



# WCARO 2019

## ANNUAL REPORT

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# FOREWORD



Oulimata Sarr © F. Diouf Photography

The year 2019 was crucial for women globally, from the first all-woman spacewalk embarked on by NASA female astronauts to Egypt, Indonesia and Tanzania banning child marriage to protect girls, their futures and their education.

The same applies to West and Central Africa. Despite the many challenges faced by our region, great achievements were made during 2019 regarding gender equality and women's empowerment.

In 2019, political instability, armed conflicts and urban criminal violence continued to pose security threats to the civilian population throughout the region. Presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal caused social tensions during pre- and post-electoral periods. Across the Sahel, insecurity translated into a humanitarian crisis, leading to the internal displacement and closure of hundreds of schools and health centres. This highly volatile environment exacerbates gender inequality and increases hostility towards women and girls, who

are made systematic victims of sexual violence, especially in countries such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The role of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) has been pivotal to empowering women and promoting their fundamental rights in this complex context. Despite the many upheavals, we are particularly proud that in 2019 we were able to achieve the following tangible results in the areas of women's political participation, economic empowerment, elimination of gender-based violence (GBV), and peace and security, whether through advocacy to influence legislation or through direct interventions such as capacity-building.

In 2019, UN Women continued to advocate for the application of global norms on gender equality and women's rights, resulting in national reviews and appraisals of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action being conducted in 12 countries of the region, with the support of the respective UN Women country offices.

As of 2019, non-discrimination based on gender in hiring was legally mandated in seven countries, including Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Niger.

The political participation of both women and girls also ranked high on UN Women's agenda in 2019, and, as of December 2019, women accounted for 15 per cent of Members of Parliament in West and Central Africa, and UN Women worked relentlessly to significantly increase women's participation in upcoming elections.

In West and Central Africa, 10 out of 12 countries now have electoral quota laws. In Mali in 2019, 3,200 women acquired specific knowledge of the roles of various election management bodies, and up to 1.2 million women were made aware of various aspects of the electoral process.

In line with our mandate for women's economic empowerment, UN Women West and Central Africa led the formulation of 13 climate-smart agriculture value chains supporting women's access to land, climate-resilient

skills and technology, finance, and markets. Of these, seven are already under implementation, in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

With regard to peace and security, and humanitarian action, in 2019, second generations of national action plans implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 were signed by four countries in the region – Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Nigeria – and a third generation of the UNSCR 1325 national action plan was signed by Mali, thus creating an enabling environment for increased participation and representation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at all levels.

In 2019, multiple countries in West and Central Africa, including Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone, took momentous strides towards the elimination of GBV by successfully implementing and adopting historic legislation that aims to combat violence against women. On 30 December 2019, women parliamentarians in Senegal, with the support of UN Women and other civil society actors, passed new legislation bringing in harsher punishments for rapists and paedophiles, with prison terms ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment.

This annual report presents our key achievements in 2019 in more detail.

We enter 2020 with much hope that the many accomplishments in gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment will build up momentum and that the progress that has been made in the region and in the world will not be undermined.

In 2020, we look forward to celebrating UN Women's 10-year anniversary and other landmark anniversaries, including the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 will also be celebrated, and we will be marking the five-year milestone on the way towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the light of all these landmark celebrations and what they represent for women's rights and gender equality, we look forward to continuing our partnership with governments, civil society, grass-roots activists and the private sector to further safeguard the well-being of women and girls in West and Central Africa.

