

African Women's Decade 2010-2020

2012 Annual Review



Make *Every* Woman Count

Promoting the Empowerment of African Women & Girls

Founded in December 2010 two months after the launch of the African Women's Decade, Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) is a young African women-led organisation that promotes and advocates for the empowerment and rights of African women and girls. MEWC provide timely and accurate information, resources and tools to support and strengthen the work of African women's rights advocates, African women's grassroots, organisations and activists.

Through its campaigns and publications, MEWC monitors and raises awareness of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 launched in October 2010 by the African Union.

MEWC is both a platform for African women & girls, a space for shared ideas, and a voice for those who have largely gone unheard. Unlike many organisations working towards women's rights, we seek to strengthen the voices of African women and girls so that they can take the lead on Africa's social, political and economic development.

MEWC main focuses are: **Human Rights of Women, Women, Peace & Security, Violence Against Women, Political Participation & Leadership, Economic Empowerment, HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health, Education**

Mission

MEWC's mission is to ensure that African women and girls have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so that they can fully participate equally with men in the public dialogue and decisions-making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families, communities and countries.

Vision

MEWC's vision is a world where African women and girls are fully empowered to participate in the economic, political and social development and to influence decisions that affect their lives; a world where African women and men, girls and boys have equal rights and opportunities and equal access to resources, education, healthcare, employment, leadership and decision-making.

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African Women's Decade: 2012 Annual Review

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Foreword:

MEWC's Annual Review of the African Women's Decade (AWD) aimed to evaluate the progress, or lack thereof, made to include and promote the rights of women at the country, regional, and Pan-African levels. This was achieved by presenting each country on the continent with a background and a presentation of progress and developments made within different areas. We evaluated each of the levels around the central gender issues, including Women, Peace and Security; Violence Against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; Education, HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health; and Human Rights of Women. The report is divided into sections according to regional visions of the African continent, and the countries are then presented individually.

MEWC will aim to publish one report yearly throughout the 10-year duration of the African Women's Decade. The purpose of the annual report is to provide an overview of women's rights situation in Africa each year during the decade. It is important to keep track of countries progress with regards to gender equality in Africa for several reasons. It is a way of monitoring the progress achieved on the continent and will thus function as a resource for accessing developments throughout the decade. Furthermore, the report can function as an incentive for countries to improve their efforts in the areas of gender equality and the human rights of women.

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Introduction

In October 2010, The AU launched the African women's Decade in Nairobi – Kenya with the theme "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." The aim of the African Women's Decade is to advance gender equality by accelerating implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), through dual top down and bottom up approaches which is inclusive of grassroots participation.

We are now heading to the 3rd year of the decade and still only few women know about the decade. African women both in Africa and in the Diaspora are not aware of the existence of the decade. The decade remains hobbled by the lack of sufficient information about it. Many are not aware of the great opportunities they could take advantage of as a result of the decade or even how they could contribute to it.

The year 2012 has thus far proved promising for the African woman's status within public bodies. Women are beginning to break the political glass ceiling in many countries and finding their way in roles traditionally occupied by men. According to the 2012 data from the Inter- Parliamentary Union, women occupy 20.2% of parliamentary seats in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is slightly higher than the world average of 19.5%.

Earlier on in the year, Joyce Banda was appointed as the first Malawian woman president to make two female head of state in Africa, while Gambian Fatou Bensouda was elected as the first female International Criminal Court prosecutor. Just recently, the big highlight of the year was the appointment of the first female Chairperson of the AU Commission Dr Dlamini-Zuma.

There have been some encouraging progresses regarding gender equality in Africa recently. Some states have made considerable advancements in protecting women from sexual violence and encouraging women to participate in politics and election.

In October 2012, The Botswana High Court provided a huge boost to the struggle for gender equality in Botswana by striking down a discriminatory customary law that only allowed men to inherit the family home. This is a significant step forward for women's rights not only in Botswana but on the all continent, where women face similar discrimination.

Another big step made on women's rights in 2012 was the announcement of Swaziland's Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku of the government's intention to enforce the Child Protection and Welfare Act by prosecuting men who marry underage girls. From now on, perpetrators face statutory rape charges, and they are additionally fined R20,000 (\$2,400) by the child welfare law. The new law also penalizes parents and guardians who collude with adult men to orchestrate a child marriage and offenders face prison terms of up to 20 years.

In some countries, the presence of women in parliament has made a difference in the adoption of gender-sensitive policies. Because of pressure from women, some countries now have affirmative action policies, such as quotas, to increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

Algeria's legislative election saw women take almost a third of the seats; Algeria has become the only Arab country in the world to have more than 30% of its parliamentary seats held by women. Women in Algeria account for 53% of the population and now control around 32% of the national assembly. This huge increase in women's participation in the legislature is largely due to the new law instituting a quota system for women candidates on a political party list.

In Senegal, The number of female elected parliamentarians in the National Assembly has almost doubled thanks to the impact of new parity laws on the July 2012 elections. With 44.6% of female parliamentarians, Senegal has come close to achieving parity in its National Assembly. There are 64 women now occupy a total of 150 seats, up from 33. The increase in the number of women in the National Assembly is the result of the adoption in May 2010 of the law on parity which has ensured a major step forward in female political participation in the country.



In Uganda, 21years-old Proscovia Alengot Oromait made history by becoming the youngest female Member of Parliament in Africa, after she won the Usuk county elections held in September 2012.

Most African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (with the exception of Sudan and Somalia), and so far, 34 out of 53 countries have ratified the Protocol to The African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa known as the Maputo protocol with the latest being the Republic of Congo and Guinea (6th of August and 17th of September 2012 respectively), bringing the total number of ratifications to 34 (thirty-four) out of the 54 (fifty-four) African member states.

While some African countries have made significant strides in expanding opportunity for women and girls, continued inequalities remain, particularly in the areas of women's political participation and economic opportunity. Gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society in Africa, in most countries, women are excluded from the public arena; they face sexual violence, 'honour killings', FGM (female genital mutilation), trafficking, restricted mobility and early marriage, among others.

Violence and discrimination against women are social epidemics and despite the progress made by women's rights movements in identifying, raising awareness, and challenging impunity for women's rights violations, serious discrimination against women continues in Africa.

Cultural marginalisation severely limits women's education opportunities, which results in high illiteracy levels and a lack of qualifications and skills. These factors block women's participation in politics, decision making and leadership positions. It is often notable that traditional and religious practices relegate women to traditional household's roles.

It is today admitted that the lack of recognition of the need to involve women by giving them a voice in decision-making and the means to participate effectively in society is one of the major causes of development failure in many countries.

Over the years, women have taken to the streets to protest against a variety of issues affecting them, from rising food prices, to the lack of female political and economic participation, demand for peace negotiations, or to call for the departure of a long-time dictator as we can see during the Arab spring, in countries such as Egypt. Through such actions, women have continuously demonstrated their commitment and their willingness to see their country change for the better. However, when it comes to seeing women in established positions of political power, such as parliamentarians, members of government or even as heads of state, the numbers seems to stall at merely 20.2%.

Despite the obstacles and challenges they face, a growing proportion of women are breaking through the glass ceiling. Today, African women are beginning to break the political glass ceiling in many countries and finding their way in roles that was traditionally occupied by men. We now have two African women out of 54 head of state and the chair of the African Union is a woman.

Women who have entered into leadership positions attribute their success to factors such as access to education and work opportunities, good mentoring by both men and women, support from family, employers, supervisors, teachers and colleagues, and successful lobbying by gender activists.

It is time for our governments to demonstrate their commitments with actions. They must go much further to ensure greater gender equality in Africa. African governments need to demonstrate concrete actions that bring about positive changes in the lives of many women and girls in Africa during and after the African Women's Decade 2010-2020.

Rainatou Sow

Founder & Executive Director, Make Every Woman Count

Central Africa

Central Africa has taken important steps forward in ensuring women's equality throughout various sections of society. Ranging from greater access to maternal health care, to ensuring that women are represented in all levels of government, individuals countries have acted to guarantee women's rights. This being said, each country has areas in which policies protecting women excelled, but there are other areas where urgent action are needed.



UN photo

In Angola, campaigns have been implemented to prevent both cervical cancer¹ in women, and tetanus² in children. In addition, awareness campaigns have been launched to educate women on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues. In an effort to reduce maternal mortality, in both Chad and Gabon, a Master's degree will be offered for both mid-wives and nurses.³ However, not all countries in the region have taken initiatives in

the area of HIV/AIDS & Reproductive rights. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a high number of women are still dying from pregnancy-related complications that are easily preventable.

Across the region domestic violence remains a constant threat for women. Overall, women that chose to take legal action often face insurmountable cultural and legal obstacles in obtaining justice. The only two countries to take action to protect women from violence in 2012 were Angola and Chad. Angola launched specific campaigns to protect women from abuse.⁴ In Chad, female parliamentarians placed pressure on the government to take action against perpetrators who commit acts of violence against women.⁵

Women's political participation throughout the region remains low. The percentage of women in parliament ranges from 7% in the Republic of Congo⁶ to 34.5% in Angola⁷. Overall, the percentage of women in parliament remains between ten and nineteen, far below the quotas set forth in many of the leading gender equality conventions and resolutions. Throughout the region, both lack of access to information and cultural norms prevent women from running in government elections.

Angola

Angola signed and ratified the Maputo protocol in 2007.⁸ The UNSCR 1325 has been adopted but a National Action plan has not yet been established. Angola has been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1986.

Human Rights of Women

Angola is ranked as 148th out of 187 countries according to the Human Development Index. The World Economic Forum ranked the country as 87th out of 135 in its 2011 Global Gender Gap Report⁹. During 2012 Angola has taken initiatives to promote women's political participation, as well as the enjoyment of social and economic rights. In May 2012, the Ministry of Family and Women Promotion (Minfam), the Norwegian Embassy to Angola and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a protocol that aims to promote and monitor efforts focused on empowerment of women in the country¹⁰. Women and men are

entitled to equal rights according to the Family Code. Both spouses have the same rights and responsibilities in relation to the family. This includes equal responsibility to support children.¹¹

Women's Political Participation

The Angolan constitution states that women and men are entitled to equal rights.¹² During the second year of the AWD, Angola has been praised as a model country resulting from the progress made in terms of equal rights in comparison with men.¹³ Angola is among the countries with a high participation of women in decision-making posts. However, by the end of 2011 there were reports of low adherence to the women voter registration and update process. Furthermore, the MP of National Assembly Emilia Carlota Dias saw the need to urge the Angolan political parties to increase the number of women enlisted for legislative elections. The aim is to provide a way to achieve a greater participation of women in the country's decision-making bodies. Among the Angolan parties only the ruling MPLA and UNITA opposition parties have female representation in their parliamentary groups.¹⁴ Following the legislative elections on August 31, 2012 women make up 34.5 percent of the parliamentarians and in the 31 ministries there are only 8 positions held by women.¹⁵

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

In 2012, the Angolan government launched a campaign to prevent cervical cancer, targeting girls between the ages of 10 and 14. The campaign aims to reduce the number of deaths from cervical cancer and to provide better standards of living for women.¹⁶ Angola has also taken measures to help protect children from tetanus by offering an immunisation to women in their fertile period, generally between the ages of 14 and 48.¹⁷ In July 2012, the Angolan government launched Angola's National Maternal and Neo-Natal Death Prevention Commission. The mission is to launch awareness campaigns on reproductive health and AIDS prevention, as well as advocate for the reduction of child and maternal deaths.¹⁸ The Angolan Health minister has encouraged women, in the central province of Bié, to carry out frequent consultations during pregnancy. The purpose of this is to facilitate monitoring during pregnancy, to enable proper growth of the child and to reduce the number of deaths due to lack of medical consultations.¹⁹ Equally women in the Bengo Province have been encouraged to join the Women's Health Programme that is being implemented. The aim is to let all citizens know their health status as well as reduce the number of infant-maternal deaths in the country.²⁰

Violence Against Women

In 2011 Angola adopted a Law on Domestic Violence, which has been considered a milestone in its importance to combat violence in society.²¹ Reports from late 2011

indicate that gender-based violence is a social problem with worrying implications.²² In 2011, there were reports of at least 134 cases domestic violence in South-Western Namibe province, compared with the 75 reported cases of 2010. The provincial Department of Family and Women Promotion holds lectures and counselling with the aim to reduce the number of cases. In an effort to find a solution to conflict-related cases²³ that have resulted in domestic violence, the minister of Family and Women Promotion has appointed a technical group to work on building family counselling centres.

As gender issues are factors in the development of Angola, in March 2012 the ministers of Social Welfare spoke about the importance of improving the situation for women, especially in relation to violence against women. To change behaviours and practices concerning violence against women, not only does there need to be the promotion of strong public policies as well as strengthened support networks, but also awareness campaigns, education and training.²⁴ In July the first Angolan conference on Women and Domestic Violence was held in Luanda. The conference hosted both national and international experts, and focused on current topics of national interest such as gender equality, legislation, victims support services and the role of the family.

Women, Peace and Security

The Angolan government has been urged to investigate allegations that refugees and migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo have been sexually and physically abused.²⁵ According to a report by Human Rights Watch, the Angolan security forces have allegedly raped women and girls during migrant expulsions from Angola.²⁶

Education

Concern has been raised over low female student attendance in Angolan schools. The Cabinet minister has raised the fact that this may lead to early marriages.²⁷

Economic Empowerment

In August of 2012, the President of the political coalition Coligação Nova Democracia (ND) hosted a conference discussing the contribution and importance of women in the labour market. Allegedly there have been improvements in labour markets for women; however women from lower classes tend to be confined to work within industrial production.²⁸

Cameroon

Cameroon signed the Maputo protocol in 2003, but it has yet to be ratified. The country has not adopted a National Action plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. Women make up over 51 percent of the population in Cameroon.²⁹ Cameroon ranked 150 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index for 2011 and at 134 out of 146 countries in the Gender-related Development Index. In the 2011 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, the country ranked 119 out of 135 countries, with a score of 0.6073 (1 represents equality and 0 represents inequality).³⁰

Human Rights of Women

This year International Women's Day focused on improving the status of women and eliminating discrimination against women. The focus included the launch of several activities across the country.³¹ In addition, Cameroon's National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has begun work to empower stakeholders with tools to fight against human trafficking.³²

Women's Political Participation

Although women constitute more than 51 percent of the population, they hold less than 25 percent of representation in decision-making bodies. In some instances the number is as low as 10 percent.³³ Several initiatives from different actors have been implemented in an effort to curb low representation in political institutions and government. Specific attention has been given for the preparation for the elections that are scheduled to take place later in 2012.³⁴ One of these initiatives is through Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) who, with support from UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has a strategy plan on "Gender and Elections". The aim is to increase women's participation in politics and elective positions.³⁵

A second initiative was made in February through a women's umbrella group - Ensemble Pour la Parité (Together For Parity). Women are placing pressure on the government to adhere to national and international conventions regarding gender equality in terms of political participation.³⁶ There have also been local initiatives to help bolster women's political participation, for instance in the Northwest region, citizens, organisations and local officials have joined together to encourage women to run for office in the legislative and municipal elections.³⁷

Two women, out of 25 candidates, ran for president in the 2011 presidential elections.³⁸ This has been praised as an important psychological step for women with aspirations to work in government institutes. In the same elections women were encouraged to cast their vote.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

The use of female condoms has been promoted around the country. As a way to make them more popular they are featured in hair salons, workrooms and other small shops. However, instead of selling them, the managers are giving the condoms to their customers in order to clear their stocks. They have been difficult to sell and in contrast to male condoms they are only available at a few locations.³⁹ The prevalence of HIV has decreased in Cameroon, but still about 5.6% of women and 2.9% of men are infected.⁴⁰

Violence Against Women

The Cameroon Penal Code defines rape as any female compelled to have sexual intercourse with a man "by force or moral ascendancy."⁴¹ Despite this, during 2012 there have been reports pointing towards the difficulty for rape victims to gain justice. In Cameroon, victims are given the burden to prove that the rape occurred and was non-consensual.⁴² In order for the burden of proof to be met, victims must receive documentation of medical treatment and physical examination to be used as evidence in court. The victims then file a report and the justice process begins.

In the northwest district of Wum, women joined together to protest outside the palace of the paramount chief of Aghem and refused to work because they risked being rape and/or assaulted, allegedly by cattle herders in the area.⁴³

Education

Cameroon is working to improve the educational system. About 50 percent of the budget of the Ministry of Basic Education each year is spent on construction of classrooms across the country. In addition to this, some 10 to 20 percent of the budget is committed to the rehabilitation of schools.

Economic Empowerment

The economic situation for women in Cameroon is unequal to men. According to reports, women do not fully enjoy their rights in relation to businesses and

employment. The country places at 114 out of 128 countries in the Women's Economic Opportunity Index (WEOI). Among lower middle income countries Cameroon places at 30th among 39 countries, and 14th

out of 21 among the Sub-Saharan Africa countries. The majority of work in Cameroon takes place within the informal sector, and this work and the earnings are not taken into account within these rankings. ⁴⁴

Central African Republic (CAR)

CAR signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 17th of June 2008 but it has not ratified it. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by CAR on the 21st of June 1991. CAR has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). CAR is ranked at 179th out of 187 on the Human Development Index. According to the Gender Equality Index the country is placed at 138 out of 146 countries.

Human Rights of Women

According to legislation in CAR, the husband is the head of the house; this entitles the husband the parental authority, as well as decision-making power over residency, of the family. This law states that divorced, single or widowed women are not considered heads of households, without regard of whether they have children living with them or not. ⁴⁵

Women's Political Participation

There were no female presidential candidates in the presidential elections in the beginning of 2011. In the parliamentary elections of the same year, there was an increase in female representation compared to the elections in 2006. There are now 12.5 % or 13 out of 104 women represented in the parliament of CAF. ⁴⁶

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

The number of women receiving anti-retrovirals during pregnancy has been halved since 2007, however the number of child infections (mother-to-child transmissions) have decreased continually since the beginning of 2000. ⁴⁷

Violence Against Women

Law in CAR prohibits violence against women. This covers rape, pedophilia, incest, sexual harassment and prostitution. ⁴⁸ It does not however consider marital rape or spousal rape, or domestic violence. It should, however, be noted that all forms of violence towards another person is prohibited. ⁴⁹ During 2012 there have been reports of violence against women as well as cases of female genital mutilation. ⁵⁰ Between 45 to 50

percent of the women are estimated to have been victims of some form of female genital mutilation. ⁵¹

The International Criminal Court (ICC) launched the Trust Fund for Victims. The fund is to commence three years after charges were brought against the former Congolese militia leader Jean-Pierre Bemba. The fund has a non-legal mandate to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Funding was to be provided by late 2011. After a year, no list has been provided and "those who should benefit from the fund still have not been identified". ⁵²

Women, Peace and Security

The unstable situation in CAR has effects on the security situation of women and girls. The members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) frequently abduct women and girls. They also face the risk of rape, being beaten or killed by members of the LRA. ^{53,54}

Education

In urban areas between 60 to 70 percent of women attend primary school, in rural areas the number is only between 10 to 20 percent. Women and men have equal access to primary education, however a majority of girls aged 14 to 15 drop out often due to marriage and children rearing. ⁵⁵

Economic Empowerment

Low adherence to women's rights, poverty and lack of funding make the economic situation of women in CAR difficult. Women's economic situations are further worsened because they are not seen as heads of household under any conditions, and therefore, only men are entitled to family subsidies. ⁵⁶

Chad

Chad ratified CEDAW in 1995 and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004. As of 2012, the Maputo Protocol has not been ratified. Chad has not adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325. The 2011 Human Development Index placed Chad at 183 out of 187. In the Gender-related Development Index, Chad is placed at 145 out of 146.⁵⁷ The World Economic Forum ranked Chad at 134 out of 135 in its Global Gender Gap Report.⁵⁸ These rankings indicate that the situation for women in the country is severe and it is difficult to obtain news and reports on the situation for women in the country.

Human Rights of Women

In 2011 the government stated that it considered a draft code with the aim to raise the status and role of women in terms of authority over the family. The draft indicates that "the married couple assume together the same responsibilities during the marriage and in family relations".⁵⁹ The current law does not entitle women to equal rights with regard to parental authority during marriage, and as such, parental authority is not clear. Despite the fact that the law on land ownership does not explicitly discriminate against women, inheritance practices are discriminatory towards women. The government has reported that social and cultural norms impede women's access to land. As a result of their economic status, women remain further disadvantaged.⁶⁰

Women's Political Participation

It has been reported that women, especially in rural areas, do not receive appropriate civic or voter education. The practice of "family voting" exists in the country. This means that a male head of household or village chief can instruct women on how to cast their vote, or even vote for them. The major constraint for women's political participation is the lack of literacy and education. Furthermore, women often have to travel long distances to reach the nearest polling station and then often have to wait in line to cast a vote. This tends to conflict with their daily work routines and as a result, women often are unable to set aside time to cast a vote.⁶¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Delegates of the NEPAD Agency, ECCAS, and the Republic of Congo and Gabon announced that beginning in January 2013 Chad will offer a Master's degree education for midwives and nurses. This initiative is part of a sub-regional project aiming to improve the access to public health and the public health status in the region.⁶² The association of midwives in Chad has taken the initiative to decrease maternal mortality by three quarters and to reduce infant mortality by two thirds

until 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals.⁶³

The maternal mortality rate in the country is 1200 per 100000 births. Only about 23% of women have a skilled attendant present at birth, and only 16% have an institutional delivery. Also noteworthy is the 5% contraceptive prevalence for Chad.⁶⁴

Estimations state that about 90.000 pregnant or nursing women in the country suffer from malnutrition. As a result the Chadian government has called the international community to step in and assist.⁶⁵

Violence against Women

Law in Chad prohibits rape, but there is no prohibition on marital rape.⁶⁶ Domestic violence is not prohibited, however battery and assault is regulated under the Penal Code.⁶⁷ Concern has been raised about the level of gender-based violence in the country.⁶⁸

In 2012, the deputy Alimé Ali Houane of the Commission on Health, Social Affairs, Situation of Women and Rights of the Child, together with the other female parliamentarians, made a call for the government to take action against perpetrators of violence against women. The ratification of the CEDAW convention is another aspect in protecting women from violence. Mrs Houane believes that ratification may help to come to terms with issues of violence against women, as well as female genital mutilation and forced marriage, thus increasing women's legal status in the country.⁶⁹ Reports estimate that at least 90% of Chadian women have experienced some form of violence against women, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, making the implementation of this initiative all the more important.⁷⁰

Women, Peace and Security

On August 22, 2012 Senegal and the African Union signed an agreement to establish a tribunal for the former dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré. This is one step in the long process of redeeming justice for the victims of the perpetrations led by the president.⁷¹ The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) has obtained a renewed mandate and this provides for

intensified work on rights and concerns of women, something that is addressed by all sectors of UNOCA's focus.⁷²

Education

The youth literacy rate for Chad is low for both males and females: 54% for male and only 39% for females. The enrolment rate for females is 70 % in primary education and only 41 % in secondary education. .⁷³

Economic Empowerment

Chadian women are entitled to 14 weeks of maternity leave based on 50% of their wages. .⁷⁴

Democratic Republic of Congo

DRC has signed and, in a number of cases, ratified an extensive array of regional and international protocols. It also has some of the most progressive legislation on women's rights and sexual violence, however, do to cultural traditions and persistent conflict in many parts of the country, women rarely enjoy the rights and protections set forth in these agreements and laws. In 2009, the country ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In 2010, it launched its National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325. All of these regional and international agreements build on CEDAW, which DRC ratified in 1986, however it has yet to ratify the optional protocol.

Human Rights of Women

The most recent constitution of the DRC, written in 2006, includes in article 14 "the principle of parity of Man / Woman". However, many provisions of the Congolese Family, Labour, and Penal Codes discriminate against women, particularly in the areas of civil liberties and ownership rights. Effective and consistent implementation of gender equality provisions in DR Congo is hindered by a lack of state mechanisms. Both the law enforcement and justice systems are considerably under resourced, financed and trained.

Although the DRC has considerable legislation to codify the rights of women and girls, however culture, tradition, armed conflicts and lack of resources prevent the full implementation of laws. As a result women suffer discrimination in the home, workplace and public.

Women's Political Participation

Women enjoy the same political rights as men in DR Congo and can, therefore, run for office. However, women face considerable practical and cultural obstacles in doing so. Currently, 10% of the DR Congo bicameral parliament is made up of women politicians. In addition, women hold 47 of 690 seats in provincial parliaments. The low participation of women in Parliament can be considered a result of a lack of involvement in political parties, which can stem from moderate financial means, and cultural and societal obstacles.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Exposure to prolonged armed conflicts and poverty has resulted in poor health records in DR Congo. Maternal health is abominable with women dying from easily preventable, pregnancy-related complications. As of 2010, the maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births) is 540.⁷⁵

According to UNAIDS between 1-5% of the population in DRC are living with HIV/AIDS. It is listed 36th of all the countries studied in the world. Rampant rape and sexual violence in the Eastern part of DR Congo is the greatest risk for increasing the rate of transmission in the country.⁷⁶

Violence against Women

The law in DRC criminalises rape and other forms of sexual violence against women but, according to the US Department of State 2010 human rights report, the government has not effectively enforced this law.⁷⁷ Impunity is often cited as the main reason for ongoing sexual violence. Members of the armed forces, one of the largest groups of perpetrators, are rarely prosecuted. This situation, combined with the stigma and shame women and girls experience from rape and sexual assault, allows the phenomenon to persist unabated.

Contrary to explicit laws on sexual violence, domestic violence is not specifically addressed in Congolese law. In 2010, the US Department of State reported that there were no cases of judicial authorities taking action in cases of domestic violence. Although there are no

official statistics, domestic violence against women, including spousal rape, appears to be common, and domestic violence has high levels of social acceptance.⁷⁸

*Armed conflict has exacerbated violence against women in DR Congo. Rates of rape are among the highest in the world, earning DR Congo the title of rape capital of the world. As many as 1,000 women every month experience rape in Eastern DR Congo.*⁷⁹

Women Peace and Security

From 1997-2006, the DRC experience a large scale of armed conflicts. It is estimated that the conflicts have generated more deaths than the whole of World War II. Although the country is recovering, yet conflict still simmers in the eastern provinces.

Sexual violence was employed as a weapon of war and strategically used by all parties. In DRC, it is estimated 500,000 women are rape survivors, many more having lost their lives.⁸⁰ The high prevalence of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war persists in Eastern Congo, due to the on-going armed conflicts and impunity.

The DRC adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in June 2010. The NAP calls for several steps to be taken in order to implement the provisions of the resolution. As a result, several mechanisms have been set up to accompany the implementation of Resolution 1325:

- Agency to fight against Violence against Women, and the girl child "AVIFEM";
- National Fund for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of the Child "FONAFEM";
- Unit of Study and Planning;
- *Regional Centre of Investigation and Research on Women and Gender and Peace building in the Great Lakes Region.*⁸¹

Economic Empowerment

Although the DRC is rich in minerals its population remains poor. The wealth generated by the mines rarely trickles down to the hands of the average Congolese citizen. According to the World Bank, 71.3% of the population in DRC lives below the poverty line (\$1.25 a day). In particular, women are at risk of poverty. The

armed conflicts have left many women as heads of households, and they often struggle to provide for their multiple children.⁸²



UN Photo

*Subsistence farming is the main source of income for most rural women. Although they work the land, they rarely own it and many women have been deprived of land due to armed conflicts. By law, the right to land concessions can be given to men and women without distinction. However, traditional attitudes and customs discriminate against women and hinder women's ownership to property. In the non-agricultural sector women account for 26% of those employed.*⁸³

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea signed the Maputo Protocol on the 30th January 2005 and ratified it in 2011. Despite the ratification of the Maputo Protocol women still do not enjoy the rights enshrined in pan-African document. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was signed in 1984.

Human Rights of Women

Inequality between women and men is present in Equatorial Guinea. Women trail men in post-secondary education, literacy, income, and political participation. However, according to World Bank data, parity between girls and boys has been reached in the area of primary education.

Equatorial Guinea has legislation to protect women's rights, however, customs, traditions, lack of resources, and lack of political will prevent its successful implementation. The dual legal system of civil law and customary law, results in continuing discrimination against women, particularly in the field of marriage and family relations.⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

Although there are no legal restrictions on the participation of women in politics, women remain seriously underrepresented in government positions. Women's political participation in Equatorial Guinea is approximately 10% according to World Bank data from 2011. In addition to serving as members of parliament women can be found as traditional chiefs, local council members, and mayors.⁸⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Equatorial Guinea has made advancements in lowering its maternal mortality. According to the World Bank, maternal mortality in 2000 was 450 for every 100,000 live births, 270 in 2005 and 240 in 2010.⁸⁶ These are commendable developments; however, more can be done to improve women and girls' chance of survival

during their pregnancy. Greater access to adequate health-care services, including pre-natal and post-natal care, and family planning information, particularly in rural areas is imperative if Equatorial Guinea is going to lower its mortality rate among women.

According to UNAIDS, approximately 20,000 people live with HIV/AIDS in Equatorial Guinea. This accounts for 5% of the population. Women are particularly at risk of receiving HIV/AIDS from their partners through forced unprotected sex and violence committed against them.

⁸⁷

Violence against Women

Domestic violence is common in Equatorial Guinea. Violence in the home is tolerated and viewed as a private matter. A woman who does report domestic abuse will be faced with considerable cultural and legal obstacles. The Government does not prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence; most often it is left to traditional councils that rarely rule in favour of women.

⁸⁸

Women Peace and Security

Equatorial Guinea does not have a national action plan for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Economic Empowerment

In Equatorial Guinea 76% of households fall below the poverty line, many of which survive on subsistence farming. According to a World Bank figure from 1990, as no current data exists, the share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector (% of total non-agricultural employment) is 11%.⁸⁹

Gabon

Gabon signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 27th of January 2005 but has not ratified it. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified on the 21st of January 1983. Gabon has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Human Rights of Women

For the 2011 Gender Inequality Index, Gabon received a score of 0.509, placing the country at 103 out of 146 countries with data. The World Economic Forum does not score Gabon as part of the Global Gender Gap Index.

