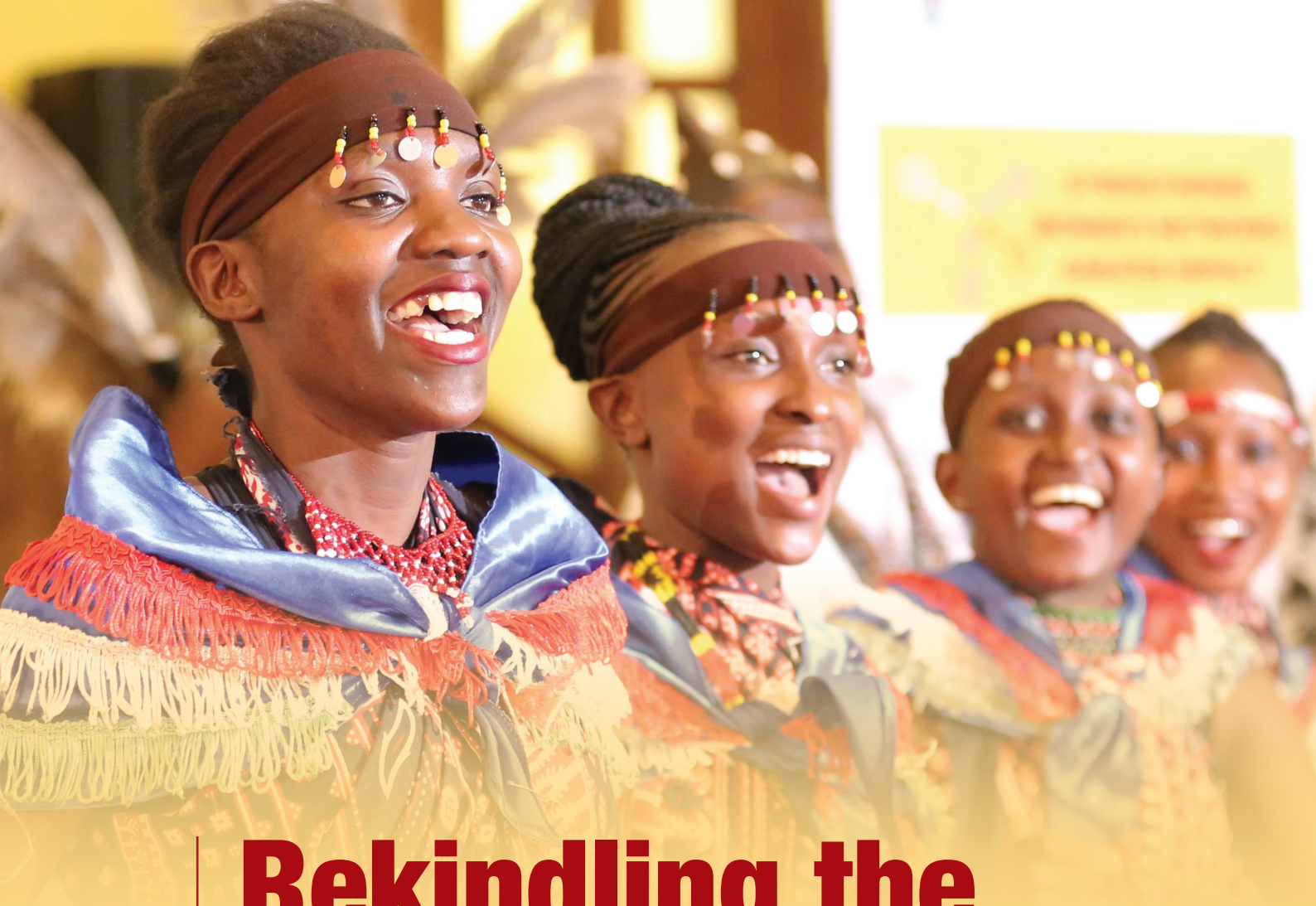

Rekindling the Beijing Fire of Revolution

African Women's Rights Organizations Parallel Report

Beijing +25 AfricaReview

GENERATION EQUALITY
REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR AN EQUAL FUTURE

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REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR AN EQUAL FUTURE

African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)

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AU	African Union
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
MFIs	Micro Finance Institutions
NAP	National Action Plan
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women Peace and Security
WROs	Women's Rights Organizations

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The critical voices of African women captured in this compilation; *Parallel Report by African Women's Rights Organizations on the 25 years review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* is of fundamental importance.

FEMNET greatly appreciates the collective efforts by women in all their diversities, individuals and organizations whose commitment to gender equality and women's rights fuelled the gist of its content.

FEMNET member organizations and other civil society and women's rights organizations played a critical role in mobilizing women in all their diversities; young women and adolescent girls, women with disabilities, women sexual minorities, women in religious spaces; to contribute to the national, regional and thematic parallel reports.

We sincerely affirm the following organizations for their immense contributions; *Women for A Change (Cameroon), national CSOs in Senegal, ATGEC (Tunisia), Francophone/ West Africa sub-regional (WiLDAF-AO), Groots-Kenya, Humanity & Inclusion and OutRight Action International*.

FEMNET appreciates the contribution and participation of African women from over 40 countries in the regional Africa Beijing+25 reviews which were held in Accra, Ghana; Nairobi, Kenya and the CSOs consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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This report would not be complete without the FEMNET Members and partners who tirelessly engaged with us from May to December 2019 and contributed both online and offline to the entire Beijing+25 consultative process. It has been a long haul.

To our partners who provided the much-needed technical and financial resources for the production of this report and for the different Beijing+25 convenings, particularly the *European Union, Embassy of Sweden in Lusaka, UN Women, Womankind Worldwide, Equal Measures 2030*, *Amplify Change, Oxfam Novib, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) and NoVo Foundation*, we deeply appreciate your solidarity.

Last but not least, much gratitude to the *FEMNET Programme Teams* who provided technical and editorial support to ensure the successful publication of this report. Our collective drive and unwavering commitment to gender equality and women's rights is crucial for the total emancipation of all women and girls of Africa.

As FEMNET, we believe the critical and actionable recommendations as articulated in this Parallel Report will be a useful reference by women's rights activists and advocates in pushing for the full realization of the Beijing dream of equality at the national, regional and global advocacy platforms. *Viva African women and girls! Viva!*

FOREWORD

There is no doubting it – the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) of 1995 was the most ground-breaking process in the history of gender equality and women's emancipation.

The world, on the premise of gender equality, was never the same since the BPfA, and it will never be the same. It was the declaration that audaciously set to make lasting changes for women and men globally. It was the blueprint that shifted the discourse on the agitation for gender equality and reinforced the realization that indeed, an equal world is possible.

Today, 25 years since this historic declaration, we see the tide of gender equality and women's emancipation coming under scathing attacks and retrogression. The potential we saw 25 years ago to societal mentality on equality is again being brought to immense challenges and stifling. We have seen some progress in the last two decades, because of the BPfA, with governments across the continent reserving ministries of gender and portfolios for women's affairs that have been a major boost to the agitation for gender equality. We have seen gender policies being developed and with immeasurable progress to bridge the gender divide. Now, even going further, we have seen governments pushing for feminist foreign policies and insisting on feminism as a pillar for development, something we never fathomed before the BPfA.

In 2020, we can confidently declare that it is indeed possible and rightfully so to make a change for women to be treated as equal citizens – as human beings! Because of the BPfA we have been able to raid through the ecosystem of development and stamp that an alternative is actually possible. That as we fight against domination and capitalistic ideologies founded on patriarchy and gender discrimination, women's rights organizations in Africa and globally as a whole have spotlighted the dangers of having autocratic governments and regimes. They have demonstrated that the alternative is possible and attainable – the alternative of an equal and just world.

As we mark 25 years since the historical BPfA, we are anxious to make the world understand, from all angles and perceptions that what we fight for, what was fought for in 1995, what we shall continue fighting for going forward is for the betterment of society. In the long-run all in society will benefit if all are treated equally.

Sadly, regardless of our noble intentions to instill the principles of gender equality, we now see, in our utter horror and alarm, that the gains we have mandated for women and girls over the years are coming under severe, spirited and coordinated attacks. We have seen that patriarchy is rearing its ugly head from time to time threatening the spaces of liberty and equality that women have fought so hard to reclaim. It is alarming to see this reversal manifest in the form of a repeal of progressive legislation that has been put in place to protect women and girls. We have watched in horror as countries debunked their own constitutions to snatch away rights from women and

girls and replace them with draconian religious and cultural practices. We have also seen countries shamelessly undermine their own constitutions on affirmative action, clawback on progressive laws and push further legislation against the spirit of the supreme law that is the Constitution. We continue to be alarmed by the increasing spread of femicides across many countries in the region that are a clear indication of an outright claw back in total disregard of the law, what utter alchemy!

It is our defiant submission that even amongst this darkness of persistent violation, discrimination, gender bigotry and patriarchal infringement, we are still alert as women's rights organizations, activists and advocates because frameworks such as the BPfA have given us this legitimacy to push-back. We boldly stand on the fundamental principles that drove the activists in Beijing 25 years ago.

"As we mark 25 years since the historical BPfA, we are anxious to make the world understand, from all angles and perceptions that what we fight for, what was fought for in 1995, what we shall continue fighting for going forward is for the betterment of society. In the long-run all in society will benefit if all are treated equally.

These frameworks allow us to interrogate through our special rapporteurs, for example the increasing incidents of violence against women where we have adamantly refused to see it as a private matter (as patriarchy would prefer us to believe) but instead we speak out in the loudest condemning voices possible. We have seen increased violence and burning attacks on LBTIQ communities; women vying for political positions have been vilified and stripped reflecting how our societies are vicious and far from being egalitarian, we encounter the minimalizing around issues of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights where women are strangled from the right to make decisions over their own bodies. We see this everyday...and every day we challenge this rhetoric.

This report, *Rekindling the Beijing Fire of Revolution* has boldly reiterated our governments' commitments within the global pact that is the Sustainable Development Goals. Everything contained in the BPfA and subsequently in this report mirrors the global SDGs 2030 and thus ought to be treated with equal priority.

This report is a conscious jolt to the minds of governments, duty bearers and society at large that there are still huge gaps of omission and commission against women and girls that still deter them from enjoying their rights as equal human beings. The twelve critical areas as espoused within the BPfA are far from being achieved and so this report clearly outlines where the gaps are and what still needs to be done. It

brings out the nuances that have come up, 2 years later like the advent and increase of cyber bullying on women and the new and devastating impacts of rising femicides in our towns.

Just like it was 25 years ago, it should be remembered that putting together this report has been a powerful celebration and fusion of the woman spirit. It has managed to bring together the African women in more than 54 countries who have come together to contribute their analysis, ideas and thoughts around one critical instrument, the BPfA for the benefit of all.

This recent period as we mark Beijing+25 has seen a very strong transitional purpose within the women's movement in Africa as we have witnessed intergenerational exchanges where young people have picked up the mantle from their elders, how elders have passed on the torch confident that the relay race for gender equality is still on. Steeped in our own African culture of how wisdom and foundations are passed over from one generation to the next, we have been honored to witness the women of the continent who carried the torch 25 years ago hand it over to the young with the mentorship to keep fighting on until gender equality is fully realized.

In addition, the multi-stakeholder Generation Equality Forums convened by UN Women and with leadership of civil society galvanizes the global women's rights movement and sets a collective feminist agenda for urgent action and accountability for gender equality and women's rights.

As FEMNET, we affirm our members across the continent and all the women's rights organizations, advocates and activists who contributed towards this report, we recognize our partners and collaborators who gave their support to make it happen. It would have been completely impossible to achieve the publication of this report without the support of our partners and regional collaborators; women in their diversities, women working in the extractives and the informal sectors; women who are survivors of GBV, women with disabilities, women traditional and cultural leaders, women parliamentarians, young women and older women...all the women who have stood the tests of time with the ferocious and passionate zeal to get their voices heard.

You are the anchors of the revolution for gender equality. You are the anchors of rekindling the flames of our struggle for gender equality and women's rights, you keep the flames burning, you are the strong foundation that women in Africa are standing on.

In sisterhood and solidarity!

Memory Kachambwa

Executive Director, FEMNET

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Beijing + 25 Africa Regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) parallel report provides an independent analysis of the last five years review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The report consolidates women's rights, feminist and other gender focused organization's perspective and lived realities of the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa specifically progress and gains, gaps and current challenges that affect the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women at national and regional level. Putting an African feminist lens to the advancement of women's rights, this report draws recommendations that span the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action and from a structural and intersectional perspective and explores strategies to shift unequal power relations between women and men.

1.1 Methodology and Process

The Africa Beijing +25 process and report development was undertaken through a multi-phase and participatory process. The initial phase consisted of a series of consultative meetings at regional and country level including:

- 16th to 31st May 2019: FEMNET commissioned an **online survey** to engage with her members and wider women's rights movement to add their voice and perspectives to the Beijing +25 review process. The survey recorded 75 responses representing CSOs (80%), individual activists/ advocates (6.8%), academia (4.1%), government sector (2.7 %), private sector (1.4%) and development partners (1.4%) – drawn from 21 African countries. There was a call for future reviews to be more engaging, inclusive and impactful – which could ultimately result in a public and visible multi-stakeholder engagement between the government, UN Women, academia, CSOs including women's rights organizations and the private sector.
- From 20th May 2019, through **dedicated** #Beijing25Africa **online conversations,** FEMNET continued to share information and regular updates as well as spur conversations with our online audiences on the review processes.
- 9th and 10th July 2019: **Webinars for Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa** were held to share the roadmap for the national, regional and global Beijing+25 review processes and strategize on ways that women's rights organizations can position themselves for greater engagement and collaboration.
- 19th to 23rd August 2019: **Beijing+25 Consultation for West Africa** piggy-backed during the Africa Feminist Macroeconomic Academy in Accra, Ghana.

