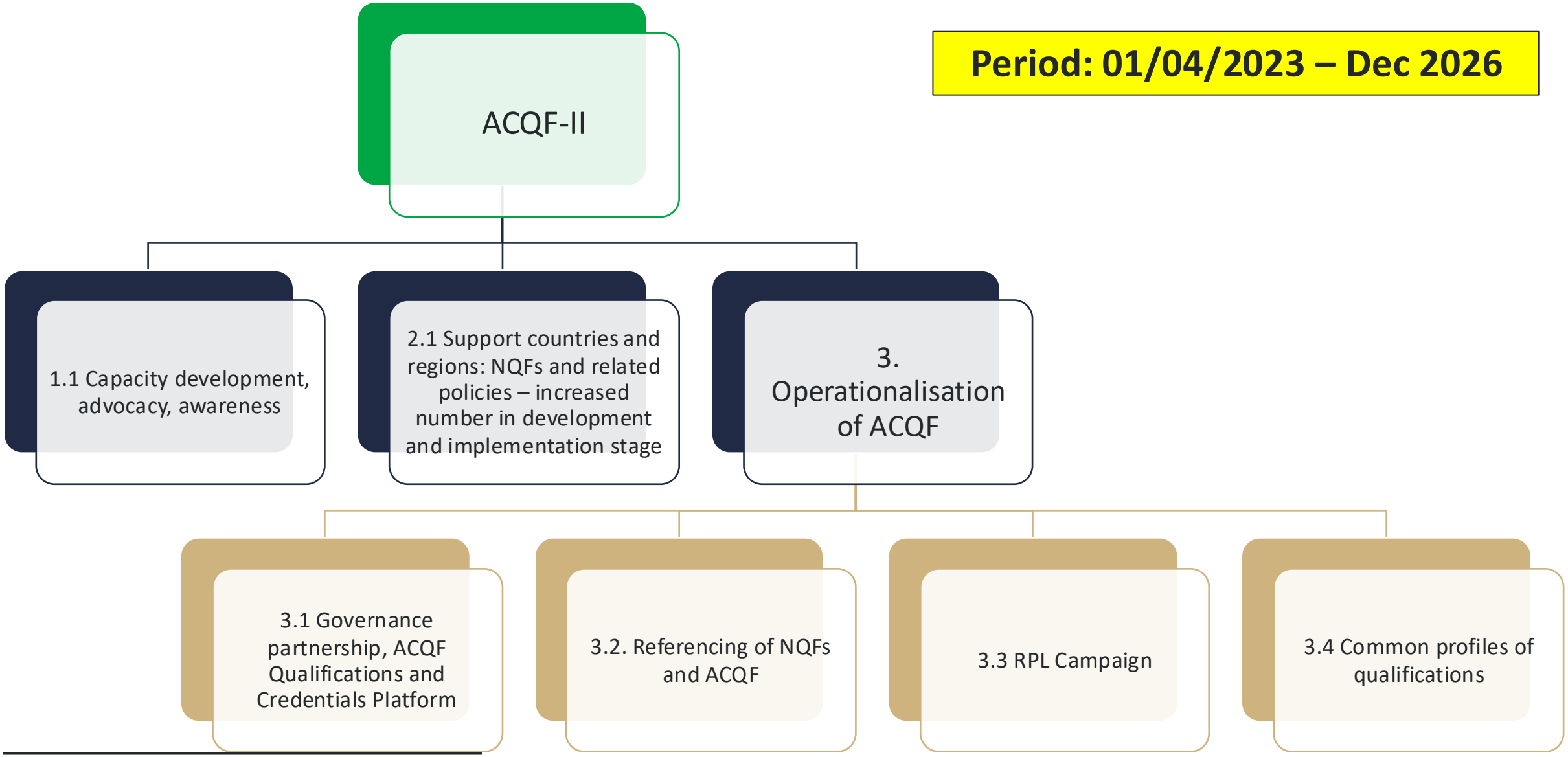
Want to know more about ACQF?

Visit our website:

https://acqf.africa/

New ACQF Project (2023-2026) ! Main outputs

Period: 01/04/2023 – Dec 2026



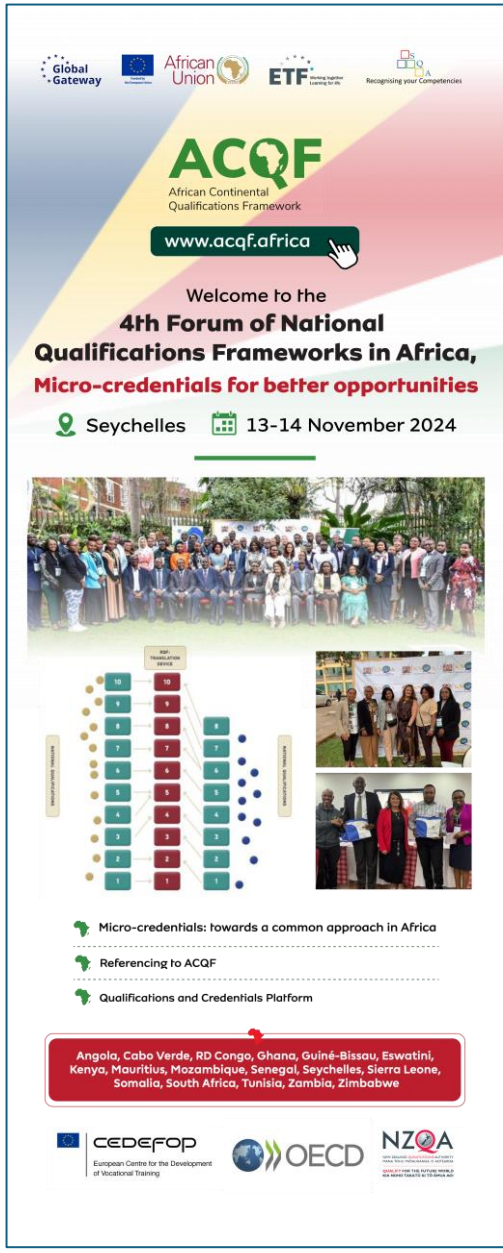
ACQF Forums


Global Gateway
African Union
ETF
ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework
Project ACQF-II
www.acqf.africa
Capacity Development & networking programme 2023
"Making National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) operational in a changing world."
The Maputo Workshop - Mozambique
05-06 Dezembro 2023
Programme de renforcement des capacités et de réseautage 2023
« Rendre les cadres nationaux des certifications (CNC) opérationnels dans un monde en mutation. »
Maputo - Mozambique
05-06 Dezembro 2023
Programa de Desenvolvimento de Capacidades e Networking 2023
"Tornar operacionais os Quadros Nacionais de Qualificações (QNQ) num mundo em mudança."
O Workshop de Maputo - Moçambique
05-06 Dezembro 2023

