



ECA



Africa regional review summary report

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1. Introduction, background and context

Women's Rights are human rights. This message came out loud and clear from the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA offered a roadmap, with clear goals to address 12 critical areas of concern affecting women and girls— from education and health to economic empowerment, political participation, and human rights. In 2025, the world commemorates the 30th anniversary of the BPfA and is a sombre reminder that while progress has been made, we are still far from achieving its BPfA goals.

1. **The progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in several African States remains insufficient to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.** The Africa Gender Index—which measures inequality between women and men in social, economic, business and political dimensions—reveals significant gender gaps across the continent. With a score of 50.3 per cent in 2023,¹ a slight increase from 48.6 per cent in 2019,² the index reveals that none of the African countries has fully achieved gender equality regardless of income status. This suggests that challenges are widespread and impact low-, middle—and high-income countries within the continent.
2. **A key message from the 30th review of the BPfA is that policy adoption alone is not sufficient to close the gender gap.** While introducing laws and policies is necessary, effective implementation and enforcement remain critical. This should be backed up by strong political commitment, sustained investment, robust coordination and real-time data disaggregated by sex, age, location and disability status, to fast-track the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa.
3. **The Beijing+30 Review occurs amidst a global landscape marked by economic crises, conflicts, climate change, and persistent gender discrimination.** In particular, the review covers a time when economic resilience was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly undermined the progress towards BPfA goals.
4. **The review brings together governments, civil society organizations, and youth groups, providing a powerful platform** to recognize progress, identify areas of improvement, and take key actions to advance gender equality. This inclusive approach ensures voices and rights of women and girls are respected and advocated for across all levels of society.
5. **Together with UN Women, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) conducted a regional review in 2024 on the implementation of the BPfA in Africa,** in accordance with the UN General Assembly under Resolution E/RES/2022/5. The review process was supported by UNFPA, UNDP and other UN organizations based in Addis Ababa.
6. **The review holds significance as it coincides with several milestones:** the end of the first phase of the African Union's Agenda 2063, the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and the evaluation of the initial decade of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. **The Beijing+30 strategically aligns the BPfA with the SDGs** by organizing its 12 critical areas of concern into six thematic clusters:
 - a. **People:** poverty eradication, social protection, and social services;
 - b. **Dignity:** freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes;
 - c. **Prosperity:** inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work;
 - d. **Partnership:** accountability, participation, and gender-responsive institutions;
 - e. **Peace:** peaceful and inclusive societies, and;

¹ Africa Gender Index Report 2023, In press (<https://www.uneca.org/stories/africa-gender-index-analytical-report-reveals-progress%2C-but-gender-equality-remains-only>).

² Africa Gender Index Report 2019 (<https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-report-2019-analytical-report>).

f. **Planet:** environmental conservation, climate action, and resilience-building.

These clusters reinforce the shared objectives of the BPfA and SDGs, creating a unified framework for action.

8. Additionally, **member States have reported on their accomplishments in the national institutions and processes**, as well as data and statistics necessary for advancing the empowerment of women and girls in Africa.

9. **This review was conducted through a regional online survey and a synthesis of national review reports** submitted by African member States. Of the 54 member States, 39 submitted their national reports and completed the online survey.³ Where necessary, data and information from the national reports and the survey were supplemented with data from secondary sources.

³ Central Africa (Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic), East Africa (Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania), North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia), Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe), West Africa (Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo). All the countries listed completed the online survey questionnaire except Senegal and Togo. Conversely, Madagascar and Angola completed the questionnaire but did not submit the national review report. The subregional groupings are based on ECA classification. Three countries: The Gambia, and Niger submitted their reports after the compilation of the synthesis report.

Box 1: Review Highlights

1. Achievements

Education: Since 1995, girls' enrolment in African schools has increased, nearly closing gender gaps. In 2021, the female-to-male enrolment ratios stand at 0.99 in primary, 1.01 in secondary, and 0.99 in tertiary education. Yet, translating enrolment into equal opportunities for women and girls needs further investment in accessible, affordable and relevant education for all girls.

Political participation: While 15 countries in Africa surpassed the 30 per cent target for women's representation in national parliaments, there is more work to be done. Rwanda stands as a beacon of hope, with women holding 64 per cent of its lower house seats, demonstrating that gender parity in public life and decision-making is possible with effective enforcement.

Legal and Policy Frameworks: Many countries have integrated global and regional women's human rights principles into their national constitutions and laws, supported by robust institutional mechanisms to ensure that women's rights are not only recognized in legislation but realized in practice.

2. Overcoming the challenges

Despite significant strides, progress remains uneven across Africa. Discriminatory laws, under-resourced policies and lack of quality data continue to challenge the implementation of gender policies. As a result, these factors perpetuate harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, and child, early and forced marriage. These barriers result in lower educational outcomes, reduced economic and political participation, and compromised dignity for affected women and girls. Yet, the resilience of marginalised women and girls, including those living with disabilities, in rural areas and humanitarian settings, serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent work still to be done.

3. Call to action

Aligning for Equality: Align laws, policies, and practices with global human rights treaties. Strengthen national gender machinery to ensure effective coordination and implementation of gender policies. Collect and utilise high-quality data disaggregated by sex, age, location, disability, and other relevant socio-economic factors to track and drive progress.

Changing Minds and Lives: Scale up targeted awareness campaigns to shift attitudes and empower women and girls to claim and exercise their legal rights. Collaborate with women's organisations, civil society and involve men and boys to foster a culture of equality.

Holistic Advancements: Ensure that improvements in gender equality translate into broader human rights advancements across social, cultural, political, and economic fields. This holistic approach will pave the way for a future where every woman and girl can reach her full potential.

10. The present document highlights the achievements, challenges, and key actions undertaken by African member States to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. It also identifies key priority areas for action over the next five years to accelerate progress toward gender equality in Africa.

2. Overview and analysis of achievements and challenges

11. **Since the 10th African Regional Conference on Beijing+25 held in 2019 in Addis Ababa, significant progress has been made** across the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the BPfA, now grouped into six thematic clusters to harmonize with the SDGs. However, ongoing and emerging challenges—ineffective implementation and enforcement of laws and policies, deeply entrenched discriminatory and harmful gender norms and cultural practices, inadequate resources, lack of disaggregated data and poor coordination and the debt crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and climate change—continue to obstruct the realization of gender equality and women’s empowerment since the adoption of the BPfA 30 years ago.

12. **The current implementation status is examined based on the six clusters that correspond to the 12 critical areas** as outlined in the BPfA and the SDG targets. The following sections summarize the key actions taken by countries in the review period to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

2.1. Cluster 1 – Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work

13. **Inclusive development, shared prosperity, and decent work are essential pillars for achieving gender equality and empowering women across Africa.** The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of these pillars, underscoring the need to incorporate social, economic, and environmental factors to create sustainable progress. In line with this, African countries have reviewed, adopted, and implemented policies that address specific needs in key areas, such as women’s participation in the workforce, the gender digital divide, unpaid domestic work, and economic equality. Although the overarching commitments remain similar, the diversity in approaches is evident, with some initiatives integrated into national development frameworks and others directly targeting specific gender equality challenges in:

- a Advancing gender equality in the world of work;
- b Reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work;
- c Reducing the gender digital divide; and
- d Supporting a more gender-equal economy through macroeconomic policies.

(a) Advance gender equality in the world of work

14. **Over the past five years, 82 per cent of African countries in this review have strengthened laws and workplace policies prohibiting discrimination** against women in hiring, retention, promotion, and pay equity. Sixteen countries have implemented mechanisms to ensure women’s equal participation in economic decision-making bodies. While 69 per cent of the 39 member States have laws addressing workplace sexual harassment;⁴ however, significant regional variations exist. All the reviewed countries in Southern Africa⁵ prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace, compared to 75 per cent in Central Africa,⁶ 62 per cent in East Africa,⁷ 57 per cent in West Africa⁸ and 40 per cent in North Africa.⁹

15. **To improve financial inclusion, 30 countries have enhanced access to credit for women,** and 21 have strengthened women’s land rights and tenure security. Women often face legal and regulatory barriers that limit their ability to own assets, enter into contracts, and access credit. North Africa has the highest number of countries where legal frameworks restrict women’s rights to inherit, own, or

⁴ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/sg-leg-sxhr-em>.

⁵ Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

⁶ Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Cameroon.

⁷ Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda.

⁸ Benin, Cabo Verde, Sierra Leone, Liberia: The percentage does not include Togo and Senegal, which have the legislation in place according to WBL2023.

⁹ Morocco, Tunisia; the percentage does not include Egypt, which has legislation in place according to WBL2023.

manage property.¹⁰ In Rwanda, initiatives such as the Umurenge Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCO) have empowered women to save and access credit through financial literacy and entrepreneurship training. South Africa has also enhanced financial inclusion, particularly for women-led businesses, through policy frameworks and initiative products such as the Women's Investment Portfolio.

