

WORKING PAPER

YOUNG WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS & DECISION-MAKING IN AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES: A WORKING PAPER



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FOREWORD

Africa is a continent of young people with 75 percent of the population below the age of 35, and nearly 50 per cent under the age of 19. However, young people are massively underrepresented in decision makings that concern their countries and fate. This underrepresentation is even more apparent when it comes to young women, who make up around 50 percent of the 75 percent below the age of 35.

The past decade has seen an upsurge in the visibility of women's involvement in leadership and decision-making in Africa. This could be attributed to advocacy efforts and laws that call for inclusion of women. Nevertheless, we still have a long way in achieving gender parity in Ministerial cabinets and at local institutions and community affairs.

The issue of young women's participation in decision making is a question of human rights. Human Rights norms assure women their right to equally participate in all aspects of political, social, and economic life. This is addressed in different regional and international human rights frameworks such as The African Protocol on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) which embodies women's right to participation in political and decision-making processes, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which lays out States' obligations to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, ensure women's rights to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof. The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is the most progressive in articulating women's rights to participate in political life, as it puts it not only as a demand for simple justice or democracy but also a necessary condition for development and the advancement of the whole of society.

Despite the international community's recognition of women's right to equal participation, the goal of equality is still eluding. And the major obstacle for achieving equality is the de facto discrimination against women that prevails in our societies. Amongst the discriminatory attitudes are, patriarchal and conservative political attitudes that display politics as exclusively as a men's activity and traditional social norms that keep young girls from going to school, leaving household responsibilities solely for women and girls. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis has created more obstacles on the path to gender equality threatening to reverse the gains made across social, economic and political spheres.

The Human Rights frameworks call for the removal of legal barriers. They demand states to work on eliminating prejudices and customary practices which are premised on inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Five years before we reach the finish line for the SDGs in 2030, we call for accelerated efforts to repeal all discriminatory laws and practices and enact new ones which curb social norms that discriminate against women at all levels.

A policy paper like this is essential in highlighting the evidence on the state of young women's participation in leadership, in sharing best practices and bringing gaps in policies and implementation to the attention of stakeholders. This paper has articulated actionable recommendations to Member States, Regional Economic Communities and partners. It is our hope that the recommendations will be considered by all stakeholders for young women to become active agents of positive change in Africa.

As we mark the 25th Anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 2020, we renew our commitment to lobby for the engagement of young women at all levels of the political process, hence, towards realizing change that is systemic and lasting. Through the #GenerationEquality Forum and its multi-stakeholder coalitions, UN Women will strive to support Member States to place women and girls at the center of Africa's development, to meet the AU's target of gender parity and realization of Agenda 2063.

ACRONYMS

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AGA	African Governance Architecture
AGA-YES	African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy 2016-2020
AGP	African Governance Platform
APAYE	African Plan for Action for Youth Empowerment (2019-2023)
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUC-DPA	African Union Commission Department of Political Affairs
AU-YVC	AU Youth Volunteer Corps
AWLN	Africa Women Leadership Network
AYC	African Youth Charter
AYWL	African Young Women Leaders
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDO	AU Commission's Civil Society and Diaspora Directorate
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DD ROADMAP	AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth (2016)
EOMs	Electoral Observation Missions
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FEMWISE AFRICA	Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
H.E.	Her Excellency
HLD-DHRG	High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
HRST	Human Resources, Science & Technology Department
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Agency for Development
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MPs	Members of Parliament
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NWC	National Women's Councils
NYC	National Youth Councils
REC	Regional Economic Community
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWAPO	Namibia South West Africa People's Organisation
TSMs	Temporary Special Measures
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

VAWP	Violence against women in politics
WGDD	Women, Gender and Development Directorate
WGPP	Women's Governance and Political Participation
YWPP	Young Women's Political Participation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Union estimates that almost 75% of Africa's population is under the age of 35 years, and 35% are between the ages of 15 and 35.¹ In June 2019, a Mo Ibrahim Foundation report found that almost 60% of the population of Africa is under the age of 25;² approximately 50% of these young people are young women.³ By 2030, it is estimated that the share of Africa's youth in the world will increase to 42%.⁴ Note in this regard that the definition of youth varies depending on the country, organisation and socio-cultural contexts.⁵ The AU defines youth as people aged between 18-35 years, while the UN defines them as people between 15-24 years of age. National youth policies also define youth differently.⁶ For consistency with AU policy, in this

Paper, the term “young women” refers to women aged between 18 and 35 years.

Recognising the burgeoning youth population that dominates Africa's demographics, it is clear that the continent cannot achieve the development objectives that it has set for itself without the active participation and leadership of its young people, including young women. Young women are a critical part of the continent's labour force; they are students, teachers, professionals, industrial workers, labourers – and an untapped resource of future leaders. In addition, recent research shows that African youth have been a driving force in mobilising and demanding political change.⁷ Despite this, young women still generally remain under-represented in political institutions, policy processes and decision-making that determine the future path of Africa's development – hampered by intersecting patterns of discrimination and exclusion that cut across their sex and age.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic on the continent, it is even more important that young women's voices are heard as governments continue to design and implement their economic and social responses to the pandemic. However, research has already begun to show that women, including young women, are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Domestic violence has been on the increase, the informal and casual labour sectors where African women predominantly work have suffered the most from economic contractions and particularly vulnerable groups (such as women with disabilities, refugees, rural women and women vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour) are even more at risk. In this context, it is even more important that women are able to access and contribute to decision-making that affect their lives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has “highlighted gaps as women's voice and needs are inadequately reflected in the response. There is a risk of being further relegated to the background with no voice...National mechanisms like

- 1 'African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2019-23)' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union Commission, March 2020), p.6, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38229-doc-apayee_final_eng_ok.pdf; 'Youth Empowerment', Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, accessed 2 October 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml>.
- 2 'Africa's First Challenge: The Youth Bulge Stuck in "Waithood"', *Mo Ibrahim Foundation* (blog), 10 July 2019, <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2019/africas-first-challenge-youth-bulge-stuck-waithood/>.
- 3 The UN World Population Prospects database states that in 2015 there were 99.7 men for every 100 women in Africa, and estimates that in 2020 there will be 100 men for every one hundred women in Africa: UN-DESA, 'World Population Prospects (2019 Revision) - Data Query', Population Division - United Nations, accessed 3 October 2019, <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>; 'The Worlds Women 2015: Chapter 1' (New York, NY: United Nations Statistics Division, 2015), https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter1_t.pdf.
- 4 'Youth Empowerment'.
- 5 Definitions of youth can be affected by a range of indicators including age, marital status, financial independence, and responsibility. For example, in many African cultures, young women lose their youth status once they marry or have children. In countries where early marriage is common this can be as young as 12-13 years.
- 6 For example, the Kenya Youth Policy (2006) defined youth as people between 18-30 years, the Senegal Plan of Action on Youth (2012-2017) defined youth as people between 15-35, while in South Africa the National Youth Policy (2015-2020) defines youth as between 14-35.

- 7 'Youth Participation in Elections in Africa: An Eight-Country Study' (Mandela Institute for Development Studies, 2017), p.82, https://minds-africa.org/Downloads/MINDS_202016_20Youth_20Program_20Research_20Publication.pdf.

COVID-19 Task Forces and Committees rarely consider gender parity or women's effective inclusion".⁸

For many decades now, the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and AU Member States have made numerous commitments to advance gender equality, women and youth empowerment. While the AU Commission and its organs have been proactive in promoting women and youth participation within their own structures, a quick snapshot of the current situation regarding young women's political participation (YWPP) in Africa suggests that more still needs to be done to translate these commitments within Member States.

Effective participation in politics and decision-making is a fundamental human right guaranteed under global, continental and national legal instruments. It is an important avenue for young women to contribute to and oversee the development of their respective communities, countries and the continent. Conversely, the absence of young women in decision-making positions has implications for them and for society. It deprives young women (half of the population) of their political rights, and the opportunity to ensure that issues of priority concern to them are part of national policy agendas, programmes and resource allocations.

Data suggests that the continent is still some way from gender parity in political life and decision-making. In fact, recent research shows that the opportunity for young women to be more active in politics and decision-making at the national and sub-national levels is growing. More African countries are engaging in regular elections, utilising political affirmative action laws, adopting multi-party political institutions and systems, and implementing government policies and structures aimed at improving gender equality. These institutional entry-points offer a key opportunity for young women interested in engaging more actively in politics. At the same time, young women and the organisations and networks they lead could benefit from targeted, specific capacity development support, designed to develop young women's leadership skills, self-confidence and networks, with a view to strengthening their capacities so that they have the skills to

succeed if and when they choose to engage in politics. There is also an emerging trend across the region of more young women-led civil society organisations dedicated to mobilising and supporting young women in politics which can be harnessed and strengthened, including through support for national and regional young women's networks.

This paper has collected together good practice and lessons learned from around the region and the world, with a view to enabling the AU and its organs, as well as its Member States, to identify possible entry points and strategies for ramping up efforts to realise the AU's GEWE commitments, and the many national gender equality and youth policies and strategies across the continent. To assist the AU, RECs, Member States and partners to address the complex challenge of empowering young women across the continent to more effectively engage in political life, this paper assessed the trends, opportunities and challenges in young women's participation in politics, and made recommendations for the consideration of policy makers at the continental, regional and national levels.

This paper proposes more than fifty recommendations for consideration by the AU, RECs, Member States and partners. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the "AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19" which provide specific guidance to AU Member States on ensuring that the needs of women, including young women and girls, are meaningfully addressed as Governments "build back better" in the COVID-19 aftermath.⁹ The Guidelines specifically recognise that "COVID-19 responses cannot be carried out in isolation from recognizing women as agents of change, creators and innovators and to fully engage them as active citizens. Without such efforts the goals of Agenda 2063 of achieving gender equality may never be realized".¹⁰ COVID-19 has had many negative effects, but it has also demonstrated the fundamental changes that governments can usher to ensure that women are included in critical political and technical decision-making forums in relation to COVID-19. Demonstrating the value of women's leadership now is an opportunity for women

8 'Concept Note - High-Level Virtual Forum On "Women In Governance And Political Participation (WGPP)" (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, AWLN, UNDP), p.5, accessed 12 December 2020, https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/38737-cn-concept_note_high_level_forum_on_the_launch_of_the_initiative_wgpp.pdf.

9 'AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, April 2020), https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38617-doc-gewe_and_covid_19_eng.pdf.

10 'AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19', p.6.

to role model how effective they can be when given a seat at the table.

Below are a selection of the most critical recommendations for action that can be considered as countries move forward in the aftermath of COVID-19 and seek to “build back better”:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- AU Member States to proactively implement COVID-19 responses that are gender sensitive and specifically address the economic, social and political impacts of the pandemic.
- In line with the “AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19”, AU Member States to “ensure the effective, equal and full participation of women, including grassroots women in all mechanisms established to prevent, contain and end the virus. These include emergency protocols and all other national decision-making structures like National COVID-19 Task Forces and Committees as well as in response and recovery decision-making”.¹¹
- AU Member States are encouraged to ratify key treaties on gender equality and democracy, in particular the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance and the African Youth Charter the Maputo Protocol, and to submit comprehensive reports on time. Such reports should include data disaggregated by sex and age, and specific analysis regarding young women’s political participation and empowerment.
- AU Member States are encouraged to ensure the implementation of the AU GEWE Strategy, in particular in relation to Pillar 4: Leadership, Voice and Visibility which calls for action both to directly empower young women and to support broader social norm change across the continent
- Implementation of the new African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2019-23) should (i) provide opportunities for the participation and contribution of young women across Africa in all elements of programming and specifically as part of all seven flagship programmes and (ii) include specific activities and indicators related to young women’s empowerment under Pillar 3 Flagship on Leadership Programme, including in relation to political participation
- National, regional and global government and non-government stakeholders are encouraged to support and implement the African Union Action Plan on Women’s Governance and Political Participation, once it is finalised, with specific priorities identified to improve young women’s political participation.
- AU and stakeholders are encouraged to support AU Member States to carry out law reform to introduce political affirmative action quotas based on age and sex, drawing on good practice already existing in the region.
- Key political institutions, including legislatures, political parties, electoral management bodies and local government bodies are encouraged to engage and build the capacities of young women more proactively.
- AU Member States are encouraged to strengthen women’s participation throughout the electoral cycle, including by advancing law reform and other actions to address violence against women in politics (VAWP)
- AU, Regional Economic Communities and development partners are encouraged to develop and implement specific policies and actions plans which prioritise young women’s engagement in politics, policy processes and decision-making at global, continental and national levels.
- Development partners are encouraged to support the development and implementation regional and national programmes that directly build the leadership, advocacy and engagement capacities of young women and their organisations, drawing on existing good practice and resources from across Africa.
- AU, RECs, Member States and development partners are encouraged to strengthen their collaboration in order to more systematically collect and publish regional and continental data on young women’s participation in politics and decision-making.

11 ‘AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19’, p.16.

1. INTRODUCTION

The African Union and its Member States have committed to the promotion of gender equality and the participation of young women in democratic processes and institutions over many decades and through many agreements. The African Union Constitutive Act,¹² the *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*¹³ (ACDEG) and the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*¹⁴ (Maputo Protocol) all make explicit commitments to gender equality. The *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation*¹⁵ (adopted in 1990 but not officially ratified by AU Leaders) also called on AU Member States to proactively support popular participation, with special references made both to engaging youth and women.

At its inaugural meeting in 2002, the Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union went further and adopted the Gender Parity Principle, which requires 50/50 gender balance in all AU structures, operational policies and practices. The Gender Parity Principle has been replicated in commitments made by Africa's regional economic communities (RECs); for example, Member States of both the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) have endorsed targets of 50 women in decision-making across executives, legislatures and judiciaries.

The 2006 *African Youth Charter* also committed AU Member States to proactively supporting the political empowerment of young women and men at all levels.

The definition of “youth” varies depending on the country, organisation and socio-cultural contexts.¹⁶ The AU defines youth as people aged between 18-35 years, while the UN defines them as people between 15-24 years of age. National youth policies also define youth differently.¹⁷ For consistency with AU policy, in this Paper, the term “young women” refers to women aged between 18 and 35 years.

In 2013, when African Leaders celebrated the 50th anniversary of the AU,¹⁸ they re-dedicated themselves to previous agreements and statements prioritising democratic governance and committed to fostering the participation of men, women and young people through democratic elections.¹⁹ These commitments were reaffirmed in the AU's *Agenda 2063: The African We Want*, a fifty-year framework for social and economic development to guide the actions of the AU, RECs and member states, which specifically included commitments to promoting gender equality and youth participation.

Most recently, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 7 May 2020 women Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Africa from eight countries²⁰ met online to discuss how to enhance women's leadership in COVID-19 responses. The Statement issued at the conclusion of the meeting set out a number of specific recommendations on ensuring a gender sensitive COVID-19 response and:

Underscore[d] that the deficits in women leadership that we are witnessing in the response to

12 'Constitutive Act of the African Union' (Organisation of African Unity, 11 July 2000), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7758-treaty-0021_-_constitutive_act_of_the_african_union_e.pdf.

13 'African Charter on Democracy and Electoral Governance' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, 2007), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36384-treaty-0034_-_african_charter_on_democracy_elections_and_governance_e.pdf.

14 'Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa' (Maputo, Mozambique: African Union, 2003), https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/protocol_rights_women_africa_2003.pdf.

15 'African Charter For Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha 1990)' (International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, 12–16 February), <https://oldsite.issafrica.org/uploads/POPULARPPARTCHARTER.PDF>.

16 Definitions of youth can be affected by a range of indicators including age, marital status, financial independence, and responsibility. For example, in many African cultures, young women lose their youth status once they marry or have children. In countries where early marriage is common this can be as young as 12-13 years.

17 For example, the Kenya Youth Policy (2006) defined youth as people between 18-30 years, the Senegal Plan of Action on Youth (2012-2017) defined youth as people between 15-35, while in South Africa the National Youth Policy (2015-2020) defines youth as between 14-35.

18 Formerly the Organisations for African Unity (OAU), which was founded in 1963. The OAU was disbanded in 2002 and replaced by the African Union.

19 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/29149-wd-50_declaration_en.pdf

20 Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tomé et Príncipe, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sudan.

*COVID-19 and the rise of women at the frontlines of COVID-19, demand a profound paradigm shift. Business cannot and should not continue as usual...[and] request[ed] that gender perspectives be mainstreamed into all AU strategies and that women leadership is strengthened in all mechanisms.*²¹

On 12 May 2020, African Union Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs also convened an online meeting on the theme of "COVID-19 Responses and Recovery – A Gendered Framework" which agreed a set of conclusions to guide the way forward. Ministers specifically recommended that:

*Executive and legislative institutions respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with gender sensitivity by ensuring the participation and inclusion of women, including women with disabilities and young women, in decision-making, adopting gender mainstreaming procedures and policies and access to resources.*²²

BOX 1

African Union Agenda 2063: Key commitments regarding young women's political participation

ASPIRATION 6: AN AFRICA WHOSE DEVELOPMENT IS PEOPLE-DRIVEN, RELYING ON THE POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY ITS WOMEN AND YOUTH, AND CARING FOR CHILDREN...

52. Africa of 2063 will have full gender parity, with women occupying at least 50 of elected public offices at all levels and half of managerial positions in the public and the private sectors. The economic and political glass ceiling that restricted women's progress will have been shattered.

54. The youth of Africa shall be socially, economically and politically empowered through the full implementation of the African Youth Charter.

55. Africa will be a continent where the talent of the child and the youth will be fully developed, re-warded and protected for the benefit of society.

In June 2019, a Mo Ibrahim Foundation report found that almost 60 of the population of Africa today is under the age of 25.²³ Approximately 50 of these young people are young women.²⁴ An analysis of youth empowerment published by the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in 2015 provided a stark analysis of the importance of young people to Africa's future:

*According to the United Nations, 226 million youth aged 15-24 lived in Africa in 2015 representing nearly 20 of Africa's population, making up one fifth of the world's youth population. If one includes all people aged below 35, this number increases to a staggering three quarters of Africa's population. Moreover, the share of Africa's youth in the world is forecasted to increase to 42 by 2030 and is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century, more than doubling from current levels by 2055.*²⁵

Recognising the burgeoning youth population that dominates Africa's demographics, Africa clearly cannot achieve the objectives it has set for itself without the active participation and leadership of its youth, including young women. Effective participation in politics and decision-making is a fundamental human right guaranteed under global, continental and national legal instruments. It is also an important avenue to enable young women to contribute to the development of their respective communities, countries and the continent. Conversely, the absence of young women in decision-making positions has implications for them and society. It deprives young women (half of the population) of their political rights and the opportunity to ensure that issues of priority concern to them are part of national policy agendas, programmes and resource allocation.

Women, including young women, have enormous potential to drive and contribute to Africa's governance, but they are not being effectively engaged in the continent's governance and development efforts. As

21 'Communique of Virtual Meeting of Africa Women Ministers for Foreign Affairs on COVID-19' (Online: African Union, 7 May 2020), <https://www.mfa.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COMMUNIQUE-OF-VIRTUAL-MEETING-OF-AFRICA-WOMEN-MINISTERS-FOR-FOREIGN-AFFAIRS-ON-COVID-19.pdf>.

22 'Ministerial Declaration On Gender Sensitive COVID-19 Responses And Recovery Plans' (Online: African Union, 12

May 2020).

