



ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA: WHERE DO WE STAND AND WHERE DO WE GO?

WOMEN2030 AFRICA REGIONAL REPORT



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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication compiles the results of gender assessments and Sustainable Development Goals' policy monitoring by the Women2030 partners in Africa in the following countries: Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Tchad, Liberia and Tunisia.

The gender assessments and policy monitoring carried out by Women2030 partners assessed the situation of women in the target countries regarding political participation, violence against women, redistributive and economic justice, climate and environmental justice and gender stereotypes.

The report highlights where Africa stands on the realization of gender equality through the lens of community-based data gathered by Women2030 partners.

Women CSOs Networking to Realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also known as the Women2030 project is a 5-year (2016-2020) global project supported by the European Commission and implemented by a [coalition](#) of 5 global and regional gender and women-focused organizations which WEP is a part of. The project aims to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in different regions of the world to ensure they are implemented in a gender-sensitive manner.



Participants danced to a women's song at the Africa regional training of gender experts organized by WEP in Marrakech, Morocco in 2016

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Africa, just like other regions of the world has made efforts towards actualizing the rights of women through the regional bodies, member states, women-led and other civil society organizations, private sector and other stakeholders. These efforts are from regional policies, plans and programmes; national plans, programmes, policies and laws; and programmes and activities of civil society organizations, women groups and other stakeholders. These actions focus on different issues affecting women ranging from poverty, education, violence, conflict, economic empowerment, environment, power and decision making among others.

2.0 REGIONAL EFFORTS

At the regional level, Africa has Agenda 2063, a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development, which the 6th of the 7 Aspirations aims to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life. The African Union also has developed a [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy for the period 2018-2028](#). This strategy, which is expected to be implemented by the member states focuses on 4 key pillars: maximize opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends for women, ensure security and dignity for women, promotes leadership, voice and visibility of women, laws and policies to realize rights of women and girls. [The African Union Gender Policy](#) "...focuses on closing the equality gap between men and women in general and particularly addressing gender inequalities which have resulted in women's disempowerments and the feminisation of poverty, in order to have a better understanding of the contribution of women in development." African Union also had in 2003 adopted the [Maputo Protocol](#) known officially as the "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa." The Maputo Protocol aims to guarantee comprehensive rights to women including right to participate in the political process, improve autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and end female genital mutilation.

There are several regional efforts to address gender inequalities and contribute to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but gender inequalities persist.

3.0 NATIONAL EFFORTS

At the country levels, different countries in Africa have made different efforts of achieving gender equality and have achieved varying results. Nigeria for example in its National Beijing + 25 report highlighted some of the progress the country has made towards attainment of gender equality as follows: "... adoption of a social protection budget as part of the federal budgetary framework; the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act; the integration of gender perspectives into the national security and peace architecture and into interventions in North Eastern Nigeria; as well as targeted programmes to improve girl child participation in science and vocational education.¹"

¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria. National Beijing + 25 Review. Page 9

Specifically, Nigeria recorded the following as some of the progress it has made from 2015-2019:

- Passage of gender related legislations such as Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015, Child Rights Act 2003, Trafficking in persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003.
- Creation of gender responsive social investment programming and budget which saw the creation of Social Intervention Project (SIP) budget line that is split between four programmes: The National Cash Transfer Programme; N - POWER; the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) and the National Home-Grown School Feeding programme (NHGSFP).
- Creation of poverty reduction, agricultural productivity and food security programs such as: Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise (LIFE), The Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), and Nigeria for Women Project.
- National Gender Policy which provides a 35% minimum threshold for women's participation in politics whether in appointive or elective positions. A Nigerian Women's Trust Fund has been established to provide technical and other resources to female political aspirants. Women's political empowerment offices have also been set up in each of the country's 6 geopolitical zones for purposes of ongoing interface with and support to women politicians in the states and rural areas. The '100 Women Lobby Group,' which comprises women of influence at community, state and national levels respectively was set up just after the Beijing Conference to undertake regular advocacy for women's visibility in leadership structures across all tiers of government and this continues to function with structures in all the 36 States and Federal Capital Territory.

Ghana on the other hand reported the following progress it recorded between 2014 -2019 to realize the Beijing Platform of Action:

“Gender Equality and Women’s empowerment:

- a. Ghana launched the updated National Gender Policy and the Strategic Plan in 2015 and 2016 respectively.
- b. The Ghana National Action Plan 2018- 2022 (GHANAP II) on the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was finalized.
- c. Conducted a country level diagnostic survey to assess the incidence, attitude, determinants and consequences of domestic violence in Ghana.
- e. During the past five years, Ghana focused on Fistula repairs and family reintegration with a coverage of 575 surgeries and repairs nationwide.

f. In line with SDG8, a total of about 1,062 marginalized women were trained in livelihood and pre-employment skills, which provided them with decent work, for a sustainable productive employment and economic growth.

g. Ghana has been able to mobilize political commitment and action for girls and women's empowerment with the President as the Lead Champion. Through this effort, the country has extended the campaign to all regions nationwide under the HeForShe Campaign.

i. Substantial numbers of women (56%) and households have benefited from the livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty.

