

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION: Pathway to Gender Equality in the East and Southern Africa Region

SEPTEMBER 2020

1. Introduction

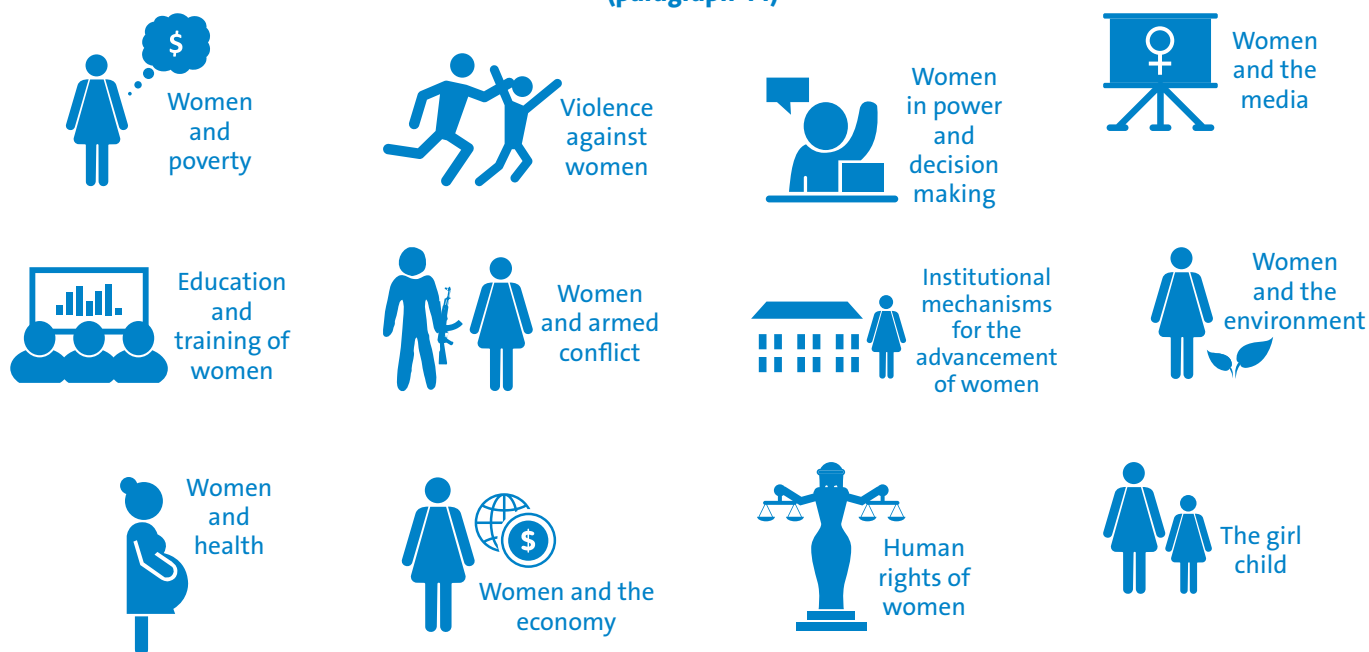
This policy brief has been produced by the UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office alongside the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The brief provides a snapshot of the progress made and achievements of the East and southern Africa region (ESAR) towards gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The aim is not to list all the achievements from all the countries, but to outline key challenges in realizing GEWE, as identified in the Beijing+25 national reports. Most importantly, the policy brief emphasizes the essential and important link between the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals, as pathways to accelerate the achievement of GEWE. It suggests key messages and strategic actions that countries might consider in accordance with their respective national priorities and contexts.

2. Overview of the East and southern Africa region

The UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) covers 13 countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The Ethiopia Country Office has a liaison

CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN: BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (paragraph 44)



function to the African Union Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. The South Africa Multi-Country Office covers members of the Southern Africa Customs Union: Botswana (which has a programme presence), Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini. It also serves as a liaison to the Southern African Development Community. Additionally, ESARO oversees a Country Programme in Somalia (covering the Federal Government of Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland) and UN Country Teams in Angola, Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zambia.