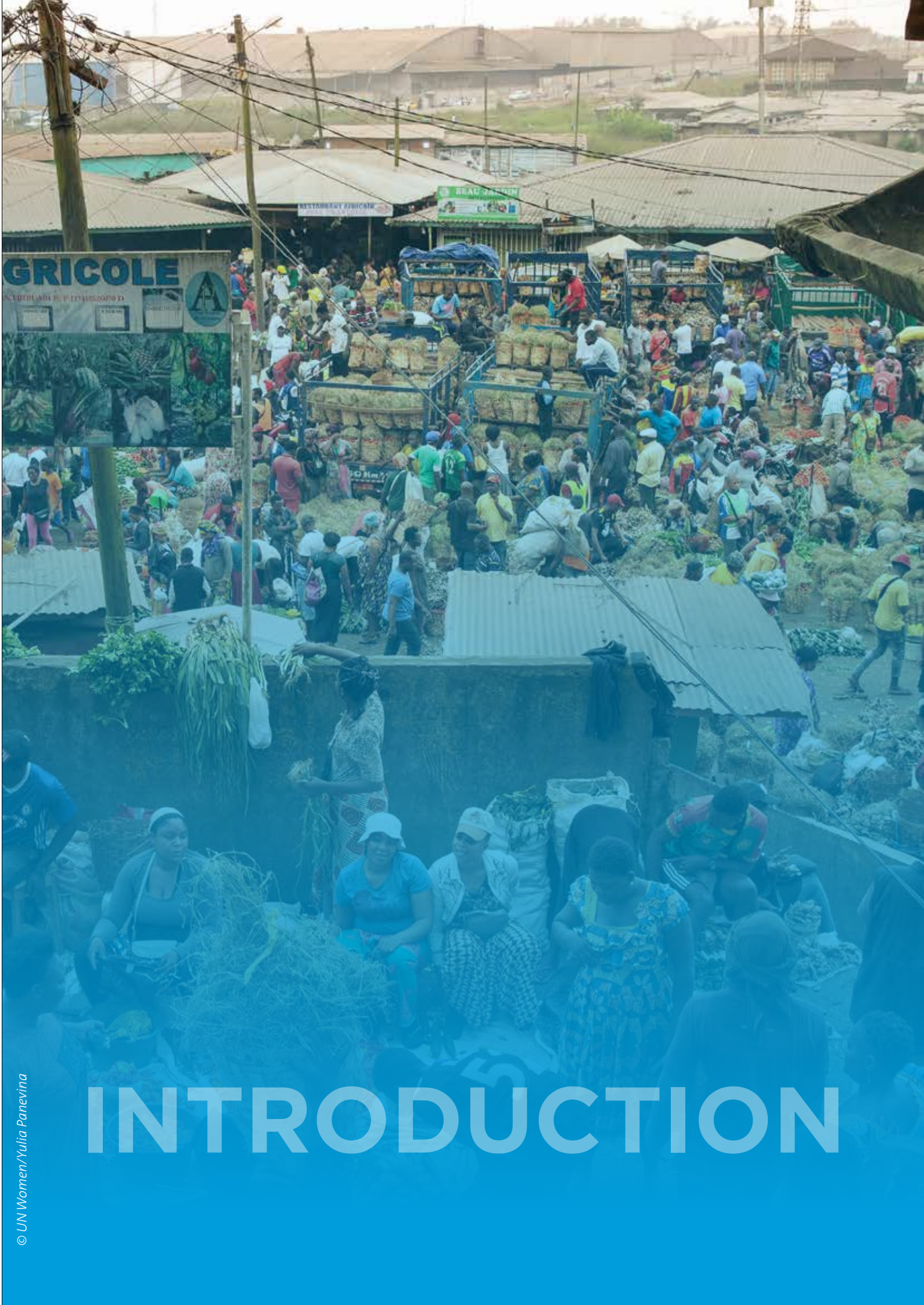
**Oulimata Sarr**  
Regional Director  
*UN Women West and Central Africa*

**This annual report  
presents our key  
achievements in 2019  
in more detail**



# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AFRITAC</b>	Regional Technical Assistance Center for Central Africa
<b>ANSD</b>	National Statistics and Demography Agency of Senegal
<b>BRIDGE</b>	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CENI</b>	Independent National Electoral Commission
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GRBP</b>	Gender-responsive budget and planning
<b>IGA</b>	Income-generating activity
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>LRA</b>	Land Rights Act
<b>NDS</b>	National development strategy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SRGBV</b>	School-related gender-based violence
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and reproductive health
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>VNR</b>	Sustainable Development Goals voluntary national review
<b>WCARO</b>	West and Central Africa Regional Office
<b>WEE</b>	Women’s economic empowerment
<b>WPS</b>	Women, peace and security