23 'Africa's First Challenge'.

24 The UN World Population Prospects database states that in 2015 there were 99.7 men for every 100 women in Africa, and estimates that in 2020 there will be 100 men for every one hundred women in Africa: UN-DESA, 'World Population Prospects (2019 Revision) - Data Query'; 'The Worlds Women 2015: Chapter 1'.

25 'Youth Empowerment'.

the 2016 African Human Development Report showed, gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa on average \$US95 billion a year, peaking at \$US105 billion in 2014 – or six percent of the region's GDP – jeopardizing the continent's efforts for inclusive human development and economic growth.²⁶ Conversely, ensuring that young women are proactively engaged from an early age means that Africa's next generation will be better empowered to harness the energy of a cohort of the population which to date, has remained under-represented in education, employment and politics.

It is critical that Africa harnesses the potential offered by its growing youth population. While much work is still to be done to ensure women are equally represented in political life, nonetheless, the trend across the region shows an increase in women's engagement. If this continues, the young women of today will very clearly be the future leaders of the region; educating and empowering them with the tools to be effective leaders and to meaningfully engage in politics and decision-making becomes even more critical in this context.

Drawing together the raft of AU commitments and activities already underway across the continent which provide a strong foundation for efforts to support young women's participation in politics and decision-making, this Working Paper aims to inform policy-makers, non-government stakeholders and partners across Africa to identify gaps, strategic priorities and entry-points for promoting young women's political participation, both within the AU itself and Member States. To this end, Section 2 provides a summary of the current state of young women's political participation across Africa, while Section 3 briefly outlines the specific challenges that young women face across Africa when seeking to engage in political and public life. Sections 4 to 6 offer specific policy guidance on the key entry-points that are available at global, regional and national levels to strengthen women's opportunities and capacities for engaging in politics and decision-making. Section 7 draws the conclusion and key messages for consideration by AU, Member States, policy-makers, and civil society organisations and development partners.

The analysis in this Working Paper covers the African continent. However, much of the data that exists is not collated according to membership of the AU. In particular, most data in relation to political and parliamentary institutions is collected and aggregated according to UN regional groupings, which do not neatly cover all AU sub-regions. Where possible, the research has attempted to use those data sources to aggregate the original data sources to compile data that covers all countries in the AU.²⁷ Where this has not been possible, sub-regional data has been referenced.

26 'Gender Gap Costs Sub-Saharan Africa \$US95 Billion a Year: New UNDP Report', UNDP, accessed 3 December 2019, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/08/28/les-disparit-s-entre-les-genres-co-tent-l-afrique-subsaharienne-95-milliards-de-par-an.html>.

27 However, none of the data sources used collected data for the Western Sahara.

2. YOUNG WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA: THE DATA

A 2019 AU publication on youth data found that “Even though youth make up more than 60 percent the continent’s population, the median age of African political leaders is three times the median age of the African population”.²⁸ Despite the huge proportion of Africa’s population that is comprised of young men and women, youth political participation across Africa is generally low, and young women’s participation is even lower.²⁹

2.1 Existing data

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) collects data from legislatures across the world to enable comparisons, via a new parliamentary information database.³⁰ The latest IPU data shows that:

- Women serve as heads of state or heads of government in only 22 countries around the world;³¹ of these women, there is **one female AU head of state, from Ethiopia**. Hon. Sahle-Work Zewde was appointed in November 2018 as the first female President of Ethiopia (though this post is ceremonial).³² Hon Saara Kuugongelwa is the Prime Minister of Namibia, and a female Vice President, Hon. Samia Suluhu, in Tanzania. In the recent past, Her Excellency (H.E.) Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was President of Liberia from 2006 to 2018 (and in fact, was the

first elected female Head of State in Africa), H.E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim was President of Mauritius from 2014 to 2018, Hon. Aminata Toure was Prime Minister of Senegal from 2013 to 2014, H.E. Joyce Banda was President of Malawi from 2012 to 2014 and H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza was Interim President of the Central African Republic from 2014 to 2016. In 2012, Hon Dlamini-Zuma was elected as a Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the first woman to be elected to this role;

- As at January 2020, **the average percentage of women ministers across Africa is 21.45%**.³³ Interestingly, in April 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic started affecting countries across the continent, it was reported that Africa had 13 female Ministers of health, of which nine health ministers were actually qualified medical doctors.³⁴ Women’s representation varies considerably across the region. In October 2018, Ethiopia made history by inaugurating its first cabinet to have a 50/50 gender balance of ministers,³⁵ (though at the time of writing, Ethiopia has 47.6 women Ministers). Rwanda made the same commitment within weeks³⁶ and now has 53.6 women Ministers. In June 2019, South Africa achieved gender parity in its Cabinet,³⁷ and in July 2019, Guinea Bissau also inaugurated its first gender balanced Cabinet.³⁸ The Seychelles is close to

28 ‘Policy Brief: Africa’s Future - Youth and the Data Defining Their Lives’ (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, September 2019), p.9, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/37828-doc-soayr_policy_brief_ok.pdf.

29 ‘Policy Brief: Africa’s Future - Youth and the Data Defining Their Lives’.

30 ‘IPU Comparative Data - Percentage of MPs 30 Years of Age or Younger’, New Parline: the IPU’s Open Data Platform (beta), accessed 1 October 2019, https://data.ipu.org/compare?field=chamber_3A_3Atotal_younger_30_percentage®ion=sub_saharan_africa&structure=any_lower_chamber.

31 ‘Women in Politics Map: 2020’ (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, February 2020), <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020>.

32 ‘Sahle-Work Zewde Becomes Ethiopia’s First Female President’, *BBC News*, 25 October 2018, Online edition, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45976620>.

33 ‘Women in Politics Map: 2020’.

34 Angola, Burkina Faso Congo Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda: Margaret Njugunah, ‘Meet the 13 Female Health Ministers in Africa Leading the Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic’, *Capital Business* (blog), 11 April 2020, <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/business/2020/04/meet-the-13-female-health-ministers-in-africa-leading-the-fight-against-covid-19-pandemic/>.

35 “Ethiopia’s Abiy gives half of ministerial posts to women”, *BBC News*, 16 October 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45881004>.

36 Ignatius Ssuuna (2018) “Rwanda unveils gender-balanced cabinet with 50 percent women”, *The Independent*, 19 October, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/rwanda-cabinet-women-gender-balance-government-africa-ethiopia-a8592461.html>

37 ‘South Africa’s Cabinet Is Now 50 Women for the First Time Ever’, *World Economic Forum*, accessed 3 December 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/south-africa-s-cabinet-is-now-50-women-for-the-first-time-ever/>.

38 AfricaNews, ‘Guinea-Bissau Names Gender-Par Cabinet after Ethiopia, South Africa’, *Africanews*, 5 July 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/07/05/guinea-bissau-names-gender-par-cabinet-after-ethiopia-south-africa/>.

parity, with 45.5 women ministers. Four countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Sudan) have mandatory quotas for executive branch positions.³⁹ A number of African countries are also notable for appointing young female Ministers. In October 2017, Benin made history by appointing 35-year-old Hon Aurélie Adam Soulé Zoumarou as Minister of the Digital Economy and Communications. In 2018, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mali followed by appointing three of the youngest (female) Ministers on the continent: Zimbabwe appointed 34-year-old Hon Kirsty Coventry as Minister for Sport; Botswana appointed 30-year-old Hon Bogolo Joy Kenewendo as Minister for Investment, Trade and Industry; and Mali appointed 35-year-old Hon Kamissa Camara as the former Foreign Minister and currently the Minister of Digital Economy and Planning.⁴⁰

- **The average percentage of women in parliament across Africa is 22.5%.**⁴¹ Within Africa, women's representation in legislatures varies considerably. Twelve African legislatures have 30 or more women MPs in their lower house;⁴² Rwanda still has the highest percentage of women MPs in the world. At the other end of the scale, five African legislatures have 10 or less women MPs in their lower house.⁴³
- 24 countries in Africa provided data on the ages of their MPs.⁴⁴ Of these, **only 4 of 24 African legislatures had more than 5% of their MPs under 30 years old** (The Gambia at 10.43, Djibouti at

9.23, Tunisia at 6.91 and Ethiopia at 6.1). Twelve countries reported that they had less than 5 MPs under 30 years old and 8 countries reported zero MPs under 30 years old.

- 40 countries in Africa provided data on the age and sex of their youngest MP.⁴⁵ Of these, **only 15 of 40 AU Member States had at least one MP 25 years or younger.** Interestingly, one-third of the youngest members in these legislatures were women.
- 50 countries in Africa provided data on their eligibility requirements for running for office.⁴⁶ Of these, **14 of 50 AU Member States only allow people over 25 years of age to stand in elections** for the national legislature.

Attention across Africa has tended to focus on women's inclusion in formal political spaces at the national level. This is expected to change however, as one of the indicators in relation to SDG Target 5.5 on women's political participation now specifically focuses on women's engagement in local government. Currently available statistics show that **across Africa, 27 countries have introduced quotas for women at local levels; 12 countries have legislated political party quotas⁴⁷ and 15 countries have reserved seats.⁴⁸ Another eight Member States have voluntary political party quotas at sub-national level.⁴⁹** Existing estimates show that the representation of women in local government in Africa range from 5 to as high as 48;⁵⁰ five countries

africanews.com/2019/07/05/guinea-bissau-names-gender-par-cabinet-after-ethiopia-south-africa/.

- 39 International IDEA, Gender Quotas Database, 3 August 2018. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>
- 40 <http://www.africanews.com/2018/09/11/africa-s-young-female-ministers-mali-follows-botswana-zimbabwe/>
- 41 This statistic is based on the 2020 IPU data for the percentage of women in the lower houses of legislatures across the world. It includes data for 54 of 55 African Union countries. No data is available for the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara): 'Women in Politics Map: 2020'.
- 42 Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Burundi, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Angola: 'Women in Politics Map: 2020'.
- 43 Eswatini, The Gambia, Central African Republic, Benin, Nigeria: 'Women in Politics 2019 Map' (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019), <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/women-in-politics-2019-map-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3303>.
- 44 'IPU Comparative Data - Percentage of MPs 30 Years of Age or Younger', accessed 2 December 2020.

45 'IPU Comparative Data - Age of Youngest MP', New Parline: the IPU's Open Data Platform (beta), accessed 2 December 2020.

46 'IPU Comparative Data - Minimum Age of Eligibility', New Parline: the IPU's Open Data Platform (beta), accessed 2 December 2020, https://data.ipu.org/compare?field=chamber_3A_3Afield_min_age_member_parl®ion=sub_saharan_africa&structure=any_lower_chamber#bar.

47 Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Namibia, Republic of The Congo (Brazzaville), Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Zimbabwe: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union', International IDEA, accessed 4 October 2019, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>.

48 Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

49 Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

50 'SDG Indicators', United Nations Global SDGs database, accessed 25 November 2019, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

TABLE 1**Women's progress in AU structures (2013-2016)**

	Women 2013	Women 2016	Variance (2016-2013)
African Union Commission and Organs	50	50	0
Headquarters (D1)	29	42	+13
Liaison Officers (D1)	8	25	+17
Representational Offices	15	25	+10
Professional Staff (P1-P5)	26	32	+8
General Services (GSA-GSB)	36	37	+1

Source: AU Strategy for Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment (2018-28), p.45.

already have more than 40 women elected at local level.⁵¹ This suggests that there is already a substantial and growing group of women across Africa who are already engaged in critical decision-making processes at local level. This data also suggests that there may be significant opportunities for young women to be more engaged at this level of decision-making.

Within the AU and its organs, the data is more encouraging. Work is well underway to accelerate progress for the implementation of the Gender Parity Principle committed to by AU Member States. The *AU Strategy for Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment (2018-28)* indicates that the AU Commission achieved gender parity at senior level positions in 2013 and has maintained this balance since then. At lower levels, there is still some work to be done, though a rolling 3-year survey suggests that progress has been on an upward trend. When aggregated, a 2018 report indicated that African Union female staff represents 35% of the 1,700 officials across of the organisation.⁵²

2.2 Data gaps

While the IPU usefully collects some data relating to women's political participation, efforts to monitor the SDGs and implementation of regional gender equality

commitments have demonstrated that lack of disaggregated data remains a serious gap across most AU Member States. Data is often poorly collected, and even where it is, it is often not disaggregated for sex or age. Apart from the statistics collected by the IPU, there have been only limited efforts to disaggregate data by sex and age in relation to political institutions and processes. In Africa, and globally, there has generally tended to be only limited data collected regarding political actors at all. For example, it is often difficult to access data and/or disaggregated data on the candidates in elections (at national and sub-national levels), the details of successful candidates, the number of registered voters, the number of actual voters and the number of staff in the Electoral Management Body (EMB). Collecting disaggregated national and sub-national data on women's participation in politics and decision-making will enable showcasing of success stories to increase the cohort of young women participating in politics, and will help with setting and monitoring a baseline against which work to strengthen young women's political participation can be assessed.

At the regional level, since 2015, the AU Commission, with technical support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), has been producing the *African Gender Scorecard*, which aims to provide a simple snapshot of progress in seven areas, including women's political participation.⁵³ The

51 Senegal (48%), Tunisia (48%), Uganda (46%), Namibia (45%), South Africa (41%): 'SDG Indicators'.

52 '« Beaucoup de Dirigeants Africains n'adhèrent Pas Au Principe de l'égalité Entre Les Sexes », *Le Monde.Fr*, 26 June 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/06/26/beaucoup-de-dirigeants-africains-n-adherent-pas-au-principe-de-l-egalite-entre-les-sexes_5321608_3212.html.

53 '2016 African Gender Scorecard' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, 2017), https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36968-doc-2016_auc_african_gender_scorecard_english.pdf; '2015 African Gender Scorecard' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, 2015), <https://au.int/sites/>

African Gender Scorecard currently draws mainly on IPU data on women in African parliaments and executives, without disaggregation by age, and tracks only the number of women in national parliaments and ministerial positions. The Scorecard was launched in 2015, the year African Union declared as the “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. It is informed by UNECA’s pioneering index, the African Gender and Development Index, which provides a more in-depth measure of gaps in the status of women and men in Africa and assesses progress made by governments in implementing gender policies.

Data which concretely demonstrates the absence of young women in political life, for example, as members and leaders of political parties or EMBs, could be used to draw more attention and resources towards addressing such shortcomings. To address data gaps,

following each parliamentary election, EMBs and/or legislatures should publish (online) data (including sex and age) of all candidates and those who were successful; likewise, following local government elections and presidential elections. Reports produced by AU or REC electoral observation groups and/or by EMBs and national CSOs, before during and after elections could also be better used as an opportunity to systematically collect data on women, including young women, as voters (both in terms of registration and turnout), candidates, political party officials and/or electoral officials. Such reports can also be used to contribute to the enhanced visibility of young women, as voters, candidates and/or as civic educators, which will give them affirmation and an enhanced profile – both of which are necessary for an active engagement in politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Following national presidential, parliamentary and local government elections, EMBs and/or relevant bodies are encouraged to collect, compile and publish information on candidates and winners, disaggregated by sex and age;
- Electoral observation missions (whether coordinated by the AU, RECs, UN or development partners) are encouraged to (i) work with national EMBs to collect and publish disaggregated electoral data, including disaggregating data for sex and age and (ii) include young women in their mission teams to ensure the inclusion of their insights inform the analysis and final reports produced by these missions;
- Political governance and/or electoral assistance programs should include support for collection and publication of disaggregated statistics on YWPP;
- Regional statistics initiatives, including the African Gender Scorecard, should include data disaggregated by age, to enable more targeted analysis of the specific issues facing young women.

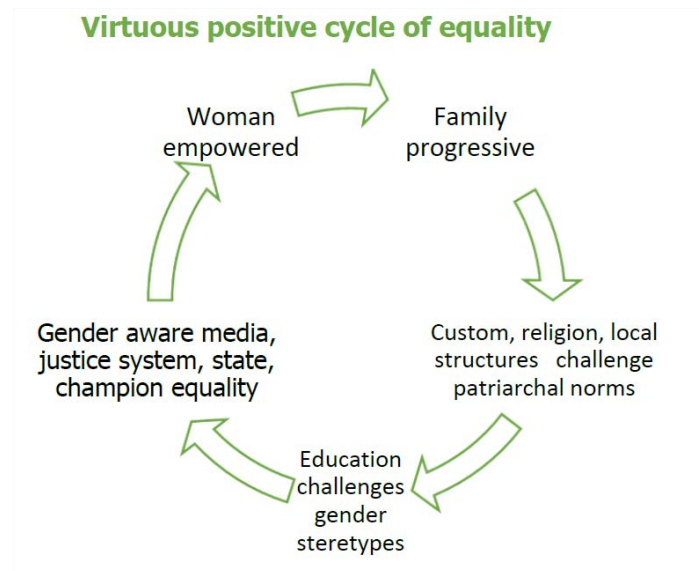
default/files/documents/31260-doc-2015_auc_african_gender_scorecard_en.pdf.

3. YOUNG WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES

Despite the range of governance challenges that have prevailed in Africa, in recent decades many AU Member States have transitioned from conflict and autocracy towards more multi-party democratic systems, manifested through regular elections. In many countries, peaceful democratic transitions have taken considerable time, impacting on the ability of women to actively participate in the political life of their country as they have often been most at risk in conflict-affected, unsettled political contexts.⁵⁴

Conflicts that prevailed in many parts of Africa have also left a mark, with continuing high rates of violence against women acting as a critical barrier to young women's ability to actively participate in politics. Violence against women in political life is "any act of, or threat of, gender-based violence, resulting in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, that prevents them from exercising and realizing their political rights, whether in public or private spaces, including the right to vote and hold public office, to vote in secret and to freely campaign, to associate and assemble, and to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression".⁵⁵ Violence can affect women as candidates, voters, activists, party supporters, observers, election workers, or public officials.⁵⁶ It can be perpetrated by a family member, community member and/or by government security forces, political party officials (including youth groups and/or party youth wings), candidates or their supporters.⁵⁷ Whether it

FIGURE 1
AU Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2018-19)



is threatened or actual violence, within the family or in public, violence limits women's ability to engage in public life, as well as undermining their confidence and capacity to participate in civic activities, stand as candidates or cast votes for candidates of their choice.⁵⁸ Recent research has shown that the likelihood of women, particularly young women, suffering from violence and intimidation is an even greater deterrent to engaging in political activities during election periods.⁵⁹ The 2016 Afrobarometer survey found that fear of political intimidation and violence is a serious barrier to women's political participation; 50% of women surveyed in 34 countries reported that they are afraid of political intimidation or violence.⁶⁰ Risks from vio-

54 Transitions have often been slow, with male elites reluctant to hand over power and/or, more commonly, one set of (male) elites simply replaced by a new political cohort of powerbrokers with similar background: OHCHR, 'Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs', n.d., pp.5-6, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/EqualParticipation.aspx>.

55 It can cover a range of behaviours, including intimidation of candidates and voters, physical harassment, rape, assault on journalists, imprisonment and assassinations, confrontations with security forces and attacks on local party headquarters: 'Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide' (New York, NY: UN Women & UNDP, 2017), <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/preventing-vaw-in-elections-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3742>.

56 'Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide'.