3. Gender equality and women's empowerment challenges

ESAR economies are characterized by high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Climate change-related weather phenomena, including prolonged drought, rising temperatures, floods, landslides,

and unpredictable rainfall patterns, aggravate the situation. The 2019 cyclones, *Idai* and *Kenneth*, which hit Zimbabwe, Mozambique and parts of Malawi, caused massive flooding, loss of life and destruction of property. The COVID-19 pandemic exponentially spreading in the region exacerbates these risks, causing death and morbidity and worsening the inequalities in the communities. The negative impacts manifest in food insecurity, ill health, loss of livelihoods, and low productivity in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. While poverty affects men and women, there is significant gender inequality, with more women falling within the extreme poverty bracket.

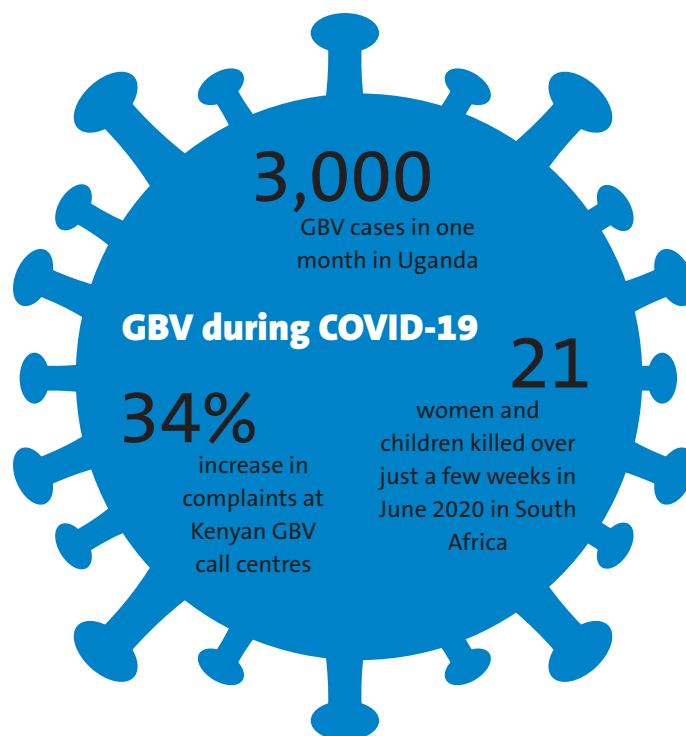
Gender gaps in education and training persist, fuelled by negative cultural norms and practices, unequal household and care work burdens, inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure, and limited access to sanitary towels. Resistance to the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education in school curricula denies girls

and boys the information and skills to safely manage their sexuality to avoid early sex debut and unwanted pregnancies. Male-centric perceptions of leadership and power remain entrenched in society, as evidenced by stagnating numbers of women in parliament and almost exclusive reliance on existent affirmative action measures to achieve the current numbers of women in parliament and local government.

Due to inadequate investment in the health sector, countries have had to rely on domestic and external borrowing and donor grants to finance the COVID-19 response (related to both public health and social services) – thereby worsening the public debt burden. The reallocation of resources to the COVID-19 response, coupled with the imposition of no-movement orders (lockdown), without due consideration of women's health, may have negative impacts on maternal mortality ratios and the health of persons living with HIV due to limited access to antenatal and antiretroviral therapy services.

There is broad agreement on the most pervasive barriers to GEWE – entrenched patriarchal social norms, attitudes, structures and institutions that propagate and enable discrimination, including violence against women and girls. The dwindling political will to adopt sustained campaigns for the transformation of these negative social norms, and inadequate resources to implement them, makes the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action slow, with minimal impact in some, including ending violence against women (VAW), which is endemic in the region.

There is inadequate capacity (technical, financial and institutional) in most countries for effective and sustained climate change resilience and adaptation strategies. Countries also report inadequate capacity to plan for and respond to climate emergencies, including providing emergency relief supplies, resettlement, and support towards economic recovery for affected populations.