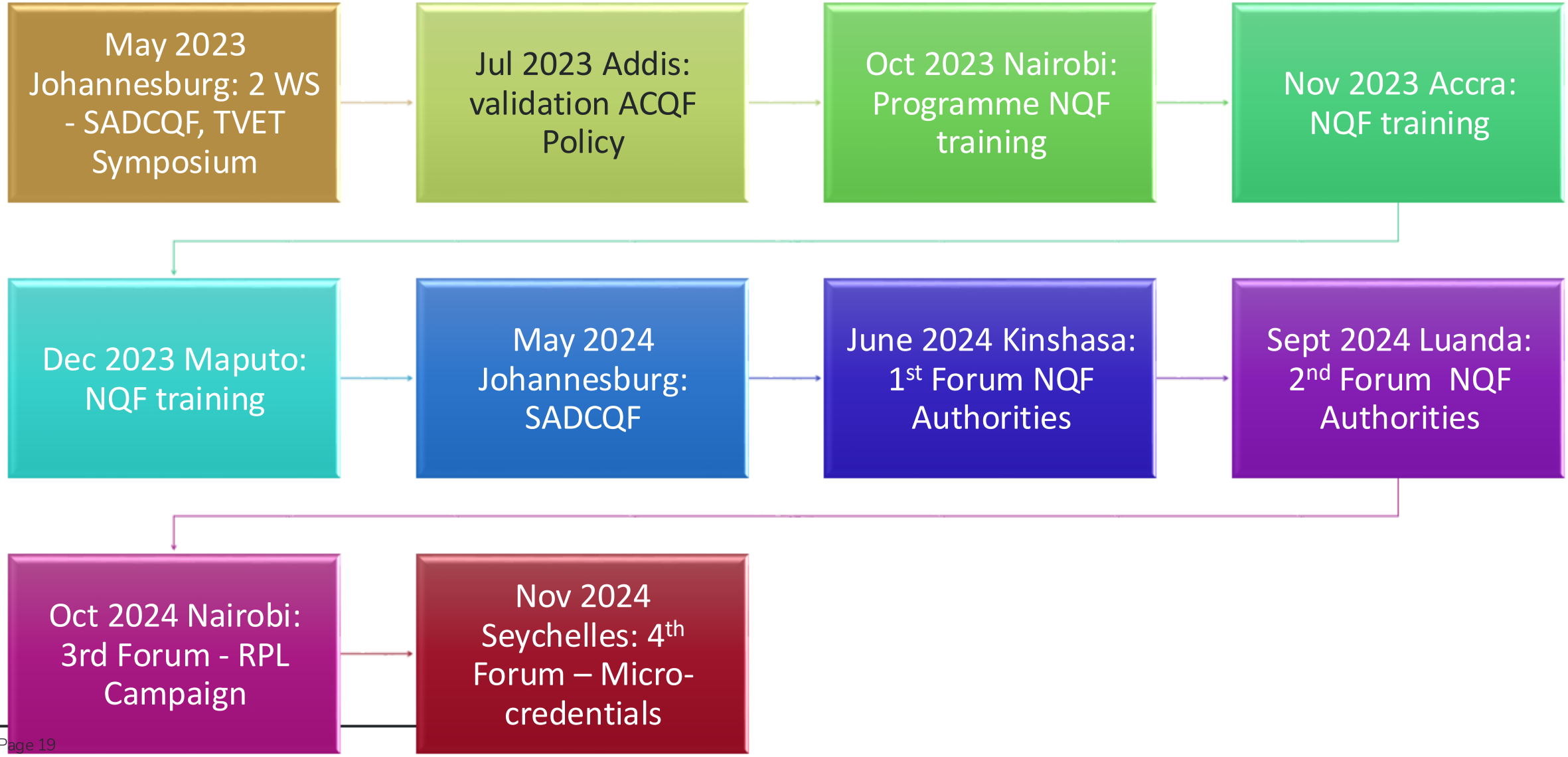

The Forum of National Qualifications Frameworks
Le Forum des Cadres Nationaux de Certifications
O Fórum de Quadros Nacionais de Qualificações
Kinshasa – R.D Congo, D.R. Congo
20 Countries
4 Regions
18 - 20 June 2024
Hotel Memling
FORUM-ONLINE ALSO ACCESSIBLE


Global Gateway
African Union
ETF
INQ
ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework
Bem-vindo
2º Fórum dos Quadros Nacionais de Qualificações em África, Luanda
Hotel Alvalade, Luanda – República de Angola
5-6 Setembro 2024
Welcome to the
2nd Forum of National Qualifications Frameworks in Africa, Luanda
Hotel Alvalade, Luanda – República de Angola
5-6 September 2024
GHANA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
New generation NQFs – innovations
Launch of Referencing to ACQF
Quality Assurance – focus on NQFs
RPL – never ending story
CATS – renewed attention, new experiences
Micro-credentials for LLL and employability
Green NQFs – Green ACQF
Qualifications and Credentials Platform (QCP) – forward!
www.acqf.africa
GOVERNO DE ANGOLA
maptss.gov.ao

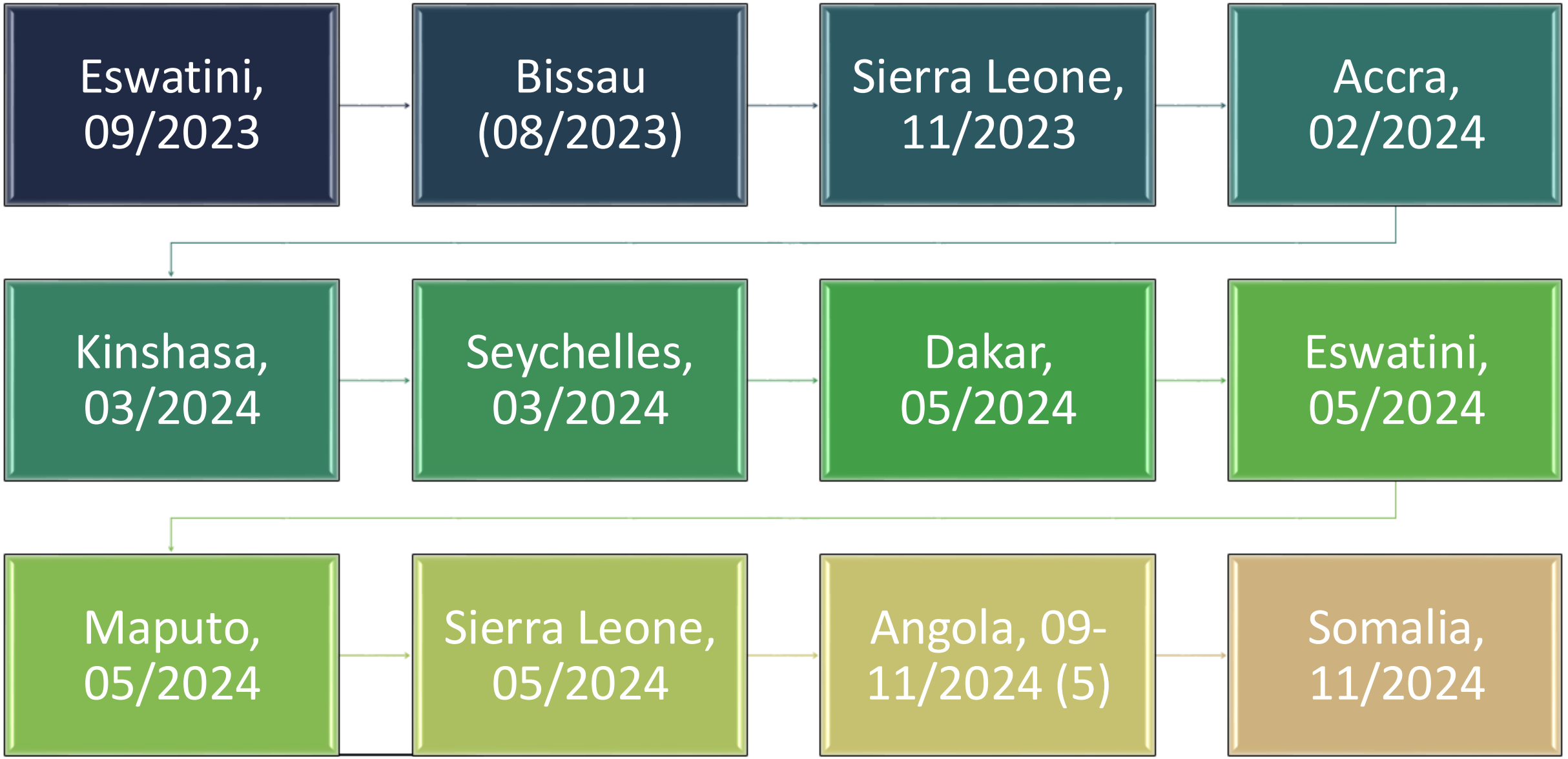

Global Gateway
African Union
ETF
KNQA
ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework
Project ACQF-II: Supporting implementation of African Continental Qualifications Framework
3rd ACQF Forum
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Practitioners
Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)
Reconhecimento Validação e Certificação de Competências (RVCC)
Hotel Fairview - Nairobi, Kenya
1-4 October 2024
ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework
www.acqf.africa
Angola, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, R.D. Congo, Eswatini, Ghana, Guiné-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
ALL-AFRICA STUDENTS UNION
UNION PANAFRICAINE DES ETUDIANTS
UNIÃO DOS ESTUDANTES DE TODA A ÁFRICA
AASU


