



PARTNERSHIP GUIDELINES

to Support Strengthened Engagement between the
African Union, Regional faith-Based Organizations, and
Communities of Traditional Leaders for the Prevention
and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Africa

2021



Partnership Guidelines

to Support Strengthened Engagement between the African Union, Regional faith-Based Organizations, and Communities of Traditional Leaders for the Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Africa



**Spotlight
Initiative**
To eliminate violence
against women and girls

An initiative of the United Nations funded by the European Union



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acronyms | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 2 |
| About the Spotlight Initiative Africa Region Program (SIARP) | 5 |
| Engaging Regional FBOs and CTLs in EVAWG, HP and SRH& RR | 6 |
| Developing the Guidelines: Building on Existing Initiatives | 7 |
| Purpose and Objectives of the Guidelines | 8 |
| Target Audience | 8 |
| Guiding Principles for Engagement between CTLs, FBOs and the AU | 11 |
| FBOs and CTLs' Engagement with the AU Organs and RECs | 11 |
| Exploring Opportunities for FBOs and CTLs to Engage with the AUC | 12 |
| Eligibility Requirements for Membership by FBOs and CTLs to the ECOSOCC | 14 |
| Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) | 15 |
| Women, Gender and Youth Directorate | 16 |
| Recommendations for more systematic partnership between AUC, FBOs & CTLs on VAWG | 23 |
| References | 25 |

Acronyms

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| ACFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| APRM | African Peer Review Mechanism |
| AU | African Union |
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| AUDA | African Union Development Agency |
| CIDO | Citizens and Diaspora Organizations |
| COMESA | Common Market for East and Central Africa |
| COTLA | Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CTLs | Communities of Traditional Leaders |
| EAC | East African Community |
| ECCAS | Economic Community for Central Africa |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community for West Africa |
| EU | European Union |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| FBOs | Faith-Based Organizations |
| GBV | Gender Based Violence |
| HP | Harmful Practices |
| HHSD | Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) Department, |
| ICPD | International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo Conference) |
| IGAD | Inter- Governmental Authority for Development |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| OPD | Organizations of Persons with Disabilities |
| PWD | Persons with Disabilities |
| RECs | Regional Economic Communities |
| SADC | Southern Africa Development Community |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender Based Violence |
| SIARP | Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program |
| SDGEA | Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa |
| SRH and RR | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights |
| UMA | Arab Maghreb Union |
| UNCHR | United Nations Conference on Human Rights (Vienna) |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children Fund |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| WGYD | Women, Gender and Youth Directorate |

Executive Summary

African Union (AU) Member States have made tremendous strides in developing and implementing comprehensive legal, policy and institutional responses to violence against women and girls (VAWG). Specific laws addressing rape, sexual violence in conflict, domestic violence, harmful practices (HPs) have been enacted; national gender policies and national action plans on VAWG and on Women Peace and Security have been adopted; and the issue remains on the priority list of national, regional and continental agendas. In addition, several initiatives exist to fight against specific forms of VAWG initiated by the AU, UN and other development partners, as well as international or local civil society organisations. These include, among others, the AU Campaign to End Early Child Marriage; the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate VAWG; the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction on Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA); the Red Card Campaign to end VAWG; the Saleema Initiative and the forthcoming African Union Commission (AUC) AU Campaign to End Violence against Women and Girls in Africa.

According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women)¹ Communities of Traditional leaders (CTLs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have an important role to play in ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) including ending harmful practices (HP) in Africa. This acknowledgement that faith and community leaders play a central role in addressing harmful gendered norms and practices, has been emphasized by the AU, which has been engaging with CTLs and FBOs since 2019. CTLs and FBOs could act as catalysts to enact meaningful social shifts. In VAWG, including HP and promoting Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and Reproductive Rights (RR). Despite their key role in society, especially at the grassroots level, traditional and religious leaders have not always been fully engaged in the development of legislation, policy and programs related to key gender equality issues, including EAWG, HP and promoting SRH and RR. This disconnect could be attributed to the limited platforms available to CTLs and FBOs to encourage in-depth engagement and consultations between the AUC and the regional FBOs and CTLs.

To address this gap, UN Women through the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program (SIARP), in collaboration with the AUC and in partnership with the EU Delegation to the AU, convened representatives from the AUC, regional FBOs, CTLs and other CSOs, including young people and persons with disabilities and RECs, to a consultative session in Addis Ababa in October 2021. The session took stock of ongoing efforts to enhance partnership between the AUC, faith and traditional leaders; sought to identify key gaps in strengthening these partnerships; and to identify opportunities and entry

points for strengthened partnership and accelerated action towards VAWG, HPs and SRH and RR.

One of the key outcomes of the consultations was the identification of elements to inform guidelines to support partnerships between the AU, Regional FBOs and CTLs, to strengthen their engagement in prevention and response to SGBV, harmful practices and promotion of SRH & RR in Africa. This highlighted the need for FBOs and CTLs to have a deeper understanding of AU structures and processes, as well as key entry points and opportunities for engagement. In addition, several recommendations were shared across groups.

Recommendations for the AUC and RECs included: a) Strengthening the engagement of the AUC and the RECs with civil society, in particular women's rights CSOs and movements in the regions, through stronger formal consultative processes that promote civil society access and enable genuine civil society participation; b) Deepening learning and collaboration across and between the RECs on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of gender equality and women and girls' rights commitments; c) Investing in research, data and co-generation of knowledge on the challenges and opportunities for engaging a diverse range of traditional and faith leaders at regional level, as well as national level through the member states; d) Enhancing communication and feedback mechanisms with CSOs, including FBOs and CTLs, to ensure timely access to information and more meaningful participation; and e) Promoting the harmonization of legal and policy frameworks in the sub-regions and at national level in the African sub-regions, such as the use of model laws in SADC and

¹ Le Roux, E. and Palm, S. (2021), Learning from Practice: Engaging Faith-based and Traditional Actors in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (New York, United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women)



*COTLA Steering Committee members meet to discuss actions to end child marriage and FGM, in Naivasha, Kenya, 2021.
Photo: UN Women/Aijamal Duishebaeva*

the EAC Bills and Acts that are directly translated into national-level law and policies.