3.1 Challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is fast evolving as a major global crisis. By 27 May 2020, almost all countries in the region had reported COVID-19 infections. Only six countries (Eritrea, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles and Uganda) had reported zero deaths from the virus.¹ Like elsewhere in the world, ESAR countries took early steps to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Measures put in place included the closure of airports; control of people's movement; closure of schools, shops and markets; and prohibition of public gatherings, including in places of worship. While the measures were effective in preventing and delaying community infections, they have had a negative impact on livelihoods and job security, particularly affecting women in the informal sector. The World Bank estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic may push over 27 million people in sub-Saharan Africa into extreme poverty.²

As countries implemented stay-at-home measures, reports emerged of a significant spike in intimate partner violence. For example, the police, the media and civil society organizations in Uganda have raised the alarm over an increase in gender-based violence (GBV). The Uganda Police recorded 3,000 GBV cases in one month,³ and most involved an intimate partner. Kenya reported that GBV call centres experienced a 34 per cent increase in complaints during the COVID-19 lockdown.⁴ In South Africa in June, 21 women and children were reported to have been killed in just a few weeks.⁵ Many households have faced financial and food insecurity-related stress, contributing to conflict in the home and forcing some women and their daughters into survival sex.

The focus on the pandemic response has had negative impacts on people with other diseases and health conditions, including cancer patients, pregnant women, and women living with HIV or albinism who could not readily access treatment or services.

There are encouraging responses, including governments at the highest level speaking out against GBV. Governments and CSOs are implementing media and community campaigns, including by involving men, to reduce the incidence of GBV and offer services to survivors. The organization Raising Voices has rolled out a resource pack on addressing GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic. The series of guidance notes is accessible online at <http://raisingvoices.org/preventing-vaw-covid-19-pandemic/>. UNFPA and other organizations are delivering reproductive health and antiretroviral therapy products to users' homes. Some businesswomen are utilizing the internet and mobile money in order to adjust to the realities of the pandemic.

4. Twenty-five years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: achievements in East and southern Africa

The ESAR has made commendable progress in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Below are some achievements by critical area of concern extracted from the country reports prepared for the 25-year Africa regional review.

4.1 Feminized poverty and women's economic empowerment

The region has taken an array of policy, legislative and administrative measures towards the reduction of poverty among women, and in support of the economic empowerment of women. Legal reforms are giving women legal rights to productive resources, particularly land. Thanks to changes in the land certification policies in Ethiopia and Rwanda, the number of women who own land and housing, either individually or with a spouse, has significantly increased. In Lesotho, 64 per cent of land titles have been issued to women in urban centres under the Land Act (2010).

Promising interventions are being implemented to ensure the financial inclusion of women, including those in rural areas. Improved uptake and use of mobile technology and women's own initiatives in setting up and managing savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) have played critical roles in enhancing women's inclusion in the financial sector. Rwanda reports a reduction of women's financial exclusion from 32 per cent in 2012 to 13 per cent in 2016. Ethiopian women have established Enat Bank to facilitate better access to financial resources for women in business. In Zimbabwe, a women's microfinance bank has been established.

Several countries, including Kenya, Uganda and South Africa, are implementing affirmative action measures that promote women's participation in public procurement processes. Countries are adopting an intersectionality approach – implementing policies that target women with special vulnerabilities. Ethiopia, for instance, is implementing special initiatives for women at a greater risk of poverty, including women with disabilities, those living with HIV/AIDS, rural women and girls, adolescents, young women, and refugee and migrant women. Madagascar has introduced social protection legislation and interventions targeting women heads of households. Uganda's Social Assistance Grants

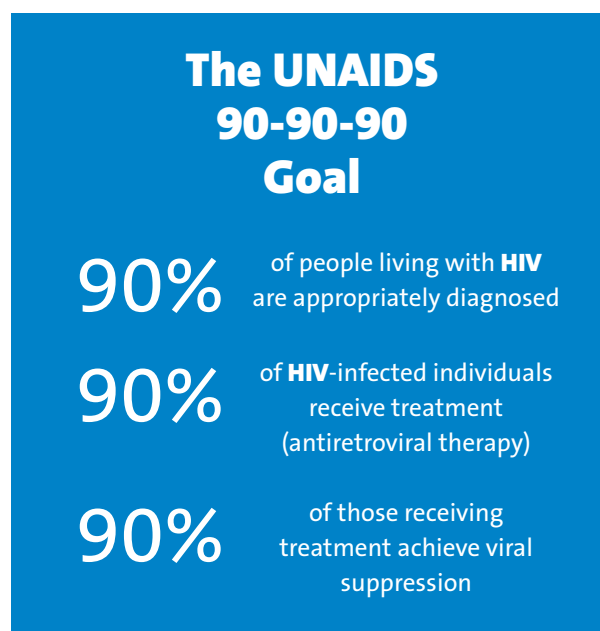
for Empowerment programme provides regular cash transfers to the elderly. Through the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, the country also provides credit to vulnerable women at zero interest to establish their businesses.