⁹⁰

While the Constitution of Gabon recognizes men and women as equals before the law, and significant steps towards gender equality have been taken, the status of women remains constrained by discriminatory laws and practices which reinforce women's unequal position in all aspects of life, particularly in the family.⁹¹

Legally women and men have equal access to education, business, investment, employment, credit, and pay for similar work. However, discrimination against women prevents them from enjoying these legal rights, particularly in rural areas. One noticeable, inequality is that men, unlike women, are able to have polygamous marriages. In the past, a man could have up to 50 wives, but the current government has limited the number to four.⁹²

Women's Political Participation

Women can and have run for public office in Gabon. Women hold 15 percent of lower house positions and 18 percent of upper house positions. The US Department of State reports that women participate freely in the political process and that voting and political activism by women is common.⁹³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the World Bank, the maternal mortality ratio (estimate, per 100,000 live births) in Gabon is 230.⁹⁴ The US Department of State reports that access to contraceptives is a problem in Gabon. Based on 2000 Demographic Health Survey, it is estimated that 33 percent of married women in Gabon use contraception, with only 12 percent using modern methods of contraception. More than a quarter of married women report an unmet need for family planning. However, there is still reluctance according to the survey to discuss family planning in the home.⁹⁵ Female genital

mutilation (FGM) is illegal, but does occur.

The prevalence of AIDS in Gabon is 5.9% (adults aged 15-49). There are an estimated 46,000 people living with HIV (PLHIV). The Ministry of Health and the Ministry in Charge of AIDS is responsible for the coordination of the national response of the epidemic. The Ministry of Defence has an AIDS program for the defence force. Of the population living with AIDS, approximately 25,000 of them are women.⁹⁶ According to UNAIDS, greater leadership and efforts must be focused on halting the progress of the disease in Gabon.

Violence against Women

In Gabon, rape and violence against women are criminal offences. One found guilty of rape can be imprisoned for anywhere from five to ten years. There is no provision for spousal rape. Domestic violence is punishable with penalties ranging from two months to 15 years in prison. However, violence in the home is rampant in Gabon, and significantly underreported. According to the US Department of State, police in Gabon rarely intervene in incidents of domestic violence.⁹⁷ It is viewed as a private matter and acceptable by the large majority of citizens.

Women Peace and Security

The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The poverty ratio in Gabon is relatively low compared to other African countries at only 4.5% according to 2005 World Bank data.⁹⁸ Under the constitution and Labour Code, women in Gabon have the equal right as men to engage in paid work. However night work and mining work is prohibited for women.⁹⁹ Women account for 29% of the non-agricultural sector (% of total non-agricultural employment).

The Republic of Congo

The Republic of Congo ratified the Maputo Protocol on the 6th of August 2012. CEDAW was ratified on the 26th July 1982. Although the status of women has improved in Congo, women are still considered as subordinate to men in all aspects of public and private life.

Human Rights of Women

For the 2011 Gender Inequality Index, Congo received a score of 0.628, placing the country in 132nd place on a list of 146 countries. The World Economic Forum does not score Congo as part of the Global Gender Gap Index.¹⁰⁰ Women lack access to education, healthcare, and other basic amenities. Violence against women and societal discrimination against women remain widespread in the Republic of Congo. Although there is no reported legal discrimination against women it does exist.

Women's Political Participation

As a result of the 2007 elections, 7 percent of lower house positions and 13 percent of upper house positions were allocated to women.¹⁰¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Despite the focus on maternal health in the Maputo Protocol and the Millennium Development Goals, Congo's maternal mortality rates have increased over the years. According to the World Bank, maternal mortality in 2000 was 540 for every 100,000 live births, 550 in 2005 and 560 in 2010.¹⁰² Greater access to adequate health-care services, including pre-natal and post-natal care and family planning information, particularly in rural areas, is imperative for Congo to curb this frightening trend.

HIV/AIDS is a health concern in Congo with approximately 77,000 persons living with the virus.¹⁰³

Violence against Women

The Criminal Code of Congo prohibits various forms of violence against women, though men are placed as the head of the household both in traditional practices and modern law, resulting in women suffering abuse. In 2008, the United Nations country team reported that sexual violence committed by civilians was widespread. They reported that in the majority of cases (between 50 to 80 percent) the perpetrators knew their victims. The majority of victims were young girls. According to the US

State Department, rape, including spousal rape, is illegal in Congo. The penalty is 10 years imprisonment. However, it is rarely prosecuted. There is no specific legislation prohibiting domestic violence. According to the US State department domestic violence is widespread and traditionally handled within the extended family or village. Only extreme incidents are reported to the police, whom rarely follow through on cases.¹⁰⁴

Women, Peace and Security

Congo has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Economic Empowerment

According to the World Bank, in 2005, 54.1% of the population of Congo lives below the poverty line. Subsistence agriculture, oil, and government are the main industries in Congo. Overall, women have equal rights to paid employment and equal pay. However, women serve largely in the agricultural sector as subsistence farmers. The World Bank notes that the share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector is (% of total non-agricultural employment) 26%. This is a figure from 1990.¹⁰⁵



UN Photo

São Tomé and Príncipe

Sao Tome and Principe won independence in 1975 and transitioned through democratic reforms in the late 1980s. Despite being one of Africa's smallest nations, Sao Tome and Principe was once a leading cocoa producer. However decreases in production have left the country heavily dependent on foreign aid.

The constitution declares equal political and economic rights for women and men; however women still face widespread de facto discrimination. In particular, domestic violence and rape remain serious challenges whilst legal action is blocked by conservative family customs.

Human Rights of Women

The main form of violence against women was domestic violence with widespread reports of violence and rape by partners. Despite constitutional rights to recourse, a culture of silence and misinformation around women's rights in the home has prevented most cases being taken to court.¹⁰⁶

Women's Political Participation

São Tomé has conducted nine elections since 1990, recognised as largely free, fair and transparent by international observers, with a formidable 66% turnout at the last elections in 2011. There were two female presidential candidates in these elections: Elsa Pinto and Maria das Neves. Das Neves was former Prime Minister of São Tomé between 2002-2004 and was the first African woman to head a government.¹⁰⁷

Ten of the fifty five members of the National Assembly are women, placing São Tomé at 64th place worldwide for female representation.¹⁰⁸

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

While contraception is authorized, it is not widely used due to lack of funds, and teenage pregnancy rate remains high.

Education

The overall literacy rate is 84.9% and the female literacy rate (77%) remains a little lower than the male literacy rate. Girls have equal access to primary and secondary education as boys and no gender disparities appear in terms of access to health services.¹⁰⁹

Economic Empowerment

Many women play crucial sales and credit providing roles in agriculture and fisheries¹¹⁰ Furthermore, 300 young women, aged 15 to 35, have organized community groups to educate and support the conservation of the high biodiversity of the seas and forests around the islands. .¹¹¹

East Africa

Eastern Africa shows new opportunities advancing gender parity that have opened up the political space for women. While Rwanda took the lead with 56.3% of women represented in parliament, Tanzania with 36% and Uganda with 35%, follow closely. Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have all developed quota systems whereby women should constitute at least 30 percent in all decision-making institutions – a significant factor in bringing about increased participation. The region has also set the pace with Usuk county elections in Uganda in 2012, producing Africa's youngest Member of Parliament (MP) at the age of 21. Proscovia AlengotOromait is an affirmation that young women can also take up elective politics. Furthermore, the new Somali Federal Parliament came to life on the 20th of August 2012 with a much broader female representation. Nonetheless, the majority of Somali women parliamentarians believe there is still much to be done to ensure women's representation in the Somali political landscape. There are currently 38 women MPs serving in the new Parliament, occupying 15% of the seats.

In what has often been a turbulent region, the emergence of sustainable peace will help create the conditions under which women's rights can be further advanced case in point Somali and South Sudan. With positive legislations and policies for women's economic empowerment as seen in Kenya's Women Enterprise Fund and Malawi's National Association of Business Women, the economic landscape is bound to change.



UN Photo

However, lack of legislative policies, weak enforcement systems and lack of government political goodwill in some countries have resulted in endemic gender based violence and increased HIV/ AIDS prevalence. Women's reproductive health is also compromised due to lack of contraceptives and death as a result of complicated pregnancies and increased cases of unsafe abortions. However, according to a study done by African Population and Health Research on the population and use of contraceptives in Africa, it is estimated that the number of women using contraceptives in East Africa has risen from 12 million in 2008 to 17 million today¹¹². The Eastern Africa region holds a potential for gender equality that can be replicated to other regions.

Burundi

Although Burundi has ratified CEDAW, it has still not ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW or the Maputo Protocol. Sexual violence and domestic violence, among other forms of violence, are widespread in Burundi due to the discriminatory Government legislation. Despite the introduction of free primary education in 2005, there is still a disparity between boys and girls mainly in secondary and higher education. Burundi has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. From June 2004 to December 2006, there was a UN peacekeeping mandate in Burundi: United Nations Operations in Burundi (ONUB).

Human Rights of Women

In 2001 in his inaugural speech, the Vice-President of the République M. Térence SINUNGURUZA, recognized that the progress made in terms of gender equality and women's rights in Burundi was largely the outcome of Burundian women's individual and collective efforts. The vice-president also remarked on the presence of existing challenges to ensuring women's socio-economic rights and the need for a national strategy that

institutionalises women's human rights and women's access to economic opportunities. As such, the CSLPII (Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté de deuxième génération), a strategic framework to combat poverty, attempts to integrate this approach.¹¹³

Women's associations and organisations in Burundi demonstrate a unique approach to working on a variety of women's issues to promote women's rights. The Collectif des Associations et Organisations non

Gouvernementales Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB) – an umbrella organisation made up of 64 associations was created in 1994. The CAFOB has developed a privileged relationship with local and national institutions ensuring the promotion of women's rights through coordinated lobby campaigns and the implementation of projects in partnership with local and national institutions.¹¹⁴ CAFOB has identified a number of challenges to addressing gender equality in Burundi: women's limited access to education, reproductive rights and the public sphere to voice their needs, choices and ensure the application of their rights.

Women's Political Participation

National and local perceptions of women's representation in politics have largely evolved since Burundi ratified the CEDAW convention in 1991. However, despite the efforts of the Burundian Women's Union-l'action de l'Union des Femmes Burundaises (FUB) and the Ministry of the Women's Affairs-Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Promotion de la Féminine,"¹¹⁵ women continue to be marginalized in the corridors of political powers and their political contribution goes unnoticed.

To strengthen, monitor and oversee current activities to promote women's political participation a 2-year national strategic plan was developed—the Plan Stratégique Triennal 2012 – 2014. It is within this framework that Parliament has approved the organisation of a workshop hosted by UNDP to develop the strategic plan and the accompanying tools to facilitate the recommendations put forward in the plan.

Economic Empowerment

In Burundi, women's economic empowerment is inhibited by their lack of access to inherited land. The draft law on succession that began in 2011 has been put on hold. As it stands now, women cannot inherit land. "Speaking of women's empowerment, it is really an illusion when the woman has nothing, when she cannot even have a banana. This is a formal inequality when you do not have the same rights, simply because one is a boy and the other a girl," Perpetua Kanyange, coordinator of a group of women's organizations in Burundi.¹¹⁶

Last year, the Ministry of Gender and various civil society organisations launched a campaign to raise awareness about the draft law on inheritance, matrimonial regimes and gifts. However these activities have been suspended without explanation on the orders of the Burundian authorities.

Rural women are particularly vulnerable. As Judith Nzeyimana emphasizes the violence suffered from the economic and psychological violence, in addition to widespread polygamy in this locality. This feeling of helplessness has let some women to attempting to commit suicide. According to human rights organizations of women, such violence is rooted in the lack of access of women to land: they have no other resources, or where to go if they are divorced.¹¹⁷

Violence against Women

Despite the adoption of a repressive Penal Code, cases of sexual violence are widespread.¹¹⁸ Amicable settlements are often preferred, and encouraged by some government officials and police officers. Moreover, numerous obstacles inhibit women's capacity or willingness to press charges: long and costly legal proceedings, fear of stigmatisation and reprisals, generalised corruption, etc.¹¹⁹

Women, Peace & Security

Revenge (or "private justice"), sexual predation and rape are the three new forms of armed violence affecting women since 2005, according to a report GRIP (Group for Research and Information on Peace and security) who conducted a survey of several dozen groups of workers, women's associations, farm women, displaced women and children, widows, prostitutes and young people.

Six years later, armed violence has decreased overall. However, the persistent insecurity and internal border disputes with incidents of crime and armed violence remain. This includes robbery, murder and domestic and sexual violence. To promote the restoration of durable peace and sustainable development, a number of initiatives will be implemented to curb the harmful effects of the proliferation and illicit circulation of weapons in the general population.¹²⁰

Comoros

As in most countries in the region women's issues in Comoros are closely associated with tradition, customs and religion, which govern most aspects of the day-to-day life. Women are increasingly playing an active role in politics and decisions making bodies; however, women are still under-represented at the political level, which remains a key challenge for gender equality in Comoros. Violence against women such as domestic violence is widespread in Comoros. In addition, financial constraints, and physical and psychological violence, after divorce threaten the rights of women. Comoros ratified the Maputo Protocol in March 2004. CEDAW was ratified by Comoros in October 1994. Comoros has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

A woman's status in Comoros depends greatly on where she lives. Women in towns often have higher status than those living in rural areas where employment and education prospects are limited.¹²¹ The law does not require women to wear head coverings, however many women face societal pressure to do so. Overall, there is limited reporting on gender issues within the country available to the public.

Human Rights of Women

In the Comoros there are two approaches to marriage—the Muslim law and the country's Family Code. Under the Muslim law the age of majority is 14-15 years and under the Family code it is 18 years. These age groups are dramatically different; and the discrepancy has allowed early marriages to continue in many regions, posing great threat to women's rights in the country.¹²²

The country has a National Gender Policy that promotes gender equality and the following reports and strategies outline women's rights and gender issues: Poverty Reduction Strategy paper, National Strategy for Vulnerable Children, the National Report of Human Development and Gender, National Plan on Gender and Gender Equality.¹²³ The Ministry of Health, Solidarity, and Gender Promotion is responsible for promoting women's rights.

In general, women have the right to inheritance and land ownership, stemming from matriarchal traditional values of landholding. In modern day, lands and homes are usually given to women upon divorce.¹²⁴ Despite the practice of polygamy and men's monopoly of religious offices, women have a relatively comfortable social status as they are owners of their conjugal houses.

Women's Political Participation

In 2012, 3% of women made up national level political governance, with thirty women in the government's lower house and no reported women represented in the upper house, local government, as judges or landholders.¹²⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In Comoros, families are generally able to choose the number and spacing of their children without constriction. Contraceptive use for modern methods of contraception among married women between the ages

of 15 and 49 is low at approximately 19%, according to the UN Population Fund.¹²⁶ Only skilled personnel attended 62% of births within the country and the UNFPA estimates that the maternal death ratio is 340: 100,000 live births.¹²⁷ Health in the country remains overall poor and there is a lack of reproductive health information and services. Unwanted pregnancies are common as a result and there is a high rate of maternal mortality among adolescent girls. There are no laws preventing women from receiving treatment for STI's and HIV but many people hesitate to seek assistance due to cultural reasons. The US State Department reports that the country recently developed a reproductive health strategy but the government requires more funding in order to implement.¹²⁸

The number of people living with HIV according to UNAIDS is 217 with 0.1% prevalence. A 2008 WHO report demonstrated a high prevalence among pregnant women.¹²⁹

Violence Against Women

In Comoros, domestic violence is often not dealt with through the courts though theoretically it could be. Issues of VAW are often dealt with within the extended family or at the village level.¹³⁰ Rape is punishable by law with imprisonment of 5-10 years, or 15 years if the victim is younger than 15. Spousal rape however has not been specifically addressed. Additionally, sexual harassment is illegal and punishable but as in most countries is rarely reported due to social stigma. UNECA reports that the government has not done enough to enforce penalties regarding violence against women.¹³¹ As of 2009, there were no confirmed reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within Comoros.

Education

In recent years the government of Comoros has been making education a key priority. The country currently has 10 schools and 62 private institutions, and two institutions providing technical and vocational training. The adult literacy rate is 75.1% (80.3% for males; 69.3% for women) and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary school gross enrolment ratio in 2006 was 46.4%. The islands have a university with 1707 students of which 43% are girls. ¹³²

Economic Empowerment

In Comoros, there are few safety or health standards for work sites. Workers' rights are dismal and many people do not remove themselves from an unsafe or healthful situation without risking loss of employment. In rural areas women take on more traditional roles yet in urban areas the number of women working formally is growing. However, women still lag behind men and few hold positions of leadership or responsibility.

Djibouti

Djibouti ratified the CEDAW in December 1998, as well as ratifying the Maputo Protocol in February 2005. Djibouti has not developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women

There exists robust prison terms for those convicted of rape. One law includes sentences of up to 20 years' imprisonment for rape. However, the government does not enforce the law effectively. There is no law against spousal rape. Rape cases, which often are not reported to the police, are usually settled informally between the families of the victim and the perpetrator. Reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape are not available.

Child marriage occasionally occurs in rural areas, where it is considered a traditional practice rather than a problem. The Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family, Welfare, and Social Affairs worked with women's groups throughout the country to protect the rights of girls, including the right to decide when and whom to marry. ¹³³

Women's Political Participation

The 2008 legislative elections brought two more women into the National Assembly, raising to nine the number of female parliamentarians in the 65-seat body. There was one woman in the 21-member cabinet, and the president of the Supreme Court, who by law acts in the president's stead in case of death or incapacitation, is a woman. ¹³⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognises the right of citizens to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children. Under the Ministry of Health, clinics operate freely in disseminating information on family planning. There are no restrictions on the right to access contraceptives, and the government estimated in 2009 that approximately 33 percent of women had

access to contraceptives. The government provides childbirth services, and increasing numbers of women deliver babies in a hospital or health clinic. ¹³⁵

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence against women is a common occurrence, but few cases are reported. While the law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence, it prohibits "torture and barbaric acts" against a spouse and specifies penalties up to 20 years' imprisonment. Families or clans rather than courts generally address cases of violence against women. Police rarely intervene in domestic violence incidents and the media reports only the most extreme cases, such as murder. The law does not prohibit sexual harassment, and it remains a problem. Statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment are not available.

According to previous estimates, 93 percent of the female population in the country had undergone FGM. However, a 2010 report by the Ministry of Health and the UN Population Fund showed that 51 percent of eight-year-old girls, 54 percent of seven-year-old girls, and 60 percent of six-year-old girls had not undergone the procedure, a marked decrease. Infibulation, the most extreme form of FGM, continues to be widely practiced, especially in rural areas. The law makes FGM punishable by five years' imprisonment and a fine of one million DJF (\$5,550). NGOs are allowed to file charges on behalf of victims; however, the government has not convicted anyone under this statute. The law provides for up to one year's imprisonment and a fine of up to 100,000 DJF (\$565) for anyone convicted of failing to report a completed or planned FGM to the proper authorities.

The law does not prohibit sexual harassment. Statistics were not available, but anecdotal information suggested such harassment was widespread, although seldom reported.¹³⁶

Women, Peace and Security

US Africa Command also known as AFRICOM has a military base in Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti and thus Djibouti was invited to AFRICOM's Women, Peace and Security conference in Accra, Ghana from August 30th to September 1st. The conference focused on preparing U.S. AFRICOM to respond to the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan. The topics included the challenges, tactical perspective, and enhancing the capacity of female peacekeepers and local women in building peace in Africa. All participants were in agreement that women have the capacity to play a critical role in peacekeeping operations from civilian, military or non-government positions. The common goal is to implement a plan that encourages the placement of

women in peacekeeping operations without placing a preference on gender.¹³⁷

Education

Primary education is compulsory, primary and middle school are tuition free based but other expenses such as transport and books could be prohibitive for poor families. Although the educational system does not discriminate against girls, societal attitudes result in lower school enrolment rates for girls than boys.¹³⁸

Economic Empowerment

In accordance with Sharia law, men inherit a larger proportion of estates than women. Many women own and run small businesses, although mostly in the informal sector, where they do not receive the same benefits or access to credit available in the formal sector. The government continues to promote female leadership in the small business sector, including through expanded access to microcredit.¹³⁹

Eritrea

Eritrea has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol, though CEDAW was ratified in September 1995. Eritrea has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Eritrea is a highly secretive state, which makes gathering evidence difficult. With the closure of the independent press in 2001, no domestic institution exists to investigate or report on abuses of human rights. Human rights organisations have been denied entry since 2001.

Human Rights of Women

The Eritrean government has ratified international conventions related to women's rights and is officially committed to gender equality. The legislation reserves 30% of seats for women in provincial, district administration and national parliament. There are many forms of gender-based violence in Eritrea such as early marriage (common in rural areas), domestic violence and female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is considered as a serious problem in Eritrea affecting 89% of women.¹⁴⁰

Women's Political Participation

The call for an increase in women's political participation has been made at a meeting with some five hundred Eritrean women from all sub zones in the region. The Administrator of Gash-Barka region, Mr. Musa Rab'a, said that the role of women is of vital significance in the government's endeavours to ensure social justice.¹⁴¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Training has been provided to women in Anseba region on raising their awareness on communicable diseases. The training involved family and community health, effects of communicable diseases and malaria prevention mechanisms with more emphasis on practice of environmental hygiene.¹⁴² Female inhabitants of Foro sub zone have said that such awareness raising training and improvements in health services have led to a dramatic decrease in maternal mortality rates.¹⁴³

Violence Against Women

Area administrators of Gash-Barka region have denounced harmful cultural practices that cause physical and psychological harm to women. The denouncement came at a meeting conducted under the organization of the Health Ministry and NUEW.¹⁴⁴

Education

In Eritrea the girl child appears to lag behind in attendance in comparison to her male counterpart at the primary school level and at secondary school level

the participation of females plummets, largely due to economic and societal pressures.¹⁴⁵

Economic Empowerment

The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare engaged women in order to offer training courses in income

generating activities. Traditional domestic practices such as weaving, sewing and catering were the main skills taught. While income-generating activities are an important aspect of economic empowerment, focusing on domestic skills does not challenge the status quo.¹⁴⁶

Ethiopia

Ethiopia signed the Maputo Protocol in June 2004. CEDAW was ratified by Ethiopia in 1981. Ethiopia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Human Rights of Women

Despite recently introducing policy instruments and legislative commitments designed to serve women's interests and a Constitution that guarantees women the same rights and protections as men, gender gaps in education, economic empowerment and political participation continue to exist. Women's ownership rights are limited in Ethiopia, although land reforms enacted in March 1997 have improved access to land by stipulating that women have the right to lease land from the government, a right that is given to them in the Federal Constitution.¹⁴⁷

challenges in rural areas are causing a high number of deaths during childbirth. Only 10 percent of deliveries take place within health facilities, according to the Ethiopia's latest (April) Demographic Health Survey results. Nevertheless, the figure is a significant improvement on 6 percent in the previous 2005 survey.¹⁵¹ Many women prefer delivering at home in the company of known and trusted relatives and friends, where customs and traditions can be observed, according to a 2011 study published in the Ethiopian Journal of Health.¹⁵²

Women's Political Participation

The last National Assembly elections took place in May 2010 with 152 of the 547 (27.8%) seats in the Lower House won by women and a further 22 of 135 (6.3%) of Upper House seats won by women.¹⁴⁸ These statistics still stand true as of 2012. However, women are still underrepresented in all levels of government.

Violence Against Women

Ethiopian women suffer from a high instance of domestic violence, especially female domestic workers. The shocking viral video of Alem Dechassa an Ethiopian domestic worker in Lebanon, being dragged by her hair and physically abused by her male employer in front of her Embassy grounds was widely watched and abhorred. The video signalled that this type of violence against female Ethiopian migrant workers is commonplace despite being outlawed.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Ethiopia has introduced programmes whereby contraceptives have been made available to all peoples irrespective of whether they can pay for it. Ethiopia is attempting to ensure family planning is allocated sufficient funding to maintain a steady supply of contraceptives to all parts of their countries. Furthermore, the importance of strong partnerships with religious and traditional leaders is recognised, as their support is valuable for successful family planning programmes.¹⁴⁹

Ethiopia is following countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines in having high number of its citizens wanting to work in the Middle East as domestic workers. Indonesia and the Philippines have imposed stricter employment conditions for its expatriates as exploitation and abuse was rife amongst these nationals at the hands of its host nations and employers.¹⁵³

Maternal mortality rates in Ethiopia are 676 for every 100,000 births. This compares to an average of 290 per 100,000 births in developing countries, and 14 per 100,000 in developed countries, according to the UN World Health Organisation.¹⁵⁰ It is said that a lack of awareness of the importance of skilled hospital deliveries in Ethiopia, cultural beliefs, and transport

Women, Peace and Security

From 11-15th June 2012 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia hosted the "Women's Leadership for Peace and Security in the Greater Horn of Africa" a project initiated by Club de Madrid with its partners the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) and the Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE). Ethiopian women were in attendance amongst women from some several different countries to discuss peace and security developments both in their individual countries and in

the region as a whole. Session included: strategic planning focusing on National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325, practical training for conflict resolution, and early warning systems. .¹⁵⁴

Education

Drought, flooding, conflict, and the subsequent migration flows have impacted upon the education of students, including the girl child. The girl child traditionally faces cultural obstacles in her right to access education. Her inability to access education is further compounded by natural and man-made disasters. UNICEF is said to be designing more flexible programmes as part of emergency education initiatives. The aim is to provide emergency education to children, including the girl child so that they do not miss out on vital learning. .¹⁵⁵

Economic Empowerment

Weaving and handicrafts is proving to be an area in which Ethiopian women are able to generate and income. A USAID funded project working with local organisations is seeking to provide traditional weaving and design training to women and men to help them produce exportable products. ¹⁵⁶ Netherlands Ambassador to Ethiopia, Hans Blankenberg said that the handicrafts sector is one of the sectors that employs and benefits women more than many other economic sectors in Ethiopia. He said that it is therefore a sector that deserves support from private sector organizations and development partners. ¹⁵⁷ However, this may be reinforcing gender norms rather than challenging the status quo.

Kenya

Kenya ratified CEDAW in March 1984, as well as ratifying the Maputo Protocol in December 2003. Kenya has not developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Women's Human Rights

The 2010 Kenyan Constitution ensures that women and men will have the right to equal treatment and opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres without discrimination under Article 27 (3). Kenya's new constitution demonstrates several gains for the women of Kenya, including stronger protections for their health and lives, the rights to acquire and own property; women will be allowed to pass their citizenship to their children and spouses. This has necessitated the formulation of many laws to enforce those provisions including the Marriage Bill, the Matrimonial Property Bill and the Family Protection Bill.

Kenya's National Policy on Gender and Development of 2008 overall objective is to ensure women's empowerment and the mainstreaming of needs and concerns of women, men, girls and boys in all sectors of development in the country so that they can participate and benefit equally from development initiatives. The National Policy as well as the Sessional Paper on Gender Equality and Development (2006) are at the basis of the Plan of Action (2008-2012) to Implement the National Policy on Gender and Development (March 2008) handled by The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social development.

From July 2009 there exist clear guidelines and all ministries now formulating sector specific gender policies to guide programmes and gender responsive

activities from the top to the district level. For instance, gender mainstreaming became a requirement in the performance contract of all Permanent Secretaries & CEOs of all state corporations. In 2006 Head of Public service asked all ministries and state corporations to appoint gender officers and establish gender units.

Women's Political Participation

Kenya trails its neighbours in the region as far as women's political leadership is concerned with a paltry 9.8% women representation in Parliament as compared to Uganda which stands at 35%, Tanzania at 36%, Ethiopia at 27.8%, and Rwanda the world's leader in women's representation at 56.3%. The Kenyan judiciary is leading in attaining the gender parity. Out of 62 judges in the country, 25 are women.

However, the promulgation of a new Kenyan Constitution in August 2010 heralded a new dawn for the women of Kenya with the provision that not more than two thirds of elective or appointive positions should be of the same gender in addition to setting aside special seats for women. The Political Parties Act provides that no political party shall benefit from the fund if its registered national office bearers do not reflect at least a third of either gender an aspect that will enable more women to vie for elective office without the impediment of financial constraints. This has also had a bearing on all the public appointments,

which have been done ensuring that women are represented.

With Kenya going to the polls in March 2013, The National Gender and Equality Commission is to launch a campaign dubbed "Wise up to women leadership: keep the promise" that will aim at tackling political participation with a gender transforming perspective.

"The campaign shall call on all Kenyans and especially voters to consider women as responsible individuals capable of taking decisions and who are indispensable for their societies' democratization process." the chairperson, National Gender and Equality Commission Winfred Lichuma said.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The National Reproductive Health Policy 2007 lauds the theme: 'Enhancing the Reproductive Health Status for all Kenyans'. The policy provides a framework for equitable, efficient and effective delivery of quality reproductive health services throughout the country and emphasises reaching those in greatest need who are most vulnerable. It intends to achieve this through the implementation of The National Reproductive Health Strategy 2009-2015.

Data from the 2008-2009 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) show remarkable declines in child mortality levels compared with the 2003 survey. Comparing data for the five-year period before each survey, under-five mortality has declined from 115 to 74 deaths per 1,000 births, while infant mortality has dropped from 77 to 52 deaths per 1,000 live births.

According to the KDHS 2008-09, 6% of Kenyan adults age 15-49 are infected with HIV. HIV prevalence is 8 percent among women aged 15-49. Kenya National AIDS Strategic Plan III (KNASP III), 2012-2013, aims to achieve Kenya's Universal Access targets for quality integrated services at all levels to prevent new HIV infections, reduce HIV-related illnesses and deaths, and mitigate the effects of the epidemic on households and communities. The goal is to have the number of new infections reduced by at least 50% and AIDS-related mortality reduced by 25%.¹⁵⁸

Violence against Women

The 2008/2009 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey reported a national drop in the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) prevalence to 27% from 32% in 2003. The passage of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 is a great step towards dealing with the practice. It provides that anyone who causes death in the process of carrying out FGM will be liable to life imprisonment. In addition, providing of premises for

purposes of carrying out FGM, possession of tools associated with FGM or failure to report an incident of FGM knowingly are also punishable by law. This law alongside the Children's Act clearly outlaws the practice with heavy penalties.

Women Peace and Security

In 2009, Kenya and Finland agreed on a twinning cooperation on UNSCR 1325. The main task will be to develop the National Action Plan for Kenya. This twinning process will give opportunities to exchange best practices, create innovative solutions and to learn from one another in a two way learning process.