Recommendations for Regional FBOs and CTLs included: a) Undertaking institutional assessments to inform improved engagement strategies, taking into account financial, technical and human resources and capacities in the organizations/ networks; and building on other collaborative partnerships while drawing on the strengths of the various partners; b) Identifying platforms and spaces for sustained engagement amongst FBOs and CTLs to identify opportunities and suitable roles amongst members of networks and coalitions; c) Engaging with existing initiatives with similar experiences for learning, such as the Gender is My Agenda Campaign, which also went through a dynamic process before identifying its engagement strategy with the AUC and succeeded in mainstreaming its campaign in the AU Assembly preparatory process; d) Exploring the potential for a regional community of practice of faith and traditional actors, with champions that can engage peers in discussions around VAWG, HP and SRH and RR; and e) In addition to tracking funding opportunities, initiate more open conversations with donors, to inform their priorities, with the aim of ensuring that funding trends respond to priorities of diverse women and girls on the ground.

Recommendations for funding partners: a) Considering more flexible funding that addresses both the prevention and response to VAWG, and which allows for partnership building, especially amongst actors that don't usually interact, including faith and traditional leaders; b) Prioritizing holistic efforts that work to strengthen institutional

responses to VAWG which enhance survivors' access to and experience of justice, protection and support and improve coordinated multi-sectoral referral pathways, including medical officers, social service personnel, the police, prosecutors, the judiciary, judges and magistrates; and c) Considering longer term initiatives that can incorporate movement building, as opposed to shorter term projects that don't manage to incorporate learning and emerging issues in their implementation.

Recommendations for development partners, including UN Agencies and CSOs prioritized: a) Ensuring that initiatives have a good understanding of the AUC's operating environment and can build on existing initiatives to complement and add value to existing faith and CTL led processes at regional level, with links to national level efforts; b) Promoting longer term, co-created advocacy objectives that allow for coordinated efforts at national and continental level, using a variety of sustainable advocacy approaches; c) Providing lasting iterative capacity development processes that focus on different aspects of strengthening technical, strategic and political capacities; as well as more individual aspects such as confidence building and team/ partnership building; d) In the design of projects and programs, allow the faith and traditional actors to contribute their lived realities as well as shaping the current and emerging priorities; and e) In addition to documenting lessons learnt and promising practices on strengthening regional engagements between CTLs, FBOs and AU, create spaces for easy access of this information over long periods of time, to avoid duplication of efforts and reinventing the wheel whenever there is staff turnover.

About the Spotlight Initiative Africa Region Program (SIARP)



High-Level Meeting of COTLA on Commitments to end gender-based violence. Photo: UN Women/Rain Vedutti

The Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program (SIARP) is part of the Global Spotlight Initiative, a partnership between the EU and UN to accelerate progress on SDG 5 targets to eliminate violence against women and girls. The SIARP is a regional response to addressing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, harmful practices and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. The program prioritizes strengthening existing strategies and initiatives, such as the AU Gender Strategy 2017 -2027, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, the Maputo Plan of Action on the Operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2016-2030), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), among other commitments.

The SIARP is implemented in two streams whereby UN Women leads the overall coordination of Stream I that focuses on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Harmful Practices (HP) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRH &RR) in Africa while Stream II responds to the priority the AU has placed on ending Child Marriage and FGM across the continent by supporting the African Union's Initiatives on these two issues.

The SIARP global Program has six pillars namely: Legislation and Policies; Institutional Strengthening; Prevention and Social norms; Quality Essential Services; Data Availability and Capacities; and Supporting Women's Movements². The Africa Regional program focuses on the three of the six

pillars of the Spotlight Initiative including Pillar 1 on Legislation And Policies; Pillar 5 on Data Availability and Capacities, as well as Pillar 6 on supporting Women's Movements and strengthening civil society. UN Women further leads in implementation of activities under Pillar 6 of Stream I in close collaboration with the other UN partner organizations namely UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

The African Union Commission is a strategic partner and counterpart of the program, alongside civil society networks and academic institutions, who provide normative insight and guidance on the key priorities of the Initiative.

In view of their critical role defying deep-rooted cultural practices thereby prevention of VAWG, child marriage, FGM and other harmful practices, UN Women under SIARP Stream I aims to support and enhance partnerships, knowledge and skills of regional faith-based organizations (FBOs) and communities of traditional leaders (CTLs) in AUC decision making processes and high-level forums in preventing and responding to SGBV, harmful practices and promotion of SRH &RR in Africa. As part of its expected results, the program will also establish linkages of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with traditional leaders and CSOs toward strengthened collaboration and coordination of efforts on EAWG, HP and SRH &RR. This will contribute to accelerated transformation of social norms in support of more gender equitable attitudes and practices.

2 What we do | Spotlight Initiative



Engaging Regional FBOs and CTLs in EVAWG, HP and SRH& RR



COTLA leaders develop a workplan with key results that respond to the network's commitments, accountability, and reporting mechanisms. Naivasha, Kenya, 2021. Photo: UN Women

According to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) 2021 synthesis review *Learning from practice: Engaging faith-based and traditional actors in preventing violence against women and girls*, there is significant learning and potential for engaging faith-based and traditional actor to end VAWG.

As the report states: faith-based actors (including formal and informal faith-based leaders and organizations and traditional actors such as chiefs, kings, queens, traditional healers, elders and mothers-in-law) are increasingly recognized as key to preventing violence against women and girls and crucial to realizing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030)³. Engaging with faith-based and traditional actors can help prevent violence against women and/or girls (VAWG). These actors can promote beliefs, norms and practices that support and enable prevention of violence against women and girls, but they can also encourage and legitimize certain forms of violence. Therefore, their reach and influence cannot be ignored, especially given their unique position in households and communities.”⁴

At the same time, there is a disconnect between the local influence of these actors and their engagement in influencing decisions made previously by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and currently by the AU on cultural and religious matters. However,

the transformation of the OAU to the AU was characterized by a shift from an authoritarian and exclusive approach in handling union matters to an inclusive, people centered and gender sensitive approach.

Subsequently, issue of African citizens engaging with the AU directly through AU Organs such as the Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)⁵, the Pan African Parliament (PAP)⁶, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPRS)⁷ African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)⁸ and through African regional institutions as well as indirectly through their member states is not far-fetched and is enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act (2000). The Act recognizes the role of African People's participation in developing the continent in general including youth, African Citizens hence created ECOSOCC, The Pan African Parliament (PAP) and enshrined the Principle of Gender Equality; Aspiration 6 in AU Agenda 2063⁹ which calls for “An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially its women and youth and caring for children” within the context of all the 7 aspirations and demands an inclusive and people centered continent that recognizes and utilizes all human capital in its people, including persons with disabilities.