4.2 Education, training and life-long learning for women and girls

The attainment of quality and relevant education by women and girls is a fundamental human right and an important strategy towards gender equality in all critical areas of concern. Most countries have adopted specific policies and strategies for mainstreaming gender perspectives into the education sector and for the protection of the girl child. For instance, Burundi is implementing the UN Girls' Education Initiative, with committees in all provinces to mobilize communities to enrol and keep girls in school. As a result, net enrolment for 2014/2015 was 93.9 per cent for girls compared to 94.9 per cent for boys.⁶

Achievements in ESAR include increased enrolment and completion rates for girls in both primary and secondary schools due to the implementation of universal free education, school bursaries to needy families, and school feeding programmes. Madagascar's Let Us Learn is a cash transfer programme to assist parents in continuing their girls' and boys' education to the completion of secondary school. Countries are improving water and sanitation facilities in schools and providing free or subsidized sanitary pads to allow adolescent girls to remain in school. Kenya's Basic Education Amendment Act, signed into law in 2017, compels the government to provide "free, sufficient and quality sanitary towels to every girl child registered and enrolled in a public basic education institution" and also offer "a safe and environmentally sound mechanism for disposal".

Across the region, there are legislative and other measures to eradicate early marriage and other harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation. The region is encouraging girls to take science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses, as well as undergo technical and vocational education



and training – areas traditionally dominated by boys. Uganda's Secondary Science and Mathematics Teachers programme aimed to retool teachers for improved teaching of STEM courses. In Rwanda, STEM promotion initiatives are credited with increasing girls' participation in information and communications technology courses from 32.3 per cent in 2015/2016 to 41.8 per cent in 2016/2017.

4.3 Women and health

The region continues to lower the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) due to better access to antenatal care services and village-level public health information and education. Most countries have an MMR of between 200 and 400 deaths per 100,000 live births. Only Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia have a lower MMR, ranging from 53/100,000 to 195/100,000 respectively. The ESAR has recorded a significant decline in HIV/AIDS-related deaths due to the availability and scale-up of antiretroviral therapy. New HIV infections continue to decline, as does mother-to-child transmission. Countries such as Botswana, Eswatini, Uganda and Namibia have the highest coverage of prevention

of mother-to-child transmission programmes, at over 90 per cent, and the highest levels of awareness and testing. Most countries are implementing the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goal by 2020, designed to ensure that at least 90 per cent of people living with HIV infection are appropriately diagnosed. The goal is also focused on ensuring that at least 90 per cent of HIV-infected individuals receive treatment (antiretroviral therapy) and that at least 90 per cent of those getting the treatment achieve viral suppression.

4.4 Violence against women

Most countries have adopted legislation criminalizing different forms of VAW, especially sexual violence and domestic violence (also known as intimate partner violence). Some countries such as Burundi, South Africa and Zambia have established victim-friendly special courts for fast-tracking sexual offence trials and preventing the retraumatization of the survivors. Others such as Kenya have enacted legislation with special measures for handling perpetrators of sexual violence, including setting up a register of sexual offenders and empowering the court to declare a convicted perpetrator of a sexual offence a “dangerous offender”. Government- and NGO-led campaigns have increased public awareness of VAW as a crime and have improved the reporting of VAW incidents to the police. Faith-based and cultural leaders are increasingly playing a visible role in the campaigns – an important step towards changing negative social attitudes and practices. There are nascent initiatives promoting positive masculinities and emphasizing men’s important role in the elimination of VAW.

4.5 Women, peace and security

The women, peace and security agenda, grounded in human rights and backed by 11 UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolution 1325, is now embedded in security discourses and national development plans. Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda are the only countries in the region that have adopted National Action Plans on Resolution 1325; they report increased recruitment

and training of women in the military, the police force, and peacekeeping missions. In addition to its National Action Plan, Uganda reported that local governments have developed and are implementing peace plans, with the support of civil society organizations.

