Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQF)

ACQF too is a RQF

MAPPING REPORT

Towards the African Continental Qualifications Framework

African Union · THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP / LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE · European Union

Aims of Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQF)

RQFs, have grown out of communities of countries with an aim 'to facilitate mutual trust in qualifications and promote student and worker mobility; therefore, they are linked to other initiatives related to mutual recognition of qualifications, of goods and of services'.

To develop a common understanding and strengthen transparency of member country qualifications.

Seek commonalities and clarify differences.

Build mutual trust across the community of countries.

Countries that have a regional, economic or social identity, or wish to see one develop, have cooperated in the development of regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs).

Regional Qualifications Framework

- 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.

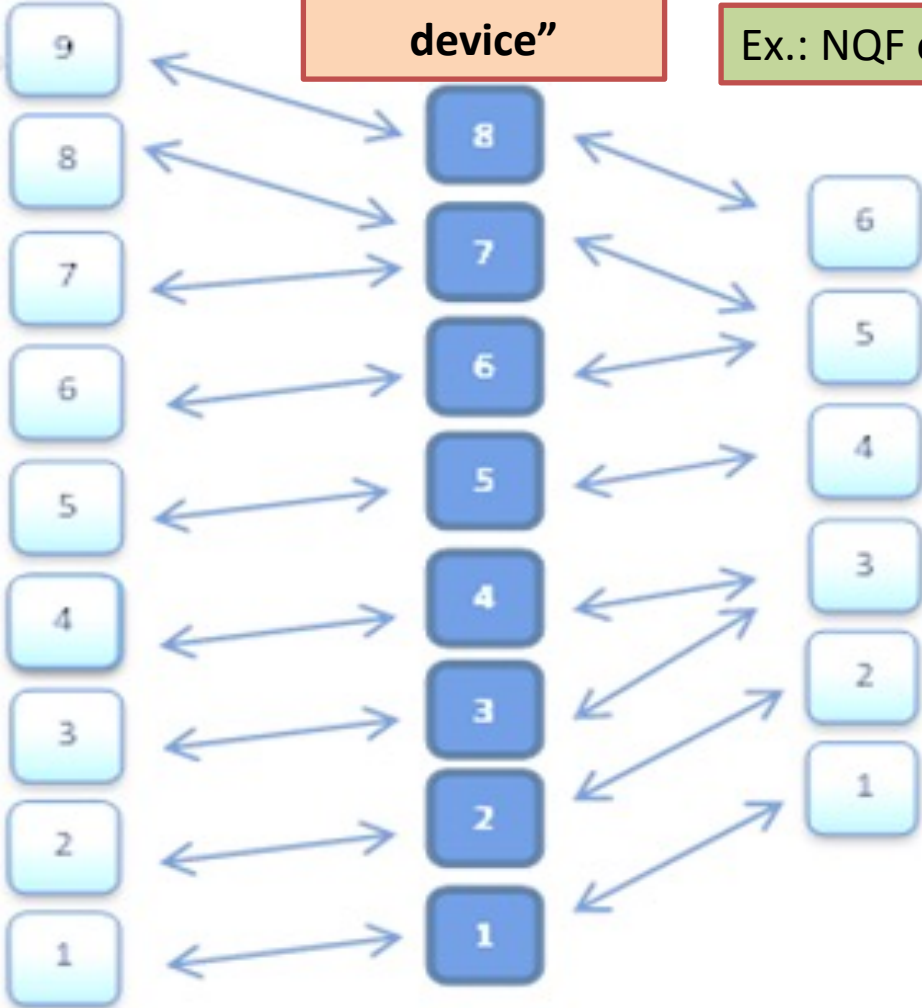# Referencing NQFs to a Regional QF (example)

NQF - as a system

- NQF: 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.
- Pillars and components of NQFs:
  - Objectives, principles, contribution to reforms and policies (LLL, HRD, TVET, employment, HE)
  - Levels and descriptors
  - Qualifications Map
  - VAE - RPL
  - Qualifications DB / register
  - Quality assurance
  - Contribution to recognition of qualifications
  - Monitoring & evaluation
  - Governance and implementation set-up: public (education, employment) & private sectors
  - Cooperation and comparison with other NQFs (same region and beyond)

ACQF

- A vision for connected and comparable qualifications across Africa

African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)