16. **Despite the advances, significant gender disparities remain in financial inclusion.** As of 2021, the gender gap in Africa in bank account ownership, financial institution participation and mobile money were 21 per cent, 26 per cent, and 19 per cent, respectively.¹¹ Discriminatory laws and practices limit women's ability to own property, access credit, and participate in economic activities on equal footing with men. In 12 per cent of countries, women need additional documentation requirements or male consent to open bank accounts. About 4 per cent of countries restrict women's ability to sign business contracts or access credit on equal terms with men.¹²

17. **The Beijing+25 Africa review highlighted women's predominance in the informal labour markets,** where they are vulnerable to low wages, limited benefits, and inadequate protections. Since 2020, 56 per cent of the reviewed countries implemented gender-responsive policies focused on job creation, skill development and employment subsidies. These efforts, however, are uneven across the subregions, with 70 per cent of the countries in Southern Africa doing so, 69 per cent in East Africa, 60 per cent in North Africa, 40 per cent in West Africa and none in Central Africa. Twenty-one countries have introduced policies to facilitate women's transition from informal to formal work, with several providing financial support to women in the informal sector.

18. **Twenty-five countries have implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and address unpaid care and domestic work** carried out by girl children. Countries, including Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda, have implemented national action plans to eradicate child labour, focusing on education, legal reforms, and social protection, particularly for girls.¹³

19. **Despite these efforts, the informal economy in Africa remains huge, multi-segmented and segregated by gender.** Women's representation in the informal sector has remained relatively stable at 73 per cent between 2020 and 2024, compared to 72 per cent in the 2015 to 2019 period.¹⁴ Overall, gender disparities in employment and labour force participation persist, with 52 per cent of women participating in the workforce compared to 63 per cent of men from 2020 to 2023.¹⁵ Employment rates reflect similar trends, with an average of 47 per cent of women employed, compared to 63 per cent of men during the same period, resulting in a consistent 24 per cent gender gap (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender gap labour force participation, by subregion age 15+, 1995-2023 (%)

¹⁰ ECA estimates based on data from World Bank Gender Statistics, World Bank, 2024. Licence: CC BY 4.0.

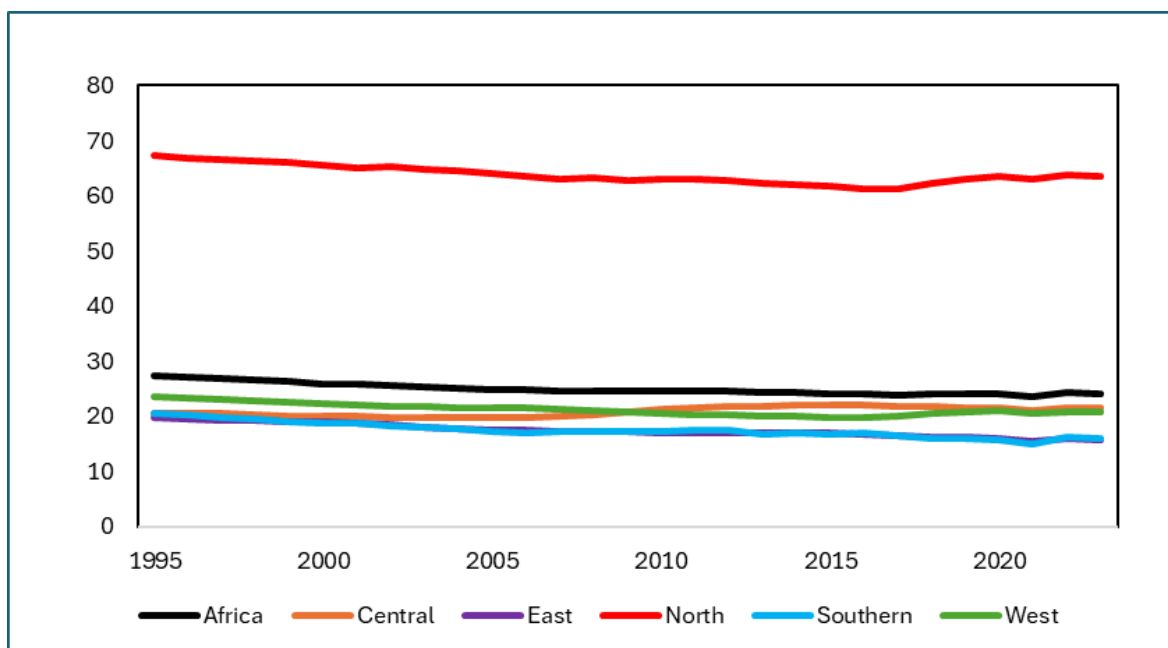
¹¹ ECA calculations using Global Findex Data, 2021.

¹² ECA estimates based on data from World Bank Gender Statistics, World Bank, 2024. Licence: CC BY 4.0.

¹³ These countries are part of a broader continental effort supported by the African Union's Ten-Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking, and Modern Slavery (2020-2030).

¹⁴ ECA calculations based on ILO data and World Development Indicators, The World Bank.

¹⁵ ECA calculations based on ILO data and World Development Indicators, The World Bank.



Source: ECA analysis based on World Bank Gender Statistics open data platform. Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics> (accessed on 15 September 2024).

20. **Women remain overrepresented in vulnerable employment, such as the agriculture and the services sectors.** In 2022, 68 per cent of women in Africa were in vulnerable employment compared to 57 per cent of men. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities, worsening existing gender inequalities in job security across Africa. The gender wage gap further compounds these disparities, particularly in medium- and high-skilled jobs. In 2023, women earned, on average, 21 per cent less than men in high-skilled positions, while the gap was lower at 6 per cent in low-skilled roles.¹⁶

21. **Persistent gender disparities in workforce participation and employment rates reflect underlying issues in enforcing gender equality laws and policies.** Women remain underrepresented in STEM fields and vocational training, often due to societal norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory laws.

(b). Reduce/redistribute unpaid care and domestic work

22. **To reduce the burden of unpaid work, 26 out of the 39 countries have introduced or strengthened parental leave policies,** with a focus on maternity leave. Additionally, 51 per cent of the countries have launched campaigns to encourage men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work. Three out of five African subregions have at least 50 per cent of their countries - Central Africa (75 per cent), East Africa (69 per cent) and North Africa (60 per cent)- implement these campaigns.

23. **Furthermore, 25 countries in the review have expanded support for caregivers, and 20 have made childcare services more affordable.** Eight countries¹⁷ now integrate unpaid care work into national statistics, while 13 have invested in infrastructure to ease caregivers' workloads. Legal reforms in 12 countries¹⁸ have recognized the economic value of household work, and 11 countries¹⁹ have advocated for better working conditions for paid care workers.

24. **Women in Africa still shoulder a significantly higher burden of unpaid work than men.** On average, women spend 249 minutes per day on unpaid care work compared to just 87 minutes for

¹⁶ ECA calculations based on ILO data from World Development Indicators, The World Bank.

¹⁷ Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, and South Africa.

¹⁸ Botswana, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

¹⁹ Benin, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia.

men. In contrast, men dedicate more time to paid work, spending 275 minutes per day, while women spend 184 minutes on paid work.²⁰

25. **Parental leave policies remain limited**, with only 57 per cent of the countries offering 14 weeks of government-supported leave, and just 31 per cent providing full maternity benefits.²¹ Similarly, while 26 countries offer parental leave, unpaid household labour remains unrecognized in economic valuation, particularly in North Africa. These disparities have severe implications for women's economic and political participation and contribute to persistent gender earning gaps.

(c). Reduce the gender digital divide

26. **Member States in the review have taken significant steps to address the digital gender divide**, with 30 countries offering programs to improve women's digital literacy and 27 promoting gender-responsive STEM education. Additionally, 24 countries have integrated gender inclusion into national development plans, including the Republic of Congo's Digital 2025, Digital Ethiopia 2025, the National Digital Economy Policy of Mali, and the Seychelles Education and Training Policy. About 21 countries have created supportive environments conducive to digital learning for women, with 19 making efforts to remove barriers to accessing digital tools.

27. **To improve digital access, 14 countries have implemented universal connectivity programs**, particularly for underserved areas. Notable efforts include Zimbabwe's 202 Community Information Centres, Senegal's Gender Digital Divide Reduction Support Project and Burundi's 'Burundi Girls Can Code Initiative', which are helping to bridge the gender gap in digital literacy and access.

28. **Despite these initiatives, women in Africa are the least frequent internet users in the world.** On average, between 2020-2023, only 28 per cent of women used the internet, compared to 38 per cent of men, resulting in a 10-percentage-point gender gap.²² This gender digital divide restricts women's access to technology and digital skills, limiting their full participation in the digital economy and hindering progress towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

(d). Support a more gender-equal economy through macroeconomic policies

29. As mentioned earlier, the review period saw all the countries experience a myriad of shocks, leading 29 countries to implement austerity measures. However, only 1 per cent of the countries estimated the impact of austerity measures before implementation, and 24 per cent of the countries did so afterwards. In addition, 75 per cent of the countries did not assess the gendered impacts of austerity measures. The impacts of macroeconomic policies on unpaid care and domestic work and overall gender equality should be further studied, and countries need to explore options to free up fiscal space to ensure adequate social protection measures for women and girls.