Education

Kenya ranks near the top in sub-Saharan Africa on international comparisons of primary student performance. Gaps in policies remain however, especially in post-primary education and with regard to resource use. Specifically, teacher deployment remains very unequal across regions. Girls' access to education has been greatly improved by the free primary education policy especially since 2006 and more recently by the implementation of the free secondary education policy. Although more boys are still enrolled in secondary schools, the number of girls has been rising in tandem, given the introduction of free tuition in secondary schools.¹⁵⁹

According to the Ministry of Education in 2010 the Net Enrolment Rate for primary school dipped slightly to 91.4% with 90.6% for boys and 92.3 % for girls.¹⁶⁰

Kenya launched a national primary schools sanitary towel pioneer programme. Under the project, 443, 858 schoolgirls from 4, 114 primary schools in 82 districts will receive sanitary towels for the whole year. Though this is not enough to cater for the over 2.6 million girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools in Kenya, the programme will reduce gender disparities in access, retention, transition and achievement in education, making Kenya achieve the overall goal of providing equal access to education for both girls and boys irrespective of their gender and socio-economic status.¹⁶¹

Economic Empowerment

Women Enterprise Fund established in 2006 is a Semi-Autonomous Government Agency in the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Development. Its aim is to provide accessible and affordable credit to support women who are starting and/or expanding their own business. The fund provides loans where women will access funds directly either as individuals, women owned enterprises or other organized entities such as women groups and women owned companies. In

addition to loans, the fund also provides capacity building for women entrepreneurs, access to local and

international marketing exhibitions and trade fairs, linkages and business incubation.¹⁶²

Madagascar

Madagascar ratified CEDAW in March 1989, as well as signing the Maputo Protocol in February 2004. Madagascar has not yet developed a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women

Madagascar is faring well in terms of achieving parity with respect to primary and secondary school enrolments, continuing discriminatory practices and the high prevalence of violence against women pose obstacles to achieving substantive equality. Madagascar has enshrined equality between men and women in its Constitution. Inequalities in the family prevail in regard to women's rights to inherit land and property. Except when an agreement is made between the spouses, widows do not inherit from their spouse.¹⁶³

Women's Political Participation

The last national assembly elections took place in October 2010, with 64 of the total 365 lower house seats being won by women and 20 of the 164 upper house seats won by women.¹⁶⁴ Women while this is good progress, women remain underrepresented at all levels of government.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Many young women and girls in Madagascar are embroiled in a viscous cycle born from a lack of sex education, family planning and poor health care provisions. Surgeon Adrien Ralimiarison says "Girls as young as 13 become pregnant. The pelvis of the girl is too small, so during delivery the head of the baby gets stuck. As it takes a long time to reach a hospital, the bladder can then erupt. After the delivery, these girls are often rejected because of the smell of leaking urine and the additional expense of soap and pads. In some villages, people even believe that these women are evil. Depression often follows."

Figures from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) reveal that the Sofia region has one of the highest maternal death rates in the country, with 1 in every 10 mothers dying during childbirth. Nationwide, 3,750 mothers and 16,500 babies die each year during or soon after delivery. Another 75,000 women experience medical problems as a result of childbirth, and an estimated 40 percent of these women receive insufficient care. Hospitals in the region, as well as UNFPA, are training community health workers and matrons to avoid delays in getting women in need of care during childbirth to a hospital. Dr Jean Francois Xavier of UNFPA said the goal

was to reduce the three kinds of delay: leaving home, reaching a hospital, and finding care once they arrive.¹⁶⁵

Violence Against Women

The 2010 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) highlighted the effect of heightened poverty levels on women, in particular becoming more susceptible to sexual exploitation and more likely to become involved in prostitution and sexual tourism.

Poverty can cause women and girls to resort to prostitution in order to generate an income, but this line of income generating has its risks attached high instances of trafficking and sexual violence.¹⁶⁶

Women, Peace and Security

Malagasy women took part in a workshop on peace and security processes and mechanisms organised by the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance cluster led by the Institute of Security Studies and national focal point Federation Pour La Promotion Feminine et Infantine. The workshop objectives included to sensitize women on a gendered approach to peace and security; build the capacity of Malagasy women so that they may contribute effectively to peacemaking and peacebuilding in the country; share experiences, good practices and lessons learnt and to advocate for women's participation in peace and security structures and processes and to form a national working group on gender, peace and security aligned to the SADC Gender Alliance.¹⁶⁷

The participation of Malagasy women in national peace and security issues are of important, namely in the Zone Rouges (Red Zone) where in nearly 200,000 square metre of territory the government exerts little or no control and banditry thrives. According to analysts, alleged cattle raiders are armed and are reported to now be conducting veritable raids, taking women and children hostage and burning down houses.¹⁶⁸

Education

In Madagascar 70% of girls of school going age stop their studies after primary education, this is extremely high and so the National Movement for Education for All in Madagascar (NMEAM) launched a campaign for positive discrimination in favour of girls in 2011. The campaign is promoting Article 14 of the SADC Gender Protocol which calls upon States Parties, by 2015 to enact laws that promote equal access to and retention in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education in accordance with the Protocol on Education and Training and the Millennium Development Goals.

¹⁶⁹

Economic Empowerment

The UNDP has linked Malagasy and Pan African Women's economic empowerment to women's legal rights to securing land and property. Women's ability to own or access land can lay the foundation for generating an income out of the land, soil or premises.¹⁷⁰ Malagasy law allows equal land and property rights amongst both men and women. However, those rights are often denied in cases of inheritance and sharing among spouses, and are all the more frequent given that most couples are married under the customary practices rather than common law.¹⁷¹

Malawi

Malawi ratified the Maputo Protocol in May 2005. CEDAW was ratified by Malawi in March 1987. However, Malawi has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Women's Human Rights

Malawi has The National Gender Policy that aims to raise awareness of gender matters, legal rights of women, diet and the efficient utilization of food and nutrition, and the economic empowerment of women in conjunction with the poverty alleviation program. Another important aspect of the National Gender Policy is better access to reproductive health services.

In July 2012 the President launched the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Agenda in Malawi project which is to be implemented by the ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. The project aims to contribute to the acceleration of efforts towards the advancement of gender equality and equity as a human right for the reduction of HIV and AIDS and poverty. This is in line with the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS II) and the National Gender Policy (NGP) which progress into the gender Sector Wide Approach (SWAP).

¹⁷²

In 2011, Parliament passed the Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection Act) Act No. 14 of 2011 to provide widows and daughters equal inheritance rights and address problems with widows being denied their inheritance upon the death of a spouse. The treatment of widows has been noted as a particularly serious problem in Malawi. The Women and Law in Southern Africa group report that the practice of dispossession and 'property-grabbing' from widows is common. The government notes that the previous law had not been effectively enforced, as there have been no prosecutors appointed. The new law represents positive developments on a number of fronts. Firstly, it sets out

principles of fairness that should be applied where there is no will. If the spouse and children are left out of a will, which has been a problem for widows in Malawi, the new law makes a provision for the spouse and children to make a claim for inheritance. The law stipulates that customary laws do not apply for inheritance and also makes property grabbing a specific offence. Finally, the law provides for the Minister to engage in public awareness activities to educate the judiciary, traditional authorities and the public about the new provisions.¹⁷³

Women's Political Participation

Malawi is the second country in Africa with a female president. Mrs. Joyce Banda, is the first ever female president in Malawi and the entire southern Africa region. Mrs. Banda ascended to presidency following the death of the former president Dr. Binguwa Mutharika on 5th April 2012. The federal election in May 2009 in Malawi saw the proportion of female Members of Parliament rise from 14 to 22% but they still remain underrepresented in decision-making positions and are disproportionately affected by poverty.



Joyce Banda, Malawi's new president, is eager to rebuild the

country's relations with western aid donors. Photograph: Amos Gumulira/AFP/Getty Images

Women ministers stand at 21% with 4 out of 19 women holding ministerial positions as per the UN Women, Women in Politics 2012 statistics. Current constraints to women's political participation in Africa and especially in Malawi include limited income and education as well as gender stereotypes and a traditional view of the woman as staying at home. .¹⁷⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Recent indicators show an improvement in health outcomes. According to the recently released Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS 2010), compared to 2004 statistics, infant mortality declined from 76 to 66 deaths per 1,000 live births. There has also been progress in reducing the maternal mortality rate from 984 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2004 to 635 in 2010. Despite the improvement, Malawi is still unlikely to meet the MDG target for maternal mortality. In addition, differences still persist with regard to urban and rural outcomes across these indicators.¹⁷⁵

Malawi is making headway with meeting the targets on HIV treatment with the prevalence rate among the 15-49 age groups falling from 12% in 2004 to 11% in 2010. The improvement in the HIV incidence rate likely reflects increased awareness of the disease; better reproductive health and child health programmes, improved diagnosis and universal access to treatment. Challenges remain with regard to the high cost of care, shortages of essential supplies and socio-cultural and economic issues.¹⁷⁶ The Extended National Action Framework for HIV and AIDS: 2010-2012 has been aligned with the MGDS with the exception of the timeframe. .¹⁷⁷

Violence against Women

VAW in Malawi grabbed the headlines in January 2012 with the reports of violence and public sexual harassment of women. Women were 'boored', physically assaulted and stripped naked, supposedly for wearing trousers, leggings or mini-skirts. Section 24(2) of the constitution invalidates any practice that discriminates against women, particularly sexual abuse, harassment and violence. .¹⁷⁸

Women Peace and Security

Malawi as a member of the South African Development Community (SADC) has a Protocol on Gender and Development which references to UNSCR 1325 and other instruments protecting women's rights. Article 28 specifically requires states parties to endeavour to introduce measures to ensure that women have equal representation and participation in key decision-making positions related to conflict resolution and peace building, in line with UNSCR 1325. It also requires states parties to take steps to prevent human rights violations of women in situations of armed and other forms of conflict and to prosecute perpetrators of such violations. .¹⁷⁹

Education

In the education sector, The National Gender Policy (NGP), advocates reduced repetition, absenteeism, and dropout rates for girls, especially in the higher classes where the gender parity index decreased from 1.04 in the first four standards of primary education to 0.96 in Standards 5 to 8 (MOEST, 2008a). The policy also advocates the increased enrolment of girls in science and technology and the implementation of a gender-responsive curriculum. .¹⁸⁰

Economic Empowerment

Malawi is considered one of the least developed countries in Africa and is highly dependent on aid. Its gross domestic product (GDP) grew an average of 6.5% between 2005 and 2010. While women in Malawi use credit and insurance at levels relatively similar to men, they are 4.1% less likely to use savings. But the usage of finance also varies: women considered financially illiterate were 6.1% less likely and women without collateral were 7.2% less likely than their male peers to use finance. .¹⁸¹

There are associations whose aim is to empower women economically. The National Association of Business Women that offers Training, provision of credit, policy advocacy, information dissemination and networking. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare mission is to promote social economic empowerment and protection of women and children using community and welfare approaches.

Mauritius

Mauritius signed the Maputo Protocol in January 2005 but has not ratified it. CEDAW was ratified by Mauritius in July 1984. Mauritius has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation UNSCR 1325.

Women's Human Rights

Mauritius has elaborated a National Gender Action Plan that endorses gender equality, and a Policy Paper on Ageing, which focuses on the integration of the elderly into society. On gender, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranks Mauritius 9th in Africa. In terms of the female participation rate in the labour force, the 2011-12 GCR ranks Mauritius amongst the bottom 50 globally, at 115th out of 142 countries. The Equal Opportunities Act passed in August 2009 is yet to be proclaimed. To accelerate progress, the government, through the 2010-2015 Economic Restructuring and Competitiveness Programme (ERCP) has specific provisions for women including retraining those who have been retrenched, and facilitating their re-employment. ¹⁸²

The Mauritian Civil Code provides both spouses with the same rights and obligations in regard to parental authority. Mauritian women have equal rights as men in regard to inheritance. Widows and widowers inherit the property of the deceased spouse, whatever the circumstances and the matrimonial regime, even if the deceased did not leave a written will. There are no legal or customary restrictions that favour male heirs over females. ¹⁸³ The right to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of gender in the field of employment is set out in the Sex Discrimination Act 2002.

Mauritius has a Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare.

The Ministry is mandated to cater for women's rights, child development and family welfare. It has been entrusted the responsibility to design and implement social policies and programmes, which promote women empowerment, child development as well as consolidate and safeguard family welfare. Actions of the Ministry are therefore aimed at creating the right conditions and environment for the harmonious development of the Mauritian children, women and their families.

As of April 2012 Mauritius was set to launch a National Women's Council Bill to boost their empowerment and fair representation in high offices, it will also promote women's gender equality through consultation with

government officials and further promote women's agenda politically and socially. ¹⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

Classified in 2010 by the Economist Intelligence Unit as the only full democracy in Africa, Mauritius enjoys political stability and civil liberties. Elections in May 2010 saw the emergence of a governing coalition involving the Labour Party led by Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, the Mouvement Socialiste Militant (MSM) led by Pravind Jugnauth and the Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate. In November, 2010 Monique Ohsan Bellepeau became the first female Vice President, a positive development in the women's empowerment agenda.

Although Mauritius has improved its position at the last General Elections in 2010 in parliament, only 18.6 percent (13 out of 70 members) are women. Furthermore, there are only two women cabinet ministers out of a total of 25. A study by Gender Links published in June 2007, "At the Coalface- Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa", shows that Mauritius has one of the lowest female representations in local government in the SADC region with only 6.4% of women.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the 2011 Human Development Report, the country has made most progress in health. In this area, life expectancy at birth stands at 73.4 years, under-five child mortality has been reduced by two thirds since 1990 to 17 per one thousand live births in 2009, HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is less than 0.2% amongst 15-24 year olds, and the country is malaria-risk free.

Education

Mauritius is making good progress in reducing gender disparities. In education near gender parity has been reached in primary school and girls dominate slightly in secondary education. Universal access to primary education has been achieved and the expected years of schooling for 7 year olds at 13.6 years in 2011 is within the average for the category of high human development

Mozambique

Mozambique ratified the Maputo Protocol in December 2005 and CEDAW on the 21st April 1997. Mozambique has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women

Mozambique is making a concerted effort in mainstreaming gender issues into national policies and programmes ranging from publicising the law on domestic violence against women, support for integrating a gender perspective into national development policies and programmes, and the institutional strengthening of the Councils for Women's Advancement. This gender mainstreaming is being supported and funded by the Catalan Development Cooperation Agency, which will disburse 60,000 euros (about 78,000 US dollars) to finance activities contained in Mozambique's National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women, for the period 2010-2014. ¹⁸⁵

Women's Political Participation

35% of the current members of Mozambique's parliament are women, and for the first time in its history, parliament has a female speaker, FRELIMO'S Veronica Macamo. Both the main political parties, FRELIMO (Portuguese acronym for the Liberation Front of Mozambique) and RENAMO, have reserved a third of their electoral lists for women. Both also have women as the leaders of their parliamentary blocs.

Linette Olofsson left Mozambique's parliament seven years ago to start a community agricultural project called the Nfuma Yatho. Olofsson is very candid about her time as a parliamentarian and is equally candid in her criticisms of her fellow female ministers, "One of our main obstacles is what we call 'party discipline'. Mozambican women in parliament are not united. They are more committed to their parties' rules than to women's objectives. They don't trust women from a rival party. We have quantity, not quality," she says. ¹⁸⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Twenty years after the end of the post-independence civil war, the country has made great strides related to the health and development of its people. However, low use of contraceptives, HIV prevalence, and maternal mortality due to unsafe abortion remain persistent problems for the country. The prevalence of modern contraceptive use among married women has remained at only 11%. 13.1% of women and 9.2% of men between the ages of 15-29 test positive for HIV. ¹⁸⁷

Violence Against Women

The fatal targeting of elderly women on the basis that they are witches is a continuing problem in Mozambique with sixteen women being killed in 2011. This issue was raised in a demonstration in Beira against violence against women, organized by the NGO Action for Community Development (ASADEC). The Provincial Director for Women's Affairs, Diquessone Tole supports the fight against the targeting of suspected witches through making efforts to reduce rates of violence by publicizing the laws against domestic violence. ¹⁸⁸

While country passed a law against domestic violence in 2009, spousal rape and violence goes unpunished. The case of a woman being raped by seventeen men in December in northern Mozambique highlighted the police's inadequacies in investigating rape allegations. Investigators allegedly have yet to visit the crime scene and the 17 attackers walk free as tradition clashes with law. ¹⁸⁹

Women, Peace and Security

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) is a well-recognised initiative that targets post conflict regions and the groups fighting in the conflict. However, the DDR program that was carried out in Mozambique has been criticised for not having focused enough on women given they were often forced against their will to fight, serve and act as sex slaves for rebel fighters right across war torn countries in Africa including Mozambique. What is more, many women participated as soldiers in the conflict, yet were unable to benefit as a male soldier would from the DDR program. Many of these women find it hard to reintegrate into their communities without proper support from government and international organisations because of the stigma of living with armed groups.

Education

MDG 2 of Achieve Universal Primary Education is an important goal in Mozambique with the latest government statistics indicating that just over 60 percent of Nampula district students are able to finish primary school and move on to secondary school; from those, less than 15 percent complete their secondary education. Cultural practices also play a role, and according to the Mozambican government, girls account for most of the students who drop out of secondary

school in the centre and north of the country. However, the situation has improved significantly in the last decade, thanks to the Mozambican government's National Plan to Empower Women, which has as one of its objectives ensuring that girls stay in school as long as possible.¹⁹⁰



UN photo

Economic Empowerment

The issues of women's health and economic empowerment have been combined in a project initiated by International Relief and Development (IRD) called "Women First", funded by USAID and implemented in partnership with World Vision, is designed to help prevent HIV/AIDS in a country with infection rates of up to 16 percent. The program achieves this through health training, including condom use and other healthy sexual behaviours. The next phase of the program is further outreach to girls, especially those at risk of leaving school and engaging in dangerous sexual behaviours. "Women First" will introduce girls to the program's business model, providing opportunities to both learn and teach healthy behaviours, earn income, and partner with mothers and other adults on activities to strengthen their families and communities.¹⁹¹

Rwanda

Rwanda ratified CEDAW in 1981, and the Optional Protocol in 2008. Rwanda was one of the first countries to ratify the Maputo Protocol in June, 2004. Rwanda developed its first National Action Plan (NAP) for UN SCR 1325 in 2009. Rwanda is ranked 28 out of 86 in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index. Rwanda was ranked 166th place in the 2011 Human Development index, with a score of 0.429. The country's ranking in the 2011 Gender Inequality Index is 82nd (out of 146) countries, with a score of 0.453. Rwanda was not ranked in the 2011 Global Index Gender Gap Index.

Human Rights of Women

The Rwanda Constitution of 2003 prohibits gender-based discrimination, but women in the country continue to face social inequalities.¹⁹² The 1992 Family Code improved the legal position of women in regard to marriage, divorce and child custody. In April 2009 Rwanda promulgated the Law on prevention, protection and punishment of any gender-based violence, the country's first comprehensive legislation on violence against women. This bill addresses spousal violence, marital rape, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse of children in its definition of gender-based violence, and lists the occurrence of such violence as grounds for divorce.

The law recommends imprisonment of between six months and two years for these crimes. However, most of these incidents remain within the extended family and are not reported or prosecuted. The government has set up mechanism to address these issues, whereby the Police headquarters in Kigali have a hotline for domestic violence, an examination room and trained counsellors who provide access to a police hospital for more intensive intervention. A broad network of support has been set up: each police station in the

nation has a gender desk, officer trained in gender sensitivity, and public outreach program.¹⁹³

Rwanda has also recently strengthened its laws protecting women's physical integrity. Rape, including spousal rape is a criminal offense in Rwanda, with sentences of 5-10 years, or life imprisonment, if it results in the victim's death.

There is no evidence to suggest that female genital mutilation is practiced in Rwanda.

The 1999 Inheritance Law established rights for the inheritance of land and other property, and the 2005 Organic Land Law formally abolished customary Law where it governed land rights. The law allows women to inherit property from their fathers and husbands and couples may make their own legal property arrangements. However, women's legal rights to land are still undermined by the continuation of discriminatory practices, which are prejudicial to women and also due to negative attitudes towards women's land rights in Rwanda.

Steps are being taken to educate the public, both by the Rwanda government, local NGOs and UN Women by training women paralegals on Rwanda's relevant family

and land laws and its legal and policy framework on women's rights as a result of which women are successfully claiming their rights to property. ¹⁹⁴

Reproductive Health and AIDS/HIV

The World Health Organization has ranked Rwanda in 2012 as one of the five countries that have reduced maternal mortality by more than half. It was credited for prioritizing family planning and women's health. According to a report, "Trends in Maternal Mortality", every two minutes a woman dies of pregnancy related complications, the most common causes being severe bleeding after childbirth, infections, and high blood pressure during pregnancy, and unsafe abortion.

Currently in Rwanda, out of 100,000 new births, the number of child deaths has been reduced from 1,071 in 2010 to 467 in 2012 according to Dr. Fidel Ngabo, the Coordinator of Maternal and Child Health at the Ministry of Health. He states that, "due to simple initiatives such as increasing the number of ambulances and establishing hospitals and maternal centres across the country, maternal deaths have reduced progressively." Expectant mothers are encouraged to adopt good health practices and most important, "there is significant political will, where multiple interventions have been made to enable pregnant mothers to give birth in hospitals."

Abortion is legal in Rwanda in cases where the women's mental or physical health is in danger. Affirming the importance of women's access to safe and legal abortion, the Rwandan government has lifted its reservation to Article 14(2)(c) of the Maputo Protocol. Under the Protocol, the Rwandan Government is now required to "protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus." ¹⁹⁵

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) unsafe abortions is one of the most easily preventable causes of maternal mortality and Rwanda has one of the worst rates in the world, at 340 deaths per 100,000 live births. Rwanda has taken a critical step forward in its efforts to respect women's fundamental reproductive and human rights.

Women, Peace and Security

Rwanda experienced Africa's worst genocide in 1994 where an estimated 800,000 people were killed. Sexual violence, rape, torture, mutilation are what women of Rwanda faced during and after the genocide, the scars of which they bear to this day. Over the last several years, the Rwandan government has made efforts to

promote gender equality and women's empowerment and women have been involved in reconciliation efforts, peace building as well economic recovery after the devastation from the genocide.

Rwanda signed its first National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2009, a significant commitment and initiative to its obligation to post conflict issues. Avega Agahozo, a non-profit organisation, formed in 1995 after the genocide by 50 widows, helps women who were affected as result of the challenges, trains them to be economically independent and also provides counselling for the women to deal with mental and psychological trauma from the genocide. ¹⁹⁶ This is a trend all over Rwanda, with women engaging in peace building initiatives as well as rebuilding their lives and communities with the help of the government and civil society.

The local Gacaca courts, a form of transitional justice, which President Paul Kagame described as "an African solution to African Problems," have also been instrumental in reconciliation and achieving justice at the local communities. ¹⁹⁷ Members of the community see tangible justice as dispensed locally. According to a report by Human Rights Watch: "Justice Compromised; The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-based Gacaca Courts", the Rwanda government used this system of Gacaca to deal with extraordinary circumstances it faced after the genocide and it attempted to strike a balance between conventional due process and the overwhelming need for swift justice, hopefully helping rape victims face closure and start rebuilding their lives.

Women's Political Participation

Women are at the forefront of politics in Rwanda. The country ranks number one for gender party boasting 56% female representation in Parliament. Women hold 45 of the 80 seats in the lower house and nine of the 26 in the Upper house. Rwanda introduced a 30% quota as part of its post-genocide constitution. ¹⁹⁸

Women and men have the same rights to vote in and stand for elections in Rwanda. Women also hold 9 ministerial positions, representing 36% of the Cabinet.

Women are at the forefront and have spearheaded legal reforms to improve women's prosperity and inheritance rights, and have passed laws to protect women from domestic violence and marital rape. However, there is still need for women to contest for positions that have long been held by men, such as district mayor.

Economic Empowerment

Women play an important role in the formal and informal sectors in Rwanda since the 1994 genocide,

although a majority of the women still work in subsistence farming. Approximately one-third of women of Rwanda now head their households according to UNDP.

Rwanda has experienced steady economic recovery and the government remains dedicated to a strong and enduring climate for the country focusing on poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and expansion of export base and trade liberalization. The current trends in the country are banking reforms and zero tolerance for corruption by the President Paul Kagame, which has led to lower corruption levels.

According to the ministry of Industry and Commerce 2011 Establishment Census, women managed approximately 26% of all formal enterprises. However, men owned key assets of most households, particularly those at the lower end of the economic spectrum, making formal bank credit inaccessible to many women and rendering it difficult to start and expand business. Women working in the public sector represent 45.5% as the latest figures from the National Institute of Statistics (NISR) indicate.

Land in Rwanda is a source of wealth and economic empowerment. However, the land tenure systems and laws tend not to favour women as they do men, even though women do 85% of the work both for subsistence and commercial purposes. For example, where the 1999 Inheritance Law established the legal rights for the inheritance of land and other property, the 2005 Organic Land Law formally abolishes Land Law where it governed land rights. The 2005 Law also encourages long tenure security through long term (99 year) leases and land registration is actively encouraging titling of

land. Women are involved in the coordination and registration process.

Yet, despite gaining a certain level of independence and legal protection since the genocide, women still face difficulties accessing private property.¹⁹⁹ According to EnockNkurunziza, Executive Secretary of the Youth Association for Human Rights Promotion and Development, "it becomes very hard for a wife to take decisions in a home since her stand economically does not make an impact." Women in Rwanda do not appear to face any legal restrictions in accessing credit, but in practice, have very limited access to bank loans. Government sponsored micro-credit schemes have improved their access to financial resources.

Education

Rwanda is one of the leading countries promoting education in East Africa, both in the sciences and in the Arts. Statistics show that girls are enrolled in schools at a young age with an equal or more percentage than boys but tend to drop out at higher levels of education. By the end of 2011 statistics from the Ministry of Education show that at pre-primary 51.4% of girls were enrolled in schools, 50.9% at primary level, 51.5% at secondary level, 38.8% at vocational level and 43.2% at tertiary level.²⁰⁰

Rwanda also has "Vision 2020," which emphasises the importance of promoting gender equality and equity through education by continuously updating and adapting its laws on gender. It will support education for all, eradicate all forms of discrimination, fight against poverty, and practice a positive discrimination policy in favour of women.²⁰¹

Seychelles

Seychelles ratified the Maputo Protocol in March 2006. CEDAW was ratified by the Seychelles in May 1992. Seychelles has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). Generally, the Seychelles has achieved most of the MDGs, especially Goals 1 to 7. Health and social development indicators, such as access to education, women's empowerment, sanitation, safe drinking water and health, literacy rates, universal coverage for essential medicines, ARVs and access to new technologies, such as the Internet and cellular telephones, are high.²⁰²

Women's Human Rights

Unlike many other places in the world, the Seychelles is a Matriarchal society. The mother runs the household and makes financial decisions. At the national level, Seychelles has a Gender Secretariat, housed within the Social Development Policy Division of the Minister for Social Affairs, Community Development and Sports. The role of the unit is to act as the permanent Lead Agency within the Gender Management System (GMS) with the goal of facilitating gender mainstreaming in all policies,

programmes and activities of the government, the private sector and civil society.²⁰³

Seychelles is set to become the first SADC country to develop a national gender policy and gender action plan that is aligned to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development after it drafted a National Gender Action Plan from January 2012. According to the 2011 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer produced by the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance, the country comes out number 1 out of the 15 SADC countries in terms of progress towards achieving the 28 targets in the Gender

Protocol. The Southern Africa Gender and Development Index (SGDI) which is based on empirical data on 23 indicators in six sectors introduced in the Barometer in 2011 places the country at 79% of where it needs to be by 2015, the target date for meeting the 28 targets of the Protocol. The six sectors are: governance, education, economy, media, sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS. ²⁰⁴

Women's Political Participation

Following the 2011 elections in Seychelles, Women won 11 of the 25 seats filled under the majority system and three women were nominated under the compensatory seats, bringing the total number of women to 14 out of the full 31 members (45.16%). ²⁰⁵

Further, as of March 2012, Seychelles now has three women ministers; one female Central Bank governor, one female vice-chancellor, one female pro-vice-chancellor, three new women chief executives, and seven out of the 15 principal secretaries are women.

"It is fitting that on the eve of International Women's Day, I am appointing women to key positions within government as well as the University of Seychelles. Women form part of an integral leadership role in the New Seychelles. I am confident they will serve the public well and add new dynamism in the public service. We are aiming to fulfil the MDG Plus targets, and become an example of women's professional development in the world," President of the Seychelles. ²⁰⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognized the right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children. Health clinics and local health NGOs were permitted to operate freely in disseminating information on family planning under the guidance of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture. There were no restrictions on the right to access contraceptives, but few couples reportedly used these measures. The government provided free childbirth services, although women traditionally preferred using nurses or midwives during childbirth as well as for prenatal and postnatal care, unless the mother or child suffered serious health complications. Men and women received equal access to diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. There were no legal, social, cultural, or other barriers that limited access to these services. ²⁰⁷ The Mortality rate; infant (per 1;000 live births) in Seychelles was last reported at 11.70 in 2010, according to a World Bank report published in 2012.

Violence against Women

Domestic violence against women has been a problem in the Seychelles. Police rarely intervened in a domestic dispute unless it involved a weapon or major assault. Authorities often dismissed the few cases that reached a prosecutor, and the court generally ordered light sentences for perpetrators. The Family Tribunal issued 268 restraining orders, 82 eviction orders, and 124 referrals of persons on restraining order to probation services during the year. During 2011, GEM Plus, a local NGO that promotes awareness of domestic violence, worked on the Gender Justice Barometer and translated the Gender Protocol of the Southern African Development Community into Creole, one of the three official languages of the country. ²⁰⁸

Rape, spousal rape, and domestic abuse are criminal offenses punishable by a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment. The police registered 63 sexual assault cases for the year, although most rape cases went unreported for fear of reprisal or social stigma. The Social Affairs Division of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture and the Women in Action and Solidarity Organization (WASO), a local NGO, provided counselling services to 15 domestic violence victims, including rape victims during the year. Nine sexual assault cases were prosecuted during the year, and 36 cases remained under investigation. ²⁰⁹

Education

In Seychelles, education is free and compulsory for 10 years or up to the age of 16. As a result, Seychelles has achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 for many years now with a near 100% primary completion rate and about a 94% secondary school enrolment rate. Furthermore, in 2009, the education department embarked on a reform of key aspects of the education system under the Education Reform Action Plan 2009-2010, with the aim of creating a high quality education and human resources development system that is responsive to national development needs. In addition, the government approved the Seychelles Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in 2011, which is a multi-sectoral policy document for all stakeholders in early childhood care and education. ²¹⁰

Somalia

Women's human rights in Somalia are a serious concern, as is peace and security, displacement, health care and education. Clashes amongst warring parties, the drought and the food crisis have caused an exodus to refugee camps (largely women and children) in neighbouring countries. Somalia has neither signed nor ratified CEDAW, though the Maputo Protocol was ratified in February 2006. Somalia has not developed a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

²¹¹

Human Rights of Women

The new Somali constitution that Somali leaders voted for in August 2012 stipulates a quota for women's political participation whereby women will hold thirty percent of seats. This has the potential to impact positively in many areas of women's daily lives, as the influence female politicians' harness is potentially transformative.²¹²

Women's Political Participation

The London Conference on Somalia held on February 23rd 2012 and attended by the Somali Transitional Authority and international heads of state was criticized by some for not including Somali women in the discussions.²¹³ Women have made calls to engage in the transitional process, as the Transitional Authorities mandate came to an end in August 2012.²¹⁴ This fragile state has excluded women from participating in political and public life for the best part of two decades mainly due to state collapse and insecurity. The new constitution currently promises 30 percent of seats to women.²¹⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Many Somali women lack the right to decide upon the spacing of childbirth. Psychological and physical demands can be made upon women and those who reject such demands can go on to suffer forms of violence.²¹⁶ Child and maternal mortality rates in Somaliland is incredibly high partly due to low numbers of medical personnel and facilities. Ettie Higgins, head of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) field office in Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland says "Somaliland has one of the worst maternal mortality ratios in the world, estimated to be between 10,443 and 14,004 per 100,000 live births, "The infant mortality rate is 73/1,000 while the under-five mortality [rate] is about 117/1,000". "There are a little over 100 doctors in the country, both in the public and private sectors, and about the same number of registered midwives."²¹⁷

Violence Against Women

Gender Based Violence is a serious issue in Somalia and numerous reports have indicated that Somali women are falling prey to bandits and soldiers invading refugee camps. Violence against refugees has only escalated with the escalation of armed conflict. Moreover, domestic violence occurs all too often in Somalia.²¹⁸ African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has made strides in training the Somali Police Force (SPF) to deal more effectively with Gender Based Violence.²¹⁹ Other forms of VAW such as early marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic violence are widespread in Somalia.

