



Human Rights of Women	
2.20 Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).....	11
2.21 Violence Against Women.....	12
2.22 Women and Armed Conflict.....	12
Women and the Media	
2.23 Women’s Access and Participation in Information Technology (IT).....	13
2.24 Media Portrayal of Women.....	14
2.25 Using Media to Advance the Gender Agenda.....	14
Women and the Environment	
2.26 The Effects of environmental Degradation on Women.....	15
2.27 Involving Women in Policy Formulation for a Better Environment.....	15
The Girl Child	

ACRONYMS

ACGD	African Centre for Gender and Development
AWCPD	African Women Committee on Peace and Development
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CWD	Committee on Women and Development
DAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBIs	Gender-Budget Initiatives
GER	General Enrolment Ratios
GFPs	Gender Focal Persons
ICPD-PoA	International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NER	Net Enrolment Ratios
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
IPRPS	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Part 1: THE OVERALL CONTEXT FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The following report is a synthesis of data and information contained in national reports submitted to ECA/ACGD by African member States. The primary objective of the exercise is to present achievements and challenges encountered by member countries in their efforts at the implementation of the Beijing platform for Action (BPFA). Towards this end, the report is organized in four parts as follows: besides this introduction and the section on the general Context of the report, part two presents data on 11 critical areas, indicating that despite achievements, African women still face daunting challenges especially with regard to poverty, lack of access to productive resources including education, health and employment. Part three addresses the critical area of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women showing that despite their importance in gender mainstreaming, these structures lack the requisite human and financial outlay necessary for effective implementation of the BPFA. Part four concludes the synthesis by summarizing the achievements, obstacles and by reiterating what needs to be done by governments to achieve gender equality vis à vis, the necessity of commitment at the highest of level of political authority, accountability for lack of implementation and the imperative of addressing gender inequality from a broader perspective that examines the fundamental issue of equality and power in societies.

1.1. The Context: Ten Years After Beijing

In 1995, the UN member States gathered in Beijing, China to add to the momentum started in Mexico City 20 years earlier, to drive women's agenda forward and underline the inseparable link between women's equality, empowerment and sustainable development. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) is a landmark document that sets out a comprehensive agenda for women's advancement in the 1990s and beyond. It is a blueprint for action that guides the work of the United Nations and its member States, as well as the African Union and its member States, in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment. The BPFA is a living document that is constantly being updated and revised to reflect the changing needs and realities of women and girls around the world. It is a testament to the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women and girls, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

responsibility and reduced market competitiveness. The target date of 2015 was set for reaching these goals. Monitoring the progress of each nation and region began soon after. A major concern has been the lack of data in Africa, on a wide range of indicators including those on per capita income, health, education and public expenditures. Only general estimates can be given and in many instances, even these cannot be obtained. Nonetheless based on present trends and available data, UNDP estimates that much of Africa might not achieve any of the goals by 2015, and indeed reversals are occurring in trends, especially in the case of poverty. There are important exceptions to the gloomy picture painted for the continent to be discussed more fully as achievements from countries are recorded.

1.3. The Economic Context of Women's Changing Status and the Effects of Globalisation

Efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa gained momentum during the so called the "lost decade" of the 1980s and part of the 1990s. Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), numerous civil wars, political instability, corruption, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and debt burden slowed economic recovery. Estimates indicate that almost half of the African population survives on less than \$1 per day. However, data from African Economic Report, 2004 indicate that the continent is making progress, for example, "In 2003, Africa was the second fastest growing region in the developing world, behind Eastern and Southern Asia". Thus, real GDP grew at 3.8 percent in 2003 compared to 3.2 percent in 2002. However, major challenges lie ahead in reducing gender gaps, as African economies are not growing faster than demographic increases. The situation of women has been exacerbated by globalisation, to the extent that national economies are tied to a global market through trade regulations, global regulatory institutions, and the rapid movement of finance capital and commodities across borders. An important component of globalisation is the negotiations by World Trade Organisation (WTO). These negotiations have definite gender implications that are not addressed by participating

Adopted in 1979, CEDAW, is known as the women's international bill of rights. Progress is being made in recognising the monumental volume of discriminations women face. Fifty one (51) of the 53

2.2 Gender Perspectives and National PRSPs

Most African countries are addressing extreme poverty within the framework of PRSPs and many are incorporating issues of gender equality and women's empowerment in these programmes. Algeria, Angola Egypt, Eritrea Malawi and Tanzania have PRSPs designed to enhance women's participation in political, economic and social spheres through affirmative action. The Tanzanian PRSP contains discussion of gender differences in poverty incidence that distinguishes between income and non-income measures of poverty and analyses of differences between households and within households;

Women conducts annual audits to assess compliance by national departments to the provisions of the National Policy Framework.

