



## OUTCOME DOCUMENT

### OUR COMMITMENT & CALL TO ACTION

**#GenerationEqualityAfrica**



## Young Women's Regional Consultations on Beijing+25

12-14 August 2019, Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire

## INTRODUCTION

We, the 150 African young people, mostly young women, in our diversity, from across 24 countries representing all regions gathered on 12-14 August 2019 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire for the young women's regional consultation on Beijing+25 on the theme "Generation Equality Africa".

We convened at this consultative meeting to review the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), 25 years after its adoption at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and generate recommendations for the future, to feed into the Africa Regional Beijing+25 consultations and review, led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and UN Women, the 64th periodic session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 64), the Generation Equality Forum being convened by UN Women in Mexico and France in 2020, and beyond.

We respect, recognize and value the commitment and inspiration of those who shaped our present with their past efforts, resulting in such profound global and regional instruments to advance gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the Charter on Human and People's Rights on Women's Rights in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the African Youth Charter, among others.

These are the principles and objectives that are informing our commitment and call to action:

- Grounded on the perspective of young women and girls to advance gender equality and women and girls' rights informed by feminist values and intersectionality.
- Recognising that patriarchy as an underlying value system expressed in social norms, behaviour and laws must be dismantled in order to achieve gender equality.
- Recognising that young people are not just beneficiaries and vulnerable but active citizens with voice and agency.

## EMERGING ISSUES AND PRIORITIES FOR AFRICAN YOUNG WOMEN

We identified the following as the critical and emerging issues for us as young African women and girls:

- ***Shifting social norms***: transform the potential of progressive traditions, cultures and religions towards advancing gender equality, including by promoting male responsibility and accountability.
- ***Naming is Norming and Language is Transformative***: demystify gender concepts and reclaim language that does not perpetuate domination, patriarchy, ageism and racism, nor undermine the work for which we seek progress on.
- ***Persistent and new forms of violence against young women and girls*** are fuelled by radicalisation, conservatism, militarisation, technology, and deep seated patriarchal practices which require multiple and multi layered interventions by different actors.

- **Migration, displacement and human trafficking** mostly affect the human rights of young women and girls therefore, there is a need for accountability that protects our human right.
- **Young women, agriculture and climate justice:** it is critical that young women participate in agriculture as business opportunities and not just as subsistence and take opportunities for participation in the value chain of the economy. Increase investments in interventions that respond to the gendered impact of climate change.
- **Accessible, sustainable and adequate resources for advancing gender equality for young women:** this includes recognition of young women-led innovations and initiatives including philanthropy and volunteerism.

## COMMITMENTS AND INNOVATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

**Our Commitments:** to dismantle patriarchal cultural norms through our leadership by being role models in our own private and public lives so that we do not continue to disempower women and girls. Moreover, work collaboratively as young people of the continent, convening and sharing practices at all levels by redefining and owning the narrative of young African women.

**Our Innovations:** young women have been harnessing the power of digital and information technologies for empowerment and advocacy. We recognise our creativity for scaling up in all levels and sectors as we innovate with our hair, cuisines, dress and shoes for social economic and cultural empowerment of both women and girls. We also embrace and value arts, sports and storytelling that affirm young women's voice, agency and positive identity.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

*We recognise that achieving gender equality for African young women and girls is the shared responsibility of many stakeholders. Therefore, we demand that everyone takes responsibility, and that there should be no exceptions to the realization of fundamental human rights for women and girls based on religion, culture and any other value systems.*

### To Governments:

- We call for implementation and accountability of laws and policies in relation to young women and girls in line with national and regional commitments.
- We call for immediate harmonisation of customary statutory laws.
- We demand an end to impunity in cases of violation of human rights.
- We demand that African resources (natural resources and budgets) to prioritise interventions and programmes that empower and secure the rights of young women and girls.
- We call on increased infrastructure and resources for technology especially in rural communities in order to bridge the digital and gender divide.
- We strongly recommend governments to formulate, implement and enforce laws and policies that address technology-assisted violence against women and girls.

- We call on the governments to prioritise resources that respond to differently abled women and ensure our mental health and wellbeing.

To Intergovernmental Organizations (United Nations, African Union and Regional Economic Commissions):

- We demand effective and meaningful participation of African young women and girls in intergovernmental processes, such as CSW, including that they address immigration policies that continue to limit our participation.
- We demand that African young women and girls are at the centre of intergovernmental normative processes, of their programmatic initiatives and resources.
- We call for affirmative actions on human resource policies that advance career development for African young women in intergovernmental spaces.

To civil society, the private sector and media:

- We demand that the private sector supports the participation of young African women in the labour market, female entrepreneurship and violence free working environments.
- We call on the private sector to make intentional commitments and actions in addressing the factors that diminish the value of women in the workplace, such as the gender pay gap, maternity and paternity matters.
- We call on private and civil societies to train men who work on women's empowerment on feminism.
- We demand that civil societies meaningfully engage and are accountable to young people as primary actors and not only as beneficiaries.
- We call on the media to promote positive gender roles and not perpetuate gender discrimination and the dehumanisation of women's bodies.

## CONCLUSION

We extend our appreciation to UN Women, Oxfam International and UNECA for facilitating this meeting, for the financial and technical support that enabled us to come together as young people to contribute to this important policy process. We also want to thank our hosts, the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, and especially the Ministry of the Family, Women and Children, and the Ministry of Youth Promotion and Youth Employment. As young people we valued the intergenerational character of the space which enabled us to have an opportunity to understand the journey to and post Beijing thus enabling us to reposition the future struggles for gender equality.