4.6 Women in decision making and power

The right to participate in public affairs and to hold public office is enshrined in national constitutions and other legislation, including electoral laws. As of November 2019, five ESAR countries were among the 25 countries with the highest women’s representation in parliament globally. Forty-three per cent have at least 30 per cent female representation in parliament. There are more women in the cabinet, the judiciary and other decision-making posts in government than ever before. Women have assumed and excelled in positions of responsibility, traditionally a preserve for men, including in ministries of foreign affairs, internal affairs, defence, justice, trade and industry, transport, and economic planning. Ethiopia currently has women serving as President, head of the Federal Supreme Court, and head of the National Electoral Board.

Ten countries in the region have a female speaker of parliament: Eswatini, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda.⁷

4.7 Promotion and protection of the human rights of women

The right to equality and to equal protection of the law is enshrined in national constitutions. All countries in the region (except Somalia) have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As states parties, they commit to refrain from any actions or practices that amount to discrimination and to take all necessary measures to prevent and punish discrimination against women.

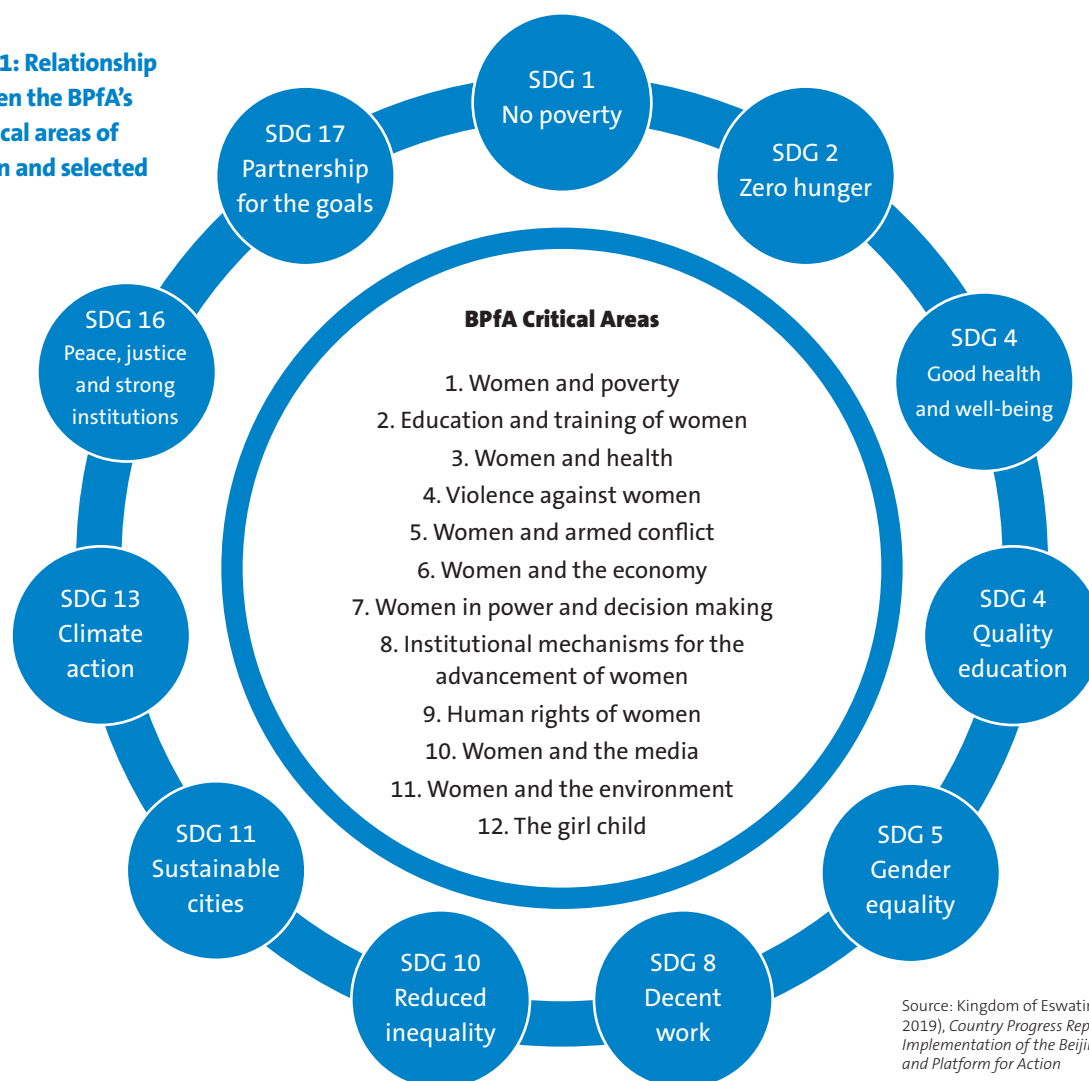


Photo: UN Women/Neema Muunga



Photo: UN Women/Kennedy Okoth

Figure 1: Relationship between the BPfA's 12 critical areas of concern and selected SDGs



Source: Kingdom of Eswatini (May 2019), *Country Progress Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*

During the period September 2014 – August 2019, eleven ESAR countries submitted their periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee, established to monitor the implementation of the convention.⁸ Additionally, most countries have ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).⁹ Eleven countries submitted periodic reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights with details on the legislative, administrative and other measures taken to respect, protect and promote the human rights of women.¹⁰

4.8 Women and the management of natural resources and the environment