⁵ <https://au.int/en/about/ecosocc>

⁶ <https://au.int/en/pap>

⁷ <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights>

⁸ <https://au.int/en/organs/aprm>

⁹ <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

³ Le Roux, E. and Palm, S. Learning from Practice, P.9

⁴ Ibid. p. 5

Developing the Guidelines: Building on Existing Initiatives



Photo: UN Women

Recognizing the opportunities to enhance the collaboration between FBOs, CTLs and the AUC in the shared efforts to end VAWG, these Guidelines seek to build on and add value to existing initiatives targeting faith and traditional leaders, noting the variety of resources developed by the UN system in recent years. These include the 2021 Global UNTF Report on Engaging Faith-Based and Traditional Actors in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls; the 2015 UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders (UNDP-CSO-Engaging-FBOs-RLs-October-2014.pdf);

UNESCO's Religious Leaders' Adolescent and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights' toolkit with a focus on Tanzania and the 2020 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) guidelines on prevention of gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights with a focus on Uganda. Furthermore, the Traditional Leaders, Service Delivery and Electoral Accountability Framework¹⁰ highlighted different possibilities of engaging traditional leaders and traditional institutions. In particular, it contrasted

the exclusion and disempowerment versus recognition and reform, encouraging the latter mode of engagement and reached a conclusion that constructive engagement with traditional leaders was possible adding that the degree of traditional leader's accountability to their communities was greater where their leaders were more embedded in their communities. From the findings of this study, any engagement of CTLs at regional levels which resulted in them being less embedded to their communities and accountable should be avoided.

Although there have been many attempts to increase efforts to engage faith and traditional actors, there are currently no guidelines that specifically focus on the engagement of regional FBOs and CTLs at the regional level in Africa, particularly with a focus on strengthening partnership with the AUC. These Guidelines are therefore developed to bridge this gap, informed by the experiences at national and global level.

¹⁰ Traditional Leaders, Service Delivery and Electoral Accountability Framework by Kate Baldwin and Pia Raffler, July, 2017).

Purpose and Objectives of the Guidelines

Faith and traditional leaders are amongst the non-state actors that have been prioritized by the SIARP, given the specific role that they play in both promoting beliefs, norms and practices that support and enable prevention of violence against women and girls; as well as the role that they can play in encouraging and legitimizing certain forms of violence and the attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence.

There are some engagements currently ongoing between individual organizations and networks with the AUC, and in some cases, there are faith leaders who also have roles as traditional leaders. However, there is not a systematic engagement between and amongst regional FBOs and communities of traditional leaders, and the AUC, which is needed to effectively address violence against women and girls.

These Guidelines have been developed, in collaboration with faith and traditional leaders and the AUC, as well as UN agencies and women's rights CSOs, to support partnerships between the AU, FBOs and, with the aim of strengthening their engagement in prevention and response to SGBV, harmful practices and promotion of SRH &RR in Africa.

Within the overall aim above, the objectives of the Guidelines are to:

- Provide an overview of the AUC and its structures to understand entry points and opportunities for partnerships with regional FBOs and CTLs
- Identify lessons learned from previous and current collaboration between and amongst regional FBOs and CTLs and the AUC and recommendations to inform more effective collaboration



Photo: UN Women Mali

Target Audience

The Guidelines are developed in collaboration with and for use by the AUC, regional FBOs and CTLs. They are expected to support UN agencies with programming/ initiatives that bring together AUC, RECs, regional, national governments, political leaders, media practitioners, private sector actors, FBOs and CTLs. To some extent, the Guidelines might also be helpful for CSOs, youth organizations and other actors who engage with the AUC, FBOs and

CTLs, particularly on EVAWG, HP and SRH and RR. The Guidelines seek to offer knowledge and perspectives that may assist these different audiences in furthering their work on EVAWG, HP and SRH and RR. They aim to enable individuals from the AUC, regional FBOs and CTLs to learn about opportunities for engagement between the AUC, FBOs and CTLs, and may not necessarily be well versed or specialists in VAWG, HP and SRH&RR.



Guiding Principles for Engagement between CTLs, FBOs and the AU

For engagement processes to be credible amongst any partners, mutual and sustainable, it would have to be anchored in an engagement environment that is conducive, accommodating and empowering to all participating stakeholders. In addition to globally agreed principles such as equal partnership, respect, co-creation and co-ownership of solutions, mutual

accountability, transparency, inclusion and do no harm, it is important to consider a partnership approach that identifies opportunities for alignment, understanding and appreciating that change takes time, as well as flexibility and adaptability to manage change and the dynamic environments in which all partners operate.

FBOs and CTLs' Engagement with the AU Organs and RECs

This section provides an overview of AUC structures and mechanisms, with the aim of providing information that would be useful to FBOs and CTLs who would like to start to engage with the AUC, as well as those that would like to deepen their knowledge of opportunities for engagement.

There are several ways to partner with the AUC, including through ECOSOCC, the STCs, RECs and Campaigns. Depending on available resources, CSOs (including FBOs and CTLs) can either have direct partnerships with the AUC via MoUs and obtaining observer status, as well as by joining the STCs and technical/ thematic working groups as technical experts. Not all CSOs have the capacity (financial, technical and/ or human) to directly engage with the

AUC. However, opportunities exist to partner with CSOs who are already partners of the AUC where direct engagement is not possible.

According to the AU Constitutive Act (2000)¹¹, the AU Infrastructure is built at three levels consisting of AU Organs (10) and specialized agencies (34), RECs (8) and Member states (55). The AU Organs are the Pillars that were put in place to ensure the realization of AU Continental Vision and Mission and are supported by Specialized Technical Agencies to deliver the AU Mandate through the Regional Economic Communities which are the building blocks of the AU as well as the AU Member states who are the principal owners (shareholders) of the Union.

¹¹ The African Union Constitutive Act, 2000,

Exploring Opportunities for FBOs and CTLs to Engage with the AUC

1. AUC Observer Status through the Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)

One of the most direct and influential ways of engaging with the AUC for CSOs, including FBOs and CTLs, is by obtaining observer status, through the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. The Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established in July 2004 as an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States¹². The purpose of ECOSOCC is to provide an opportunity for African Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to play an active role in contributing to the AU's principles, policies and programs.