# INTRODUCTION

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment and gender equality represent long-standing global challenges on which significant progress has been made over the past few decades, albeit slowly and sporadically; however, this progress continues to be undermined by institutionalized unequal gender power relations based on social norms and practices. In the light of the current state of the world, where systemic oppression, ongoing conflicts, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and other epidemics interact to exacerbate gender and social inequality, it is absolutely critical to vigorously enforce women's and girls' human rights to ensure their well-being, dignity and empowerment so that they can achieve their full potential. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) is the leading intergovernmental organization at the forefront of this important work towards transformational institutional and social change guided by and enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gender discrimination remains the most pervasive form of discrimination in the world. Gender inequality is one of the key reasons for persistent poverty and increasing environmental degradation and climate change, as women are too often deprived of access to public services and productive resources and excluded from decision-making, including on natural resources. Globally, according to a gender review of the SDGs (UN Women and United Nations Division of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019), women aged 24–35 years are 25 per cent more likely to live in extreme poverty than men in the same age group. Although 38.7 per cent of women work in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, only 13.8 per cent are landholders. However, in the past 20 years, there have been gains, such as a 25 per cent decline in both the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage, largely driven by achievements in Africa and South Asia. The global average representation of women in parliaments has improved in the past 10 years to 24.2 per cent, and tracking systems that measure and make publicly available gender budget data are making headway in 65 countries worldwide.

The West and Central Africa region, which comprises 24 countries,<sup>1</sup> is presently home to 533.9 million people, with women accounting for 49.8 per cent of the population. In 2019, the region had a combined gross domestic product of US\$2.1 trillion, growing at an average rate of 4.2 per cent. There exists a great disparity in per capita income among these countries, ranging from US\$500 to US\$7,210, which reflects the diversity of their economic structures, which are largely dependent on natural resources, namely agriculture, forestry, oil and mining. Although economic growth has surpassed that of the continent, which stood at 3.4 per cent in 2019 (AfDB, 2020), the region has not been able to significantly curtail extreme poverty, as the mean poverty headcount remains high at 46.1 per cent. Overcoming barriers such as internal conflicts, economic dependence on natural resources, weak political and economic governance, and gender inequality constitutes a key element of the work towards improving socio-economic development in the region.

Gender inequality in West and Central Africa remains a major obstacle to human development, which is reflected in high gender inequality values, ranging from 0.372 (Cabo Verde) to 0.701 (Chad), according to 2018 data from the Gender Inequality Index. The average maternal mortality ratio is high, at 554 deaths per 100,000 live births, because of a lack of adequate access to health care that caters to women's needs. The average labour force participation rate of women aged 15 years and older stands at 58 per cent, compared with 71 per cent for men (Gender Inequality Index, 2018), and in most countries employed women are more likely to live under the international poverty line than employed men (Women Count, 2018). The average share of women aged 25 years and older achieving some level of secondary education is 24 per cent, 12 percentage points lower than men, which partially explains the low level of representation of women in parliament, although some rising stars have achieved and surpassed the 30 per cent critical mass, notably Cameroon and Senegal. Nevertheless, progressive laws have been passed in an increasing number of countries to improve gender inequality and women's empowerment

in relation to family life, employment and political participation in the past 10 years; however, patriarchal values are still reflected in many legal texts, and, although the practices of FGM and child marriage have declined, these continue to form part of local social practices.