Global Gateway
African Union
ETF
ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework
www.acqf.africa
Welcome to the
4th Forum of National Qualifications Frameworks in Africa,
Micro-credentials for better opportunities
Seychelles
13-14 November 2024
Micro-credentials: towards a common approach in Africa
Referencing to ACQF
Qualifications and Credentials Platform
Angola, Cabo Verde, RD Congo, Ghana, Guiné-Bissau, Eswatini, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
CEDEFOP
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
OECD
NZQA

2023-2024: 11 ACQF-II capacity development, peer learning, referencing multi-country workshops; 21 countries - 3 regions



2023-2024: 16 Country-specific workshops



6 Multi-country Workshops 2023

Theme of the 3 Training Workshops (Nairobi, Accra, Maputo):

“Making NQFs operational in a time of change”



Q 2-4 2024: 5 Forums, 13 country workshops













Attendance certificates: emotion, friendship and satisfaction















Participants receiving ACQF-II certificates













ACQF delivers on:

Referencing between NQFs – facilitate comparability, mutual understanding & trust and recognition of qualifications.

NQFs and related policies (RPL, CATS, micro-credentials)

Digitalisation of qualifications management – QCP.

Capacity development training; peer learning; pooling of handbooks and guidelines

ACQF Network – Inception Document validated, project pilot 2025 in preparation for launch in Jan 2025.

Data for skills intelligence – common profiles occupations-Big Data driven; interactive data dashboards for public use.

Monitoring and evaluation of NQF: guidelines and tools; capacity development; regular research (NQF, RPL and micro-credentials)