However, unlike other CSOs who have been more actively engaging the ECOSOCC process, CTLs and FBOs have been largely missing because ECOSOCC's capacity to deal with thematic issues is yet to be fully developed, pending the full operationalization of its thematic clusters. Subsequently, thematic channels have evolved as an alternative way of engaging

with the AU on urgent issues such as on Peace and Security, Women, Youth, Children, including through the Gender is my Agenda Campaign for Women and the African Child Policy Forum.

ECOSOCC's functions include:

- Contributing, through advice, to the effective translation of the AU's objectives, principles and policies into concrete programs, as well as evaluating those programs
- Undertaking studies and making recommendations
- Contributing to the promotion and realization of the AU's vision and objectives
- Contributing to the promotion of human rights, the rule of law, good governance, democratic principles, gender equality and child rights
- Promoting and supporting the efforts of institutions engaged in reviewing the future of Africa and forging pan-African values in order to enhance an African social model and way of life
- Fostering and consolidating partnerships between the AU and CSOs.



Anta Konipo, member of the coalition of community leaders of Sikasso attends a training on GBV initiated by UN Women in Sikasso, Southern Mali, April 2022 Photo: UN Women Mali

¹² <https://au.int/eg/pressrelease/20190611/Africa-union-economic-social-cultural-au-ecossoc-elects-ten-10>

Eligibility Requirements for Membership by FBOs and CTLs to the ECOSOCC

The requirements to be fulfilled by CSOs (including FBOs and CTLs) seeking membership are as follows:¹³

1. Be national, regional, continental or African Diaspora CSO, without restriction to undertake regional or international activities.
2. Have objectives and principles that are consistent with the principles and objectives of the Union as set out in Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitutive Act.
3. Registration and status:
 - a. Be registered in a Member State of the Union and/or;
 - b. Meet the general conditions of eligibility for the granting of Observer Status to non-governmental organizations.
3. Show a minimum of three (3) years proof of registration as either an African or an African Diaspora CSO prior to the date of submission of application, including proof of operations for those years of submission of application.
4. Provide annual audit statements by an independent auditing company.
5. Show proof that the ownership and management of the CSO is made up of not less than fifty (50%) of Africans or of African Diaspora.
6. The basic resources of such an Organization shall substantially, at least fifty percent (50%), be derived from contributions of the members of the Organization. Where external voluntary contributions have been received, their amounts and donors shall be faithfully revealed in the application for membership. Any financial or other support or contribution, direct or indirect, from a government to the Organization shall be declared and fully recorded in the financial records of the Organization.
7. Provide information on funding sources in the preceding three (3) years.
8. For regional and continental CSOs, show proof of activities that engage or are operative in at least three (3) Member States of the Union.
9. CSOs that discriminate on the basis of religion, gender, tribe, ethnic, racial or political basis shall

be barred from representation to ECOSOCC.

10. Adherence to a Code of Ethics and Conduct for civil society organizations affiliated to or working with the Union.

1. Strengthening partnerships between FBOs, CTLs and AUC Departments

As part of its structure, the AUC has departments and directorates that have been set up to provide strategic leadership and improve coordination and engagement around specific thematic issues. The two departments that are most relevant for Regional FBOs and CTLs to engage with regarding EVAWG, HP and SRH and RR are the Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) Department, and the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate.

13 27445-wd-ecosocc_statutes_-_en.pdf (au.int)

Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD)

The AUC has been engaging FBOs and CTLs in the prevention and response of EAWG, HP, and promotion of SRH&RR through the Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHSD) Department, whose mandate included the elimination of FGM and Child Marriage. To date, some of the important partnerships and ongoing initiatives by AUC HHSD such as with the SIARP and Saleema Initiative, were meant to strengthen legal and policy processes for member states, and the production of reliable and quality data to support the work of women's movements, CSOs, FBOs and CTLs on ending child marriage and FGM. Some of the AU framework which have underpinned the engagement and partnerships with FBOs, CTLs and other stakeholders through the AUC departments of HHSD, WGYD and Citizens and Diaspora Organizations (CIDO) include the AU Agenda 2063, Priorities of the SDGs, the Maputo Protocol and the Maputo Plan of Action,

amongst others. The facilitative role that FBOs and CTLs played in the successful implementation of campaigns and movement to end harmful practices, particularly FGM and Child Marriage, was informed by a study AUC HHSD conducted in 2015.

Within this context, the AUC HHSD launched a report in 2015 on the effects of traditional and religious practices of child marriages on Africa's Political and Economic Development to set pace for work with FBOs and CTLs among others through:

- Organizing a regional capacity building workshop on ending child marriage and harmful practices in Africa jointly with UNICEF;
- A follow up engagement with the FBOs and CTLs in 2019 on Girls' and Young women's access and retention in educational system in Uganda; and
- The African Girls Summit to build on the momentum already established by successor actions.



Photo: UN Women Mali

Women, Gender and Youth Directorate

The Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD) designs programs and projects based on the policies and frameworks adopted by AU Member States. It also oversees the development and harmonization of gender policies; defines strategies for gender mainstreaming within the Commission, AU organs and Member States; and supports capacity building by providing training on gender policies and instruments.

The Directorate advances gender equality and women's empowerment at the continental and international levels, with a view to giving new impetus to the commitments agreed at the global and regional levels in the following areas: poverty and women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship; agriculture and food security; women's health, maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS; education, science and technology; environment and climate change; peace and security; violence against women; governance and legal protection; finance and budget; women in decision-making positions; promotion of youth (women and men) and women in gender equality; empowerment of women. In particular, the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate engagement with CTLs, FBOs as well as CSOs would benefit the implementation of Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14 and 17 enshrined in the Maputo Women's Protocol related to EAWG, FGM, HP and advancing SHR and RR, which member states are obliged to report on bi-annually under Article 9 of the Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa on the status of their implementation to the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government through the SDGEA reports.¹⁴

1. Participation and Representation of FBOs and CTLs in AUC Specialized Technical Committees (STCs)

Specialized Technical Committees¹⁵ (STCs) are thematic Committees and are answerable to the Executive Council. Each STC is composed of Member States' ministers and senior officials responsible for sectors falling within their respective areas of competence. The purpose of the STCs is to work in close collaboration with AUC departments to ensure

the harmonization of AU projects and programs as well as coordination with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Constitutive Act of the AU provides that each committee shall, within its field of competence:

- Prepare AU projects and programs and submit them to the Executive Council
- Ensure the supervision, follow up and evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by AU organs
- Ensure the coordination and harmonization of AU projects and programs
- Submit to the Executive Council, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Executive Council, reports and recommendations on the implementation of the provisions of the Constitutive Act
- Carry out any other functions assigned to it for the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the Constitutive Act.