Mainstreaming gender into socio-economic development:

a. The gains made under this theme are as follows: a. Strengthen the Capacity of Gender Focal Persons, Planning and Desk officers of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) on Gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming for ensuring gender-responsiveness at the local level through the Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

b. Finalized and received Cabinet approval for an Affirmative Action Legislation 2016

Development of Laws and Establishments of Boards:

Bills such as the Affirmative Action Bill, the Aged Bill, the Foster Care and Adoption Regulations were submitted and approved by Cabinet in 2016, the change in government requires that, they are resubmitted to the new Cabinet for approval. In line with this, the Ministry undertook further consultations on the bills and regulations to reflect the broader views of the public and government priorities for women, children and the vulnerable. The current status of the bills are as follows:

- Domestic Workers Regulation in Draft with the Attorney General's Department
- The Foster Care and Adoption Regulations are at their final stages of passage in Parliament.
- The Affirmative Action Bill has been re-submitted to Cabinet for consideration and approval.
- Four (4) Bills; the Aged Persons, Social Protection, Persons with Disability, and Ghana School Feeding Bills will be taken through stakeholder consultations and subsequent submission to Cabinet for approval.
- Existing legal documents and policies such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Human Trafficking Act, and the Children's Act are being translated into voice format in eleven (11) Ghanaian languages for easy access by the general public.

To ensure the achievement of the Ministry's mandate, a number of Boards have been constituted in line with Acts of Parliament to advise and provide technical support to the Ministry. These include:

- The Ministerial Advisory Board,
- The Human Trafficking Management Board,
- Domestic Violence Management Board,
- The Cancer Board,
- Adoption Board and
- The National Council on Persons with Disability Board

Social Development:

The Ministry developed various programmes and interventions to eradicate the Kayayei phenomenon. These are:

- A five-year Strategic Plan¹ to eradicate ‘kayayei’ is being developed through the support of UNFPA.
- The Ministry has developed a Porterage Module to link women in rural communities to Government’s initiatives such as the one Village, One Dam and One District, one Factory to make them economically independent.
- Developing a strategy to mainstream gender in climate change programme.”

Liberia on the other hand reported the following achievements:

- Adoption of the Government’s development plan, Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) (2018 to 2023)
- Adoption of the revised National Gender Policy (NGP), which was launched in 2017, and covers the period 2018-2022
- Re-formation of the Ministry of Gender and Development to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) whose function was increased to include social welfare and social protection
- The establishment of Gender Units in (10) security institutions including: Liberia National Police (LNP), Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR), Ministry of National Defence (MOD), and in a few Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Ministry of Agriculture; the Governance Commission; Liberia Land Authority (LLA); and the National Housing Authority)

The Federal Republic of Togo also reported progress on the priority areas of the Beijing Platform of Action by adopting appropriate policies, plans and institutional frameworks. Certain articles of the country’s constitution were amended to promote women’s participation in elections. Similarly, the land and state code was reviewed to guarantee access to land for women in the same way as men. The reviewed criminal code of Togo incriminates violence against women. Several policies and plans have been put in place in Togo to achieve gender equality.

Like Togo, Burkina Faso also has put in place laws that prevents and penalizes violence against women and have developed a National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES) which aims to reduce gender inequalities and make women actors in development. There is also put in place a national plan to prevent and eliminate child marriage, national

plan to eliminate female genital mutilation and a strategy to accelerate, the integrated programme for empowerment of women in Burkina Faso. The country also formalized 825 women's businesses in 2017.

It is similar case in Cameroon, Tunisia and other African countries where the countries report efforts across different priority areas of the Beijing Platform of Action ranging from development of gender sensitive policies and laws, gender-responsive programmes and plans.

4.0 CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER CSOs

In addition to the efforts made above by regional and national governments to realize the priority areas of the Beijing Platform of Action, women-led organizations and other civil society groups equally made tremendous contributions towards the progress of realizing the Beijing Platform of Action.

One of the coalition of gender and women-led civil society organizations known as Women2030 coalition working under the European Union's funded project titled: "Women CSOs networking to realize the Sustainable Development Goals), has since 2016 been working to contribute to the realization of gender equality globally. The project whose aim is to ensure gender sensitive implementation of the SDGs comprise of 5 women-led civil society organizations working with other women and gender civil society organizations around the world to achieve its goal. The Women2030 coalition is led by Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) and the following as partners: Women Environmental Programme (WEP); Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and Global Forest Coalition (GFC).

