

Africa Youth Position Statement on Beijing +30 Review



The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

- (Beijing Declaration, Paragraph 35)

We young people, youth organizations, girl and young women led organization in all our diversities drawn from across the five(5) sub regions of Africa and the diaspora, having participated in the review of the implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (BPfA¹).



¹ The historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) is a policy framework on gender equality and women's empowerment that was unanimously adopted by 189 countries during the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995.



BACKGROUND

As part of the Beijing+30 review process, the **African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET)** and **NGO CSW Africa**, in collaboration with **UN Women**, jointly organized a total of **13 Civils Society Organizations** and **Youth consultations** across Africa, engaging **3,136 participants** from all five subregions. These consultations brought together national, subregional, and regional representatives of women's rights organizations, girls' and young women-led groups, International Non-Governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, and other partners supporting the advancement of women's and girls' rights in Eastern, Central, Western, Northern, and Southern Africa.

This position statement from the consultative meetings provides an overview of the main issues pertaining to this year's theme: **review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. It acknowledges progress, identifies significant gaps and puts forward recommendations from African Women and Girls.



Recognize that nearly 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), some progress has been recorded towards realising gender equality and young people's rights in Africa. Notably, there have been policy and legal reforms to institutionalise women's rights in different spheres of their lives, for example the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) adopted in 2003, and now ratified by 42 countries. In addition, gender equality protection and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender is now entrenched in most national constitutions of Africa Union (AU) Member States. Moreover, there has been an increase in laws targeting the protection of youth and women in areas such as labor rights and domestic violence, though enforcement remains a significant challenge.

Concerned, however, that these legislative reforms have not fundamentally altered gender power dynamics. Across many African nations, young women and girls continue to face profound inequalities, while young men and boys at all levels of society (both the private and public spaces) continue to enjoy patriarchal privileges. This leaves young women to shoulder the burden of sustaining an unequal society.

Sadly, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against young women and girls persist across all areas of their lives. Despite numerous youth and women's rights commitments made by African governments, deep-rooted negative social norms, cultural expectations, and religious practices often take precedence over national laws, whether overtly or covertly.

Noting that the 30-year review of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(\(BPfA\)](#) is being conducted against the backdrop of an eroding Pan-Africanism ideology; Africa's heavy dependence on foreign aid, rising illicit financial flows, extractivism, unprecedented poor land governance, rapid unplanned urbanisation, xenophobia, misogyny, and extremism often disguised as nationalism and protectionism. These issues, along with the migration crisis, militarisation, centralisation of political and economic power among elites, shrinking civic space, and restrictions on freedom of expression and association, present substantial barriers. Additionally, the financialisation of social services, ongoing armed and unarmed conflicts, technology-related violence, femicides, and recurrent disasters due to climate change and extreme weather pose serious threats to the well-being of Africa's youth.

Taken aback by the realisation that the Beijing +30 review (the review) process has, in significant ways, isolated youth organisations at both national and regional levels. While youth organisations were invited, they were not meaningfully integrated into the planning or reporting phases of the review. This exclusion has resulted in limited alternative (shadow) national youth and CSO reports.

We therefore **DEMAND** the following as our **PRIORITY ACTIONS** for the protection, respect, promotion, fulfillment, and realisation of the human rights of young people, particularly young women and girls, across Africa.



AFRICA YOUTH PRIORITIES FOR BEIJING+30

1. Progress, Successes, Gaps, and Challenges in the 12 Critical Areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)

- Enact policies ensuring accessible, affordable credit for women-owned businesses, enforce equal pay, and build social safety nets for women in informal sectors to achieve economic independence.
- Provide targeted funding for gender-sensitive curricula, STEM programmes, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education, and robust protection from gender-based violence (GBV) in educational settings.
- Prioritise maternal healthcare infrastructure, fund women's mental health services, and initiate disease prevention and SRHR programmes accessible to all women and girls.
- Develop equitable investment policies for women's businesses and create flexible financial systems that empower women to enter and thrive in formal and emerging economies.
- Eliminate gender discriminatory laws, policies and practices in land ownership and inheritance.
- Empower women economically through tailored financial inclusion for those in informal sectors.
- Remove educational barriers by making schooling affordable, reducing dropout rates, and promoting girls' participation in STEM through scholarships and infrastructure improvements.
- Integrate SRHR priorities into national health agendas, restore accessible health insurance programmes, and invest in SRHR education and sustainable contraceptive access for youth.
- Criminalise femicide, enforce strict laws against sexual abuse, shift harmful cultural attitudes through awareness, and create accessible mental health services for survivors.
- Establish inclusive financial systems with microloans, tailored financial literacy programmes, and policies that support women's job security and benefits in informal economies.
- Enforce gender pay equity, incentivise gender diversity in companies, and fund capacity-building initiatives to increase women's representation in economic leadership and governance.
- Implement gender-sensitive healthcare policies, provide affordable health screenings, and ensure mental health services are embedded in primary care for women's holistic wellness.
- Offer unrestricted funding for youth, especially young women, to engage in business and community initiatives, and expand training programmes to support youth-led economic development.
- Strengthen anti-femicide and anti-FGM laws, especially in high-risk areas, and provide comprehensive health, legal, and social support for affected women.
- Involve men and boys in anti-Gender Based Violence (GBV) initiatives to positively shift cultural norms and establish rapid-response systems for GBV victims.
- Enforce anti-cyberbullying laws, enhance data privacy protections for activists, and educate women on digital rights and safety.