2.2. Cluster 2 – Poverty eradication, social protection, and social services

30. **Poverty profoundly affects quality of life and restricts opportunities, particularly for women and girls**, limiting their access to education, health, and employment. Countries in Africa have, therefore, implemented measures to reduce poverty, specifically among women and girls. These measures focus on poverty reduction, robust social protection programs, inclusive health, and education programmes.

(a) Poverty eradication strategies

31. **Over the past five years, member States in the review have prioritized gender-sensitive approaches in national poverty reduction plans** with a focus on women. Examples include Burundi's Revised National Development Plan, Chad's National Program for Economic and Social Empowerment

²⁰ ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA and UNECE. (2024). Intergenerational relations: Creating a world for all ages so that no one is left behind. Forthcoming.

²¹ World Bank Gender Statistics, World Bank, 2024. Licence: CC BY 4.0.

²² ECA analysis based on ITU data Available at <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/statistics/> (accessed on 26 September 2024). with 38 per cent of men using the internet compared to 28 per cent of women, in Africa, 85 per cent for men and 84 per cent for women in America, 58 per cent for women and 64 per cent for men in Asia Pacific, and 86 per cent for women and 89 per cent for men in Europe.

of Women, and Gender-inclusive National Development Plan of the Republic of Congo. These frameworks aim to address poverty by recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls.

32. **To combat poverty, women's economic empowerment has been a core focus**, with 95 per cent of the countries supporting women's entrepreneurship, market access, and business development. All countries from Central, Southern, and North Africa reviewed have implemented these initiatives, while 90 per cent and 86 per cent of countries in East and West Africa, respectively, have also adopted similar approaches. For example, Côte d'Ivoire has established a fund for SMEs and women's entrepreneurship, while Seychelles introduced the Financial Assistance for Job Retention scheme. Additionally, 23 countries have introduced or strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty.

33. **Expanding women's access to essential resources, such as land, finance, housing and technology, has also been a focus by many countries (22 countries)**. Additionally, countries have implemented initiatives to improve women's economic security and productivity, while complementary programs work to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and support girls' education.

34. **Furthermore, 35 countries have introduced gender-sensitive social protection tools, such as safety nets and digital financial platforms**. Togo's NOVISSI (which means 'solidarity' in the Ewe language) program, for example, provides financial assistance to informal women workers through mobile money payments, promoting women's empowerment, as well as transparency and accountability in the distribution of state funds.

35. **African countries have made mixed progress in reducing poverty among women and girls**. Between 2000 and 2019, poverty rates dropped from 58 per cent to 40 per cent, driven by increased participation of women in education and the labour force. However, poverty reduction has been uneven, with countries such as Burundi, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo experiencing higher extreme poverty levels, while countries such as Mauritius and Algeria have much lower rates. East and West Africa account for most of the impoverished populations, while Southern and North Africa have fewer people living in poverty.²³

36. **Poverty remains disproportionately concentrated among women and girls in Africa**, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2023, an estimated 10.3 per cent of women in Africa (220.9 million) were living in extreme poverty, with the highest rates in the East and Southern Africa. Notably, the gender poverty gap is more pronounced for women aged 35-54, indicating that poverty impacts women more severely as they age.²⁴

(b). Social protection measures

37. **Over the past five years, many African countries in the review have made significant progress in expanding social protection for women and girls**. Thirty-four countries have implemented or expanded cash transfer programs, prioritizing women as beneficiaries, while 19 countries introduced new initiatives for women of working age. Additionally, 21 countries have improved social protection for marginalized women, 16 countries expanded coverage to women in informal employment, and ten countries introduced measures specifically for older women.

38. **Countries have also implemented complementary social security systems**, offering benefits such as paid maternity leave in Algeria, Congo, and Kenya, as well as unemployment benefits in Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa. Special social grants for domestic workers, the elderly, and vulnerable groups are available in Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa. Gender-responsive programs

²³ World Bank. (2020). Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity-2020>.

UNECA. (2022). Fostering recovery and transformation in Africa to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities. <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/49400>.

²⁴ UN Women. (2023). Progress on sustainable development goals: The gender snapshot 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023en.pdf>.

targeting women and other vulnerable groups have been established in Burundi, Mozambique, and Uganda.

39. **Crises, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted gender-specific vulnerabilities,** prompting eight countries - Algeria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, and South Africa – to adopt innovative social protection measures to improve women’s long-term income security.

40. **Although social protection programs have expanded in recent years, regional expenditure on social protection was only 3.8 per cent of the GDP** in 2020, considerably below the global average of 12.9 per cent. As a result, only 30.6 per cent of the working-age population is legally covered, with women’s coverage lagging behind men’s by 8 percentage points. With a total coverage of only 18 per cent of the total population, women in Africa face significantly lower chances of benefiting from social security systems benefits, such as child and family allowances and pensions, compared to men.²⁵

(c). Health

41. **To improve health outcomes for women and girls, 37 African countries in the review have expanded universal access to healthcare,** while 35 countries focus on sexual and reproductive health, mental health, maternal health, and HIV care. Additionally, 54 per cent of the countries have improved healthcare access for marginalized women and girls, particularly in North Africa (80 per cent), West Africa (57 per cent), Southern Africa (50 per cent), Central Africa (50 per cent) and East Africa (47 per cent). Efforts such as those of Liberia’s comprehensive health program, illustrate the comprehensive approach many countries are taking to address women’s health needs.

42. **Education and training are integral to these efforts.** Twenty-two countries have introduced gender-responsiveness training for healthcare providers, and 21 countries have strengthened comprehensive sexual education to promote life skills, decision-making and an understanding of gender roles. Twenty-seven countries have addressed health disparities in malnutrition, early childbearing (e.g., anaemia), and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Countries such as Côte d’Ivoire are advancing literacy programs for vulnerable populations affected by HIV/AIDS, while Liberia’s healthcare services have provided essential education and counselling for adolescent girls and women on family planning.

43. **Furthermore, 31 countries have launched gender-specific public health campaigns,** and 26 have encouraged male involvement in reproductive health to promote contraceptive use and responsible sexual behaviour. Countries, including Burundi, Cameroon, and Rwanda, have updated their National Development Plans to improve sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for addressing adolescent pregnancies and maternal health. Rwanda’s innovations in technology-based reproductive health solutions and Ethiopia’s strategic HIV/AIDS plan reflect broader efforts to tackle these issues. These measures integrate gender considerations into national health policies, promoting more inclusive healthcare and improving outcomes for women and girls in respective countries.

44. **Despite progress, health outcomes remain uneven across the continent.** While the adolescent fertility rate has declined from 88.9 in 2020 to 85.75 in 2023,²⁶ maternal health remains a significant challenge, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, which accounted for nearly 70 per cent of maternal deaths worldwide in 2020.²⁷ Current health expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Africa lags

²⁵ ILO. (2021). Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021-2025 Towards 40 per cent a social protection coverage acceleration framework to achieve the SDGs. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@africa/@roabidjan/documents/publication/wcms_828423. ILO. (2022). World Social Protection Report 2020–22. Regional companion report for Africa. <https://www.ilo.org/media/372641/download>.

²⁶ <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Fertility>.

²⁷ UNDESA, Population Division. (2024). World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition. <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Fertility/>.

Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2024). The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press. <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/downloads>.

behind the global average, at about 6 per cent compared to 10.35 per cent in 2021.²⁸ With 27 countries²⁹ reporting that maternal mortality rates are above the Sustainable Development Goal target of fewer than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births, there is a critical need for increased investment in maternal health services.

(d). Education

45. **Over the past five years, 34 countries have improved girls' access to education, technical and vocational education, and training (TVET), and skills development programs**, with 26 countries expanding training in STEM and digital literacy. Ethiopia and Rwanda have seen an increase in women's participation in areas such as artificial intelligence and ICT. Additionally, several countries have developed gender-sensitive national TVET policies and plans to support women's skills development.

46. **Regarding infrastructure, many countries have prioritized safe and inclusive learning environments.** Twenty-three countries have improved access to safe water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene management in schools to ensure girls can attend without interruption. Additionally, 67 per cent of the countries have promoted harassment-free and inclusive educational spaces, fostering a supportive environment for women and girls. By subregions, this consists of all countries reviewed in West Africa,³⁰ 77 per cent in East Africa,³¹ 75 per cent in Central Africa,³² 50 per cent in Southern Africa³³ and 20 per cent in North Africa.³⁴

47. **Gender-responsive education initiatives have also been a focus for 22 countries**, which have incorporated gender equality and human rights training into teacher education. Twenty-one governments have set gender parity in education as a national priority, with a focus on quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls. These efforts highlight the commitment to empowering women and girls through education and skills development.

48. **To bridge the gender gap in STEM fields, 26 member States have introduced initiatives to close the gender digital divide**, equipping girls with essential digital tools and competencies. Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda launched various education initiatives, such as STEM boot camps and STEM education programmes.