There are several specialized technical committees in the AUC, and a few have been highlighted below.

The STCs therefore provide an opportunity for FBOs and CTLs to influence decisions, projects and programs prioritized by the STCs. Depending on the FBO and CTL observer status, the thematic area of expertise, as well as existing capacities and resources within organizations/ networks, the FBOs can determine which STCs are most relevant for them to engage in.

Examples of STCs that Regional FBOs, CTLs and CSOs working on EAWG, HPs and SRH and RR could engage with and advocate through include:

- **The STC on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)** whose role includes advocating for: ratification and implementation of AU policies and instruments on gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights; promotion and protection of all human rights for women, including implementation of Member States' obligations and commitments made under international, continental, regional and country-level human rights law; promotion of gender-responsive practices and realization of commitments to the human rights of women.

¹⁴ Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa 8 July 2004

¹⁵ <https://au.int/en/stc>

- **The STC on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** whose functions include strengthening mechanisms for effective humanitarian response on the continent through establishment of an African humanitarian agency; strengthening protection and assistance for populations in need of humanitarian assistance including through the formulation and implementation of AU guidelines; strengthening measures to popularize international humanitarian law and principled action; discussing Africa's first comprehensive Humanitarian Policy Framework, including guidelines on disaster management, epidemic response, and the role of the African Standby Force in humanitarian and disaster situations.
- **The STC on Health, Population and Drug Control** which reviews progress on the implementation of continental policies, strategies, programs and decisions in its sector. The STC also identifies areas of cooperation and establishes mechanisms for regional, continental and global cooperation. It further serves to elaborate Common African Positions in its three areas and advises relevant AU policy organs on priority programs and their impact on improving lives.
- **The STC on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration**, which is the prime forum for African ministers responsible for finance, economy, planning, integration and economic development, as well as central bank governors, to discuss matters about the development of Africa. This STC is also charged with following up on implementation of the integration agenda for the continent.
- **The STC on Social Development, Labor and Employment** which promotes and develops cooperation amongst African countries in the field of social protection, labor, employment, productivity and poverty alleviation. It reviews and harmonizes Member States' policies and legislation, and coordinates Common African Positions to advance African interests, promote tripartism and freedom of association, collective bargaining and decent work. The STC also reviews and assesses progress made by Member States and Regional Economic Communities in implementing the various instruments and policies that advance social protection.
- **The STC on Youth, Culture and Sports** whose functions include considering progress on: implementing the Decade for Youth Development 2009–18 Plan of Action, including the Youth

Volunteer Corps, youth capacity building and the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Project in post-conflict countries; ratification and implementation of the African Youth Charter, Charter for the African Cultural Renaissance and the Policy Framework for the Sustainable Development of Sport in Africa; establishing the Architecture for Sport Development, Architecture for Culture Development in Africa, Pan African Cultural Institute and the African Audiovisual and Cinema Commission (AACC); and implementing adult education and lifelong learning.

2. Improving Visibility & Partnership with FBOs & CTLs at the AU Regional Economic Communities Level

The AU recognizes eight RECs as pillars in the regional integration process, which includes economic as well as broader integration, including social development and governance.¹⁶ The RECs differ in their roles and structures, and also in the progress they have made so far. They are increasingly involved in gender equality and women and girls' rights agendas, where their roles, commitments and progress also vary.

Five of the eight RECs have a normative and institutional framework on gender equality and women and girls' rights in place: ECOWAS, EAC, IGAD, SADC and COMESA. These are binding commitments in the case of ECOWAS (Supplementary Act of 2015), SADC (Protocol on Gender and Development, updated in 2016) as well as the SADC Model Law on GBV and COMESA (Revised Gender Policy of 2016). For EAC, the Gender Equality Bill is to be passed, and this will be binding once this happens. The IGAD Gender Policy Framework is not binding. Most normative frameworks are recent or have recently been updated and amended, to align with the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and other key continental and international agendas and frameworks. These RECs differ in terms of the strengths, opportunities and challenges within their normative and institutional frameworks.

The treaties of these five RECs contain important provisions and commitments with respect to gender equality and women and girls' rights. Most RECs provide for the importance of gender mainstreaming and women's participation, and to varying degrees on the elimination of discrimination against women.

CSOs can apply for observer status with RECs and take part in technical/ thematic working groups which support and influence decision making process at the REC level. As with the AUC, not all CSOs (including FBOs and CTLs) would have the technical, financial and/ or human resources to engage at this level, thus indirect engagement through CSOs and networks with observer status can also be considered. As with the AUC, CSOs whose membership with ECOSOCC, is up to date, and who report regularly to ECOSOCC can apply for observer status to the RECs as well.

3. FBOs and CTLs Influencing and Advocating for Implementation of Key AUC Strategies & Instruments

The AUC has adopted several strategies and guiding legal instruments relating to gender equality and women's rights issues, including EVAWG, HP and SRH and RR. These include the AU Strategy for Gender

Equality & Women's Empowerment (GEWE Strategy) (36195-doc-au_strategy_for_gender_equality_womens_empowerment_2018-2028_report.pdf) , the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa | African Union (au.int), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) (Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa | African Union (au.int) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 36804-treaty-0014_-african_charter_on_the_rights_and_welfare_of_the_child_e.pdf (au.int). Below, we take a look at the GEWE Strategy and the Maputo Protocol

- i. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)¹⁷



Anta Konipo, member of the coalition of community leaders of Sikasso attends a training on GBV initiated by UN Women in Sikasso, Southern Mali, April 2022 Photo: UN Women Mali

17 <https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights-rights-women-africa>



Community leaders of Sikasso, in Mali, attend a training on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW), April 2022. Photo: UN Women Mali

The Maputo Protocol is a ground-breaking protocol on women and girls' human rights, both within Africa and beyond, and was adopted in 2003 and came into force in 2005. This Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa compensates for shortcomings in the African Charter (1981) with respect to women and girls' rights. It includes 32 articles on women and girls' rights, and provides an explicit definition of discrimination against women, which was missing in the African Charter.

CSOs, including FBOs and CTLs, have played a key role in adoption of the Maputo Protocol and continue to play a critical role in its further ratification¹⁸, domestication and implementation. The progressive and innovative character of the Maputo Protocol lies in, among other things, the legal prohibition of FGM and the prohibition of forced marriage and marriage of girls under 18. It also provides for the eradication of all forms of VAWG, in public and private spheres,

and for the legal protection of adolescent girls from abuse and sexual harassment. The Maputo Protocol articulates women and girls' right to health, including SRH, and their reproductive rights.