12th Peer Learning Webinar 28/October/2021

ACQF
African Continental Qualifications Framework

NEVER STOP LEARNING
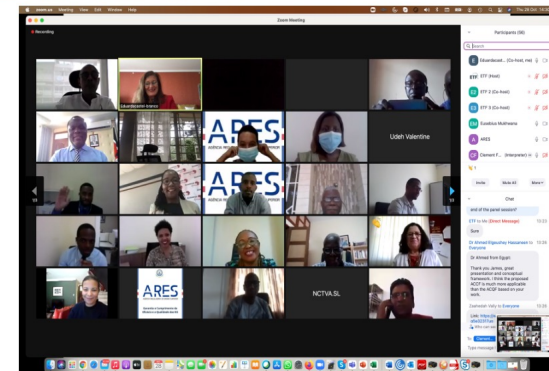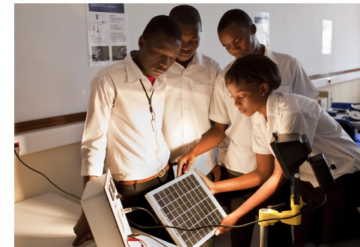
Objectives of the ACQF

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

Principles and functions ACQF

Principles

- Inclusive: all levels qualifications, types of learning
- Innovation-ready
- Open: users', stakeholders' needs; good practice others

Funtions

- Referencing Qualifications Framework – NQF / NQS – ACQF
- Hub, catalyst, support for development of NQFs and their instruments
- Overarching framework against which NQF and RQF / LD can be calibrated, if needed / relevant
- Reference for comparison with other international frameworks

ACQF in the African Union policy context

- Skills and qualifications: at heart of African renaissance. Accomplishment of the demographic dividend.
- Agenda 2063: integrated Africa
- Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2023
- **AU Free movement Protocol (Art 18)**
- **Free Trade: African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**
- **CESA 16-25**
- Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) and Addis Convention on Recognition of Qualifications

The ACQF will be:

INCLUSIVE

qualifications of all levels and sub-systems of education and training

RECEPTIVE TO INNOVATION

from new trends and technologies

OPEN

to stakeholders' contribution; good practice from Africa and the world

The ACQF is vital to the processes that contribute to create an African education space:

▶ Advance the implementation of CESA 2016-2025

▶ Harmonise higher education in Africa and implement the

ACQF development - milestones

2019

- Launch workshop and 1st meeting of ACQF Advisory Group (09/2019)
- ACQF Mapping study – continental survey

2020

- ACQF mapping study – analysis, consultation, publication
- Capacity development programme – 7 Peer Learning Webinars, ACQF network
- Start of reflection on ACQF scenarios

2021

- 3 meetings of ACQF Advisory Group (April, July, December)
- ACQF scenarios and Feasibility analysis presented to ACQF AG
- Start development ACQF Policy and technical document
- Start development of ACQF governance based on Network of NQF agencies
- 10 Guidelines and Training Modules ACQF
- ACQF Website
- Capacity development programme: 5 Peer Learning Webinars; start of Support to Countries' NQF; conference; series of thematic briefs; development of trainig modules

2022:

- Test selected Guidelines and finetune them
- Consultation on ACQF policy and technical document and completion
- Capacity development programme: launch E-Learning Platform; complete Support to countries; carry out ACQF Training Programm; create pool of trained experts.
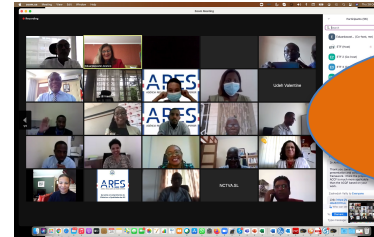
Building the ACQF (2020-2022)

Analysis, technical work

People, networking

Policy document and action plan	ACQF Conference
Governance ACQF	Training programme
10 Guidelines	Support to countries
Feasibility study	Working with RECs (SADC)
Scenarios of ACQF	Networking with AQVN
ACQF Mapping Study	Peer Learning Webinars
	ACQF community - network