49. **Africa has achieved significant progress in gender parity in education over the past five years.** By 2021, parity was nearly achieved, with female-to-male ratios of 0.99 in primary, 1.01 in secondary, and 0.99 in tertiary education.³⁵ School completion rates for girls in sub-Saharan Africa improved from 41 per cent to 61 per cent in primary and 24.2 per cent to 43.3 per cent in lower secondary education between 2000 and 2020.³⁶

²⁸ The World Bank, World Development Indicators (2024). Current health expenditure (% of GDP). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS>, (accessed September 25, 2024).

WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and UNDESA, Population Division. (2023). Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2020. <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Trends%20in%20Maternal%20Mortality%202000-2020.pdf>.

UNDESA, Population Division. (2024). World Population Prospects 2024, Online Edition. <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Fertility/>.

Sachs, J.D., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2024). The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press. <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/downloads>.

²⁹ List of countries in the review include Benin, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

³⁰ Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone.

³¹ Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

³² Chad, Cameroon, and Central African Republic.

³³ Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

³⁴ Morocco.

³⁵ ECA, analysis using data from World Bank. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics/Series/SE.ENR.PRIM.FM.ZS#>.

³⁶ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database, <http://data.uis.unesco.org> (accessed September 26, 2024).

The World Bank, World Development Indicators. Ibid.

50. **However, gender parity is still a challenge in some areas**, with North Africa performing better than Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender parity in primary education is lower. Countries such as Guinea, Chad, Liberia, and Mali face the highest disparities, with over 25 per cent of young women remaining illiterate. Gender disparities are also notable in primary and secondary education enrolment, with Angola, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo showing the largest gaps. At the tertiary level, only 76 women are enrolled for every 100 men, with gaps especially pronounced in countries, such as Chad and Niger. Young women in Africa are 1.74 times more likely than men to not be in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), a status exacerbated by limited access to information and communication technology (ICT), further exacerbating existing gender inequalities.³⁷

2.3. Cluster 3 – Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes

51. **Violence against women and girls remains a pervasive issue across Africa**, manifesting in domestic abuse, child marriage, human trafficking, and various other forms. In the past five years, 29 out of 39 countries prioritized action against child, early, and forced marriages, as well as domestic violence, and sexual harassment. Additionally, 25 countries addressed technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and 20 focused on eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM).

52. **Member States have implemented various strategies to combat violence**, including measures to prevent and respond to

- a Violence against women and girls;
- b Technology-facilitated gender-based violence;
- c Harmful portrayal of women and girls in media, including social media; and
- d Violence against marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, women in rural areas, and women in conflicts or humanitarian settings.

(a). Initiatives for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)

53. **To combat violence against women and girls, 36 countries have introduced or strengthened survivor support services**, including shelters, helplines, legal support, and One-Stop Centres. In addition, 35 countries have enacted or bolstered laws to prevent violence against women and girls. Key initiatives, such as the understanding of the extent, causes and consequences of violence against women in over 22 countries, highlight concrete actions taken to address this issue. Across four of the five African subregions, most countries have improved access to justice by creating specialized courts and training law enforcement to provide better support for victims of gender-based violence.

54. **Prevention efforts have equally been a priority**, with 34 countries implementing educational, media, and community initiatives and 31 countries developing national action plans to end violence against women and girls.

55. **Data collection and monitoring have also been strengthened**, with 21 countries enhancing VAWG data systems and actively monitoring the impact of interventions. For example, Malawi and Liberia upgraded their infrastructure to support evidence-based responses to ending gender-based violence and improving the delivery of support services for victims.

56. **Furthermore, 37 countries have focused on empowering women economically**, while 33 countries have engaged community leaders and influencers to advocate for positive social norms. Public awareness campaigns and interventions in schools, workplaces, and families have been implemented to promote gender-equitable attitudes and non-violent relationships, helping to create safer environments for women and girls in respective countries.

³⁷ World Economic Forum (2024). Global Gender Gap Reports. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>.

Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (2022). Global education monitoring report 2022: gender report, deepening the debate on those still left behind. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381329>.

ILO. (2024). ILO modelled estimates database, ILOSTAT (accessed September 26, 2024). <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.

57. **During the review period, member states have worked to eliminate discrimination and promote the rights of the girl child.** Thirty-seven countries have improved girls' access to quality education, skills development, and training. Several countries have enacted policies allowing pregnant girls to remain in school, ensuring they continue their education without disruption.

(b). Prevention and responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence

58. **The rapid increase in mobile and internet usage in Africa has led to a rise in technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV),** such as cyberbullying, online harassment, sextortion, and other forms of digital abuse. This trend, worsened by the shift to online learning during COVID-19, has exposed more women and girls to digital abuse.

59. **Thirty-two member States have enacted or strengthened legislation to combat online VAWG,** complementing established forms of protection with specific provisions targeting digital abuse. Countries, including Chad, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, have passed progressive cybercrime laws safeguarding women, children, and other vulnerable groups online. In countries, such as Rwanda, Somalia, and Togo, national agencies have been established to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to online violence. Additionally, 23 countries have strengthened their national capacities to enforce policies against TFGBV.

60. **In parallel, awareness campaigns have also been essential.** About 64 per cent of the countries promote ethical online behaviour through educational campaigns in schools and public spaces, targeting young people, caregivers, and educators. Four out of the five subregions (West, Central, Southern, and North Africa) have at least half of their countries engaged in these efforts. In addition, partnerships with technology providers are helping to design and deliver safe online environments, which reflects a cross-sectoral approach to combating online abuse.

(c). Initiatives to fight against the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination, and gender bias in the Media, including social media

61. **Recognizing the media's role in shaping societal norms, African countries have implemented measures to combat gender bias in media portrayals.** Thirty-three countries have promoted women's participation and leadership in media, ensuring a balanced representation. For instance, Uganda's Media Women's Association trains journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, while Rwanda has enacted policies promoting gender equality in media practices. Namibia's increase in women's managerial roles in media further reflects progress toward gender parity in decision-making positions in media organizations.

62. **Additionally, 27 countries have trained media professionals to avoid stereotypical portrayals of women,** while 21 countries have enacted legal reforms to combat gender bias. Public awareness campaigns in places, such as Somalia and Tanzania, have challenged harmful norms and highlighted women's contributions to society. Efforts also include media regulations and consumer protection services that promote accountability. Overall, this strategy combines legal, educational, and regulatory approaches to ensure fair and accurate media portrayals of women.

(d). Initiatives to Combat Violence Against Marginalized Women and Girls

63. **Member States have implemented targeted measures to address violence against five key marginalized groups of women and girls:** women with disabilities (34 countries), girls and younger women (32 countries), women in rural areas (30 countries), women living with HIV/AIDS (26 countries), and refugee or internally displaced women (25 countries). Other marginalized groups receiving attention include older women (22 countries), women in humanitarian settings (20 countries), migrant women (12 countries), indigenous women (8 countries), and individuals with diverse sexual orientations or identities (5 countries). Some countries also addressed violence based on race, ethnicity, caste, and religion.

64. **To eliminate violence against girls specifically, 35 member States have implemented policies and programs** to address physical and sexual violence, as well as harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and FGM. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda have criminalized FGM and allocated funds to end the practice. Countries, including Malawi, have raised the legal marriage age to 18, imposing penalties for offenders, while Ethiopia has also banned child marriage, although with varying degrees of enforcement.

65. **Thirty countries have adopted measures to combat discriminatory social norms and** promote the awareness and participation of girls in social, economic and political life.

66. **In Africa, progress in eliminating FGM has been uneven.** Although FGM cases are reducing, it remains unclear if this reflects true progress or underreporting. In 2022, 34.6 per cent of girls aged 15-49 years in sub-Saharan Africa had undergone FGM.³⁸ In 2020, Somalia and Gambia reported the highest rates of FGM among girls aged 15-49, with figures of 99.2 per cent and 72.6 per cent, respectively.³⁹

67. **The reviewed reports suggest that stronger domestic violence laws, along with improved prosecutions, have helped reduce intimate partner violence in some countries.** This trend warrants further analysis for a deeper understanding because many countries in Africa continue to grapple with an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence. The situation in South Africa was so dire that President Cyril Ramaphosa declared domestic violence the country's second pandemic after COVID-19 in 2020.⁴⁰

68. **Despite being outlawed in many countries, child marriage remains widespread,** with 130 million women and girls in Africa married before the age of 18 as of 2023.⁴¹ If current trends continue, an additional 20 million girls in East and Southern Africa are projected to marry in childhood in the next decade, missing the SDG target of eliminating child marriage.⁴²

69. **While member States have made substantial efforts over the past five years, violence against women and girls continues to hinder gender equality across Africa.** The COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, climate change, harmful cultural norms and underreporting have intensified this crisis, threatening to reverse progress.⁴³

2.4. Cluster 4– Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions

70. **Women's participation in public life and decision-making is critical in advancing the agenda of gender equality** and ensuring that policies and actions are inclusive. Countries have implemented measures to enhance women's participation in:

- a public life and decision-making,
- b in media;

³⁸ https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef/f/?ag=UNICEF&df=GLOBAL_DATAFLOW&ver=1.0&dq=.PT_F_15-49_FGM+PT_M_15-49_FGM_ELIM+PT_F_0-14_FGM+PT_F_15-49_FGM_ELIM..&startPeriod=2016&endPeriod=2023.