In 2019, political instability, armed conflicts and urban criminal violence continued to pose security threats to the civilian population throughout the region. Presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal caused social tensions during pre- and post-electoral periods. Across the Sahel, insecurity translated into a humanitarian crisis, leading to the internal displacement of 5.1 million Burkinabe, Malians and Nigerians and closures of hundreds of schools and health centres (United Nations Security Council, 2019). In the region, conflicts often relate to tensions between members of opposing political parties, insurgent armed militias striving for political control, pastoralists and farmers competing for land, rights over the exploitation of natural resources, and terrorism, such as the actions perpetrated by jihadist Boko Haram and splinter groups in the Lake Chad Basin. This highly volatile environment exacerbates gender inequality and increases hostility towards women and girls, who are made systematic victims of sexual violence, especially in countries such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With a rapidly growing population and more frequent extreme weather events, the region is likely to experience an increase in climate-related disasters in the decades to come (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2019). The Sahel is particularly vulnerable to droughts, while storms and floods typically affect West and Central African countries; the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria have been especially affected. This situation and outlook are problematic in a region where, in half of the countries, 45.8 to 81.4 per cent of the population engage in agriculture and could see their livelihoods compromised with little recourse. This will greatly affect women, who make up on average 46.2 per cent of the agricultural workforce (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) database). Not only do climate-related disasters undermine development efforts through human and economic losses, but they can also fuel conflicts and insecurity while contributing to the worsening of existing problems of food

**Gender inequality in West and Central Africa remains a major obstacle to human development, which is reflected in high gender inequality values, ranging from 0.372 (Cabo Verde) to 0.701 (Chad), according to 2018 data from the Gender Inequality Index**

insecurity, malnutrition and epidemics that are affecting countries such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 5.3 million people and 13.1 million people, respectively, were facing acute hunger at the beginning of 2019 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2019).

Located in Dakar, Senegal, the UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) coordinates support for 12 UN Women country offices' efforts towards strengthening women's and girls' human rights protection, resilience and empowerment in the region. Serving as the interface between UN Women headquarters and the country offices, WCARO provides high-end policy advisory services and technical support for the successful implementation of the UN Women All Africa Strategy at regional level, as well as for management oversight and quality assurance processes to enhance

<sup>1</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.





AgriFeD Project, Senegal. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina

the country programmes' effectiveness. As a regional centre of knowledge, it also plays a key role in knowledge production management, based on accurate data and gender-responsive research and evaluation. It promotes a culture of knowledge and learning, cultivates knowledge partnerships, leads institutional capacity-building to bridge the gender knowledge gap, and fosters knowledge exchange platforms. WCARO operates on a budget of US\$30.3 million for the 2018–2021 strategic operationalization plan.

The key regional strategic priorities for the four-year plan, as identified by evaluations, staff and key partners, relate to (a) women's economic empowerment (WEE), (b) peace, security and humanitarian action, (c) leadership, political participation and gender-sensitive governance systems, and (d) ending gender-based violence (GBV). To this end, WCARO has been promoting and supporting the implementation of policy coherence on these topics through a number of flagship programmes, such as the Women Count programme on

disaggregated gender statistics production, the Climate-Smart Agriculture Value Chains programme and the Buy from Women digital platform with regard to WEE, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and the Spotlight Initiative on GBV, the French Muskoka Fund on maternal and children's health, and the Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response programme with regard to peace and security. WCARO has also played a critical role in the development of local progressive legislation and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of gender equality and women's rights through global campaigns, such as HeForShe. WCARO has successfully developed key partnerships with various international organizations, such as the African Development Bank, the Economic Community of West African States and the Secretariat of the G5 Sahel, to advance many of these programmes and see to it that women's and girls' needs are met and that formal and informal measures are in place to support transformational social change that is inclusive of them as a matter of survival and human rights.



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# KEY HIGHLIGHTS



## 2. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The UN Women WCARO 2019 annual report is based on an overview of activities organized in 2019 and the key results chiefly achieved in 12 countries<sup>2</sup> where UN Women has local representation.

### GLOBAL NORMS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Stakeholders in **all 12 countries** undertook **national reviews and appraisals of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**, with the support of the respective UN Women country offices, to inform the regional report prepared by the UN Economic Commission for Africa.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contributed to global policy discussions in **10 countries**, through the convening of **26 dialogues and the creation of 127 platforms**, with UN Women country offices' support.
- **Non-discrimination based on gender in hiring** is now legally mandated in **seven countries** (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, and Niger).