ACQF in development: main pillars

A Network of NQF agencies / entities working together with stakeholders, world of work.
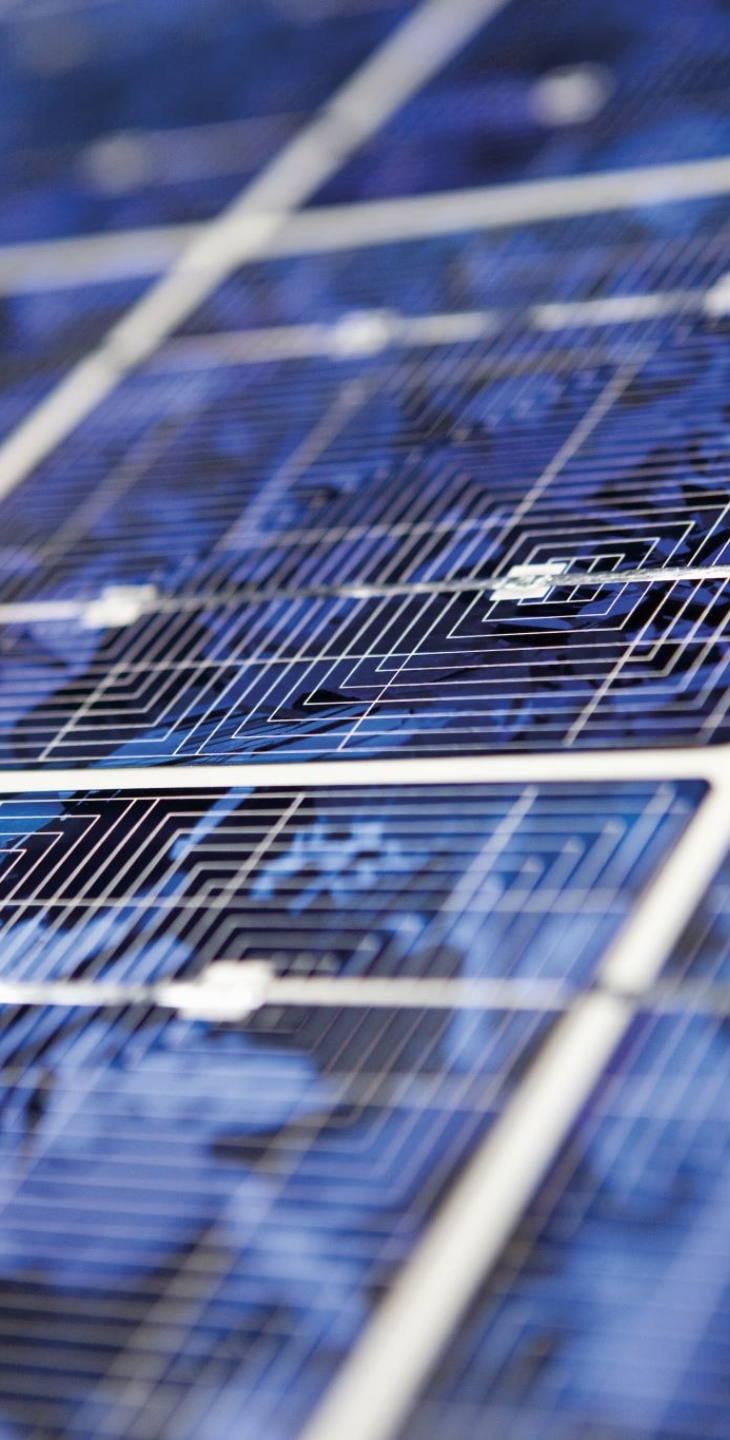
Referencing between NQFs / NQS and ACQF

ACQF levels on qualifications and databases – upon sucessful referencing NQF-ACQF

Support countries developing and strengthening their NQFs.
The ACQF own level structure and descriptors can inspire countries. Countries can use the ACQF Guidelines for their own home NQF.

A continental qualifications management system (platform, database)
All interested countries can connect to it

Validation and recognition of skills (NFIL)
Campaign and common tools

A sustainable capacity development basis to create knowledge, mutual learning and sustainable solutions on qualifications and skills

10 Guidelines and training modules

1. Learning outcomes

2. Level descriptors

3. Referencing NQF-ACQF: criteria, process, tools

4. Validation of learning: RPL, CATS, recognition

5. Quality assurance

6. Registration, databases of qualifications

7. Monitoring & evaluation in the context ACQF

8. Communication / users' outreach

9. Innovation and technology in NQFs / ACQF

10. Qualifications, NQFs, NQS - systemic view

Each Guideline has 2 sides

For use at NATIONAL (regional) level

For ACQF's use

1 Guideline =

1. <u>Users</u>: countries / regional authorities, QF-working groups, stakeholders, AUC, NQF Network
2. <u>The topic – what is it</u>? State-of-art, knowledge base, principles. Conceptual+theoretical foundations, applications in the Qualifications - QF domain, literature, cases
3. How the given theme / policy area relates to / applies in ACQF context
4. Recommendations on application
5. Tools (e.g. templates, self-assessment questions, check-lists...)