- 28th to 29th August 2019: **Consultative Meeting** on the 25 years Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +25) with Pan African Parliament, Gender Commissions and Women Rights Advocates in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 8th and 9th October 2019: **Webinars for Anglophone Africa and Francophone Africa** were held to strategically plan for collective advocacy and amplify women's rights voice in the Africa CSO's Beijing +25 Review ahead of the CSOs Forum in Addis Ababa on 28th October 2019.
- 25th to 26th October 2019: **Beijing +25 Advocacy in Practice (AiP) Training**, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – FEMNET partnered with the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) to enhance the advocacy skills for 20 young feminist leaders and women's rights advocates in influencing and advocating for the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women and young people in the Beijing+25 review processes.
- 27th October 2019: **Beijing +25 Youth Strategy Meeting** in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - FEMNET in partnership with Education as a Vaccine (EVA-Nigeria) and SPECTRA organized a youth strategy meeting to ensure that young women and girls are informed, properly engaged and take up space during the Beijing +25 Africa Review Process. The youth strategy meeting also served to consolidate emerging issues and priorities, commitments and calls to action as outlined in the Africa youth position paper.

The second phase consisted of data collection through desk review and administration of continent-wide surveys. The desk review was analytical in nature focused on identifying observable trends and key insights particularly with regard to gains and gaps. Further, in the course of carrying out the desk review, attention was paid to legislative, policy and political shifts that may have occurred during the respective implementation periods that may have a bearing on implementation. The review of documents included:

- Beijing +25 country/ state reports
- All available Beijing +25 sub-regional CSO reports
- All available Beijing +25 national CSO reports
- All the available FEMNET Beijing + 25 consultation meeting reports
- Previous Beijing Africa Regional CSO reports
- Intergovernmental and nongovernmental reports on the status of women in Africa

The third phase entailed the holding of a continent-wide CSO Forum in Addis Ababa from 28 - 30 October 2019. The consultation drew over 200 women and girls in their diversity from across the continent representative of the 5 sub-regions of Africa and the Diaspora. The consultation facilitated the development of outcomes of the Africa +25 process that are decisive, forward-looking and inclusive to respond to rising inequalities, persistent discrimination and unacceptable violence meted on women and girls in Africa.

1.2. Scope of the Report

The Beijing +25 CSOs parallel report reviews countries' reports in their depth and breath, to point out gains achieved since Beijing +20 (last five years) and identifies gaps in the implementation. The parallel report analyses the progress of selected African States in regard to the 12 Critical Areas of Concern and make recommendations to governments in order to accelerate the implementation of the BPfA.

The report is constructed around three main sections:

- The first section gives a background and historical overview since Beijing 1995 and offers a continental environmental analysis of some of the main achievements and regional trends. It goes further by highlighting some key events that took place over the last five years.
- The second section covers the 12 critical areas by reviewing the progress made and actions taken by States such as the adoption of laws, policies and provide data with examples of countries to illustrate the gains made. Furthermore, the report also highlights the gaps and challenges that still exist for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality in Africa.
- The third section gives recommendations in each of the 12 critical areas of the BPfA.

Due to the report's broad nature, which aims to provide a bird's eye view of the continent, country level-specific discussions are short on detail. The report has used country level information only to emphasize specific issues.

1.3. High-Level Synopsis of the Africa Regional Review Summary Report 2015-2019

The Beijing +25 Africa Regional Review Summary Report was prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UN Women. It has been prepared utilising national assessment reports. The report provides an analytical picture of progress Africa made as a region, in each and all of the 12 Critical Areas. Following is a high-level analytical synopsis of the report and accordingly of the BPfA status of implementation reported by African states.

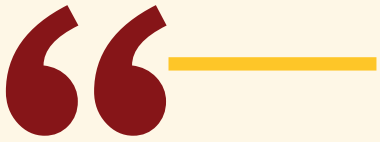
The Beijing +25 review recognizes the significant improvements countries have made in reducing gender inequality, discrimination, and violence. The review simultaneously highlights the existing challenges to the successful implementation of the BPfA and to the realisation of the physical, social, economic, and political rights of women on the continent. The review focuses on the revision of laws and administrative practices in 12 critical areas with the acknowledgement that despite the notable achievements many have made, progress remains uneven across the continent.

Gender-responsive social programming aimed at increasing access to social protections, eliminating poverty and inequality, and enhancing value chain models for agro-products have become a priority for many governments in Africa. However high levels of inequality continue to dilute the impacts of poverty reduction programming. Despite the introduction of initiatives such as food security programming for vulnerable women and children as well as start-up capital services to improve women's economic mobility, challenges such as inaccurate data collection methods continue to negatively impact the relationship between eliminating poverty and gender equality.

Equal access to education at all levels remains a critical challenge on the continent. While countries have widened educational reform programs to include more holistic indicators of progress such as retention rates, Africa still remains the furthest from attaining gender parity in educational attainment at all levels. Furthermore, the rise of a technologically-driven job market has made it necessary for countries to invest in STEM education for women and girls, along with a greater investment in completing secondary and tertiary education.

While health outcomes have improved substantially since the early 2000s, with significant decreases in maternal, infant, and child mortality rates across the continent, unequal

access to health services remains a key challenge. Moreover, key indicators of stability such as life expectancy rates have increased overall, however punitive and discriminatory laws and practices continue to undermine equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services for vulnerable communities, specifically women. Additionally, within-country inequality based on socio-economic factors such as income groups and rural/urban divides continue to disproportionately impact equitable access to quality health care for women on the continent.



Despite legislative progress, GBV remains deeply rooted and embedded in patriarchal social practices.

The region has witnessed a significant increase in the number of advocacy, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation platforms that are aimed at eliminating all forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Member states have introduced innovative strategies and made notable efforts to domesticate and implement measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. Nonetheless, GBV in all its forms remains a critical concern for human rights, health and economic progress in Africa. Despite legislative progress, GBV remains deeply rooted and embedded in patriarchal social practices. Trafficking and prostitution remain a serious problem throughout the region, making it critical for countries to take measures to both eliminate trafficking and prostitution practices as well as assist victims of these violent practices.

The realisation that women play a key part in conflict resolution and peace-making processes has resulted in many countries actively attempting to integrate women into their uniformed cadres, while also providing them with the formal capacity to engage in peace-making, conflict resolution and human rights management.

Governments across the region have developed and implemented legislative and administrative reforms aimed at promoting the economic rights and independence of women. New programmes and laws promoting and supporting equal access to formal employment, credit and capital, control over productive resources, economic resources, access to markets and information, and potential income-generation programs. However, the pace and progress of moving women into productive and good quality employment remains a major challenge. Factors such as work-life balance, workplace discrimination, sectoral employment segregation, literacy and education inequality, and discriminatory legislative provisons have all acted as a barrier to equality and labour market participation. While Africa has witnessed large jumps in economic growth, this growth has not reflected a reduction in poverty and inequality. Women have not benefited from recent trends and higher unemployment rates, a disproportionate number of women working in the informal sector, and working poverty continues to hinder progress.

Slow and uneven progress continues to characterize the equal representation and participation of women in decision-making at all levels. While findings show that countries have made efforts to prioritize women's participation in both economic and political leadership roles, they remain extremely underrepresented with systematic barriers such as negative cultural attitudes, lack of quotas, and lack of capacity building for potential candidates all hindering equality initiatives.

All African countries have some sort of national gender machinery focused on the policy formulation and implementation for gender equality and the advancement of women. While political commitments to gender reform is seen across the continent, implementation remains a significant challenge. Tensions between laws versus customs and other values held individually or collectively, regardless of constitutional provisions, continue to hinder the advancement of women. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality require extensive support, and capacity, regulation, monitoring, and national reporting have had mixed successes within countries. A lack of adequate financing along with a need to revisit and redefine the role of these institutionalised gender platforms has made measuring the impacting of these mechanisms difficult. However, many of these gender machineries have led to an increase in quality sex-disaggregated data, with most countries showing a commitment to partner-driven or home-grown initiatives to establish and collect gender sensitive data sets. West,

> **...social norms, attitudes, and gendered stereotypes remain a major barrier to realising these rights for women.**

Southern, and Central Africa have the most noticeable reported progress on provisions to improve data collection methods.

The region registers great achievements in human rights for women and girls in terms of the criminalization of GBV, the right to equal inheritance, the legal representation of women, and to some extent legal literacy. While many governments have committed their constitutions to comply with human rights obligations as per the various human rights instruments' social norms, attitudes,

and gendered stereotypes remain a major barrier to realising these rights for women.

Countries have made concerted efforts to have equal representation, inclusion, and expression of women across media platforms. However, equal access to media in both an employment and consumer capacity remains challenging due to infrastructural costs, discriminatory norms, and lower levels of literacy amongst women compared to men.

Progress has been made in integrating a gender perspective into environmental policies, with some African countries taking steps to incorporate gender-responsive dimensions into basic services and infrastructure. Other countries have developed gender-responsive frameworks for oil and gas, climate change, environment and natural resources as well as water and sanitation. Moreover, the region has seen an increase in women's participation in decision-making on environmental matters, with some not only participating but monitoring and evaluating the impact of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls. However, women's continued vulnerability during climate-related crises both during and post-disasters remains a challenge.

Member States have taken on a number of initiatives to improve the lives of the girl child and address existing norms and practices undermining their rights. These initiatives include; awareness interventions aimed at addressing traditional and cultural practices that encourage child marriage, premature marriage, and forced marriage; improving the educational outcomes and skills for girls; providing affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health care and related services; incentivising more participation in the field of STEM; promotion of sanitation and hygiene management through free sanitary kids and pushing gender sensitive curriculum for both teachers and students.

The review found that achieving gender equality requires transformative policies and actions along with adequate and predictable financial resources. Overcoming

structural and institutional barriers requires the disruption of negative stereotypes, social norms and harmful and traditional practices, and an investment in innovative and technologically-based data management procedures. Furthermore, accelerating and coordinating continental strategies as well as harnessing public-private-partnerships for advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment remains a critical part of realising the equality and autonomy of women on the continent.

Finally, it is important to note that the commitments expressed in the African regional report have also been the subject of formal political declaration by African Ministers and Representatives of African Governments at the fourth session of the "African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." The regional conference, held from October 28th to November 1st of 2019 in Addis Abba, was a space to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The conference not only reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063, and other frameworks promoting the rights of women, but reaffirmed the challenges and successes outlined in the Beijing +25 review. States expressed a renewed commitment to gender equality on the continent through the agreement on key messages outlined in the Political Declaration and key messages and priority actions on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

During the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995, the most visionary global agenda for attaining gender equality was set with the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA was adopted by 189 governments committed to advancing the equality of women by taking strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern being: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights of women, media, environment and the girl child.

The BPfA is reviewed in 5-year cycles where an appraisal of its implementation by states is undertaken in a complementary process that includes intergovernmental organisations, states and non-state actors such as civil society.

The review includes an assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution towards the full realisation of women's and girls' equality and empowerment.

2020 marks the next global review and further a marking of the 25th anniversary since adoption of the Platform for Action in 1995. In the last 25 years, the BPfA has catalysed the global women's movement and has contributed to the improvement on the status of women and girls even where strong challenges still remain. The BPfA has provided critical normative guidance towards enabling states to make the necessary legal, policy and institutional adjustments needed to achieve gender equality. This normative guidance is lauded for its ability to recognise and provide remedy for the redress of systemic, structural, root cause and practice barriers that stand in the way of women and girls achieving gender equality.

Since 1995, a number of other significant landmarks have also been achieved in the quest for gender equality. Most recently, in addition to committing to the BPfA, African states also have parallel commitments that interact with and enhance their implementation of the Platform for Action.

2.2 Current Context for Advancing Women's Rights in Africa

There is an increasing number of progressive normative frameworks at national, regional and global level to advance women's rights on the African continent. Consequently, gender transformative programming is gaining prominence in the region and creating opportunities to improve the status and conditions of women and girls in the region.

The women rights/ feminist movement in Africa have also played a critical role in advancing a progressive gender equality agenda in the last five years. By promoting collective action and taking advantage of political opportunities and leveraging global women rights frameworks, WROs have influenced legislative, policy and institutional reforms and shifts in social norms at community level. The youthful continent has brought on board new and younger actors who have re-energised the struggle with new and creative forms of organizing. Deliberate efforts have and will continue to invest in women population groups that continue to be left out in gender equality discourse such as older women and women with disabilities.

> **Despite the normative successes at the national, regional and global levels, women's movements in the region are experiencing an unprecedented backlash that threatens to roll back hard-won gender equality gains. The resurgence of ultra-conservatism, fundamentalism, militarism and corporate capture have opened new frontiers for rights violations, which if unchecked, will widen gender inequalities and heighten women and girls' vulnerability and experience of poverty.**

The advancement of women's rights in Africa has also been affected shrinking civic space which is affecting WROs and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) ability to mobilise and organize through various regulatory restrictions, threats and intimidation. In conservative countries where religious communities exert strong influence on societies, attacks on the LGBTQI population and women activists defending the right to safe abortion are all too frequent.

Despite global commitments to advance women's rights, funding for gender specific programming and women organisations has stagnated and/ or reduced due to changes in funding priorities and aid delivery mechanisms. Most of the current funding models employed by the big donors are restrictive and do not adequately respond to the needs of WROs in the region. The smaller, informal and grass root women groups have been particularly disadvantaged.

In addition to the 12 critical areas envisaged in the BPfA, this section aims to highlight some of the emerging issues that impact on women's ability to enjoy their rights.