It is the first protocol to recognize women and girls' access to safe abortion under specific conditions as a human right. It is also the first international human rights instrument to refer to HIV and AIDS explicitly. The Maputo Protocol's value also lies in its explicit references to vulnerable and marginalized groups, including adolescents, widows, elderly women, women with disabilities, poor women and migrant and refugee women.

As of October 2022, 43 countries had signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol. Only 12 countries are yet to ratify for the Protocol to achieve universal ratification. Of the 43 that have ratified the Maputo Protocol, 11 have made reservations¹⁹, mainly regarding SRH and RR issues, including marriage and fertility.

¹⁸ According to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), by signing a protocol a state expresses the willingness to continue the treaty-making process to ratification. Signing a treaty does not yet make it legally binding, but the signature does create the obligation for the state to refrain from acts that defeat the purpose of the protocol. In addition, the signature creates obligation for states to refrain from acts that defeat the object and purpose of the protocol (Arts 10 and 18). In turn, ratification is 'the act whereby a State establishes on the international plane its consent to be bound by a treaty'. The content of the treaty then becomes legally binding for the state (Arts 2(1)(b), 14(1) and 16).

¹⁹ In the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), a reservation on a treaty, which can also be referred to as an 'interpretative declaration/statement', is a unilateral statement that 'purports to exclude or to modify the legal effect of certain provisions of the treaty in their application to that State' (Art. 2(1)(d)).

In countries that have not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol, FBOs and CTLs can collaborate with other actors at national level to facilitate dialogues and decision-making processes aimed at improving understanding of the provisions of the Maputo Protocol and need for ratification.

In countries that have ratified the Maputo Protocol, FBOs and CTLs can play a key role in **providing support in the design and roll out of national domestication processes**, including developing and harmonizing laws on VAWG, HP and SRH and RR; development, resourcing and implementation of national programs, campaigns and other initiatives to ensure awareness, acceptance and practice that translate the provisions of the Maputo Protocol into reality for women and girls.

In addition, FBOs and CTLs can support the production and improvement of the quality of data on VAWG, HP and SRH&RR at country level, to ensure that policies, budgeting and implementation are informed by realities at country level. AU Member States are also expected to report to the African Union Assembly through the AU Commission, on progress regarding the domestication of the Maputo Protocol every two years using guidelines²⁰ provided by the Commission. FBOs and CTLs can support such processes to ensure increased participation by diverse social groups and can support the review of the reports at national level ahead of their submission to the AUC.

ii. The AU Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Strategy

The GEWE strategy was developed by the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGDD) of the AUC in an elaborate process involving AU departments, divisions and organs, gender structures of the RECs, national gender machineries and UN agencies, local, national, regional and international CSOs, traditional leaders and faith-based organizations. Within the context of these guidelines, CTLs and FBOs have an opportunity to participate in implementing, monitoring and reporting on the provisions of the strategy.

The GEWE Strategy's outcomes aim to mitigate the major constraints hindering gender equality and women's empowerment, so that women and girls may participate fully in economic activities, political affairs and social endeavors. The strategy is aligned to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular, goal number 5 which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The strategy has 4 pillars: a) maximizing (economic) outcomes, opportunities and tech e-dividends; b) Dignity, Security and Resilience; c) Effective Laws, Policies and Institutions; and d) Leadership, Voice and Visibility.

Member States and other stakeholders are called upon by the AU STC on GEWE to own the strategy so that they are able to align it with their national strategies, to support efforts towards alleviating poverty and enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

To bring this strategy to life, WGYD initiated the development of three key documents: i.e. the Operational Plan, the Results Framework and the Harmonization Matrix. These documents aim at consolidating and capitalizing the orientation of the GEWE strategy, strengthening its operationalization and implementation modalities, while taking into account the specific contexts and priorities of Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

The Strategy will be implemented at national level. It will be critical for FBOs and CTLs to be aware of the content of the strategy, as well as engage in continental, national and sub regional efforts, aimed at implementing, monitoring and reporting on the provisions of the strategy. Understanding which departments at national and REC level is responsible for the domestication and roll out of the strategy at national level, for example would be important. Ensuring that FBOs and CTLs are well represented at these spaces would also be important and negotiate for FBO and CTL representation where it currently does not exist.

4. Increased Engagement of FBOs and CTLs in AUC Campaigns

The AUC has launched key thematic campaigns through which action is accelerated, to contribute to ending harmful practices, and by extension, reducing incidences of violence against women and improving access to information and services on sexual and reproductive health. The campaigns have led to creating awareness and positive advocacy on VAW, HP and promoting SRH and RR and created a conducive environment for positive engagement between the AU and key stakeholders in the CTLs and FBOs to advance positive change. CTLs and FBOs have affirmed that they are open to forging partnerships with the AU, from direct, formal partnerships where CSOs provide technical and/ or financial support

20 file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/Guidelines%20on%20State%20Reporting%20under%20the%20Maputo%20Protocol_2.pdf

to the campaigns, to signing up to newsletters to receive regular updates, news and opportunities for direct and indirect engagement and participation in the campaigns. With virtual spaces gaining more importance in recent years, exploring opportunities through social media spaces is also an important consideration, particularly for CSOs that may have limited capacity and resources. Three of the campaigns are highlighted below:

i. African Union Campaign to end Female Genital Mutation (FGM)

Building on the Saleema Initiative, which is a continental campaign aimed at ending FGM launched in February 2019,²¹ the AU seeks to galvanize political action to enforce strong legislation, increase allocation of financial resources and strengthen partnerships to end female genital mutilation, particularly within communities most impacted by the harmful practice. The campaign supports the protection of girls from genital cutting, particularly in the context of efforts to promote collective abandonment of the practice at community level. Saleema is a word that means whole, healthy in body and mind, unharmed, intact, pristine, and untouched, in a God-given condition. The broad objective of Saleema is to change the way that people talk about female genital cutting by promoting, at the community level, wide usage of new positive terminology to describe the natural bodies of girls and women.