The activities of the Women2030 project revolve around: capacity building, policy advocacy and media outreach.

On capacity building, the Women2030 project, has built capacity of women and gender organizations and other civil society groups as well as policy makers and legislators on understanding the SDGs and mainstreaming gender in its implementation. Capacities of these groups have been built around understanding gender equality and mainstreaming it in actions, gender sensitive assessments and data collection, media campaigns, policy advocacy, organizational and financial management among other issues. The Women2030 project through WEP had in 2016 built capacity of 10 leaders of 10 women-led organizations who became trainers that train other women organizations on the issues mentioned above. From 2016 to 2019, the Women2030 project has built capacities of over 1000 persons from 300 organizations on different issues around SDGs, gender, advocacy, data collection, organizational and financial management. These persons come from the following countries: Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, Ghana, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Liberia ... Through this capacity building interventions, different movements of women have been created that advocate for gender sensitive national plans and programmes. The capacity building activities equipped many people with knowledge that they previously did not have.

Rose Pélagie MASSO of African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) from Cameroon testified how the Women2030 project has helped her as an individual and her organization. In her words:

“The activities of this project are very useful; from a personal point of view, of REFACOF as well as of beneficiary communities. As far as I am concerned, I want to thank this project because I have strengthened my capacities. Before the project, I had a very vague idea of the SDGs, I confess that I heard about Women2030 for the first time when I was invited to the train of trainers in Morocco by WEP and it is from this moment that I am really familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals that I can explain to others today with a certain ease...”

Similarly, Samuel Kyiei-Berko of Lifetime Empowerment Center (LEC) Ghana testified thus: *“for the first time, I had a better understanding on the goals.”*

The Women2030 project also has succeeded in advocating and putting in place gender sensitive policies and laws in different countries to advance the realization of the priority areas of the Beijing Platform of Action. One of the Women2030 partners, Women Environmental Programme (WEP) has been instrumental for advocating for laws, policies and programmes in different African countries. WEP teamed up with other women and gender civil society organizations and pushed for the domestication of Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP Act) and Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) in Benue State of Nigeria and this was realized. WEP has also presented a bill on Affirmative Action for Women in Zamfara State of Nigeria to promote participation of women in politics. The advocacy action by Women2030 partners in Nigeria led by WEP also saw to the development of Gender and Climate Change Action Plan for Nigeria, a



Participants at the Policy Consultation organized by WEP Togo in Lome

document that provides guidance on mainstreaming gender in climate change and environmental actions in Nigeria.

In Togo, Women2030 project mobilized women's groups and facilitated their contribution to the National Development Plan of Togo (PND) launched from 2016 to 2018. Similarly, in countries like Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Cameroon and Tunisia, women groups under the Women2030 project made inputs to the countries' development plans for incorporation of gender issues therein. The Women2030 partners in these countries participated in policy forums organized by the government or other stakeholders and in some cases organized policy fora, discussed and made recommendations to government and other stakeholders on issues affecting women.

The Women2030 partners in Africa have also influenced regional decisions on issues through position statements and engagement with policy makers at different regional programs. Women2030 partners coordinate the women's groups to make inputs into regional SDGs and climate plans and were instrumental in the establishment of Africa Civil Society Engagement Mechanism which engages with the African Union (AU) and other regional bodies on development issues.

In addition to the above, Women2030 project partners implemented different initiatives in different African countries that contributed to the realization of the Beijing Platform of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. These initiatives were supported through sub-grants provided by the Wome2030 project. Through one of the Women2030 partners, Women Environmental Programme (WEP), sub-grants and seed-grants were awarded to 51 women and gender civil society and community-based organizations in Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Togo, Burkina Faso and Tunisia. These initiatives ranged from preventing inhumane treatment of women, promoting women's rights to land, promoting political participation of women, promoting menstrual hygiene management, access to water and clean cooking energy, poverty alleviation and economic empowerment for women amongst other initiatives.

Highlight of some of the initiatives implemented by beneficiaries of the sub-grants and seed-grants are below:

Center for 21st Century Issues (C21st) used the Women2030 sub-grant and built capacity of policy makers and women's CSOs and raised awareness on climate change and the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (GAP) in Lagos State of Nigeria, while Echoes of Women in Africa (ECOWA) advocated for increased participation of women in politics in Lagos State and Center for Development Support Initiative (CEDSI) got school girls acquire information and communication skills in [community secondary school Oginigba, Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria through establishment of a computer laboratory and provision of training on ICT.](#)



Women2030 project provided ICT laboratory in Government Secondary School Oginigba, Delta State Nigeria to equip boys and girls with ICT skills

Global Women Development Promoters (GLOWDEP) used its sub-grants to implement an initiative in Schools in the Central Tongu District (Volta Region of Ghana) increasing school enrollment rate of girl child. One of the respondents gave testimony of the impact of the Women2030 project on her life thus - *“Through my attachment with the Girls’*



Club, I have received education in soap making and beads making. In the community, there has been a reduction in the teenage pregnancy and domestic violence cases. Most of them were engaged in them due to ignorance but now they have been educated through this project.” The project has addressed the factors encouraging teenage pregnancy among school girls in 5 schools in the Central Tonga district of Ghana increasing school enrollment rate of girl child.