Women with Disabilities[1]

Disability is mentioned in the BPfA in a generalised manner in two paragraphs where states are required to take into consideration multiple barriers that women face including disability. The issue is therefore not necessarily excluded from the BPfA and states have an obligation to mainstream the concerns of women with disabilities. However, in practice, the rights of women with disabilities are routinely violated and their exclusion magnified in a manner to justify categorical mention in this report. Women with disabilities embody various identities such as sex, gender, disability and socioeconomic status among others. These identities intersect to result in various insights, strengths as well as vulnerabilities. Owing to various barriers, it is the vulnerabilities of women with disabilities that are most pronounced leading to their

[1] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No.3 (2016) on Article 6: Women and girls with disabilities: Women with disabilities are not a homogenous group. They include indigenous women; refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and internally displaced women; women in detention (hospitals, residential institutions, juvenile or correctional facilities and prisons); women living in poverty; women from different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds; women with multiple disabilities and high levels of support; women with albinism; and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, as well as intersex persons. The diversity of women with disabilities also includes all types of impairments, in other words physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory conditions that may or may not come with functional limitations. Disability is understood as the social effect of the interaction between individual impairment and the social and material environment, as described in article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

disproportionate experience of human rights violations, systemic discrimination and exclusion within political, social and economic spheres.

To alleviate the exclusion of women and girls with disabilities and enhance their ability to attain substantive equality, a dual approach needs to be taken by states. This entails mainstreaming the concerns of women with disabilities on the one hand and putting in place specific measures as appropriate on the other hand particularly in the elimination of discrimination.

Gender Data Gap

The lack of data 'gender data gap' as well as disaggregated gender data according to intersecting and accumulated identities such as poverty, age disability etc is one of the biggest challenges to the realisation of gender equality. Policies and decisions are being formed without a full understanding of the lived realities of women and girls. According to UN Women[1], across the SDGs, 80% of the indicators for gender equality are missing data; globally, only 13% of States have a devoted budget to gender stats.[2] Data should be disaggregated by sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, geographic location, disability, migration and other status.

For evidence-based policies and interventions, States should invest in strengthening a pluralistic ecosystem of data which collects, systematises, analyses and disseminates quantitative and qualitative data in order to secure gender equality.

Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are an essential tool for advancing gender equality and the women's rights agenda. Digital and mobile technologies and the Internet have enormous potential for women's empowerment, providing women with opportunities to find and share information, access educational and health services, generate income, interact, collaborate, network, and make their voices heard. Yet a lack of access to technology and training, autonomy and adequate infrastructure (often coupled with the high costs of connectivity) prevent many women from accessing the internet. It is estimated that 18% of women have access to internet in Africa, which is lower than the proportion of men at 25%[3].

Through the use of ICT and access to internet, African women will be able to define and demand policies reform that will improve the quality of their lives and allow them to participate equally in the social, political and economic development of Africa.

Elderly Women

Africa is experiencing the highest increase of older persons population, who are living longer with valuable capacities as well as vulnerabilities particularly older women who further bear more risks due intersectionality between age and other aspects such as gender, disability, poverty etc. In 2017, Africa had 69 million older persons (7.1% of global population of older persons), projected to reach 226 million in 2050 (about 10.9 % of 60+ globally). Older women make 58% of older persons but also about 23% of all women. Despite the older women proportion being high in women and girl's population, gender equality laws and policy standards and discussions fail to articulate exactly how these

particular rights apply to older women and to the context of old age. As a result, older women in Africa perpetually to experience poverty, discrimination and violence.

The Africa Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa adopted by the Assembly of Heads of States during the 26th Ordinary Session held in January 2016 has well-articulated issues of elderly women to support the implementation of Article 22 of Maputo protocol. However, the ratification of the protocol is slow and only two[2] countries have ratified out of the 15 ratifications needed for the legal instrument to come into force. 14 countries have signed the protocol[3] and with notable progress of consultation and ratification road maps in Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa among other countries. Therefore, there is an urgent need for African governments to accelerate the ratification and domestication of the Protocol. More efforts is need to ensure an accelerated ratification to bring the protocol into force.

Violence Against Women and Girls

Women's and girls' vulnerability to violence is deeply rooted in the greater power and value that societies afford men and boys in access to material, symbolic, and relational resources, compared with women and girls. Simply stated, to be born a girl in a patriarchal society is a fundamental risk factor for various types of gender-based violence. This gender-based risk is often compounded by other forms of discrimination and inequality based on, for example, race, class, ethnicity, caste, religion, disability, HIV status, migration status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which affect both exposure to violence and experiences of response.

An unprecedented number of countries have laws and policies against various forms of violence. Challenges remain however in implementing these measures. Many women still lack access to free or affordable essential services in sectors such as health, police, justice and social support to ensure their safety, protection and recovery. Not enough is done to prevent violence, which is the most challenging but also effective way to eliminate violence in a sustainable way.

Gender and Climate Change

Since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol the idea of climate change as not simply an environmental issue, but one of social justice, has been given increasing recognition. However, the way in which climate change affects groups that face discrimination and under-representation, such as women, ethnic minorities and indigenous people, has not received sufficient attention. Several reports have examined the distinct impacts of climate change on women and girls, women's contribution to climate change, and their involvement in decision making about tackling climate change.

It is therefore very pertinent that gender-responsive strategies to adapt and mitigate climate change are developed and effectively implemented – the more radical the cuts in emissions in the next few years, the better chance there is of limiting the negative

[2] Benin and Lesotho

[3] Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Central Africa Republic, Zambia, Comoros, Togo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Gabon, Guinea, Chad, Mali and Lesotho.

effects of climate change on women. Secondly until gender inequality is addressed, women will continue to suffer climate injustice. There is need to ensure that women's leadership for climate justice is fulfilled.

Femicide

Femicide or gender related killing of women is a gender-based violence against women. It is directed against a woman because she is a woman. Such killings affect women disproportionately. In addition to being an act of the most atrocious form of violence against women, femicide is the most visible manifestation of the systematic and widespread discrimination and inequality that women and girls continue to face around the world. A recent United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on gender related killing of women and girls found that out of the total of 50 000 women killed in 2017 by their current or former partners or by any family member, 19 000 were African. This makes Africa the region where women run the greatest risk of being killed by people they normally should be able to trust the most. In addition, they are vulnerable to honour, sorcery and witchcraft related killings.

The major barriers in preventing femicides or gender-related killing of women and in developing meaningful strategies to address this serious human rights violation include among others shortcomings of national prevention systems, the lack of proper data collection mechanisms, the absence of risk assessment, and the scarcity and poor quality of data on femicide. Such gaps result in misidentification, concealment and under-reporting of gender-motivated killings, including those of female women belonging to ethnic groups.

Gender and Extractives

There is growing recognition that persistent structural gender inequality within the extractive industries (EI) continues to undermine women's rights and the development potential of the sector. Women face systemic discrimination in all phases of an extractive industries project and all along the EI value chain. Tackling gender inequality within the extractive industries demands a fundamental shift in how the industry is conceptualized, organized, and governed. It requires a reshaping of the values, culture, and norms that produce and maintain gender bias within the sector. Given the positive correlation between the progressive realization of women's rights and poverty alleviation, the imperative for a new paradigm is clear.

Migration

It has been estimated that around 17 million African women are living away from their country of birth, which represent almost 50% of the total of migration flux from Africa[4]. Historically, migration has been a male dominated occurrence within and from Africa, however, things have gradually shifted in recent decades. More African women are moving from their home countries in search of new and better opportunities elsewhere. This new pattern has been identified as the "Feminisation of Migration", which is caused by poverty, conflicts, discrimination, land degradation, shrinking jobs opportunities at home, low wages, restricted social and economic opportunities, natural disaster. Though migration could be a possible source of better opportunities for women, it can

however be a risky journey leading to trafficking, violence, slavery. Both sending and receiving countries should work together to ensure that the rights of migrants women are protected and policies are in place to facilitate access to these rights when needed.

2.3 Related Women's Rights Platforms and Processes in Africa

African Women's Decade

On the 15th October 2010, International Day of Rural Women, the African Union launched the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 with the theme 'Grassroots approach to gender equality by accelerating implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), through a dual top-down and bottom up approaches inclusive of grassroots participation.'

Over the last years, the AU has demonstrated its commitment to uphold women's rights through various actions, campaigns and adoption of legal instruments: AU Agenda 2063, the Maputo Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Women's decade, AU Campaign to end Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.

The launch of the African Women's Decade was a unique and significant milestone in the advancement of women's right on the continent. It was a reaffirmation of the AU commitment towards the realisation of women's rights with main objective to amplify the implementation of the AU Member States commitments to secure gender equality and women's rights. Since the launch of the decade, great strides have been made by the AU Members States to guarantee the rights of women and girls across the continent specially around the adoption of legal instruments, policies, strategies and national actions plans for the advancement of women's rights and their active participation in public, social and political life. Most of them have adopted gender policies or put in place a type of gender machineries such as a ministry of gender or Ministry of Women's Affairs. Almost all States have the principle of gender equality enshrined in their constitution and several countries have taken remarkable measures to guarantee the equal participation and representation of women in decision-making bodies.

As we are gearing towards the end of the decade in 2020, both States and Non-States will come together to take stock of gains made so far and point out challenges during the ten years of the Decade in achieving the advancement and realisation of women's rights and gender equality in Africa.

Maputo Protocol

The year 2018 marked the 15th anniversary of the adoption of The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa', known as the "Maputo Protocol", which was adopted in 2003 by the AU Members States. The Protocol is one of the most progressive instruments on women's rights globally and it specifically tackles the issues affected by women across the continent. The 15th anniversary was a great opportunity to review the gaps and to pinpoint where challenges still exist for the achievement of women's rights and gender equality on the continent. In its Article 2 (1), the Protocol calls on AU Members States to take affirmative actions to guarantee women's rights through the adoption of laws, policies, strategies, and formal legal protections to end all forms of discrimination against women.

To date, over 40 countries have ratified the Protocol making it one the most ratified human rights instrument of the AU. Under Article 26 of the Maputo Protocol, countries are required to submit periodic reports to the African Commission in order to comply with Article 62 of the charter. It is worth noting that while most countries periodically report on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), so far less than 15 African countries have reported on the Maputo Protocol since it was adopted in 2003.

In spite of the high number of ratifications of the Maputo Protocol by the AU Member States, its implementation and domestication remain a huge disappointment. Minimal investments have been made to tackle older women issues increasing their risks to discrimination, abuse and violence. Despite the efforts by most Africans States in terms of legislation and policies adoption, the reality in terms of their implementation remain very slow. The lack of infrastructure, inadequate literacy levels and awareness, technical expertise and human resources, information vacuum and especially awareness of laws, social-cultural attitudes, continue to act as serious obstacles. Furthermore, women continue to be largely marginalised in both public and private spheres. More efforts are required to tackle violence against women, end harmful practices such as FGM and Child Marriage and witchcraft accusation affecting older women. Greater participation of women in decision making and access to basic human rights would require continuation of ongoing robust efforts with a strong political and social will for real change to become visible and sustainable.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all UN Members States by pledging to 'Leave No one Behind'. The 2030 Agenda is a global call for action to alleviate poverty, lessen inequality, economic growth, secure the protection of the planet, while guaranteeing peaceful and prosperous societies. It has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets to be reached by 2030 across the board. At the continental level, during the same year, the AU adopted 'Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want' as the continent 'blueprint' and long-term vision to transform Africa "into the global powerhouse of the future"[5].

Under Goal 5 of the SDGs, Member States are called upon to end discrimination against women of all ages and to take affirmative actions by enacting laws and policies for the advancement of women's rights and to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed in all the goals. Although we have made some great strides on women's rights over the last decades, women still continue to face discrimination, unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work, violence against women is a daily occurrence in most countries and preparators go unpunished. Accumulated and intersecting realities across life course remain unattended in interventions and data disaggregation have perpetuated the exclusion of older women and women with disabilities among others. Globally, 49 countries don't have laws protecting women against domestic violence[6]. More so, country action plans and reports continue to miss reference to the violence older women may experience in the different settings where they receive care and support, to neglect or to financial exploitation and abuse[7].

In the 2019 SDG Gender Index, Africa was ranked as the lowest scoring with an average of 51.1 (very poor) out of 100. Mauritius (73.1 – 'fair'), South Africa (64.9 – 'poor') and Namibia (64.5 – 'poor') as the top performers; while Congo (44.0 – 'very poor'), DR Congo (38.2 – 'very poor') and Chad (33.4 – 'very poor') are the lowest performers on the continent[8].

African women's rights organisations were massively mobilised to ensure their effective engagement through the whole process under the leadership of FEMNET. In 2017, FEMNET brought together nearly 200 women's rights organisations in Nairobi to discuss the 2030 Agenda on SDGs. As a result of the convening, a Road Map was developed in 2018 as a guide to support women's groups organisation for their meaningful participation and involvement in the implementation of 2030 Agenda on SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063.[9]

Achieving Gender Equality is key to the success of the SDGs; therefore, it is paramount for Member States to ensure that women and girls across their life course have access to education, health care, equal pay, decision-making process, and harmful practices are eliminated. States must act to sign, ratify and comprehensively implement national, regional and international legal framework on women's rights without leaving out any category of women. Women rights groups must ensure that a strong system of accountability is in place be it at the sub-national, national, regional and continental level to make sure that States turn their promises into actions.

"...Africa was ranked as the lowest scoring with an average of 51.1 (very poor) out of 100. Mauritius (73.1 – 'fair'), South Africa (64.9 – 'poor') and Namibia (64.5 – 'poor') as the top performers; while Congo (44.0 – 'very poor'), DR Congo (38.2 – 'very poor') and Chad (33.4 – 'very poor') are the lowest performers on the continent.

The table below shows interlinkage and alignment of the 12 critical areas of Beijing Platform for Action with the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Beijing Platform for Action - Critical Areas of Concern	The Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Women and poverty	**Article 13**. Economic and Social Welfare Rights **Article 15.** Right to Food Security **Article 16.** Right to Adequate Housing	**Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls **Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries.	**Article 13.** Woman have a right to family benefits, bank loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial credit.
Education and training of women	**Article 12.** Right to Education and Training **Article 13.** Economic and Social Welfare Rights **Article 19.** Right to Sustainable Development	**Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls **Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.	**Article 10.** Women and girls should receive career and vocational guidance and have access to education opportunities on par with men or boys.