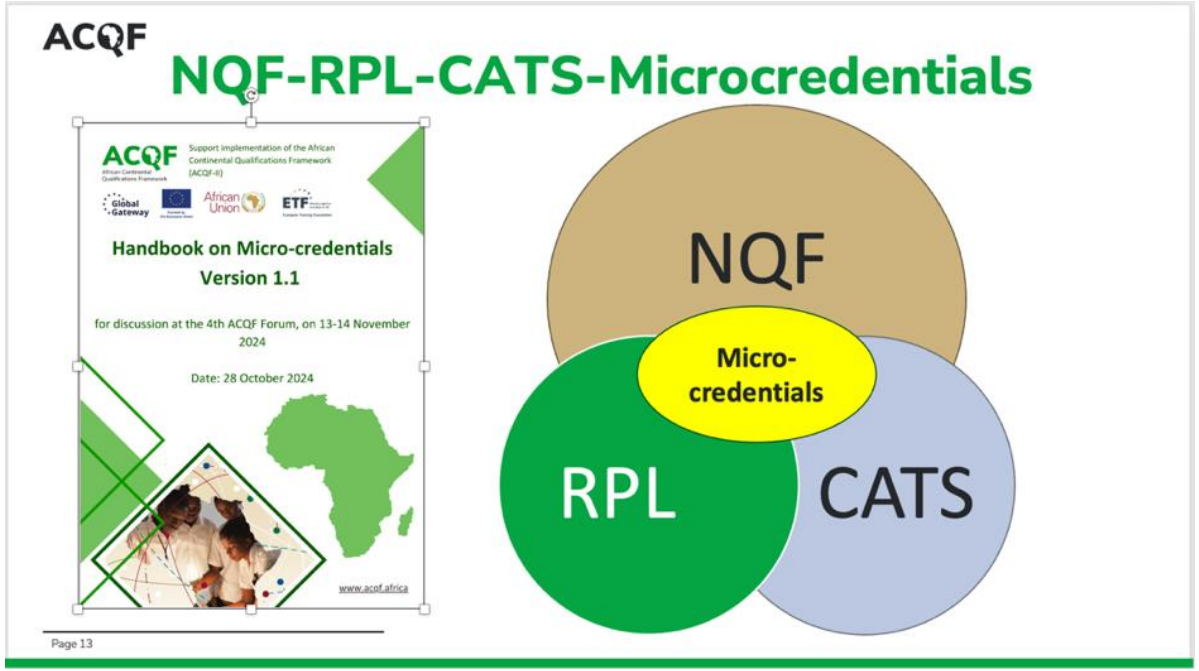
Gains for all

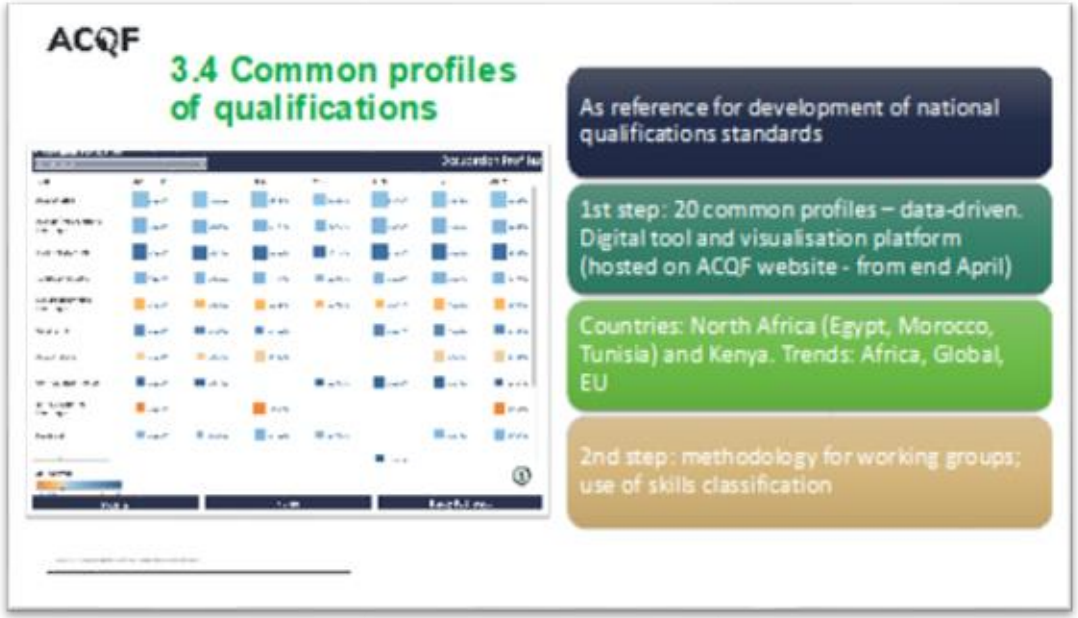


ACQF

Africa

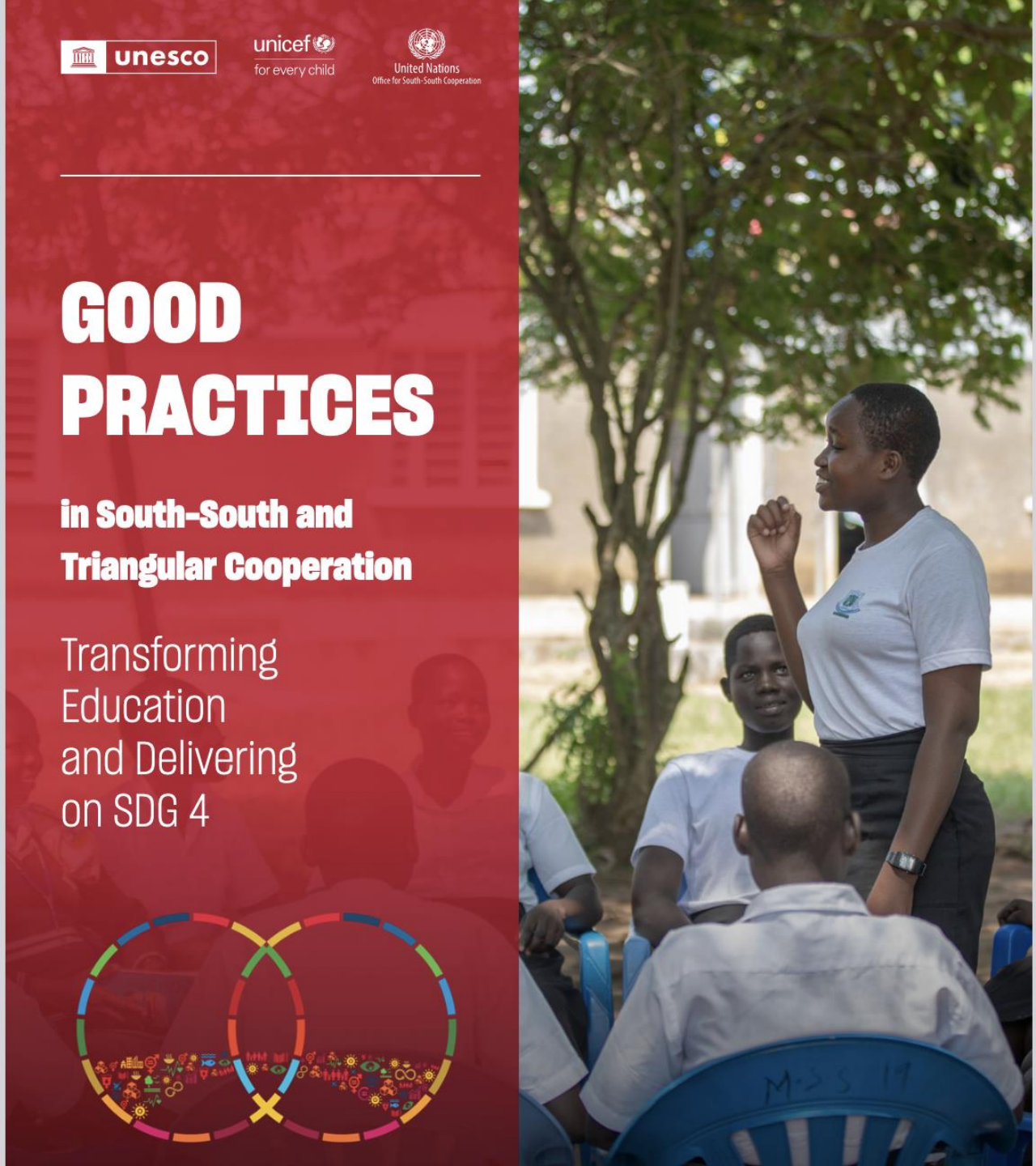
- Comparability, transparency, trusted qualifications & credentials
- More, better and connected NQFs – RPL, CATS, QCP
- Recognition – Mobility
- Green NQFs
- LMIS - Data
- Skills – Human Resources - Employability





South-South dialogue and sharing: ACQF among the good practices 2023

https://www.southsouth-galaxy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Good-Practices-in-SSTC-Transforming-Education-and-Delivering-on-SDG4.pdf



ACQF

For ETF – European Commission

So much new!

Mutual learning!

- Knowledge
- Tools
- People
- Institutions
- Energy of the ACQF Network

Yes Africa can !



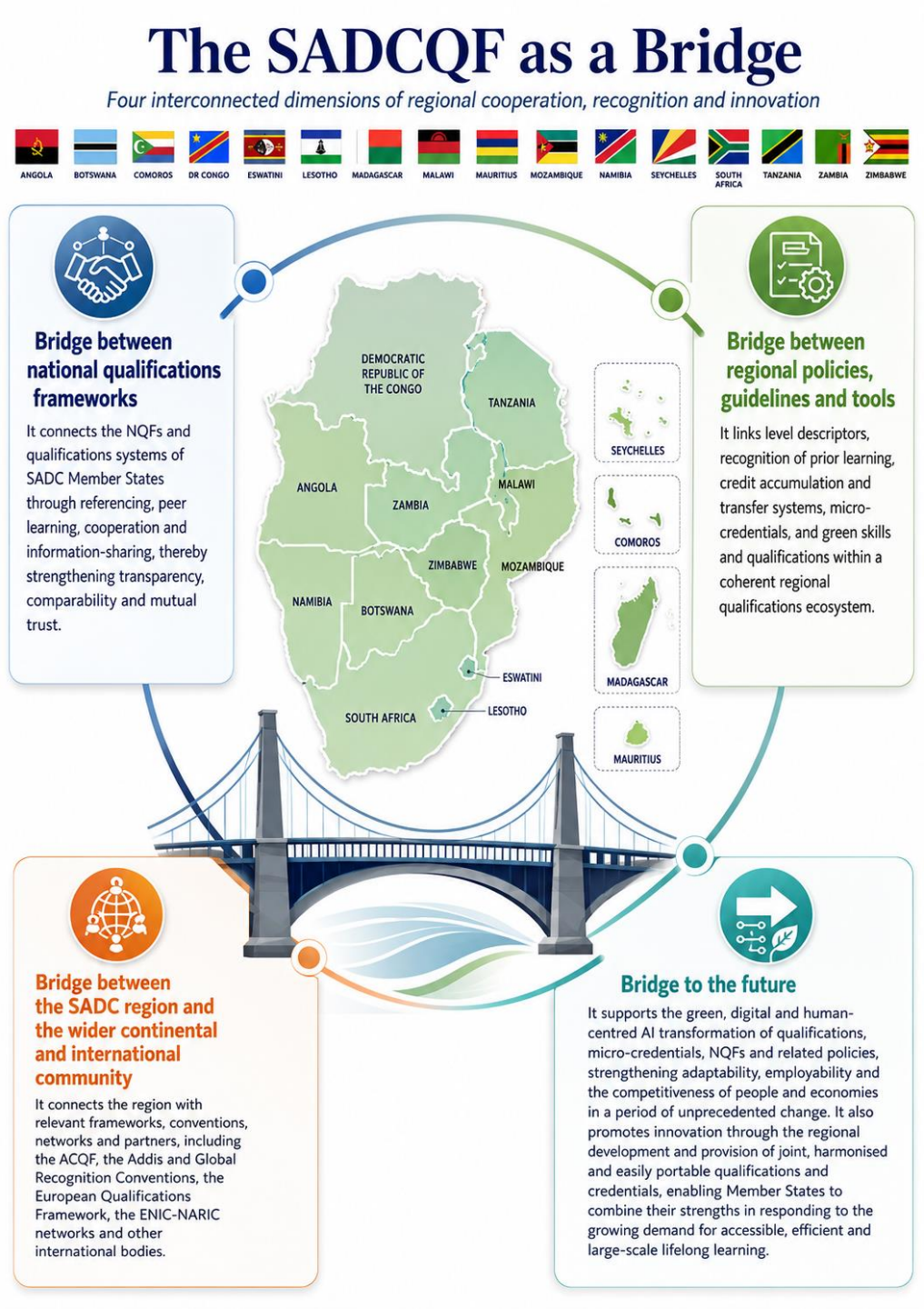
02

Revised SADCQF

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

The revised SADCQF

A regional qualifications framework for action: lifelong learning, innovation, employability, inclusion, recognition, mobility, connection, sustainability



SADCQF 2026 in Brief

SADCQF Policy and Guidelines: validated in June 2026 by TCCA.