³⁹ UNICEF database 2023.

⁴⁰ South Africa Beijing +30 National Review Report.

⁴¹ UNICEF. 2022. Press Release <https://www.unicef.org/wca/press-releases/130-million-african-girls-and-women-today-married-children> (accessed on 23 October 2024).

⁴² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), June 2022. Child Marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa. A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice. <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Child-Marriage-in-Eastern-and-Southern-Africa-June-2022-UNICEF-web.pdf>.

⁴³ African Union Commission - Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AUC-WGDD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2020. Gender-Based Violence During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Africa. https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/Policy%20Paper-%20GBV%20in%20Africa%20during%20COVID-19%20pandemic_EN%2018%20Feb_compressed.pdf, (accessed on 22 October 2024).

- c national machinery;
- d the integration of a gender perspective across various sectors; and
- e national human rights institutions.

(a). Women’s participation in public life and decision-making

71. **Equal participation of women in political and public life is crucial for creating policies that address women’s concerns and needs.** Of the 39 African countries participating in the Beijing+30 review, 25 identified political participation as a top five priority for advancing the rights of women and girls. Countries have focused on skills development initiatives, such as leadership training, mentorship, and political campaigning, to bolster women’s political participation. Data collection on women’s political participation has also been improved in 29 countries, while 28 countries have implemented capacity-building programs for emerging women leaders.

72. **Several countries (25) have introduced temporary special measures, such as quotas, to increase women’s political representation.** For instance, Sierra Leone’s 2023 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act, mandating a 30 per cent quota for female candidates, has increased women’s parliamentary representation. Similarly, Ghana’s 2024 Affirmative Action Act aims for 50 per cent female representation in public life by 2030, while countries, including Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, have implemented reserved seats. In Angola and Senegal, legislated candidate quotas have also resulted in positive change.

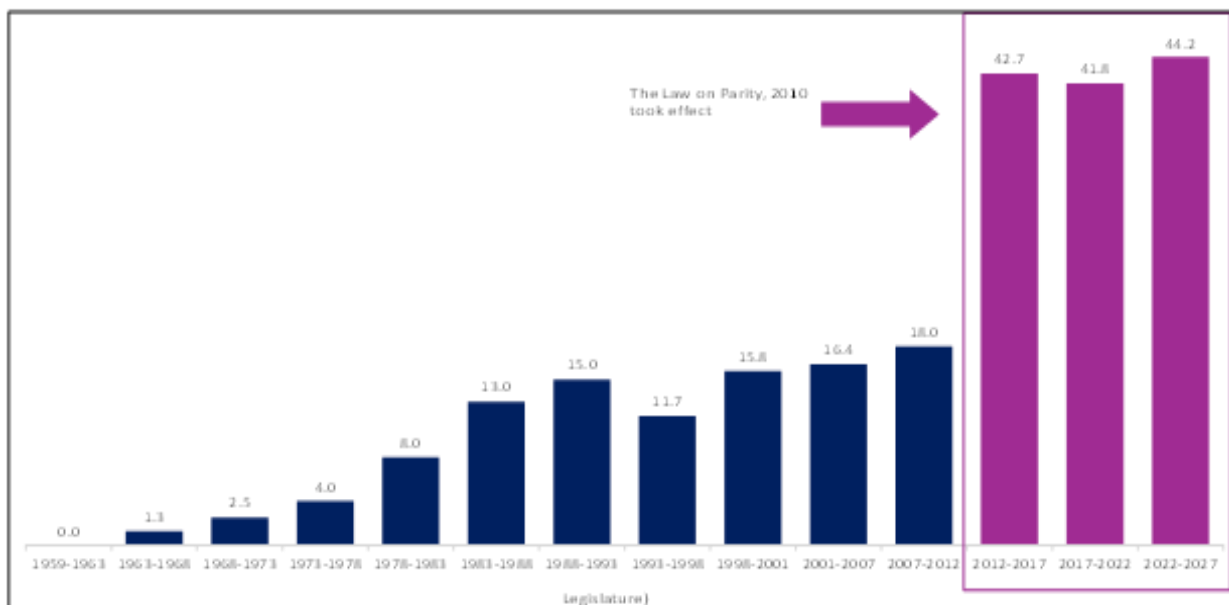
73. **Research by ECA⁴⁴ highlights the importance of enforcing gender quotas alongside strong women’s movements to support female candidates.** To strengthen these efforts, 12 countries bolstered the enforcement of quotas, with Cabo Verde shifting from incentives to a mandatory 40 per cent minimum women representation. Additionally, 18 countries have introduced measures to address violence against women in politics, while 15 nations have strengthened civic protections for women’s movements and human rights defenders.

Box 2: The effect of electoral gender quota on representation of women in Senegal
 The Law on Parity came into force in 2010, establishing gender parity in fully or partially elective institutions. As a result, the share of women in parliament rose from 18.0 per cent in the 2007-2012 legislature to 42.7 per cent and 44.2 per cent in the 2012-2017 and 2022-2027 legislatures, respectively (Figure 2). The increased representation of women in parliament is credited with the adoption of women-friendly legislation (or substantive representation) including Law No. 2020-05 of 2020 which criminalizes rape.⁴⁵

Figure 2: The proportion of women in Parliament in Senegal, 1959-2027 (%)

⁴⁴ ECA (2019). Measuring Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment in Africa: African Gender and Development Index Regional Synthesis Report III, 2018. https://archive.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/agdi_report_2018_en.pdf.

⁴⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2023). [Women in Parliament in 2022: The year in review](#).



Source: Republic of Senegal, Ministry of Women, Family and Child Protection (2022). [Bulletin statistique](#).

(b). Participation in the media

74. **Enhancing women’s leadership in media and improving their access to information and technology are vital to combating negative portrayals of women and girls in the media.** In pursuit of this, 27 countries have strengthened formal and technical vocational education and training in media and ICT, with a focus on leadership and management skills. Additionally, 23 countries have implemented measures to improve access, affordability, and utilization of ICTs for women and girls, while 20 countries have provided support to women's media networks and organizations. Moreover, 10 countries collaborated with media and ICT employers to improve hiring and retention policies, and 6 countries have introduced regulations to promote equal pay and career advancement of women within these fields.

(c). National gender machinery

75. **BPfA recommends a national gender machinery at the highest level of government, with clear mandates, authority and resources to drive policy and legislative changes.** Of the 39 reporting countries, all have set up a national women’s machinery within the government. In 30 countries, this machinery is housed within a full cabinet-level ministry, while in 5 countries, it is within a sectoral ministry. Zambia’s national gender machinery, for instance, has been based within the Office of the President since 2021.

76. **Despite this, 26 countries reported insufficient resources and staffing for their gender machinery to fulfil its mandate.** In the survey, 15 countries saw budget increases over the past five years, one-third of the countries reported stagnant budgets, and 6 experienced budget reductions.

(d). Mainstreaming a gender perspective across sectors

77. **To advance gender equality, governments are encouraged to mandate that all ministries review policies and programs from a gender lens.** Most countries in the review have institutionalized gender mainstreaming by appointing gender-focal persons within all government ministries and agencies. Senegal, for instance, created the Gender and Equity Unit (CGE) in 2021 to integrate gender into each Ministry’s activities, with dedicated focal persons in each department to work with CGE.

78. **However, gender-focal persons often hold middle-management positions with limited knowledge and authority on gender issues,** restricting their ability to drive gender-focused policy changes. Furthermore, limited institutional support and a lack of sex-disaggregated data further

compound this situation. Senegal's recent gender audit offers a model for addressing these issues, using audit findings to improve gender integration and strengthen institutional capacity.

(e). National Human Rights Institutions

79. **All but two countries surveyed – Madagascar and Somalia - have established a national human rights institution**, with 28 of these institutions specifically mandated to address gender inequality or sex-based discrimination. In 1993, the United Nations adopted the “Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions” (The Paris Principles).⁴⁶ These principles ensure that national human rights institutions have a broad mandate, broad functions to deliver on their mandate, independence from government, inclusive representation, and adequate powers and resources to perform their functions and discharge their responsibilities.⁴⁷ Of the 34 African members of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, 25 were deemed fully compliant with the Paris Principles.⁴⁸

2.5. Cluster 5– Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

80. **Building peaceful and inclusive societies requires the meaningful participation of women** in peace processes, security agreements, humanitarian action, conflict resolution and crisis response. In Africa, prolonged conflicts have exacerbated women's vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and rights violations, with the resulting displacements and increased military spending further straining resources and amplifying the need for humanitarian interventions. To build peaceful and inclusive societies, member States have implemented many measures in various areas, focused on operationalizing the United Nations Security Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (a) promoting women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives, (b) reducing military spending, (c) promoting non-violent conflict resolution, (d) protecting women in conflict zones, and eliminating discrimination against the girl child (e).