Women, Peace and Security

Al Shabaab fighters have posed a significant risk to peace and security of Somali women, as reports claim that the fighting group has forced women and girls into marriage, committed rapes and attacked schools and teachers.²²⁰ Reports have surfaced that Al Shabaab has arbitrarily arrested women for unknown reasons.²²¹

Education

Much like many other developing countries the second Millennium Development Goal, achieving 'universal primary education', is of concern and important strides are being made to achieve this. The real concern for the girl child in Somalia is that she typically drops out of education at middle or secondary school levels, as a result of cultural and or economic pressures.²²²

Economic Empowerment

This fragile state and insecurity makes economic empowerment difficult, but women are surviving through their own entrepreneurial spirit, such as Faduma Aden Mohamud, 37, who manages to survive in Mogadishu selling samosas and cold drinks in a refugee camp to support her large family.²²³

Tanzania

Tanzania ratified CEDAW in 1985, and the Optional Protocol in 2004. The country ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2007. However CEDAW has still not been mainstreamed into law in Tanzania. As long as the Convention is not a part of the national legal framework and its provisions are not enforceable in the courts.²²⁴ Tanzania does not have a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Women's Human Rights

The Constitution proclaims equality between men and women, and refuses discrimination based on sex. The Government has signed several international and regional agreements on protection of women, and in coordination with the civil society, the government is taking steps towards the revision of national legislation that is discriminating against women, promote informative campaigns on women's rights, and condemns violence against women.

It has operationalised this commitment in the National Women and Gender Policy (2000) and the National Strategy for Gender and Development (NSGD, 2002) which identifies the major constraints and interventions to achieving gender equity for sustainable human development in the Country. Particular emphasis has been placed on gender equality in the new national development agenda, MKUKUTA II, unveiled in 2010. The Human Development Report 2011 ranks Tanzania at 119 out of 146 countries in the Gender Inequality Index and compares relatively well with neighbouring countries.

Women's Political Participation

On 31 October 2010, Tanzania held its fourth general elections since the re-introduction of the multi-party system in 1992. The National Assembly is unicameral with 357 Seats. 239 members are elected by direct popular vote in single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post system. 102 seats are reserved for women elected by their political parties on the basis of proportional representation. Among the political parties represented in the National Assembly, 5 members are indirectly elected by the Zanzibar House of Representatives and up to 10 members may be appointed by the President. 1 seat is reserved for the Attorney-General; members serve 5-year terms.

Tanzanian women hold 36% or 126 out of 350 seats in parliament and 27.6% of ministers are women, or 8 out of 29 ministers. There are 3 female deputy ministers and 60 councillors.²²⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2010 Maternal deaths were defined as any death

that was reported as occurring during pregnancy, childbirth, or within two months after the birth or termination of a pregnancy. The maternal mortality ratio during the ten-year period before the survey is estimated as 454 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. In other words, for every 1,000 live births in Tanzania during this period, about four to five women died of pregnancy-related causes.²²⁶

HIV and AIDS particularly affect women in Tanzania. In 2008, women comprised over 60% of people living with HIV. Among the 15-24 age groups, this figure rises to 75%. Women tend to become infected earlier, which is partly due to the tendency of women to have older partners or get married earlier. Another reason for the higher prevalence is the difficulty women experience negotiating safer sex because of gender inequality. One example of women's dependency is the widespread culture of 'sugar daddies': women will often accept the sexual advances of older men, or 'sugar daddies' for a variety of reasons including money, affection and social advancement.²²⁷

The Tanzania Commission for AIDS²²⁸ has put in place the National Multi Sectoral Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS 2008 -2012 which is a broad national strategic plan designed to guide the country's response as a whole to the epidemic. It calls for scaling up the comprehensive multi-sectoral response in prevention, care and treatment and impact mitigation that is gender responsive. As expected, it puts a strong emphasis on prevention of new HIV infections with special focus on women, the youth and high risk groups. It also emphasizes on quality continuum of care for AIDS patients and better management of most vulnerable children.

Violence against Women

To stop the occurrence of violence, which may cause great physical harm, death, psychological abuse, separation, divorce, and a host of other social ills, the Government of Tanzania has formulated the National Development Vision 2025, The Women and Gender Development Policy of 2000, and the National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (2001-2015). The Parliament has also amended the penal code, Cap 16

(Rev. 2002), specifically section 130, which addresses issues of sexual violence.²²⁹

With regards to girls, the demographic and health survey 2010 shows that the prevalence rate of Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C) stands at 15%. However, the Tanzanian Special Provision Act, a 1998 amendment to the penal code, specifically prohibits FGC. A National Plan of Action (NPA) to combat FGM/C (2001 to 2015) was developed to provide guidance on the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. The 1st of February of each year is a national FGM/C day, used to sensitize the community on its harmful effects.

Education

Demographic and Health Survey data for 2010 indicates that 20% of women aged 20-24 had no education at all, compared to 9.6% of men. Secondary school completion rates for the same age bracket were 19.5% and 32.7% respectively. This would indicate some preference towards sons in regard to access to education. However, there are a number of efforts undertaken by Tanzania in the area of education, including the adoption of the Education Sector Development Programme (2000-2015), which incorporates the objective of providing education to all women and men by 2015, as well as a number of

other special programmes to promote the education of girls, in collaboration with the development partners and NGOs. Such programmes include: a training fund for Tanzanian women, community-based education for girls, (the building of hostels and boarding schools and setting up of educational trust funds); primary education and special programmes for secondary education which introduces capitation grants; complementary basic education in the Tanzanian mainland and the Zanzibar education programme; and higher education programmes.

Economic Empowerment

About 60% of women in Tanzania live in absolute poverty. In the rural sector and the poor urban suburbs, women carry a heavier burden because by tradition, women lack property rights and they also lack adequate knowledge on existing credit facilities. Most of women also depend on poor technology, which consume their time and energy. A 2004 amendment to the Land Act gave Tanzanian women the right to mortgage land to enable them to access to bank loans. However, customary practices continue to restrict women's access to and control over loans and credit.²³⁰ The Tanzania Women's Bank Limited opened in 2009 whose aim is to empower women economically and socially.

Zambia

Zambia ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 2nd of May 2006. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Zambia on the 21st of June 1985. Zambia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Human Rights of Women

A key obstacle to gender equality in Zambia is persistence of discriminatory practices in the family arising from the dual legal system and high levels of gender based violence. Discriminatory customary laws prevail in areas of personal status, marriage, divorce and inheritance. Article 11 of Zambia's Constitution guarantees the equal status of women. However, article 23 of the Constitution permits discriminatory laws in the areas of personal law and customary law.

The Penal Code in Zambia prohibits rape with heavy penalties including life imprisonment. Marital rape is not prohibited under the Penal Code. There is no specific law against domestic violence; however the Penal Code's assault provisions can apply to cases of spousal abuse.

Political Participation

Women represent 14% of the Parliament, 17% of Cabinet Ministers and 13.3% of Deputy Ministers.²³¹

Violence Against Women

Although the nation of Zambia has started the process of integrating legal protective and reporting mechanisms such as CEDAW, gender-based violence continues to be a problem in Zambia with the number of reported cases on the rise.²³² Zambia's first lady, Dr. Christine Kaseba (also known in Zambia as Mrs. Michael Sata), is calling for stiffer penalties for perpetrators of violence against women and children in the region. Regional advocates say the problem may be centered on violence inside the home.

Zambia Police Services Victim Support unit cases now suggest that an increase in the number of reported

cases of violence against women and girls with spousal violence and child abuse is topping the list. Some sections of society have, however, attributed the increase in the number of reported cases to more widespread and greater public awareness of the problems of violence in Zambian society. "It is important that we have stiffer penalties so that people think twice before committing such offenses. It will also help us save lives of the vulnerable who are mostly women and children," asserts Dr Kaseba. Meanwhile, as advocates work inside the region to reduce domestic violence, the YMCA in Zambia is working with Zambia's youth to bring preventive measures to the table as members of Zambian society who can make a difference. The programs are the most cost effective way to deal with violence within Zambian homes, communities and the larger society says the YWCA. ²³³

Other initiatives to address violence against women include the project set up by Panos Institute of Southern Africa (PSAF). PSAF recently launched a campaign directed at men, asking them to address the issue of violence against women head-on. PSAF has selected three satellite points for the campaign in Lusaka, Kafue and Chongwe. PyrdChitah, the PSAF regional governance and development manager, says this approach will target influential men in society who will then talk to other men to highlight the dangers of violence against women. PSAF contends that though government has put measures in place in form of a law, it is still vital to address the issues from the angle of tradition and culture, as belief lies at the core of people's decision-making. ²³⁴

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is signatory to regional and international conventions that outlaw the discrimination of women namely CEDAW, ratified in 1991 and the 2003 African Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa ratified in 2008. Zimbabwe does not have a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Women's Human Rights

Zimbabwe is in the process of drafting a new Constitution, which may have positive developments on gender equality if it is passed. Clause 3(1) (f), gender equality is recognised as one of the founding values and principles of the draft constitution. This is an important validation of gender equality so that in interpreting the constitution and all other laws, the value of gender equality will have to be taken into account. Clause 4.7 provides for equality and non-discrimination and recognises in specific terms the equality between men and women. Clause 4.7(2) states that: "Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

The overall HIV prevalence rate is 14%, with women at the forefront, according to Zambia's most recent demographic and health survey. Women between 15 and 49 have an infection rate of 16%. For men in that age range, it's 12%.

One reason Zambian women are more vulnerable to HIV is that they have difficulties controlling or negotiating sexual relations and condom use, a 2009 U.N. study found. Women also carry an extra burden, as they frequently are the ones to take care of HIV-infected relatives. Iola Morgan, the Zambia country director of the United Nations Development Program, says future programming must go beyond teaching girls and women about HIV. Girls and women, she says, must start helping to design HIV-prevention programming so their own needs can be known and met. ²³⁵

Women peace and Security

Zambian President Michael Sata has appointed the first female inspector-general of the Zambia Police and a new director-general of the Zambia Security Intelligence Service (ZSIS). Mr Sata has appointed Stella Libongani as the new inspector-general of the Zambia Police, becoming the first female to head the police since the country's independence in 1964. ²³⁶

equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres".

The adoption of a provision within the Constitution (amended in 2005) prohibiting laws that discriminate on the basis of sex and marital status is a positive step for gender equality. Article 23 of the constitution also provides for affirmative action to achieve substantive equality. The National Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Work Plan 2008 -2012 seeks to operationalise the commitments of the Government of Zimbabwe to gender equality and women's empowerment derived from various national policies, statutes and decisions.

Women's Political Participation

Zimbabwe's current electoral system is "First Past the Post", and there is no legislated quota to help increase women's political representation. Women make up just 17.9% of parliament, 18.5% of local government councillors and 17.1% of the Cabinet, which falls far below the 30 per cent target set by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Zimbabwe government has also ratified the Southern African Development Community Gender Protocol, which commits to achieving a 50-50 balance of men and women in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors by 2015.²³⁷

Zimbabwe is currently involved in nationwide consultations in preparation for the drafting of a new Constitution. The proposed constitution seeks to expand the House of Assembly by 60 more seats to specifically cater for women.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

For every 100,000 live births in the country, 790 women die from pregnancy related complications. Women are likely to be poorer and less educated than men, predisposing them to HIV infection and making it harder for them to access treatment, care and information. According to Zimbabwe's National AIDS Council, an estimated 60 percent of Zimbabwean adults living with HIV at the end of 2009 were female.²³⁸ The Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (ZNASP 11, 2011-2015) acknowledges that gender inequalities and gender norms continue to be determining factors in women and girls risk of contracting HIV. The National AIDS Council with support of the National Gender and HIV and AIDS Technical Working Group has embarked on a gender mainstreaming initiative to build capacities of institutions and communities. A training guide has been developed whose purpose is to promote increased and improved action on the intersecting issues of HIV and gender inequality.

Violence against Women

Zimbabwe can be lauded on the adoption of the prohibition of marital rape within the Criminal Law Act (Codification and Reform) 2006 (s.68 (a)) as well as the adoption of the Domestic Violence Act 2007. The definition of domestic violence under the Act is very wide and includes abuse derived from any cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate against or degrade women, such as forced virginity testing, female genital mutilation, pledging of women and girls for

purposes of appeasing spirits, abduction, child marriages, forced marriages, forced wife inheritance and other such practices.

Despite the adoption of legislation, violence against women, particularly domestic violence, remains widespread and perpetrators continue to benefit from impunity. The lack of training of law enforcement personnel, the lack of awareness of women's human rights, the fear of social stigma and reprisal contribute to the ineffectiveness of such laws. Since the criminalisation of marital rape, only one case of marital raped has been tried in court.²³⁹

Political violence against women is common in Zimbabwe, with assault, torture, threats, intimidation, displacement and property destruction frequently reported. The most recent report on political violence, by the Zimbabwe Peace Project, indicates again that women are not spared from political violence, with 20% of the victims in April 2010 being women, and women constituting 12% of the perpetrators.²⁴⁰

Education

According to the Human Development Report (HDR) for 2011, 48.8% of women having reached secondary or a higher form of education as compared to the 62% for men. While gender parity has been achieved with respect to enrolments at primary school level, inequalities increase with level of education. The budget allocation towards education increased from 12.3% of the budget in 2010 to 22.8% in 2011 and 25.1% in 2012.²⁴¹

Economic Empowerment

Zimbabwe launched a Broad Based Women's Economic Empowerment Framework that seeks to provide a guiding outline for economic empowerment and has inspired Government's efforts to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. The framework's strategic interventions include enhancing women's business ownership or entrepreneurship and facilitating women's participation in key economic decision-making positions. It also aims to ensure employment equity and assist women from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate and benefit from viable informal and formal livelihood activities.²⁴²

Uganda

Uganda is a state party to various international and regional instruments that guarantee the rights of women. It ratified CEDAW in 1985 though it has not yet ratified the protocol. It has also ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1995, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1985, and the Convention Against Torture in 1986. Uganda has also ratified the Maputo Protocol in July 2010. Uganda is also a signatory to the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. It also has a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325/1820 and launched the Goma Declaration in 2008.

Human Rights of Women

Two positive laws came into force in 2010; The Domestic Violence Act which originated from the initial Domestic Relations Bill that had sat on the shelves of parliament for so many years, and the Prohibition of Female genital mutilation Act.

However despite all of these progresses, women still face challenges in regards to cultural and traditional practices that discriminate against girls, persistence of patriarchal patterns of behaviour, low literacy levels among women, high prevalence of poverty among women and lack of access to social services. This compounded with a slow law reform process and ineffective means of implementation. Implementation of the laws is still lacking though and practices like early forced marriage remain prevalent, abduction of girls, widow inheritance and wife sharing. Cases of FGM are said to have increased in 2011 from 550 in 2008 to 820.

Important laws like the Sexual Offences Bill is still awaiting adoption and the succession Act, which would address the issues women face in acquiring inheritance from their fathers or husbands, has not yet been submitted in parliament.

Women's Political Participation

There is a wide acknowledgement of women's participation in politics in Uganda. Women's participation in political spheres encompasses political parties, civil society, the public and private sector. Women however constitute 51% of Uganda's population and the numbers in leadership positions do not match the demographic gender representation.

In parliament, 116/375 (34.9%) seats are filled with women, putting Uganda among the top countries in terms of women's parliamentary representation.²⁴³ However, affirmative action plays a key role in these numbers. There is a woman member of Parliament for each district as provided by Article 78 (1) of the Uganda constitution. In the cabinet, women constitute 28% of ministers.

With a new multiparty system in Uganda, female opposition politicians have recently faced a wave of

violence from state police and security operatives. A case in point is leader of the Women's league in FDC party, Ingrid Turinawe who was molested by a policeman during her arrest.²⁴⁴ This year has seen a growing trend of this violence against female politicians, especially women of the opposition party. The speaker of parliament has decried election violence and while addressing the newly formed parliamentary committee on Human Rights in August 2012 stated:

"If all states were observing their human rights commitments, we would live in a world free from want or fear. Unfortunately this is not often the case; the human rights of individuals are violated more often than not. Election violence, mob justice, gender based violence, torture of suspects by state security agencies remain rampant in this country".²⁴⁵

Reproductive Health and AIDS/HIV

Uganda's health indicators are low for all social categories and worse for women. In 2011, statistics show that about 16 women in Uganda die every day in pregnancy and childbirth related complications many of which are preventable.²⁴⁶ Activists in Uganda have gone to court as a result of this to force the government to put more resources towards maternal healthcare.

The petition centered around the deaths of two mothers, Sylvia Nalubowa in Central Uganda and Jennifer Anguko from Northern Uganda, was widely talked about this year. It said the women's deaths could have been prevented if the health centres where they died had 'basic indispensable health maternal commodities' and if the health workers had not neglected the two women.²⁴⁷ This is a reflection of what is happening in Uganda especially in the rural areas and the reason for the high mortality rate due to inadequate health centres, poorly trained medical personnel, and low instances of prenatal and antenatal visits.

The Uganda National Development plan also points to the traditional harmful practices such as early marriages as partly responsible for high maternal mortality rate.

Women and girls bear the brunt of HIV/AIDS due to inherent power relations, their reproductive roles and existing negative cultural practices. Girls and women are more prone to get infection early on as compared to men due to sexual violence against them and cross-generational sex. Uganda's HIV prevalence rate has risen from 6.4% to 6.7% according to a new national AIDS indicator survey report. According to the preliminary report released by the Minister of Health, Christine Ondo, on March 12, 2012 in Kampala, Uganda, some 7.7% of women are positive compared to 5.6% of men. Women in urban areas have the highest percentage of the disease at 11% compared to those in rural areas at 8%.²⁴⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Uganda has been synonymous with conflict since its independence in 1962 and for the past 20 years in the Northern part of the country. As a result, women in the north have suffered from the consequences of armed conflict that has resulted in high instances of sexual and gender based violence and insecure livelihoods. The Uganda government has adopted and begun the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820. The Goma Declaration recognises violence as a threat to national and regional security and development and that it propagates the spread of HIV/AIDS. Nodding disease has become a serious issue in regions affected by the conflict and has disproportionately affected women. The Government has set up treatment centres for nodding disease and a toll free hotline to monitor cases as they come up. So far there have been 1488 cases of nodding disease with 66 deaths. In Pader district, girls with the disease are being raped and the authorities are yet to apprehend the culprits.²⁴⁹

The government has also set up some mechanisms in addressing these post conflict issues like the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), designed to eradicate poverty in Northern Uganda, and the National Development Plan (2010/11-2014/15). These are far from being implemented. The PRDP clearly states that conflict goes beyond presence of war. There needs to be adequate resourcing and implementation of the UNSCR 1820 and Goma Declaration as well as integration of UNSCR 1325 with government policies. The PRDP must be reviewed to ensure it properly includes and integrates women's issues. Moreover, the government needs to establish a reparations fund for women, promotion and establishment of national reconstruction and reconciliation initiatives among people from all regions and of all political persuasions.

Education

Uganda has Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) policies that make primary and secondary education free. The Mid-Point review report (2010) on Uganda's efforts towards attaining the MDGs considered that the country is on track to meet its 2015 targets on MDGs. Uganda was also assessed as being on track to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education levels by 2015. However, this success hides high and increasing school drop-outs, as well as access to schools in most rural areas. Primary education enrolment rates do not reflect the gender disparity in completion rates both at primary and secondary levels. Retention in primary school is low and reveals gender disparity with 53% of boys and 42% girls completing primary school. Enrolment figures for secondary education show gender disparities with only one third of girls continuing in school to the age of 18 compared to 50% of boys.²⁵⁰

It is important to note that there remain serious obstacles to education for women and girls in Uganda. In rural areas, girls often start school at an already advanced age, in part due to risks associated with walking long distances to school. Girls also have higher dropout rates in part due to early marriages and pregnancy. Retention of girls in school is therefore a huge hindrance to girls' education in the country. Functional adult literacy has taken root in Uganda with 85% of rural women able to read. There is a draft non-formal Adult Education policy that streamlines the operation of adult literacy though it still faces many constraints like lack of resources, inability to be accessed by the majority of women, but it is a very positive step in educating the women of Uganda who did not get a chance as children.

Economic Empowerment

75% of agricultural producers are women. However, women in Uganda have unequal access to resources, land ownership despite the fact that they earn most of their livelihood from land. Women's land rights are recognised in the Land Act and the Land Acquisition Act. Women also make up a majority of the population engaged in small business and the informal sector. They are however lacking in adequate resources and also lack information and access to funds for developing small-scale businesses. Women also continue to face severe legal and cultural obstacles. For example, the fact that women need permission from their husbands to participate in development schemes such as village savings and loan associations in Katine, in Eastern Uganda, is a reminder of how much needs to be done to change cultural attitudes.

North Africa

Women have made their mark in all spheres of society and both negative and positive ways in North Africa. In Algeria, despite the low turnout for women in the polls, women have forged their way into politics during the previous 2012 elections. As of 2012, women hold more than 30% of the seats in parliament, making it the first Arab country to surpass the quotas set out in both the Beijing Platform and CEDAW. In Egypt, Ms. Bothaina Kamel made a public statement in support of women's representation in office by attempting to run for office in the presidential race earlier this year.

Another positive trend in terms of women's political participation is the regional support and collaboration demonstrated between women's organisations and associations in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Over 40 Libyan women gathered in Cairo from October 7-9, 2011 to inaugurate the Libya Women's Platform for Peace, a new national movement that will work together to increase all forms of female political participation in post-Gaddafi Libya



This year has also been marked by institutional and legal reform. In Morocco, Women are steadily gaining many rights to guarantee their equality in a multitude of situations. In particular, women are gaining ground in the private sphere in relation to marriage and family. While in South Sudan, the Transitional Constitution has attempted to counteract gender-based discrimination through several means. The affirmative action policy that sets the 25% benchmark for women's representation in the public sector mandates all government institutions and agencies to promote women's participation in public life and their representation in legislative and executive offices. Other rights include equal pay for equal work and provisions for maternity leave.

While all eight countries demonstrate continuing progress in terms of women's rights, closer investigation also reveals persisting challenges in terms of social, political and economic barriers.

Algeria

In 1996, Algeria signed and ratified CEDAW and in 2003 Algeria signed the Maputo Protocol. As of 2012, Algeria has not ratified the Maputo Protocol. Women in Algeria continue to walk a tight rope between empowerment and disfranchisement. While women have made great advancement in the public sphere, especially in politics, women remain subjugated in the private sphere, particularly within the family domain.

Political Participation

Algeria held legislative elections in May 2012, which produced an array of both positive and negative outcomes for women in the country. In terms of women's political participation in relation to polling, women were pushed to the background. With nearly 22 million men and women eligible to vote, the overall turnout rate, according to Interior Minister's, Daho Ould Kabila, statistics, was 42.9%, however, this number is thought to have been inflated.²⁵¹ It has been suggested that women are no longer turning to the polls because they are losing interest in political elections or are, on a larger scale, indifferent. This is a trend that has expanded beyond women voters and affects old and young voters, men, and Algerians living abroad.

Despite the abysmal turnout for women in the polls, women have forged their way into politics during the previous 2012 elections. As of 2012, women hold more than 30% of the seats in parliament, making it the first Arab country to surpass the quotas set out in both the Beijing Platform and the CEDAW.²⁵² In total, 145 women will take their place in the national legislature thus controlling about 32% of the national assembly. In addition, women will make 45% of the magistrates.²⁵³

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

As of 2009, UNAIDS estimates that there are about 18,000 people living with HIV in Algeria, of which about 5,200 women are aged 15 and older.²⁵⁴ Since 1998, antiretroviral treatment has been offered for free to individuals who meet standard requirements.²⁵⁵ In addition, 93% of the national HIV programs are subsidized through domestic sources, an achievement which few African countries can boast.

One of the programs the government supports is El Hayet, a NGO working to reintegrate HIV patients back into society and reach a goal of zero discrimination. At El Hayet, there is a multi-pronged approach to combating HIV and reintegrating affected individuals back in to society. According to a report from the organization in collaboration with UNAIDS, 43,321 women have access to voluntary testing for various STI's and HIV, including hepatitis B and C.²⁵⁶ In terms of both psychological and economic reintegration, El Hayet provides training on embroidery, sewing and hairstyling along with microcredits which will help patients overcome poverty, stigma and traditional discrimination.²⁵⁷ By providing this technical training, the organization believes that it will allow patients to "stop thinking only of the disease."²⁵⁸

In Algeria, the lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 220 women.²⁵⁹ According to the State of the World's Children report in 2008 it is estimated that a skilled practitioner, for instance, a nurse, doctor, or midwife, accompanied 95% of mothers giving birth.²⁶⁰ More than 50% of the female population uses a contraceptive and emergency contraceptives are available in pharmacies with a prescription.²⁶¹ According to the centre for reproductive rights, women are permitted to have an abortion only to preserve the mother physical or mental health.

Economic Empowerment

Algeria, like most other Middle East and North African nations, is experiencing an increase in women's participation in agricultural industries. The interesting trend however, which remains true for the entire region, is that while the amount of women entering the agricultural industry increases, the amount of men is decreasing.²⁶² Unfortunately, women tend to enter the informal, and largely unregulated, agricultural sphere. Because of this, they have a vulnerable position

in the workforce and work conditions can often be considered hazardous.²⁶³

Violence against Women

Algeria still remains a largely patriarchal society. Women often experience subjugation and violence within their own home either from their husband or sons. Domestic violence is still considered a private matter, and as such, is not prohibited by law.²⁶⁴ The Wassila Network, an NGO, helps to provide assistance to women who have been victims of violence by providing shelters, and judicial and psychological counselling.²⁶⁵ The government, realizing that domestic violence is a growing concern, has responded by creating a national strategy to combat domestic violence.²⁶⁶

Women, Peace & Security

With the new role of women in parliament, the role women play in peace & security remains to be seen. It is hoped that women in parliament will take part in high-level peace & security negotiations; however, President Bouteflika still retains most of the power.²⁶⁷

Human Rights & Civil Liberties

Although women have a more prominent role in Algerian society in comparison to other North African states, many barriers to the full realization of their rights exist. With the exception of this year's apparent victory of women in politics, many of the same laws from the 1980's continue to be enforced.²⁶⁸ For instance, the family code continues to discriminate against women by denying them equal rights in divorce, inheritance, and custody.²⁶⁹

Education

In Algeria, education, and the equal access thereof, is free and compulsory for all children in Algeria.²⁷⁰ According to a 2010 World Bank report, as of 2009 the ratio of boys to girls receiving a secondary education was 98.44% while the number was 96.3% for primary education.²⁷¹

Egypt

Women in Egypt face many obstacles in attaining gender equality. Due to the prevalence of traditional misogynistic ideals, women face discrimination and inequality in almost all sectors of their lives. Although Egypt has ratified CEDAW in September 1981, the country has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. In addition, Egypt has not adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Political Participation

Egypt held presidential elections in June 2012, with nine major male candidates. One woman, Bothaina Kamel, attempted to run but was unable to gather the 30,000 signatures needed to be included on the ballot.²⁷² Egypt has one of the largest gaps in female political participation in the world, with only 10 of the 508 seats in the People's Assembly being held by women, and only 5 of 180 seats in the Shura Council, or upper house.²⁷³ The Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi won the 2012 Presidential race and much remains to be seen in the realm of women's rights. It should be noted however that little has been done to curb physical attacks against women throughout the election period and that women's rights seem to be dwindling under the new leadership.²⁷⁴

Violence against Women

Since the revolution, acts of violence against women have been on the rise. Perhaps the most notable headline to come out of Egypt this year was the court decision regarding the military's use of virginity tests on women during the protests. Not only during the revolution, but also in individual protests thereafter, security forces sexually assaulted, arrested, and then forced female protestors to submit to a virginity test.²⁷⁵ A doctor administered these tests with members of the military in the room.²⁷⁶ Samira Ibrahim, a victim of the assault, filed charges against the military and the doctor and as a result was fired from her job and received death threats.²⁷⁷ The outcome of the trial was two-fold: Firstly, since the trial was conducted through a military tribunal, only the doctor was on trial and he was acquitted.²⁷⁸ Ibrahim admitted that she "originally filed the case against the military leaders who gave out the order" and that "they should be standing trial."²⁷⁹ Regardless, when the judgment was released, it was a disappointment for not only Ibrahim and Egyptian women, but for women around the world rallying for her cause.²⁸⁰ Despite the acquittal, there is a silver lining to the story. In light of the case, an administrative court in Cairo ruled that what happened to Ibrahim was illegal, and that forced virginity tests on female detainees would henceforth be illegal.²⁸¹

Unfortunately, women face harassment all too often in Egypt. There have been several reports of women being harassed or even assaulted because their attire was either "immodest" or they were unveiled.²⁸² Tahrir square, which has been an epicenter for protests of all kinds including the women's movement, is now known for its unbridled harassment against women. Between May and July 2012, there have been dozens of incidences of women being groped and attacked in the square while just walking across.²⁸³ In two separate organized protests on Tahrir square seeking to advance women's rights and protest sexual violence, a mob of men assaulted women both physically and sexually, by groping or throwing objects, including glass bottles, at participants.²⁸⁴



UN Photo

Economic Empowerment

Although women can be found working in different sectors in Egypt, there are still barriers that challenge women's equal access to the labour market. As of 2009, women make up about 23% of the labour market in Egypt participating in public and private sectors as well as agriculture.²⁸⁵ Many women have also benefited from microfinance programs.²⁸⁶ Overall, women are three times more likely to be unemployed than males, are paid less, and often have poor and insecure working conditions.²⁸⁷

Due to the vulnerable position of women in Egypt, many women are unable to achieve job security. For example, Samira Ibrahim was steadily employed however, once she decided to take her sexual assault to trial, she lost her job.²⁸⁸ It can be inferred that individual companies hire and retain employees based on traditional and cultural views that discriminate against women.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Rights

The most current information regarding family planning to be found came from 2008. As of 2008, the contraceptive prevalence rate was at 60%.²⁸⁹ The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Egypt is relatively low; however, there is no surveillance system in place to document cases therefore any estimates are not entirely accurate. In fact, many suggest that in Egypt, cases of HIV/AIDS are on the rise due to a lack of education and high-risk behaviours.²⁹⁰

Egypt has been making progress to ensure the quality, availability, and accessibility of maternal health services in the country. Due to this dedication, about 73% of women receive some form of antenatal care to assess the health status of the mother and foetus.²⁹¹ Because of the investment in healthcare access, as of 2008 the maternal mortality rate was 55/100,000 live births.