Additionally: 6 Guidelines, 3 Technical Notes

To be approved at ESTI Ministerial meeting 2027

1. Ownership, homegrown: ESTI Minister's decision - MS active participation – Secretaria

2. Sources: ACQF, EQF-SADCQF comparison 2024, 2 specific regional surveys, NQFs experiences, Cedefop tools, UNESCO Recognition Conventions

3. Substantial revision - several novel elements. Innovation (MC, green skills). Inclusive scope.

4. SADCQF eco-system for action: strategic features + practical Guidelines + Roadmap + M&E + Capacity development

5. Stronger emphasis on Referencing NQFs to SADCQF – use of SADCQF levels on national qualifications to facilitate recognition, portability, mobility

SADCQF – an eco-system

A. Core policy foundation

SADCQF Policy and Guideline Document (validated)

SADCQF POLICY AND GUIDELINE DOCUMENT

validated

TRUST

B. Guidelines | *approved / in final consultation phase*

5 Guidelines

1. RPL (approved)
2. CATS (approved)
3. Referencing to SADCQF
4. Micro-credentials
5. Green Skills: classification and guideline

C. New Guidelines & Technical Notes in development and consultation

3 New Guidelines / Technical Notes

1. Digital-AI-cybersecurity skills: classification and guideline
2. QA in the SADCQF context
3. Digital Credentials

An evolving ecosystem of policy, guidelines and technical tools supporting implementation, trust and innovation.

What is the SADCQF?

Vision and eight fundamental features

VISION

A trusted, inclusive and responsive regional qualifications framework that supports lifelong learning, recognition of qualifications, skills and micro-credentials, and contributes to regional development and integration, mobility, employability, innovation, social justice and sustainability across the SADC region.

1 Nine objectives

- Quality, transparency, comparability and trust
- Articulation of NQFs, RPL and CATS
- Fair recognition and support for future skills
- Lifelong learning, inclusion and regional integration

2 Inclusive scope

- All levels and types
- Higher education, TVET and general education
- Formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Full, partial, sectoral and professional qualifications
- Micro-credentials

3 Future-oriented principles

- Learner-centred
- Learning outcomes-based
- Innovation-oriented
- Inclusive and equitable
- Transparent and quality-assured
- Agile, responsive and data-informed

4 Eight activity areas

- Regional and global alignment
- NQF development and referencing
- Quality assurance coherence
- Recognition and mobility
- Digitalisation
- Capacity development
- Monitoring
- Evaluation

5 Technical architecture

- Governance
- Core instruments and guides
- RPL, CATS and micro-credentials
- Digital systems, registers and verifiable credentials
- Communication and advocacy

6 Ten levels

- Revised level descriptors across knowledge, skills and autonomy/ responsibility
- Aligned with the ACQF

7 4-year implementation roadmap

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Governance and inventory	Capacity development and referencing	Pilots, digital credentials and regional skills intelligence	Evaluation, consolidation and scaling

8 Regional value

- Stronger transparency and mutual trust
- Greater recognition and visibility of qualifications and skills
- Enhanced mobility of learners and workers across the SADC region

One region. Trusted qualifications. Lifelong opportunities.

SADCQF: homegrown, contextualised and globally connected

Responsive to SADC needs and open to the world



1

Homegrown

designed within the region, rooted in SADC realities, priorities and cooperation.

2

Contextualised and responsive

responds to SADC development needs, strategic initiatives, inclusion, mobility, sustainability and economic transformation.

3

Globally connected

takes account of international experiences and developments while keeping a strong regional identity; aligned with wider African and international transparency agendas.

4

All levels of complexity

supports skills and qualifications at the highest levels, as well as at medium and lower levels of complexity.

5

Equal merit throughout life

values formal, non-formal and informal learning; supports equal merit of learning modalities and recognition of learning outcomes throughout life.

Regional relevance with international openness.

Higher Education and the SADCQF

A strategic partnership for quality, innovation, recognition and regional impact

Higher Education institutions and systems are essential agents of innovation, skills development and the qualification of the population, aligned with quality assurance policies, national strategies and regional goals.

1. Qualifications referenced to SADCQF

- HE qualifications of all levels and types are referenced through national NQFs to the SADCQF.
- Institutions can use SADCQF levels.
- Benefits: international recognition, mobility and visibility.





2. Using the Guidelines strengthens practice

- Supports national and institutional policies and practices.
- Key tools: RPL, CATS, Micro-credentials and Green Skills.
- Contributes to mutual understanding, trust and transparency of HE qualifications and micro-credentials across the region.



HE Sector / HE Institutions

Knowledge • People • Innovation • Impact

3. HE contribution to the SADCQF roadmap

- Contribute expertise, evidence and innovation.
- Support joint qualifications and common standards.
- Develop pilot micro-credentials for green skills and AI literacy.



4. Benefits beyond the region

- SADCQF and its tools can be compared or referenced with other regional qualifications frameworks.
- Examples: EQF, ASEAN QRF, ACQF and East African regional frameworks.
- Expands cooperation, recognition and global relevance.



Higher Education is strategic for the impact, visibility and sustainability of the SADCQF — the common reference framework of all SADC Member States.

QUALITY · INNOVATION · RECOGNITION · SUSTAINABILITY

1.Overview of activities and timelines (1)

Overall – an efficient process with tangible results

June 2025, Harare - ESTI Ministers annual meting

Approved Progress Report 2023-26, incl. proposal for substantial revision SADCQF.

3-5/Sept 2025, Pretoria (hosted SAQA-CHE)

1st TWG workshop: conceptualisation all key aspects of the revised SADCQF.

Oct 2025 – Jan 2026

Elaboration of 1st complete version of Revised SADCQF Policy and Guideline. Comments Member States received, incorporated. 2nd version prepared for 2nd TWG meeting.

10-12/Feb 2026, Windhoek (NQA)

2nd TWG workshop. Final inputs to revised SADCQF from working group discussions. Started 1st SADCQF Survey (8 thematic areas).

17-19/Jun 2026, TCCA (Johannesburg)

Validated revised SADCQF Policy and Guideline. Presented report of 1st SADCQF Survey 2026.

Jul-Aug 2026: elaboration 3 new Guidelines version 1 for discussion – Referencing, Micro-credentials, Green Skills

Shared. Presented at Lusaka and Mauritius TWG workshops.

Revised SADCQF: Validated by TCCA, June 2026. To be approved at next Joint Meeting ESTI Ministers (June 2027).

Towards a Common Future



1 Revision process:

- Decision by Ministers at the Harare Joint ESTI Ministerial Meeting (June 2025).
- Participative revision through dialogue and co-design of the Policy and Guideline Document: 2 workshops: Pretoria (Sept 2025) and Windhoek (Feb 2026). **Technical Working Group**
- Evidence-based process: comprehensive survey collected views and orientations from 13 SADC Member States. Analytical report presented at Pretoria workshop and used in the conceptualisation of the revised SADCQF.
- Use of relevant information and findings from the EQF-SADCQF comparison report (2024).
- Based on benchmarking and relevant international experience.





2 Version 5 of Revised SADCQF – result of consultation and gradual evolution:

- Version 2 circulated in October 2025 for comments and orientations from all Member States. Incorporated into draft 3 for discussion.
- Presented and discussed comprehensively at the Windhoek workshop, February 2026. All proposals from participants and working groups incorporated.
- **Current version has 3 main changes:** (a) Vision: more concise formulation; (b) Inserted broad implementation roadmap for 3 years; (c) Inserted revised M&E plan – based on 4 outcomes with respective indicators.

New SADCQF: validated by TCCA (June 2026)

TCCA VALIDATED JUNE 2026

1 Comprehensive Policy and Guideline document

A comprehensive policy and guideline document to guide implementation across the region.