Synthesis Guideline	**Technical Guideline**	**Training Module**
2-3 pages	**15-30 pages + annexes**	Purpose, users
		LO
• Concept(s)	• Comprehensive presentation of the topic	What
• Users	• Recommendations on application in ACQF context	Why
• Recommendations related with ACQF	• Links with other ACQF Guidelines	How
• Links with other ACQF Guidelines	• Literature	Cases
	• Annexes	(Self)-assessment
		Sources

Guidelines: complementary formats

- **A) Synthesis guideline**: main objectives, definition(s), applications, mechanisms and tools, main requirements for alignment, referencing to the ACQF, linkage to existing relevant AU policies and tools (PAQAF, ASG-QA, CESA 16–25) – approximately 2–3 pages;

- **B) Technical guidelines**: 15–30 pages (additionally: annexures, sources, technical instructions, examples), depending on the subject or policy area. Complements the synthesis guideline.
  - Purpose: deepen, clarify, and provide technical orientation for national implementing bodies and stakeholders, especially the lead institutions managing the NQF and interacting with the (future) ACQF implementation structure (unit)
  - The technical guidelines combine features of a) technical document and b) short application handbook.

Guidelines 1, 2

Guideline	Theme and broad overview of topics, issues and contextualisation
Guideline 1 Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes approach 1. theoretical, conceptual and technical underpinnings 2. application in different contexts, such as level descriptors, qualifications standards, qualifications documents, curriculum, training documents, assessment 3. Issues specific to different subsectors of education and training: higher education, school education, vocational education and training 4. guiding principles to define and describe learning outcomes 5. application in the context of the ACQF and NQFs
Guideline 2 ACQF Levels and level descriptors	1. theoretical, conceptual and technical underpinnings 2. domains and sub-domains; horizontal and vertical logic 3. making level descriptors user-friendly: understanding the applications of level descriptors for qualifications standards, curriculum and assessment; use of level descriptions in different contexts 4. guiding principles to define and write level descriptors. Issues, for example, understanding competence; integrative/domain-specific level descriptors 5. ACQF level descriptors: comprehensive draft proposal of descriptors for all levels and domains (sub-domains) 6. proposal for testing ACQF level descriptors and reviewing and fine-tuning based on feedback from test

Guidelines 3, 8

Guideline	Theme and broad overview of topics, issues and contextualisation
Guideline 3 Criteria and procedures for referencing /alignment of NQFs (or RQFs) to ACQF	1. conceptual and technical underpinnings; rationale, purposes of referencing/alignment; benefits for the involved parties (national, regional, continental). Contribution to transparency, comparability, common concepts and trust, while respecting diversity of education and training systems across Africa. Contribution to development, implementation and consolidation of NQFs 2. criteria, procedures, process, governance, efficiency and quality assurance of alignment and referencing to ACQF. Transparency and robustness of referencing/alignment process and outcomes. Publication of information on results of referencing/alignment on ACQF website 3. suggestion on use of digital tools to ease and streamline referencing/alignment 4. proposal on the use of ACQF levels on qualifications documents, qualifications databases of NQFs upon successful referencing/alignment to ACQF
Guideline 8 Communication	1. Purposes, benefits and uses of communication in the context of NQFs and the ACQF. Contribution to buy-in, performance and impact 2. Target groups, end-users: policymaking, implementation institutions, education and training institutions, NQF authorities 3. Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences) 4. Proposal for ACQF communication plan, with main objectives, instruments, outreach modalities with some target-group differentiation, interactions continental-regional-national levels