Foundation for Grassroots Initiatives in Africa (GrassRootsAfrica) on the other hand sensitized communities against the use of polluting forms of energy and introduced cleaner energy sources for cooking.

Hope for Vulnerable Children (HOVUCA) in Mankon and Nsongwa in the Bamenda II Municipality of Cameroon guided women and girls on proper menstrual hygiene management, while WEP Tunisia promoted agroecology amongst school children in Tunisia.

The above initiatives are among 51 different other initiatives implemented by sub-grants and seed-grants beneficiaries of the Women2030 project across different countries of Africa.

5.0 SITUATION OF WOMEN IN AFRICA AND THEIR CONSTRAINTS

There is no doubt that a lot of progress has been made in realizing the priority areas of the Beijing Platform of Action and the realization of the SDGs but gender inequalities still persist in economic, political, cultural and environmental sectors of the society. The situation of women from different African countries in the above sectors are presented below:

Political participation and decision making

Generally, fewer women than men participate in politics and have low representation in public decision- making spaces. As of January 2019, there were 2,622 women parliamentarians out of a total of 11,099, bringing the African average for the proportion of women in parliament to 23.6

per cent. While this is commendable progress over time, it represents less than half the number needed to attain gender parity in national parliaments in Africa².

As of October 2018, there were 302 women ministers in Africa out of a total of 1,348 ministers. Consequently, women's representation in African cabinets remain on average at 22 per cent, which is less than half of the 50 per cent needed to attain gender parity³. Nonetheless, out of 35 countries with more than 33 per cent female representation in national parliaments across the world, nine are in Africa, including Rwanda (61 per cent), Namibia (46 per cent), South Africa (43 per cent), Senegal (42 per cent), Mozambique (40 per cent), Ethiopia (39 per cent), United Republic of Tanzania (37 per cent), Burundi (36 per cent) and Uganda (35 per cent)⁴.

In Nigeria, following the 2019 general elections, women occupy 6.5% of the seats in the Federal Senate and 3.1% in the Federal House of Representatives. This constitutes a regression from the previous elections in 2015, where the percentage representation of women in the Senate and House was marginally higher, at 6.5% and 5.6% respectively⁵.



Engagement with members of Zamfara State House of Assembly Nigeria on Affirmative Action Bill

In Ghana, women held fewer leadership positions than men, and female political figures faced sexism, harassment, and threats of violence⁶. Women's participation in the 275-member parliament increased by 2.5 percent in 2016, with 37 women winning parliamentary seats. Ghana deployed 56 Ambassadors abroad in 2019. Out of this number, 24 were females representing 42.85% as against 41% in 2017. Out of 25 members of the Council of State, 5 are females since 2017⁷.

² United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Fact Sheet, Women in Decision-Making Spheres in Africa. June 2019.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Federal Republic of Nigeria. National Beijing + 25 Review Report

⁶ Ghana's Report on Beijing + 25 Final Draft. 2014-2019. Page 20.

https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/Beijing25/ghana-beijing25_report.pdf

⁷ Ghana's Report on Beijing + 25

In Chad, only 15% of women currently occupy seats in parliament, 16.5% in Togo, 13.4% in Burkina Faso, 31.1% in Cameroon's lower house and 26.0% in the upper house, while In Tunisia 35.9 percent of women occupy seats in parliament⁸.

The above data does not show gender parity in representation in public leadership position in Africa in line with SDG 5 target 5.5.

Some of the constraints militating against women for effective representation in leadership positions are: Social ostracism of women in public space, fear of public ridicule and intrusion into women's private life, financial obstacles for women in Politics at all levels due to monetization of politics, and patriarchal norms⁹.

Violence against women

Sexual, physical and psychological violence continued to be perpetrated against women in Africa at different levels: from intimate partner, human trafficking, agents of state and culture.

From January 2018 to June 2019, African region has recorded the highest number of sexual violence against women more than other regions of the world.¹⁰ There has been increased violence against women both from intimate and non-intimate partners. Women also continue to experience violence because of increasing crisis in Africa. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages of young girls are still taking place in Africa. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is widespread throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, with an overall prevalence of 36% exceeding the global average of 30%¹¹. More women in Africa are subject to lifetime partner violence (45.6%) and sexual assault (11.9%) than women anywhere in the world¹².