Beijing Platform for Action - Critical Areas of Concern	The Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Women and health	**Article 14.** Health and Reproductive Rights **Article 5.** Elimination of Harmful Practices	**Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. **Goal 2.** Achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 12.** Women have the right to family planning services.
Violence against women	**Article 3** Right to Dignity **Article 4.** The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person **Article 5**. Elimination of Harmful Practices **Article 6:** a) no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties; b) the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years; **Article 22:** Special Protection of Elderly Women	**Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 5.** Modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices **Article 6.** Governments shall take all measures to stop trafficking and exploitation of women for prostitution.
Women and armed conflict	**Article 10.** Right to Peace **Article 11.** Protection of Women in Armed Conflicts **Article 22:** Special Protection of Elderly Women	**Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**General Recommendation 30.** Women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations
Women and the economy	**Article 13.** Economic and Social Welfare Rights	**Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth full and productive employment and decent work for all. **Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. **Goal 10.** Reduce income inequality within and among countries. **Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 14.** Governments should undertake to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas so that they may participate in and benefit from rural development. **Article 11.** Women have an equal right to work with men, which includes pay, promotions, training, health and safety.

Beijing Platform for Action - Critical Areas of Concern	The Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Women in power and decision-making	**Article 9.** Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process	**Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustain- able development. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 16.** Women have the same rights as their husbands in marriage, childcare and family life. **Article 7.** The right of women to vote, to participate in forming and implementing government policies and to join public and political organizations**.** **Article 9.** Equal rights with men to keep and change their nationality and to grant their nationality to their children.
Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	**Article26.** Implementation and Monitoring	**Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 10.** Women are to be equal before the law.
Human rights of women	**Article 2.** Elimination of Discrimination Against Women **Article 20.** Widows' Rights **Article 23.** Special Protection of Women with Disabilities **Article 8.** Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law **Article 22:** Special Protection of Elderly Women	**Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	**Article 3.** Governments shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women can enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. **Article 4.** Governments can adopt temporary special measures to accelerate equality for women, i.e., affirmative action. **Article 2.** Governments shall take concrete steps to eliminate discrimination against women.
Women and the media	**Article 12.** Right to Education and Training		**Article 5.** Governments shall take appropriate measures to eliminate sexist stereotyping.

Beijing Platform for Action - Critical Areas of Concern	The Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Women and the environment	**Article 18.** Right to a Healthy and Sustainable Environment **Article 19.** Right to Sustainable Development	**Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls **Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. **Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. **Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. **Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. **Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and re- verse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.	**General Recommendation 37.** Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change
The Girl-Child	**Article 12.** Right to Education and Training **Article 14.** Health and Reproductive Rights **Article 5** Elimination of Harmful Practices **Article 6:** a) no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties; b) the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years;	**Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. **Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls **Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	**Article 10.** Reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely; **Article 12.** Eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care

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12 Critical Areas of Concern

Education and training of women

Violence against women and Girls

Women and armed conflict

Women in power and decision-making

Women and the economy

Human rights of women

Institutional mechanism for the Advancement of Women

Women and Poverty

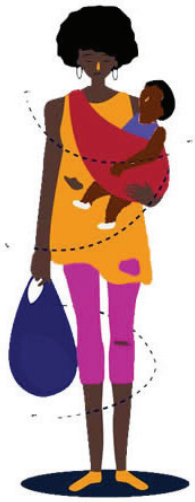
Women and the media

Women and health

Women and the environment

The Girl Child

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS



3.1 Women and Poverty

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions including extreme poverty is one of the 12 critical areas under the Beijing Platform for Action. Despite the recent spate of economic growth, the African continent remains afflicted by entrenched poverty and alarmingly high and rising inequality.[10] In many nonmonetary dimensions, women and girls suffer large inequalities in Africa as a region. On average, women in the region are less productive than men as farmers, and their nonfarm businesses are less profitable. Gender inequality traps women in poverty and generates a vicious cycle for daughters. The cumulative vulnerability and intersectionality of gender and other aspects such as age and disability contribute to the majority of older women and their families living in poverty. Poverty places especially women at a disadvantage leading to violations of their dignity and other forms of human rights violations including sex trafficking, and forcing women into prostitution as an income option, etc. A lot of evidence shows that African women, relative to men, tend to have significantly inferior human capital endowments.[11] Poverty in old age has a strong gender dimension as women live longer and likely to spend more time living in poverty than men. Reviews on existing survey evidence from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America suggests suggest older people are over-represented among the poor. Lower education levels and the need to combine work with childcare means that women are more likely to work in the informal sector. They are often paid less than men. They are more likely to lose their partner, and less likely to remarry. Older women, especially widows and those without children, are particularly vulnerable, both economically and socially[12]. The gap between rich and poor is greater than in any other region of the world apart from Latin America, and in many African countries this gap continues to grow.[13] A key issue of concern is the extent to which women and girls face different levels of poverty.

Progress and Gains

Reductions in Extreme poverty: The 2019 SDG Gender Index finds that, across the 129 countries studied, no country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality. Overall, higher income countries are more likely to have greater gender equality than lower income countries. Further, the 2019 SDG Gender Index reveals that 122 women aged 25-34 lived in extreme poverty in developing countries for every 100 men in 2019.[14] The World Bank (2018) report on poverty reduction indicated that in all regions except Sub-Saharan Africa, the regional average rates range from 1.5 percent to 12.4 percent, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, around 41 percent live below the international poverty line.

Ethiopia: is projected to lift 22 million people out of extreme poverty by 2030, reducing the percentage of Ethiopians living in extreme poverty from 25.6 percent in 2019 to 3.9 percent; Ghana is projected to lift approximately 2 million people out of poverty by 2030, which will reduce the percentage of its total population living in extreme poverty to 4.5 percent from 12.5 percent in 2019, Kenya is projected to reduce the percentage of Kenyans living in extreme poverty from 20.9 percent in 2019 to 4.3 percent, Cote d'Ivoire is also projected to make substantial progress in poverty reduction by 2030, 5.3 million of its citizens are projected to be lifted out of poverty, bringing down the percentage of citizenship in extreme poverty from 17.2 percent in 2019 to 4.9 percent, Djibouti is projected to reduce relative poverty from 14.2 percent-lifting over 80,000 of its citizens out of poverty by 2030.

Other poverty related interventions have been implemented especially in the ECOWAS region to reduce poverty. Before the adoption of the National Development Plans, most of these countries focused their development programmes on poverty reduction. Beyond these frameworks, specific measures have been taken to end poverty, including female poverty. In Guinea, a National Agency for Economic and Social Inclusion (NAESI) was created in 2018 to provide direct assistance to the poorest people. The Support Programme for Economic and Social Development (SPESD) 2016-2018 in Senegal contributes to poverty reduction. It ensures the socio-economic empowerment of women (urban and rural), youth and vulnerable groups through the development and consolidation of SMEs. The Gambian government is committed to improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable by providing them with the necessary support and tools to improve their quality of life and make them productive members of society. A National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) 2015-2025 with a strategic plan and an implementation plan has been developed and approved.

Gaps and Challenges

Gender gaps in human endowments, time use and property ownership often reflect biases in legal systems, social norms, and institutional structures. While many African have enacted progressive legislations in recent years, still the average country gives women only half the legal rights of men.[15]

Further in Africa, levels of gender inequality are among the highest in the world, combining with economic inequality to create a suffocating web of exclusion. For example, in Kenya, a boy from a rich family has a one-in-three chance of continuing his studies beyond secondary school. A girl from a poor family has a 1-in-250 chance of doing so.

While labor force participation across the continent is often touted as being close to parity at 0.85 (where 1 represents gender parity), individual realities vary vastly in each country. For instance, gender gaps in agricultural productivity range from 23% in Tanzania to 66% in Niger. Overall, only four countries—Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea—have gender parity (of 1 or higher). Women and girls are also responsible for the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work that contributes to their family, community

and the economy. For example, in Malawi, women spend seven times the amount of time on unpaid care and domestic work than men. In Madagascar, almost half (47%) of the richest urban boys complete lower secondary education, while 0% of the poorest rural girls do.[16]

Highlights

- In Sub-Saharan Africa, around 41 percent live below the international poverty line.
- The Gambian government is committed to improving the lives of the poorest. A National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) 2015-2025 with a strategic plan and an implementation plan has been developed and approved.

3.2 Education and Training of Women

A significant number of countries have adopted policies and strategies to provide equal access to education and improve access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education for women and girls.

Progress and Gains

Constitutional provisions, such as in the Constitution of Burundi, guarantee the same educational opportunities for girls and boys and recognizes the responsibility of the State to provide public education and facilitate access to it. Constitutions, such as in Comoros, requires that the State shall determine policy with the objectives of gradually eradicating illiteracy. To improve literacy rates and to eliminate gender gaps in education, the government of South Sudan adopted the National Girls' Education Strategy for 2018 -2022. The goals contained in the Strategy are in line with the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.[17] Burkina Faso has taken several steps to improve access to vocational and continuing training of women. Its Trades Training Program (Programme de Formation aux Métiers) provides a quota of 30% to women for vocational training.[18] In 2016 the government adopted the 2016 -2020 National Economic and Social Development Plan (le Plan National de Développement Economique et Social) with objective to significantly reduce gender inequalities and provide women with opportunities to establish businesses.

The Government of Liberia together with international and regional organizations developed programs benefitting girls and women. The United Nations Global Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (2014 – 2020) provides the women with capacity building, literacy and entrepreneurial skills.[19] Together with the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), the Volunteer Programme to provide career advice for secondary school students in Liberia, and the ECOWAS Girls of Excellence Scholarship Programme to give scholarships to girls in secondary, tertiary and vocational education.[20]

Several countries have seen increased enrolment, retention and completion of primary education in particular for girls as a result of eliminating school fees, building dormitories, and providing access to water, sanitation, and menstrual health management services.

Among the countries with the highest level of net enrolment of girls in primary education in 2017 are Namibia (98.5%), Egypt (97.6%), Burundi, (97.5%) Mauritius (96.9%), and Morocco (96.6%).[21] The majority of countries find enrolment around 50%, whereas in Eritrea girls account for only 35.6% of net enrolment in primary education in 2017, a decline from 41.7% in 2014.[22]

Many of the countries with the most girls enrolled in primary education, also reported the highest rates of girls completing primary education. In 2017, 97.9% of girls completed primary education in Mauritius, 95.4% in Egypt, and 93.1% in Morocco.[23] While in other countries such as Namibia and Burundi, the complete rates were lower at 80.5% and 74.9% respectively.[24] The countries with the highest rates of girls not enrolled in school include Mozambique, Sudan, Niger, Tanzania, and Mali.

The data available shows great variation in the literacy rate among women 15+ years in Africa. The countries with the highest literacy rates of women 15+ years include Namibia (91.44%), São Tomé e Príncipe (89.52%), Mauritius (89.37%), and Eswatini (88.54%).[25] The countries with lowest literacy rates of women 15+ are Mali (25.74%), Central Africa Republic (25.76%), and South Sudan (28.86%).[26]

Gaps and Challenges

Although the gender gap in many countries is shrinking in primary education, the same trend is not visible for secondary and tertiary education. Implementing affirmative action and providing scholarship opportunities have however had a positive effect on enrolment retention and completion for girls and women in secondary and tertiary education. There have also been notable gains from investing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiatives. The 2016 STEM Initiative in Zimbabwe not only saw an increase in girls' enrolment, but the Initiative also had a positive effect on combating negative stereotypes of women and girls in STEM fields.

Challenges remain to the equal access and participation of women and girls in education. Negative social and cultural attitudes persist and practices such as early marriage and forced marriage prevent girls from or force them out of school. Pregnant students often face discrimination and stigma. Back to school policy for pregnant girls is non-existence and in countries where there is, the lack of implementation makes it challenging for girls to go back to school. Lack of support for young mothers prevents them from completing their education. Educational institutions often lack the infrastructure to give the support young mothers need.

Highlights

- The government of South Sudan adopted the National Girls' Education Strategy for 2018 -2022 to improve literacy rates and to eliminate gender gaps in education. The goals contained in the Strategy are in line with the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.
- Namibia has the highest literacy rates of women 15+ years at 91.44%
- Burkina Faso has taken several steps to improve access to vocational and continuing training of women. Its Trades Training Program (Programme de Formation aux Métiers) provides a quota of 30% to women for vocational training
- Lead by UNESCO East Africa regional office, policy-makers and researchers from Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania have been discussing strategic approaches to promoting lifelong learning in their respective countries. The outcome can provide policy suggestions for lifelong learning[27].

3.3 Women and Health

Women make up over 50% of Africa's population and therefore their health is of paramount significant to the continent's overall wellbeing and development.

Progress and Gains

In terms of progress, from a development of norms perspective, African states have made various commitments towards securing women's and girls' health as required by the BPfA.[28] These commitments range from binding instruments such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) to other significant international and regional commitments such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and their resultant action plans. These commitments emphasise on women's sexual and reproductive health rights as being the most central concern to women's health.

One of the biggest concerns to women's health is maternal mortality. The African Union responded by launching the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction on Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).[29] The uptake of the campaign has been successful with 46 countries having launched a CARMMA campaign and 6 others preparing to launch.[30] Relatedly, maternal mortality rates have seen a decline and between 2000 and 2017, sub-Saharan Africa achieved a substantial 38% reduction in maternal mortality rates.[31] In addition, national contraception (family planning) campaigns are more prevalentand many states are now pursuing universal health coverage. The national campaigns in particular have led to increased awareness and health services seeking behaviour among women and

girls. Overall, the health sector has recorded some progress over the years in relation to markers most related to women's health with declines being recorded on maternal mortality and HIV infection among others.