Countries are implementing measures to increase gender equality in access to land, water, energy and other natural resources, with emphasis on renewable energy and climate change adaptation technologies. Legislation in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia and Rwanda has enabled women to own land solely or together with a spouse. Uganda is implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in the Oil and Gas Sector (2016) to ensure women's participation

in the sector while reducing any potential negative impacts of the sector's operations on women and girls. Eswatini is ensuring that women have decision-making roles in climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes. Malawi has 50:50 gender representation on Village Natural Resource Management Committees. Zimbabwe is supporting a women's cooperative, the Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM), currently with a membership of 2 million women, as the vehicle for women's participation in agriculture, fisheries, industry, energy, tourism and mining.

5. Agenda 2030 and the Beijing Platform for Action: pathway to gender equality

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an ambitious global development agenda and commitment to **"leave no one behind"**. The agenda affirms the cross-cutting nature of GEWE, stating the following:

"...gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a critical contribution to progress on all the Goals and targets"



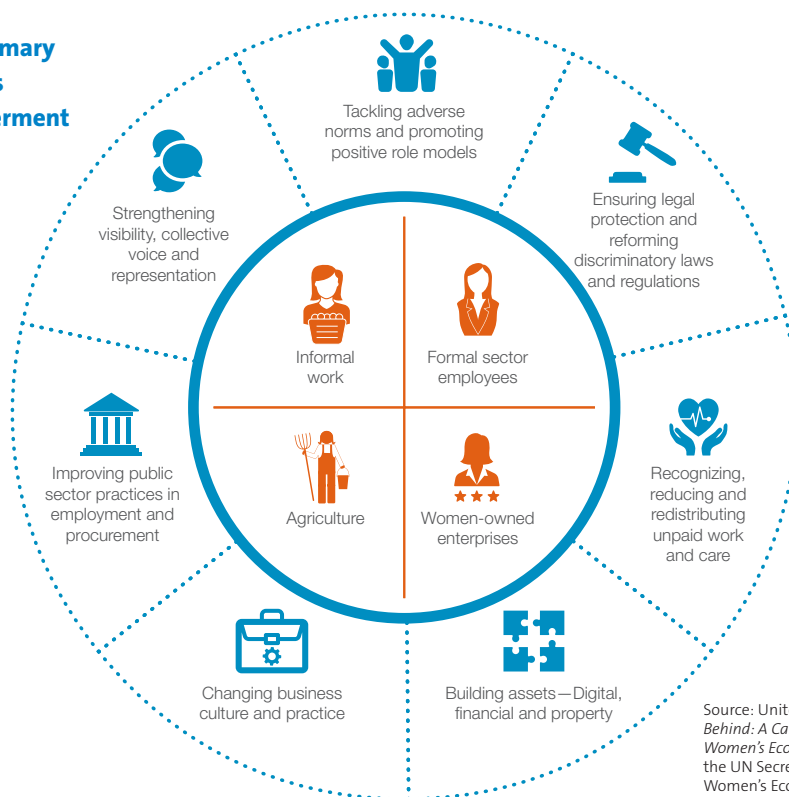
Goal 5 is "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030. The nine targets for Goal 5 mirror the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action, including ending all forms of discrimination; eliminating VAW and harmful practices; ensuring the

participation of women in leadership and decision making; and universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights. In the SDGs, as in the BPfA, countries agree to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, per the national laws. All the ESAR countries have integrated the SDGs into their national development plans, with the achievement of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. The Kingdom of Eswatini, in its Beijing+25 report, shows a diagrammatic representation of the relationship between the BPfA Critical Areas of Concern and the SDGs (Figure 1).