**WCARO has successfully developed key partnerships with various international organizations**



Senegal's Generation Equality campaign was launched during an intergenerational dialogue in Dakar, Senegal, in 2019. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.



Young participants in the Beijing+25 regional consultation held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in August 2019. © UN Women Côte d'Ivoire.

### GENDER-SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

- **Three national development strategies** (Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone) were gender-mainstreamed, whereas two additional ones (Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire) made some progress with the support of UN Women country offices.
- **Seven finance ministries** (Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Senegal) developed or enhanced their capacities to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into public finance management systems with UN Women's support.
- **Three national strategies** for the development of statistics (Cameroon, Senegal and Sierra Leone) that integrate a gender perspective were developed or implemented with UN Women's support.
- **Overall, 2,020 additional personnel of formal and informal justice institutions** strengthened their capacity to provide justice to women with the support of UN Women country offices in eight countries (the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone).



Second Interministerial Committee on Gender Statistics, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 17 December 2019. The National Council of Statistics adopted a national normative framework on gender statistics and is currently equipped to mainstream a minimum set of gender indicators to be generated by the national statistical system. © UN Women Cameroon.



Training of women leaders in conflict resolution and radicalization prevention, Bamako, Mali, October 2019. © UN Women Mali.

<sup>2</sup> Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.



## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- **Five electoral quota laws** were adopted in Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Niger with the support of UN Women country offices in 2019.



Workshop on Guinea's new parity law, chaired by the President of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians of Guinea, Hadja Fatoumata Binta Diallo, in May 2019. © UN Women Guinea.

- The capacity of **17 UN Women staff** members from 11 country offices was reinforced through a four-day workshop on Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) gender and election training, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to enhance their technical engagement with relevant stakeholders, including the media.



In Mali, more than 1.2 million women were made aware of various aspects of the electoral process. © UN Women Mali.

- **In total, 36 experts** were trained on the UN Women Manual for Political Leadership and Candidate Training to expand the pool of qualified women willing to run a campaign, win and serve in elective office.



Dynamique Nationale des Femmes Candidates – a network of 3,000 female members that works to promote women's political participation – was launched in Gombe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 17 May 2019. © UN Women Democratic Republic of the Congo.

- As of December 2019, **women accounted for 15 per cent of Members of Parliament** in West and Central Africa; there was a firm aim to increase women's participation in upcoming elections through the development of new strategies strengthening coordination between international organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs).



The National Conference on Women's Political Participation in Nigeria: Post 2019 General Elections Agenda was held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 27–28 June 2019. © UN Women Nigeria.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- **Seven countries** (Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone) are implementing the UN Women Climate-Smart Agriculture Value Chains flagship programme, which supports women's access to land, climate-resilient skills and technology, finance and markets through the digital platform Buy from Women, reaching more than 50,000 women.
- UN Women WCARO directly supports country offices and governments in undertaking **policy reform in relevant areas of WEE**.



Women smallholder farmers in Mali connected to the Buy from Women digital platform, which reaches more than 20,000 women working in the shea, onion and potato value chains. © Buy from Women Mali.



Producers of the North (REFAN), whose 15,000 women members have seen their livelihoods strengthened through participation in rural value chains and a bank loan of US\$500,000 to expand their operations. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina.



Validation of the National Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment of Senegal, co-chaired by Ndèye Saly Diop Dieng, Ministry of Women, Family and Gender, and Oulimata Sarr, UN Women, in Dakar, Senegal, on 30 September 2019. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

## PEACE AND SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

- In 2019, second generations of **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 national action plans** were signed by four countries in the region – **Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Nigeria** – and a third generation of the **UNSCR 1325 national action plan** was signed by **Mali**.



Traditional and religious leaders engaged in UNSCR 1325 national action plan/state action plan implementation in Nigeria. © UN Women Nigeria.

- **Seven countries** (Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) **improved institutional capacities and policies** that promote gender perspectives and the rights of women in the **justice and security sector**.