(a). Operationalization of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (WPS)

81. The year 2025 will mark 25 years since the adoption of the Security Council 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). To advance its implementation, 34⁴⁹ out of the 39 countries under review have adopted and are implementing National Action Plans on WPS, with 28 countries incorporating WPS commitments into national and inter-ministerial policy, planning, and monitoring frameworks. Twenty-two countries have increased budgetary allocations for the WPS agenda, and nine countries have leveraged communication strategies, including social media, to enhance awareness about WPS. These developments underscore the commitment of member States to integrating women into peace and conflict resolution processes.

(b). Women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives

82. **Over the last five years, member States have intensified efforts to increase women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution**, with 31 countries promoting women's participation in peace processes and 23 focusing on equal participation in humanitarian and crisis response. Sixteen member States have adopted gender-responsive conflict prevention approaches, while 10 countries have taken steps to safeguard civil society spaces and protect women's human rights defenders.

⁴⁶ UN (1993). [General Assembly resolution 48/134. Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions \(The Paris Principles\)](#).

⁴⁷ Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (June 2024).

⁴⁸ Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (nd). [Paris Principles](#).

⁴⁹ Central Africa (Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic); East Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda); Southern Africa (Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe); North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia); West Africa (Benin, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone).

83. **Despite being underrepresented, women have significantly contributed to peacekeeping and security efforts across several countries**, including Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. Major Winnet Zharare from Zimbabwe became the first peacekeeper to win the UN Secretary General’s Award for gender advocacy in 2021. Sierra Leone’s armed forces, for instance, recruited 300 all-female personnel, and in South Sudan, women have been crucial in peace negotiations led by figures like Angelina Teny. Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka played a pivotal role as a member of the mediator in the AU-led talks that ultimately led to the peace agreement between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front.⁵⁰

84. **Positive developments in military inclusivity have also been made.** In Kenya, women recruitment in the military rose from 5 per cent in 2017 to 17 per cent in 2022, facilitated by the 2016 Gender Policy, with more women now holding high-ranking positions. In Somalia, women have taken leadership positions, with the first female Deputy Chief of Police, Brig. Gen Zakia Hussien and Iman Elman are to the rank of Colonel, serving as the Head of the Civil-Military Cooperation Directorate.⁵¹

85. **Nevertheless, women’s representation in formal peace processes remains minimal.** For example, in 2022, 15 peace talks were held in Africa, but with limited representation of women.⁵² In the Central African Republic, for example, only two women participated in the 11-member Republican Dialogue follow-up committee, and only 17 per cent of its 450 participants were women.⁵³ Women were similarly excluded from major peace talks in Chad⁵⁴, the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace consultations, Sudan and Ethiopia. Despite their active advocacy and valuable contributions, African women remain underrepresented at negotiating tables.

(c). Military spending

86. **While military spending can contribute to stability, excessive military budgets divert resources from critical areas** such as education and healthcare, which promote equality and social cohesion. None of the 39 countries reviewed reported measures to reduce excessive military spending or reallocate funds toward social and economic development, including gender equality. Military spending on the continent continues to rise, reaching about 2 per cent of its combined GDP in 2023, a 33 per cent increase since 2020. North and East Africa saw the highest increases, with military budgets up by an average of 37 per cent, indicating a strong regional focus on security (see Table 1).

Table 1: Military expenditures by subregions

Region and Subregion	Spending		Change in spending (%)	
	2023 (\$m)	2023(%GDP)	2020-2023	2014-2023
Africa ^a	1530.70	2.07	33.0	19.6
Central Africa	267.12	1.81	7.4	-19.3
East Africa	644.21	1.95	36.5	38.5
North Africa	5619.78	3.52	36.7	29.1
Southern Africa	616.82	1.35	10.6	-88.7
West Africa	505.55	1.72	27.4	42.0

^aFigures exclude Djibouti, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan. Spending figures are in US dollars at Current prices and exchange rates. Changes are in real terms based on constant (2022) US\$.

Source: ECA Calculations using data from SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (<https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>, Accessed April 2024).

⁵⁰ <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/press-release-25-statutory-meeting-final..pdf>.

⁵¹ Kenya and Somalia: Beijing +30 National Review Reports.

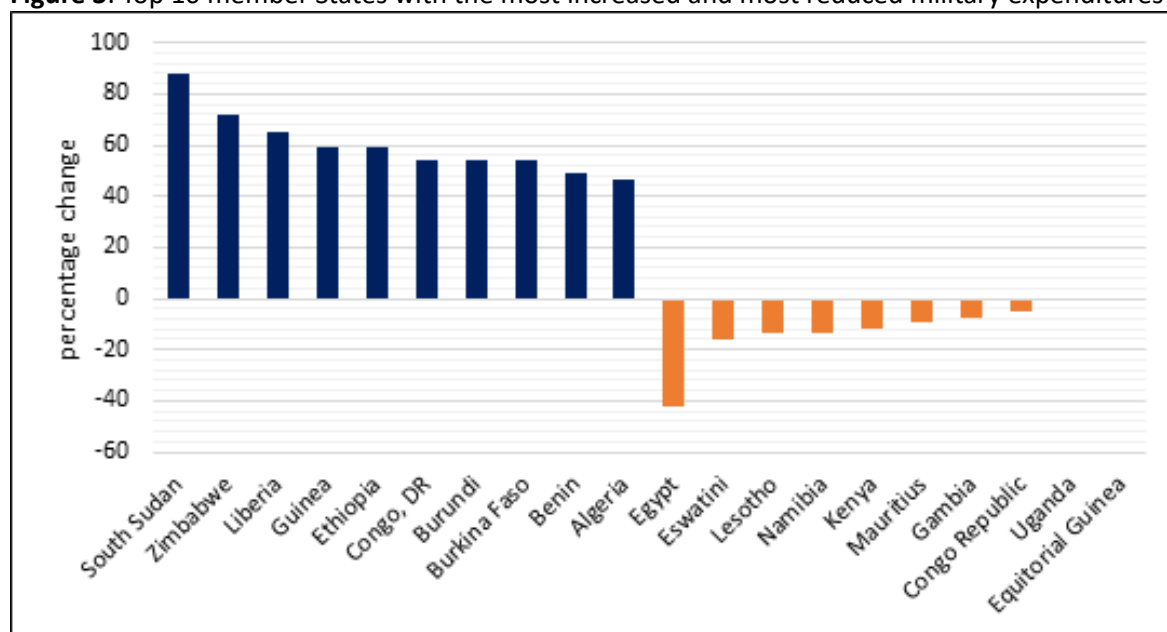
⁵² <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/press-release-25-statutory-meeting-final..pdf>.

⁵³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/speech/2023/06/briefing-fulfilling-our-commitments-to-the-women-of-the-central-african-republic>.

⁵⁴ Peace Talks in Focus 2022: Report on Trends and Scenarios <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Peacetalks2023.pdf>.

87. **The regional average military expenditures, however, mask variations among individual countries.** The latest data indicate that while certain countries, such as South Sudan and Zimbabwe, have increased their military spending, others, such as Egypt and Eswatini, have cut their expenditures significantly over the past four years (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Top 10 member States with the most increased and most reduced military expenditures



Source: ECA Calculations using data from SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (Accessed April 2024).

(d). Promoting Non-violent Conflict Resolution

88. **Many African countries have increasingly focused on non-violent conflict resolution,** applying gender-sensitive analysis to conflict situations. Over the review period, 20 countries supported inclusive and gender-sensitive conflict analysis, early warning, and prevention mechanisms, while 22 countries enacted legal and policy reform to prevent and address violations of the rights of women and girls. Additionally, 21 countries strengthened institutional capacities, including the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms, to ensure women’s access to justice, even in conflict and crisis settings.

89. **Mechanisms, such as the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) and FemWise, are strategic platforms for women’s participation in peacebuilding at local and regional levels.** For instance, the AWLN in Kenya has actively promoted peaceful elections and combating hate speech, while similar initiatives in Liberia, Sudan, and the DRC have fostered peace and stability. In 2022, South Sudan established the South Sudan Security Women Network to bring women together to share experiences and advocate for more women in the sector. Similarly, Nigeria’s Women, Peace, and Security Network has trained women mediators and peacebuilders, enhancing their capacity to engage in peace processes.⁵⁵ This increased participation has contributed to more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

90. **Women across Africa have been at the forefront of initiatives to foster a culture of peace** through grassroots initiatives such as the Women’s Situation Room, which is active in Uganda, Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. This women-led initiative monitors electoral processes, advocates for non-violence, and fosters peaceful and credible elections. In Kenya, the Uwiano Platform for Peace has also been instrumental in promoting peaceful elections in Kenya.

Box 3: Uwiano Platform for Peace in Kenya

⁵⁵ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/nigeria/women-peace-and-security>.

In Kenya, the Uwiano Platform for Peace has played a pivotal role in preventing electoral violence through early warning and response mechanisms. By engaging women and youth in peacebuilding activities, the platform has fostered dialogues and understanding among communities, reducing the incidence of violence during elections.