New SADCQF

A regional qualifications framework enabling mobility, recognition and trust across SADC



2 Eco-system

- Vision
- Objectives
- Principles
- Main Areas of Activity
- Technical Components
- Level Descriptors
- Implementation Support Mechanisms
- Annexes (Referencing Guideline, Glossary, Guidelines, CATS Conversion Table, M&E Matrix)

3 Mobility and recognition tools

- Referencing
- CATS Guidelines and Conversion
- RPL
- Microcredentials
- Joint / regional Occupational Standards and Qualifications
- Cooperation – Addis Recognition Convention

4 Other instruments enhancing trust and mutual understanding

- capacity development
- annual SADCQF Inventory
- innovation (AI literacy, Green Skills)
- Technical Working Groups

Outcomes: Stronger Region, Shared Future

Mobility of learners and workers across all subsystems and countries

Cooperation between countries and NQFs

Mutual understanding through shared standards and tools

Trust in qualifications and recognition systems

Supporting mobility across all learning and work pathways

Higher Education
Universities and tertiary learning

TVET
Technical and Vocational Education & Training

General Education / Lifelong Learning
Schools, adult learning and non-formal pathways

Labour Market / Workers
Workplace learning and career progression



One Region.
One Framework.
Shared Opportunities.

Revised SADCQF: comprehensive, innovative, action oriented

Table of contents

Preamble 2
List of used acronyms 4
1. Introduction 5
2. SADC policy context and rationale 6
2.1 Policy underpinnings 6
2.2 SADCQF – state-of play 7
2.3 Rationale for the revision of the SADCQF 9
3. Vision, Objectives, Scope and Principles of SADCQF 10
3.1 Vision 10
3.2 Objectives 10
3.3 Scope of the SADCQF 11
3.4 Guiding principles 12
4. Areas of Activity of the SADCQF Roadmap 13
5. Technical Components of the SADCQF 17
6. Level Descriptors of the SADCQF 20
6.1 Purpose and function of level descriptors 20
6.2 Level descriptors 20
7. Implementation and Support Mechanisms 23
7.1 Overall implementation plan 24
7.2 National implementation processes 26
7.3 Regional support measures (technical assistance, peer review, expert pools) 26
7.4 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting 26
7.5 Capacity development and resource mobilisation 28
8. Sources 30
9. Annexes 32
9.1 Annex 1: Glossary of key terms 32
9.2 Annex 2: Referencing guidelines (short version) 37
9.3 Annex 3: SADCQF Guidelines in force 42
9.4 Annex 4: SADCQF Guidelines in development 42
9.5 Annex 5: Conversion table ECTS-SADC CATS 42
9.6 Annex 6: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix of SADCQF 43

What is new (2017)?

1. Strategic concept: vision-objectives-scope-principles
2. Areas of activity
3. Technical components
4. Level descriptors: aligned to ACQF
5. Implementation and support mechanisms
6. Referencing guidelines
7. Conversion table ECTS-CATS
8. Monitoring and evaluation matrix

3.1 Vision

Vision of the revised SADCQF

- ***A trusted, inclusive and responsive regional qualifications framework that supports lifelong learning, recognition of qualifications, skills and micro-credentials, and contributes to regional development and integration, mobility, employability, innovation, social justice and sustainability across the SADC region.***



3.1 Vision (2)

Impact

- The revised SADCQF aims to enhance **employability** through increased mobility and to support the region and its Member States in advancing innovation, as well as the **green, digital, and technological transformation of their economies and societies**, industrialisation, and the promotion of **decent work and entrepreneurship** for all people, in both rural and urban areas.

Continental and Global role

- The SADCQF actively contributes to continental integration through strengthened cooperation with the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF), and the Addis Recognition Convention.
- SADCQF is fully compatible and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 4, 8, 5, 10 and 13.



Delegates of Angola and Mozambique – at 3rd TWG meeting, Lusaka, 25-28 Aug 2026. Real photo, Eduarda Castel-Branco's.



Revised SADCQF

Trust • mobility • lifelong learning

SADCQF Revision

Objectives

Nine strategic directions for a trusted, inclusive and future-oriented regional qualifications framework

- Q — 1. Quality, transparency, comparability, trust in qualifications and credentials
- CI — 2. Continuous improvement and resilience of education and training systems
- NQF — 3. Development of NQF and related policies
- EQ — 4. Efficient and fair recognition of qualifications and credentials
- AI — 5. Development knowledge & skills for green-blue-digital / AI transition
- ∞ — 6. Expansion of LLL for all groups, esp. NEETs
- IKS — 7. Recognition and valorisation of IKS
- REG — 8. Regional and continental integration, just and sustainable development
- M&E — 9. Skills intelligence, Monitoring & evaluation based on modern data systems

From transparency and trust to future skills, inclusion, integration and data-driven implementation

3.2 Objectives (1)

- The revised SADCQF serves as the reference qualifications framework for SADC Member States and cooperates closely with the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). As a **regional meta-framework, the SADCQF fosters cooperation and mutual learning among Member States and acts as an inspiration for the continuous evolution and resilience of national qualifications frameworks, while fully respecting and valuing the diversity and richness of the national systems and policies**.

Specifically, the revised SADCQF will:

1. **Promote quality, transparency, comparability, and mutual trust** in qualifications, part-qualifications and micro-credentials among Member States, while deepening cooperation with national and regional qualifications frameworks and systems in Africa and globally.
2. **Support the continuous improvement and resilience of education and training systems** in Member States by providing **references and solutions** to fundamental challenges and areas of reform.



SADC Directorate Education Skills and Development - 3rd TWG meeting, Lusaka, 25-28 Aug 2026.
Real photo, Eduarda Castel-Branco's.

3.2 Objectives (2)

3. Act as a catalyst for the development and implementation of NQFs and related policies (such as **RPL, CATS, articulation),** foster synergies between regional and national drivers of **innovation** for **technology adoption**, collaborative regional development of joint qualifications, micro-credentials, and common occupational standards and the integration of all types of learning.

4. Facilitate efficient and fair recognition of qualifications and micro-credentials, enabling greater **mobility of learners, graduates, and workers** within and beyond the SADC region.

5. Support the development of knowledge and skills for the digital, AI-driven, green, and blue economies, enhancing the region's capacity for **innovation, sustainability**, job creation and **competitiveness.**

6. **Promote the expansion and quality of lifelong learning for all population groups**, especially the NEETs and underrepresented groups.

7. Promote the recognition and valorisation of indigenous knowledge systems, contributing to **cultural identity**, **social cohesion,** and **sustainable community development.**



Delegate of Namibia– at 3rd TWG meeting, Lusaka, 25-28 Aug 2026. Real photo, Eduarda Castel-Branco's.

3.2 Objectives (3)

8. Contribute to **regional and continental integration**, fostering inclusive and sustainable development anchored in social justice, equity, and shared prosperity.

9. Advance **data science-based skills intelligence and monitoring and evaluation systems** to enhance **skills matching and career guidance for relevant employment, and to support evidence-based policy** and mutual learning among Member States.

These objectives are aligned with the **vision and provide the foundation for the revised SADCQF's scope** and guiding principles, which together define its operational framework and its role in advancing regional integration, quality learning, and lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Delegates of Eswatini, Seychelles, Zambia and facilitator– at 2nd TWG meeting, Namibia, Feb. 2026. Real photo, Eduarda Castel-Branco's.

3.4 Guiding Principles

Pragmatic and forward-looking principles underpinning transformation, trust and accountability.

SADCQF

1. **Learner-centred**
   Learning outcomes, flexible pathways, RPL
2. **Future-ready**
   Green, digital-AI, technology and micro-credentials
3. **Inclusive & equitable**
   Equal merit of learning; no learner left behind
4. **Transparent & quality-assured**
   Clear standards, QA and stakeholder participation
5. **Agile & data-informed**
   Foresight, feedback, data exchange and skills intelligence
6. **Mobile & globally aligned**
   Cross-border recognition and ACQF/international coherence
7. **Impact-oriented**
   Employment, productivity and sustainable development
8. **Autonomous & connected**
   Respect sectors while promoting articulation
9. **Comparable & coherent**
   Levels, credits and outcomes for seamless mobility

Scope of SADCQF



01 All levels of qualifications and credentials

02 Regional / joint qualifications & standards

03 Foundational learning

04 All modes of learning

05 Mechanisms for cross-border comparison, recognition

06 Sectoral and professional qualifications frameworks

07 Integration of digital, AI and green skills

08 Comprehensive Quality Assurance

09 Strong partnerships and collaboration

10 Lifelong learning: flexible pathways for upskilling and reskilling.

11 Respect for national education and qualifications systems

12 Alignment with continental and global frameworks, such as the ACQF and UNESCO conventions

4. Areas of activity of SADCQF

- The SADCQF will be implemented through a coherent set of interrelated areas of activity designed to promote regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity development.
- These activities directly support the strategic objectives of the SADCQF and contribute to its progressive institutionalisation and growing impact across Member States.