ii. African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage

The overall purpose for the Campaign (2014–2017)²² is to accelerate an end of child marriage in Africa by enhancing continental awareness of the implications of the practice by supporting legal and policy actions in the protection and promotion of rights; mobilizing continental awareness of the negative socio-economic impact of child marriage; building social movement and social mobilization at the grassroots and national levels and increasing the capacity of non-state actors to undertake evidence based policy advocacy including the role of youth leadership through new media technology, monitoring and evaluation among others. The Campaign works towards building on existing activities of governments and partners in ending child marriage and is based on advocacy, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as well as the facilitation of

technical assistance and capacity building. According to UNICEF review report 2018, “The campaign was effective in bringing the issue to the fore and as an advocacy strategy which increased awareness and sensitivity of member states and provided a basis of developing a conceptual framework for targeting member states as well as for effective monitoring and evaluation.”²³

iii. Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)

The campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Mortality in Africa has been successful in raising awareness on maternal mortality in Africa, which has contributed to the reduced mortality rates by 44%, from 965/100,000 to 542/100,000 live births in Africa²⁴. Launched in May 2009 with a main objective of expanding the availability and use of universally accessible quality health services, including those related to sexual and reproductive health that are critical for the reduction of maternal mortality, its adoption was timely. The focus was not to develop new strategies and plans, but to ensure coordination and effective implementation of existing ones. CARMMA aims to renew and strengthen efforts to save the lives of women who should not have to die while giving life. CARMMA believes in ensuring accountability: every single loss of a mother’s or child’s life should be reported. Activities of the campaign include mobilizing the necessary political will to make the lives of women count, coordinating and harmonizing interventions around country-led plans/roadmaps and supporting ongoing efforts and initiatives to improve maternal, newborn and child health.

21 The African Union Launches a Continental Initiative to End Female Genital Mutilation and Save 50 million Girls at Risk | African Union

22 African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage | African Union (au.int)

23 UNICEF, REVIEW OF THE AFRICAN UNION CAMPAIGN TO END CHILD MARRIAGE 2014-2018 at Child-Marriage-AU-Campaign-2018.pdf (unicef.org)

24 au.int,carmma

5. Additional opportunities for Informal Engagements

The engagement between CTLs and FBOs with the AUC and RECs may also be informal. These are engagements which are not formalized under any AU Decisions including Assembly or Executive Council, for example:

- The Citizens and Diaspora Organizations (CIDO) Directorate, which spearheads the Interfaith Dialogue Forum (IFDF) to promote sustainable peace through religion; the annual youth-led Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove), which is aimed at utilizing religion and dialogue to prevent violent extremism by engaging young experts from various backgrounds and religious beliefs including community workers, academicians, policy makers and creative artists; as well as the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), which brings together governmental, intergovernmental, civil society organizations and faith-based organizations to harness the social capital and capacities vested in faith communities for sustainable development.
- CTLs and FBOs may engage in Ad hoc partnerships with AUC through participating in AU processes such as AU Summits under different themes.
- CTLs and FBOs may engage with AUC on short term basis through participation in AU programs including around activities related to AU Flagship Programs and launch of AU Products such as the African Girls' Summit.
- CTLs and FBOs may make impromptu engagements with AUC Departments, AU Organs and

RECS at the margins of AU meetings and Summits

- CTLs and FBOs may make presentations in AU Meetings and conference on relevant topics and make informal engagements with AUC Departments, AU Organs and RECs

Depending on the nature of the partnerships, they might come together to reflect and jointly learn is based on their nature of interaction. These interactions may take different forms including:

- Joint meetings, forums and activities for networking and dialogue
- Networking sessions to assess their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) as well as Risk assessment
- Exposure to new ideas and new knowledge through interactive learning
- Co-creating shared messages for mass media channels and IEC
- Co-creating and amplifying information via social media channels and platforms
- Sharing of Experiences and Lessons Learnt
- Dissemination of publications, documentaries, case studies,

While the AU may open doors for the above engagements to take place, it is important to underscore that the AU might not always have the resources to support engagement with non-State actors outside the AU ECOSOC. Subsequently, any envisaged engagements of CTLs and FBOs with AU on VAWG, FGM, HP and promoting SHR and RR should be facilitated through as appropriate financial mechanism including the SIARP or other financing arrangement with AU partners including UN agencies.



Traditional, religious, and civil society leaders meet to take bold action to end violence against women and girls in Africa, Addis Ababa, 2021. Photo: UN Women Liaison Office to AU

Recommendations for more systematic partnership between AUC, FBOs & CTLs on VAWG

i. Recommendations for AUC and RECs

- Map out, expand and diversify the representation of faith and traditional leader actors in the partnership with CSOs to ensure more inclusion with regards to geographic, language, gender and age.
- Strengthen the engagement with civil society, in particular women's rights CSOs and movements in the regions, through stronger formal consultative frameworks that promote civil society access and enable genuine civil society participation
- Strengthen learning and collaboration across and between the RECs on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of gender equality and women and girls' rights commitments
- Invest in research, data and co-generation of knowledge on the challenges and opportunities for engaging a diverse range of traditional and faith leaders at regional level, as well as national level through the member states
- Strengthen communication and feedback mechanisms with CSOs, including FBOs and CTLs, to ensure timely access to information and more meaningful participation
- Promote the harmonization of legal and policy framework in the sub regions and at national level respective regions, building on examples such as the use of model laws in SADC and the EAC Bills and Acts that are directly translated into national-level law and policies
- Strengthen implementation frameworks and plans on the gender equality and women and girls' rights commitments of the RECs, particularly in line with AU-level commitments in the Maputo Protocol, MPoA and AU Gender Strategy
- Strengthen monitoring and accountability frameworks and mechanisms on these existing commitments on gender equality and women and girls' rights to increase financial and human resources for gender infrastructure in RECs to an adequate level that allows them to fulfil their mandates. For ECCAS, CEN-SAD and UMA, strengthen the development

and adoption of gender equality and women rights and girls' rights normative and institutional frameworks

- Mobilize sustainable resources for the engagement process within the AUC, AU Organs, RECs and Member states to sustain the ongoing campaigns on VAWG, HP and FGM and in advancing SHR and RR
- Building on the campaigns to end child marriage and FGM, work with the AU on the implementation of the campaign on VAWG.

ii. Recommendations for Regional FBOs and CTLs

- Undertake institutional assessments to inform improved engagement strategies with the AUC/RECs, taking into account financial, technical and human resources and capacities in the organizations/ networks; and building on other collaborative partnerships while drawing on their strengths.
- Identify platforms and spaces for sustained engagement amongst FBOs and CTLs to identify opportunities and suitable roles amongst members of networks and coalitions
- Engage with existing initiatives with similar experiences for learning, such as the Gender is My Agenda Campaign, which also went through a dynamic process before identifying its engagement strategy with the AUC
- Explore the potential for a regional community of practice of faith and traditional actors, with champions that can engage peers in discussions around VAWG, HP and SRH and RR
- In addition to tracking funding opportunities, initiate more open conversations with donors, to inform their priorities, with the aim of ensuring that funding trends respond to priorities on the ground.
- Work towards the institutionalization of strong & sustainable regional Interfaith-cultural agencies and networks with commitment to respond to VAWG, HP and FGM and in advancing SHR and RR.
- Strengthen the capacity of traditional and religious leaders to understand how to provide survivor-centered referral in a confidential

manner and protect victims as the first point of call-in remote places before they arrive at a health facility.