2.4 Micro-credit Schemes for Women

A wide variety of micr

2.6 Women's Share of Paid Employment and Labour Force Participation

Female employment rates for SSA compares favourably with employment rates in more advanced countries. However, data from national reports and other sources indicate that African women are mostly to be found in agriculture and in the informal sector where they form the majority of workers (e.g. 70% in Mali, 60% in Angola and 58.1% in Burkina Faso). In these sectors, they are generally found at the lower ends of the informal sector with small farms and micro-enterprises, such as food vending, brewing, tailoring, craft works, etc. Retrenchments in the formal sector have resulted in overcrowding of the informal sector with very low incomes. Thus women's jobs do not necessarily lead to empowerment. Support to these sectors should include policies to end harassment of the informal sector operators by government authorities in cities. The agricultural sector also needs support in terms of policies specific to women including ensuring the recording of their contribution in systems of national accounts. Currently, women's share of employment in the formal sector is very small (e.g. 25% in Tunisia, 20% in Republic of Guinea, 23% in Burkina Faso, 29% in Kenya, 20% in Algeria, and 21% in Mali) relative to men and their pay is normally lower than men's pay for the same work.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.7 Striving Towards Basic Education for All

During the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to provide basic and quality education for boys and girls and to close gender gaps. One of the MDGs is on universal primary education (UPE). Many national reports point out that the State has the responsibility to provide education for all and to reduce gender differentials in education. Basic education is also identified as an area of focus/priority for most countries, yet only a few countries report providing UPE (Malawi, Algeria, Djibouti Morocco, Tunisia, Tanzania, Botswana and Uganda). In 2002 Djibouti instituted a law to keep children in school up to 16 years. Introduction of UPE is reported to significantly increase girls' enrolments, as normally they are the ones most affected by rising educational costs and cost recovery in education. A few countries report increased gross enrolment ratios (GER) and net enrolment ratios (NER) for both boys and girls. For instance in Ethiopia, the total enrolments are reported to have increased by 107% in the past five years; doubled in Eritrea between 1991-2001 from 24.8% to 46%; Tanzania NER increased from 79.3 to 86.7 between 2002 and 2003; in Mali 42.3% to 64% between 1996 and 2002; in Senegal 59.7% to 71.6% between 1996 and 2002; in Burundi 39% in 1996 to 67.3% in 2002; and in Mauritania, 45.5% in 1990 to 91.7% in 2003. Algeria and Tunisia have almost reached 100% enrolment for boys and girls. On the other hand, NER and GER have declined in a number of countries: e.g. NER dropped by 12% between 1990 and 2002 in Zambia and in Liberia, the decline was from 18.7% to 14.5 between 2000 and 2002.

2.8 The Imperative of Closing Gender Gaps at the Secondary Level

Secondary education for girls and women is inversely correlated to unsustainably high levels of fertility, infant, child and maternal mortality rates, among other problems. A few countries report having achieved parity between boys and girls or reducing gender gaps (e.g. Malawi, South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia,). In Tunisia and Algeria, girls at secondary level comprise 55.6% and 58.8% of the total respectively. The trend at this level shows increased gender imbalances in education especially in West Africa Sub-region. As pressure from multilateral donors has mounted to

concentrate on the provision of UPE, secondary education in general and the enrolment and retention of girls and women in particular has been adversely affected. For instance, Malawi reports that since the introduction of UPE in 1994, secondary education has received low priority. The result in many countries has been high drop out rates and repetition of classes thereby greatly exacerbating gender gaps in secondary level education. Even countries with UPE have not managed to significantly reduce gender gaps in secondary education.

2002. This is an outstanding achievement given the fact that maternal mortality ratio for SSA is 940 compared to 440 in developing countries.

2.14 Addressing Infant and Child Mortality Rates

Progress has been made in reducing infant and child mortality rates attributed to the provision of clean water and extended immunisation programmes. However, the larger picture is one of unacceptably high levels of infant and child mortality rates. The traditional childhood diseases are compounded by malaria and HIV/AIDS pandemic. National reports indicate various strategies to reduce incidences of infant and child mortalities including integrated maternal and child health services, backed by immunisation programmes (Botswana, Eritrea, Malawi, Mali Niger, Nigeria and Togo). The deteriorating health situation has been considerably aggravated by: food insecurity leading to serious malnutrition and stunting; flight of health pe

grounded in their Constitutions to enhance women's participation in decision-ma

Judicial representation in Africa is one of the lowest. In many cases there are no women at all at senior levels of the judiciary. In Eritrea, as part of the nationwide reforms, 22% of women were elected as community court magistrates and in 2003, young women were given a three-year legal training and assigned to communities to serve as court interpreters, advisors and gender-issues advocates. In Rwanda, a real exception, women's share in the highest court (Court Suprême) is more than 41% with a woman as the President. In the highest court of Republic of Guinea and the Republic of Congo, there are 3 women. In Central African Republic women comprise 12% of the Judiciary. Kenya is also substantially represented with women accounting for 36.4% of th

implementation. Countries have instituted various measures in an effort to harmonise their national legislation with CEDAW and have reformed national legal and administrative instruments accordingly

Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Sudan etc.), women are victims of rape and other forms of extreme physical violence. The problem is compounded by disintegration of family units as husbands and male children participate in the conflict thereby increasing the financial burden of women while their traditional means of livelihood in the agricultural production is inexorably disrupted. Countries report on-going programmes to rehabilitate women (Eritrea, Liberia, Malawi). But many other have no laws protecting women and girls living in conflict situations. In Liberia women were not only forced to fight a war they did not start, they were forcefully conscripted into the ranks of rebel armies. During the war, women were forced to marry rebel fighters against their will, while others were forced to cohabit with the rebels because of easy access to food. Reports from war torn nations indicate escalation of incidences of violation and abuse of women's human rights, including deliberate and arbitrary killings, disappearances, torture, rape, sexual violence and arbitrary arrests and detention. Increasingly, the international

represented in community radio station boards. In many countries, poverty, lack of electricity and limited infrastructure in rural areas, is a hindrance to the spread of ICTs. In Niger women use community radios to promote women's issues and to create a women networks: "Le Conseil Supérieur de la Communication" is headed by woman. In Republic of Guinea the number of women involved in ICTs and the media in general has doubled to 39% of journalists; while Tunisia has 7 feminine newspaper titles and 34.38% of people working in the media are women; in Togo, 51% of women have access to at least one type of media instrument. In Mauritania 78% of illiterate women have no access to any media as compared to 18% of educated women who lack access, and in Mali, 34% of women have no access to any form of media.

2.24 Media Portrayal of Women

The domination of media by men affects women adversely, e.g. Malawi notes the gender insensitive language, sexist advertisements, folklores that depict women as subordinates and inferior. Malawi, South Africa and Uganda note the increasing degrading use of women including pornography as a result of the proliferation of ICTs. Women journalists that normally hold lower professional positions find it difficult to access stories. Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia note that women visibility in the media is only among the younger age groups while Malawi and South Africa note that women tend to generate news as beauty contestants, sex workers and home-workers. Mauritius report that gender equality is hardly considered newsworthy. Some, countries are confronting these imbalances. For instance, in Mauritius, two sexist advertisements have been banned as a result of the concerted effort by the gender and media watchdog. Mauritius records the highest level of women representation in the media as presenters (49%). The Tunisia government initiated a strategy to sensitize the population about the culture of equality, the aim being to fight against traditional stereotypes, which present women as inferior. Mali is fighting against the negative traditional media portrayal of women, through National Centre for the Documentation and Information. In Burkina Faso the government has efforts to improve the women's image through the media, by adopting a code on the language used in advertisements. The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW) has established a Media Watch Unit to monitor the content of media messages and to recommend corrective measures. Local TV channels have been created and the Radio and Television allocated funds to raise awareness on women's issues. In Togo, creation of women networks involved in media and ICTs have played a key role in the advancement of gender agenda. In Mali, women in media are organized in NGOs and networks to promote women and gender concerns. In Mauritania, the Ministry of communication has provided schools in rural region with solar radios. Kenya Association of Media Women is giving attention to the employment policies in media houses and the chances of upward mobility for women.

2.25 Using Media to Advance the Gender Agenda

In Burkina Faso, the minister in charge of women affairs, organizes fora to debate and discuss modalities on how to improve media portrayal of women. In Liberia, women have increasingly turned to the media to enhance networking and advocacy. Women groups use media to discuss HIV/AIDS, disarmament and demobilization of female combatants, status of refugees and internally displaced persons among other issues. The Namibian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting through its Multi Media Campaign on violence against women, advocates combating violence against women and children and has enactment the Domestic Violence Act. Media watch organizations have been

increase unabatedly. The human rights of the girl-child are also violated through physical and emotional abuse. In addressing the plight of the girl-child, most countries are concentrating on access to education. Almost all countries have ratified the Convention for the protection of the children while several countries report having mechanism for the follow up of the convention. Although countries report that there are legislations to protect the girl child, there is need for effective strategies for implementation of the conventions and legislation. She is frequently neglected in socio-economic development, because she is by virtue of being a girl, culturally undervalued. As a redress strategy, Egypt focuses on education, combating early marriage. Liberia notes the Sande society, where girls are trained for marriage, which in some instances can take up to 3 years: the practice is keeping girls out of schools. Namibia launched its Girl Child Association in 2001 to enhance girls' empowerment through capacity building courses. Djibouti has a plan of action for children from 0 to 6 years focusing on physical, emotional and psychological development. But countries report increasing trafficking in girl-children that are subsequently forced into slavery and prostitution.