In Nigeria, the 2018 National Demographic Health Survey estimates that the rate of sexual intimate partner violence among women currently stands at a prevalence rate of 16%.

In Ghana, a public health report shows that 33 to 37 percent of women in Ghana have experienced intimate partner violence in the course of their relationship (this includes physical, sexual, and emotional violence). In Ghanaian schools, studies found that 14 percent of girls are victims of sexual abuse and 52 percent have experienced gender-based violence¹³.

⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union. Women in National Parliaments. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

⁹ Ghana's Report on Beijing + 25

¹⁰ ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/2019/06/19/fact-sheet-sexual-violence-in-conflict/>

¹¹ <https://archpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13690-018-0253-9>

¹² Ibid

¹³ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/violence-against-women-ghana-unsafe-second-safest-country-africa>

Liberia records a total of 1,685 cases of gender-based violence (GBV) in 2017. Of these, 69.2% were sexual violence¹⁴. In Togo, 32%, 8%, and 22% of married women have experienced emotional, sexual, and physical violence respectively¹⁵. In Cameroon, 39 percent, 14 percent and 28 percent of the surveyed women who were in a relationship or who had been in a relationship had respectively experienced physical violence, sexual violence or emotional violence at the hands of their partner¹⁶. It is similar situation in Tunisia where 60 percent¹⁷ of women experience gender-based violence, and in Burkina Faso where 9.2 percent of women experience physical and or sexual intimate partner violence¹⁸.

Surprisingly, all the above countries have laws and policies and other measures in place to prevent violence against women, but sadly, violence against women persists. The above figures and statistics are said to be underrepresentation of the reality since most cases of gender-based violence go unreported. Some of the factors that could be reasons why victims fail to report cases are the following amongst other reasons: stigmatization, traditional norms, slow dispensation of justice, and healing of the victims.

Other forms of violence against women are still prevalent in Africa. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is still prevalent in Burkina Faso as 13%¹⁹ of girls aged 0-14 had been subjected to FGM, 1.4%²⁰ in Cameroon, 38.4%²¹ in Chad, 58% in Liberia, 30% in Nigeria²², and 1.8% in Togo²³.

Child marriage is another form of violence that is prevalent in many African countries including Nigeria, Liberia, Cameroon, Ghana, and Togo²⁴.

Young women, girls, and children continued to be trafficked out of Africa to Europe and to other continents for menial jobs and sex trade among other reasons. These victims are trafficked from some of the following primary countries: Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Burkina Faso, Togo, and

¹⁴ The Government of Liberia: Beijing +25 National Review Report

¹⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187757561930165X>

¹⁶ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4db7b9d92.html>

¹⁷ IDLO. Ending Violence Against Women in Tunisia Through Shelters.

<https://www.idlo.int/fr/news/highlights/ending-violence-against-women-tunisia-through-shelters>

¹⁸ <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/5/1/e002208.full.pdf>

¹⁹ UNICEF. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/FGM-C_final_10_October.pdf

²⁰ GIZ. Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20131003050434/http://www.giz.de/Themen/de/dokumente/giz-fgm-EN-kamerun-2011.pdf>

²¹ UNICEF. Female Genital Mutilation /Cutting. https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/FGM-C_final_10_October.pdf

²² Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria Archived 2013-10-03 at the Wayback Machine Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany (September 2011)

²³ UNFPA. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/1027123_UN_Demographics_v3%20%281%29.pdf

²⁴ <https://bmcinthealthhumrights.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12914-019-0219-1>

Ghana²⁵. Unemployment back at the countries of origin, low opportunities, and poor living condition, make people vulnerable to be trafficked.

To contribute to ending violence against women, Women Environmental Programme (WEP), one of the Women2030 partners from Nigeria engaged the sub-national government of Benue state and advocated for the domestication of Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP Act) which was enacted in 2015 in Nigeria. This was inspired by increase in cases of violence against women, ranging from rape, wife battery amongst other varying forms of violence and the case of Ochanya Ogbanje, a young girl from the state who was raped by her uncle and his son which consequently resulted to her death. Through WEP's advocacy, the VAPP Act and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) were domesticated in Benue State to prevent and punish violence against women and other criminalities.

Living conditions of women

The conditions of women in most African countries have either not improved significantly in the last 5 years or have worsened. Women Environmental Programme (WEP) and her Women2030 partners in selected countries in Africa carried out an assessment to get the perception of women about their living conditions in some of the countries we work. Majority of women in both urban, peri-urban and rural areas reported their conditions of living as bad or very bad.

The living conditions assessed were on: economic situation, housing, water, sanitation, energy, and land.