- Identify platforms to meet and report regularly on the achievements, challenges and lessons learnt during the engagement process.

iii. Recommendations for Development Partners

- Consider more flexible funding that addresses both the prevention and response to VAWG, and which allows for partnership building, especially amongst actors that don't usually interact, including faith and traditional leaders
- Prioritize holistic efforts that incorporate officials in referral pathways, including medical officers, the police, prosecutors, the judiciary, judges and magistrates, on gendered approaches that can enhance survivors' access to and experience of justice, protection and support
- Consider longer term initiatives that can incorporate movement building and strengthening solidarity and resources for learning and adapting to emerging issues, as opposed to shorter term projects that are rigid in their implementation

iv. Recommendations for UN Agencies and CSOs seeking to support/ facilitate partnerships amongst the AUC, Regional FBOs and CTLs

- Ensure that initiatives have a good understanding of the operating environment and can build on existing initiatives to complement and add value to existing faith and CTL led processes at regional level, with links to national level efforts.
- Promote longer term, co-created advocacy objectives that allow for coordinated efforts at national and continental level, using a variety of advocacy approaches over a longer-term period.
- Ensure longer term, iterative capacity building processes that focus on different aspects of capacity strengthening, including technical, strategic and political capacity; as well as

more individual aspects such as confidence building, team/ partnership building and collaboration

- In the design of projects and programs, allow the faith and traditional actors to provide input based on lived realities as well as current and emerging priorities
- Mobilize global resources to support regional level advocacy for CTLs, FBOs as well as AU Organs, RECs and Member states for interventions to VAWG, HP and FGM and in advancing SHR and RR.
- In addition to documenting lessons learnt and promising practices on strengthening regional engagements between CTLs, FBOs and AU, create spaces for easy access of this information over time in institutionalized platforms, to avoid duplication of efforts and reinventing the wheel whenever there is staff turnover
- Jointly with other UN Agencies secure availability of sustainable financial resources for regional engagement of CTLs and FBOs on VAWG, HP and FGM and in advancing SHR and RR.
- Strengthen and coordinate UN Agencies participation in efforts to end VAWG, HP and FGM and in advancing SHR and RR.
- Monitor and ensure dual accountability (Fast Track Progress Checks) on committed resources and actions by Spotlight partners and implementing agencies including the AUC.
- Provide local organizations financial and logistical resources to help them to respond to the issue of violence against women and girls.
- Involve vulnerable and marginalized groups, including rural women, young activists and persons with disabilities at all levels in VAWG, to inform efforts and influence decision-makers on their needs and also to address VAWG in more inclusive ways and champion their Right to Sexual Reproductive Health.
- Conduct regular regional and national assessment together with FBOs and CTLs to monitor progress on VAWG initiatives involving these groups.

References

1. African Union, *African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)*, [Online], 2022. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/31528-pr-aprm_overview_final-2.pdf
2. African Union, *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want*, [Online], African Union Commission, 2015. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf
3. African Union, *Audit of The African Union*, Ethiopia, Assembly of the African Union, 2007. Available from: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/RO%20Audit%20of%20the%20AU.pdf>
4. African Union, *AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*, Ethiopia, [Online] African Union, 2009. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36195-doc-au_strategy_for_gender_equality_womens_empowerment_2018-2028_report.pdf
5. The African Union Commission, Maputo Plan of Action 2016-2030 for the Operationalization of The Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Department of Social Affairs African Union Commission. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/24099-poa_5-_revised_clean.pdf
6. United Nations, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, pg. 197, New York, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Available from: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/
7. United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 4-15 September 1995*, New York, United Nations. 1996. Available from: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf
8. Emma B., *The value of civil society alliances in realising women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights*, [Online], International Planned Parenthood Federation Africa Region (IPPF AR). 2021. Available from: www.faithtoactionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-value-of-civil-society-alliances-in-realising-women-and-girls-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights.pdf
9. GIMAC Network, *Gender Is My Agenda Campaign Network*, [Online], The Gender Is My Agenda Campaign Network (GIMAC). 2002. Available from: <https://www.genderismyagenda.org/>
10. United Nations, Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 5-13 September 1994, New York, United Nations. 1995. Available from: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/icpd_eng_2.pdf
11. Spotlight Initiative, *Africa Regional Programme Document*, Spotlight Initiative, 2020.
12. African Union, *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Nairobi*, [Online], African Union, 1981. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf
13. African Union Commission, UNFPA, *The Campaign on Accelerated Reduction on Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)*, [Online], African Union Commission, UNFPA, 2011. Available from: <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/publications/carmma>
14. African Union Commission, *The Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*, Mozambique, [Online], 2003. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf
15. African Union, *Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA)*, [Online], 2004. Available from: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38956-doc-assembly_au_decl_12_iii_e.pdf
16. African Renaissance and Diaspora Network, UNFPA, *The Red Card Campaign to end VAWG*, Ethiopia, 2020.
17. Spotlight Initiative, [Online]. Available from: <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/>
18. United Nations, *UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign*, The UN Secretary General, 2008. Available from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action>

19. Kate Baldwin and Pia Raffler, *Traditional Leaders, Service Delivery and Electoral Accountability*, July 2017
20. United Nations, *UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, New York, 2015.
21. United Nations, *UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women*, [online], 2021. Available from: <https://untf.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-the-un-trust-fund-to-end-violence-against-women>
22. United Nations Women, *UN Women tool kit on engaging traditional leaders*, 2020
23. UNDP, *Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders*, United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Policy and Programme, [Online], 2014. Available from: <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-guidelines-engaging-faith-based-organizations-and-religious-leaders>
24. UNESCO, *Toolkit on engaging religious leaders on adolescent SRHR*, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022
25. United Nations, *World Conference on Human Rights*, Vienna, 1993

