

2022 International Women's Day Celebrations:

' From Passion to Profit – A young people's perspective.'

Collaboration between UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office (UN Women ESARO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

8th March 2022, 12:00-2:00pm Nairobi time

Concept Note

Background

The theme for International Women's Day, 8 March, 2022 (IWD 2022) is, "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow", recognizing the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response, building a more sustainable future for all.

Greenhouse gases have risen drastically from 280 parts per million in 1850 to 390 ppm in 2011; these unprecedented changes have contributed to increased global warming and climate change (World Meteorological Organization [WMO] 2015). The sustained changes in GHG emissions at the global level have severely exposed Africa's arable land, and freshwater bodies leading to reduced productivity, crop yield and habitat loss and have affected livelihoods and exacerbated the levels of employment amongst the youth (UNEP 2012); (UNEP 2016b); (Lewis 2018). Africa's weak institutional structure has further compounded these developments and rigid systems of governance towards adopting policies and interventions to mitigate the impacts of climate change (Engelbrecht et al. 2015; Schaeffer et al. 2014; Niang et al. 2014; Boko et al. 2007). It is against this backdrop that African youth need to play a central role in tackling climate change.¹

Agriculture, therefore, continues to be the backbone of most African economies based on its enormous social and economic footprint. The agricultural sector employs a large proportion of the population and is comprised of over 60 percent of smallholder farmers from rural areas who contribute 23 percent of GDP.² The agricultural sector and its value chain remain an untapped resource potential that could resolve existing socioeconomic challenges and advance efforts towards ensuring integration of gender-transformative development processes that would mitigate against the marginalization of women, youth and vulnerable communities. Though there has been a notable shift among the smallholder women farmers investing in cash crops and the agricultural value chain process, a majority still engage in household food production. Furthermore, with the growing number of youths who are estimated to account for over 60 per cent of the population in Africa³, it would be prudent for governments and partners to invest in developing their capacities to climate-resilient agricultural innovations and technologies. In doing so, they will secure a generational investment, having developed the youth resilience, equipping them with vital knowledge and skills pivotal to investing in entrepreneurship and thereby increasing avenues for agriculture and other related sectors.

Despite the rapid spread and health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, African countries have fared relatively well compared to other countries. However, World Food Programme estimates that more than 40 million East Africans are likely to experience chronic food shortages due to COVID-19. This was

¹ <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-environment-outlook-youth-africa>

² <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/agriculture/our-insights/winning-in-africas-agricultural-market>

³ FAO. 2019a. *NUUS: Field Stories from Africa, Youth Edition*. Rome: FAO.

exacerbated by restrictions in movement disrupting agricultural produce supply chains to markets, access to labour, technical and technological services that have consequently led to post-harvest losses and increased food prices. It is, therefore, imperative that interventions into Climate Smart Agriculture should be mindful of the challenges and opportunities that exist and can be explored for sustainable climate-resilient development.

UN Women and UNEP seek to enhance the gender-sensitive adaptive capacities of women and young women to climate change and strengthen their capacity to engage in climate-smart agriculture (CSA) meaningfully and, more broadly, in the green economy. UN Women has identified CSA as a Flagship Program Initiative (FPI) that yields high impact, with the capacity to be scalable to deepen efforts and achieve transformative change for women in the agriculture sector. Within CSA, UN Women focuses on supporting women and young women in agriculture to participate in decision-making fully and equally at all levels as necessary for the development of appropriate policy interventions; deployment of more effective tools, technologies, infrastructure, and institutions to implement measures to build resilience; and the achievement of sustainable resource management for resilient green value chains.