The BPfA does not only provide in detail the content of the commitment in each of the GEWE targets in the SDGs, but also the means of achieving it. For instance, Target 5.1 is a commitment to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. The BPfA describes how discrimination against women and girls manifests, explains its causes, and sets out actions that governments might take towards its elimination. Target 5.2, meanwhile, is on the elimination of all forms of VAW, whether committed in the public or private spheres of life. The BPfA gives a detailed definition of VAW, the underlying causes, and the intersecting factors that increase the vulnerability of sections of women to VAW. It lays out actions for combating VAW by governments, non-governmental organizations, employers, youth organizations, and development partners, including the United Nations.

Creating and sustaining the synergy between the SDGs and the BPfA ensures policy coherence and mainstreams GEWE into national development planning, budgeting and delivery processes. It also facilitates the integration of GEWE targets and indicators into national data collection, analysis and monitoring systems. It opens the door for GEWE to be at the centre of the development discourse and accountability systems at sector, national, regional and global levels.

Figure 2: Seven primary drivers of women's economic empowerment



Source: United Nations (2016), *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*, Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, 4

6. Strengthened strategic GEWE interventions: key messages

Ending violence and harmful social norms and practices

1. The transformation of patriarchal social norms, attitudes and practices must begin at the household level and scale up to the community and national level. Initiatives that have the potential for fundamental change are those that are founded on an appreciation of the complexity and emotive nature of the goal and process because of cultural and religious identity issues. It is imperative for such initiatives to involve cultural, religious and community leaders actively and to require financial investment on a sustained basis. Change is slow and progressive. Initiatives with Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa members on ending early and child marriage and harmful practices should be expanded, deepened and profiled as good examples.

Strengthening institutional capacities

2. While the advocacy for strengthened capacities of gender machineries (financial, technical, institutional and political) must continue, it is necessary to ensure that all ministries, departments and agencies are accountable for GEWE. They need to adequately plan for, resource, implement, monitor and report on GEWE within their respective mandates. Countries are commended for developing sector gender-mainstreaming strategies. They are not an end in themselves, but rather tools to guide towards gender-responsive development.

3. Strengthen and institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting in the national and local government planning, budgeting, expenditure and reporting cycles across the ESAR. National gender machineries should commit to document and share “what was done, how it was done, and with what results” to facilitate learning from promising approaches.

4. Strengthen gender analysis expertise in different priority sectors to support the translation of sector gender-mainstreaming strategies into impactful initiatives. Towards this end, countries are encouraged to establish and strengthen partnerships with gender and women's studies departments in academic institutions and with GEWE activist organizations across sectors and women's diversities (youth, women with disabilities, etc.). The aim should be to enhance the capacity of the gender machinery to support gender mainstreaming in different government ministries, departments and agencies.

Economic empowerment of women

5. The economic empowerment of women is central to the achievement of the SDGs and the objectives of the BPfA. Making progress in this area requires a critical understanding of the factors that define and perpetuate poverty and economic marginalization for most women. These inter-linked and systemic factors include adverse social norms; discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protection; limited access to economic assets, labour force participation and enterprise ownership; and the unequal and unpaid burden of household work and care. It is essential that sustained and coordinated action be taken to address all the identified factors.

6. Adopt, popularize and utilize the seven drivers of change for women's economic empowerment identified by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment as a framework for planning, resourcing, implementation and monitoring policies and programmes for women's economic empowerment.

7. Recognize and harness the entrepreneurial spirit of many of Africa's youth and recommend the scaling up of the "hustle" in ways that provide support to young entrepreneurs, an enabling environment for their work, and an opportunity to both create employment and grow sustainable businesses.¹¹

8. Expand and implement effective social protection measures to provide targeted poverty reduction and

mitigation support to women and girls with special vulnerabilities, including those associated with age, health, disability, displacement, natural disasters and geographic remoteness. The measures should as much as possible aim to assist the women to transition out of poverty towards economic empowerment.