57 Donnas Ojok and Tony Acol, 'Connecting the Dots: Youth Political Participation and Electoral Violence in Africa', *Journal of African Democracy and Development*

1, no. 2 (2017): 94-108, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=006df57c-2bfi-80ca-1c85-eacd91c5ddb2&groupId=280229.

58 'Violence Against Women In Politics: Expert Group Meeting Report & Recommendations' (New York, NY: UN Women, OHCHR, UN Office of Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, 8 March 2018), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/ViolenceAgainstWomeninPoliticsReport.pdf>.

59 'Violence Against Women In Politics: Expert Group Meeting Report & Recommendations'.

60 'Concept Note - High-Level Virtual Forum On "Women In Governance And Political Participation (WGPP)"; 'African

lence against women in politics and elections are even more daunting in African countries suffering from political polarization, armed conflict and/or managing a post-conflict transition.⁶¹

COVID-19 has added a new threat dimension to participation in elections, with women (and men) potentially risking their health if they choose to vote. Conversely, that threat has the potential to depress voter turnout, including by discouraging first-time and/or young women voters from participating. A recent analysis found that “with the outbreak of COVID-19, there is a high risk that women and men may not be able to exercise their rights to vote, as the majority may opt to stay home. For example, in Mali only 36% of registered voters turned out for parliamentary election due to collective fears of COVID-19 and other challenges including terrorism. In Benin, although special measures to protect voters had been taken by the Independent National Electoral Commission, voters did not go to the polls in large numbers for the municipal elections, in particular because of the risks of the spread of the COVID-19”.⁶²

Societal norms of discrimination and harmful gender-based stereotypes also shape social attitudes, beliefs and practices to deny young women political opportunities.⁶³ Many qualified (young) women are pressured to give up political ambition in favour of men. The combination of familial and marital power dynamics, the burden of domestic chores and care for a young family can effectively deny young women opportunities to associate with others, and to get involved in civic and political activities. Married young

women also often face additional difficulties; after marriage, they may not be accepted by the constituency where they grew up, but when they move to their husband's home, they may also be rejected by the new constituency, where they are seen as a foreigner. Gender inequality in the inheritance of family property and ownership of land also disadvantage young women and girls, for instance leaving women with less access to collateral to finance their political campaigns and careers.

Exacerbating the impact of discriminatory norms are continuing problems addressing the gap in young women and girls' access to education, which can limit young women's ability to grow and develop into confident capable leaders with the skills, networks and opportunities to engage actively in civic and political life.⁶⁴ The 2016 *Global Education Monitoring Report* found that only 38 countries in sub-Saharan Africa achieved gender parity in primary education, while only 19 countries and 6 countries respectively achieved gender parity in lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.⁶⁵ Gender disparities in education are a result of the intersection between discriminatory cultural beliefs that do not value girls' education, and school systems that do not cater for girls' needs in terms of security, and sanitation; as well as early marriages.

Challenges accessing education in their early lives often leads to problems in later years for young women who struggle to access employment and suffer from the impacts of economic inequality throughout their adult lives. Lack of financial resources act as a very practical barrier to their entry into politics. The 2015 *African Development Report* on growth, poverty and inequality showed that in most African countries, across all age groups, women experience higher unemployment and lower labour force participation than men.⁶⁶ Young women do not have the social capital to

Women Lag Men in Activism, Fear Campaign Violence' (Afrobarometer, 27 March 2014), https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/press-release/round-5-releases/ab_r5_pr_gender_equality.pdf.

61 For example, in Zimbabwe, reports indicate that the culture of violence in elections has been a formidable barrier to young women's participation in politics: Research & Advocacy Unit (RAU) (2015) Do Middle-Class Women Defend Democracy?, Harare, Zimbabwe, http://researchandadvocacyunit.org/system/files/Middle_class_women_20284_29.pdf.

62 'Concept Note - High-Level Virtual Forum On "Women In Governance And Political Participation (WGPP)', p.6.

63 Josephine M Kiamba, 'Women and Leadership Positions: Social and Cultural Barriers to Success' 6 (2008): 20; Development Matters, 'Gender Equality in West Africa? The Key Role of Social Norms', *Development Matters* (blog), 8 March 2018, <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2018/03/08/gender-equality-in-west-africa-the-key-role-of-social-norms/>.

64 'Youth Participation in Elections in Africa: An Eight-Country Study', p.82.

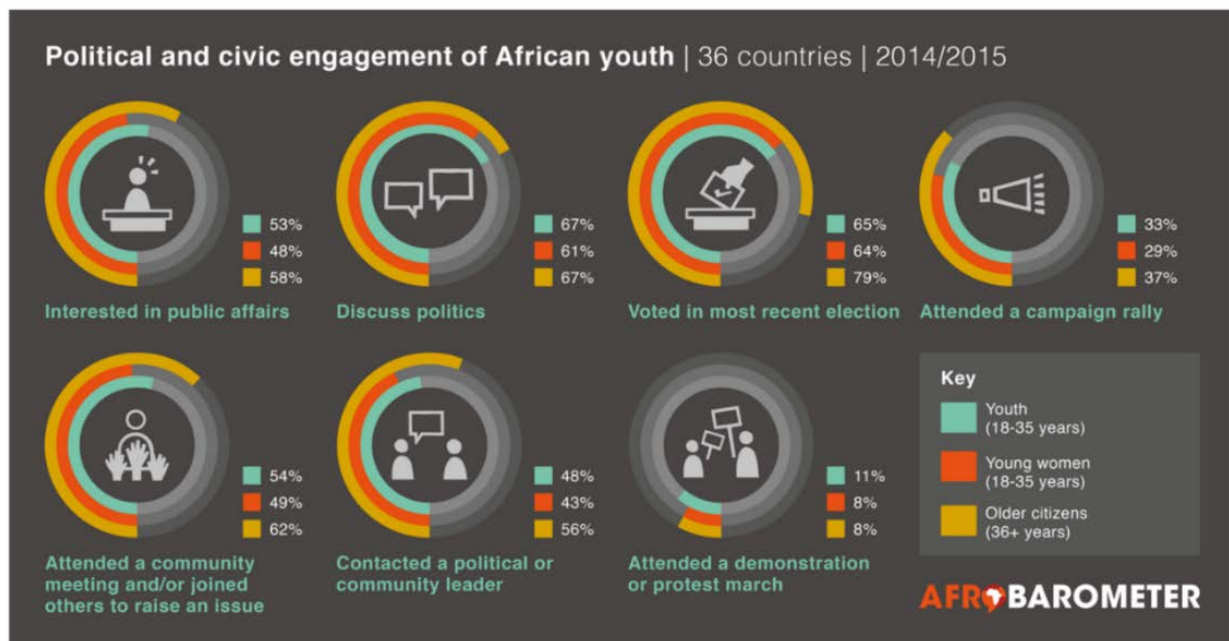
65 UNESCO (2016), Gender Review of the Global Education Monitoring Report, p.15, file:///C:/Users/florence/Desktop/FB_20TEMP_2019AUG2017/AUC/Political_Affairs/UNESCO_20education_20monitoring_20report_202016_20(gender).pdf.

66 'African Development Report 2015 - Growth, Poverty and Inequality Nexus: Overcoming Barriers to Sustainable Development', Text (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: African Development Bank, 2016), <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/>

FIGURE 2

Afrobarometer results 2015/16 on youth participation in politics

PP34: Does less engaged mean less empowered? Political participation lags among African youth, especially women



compete favourably with adults and male colleagues, either in the labour market or consequently, in the political arena. High youth unemployment across Africa has specific implications for young women's capacities to participate in politics on the continent.⁶⁷ Vying for political office can be expensive, and political parties are often unable to financially support their candidates.⁶⁸ For example, in the Central African Republic, the electoral law requires that candidate for president must own property and candidates must pay a high sum to nominate.⁶⁹ Young women, without financial means of their own, are at a definite disadvantage when it comes to competing successfully in elections.

Early disparities in access to education, and the subsequent impact this has on access to both economic and political power, may explain recent AU data which

suggests that young women are less likely to participate in politics, even where opportunities exist to engage (see Figure 2). The 2015/16 Afrobarometer data from 36 African countries found that:

...young [African] women's political engagement lags behind that of their male peers across all the indicators under consideration, although these differences are smaller for voting levels and attendance at demonstrations or protest marches. The findings on gender-based disparities in engagement levels are consistent with results from the previous round of the Afrobarometer surveys (2011/2013), which show that African women are generally less likely than men to participate in political processes, despite widespread support for gender equality across Africa".⁷⁰

In addition to the multitude of societal factors which combine to limit young women's opportunities to develop into active members of communities with capacities and opportunities to engage in politics and

[african-development-report-2015-growth-poverty-and-inequality-nexus-overcoming-barriers-to-sustainable-development-89715](#).

67 UNFPA (2014) State of the World's Population, p.3.

68 'Young Women in Politics: Experiences of the 2013 Election' (Youth Agenda (Kenya), 2013).

69 'Loi No.13-003 Portant Code Electoral de La Republique Centrafica' (n.d.).

70 Rorisang Lekalake and E Gyimah-Boadi, 'Does Less Engaged Mean Less Empowered?', Policy Paper No.34 (Afrobarometer, 2016).

decision-making, there are also specific institutional impediments to their effective political participation. Most AU Member States have some form of multi-party democratic system, making political parties critical gatekeepers to young women's participation in formal politics. Political party structures are often male-dominated,⁷¹ with no clear policies on recruitment and retention of (young) women candidates or party leaders.⁷² The 2018 SADC Barometer in relation to political parties shows that only 6 of the 14 SADC countries reviewed have significant percentages of women holding top posts in major political parties; in Malawi, 30 of top posts are filled by women, while in Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa 17 of top posts are held by women.⁷³ This is a major gap, as candidate selection in political parties still tends to be quite centralised,⁷⁴ with some exceptions, such that political party executives have outsize impacts on who is chosen. Political parties in Africa have tended to resist internal reform efforts, with centralised power systems still favouring patronage over merit; this has impacted on the numbers and type of women engaging with political

parties.⁷⁵ Even where youth wings exist, these are also often male-dominated, with young men learning at an early age how to leverage their societal power into political influence.⁷⁶ Where political party women's wings exist, these are often not well-integrated into the main party or decision-making structures.⁷⁷ Even where the head of the women's wing is a member of the executive, women's wings often still lack resources and are often used more as a resource for mobilising voters than as a vehicle for promoting women's systematic participation within the party.⁷⁸

In many African countries, the Electoral Management Bodies that are responsible for ensuring the safe, credible and transparent conduct of elections also remain gender-blind and/or only have limited resources to commit to ensuring gender-equal elections. This has been changing in recent years, not least because gender equality advocates have actively called on EMBs and similar regulatory bodies to be more proactive in ensuring that women can safely and effectively engage in elections, but considerably more work needs to be done. Governments and EMBs still need to ensure that EMB mandates include an explicit obligation to ensure that women generally, and young women particularly, have a level playing field with men throughout the electoral process. This includes ensuring that proper support is provided both to women candidates and to women voters. Voter education materials also need to be designed in a such as way as to dispel gender-based voter biases.

71 For example, Kabwato's findings in Malawi were that political parties had no deliberate policies for mobilising young rural women and that often women's role in political parties is reduced to "singing and dancing" remain true today: Linda Kabwato (2013) Young Women in Political Participation in Malawi, <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/52638/IDL-52638.pdf>

72 For example, young women in Kenya and Tanzania have complained that party nomination procedures were not transparent, and effectively worked against women: See Youth Agenda 2013, Young Women in Politics, http://www.youthagenda.org/images/stories/downloads/Young_20_Women_20In_20Politics_20Final.pdf; International Republican Institute (2015), Tanzania National Elections Gender Assessment, Washington DC.

73 (2018) "The proportion of women holding top posts in the three top political parties in a country", *SADC Gender Protocol 2018 Barometer: Gender and Governance*, p.4, <http://genderlinks.org.za/gender-links-community/sadc-gender-barometer-data-portal/gender-and-governance/>

74 Ransford Gyampo and Eileen Gans-Lartey, 'Assessing Internal Party Democracy in Africa' (Accra, Ghana: Conference on Internal Party Democracy, July 2018), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326422749_ASSESSING_INTERNAL_PARTY_DEMOCRACY_IN_AFRICA; *New Trends in Women's Political Participation in Africa*, n.d.; 'The Role of Political Parties in Promoting Women in Politics', International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, 12 August 2019, <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/role-political-parties-promoting-women-politics>.

75 https://www.sadc.int/files/3813/5435/8903/FINAL-SADC_Framework_for_Achieving_Gender_Parity_in_Political_and_Decision_Making_Positions_by_2015.pdf

76 Ojok and Acol, 'Connecting the Dots: Youth Political Participation and Electoral Violence in Africa.'

77 Rumbidzai A. Kandawasvika-Nhundu, *Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2013), p.66, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/political-parties-in-africa-through-a-gender-lens.pdf>; 'Maximizing Opportunities: Political Parties, Women's Wings and the Gender Agenda in Africa's Developing Democracies | Africa Up Close', *Africa Close, a Blog of the Wilson Center Africa Program* (blog), 23 June 2014, <https://africaupclose.wilsoncenter.org/maximising-opportunities-political-parties-womens-wings-and-the-gender-agenda-in-africas-developing-democracies/>.

78 Kandawasvika-Nhundu, *Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens*.

4. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AS ENTRY-POINTS

AU Member States have made commitments at international, regional and national levels to ensure that young women have the opportunities and capacities to participate effectively in politics and decision-making. This entails taking immediate and effective action at national and local levels to accelerate the implementation of the commitments. This section discusses entry-points at the global level which AU Member States and civil society can harness in support of young women's political participation.

4.1 Using CEDAW to monitor and promote young women's political participation

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) enshrines the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of political rights, including the right of women and men to take part in the government of their country. Subsequently, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 and coming into force in 1981, built on the rights in the UDHR and became the seminal international treaty dedicated to strengthening the rights of women and girls. Through CEDAW, States parties have endorsed women's equal right to participation in political and public life, including the right to vote in elections and public referenda, eligibility for election to all publicly elected bodies and participation in the formulation and implementation of government policy. CEDAW encourages States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public spheres, including through temporary special measures (TSMs).⁷⁹ Only two AU Member States have not ratified CEDAW: Somalia and Sudan.⁸⁰

CEDAW paved the way for the adoption of a series of international commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and specifically espousing the right of women to participate in political and public life, including by ensuring gender balance in positions of political leadership and decision-making.⁸¹

These commitments were reflected in the Commission on the Status of Women 2006 *Agreed Conclusions on the Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes at all Levels*,⁸² which set out a list of specific actions that States should take to support both women and girls to more effectively participate in politics and decision-making. More recently, *UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130 (2011) on Women and Political Participation*⁸³ reiterated these priorities, with Article 6(k) specifically calling on States to "encourage

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When reporting to the UN CEDAW Committee, AU Member States are urged to include a specific section/s in their national reports documenting efforts made to promote young women's rights, including their right to participate in politics and decision-making.
- AU Member States are encouraged to include representatives of young women in their delegations to CEDAW Committee sessions, who can be empowered to speak specifically on relevant GEWE issues.

of political leadership by 1995 and 50% by 2000. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), agreed to by 189 States parties established the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, public administrative entities and the judiciary.

79 As of November 2018, 189 countries have ratified or acceded to CEDAW. Only two ESA countries have not ratified, Somalia and Sudan: see https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en and <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

80 <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

81 The UN Economic and Social Council Resolution (E/RES/1990/15) set a global target of 30% women in positions

82 'Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions (B): Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes at All Levels, E/2006/27-E/CN.6/2006/15' (United Nations, March 2006), https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/50/csw50b_e_final.pdf?la=en&vs=1151.

83 'Resolution 66/130: Women and Political Participation' (adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011, 19 March 2012), 66, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/466/62/PDF/N1146662.pdf?OpenElement>.

FIGURE 3

Relevant SDG targets on youth, women and participation



the promotion of programmes geared towards the sensitization and orientation of youth and children, in particular young women and girls, on the importance of the political process and women's participation in politics”.

All States which have ratified CEDAW are obligated to report to the UN CEDAW Committee every four years. These regular CEDAW reports provide an excellent opportunity for AU Member States to report on their progress in implementing women's rights, including the rights of young women. Young women's organisations and other CSOs can use these review points as an opportunity to submit their own CEDAW Shadow Report/s, which can be used to highlight the specific challenges and priorities of young women.

4.2 Engaging young women in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

AU Member States have used their membership of the UN to develop and endorse the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agenda 2030 applies to all countries and is designed to mobilise global effort to end poverty, inequalities, and ensure sustainable

development. Three SDGs relate to women's political participation (see Figure 4 below for details). SDG-5 specifically focuses on gender equality and empowering women and girls, with a specific target dedicated to tracking progress to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels. Progress implementing SDG-5, and the other complementary SDGs, will be monitored by monitoring both the share of women in national legislatures and women elected to local governments.

The SDGs were adopted by AU Member States in September 2015, nine months after the endorsement in January 2015 of AU *Agenda 2063*, which sets out a 50-year plan for peaceful, integrated and prosperous continent. The AU's *Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (CAP)*, which predates the SDGs, informed Africa's inputs to the development of Agenda 2030.⁸⁴ This ensured complementarity between that *UN Agenda 2030* and the *AU Agenda 2063* for sustainable development. Since the two agendas were adopted, the AU and UN have been able to develop tools and guidelines for a coherent implementation, monitoring and reporting on both programmes.⁸⁵

84 'Agenda 2063-SDGs', African Union, accessed 3 October 2019, <https://au.int/en/ea/statistics/a2063sdgs>.

85 'Agenda 2063-SDGs'.

Among others, a framework of coordinated indicators for the two agendas was developed and serves to track progress on the implementation of the two agendas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When reporting on progress on implementation of SDGs (particularly on SDG-5, Target 5.5 on women's political participation), AU Member States are encouraged to consider providing additional age disaggregated data on women's political participation indicators at national and sub-national levels.
- Towards the aligned implementation of UN Agenda 2030/SDGs and AU Agenda 2063, the AU and Member States are encouraged to harmonise indicators and reporting processes to ensure the availability of sex and age disaggregated data on gender equality and women's rights commitments including young women's political participation.

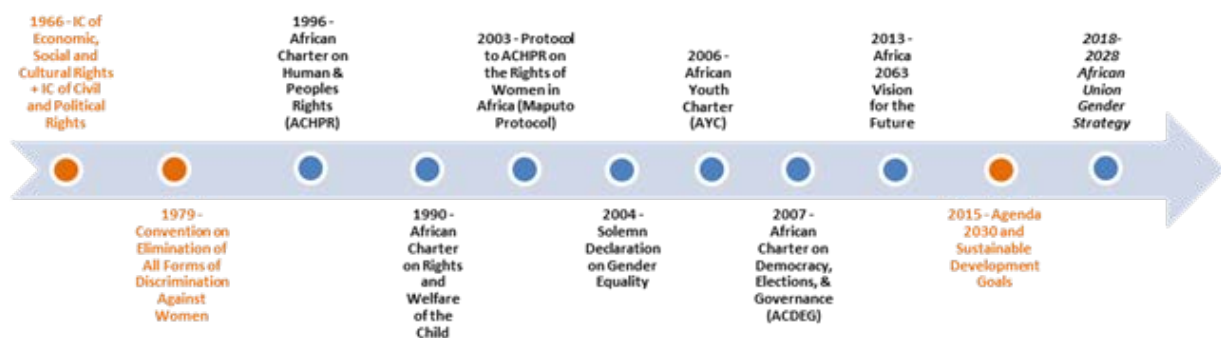
5. REGIONAL ISSUES AND ENTRY-POINTS

The promotion of gender equality, respect for constitutional democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance are core principles that guide the African Union,⁸⁶ the Regional Economic Communities and Member States across the continent. Numerous regional treaties, charters and action plans have been consultatively developed and endorsed over the past decades which explicitly commit AU Member States to ensuring women's political participation, including that of young women. These regional commitments recognise that AU Member States and their citizens can benefit from working collectively to address regional challenges.

the existing African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which was adopted in 1981 by leaders meeting as the Organisation of African Unity (the precursor to the AU). Article 18(g) of the ACHPR specifically requires that "The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions".⁸⁸

Since the establishment of the AU, Member States have adopted additional, more explicit statements that recognise and extend the rights of both women and young people.⁸⁹ Member States have also established a number of mechanisms and policies designed to support the implementation of the commitments at the regional and national levels. This section describes the key regional agreements and mechanisms available to proactively promote young women's political participation.