Guideline 4

Guideline 4 Validation of learning	1. Credit accumulation and transfer system(s) 2. Validation/RPL; non-formal and informal learning 3. Recognition of qualifications: brief chapter, with focus on the text and application of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States 2014 ([Addis Recognition Convention](#)) Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms Proposal for application of credit accumulation and transfer system in the context of NQFs and ACQF Proposal for application of RPL (VAE) in the context of NQFs and ACQF Proposal on systematic exchange of information between ACQF, NQFs and qualifications recognition structures (agencies, departments) (at national level) to ease and streamline recognition processes and improve efficiency of outcomes Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)

Guideline 6

Guideline 6

Registration / registers of qualifications

Conceptual and technical underpinnings, main features and application mechanisms

Approaches, requirements (classifications, others)

Proposal for technical design and main specifications for ACQF register/database of qualifications of various types (formal education and training, international-sectoral qualifications, new types of credentials, qualifications of the context of non-formal learning). Elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications. Use of ACQF levels in qualifications registers and databases (link with Guideline 3)

Examples, sources (from African and international literature and experiences)

Website ACQF

https://acqf.africa/

Is at your service

Visit – use - contribute – send us news about your NQF / NQS

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Who we are

The African Continental Qualifications Framework contributes to transparency of qualifications and trust between African qualifications frameworks.

Find out more

How does ACQF support your Qualifications Frameworks and Systems?

The ACQF will be the largest of the regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs), as it cooperates with 55 countries and 8 regional economic communities (RECs). ACQF will be the only RQF interacting with two different levels – national and regional qualifications frameworks.

The ACQF will support:

- Comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications and support people´s lifelong learning;
- To facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and support mobility (learners, workers, services);

Policy & Guidelines

Policy and strategic documents developed by the ACQF project. Information on ACQF Advisory Group consultation and other meetings. All major African Union policies and strategies underpinning the ACQF.

ACQF Guidelines

10 Guidelines and Training Modules to support countries, regions and AUC implementing the ACQF. Themes of the 10 ACQF Guidelines: learning outcomes approaches, defining NQF levels, referencing between NQFs and ACQF, validation of learning (RPL, credit systems, recognition of qualifications), quality assurance of qualifications, registration and registers of qualifications, monitoring and evaluation of NQFs, communication, innovation and technology in qualifications frameworks. The 10th Guideline will be a companion for all countries in Africa starting their national reflection and roadmaps towards NQFs with a systemic vision.

Feasibility Study

This report analyses the rationale for the ACQF for the continent, provides a synthesis of the panorama of qualifications and qualifications frameworks in Africa, proposes the three scenarios for ACQF and a plan of outputs until 2025.
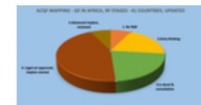
Meetings and Webinars ACQF Advisory Group (AG)

Technical and policy dialogue meetings with Advisory Group ACQF and other networks.

African Union policy documents

Strategic policies of the African Union underpinning the ACQF

Home / Capacity Development Programme

Peer Learning Webinars

Learn About National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks from the relevant institutions. Presentations and videos guide you into this domain. ACQF Peer Learning Webinars foster knowledge circulation, sharing of good practice and mutual trust. In 2020 the seven Peer Learning Webinars shared 22 cases - 17 National Qualifications Frameworks and 5 Regional Qualifications Frameworks. In 2021 the five Peer Learning Webinars diversify the thematic coverage and added new cases of African Qualifications Frameworks, RPL systems and experiences, Qualifications Registers, Learning Outcomes approach, Quality Assurance and Recognition in higher education, Referencing between frameworks and others.

ACQF 12th Peer Learning Webinar

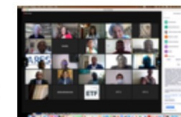Oct 28, 2021 from 12:00 AM to 02:50 PM — Online - Zoom,
1) African experiences and debates: (a) TVET reforms work better with an NQF: case of Mozambique (ANEP); (b) Recognition of degrees and diplomas in higher education: the experience of Cape Verde (ARES); c) African School Curriculum Mapping Study – main findings of the survey (African Curriculum Association, JET Education Services). 2) Micro-credentials: a new opportunity for LLL and NQF – findings of new research in Europe (Cedefop). Debate.