Gaps and Challenges

While African states have made these commitments to the health concerns that most affect women (sexual and reproductive health), the reality on the ground is different with most women's health markers in the continent failing to meet global and regional commitments. While the Beijing Platform for Action recognises that the increased life expectancies, health concerns of older women require particular attention (paragraph 101), not much has been actioned. Universal Health Coverage remains unequal and limited with many older women experiencing barriers of all important health services such as Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, and long term care is un developed in Africa. The facilities are inaccessible, costs are prohibitive and discrimination and ageism by health workers persist.

Maternal mortality remains an urgent concern with many women still suffering needless and preventable deaths. Despite recorded decline, the rates of maternal mortality remain unacceptably high with more than half of maternal deaths worldwide occurring in sub-Saharan Africa.[32]In 2017 only, about 66% of the global number of maternal deaths occurred in Africa (196,000).[33]The rates of maternal mortality in Africa (highest in the world), are still unacceptable particularly when it is considered that most maternal deaths are preventable. The risk of maternal mortality is highest for adolescent's girls under 15 years and complications in pregnancy and childbirth are higher among adolescents age 10-19 compared to women aged 20-24. To avoid maternal deaths, it is also vital to prevent unwanted pregnancies. All women, including adolescents, need access to contraception, safe abortion services to the full extent of the law, and quality comprehensive and post-abortion care.

On contraception, women still have an unmet need for contraception. Recent data indicates that 20% of married women have an unmet need for contraception but this number is likely to be higher as these figures do not consider unmarried women. The mode of collecting data on contraception usage in itself perpetuates patriarchal biases that only married women use contraceptives, and this same bias hinders contraceptive access among unmarried women and girls as evidenced next. Deficiencies on contraception usage are pronounced among young women aged 15 – 19 years.[34] Relatedly, pregnancies among adolescent girls and young women are highest in sub-Saharan Africa and in some countries in West and Central Africa, these pregnancies are strongly linked to child marriage.[35] These statistics are also linked to maternal mortality as adolescent girls face a higher risk of death resulting from complications in pregnancy and childbirth with maternal mortality listed as the leading cause of death among adolescent girls who are under 15 years.[36]

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is pertinent to achieving sexual health and rights. Sexual and reproductive health challenges among adolescent girls and young women are worsened by a lukewarm commitment to CSE among African states.

Whereas some states have put in place CSE measures, strong challenges remain in implementation where comprehensive sexuality education is actually not being undertaken (and in some instances where it is undertaken, it is not aligned to WHO standards).[37]

On HIV, progress-wise there has been a decline in HIV infections in Africa. Nevertheless, women and girls remain disproportionately infected and affected by new HIV infections. More than half of the new infections in the region occur among women and girls aged 15-22 years and young women aged 15 – 24 years old are 2 and a half times more likely to be infected with HIV compared to men. In fact, AIDS-related illnesses are the second leading cause of death among young women aged 15 – 24.[38]

Overall, women's health priorities remain underfinanced and are further compromised by the misappropriation of health expenditure among African states. Yet gender budgeting is critical towards meeting women's and girls' health needs and states have an obligation to increase budgetary allocations towards primary health care in general and ensuring said allocation are gender responsive. The BPfA recognises that critical to meeting women's and girls' health needs is the obligation for states to increase budgetary allocations towards primary health care in general and ensuring said allocation are gender responsive.[39] African states have further entrenched this obligation through the Abuja Declaration (2001) where they committed to allocate at least 15% of their budget to health expenditures. To date, only 4 countries (Ethiopia, The Gambia, Malawi and Swaziland) have satisfied the Abuja Declaration despite the continent having some of the world's women's health indicators. In addition, some women neglected diseases such as fistula, endometriosis and cervical cancer are largely supported by development partners with little national financing.

All the foregoing trends and markers indicate that despite formal commitments, African states are still not putting suitable measures towards women's and girls' health. Even where laws and policies are in place, strong implementation challenges are hampering women's access to health services especially in relation to their sexual and reproductive health.

Highlights

- Ethiopia, The Gambia, Malawi and Swaziland have satisfied the Abuja Declaration (2001) by allocating at least 15% of their total budget to health expenditures.
- 80% of countries have constitutional provisions that affirm women's and girls' right to health.[40]
- Some countries have put in place policy frameworks specific to addressing sexual and reproductive health. These include: Djibouti, DRC, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan and Tanzania.
- 21 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have committed to providing comprehensive sex education and sexual and reproductive health services to adolescent and young people.[41]

- African Union Commission has also adopted a common position on long term care while WHO is leading on Health Ageing Strategy which is hoped to increase conversation and action are around appropriate responses for older persons health and care needs.

3.4 Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most egregious manifestations of gender inequalities resulting in the violation of several women's rights yet it remains a systemic challenge in Africa. At the same time, rape culture is prevalent characterised by systemic impunity to sexual violence and the popularisation of ideas, words and stereotypes that condone VAWG. VAWG is a violation of women's rights as per the BPfA and several other international and regional commitments.

Progress and Gains

Combatting violence against women and girls in Africa records chequered progress. Some gains have been made particularly on the legal framework front. In Africa, the Maputo Protocol prohibits violence against women and provides strong measures for its elimination. Further, all states except South Sudan have at least one statutory law that prohibits a form of VAWG.[42] The general trend that is taking root is an increase in the legal recognition of the different manifestations of VAWG and their consequent criminalisation. For instance, the revisions of the Penal Code in Cape Verde and Togo (2015), Burkina Faso (2018) and Côte d'Ivoire (2019) have made it possible to recognise different types of violence that were not previously sanctioned or sufficiently addressed.

Beyond, legal recognition, states can also be seen to report on the taking of other measures to combat and manage VAWG. In more than half of the countries, response is evident through the reporting of measures to ensure that the police are better equipped to manage survivors. The establishment of one stop centres in more than half of the states is also lauded and is critical towards enhanced coordination in the management of VAWG. Enhanced coordination minimises revictimization, encourages reporting and will eventually contribute to a decrease in VAWG cases whose current upsurge is fanned by impunity.

In July 2018, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Committee of experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted the first ever Joint General Comment on ending child marriage to intensify and harmonize the fight against child, early and forced marriage in Africa. This is a build-up on Article 6b of the Maputo Protocol and Article 21(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The joint general comment provides practical guidance to states on their obligations on ending child marriage.

Gaps and Challenges

Overall, there exist tremendous gaps that render women vulnerable to various forms of VAWG. Statistics indicate that 45.6% of women in Africa have experienced physical and/ or sexual violence.[43]Moreover, there have also emerged new forms of violence such as cyberviolence.

There exist serious protection gaps where some forms of VAWG are not recognised in law. In illustration, 60% of African countries do not criminalise marital rape; 30% lack a legal framework on domestic violence; and at least six countries (Comoros, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan) lack a legal framework on human trafficking.[44]

On child marriage (a form of VAWG), 80% of countries in Africa have set the legal age of marriage at 18. But there are legal loopholesin 34 of the 45 countries that have a legal age of marriage at 18, in that there are guarantees of full and free consent and/or that the legal age of marriage applies to customary and religious marriages as well.[45]While child marriage rates are on the decrease, the highest rates of child marriage are found in sub-Saharan Africa where one in four girls is married before the age of 18. In about 20 countries, the child marriage prevalence rate is at an unacceptable 30-50%, meaning 3-5 out of 10 girls in these countries are likely to get married before 18. The prevalence is highest in the Western and Central African regions.[46]

On female genital mutilation (FGM), another form of VAWG, the mutilation of girls remains unrelenting and concentrated in 28 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda) with some of these countries recording a prevalence rate of more than 80%. These countries include: Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

Many African countries have marriage laws that allow/ promote polygamy (for instance Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) such laws promote inequality as they allow a man to have more than one wife. These laws that allow polygamous marriages continue to discriminate against women and violate a woman's right to equality in marriage.

Even among states that have adequate legal provisions, the greatest challenge to VAWG is in the actual implementation of existing protections coupled with a non-coordinated state response. A coordinated response envisages the state to ensure legal protection, addressing root causes, protection and holistic support to survivors and the effective prosecution of perpetrators.[47]

Further, certain categories of women are disproportionately affected by VAW. Factors such as sexual orientation, disability status, ethnicity, and some contextual factors, such as conflict and post-conflict situations, increase women's vulnerability to violence. Further, older women may experience violence in the different settings where they receive care and support, to neglect or to financial exploitation including killings as a result of witchcraft accusation and yet VAWG data does not provide data beyond 49 years. Yet states do not report on their efforts to address these particular vulnerabilities.

Highlights

- 13 countries in Africa criminalise or prohibit marital rape. These countries include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Comoros, The Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- Most countries have shown decline on FGM prevalence for girls ages 14-19.
- 80% of countries in Africa have set the legal age of marriage at 18. But there are legal loopholes in 34 of the 45 countries that have a legal age of marriage at 18, in that there are guarantees of full and free consent and/or that the legal age of marriage applies to customary and religious marriages as well.
- African Member States adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Older Person in Africa that if ratified, will provide further reinforcement on the rights of older women as provided as provided for in the article 22 of the Maputo Protocol.

3.5 Women and Armed Conflict

October 2000 was a turning point for women's rights agenda globally when the Security Council unanimously adopted the landmark resolution 1325 which recognises the impact of conflicts on women and the need for the protection of women and girls during conflicts. The UNSCR 1325 went beyond the victimisation of women during conflicts, it recognises women and girls as potential actors in all phases of conflict, particularly in peace processes, Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), as well as in reconstruction and development policies.

Progress and Gains

Women's participation at all levels of peacebuilding is a prerequisite for a lasting peace. The Council of Foreign Relations estimates that when women take part in peace process, the 'peace agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.[48]Between 1992-2018, women have made up only 3% of mediators, 4% of signatories to peace agreement and 135 of negotiators.[49]

At the continental level, Africa has made great strides to promote the increase participation and contribution of women and non-violent forms of conflict resolution. Various instruments and policies on women's peace and security such as the Protocol to the African Union Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) have been adopted. At the regional and national level, efforts have been made to adopt various instruments and policies to ensure that women are at the forefront of peace process and conflict resolution.

Several African countries have embraced Resolution 1325, and up to date over 20 countries have adopted a National Action Plan. Namibia being the most recent country to launch its first ever National Actions Plan on Women, Peace and Security in June 2019.[50] The majority of countries are in the process to formulate and implement a National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Rwanda, Nigeria, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have all implemented their second NAP and Liberia is in the process of launching a second NAP in 2019. The most recent NAPs in these countries expand upon the previous Plans. In Uganda, the NAP includes provisions to improve access to health and medical services and psychosocial services for survivors of gender-based violence, women in leadership and decision-making positions, and budget dedicated to the implementation of UNSCR 1325[51]. In the DRC, the NAP takes into account the challenges and concerns of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063[52].

In Rwanda, women are considerably taking part in the conflict management and justice structure specially at the grassroots level where they constitute 44.3% of community mediators (Abunzi) and 48% of the access to justice bureau.[53]

In July 2015, Burkina Faso put in place a Regional Coordination of the Women's Platform as part of the integrated program to strengthen the participation of women and youth in the promotion of peace, security, citizenship and stability in the G5 Sahel countries. It is an organization comprising a national unit in each of the five G5 Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.[54]The Namibia National Gender Policy (2010-2020) provides strategies for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and paths to include more women in peace-keeping missions at all levels of decision-making.[55]

To increase the protection of women, Burkina Faso adopted the 2018 Criminal Code. The Code makes violence against women, including human rights defenders, punishable[56]. In Togo, the new Penal code recognizes some sexual and other forms of violence committed during conflicts as crimes against humanity[57]. In 2019, the Republic of Congo adopted a law against trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Nigerian government deployed 233 out of 2,961 women peacekeepers in 2015, making it the second largest number of female peacekeepers in the world.[58]

Several countries have taken steps to increase the participation of women. In Liberia the National Strategy for achieving 20% women representation in security sector institutions has had a positive effect in increasing the recruitment and participation of women. Although not achieving the goal in all sector, as of 2018, there were 29% women in the Liberia Immigration Service; 19% in Liberia National Police; and 3% women in the armed forces.[59] In Uganda, the Uganda Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) uses a quota system to encourage the participation of women in recruitment, promotions, and deployment. In Tanzania, the Zanzibar Gender Policy 2016 includes a mandate on involving women in all peace keeping operations and at all levels.

Although women are increasingly participating in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations, gender-disaggregated comparative data is often lacking.

From the data available, Sierra Leone has seen an increase of women participating in peacekeeping missions, in particular among police personnel. In 2018, women made up around 30% of the troops from Sierra Leone.[60]

Gaps and Challenges

Women continue to play a crucial role in peace building and conflicts resolution across the continent. Despite the considerable efforts made at the continental, national and local levels to push the Women, Peace and Security agenda through the adoption of laws, policies and National Action Plan (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325, challenges persist, and notable gaps exist concerning the financing of the WPS agenda and the implementation of NAPs. The lack of political will and inadequate resources are some of the biggest challenges for the implementation and monitoring of UNSCR 1325 both at the national and regional level.

Budgets have been constrained or greatly reduced, and few countries have taken steps to reduce military spending. In South Sudan, women's organizations dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict prevention face funding constraints and capacity gaps. Moreover, in a number of countries the process to formulate a new NAP has stalled, while in others no process has been initiated altogether. Despite representing 80% of displaced people, refugees' camps lack adequate services and facilities for women and girls leaving them vulnerable to violence, trafficking, harassment, disease with no protection. Though most countries have put in place laws upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, they, however, don't take into account the gender dimension and as a result, most of the issues affecting women with disability are not fully addressed specially in conflicts situation.