FIGURE 4
Timeline of key international and regional legal instruments and declarations



5.1 Harnessing African Union policies and political process

The African Union is the key regional inter-governmental organisation consisting of 55 Member States from across the five sub-regions of the continent. The *Constitutive Act of the African Union* specifically recognised in its Preamble that Member states were "guided by...the need to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society, in particular women [and] youth..." and included "Article 4(l) – promoting gender equality" as one of the guiding principles of the AU.⁸⁷ It also specifically endorsed

5.1.1 Key AU Commitments on Democracy, Women's Rights and Youth

Several AU legal instruments and policy statements commit Member States to protecting and promoting women and young people's rights to political participation. These commitments encompass development and human rights generally, women's rights and youth rights:

⁸⁸ 'African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights', African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981, <https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49>.

⁸⁹ Olga Martin, 'The African Union's Mechanisms to Foster Gender Mainstreaming and Ensure Women's Political Participation and Representation' (Stockholm, Sweden: International IDEA, 2013).

⁸⁶ Article 4 (l) and (m), Constitutive Act of the African Union.

⁸⁷ 'Constitutive Act of the African Union'.

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want: Agenda 2063 was endorsed as part of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration of AU Leaders in 2013, setting out a 50-year vision for the continent. Agenda 2063 places gender equality and equity at the centre of the continent's social and economic development,⁹⁰ with leaders reaffirming their "...commitment to place the African people, in particular women, children and youth...at the centre..." of national development endeavours and restating the determination to enforce respect for human rights, popular participation, inclusion and democracy.

The AU identified 7 Aspirations and 20 Goals that would guide implementation of Agenda 2063. As Table 2 shows, women and youth empowerment is one of the critical aspirations with complementary

TABLE 2
Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063

Aspiration 6: An Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children	
(17) Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and Girls Empowerment • Violence & Discrimination against Women and Girls
(18) Engaged and Empowered Youth and Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Empowerment and Children

Source: Excerpt from Goals & Priority Areas of Agenda 2063

goals on empowerment of girls and youth providing a very strong foundation for AU's work to support young women's political participation.

Most recently, the AU Assembly took forward the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and translated them into more practical guidelines. In January 2018, the AU Assembly specifically mandated that the "Commission shall take specific measures to fully achieve the equal representation of women and men (50/50) in all senior level positions including Political and Special Appointees, Directors and Heads of Divisions [and in

⁹⁰ The AU Commission, "Agenda 2063: Framework Document, The Africa We Want", 2015, p. vi. Aspiration 6 particularly focuses on "strengthening the role of Africa's women through ensuring gender equality and parity in all spheres of life (political, economic, and social); eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls

both general service and professional staff categories] by 2025 in the Organs and institutions of the Union".⁹¹ This decision also required that the AU Commission implement a 30 youth quota for staffing by 2025.⁹² This commitment to gender parity by 2025 is a key plank of the AU's own internal efforts to promote women's political participation. It is complemented by a similar commitment which states that the "Commission shall take specific measures to ensure that by 2025, 35 of the AU workforce will be made up of youth" and that "from 2018 onwards, Member States shall fully finance the Youth Volunteer Program and the Junior Professionals Program from the regular budget of the Union".⁹³

African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990): This Charter was developed at the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Processes in Africa, which was held, in Arusha in 1990, bringing together African governments, NGOs and UN agencies. The Charter is more of an aspirational statement of values and goals, and is not legally binding, but provides a statement of principles to guide the AU and Member States and is still useful as a normative statement, owned and developed by Africa.⁹⁴

African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (2007): To date, 34 of 55 AU Member States have ratified the Charter,⁹⁵ which calls on States to "promote gender balance and equality in the

⁹¹ 'Assembly of the Union, Thirtieth Ordinary Session, Decisions, Declarations and Resolutions, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia', 28 January 2018, https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly_decisions_665_-689_e.pdf.

⁹² 'Concept Note - High-Level Virtual Forum On "Women In Governance And Political Participation (WGPP)", p.4.

⁹³ 'Assembly of the Union, Thirtieth Ordinary Session, Decisions, Declarations and Resolutions, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia'.

⁹⁴ Kofi Oteng Kufuor, 'The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation: A Critical Review', *Netherlands Quarterly on Human Rights* 18, no. 1 (2000): 10.

⁹⁵ 'African Charter on Democracy and Electoral Governance - Ratification Table' (African Union, 28 June 2019), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36384-sl-AFRICAN_20_CHARTER_20ON_20DEMOCRACY_2C_20ELECTIONS_20AND_20GOVERNANCE.PDF; 'International Democracy Day Campaign 2020', *African Defenders* (blog), accessed 4 December 2020, <https://africandefenders.org/international-democracy-day-campaign-2020/>.

governance and development processes.”⁹⁶ Article 29 specifically calls on State Parties to “create the necessary conditions for full and active participation of women in the decision-making processes and structures at all levels as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture; [and] take all possible measures to encourage the full and active participation of women in the electoral process and ensure gender parity in representation at all levels, including legislatures”. Article 31 also commits State Parties to “promote the participation of social groups with special needs, including the Youth...in the governance process”. More broadly, State Parties also commit to eliminate all discrimination based on gender.⁹⁷

Gender and women’s rights

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (2003):⁹⁸ This Protocol came into force in 2005,⁹⁹ and serves as the AU legal framework on gender equality and women’s rights. To date, 42 of 55 AU member states have ratified the Protocol.¹⁰⁰ Article 9 specifically focuses on women’s political participation, stating that: “States Parties are required to take affirmative action to promote equal participation of women in political life, including through measures to ensure that women participate without any discrimination in all elections; are represented equally with men at all levels in all electoral processes; and participate equally with men in the development and implementation of State policies and development programs”.

Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004): The Declaration was adopted by the AU Assembly as the reaffirmation by Member States of global and regional commitments on gender equality and women’s rights. The Preamble specifically recognises that Member States are “aware of the fact that low

levels of women’s representation in social, economic and political decision-making structures and feminisation of poverty impact negatively on women’s ability to derive full benefit from the economies of their countries and the democratization process”. Article 5 commits Member States to expand and promote the gender parity principle within the AU Commission and other organs of the AU and the Regional Economic Communities, as well as at the national and local levels in collaboration with political parties and national parliaments.¹⁰¹

Youth rights

African Youth Charter (AYC) (2006): To date, 39 of 55 AU Member States have ratified the AYC.¹⁰² The AYC serves as the AU legal framework on youth rights, defining youth as any person aged 15 to 35 years. States Parties specifically committed to building the capacities of young women and guaranteeing their participation in parliament and other decision-making bodies. Article 23 is dedicated specifically to young women, and focuses on political participation, calling on States Parties to “Ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours”. This is complemented by Article 11 on youth political participation, which sets out a list of core actions, including calling on States Parties to:

- *Guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws;*
- *Facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision-making at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance;*
- *Ensure equal access to young men and young women to participate in decision-making and in fulfilling civic duties;*
- *Provide access to information such that young people become aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate in decision-making and civic life.*

96 ‘African Charter on Democracy and Electoral Governance’.

97 ‘African Charter on Democracy and Electoral Governance’, Art.8.

98 ‘Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa’.

99 The Maputo Protocol has been ratified by 36 African countries. Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan having signed but not ratified. Botswana has taken no action yet: <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/women-protocol/ratification/>.

100 ‘Slow Progress in Meeting Commitment to 2020 as the Year of Universal Ratification of Maputo Protocol’, African Union, 18 November 2020, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20201118/slow-progress-meeting-commitment-2020-year-universal-ratification-maputo>.

101 ‘Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa’ (African Union, July 2004), https://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/Solemn_Declaration_on_Gender_Equality_in_Africa.pdf.

102 ‘List of Countries Which Have Signed, Ratified/Acceded to the African Youth Charter’ (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, 18 June 2019), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-sl-AFRICAN_20YOUTH_20CHARTER.pdf.

As illustrated above, Africa has many progressive legal instruments that, if implemented, would enhance opportunities for young women's participation in politics. However, the continent is still yet to achieve universal ratification of the Maputo Protocol, and even where AU Member States have ratified key treaties, there is often inconsistent and inadequate reporting on progress made under the commitments. The African Commission on Human People's Rights has a role to play in monitoring treaty implementation but has been impeded from discharging its mandate due to delays and absence of regular reporting, contrary to Article 62 of the ACHPR itself.¹⁰³ The AU needs to work with Member States to accelerate the ratification, domestication, implementation and reporting under key legal instruments, with specific considerations of the rights of young women, including in relation to their participation in decision-making.

5.1.2 Key AU Operational Policies and Plans

The AU and its various organs have developed operational level policies and programmes designed to

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs and Member States are urged to renew efforts to ensure the universal ratification of the Protocol to the ACHPR on Women's Rights in Africa, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance and the African Youth Charter;
- AU Member States are urged to report more regularly and comprehensively on their implementation of key treaties, including the Maputo Protocol. Reporting should disaggregate data by sex and age, with specific reference to young women, including the status of implementation of their rights to political participation;
- Treaty monitoring bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, are encouraged to proactively encourage Member States to take special measures to promote young women's participation and to regularly report on progress.

¹⁰³ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2012), Concluding Remarks; http://www.achpr.org/files/sessions/17th-eo/conc-obs/1-1984-2012/concluding_observations_liberia.pdf

support implementation of Member States' gender equality and women's rights commitments, including to promote the rights of young women. The most relevant of these are:

African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE) (2019-23): In line of the African Youth Charter, the AU developed a Plan of Action (POA) (2009-2018),¹⁰⁴ which

FIGURE 5
APAYE (2019-23) Youth Flagship Programmes

1. Alternative pathways to education	Engage relevant partners to reach at least 10,000 young people with alternative pathways models for learning and skills development, including remote learning
2. Young teachers' initiative	Establish a continental "Teachers without Borders" programme, reaching at least 5,000 young people in at least 25 countries to address quality of delivery and availability
3. Internships and apprenticeship	Engage Member States, AUC Departments, and partners (including private sector partners) to provide at least 100,000 young people with professional internships and apprenticeship programmes to contextualise learning to the world of work
4. Nurture youth-led start-ups	Engage and leverage partners to identify and implement scalable models on nurturing at least 100,000 young entrepreneurs
5. Leadership programme	Roll out leadership programmes including training, mentorship and job shadowing, reaching at least 100,000 young people
6. Youth Movement	Establish a framework for youth consultations, including an annual consultative forum and regional consultations
7. Campaign on youth well-being and mental health	Develop and roll out a continental campaign on mental health that focuses on the intersection between substance abuse, crime, suicide and mental health

mandated the AU to establish the Office of a Special Envoy on Youth, who was appointed in 2018 and drives the AU's focused interventions on young women and men (see section 5.1.3 below for more). The POA has now been replaced with the APAYE (2019-2023) which is designed around three pillars: (i) strengthening the foundations of youth programming; (ii) catalysing action at Member States level; and (iii) implementing their seven youth flagship programmes. As Figure

¹⁰⁴ 'African Youth Decade (2009-2018) - Plan of Action' (African Union, May 2011), p.9, https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_decade_2009-2018.pdf.

5 below shows, one of these flagship programmes specifically focuses on leadership. Currently, APAYE offers an overarching policy basis for the coordination of youth and gender related programs although the details are not provided in the document. It will thus be important to support the gender responsive implementation of this framework to ensure that the specific issues facing young women are given proper attention and resources.

AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth (DD Roadmap) (2016):

The DD Roadmap was developed in response to an AU Assembly decision to dedicate 2017 as the year of “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth”.¹⁰⁵ The DD Roadmap aimed to mobilise action towards transforming Africa’s large youth population into a “youth dividend”. The DD Roadmap outlined 4 pillars, one of which focused on rights, governance and youth empowerment. The Roadmap sets out 13 strategic actions, including eliminating barriers to youth participation in politics and reform laws that have a discriminatory impact on youth participation in decision-making and politics. It also recommended strengthening youth organisations and networks at national and sub-regional levels. The DD Roadmap contained no specific gender analysis or actions to support young women specifically.

African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment 2018-2028:

¹⁰⁶ This Strategy aims to guide the AU Commission’s work to support gender equality and women’s empowerment, including young women’s rights, for the next decade. The Strategy specifically recognises the importance of addressing intersectionality and identifies ‘youth’ as a specific target group. The Strategy identifies 4 pillars for action. Pillar 3 targets law reform in support of women’s rights, including the right to political participation. Pillar 4 then focuses specifically on ‘Leadership, Voice and Visibility’, proposing three key areas for action, which are directly relevant to promoting young women’s political participation:

- Outcome 4.1 Leadership: Equal participation and demonstrated influence of women and girls in all leadership and decision-making positions;

- Outcome 4.2 Voice: Women and girls have equal voice and exercise agency in the home, community, and public spaces;
- Outcome 4.3 Visibility: Women and girls are more visible and portrayed as equal contributors to society in the media, literature and cultural resources.

African Union Action Plan on Women’s Governance and Political Participation (WGPP):

The AUC Department of Political Affairs (AUC-DPA), in collaboration with UNDP, is leading the development and implementation of an action plan to “address the root causes of the...challenges for women’s empowerment in leadership and in partnership with national, regional and global actors to advance the ‘50/50 agenda of Women in Governance’”. The action plan will also include capacity building activities to raise awareness and advocate for more women’s representation in relief and recovery decision-making with regard to COVID-19”.¹⁰⁷ During the development process in 2020, the AUC-DPA specifically acknowledged that “women’s leadership in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly important as the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately affects women. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable including those living in crises and conflict-affected areas.”¹⁰⁸ The Action Plan “responds to the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN)’s call to action to increase participation of women in governance by focusing on the ecosystem for women in governance; ensuring gender parity in political parties and increasing the number of women in politics (including young women)”.¹⁰⁹

5.1.3 Key AU Institutional Entry Points

Towards the implementation of the commitments and strategies described earlier, various bodies and platforms have been established by the AU which can be leveraged to promote gender equality and women’s rights, including young women’s political participation.

¹⁰⁵ Assembly/AU/Dec.601(XXVI) of January 2016.

¹⁰⁶ ‘AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment (2018-28)’ (African Union Commission, 2018), https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36897-doc-52569_au_report_eng_web.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ ‘High-Level Virtual Forum: Women in Governance and Political Participation (WGPP): Enhancing African Women’s Role in Leadership’, African Union, 24 June 2020, <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20200624/women-governance-and-political-participation-wgpp-enhancing-african-womens-role>.

¹⁰⁸ ‘High-Level Virtual Forum: Women in Governance and Political Participation (WGPP): Enhancing African Women’s Role in Leadership’.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Concept Note - High-Level Virtual Forum On “Women In Governance And Political Participation (WGPP)”’, p.4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementation of the new APAYE (2019-23) should (i) provide opportunities for the participation and contribution of young women across Africa in all elements of programming and specifically as part of all seven flagship programmes and (ii) include specific activities and indicators related to young women's empowerment under Pillar 3 Flagship on Leadership Programme, including in relation to political participation.
- National, regional and global government and non-government stakeholders are encouraged to support and implement the African Union Action Plan on Women's Governance and Political Participation, once it is finalised, with specific activities identified to improve young women's political participation.
- The AU Commission is encouraged to support Member States to action and report on progress with implementation of the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, with specific references to the rights of young women, including in relation to political participation.

The AU Commission's **Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD)** promotes gender equality within the AU and is responsible for leading implementation of the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as well other key AU commitments. The WGDD should be recognised as a focal point for advocacy within the AU and with Member States for increased participation of young women in leadership and decision-making. The WGDD is also mandated to support gender mainstreaming within the AU and its organs for systemwide action and can be supported in this role to ensure resources are directed to strengthening women's leadership in politics and decision making.

The AU Commission's **Human Resources, Science & Technology Department (HRST)** is responsible for coordinating AU programmes on human resource development, education, science, technology and promoting the youth development agenda. The HRST provides an institutional entry point for promotion the priorities of young women and for advocacy within the AU and with Member States to push forward adoption and implementation of legal, policy and institutional measures. The programs and initiatives of the HRST provide strategic opportunities for young women and advocates to promote the rights of young women's political participation.

The first-ever **AU Special Envoy on Youth**¹¹⁰ was appointed in November 2018 for a two-year term. The

AU Chairperson appointed Ms Aya Chebbi as the first Special Envoy, a young Tunisian woman who is highly regarded as a pan-African feminist. She has a mandate to serve as a representative of and advocate for the voices and interests of African youth to the relevant AU decision-making bodies and to spearhead regional initiatives and actions. She is supported by the Office of the Youth Envoy (OYE), a Pan-African collaborative movement of committed young leaders, and the AU Youth Advisory Council.¹¹¹

The **AU Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security**¹¹² was established to amplify the voices of women on peace and security issues within the region. Young women are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of conflict and can immensely benefit from the mandate of the Special Envoy, who aims to promote women's voices in building sustainable peace on the continent through their active participation in peace and governance processes. Although conflict poses significant hazards to young women, the aftermath of conflict can also be a time for transformation; if harnessed, a post-conflict transition can represent an opportunity to advocate for temporary special measures in political leadership positions, not only for women but for youth. As Rwanda demonstrated during its post-conflict rebuilding, this period can also provide an opportunity to transform social norms and recognise the value of (young) women's leadership and contribution to decision-making.

¹¹⁰ 'African Union Youth Envoy – Let's Shake Things Up!', *Office of the AU Youth Envoy* (blog), accessed 4 December 2019, <https://auyouthenvoy.org/>.

¹¹¹ 'African Union Youth Envoy – Let's Shake Things Up!'

¹¹² 'Office of the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security: Facebook Page', n.d., <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionWomenPeace/>.

Launched in January 2010 by the AU Heads of State and Government, the **Fund for African Women** is a mechanism for the implementation and mobilisation of resources for programs and projects dedicated to the African Women's Decade (2010-20).¹¹³ The Fund's guidelines specifically note that applications are welcome from "registered youth and women's groups" and "African Civil Society Organizations working on mentoring youth (women and men) to be champions of gender equality and women's empowerment".¹¹⁴ Funding proposals must align with the objective of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and are encouraged to align with the relevant annual AU theme.