Roadmap: eight Areas of Activity

The operational foundation for implementation, institutionalisation and growing impact.

1 Regional & global alignment

Conventions, ACQF, EQF and QA networks

2 NQF development & referencing

NQF updates, referencing reports and communication

3 Quality assurance coherence

Regional QA guideline, tools, data and community of practice

4 Recognition & mobility

Joint qualifications, micro-credentials, standards and MRAs

5 Digitalisation & recognition

Registers, QCP, verifiable credentials and skills intelligence

6 Capacity development

Guidelines, peer learning, training and methodological packages

7 Monitoring arrangements

Inventory, skills intelligence, results framework and data system

8 Evaluation

Thematic, comparative and impact studies for improvement

Eight interrelated areas connect policy, tools, support, evidence and impact.

5. Technical Components of the SADCQF

- The effective implementation of the revised SADCQF relies on a **coherent set of technical components** that ensure **coordination, transparency, and sustainability** across the region.

- These components provide the **institutional and operational backbone** of the SADCQF, linking policy vision with practice and enabling Member States to cooperate effectively in advancing lifelong learning, recognition, and mobility.

The technical components comprise:

1. Governance arrangements
2. Core instruments and guidelines
3. Articulation and lifelong learning tools
4. Digital systems for qualifications management
5. Communication, dissemination and advocacy mechanisms

Technical components: 2. Core instruments and guidelines

The SADCQF is operationalised through a set of instruments, inventories, and guidelines that translate its principles and objectives into practical methodologies and procedures and enable coherent action.



These instruments include:

1. The SADCQF Policy and Guideline: direction, structure, and procedures for referencing, and implementation.
2. The Inventory of NQFs and Related Policies, regularly updated by TCCA and thematic working groups to capture progress, policy developments and new demands across the region.
3. Thematic Guidelines and Manuals on key areas such as RPL, CATS, micro-credentials, qualifications design and articulation, referencing, green skills and quality assurance.
4. Methodological toolkits and templates to support practitioners and national teams in development of qualifications and pathways, monitoring, and review.
5. Reporting and communication templates that ensure consistency and transparency in information shared across Member States.
6. Monitoring and evaluation framework of SADCQF.

These instruments contribute to policy coherence, comparability, and effective implementation of the SADCQF at both national and regional levels.

SADCQF for action and future orientation

More than a policy and roadmap

1 An ecosystem for action

More than a policy and roadmap



- A connected eco-system of areas of work
- Practical guidelines and tools for implementation
- Regular inventory of national developments
- Ongoing capacity development and support

2 A framework of trust



- Trust between NQFs
- Built on transparency and accountability
- Robust referencing between national NQFs and the SADCQF
- Visible and comparable level relationships

SADCQF

3 A framework of innovation



- Supports micro-credentials
- Advances green skills
- Embraces AI-digital and hybrid skills
- Uses the indispensable lifelong learning tools of RPL and CATS for all groups of the population

4 Regional cooperation and integration



- Proposes novel approaches for a changing world
- Common profiles for mobility and recognition
- Joint qualifications standards that raise the bar
- Joint micro-credentials responding to emerging skills needs

From policy to practice: trust, innovation, cooperation and future-ready skills.

SADCQF:
a bridge for lifelong learning, recognition and mobility

Reducing barriers through flexible learning and trusted qualifications

1 Reduce barriers to LLL

Flexible learning pathways, recognition and progression for all.

2 Bridge for NQFs

Connects national frameworks and strengthens comparability and cooperation.



3 Bridge for learners and workers

Supports recognition, portability of qualifications and mobility.

4 Bridge to global transparency

Enhances cooperation with UNESCO Recognition Conventions and established recognition networks such as ENIC-NARIC.

5 Trusted qualifications

When the SADCQF level appears on national qualifications and in national databases, it becomes a strong token of a trusted qualification referenced to the SADCQF, with far-reaching benefits for recognition and mobility.

Trusted Qualification – Referenced to the SADCQF

A regional bridge to lifelong learning and international recognition.

6. Level Descriptors of the SADCQF



6. Level Descriptors of the SADCQF (1)

- The revised SADCQF Policy and Guidelines adopt the ACQF level descriptors as the common foundation for further development and technical alignment.
- The SADCQF is committed to ensuring and maintaining close compatibility between the level descriptors of both meta-qualifications frameworks — the SADCQF and the ACQF — in order to strengthen comparability, promote coherence, and optimise efficiency and synergy in the referencing of NQFs across the region, while avoiding unnecessary duplication of processes and procedures and the associated costs.



6. Level Descriptors of the SADCQF (2)

- Each of the ten SADCQF levels represents learning outcomes achieved through formal, non-formal, and informal learning at that level. The SADCQF level descriptors define how the three domains — knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility — express the key dimensions of learning (breadth, depth, and context) and increase in complexity from lower to higher levels.
- Understanding the horizontal and vertical logic of the level descriptors is further supported by a glossary that clarifies key terms and concepts.



6. Level Descriptors of the SADCQF (3)

	Domains of learning		
Level	**Knowledge**	**Skills**	**Autonomy and responsibility**
Definition of the domains of learning	*In the context of the SADCQF, "Knowledge" refers to the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. It represents the body of facts, principles, theories, concepts, and practices related to a field of study or work, and provides the foundation for understanding, analysis, and problem solving. Knowledge includes various dimensions: factual, conceptual, procedural, contextual, reflective, indigenous.*	*In the context of the SADCQF, Skills refer to the ability to apply knowledge effectively to perform tasks, solve problems, create solutions, and adapt to different contexts. Skills reflect what a learner can do, both in predictable and in changing or complex environments. Skills integrate the following dimensions: transversal and durable skills, cognitive skills, practical skills, digital skills, AI and data literacy skills, green skills, innovation and entrepreneurial skills.*	*In the context of SADCQF "Autonomy and responsibility" refers to the context and extent of the application of autonomy and responsibility in learning and work.*



National Commitment | Regional Cooperation | Mutual Learning | Accountability

7. Implementation and Support Mechanisms

- Effective implementation of the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) requires sustained national commitment, coordinated regional support, and a culture of mutual learning and accountability.

- This chapter outlines how Member States and SADC structures cooperate to ensure coherent, progressive implementation of the SADCQF and its associated instruments.

CHAPTER 7
Opening Slide

Building a trusted, coherent, and collaborative system for qualifications across the SADC Region.

SADCQF
SADC QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

7. Implementation and Support Mechanisms



1. Roadmap - 4 years
2. National implementation processes
3. Regional support measures
4. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting
5. Capacity development and resource mobilisation

SADCQF
QUALIFICATIONS FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND PROSPERITY

Implementation Plan for the Revised SADCQF (Years 1–4)

This implementation plan was developed by representatives of SADC Member States during the second meeting of the Working Group supporting the revision of the SADCQF, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 10 to 12 February 2026.

Sequenced activities, key indicators, timeline and indicative funding/support arrangements



SADC MEMBER STATES



Presenter: SADC Secretariat

Date: 17 June 2026

Four-year implementation roadmap

Sequenced phases from governance baseline to evaluation, consolidation and scaling.