These living conditions are linked to different targets of the SDGs.

The economic situation is linked to SDG target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Housing condition is linked to SDG target 11.1: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

Water and sanitation are linked to SDG target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all; and SDG target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations respectively.

Energy condition is linked to SDG target 7.1: By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services. While land is linked to SDG target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms

²⁵ UNICEF. Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, in Africa.

of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Economic situation

Assessment carried out by Women2030 partners in Tunisia revealed that 26.7 percent of women in urban, peri-urban and rural areas reported their economic condition as bad. This is corroborated by Baker Institute that “Tunisia's women suffer from an untoward economic situation and low demand for their labor; low labor force participation and very high unemployment rates; social and regional inequalities; inadequate support systems for working mothers; persistent domestic violence; and prevailing conservative attitudes.”²⁶

In Cameroon, “women's limited access to and lack of control over resources such as education and bank loans that are more readily available to Cameroon men has led to the further decline of women's economic status in modern Cameroon. The vast majority of Cameroon women, regardless of educational level, find themselves in a disadvantaged position in the economic sphere.”²⁷

Women in Africa despite spending much time on domestic work much more than their male counterparts, they receive no payment for that. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women devote 5 hours of their time to unpaid care work more than their male counterparts who devote only 2 hours per day for unpaid care work²⁸.

An average of 30 percent of women in Togo from urban, peri-urban and rural areas stated that their economic situation was bad. “In the area of entrepreneurship, there are still barriers impeding business creation and management by women. According to data from the Togolese center for business formalities (CFE), women held only 27% of businesses created in 2019. This is slightly above what was recorded the year before; In spite of the government’s promise to set aside 25% (up from 20% previously) of procurements for youths and women.”²⁹

In Liberia, “74 percent of all female workers are informal laborers, facing challenges such as a lack of access to credit and banking services, limited financial literacy and business training, and few social protections or childcare options³⁰.” “...41 percent of university-educated women work informally, compared to 24 percent of university-educated men.”³¹ Although the government is

²⁶ <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/f4fb8e9f/bi-brief-090318-cme-carnegie-moghadam.pdf>

²⁷

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265497734_An_Analysis_of_the_Economic_Status_of_Women_in_Cameroon

²⁸ OECD. Why you should care about unpaid care work. <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2019/03/18/why-you-should-care-about-unpaid-care-work/>

²⁹ <https://www.togofirst.com/en/economic-governance/1701-4752-togo-among-top-economies-in-terms-of-gender-equality-in-africa>

³⁰ <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-global-economy/case-studies/liberia>

³¹ Ibid

said to be prioritizing the development of policies to protect female informal workers as well as enable their transition to the formal economy.

According to International Labour Organization, Labour force participation rate, female in Burkina Faso was 58.29 percent as at 2019.

In Nigeria, the assessment³² carried out by Women2030 partners to determine the perception of women about their living conditions revealed that at least 20 percent of women in urban, peri-urban and rural areas perceived their living condition as bad. While some still use crude energy sources like firewood, some had no access to potable water, many live in slums in a filthy environment and live below 1 USD per day. Out of the 378 respondents that were assessed in Lagos State Nigeria, 282 respondents said they did not own land, while 96 respondents said they did own land. The survey showed that more males (38.6%) than their females(11.4) counterparts owned land in Lagos.

Water and sanitation

Progress towards achieving access to water and improved sanitation has been challenging in Africa as many people including women still lack access to potable water and improved sanitation services.

In Nigeria, 60 million Nigerians or 33 percent of the population do not have access to clean water³³.

According to UNICEF, “poor access to improved water and sanitation in Nigeria remains a major contributing factor to high morbidity and mortality rates among children under five. The use of contaminated drinking water and poor sanitary conditions result in increased vulnerability to water-borne diseases, including diarrhoea which leads to deaths of more than 70,000 children under five annually. Also, 23.5 per cent of the population defecate in the open.³⁴” Lack of access to potable water and improved sanitation adversely affect women directly and indirectly as they bear the brunt of whatever affect the children as a result of poor access to water and sanitation.

In Ghana, 81% of the population has access to safely managed and basic service drinking water, while only 18% have access to safely managed basic sanitation services³⁵. In Togo, 33% of the Togolese population don't have access to clean water and a quarter of the population don't have access to drinking water within 30 minutes walking distance of their homes. Along with lack of safe water access, seven people out of 10 don't have access to adequate toilet facilities³⁶. 3 million people in Burkina Faso lack access to an improved water source and only 22% have access to a toilet, causing over 2,800 childhood deaths per year for children under 5. In Tunisia, 253 thousand people lack access to "improved" water while 944 thousand people lack

³² Women2030: Report of Gender Assessment in Lagos Nigeria. https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ROGhrqE_-V7Te0qKsfEh3dey52rFgL40

³³ Voice of Nigeria. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/millions-nigeria-lack-access-clean-water>

³⁴ UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

³⁵ WHO/UNICEF JMP, 2019

³⁶ UNICEF. <https://water4.org/solution/togo/>

access to improved sanitation³⁷. In Cameroon, 73% of households use improved sources of water, while 35% of households use improved toilets that are not shared with others³⁸.