The APAYE (2019-23) specifically commits the AUC to "operationlise the **Youth Development Fund** and a strong resource mobilisation strategy and sustainability plan".¹¹⁵ The guidelines for the Fund are currently being finalised. Broadly, the aim of the Fund is to "drive catalytic positive action in youth development through providing necessary capital to drive youth led transformative action and change on the continent. As this is an incredibly ambitious goal, the fund will prioritise engagement with stakeholders and work to expand and deepen ecosystem support structures. The fund is envisaged as an implementation support vehicle for critical development visions and plans."¹¹⁶

5.1.4 Working through the African Governance Architecture

In 2011, the AU Assembly agreed to establish what is now the African Governance Architecture (AGA),¹¹⁷

113 'Briefing Note on the Fund for African Women' (African Union, 2016), https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/33442-wd-briefing_note_on_fund_for_african_women.pdf.

114 'Fund for African Women: Frequently Asked Questions' (African Union, Undated), https://au.int/sites/default/files/announcements/32197-annnc-faw_faq.docx.

115 'African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2019-23)', p.24.

116 'Request For Proposals: Consultancy Services For Conducting A Feasibility Study For The Establishment Of An African Youth Fund (Procurement No: AUC/HRST/C/70)' (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, March 2018), https://au.int/sites/default/files/announcements/33940-annnc-request_for_proposals_-_africa_youth_fund.pdf.

117 'AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20)' (African Governance Architecture (AGA), Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission, January 2018), p.ii, http://aga-platform.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/AGA-YES_20_web_20english-2.pdf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The different institutions and structures of the AU with responsibilities for promoting youth and women's rights are encouraged to collaborate to develop a joint action plan for the promotion of young women's rights, including the right to political participation, which builds on existing AU youth and gender policies and resources.
- The guidelines and criteria used to implement the new Youth Development Fund should specifically integrate gender equality as a fundamental value and gender mainstreaming as a core operational principle. Supporting young women's political participation should be an explicit priority. Indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of the Fund should be sex disaggregated.

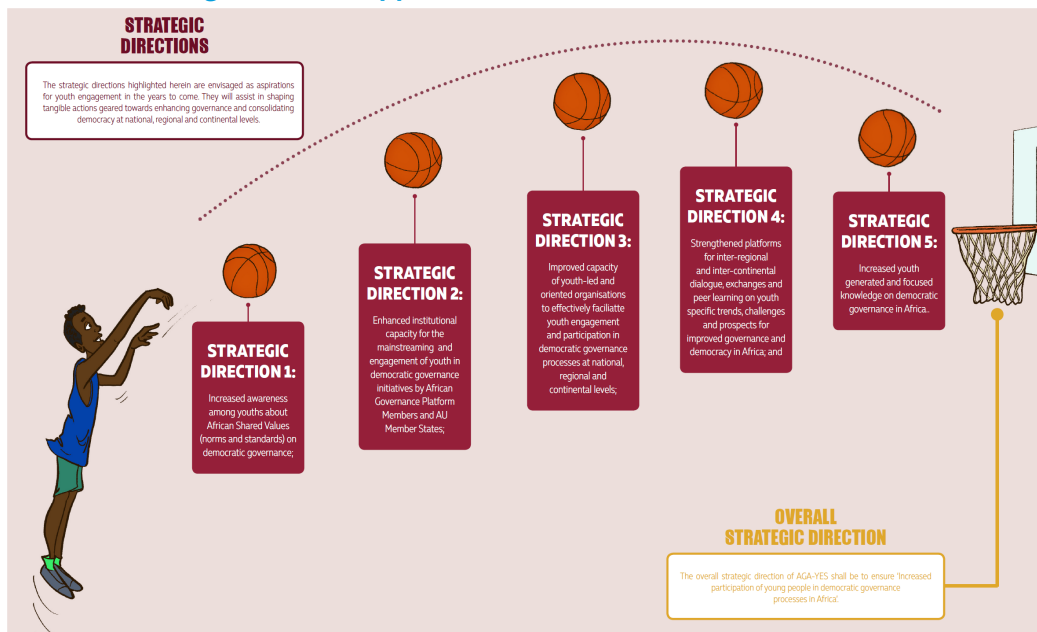
which operates as a platform for dialogue between stakeholders mandated to promote good governance and strengthen democracy in Africa. The AGA has since been operationalized through the African Governance Platform (AGP), the institutional mechanism bringing together AU organs, institutions and RECs with a mandate for the promotion and sustenance of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa.¹¹⁸ The AGA Secretariat is based in the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission.

The **High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (HLD-DHRG)** is an annual convening for the African Governance Architecture Platform which aims to provide a forum to Member States, RECs, non-state actors and other key stakeholders to discuss governance trends, challenges and prospects on the continent. The HLD-DHRG provides a critical dialogue platform for young people, including young women, together with African leaders, decision-makers and stakeholders and have been used to identify key youth and gender equality priorities for action by Member States.

The **Gender Pre-Forum, which precedes the HLD-DHRG** is organised by the AGA Secretariat and brings together mainly young women active in politics from different countries to discuss the state of young women's participation in politics. Participants discuss progress

118 'AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20)', p.ii.

FIGURE 6
AGA-YES Strategic Direction (pp.11-12)



made, persisting challenges and propose solutions on how the gains by young women in politics can be sustained. These Pre-Forums have also been used to facilitate inter-generational dialogues with senior, current and former political leaders and to exchange lessons. The discussions from the Gender Pre-Forum inform the discussions at the HLD-DHRG. The most recent Gender Pre-Forum was held online from 19-20 November 2020 and was organised around the theme of “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”. In response to the rapidly changing context, the Forum also deliberated on how the COVID-19 pandemic required responses that are multi-dimensional and leave no one behind, specifically women, girls and the vulnerable.¹¹⁹ The Outcomes Statement specifically recognised that:

Investing in young women is a key driver for achieving Africa’s sustainable development and peace agenda. It is therefore critical to raise and empower a new generation of young African women. The development partners can actualize this by supporting the designing and implementation of development programmes in the context of the SDGs and Agenda 2063.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ ‘Magnifying Women’s Role In Conflict Prevention And Silencing The Guns: Outcome Statement’ (Online: Gender Pre-Forum To The 9th High-Level Dialogue On Democracy, Human Rights And Governance, 19 November 2020).

¹²⁰ ‘Magnifying Women’s Role In Conflict Prevention And Silencing The Guns: Outcome Statement’, p.5.

The AGA developed the **African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy 2016-2020 (AGA-YES)**, in response to outcomes from the 2013 High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance. Recognising the multitude of frameworks and mechanisms proliferating across the AUC and RECs, the AGA-YES aimed to “to provide a guiding framework for AU Policy Organs and RECs to ensure sustainable engagement of youth in democratic governance processes within the framework of the AGA”.¹²¹ At the outset, the AGA-YES specifically recognises that “young women and girls on the continent disproportionately face varied challenges alongside their male counterparts. Similarly, socio-cultural and economic exclusions continue to manifest in the form of limited women’s access to opportunities for recovery from the effects of violence, the ability to get redress for human rights abuses, and participation in reforming laws and public institutions in post-conflict situations”.¹²² As Figure 6 demonstrates, the AGA-YES is very explicitly directed at strengthening the capacity of African young people and their organisations to engage in decision-making at all levels across the AU.

¹²¹ ‘AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20)’, p.5.

¹²² ‘AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20)’, p.2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AGA Secretariat is encouraged to work closely with the ACPHR and relevant AU Commission departments to develop and implement a programme to support countries to remove barriers to ratification of key treaties and support reporting on progress.
- The AU and its organs are encouraged to ensure that: (i) key continental and regional meetings including the HLF-DHRG specifically engage young women and men both as part of Member State delegations and non-governmental actors; and (ii) the recommendations of the gender and youth forums are consistently implemented, monitored and reported on to address issues related to the rights of young women and men.
- The AGA Secretariat is encouraged to expedite the development of its Women's Engagement in Democratic Governance Strategy, which was proposed to institutionalise efforts around young women in leadership within the AU and its organs, building on lessons learned from the implementation of the AGA-YES and other continental initiatives.
- Young women and the organisations that support them are encouraged to proactively identify and systematically engage in AGA led opportunities, and other such initiatives coordinated by AU organs, institutions and RECs.
- In line with the recommendations included in the AGA-YES Strategy for priority action,¹²³ AU Member States are urged to:
 - a. Provide the enabling legal and policy space for youth and specifically young women to participate actively in democratic governance processes through ratification, domestication and implementation of regional and international norms and standards for youth empowerment;
 - b. Provide adequate and gender responsive budgetary support for the implementation of National Youth Policies aligned to the National Development Plans as well as continental and international frameworks such as AU Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals;
 - c. Establish and strengthen platforms for strategic engagement and interaction with young people on a regular basis;
 - d. Ensure regular reporting on youth and young women's participation in democratic governance processes of the Member States in line with the ACDEG State Reporting responsibilities, among other state reporting mechanisms; and
 - e. Support gender and youth-led and -oriented initiatives through incentivization mechanisms.

¹²³ 'AGA Youth Engagement Strategy (2016-20)'; p.20.

5.1.5 Key AU Platforms and Programmes

In addition to the institutions established by the AU to advance women and youth political empowerment, there are also a number of coordination platforms and capacity building initiatives which can be engaged with.

The **AU Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC)** program was developed for the implementation of the Youth Decade POA, as a 12-month volunteer programme that places young people at various AU organs and institutions.¹²⁴ One of its key objectives is to provide young Africans with opportunities to serve and gain crucial professional experience, soft and social skills, international exposure and leadership skills.¹²⁵ The programme has seen over 150 young people benefit, with about 50 of those who have participated in the programme retained in various departments of the AU Commission;¹²⁶

In March 2017, the AU Peace and Security Council endorsed the creation of the **Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise Africa)**.¹²⁷ The Network was created to establish a clear channel for women's meaningful participation in peace processes and to catalyse the mainstreaming of African women in mediation. The Network is open to women and girls across the continent. It is located within the African Peace and Security Architecture, as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise and the Pan-African Network of the Wise. Notably, the May 2020 virtual session of African women Foreign Ministers specifically called for "strengthen[ing] the platforms such as the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise) to address the gaps that lead to invisibility and disenfranchisement of women, girls, youth and children" as a critical action to ensure women and girls were meaningfully included in COVID-19 responses¹²⁸;

The **African Women Leaders Network (AWLN)** was established in June 2017 by GEWE advocates and African women leaders from various sectors, under the leadership of the AU and with support from the UN system and development partners. AWWN aims to enhance the leadership of African women in the transformation of the continent in line with *Agenda 2063*.¹²⁹ AWWN supports the advancement of African women leaders including young women through flagship projects, peer learning, experience sharing and cross-generational dialogues in order to bolster women's contributions to building and sustaining peace, sustainable economies and social transformation;

The **1 Million by 2021 Initiative** was launched in April 2019 by the AU Commission and aims to encourage direct investments in millions of African youth through leveraging partnerships and private sector opportunities.¹³⁰ The Initiative focuses on four key themes, namely engagement, employment, entrepreneurship and education. The first, engagement, focuses on empowering young Africans to be more involved in development activities across the continent, including through the development of leadership programs and exchange programmes.¹³¹ The APAYE (2019-23) highlights this initiative as one of its key priorities in coming years.

The **African Young Women Leaders (AYWL) Fellowship Programme** was launched in June 2019 by the AU Commission and UNDP to develop the next generation of young African women leaders and experts to serve Africa and the world.¹³² The Fellowship Programme

124 'African Union Youth Volunteer Corps', African Union, accessed 4 October 2019, <https://au.int/en/volunteer/african-union-youth-volunteer-corps>.

125 Lauren Tracey and Edward Kahuthia, 'Beyond Rhetoric: Engaging Africa's Youth in Democratic Governance', *Institute for Security Studies Policy Brief* 99 (March 2017): 12.

126 Tracey and Kahuthia.

127 'Background Brief: Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)' (UN Women, n.d.).

128 'Communique of Virtual Meeting of Africa Women Ministers for Foreign Affairs on COVID-19', p.6.

129 'The African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Awarded for Driving Societal Change', African Union, 26 November 2018, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181126/african-women-leaders-network-awln-awarded-driving-societal-change>.

130 'Launch of the "1 Million by 2021 Initiative" at the Pan African Youth Forum', African Union, accessed 4 December 2019, <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20190424/launch-1-million-2021-initiative-pan-african-youth-forum>; '1 Million By 2021: The African Union Commission Chairperson Rallies Support for New Youth Initiative', African Union, accessed 4 December 2019, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20190422/1-million-2021-african-union-commission-chairperson-rallies-support-new-youth>.

131 '1 Million By 2021: The African Union Commission Chairperson Rallies Support for New Youth Initiative'.

132 'UNDP and the African Union Commission Join Forces to Empower Young African Women Leaders for Sustainable Development', African Union, 16 July 2019, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20190716/>

aims to equip outstanding young African women leaders with leadership skills and experience required to contribute effectively to decision making in public, private and multilateral institutions. The Fellowship Programme started in November 2019 with a cohort of 20 leading young women and aims to train and mentor several young experts from each African country, with financial support from UN Member States, the African Union, private partners and development organizations by 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Guidelines for selections under the AU Youth Volunteer Corps program should be in line with the AU Gender Parity Principle.
- The African Women Leaders Network, in collaboration with the AU Commission and UN, is encouraged to (i) develop guidelines for mentorship and networking to young African women and (ii) provide platforms for the participation and contribution of young African women (iii) Document and share success stories and the voices of young women leaders.
- The African Young Women Leaders Fellowship Programme, along with relevant AU or-gans, RECs and partners, is encouraged to develop online platforms and tools that will (i) enable young women to better understand how to engage with the Programme and (ii) share stories of success AYWL Fellows, including through social media platforms.

5.2 Working with Regional Economic Communities

Regional Economic Communities operate in support of AU Member States across the five sub-regions in Africa. As Annex 2 shows, six RECs have developed gender policies, with several endorsing quite comprehensive frameworks in support of women, including young women. For example, the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development requires that by 2015 States Parties should endeavour to ensure that 50 of decision-making positions in the public and private

[undp-and-african-union-commission-join-forces-empower-young-african-women.](#)

sectors are held by women, including through legislation, capacity-building, training and mentoring, and awareness raising to change discriminatory attitudes and norms.¹³³

The AGA provides a useful platform for bringing together the AU and RECs around issues relating to governance, including youth empowerment and women's rights. However, RECs also coordinate regional platforms and implement their own programmes and activities. The RECs thus provide a practical entry point for the promotion of the implementation of AGA and an opportunity to influence policy making and monitoring of implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and youth commitments by Member States at the regional level.¹³⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- RECs are urged to proactively ensure the integration of youth and young women's priorities in their advocacy, implementation and monitoring activities, including in relation to their political participation and engagement in decision-making.
- Young women and gender equality advocates are encouraged to identify the relevant regional commitments and advocate with RECs and Member States to promote young women's political participation.

133 Articles 12 and 13: https://www.sadc.int/files/8713/5292/8364/Protocol_on_Gender_and_Development_2008.pdf

134 Mehari Taddele Maru and Sahra El Fassi, 'Can the Regional Economic Communities Support Implementation of the African Governance Architecture (AGA)? The Case of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)' (RCDPM, October 2015).

6. NATIONAL ISSUES AND ENTRY POINTS

While global, continental and regional commitments, platforms, mechanisms and programmes all provide important opportunities to promote young women's rights, nonetheless, what will affect young women most directly are the enabling environment and opportunities that they are able to access and engage with at national and local levels. This section identifies a number of practical entry-points for young women and youth advocates can use to promote youth rights, in particular the right to participate in politics and decision-making. It is recognised at the outset that all countries have their own unique cultural and contextual realities, however, there remain some common opportunities that can be harnessed at national level by Member States as they endeavour to promote and support the empowerment of young women.

6.1 Ensuring young women's needs are explicitly addressed by COVID-19 responses

COVID-19 fundamentally changed the way the world works. In 2020, governments and societies around the world were forced to adapt and innovate in response to the threat posed by this global pandemic. COVID-19 required countries to develop not only immediate health responses, but also to more fundamentally reflect on their economic and social policies with a view to ensuring that COVID-19 responses left no one behind. This approach was borne out of necessity but demonstrates that with political will, Member States can mobilise substantial resources to implement transformative solutions.

It is essential in the COVID-19 aftermath that the needs of women and girls are properly addressed. Already it is clear that gender-based violence has been exacerbated during the crisis; as discussed in Section 3 above, such violence against women, including young women and girls, often acts as a disincentive to their participation in politics. This heightened sense of risk has been exacerbated by the fear of contracting COVID-19 through participation in elections, either as a candidate or a voter, which may also discourage young women's political participation. In the longer-term, COVID-19's impact on young women's access to education, combined with the fact that women have been harder hit economically by the COVID-19 economic downturn, means that young women will likely continue to face great economic insecurity than their male peers (though both will likely feel the effects of the disruption to their schooling for some years to come). This economic insecurity coupled with young women's

common lack of access to finance, directly undermines their capacities to nominate and campaign effectively as candidates.

It is imperative that African governments, many of whom may be managing constrained economies as a result of the COVID-19 global economic contraction, nonetheless continue to invest explicitly in ensuring equitable development for women and girls and identify specific strategies and mechanisms for ensuring that women, including young women, can access and participate in the decision-making that affects their lives. As noted earlier, African women Foreign Affairs Ministers and African Minister for Women and Gender Equality met in May 2020 at two separate meetings which provided specific guidance on how women and girls' needs should be addressed.¹³⁵ The African Union has also issued "the AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19" which provide specific guidance to AU Member States on ensuring that the needs of women, including young women and girls, are meaningfully addressed as Governments "build back better" in the COVID-19 aftermath.¹³⁶ The Guidelines specifically recognise that "COVID-19 responses cannot be implemented without putting women at the centre of the efforts as agents of change, creators and innovators and to fully engage them as active citizens. Without such efforts the goals of Agenda 2063 of achieving gender equality may never

¹³⁵ 'Ministerial Declaration On Gender Sensitive COVID-19 Responses And Recovery Plans'; 'Communique of Virtual Meeting of Africa Women Ministers for Foreign Affairs on COVID-19'.

¹³⁶ 'AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19'.

be realized”.¹³⁷ The Guidelines include a specific section on COVID-19 and women’s political participation, encouraging Member States to proactively push for women’s inclusion in political and technical decision-making forums in relation to COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- AU Member States are encouraged to use the transformative opportunity presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to more fundamentally reflect on the inclusion of women and girls in politics and decision-making.
- AU Member States, supported by the AU and development partners, are encouraged to proactively implement COVID-19 responses that are gender sensitive and specifically address the specific economic, social and political impacts of the pandemic.
- In line with the “AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19”, AU Member States are encouraged to “ensure the effective, equal and full participation of women, including grassroots women in all mechanisms established to prevent, contain and end the virus. These include emergency protocols and all other national decision-making structures like National COVID-19 Task Forces and Committees as well as in response and recovery decision-making”.¹³⁸

6.2 Advocacy for law reform

At the national level, constitutions and legislation play a big role in ensuring that young women can effectively participate in politics and decision-making. The UN Women Global Gender Equality Constitutional Database Dashboard finds that 54 of 55 countries in Africa have constitutions that outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex.¹³⁹ Some of these also include more

express provisions permitting the use affirmative action to promote the participation of women and other groups, but in the majority of countries, such measures are implemented through ordinary legislation.