Uwiano Platform for Peace is a public platform that encourages Kenyans to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Kenya. The platform uses SMS, incident reports, and media reports to support peace and conflict prevention initiatives in the country. This initiative is led by the National Steering Committee on Conflict Management and Peacebuilding in the Office of the President and was established with the support of UNDP-Kenya and UN Women.⁵⁶

(e). Protection of women in conflict zones

91. **To protect women and girls in conflict-affected areas, 32 countries have strengthened the capacity of the security sector** in human rights and prevention of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG), as well as sexual exploitation and abuse. Nineteen member States have increased access to protection services for women affected by conflict, displacement or crises. Under the WPS agenda, 17 countries implemented measures to combat illicit arms trafficking, while 25 countries took actions to combat the production, use and trafficking of illicit drugs. Furthermore, 32 countries have implemented anti-trafficking measures specifically to protect women and children.

92. **Despite the many challenges, African countries have made progress in protecting women living in conflict zones.** Zimbabwe, for instance, adopted a National GBV Strategy 2023, which includes a specific focus on addressing VAWG in emergencies and conflicts. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the Government of Zimbabwe, through its Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, designated VAWG services as "essential", ensuring continued access. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the government has established one-stop centres in conflict zones, offering medical, psychological, and legal support to survivors of sexual violence.

93. **While the implementation of UNSCR 1820 has improved recognition of SVAWG as a tactic of war,⁵⁷ there remains a critical need to address the root causes of sexual violence** during conflict and peace times, including gender inequality and discrimination.⁵⁸ Violent extremism, conflicts and the challenges faced by human rights defenders remain pressing issues, increasing the urgency of targeted support and protection.

2.6. Cluster 6– Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building

94. **Africa, despite contributing only 4 per cent of global carbon emissions, suffers disproportionately from climate change,** with 17 of the 20 most climate-vulnerable countries located on the continent.⁵⁹ The continent faces impacts, such as extreme weather events, disruptions to agriculture, and risks of conflicts over scarce resources, leading to widespread displacement and heightened vulnerability of women to violence. Due to their roles in caregiving, food and water provision, and reliance on natural resources, the lives and livelihoods of women are adversely affected by the impacts of climate change.

95. **Global frameworks, including the BPfA, emphasize involving women in environmental decision-making and integrating gender perspectives into sustainable development policies.**

⁵⁶ Source : <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/uwiano-platform-launches-let-peace-win-campaign-promote-peaceful-elections>.

⁵⁷ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1820>.

⁵⁸ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2467>.

⁵⁹ Source : https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/sites/default/files/resources/documents/sro-na/egm-na-wa-energy-food-security-2023/e2301133_eng.pdf.

Recognizing women's roles as agents of change in disaster risk reduction and resilience is critical to building climate resilience and advancing sustainable development across Africa.

(a). Environmental conservation and climate action

96. **Over the past five years, 33 African countries have taken measures to integrate gender into environmental policies**, enhancing women's access to land, water, energy, and natural resources. Countries, including South Africa and Zambia, have promoted women's access to renewable energy, while Uganda has increased the adoption of rainwater harvesting. Additionally, 18 countries focused on securing women's land rights, with Mozambique increasing women's land access by 1.4 per cent.

97. **Women's participation in environmental governance is also growing, with 31 countries promoting women's engagement in this sector.** Rwanda's constitution mandates a 30 per cent gender quota in sectors including the environment, while Senegal and Uganda have adopted similar policies. Several countries, such as Mozambique, have implemented gender quotas in water management committees, significantly increasing women's participation in water-related decision-making.

98. **Twenty-four countries have intervened to improve women's access to time-saving technologies**, particularly in agriculture, with 25 countries promoting women's education in science and technology. Kenya's STEM Mentorship Program and Rwanda's Girls in ICT initiative are notable projects encouraging more women in these fields.

99. **To address environmental and health risks faced by women, 18 countries have launched awareness campaigns**, and 16 others are monitoring the impact of policies on women. Data collection initiatives have been prioritized to understand the gendered effects of environmental challenges, while 15 countries are working to preserve Indigenous women's traditional conservation knowledge. Additionally, 16 countries have encouraged women's participation in the green economy, supporting female entrepreneurship in sectors such as renewable energy.

(b). Disaster risk reduction and environmental resilience building

100. **To address the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls to climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters, 30 countries have strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness of these impacts.** Additionally, 27 countries have supported the participation and leadership of women, particularly those affected by disasters, in decision-making related to disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. Moreover, 24 countries have taken concrete steps to improve access to essential services for women in disaster-affected areas, such as relief payments, disaster insurance, and compensation. Lastly, another 24 countries have enacted or enhanced gender-responsive laws and policies to foster an equitable approach to disaster risk reduction and climate resilience.

101. **Member States have made notable progress in integrating gender considerations into climate action and disaster resilience.** Eighty-five per cent of the 54 African Member States submitting Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) have referenced gender actions in their submissions.⁶⁰ Ghana's National Adaptation Plan, for instance, incorporates gender-sensitive strategies that address the specific climate vulnerabilities of women and men, resulting in more inclusive and effective climate adaptation measures.⁶¹

102. **Despite these efforts, several barriers still hinder gender equality in climate action and disaster resilience.** These include women's underrepresentation in decision-making, lack of sex-disaggregated data, weak institutional frameworks, inadequate implementation of gender-responsive policies, cultural barriers, and inadequate funding for gender-responsive initiatives.

⁶⁰ Remteng, C., Nkem, J., Mofor, L. and Murombedzi, J. (2022), "Gender in the nationally determined contributions of African countries: a way forward for effective implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies", *Ecofeminism and Climate Change*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 2-22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EFCC-01-2021-0001>.

⁶¹ [Integrating Gender Considerations into Ghana's National Adaptation Plan Process - NAP Global Network](#).

3. National institutions and processes to advance gender equality

103. **Establishing national institutions and processes dedicated to gender equality is crucial for advancing the commitments outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda.** Embedding gender equality within national systems ensures that policies move beyond symbolic statements to actionable and measurable progress across all levels, promoting accountability and sustained action.

104. **Over the past five years, 36 out of 39 African countries have established national strategies or action plans for gender equality,** with mechanisms in place to involve various stakeholders. Among these, 15 countries developed plans to implement other recommendations from United Nations human rights mechanisms, while 23 countries developed action plans based on CEDAW recommendations, and 28 countries based on recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review.

105. **To strengthen gender equality promotion, 23 countries (59 per cent) tracked national budget allocations towards women's empowerment.** However, 16 countries have yet to adopt gender-responsive budgeting. Diverse stakeholder participation in national coordination mechanisms has also proven essential for advancing gender equality and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of countries where various stakeholders participate in coordination mechanisms established for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Civil society organizations	Women's rights organizations	Youth-led organizations	Academia and think tanks	Faith-based organizations	Parliaments/parliamentary committees	Private sector	United Nations system
36	31	25	28	26	30	26	34

Source: ECA analysis of survey results conducted by UN Women as part of the Beijing+30 review process.

4. Data and statistics

106. **Accurate and comprehensive gender statistics are essential for measuring progress,** identifying inequalities for policy action, and meeting global and regional reporting obligations, such as those under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Beijing Platform for Action urges governments to regularly collect and disseminate gender-disaggregated data for planning and evaluation. Over the past five years, significant strides have been made, with 22 countries using gender data for policy planning, 19 countries strengthening their capacity for data utilization, and 32 countries defining national indicators to monitor SDG progress. Thirty countries have also started compiling data on gender-specific SDG indicators.

107. **Countries have expanded their focus on disaggregating data by various factors,** such as sex, age, location, education, and income. For instance, Rwanda established the Gender Management Information System and Gender Data Lab to enhance the production and use of gender statistics, enabling district authorities to integrate gender analysis into local planning. However, marginalized communities, including women from rural and poor areas, are often overlooked, highlighting the need for more detailed disaggregated data to accurately assess progress on gender equality.

108. Looking ahead, the top priorities for member States include increasing the use of gender-sensitive data in policy development (21 countries), conducting new surveys to address data gaps (17 countries), and designing laws and strategies to advance gender statistics (13 countries). Improving statistical capacity remains a crucial focus for advancing gender equality over the coming years.