As of 2008, 95% of women aged 15-49 have been victims of FGM. However, in that same year, legislation was introduced that criminalized FGM.²⁹² Sentences for FGM can range from three months to two years plus a fine.

Women, Peace & Security

In early 2011, Egyptian women took to the streets and risked their lives for the revolution that ultimately

ousted former President Mubarak. Since their brave acts, women have been shut out of many of the decision making process by both military authorities and political parties.²⁹³

Human Rights of Women

Unfortunately in Egypt, women still not have a wide array of human rights law readily available. In fact, in Egypt, women are largely discriminated against in both public and private spheres. Within a family context, while men can divorce without their wife's consent whereas women only have the same right under some conditions.²⁹⁴ In terms of inheritance, women are only entitled to half the amount a man would receive. In addition, customary laws and traditional beliefs tend to dictate inheritance laws.²⁹⁵ Women are able to obtain passports and travel without their husbands or father's consent; however, they may obtain a court order that would prevent the women from leaving the country.²⁹⁶

Education

"Education is the key to combating gender discrimination" said the president of the Egyptian National Council for Women, Mervat Tallawi.²⁹⁷ There are many barriers for women's access to education including widespread poverty, and patriarchal culture and traditions. It is estimated that about two million women in Egypt never attended school, with women in rural areas being affected most.²⁹⁸ In addition, women are less likely to receive an education primarily because they marry at a young age. It has been suggested that if an Egyptian women receives a university degree, she will be ten times more like to enter the labour force.²⁹⁹

Libya

After 42 years of brutal repression and nearly seven months of armed conflict erupting in February 2011, Libyans are today looking ahead to building a state based on the respect for human rights and the rule of law. In the last several months, they have paid a heavy price standing against repression and injustice, demanding their right to live in dignity and to participate in the shaping of their future. They have faced further human rights abuses in some cases pointing to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Until recently Libya lacked an independent civil society, a free press and political parties. Public institutions have been largely inefficient or, like the criminal justice system, turned into tools of repression. They are deeply mistrusted by Libyans.

Libya ratified the Maputo Protocol in May 2004 and CEDAW in May of 1989. However, the country has yet to adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. There are currently no UN peacekeeping operations in Libya.

Political Participation

Many women who participated in the overthrow of Qaddafi are now determined to play their full part in the

political transition. The last twelve months have brought huge changes to Libya. Over 40 Libyan women gathered in Cairo from October 7-9, 2011 to inaugurate the Libya Women's Platform for Peace, a new national movement

that will work together to increase all forms of female political participation in post-Qaddafi Libya.³⁰⁰

However the first measures adopted by the National Transitional Council (NTC) failed to promote women's participation. When the NTC was established in February 2011, there was only one female member, Dr. Salwa Fawzi El-Deghali, who was in charge of Legal Affairs and Women.³⁰¹

In November 2011, the NTC announced a new cabinet; the 28-member cabinet responsible for drafting a new electoral law included only two women. The electoral law adopted in January 2012 did not contain a quota or other measures to guarantee the representation of women in the new parliament.³⁰² The initial version of the law released in late January established a 10% quota for women; however, in the text adopted on 28 January 2012, the quota was deleted entirely. Instead the officially adopted law chose a zipper-system approach, requiring parties to alternate their candidates (male/female) horizontally and vertically. This fails to address the obstacles faced by women candidates and limits their chances to run as individual candidates.

As soon as the electoral law was announced, the Voice of Libyan Women, LWPP and the Libyan Rights Organization, organized demonstrations outside the Office of the Prime Minister in Tripoli, labelling this provision as "scandalous" and calling for an increased quota. The LWPP organized protests and commissioned the drafting of an alternative electoral law that contained a range of provisions to ensure women's representation and other changes.³⁰³

On the 7th of July 2012, Libyans went to the polls to elect a new interim government, the Libyan National Congress who would be tasked with establishing a committee to draft the constitution and scheduling official parliamentary elections nine months later. The newly elected government, which included 33 women, was expected to nominate new ministers on September 8, 2012, however as a result of the resignation of the current prime minister this remains unclear.

Economic Empowerment

Despite the regime's encouragement and Qaddafi's repeatedly stressing that women should undertake jobs, women continue to be underrepresented in the workforce primarily due to social pressures. Women's civil society organizations such as the Voice of Libyan women (VLW) have undertaken a number of projects to re-construct the economy and strengthen women's integration into the formal labour sector, through training workshops, programs and by encouraging local

businesses to provide internship opportunities for female graduate students.

Human Rights of Women

Men and women are generally treated as equals under Libyan legislation. However, in some areas inequalities and discrimination persist, especially in those laws related to family issues, in which certain Islamic interpretations are followed. Officially, women have equal access to justice than men, but in reality they still find themselves at a disadvantage.

The Libyan government acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1989. However, it maintains reservations to Articles 2 and 16(c) and (d) on the grounds that they are incompatible with Islamic Sharia law and Libya's personal status code. It appears that the Libyan government has attempted to implement some of the CEDAW stipulations, largely through introducing legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination in various sectors. However, as already stated, the gap remains between legislation and reality on all of these measures, due primarily to the conservative nature of society. In reality, women continue to face discrimination at all levels.

The issue of women's rights in Libya was recently placed under a spotlight in the wake of controversial comments made by NTC chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil when he declared that the constitution would be based on Islamic law. Although women leaders and women's organisations and associations have managed to organise themselves rather rapidly with the assistance of their Tunisian and Egyptian colleagues to ensure that their substantial contribution to the revolution is recognised by the interim government, it remains unclear how women's rights will be integrated in the new constitution.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women generally increases post conflict however it is unclear whether or not that has been the case in Libya due to a lack of reliable data. Women's civil society organizations have been playing a key role in addressing the issue in the absence of government led initiatives.

For example, the Voice of Libyan Women (VLW), which was founded in August 2011, has been a leading figure in combating gender-based violence. Employing a rather unique approach the women's organization, VLW has led a poster campaign to generate awareness about physiological abuse against women. VLW posted insulting posters around numerous cities and on the Internet from November 26th to December 9th 2011.

On the final day, December 10th 2011, the poster stated: "How have these made you feel? Millions of women suffer from psychological abuse every day, but for them it's not as easy as turning off their computers to get away from it". The campaign ran in both English & Arabic and focused on psychological abuse. .³⁰⁴

Women, Peace and Security

There are ongoing concerns about the safety and security of Libyan women, particularly ethnic Libyans

Morocco

The Kingdom of Morocco is not a member of the AU so it has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. The Kingdom of Morocco ratified CEDAW on the 21st of June 1993. Morocco has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. There is a UN peacekeeping mandate in Western Sahara and Morocco: United Nations Missions for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Political Participation

It was in 1993 that the first two women joined the Moroccan elective institution as legislatures.³⁰⁶ Since then, women have continued to participate, albeit on a limited scale, in Moroccan government as Minister of Environment to Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development. It was only in 2002, at the behest of women's rights organizations, that the parties implemented an informal gender quota system following a list voting system.³⁰⁷ As of the previous legislation election, held in November of 2011, 65 out of 395 seats were held by women.³⁰⁸ The total percentage of women in parliament is 15%.³⁰⁹ This percentage is well below the international target of 30%. The current government has a unique opportunity to ensure that the nation's new constitutional provisions regarding women's rights will be enforced on a tangible level.

Although women have had the right to vote since 1962, information regarding women's political participation is scarce.³¹⁰ Local NGOs and women's organizations are trying to break this by campaigning on the radio, and holding training sessions for women interested in participating in elections.³¹¹ Additionally, they aim to encourage women to vote.

Violence against Women

Morocco drew a great deal of criticism this year when Amina Filali, 16 years old, committed suicide. In 2011 Mustafa Fallaq raped Amina Filali. Filali's parents wanted justice and thus filed charges against Fallaq. Instead, acting under Article 475 of the Moroccan Penal Code, the judge had the opportunity to absolve the

and Sub-Saharan women. These groups face harassment, intimidation, and threats of sexual violence. UN Support Mission in Libya (UNMIL) and human rights organizations have also reported on women held in detention in the absence of female guards and under male supervision, and of children detained alongside adults. Women detainees have highlighted the absence of formal investigations and charges, and the lack of information on the reason for their detention.³⁰⁵

rapist of punishment if the perpetrator married the victim.³¹² The marriage also acts as a way to protect the 'honour' of the victim who has been raped.³¹³ Filali's father did not agree to the marriage but was pressured by the court of family affairs to accept the terms.³¹⁴ Amina Filali was wed to her rapist, took to his family home where he beat her and starved her. To escape the trauma of her life, Amina Filali committed suicide by consuming rat poison.³¹⁵ Amina Filali's death sparked an international outcry to end violence against women and highlighted the issues that many women face on a daily basis in Morocco. As a result, the nation scrambled to create and pass the Violence against Women law; however, it has yet to be introduced to parliament.³¹⁶

Amina Filali's case involved much more than a rape and a failed law. It highlights many cultural norms and traditions that continue to affect Moroccan women on a daily basis. It is difficult to find statistics regarding domestic violence, however it is estimated that as of 2011 over 60% of women experience some form of violence.³¹⁷ It is estimated that husbands were the perpetrators of such violence almost 55% of the time.³¹⁸ Due to the patriarchal society and mistrust in the justice system, women are unlikely to report instances of domestic abuse.³¹⁹ Other forms of violence towards women have also been uncovered, including psychological violence and violence committed by law enforcement officials.³²⁰

The new Moroccan Constitution, passed in July 2011, contains provisions that could be used to address domestic violence. In addition, the Constitution seeks to create an Authority for Parity and the Fight against All

Forms of Discrimination, a National Human Rights Council, and a Consultative Council on the Family and Childhood. Although this seems like a great stride in the right direction, these authorities have yet to be formalised.³²¹ Instead legislation regarding gender-based violence can be found in the dated 1962 Penal Code, which tends to solidify many long-standing cultural beliefs.³²² Still, to date, there is no legislation specifically addressing violence against women. Starting in 2006, there have been multiple attempts to initiate a Violence Against Women law, however, the bill remains in contention.³²³

Economic Empowerment

Although Morocco has set goals for women's access to economic participation, as of September 2011, women only make up 28% of the nation's workforce.³²⁴ Since Morocco withdrew its reservations to the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2008, the government has ramped up efforts to mobilize women in the workplace by creating professional training centres across the country.³²⁵ The professional training centres offer seminars, professional training, alternative formal education, career guidance, and reintegration among other activities and services. It is estimated that over 300,000 women have benefitted from the centres nation-wide.³²⁶

Despite progress efforts from the government, women still face an unnerving amount of discrimination in the workforce. On average, women earn 40% less than their male counterparts and in urban areas often receive less than minimum wage.³²⁷ Women are vulnerable to exploitation, and often work longer hours. Furthermore, women often face discrimination when searching for employment. The employers' personal views, as well as the companies and workers culture often bar women from entering the workforce.³²⁸ This delves back to the deep-rooted traditional norms that still govern many Moroccans attitudes towards women's role in society.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Morocco is relatively low, with only a prevalence rate of about 0.15% of the general population.³²⁹ In order to curtail the localized raising number of cases, the government launched a new national aids strategy in 2012, which consists of total, or partial exemption from treatments costs for those living below the poverty line.³³⁰ The government also aims to reduce dependence on foreign funding for national HIV/AIDS programs.³³¹

Between 1990 and 2010, Morocco decreased its maternal mortality rate by over 60%, putting it on target

to meet the UN MDG 5 goal by 2015.³³² Women have increased access to clinics where they can get regular vaccinations and routine check-ups during pregnancy. Because of increased access to clinics, more women are choosing to either give birth in hospitals or in the presence of a skilled nurse or mid-wife.³³³ To achieve this type of improvement, the government launched a three-prong strategy to improve access to care, improving the quality of care, and program governance, and has spent \$157 million (1.4 billion dirham) between 2008-2012, to make this strategy a success.³³⁴ The head of communications at the Ministry of Health has stressed that "the most important thing is making obstetric care free, including transfusions, C-sections, transportation, all the tests, the delivery, as it has allowed women to come into the hospital, especially the poor."³³⁵

Women, Peace & Security

Morocco has implemented UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1960. In a statement at a Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace, and Security, Morocco discussed the measures it has taken to tackle conflict related sexual violence. Morocco aims to strengthen the monitoring, analysis, and reporting mechanisms to allow for credible data to be reported.³³⁶ In addition, the country seeks to strengthen preventative measures, both medical and psychological services, and access to justice for victims of conflict related sexual violence.³³⁷

Human Rights of Women

Women are steadily gaining many rights that guarantee their equality in a multitude of situations. In particular, women are gaining ground in the private sphere in relation to marriage and family. For instance, women no longer need the permission of a male guardian to wed, the legal minimum age to be married is 18, parental authority is equally shared between parents, and women have the option to divorce on the same grounds as men.³³⁸ Polygamy and inheritance rights are still areas where progress is needed to make women equal to their male counterparts.³³⁹



Education

Education for children is free and compulsory through the age of 15; however very few girls in rural communities have the opportunity to attend school.³⁴⁰

Although education is free and compulsory, many barriers still exist for girls due to bias in school administration or traditional norms prevalent in the home. Because of this, it is estimated that 66% of women in Morocco are illiterate.³⁴¹

Sudan

Women in Sudan face discrimination on a daily basis, and now that South Sudan has seceded, speculations have risen that the country will be run under strict Muslim rule based in Sharia Law. With its past degradation of women rights, the future of women's rights in this country remains in limbo. Although Sudan has signed the Maputo Protocol, it has yet to ratify it; Sudan has neither signed nor ratified CEDAW and has not adopted a national action plan on UNSCR 1325.

Violence against Women

Women in Sudan face insurmountable forms or threats of violence on a daily basis. Due to an archaic law implemented in 1991, article 152 of the penal code, women can be punished with 40 lashes for any conduct or clothing that might be in violation of public decency. Due to the vague phrasing of the law, law enforcement officials can use their own judgment to determine what might be considered in violation of public decency. This can range from interacting with men who are not their immediate family to women who chose not to wear a hijab. Under this law, women have been taken from the streets, cars, and other public places and placed under arrest through this article.³⁴²

In February 2012 reports surfaced that three individuals of the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service arrested and subsequently gang raped a woman for participating in a mass protest in 2011. While in their custody, she was verbally abused, beaten unconscious, restrained and then repeatedly raped.³⁴³ When she was released she posted a video on the Internet documenting what had occurred while detained. Due to the social stigma that is quite apparent in Sudan's patriarchal society, the woman fled the country.³⁴⁴

In June 2012, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir stated that a "100 percent" Islamic Constitution would be adopted in Sudan. After this announcement, news broke that a woman would be sentenced to death by stoning after being convicted of adultery. This was the second sentence that mandated death by stoning in the country.³⁴⁵ Due to the increase in frequency, there has been an international outcry to ban stoning in Sudan.

Economic Empowerment

Women in Sudan face many barriers in securing a job in either the formal or informal sector. In Sudan, 20% of women are unemployed.³⁴⁶ Only 14.1% of the labour force is women, compared to men's participation at

38.3%.³⁴⁷ Sudan's main area of employment is in agriculture, making it a largely pastoralist country. Women pastoralists are marginalized, both socially and economically, by society. Women who are part of this society are marginalized more significantly in the field and often work longer hours for less pay.³⁴⁸ Women believe that even if they receive training or financial aid, there would be other barriers keeping them from employment and financial success.³⁴⁹ For instance, it is often difficult for women to take on jobs not only because of their limited participation in public life, but also due to their limited ability to travel in public without permission from a male guardian.

Political Participation

As of 2010, Sudan enacted a 25% gender parity clause by requiring parties to have a women's list. This is lower than the minimum set by the Beijing platform and the 50% established by the African Union. As of the 2010 elections women held 114 of the 450 parliamentary seats accounting for 25.56% of the seats. Although women hold seats in government, their actual position to forge a change in the broader realm is hotly debated.³⁵⁰ After the revolution in 1964, women gained the right to vote in the country's election.³⁵¹ Although women are able to vote, women still face informal barriers like illiteracy, poverty, and a lack of knowledge of politics.³⁵² It is essential to provide opportunities for women to learn more about the participation process through workshops around the country.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

The most recent information regarding HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health was published in 2010. According to the World Health Organization, the rate of maternal mortality is 216 of 100,000 live births.³⁵³ On average 72% of women give birth with the assistance of a skilled professional.³⁵⁴ The use of contraceptives is very low for both men and women in Sudan.

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among females aged 15-24 years is 1.24%. Unfortunately, only 4% of the population has comprehensive knowledge about measure to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.³⁵⁵

Women, Peace & Security

Although the conflict in Sudan has ended, fighting is still prevalent along the border with South Sudan. Women are subjugated to various forms of gender-based violence and harassment, including rape, from all parties of the conflict. In addition, as stated earlier, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service has been accused of repeatedly abusing women on the streets.

Human Rights of Women

In Sudan, women's human rights are severely limited. Their ability to travel is dependent on the permission of their husband or other male guardians. In terms of mobility, men can forbid women to leave the house unaccompanied. In addition, Muslim men can forbid their wives the right to work outside of the house.

Women face discrimination and hostility in public when they are with a member of the opposite sex or when they play an active role in politics or activism.

Education

Education is free and compulsory for children ages 6 to 13 years. 64% of girls are enrolled in primary schools, compared to 69% for boys.³⁵⁶ This percentage drops dramatically for both genders at the secondary education level to 21% for males and 23% for females.³⁵⁷

South Sudan

According to the Institute for Security Studies: "Post-independence South Sudan has provided a framework that aims to bring women to the fore, and the commitment of the government to ceding to international laws in this regard should be applauded."³⁵⁸

South Sudan has signed and ratified CEDAW and has signed the Maputo Protocol, which calls for the protection of women's human rights. As an African Union (AU) member state, South Sudan has also adopted the AU's Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development strategy, which calls for gender mainstreaming within all nation- and state-building projects.

Political Participation

The government has enacted a parity clause in the 2011 constitution, which ensures that 25% of women are represented in all government positions. Although women are represented as ministers and assistant ministers, women still occupy many of the lower entry positions and earn less.³⁵⁹ Currently there are four female ministers out of a total of 29, and eight female assistant ministers from a total of 27.³⁶⁰

In March 2012 President SalvaKiir's commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality as a central means of achieving development was questioned when he announced the appointment of ambassadors to be deployed throughout the world: of the 90 ambassadors, only nine were women.³⁶¹

Violence against Women

Many of the forms of discrimination and violence that effect women in Sudan, start in the home. Like the rest of the region, South Sudan is a largely patriarchal society where the father, husband, or brother shapes the life of a woman. Women are often victims of domestic violence and are prevented from divorcing their husband due to the role of a dowry.³⁶² Overall, women in South Sudan still live in fear. Abduction, and physical and sexual violence, remains a threat to women in the country, especially in refugee camps.³⁶³ Many of the perpetrators are former or current members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army.³⁶⁴ Although there are laws in place to protect women from violence, the countries lack of resources makes police enforcement and other programs ineffective, especially in rural areas.³⁶⁵

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Rights

Access to birth control in South Sudan is restricted. ³⁶⁶ In addition, drugs to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs are difficult to obtain. ³⁶⁷ Access to maternal healthcare, both pre-natal and antenatal care, is severely restricted in rural areas and skilled health workers are only present in 19% of births. ³⁶⁸ South Sudan has a high prevalence of maternal mortality at about 2,054 out 100,000. ³⁶⁹

While the country's health system remains very reliant on NGOs, and there is an urgent need for nurses and teachers to train others, ³⁷⁰ The government is currently in the process of rebuilding the health care services. This process may take years.

Human Rights of Women

Women's role in society is very restricted due to the patriarchal culture. In South Sudan, customary laws govern marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. Although divorce is possible with the return of the dowry, it is often difficult and shunned in hopes of making the marriage work. ³⁷¹ In terms of custody, infants are permitted to remain with their mother until the ages of three or seven, and then are placed with the husband. ³⁷²

The Transitional Constitution has attempted to counteract gender-based discrimination through several means. The affirmative action policy that sets the 25% benchmark for women's representation in the public sector mandates all government institutions and agencies to promote women's participation in public life and their representation in legislative and executive organs. Other rights include equal pay for equal work and provisions for maternity leave.

Economic Empowerment

Although women are present in the workforce, they tend to occupy entry level positions and earn less than men. ³⁷³ Furthermore the country is in the midst of an economic crisis after South Sudan's decision in January to shut down oil production, which accounts for 98

percent of the its revenue, following a dispute with Sudan over fees charged to use its pipelines. Rising food insecurity as a result of external shocks and the internal economic crisis will have severe repercussions for single headed houses holds of which women make up the majority. In June, the United Nations World Food Programme said that more than half of the country's 8.2 million people would need food aid by the end of the year. ³⁷⁴

Education

In Sudan, over 80% of women are illiterate. It is estimated that only 37% of the primary school's population are girls. ³⁷⁵ Only 1% of girls complete primary school. ³⁷⁶ The high level of illiteracy is a result of cultural views that restrict women's access to education after a certain age and a lack of resources and trained teachers.

Women, Peace & Security

Although women are present in government, they have little representation in decision-making roles. Amidst all of this both women leaders and activists admit that they had high expectations of the country's first year. Some feel that the reality of independence has failed to live up to the hype and euphoria.

"We had high expectations, but I think they are not unrealistic and should not be pushed aside. Women are doing badly politically, economically, socially and education wise. The government needs to take measures to address the challenges facing women so that they can truly enjoy life in their new independent country" Lorna Merekaje, of the South Sudan Domestic Election Monitoring and Observation Programme, told IPS.

Tunisia

Tunisia has not signed or ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Tunisia on the 20th of September 1985. Tunisia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Political Participation

In April 2011, Tunisia enacted a gender parity bill declaring equal representation of men and women on the electoral list. Although nearly 4,000 women ran for the 2011 elections, the number was not proportionate to the number of women in the country, and there was only one woman who was head of a party.³⁷⁷ In December 2011, the Ennahda Party, an Islamist party, won elections and pledged to uphold civil and women's rights.³⁷⁸ Of 49 women elected to the constituency assembly, 42 were from the Ennahda party. Only two women are ministers.³⁷⁹ Although there progress can always be made, Tunisia still has the highest amount of women represented in the government than any other state in the Arab world and outnumbers those represented in France, Ireland, the US, and the UK.³⁸⁰



Deutsche Welle. Photo

There are no exact figures as to the number of women registered to vote, but it has been suggested that there was a large turnout for the 2011 elections. Regardless, women still faced obstacles in the voting process. There was a lack of communication with women regarding their rights in the election process and as a result this affected the turnout at the booths.³⁸¹ In addition, there were cases where women went to cast a ballot, but when they arrived at the polling station, they were told that they were not registered to vote.³⁸²

Violence against Women

In response to statistics from 2010 that one and three women experience domestic violence, the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs along with the UNFPA has been working to reform and launch new programs to combat domestic violence.³⁸³ The programs will be in effect until December 2012 and will use a multipronged approach tackling issues such as gender equality, sexual

and reproductive health, access to social services, sustainable development, and poverty.³⁸⁴ In addition, the project will provide shelters with the aim to protect victims of violence, and provide a safe haven.³⁸⁵ Furthermore in order to curb the prevalence of gender-based violence, a national commission will be created to respond to incidents of gender-based violence.³⁸⁶

However gender-based violence still remains taboo in Tunisia. It is estimated that about 42% of women who have been abused have not spoken about their experience.³⁸⁷ Cultural traditions and fear of reprisals are often behind the reason women do not report or speak of incidences of violence.

Economic Empowerment

Women have been well integrated into the workforce since its independence and have been present in all sectors including medicine, law, politics, and tourism.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

Abortion is legal in the first trimester and if there is a threat to the mother's health. There is a national policy that addresses issues such as emergency contraceptives, abortion, and improvement of reproductive health centres, family health, and gender-based violence.³⁸⁸ In 2011, Tunisia launched the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA), which aims to share knowledge with other African nations in an effort to reduce maternal mortality and improve good practices.³⁸⁹ It is the first North African country to enact a public health initiative to combat maternal mortality.

Treatment for HIV is free and there are policies in place to prevent mother to child transmission of the disease through education about HIV prevention from a young age.³⁹⁰

Women, Peace & Security

NATO held conferences, with female representatives from Tunisia, in March 2012 to review the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in light of the Arab Spring. Topics discussed ranged from women in the political process, women's role in peace and conflict resolution, and awareness of human rights violations.³⁹¹

Education

Like many other North African countries there is a large disparity between rural and urban areas and the access to education. However, females account for nearly two thirds of students enrolled in secondary education.³⁹² The country has strong national laws on education and because of this school enrolment rates have been high. However, with the formulation of a new constitution, there is fear that education will be left behind.

Human Rights of Women

After the Ennahda party won the elections in December 2011, it became clear that gender equality was on the agenda. The party presented a plan to solidify a 1956 gender equality statute as a basic law, Nourredine Bhiri, a spokesman said.³⁹³ The statute abolished polygamy and prevented unilateral divorce, but lacked when it came to inheritance rights for women. Despite this, when a draft version of the constitution surfaced it was severely criticized for describing women as complementary to men.³⁹⁴

Western Sahara

Western Sahara signed the Maputo Protocol in 2006. The country has yet to sign or ratify CEDAW, and has not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. There is a UN Peacekeeping mandate in Western Sahara, United Nations Migrations for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Between 1975 and 1979, many of the Sahrawi of Western Sahara were forced to flee the country due to on-going violence and occupation by Morocco. It is estimated that there are about 500,000 Sahwaris. It is estimated that 150,000 Sahwaris reside in one of the largest UN Refugee camps, The Sahwari Refugee Camps, located in Algeria.³⁹⁵

The war between Morocco and Western Sahara has helped deeply solidify women's rights in the community. Women have always played important roles in all aspects of Sahwari life, but when the war erupted women found themselves supplying weapons and ammunition to the rebel, Sahrawi groups.³⁹⁶ Many fled Western Sahara for refugee camps in neighbouring Algeria. Women and children comprise the majority of the camps. Most homes in the refugee camp have specific name, and are commonly referred to as their female owner's name.³⁹⁷ Women quickly learned new trades to help develop and foster a sense of community within the camps. These positions ranged from administrative functioning of the camps, to guards, and political leaders.³⁹⁸ Further, all heads of the districts are women.³⁹⁹

Southern Africa

Southern Africa has made significant progress in many spheres with areas of concern that vary greatly by country. In all countries, violence against women is a primary concern and gender equality lags behind in political and economic spheres.

Swaziland, placed 140 out of 187 has demonstrated a genuine commitment to include gender in the national development agenda. However, Swaziland's key findings demonstrate that Swaziland fares only moderately in terms of political, social, economic and cultural arenas as covered by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Women are discriminated against within the country's traditional system and men remain dominant in political spheres. Swaziland has the highest known HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Africa and violence against women remains widespread.

South Africa is a leading African country in terms of gender equality and equality has been recognized in the South African Constitution and its Bill of Rights as a cornerstone of democracy in the country. Women are well represented in the government. Primary issues include maternal mortality rates and widespread violence against women.



Namibia's National Vision for 2030 addresses inequality and social welfare and though this infers optimism for the future, Namibia currently sits at 120/187 on the Human Development Index. Women in Namibia face several challenges rooted in the country's patriarchal system that presents power imbalances and gender-based discrimination. Additionally, confounding issues of poverty, unemployment, HIV/Aids and widespread violence play a crucial role.

Lesotho ranks among the top 15 countries for women's equality sitting at number eight. Although some efforts are being made by the Government to address gender equality, women are significantly under-represented in decision-making positions, political parties, central government and leadership positions and only 20% of the ministry's budget is allocated to gender issues. Maternal mortality in Lesotho is high at 1,155/100,000 live births and trafficking and prostitution are also prominent. The country prides a high literacy rate of 72% and is on course to meet MDG 2.

The Constitution of Botswana guarantees equality before the law and outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex or gender. Botswana is ranked 118/187 countries on the human development. Economic policies implemented within the country remain gender blind and Botswana has failed to take the effective measures to increase participation such as a quota system. 37% of the population is HIV positive, 60% of which are women and 67% of women in Botswana have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime.

Botswana

Botswana ratified CEDAW in 1996 followed by the Optional Protocol in 2000.⁴⁰⁰ Botswana has failed to ratify the Maputo Protocol, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, Botswana has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

The Constitution of Botswana guarantees equality before the law and outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex or gender. However the constitution does not address contradictions between formal and customary law, with no apparent motion in place for a constitutional review.⁴⁰² For example, unmarried women fall under the guardianship of their father and women are widely viewed as second-class citizens or legal minors.⁴⁰³

The government of Botswana has addressed economic gender inequality and is now ranked 118th of 187 countries on the human development and gender equality index. There are growing numbers of women in government and the private sector, including some in leadership and decision-making positions. Despite these signs of progress and the efforts of government to improve gender equality, conservative social perceptions and expectations of women remain serious challenges for Botswana.

Human Rights of Women

The National Gender Programme Framework of the Botswana Government was introduced in 1998.⁴⁰⁴

Botswana is signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and its addendum on VAW's regional task force along with Lesotho and Mauritius. The Women's Affairs Department represented Botswana in the SADC Task Force and as a result facilitates the national consultative process on the Draft Protocol in Botswana.⁴⁰⁵ Additionally Botswana is part of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) which promotes the adoption of indices for measuring the progress of gender and development related issues in African nations. Botswana is one of several countries selected to pilot the implementation of this program, and a National Advisory Panel has been established by the Women's Affairs Department to support the AGDI's implementation in Botswana.⁴⁰⁶

Women's Political Participation

In 2010 a number of women were appointed to key managing positions, such as the Botswana Development Corporation and the National Development Bank. However economic policies have remained largely gender blind.