In most countries, legislation does not overtly discriminate on the basis of sex or age (though eligibility requirements can have this impact in practice (see below for more)). However, gender and age neutral language does little to counter traditional patriarchal notions and perceptions of politics as a domain for men. In fact, to address the male-domination of politics across the continent, legislation has increasingly been proactively used to implement affirmative action measures, which enable discrimination in favour of marginalised groups, such as women and young people. The most common way across the continent to boost the numbers of women and/or youth in national legislatures has been through temporary special measures, or “quotas”. In this regard, youth-related quotas do not always ensure gender balance between young women and men, allowing for the replication of existing patterns of discrimination. Quotas for women also do not provide for age disaggregation, such that young women still often remain marginalised, despite the law.

- There are several areas of law reform that could be considered to promote young women’s ability to participate in politics and decision-making, ranging from removing barriers to actively introducing affirmative action quotas. The data below highlights areas where AU Member States may have practical legal barriers in place which need to be addressed through law reform, as well as highlighting good practice which could be adapted by other AU Member States: 50 countries in Africa provided data on their eligibility requirements for running for office.¹⁴⁰ Of these, **14 of 51 AU Member States only allow people over 25 years of age to stand in elections for the national legislature.** In Nigeria, for example, even after the passage of the *Not Too Young To Run Act* in 2018, candidates for the presidency must still be 35 years or older, and for Senate and governorships they must be 30 years or older, though the age of candidates for the House of

¹³⁷ ‘AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19’, p.6.

¹³⁸ ‘AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19’, p.16.

¹³⁹ The database can be interrogated at <https://constitutions.unwomen.org/en/dashboard>. No data is provided for Western Sahara.

¹⁴⁰ ‘IPU Comparative Data - Minimum Age of Eligibility’, New Parline: the IPU’s Open Data Platform (beta), accessed 2 December 2020, https://data.ipu.org/compare?field=chamber_3A_3Afield_min_age_member_parl®ion=sub_saharan_africa&structure=any_lower_chamber#bar.

Representatives has now been lowered to 25 years.¹⁴¹ Age limits in electoral legislation are a major barrier to young women engaging in political life;¹⁴²

- **30 countries in the Africa have implemented some form of quota to promote women's political participation in the national parliament.**¹⁴³ Sixteen countries have implemented a legislated political party quota¹⁴⁴ and 14 countries have implemented reserved seats.¹⁴⁵ Even where nothing has been legislated, another seven countries have political parties which are implementing their own voluntary quotas;¹⁴⁶
- **5 countries in Africa have implemented some form of quota to promote youth political participation in the national parliament.**¹⁴⁷ Rwanda reserves 2 seats for MPs under 35 years old,¹⁴⁸ while Egypt, Gabon, Morocco and Tunisia apply youth quotas to party lists, requiring lists to include various number/percentages of youth candidates;

- **27 countries in Africa have implemented some form of quota to promote women's political participation at sub-national level.**¹⁴⁹ Twelve countries have implemented a legislated political party quota¹⁵⁰ and 15 countries have implemented reserved seats.¹⁵¹ Even where nothing has been legislated, another eight countries have political parties which are implementing their own voluntary quotas.¹⁵²

In addition to passing laws which specifically require inclusion of young women and men in political party lists and national parliaments, legal frameworks can also be used to promote women's involvement in other important decision-making institutions, by requiring a minimum number of women to be appointed. For example, quotas can be applied to the leadership or staffing of institutions such as EMBs, a national regulatory body for political parties or a national civic education commission.¹⁵³ Legislation in relation to civic and voter education may also mandate that civic education must be gender sensitive in both its content and rollout.

In addition to political party quotas regarding candidates' selection, laws may also be extended to apply to the internal structures of political parties. For example, in Kenya, the electoral law strips a political party of the right to receive any public funding from the Political Parties Fund if more than two-thirds of its registered office bearers are of the same gender.¹⁵⁴ In Namibia, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)

¹⁴¹ Bukola Adebayo, '#NotTooYoungToRun: Nigeria Lowers Minimum Age for Election Candidates', CNN, 31 May 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/31/africa/nigeria-not-too-young-to-run/index.html>.

¹⁴² 'Youth Participation in Elections in Africa: An Eight-Country Study', p.82.

¹⁴³ 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁴⁴ Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Democratic Republic of Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Republic of The Congo (Brazzaville), Senegal, Togo, Tunisia: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁴⁵ Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁴⁶ Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁴⁷ 'IPU Comparative Data on Electoral Quota for Youth', New Parline: the IPU's Open Data Platform (beta), accessed 4 October 2019, https://data.ipu.org/compare?field=chamber_3A_3Afield_is_electoral_quota_youth®ion=sub_saharan_africa&structure=any_lower_chamber.

¹⁴⁸ Notably, Uganda had 5 youth reserved seats in the National Parliament for a decade but the Uganda Constitution Court declared these seats unconstitutional in September 2015: 'Uganda: Politically Active Youth Take Responsibility for the Future of Their Country | Democracy Speaks', International Republican Institute, 21 January 2016, <https://www.democracyspeaks.org/blog/uganda-politically-active-youth-take-responsibility-future-their-country>.

¹⁴⁹ 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁵⁰ Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Namibia, Republic of The Congo (Brazzaville), Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Zimbabwe: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁵¹ Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁵² Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique: 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

¹⁵³ Ghana is a global leader for establishing a National Commission on Civic Education, with a mandate to ensure that the public is educated on its civic duties and political responsibilities. Notably, at the time of writing, the Chairperson of the NCCE is a woman, and four of the six Commissioners are women: 'Commission Members', National Commission on Civic Education Ghana, accessed 4 October 2019, <https://www.nccegh.org/commissioners/>.

¹⁵⁴ Political Parties Act, section 25 (2)(b).

party amended its constitution and adopted by-laws to codify a requirement for 50/50 gender representation in all of the party's organs and structures.¹⁵⁵ This policy has resulted in all delegations to the SWAPO Congress being composed of 50 women, all district and regional structures being composed of 50 women, the Central Committee of the party being composed of 50 women and the current vice president and secretary general of the party both being women.¹⁵⁶ The policy has also increased women's numbers both in parliament and the executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In countries where quotas are not in place, AU Member States and/or civil society are encouraged to assess the state of the law in their country and identify whether and what reforms may help increase the ability of women/young women to engage in politics. Specifically, reserved seats or a sex or age quota for political parties could be considered. Sex and age quotas could also be advocated at sub-national level.
- Where quotas have been enacted, the AU, RECs, EMBs and civil society are encouraged to advocate for accountability regarding the implementation of existing election laws, particularly for sanctions where quotas are not implemented.

As noted earlier, while the constitutions of countries across Africa guarantee rights and freedoms without discrimination on the basis of sex, the majority recognize the application of customary law and they do this without resolving the conflict between customary law norms and human rights provisions.¹⁵⁷ The recognition of customary law in matters considered “personal” “family”, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance of property, leads to violations of the rights of women in practice. The practical impact customary laws on marriage, divorce and property rights can significantly affect the capacity of young women to exercise their

fundamental rights and freedoms, including in relation to their participation in politics and decision-making. AU Member States thus need to ensure that provisions for customary law comply with constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms for young women, including prohibiting gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- AU Member States are urged to review and reform laws including customary laws and policies that have a discriminatory impact on young women.
- AU Member States are urged to strengthen the capacity of the legislature and law enforcement organs for youth and gender responsive implementation of laws
- AU Member States are urged to allocate sufficient resources for the full implementation of gender and youth related laws and policies

6.3 Strengthening gender-sensitivity of key women and youth institutions

Almost all AU Member States have developed some form of national gender equality and women's empowerment strategy as well as some form of national youth policy.¹⁵⁸ To implement national women and youth policies, AU Member States have mandated government bodies with responsibility for women and for youth. In some countries, the same body may be responsible for both. Unfortunately, government bodies mandated to promote women and youth issues are very often under-resourced and rely heavily on funding from development partners. It is unclear how many women's ministries include specific staff dedicated to support young women's rights specifically and whether national women's and youth policies have included specific activities and indicators in relation to young women, including young women's political participation. Without the inclusion of such activities

¹⁵⁵ Amanda Clayton, 'Special Briefing Report No. 7 - Namibia at a Crossroads: 50/50 and the Way Forward' (Democracy Report, September 2014), p.3.

¹⁵⁶ Information provided to the author by UN Women Women's Political Participation Specialist, 4 December 2019.

¹⁵⁷ See for instance Art. 82(4) of the Constitution of Kenya, and Section 23(2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

¹⁵⁸ Of the 55 countries in the AU monitored by the think tank [YouthPolicy.org](https://www.YouthPolicy.org), 32 countries have a youth policy, while two have draft policies: Terence Corrigan, 'Getting Youth Policy Right in Africa', Africa Portal, 11 August 2017, <https://www.africaportal.org/features/getting-youth-policy-right-africa/>.

and indicators, it is much less likely that budgets will be allocated towards young women's issues.

Many national GEWE and youth policies establish national women's councils (NWC) and national youth councils (NYC), with operations at different levels. Sometimes these councils operate as part of the government structure and may even be established via legislation. In others, they operate more independently and may have grown out of civil society. NWCs and NYCs operate as platforms for women and youth to participate more systematically in development and decision-making processes, as well as for channelling government support to youth. In reality, many are under-resourced, both in terms of human resources and funding. They often rely on volunteers and may ebb and flow in their effectiveness, depending on who is involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs, Member States and development partners are encouraged to provide well-targeted technical and financial support to national women and youth ministries /departments to enable them to more effectively deliver on youth and gender equality priorities. These bodies are also encouraged to review their mandates and structures to ensure that they specifically prioritise the effective participation of young women and facilitate their inclusion in political processes and decision-making.
- The AU, RECs, Member States and development partners are encouraged to strengthen their collaboration in order to more systematically collect and publish regional and continental data on young women's participation in politics and decision-making.
- AU Member States are encouraged to review the mandate and structures of national women's councils and national youth councils to ensure their responsiveness to youth priorities including young women's participation and representation in their executive or sub-committee structures. Funding could be directed towards building the capacities of these bodies to more effectively engage and support young women's rights, including the right to political participation.

6.4 Integrating young women throughout the electoral process

Across the continent, though not universally the case, membership of the AU is now largely characterised by regularly held national elections between multiple competing political parties, though there remain challenges regarding how effectively these electoral contests are organised and run. Over the last decade, one of the critical lessons learned on how to more effectively support democratic elections, and people's engagement with those elections, is to view them as an "electoral process" rather than a single electoral event. Figure 7 summarises the ebb and flow of the electoral process, as it moves from preparation to conduct to reflection to preparation again. Viewing elections as a process focuses more attention on the periods surrounding the actual election itself – whether a presidential, parliamentary or sub-national election – and encourages both potential candidates and voters to start planning to engage with electoral events well in advance.

Within Africa, increasing attention has been given over the last decade to supporting electoral processes, and in particular, to supporting women to be more effectively engaged in those processes.¹⁵⁹ The UN has produced two guides which are very useful for young women seeking to engage in formal politics: (i) *Empowering Women Through Political Parties*, which identifies how women, including young women, can engage with political parties throughout the electoral process (see Annex 3 for a summary of possible entry points); and (ii) *Enhancing Youth Political Participation Throughout The Electoral Cycle: A Good Practice Guide*, which identifies specific activities and institutions that young women and men can engage in during the electoral cycle (see Annexes 4 and 5 for a summary of possible entry points).

159 'Outcome Document of the Regional Workshop on "Participation, Representation And Protection of Women in Electoral Processes in the Great Lakes Region"' (UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, African Union, International Conference for the Great Lakes Region, Southern African Development Community, 12 November 2019).

FIGURE 7**The electoral cycle approach diagram from Building Re-sources in Democracy, Governance and Elections**

As Figure 7 and Annexes 3-5 show, the electoral process starts at the end of one election and runs through the beginning of the next election. It has three basic phases: pre-electoral preparations, electoral operations and post-electoral learning and improvement. Organising around elections must be conceptualised as a continuous process. Young women and their organisations have many opportunities to engage in the different phases of the electoral process. For example, young women and GEWE advocates can engage as supporters of the electoral process to build a better understanding of the value of enhancing women's role in politics and decision-making. Young women can foster partnerships with EMBs, bodies responsible for civic education and the media to implement gender-sensitive civic and voter education. Young women can also draw on their own networks, for example, at school, university, in the workplace or in their local community, to share information about the contribution women can make. Young women may also engage as potential political candidates (see Section 6.5 for more on engaging with political parties).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Young women and supportive organisations are encouraged to partner with EMBs and civic education institutions to identify opportunities and implement initiatives to engage young women in electoral processes.
- Youth and women's NGOs should be technically and financially supported by relevant AU organs, national institutions and development partners to strengthen their engagement with electoral processes in their respective countries, using an electoral cycle approach.
- EMBs and civic education institutions are encouraged to design and roll out more gender and age-sensitive content and approaches in civic and voter education activities.
- EMBs are encouraged to work with national statistics offices to more systematically collect sex and age disaggregated data, including on voter registration and voter turn-out. Such data will facilitate identification of, and better programme targeting, to benefit young women.
- The AGA-Secretariat in collaboration with partners is encouraged to document good practices in the use of an electoral cycle approach to enhancing participation in politics and decision making as a resource to young women and youth generally.

It is also important that young women's issues and challenges are reflected in any post-election reflections and analysis. In this context, it is notable that the AU, RECs and a range of development partners increasingly support electoral observation missions (EOMs) across the continent, and subsequently produce reports of their findings. EOMs can be critical activities in terms of monitoring that elections have been conducted freely and fairly, and that all voters and candidates were able to participate equally, including young women. EOMs need to be encouraged to pay special attention to the environment for young women's effective participation and to make assessment and recommendations accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UN, AU, RECs and other organisations' Electoral Observation Missions are encouraged to include gender equality issues in their terms of reference, field consultations and reports and ensure that their assessments and reports specifically address the concerns of women, with appropriate attention to young women.
- Young women and GEWE advocates are encouraged to engage with EOMs, where they exist, to advocate their issues ahead of impending elections, to share information and observations, as appropriate and to provide feedback on any EOM reports.

6.5 Tackling violence against young women in politics and elections

It is an unfortunate reality that violence against women in political life, including during electoral processes, is a critical barrier to women's effective engagement in politics. Recent research has shown that "almost universally, the increase in women's political representation has been accompanied by a rise in violence against women in politics (VAWP). This is visible in different ways: in the escalation of harassment and aggression in various media, the intimidation and sexual and physical violence against women in public life, in forcing political women to resign, and in the public scrutiny of women candidates where commentary examines their appearance, rather than their experience and policies. In the most extreme form of

VAWP, women politicians have been assassinated for exercising their political rights. VAWP is one of the most serious obstacles to the realization of women's political rights today".¹⁶⁰

Unfortunately, violence against women during elections is not uncommon throughout Africa.¹⁶¹ In Africa, violence tends to be triggered by the interaction of three principal agents: political parties, elite groups, and youth groups (or party youth wings).¹⁶² For example, in Zimbabwe, the culture of violence in elections has been a formidable barrier to young women's participation in politics and only very few young women have braved the militarisation of politics unleashed by their male counterparts.¹⁶³ Despite the progressive electoral laws in Kenya, young women have shied away from competitive politics at the national level due to the fear of violence against women and have instead focused more on the reserved seats for women's representative in the devolved local governments.¹⁶⁴ In African countries undergoing violent conflict and/or major political transition, the risk of violence is even more acute, but even in relatively stable democracies, the threat of violence can impact on women's confidence to contest for election and even sometimes to cast their vote. For young women, the threat of violence can be even more intimidating, as young women often attract less respect from both older people and their male peers.

AU Member States and the state apparatus they control have a duty to ensure the safety of young women

¹⁶⁰ 'Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide'.

¹⁶¹ Tim Kellow, 'Women, Elections and Violence in West Africa' (International Alert, 2010); Ojok and Acol, 'Connecting the Dots: Youth Political Participation and Electoral Violence in Africa'; 'RAU Report Finds That Violence Discourages Young Women from Participating in Politics in Zimbabwe', Text, International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, 24 April 2017, <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/knowledge-resources/report-white-paper/rau-report-finds-violence-discourages-young-women>.

¹⁶² Ojok and Acol, 'Connecting the Dots: Youth Political Participation and Electoral Violence in Africa.'

¹⁶³ 'RAU Report Finds That Violence Discourages Young Women from Participating in Politics in Zimbabwe'; Research & Advocacy Unit (RAU) (2015) Do Middle-Class Women Defend Democracy?, Harare, Zimbabwe, http://researchandadvocacyunit.org/system/files/Middle_20class_20women_20_284_29.pdf

¹⁶⁴ 'Young Women in Politics: Experiences of the 2013 Election'.

as candidates and voters.¹⁶⁵ To address this challenge, UN Women and UNDP have published *Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide*, which provide guidance on practical measures that can be taken to address VAWP (see Annex 5 for a summary). The guide identifies actions which governments and partners need to take to ensure women's safety during the electoral process. For example, AU Member States may need to review their electoral frameworks to ensure that specific electoral acts of misconduct such as gender-based violence against women in elections are criminalised and are complemented with a more comprehensive package of security and electoral reforms. EMBs and any other relevant political party regulatory bodies may need to work with political parties to support them to develop and implement codes of conduct which prohibit violence or threats of violence and include review and sanctions. A multi-stakeholder and multi-sector approach is needed, both to prevent violence from occurring, but to sanction any violence if it takes place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs and Member States are urged to explicitly recognise through continental, regional and national level policy and legal commitments that Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) is a critical barrier impacting the ability of women, including young women, to actively and safely engage politics.
- AU Member States are urged to implement legal and policy reforms at the national level to ensure that VAWP is specifically criminalised and there are mechanisms and resources available for enforcement against perpetrators and redress for victims.

¹⁶⁵ 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: Violence against Women in Politics' (A/73/301, Report of the UN Secretary General, 6 August 2018), <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/73/301>; 'Resolution 73/148 on Intensification of Efforts to Prevent and Eliminate All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls: Sexual Harassment' (A/RES/73/148, adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018, 17 December 2018), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/445/52/PDF/N1844552.pdf?OpenElement>.

6.6 Proactively engaging young women in political parties

In practical terms, if young women want to be active in politics as candidates and then as elected representatives, they need to be active in political parties. Political parties nominate candidates to run in electorates, they choose which candidates are on their party list and in what order and in some countries they can choose who sits in the Upper House as a representative. They may also provide campaign funding to party candidates, organise voter rallies and engage with the media. Significantly, political parties also often lead the development of the policy agendas and party manifestoes that influence what policies and laws parliamentarians and Ministers prioritise when they get into power, or even if they remain in opposition.

In reality, political parties across Africa are not generally gender-sensitive, with gender and age intersecting to create a formidable barrier to young women's participation in political party politics. For example, in Malawi, a 2013 analysis found that political parties had no deliberate policies for mobilising young rural women and that women's role in political parties is often reduced to "singing and dancing".¹⁶⁶ Young women in Kenya and Tanzania have also complained that party nomination procedures were not transparent, and effectively worked against women.¹⁶⁷

Despite the challenges that still limit young women's engagement in political parties, it remains an unavoidable reality across Africa that political parties remain the main vehicle for engaging in elections, such that that young women will need to engage with parties throughout the electoral cycle. Recognising the centrality of political parties, UN Women and the National Democratic Institute produced a guide on *Empowering Women Through Political Parties* which identifies how women can engage with political parties throughout the electoral process (see Annex 3 for a summary). For young women, there are some quite specific options, including not only engaging via political parties'

¹⁶⁶ Linda K Kabwato, 'Young Women in Political Participation in Malawi: Final Technical Report' (Malawi: Governance and Development Institute, 2013), <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/52638/IDL-52638.pdf>.