With respect to the participation of women in conflict resolution and in promoting women's contribution in conflict prevention and fostering a culture of peace, significant challenges remain. Conflict resolution and security institutions remain a male dominated environment. Patriarchal views keep women from participating equally in post-conflict dialogue and conflict management. Thus, women are marginalized, their contributions are not recognized and their views and perspective are not included.

Highlights

- The Namibia National Gender Policy (2010-2020) provides strategies for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and paths to include more women in peace-keeping missions at all levels of decision-making.
- The Zanzibar Gender Policy 2016 includes a mandate on involving women in all peace keeping operations and at all levels.

3.6 Women and the Economy

Women's economic empowerment is widely recognized as essential for human progress, thriving economies, and business success. Women's economic empowerment is a process through which their capital (human, financial and physical) endowments increase along with their access to and benefits from economic opportunities, leading to improved agency and voice[61].

Progress and Gains

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 66 per cent of women in Africa participate in the labour force, but among employed women, only 20 per cent are in wage employment, leaving the majority in the labour force in self-employment. Studies reveal 20 per cent of women in North Africa participate in the labour force but of that close to 80 per cent do so in Eastern Africa. While participation rates are high for women, they include both unemployed and employed women. It is important to note that unemployment rates for women, in particular for young women, are high in Africa and those employed are often underemployed, with less than 30 to 35 hours of labour supply per week.[62]

Prevalence of female-owned enterprises vary across Africa but remains below 30 per cent. In both formal and informal sector, female owned enterprises are widely present in the services sector with the exception of Egypt where only 4 per cent of formal enterprises are owned by women. Majority of female -owned enterprises are micro or small, operate in wholesale and retail trade and hotels and restaurants sub -sectors.

A World Bank report titled *Women, Business and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform*[63] reveals that sub-Saharan Africa had the most reforms promoting gender equality in the economy. In fact, six of the top 10 reforming countries include—the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Malawi, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Zambia. More than half the reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa were in Starting a Job and Getting Married. Within each of these indicators, the biggest areas of reform were on laws affecting gender-based violence. Five economies—Burundi, the Comoros, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe and Zambia—introduced laws on both workplace sexual harassment and domestic violence. A further seven legislated against workplace sexual harassment, and eight economies introduced domestic violence laws. Analyses of variations in legal rights across countries and of legal reforms over time illustrate how reforms in family, inheritance, and land laws can strengthen the ability of women to pursue economic opportunities.

A number of African member states have experimented with direct and short term policy tools such as the public procurement policies which provide special derogation for competing companies based on gender, active labor market policies such as skills training and entrepreneurship promotion programs, building skills training, e.g. adult literacy and numeracy, financial literacy, business and entrepreneurial skills with

capital transfers, e.g. start-up capital, cash grants, micro-loans or in-kind transfers, which can help women transition into more productive and lucrative income-generating activities.

Gaps and Challenges

Across sub-Saharan Africa, women's economic empowerment is stalled by low educational attainment among women, cultural practices that place the burden of domestic work on women and girls, customs that inhibit women from owning lands and properties, and workplace sexual harassment.[64] These challenges put women at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement, skill acquisition, access to markets, and scaling up successful jobs. Consequently, African women are less represented in international trade ventures such as exporting cash-crops despite the fact they are over-represented in small-scale farming.

Since 2015, progress on increasing women's presence in middle management roles has gone backward, on average across Africa by around 1 percent a year. In North Africa, only 9 percent of women attain middle-management roles despite the fact that account for 53 percent of the population completing tertiary education. Too few African women make it into high quality professional and technical jobs.

Highlights

- Africa's female labor participation is on par with that of China, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North America and Oceania and Western Europe.
- Five countries—Burundi, the Comoros, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe and Zambia—have introduced laws on both workplace sexual harassment and domestic violence.

3.7 Women in Power and Decision-Making

Within the African continent, wide variations can be identified when it comes to women's participation in decision-making as well as in the measures taken by each country in order to promote women's rights. Most African countries have made significant efforts to reduce gender inequality, strengthen women's rights and several measures have been taken to ensure the equal participation and representation of women in public bodies through the adoption of various policies and legislation.

Progress and Gains

The current average of women in parliament on the continent is around 23.7%[65]. A total of 19.4% of seats were gained in both lower and single house and 27.5% in upper house as of 2018 [66]. While some countries have adopted legislated or constitutional quotas, others have introduced voluntary quotas to promote women representation in Parliament.

Women participation has increased significantly following the 2018 election in Djibouti, around 25% of 112 candidates were women. The country has made head way by increasing the number of women parliamentarians from 10.8% to 26.2% (out of the 65 seats of the National Assembly, 17 are occupied by women).[67]

Zimbabwe has also made great progress in terms of women representation after the 2018 election, out of 350 seats, women won 120 in both houses representing 34% of women parliamentarians. This marks a notable increase compared to 2013 (23%) and 2008 (15%)[68]. In Mauritania, women make up 33% of all seats (47 seats in the parliament, 37 in the National Assembly and 10 in the Senate) after the recent election.[69]In terms of women's participation in decision-making bodies, Burundi has made significant progress. In fact, the new constitution of Burundi of 2018 and the Electoral Code of 2014 ensure a minimum of 30% in terms of the representation of women in decision-making bodies.[70]

In 2018, Liberia adopted the revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022) and the Local Government Act and established Gender Units in key Ministries.[71] In the Republic of Congo, article 17 of the 2015 Congolese Constitution granted women the same rights as men and ensures women's promotion and representation in political, elective and administrative functions.[72] Moreover, in 2016, a National Gender Policy was launched for the period of 2017-2021 and its first objective was to amend the legal framework and improve institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women in political, elective and administrative positions.[73]

South Africa made history by becoming one the few countries (so far, only 10 other countries) in the world to achieve gender parity in their cabinets and for the first time ever, women represent 50% of the South Africa's cabinet.[74]. Rwanda has the highest number of women ministers at 51,9% (14 out of 27 ministers) in the cabinet from 36.8% in 2014. In Ethiopia, the percentage of women ministers is 47.6% (10 out of 21 ministers).[75]

According to the Rwanda CSOs Parallel report, the country has achieved tremendous improvements towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)[76]. One of the main achievements of Rwanda has been the constitutional guarantee of a minimum quota of 30% of women's representation in all decision-making organs[77] which has led to the increase in the percentages of women's participation. Women's representation in the cabinet reached 50% in 2019 from 36.8% in 2014.[78]As of January 2019, women in Rwanda represent 51,9% (14 out of 27 ministers) in the cabinet from 36.8% in 2014.

Gaps and Challenges

Despite the positive developments mentioned above, there are still countries in the African continent where women's participation in politics remains low. In the Central African Republic (CAR) women hold only 8.2%[79]of the seats in Parliament, in Nigeria 5.6% of the seats in the Lower House and 6.5%[80]of the seats in the Upper House and in Comoros women hold 6.1%[81]of the seats. Notably, the problem of low women's political participation is not African but global: as of February 2019, only 24.3% of all national parliamentarians were women and this is a slow increase, comparing to 11.3% in 1995.[82]

The above low numbers on women's participation in politics and decision-making in certain countries can be explained by the fact that women in Africa often face challenges and have to overcome multiple obstacles to make their voices heard. In the vast majority of African countries, if not in all countries, women face major *institutional, social, cultural and economic barriers*. For instance, even in Rwanda, which is ranked among the top countries globally on women's participation in politics, negative stereotypes of women, uneven sharing of family and home responsibilities and continued incidences of gender-based violence, disrupt the country's gender equality visions.[83] Furthermore, it is worth noting the presence of the discriminatory laws towards people with disabilities specially women and girls. For instance, the Mental Health Act in Kenya which was amended in 2018 doesn't mention the right to vote for people with disability. This not only prevent them to exercise their right as a citizen, it also constitutes a barrier to their participation in the political life of their country[84].

In North Africa, female candidates do not have access to financial support and experience constraints which limit their work and ability to influence decision-making.[85] Additionally, violence against women candidates is often in African countries, for instance, in Tunisia, cases of electoral violence against women have been reported.[86] Another major barrier is implementation, even though policies are approved, implementation remains a challenge since there is lack of coordination and no action plans in place. This is the case of Somalia, where although the National Gender Policy has been approved, it has not been adequately implemented.[87]

Highlights

- The new constitution of Burundi of 2018 and the Electoral Code of 2014 requires a minimum of 30% in terms of the representation of women in decision-making bodies.
- Women represent 51,9% (14 out of 27 ministers) of the Rwanda cabinet, followed by South Africa at 50% and Ethiopia with 47.6% (10 out of 21 ministers).
- DRC launched its National Gender Policy for the period of 2017-2021 and its first objective was to amend the legal framework and improve institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women in political, elective and administrative positions.

3.8 Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) commits governments to establishing "institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women". "Critical Area of Concern H: Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women" gave specific attention to national machineries, stating that "a national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside government" whose main task is "to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas" (Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 201).

In contexts with both positive and challenging elements, national machineries and institutional mechanisms have developed in significant ways. Examples of their development are the increasing popularity of ministries for women or departments of ministries as lead institutional mechanisms; a growing trend towards multiple institutions as institutional mechanisms; greater cooperation between institutional mechanisms and civil society institutions, although such relations remain largely informal and without established modalities; and a growing trend towards supplementing gender desks and gender focal points with inter-ministerial committees and other collective bodies. Instruments such as legislative reform, funding mechanisms and gender-responsive budgeting have become very popular over the last ten years.[88]

Progress and Gains

There is visible and improved coordination of gender equality and women's rights initiatives to ensure coordination and monitoring of gender thematic programs and project implementation in several African countries. Several mechanisms have been strengthened such as Ministries responsible for gender, National Women parliamentary caucuses, Gender Technical Committees made up of gender focal points from other ministries etc. Gambia did not have a ministry in charge of the issue but a Women's Office. In January 2019, Gambia created a new Ministry of Women's Affairs, Children and Social Welfare. In Cape Verde, an inter-ministerial commission for gender mainstreaming (Gender Commission) has been set up to monitor the effective integration of the gender dimension into policies and to create an institutional culture conducive to the use of the gender approach in the planning and implementation of sectoral policies. In Togo, the General Directorate for Gender and the Promotion of Women within the Ministry of Social Action, the Promotion of Women and Literacy is responsible for coordinating actions in favor of gender and the promotion of women.[89]

A number of countries in the last five years have adopted policies, laws and programs to advance GEWE. For instance, Lesotho adopted the Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030, Liberia revised the National Gender Policy (2018-2022) that promotes women's rights by addressing discrimination, assisting women entrepreneurs, creating new economic opportunities and demanding for justice for women, Zanzibar adopted

the Gender Policy and its Action Plan in 2016. In December 2018, the President of South Africa established a 30-member team of experts to assess the status of women in the country, reviewing what the government has done to change the quality of life of women. This was to help deal with the lack of co-ordination and collaboration between the Ministry of Women, the Commission for Gender Equality, and other gender-related institutions (including this newly appointed task team) which was leading to duplication and overlapping of roles, as well as certain areas not being addressed.

There is an overall increment in commitment to developing and implementing gender budgeting policies and programme across Africa including Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Two countries that have achieved notable success in their efforts are Uganda and Rwanda, both of which have integrated gender-oriented goals into budget policies, programs, and processes in fundamental ways. Uganda introduced a Certificate on Gender and Equity Compliance to ensure that the budget process meets women's needs.[90] Other countries have made more limited progress in introducing gender budgeting into their budget-making. [91]

In 2018, Cape Verde introduced a system of gender indicators to monitor the allocation of funds for gender equality. Guinea has adopted a gender strategy for public administration. And on the basis of gender policy, Mali has developed and disseminated a guide for taking into account cross-cutting themes, including gender in public policies and budgets for greater justice and equality in the conduct of public actions. Over the past three years, Senegal has prepared the Gender Budget Document to accompany the 2019 Finance Law in order to enable Parliament to better assess the efforts made to reduce gender inequalities in the actions carried out by the government. In Côte d'Ivoire, the National Policy on Equal Opportunities, Equity and Gender updated in 2018 is still awaiting adoption by the Government.[92]

Gaps and Challenges

The national gender machineries are yet to function as effectively as they had been envisioned. In a number of countries they are yet to wield sufficient power within the decision-making hierarchy [and authority] to influence government policy; in some cases they lack clarity of mandate and functional responsibility; and in others there links with civil society groups supportive of the advancement of women's rights and enhancement of women's status is weak; and are perennially saddled with limited human and financial resources.[93]

Highlights

- In January 2019, Gambia created a new Ministry of Women's Affairs, Children and Social Welfare.
- In Cape Verde, an inter-ministerial commission for gender mainstreaming (Gender Commission) has been set up to monitor the effective integration of the gender dimension into policies.

3.9 Human Rights of Women

Women's rights are human rights and the BPfA notes that these rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The BPfA provides that governments must not only refrain from violating the human rights of all women, but must work actively to promote and protect these rights. The actualisation of women's rights can be measured through assessing women's equality in society. Gender equality can be assessed in various ways. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) which is mandated to follow-up progress and report on Africa's implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action measures gender equality by assessing: women's social power (capabilities), women's economic power (opportunities) and women's political power (voice or agency). It also assesses government's progress in ratifying regional and international conventions, documents and treaties regarding gender equality and women's advancement and empowerment.[94]In addition to the BPfA critical areas, women's human rights can also be assessed through an evaluation of states commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Goal 17 of the AU Agenda 2063 on achievement of gender equality.

Progress and Gains

In regard to women's rights normative frameworks, the continent records strong success with the African Union having in place elaborate normative and institutional frameworks. The most significant regional convention on gender equality is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). To date, 42 out of a possible 55 African states have ratified the Maputo Protocol (10 have signed but not ratified).[95] The Maputo Protocol sets a high standard for the attainment of women's equality and rights in Africa requiring states to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures.