UNEP's work has focused on providing leadership that will cultivate partnership in caring for our fragile environment through inspiring, informing, and enabling countries and its people to improve their quality of life without compromising future generations interests. In comparison, Africa has contributed negligibly to the changing climate, with just about two to three percent of global emissions. It stands out disproportionately as the most vulnerable region in the world. This vulnerability is driven by the prevailing low levels of socioeconomic growth in the continent. While climate change is global, the poor are disproportionately vulnerable to its effects as they lack the resources to afford goods and services to buffer themselves and recover from the worst of the changing climate effects as they lack the resources to afford goods and services; they need to buffer themselves and recover from the worst of the changing climate effects. This is the case in Africa. UNEP Africa offices on climate change continue to work in the region, providing support to countries to put in place a structure for implementing their climate action commitments. The being to ensure that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are implemented in a manner that meets leading socioeconomic priorities – food security, creation of income and enterprise opportunities for the youth, and economic expansion.

To increase global and regional awareness and amplify youth's voice and their vital role in climate action. UN Women and its partners will commemorate International Women's Day to call for action to support women and girls to grow their capacities to respond to climate change through agricultural production, food security, and natural resources management. This celebration is marked annually on the 8th day of March. For this celebration in 2022, UN Women and UNEP will advance joint advocacy on youth, climate change, and gender issues, contributing to enhancing regional norms on climate-smart economic empowerment.

Rationale

UNEP's Sixth "*Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for Youth, Africa: A Wealth of Green Opportunities*" has been produced through the collaborative effort of more than 100 youth writers, photographers, artists, and reviewers from 30 African countries. The publication provides a regional mosaic of practical ideas, insights, analyses, and experiences about the potential of Africa's natural resources to generate multi-sectoral green jobs. This potential can be fully tapped into through the initiative of youth themselves, with the support of policymakers and the private sector.

In response to the knowledge on youth climate activism and the opportunity for youth in the green economy and the agriculture sector, UN Women commissioned a study during the period 2019-2021, titled "*Opportunities for Youth in Rural Business and Entrepreneurship in Agriculture*".

Objectives of the virtual event celebrations

- To give visibility to young people's actions in the gender equality and climate action nexus.
- To inspire discussion among young people on climate action to advance their economic empowerment through gender-equal climate-friendly businesses.
- To share the "*Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for Youth, Africa: A Wealth of Green Opportunities*" findings and how the youth authors have progressed on the journey in climate action.
- To provide a nexus for innovators and policymakers, paving the way for considerations in developing youth-centric climate change mitigation and adoption policies and practices.
- To present the findings and recommendations of the study "*Opportunities for Youth in Rural Business and Entrepreneurship in Agriculture*" that can inform climate-smart approaches and innovations bridging the digital divide and increase resilience and adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change."
- To leverage on ways of operationalizing the findings and recommendations of the studies by exploring partnerships with interested stakeholders in further advancing work on young women's economic empowerment.

Voices of young people - videos

To increase young people's visibility in the event, UN Women and UNEP will launch a call for submissions for young people to submit 2 -minute videos presenting their innovations and work in the nexus of climate action, economic empowerment, and gender equality. The videos will be incorporated into the event to demonstrate the young peoples' work as part of the discussion. A separate concept note for the submissions is being developed.

Summary of the Studies

Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for Youth, Africa: A Wealth of Green Opportunities

There are more young people in Africa than anywhere else in the world. This has endowed the continent with the potential for unparalleled energy, dynamism, and innovation. Unfortunately, this priceless asset of a predominantly youthful population can easily be undermined by lingering youth unemployment across the continent. The *GEO for Youth Africa: A Wealth of Green Opportunities* publication explores the economic opportunities that are present in Africa's vast wealth of natural resources.

Africa's future sustainability is bright. In that future, green jobs abound so much that youth unemployment is dealt a decisive blow. But for this future to materialize, young people, policymakers, private sector players, local communities, and Africans as a whole must roll up their sleeves and work very hard at ensuring replenishment and not depletion of natural resources. The numerous pathways that lead to this future can be found in parliaments, learning institutions, workplaces, local markets, city streets, farms, and all across Africa. This publication has showcased over 30 successful pathways that young people have already carved from all over the continent.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the nature of rural transformation and limited industrialization means that the non-farm economy can absorb only a fraction of the rising youth population in the continent. (Ripoll et al., 2017). At the same time, there are opportunities for young farmers to tap into the digitalization of African economies and benefit from linkages with environmental protection work. Modern 'smart' technologies and digitization in the farming business has motivated a new generation of farmers, managers, and entrepreneurs. UN Women undertook the study to help prepare the youth for an inclusive, environment-sensitive, and resilient approach to productive livelihoods. The study provides information and evidence on gender-responsive proposal development that integrates youth in agriculture solutions in the broader programmes on climate-smart agriculture.