¹⁶⁷ 'Young Women in Politics: Experiences of the 2013 Election'; 'Tanzania National Elections Gender Assessment' (International Republican Institute, 2016), https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/tanzania_gender_report.pdf.

women's wings but also via their youth wings. The latter are often dominated by young men, but if they can be made gender-sensitive they can be an important platform for building a cadre of young female political party members who have positioned to develop into future leaders of the party. Strategically engaging in political party manifesto development, as well as internal policy processes, can also have long-term benefits, as party manifestoes are a way of signalling to the broader public the values of the party. Making such party manifestoes gender-sensitive is also an early way of building a political environment that is more inclusive of women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU and RECs are encouraged to convene dialogues platforms that promote the implementation of guidelines for gender and youth responsive political parties in Member States.
- Young women and youth organisations are encouraged to work with partners to organise and/or engage with regional and national capacity building trainings and advocacy forums for increased engagement of young women in political parties in Africa.

6.7 Supporting young women within national legislatures

A focus on supporting young women as candidates and voters should not overlook the fact that the number of women Members of Parliament (MPs) across Africa is growing, including the number of young women MPs. These women MPs need to be actively supported to discharge their leadership duties. In practice, many new MPs may welcome capacity building trainings aimed at empowering them to more effectively use their new powers to make change. A number of development partners offer support for parliamentary development, with special programmes available for women and young people.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ For example, UNDP, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the European Union, the Westminster Foundation or International IDEA and International IDEA. The IPU and UNDP also regularly convene meetings of women parliamentarians in order to facilitate information exchanges between women to learn more about their own and other regions and about strategies or mechanisms developed by other countries to meet the concerns of women. IPU also organises meetings of young parliamentarians, in order to support the development of networking and knowledge sharing amongst this relatively small cohort. The Commonwealth

At the national level, a number of African legislatures have developed parliamentary women's caucuses and parliamentary youth caucuses, which bring together MPs across party lines to discuss common issues. Data from the IPU indicates that 39 of 55 AU Member States have women's parliamentary caucuses.¹⁶⁹ The prevalence of youth caucuses is much lower. In 2018, IPU produced a report on *Youth in Parliaments* which found that "youth networks and caucuses in parliament, both formal and informal, are growing in number around the world. Such bodies exist in 16.7 of the parliaments included in this report."¹⁷⁰ In fact, of the small global cohort of parliamentary youth causes in operation, many of the youth caucuses that do exist are located in Africa, with the IPU reporting Networks of Young Parliamentarians in Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa and Tanzania.¹⁷¹ Women and youth caucuses are a valuable way for increasing the visibility of these cohorts of MPs, as well as to build much-needed solidarity and social support. They can

RECOMMENDATIONS

- National Parliaments in AU Member States are encouraged to establish parliamentary women's caucuses and parliamentary youth caucuses where these do not exist, and to provide financial and human resources support towards outreach, education and consultation related activities for caucuses that are already established.
- The AU, RECs, Member State legislatures and development partners (in particular, parliamentary support organisations) are encouraged to work together to design and implement specific programmes to support young women MPs across the continent.

also be useful platforms for enabling young women MPs to influence policy decisions by leveraging their caucus's influence to focus more attention on issues affecting young women. Such caucuses can also be good allies for CSOs working on young women's issues, as they are often willing to partner and provide a platform through which issues of concern to young women can get on parliamentary agendas.

Secretariat also convenes regular conferences for women and youth MPs from Commonwealth countries

¹⁶⁹ 'Database on Women's Caucuses', Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed 4 October 2019, <http://w3.ipu.org/>.

¹⁷⁰ 'Youth in Parliaments: 2018' (Geneva, Switzerland: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018), p.31, <https://www.ipu.org/file/6076/download?token=7Aog71dH>.

¹⁷¹ 'Youth in Parliaments: 2018', p.31.

6.8 Facilitating young women's engagement at sub-national level

Increasing attention is now being paid to women's inclusion in sub-national political institutions, as part of global monitoring of implementation of SDG-5, Target 5.5 in relation to women's participation in politics. The AU adopted the *African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development* in June 2014, and it came into force in January 2019. It currently has been signed by 17 countries but ratified by only six Member States.¹⁷² The Charter enjoins Member States to ensure the participation and representation of youth and women in local governance and to integrate gender and youth issues in policy formulation, planning, provision of services and implementation of programmes and initiatives related to local governance.¹⁷³

Representation of women in local government in Africa range from 5 to as high as 48.¹⁷⁴ The data in Africa shows 27 countries have introduced quotas for women at local levels.¹⁷⁵ Quotas for women at local level represent an excellent opportunity for young women to become engaged in politics at the community and local level, but to date, the bulk of resources and attention has been paid to supporting women's involved in national politics, with less focus on sub-national institutions and processes.

More work can be done in Africa to support young women to be more actively engaged in electoral processes relating to local government elections. Local government can be an excellent training ground for women seeking to engaging in national politics at some later stage. Notably however, elections for local

government elections are often held on a different schedule to national elections, such that young women need to be specifically supported to understand how and when to engage in sub-national elections. Young women can also be supported to better understand how to advocate towards and work with sub-national governments. Considerable decision-making, implementation of government programmes and spending of government monies takes place at local level, particularly in federal systems (e.g. Nigeria, Somalia) and heavily decentralised systems (e.g. Kenya). Partners can work with young women to develop their understanding of the division of powers and resources at national and local levels, and how they can engage with sub-national government departments, including by being more involved in local-level planning, policy-making and decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs and other regional organisations are encouraged to promote the ratification and implementation of continental and regional commitments to ensure the equal and effective participation of women and youth in leadership in local governance in Africa
- Sub-national governments are encouraged to reach out more systematically and engage young women and, in their planning, policy-making and decision-making.
- Development partners are encouraged to support programs and initiatives to build the capacities of sub-national institutions and young women on the values of and strategies for increasing youth and women's engagement in local governance.

6.9 Developing a cadre of political empowered young women

Efforts to strengthen young women's political participation across Africa needs to start and finish with young women themselves. In this context, it is notable that while many different institutions are active in the field of political governance, gender equality and women's rights broadly, there remains considerable room to better target and coordinate activities towards young women specifically.

172 'African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development - Ratification Table' (African Union, 7 November 2019), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-sl-AFRICAN%20CHARTER%20ON%20THE%20VALUES%20AND%20PRINCIPLES%20OF%20DECENTRALISATION%2C%20LOCAL%20....pdf>.

173 'African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development' (African Union, 27 June 2014), https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049_-_african_charter_on_the_values_and_principles_of_decentralisation_local_governance_and_local_development_e.pdf.

174 Unpublished UN Women Database on Women in Local Government, reviewed on 8 October 2019.

175 'Gender Quotas Database - Regional Grouping - African Union'.

There are different forms of support and channels of engagement that can be considered in order to strengthen young women's capacities to engage more effectively in politics and decision-making. Consideration can be given to developing and rolling out specific capacity building programmes for young women who want to engage in politics, whether through national youth or women's ministries, secondary schools, Universities, NGOs or development partners. Across Africa, women candidates training has already been rolled out in many countries, and there are several tools that can be drawn upon to inform locally-contextualised capacity development programmes for young women.¹⁷⁶

Lessons learned from capacity development programmes across the world suggest some common themes.¹⁷⁷ For example, when identifying participants for such programmes, it is important not to engage only elite young women, based in capitals and/or with formal education. It is important that training opportunities are offered on a merit-basis, and special effort is made to reach out to women living in regional towns or rural areas and/or who may not have completed secondary education but may nonetheless be active in their communities and keen to engage in public life. Experience also shows that it is important that such trainings are not ad hoc or one-off. Building political and public policy skills takes time; training programmes therefore need to be action-orientated and seek to build young women's capacities over time

through a mix of formal training and applied, hands-on activities. Another lesson points to the need to develop not only individual women's capacities but to complement training with support for the development of networks of young women, who can support each other and work together over time. This helps protect individual women from being singled-out for criticism/attack, as well as growing a connected cohort of empowered young women, who can strengthen their collective impact on decision-making over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs, Member States, youth and women's ministries and NGOs are encouraged to provide dialogue, training and mentorship opportunities as well as funding support to enhance young women's participation in political processes and decision making at different levels.
- Development partners are encouraged to collaborate in supporting capacity development activities for young women aspirants, including by drawing on existing training tools developed in this space.

6.10 Strengthening continental, regional and national youth/young women's Civil Society Organisations

Apart from engaging directly in political and governance institutions, there are also many opportunities for young women to engage in civic life through women- and youth-led organisations that are active across Africa at regional and national levels. The AU Commission's Civil Society and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) is dedicated to promoting civil society participation in AU policy and program initiatives. In this role, CIDO can take the lead in reaching out to young women and their organisations to facilitate their engagement in continental policy platforms, process and decision-making structures. All other departments of the AU Commission and RECs are also mandated to engage with African civil society, providing numerous opportunities for young women's organisations to influence regional policy processes and programmes.

Africa has long been characterised by strong civil society movements across the entire continent, with independence movements morphing over time into activism across a range of civic issues. CSOs working directly on youth or women's rights, as well as CSOs

¹⁷⁶ For examples, see 'Breaking Barriers: Empowering Young Women To Participate In Democratic Politics - Manual For Facilitators' (Freetown, Sierra Leone: The Gender, Research and Documentation Centre and the Political Science Departments of the University of Sierra Leone in collaboration with the 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone, in partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), undated), <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/52307/IDL-52307.pdf>; Mahnaz Afkhami et al., *Leading to Action: A Political Participation Handbook for Women* (Bethesda, MD.: Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace, 2010); 'Political Leadership Training Manual' (Aware Girls & Commonwealth Foundation, 2013), <http://www.awaregirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Aware-Girls-CommonWealth-Good-Governance-Manual-Draft.pdf>; Jacqueline Aslimwe-Mwesigye and Alexious Butler, 'Uganda - Candidate Training Manual for Women: Training Manual for Civil Society Organizations', n.d.

¹⁷⁷ 'Increasing Women's Political Participation Through Effective Training Programs: A Guide to Best Practices and Lessons Learned' (National Democratic Institute, 2013), <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Training-Manual-Increasing-WPP-Through-Effective-Training-Programs.pdf>.

working on sectoral issues (e.g. poverty reduction, climate change, natural resource exploitation) are all vehicles for young women to become more actively involved in civic and public life. However, breaking into existing CSOs has sometimes been difficult for young women, with youth-led organisations often dominated by men and women-led organisations still tending to be dominated by senior women. In early 2019, a feminist forum organised in Ghana debated and agreed that “the women’s movement had been fragmented and was characterised by numerous cleavages, especially along intergenerational and class lines...‘It is imperative to start a serious intergenerational dialogue, so the next generation of young women will get to understand what we have fought for and the need to continue the fight if the gains are to be sustained.’”¹⁷⁸ The forum recognised the need to bridge the gaps between young and older women (as well as between female politicians and women’s rights activists, rural and urban women and rich and poor women) and called for more engagement with younger women in order to effectively further the women’s rights agenda.¹⁷⁹ It may well be because current structures are difficult to penetrate that there are now more CSOs specifically run by and/or focused on young women.

Many young women currently in parliament and local government started as civil society leaders. Engaging young women more actively in the CSO movement will ensure that young women’s issues are integrated into CSO advocacy platforms. Ensuring young women’s involvement within CSO structures is also critical to the sustainability of the CSO movement, including regional and national women’s rights movement. Young women can also utilise these avenues to build self-confidence, and public speaking and leadership skills as well as achieve economic empowerment. Participating in CSOs also helps to develop specific subject matter expertise and a profile and to facilitate networking opportunities. In fact, a 2017 study of elections in eight African countries recommended that “youth movements in individual countries could be strengthened by building networks across the continent, and promoting learning from experiences within countries” through more platforms for sustained

youth engagement with government, political parties and elected leaders”.¹⁸⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs and other regional organisations are urged to require all CSOs participating in regional meetings and initiatives include young women as members of their delegations.
- The AU, AGA Secretariat, RECs, Member States and their partners can work with existing civil society to (i) facilitate inter-generational dialogues that strengthen women’s movements and (ii) build the specific capacities of young women to work within CSOs, as part of a broader agenda to encourage young women’s leadership within African civil society.

6.11 Supporting social norm change

One of the most complicated but critical aspects of empowering young women to meaningfully exercise their rights to engage in politics and decision-making as equal, respected, active members of their communities is supporting broad-based social norm change across the continent. As discussed earlier in this report, young women still suffer from intersecting discrimination on the basis of both their sex and age (amongst many other aspects of their identities). A 2017 study of elections in eight African countries found that “in a number of countries, women and youth representation in government, political parties and elected positions was limited by perceptions about the inability of women and youth to occupy positions of leadership...Increased youth participation in future requires that these perceptions are interrogated and changed”.¹⁸¹ If young women are to be truly empowered and practically able to engage equally in politics and decision-making, social norms must change to recognise and respect the value of young women’s perspectives and to provide them with opportunities from childhood throughout their lives to develop and exercise their capacities safely, freely and confidently.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Defining the Agender: West African Feminism’, *Commonwealth Foundation* (blog), 27 February 2019, <https://commonwealthfoundation.com/defining-the-agender-west-african-feminism/>.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Defining the Agender’.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Youth Participation in Elections in Africa: An Eight-Country Study’, p.83.

¹⁸¹ ‘Youth Participation in Elections in Africa: An Eight-Country Study’, p.83.

Social norm change requires broad engagement across a range of stakeholders and sectors. Work to address social norms will often form a fundamental aspect of many of the activities discussed earlier in this report. However, at the same time, the fundamental importance of supporting broad-based social norm change also requires that this work warrants prioritisation in its own right. In this context it is very significant that the new AU *Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Rights (2018-28)* specifically recognised under Pillar 4: Leadership, Voice and Visibility, not only the need to ensure equal political participation of women and girls but also included a specific outcome focused on

social norm change. *Outcome 4.2* focuses specifically on “Voice: Women and girls have equal voice and exercise agency in the home, community, and public spaces”. This outcome specifically recognises that “The social norms around gender in the home, community and work result in women being effectively silenced. Without voice, there can be no choice, and certainly no control”.¹⁸² To address this challenge, the AU commits to “strengthening a continuous flow of information through mainstream, social and traditional media leading to a ‘gender-web’ and movements that change attitudes, mindsets and social norms”.¹⁸³

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The AU, RECs and other regional organisations are encouraged to develop continental and regional policies that promote an end to discriminatory laws, norms and practices, including those impairing women’s role in politics and decision making.
- AU Member States are urged to promote multi-sectoral partnerships including with traditional and religious leaders as well as men and boys to transform harmful social norms that impede women’s ability to engage in politics.
- AU Member States and development partners are encouraged to devote substantial human and financial resources on behaviour change programs at national and local levels, in order to more systematically accelerate social norm change.

¹⁸² ‘AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment (2018-28)’.

¹⁸³ ‘AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment (2018-28)’.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Barriers to young women's political participation are multidimensional, reflecting the complex interaction of cultural values and institutional policies and practices. The impact of COVID-19 has added a further level of complexity to this already challenging space, with young women's lack of voice in political spaces potentially further marginalising them as governments have attempted to implement quick responses which have not necessarily allowed for sufficient public consultation.

Despite the many commitments made to strengthening the political participation of both women and young people, there remains a considerable gap in political empowerment between men and women, and that gap grows larger in relation to young women. Although some countries have made progress in supporting more women to be active in formal political institutions at national and sub-national levels, nonetheless, the data shows that young people, and young women in particular, are still under-represented in national political and decision-making institutions.

Cultural and social inequalities in relation to gender are often exacerbated at the intersection of age and sex, with young women bearing the brunt of discrimination on both fronts. Although gender equality has been recognised as a critical issue of importance to both the AU and Member States, less attention has historically been paid to young women as a distinct category of political actor. Where young women are involved it has usually been either as part of a larger group of women or young people, with less systematic consideration of the specific value or need of young women as a group in their own right. In practice, this has meant that less resources have been specifically directed at promoting their political empowerment, which has further marginalised young women from participation and representation in regional and national political decision-making.

Overcoming the barriers to women's active participation in politics and decision-making across the continent necessitates action on many fronts by different actors, as described in the preceding analysis. In summary, consideration needs to be given to the following:

- COVID-19 can provide an opportunity to advance transformative gender equality reforms, which

harness changing economic and social norms for the benefit of women and girls. At a minimum, COVID-19 responses need to be gender sensitive, and specific resources need to be directed towards ensuring that the specific needs of women and girls are addressed. To this end, noting the limited voice and political space that young women currently occupy, it is important for governments to establish specific consultation and feedback mechanisms that will enable young women to be meaningfully involved in policy- and decision-making.

- AU Member States and other stakeholders need to actively progress implementation of existing international and regional treaties, agreements and policy frameworks, many of which already provide strong support for efforts to prioritise young women's more systematic and effective inclusion in politics and decision-making. The SDGs, Agenda 2063 and numerous AU treaties and agreements make clear that young people are critical to the future development of Africa. AU Member States and other key stakeholders are also encouraged to ratify and implement key treaties, for example, the Maputo Protocol.
- Laws regulating politics, political processes and political institutions need to be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, to ensure that they proactively support young women (and men) to engage effectively in politics and decision-making. This may include introducing legal quotas in national and sub-national political institutions. More broadly, laws should be reviewed to promote gender equality and remove provisions which may discriminate against women.
- Key institutions – such as legislatures, sub-national decision-making bodies, electoral management bodies and youth and women's ministries – need to be supported to review their current efforts to support young women's political participation and to then design and implement strategies to strengthen their engagement with and support for young women.
- Young women and organisations working with young women need to be directly supported, to strengthen their capacities and empower them to more effectively engage in political processes

at all levels. This includes, for example, capacity development training for young women, mentoring programs and supporting young women's networks.

- Long-term efforts need to be made at all levels, by the AU, RECs, Member States and development

partners, to invest in programs and initiatives which support deeper "social norm change", in order to address gender inequality and related prejudices in relation to youth and young women in the context of leadership.