Some progress has been recorded in the following areas among African states: legal measures towards ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls have recorded some progress. The constitutions of many African states have provisions on equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, age and disability, which provides a key foundation for the protection of women's rights for all women and all ages and context. Progress has also been recorded by states in taking measures towards the elimination of harmful practices.[96] More substantial progress has been recorded by states in regard to taking measures towards ensuring the full, effective and equal participation of women in political, economic and public life.[97]

There is also a slow shift with states starting to pay attention to the accumulated and intersectional identities of women and the resultant concerns. For women with disabilities, a few states have put in place measures to enhance their economic empowerment. For instance, in Cameroun, there are vocational training centres that offer free tuition for women with disabilities. Kenya, has a law requiring 30% of its

government tenders to be procured by women, youth and persons with disabilities as well as other parallel development funds. Minimal investments have been made on older women issues. However more countries continue to expand social protection (SP) programmes and universal pension like in Kenya and Zanzibar. Tanzania has recently developed a strategy to eliminate killings older people as a result of witchcraft accusation. Older women are the most affected. Whereas challenges remain in terms of awareness creation of these opportunities and limited funding, these measures are encouraged and should be scaled up.

Gaps and Challenges

Overall, government actions have resulted in the improvement of some markers of women's social empowerment but strong challenges still persist. Despite robust legal frameworks on women's rights at continental and national levels, their implementation remains wanting coupled with a lack of political will to follow through on women's rights commitments. This is as illustrated by all the women's rights gaps and challenges illustrated in all the critical areas discussed in this report.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls is the bedrock on which women's rights can be fully realised. While progress has been made as reported above, some states still maintain laws that do not protect women from discrimination in private and public spheres. The principle of non-discrimination is only protected in 89% of countries in Southern Africa, 73% in Eastern Africa, 71% in North Africa to as low as 43% in Central Africa.[98] This means that there are countries where discrimination is sanctioned.

In addition to the elimination of all form of discrimination, certain violations are critical towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These include: Elimination of all forms of violence and harmful practices; recognition and value of unpaid care and domestic work; ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health rights; and ensuring women's full participation in politics and decision-making. Most of these areas record inequalities for women in Africa coupled with a very slow pace of implementation of the multiple global, regional and national commitments that states have taken towards their alleviation.[99]

In terms of other measures of gender equality, women's social power is measured through their health, education and skills and personal safety can also be included. On health, whereas women have benefited from greater access to health services, overall, they still experience many health risks and gaps as discussed in the reporting on the *Women and Health* critical area earlier. On education, there is progress to record as many African countries have now effectively eliminated the gender gap in primary education, although there is still some way to go on secondary and vocational education.[100] The findings on women's personal safety are as reflected in the *Violence against Women* critical area earlier where minimal gains are reported.

Statistics on women's economic power in Africa reveal gender divides. Ranging from income to time-use and employment as well as access to resources, women still suffer inequalities. The African Development Bank has found that women in Africa

have particularly unequal access to land, credit, time and that they bear the biggest brunt of Africa's infrastructure deficit.[101]Further, women produce 80% of food on the continent yet they are most affected by poverty and low-paid, poor quality jobs. Women in rural areas and women with disabilities in particular face a high economic burden in accessing various opportunities including education, employment and healthcare. These access challenges are due to remote locations and inaccessible public transport system coupled with the high cost of services. These factors combine to create a vicious cycle of poverty among women in rural areas and those with disabilities.

The status on women's political power is as previously discussed. The utilisation of quotas has enhanced women's representation significantly and is encouraged. However, socio-cultural challenges as well as women's unequal access to higher levels of education and economic opportunities hamper their full, equal and effective participation in political, economic and public life.

Overall, with an average remaining gap of 33.7%, Sub-Saharan Africa records the third-largest gender gap among eight profiled regions, behind the East Asia and the Pacific region and ahead of South Asia.[102]Through all potential markers, measures and indices, women in Africa are still largely in a state of inequality. Clearly states' measures in pursuing gender equality and non-discrimination in laws, policies and practice are yet to be adequate and fully aligned.

Highlights

- Rwanda (ranked 6) and Namibia (ranked 10), feature in the top 10 of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Index (2018) having closed 80% and 79% of their gender gaps. Rwanda has performed consistently in this regard and is joined by Namibia which manages to narrow its political empowerment gender gap due to an increased share of women in parliament. South Africa (ranked 19) also registers some progress on the political empowerment sub index, despite a slight decline in wage equality.
- Globally, african countries have made important progress in promoting women's contribution to political life, through quotas in parliament. Even without quotas, more women than ever are succeeding to high political office.

3.10 Women and The Media

Efforts by African governments, CSOs, and other partners to empower women, especially women to take up positions in media and communications, as well as providing training on non-stereotypical reporting of gender issues by the media have yielded positive results. By promoting more women in media and encouraging a balanced and positive portrayal of women and their achievements, negative stereotypes are challenged, and positive attitudes of women and gender equality created.

Progress and Gains

Although few countries reported on laws enacted concerning women and the media, notable steps were taken. To combat discrimination against women, Burkina Faso has adopted several laws that have contributed to reducing gender bias and negative portrayal of women and girls in the media. Specifically, the laws have sought to regulate how women are presented in advertising and to make violations punishable under the Penal Code. To address the marginalization and lack of access to media by vulnerable groups, such as women, the government of South Sudan adopted The Media Authority Bill, The Broadcasting and Corporation Bill and the Access to Information Bills.

Several African governments, in partnership with CSOs, such as women in media associations, have adopted national strategies to address the negative portrayal of women and gender biases in the media. The government of Uganda together with Uganda Women's Media developed the 2015 National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Media. In 2016 Tanzania adopted the Zanzibar Gender Policy. It aims to shift the negative portrayal of women, promote the equitable representation of women at all levels, and promote awareness of gender equality and women's issues such as ending gender-based violence. In 2017, Zimbabwe adopted the Revised National Gender Policy which includes a specific focus on media strategies to mainstream gender, eliminate negative portrayal of women and encourage women to take leadership positions in the media sector, as well as ownership of media houses.[103] Similarly, Lesotho adopted the Lesotho 2018 –2030 Gender and Development Policy that includes goals such as eliminating gender stereotypes and more effectively promote women's issues through radio and television programmes.

Progress has been made in the promotion and representation of women in new media technologies. In 2016, the government of Senegal adopted the "Digital Senegal 2025" strategy, which focuses on projects with a gender perspective and aims to strengthen women's skills and knowledge in information and communication technologies. The implementation of the Strategy increased women-led start-ups.

Additionally, more women participate in and have access to media in Africa. There is an increased focus on women's issues and gender equality, and more reports by female journalists are published. In 2016, the first newspaper dedicated to promoting and protecting women and girls, the Women's Voice, was launched in Sierra Leone. In Nigeria, WFM 91.7 Voice of Women Radio targeted at women and their families and increase women focus was conceived in 2010 and is currently in operations. They also worked with BBC Africa on the investigative journalism Piece Sex for Grades that was led by one of their presenters Kiki Mordi.

Gaps and Challenges

Despite gains, women remain underrepresented in media and are only offered limited opportunities as the journalism is often portrayed as a man's profession. Women in the media continue to face discrimination, prejudices, threats, and violence. Gender biases and strongly held beliefs continue to influence and favour men over women in

covering many issues such as politics and economics. Where policies, strategies, and laws related to women in media, such as on gender bias and discrimination, have been adopted, implementation and enforcement is often weak and must be strengthened. Despite countries having enacted laws and policies to ensure accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities specially women to the media platform, more work is needed in terms of their implementation.

Based on the scant data available, women's representation and participation in all forms of media remains low across Africa. According to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project Report, women accounted for 22% of the overall presence in print, radio and television news in Africa.[104] The report also noted the significant gender gap in internet access. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 45% fewer women than men have access to the internet, and in North Africa, the gender gap is at 35%.[105]

The data shows that media remain a male-dominated environment. A 2016 report by the national press centre Norbert Zongo in Burkina Faso revealed that out of 1030 journalists working 75% were male and 25 % female, and only 7, or 5%, of the editors in-chief are women.[106] In South Africa, black women account for 18% of newsroom staff despite constituting 46% of the entire population.[107] In Rwanda, only 24.5% of journalists are female, and only 14.1% ownership or managerial positions are held by women.[108] In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only 28% of the executives in the press corps are women.[109] A 2017 study by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) showed that out of the 25 media organisations monitored, only 2 were owned by women.[110]

As more women gain access to information through social media, other online platforms and news channels, laws and policies must be adopted and implemented that reflect these changes. Zimbabwe is in the process of drafting Cyber Crime and Cyber Security bill that includes criminalizing transmission of private messages and images without consent.[111]

Highlights

- South Sudan has adopted the Media Authority Bill, The Broadcasting and Corporation Bill and the Access to Information Bills to address the marginalization and lack of access to media by vulnerable groups, such as women.
- Tanzania adopted the Zanzibar Gender Policy in 2016 with aims to shift the negative portrayal of women, promote the equitable representation of women at all levels, and promote awareness of gender equality and women's issues such as gender-based violence.
- In 2017, Zimbabwe adopted the Revised National Gender Policy which includes a specific focus on media strategies to mainstream gender, eliminate negative portrayal of women and encourage women to take leadership positions in the media sector, as well as ownership of media houses.

3.11 Women and Environment

Women and the environment is one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by global leaders at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The Platform pinpointed three strategic objectives for government action on the environment. These include involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, integrating their concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes and establishing how to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Progress and Gains

A key achievement has been the recognition and acceptance from government agencies on the environment on the important role of women in articulating national policies and programmes. Women in civil society organisations have developed relevant technical expertise on mainstreaming gender in environmental issues. Civil society organisations are therefore represented on critical Technical and Steering Committees. A case in point is in Ghana, the National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC) hosted by MESTI which has representation from the women's rights organizations.

A 2017[112] International Union for Conservation (IUCN) Global Gender Office (GGO) analysis of 192 energy frameworks found that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the world's regional leader in acknowledging gender considerations in national energy frameworks. From a sample of 45 national energy frameworks from 29 different SSA countries, nearly three-quarters (71%) of the frameworks include gender considerations to some extent. Of those that include gender keywords, context analysis reveals that around half (56% and 44%, respectively) consider women as potential stakeholders and beneficiaries. Seldom characterizing women as agents of change in national frameworks, countries have the opportunity to engage both women and men alike as powerful drivers toward a more equitable, impactful and productive energy sector. Thirty-one frameworks (69%) acknowledge the negative health impacts of using traditional stoves, propose remedial actions to reduce the use of these stoves, and/or emphasize the need to ensure access to modern cooking technologies. Energy frameworks reflect diverse opportunities to advance a gender-responsive approach, including by addressing time poverty, energy poverty in both rural and urban areas, women's health and well-being and women's economic and educational opportunities in the sector.

Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, have adopted new environmental policies such as Uganda's National Climate Change Policy 2015, and Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy 2018; Kenya adopted the Climate Change Act 2016, and applies gender based analysis plus (GBA+) to all domestic and international frameworks which have bold and clear targets that relate to climate change. It also gives footing to the Environment and Land Court (ELC) which has the jurisdiction to handle matters relating to climate change.[113] Ethiopia in 2019 launched RESET Plus Innovation Fund program to build resilience in Ethiopia through social innovation—livestock, family planning, sanitation and agriculture are among the eligible thematic areas for funding.[114] Ethiopia also launched the ambitious

Green Legacy campaign that set a milestone to plant 200 million tree seedlings within 12 hours as integral part of an annual target to plant 4 billion tree seedlings.

Women's contribution to the agricultural sector is important in the region in more ways than one. According to West Africa CSO Parallel report on Beijing +25 the States of the sub-region have adopted and are implementing national policies aimed at modernizing agriculture and taking better account of gender issues in the sector. Togo, Nigeria, Guinea, Senegal have adopted policies, plans and mechanisms to integrate gender in agricultural related policies, nutrition and zero hunger initiatives.

Gaps and Challenges

There is a general lack of a direct gender policy on environmental issues across sub-Saharan Africa. There is the inability of state agencies to demystify terminologies and concepts around environmental issues to allow for women to actively participate in these areas.

Areas of least progress and difficulties include affordability of improved energy sources, inadequate technology and capacity of women and girls in the various sectors addressing environmental and climate issues.

Mining and other extractives industries with its negative impacts on women and girls remains a major concern with insufficient attention being paid to gender issues in spite of years of intense advocacy on women's rights. The violence faced by women human right defenders who are protecting their lands and communities from exploitation and harmful labour practices are overlooked and their safety ignored. At both regional and country level, the issue of financing especially for agriculture remains a major challenge.

Highlights

- International Union for Conservation (IUCN) Global Gender Office (GGO) analysis of 192 energy frameworks found that sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the world's regional leader in acknowledging gender considerations in national energy frameworks.
- Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, have adopted new environmental policies such as Uganda's National Climate Change Policy 2015, and Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy 2018; Kenya adopted the Climate Change Act 2016, and Ethiopia in 2019 launched the Green Legacy Campaign.

3.12 The Girl Child

Children in Africa comprise almost half of the continent's population and the continent's average age is quite young at 19 years. Approximately 50% of these children are female, the girl child.[115] Upholding the rights of the girl child to education, health and freedom from violence will contribute significantly to the sustainable development of African nation states and ensure that the demographic boom becomes a demographic dividend across

Sub Saharan Africa. The girl child in Africa embodies various identifiers based on her age, sex, gender, socio-economic status, rural/urban status, disability, level of education among others. The intersection of these identities results in various insights, strengths as well as vulnerabilities. Various violations of the girl child leads to their discrimination from early childhood through to adulthood. Resultantly, various international and regional instruments and mechanisms emphasise special protection of the girl child.

Progress and Gains

In the African region, the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provide expansive protection for the girl child and therefore from a normative framework perspective. The majority of states parties have committed to the protection and advancement of the girl child. Both treaties are highly subscribed to by states with ratifications for the Maputo Protocol at 42 and those for the African Children's Charter at 49.[116] In light of these state commitments, there is the recognition of the girl child's right to be free from discrimination, to have equal opportunity to socio-economic opportunities and to be protected from discrimination and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.