5. Summary of findings

1. **Progress on gender equality:** Significant progress has been made in advancing gender equality since the Beijing+25 review, but no African country has fully achieved it. According to the 2023 Africa Gender Index, Africa is only halfway toward closing the gender gap.
2. **Gender gaps in labour force and unpaid work:** Gender gaps persist in labour force participation, with women facing higher rates of vulnerability (68 per cent of women compared to 57 per cent of men), informality (73 per cent of women in the informal sector from 2020 to 2024, up from 72 per cent from 2015 to 2019), and a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work (249 minutes per day for women vs. 87 minutes for men).
3. **Digital divide:** A gender digital divide remains, with only 28 per cent of women using the internet compared to 38 per cent of men between 2020 and 2023, marking a 10-percentage-point disparity.
4. **Inclusive development:** Despite several initiatives and legal frameworks, women in Africa still lag behind men in labour force participation, digital access, resource control (including land and finance) and unpaid care work, which hinder opportunities for shared prosperity and decent work.
5. **Poverty:** Recent efforts to address poverty and improve social protection for women include social protection programs, entrepreneurship support, access to resources, and cash transfers. However, challenges persist in ensuring adequate coverage for women across the continent. Social protection spending remains low at 3.8 per cent of GDP, while the ILO estimates 8.5 per cent of GDP spending is required to provide four basic benefits.
6. **Health outcomes:** African countries have made notable strides in improving women's health outcomes, as evidenced by a 1.7 per cent decrease in maternal mortality between 2016 and 2020 and a reduction in adolescent fertility from 88.9 in 2020 to 85.75 in 2023. Access to family planning services has also improved. However, health shocks, such as COVID-19 and monkeypox, inadequate rural infrastructure, and disparities for marginalized communities pose ongoing challenges.
7. **Education and Skills:** In the African countries reviewed, progress in primary, secondary, and tertiary education has brought female-to-male ratios to near parity (0.99 in primary, 1.01 in secondary, and 0.99 in tertiary). This progress is supported by an increasing focus on TVET, as well as initiatives such as gender-sensitive teaching and improved learning environments designed to promote skills development for women in STEM and digital fields.
8. **Political representation:** Women's representation in public life is advancing slowly, with parliamentary participation increasing only from 25 per cent in 2021 to 26 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile, the Horn and North Africa regions saw a 2 per cent decline.
9. **Human rights:** Significant achievements have been made in women's human rights, including criminalizing violence against women and girls and inheritance rights. However, barriers remain in delayed justice, protection for human rights defenders and curbing harmful cultural beliefs that perpetuate violence against women and girls.
10. **Cultural barriers:** Discriminatory gender norms, stereotypes and stigma in 56 per cent of the reviewed countries continue to limit opportunities for women and girls despite legal reforms, depriving them of dignity and equal participation in economic and political life.
11. **Media portrayals:** Women's representation in the media has improved, promoting inclusion and positive portrayal across various platforms.
12. **Peace and security:** Member States are actively integrating the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) into their National Action Plans. However, women are still underrepresented in decision-making roles in peacekeeping and conflict resolution and face heightened risks amid rising security shocks, terrorism, and armed conflict.

13. **Gender and climate:** Many countries are integrating gender perspectives into climate action and disaster resilience policies. However, progress is hampered by the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles, resource constraints and a lack of a coordinated, government-wide approach to mainstream gender perspectives effectively.
14. **Institutional mechanisms:** While institutional mechanisms for gender equality have strengthened across member States, progress is often undermined by limited organizational, human, and financial resources.
15. **Data and statistics:** Persistent challenges in collecting, managing and disseminating quality disaggregated data continue to impact the monitoring, accountability and reporting of gender equality commitments.

6. Recommendations and priority actions

109. To achieve gender equality, member States have identified five priority areas⁶² for action over the next five years. Across these areas, the focus must be on implementing robust policies, transforming discriminatory gender norms and harmful cultural practices, and securing adequate financial resources to overcome structural barriers that inhibit gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Five priority areas for action:

- I. **Eliminating violence against women and girls:** Despite various initiatives by member States to combat violence against women and girls, including enhanced support for survivors, enforcement of existing laws, new legislation, and improved access to justice, elimination remains a major challenge across Africa, as indicated by 90 per cent of the reviewed countries. Priority efforts should be directed towards:
 - Training government officials to better enforce laws and implement policies addressing violence against women and girls.
 - Launching collaborative awareness campaigns to engage men and boys as well as to inform victims of the available legal channels to seek recourse.
 - Integrating VAWG-specific support into social protection programs and funding one-stop centres to offer legal, shelter and psychological support to victims.
 - Utilizing cross-sector strategies that involve communities and foster partnerships across public institutions, civil society, and development partners.

Training teachers to develop curricula to raise awareness about violence and teach peaceful conflict resolution skills.
- II. **Promoting women's political participation:** Although progress has been made, only one-third of African countries have achieved a minimum of 30 per cent of women's representation in politics. To address the barriers faced by women in political participation, member States should prioritize:
 - Investing in programs to provide women with training in leadership, mentorship, campaigning skills, and public speaking.
 - Strengthening mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of gender quotas in electoral processes.
 - Supporting countries without parity laws to establish and enforce measures for gender equality in political representation.
 - Safeguarding civic spaces, women's movements and women's rights defenders.

⁶² Priority areas have been identified based on the responses of countries to Question 7 in UN Women's "Guidance Note for Comprehensive National-Level Reviews," published in September 2024.

- Preventing, investigating, and prosecuting cases of violence against women in public life, including negative media portrayal, to ensure safe participation.
 - Encouraging community engagement and campaigns to foster acceptance of women's leadership, with men as allies.
 - Utilizing data analytics to identify promising women candidates and establish monitoring systems to track progress in their political progression.
- III. **Promoting quality education, training, and lifelong learning for women and girls:** With 54 per cent of the member States reviewed prioritizing quality education, training, and lifelong learning for women and girls, there is an increasing need to prepare women to meet future workforce demands. Targeted interventions should focus on:
- Integrating digital literacy, automation, and emerging technology skills into school curricula to prepare students for future jobs.
 - Creating pathways for women to engage in continuous education and upskilling, ensuring adaptability to changing labour market.
 - Partnering with industries to align TVET and STEM programs with market demands and provide internships, apprenticeships or job placements for women and girls.
 - Partnering with international online education providers to offer courses in local languages and learning opportunities for teachers.
- IV. **Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity, and food security.** Several countries highlighted promoting women's rights and ensuring equal access to financial resources, technology, and social services as essential to boosting agricultural productivity, enhancing food security, and addressing poverty. Key actions should be:
- Ensuring rural women's equal access to land, capital and technology and addressing barriers to trading their products in national, regional, and international markets.
 - Partnering with local authorities to raise awareness about women's land rights in rural and remote areas, as well as with tech companies to provide affordable technologies (such as irrigation systems and mobile apps) for women.
 - Investing in quality, affordable and accessible care services, implementing gender-responsive social protection systems, and setting up comprehensive leave policies to reduce women's unpaid care burden and time poverty.
 - Recognizing the contributions of unpaid work by integrating it into national statistics accounting as part of providing social protection services.
 - Creating community-led safety net programs to support vulnerable women in informal agricultural activities, providing essentials such as seeds, tools, or food during lean seasons.
 - Implementing initiatives to connect women-led agricultural businesses with supply chains and train them to trade internationally, fostering associations for collective selling power.
- V. **Enshrining equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice.** Nearly 44 per cent of the countries reviewed, particularly in Southern Africa, have prioritized legal equality, non-discrimination and access to justice over the next five years. However, in several countries, constitutional protections for customary and religious laws continue to limit women's rights. Proposed actions should focus on:
- Renewing partnerships between the public, private and civil society to close legal gaps and create an inclusive environment for women and girls.
 - Shifting focus from legislation to the efficient implementation and enforcement of gender equality laws.
 - Harmonizing laws, including customary laws, with human rights instruments and strengthening programmes to enhance women's awareness of their rights.

- Scaling up successful community-based justice initiatives to resolve disputes and promote restorative justice where formal legal channels are not easily accessible.
- Implementing legal aid programs to offer free legal support to improve access to justice.
- Adopting gender-responsive budgeting to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources to help finance the initiatives.
- Collecting quality data disaggregated (by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, location, and socioeconomic status) to inform and measure policy effectiveness.

Two cross-cutting areas for action

I. Peaceful and inclusive society: Mainstreaming the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda across all sectors is essential for lasting peace and sustainable development. The convergence of Beijing+30, the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and the 10th anniversary of the 2030 Agenda provide a timely opportunity to reflect on WPS progress, as well as identify and adopt best practices to close the persistent gaps. Member States should:

- Secure adequate financing for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and localisation of the National Action Plans to advance the WPS Agenda.
- Prioritise structural and legal changes in the justice sector to ensure the safety and security of human rights defenders amid growing extremism and shrinking civic space.
- Increase awareness of the WPS Agenda to counter misconceptions that it only applies in conflicts or humanitarian contexts.
- Strengthen the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data to make informed policy decisions.
- Strengthen coordination and partnerships across sectors, including the private sector and civil society organizations.
- Boost women's participation in different peace and negotiation processes, particularly as mediators and decision-makers.

II. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building: Addressing the deeply rooted barriers to integrating gender into environmental policies and disaster risk reduction is essential for achieving gender equality and climate resilience in Africa. Member States should:

- Implement capacity-building initiatives to address cultural and social norms that negatively impact gender dynamics within government and other institutions involved in climate policy and climate action.
- Collect and utilize gender-disaggregated data to inform policies and programs. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activities should go beyond data disaggregation to promote gender-responsive MEL systems, leveraging regional bodies, think tanks and research institute.
- Strengthen institutional frameworks to improve accountability and collaboration between gender and climate ministries to advance gender integration.
- Explore innovative ways of mobilizing finance to fund gender-responsive environment policies and disaster risk reduction initiatives.
- Foster partnerships and collaborations among governments, civil society organizations, women's groups, research institutions, and the private sector to leverage cross-sectoral expertise, resources, and networks for gender-integrated climate action.
- Increase women's involvement in climate-related decision-making at national, regional, and international levels by establishing or enforcing gender quotas and targets.