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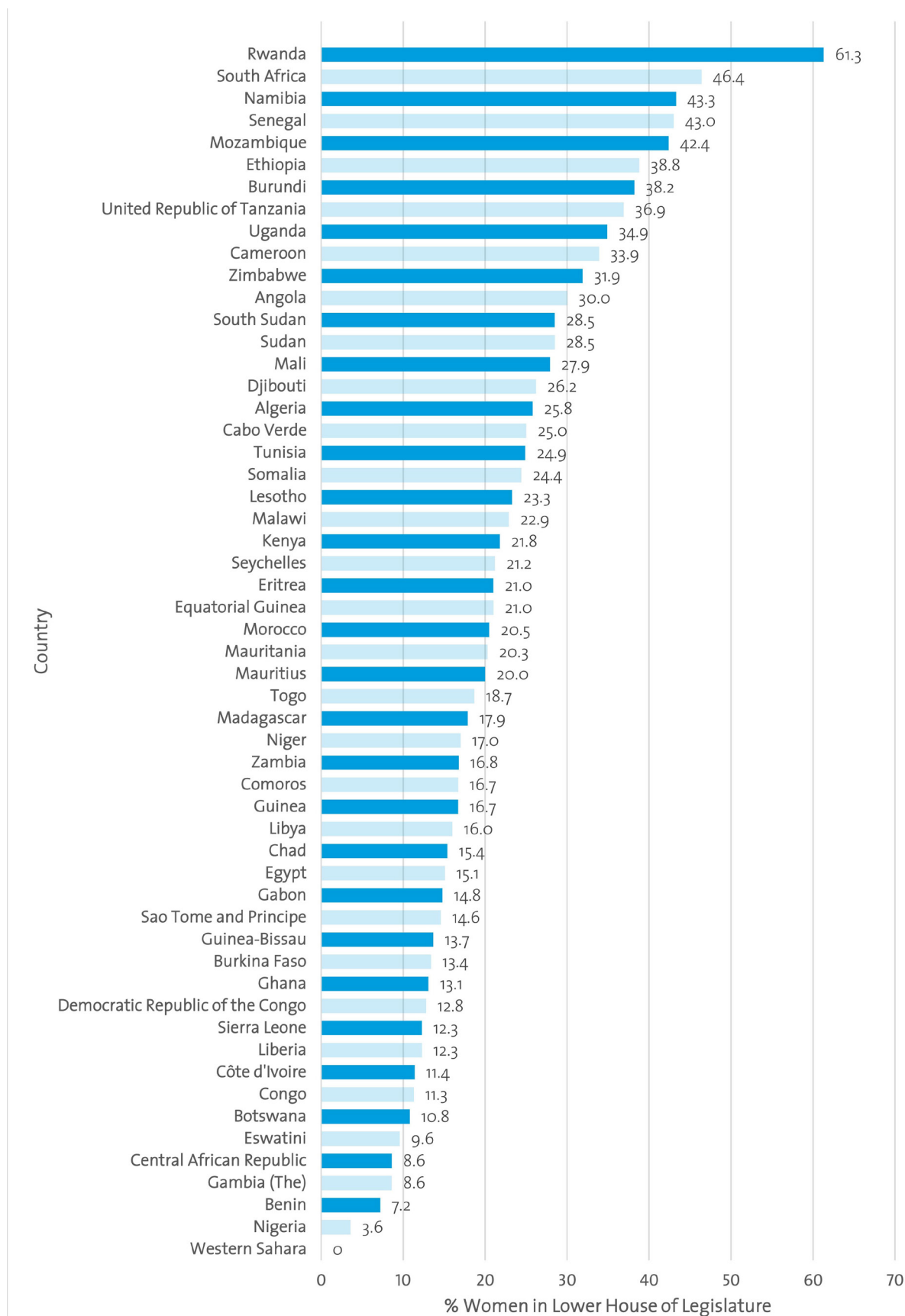
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ANNEX 1: WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT ACROSS THE AFRICA



ANNEX 2: GENDER EQUALITY COMMITMENTS BY REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

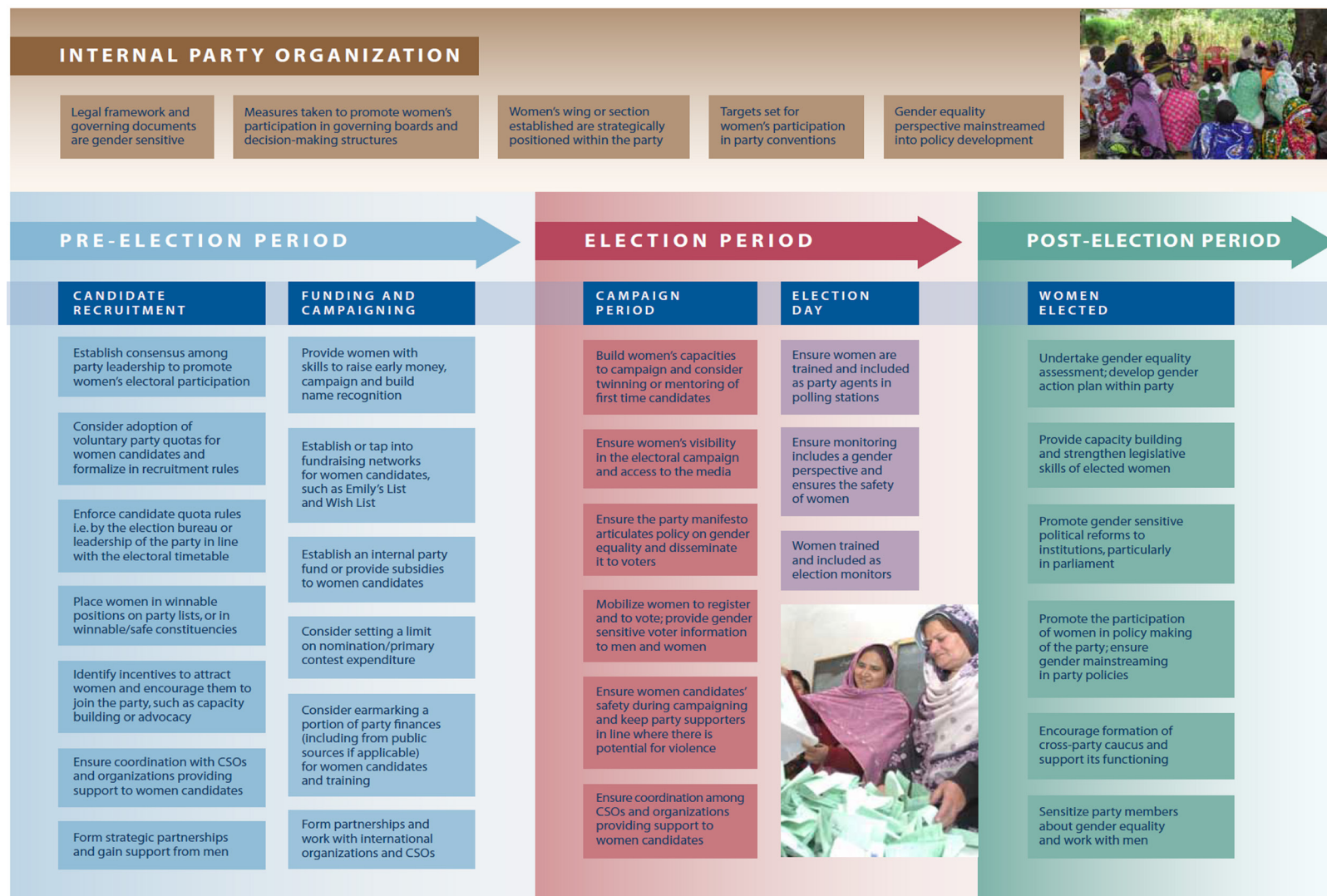
FIGURE 8
African Human Development Report 2016 (p.97)

Women's rights supported by declarations and policies in African Economic Commissions

Sub-regional body	Policies, declarations and plans
Southern African Development Community (SADC)	1997 Declaration on Gender and Development
	2008 Protocol on Gender and Development
	2009 Annual Barometer to monitor Protocol compliance
	SADC Gender Unit
	SADC Workplace Gender Policy
	SADC Women's Economic Empowerment Framework
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	2014 Social Charter
	COMESA's Gender and Social Affairs Division
	COMESA Gender Manuals
	COMESA Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Action Plan
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	2000 Regional Action Plan for Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
	2008 Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1820 on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts and Post-Conflict Situations
	2009 Addis Ababa Declaration on the Enhancement of Women's Participation and Representation in Decision Making Positions
	2013 Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women and Security
	2014 Regional Strategy for Higher Representation of Women in Decision Making Positions
East African Community (EAC)	EAC Sectoral Council on Gender and Community Development
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	Revised ECOWAS Treaty
	1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security
	2001 Declaration on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons
	ECOWAS Gender Policy
	2003 ECOWAS established a Gender Development Centre
	2010 ECOWAS Regional Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820
International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR)	Dakar Declaration
	2006 Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children
	2011 Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
	Sexual and Gender based Violence Checklist

Source: Compiled by the AfHDR research team.

ANNEX 3: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH POLITICAL PARTIES



ANNEX 4: STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGHOUT THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

TABLE 1: POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

Note: The numbers in brackets refer to examples of good practices featured in Part B of this guide.

1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND PARLIAMENTS

Align the minimum voting age with the minimum age of eligibility to run for office	Consider the introduction of youth and women's quotas in electoral laws	Identify and address context-specific legal barriers to youth participation
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CSOs AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Review and discuss the legal framework for youth participation	Consider calling for a youth-friendly legal framework	Campaign and lobby for proposed changes (1)
--	---	--

UNDP

Conduct research on an enabling legal framework	Provide technical advice to governments	Support dialogue and consultation processes on youth-friendly legal frameworks
---	---	--

2 PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

UNDP AND CSOs

Encourage continuous youth participation and civic education in schools and universities (2) (3)	Design training programmes as incubators for new projects (4) (5)	Support youth-led community development and volunteering organizations (6) (7)	Provide flexible support to innovative, small-scale youth projects (8)	Bridge the digital divide with mobile phones and radio (9)	Use online platforms for knowledge sharing and networking (10)
---	--	---	---	---	---

UNDP AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Encourage affirmative action measures such as youth and women's quotas (11)	Support the development of strong political party youth wings (11)	Develop the capacities of young members in a multi-partisan setting (11)	Address training and mentoring needs of young women separately (12)
--	---	---	--

3 ELECTORAL PERIOD

UNDP, EMBs AND CSOs

Ensure youth participation in all phases of voter education campaigns (13)	Use entertaining methods and multimedia strategies to catch the attention of youth (14) (15)	Include youth on EMB advisory boards, and as poll station workers and election observers (13) (16)	Develop interactive online tools to reach out to young voters (17)
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4 POST-ELECTORAL PERIOD

UNDP, PARLIAMENTS, GOVERNMENTS AND CSOs

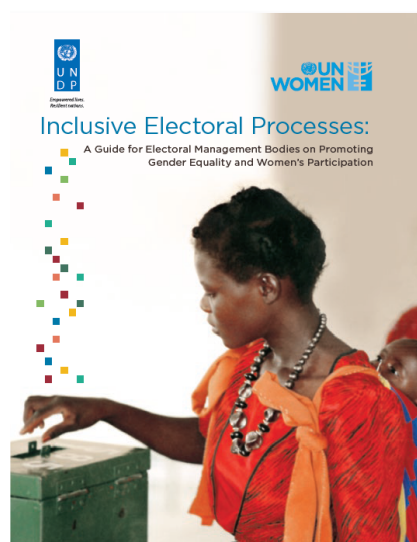
Help ensure that voices of youth are heard in Parliament and government (18)	Facilitate youth-led national youth councils/parliaments (19)	Invite youth groups to visit national parliaments (20)	Initiate internship schemes for students in parliaments	Train and support young members of parliament (5)	Initiate and support youth councils at local levels (21)
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ANNEX 5: PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

Promoting Gender Equality in the Electoral Cycle

Internal EMB Organization

- Assess needs through a gender mapping or assessment exercise
- Commit to gender equality by developing a gender policy and action plan
- Use the recruitment and promotion process to achieve gender balance at all levels
- Consider the appointment of gender focal points or a gender equality unit
- Institute process to collect sex-disaggregated data
- Include sex disaggregation in data analysis
- Provide training on all new procedures and in gender awareness for all staff



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Pre-election period

(the years between the post-election period and the announcement of the next election)

REGISTRATION

- Conduct a mapping of registration procedures
- Ensure provision of sex-disaggregated data
- Ensure need for proof of identity is not a barrier
- Consider need for flexibility in regulations for displaced peoples
- Consider need for taking registration to the people
- Consider need for women-only registration teams
- Include gender-sensitive actions in the role descriptions, checklists and training
- Deliver gender-sensitive outreach about registration as needed

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES & PARTIES

- Ensure the enforcement of nomination rules regarding number of women candidates
- Ensure enforcement of campaign finance rules regarding gender equality

VOTER OUTREACH

- Plan gender-sensitive voter outreach programmes – message, audience and delivery method
- Deliver voter outreach programmes for women that give consideration to best delivery methods
- Work with media on gender-aware outreach and reporting
- Work with civil society organizations on gender-aware outreach

PLANNING FOR ELECTION DAY

- Conduct a mapping of polling procedures
- Consider polling place location and provision of equipment
- Consider need for women-only polling stations or booths within the polling station and/or mobile polling stations
- Plan how to recruit women and men to work in polling places
- Conduct gender sensitivity training for polling staff
- Include gender sensitivity in role descriptions and checklists
- Ensure ballot paper and instructions made accessible for people who cannot read
- Consider need for flexibility in regulations for displaced peoples

Election period (announcement to results)

POLLING PLACE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure safety of polling station staff and voters by adopting appropriate measures
- Deliver priority in queue for pregnant women and mothers
- Organize women-only queues and/or polling stations or booths within the station (where appropriate)
- Deliver mobile polling stations (where needed)
- Consider arrangements for collecting sex-disaggregated data

VOTER INFORMATION

- Deliver voter outreach about election day (planned and designed in pre-election period)
- Give consideration to best delivery methods

Post-election period (after the election results)

ELECTION ASSESSMENT

- Include gender issues in the assessment of the past election
- Review operations manuals and outreach materials from a gender perspective
- Include sex disaggregation in data analysis

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- Assess whether any regulations require revision, including to ensure enforcement (e.g., candidate quota)
- Assess whether any regulations or processes require review to produce sex-disaggregated data

STRATEGIC AND ACTION PLAN

- Conduct a mapping of EMB policies and processes to identify any gender inequalities
- Set gender-related goals for registration and voting
- Set voter outreach policy and goals
- Include internal gender mainstreaming goals
- Consider appointment of gender focal points or a gender unit

ANNEX 6: ACTION POINTS FOR PREVENTING & MITIGATING VAW

ACTION POINT	PRE-ELECTION PHASE	ELECTION PHASE	POST-ELECTION PHASE
1. Mapping and Measuring VAWE (e.g. international and regional organizations, CSOs, national programmes, violence monitoring programmes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct country-level and regional-level mapping of VAWE Include VAWE in EMB and electoral security assessments Develop and define indicators Adjust or build upon existing VAW indicators and measurement tools Consider including VAWE in relevant SDGs monitoring Consider using crowd-sourcing and data visualization tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection and verification Adapt and integrate VAWE into monitoring tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse results of collection efforts Ensure data aggregation and reporting Identify gaps and refine indicators as needed Include VAWE in post-election reports and findings
2. Integrating VAWE into Election Observation and Violence Monitoring (e.g. international and regional organizations, CSOs, election observers, Women's Situation Room partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt and integrate VAWE into international and domestic election observation Integrate VAWE into electoral violence early warning systems Integrate a gender perspective into existing election violence monitoring tools Identify indicators to be measured Include gender sensitivity in observer trainings Ensure VAWE is monitored and reported in Women's Situation Rooms and other civil society monitoring programmes (i.e. election and human rights) Develop harmonized data collection and reporting tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt and integrate VAWE into observation tools Aim for gender balance in election observer teams Streamline reporting across Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure aggregation and reporting Identify gaps and make recommendations Include gender dimension and human rights-based approach in observation report and findings
3. Legal and Policy Reform to Prevent and Respond to VAWE (e.g. legislatures and lawmakers, electoral management bodies, international and regional organizations, courts, political parties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of laws and policies which define and protect against VAWE Adapt existing Eliminating VAW (EVAW) legislation to explicitly provide measures on protecting against VAWE Protocols and regulations adopted by EMBs to prevent VAWE in the electoral process Election and political party codes of conduct address VAWE Provide gender-sensitivity training to the police, adjudicators, judges, lawyers, CSOs etc. who may handle reported cases of VAWE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to electoral justice for women, and pursue justice for victims Establish methods to safely/confidentially report cases of VAWE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure implementation of laws and policies on VAWE Review laws and policies and make adjustments as needed Adjudication of electoral disputes involving VAWE Ensure investigation and prosecution of human rights violations and abuses against women in politics Adapt and integrate new victim resources into existing services for VAW
4. Preventing and Mitigating VAWE through Electoral Arrangements (e.g. EMBs, relevant line ministries, security sector/police)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMB ensure any violence monitoring or risk assessments include consideration of VAWE Train EMB staff on VAWE and responses Adopt measures to reduce family voting as needed Integrate VAWE into voter education, including raising awareness about ballot secrecy and family voting Relevant unit within EMB tasked with addressing VAWE and gender concerns Provide protection for women candidates Training of police and security forces on VAWE Increase numbers of women in police forces, including in leadership positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider arrangements for ballot secrecy for voters Election day logistics planning sensitive to VAWE (gender segregated polling stations, female security guards/sensitized police forces in high risk areas, poll workers sensitized to VAWE) Gender-segregated polling stations if required to reduce violence or family voting pressures Deploy female police officers at women-only polling stations Ensure protection of election workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-election review includes gender dimension Enforcement of violations of gender-related offences
5. Working with Political Parties to Prevent and Reduce VAWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to all political parties to carry out advocacy work Comply with legislated codes of conduct and sensitize party members Adopt own code of conduct as needed Update party regulations and statutes to address VAWE Monitoring and enforcement of party policy and practices on VAWE Ensure transparent candidate selection rules and access to political finance Introduce issue of VAWE to trainings and voter outreach materials and efforts Encourage adoption of a public joint statement by political parties committing to comply with codes of conduct and human rights Train party agents/observers to monitor VAWE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and deploy more women as political party agents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure women elected representatives are supported in their functions Ensure no women forced to resign seats in favour of men
6. Raising Awareness and Changing Norms (e.g. legislators and parliamentary networks, CSOs, media, men, international and regional organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising campaigns to prevent VAWE Adapt training programmes to introduce VAWE Civic outreach materials are adapted to the issues of VAWE Commitment to report on VAWE in the media Capacity building for media on VAWE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building for media on VAWE Media monitoring for gender bias Engage with men as allies and influential advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of lessons learned Adopt civic education to inform the public and opinion-makers about VAWE Penalties and sanctions for media violations Engage with legislators and parliamentary networks

With the burgeoning youth population that dominates Africa's demographics, the active participation and leadership of Africa's young people, including young women is critical to achieve the development, peace and integration aspirations of the continent in Agenda 2063 and other commitments.

However, their political power has not reflected their demographics. For young women, representation in political institutions, policy-making and decision-making processes has remained limited. The disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women's social and economic lives puts the limited progress at risk and threatens to reverse the gains made if specific attention is not given to specifically addressing the needs of women, including young women.

This policy paper and accompanying policy brief carry a collection of good practice and lessons learned from around the Africa and the world, with a view to enabling the AU and its organs, as well as its Member States, to identify possible entry points and strategies for ramping up efforts to realise the AU's GEWE commitments, and the many national gender equality and youth policies and strategies across the continent. The paper and policy brief offer more than fifty recommendations for consideration by the AU, AU Member States, and other stakeholders at the continental, regional and national levels to address the complex challenge of empowering young women across the continent to more effectively engage in political life. It calls on deliberate efforts to put the needs of young women at the centre of the COVID-19 response and recovery plans so that gains made around political participation are not reversed by the pandemic.



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