- Ensure SRHR services are widely accessible, integrating mental health into primary healthcare, and increase availability of affordable menstrual products to reduce period poverty.
- Integrate gender-sensitive climate policies, laws and practice, facilitate safe migration for climate-displaced women, and support climate resilience programmes led by women and youth.
- Implement policies, laws and practices to mitigate pollution and degradation, promote sustainable agriculture, and educate women on climate resilience.
- Increase women's representation in media to elevate digital rights and address stereotypes, supporting visibility of women's issues.
- Reduce school fees, expand scholarships, support pregnant students, and foster gender parity in educational leadership by transforming systems, structures, and mechanisms.
- Strengthen youth involvement in governance through youth parliaments, task forces, and platforms for law and policy advocacy and decision-making.
- Advocate for comprehensive legal reforms to end GBV including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and discrimination, and establish accountability frameworks to monitor gender equality.
- Reinforce anti-corruption initiatives, ensuring equal access to resources and services across all sectors.



2. Emerging Areas for Prioritisation

AU Member States should:

- Establish and enforce gender quotas in leadership positions, with mentorship and capacity-building programmes to prepare women for decision-making roles across all sectors.
- Commit sustainable funding for education programmes, ensure equitable access for girls, and strengthen the funding of women's rights organisations.
- Integrate women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, prioritize psychosocial support, and provide economic opportunities tailored for displaced and post-conflict affected women.
- Reduce leadership campaign fees, enforce affirmative action for youth leaders, and promote male allyship in dismantling patriarchal barriers to women's leadership.
- Enact and enforce comprehensive legislation to protect women from all forms of violence, with accessible online platforms for reporting and effective case management for survivors.
- Expand access to microfinance and digital economy resources, establish accessible rural funding with minimal requirements, and provide start-up support to empower young women entrepreneurs.
- Guarantee women's access to landownership, credit, and marketplaces, especially in rural areas, to support economic resilience and independence.
- Prioritise cross-border anti-FGM efforts and involve men and boys in educational programmes to combat GBV and cultural stigmas that normalise violence against women.
- Increase access to SRHR services, including mental health and maternal care, with a focus on reducing and eliminating child marriage rates, and ensuring access to menstrual products.
- Integrate women and youth in climate adaptation and environmental policies, promote climate literacy, and prioritise safe migration for those affected by climate-induced events.
- Enact strict policies to combat cyberbullying, educate on online safety, and increase female representation in media and its management, to advocate for digital rights and address cyber violence.



- Expand scholarships, reduce financial barriers, and support low-income families to ensure all girls and young women have equal educational opportunities.
- Strengthen civil society's role in monitoring BPfA commitments through transparent reporting systems and accountability mechanisms.
- Enforce anti-corruption policies across all sectors to ensure equal access to services.
- Involve youth in decision-making bodies, establish youth consultative councils, and create leadership pathways for young voices in governance.
- Adopt policies that reflect and respect gender diversity, integrating the perspectives of marginalised gender identities in law and policy development and implementation.
- Develop partnerships across governments, civil society, and private sectors to ensure long-term, collaborative solutions to address gender inequalities.



3. Strategies and Mechanisms for Accountability

AU Member States should:

- Create comprehensive data collection systems that capture diverse identities, to accurately track gender equality law and policy impacts.
- Implement accountability frameworks that require active engagement with grassroots organisations and community-led monitoring.
- Conduct gender equality awareness campaigns, leverage social media for transparency, and produce accessible, multilingual resources to inform communities of their governance rights and responsibilities.
- Enforce anti-discrimination laws with targeted support for PWDs, especially in protecting women's rights in regard to femicide and gender-based violence.
- Promote equitable access to financial resources for women, address gendered pay disparities across sectors, and implement salary equality measures.
- Adopt comprehensive laws against all forms of violence, ensure judicial access for survivors, and conduct positive cultural campaigns to shift attitudes that normalise GBV.
- Provide accessible microfinance, loans, and digital resources with reduced barriers to foster entrepreneurship among young women.
- Implement digital literacy programmes that focus on safe online practices to combat issues such as cyberbullying and digital abuse.
- Integrate women and girls into climate adaptation and resilience laws and policies, particularly in ensuring protection from the impacts of climate displacement, and ensuring safe migration.
- Streamline application processes to enhance women's access to climate funds and empower them to participate in, and benefit from, resilience initiatives.
- Build legal frameworks and support services for GBV prevention, particularly in marginalised communities, and engage men and boys as allies for gender equality.
- Invest in education access for girls, particularly in rural areas, and create mentorship programmes to build young women's leadership skills.