States have focused on school enrolment and retention and to protect the girl child from abuse as well direct participation in hostilities. On education, as earlier discussed in the *Education and training* critical area, there have been vast improvements in terms of an increase in enrolment and school retention.

On harmful practices, about 60% of countries now have a law prohibiting FGM. In addition, 27 countries have put in place a specific programmatic response or action towards ending FGM, with most of these countries falling predominantly in the Western region and significantly in the Eastern region. Ghana, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda stand out for having a holistic legal response to FGM by having a constitutional provision to eliminate harmful practices, a legal provision prohibiting FGM and programmatic actions towards ending FGM. The decline of FGM in the continent can partly be attributed to such measures. On child marriage, 80% of countries in Africa have set the legal age of marriage at 18 and some have put in place other measures such as public campaigns to sensitize the citizenry on the urgency for concerted efforts in ending child marriage. This has seen the prevalence of child marriage also slowly declining particularly in Northern Africa.

Gaps and Challenges

While a lot of progress has been made on enhancing gender parity in accessing education, challenges still remain in the equal access of girls to education and training. The countries with the highest rates of girls not enrolled in school include Mozambique, Sudan, Niger, Tanzania, and Mali. Strong challenges also persist in the provision of comprehensive sex education (CSE). The girl child pays a particularly higher price for this lack of CSE as evidenced by early pregnancies, high rates of maternal mortality and HIV infection among adolescents as earlier adduced in the *Women and Health* critical area. This also compounded by lack of access to sanitary facilities and menstrual health products, many girls miss school for these reasons; and in some African countries, there are taxes on

sanitary products, women rights organizations have pushed for the removal/reduction of these taxes on sanitary products. Some countries like Rwanda and South Africa have removed taxes on sanitary pads.

The girl child is still faced with many violations and exclusions on account of the intersection of her identities. She is systematically excluded in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and engaging in decision making processes. Child labour is still rampant and child headed households are far from being eliminated. Violence against children is unabated, including, abuse, molestation, rape and trafficking continue to be recorded in most countries. Access to technology has also heightened some of these vulnerabilities where the girl child is exposed to toxic or pornographic content as well as cyber abuse.

On harmful practices, the highest rates of child marriage are found in sub-Saharan Africa where one in four girls is married before the age of 18. While decline has been recorded at a modest rate through government and civil society efforts, the rates remain unacceptably high. In about 20 countries, the child marriage prevalence rate is at an unacceptable 30-50%, meaning 3-5 out of 10 girls in these countries are likely to get married before 18. The prevalence is highest in the Western and Central African regions.[117] Child marriage is literally killing the girl child with countries that record high prevalence rates also recording high rates of maternal deaths among adolescents.[118]Whereas 80% of countries in Africa have set the legal age of marriage at 18, there exist significant legal loopholes in that in over 30 of these countries the legal age does not apply to customary marriages and the full and free consent of the marrying parties is not guaranteed.[119]FGM of girls remains unrelenting and concentrated in 27 African countries with some of these countries recording a prevalence rate of more than 80%. These countries include: Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

Overall, there are still several violations that impact the girl child's ability to enjoy her rights and pursue her fullest potential. In addition, these violations also stand in the way of states realising the potential demographic dividend presented by the girl child.

Highlights

- Namibia (98.5%), Egypt (97.6%), Burundi, (97.5%) Mauritius (96.9%), and Morocco (96.6%) have the highest enrolment of girls in primary education.[120]
- The countries with the highest rates of girls not enrolled in school include Mozambique, Sudan, Niger, Tanzania, and Mali.
- Child marriage rates in the continent vary with very low prevalence rates recorded in countries such as Tunisia (2%) and Algeria (3%) and at the same time extremely high prevalence rates recorded in Central Africa Republic (68%), Chad (68%) and the highest in Niger (76%).
- Guinea and Somalia record the highest rates of FGM at 97% and 98% respectively.

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4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Women and Poverty

- Implement redistributive economic growth policies underpinned by progressive taxation and more equitable public spending in high-quality services in areas such as health, education and agriculture, cash transfers, and social protection to accelerate poverty reduction. African governments must widen the tax base by bringing hard to tax sectors into the tax net, including agriculture, the informal economy, the digital economy and the natural resources sector. Countries must reassess tax incentives and drop those that do not serve the intended purpose.
- Africa must continue to invest in implementing policies to tackle all forms of gender discrimination accross, promote positive social norms and attitudes towards women and women's work, and rebalance power dynamics at the household, local, national and international levels.

4.2 Women and Health

- All states should develop comprehensive legal frameworks on women and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights, that enable women and girls to exercise and enjoy their reproductive rights and freedoms with full consent and without restrictions such as those related to age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic status among others.
- States should strengthen public health financing by increasing allocations made to health budgets generally and to do so in a gender responsive manner. States should also identify country specific public financial management bottlenecks that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of public financing. Aside from increasing government expenditure towards health services, states should identify and address the root causes of inefficiencies in spending and corruption in order to transform allocated funding into better health outcomes.

4.3 Education and Training of Women and Girls

- Governments stand to gain from investing in inclusive, lifelong and quality education at all levels. Particular attention needs to be paid to vulnerable groups such as girls and women with disabilities, children in protective and social services, pregnant students, and students in conflict and turbulent environments including older persons to help them remain productive and independent.

- Investing in comprehensive and disaggregated data allows for proper analysis of gaps and ensure that commitments are met.
- National laws, policies, and strategies should be adopted that are in line with regional, continental and international agreements on education and gender equality.
- Investing in new forms of technologies and online education can help improve computer literacy and offer students unable to attend school to complete their education. This in combination with offering educational programs in the afternoon and evenings can help reduce the gender gap in education and provide opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable groups.

4.4 Violence against Women and Girls

- Efforts to address VAWG should pay attention to women and girls' intersectional identities such as disability, age and sexual orientation that may exacerbate violence. Heightened measures should also be put in place to prevent and manage VAWG in contexts where violation is more likely such as in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- States should develop and strengthen comprehensive legal framework as well as take other complementary measures to address VAWG. This should cover prohibition and prevention of VAWG, address root causes of VAWG, enact protection and support of survivors and prosecution of perpetrators.
- States should actively promote the transformation of societal attitudes, harmful cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes which legitimise and exacerbate the persistence and tolerance of violence against women. The government should also utilise education curriculums and the media as channels to inform societal change.

4.5 Women and Armed Conflict

- Countries should adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) that includes monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and establishes links to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the SDGs, CEDAW and other international and regional agreements.
- Strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for gender equality initiatives and support the full participation of women at all levels of justice delivery through the formal and informal systems
- Implement gender responsive budgets to ensure adequate funding for the women, peace and security agenda and reduce military expenditures.
- Promote and support women's organizations, CSOs and groups dedicated to creating peaceful societies and conflict prevention through activities such as building strong intercultural relationships and inclusive societies and reducing inequalities often underlaying conflicts and violence.
- Integrate a gender perspective and advance women's human rights in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution.

- Ensure care and support of survivors following conflict and violence, paying particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as female refugees, older women, widows and persons with disabilities.

4.6 Women and the Economy

- There is need to foster the transition from informal to formal jobs, particularly among rural women in the agricultural sector. Promoting economic diversification, within both agricultural and non-agricultural activities, will contribute to achieving a higher degree of formalization, while reducing the incidence of working poverty through income diversification.
- It is imperative for African countries to invest in human capital development including education of the girl child, raising women's skills for the future world of work, which plays a vital role in driving sustained economic growth. The networking possibilities for women's entrepreneurs must be supported. Evidence suggests that organized female entrepreneurs have higher collective and individual bargaining power, better access to basic services and inputs, collaborate among each other to address skill and credit constraints.
- States must resist unfair and preferential trade and intellectual property agreements, and dispute settlement mechanisms that erode the policy space for economic and ecological justice and exacerbate the economic burden on women and girls
- Women of all ages are better clients among Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), as their repayment rates are higher. The credit history of women must therefore be captured to help women graduate from MFIs to commercial banks. Loan conditions among MFIs must improve, particularly at early stage of entrepreneurship where women need a breathing space till they break even.
- Shaping attitudes is very key in any drive toward gender equality and economic empowerment of women of all ages and abilities in Africa, starts with efforts to change entrenched and widespread attitudes about women's role in society, an extremely difficult and complex challenge that will require all stakeholders to play a part that is sustained over the long term. Even if women are enabled to undertake paid work through, for instance, the provision of flexible working practices and governmental policies in favour of maternity and paternity leave, women will continue to undertake the largest share of unpaid care work in the home if societal views don't shift.

4.7 Women in Power and Decision-making:

- Put in place measures to ensure balanced representation of women and men in decision-making functions in public life, by promoting the increased presence of women at all levels of government;
- Introduce a functional redressal system able to ensure comprehensive reporting of violence against women voters and candidates during election period.
- Couple the introduction of gender quotas with the establishment of gender-mainstreaming in all practices and policies.

- Ensure that sufficient financial and material resources are allocated to national gender policies and gender machinery
- Carry out periodic monitoring/reporting and develop robust data collection to identify gaps and challenges in advancing women's representation and participation in decision-making processes.
- Facilitate access resources and education for women and girls of all ages and across their life cycle in order to empower them and prepare them for political leadership roles
- Enforce sex disaggregated data collection by Electoral Management Bodies

4.8 Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

- Strengthening National Gender Machineries. The National Gender Machineries, given the scarce resources they attract, need to play a catalytic role within the state and in civil society through strengthened cross ministry collaboration across government to build sectoral 'ownership' of the agenda, rather than viewing gender as an add on. The responsibility of developing policy initiatives can involve the machineries in negotiations with other ministries that can expand the network of bodies involved in the process of mainstreaming gender equality agendas.
- Availability of disaggregated data by sex including intersecting realities such as age, disability as a key prerequisite. Data on adolescent girls and elderly women are often not collected or available when sex disaggregated data are collected, the availability of timely and accurate data is critical for establishing baselines, and designing appropriate interventions and targets for measuring the impact of gender-related reforms. Though the national statistics agencies in some countries are working with key stakeholders in collecting, recording, analysing, and archiving key sex-disaggregated data, this process is still nascent and requires substantial support in most countries.
- Strengthen State- Civil Society Relations There is need for state- civil society relations to be institutionalized, while ensuring the autonomy of civil society actors. The active involvement of a broad and diverse range of institutional actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors should be encouraged in order to work for equality between women and men.
- Introducing gender responsive budgeting as part of broader program of public-sector reform. Gender responsive budgeting should be introduced as part of the overall public finance management and tax reforms, and in conjunction with efforts to improve annual budget credibility. It was also important to mainstream GRB across the entire budget cycle covering budget preparation, execution, and the evaluation and audit of performance. Leadership by the ministry of finance is critical for enduring effects although nongovernmental organizations and parliamentary bodies in sub-Saharan Africa play an essential role in advocating for gender budgeting.

4.9 Human Rights of Women

- All African states should commit to the universal ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).
- States should eliminate all the barriers that impact women's ability to enjoy their rights and pursue their fullest potential. In this regard particular attention should be paid to enhancing women's access to socio-economic opportunities and eliminating harmful practices.
- Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms on women's rights instruments and encourage States to produce periodic reports on existing commitments.
- States should accelerate measures to address discrimination and inequalities based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, and place of origin, cultural or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, health status, and ability, which disproportionately affect women.
- States should accelerate measures towards enhancing women's economic and political status. This can be achieved by putting in place legal, policy and practice measures to eliminate the gender gap in secondary and vocational education for women. States should also enact legal measures aimed at reaching gender parity through the increased representation of women.
- States should pay specific attention to the review of laws that entrench discrimination and unequal power relations; and the development of laws to protect women in private and public spheres including family laws including equality in marriage and property.

4.10 Women and the Media

- Concerning participating in and access to internet and social media platforms, governments should take steps to reduce gender gaps in paying particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as women and girls with disabilities and girls, older women, women living in rural and remote areas.
- Investing in collecting data is vital to promote gender equality and to assess where gaps exist in participation in and access to all communication systems, especially in the media.

4.11 Women and the Environment

- There is need to implement affirmative action for women in the environment sector to ensure women and girls are effectively represented and provide leadership on environmental governance, renewable energy and climate change.
- There is the need to invest in improved energy sources to improve efficiency and quality of renewable energy options such as cooking stoves to conform to standards developed for enforcement. Local knowledge and expertise of women and their groups should be a core feature of this energy entrepreneurship processes.

- Regulate and hold accountable multinational and national corporations in collusion with state actors that are engaged in large scale agriculture, mining, mega projects, and commercial logging in order to uphold human rights principles, eliminate labour exploitation of women and girls, land and resource grabbing
- The gender and environment nexus should be fully embraced by government and relevant stakeholders' and serve as strategic guidance in the formulation of policies and programmes in all the various sectors of the environment.

4.12 The Girl Child

- States should eliminate all the barriers that impact the girl child's ability to enjoy her rights and pursue her fullest potential. In this regard particular attention should be paid to enhancing girls access to socio-economic opportunities and eliminating harmful practices.
- Ensure access of girls to education through proactive enrolment and retention policies and programmes and by guaranteeing their safety. In addition, provide comprehensive sexuality education for all adolescent girls for those in and out of school.
- Respond to harmful practices through strong legal measures in the constitution or legislation that explicitly prohibit harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM as required by the Maputo Protocol.
- Reform marriage laws to ensure that in all countries 18 is the minimum age of marriage for all types of marriages (customary included), along with a legal guarantee for the requirement of the full and free consent of the marrying parties.
- Countries that have high prevalence rates of FGM and child marriage should put in place comprehensive, well-resourced and coordinated programmatic actions to end said harmful practices.

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