Though the SADC includes a commitment to 30% representation of women in parliament and decision-making positions, Botswana has so far failed to meet these targets. Little has been done in the way of enforcing effective measures, such as quotas, to increase participation. In 2008 there were only 7 women in the 61 seat national assembly, 4 women in the 24 member cabinet and 4 women in the 35 seat House of Chiefs.⁴⁰⁷ In the October 2009 elections, of a total of 117 candidates, only 10 were women and only two were elected to parliament.

The United Nations cites the following initiatives to improve women's political participation in Botswana:

- The Women's Affairs Department has embarked on lobbying, public education, advocacy and social mobilization
- The Inter-party Caucus of Women Politicians was established in 1998
- Political education projects by Emang Basadi, an NGO and inter-party caucus, have targeted political parties and their female members
- Advocacy and mobilization programmes by the SADC Gender Department
- Affirmative action in the selection of specially nominated councillors and Members of Parliament by focusing on women

- Attempts to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the Public Sector, although still only with a small impact

The Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations has been pushed for a National Action Plan that reflects the Beijing Action Plan. In 2010 it commissioned a consultancy to develop a gender budget strategy but as yet no implementation strategy has accompanied this framework.

In October 2012, The Botswana High Court provided a huge boost to the struggle for gender equality in Botswana by striking down a discriminatory customary law that only allowed men to inherit the family home. This is a significant step forward for women's rights not only in Botswana but on the all Africa, where women face similar discrimination.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

37% of the population is HIV positive and of this number 60% are women.⁴⁰⁸ Both this very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the practice of unsafe abortions remain a major problem. The Criminal Code criminalizes abortion, unless pregnancy is a result of rape, defilement, or incest, poses a physical or mental health risk to the pregnant woman, or if the unborn child would suffer from or later develop serious physical or mental abnormalities or disease. However, much debate around abortion legalization continues to gain media attention.

Over 20% of girls in Botswana aged 15 to 19 are HIV-positive, while 17% fall pregnant.⁴⁰⁹

A push to legalize abortion with a leading argument of reducing HIV is also prominent in conservative Botswana at the moment.⁴¹⁰

Violence Against Women

67% of women in Botswana have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime, including partner and non-partner violence and a smaller, while 44% of men admit to perpetrating violence against women.⁴¹¹

The Domestic Violence Act was introduced in 2008 and criminalizes many acts of GBV and offers some protection to victims, yet has several gaps.⁴¹² While the minimum sentence for rape is 10 years, the majority of perpetrators are not prosecuted or convicted. Marital rape has not been criminalized and as a result post-exposure prophylaxes are not provided to married women raped by their spouse.⁴¹³ Another key issue is the lack of shelters for women. There is currently only one run by a local NGO yet it is common for police to remove victims from their home.

The Abolition of Marital Power Act in 2007 was introduced to abolish common law principles of marital power where the husband has full control over family assets and decision-making.⁴¹⁴ But customary and religious codes remain the norm for the lives of most women.⁴¹⁵

In 2009, the United Nations estimated that three fifths of women in Botswana experience domestic violence alongside an increase of women being murdered by their partner.⁴¹⁶ Patriarchal attitudes are a significant underlying factor driving the incidence of GBV in Botswana and though there is visible progress in the public sphere of equality, this has not translated into equality within intimate relationships.⁴¹⁷

This was reconfirmed this year when Botswana's Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Edwin Jenamiso Batshu, launched The Gender Based Violence Indicators Study, showing persistently high levels of GBV.⁴¹⁸

Education

Secondary education in Botswana is neither free nor compulsory.⁴¹⁹

According to the Ministry of Education, there has been a dip in the enrolment of girls in primary schools from 50.7% in 1993 to 49.4% percent in 2003 and in secondary school has also fallen from 53.5% in 1993 to 51.9% in 2003.⁴²⁰

Whilst some efforts have been made by the government to increase girls' access to education, girls continue to drop out of education due to pregnancy, early marriage, household responsibilities, violence against girls, or the need to earn money to support their families. Over 80% of children are in school but gender discrimination continues to undermine efforts to achieve universal education.⁴²¹

Economic Empowerment

Although the government has invested in creating employment opportunities that are gender sensitive, such as the Amendment of the Employment Act 2010 to improve work conditions for women, the latest data on Botswana reveals a downward trend in the economic participation and opportunity sub index.⁴²² In 2008, 37% of the public service decision-making positions were occupied by women demonstrating an overall improvement compared to 2002 (30%).⁴²³ However, despite progress, women still hold the majority of 'junior' and undervalued positions and are the large number of employed in informal sector, which lack job security and social benefits. Women's limited access to property and credit act as major barriers to women becoming entrepreneurs.⁴²⁴

Botswana has also recently signed a Decent Work Program with the ILO (2011) to ensure equal access to work, pay and social protection for men and women alike.⁴²⁵ There appears to have been little incentive to promote the participation of women.

There have been laws over recent years addressing gender inequalities: the Public Service Act, 2001 recognizes sexual harassment as misconduct, and the Employment Act in 1996 was amended to allow women to work in mines.⁴²⁶ Yet a study by Put Women Fist Trust a local NGO found that access to services including government services were not gender sensitive and tended to exclude women.⁴²⁷

Young women, for example, do not have access to youth economic programs to the extent that young men do. Women still require their husband's or a legal male guardian's permission to buy or sell land, apply for bank loans, and enter into legally binding contracts. As a result of the lack of access to resources such as land, women specifically in rural areas are more vulnerable to food insecurity and economic shocks both of which perpetuate inequality.⁴²⁸

Lesotho

Lesotho has ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 26th of October 2004. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was also ratified on the 22nd of August 1995.

Lesotho has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

According to the 2010 Global Gender Gap Report, Lesotho ranks among the top 15 countries for women's equality sitting at number eight. These statistics impressively put Lesotho at the top table in the equality, and thus it ranks amongst countries such as Sweden and Denmark. However many challenges remain.⁴²⁹ Although some efforts are being made by the Government to address gender equality, women are significantly under-represented in decision-making positions, political parties, central government and leadership positions.

Human Rights of Women

Since CEDAWs ratification the following legislative measures have been granted: Sexual Offence Act (2003) which recognizes marital rape as an offence; Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act (2006) and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act in 2011 which criminalizes all forms of slavery and provides for harsh penalties for the perpetrators.⁴³⁰ Lesotho is also commended for the establishment of a Law Reform Commission, with the mandate of reviewing discriminatory laws towards women and girls.

While noting the establishment of the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation in 2002 there remains a lack of information on the importance of gender within the ministry and the reassurance of the capacity to adequately mainstream gender throughout all ministries. Additionally, only 20% of the ministry's budget is allocated to gender issues.⁴³¹

Despite some positive highlights harmful social norms and traditions and deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes discriminate against women such as polygamy and the bride price in Lesotho, Bohali.⁴³²

Women's Political Participation

In 2011, there were 24 women in Lesotho's national parliament.⁴³³ At a local government level, the Local Government Act of 2004 legislated a quota of 30% for women in local government with the result of 58% representation of women achieved.⁴³⁴ Recently a movement to assert women's right to Chieftainship has emerged alongside an ongoing attempt to repeal parts of Lesotho's Chieftainship Act, currently allowing only the first-born son to succeed to chieftainship. The case was heard in February 2011 and results are expected in late 2012.⁴³⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality in Lesotho is high at 1,155/100,000 live births and presently one out of thirty-two women in Lesotho dies of pregnancy and child birth related conditions.⁴³⁶ Government led initiatives such as Campaigns on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality and Safe Motherhood Programmes are working to raise awareness and provide support on this issue.

Overall though, there is limited access to quality reproductive and sexual services.⁴³⁷ Abortion in Lesotho is prohibited and results in many unsafe abortions every year.

HIV/AIDS remains a key issue for Lesotho—being the third most affected country with 23% of the adult

population affected.⁴³⁸ Women and girls are disproportionately affected due to gender relations and norms and patriarchal power relations that challenge women's ability to negotiate safe sexual practices.⁴³⁹

However, in 2011 the government adopted a National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan and National Action Plan on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS 2011-2016.

Violence Against Women

Though the law formally prohibits discrimination of any kind, there is an absence of specific prohibitions for violence against women in Lesotho including domestic violence.⁴⁴⁰ Trafficking and prostitution are also prominent and the reporting of these issues remains low. In recent years, domestic violence has become less socially acceptable, largely due to awareness-raising programs and actions undertaken by local and international NGOs.

Education

Education Act was legislated in 2010 and provides free and compulsory education for all and the country prides a high literacy rate of 72%.⁴⁴¹ Lesotho is on course to meet MDG 2 on universal primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 81% in 2009.⁴⁴² Adult literacy levels are amongst the highest in Africa at 86%. Unlike most African countries, girls in Lesotho are more invested in education than boys. Boys generally work in mines and often miss the opportunity for adequate education. Despite this there still remains a decline in female enrolment at primary and secondary levels as well as the post-secondary segregation of traditionally female areas and a lack of representation in technical vocational training. Sexual harassment at school and sexual violence on the way to and from school continue to threaten girls and women in education.⁴⁴³

Economic Empowerment

In 2011 the paid maternity leave in Lesotho was extended from 60 to 90 days yet occupational segregation, both vertical and horizontal, continue to limit women's economic mobility. According to the 2008 Employment and Earnings Survey women earn only 45% of men's average monthly earnings in the private sector and 83% in the public sector.⁴⁴⁴ As in most nations, many women take part in the informal job market and have little security or benefits.

Namibia

Namibia's efforts for peace and democratic governance over the last two decades have included efforts in gender equality and the promotion of women's rights.

The Government of Namibia ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004, CEDAW in 1992 and the CEDAW Optional Protocol in 2000.⁴⁴⁵ Namibia has also ratified the Beijing Platform for Action and the African regional Platform for Action, which asserts the need for gender equality.⁴⁴⁶ The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was ratified in 2010.⁴⁴⁷ Namibia was the first country to have adopted both a policy and action plan aligned to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.⁴⁴⁸

Namibia's National Vision for 2030 sets out goals to address inequality through welfare and development:

"Namibians are healthy, empowered, innovative, confident and determined to succeed; everyone has a role to play, and the playing field is level, unhindered by race, colour, gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation or political inclination" (US Department of State, 2010).⁴⁴⁹

Namibia currently sits at 120/187 on the Human Development Index for overall quality of life and gender inequality measures.⁴⁵⁰ Overall women in Namibia face several challenges rooted in the country's patriarchal system that presents power imbalances and gender-based discrimination. Additionally persistent poverty, unemployment, HIV/Aids and widespread violence remain significant challenges.⁴⁵¹

Human Rights of Women

In 2010, to coincide with the AU's African Women's Decade, Namibia adopted an updated National Gender Policy which sought to incorporate new commitments to gender equality.⁴⁵² In 2011, the final draft of this plan was published by the Namibian Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.⁴⁵³

The National Gender Policy is described by the Namibian Government as unique in that, "it is the only sub-regional instrument that incorporates all existing gender provisions - The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1997) and its Optional Protocol; and The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), among others. It further enhances these by setting 28 targets to be achieved by 2015: also the target date for MDG 3 (gender equality)"⁴⁵⁴. The National Gender Policy is described as a sub-regional road map for achieving gender equality and its first actions will be implemented between 2012 and 2015.⁴⁵⁵

Women empowerment became a key government priority in June 2012 with the historic launch of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Namibia branch. The CWP aims to advocate for gender equality in law making decisions—political, economic and cultural.

Women's Political Participation

The representation of women in Parliament in Namibia remains low with only 7 female MP's out of 26 National

Council members, representing 26.9% which falls short of the SADC Declaration of Gender and Development requirements which has a target of at least 30% of women's representation in government leadership. To date, no political party in Namibia has been headed by a woman, nor have women dominated the top party leadership structures. The highest office a woman has held is that of Deputy Prime Minister, Libertina Amathila between 2005 to 2010.⁴⁵⁶

Lobbyists in the country complain of the 'lip service' of political parties regarding gender issues but that no concrete efforts are being made in this regard. Gender training and the inclusion of women in drafting processes has been recommended.⁴⁵⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Namibia has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates and as of 2003, there were 210,000 people estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Namibia, or more than one in five adults.⁴⁵⁸ Women account for more than half (55%) of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Namibia.⁴⁵⁹ To date more than 40,000 Namibians receive ARV therapy and 93 percent of patients that have so far enrolled in the program are continuing their treatment.⁴⁶⁰

Namibia's maternal mortality ratio in 2006 was 449 per 100,000 live births, a near doubling of the rate in 1992 which can be attributed to the general lack of access to effective health care. The government and NGOs continued to make a strong effort to educate men and women equally in the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.⁴⁶¹

In Namibia, abortions remain illegal yet they are still being practiced, often through unsafe means. Abortion is legal in Namibia only when the pregnancy endangers the life, physical or mental health of the woman; when there is fetal malformation, and when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.⁴⁶²

This phenomenon has been described as a "silent epidemic" threatening women's lives and The Namibia Planned Parenthood Association (NAPPA) says there is "an urgent need" to overturn current restrictive legislation on abortion and reopen the debate in Parliament.⁴⁶³

In the 2010 international study, 'Trends in Maternal Mortality' Namibia's progress to improve maternal health was judged as "insufficient." Unsafe abortions contribute to 16% of maternal mortality and 59% of women in Namibia who die as a result of unsafe abortions are under the age of 25.⁴⁶⁴

The sterilization of HIV positive women is widespread. A 2008 investigation by the ICW reported on the systemic abuse of HIV positive women in Namibia with 40 out of the 230 women sterilized having been forced or coerced.⁴⁶⁵

In October 2009, 16 HIV-positive women who were sterilized without their consent sued the Namibian government for N\$1.2m (approx. USD \$167,000) With support from the Legal Assistance Centre and the Southern African Litigation Centre. Judges have not yet ruled on the case.⁴⁶⁶

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) is becoming a reality in Namibia with the launch of the Fertility Clinic in Windhoek in April 2011.⁴⁶⁷ This clinic will make it possible for couples facing infertility to conceive.

Violence Against Women

Although GBV has become an acknowledged social challenge many hindrances persist and act as key barriers to the attainment of women's rights in Namibia.

The Government of Namibia has shown its concern over GBV through the enactment of various laws and policies related to the occurrence. However, the problem of GBV still persists and is seen as acceptable by many, which may suggest a new plan of action is needed. The Domestic Violence Act has not yet led to 'concrete changes' in the lives of women.

In February 2010 the government embarked on GBV Campaigns, to challenge the barriers to its implementation. Numerous workshops with various members of civil society, women's groups and members of government together developed a GBV action plan complied to the SADC Protocol standards. Additionally,

there are 15 women's and children's shelters staffed with police officers trained to assist victims of sexual assault.⁴⁶⁸

Namibian law defines rape in broad terms and allows for the prosecution of spousal rape. According to police statistics for 2009, 11,882 cases of gender-based violence were reported, 1,036 of which involved rape. The penalties range from small fines to 10 years of imprisonment. In 2007, there were 12 563 GBV cases reported to the Police. Through this year, statistics are not yet out Governor Samuel Nujoma warns that the situation remains dire in the country.⁴⁶⁹

The US government reports that a "number of factors continued to hamper rape prosecutions, including lack of police transport, poor communication between police stations, lack of expertise in dealing with child rape complainants, and the withdrawal of cases by rape complainants after they filed charges".⁴⁷⁰

The law prohibits discriminatory practices against women married under civil law, but women who married under customary law continued to face legal and cultural discrimination. For example, traditional practices permit the confiscation of a man's property pending death and it is still common to force a female widow to marry the brother of the deceased.⁴⁷¹ FGM is not a widespread practice in Namibia, however NGOs are campaigning to raise awareness of and curtail unsafe, damaging and underage sex.

A 2012 Namibian news report stated that one out of two victims of domestic violence receive a death threat from their abuser and that the majority of romantic relationships in Namibia are based on unhealthy foundations resulting in GBV. Continued awareness and support is needed in order to uproot harmful traditional and end GBV.⁴⁷²

In 2012 about 100 people, of whom 56 were men, held a peaceful march to protest violence perpetrated against women and children under the theme 'men for healthy relationships'.⁴⁷³

Women, Peace and Security

Namibia has been a key actor in terms of women's issues related to peace and security due primarily to the fact that Resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted during the Namibian presidency of the UN Security Council in October 2000.⁴⁷⁴ The adoption of this landmark legal and political framework offers great promise to Namibia, yet to date, the country has not yet adopted a national action plan to implement UNSCR 1325 or a formal UN Peacekeeping mandate. However, in 2010 it was reported that Namibia has made progress in its commitment to increasing the number of women

in conflict prevention, management and resolution with 44 of the 96 deployed Namibians in UN Peacekeeping Operations being women.⁴⁷⁵

Education

Namibia has been making strides in terms of girls' education. For example, the primary net enrolment rate of women is 91% (compared to 87% men) and a secondary enrolment rate of 79% (compared to 76% men).⁴⁷⁶ The adult literacy rate is at 88% with women at 88% and men at 89%.⁴⁷⁷

Though enrolment parity has been achieved, current challenges include attracting more women and girls to mathematics and science and addressing the challenges of HIV/Aids, GBV and sexual exploitation.⁴⁷⁸ Namibia remains far from achieving MDG targets as drop-out rates of girls remains high, largely due to child marriage and child labour.⁴⁷⁹

Economic Empowerment

Women's roles in business has been vital to trade and development in Namibia. Namibian women participated in the 4th Women in Business SADC fair in Botswana this year.⁴⁸⁰ In March of this year, Hon. Dr.Hage. G. Geingob, The minister of Trade and Industry addressed

the nation for International Women's Day and stated that the economic empowerment of women is high on the Ministry's agenda and that the SME bank will greatly assist in the economic advancement of women through collateral free loans. The minister also challenged banks to readapt their thinking, and move away from traditional practices that disproportionately benefit men.⁴⁸¹

Women in Namibia are the main harvesters of indigenous natural products and the Millennium Challenge Corporation is contributing \$304 million over the next 5 years Women will greatly benefit from this.⁴⁸²

The Namibian law explicitly prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace and urges employers to take actions to protect all employees; however, no sexual harassment reports have ever been filed.⁴⁸³

South Africa

South Africa ratified CEDAW in 1995 and the Maputo Protocol in 2004. South Africa has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

South Africa has been a leader in gender equality, yet sexual violence remains a serious challenge, with rape going largely unprosecuted. Despite the abundance of legal documents that establish women's rights in South Africa, the rights of women depend largely on race and the type of marriage. There are three kinds of marriage: civil marriage (with or without a joint property agreement), religious marriage, and customary marriage, which perceive women as minors. The state only recognizes civil and religious marriages, but does not address the presence of customary marriage in which polygamy is still allowed.

Inheritance rights poses another challenge; in a civil marriage women are entitled to half of a property, while in a customary marriage women receive nothing and have no legal entitlement. Women in rural areas face cross-sectional discrimination, because customary law is more prevalent in rural areas, and access to resources and services more complicated and defined by tradition.

Human Rights of Women

Gender equality has been recognized in the South African Constitution and its Bill of Rights as a cornerstone of democracy in the country.⁴⁸⁴ The equality clause prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy or marital status, ethnic or social origin, while the clause on freedom and security establishes the individual right to bodily and psychological integrity" This includes the right to make

decisions concerning reproduction; and to security and control over one's body.⁴⁸⁵ In 2009, the Government created the Department for Women, Children and People with Disability (DWCPD) with the mandate to emphasize the need for equity and access to development opportunities for vulnerable groups in our society.⁴⁸⁶

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill were passed in August 2012, which aims at eliminating

harmful practices and discrimination against women and girls. It calls for equal participation and representation in the economy and decision making as well as monitoring of all legislation targeted to improving the lives of women and girls.⁴⁸⁷

Women's Political Participation

In South Africa, women are well represented in the government. Women make up a total of 34 ministers and 32 deputy ministers; South Africa has almost attained gender parity with 45% women in parliament. South Africa took a leap from 17th to 3rd place of women in parliament rankings, behind Rwanda and Sweden. Prior to democratic elections held there in 1994, there were only 2.7% women in the South African Parliament; the figure increased to 27% after elections and has been growing ever since.⁴⁸⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

South Africa's maternal mortality ratio has more than quadrupled in the last decade, increasing from 150 to 625 deaths per 100,000 live births with HIV playing a role in the majority of deaths.⁴⁸⁹ The UN estimates that 4,500 women die annually due to preventable pregnancy related causes.⁴⁹⁰ Since abortions were legalized in 1996, the number of abortion-related mortalities has decreased dramatically yet unsafe abortion related mortalities have not been eradicated and mortalities associated with unsafe or incomplete abortions have risen by 4.6 percent between 2004 and 2007.⁴⁹¹

Violence Against Women

Violence against women, such as rape and domestic violence, is highly widespread in South Africa. It is estimated that one in three South African women are victims of rape, one in six South African women are victims of domestic violence, and four women are said to be killed every day by their intimate partners. The combined figures of all sexual offences, including rape and indecent assault, indicate an upward trend of 2.1% in 2010/11 compared to 2009/10 and Cases of murder of women increased by 5.6% and sexual offences against children increased by 2.6% during this period.⁴⁹²

A national council for gender-based violence has been launched after cabinet approval in December 2011 in hope to offer a multi-sectorial approach to VAW. The council will lead and monitor the implementation of a 365 Days plan of action against gender-based violence.⁴⁹³

Women, Peace and Security

South Africa has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). In terms of peacekeeping, South Africa's defence policy since the end of apartheid in 1994 has prevented the country from undertaking a more prominent role in African peacekeeping operations. The country has long been criticized for its lack of involvement in African peacekeeping operations. IRIN news reports that, "In 2011 South Africa, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, embarked on a defence review (expected to be released for public comment later this year), but it appears that a policy shift towards creating a greater peacekeeping capacity is not on the cards."⁴⁹⁴ In terms of national defence though, South Africa is leading the way in the region with 27% representation of women, including one woman as a Major General and thirty-one women as Brigadier Generals.⁴⁹⁵ In Southern Africa, South Africa deploy the most women in terms of numbers but the percentage is still low, at 14-25% for UN missions in 2011.⁴⁹⁶ Overall more needs to be done to include women in South Africa's security sector despite some evidence of progress.

Education

96% of South African children aged 7-13 are enrolled in primary education and 70% of children aged 14-17 go to secondary school. However despite these positive figures, UNICEF reports that girls who perform well in math or science are discouraged and they often do not gain the confidence to pursue an education in these sectors.⁴⁹⁷ Additionally, women and girls in South Africa are encouraged to stay at home and perform traditionally female care activities. Many schools and curriculums are not girl friendly and the level of sexual harassment within the education system remains high. HIV and AIDS has devastating effects; almost a million children in South Africa under the age of 15 have lost their parents to AIDS and it is often girls who drop out of school to take care of sick family and/or younger siblings.⁴⁹⁸ However there is an emerging strong girls education movement and girls empowerment and education have been placed on the government's agenda.⁴⁹⁹

Economic Empowerment

In 2007, the government launched an 8-Principle Plan of Action for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality within the public service workplace and the involved parties are still working to promote better representation of women in the workplace, especially in

senior positions.⁵⁰⁰ Women's participation in textiles, wood and In South Africa is growing at 22%.

Research conducted by Gender Links state that "22.3% of women in the sample experienced economic abuse

and 28.5% of men disclosed perpetration."⁵⁰¹ Overall South Africa has undergone great measures to engage women politically but women's economic empowerment is lagging behind.

Swaziland

Swaziland signed the Maputo Protocol and ratified the CEDAW convention in 2004 but the Maputo Protocol remains as yet unratified⁵⁰². The Human Development Index for the nation as 0.522, ranking it at 140 out of 187 countries surveyed.⁵⁰³ Swaziland has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. However, despite these shortcomings, government has demonstrated a commitment to include gender in the national development agenda.

The 2009 SADC report on Swaziland's key findings demonstrate that Swaziland fares only moderately in terms of political, social, economic and cultural arenas as covered by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. If not for the detailed gender commitment in the constitution SADC reports that Swaziland would be on an unstable foundation for growth.⁵⁰⁴

Human Rights of Women

The constitution of Swaziland, adopted in 2006, provides equal legal rights for men and women yet traditional culture within the country continues to restrict women's human rights. Women are discriminated against from a very young age and have limited participation in economic and public spheres.⁵⁰⁵

The existing dual legal system in the country remains a constant source of conflict. Swaziland's political system, known as the Tinkhundla system, marginalizes women at decision-making levels, which consistently sidelines women into non-political traditional roles.⁵⁰⁶ Several discriminatory laws are still in force, having not yet been aligned with the anti-discrimination measures in the constitution. For example, women still have limited land and inheritance rights and in 2010, land rights granted to a woman was overturned by the Supreme Court.⁵⁰⁷

In September 2012, the Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku announced the government's intention to enforce the Child Protection and Welfare Act by prosecuting men who marry underage girls.. From now on, perpetrators face statutory rape charges, and they are additionally fined R20,000 (\$2,400) by the child welfare law. The new law also penalizes parents and guardians who collude with adult men to orchestrate a child marriage and offenders face prison terms of up to 20 years.

Women's Political Participation

The United Nations Reports that due to cultural biases that favour men's leadership women are often discouraged or sidelined from electoral processes. For example out of the 55 Tinkhundla constituencies, only 5 women were elected in the House of Assembly.⁵⁰⁸ For

the past three years in a row, women have had only 14 seats in Swaziland's parliament.⁵⁰⁹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Swaziland has the highest known HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, recently surpassing Botswana.⁵¹⁰ The financial crisis has led to shortages in antiretroviral drugs, as well as HIV testing.⁵¹¹

31% of the female population is living with HIV, contrasting with 20% of men, rising to 49% for women between the ages of 24 and 29.⁵¹² Women though are leading the fight against HIV at a grassroots level with great campaigning and mobilization and this is a step in the right direction for women's rights in the country. However a report to the Commission of the Status of Women in 2009 stated that women are increasingly bearing responsibility for the care of HIV/Aids patients informally, which will limit their political and social mobility.⁵¹³

In regards to maternal health, Swaziland is among the 11 countries in Africa that have failed to make any progress in the past years towards meeting MGD5 on the improvement of maternal health and is classified as having an extremely severe maternal health situation by the United Nations.⁵¹⁴

Violence Against Women

Both the legal code of Swaziland and its customary law provide some protection against gender-based violence yet it is still quite common and often tolerated with impunity.⁵¹⁵ Law prohibits rape and a Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence bill was introduced in 2005 that would prohibit marital rape, but it still waits to be enacted.⁵¹⁶ As in many of Swaziland neighbours,

despite rape being illegal, there is a lack of enforcement and a social taboo with reporting.

Social attitudes and the normalization of violence remain key factors contributing to the high prevalence of violence against women. According to a government survey conducted in 2008, 60% of men believe it is acceptable to beat their wives.⁵¹⁷

Education

In Swaziland there equal rights for women in education and UNICEF data shows that gender parity has been achieved in primary school enrolments and that there is no son preference at this age. However a gap does emerge in secondary and tertiary education in the country, beginning at age 16.⁵¹⁸

Economic Empowerment

There are currently no affirmative action interventions to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities and employment conditions in Swaziland fall short of being gender responsive.

Women head an estimated one third of households in Swaziland.⁵¹⁹ Those living in rural areas face the greatest challenges as their lives are largely determined by common law.

Sexual harassment at work persists and men often demand sexual favours from women in return for employing them, and less than 20% of people know their HIV status.⁵²⁰

West Africa

In the past year West Africa has demonstrated a number of positive trends in all areas relating to women's human rights.

Examples of good practices include improved health care access and services for women in Benin and The Gambia and increasing school enrolment of the girl child in Burkina Faso. National and Civil Society initiatives to strengthen women's political participation were exhibited in Cape Verde and Senegal. Women's CSOs played an important role in Guinea. The Women's Political Platform in Guinea Bissau and L'Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF) in Mauritania were important efforts to support women's leadership. Economic reforms were initiated to address women's socio economic rights such as the key role of women farmers in reducing poverty in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

The promotion of women's participation in peace building efforts was demonstrated in Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. Women have been at the forefront of campaigns to maintain and deepen Liberia's still fragile peace include two of this year's Nobel Peace Prize winners: Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Liberian peace activist, Leymah Gbowee. In Mali, the Malian Network for Peace and Security is developing a roadmap for the involvement of female mediators in the resolution of the crisis.⁵²¹ In Nigeria, the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) has asked the Federal Government to find a solution through dialogue to end the violence and terrorism from the Islamist sect, Boko Haram.



However, West Africa continues to struggle with conflict, violence against women, refugee and IDP crises, famine, economic crisis, corruption, early childhood marriage, low female political participation, poor access to hospitals and women's health clinics, illiteracy and high secondary school dropout rates for girls.

Benin

Despite the institutional and legal frameworks that guarantee women equal rights and acknowledges their meaningful participation in the democratic process in Benin, empirical data reveals the under-representation of women in all spheres of life, both at the local and the national level. As a result, women are economically marginalised and have little access to justice. Benin ratified The Maputo Protocol in 2005 and CEDAW in 1992. However Benin has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Political Participation

Male candidates with the exception of the nomination of one female candidate in 2001 and two in 2006 have dominated the presidential race. Women in Benin make up a small percentage of legislators and top decision makers in ministries. Women's political participation in public life is inhibited by oppression based in beliefs about appropriate gender roles and assumptions of limited talents accorded to women.

The National Assembly produced provisions to raise the statutory number of seats in parliament and to implement a 20% quota to promote and strengthen the political participation of women in the legislative election. However in September 2010, the Constitutional Court nullified both provisions. This

decision has had an adverse effect on the representation of women in the current parliament. Only eight women were elected and of these, the first lady Chantal de Souza later resigned and was replaced by her male counterpart, reducing the number of women from 8 to 7.

In May 2011, Benin President Thomas Boni Yayi appointed 8 women as cabinet ministers out of the total number of 27 ministers and while this is seen as an improvement to the 4 women cabinet members in the past it fails to adequately represent women at the national level.

Economic Empowerment

The Government of Benin has taken both institutional and legal measures to combat economic inequality; it

has also implemented micro credit projects, and strengthened social protection frameworks.

Violence Against Women

Weak public policy in Benin has also meant that laws prohibiting sexual harassment, rape, female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women are not regularly enforced.⁵²² The results of a study by the Family in 2010 established that violence against women is widespread, deeply rooted in cultural customs and has had serious consequences for the welfare of women and girls: 69% of women have suffered from violence at least once in their lives.