ACQF 11th Peer Learning Webinar

Sep 23, 2021 from 12:00 AM to 02:30 PM — Online - Zoom,
Thematic discussion on newest developments concerning: a) Learning outcomes approach in different contexts of learning and qualifications; b) regional qualifications frameworks: objectives, referencing, levels and descriptors; c) ACQF development: towards the conceptual and technical design – levels and descriptors.
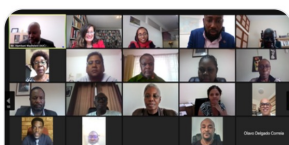
ACQF 10th Peer Learning Webinar

Jul 22, 2021 from 12:00 PM to 02:30 PM — Online - Zoom,
Cases discussed at this webinar: African experiences of National Qualifications Databases and NQF Information Systems (cases of South Africa and Kenya); and 2 cases of Recognition of qualifications (AQVN; INAAREES - Angola).
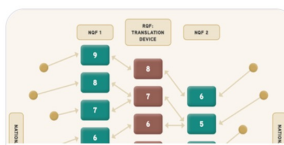
Latest updates and publications

ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

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Latest updates from ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework
Advisory Group very active

Sep 09, 2021

Read more

10 ACQF Guidelines are in
development

Sep 09, 2021

Read more

ACQF Peer Learning
Webinars continue in 2021

Sep 09, 2021

Read more

African Qualifications
Verification Network
(AQVN) activates
knowledge-sharing

Sep 09, 2021

Read more

Latest Publications

Kenya country
report - ACQF
Mapping

Sep 13, 2021

Abordagem estudo
de cartografia sobre
curriculo escolar em
Africa (CESA
Cluster - ACA) - PT

Sep 13, 2021

Aperçu sur
l'enquête sur les
programmes
scolaires (CESA
Cluster - ACA) (FR)

Sep 13, 2021

Overview of African
School Curriculum
Mapping (CESA
Cluster - ACA) (EN)

Sep 13, 2021

ACQF étude de
faisabilité, 06/2021

Sep 13, 2021

Components Capacity Development Programme (CDP) Combination of modalities for different needs (2021)

ACQF PLWs: Cases shared

2020	National Qualifications Frameworks	Regional Qualifications Frameworks
Africa (14 cases)	Angola, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe – 12 cases	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF), East Africa Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE) – 2 cases
Other regions, continents (8 cases)	Bahreïn, France, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenija – 5 cases	Arab Qualifications Framework (AQF), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework – 3 cases

2021

National Qualifications Frameworks	Quality Assurance frameworks	Recognition of learning / Qualifications	NQF MIS /Databases Qualifications	Thematic
Seychelles Namibia **NQF-TVET reform Mozambique**	CAMES (Regional) ANAQ-Sup (Senegal)	RPL (Kenya) AQVN Angola - INAARES **Cabo Verde - ARES**	South Africa Kenya	✓ Learning outcomes ✓ Levels and descriptors RQFs ✓ **School curriculum** ✓ **Micro-credentials**

ACQF Mapping study

ACQF Mapping Study (2020 complete)

Countries online survey (33 countries responded):

Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Union Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, D R Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, The Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé e Príncipe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia; Chad, Republic of Congo, Ghana, Zimbabwe

Countries and RECs – visits and reports:

Angola, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Togo. EAC (EAQFHE), SADC (SADCQF), ECOWAS (mentions CAMES, LMD). New started: Ivory Coast and Nigeria.

Review process in 3 rounds (external, project expert, country and REC). Published:

https://www.nepad.org/skillsportalforyouth/publication/african-continental-qualifications-framework-acqf-mapping-study

Countries and RECs – peer learning, updates, meetings:

Eswatini (meeting), Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia; Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cape Verte, South Africa. SADCQF and EAC. CAMES (meetings)
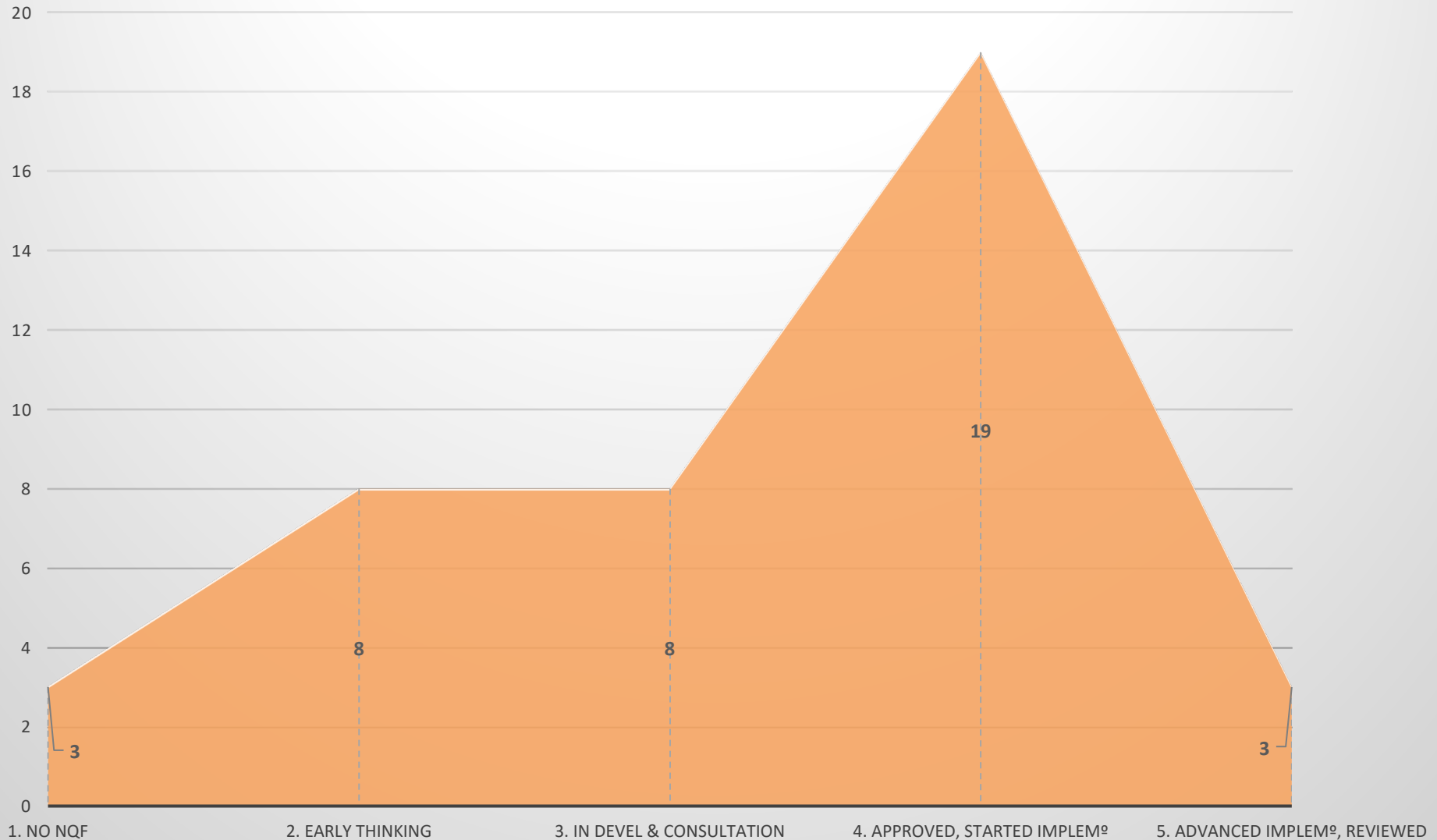
Mapping study: outputs