Education and training

9. The achievement of sustainable, high-quality education for girls is dependent on improving the structural problems that affect the quality of girls' education, including building staff capacity, improving infrastructure, addressing sexual abuse in institutions of learning, and transforming negative gender norms that lead to early marriage and unequal work burdens on girls.¹² Countries need to offer education and training that is relevant and geared towards increasing girls' and women's opportunities in well-paying jobs, enterprises and trade.

10. Improve the gender responsiveness of the physical infrastructure in schools and institutions of learning, including the installation of secure girls-only water and sanitation facilities.

Participation in politics, decision making and power

11. While the increased numbers of women in decision-making positions at different levels must be celebrated, it is important to understand that underlying patriarchal norms, attitudes and structures permeate society at all levels.

12. Take deliberate action to increase the participation of young women and women with disabilities through creating and sustaining platforms that are safe, accessible, relevant, inclusive and responsive to their participation by recognizing and addressing the factors that inhibit their full and meaningful participation.

13. Strengthen civic and voter education initiatives, including the partnerships between national electoral bodies, national human rights commissions and women's advocacy organizations, to expand their reach and GEWE content.

14. Promote and support initiatives for gender equality in the formal and informal sectors, including through career growth.

Quality health care and sexual and reproductive health and rights

15. Develop and implement effective strategies for community-based health education, support for antenatal care, and access to the nearest health centre in order to reduce maternal mortality.

16. Consistently promote the adoption of proven strategies and methods for the prevention of new HIV infections, including condom use, and strengthen systems that ensure women's access to antiretroviral therapy.

17. Strengthen responses to the health needs and rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons, including those with disabilities, older women, sex workers, refugee women and girls, and internally displaced women and girls.

18. Provide free or affordable family planning and sexual and reproductive health services, ensuring they reach all women, especially the poor and young, in order to reduce unmet need for contraception and to lower the incidence of unintended pregnancies.

Ending violence against women

19. Violence against women and girls is intrinsically linked to unequal gendered power relations and is perpetuated by social, cultural and religious structures, including the family. While the extensive legal frameworks enacted in the region are commendable and are an important response towards the elimination of VAW, a more holistic and multi-pronged approach is necessary.

20. Invest in social mobilization and implement public awareness campaigns targeting men, boys, women and girls as well as religious, traditional and community leaders to eliminate violence against women and girls and end trafficking.

21. Include in school curricula subject areas and teaching materials that reinforce the need for an equal society, equal responsibilities and equal rights, and equip pupils and students with the life skills to recognize, avoid and prevent VAW or seek assistance if it occurs.

22. Enact and strengthen the enforcement of appropriate laws that criminalize all forms of violence against women and girls, provide for efficient victim-friendly trials of the perpetrators, and provide adequate remedies to the victims.



Photo: Grassroots Soccer/Karen Schermbrucker

Endnotes

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7. Information extracted from Inter-Parliamentary Union data, <https://data.ipu.org/speakers>, accessed on 11 May 2020.
8. Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Botswana, Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Eritrea and South Africa.
9. As of 16 October 2019, the protocol had been ratified by all ESAR countries except Botswana, Burundi, Eritrea, Madagascar and Somalia. See <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-sl-PROTOCOL%20TO%20THE%20AFRICAN%20CHARTER%20ON%20HUMAN%20AND%20PEOPLE%27S%20RIGHTS%20ON%20THE%20RIGHTS%20OF%20WOMEN%20IN%20AFRICA.pdf>, accessed on 1 May 2020.
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11. Outcome document: *Unleashing the Potential of Youth in Africa through Prioritizing Investment within the Post-2015 Agenda on Sustainable Development*, Africa Youth Conference to mark the 25th anniversary of the BPfA.
12. *Mozambique Beijing+25 Report*, p. 10.



Photo: UN Women/Mariam Kouyate and Cody Harder



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ABOUT UN WOMEN

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. The main roles of UN Women are:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards, and norms
- To help Member States to implement these standards
- To lead and coordinate the UN system's work on gender equality as well as promote accountability