Generally, access to clean water and improved sanitation is limited in Africa and this has negative impact on women and other vulnerable populations.

UNICEF has captured the situation of water and sanitation in Africa below:

“West and Central Africa is the only region with an increasing number of people who practice open defecation – one of the most unsanitary hygiene practices where people use the bush, stream, local river or outside area as a toilet. Progress toward increasing access to improved sanitation has been very limited in the region.

Sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene in health centres and schools also remains a challenge. In the region, less than 50 per cent of schools have access to water and less than 40 per cent have access to adequate sanitation. Water, sanitation and hygiene services in healthcare facilities are also limited.

In communities across the region, more than a third of all people still do not have access to safe water, and millions drink untreated and potentially contaminated water that can give rise to diarrhoea, a major child killer, and cholera.

Women and young girls are primarily responsible for collecting water in most households without drinking water on their premises. This means that a lot of their time is taken away from other important activities such as going to school. Collecting water in public places far away from home also exposes girls and women to the risk of sexual violence.”

Environment

Many women in Africa are negatively impacted by the environmental condition in the region. Since most human activities are carried out on the environment, its condition, whether good or bad affects the activities it supports. The environment supports agriculture, which is a source of food, buildings, vegetation, houses natural resources, water and the air we breathe.

Africa as a continent is confronted with several environmental challenges that affect women negatively. The challenges range from desertification, erosion, air and water pollution from

³⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_supply_and_sanitation_in_Tunisia

³⁸ UNICEF. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Cameroon. <https://www.unicef.org/cameroon/english/wes.html>

varied sources, land and forest degradation, and climate change which has caused unprecedented environmental calamities in Africa.

Desertification has claimed large agricultural lands in Africa posing threats to food security in the region. Desertification occasioned by climate change has caused the drying up of Lake Chad which used to be one the largest lakes in Africa. “Natural causes like drought, the advancing desert and climate changes, as well as increasing diversion and withdrawal of water and anthropogenic causes like uncontrolled and near-permanent clearing of green spaces for firewood, and various other human actions, have significantly contributed to reducing the surface area of Lake Chad to barely 2,500 km² – a reduction of approximately 90% compared to the recorded level in the mid-1960s.³⁹” The Lake Chad basin covers parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and has been a water source for between 20 million and 30 million people.

“But with the desert encroaching further every year, it is getting increasingly difficult for families to make a living through agriculture, fishing and livestock farming. The UN says 10.7 million people in the Lake Chad basin need humanitarian relief to survive.⁴⁰” The drying up of Lake Chad has affected in no small measure, women who are more involved in farming activities in the Lake Chad region.

Another environmental challenge in the region that is posing serious health challenges to women is pollution from the use of traditional biomass energy. Pollution from the use of firewood has caused respiratory diseases for many women and children and in some cases leading to death. According to Ayomide Atitebi as reported in Climate tracker, “In Africa, many women die of pollution from cooking⁴¹.” World Health Organization revealed that smoke from open fire is Nigeria’s third biggest killer with over 95,000 deaths annually behind Malaria and HIV/AIDS⁴².

Despite several efforts to provide clean cooking energy to women on the continent, many women still have no access to clean cooking energy sources.

Accelerated deforestation is also been experienced in Africa and this is affecting forest dependent communities who make their livelihood from forest resources. It’s a bigger challenge for women whom tradition has bestowed on them the role of fetching firewood and who trade on forest resources to raise income to take care of their families.

³⁹ Joint Environmental Audit Report on Drying Up of Lake Chad.

https://oaugf.ng/images/Reports/Joint_Audit_Report_on_Environmental_Audit_of_the_Drying_up_of_Lake_Chad.pdf

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ayomide, A (2017). “In Africa, Many Women Die of Pollution from Cooking” <http://climatetracker.org/in-africa-many-women-die-of-pollution-from-cooking/>

⁴² <https://punchng.com/470000-nigerians-die-firewood-smoke-five-years/>

Climate change is another challenge that has caused several other environmental challenges ranging from flooding, desertification, unpredictable rainfall and high temperatures which affect the performance of crops and animals.