The review reveals that:

- I. The digitization of agriculture and a green economy could create new employment opportunities for youth. Opportunities in the digitization of agriculture derive from increasing the efficiency, productivity, and profitability of the activities in the agricultural value chains. Digital technologies such as IoT, big data, precision farming and blockchain have the potential to redress constraints in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products. Exploiting the potential of these technologies can play a crucial role in ensuring food and nutrition security in the face of climate change. Youth's interest in digital technologies would also strengthen efforts to transform the agricultural sector. Access to digital technologies is minimal and not customized to the needs of the actors in the agricultural value chains in Africa. The lack of inclusive processes for engaging youth and women in the design, development and application of digital technologies could also limit the success of these technologies in Africa.
- II. A green economy could also employ many youths while preventing overexploitation of natural resources. However, most initiatives failed to ensure youth inclusion, and little has been done to consider the interests of different gender groups. Thus, addressing gender inequality in dependence on natural resources, access to digital technologies, digital literacy, and business skills without aggravating the existing gender inequality problem should be a prerequisite for the success of initiatives towards the fourth agricultural revolution and a green economy.

Target Participants

The virtual events will bring together participants from across Africa with participation at the technical/expert level to include representatives of COMESA Member States, International Agencies, United Nations entities, COMESA Secretariat, COMFWIB, academia, civil society organizations, National Statistical Offices, COMESA Youth Advisory Panel, Youth activists, donors, country office teams, private sector, and other stakeholders.

Event Structure

The International Women's Day celebrations will be held virtually via the Zoom platform and broadcasted through social media channels such as YouTube Live and Facebook Live. The event will be in 2 segments; the first will include a discussion with the youth authors of the UNEP study as a follow-up of their journey after they completed the report. The second segment will be a fireside chat structure where a youth moderator will steer discussions with experts from UN Women, UNEP, National Government on the



economic opportunities for young people in climate-smart businesses. Throughout the event, videos from young people explaining their work in this area will be showcased.

Dates and time:

The planned virtual event will be held on **8th March 2022**, from **12:00 to 2:00 pm Nairobi time**. The detailed programme is below

' From Passion to Profit – A young people's perspective.'

Collaboration between UN Women and UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

Venue: Zoom Webinar

Date: 8th March 2022

Time: 12:00 noon – 2:00pm (East Africa Time)

Agenda

11:30 – 12:00	Zoom link open – videos playing
12:00 – 12:15	Opening Session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zebib Kavuma, UN Women Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa. ▪ Mr. Frank Turyatunga- OiC-Regional Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Africa Office ▪ AUC (TBC)
12:15 – 12:55	Beyond the Study-Global Environment Outlook for Youth-Africa. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awovi Komassi- Togo ▪ Miyomba Buumba-Zambia ▪ Ahmed Fathy-Egypt ▪ Dr. Marc Kamga-Cameroon ▪ Olumide Idowu- Nigeria ▪ Natania Botha-South Africa <p>Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator Damaris Mungai, Gender and Youth Portfolio-UNEP-Africa Office
12:55 – 13:05	Videos
13:05 – 13:45	Moderated discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mehjabeen Alarakhia, Regional Women's Economic Empowerment Policy Specialist, UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office ▪ Rhoda Wachira, Programme Officer, Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production ▪ Sizolwethu Maphanga, Young women entrepreneur from Girls Can Code ▪ Irene Githinji, Program Manager- Education Engagements Microsoft ADC ▪ AUC (TBC) <p>Q&A</p> <p>Moderated by Amanda Namayi.</p>
13:45 – 14:00	Closing Remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNEP ▪ UN Women