- Promote youth leadership by establishing consultative bodies for decision-making inclusion, and addressing digital inequities.
- Ensure youth representation in BPfA reporting and policy frameworks, amplifying young voices in governance and accountability.
- Promote partnerships with CSOs and youth movements to maintain transparent, inclusive dialogue, and provide CSOs with advocacy support and capacity-building resources.
- Develop systems with both quantitative and qualitative indicators, disaggregated by key characteristics, including identity, to track BPfA progress and address specific gaps.
- Implement robust legal protections for women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, with periodic reviews to align with international standards.
- Fund research to identify barriers to gender equality and foster evidence-based laws and policies to address gender and youth-specific challenges.
- Encourage collaboration among governments, private sectors, and youth networks to address transnational issues such as trafficking and organised crime.
- Ensure funding for education, healthcare, and economic support to achieve sustainable gender equity.
- Use media and pop culture to raise awareness on gender equality, mobilise support, and challenge stereotypes.
- Mobilise men and boys to champion positive masculinity, supporting anti-GBV, anti-FGM(Female Genital Mutilation) efforts and equality initiatives across communities.



4. Intersectionality

AU Member States should:

- Implement policies that require fair representation of women in media, provide gender equality training for media professionals, and promote visibility of women in both leadership and creative roles within the industry.
- Prioritise youth representation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, climate resilience, SRHR law enactment and policy-making, ensuring inclusion of marginalised groups and those in conflict-affected areas.
- Establish laws and policies that ensure women's involvement in environmental decision-making and provide resources to support women-led climate initiatives.
- Prioritise legislative measures to protect girls' rights, ensure funding for safe spaces, and engage communities to positively shift cultural attitudes toward gender equality.
- Regulate media practices to prevent harassment, criminalise sexualisation, and support policies for positive and accurate portrayals of women, including more women in media leadership.
- Criminalise harmful practices such as FGM, ensure sustained funding for safe spaces, and foster engagement to end gender-based violence and promote positive cultural shifts for equality.
- Design targeted support for displaced women, including mental health services, economic stability programmes, and social reintegration pathways.
- Provide accessible micro-finance, entrepreneurial training, and startup resources, particularly for marginalised young women in rural areas.
- Develop programmes to enhance access to financial resources, land ownership, and market participation, especially for rural and underserved women.
- Fund initiatives to reduce and eliminate barriers to education for girls, provide mentorship to build leadership skills, and equip young women with digital and STEM skills.
- Implement and enforce laws to combat GBV and femicide, especially for vulnerable groups such as women living with HIV and AIDS and strengthen accountability mechanisms in conflict zones.
- Expand access to SRHR services, address issues such as child marriage, and support safe reproductive health practices, particularly for vulnerable women and girls.
- Integrate accessible mental health services into national healthcare systems, addressing diverse needs across regions and demographics.
- Address socio-economic factors contributing to girls' dropout rates, and expand access to digital literacy, STEM, and green skills education.
- Integrate women's unique climate vulnerabilities into law and policy, and ensure their participation in environmental decision-making and climate adaptation initiatives.
- Address the compounded effects of climate change, food insecurity, and gender inequality, focusing on impacts on rural women.
- Conduct campaigns to end harmful practices such as FGM, promote positive masculinity, and engage men and boys as allies in gender equality.
- Launch awareness campaigns that highlight gendered intersectional realities and encourage young leaders to advocate for the rights of diverse women and girls.
- Establish formal platforms to include young people, especially young women, in decision-making on laws and policies affecting their rights and futures.



- Support partnerships among youth organisations to collaboratively address gendered intersectional challenges, focusing on the unique struggles of young women and girls.
- Promote female representation in media and technology, ensuring women's voices in critical industry discussions and decisions.
- Implement educational programmes on cyber safety, empowering young women to navigate online spaces without fear of harassment or cyberbullying.
- Enable youth organisations to contribute a Beijing +30 parallel civil society report, offering a youth-focused evaluation of gender equality progress.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the rights of youth and civil society organisations are not and will not be considered adversaries of the state. It is crucial for African governments to recognise and embrace the significant role of youth rights and civil society organisations across the continent in fostering and sustaining inclusive and sustainable development. Now, nearly 30 years after Beijing, which was profoundly influenced by youth activists and civil society, African youth, in their diverse identities, should not merely be invited as guests to national, regional, and global platforms but should be afforded a seat at the decision-making table as equal partners.

In that spirit, we call on African Union member states to adopt, engage in meaningful discussions, and recommit to advancing youth rights as outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.





2020 - 2030 is a DECADE OF ACTION!

African Union Member States must honor, finance, and remain accountable to the progressive commitments made for the human rights of young people!



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