“Experts say that climate change most affects those who depend mainly on natural resources and whose livelihoods are climate sensitive—many are poor farming women. According to a 2015 report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), about two-thirds of the female workforce in developing countries is involved in agricultural labour, and that number is higher in Africa’s rural areas.⁴³” Given this fact, there is need for countries to make plans to address climate change to be gender-sensitive so as to cushion the negative impacts of climate change on women. In Nigeria, WEP, a Women2030 partner has collaborated with the Federal Ministry of Environment to develop a gender and climate change action plan that will promote mainstreaming of gender in climate actions in the country. Although, the Action Plan is yet to be approved by the Federal Executive Council of the country.

Many African countries have ratified the Paris Agreement that aims to fight the climate change crisis and have further developed their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in this regard, but the efforts are not sufficient enough to address the climate problem, hence the call on countries at the 25th session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Madrid, Spain, to step up their climate ambitions in the NDCs.

Without stepping up ambition for climate change, making climate plans more gender-sensitive and involving women in planning and implementation of climate actions, women will continue to suffer the negative impacts of climate change. Women have consistently had low representation among the country delegates to climate change conference. And according to Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), “Women’s equal participation in climate change decision-making is fundamental to just policies that reflect and respond to the needs of the global community.⁴⁴”

“At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where negotiations determine global climate policy, in 2019 women comprised 39% of all national Party delegations and served as 25% of the Heads of Delegations. Research shows that gender imbalances differ across countries and regions. Women’s participation in Eastern and Western Europe, for example, was approximately 52% and 48% in 2019, respectively, while women comprised 31% of African delegations and 34% in the Asia-Pacific region. These differences can also be seen when

⁴³ Elene Mourdoukoutas. Women grapple with harsh weather.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2016/women-grapple-harsh-weather>

⁴⁴ WEDO. Women’s Leadership: The Women Delegates Fund. <https://wedo.org/what-we-do/our-programs/women-delegates-fund/>

looking at participation by UNFCCC negotiating blocks, with countries from the African Group, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and OPEC having less representation of women on national delegations.⁴⁵”

6.0 BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA

The following are some of the major barriers to achieving gender equality in Africa:

Socio cultural barriers

In spite of the fact that gender awareness is increasing in Africa, progress towards attaining gender equality is still hindered by deeply entrenched social constructs and cultural beliefs, which sometimes perpetuate gender bias and limit women’s access and opportunities. These are particularly challenging because they lead to systemic, pervasive and deeply entrenched discrimination, which influence social institutions as well as the formal and informal rules⁴⁶.

Inadequate Funding

Budgetary allocation to interventions to address gender inequalities have been low in most African countries. In addition, short-term support from donors that is not sustained by countries cause fluctuations in the efforts to achieve gender equality.

Non-implementation of some gender specific laws and policies

In most African countries, policies and laws have been put in place to ensure gender equality, but in the face of those policies and laws, women’s rights continue to be abused as the laws and policies are not implemented. This has to do with the political will of the leaders and the capacity of the implementing institutions.

Violence and conflict

Proliferation of violence in many countries on the African continent is also a barrier to the attainment of gender equality in Africa. Violence and armed conflict has caused girls to abandon schools, have closed down business and prevented provision of basic infrastructure to some regions of the countries and have frustrated several efforts geared at promoting gender equality.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

For gender equality to be realized in Africa, we make the following recommendations:

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Helpline Foundation for the Needy Abuja. Beijing + 25 Parallel Report

- i. **Changing mindsets** – Changing of mindsets is critical to breaking patriarchy and causing change in traditions and processes that undermine women’s rights. Causing change of mindsets is a role to be played by the media, civil society organizations as well as government agencies in raising the consciousness of the public on the need to provide equal opportunities for women and men as well as boys and girls. A sustained awareness-raising campaigns can change the orientation of many about the position of women in African society leading to change in the roles of women in the society.
- ii. **Women mobilization and movement building:** Mobilizing women and building feminist movement to challenge gender stereotypes is necessary to create spaces and more opportunities for women. When women come together and engage the traditional institutions, policy and law makers, they can cause a change in traditional and public institutions, creating opportunities and protecting the rights of women.
- iii. **Conditional support to developing countries:** – We call on donors providing support to African countries on gender equality interventions to establish gender criteria to be met before benefitting from support. The condition could be that the countries must have a certain percentage of women in their cabinets or must have and implement electoral laws that favor women’s participation in politics.
- iv. **Education:** We call on African governments to create policies and programmes that promote education of girls. Education is important for bridging the inequalities that exist between women and men.
- v. **Implementation of conventions:** We call on African governments to commit to the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), by developing appropriate policies, laws and programmes that promotes the rights of women and girls.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Despite major commitments and important progress made, women’s universal human rights are still far from a reality today. Agenda 2030 provides an important opportunity and responsibility for governments to take action and make sure everyone can live a healthy, fulfilling and dignified life. Achieving the Agenda 2030 will not be possible without achieving gender equality.