The nationwide project "ETODE: for justice and the rights of women and girls in Benin" was launched in 2011.⁵²³ This activity funded by the European Union seeks to support the promotion and defence of human rights and to combat violence against women. The ongoing project has sought to generate awareness of women's rights.

Women, Peace & Security

There is low female representation in security sector institutions. National police and armed forces personnel

have benefited from gender training on an ad hoc basis but this has not yet been integrated into formal training procedures. Furthermore there are currently no initiatives that encourage collaboration between the Ministry of Women's welfare and security sector oversight institutions.⁵²⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In the past year Benin has witnessed a decreasing birth rate and an increase in the number of women who have access to contraception and maternal care. 2-3% of women have access to contraception and 89% of women benefit from a minimum of one prenatal doctor visit. However 1 out of 25 women still dies during childbirth and while the HIV prevalence is decreasing women still remain 1.5 times more likely to contract the virus than men. Only half of all pregnant women benefit from anti retroviral treatment during their pregnancy.⁵²⁵

Burkina-Faso

The government has made efforts to improve gender equality by enacting new legislation, which gives equal rights to men and women. Despite this, women are still discriminated against and their role is constricted to wife and mother. Burkina Faso ratified the Maputo Protocol in June 2006 and CEDAW in October 1987. However, the country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Gender Equality

In an attempt to redress the gender inequality, the government of Burkina-Faso has undertaken to address three core issues: education, reproductive rights, and economic empowerment. The past year has seen increasing efforts to reduce the education gap between girls and boys. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), 18 per cent of the boys in Burkina Faso are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 13 per cent of the girls.⁵²⁶

UNICEF reports that Burkina's gross school enrolment rate, especially at primary school level, has increased significantly in recent years, and this increase is particularly due to a massive girls' education campaign and other incentives – such as the elimination of primary school fees for all girls and the free distribution of more than four million books and school supplies:

"These improvements are coming from the Government of Burkina Faso, with support from development

partners including non-governmental organizations – but also from smaller, more personal initiatives like the one carried out by Fred Eckhard and the association he's a member of," said UNICEF's Representative in Burkina Faso, Hervé Périès. "These sorts of efforts will also contribute towards bridging the gender gap in secondary education which still exists in the country."⁵²⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

On average women give birth to 4 to 5 children. 2-3% of women have access to contraception and 71% benefit from one prenatal doctors visit according to an IOM report. Only 1/3 of women who require anti-retroviral treatment actually benefit from the health care service provisions for HIV positive patients.⁵²⁸

Economic Empowerment

The Ministry for the Promotion of Women's Affairs has been working on strengthening its communication with

other ministries and increasing awareness of its role and presence within society at large to expand its work on women's economic empowerment.⁵²⁹

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence against women remains the most common form of violence against women in Burkina

Faso, but cases of domestic violence and GBV are rarely reported and brought to court. As a result of the under reporting of cases and the lack of institutional measures to enforce existing policies there is also an absence of services to address the needs of victims. Furthermore, despite the adoption of a law in 1996 penalising FGM, the incidence of cases of FGM has not decreased.

Cape Verde

Cape Verde often considered one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa, scarcely ever makes the news. Although Cape Verde has ratified CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, the Government has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. On International Women's Rights Day this year, the president of the Cape Verdean Association of Women Lawyers (JMA) stated that gender equality and human rights for all remains a dream, despite the efforts.⁵³⁰

Political Participation

Presidential elections took place on the 7th August 2011 showing that the number of women elected to the national assembly is gradually rising with 15.3% in 2006 and 20.80% in 2011.⁵³¹

The 1999 Electoral Code includes measures aimed at promoting women's political participation, yet the Electoral Code lacks implementation.⁵³² Under the Electoral law, the State provides a subsidy to political parties that have successfully elected at least 25 per cent of women in both national and municipal levels. Despite the law, women continue to be underrepresented and only few seek public office.⁵³³

Nevertheless, the Cape Verdean government is making strides to include more women in the political process. In the last few years, women's political participation has been a central concern for the government of Cape Verde, namely a number of government programmes initiated through the Institute for Gender and Equality and Equity (ICIEG).⁵³⁴

Economic Empowerment

Although the overall poverty rate has been significantly reduced over the last 20 years in Cape Verde, the gender gap has increased; overall women, and in particular rural women head 56% of poor households. Both men and women from rural areas experience limitations in choosing productive domains other than subsistence agriculture, women particularly have low levels of technical knowledge and literacy, limited access to modern production technologies, experience and perception of markets. Where new business opportunities emerge, in particular linked to the growing tourist market, women are for the most part excluded from that sphere.⁵³⁵

This year has seen the implementation of national and international initiative to integrate women into the formal labour sector. An example of such an activity is the training implemented in the small Cape Verdean village of Tras-os-Montes on the Island of Santiago.

The project, which is piloted by UN Women in partnership with the National Gender Equality Institute in Cape Verde and women's organizations, is part of a series of projects to strengthen rural women's economic empowerment by supporting them in developing entrepreneurial skills and improve the quality of their products and market placements. In another such project in World Heritage site Cidade Velha, 20 grassroots women have been supported to improve Aloe Vera based products such as handmade soaps and shampoos, as well as their branding and marketing.

Violence Against Women

In 2009 Cape Verde adopted a National Action Plan to fight gender-based violence. To support this initiative Cape Verde approved a specific GBV Law (nº 84/VII/2011) in January 2011, which came into effectiveness on the 11th of March 2011.

Although it is difficult to assess changes in women's access to justice after just 10 month of the GBV Law's effectiveness, the following are already to be noted: courts are sentencing GBV cases in 2 months as opposed to 4 to 5 years, there is a substantial increase in GBV cases being tried, and there is increased collaboration between the National Police and Justice systems who are mobilizing for the implementation of the GBV Law and public awareness on GBV.

Cape Verde still has not adopted a specific law criminalizing violence against women (a draft law is currently before Parliament).

Cote d'Ivoire

In 2011, the Minister of the Family, Women and Children of Cote D'Ivoire defined her mission as follows: Promote women in economic, social, legal and cultural; Protecting the Rights of the Child; To protect and enhance the vitality of citizens within the family. A year later we look back to and analyse the progress made towards achieving these goals.⁵³⁶

Cote d'Ivoire signed the Maputo Protocol in February 2004 but has not yet ratified the protocol. The country signed and ratified CEDAW in 1995. The National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was launched in 2007. Since 2004, there has been a UN Peacekeeping mission in Cote d'Ivoire. Gender based discrimination is still very prevalent in all domains of society disproportionately affecting women and children, refugees and IDPs.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In spite of the recent efforts of the new government to improve health services in the country only 4.5 percent of the country's budget goes towards health care in contrast to the budget allocated to the defence and security budget.⁵³⁷ "Health facilities throughout the country lack funds, skilled health workers and resources," laments Germaine Mocket, the medical services director of the local branch of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, an international organisation assisting with reproductive health and family planning services in more than 180 countries worldwide.⁵³⁸

While mother and infant care has been recognised as a priority by the National Department of Health because it is classified as curative, sexual and reproductive services are viewed as preventive and less urgent. Lastly HIV/AIDS awareness among the youth for men and women alike remains insufficient to combat the transmission of HIV/AIDS. "I would like to use contraception, but my husband is against it," says Bintou Moussa. The 32-year-old mother had just given birth to her sixth child at the Abobo General Hospital in Cote d'Ivoire's commercial capital Abidjan.⁵³⁹

When asked if she knows about her rights to sexual and reproductive health, the woman shakes her head. "As head of the family, it's my husband who makes decisions about the health of the family," she explains. And that includes her body.⁵⁴⁰ The current abortion law that renders abortion illegal unless it is a matter of life or death clearly demonstrates the absence of complete reproductive rights and the need to strengthen legal mechanisms and awareness of women's reproductive rights as enshrined in the CEDAW convention.

Economic Empowerment

In northern Côte d'Ivoire women farmers are playing a key role in reducing poverty. Many are members of cooperatives where they grow high quality rice seeds. These seeds are helping them double their yield and reap huge profits. Not only are they living better with

their families, but they are also becoming more independent.⁵⁴¹

Violence Against Women

The end of the political violence as a result of the contested polls in 2011 has led to an increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls in both the north and south of the country.

Cote d'Ivoire has since 2002 established a department within the Ministry of the Family, Women and Children that is responsible for overseeing the nationwide fight against violence against women and coordinating actions and programmes that address the needs of victims. In October 2011 the ministry published all recorded data on Violence Against Women (physical, sexual, domestic, economic and cultural) making it accessible to all the stakeholders involved in combating sexual violence against women in Cote d'Ivoire. The data reveals a steep increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence since 2009 from 509 to 1,934.⁵⁴² In June, the International Rescue Committee published a report on domestic violence in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The report stated that more than 60 percent of women in the countries examined are survivors of violence, primarily by their intimate partners.⁵⁴³

According to Gladys Marie-Angela Asso Bally, director of the Treichville Centre, an organisation that provides support to victims of domestic violence, and the National Commission to Fight Violence Against Women and Children the current legislation against domestic violence and violence against women fails to address the needs of victims because it requires women to "provide hard evidence that they have been beaten. Or else the man must be caught in the very act of aggression in order to be prosecuted. It's as if one is waiting for someone to die before reacting."⁵⁴⁴

This clause hampers the legal process by making it even more difficult for women to report cases of domestic violence and as such would need to be reformed to effectively combat domestic violence.

Women, Peace and Security

As part of activities marking the celebration of the International Women's Day, PAS Abidjan organized on Wednesday, March 14th, 2012 an English Immersion program on the topic "Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security". The program brought together 50 participants composed of students, journalists, teachers, leaders of women's associations and public servants. It was an opportunity to highlight gender issues including, girl's education, women's leadership, and role of women in government's institutions and the contribution of women in the resolution of conflict.⁵⁴⁵

Cote d'Ivoire remains a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Trafficking within the country is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, and the

majority of victims are children. The government's efforts to tackle the trafficking women and the girl child are hampered by limited resources and the lack of a functioning law enforcement and judicial system, as well as by insufficient knowledge of law enforcement officials and judges about the phenomenon of human trafficking.⁵⁴⁶

Political Participation

A number of initiatives are underway to address women's access to political participation and representation such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI-an American NGO promoting democracy), recent roundtable discussions on reinforcing Ivorian women parliamentarians and NGO leaders' participation in conflict resolution and the peace process.⁵⁴⁷

The Gambia

The legal system of the Gambia is mixed and has various sources from English common law, Islamic law to customary law. Notably, with regard to family law, four different legal systems are in operation and are recognised under article 7 of the 1997 Constitution – civil, customary, Christian and Sharia. Hence, while the rights of women are protected under the Constitution, such rights can sometimes conflict with other sources of law, including Sharia.

Gambia ratified the Maputo Protocol in May 2005. It ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) April 1993 but has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on Violence Against Women. Gambia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. .⁵⁴⁸

Human Rights of Women

The decision-making power of women in the Gambia is limited in most fields, including health, participation in elections and access to the workplace. The majority of women are employed in the agricultural sector, where inheritance laws are discriminatory, as they offer no protection for women. Under customary law for example, wives are not entitled to the property of their husband unless they agree to let themselves be inherited by the husband's family.⁵⁴⁹

However, with the declaration of the International Women's Decade (1975 – 1985), Gambian women began to gain some visibility in terms of their participation in socio-economic development as well as in their decision-making capacity. This period saw the setting up of the National women's Council and Bureau by an Act of Parliament in 1980 to advise government on women's issues and concerns. .⁵⁵⁰

Women's Political Participation

There are no legal restrictions against the participation of women in political life, but levels of participation nevertheless remain low. The low literacy rate and lack

of education of many women often prevents them from taking an active part in the political life of their country. It was only in 2002 that women took part as candidates in the National Assembly elections although the President had appointed female parliamentarians in the past.⁵⁵¹

Since 2009, the President of the National Assembly is a woman, Elizabeth Yamide Frances. However, women in the National Assembly currently occupy only four out of 53 seats.⁵⁵² Since 1997, the Minister for Women's Affairs and Vice-President is also a woman, Ajalsatou Njie-Saidy, and she was reappointed in 2002.⁵⁵³

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Although the Constitution states that all marriages shall be based on the free and full consent of the intended parties⁵⁵⁴, underage marriages remain a concern in Gambia and some girls are married as early as age 12. The Government of Gambia acknowledged the problem in its 2003 report to the CEDAW Commission stating that "it is not unusual for a woman to be forced into marriage".⁵⁵⁵

Furthermore, the maternal mortality rate is currently 400 for 100,000 live births, putting Gambia in 37th position worldwide. While the mortality rate has decreased significantly since the 1980s, it nevertheless remains an area for concern. Low standards of obstetric health care, failure to recognize the severity of the problem at the community level, lack of transportation to health clinics and qualified doctors as well as delays in seeking health care are factors contributing to the maternal mortality rate.

The fertility rate remains high with 4.9 children per woman in 2010,⁵⁵⁶ a number that can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the frequency of underage marriages, lack of education of young women and girls and lack of access to contraception. Presently, contraceptive use in Gambia appears low, with less than 18% of women reporting using any forms of contraceptives.⁵⁵⁷

Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDs, representing approximately 57% of those with the disease. As UNAIDS notes "addressing the vulnerability of women and girls continue to be a major priority and this is reflected in the review of the Women and Gender Policy and HIV mainstreamed".⁵⁵⁸ UNAIDS also highlights the "very positive strides" that Gambia has made in the response to HIV in 2009, notably in terms of mother-to-child transmission rates and the increase of voluntary counselling and testing.⁵⁵⁹

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence, including rape, spousal rape and assault, can be prosecuted and can constitute grounds for divorce under civil law. However, there are currently no statistics available and domestic violence is rarely prosecuted as the police treat it as a private matter.⁵⁶⁰

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is not prohibited under Gambian law⁵⁶¹ and it is estimated that almost 80% of women have undergone the procedure.⁵⁶² In recent years, NGO and women's group working to end FGM have reported threats and intimidation; the government has prohibited the dissemination of anti-FGM messages in the state media, and the major government officials have spoken out in favor of the practice.⁵⁶³

Gambia is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, primarily children who are trafficked into forced sexual exploitation.⁵⁶⁴ Women and girls, and to a lesser extent boys, have been trafficked to neighbouring countries in Africa, including Senegal but also to various European countries. According to the US Department of State, Gambia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the

elimination of trafficking, notably due to a lack of funds and limited resources.

Women, Peace and Security

Aside from trafficking, women do not face any particular threats to their safety, as the Gambia's internal situation remains stable. However, approximately 6000 refugees from Sierra Leone are currently settled in the Gambia.⁵⁶⁵ The instability and uncertainty of refugee life makes the refugee population, especially women and girls, more vulnerable to violence. There are no current or former UN Peacekeeping mandates in Gambia.

Education

The literacy rate of the overall population is 50%. 60% of male and 40% of female are literate and the average number of years spent in school is 9 years.

While primary school attendance for boys and girls is similar, rates drop slightly in secondary education (19% for girls against 23% for boys).⁵⁶⁶ As school fees had prevented an important number of children from attending school, those fees were abolished in 1998 for the first six years of schooling.

However, primary school attendance, especially for girls, remains lower in rural areas, notably due to poverty and cultural factors.⁵⁶⁷ Young girls are often forced into early marriages, are expected to do farming work or to take care of the home. Since 2006, Mothers' Clubs have formed throughout the country to change the situation, notably by building new schools and by going door-to-door to encourage parents to enrol their daughters in school.⁵⁶⁸

Women's Economic Empowerment

In the Gambia, agriculture forms the basis of secure livelihoods for the majority of the population. Women have played and continue to play vital roles in the process of agricultural development and currently provide about 75% of the agricultural labour force.⁵⁶⁹

Women's access to land is nevertheless limited in the Gambia. Under customary practices women borrow rather than own the land they cultivate from their husband, their husband's family or other village members.

While the law does not discriminate against women in the area of access to bank loans and credit facilities, banks will often require guarantees in the form of land, which most women are unable to provide. Hence, women who benefit from loans and credit often do so through schemes run by NGOs.⁵⁷⁰

Ghana

While the Ghanaian constitution grants equal rights to men and women discrimination and inequality against women still continue in Ghana. Violence against women, such as domestic violence and female genital mutilation (FGM) is widespread in the country. It is estimated that 15 to 30 per cent of girls and women are still circumcised in northern Ghana. The country ratified CEDAW in 1986, but has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). In 2007, Ghana ratified the Maputo Protocol.

Human Rights of Women

The situation for women differs slightly depending on the region of the country. Women in Northern Ghana are particularly vulnerable as it is a patrilineal society; inheritance and succession pass through the male line. Hence, women do not traditionally own property, large livestock or land and so are unable to support themselves and their families. Despite the physical and physiological damage caused by the cultural practice of FGM, it is still practiced amongst many of the ethnic groups. Furthermore, domestic violence is considered to be a normal part of married life. Women are not able to make important decisions concerning their lives – including decisions regarding reproductive health, their children and family planning. Women also have little or no say about important decision within their own communities, especially in the field of agriculture. Programmes supporting farmers are usually dominated by men's concerns and needs, ignoring the fact that women play an important role in agricultural work.⁵⁷¹

Women's Political Participation

The 1992 elections constituted the country's return to multiparty democratic electoral politics after more than 30 years of political instability, military interventions and authoritarian rule. Successive elections took place in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 and have been considered democratic by domestic observers and the international community. Today, Ghana is widely viewed by the international community as a model of stability and democratic governance in Africa.⁵⁷²

Mrs. Pauline Adobea Dadzawa at the Electoral Commission (EC) noted that though Ghana has made reasonable progress in participation of women in elections, Ghana still has a long way to go when it comes to adequate representation. Thus, she pointed out that there was the need to strive for greater participation in elections through continued advocacy for laws that would back non-discriminatory policy, continued engagement of political parties to field women candidates as a policy and mobilization of funds to support women candidates in the electioneering process. Dadzawa urged the media to portray women in a positive light because it can have a major impact on women's participation in election.⁵⁷³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2009, there was a 1.8% prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the adult population, which was relatively low compared to other African countries. An estimated 260,000 people were living with AIDS in 2009.⁵⁷⁴ According to John Dramani Mahama, Ghana's Vice President, Ghana has managed to bring the prevalence rate from 4% down to almost 1.5% in 2011, following the adoption of its first national strategy plan.⁵⁷⁵

However, with a prevalence rate of 1.3% compared to 0.5% for men, women are still the group most affected by HIV/AIDS and by new infections.⁵⁷⁶ As in many parts of Africa and the world, women remain at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS for a variety of reasons: they are more biologically prone to contract it during intercourse, they often have less say about their sexual encounters and an important number of women still report that most of their sexual encounters are forced. In 2009, a report concluded that violence against women, including rape and forced marriages, increased women's vulnerability to AIDS.⁵⁷⁷

Several non-governmental organizations, including the Planned Parenthood Association, are active in Ghana in promoting reproductive health among the population and educating young boys and girls about their rights and health concerns.⁵⁷⁸

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a significant problem in Ghana and especially in the northern part of the country. Women are still subject to domestic violence and over 40% of men in Ghana still believe it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, an important number of women and girls are victims of forced or early marriages as well as the continued practice of FGM. Rape, both within and outside the household, occurs regularly, with the perpetrator rarely being brought to justice.

Women, Peace and Security

Although Ghana is not suffering from major internal strife or civil war, instability in neighbouring countries has occasionally spilled over to Ghana. Approximately 200,000 people have been forcibly displaced from the Ivory Coast and an estimated 18,000 are currently in

Ghana.⁵⁸⁰ Five refugee camps monitored by the UNHCR are presently active in Ghana. The presence of refugees often increases poverty, instability and health concerns in the host country, further leading to augmented insecurity and violence against women.

Economic Empowerment

In Ghana, women are present in an increased number of sectors, ranging from agriculture and food production to micro and small-scale businesses. Women constitute approximately 52% of the agricultural labour force, they account for 30% of cocoa farmers and 70% of food crop growers. In the private sector, women form over 70% of entrepreneurs involved in micro and small-scale business, i.e. trading, small-scale manufacturing and

food processing which significantly contribute to national income.⁵⁸¹

Changes in traditional policies and beliefs have not taken place to reflect the participation of women in the workplace. For example, women's unpaid work on family farms is not reflected in national accounts or in the design of agricultural policies. National laws still do not permit women to inherit land. The government must therefore act to reverse the continuous marginalization of women in the economy, by removing the gender gaps in employment and by promoting gender-equitable socio-economic development.

Guinea

The constitution of Guinea grants equal rights to men and women as a fundamental right. However, discrimination against women still persists in the daily life, mainly in rural areas. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely practiced. During the political demonstration in September 2009, an estimated 150-200 people were killed and women were sexually assaulted and brutally raped by the army.

Guinea ratified the Maputo Protocol on the 17th of September 2012. The country ratified the CEDAW in August 1982 and adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2011.

Human Rights of Women

The law generally provides for equal treatment of men and women; however, traditional law discriminates against women and sometimes takes precedence over formal law, particularly in rural areas. Formal law regarding inheritance and ownership of the land also discriminates against women. Polygamous marriage as well as forced and child marriages are common. Furthermore, divorce laws favour men and the testimony of a woman carries less weight than the one of a man.⁵⁸²

Women's Political Participation

There were 36 women in the 155-seat National Transitional Council (CNT), the country's legislative body, including the CNT president. Six of 13 cabinet ministers were women, and there were two female justices on the Supreme Court.⁵⁸³

Legislative elections, which were due to be held six months after the Presidential election, have been continuously postponed. They were due to take place on 8 July 2012, but the President announced in April that they would not be held. The elections are currently indefinitely postponed.⁵⁸⁴

Women's groups have formed to increase their participation in the political life of their country, including the Working Group of Girls and Women of Guinean Political Parties and a number of initiatives have been initiated, notably by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), to train women in leadership, public speaking and lobbying skills, with the aim to prepare them more effectively in the electoral process.⁵⁸⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Presently, only 9% of women of reproductive age use a modern contraception method and Guinean women have an average of 5.04 children each.⁵⁸⁶ Guinean women, particularly in rural areas, face problems accessing adequate health services, including obstetric care and family planning, and the maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (980 deaths for 100,000 births).

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the adult population is 1.3%,⁵⁸⁷ with an estimated 79,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in 2009, among them, 41,000 women.⁵⁸⁸ Women are more infected than men, with rates of 1.9% and 1.1%, respectively,⁵⁸⁹ and women also appear to have less knowledge about the disease and report lower condom use than men.⁵⁹⁰

Violence Against Women

According to the US Embassy in Conakry,⁵⁹¹ violence against women in Guinea includes sexual violence, societal discrimination against women and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Up to 90% of women have been subjected to FGM. In 2000, Guinea adopted legislation on reproductive health, which also made the practice of FGM illegal. Article 265 of the Penal Law specifically addresses genital mutilation: "Any person guilty of this crime shall be sentenced to the punishment of hard labour for life. If death results within 40 days after the crime, the perpetrator will be sentenced to death".⁵⁹² However, no information presently exists on the implementation of this law and reports indicated that FGM continues to be performed.

During the demonstrations of September 2009, members of the Presidential Guard publicly raped and sexually assaulted with weapons an estimated 100 women and approximately 20 women were also kidnapped and raped for several days. By the end of 2009, no perpetrator was punished for these crimes and the government made no efforts to rehabilitate rape victims, some of whom were subsequently shunned by their families and forced to live on the streets.⁵⁹³

Rape between spouses is not considered an offense and hence is not punishable by law. While both rape and domestic violence are prevalent, they both remained largely underreported. Sexual harassment is not currently punishable and women continue to report being frequently harassed in their workplace.

Prostitution exists in the informal economic sector and employs girls as young as 14 years of age. The Government does not take action even if prostitution of minors is brought to its attention and does not monitor actively child or adult prostitution.⁵⁹⁴

Women, Peace and Security

The threat of civil war, instability and conflict between warlords in Sierra Leone and Liberia has spilled over to Guinea and led to instability in the border regions.

Approximately 30,000 refugees live in Guinea, the majority (over 20,000) coming from Liberia and the remaining from Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast.

There is also an estimated 19,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs).⁵⁹⁵ This situation increases insecurity for women, especially in bordering regions. However, there are no current or former UN peacekeeping mandates in Guinea.

Education

Although education is free, the schooling of the general population and girls in particular remains low. Literacy rates remain very low, with 41% among the total population, but only 30% among women, compared to 52% for men. On average, girls attend school for 7 years and boys for 10 years.⁵⁹⁶ Dropout rates remain high, due in part to the prevalence of early marriages, pregnancies and domestic trafficking. The rate of schooling of girls in Guinea is 69% in primary education and 20% in secondary education (2003-2008).⁵⁹⁷

Economic Empowerment

The Government has affirmed the principle of equal pay for equal work, but in practice women receive less pay than men in most equally demanding jobs. As in numerous countries in the world, Guinean women continue to occupy the majority of unskilled and low-paid jobs.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), women under traditional law are entitled to hold land only on a usufruct basis, which authorizes them to work family-owned land and draw a wage, but not to own the land. Women also had difficulty obtaining loans, according to the OECD.

Guinea Bissau

The constitution and legislation of Guinea-Bissau forbid all forms of discrimination on the ground of gender and grants equal rights to men and women. In reality, the government is not in position to enforce the principle of non-discrimination. Violence against women continues to be a serious concern in Guinea-Bissau. The country ratified the Maputo Protocol in June of 2008 and CEDAW in August of 1985. The country has not adopted yet a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). There are no current or former UN peacekeeping mandates in Guinea-Bissau.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Since the 1990s, there has been an intensification of the initiative and dynamism of Guinea-Bissau's civil society in all areas - political, social, economic and also organisational, with informal voluntary associations predominantly made up of women growing rapidly. These feminist associations, called 'mandjuandades' in creole, assume various functions and pursue diverse objectives: saving and the collective purchase of consumer goods (for example, buying fabric to share to make clothes used at parties and ceremonies), individual credit for members, the celebration of family and religious ceremonies and even the organisation of leisure activities.⁵⁹⁸ In spite of the apparently uniting character of the cooperativism of the "mandjuandades", obstacles to female public participation still exist in Guinea Bissau.

Guinea Bissau launched a second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in 2011 and is currently in the first phase of implementing socio-economic reforms to encourage sustainable development and decrease poverty.

To correct the shortcomings of the previous PRSP strategy, the construction of the second PRSP has relied on a participatory approach, which has included all the relevant development actors and stakeholders in the process. Efforts have also been made to include women at all stages of the process.⁵⁹⁹

Political Participation

On March 9th 2012, representatives of seven out of the nine presidential candidates signed the Political Declaration prepared by the Women's Political Platform, in which the candidates inter alia agreed to push for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights through the implementation of the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity, decentralization of the administration through municipal elections with women candidates, as well as to strengthen capacity building of women and enable access to credit.

This initiative led by the Women's Political Platform is part of a set of actions undertaken to enhance women's participation in the presidential elections that took place

on March 18th. 2012. It should be noted that Guinea-Bissau's current acting Prime Minister, Ms Adiato Djalo Nandigna, is the first female to hold this position in the country's history and was recently appointed by her predecessor (and now presidential candidate) on February 10th to serve as interim during this process.

While the competition involved nine male candidates, no women candidates partook in the presidential race.⁶⁰⁰ Following a coup all candidates have been disqualified and future elections are scheduled in two years' time.

Women, Peace and Security

Based on a needs assessment undertaken by UNDP in 2011⁶⁰¹ that revealed the limited access of women to justice services, the ministry of Justice, Defence and the National Assembly with the support of UN Women, UNFPA, and UNDP has recently launched an initiative to improve women's access to justice and strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in ongoing security sector reform in Guinea Bissau.⁶⁰²

These activities compliment the existing national security sector reform strategy « la Stratégie Nationale de Modernisation et de Réorganisation du Secteur de la Défense et de Sécurité et dans la Politique Nationale pour le Secteur de la Justice (PNSJ) ». The core objectives of the project include:

1. The decentralization of the justice sector to improve women's access to services
2. The creation of legal assistance service providers for women and children
3. The enhancement of local mechanisms of mediation and arbitration
4. Improve the capacity and capability of judicial and penal institution to protect women's human rights

Unfortunately much of the progress made to implementing reforms has been stalled since the military takeover. The recent coup does however provide a key opportunity for change on the condition that women are included in the decision making process that will define the future political landscape of Guinea Bissau.

Liberia

Liberia has been the centre of women-led peace building movements and women's political participation this year. Liberia's first female head of state was re-elected and laws have been put in place to promote equal rights and reduce violence against women. However, domestic violence is still a major problem in the country.

Liberia ratified the Maputo Protocol on the 14th of December 2007 and CEDAW on the 17th of July 1984. Liberia is one of a few African countries that has established a National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325.

Women's Political Participation

Liberia brought the world's attention to the role of women leaders and the role for women's movements in peace and security when Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, along with Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee and Yemeni journalist Tawakkol Karman. Sirleaf accredited the award to the long struggle for peace and democracy in Liberia. The Prize was described as a boost for the country and its women.⁶⁰³

While Liberian legislation is very egalitarian when it comes to gender - specifying equal ownership rights, discrimination does persist through traditional practices. Men and women are granted the same legal rights regarding access to land, property, inheritance and bank loans – but the prevalence of customary law, particularly over marriages, and other traditional informal structures have meant women remain significantly discriminated against.⁶⁰⁴

Women's Economic Empowerment

Rural women have increasingly been active in formal grassroots organizations such as one for the Aiding Disadvantage & Traumatized Women and Girls (ADWANGA) – which has offered women networks, skills and information in becoming self-sufficient and competitive in agricultural production. Many members are widows and single mothers having joined since the end of the civil war have taken opportunities with organizations like help gain greater economic independence and security, but are not yet widely established across the country.⁶⁰⁵

Women, Peace and Security

Leymah Gbowee has continued her work to empower women in leading the peacebuilding movement across Liberia. Most recently she joined the African Women Leaders Network for Reproductive Health and Family Planning, saying "You can give a woman anything—all the financial help or whatever—but she will still be in bondage until she is able to say: This is my body. I will have a child when I want to have a child. I'll stop having children when I want to stop having children."⁶⁰⁶

Women have been at the forefront of campaigns to maintain and deepen Liberia's still fragile peace. Of the campaigners, many are elderly women, who have repeatedly taken to the streets of the capital Monrovia, voicing to Liberians that political issues should be addressed lawful and legal means, and that peaceful resolutions can now be in everyone's best interest.⁶⁰⁷

Violence Against Women

Although courts have been established and laws enacted to challenge the high levels of violence against women, there is still a very low trial and conviction rate in Liberia. No one has yet to receive a sentence longer than six months prison time. Similarly, although rape is punishable by law, authorities have not adapted in order to uphold the legislation. Significant challenges remain for a culture, media and justice system that discourages victims of violence to speak up and press charges.⁶⁰⁸

Female genital mutilation (FGM) remains a common practice across much of the country, particularly in the northern, western and central regions of Liberia. Although the practice, which decreased during the instability of the conflict, has resurfaced to the point that it is estimated that around half of Liberia's female population have been subjected to the traditional genital mutilation practice.⁶⁰⁹

Education

The Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) and Plan Liberia, launched a US\$2.5 million five-year program aimed at giving a target of 40,000 girls and young women education and basic skills training. The programme is designed to help young girls access primary education as well as offer greater protection against gender-based violence.⁶¹⁰

Human rights for Women

After false starts and numerous difficulties bringing a political coalition together to entrench gains women have made in Liberian politics, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has reintroduced the '30% of Women Participation in Government's Bill'. After initially distancing herself from the bill, criticizing its weaknesses, she has now backed the bill and

encourages other lawmakers to ensure its quick passage through Parliament, while also encouraging female members to approach the upcoming budget with a 'gender lens'.