- 13 country reports
- 3 REC reports
- Comprehensive report
- Synthesis report
- Analysis LD
- Analysis Qualif
- Inventory NQFs
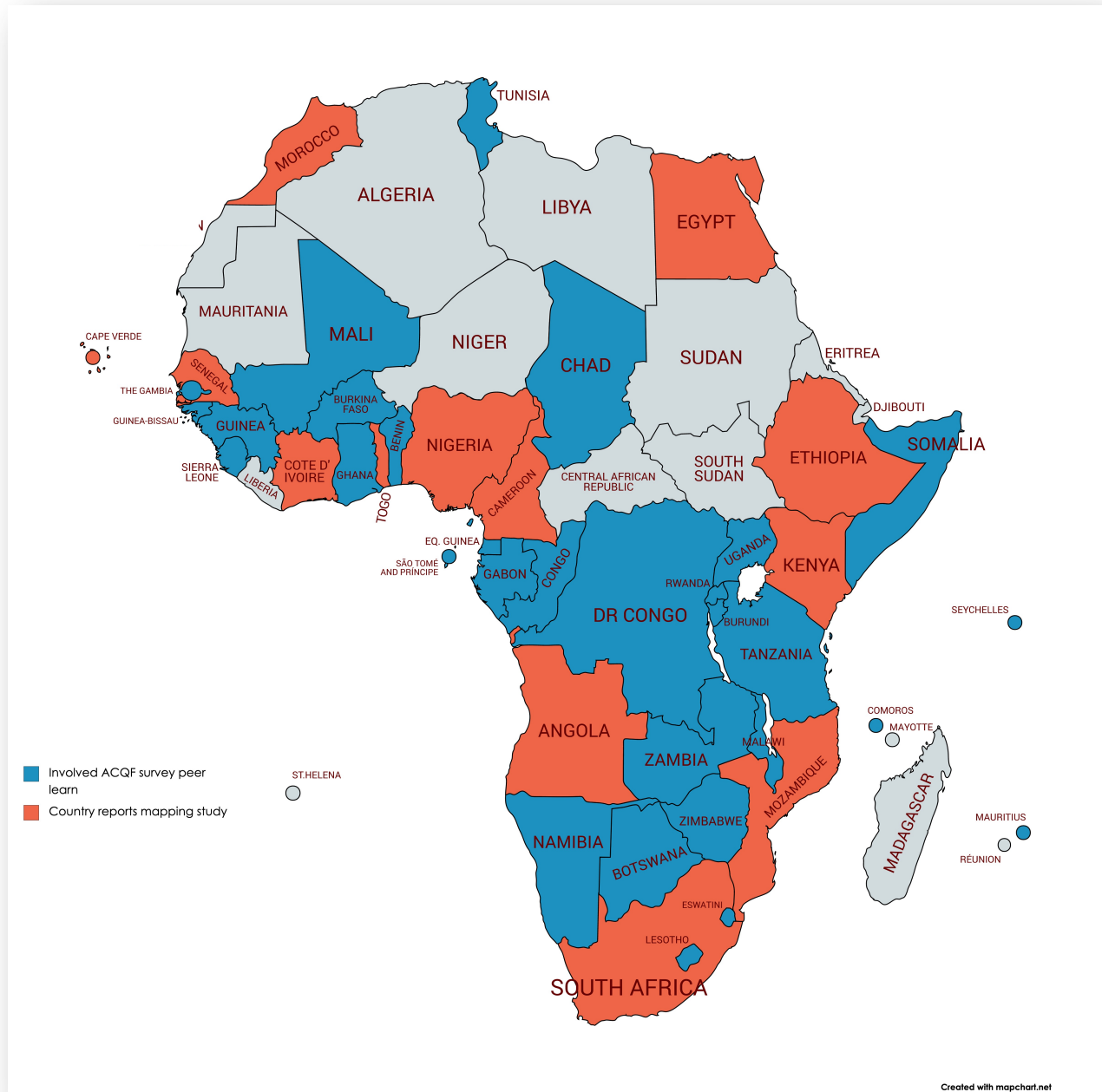
NQFs in Africa – stage of development and implementation (from 41 countries)

Qualifications Frameworks, Africa - stage of development implementation (01/2021; total = 41 countries)

Overview levels and level descriptors in African NQF-RQFs

Levels	Domains LD – some examples
• **10** (==14== NQFs) • **8** (6 NQFs) • **7** (1 NQF) • **6** (1 SQF) • **5** (1 SQF) 2 RQF: • **10** (1 RQF) • **8** (1 RQF)	• Knowledge, skills, competence • Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy-responsibility • Knowledge, Skills, Personal attitudes • Learning demand - processes • Areas of knowledge (depth, breadth, complexity); nature of skills; agency & context • KS, complexity, autonomy-respons, adaptability, communication • Competence, skills, autonomy • Degree complexity; reasoning & problem solving; knowledge; Autonomy-responsibility

Stage of QF development and implementation (from 41 countries)

Stage of NQF (QF) development and implementation	Countries
No NQF	Chad, Republic of Congo, São Tomé e Príncipe
NQF in early thinking	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Togo
NQF in development and consultation	Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Madagascar, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia
NQF legal act approved, implementation started	Botswana, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia
NQF in advanced implementation and reviewed	Cape Verde, Mauritius, South Africa