



NEWSLETTER

MAGNETISE

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN SSA ACADEMIA

#issue 1 | JULY 2026

Project Number 101237680

MAGNETISE LAUNCHES ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Despite growing commitments to gender equality, many higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) continue to face challenges in translating policy into everyday institutional practice. MAGNETISE aims to support five SSA universities in turning commitments into sustainable action.^[1] Through capacity-building, institutional dialogue, student engagement, and cooperation with civil society and policy stakeholders, the project seeks to support sustainable change in the higher education sector. Through the project, partner institutions will co-develop Gender Equality Plans for their universities, strengthen staff capacity through targeted training, engage students through a digital knowledge hub, collaborate with policymakers and civil society, and produce practical resources to support the long-term implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies.

^[1] The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Nelson Mandela University, and Rhodes University (all in South Africa), as well as Muni University and Makerere University (both in Uganda).

PARTNER UNIVERSITIES BEGIN PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS ON GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

Between 26 May and 3 July 2026, MAGNETISE partner universities organised participatory workshops to support the development and implementation of institutional Gender Equality Plans. The workshops created space for university staff, management, researchers, and partners to reflect on existing practices, identify institutional challenges, and discuss concrete actions to advance gender equality in higher education.

The discussions showed that many institutions already demonstrate commitment to gender equality through policies, strategic frameworks, and transformation agendas. However, a recurring theme emerged across contexts: policy commitment must now be translated into visible, measurable, and sustainable institutional action.

FOLLOW US



magnetise-project.eu



NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY



vives
University of Applied Sciences

kmop
POLICY CENTER

ReadLab
Research Innovation and Development Lab

ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΥ
University of the Peloponnese



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA.) Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



MAGNETISE

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN SSA ACADEMIA

#issue 1 | JULY 2026

Project Number 101237680

KEY INSIGHTS FROM UGANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA

At **Muni University (MU)** in Uganda, the workshop focused on strengthening institutional gender equality and safeguarding through awareness creation and shared learning. Participants highlighted the need to increase awareness of existing gender equality and safeguarding policies, strengthen women's participation in leadership and decision-making, support women and early-career researchers through mentorship and capacity-building, and improve safeguarding, reporting, and accountability mechanisms. The workshop also underlined the importance of disability inclusion and the need for a dedicated institutional structure to coordinate gender equality and safeguarding work.



In South Africa, discussions at **Nelson Mandela University (NMU)** focused on closing the gap between aspiration and implementation. The workshop emphasised that access and representation do not automatically lead to equality. While positive attitudes toward gender equality were strongly present, participants identified the need for stronger implementation mechanisms, inclusive data systems, clearer accountability, support for care responsibilities, and improved responses to discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence (GBV).

The workshop at **Rhodes University (RU)** highlighted the importance of embedding the Gender Equality Plan within the university's broader transformation architecture, rather than treating it as a stand-alone instrument. Participants stressed the need for sustained dialogue, intersectional approaches, stronger monitoring and accountability, and long-term culture change across the university community.

FOLLOW US



magnetise-project.eu



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA.) Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



MAGNETISE

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN SSA ACADEMIA

#issue 1 | JULY 2026

Project Number 101237680



The workshop at Makerere University (MAK) introduced the project to the University community and presented preliminary findings of a pre-survey and MAK institutional gender audit. Overall, it was noted that because of existing gender responsive policy frameworks, MAK has made significant strides in mainstreaming gender, including the establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Directorate, mainstreaming gender into the curricula, following up on cases of sexual harassment and sensitising the MAK community on GBV, toxic masculinities, and gender responsiveness. There has been steady growth in female students' enrolment, advocacy for equal opportunity for recruitment, and development of female faculty and staff compared to males. Discussions underscored the importance of strengthening the implementation of existing gender responsive policies and institutional frameworks, enhancing awareness and capacity building, erecting child care service centers, improving infrastructure and support services to enhance equitable access, strengthening data systems to inform decision-making, questioning budget allocations to gender activities, and promoting shared institutional responsibility for gender equality initiatives.

The online workshop at the University of KwaZulu-Natal explored aligning gender equality policy with institutional practice. Discussions underlined the value of data-driven action, particularly in addressing the gap between strong male/female student participation and women's lower representation in senior academic ranks. UKZN also showcased initiatives such as its Critical Social Justice and Citizenship module and GBV work, while participants called for stronger governance, reward and workload equity, recognition of care-based labour, and targeted support in scarce-skills fields.



FOLLOW US



magnetise-project.eu



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA.) Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



MAGNETISE

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN SSA ACADEMIA

#issue 1 | JULY 2026

Project Number 101237680

COMMON PRIORITIES EMERGING FROM THE WORKSHOPS

Across the available workshop findings, several shared priorities emerged: moving from policy to implementation; strengthening institutional accountability; supporting women's leadership and academic career progression; improving safeguarding and reporting systems; integrating gender equality into teaching, research and governance; and ensuring that gender equality work is intersectional, inclusive and adequately resourced.

NEXT STEPS

The insights gathered through the workshops will directly inform the development and refinement of institutional Gender Equality Plans. In the coming months, the MAGNETISE team will continue to consolidate findings, expand consultation and work toward practical, context-responsive actions that can support safer, more inclusive, and more equal academic environments across partner universities.



FOLLOW US



magnetise-project.eu



NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY



vives
University of Applied Sciences



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA.) Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.