1 Year 1



Governance & coordination baseline

- focal points
- results framework
- NQF inventory
- referencing methodology
- digital architecture

2 Year 2



Capacity building

- referencing teams
- QA authorities
- pilot interoperability
- peer-review mechanism
- joint qualification methodology

3 Year 3



Pilots, digitalisation & recognition

- referencing reports
- pilot joint qualifications / micro-credentials
- digital credentials
- skills intelligence
- conventions

4 Year 4



Consolidation, evaluation & scaling

- impact review
- scale pilots
- majority interoperability
- progress report
- next roadmap

Implementation plan developed by Member State representatives · Windhoek, Namibia · 10–12 February 2026

7.1 National implementation processes (1)

At national level, implementation of the SADCQF builds on existing National Qualifications Framework (NQF) structures, policies and governance mechanisms.



01 Each Member State defines its own national implementation plan, aligned with SADCQF objectives, principles, processes and agreed timelines.

02 These national plans are coherent with, and directly support, implementation of the revised SADCQF at regional level.

Aligned national action. Stronger regional impact.

Delivering the revised SADCQF together.

7.2 Regional support measures (technical assistance, peer review, expert pools) - (2)



National Commitment | Regional Cooperation | Mutual Learning | Accountability

Main support measures include:

1. **Technical assistance** for national referencing reports, NQF development or renewal, and QA alignment.
2. **Peer review** by experts from other Member States to validate reports and implementation progress.
3. **Regional expert pools** in QA, articulation, qualification design, micro-credentials, RPL, and digital and green skills.
4. **Guidelines, toolkits and training materials** for consistency and support.
5. **Regional workshops, communities of practice and online exchanges** to promote mutual learning.
6. **Information sharing and synergy** with other SADC policies and initiatives to reinforce coherence and visibility.

7.4 SADCQF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A coherent structure for tracking progress, outcomes and long-term impact across Member States.

The complete SADCQF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Matrix is included in **Annex 9.6.** It provides a coherent structure for tracking progress, outcomes and long-term impacts of implementation across Member States. It supports **transparency, accountability, learning** and **continuous improvement,** aligned with the SADCQF Vision and Objectives.

The framework serves to:

1. **Track implementation progress**
   across Member States.
2. **Assess operational use**
   for comparability, recognition and mobility.
3. **Identify gaps and good practice**
   implementation gaps, capacity needs and good practice.
4. **Support evidence-based improvement**
   continuous improvement and reporting to SADC structures.

The M&E Framework helps turn implementation into measurable learning, accountability and action.

Monitoring and Evaluation in practice

Transparency, accountability and learning for effective SADCQF implementation.

1 Progress tracking



Monitoring implementation of the revised SADCQF.

2 Outcome assessment



Checking how the framework is used in practice.

3 Gap identification



Revealing capacity needs and implementation challenges.

4 Learning and good practice



Capturing lessons, promising practices and peer learning.

5 Improvement and reporting



Informing continuous improvement and reporting to SADC structures.

Why it matters

A strong M&E approach ensures **transparency**, **accountability** and **informed decision-making**.

It helps Member States and SADC structures **learn** from implementation and **strengthen results** over time.

Matrix of indicators by SADCQF Outcome

Outcome 1: Updated knowledge on trends and practices

Output	Indicators	Data Sources
SADCQF Governance and Coordination	• Number of SADCQF governance structures established and functional • Number of Regular meetings of the SADCQF Technical Committee • Number of Dedicated national SADCQF focal points appointed	• Meeting reports • Terms of reference • National nominations and progress reports
RQF & National QF Development and Referencing	• Number of NQFs Developed • Number of MS NQF reference reports validated by TCCA • SADCQF referenced to an international RQF	• NQF development reports • NQF Referencing reports • Peer review outcomes • National policy and legislative documents
SADCQF Quality Assurance Coherence	• % Alignment of national QA principles with SADCQF requirements • %/Evidence of QA cooperation across borders • %/Inclusion of QA information in referencing reports	• QA frameworks and guidelines • Peer review feedback • Technical reports from NQAs and QA

Outcome 2: Strengthened capacity of NQFs lead institutions/Authorities

Output	Indicators	Data Sources
SADCQF Capacity Building	• Number of technical staff trained on SADCQF implementation • Number of regional peer-learning activities conducted • Number of national technical guidelines and tools produced	• SADC,UNESCO, AU, ETF • Training records • Workshop reports • Capacity development plans
Regional and Global Alignment	• Number of national QA principles aligned with SADCQF requirements • Number of QA cooperation across borders reported • Number of AU/SADC/UNESCO joint events conducted on Addis Convention awareness	• Comparative technical analyses • Regional and continental reports • SADC–UNESCO/AU coordination records

Outcome 3: Operational partnerships for joint qualifications developed

Outputs	Indicators	Data sources
Use of the SADCQF for Recognition and Mobility: Joint Qualifications, Micro-credentials and standards with regional currency and recognition	• % use of SADCQF in qualification recognition decisions • Number of national recognition guidelines Referencing the the SADCQF levels • Number of learner or labour mobility reports submitted • Number of pilot joint qualifications launched	• Recognition case studies • Surveys of credential evaluators • National Institutional and employer standards feedback

Outcome 4: Enhanced interoperability of NQF databases

Outputs	Indicators	Data sources
Digitalisation and Recognition Strengthening	• Number of SADCQF communication materials • % of the SADCQF awareness among key stakeholders • Number of Stakeholder consultations and workshops conducted • Regional skills intelligence platform established • Number of Periodic Labour Market Reports submitted • Digital credential prototype operational • SADCQF website established	• SADCQF Communication products on stakeholder engagement reports • SADCQF Stakeholder surveys • SADCQF Event participation record • Periodic Labour Market briefs issued :ILO • SADCQF QCP report
Monitoring Arrangements	• Number of Annual national implementation reports submitted by Member States • Number SADCQF Technical Committee Monitoring reports submitted	• Regional synthesis report coordinated by the SADC Secretariat • Use of MS peer review reports to validate progress and quality • SADCQF M&E Integration reports
Evaluation	• Number of Mid-term Evaluation Reports: • SADCQF End-term Evaluation report submitted	• SADCQF Mid-term Evaluation Report:Focused on implementation progress, capacity, and governance effectiveness. • SADCQF End-term Evaluation report submitted: Assess impact on recognition, mobility, and regional trust.

7.5 Capacity development and resource mobilisation

Capacity development is essential to ensure sustainable implementation of the SADCQF. The Secretariat, in partnership with Member States and development partners, will promote targeted actions to strengthen institutional, technical, and human capacities.

Priority areas include

1 Training and coaching

for NQF and QA staff, referencing teams, and data experts.

2 Regional learning programmes

on qualifications frameworks, QA, skills intelligence, and digital credentialing.

3 Research support

on qualifications, labour-market needs, and emerging green and digital skills.

4 Mobilisation of financial and technical resources

from regional and international partners to sustain implementation, innovation, and knowledge-sharing.

Effective capacity development contributes to building a **resilient and dynamic SADCQF community**, capable of advancing the framework's goals of **transparency**, **comparability**, and **recognition** of qualifications across the region.

Annexes toolkit



SADCQF
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

9. Annexes Toolkit

Practical tools that help users apply, interpret and monitor the revised SADCQF.

Why the annexes matter

- **Support implementation**
- **Improve consistency**
- **Facilitate referencing and credit transfer**
- **Strengthen monitoring and learning**

9.1 Annex 1: Glossary of key terms

Defines the main concepts and language used in the SADCQF.

9.2 Annex 2: Referencing guidelines (short version)

Provides a concise guide for linking national frameworks to the SADCQF.

9.3 Annex 3: SADCQF Guidelines in force

Lists the guidelines already adopted and available for use.

1) Micro-credentials +
2) Green Skills +
Technical Notes

9.4 Annex [illegible] SADCQF Guidelines in development

Shows the priority guidance tools currently being prepared.

Annex 5: Conversion table ECTS-SADC CATS

Helps compare and translate credit values across systems.

9.6 Annex 6: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix of SADCQF

Presents indicators and data sources to track progress, outcomes and impact.

Together, the annexes turn the SADCQF into a practical toolkit for implementation, cooperation and continuous improvement.