PART 3: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

3.1 National Mechanisms

African governments have established diverse gender structures to handle a wide range of development issues from a gender perspective: this is as it should be if governments are to successfully mainstream gender into their policies, programmes and structures. The gender machineries range from Committees and Departments within ministries, to fully-fledged Ministries. Most countries report the existence of gender focal points in various ministries, while others have established women's affairs departments in line ministries and have gender focal points at district level (Ethiopia, Lesotho, Cameroon, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe) to ensure incorporation of gender issues at local level. Gender focal points are said to have provided a valuable link between Women's/ Gender Affairs and line Ministries. Although machineries are tasked with different functions depending on their governments' priorities concerning women, functions of almost all of them translate into mainstreaming gender in policy formulation, gender equity and equality, monitoring the Platforms for Action and CEDAW, as well as advising government on gender issues. In Mauritius, Burkina Faso and Namibia, working groups comprising gender focal points (GFPs) have been set up to advise gender ministries on issues related to the GFPs.

South Africa, Gabon, Zambia, Ethiopia and Egypt have offices/ councils in Presidents' offices which is important for visibility. In Gabon the Prime Minister 's office has a department in charge of gender and family issues. The South African Office on the Status of Women model is replicated in Provincial governments where "Gender Offices" are housed in the Premiers' offices. Its Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women monitors progress in the advancement of the status and improvement of the quality of life for South African women. Tunisia has an institute of research "le Centre de Recherche, d'Etudes, de Documentation et d'Information sur le Femme" (CREDIF), which encourages research on women's conditions. Niger has created an institute called "L'Observatoire national pour la Promotion de la femme » (ONPF) designed to undertake research on women. Mali has a similar structure termed "le Centre National de Documentation et d'information sur la Femmeet l'Enfant (CNIDIFE). The Egyptian Council for Women established an Ombudsman Office in 2002 to receive complaints from women regarding gender discrimination. The

would otherwise not afford to file court cases. Complaints cover gender discrimination at the workplace, personal status law, domestic violence and inheritance.

3.2 Developing and Implementing National Plans of Actions

Most countries have formulated gender policies (Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Republic of Guinea, Namibia, Senegal, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe); or have programmes in place for specific gender issues (Botswana, Central African Republic, Gabon, South Africa and Tunisia); others have national councils on women (Botswana, Egypt, Mauritius, Mauritania, Burundi, Mozambique, South Africa Tunisia), while women's NGO Coalitions established in Botswana, Rwanda, Zambia Gambia, Rwanda, and Kenya are at advanced stages of setting up machineries to implement and coordinate their national Platforms for Action. Malawi and Seychelles report monitoring policy implementation through reports, meetings, field visits symposia and workshops. Djibouti, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Senegal report that

process is beginning to receive much deserved attention. Recently, African Heads of States adopted a Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. The Declaration calls for the establishment of an “African Trust Fund for Women for the purpose of building the capacity of African Women” and focuses specifically on women in rural areas. The AU has gone beyond the UN 30% target for representation to achieving a 50/50 Gender parity within the Commission

4.2 Obstacles to Empowerment

Insufficient economic growth, debt burden, lack of appropriate macroeconomic policies, and economic mismanagement, are some of the factors retarding poverty reduction in Africa. For almost all the countries, gender gaps characterise the **educational ladder** but are most intense at the tertiary level. Women continue to be marginalized in IT and science fields which limits their employment opportunities and remuneration, and has implications for those investing in women and girls in terms of returns to their investments. Attrition rates, repetitions and high levels of illiteracy among women and girls, as well as inadequate education infrastructure are some of the major constraining factors to women’s access to education. **The health sector**

and laws need to be developed in the future, the main emphasis must be implementation. Africa needs to place at the helm of all new programmes individuals who are action-oriented. The issue is not more paperwork and structures but implementation of policies. When programmes or policies fail to be implemented official responsible must be held accountable. These are changes that need to be initiated at the community and national levels.

Finally, in addition to the issue of high level policy commitment and implementation, African countries need to confront the fundamental question of equality and power as such. Inequality of power and advantage have been found in almost all human societies for m