Customary law assigns women as legal minors once married under customary law reducing many rights significantly. Although the constitution outlaws discrimination by gender, there are no specific laws to prevent it. But a new law, responding to a 2004 UN report showing 36% of 15-19 year old girls had married, has set a minimum legal age limit for marriage to 18 years for women and 21 for men.⁶¹¹

A major conflict between state and customary law over polygamy remains, with the state prohibiting the

practice that has allowed for over a third of married women aged between 15 and 49 living in polygamous marriages.⁶¹²

HIV/Aids and Reproductive Health

The unmet need for family planning is high for the region, understood to be because of pressure from male family members to oppose the use of contraception. But as both the knowledge of abortion and the risks involved are becoming more widely understood, Doctors are reporting that an increasing number of women are using family planning centres and sexual and reproductive health advice available at clinics such as Planned Parenthood.⁶¹³

Mali

Mali ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005 and CEDAW in 1985. Mali has yet to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The crisis in Mali that erupted at the beginning of this year in which Tuareg rebels and armed groups that have swept across the north, expelling all government troops from the region, has taken a very serious toll on Malian women. Human rights organizations have reported mass rapes and use of child soldiers across the north.

On March 22, 2012, when mutinous soldiers deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré just five weeks before his term of office expired, Mali's plans to hold a presidential election and a constitutional referendum on April 29 were disrupted. Legislative elections in July were also cancelled. Several months after the "coup d'état", Mali suffers political turmoil in the south and a humanitarian crisis in the north. As of now, there is no UN peacekeeping mission in the north of Mali and the UN has said it is not ready to back a West African military intervention led by ECOWAS.

Women's Political Participation

The Malian Presidential and Parliamentary elections were delayed after a coup d'état took place earlier this year. Nonetheless, women have played an important role in Malian politics with a small number of women holding Ministerial posts and seats in the National Assembly. Aminata Dramane Traoré, author and political activist has served as the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Mali, coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme, and board member of the International Press Service.

Sidibé Aminata Diallo, a professor at the University of Bamako, is leader of the Movement for Environmental Education and Sustainable Development political party, and in 2007 became the first woman to stand for President of Mali as one of eight candidates in the April 2007 presidential election. Diallo received over 12,000 votes in the election, 0.55% of the total. Unfortunately the coup d'état led by the military has not only left the country in an emergency state affecting the lives of all Malian men and women it has jeopardized any female candidates choice of running in any future election.⁶¹⁴

As it stands, Malian women in 2012 and beyond face significant barriers to their full political participation. Women MPs represent only 10 percent of the National Assembly. "In December 2011 the legislature voted unanimously in favor of a revised Family Code that failed to advance rights for women, deeply disappointing women's rights activists both domestically and abroad."⁶¹⁵

Women, Peace and Security

The crisis in the north of Mali has created a dire and dangerous situation for northern Malian women. There is no UN peacekeeping mission and no UNSCR 125 National Action Plan in place to protect women's rights during conflict. What is more, women have not been sufficiently represented in the planning and strategizing for mediations and conflict resolution programmes. However, there are other institutions, groups and individuals taking action to end the conflict, stop mass atrocities against women and secure livelihoods.

In April of 2012, thirty women leaders from civil society and women's movements from various sectors with the support of UN Women launched the Malian Network for Peace and Security (REPSFECO / Mali). The initiative's

goal is to develop a roadmap for the involvement of female mediators in the resolution of the crisis and ensuring peace processes.⁶¹⁶

Women's groups and associations organized a march on April 13 2012 in Bamako to condemn the abuses and rape of women in the north, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen) in Mali, and led by the Alliance of Women for Peace, "l'Alliance des Femmes pour la Paix". Participants chanted: "We, the women of Mali, condemn abuses and the rape of women in the north," and, "Yes to secularism.No to fundamentalism in Mali."⁶¹⁷

The Senegalese Feminist Forum joined in support of Malian women calling for an end to the conflict in the north and the mass atrocities against women: "We, members of the Senegalese Feminist Forum, would like to express our full support for the Malian people and especially to the women who are woefully underrepresented in these critical moments of the country's political life. We also wish to express our concern about the situation of people living in the occupied territories (Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao). International NGOs have withdrawn from the North and the schools are closed. The little information we have about the living conditions of people living in this zone is of multiple violations of human rights and individual freedoms."⁶¹⁸

Violence Against Women

The conflict in the north has sharply increased instances of violence against women. Human Rights Watch as well as other human rights groups have reported that Separatist Tuareg rebels and Arab militias who have seized control of northern Mali have committed

numerous war crimes including: rape, use of child soldiers, pillaging of hospitals, schools, aid agencies, government buildings, arbitrary detainment and execution and abductions. A scarcity of food, medicine and non-functioning banks, hospitals and schools has led to a growing wave of refugees headed south.⁶¹⁹

Human Rights Watch also reported that armed groups were abducting women and girls: "Witnesses described the abductions by rebels of at least 17 women and girls as young as 12...Witnesses and family members who had spoken with several of the other victims said the abducted girls and women had been sexually abused by the rebels. One person said that rebels took three young women from the same family from a compound in Gao, raped them, and brought them back the next day. The majority of these crimes took place in Gao shortly after it fell to rebel groups, but also in Timbuktu, Niafounke, and in villages around Dire."⁶²⁰

Women and Climate Change

A 2010 report from Mali's agriculture ministry said that more than 500,000 hectares of forest are cleared for firewood and charcoal each year in the West African country. But several female Malian engineers have taken matters into their own hands by developing and spreading new ways of cooking, using solar power and heat retention. Female engineers like Anna Dembele, featured in Trust.org, are helped to cut carbon costs by disseminating kits for low-carbon cooking. The association she belongs to now plans to promote use of the equipment across Mali, helping people cope with inflation and tackling deforestation in the bargain.⁶²¹

Mauritania

Mauritania ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005 and CEDAW in 2001. However Mauritania has not adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. While Mauritania has signed most of the international conventions including the ones listed above, the law remains deeply discriminatory against women. Mauritania continues to use Islamic Sharia law, polygamy is legal and men are legally heads of the household. Violence against women, especially domestic violence and Female Genital Mutilation remain widespread throughout the country. There is no specific law in the books to prohibit violence against women.

Mauritania is ranked 48 out of 86 in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index, up from the 61st position in 2009. The country's Human Development Index (HDI) score in 2011 is 0.453 placing Mauritania at 159 out of 187 countries. The Gender Inequality Index value is 0.605 ranking Mauritania at 126th place out of 146 countries. Mauritania's Global Gender Gap Index ranking in 2011 is 0.6164, placing it in 114th place (out of 135 countries).⁶²²

Women's Political Participation

Mauritania has four areas of law that effect women in different ways: Islamic law; Customary African law; Customary Arabic-Bedouin and Berber law, and (modern) Civil law

There are no legal restrictions on women's freedom of access to public space in the Mauritanian constitution and freedom of association and assembly is protected under Mauritanian law. However, peaceful demonstrations such as the demonstration following the 2009 coup in which women ministers of parliament staged a sit-in were forcibly broken up by police, do occur.⁶²³

On International Women's day of March 2012, around 3,000 women marched through the streets of the capital city, Nouakchott, and converged on the presidential palace to demand action from President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz to fight for women's rights.

"We want to draw attention to occurrences of domestic violence, rape, including marital rape, female genital mutilation/cutting and forced feeding that endanger women's lives in the country,"- Zeinabou Mint Taleb Moussa, head of a Mauritanian association for mother and child health care.⁶²⁴

One organisation, L'Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF), is making great strides in education women to become leaders and politically active. The primary mission of AFCF is to promote human rights and to defend the rights of women and children; bring about support for women in precarious situations, particularly those who are the head of the household; create a network of associations that fight for the improvement of living conditions of women heads of households and their children; contribute to the emergence of an active solidarity amongst women of different social classes; and fight for equality among men and women.

AFCF conducts numerous trainings and workshops on women's leadership skills and political participation. Participants come from all over the country representing

women's groups who are seeking to advance women's rights but who may not have had formal training in political participation and grassroots organizing. The trainings allow participants to bring their new leadership skills back to their organizations to build capacity of other members. Trainings also target female candidates who are running for parliamentary elections. "During the trainings, participants spend time developing their skills to run a political campaign, and cover topics such as how to utilize media most efficiently, how to raise funds, how to advocate for issues effectively, and how women can negotiate successful roles in politics."⁶²⁵

Violence Against Women

Mauritania has ratified various international conventions protecting women's rights and has enacted local laws to curb violence against women, however many have reported that these laws are not fully implemented as they are in conflict with cultural and religious laws.

While the law states that those found guilty of rape must serve 15 years in prison and pay a fine, few cases are ever heard in court. Women suffer from stigma and are concerned they might be accused of adultery or fornication under Muslim Sharia law. There are instances where victims of rape have been put in prison for fornication and adultery.

"If a woman is at home and somebody forcefully breaks into her house and rapes her, that can be considered as rape. But if a woman goes out, for example to dump rubbish, and she is raped, they would ask her what she was doing outside of the house"- Mar Jubero, a women's right campaigner in the country.⁶²⁶

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still the norm in Mauritania. While the country's criminal code prohibits FGM, the law has hardly been applied. 72% of women in Mauritania have undergone FGM.⁶²⁷ Issues have of forced feeding so that young women appeal to the beauty standards of 'roundness', have also been reported in the country.⁶²⁸

Niger

Niger signed the Maputo Protocol in July 2004 but has yet to ratify it. CEDAW was ratified in October 1999. Niger has not adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 and there is no former or current UN Peacekeeping mandate in the country.

Niger's food crisis continues to be a major issue and still affects 8.3 million of the 15.7 million people in this West African nation.

Human Rights of Women

The Nigerian Constitution grants equal rights for spouses in all areas of family life, however customary law general trumps those rights. Men are considered heads of the families and wives as second-class citizens. Divorce rights and custody rights are virtually non-existent, more often than not favouring the husband. Customary law or Sharia law, stipulating that a woman's inheritance is half of a man's, governs inheritance rights.⁶²⁹ Women's civil liberties are also nominally ensured in the constitution but are hardly guaranteed in practice. It is incredibly difficult for a woman to own land, to find justice in the courts and to access credit.

Violence Against Women

There is no legislation in place specifically addressing domestic violence in Niger. Women can report instances of violence but seldom do for fear of stigmatization. Most women are unaware of their legal rights. Sexual harassment is recognized as a criminal offense, punishable by a few months in prison.⁶³⁰ Female genital mutilation (FGM) is gradually being eradicated where only a few ethnic groups in the country continue to practice it (around 2.2% of women have had the procedure).⁶³¹ Niger is also a source, destination and transit country for female trafficked persons, according to the CIA.⁶³²

Reproductive Health and AIDS/HIV

According to a report by Save the Children, Niger is the worst country on earth in which to be a mother. The current food crisis in Niger has led to high instances of maternal mortality, coupled with poor access to contraception and women's health clinics.

Overall, under-five infant mortality rates in Niger are amongst the highest in the world (in 4th place, according to a UNICEF report published in 2007). However, mortality rates for girls are slightly higher (173 per 1000 as against 171 per 1000 for boys).⁶³³

Economic Empowerment

In a country where hunger is never far away, women in the rural district of Torodi are taking measures to ensure food security by tending to a large vegetable garden after the harvest season has come and gone. This group of women managing more than three hectares of land belongs to an association called Cernafa, meaning "cooperation". "We were about fifty women at the beginning in 2002, when we got started here on a plot the chief made available to us," said Douramane, who is president of the group. She continued: "It was very difficult at the start, because of a lack of water. People took us for fools...But now the group has more than 100 women, and through this garden we have become the pride of the village and the Torodi district. Three years ago, we had saved enough to buy 4.2 hectares of land for about 400,000 CFA francs (around 772 dollars) to respond to requests and diversify our range of produce."⁶³⁴

World Food Day 2012 highlighted Agricultural Cooperatives –something these women have been able to show success in developing. Despite the key contributions women make to produce and process agricultural products and provide food security for their families, women farmers in Niger still have very limited access to natural resources and productive opportunities, according to the FAO. They had rarely given the opportunities to play a role in decision-making in rural institutions.⁶³⁵ While the producer organization mentioned in the latter paragraph showed women in managerial positions, the FAO report on producer organizations (POs) in Niger shows that women can easily join a PO but their numbers fall dramatically when it comes to management positions (81% are men; 19% are women).⁶³⁶

Education

School enrolment rates have not achieved gender parity. 65% of boys against 51% of girls are enrolled in primary school, and 14% of boys and just 8% of girls are enrolled in secondary school.⁶³⁷ This is reflective of decisions to prioritise boys' education and keeps girls at home to work or marry.

Nigeria

Nigeria ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004 and CEDAW in 1985. Nigeria has yet to adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The Nigerian constitution, which was passed in 1999, prohibits all forms of discrimination against women and grants equal rights to men and women. However, customary and religious laws limit these rights. Certain states in the south follow Islamic Sharia law, which strengthen customs that discriminate against women. Domestic violence is widespread mainly in polygamous families and female genital mutilation is common in certain states, mainly in rural areas.

The impact of inequality on the lives of girls and women is reflected starkly in health and education outcomes, nationally and between North and South. Levels of gender violence are also high, notably in the South where inequality is greatest.

Women's Political Participation

Women are excluded from decision-making at all levels due to male-dominated patronage networks, the absence of agreed quotas, and a party system that fails to nominate women candidates for electable seats. The first National Women's Retreat on Development, Peace and National Transformation called for the Nigerian Government to tackle gender inequality in the civil society and governance.⁶³⁸

At present, Nigeria's House of Representatives has 360 Members. Of these, 25 are women. Only about 4% of local government councillors are women. However, more women than men are registered to vote. Fear of violence and restrictions on mobility may deter women in some cases to run for an elected position or to even vote.⁶³⁹

The Deputy Chairman for the House Committee on Women Affairs, reaffirmed this year the commitment of the house to enact laws that initiate an affirmative action plan for women in the public sector: "the Committee on Women Affairs is working hard on the 35% affirmative action plan for women to be soon presented to the parliament but expectation is ours but reality is another."⁶⁴⁰

Women, Peace and Security

The Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) has asked the Federal Government to find a solution through dialogue to end the violence and terrorism from the Islamist sect, Boko Haram. FOMWAN is collaborating with their Christian counterpart under the auspices of Catholic Women Association of Nigeria (CWAON) on the peaceful co-existence between Christianity and Islam in the country.⁶⁴¹

Violence Against Women

Up to one third of Nigerian women report that they have been subjected to some form of violence. One in five has experienced physical violence. Violence is

endemic in some public institutions, including the police and certain educational bodies, where an "entrenched culture of impunity" protects perpetrators of rape and other violence.

The Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajiya Zainab Maina has decried the alarming rate of rape cases across the country. The minister said in April 2012, based on an overview of Gender-based violence cases in 18 states in Nigeria, that out of 479 reported cases, 21% were determined to be a sexual violation, 44% were physical violations, 18% were instances of domestic violence, 11% were harmful traditional practices (HTP) and 2% were considered economic violations.⁶⁴² An estimated 1.3 million women have been recorded as victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.⁶⁴³

Women's Economic Empowerment

Women own 4% of land in the North-East, and just over 10% in the South-East and South-South. A woman runs one in every five businesses but they are constrained by lack of capital and have to rely on savings. Despite being better educated than their male peers in the micro-enterprise sector, women are less likely to secure loans. The gender pay gap remains wide and income inequality in the formal and informal sectors continue to grow. Women occupy fewer than 30% of all posts in the public sector and women hold only 17% of the senior positions. Five times as many judges and permanent secretaries are men rather than women. 54 million of Nigeria's 80.2 million women live and work in rural areas; providing 60-79% of the rural labour force.⁶⁴⁴

Women's groups across the country are taking poverty alleviation into their own hands. A group of rural women in the Adamawa State vowed to end poverty in their communities by engaging in capacity building and skills acquisition workshops for domestic trades. The women made the resolution during a give-day skills training workshop that was organized by the Women Education and Empowerment Initiative (WEEIN) in YOLA.⁶⁴⁵

Education

Girls' dropout rates are high. Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world. 70.8% of young women aged 20-29 in the North-West are unable to read or write compared to 9.7% in the South-East.⁶⁴⁶

HIV/Aids and Reproductive Health

Nigeria spends only 6.5% of its budget on health care. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world: one Nigerian woman dies in childbirth every ten minutes.⁶⁴⁷ Nationally, the

maternal mortality rate is 545 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is nearly double the global average. In the rural Northeast region it is 1,549 – over five times that average. Only 36% of women deliver in a health facility or in the presence of a qualified birth attendant. 62% of Nigerian women with higher education have used contraceptives, whereas only 8% of women without education have done so. 47% of Nigerian women are mothers before they reach 20.⁶⁴⁸ 10,000 women are to get free cervical cancer screening through The Redeemed Evangelical Mission, TREM, and offered free vocational training or an educational scholarship.⁶⁴⁹

Senegal

Despite the constitution of Senegal, which grants equal rights to men and women and prohibits discrimination against women, the government does not enforce these laws. Discrimination against women is widespread in the country and is especially apparent in rural areas. Women are limited to traditional roles. Female genital mutilation, polygamy, and early marriage are widely spread in Senegal.⁶⁵⁰

Senegal ratified CEDAW in 1985 and the Optional Protocol on Violence Against Women in 2000. However, the country has not reported to the CEDAW committee since 1994. Senegal ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004. A National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity has been developed, to run from 2005-2015. Senegal has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Political Participation

Senegal had two major elections in 2012. The first occurred in February in which for the first time in Senegal's history, there were two women who ran for the presidential seat, signalling an important step in women's political participation in this country and in the region.

"Feminine leadership is really important for democracy, for development and for peace," Prof Amsatou Sow Sidibe⁶⁵¹

In the end, however, neither female candidate moved onto the 2nd round of voting. However, voters removed the long serving President Wade from his post, election Macky Sall and the opposition party won, constituting a victory of Senegal's young democracy.

Senegal's legislative elections that occurred in June 2012 signified an important test to the country's new gender quota system enacted in 2010. The gender quota law provided a mandatory requirement that all candidate lists for legislative, regional, municipal and rural elections be comprised of equal number of male and female candidates, presented on the list in an alternating manner. This new legal framework for gender parity in electoral lists was launched during the parliamentary elections held this year.⁶⁵²

"A record number of women were sworn in as legislators as Senegal's new parliament was inaugurated" this August. "Sixty-four women now have seats in this West African country's 150-member National Assembly, thanks to a law on gender parity."⁶⁵³

Human Rights and Civil Liberties

While Senegal's constitution grants equal rights to women and men, women's human rights and civil liberties continue to be ignored in many cases.

Forced and early marriages, while banned in the Family Code, continue to happen. The minimum legal age for marriage is 16 years for women and 20 years for men.⁶⁵⁴ The average age of marriage for women between 20 and 49 years of age is 19.6 years.⁶⁵⁵ Polygamy is legal and the husband can marry up to 4 women. Parental authority lies solely with the father and in the case of divorce women are unable to take sole custody of their children. The father manages Housing and money. 49% of women reported that they had to obtain their husband's permission to visit friends or relatives, indicating considerable restrictions on women's freedom of movement.⁶⁵⁶

Violence Against Women

As Senegal edges closer to becoming the first African country to fully abandon female genital mutilation/cutting, younger women are supporting campaigns to change social norms surrounding the practice. Increasingly, mothers are taking a stand and refusing to subject their daughters to FGM practices. However, pockets still exist across the country in which FGM is practiced. ⁶⁵⁷

Senegalese women continue to suffer from domestic violence. Although Senegal enacted a law against domestic violence in 1999, only a handful of offenders are brought to court and receive light sentences that amount to a slap on the wrist. According to All Africa: "prejudice often puts overwhelming societal pressure on women, which prevents them from reporting abuse, experts said." ⁶⁵⁸ The Association of Senegalese Women Jurists (AJS) and other NGOs have ignited a campaign against domestic violence involving radio shows, TV talk

shows, debates, legal training and domestic abuse hotlines. "We cannot say the issue is not taboo anymore, but more and more women are daring to look for help," ⁶⁵⁹ said Fatou Bintou Thioune, the CLVF's coordinator.

Women, Peace and Security

Bineta Diop, Founder and Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité was recognized last year by Time Magazine as one among Time's 100 most influential people in the world. Ms Diop, hailing from Senegal, has led numerous peacebuilding initiatives in Africa focusing on women's protection in armed conflict and their integral role in peace processes. ⁶⁶⁰ Today, she continues her influential work in Senegal and across Africa, fighting for women's rights in post-conflict settings. During the elections this year, Bineta Diop and FAS led a network of women's groups in calling for an end to election related violence and insisting politicians come together to solve differences. ⁶⁶¹

Sierra Leone

While the constitution of Sierra Leone grants equal rights to men and women, customary law discriminates widely against women. In recent years, reports of sexual and domestic violence have increased. During the civil war in Sierra Leone, widespread sexual violence was used as a weapon of war and women and girls were kidnapped, raped or suffered other abuses such as amputations. Sierra Leone signed the Maputo Protocol on 9 December 2003 but has not ratified it. The country ratified the CEDAW on 11 November 1988 and launched its National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in March 2010. ⁶⁶²

Human Rights of Women

Changes in the legislation since 2007 have improved the condition of women in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance laws. Customary law nevertheless remains influential, depending on the region of the country, and reinforces discrimination against women, as it highlights the predominance of men over women.

Hence, discrimination against women persists in various fields, including inheritance laws, marriage and divorce, access to the workplace, and political and economic participation. Women also face challenges in terms of access to adequate health care and violence against women, including domestic violence and rape, remains prevalent. ⁶⁶³

Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation has improved in the last decade, but nevertheless remains limited. Presently, only 17 Members of Parliament (out of 124) are women, and only 18.9% of local government councillors are female, with zero representation at the level of

chairperson. According to UN Women, women make up less than 10% in top civil service positions.

In view of the upcoming general elections in November 2012, a draft bill, "The Gender Equality Bill, which stipulates that political parties must field a minimum of 30% of women as candidates in parliamentary and local council elections, is currently under review by civil society groups. The bill also proposes that political parties should have reserved seats for women and field women candidates in districts they regard as their strongholds. ⁶⁶⁴ Opponents of the bill claim that it is undemocratic and does not allow people to choose their candidate freely. ⁶⁶⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Sierra Leone ranks among the worse countries in the world in terms of maternal mortality, with a rate of 970 deaths for 100,000 live births. Less than half of all deliveries are attended by a skilled birth attendant and less than one in five takes place in health facilities. ⁶⁶⁶ Women's health needs in general, including access to maternal care, are given low priority by their own families, community leaders and government.

The fertility rate has decreased only very slightly in Sierra Leone since the 1960s, and is currently at 4.9 children per woman.⁶⁶⁷ The fertility rate remains high as underage marriages, lack of education of girls and traditional cultural practices continue to prevail. Furthermore, although knowledge about contraception appears to be high, contraception use remains very low, with only 10% of women reporting using a form of contraception.⁶⁶⁸

The overall HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was at 1.6% in 2009, but women represented 60% of the total population infected.⁶⁶⁹ Lack of prevention and knowledge about the disease contributed to the infection rate and less than 10% of women reported using condoms.⁶⁷⁰ Furthermore, the practice of polygamy also constituted a factor: although prohibited under Sierra Leone's Penal Code and punishable by eight years in prison, polygamy continues to be authorised in customary marriages, where a man can take as many wives as he wishes.⁶⁷¹ The sexual violence and countless rapes, which took place during the civil war, also increased the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Violence Against Women

Although the 2007 Domestic Violence Act made domestic violence a criminal offence, the police rarely intervene in such cases, which are considered a private matter. Rape is an offence punishable by up to 14 years of prison, but the law does not yet recognize spousal rape. There are presently no reliable statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence, but it appears to be an accepted part of relationships, even for some women.

There is no specific law punishing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) although the police might in some case intervene on charges of manslaughter, forced mutilation or child abuse. The World Health Organization estimated that 94% of women and girls have undergone the procedure.⁶⁷²

Sexual violence was used repeatedly as a weapon and tactic of war during the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone. In a 2002 survey, virtually all (94%) of the households surveyed reported at least one person having suffered abuses in the past ten years. These abuses include abduction, beatings, killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced labour, gunshot wounds, serious injuries, and amputations.⁶⁷³ It is estimated that over 50,000 women and girls were raped during the conflict.⁶⁷⁴

Women, Peace and Security

The condition of women and girls suffered and worsened during the decade-long civil war, as many were victims of abuse, rapes, assault and attacks to their physical integrity. The abuses took place during conflict, but also in refugee and internally displaced camps and the consequences are long lasting.

Over 27,000 refugees from Liberia are currently still living in Sierra Leone.⁶⁷⁵ Those women are also prone to increased sexual and physical violence and limited access to health care and education.

From October 1999 to December 2000, there was a UN Peacekeeping mandate in Sierra Leone: United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The mission was succeeded by the United Nations Mission Integrated Mission Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL).⁶⁷⁶

Education

The literacy rate in Sierra Leone remains low at under 40%, putting Sierra Leone in 174th out of 183 worldwide. As of 2004, 24% of women were literate compared to 47% of men.⁶⁷⁷

National legislation requires children to attend school for at least nine years, but a shortage of schools (many were destroyed during the civil war) and of teachers has made implementation impossible. Presently, only 64% of children complete primary school and fewer go on to attend secondary education.⁶⁷⁸

As more than half the population of Sierra Leone lives below the poverty line, parents tend to keep their children at home to work and seek extra income. This often prevents children from going to school or makes them drop out. The late payment of teachers' salaries and school subsidies, as well as the prevalence of unqualified teachers, has added to the financial burden on parents and guardians. Hence, many children cite the high cost of schooling as the primary reason for dropping out.⁶⁷⁹

Economic Empowerment

Women form the majority of the agricultural workforce but have limited land ownership rights; as such rights are governed by customary rules.⁶⁸⁰

While women have access to bank loans and credit, their lack of land ownership often restricts their access to loans, particularly in rural areas where financial institutions often require land as a guarantee.⁶⁸¹ As in several neighbouring countries, an increasing number of NGOs work to grant access to microcredit opportunities for women.

Togo

Togo ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Political Participation

The Republic of Togo is currently undergoing political restructuring as a result of the resignation of the prime minister. The elections scheduled for later this year may still provide an opportunity for women candidates to strengthen their political representation at the national level. Unfortunately there is no fixed date for elections, making political campaigning and national lobbying and awareness campaigns for the elections rather difficult.

Recent initiatives undertaken by women's civil society organizations include a seven-day sex strike to motivate men who are not involved in the political movement to pursue its goals, which include an end to the system allowing unlimited presidential terms.⁶⁸²

Discrimination Against Women

Despite progress women in Togo are still discriminated against in all spheres of life. In light of this, the Sisters of Solidarity/Femmes Solidaires implemented a training seminar on March 8 2012, on the integration of women in the decentralization policy structures in Togo. The locally based organisation identified a number of recommendations to improve the socio-political status of women in Togo, which included among other recommendations addressed:

1. The need for additional health care services and maternal care for women in urban and rural areas
2. The absence of gender parity within state institutions
3. Health care reforms to increase the access of women to health care services
4. Legislative measures to protect and promote women's integration into the formal economy.⁶⁸³

These recommendations provide a framework for the achievement of women's socio economic and political rights in Togo.

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Although there is the national strategic plan which takes into account the promotion and protection of women living with HIV / AIDS the difficulties overcome in implementing this action plan include: misconceptions of tools by implementing actor, and the implementation of the action plans on a superficial level.⁶⁸⁴

There is also a need to reinforce existing legal legislations/laws that protect individuals infected with HIV/AIDS and guarantees treatment.

Conclusion:

The achievement of gender equality and women's rights is a global agenda that poses challenges for every country both rich and poor.

While 2012 has seen a huge step on women's rights, in Africa; however, it is clear that African countries are still lagging behind when it comes to women's rights. Women's issues and machineries charged with women's affairs have been marginalized and under-resourced for too long, and this has led to a very slow implementation of international and regional commitments made for women's empowerment and gender equality.

The vast majority of African women still lack awareness about their rights. Women have to know their rights, and take action to demand accountability. Many are kept in ignorance due to lack of education and information on what the constitutions of their countries say and how the systems/ institutions/laws that are supposed to run their nations should work.

For many African women, the Beijing platform and the various international instruments their governments have signed have yet to be translated into positive changes in their daily lives. Many African women remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with poor access to land, (financial loan) credit, health and education. While some of the agreements that African governments have ratified enshrine property and inheritance rights, in most countries women are denied those very rights.

It is not a secret to anyone that Africa's various human security challenges will not be effectively addressed unless the exclusion faced by women and girls is tackled across the board. It is important to have more women in decision-making and leaderships positions because whether the issue is food security, economic recovery, health, or peace and security, the participation and inclusion of women is needed today more than ever.

Political commitment is key to ensuring women enjoy their rights. Governments need to demonstrate their commitments with actions. African Governments have to be accountable, and take their responsibility to keep their promises.

The participation and inclusion of African Women and girls are vital to the continent growth and development. African governments can simply no longer afford to deny the full potential of one half of the population in Africa. Women and girls need to be empowered and the full power of their development skills unleashed to participate in the development economic, political and social of the continent.

Gender equality is a fundamental component to development and must be placed at the forefront of discussion and located at the heart of development agendas.

Women's political participation is crucial to achieving other outcomes in women's rights and development; specifically increasing the number of female friendly laws curbing gender based violence, land owning rights, divorce laws, access to education and better healthcare.

African governments have to work harder on women's issues; those who have not ratified the various legal framework to ratify, those who have already ratified to put money aside for implementation with concrete action plans such as clear gender budgeting as well as allocating more funding for food security, human security, better education /health care for sustainable development.



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