UN Women instructors and female mediators in Niger, where 600 women have acquired conflict mediation skills and have been acknowledged by local authorities and traditional leaders as key community resources in mediation processes and resolutions for peace and social cohesion. © UN Women Niger.



President Macky Sall with the UN Women Regional Director for West and Central Africa, women from CSOs and parliamentarians during the promulgation of the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia. © Presidency of the Republic of Senegal.

### ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

- In 2019, multiple countries in West and Central Africa, including **Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone**, took momentous strides towards the elimination of GBV by successfully implementing adopted **historic legislation** that aims to combat violence against women.



In Sierra Leone, the government has passed an amendment to the Sexual Offences Act criminalizing rape and paedophilia, punishable by life imprisonment, and guaranteeing free medical treatment to rape victims. © Politico SL.



# WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA KEY RESULTS

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# 3. WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA KEY RESULTS

## 3.1 GLOBAL NORMS, STANDARDS AND POLICIES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

West and Central African countries have taken steps towards realizing gender equality and women's empowerment, namely by adhering to a number of relevant international legal and policy instruments and translating these into national legislation regulating women's social, economic, civil and political rights. A homogeneous mobilization to accede to international women's rights conventions is observed in the region, although translation of these norms into national legislation has been slower and more uneven among countries. Despite the general public being more aware of women's rights and the importance of gender equality, unequal gender social norms are slow to change, and progress is continuously threatened by ongoing conflicts and the presence of violent extremism forces in the region.

### COUNTRIES STEPPING UP NATIONAL REVIEWS AND REPORTING ON BEIJING+25

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** is the most comprehensive gender equality and women's empowerment international instrument and was adopted by governments, during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, determined to "advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity". For greater regional relevancy, the ministers attending the **African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+25)** in Addis Ababa in October 2019 prioritized

eliminating all discriminatory laws, practices, stereotypes and social norms based on culture, investing in education and equal access to employment, strengthening gender machineries, scaling up social protection systems and public services, implementing the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG), ensuring women's participation in agribusiness and agricultural value chains, and closing sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive statistical and analytical gaps for enhanced gender-sensitive planning and budgeting towards the 2030 Agenda and 2063 Agenda (UNECA, 2019).

In 2019, all countries conducted national reviews with UN Women WCARO's and country offices' technical and financial support and submitted Beijing+25 progress reports<sup>3</sup> to the UNECA, which was mandated to consolidate regional information to contribute to a global report scheduled to be presented at the sixty-fourth Commission on the Status of Women in 2020. WCARO funded the evaluation and summary of the 19 francophone national reports.

WCARO has been working on increasing the inclusiveness of lusophone countries in the region by identifying and funding key individuals to take part in the International Conference on Population and Development and the African Regional Conference on Women in 2019. WCARO



"Generation Equality Africa", 12–14 August 2019, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. © UN Women Côte d'Ivoire.

worked to include the voice of young people during a Beijing+25 regional consultation on the theme of "Generation Equality Africa" held on 12–14 August 2019 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, at which 150 young people from 24 countries were in attendance, 60 of which were from the West and Central Africa region.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNDP and the UN Women Côte d'Ivoire Country Office provided financial and technical support for Beijing+25 national consultations organized under the aegis of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family and Children to review government implementation progress, resulting in a report being submitted to UNECA in June 2019 and recommendations being presented at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2020. Furthermore, UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and the UN Women Côte d'Ivoire Country Office hosted a regional Beijing+25 consultation on 12–14 August 2019 for 150 young people, mainly women, on the theme of "Generation Equality Africa", resulting in recommendations being added to the Beijing+25 Africa Region Assessment and Review.

Liberia submitted its Beijing+25 national report with the support of the UN Women Liberia Country Office and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, for which the country undertook a national progress review and identified challenges in implementation. Recommendations followed to strengthen the implementation of the gender agenda, namely relating to financial resources, baseline information for monitoring and evaluating, sex-disaggregated data, public-private

partnerships, women's role in the justice system, decision-making in public institutions (i.e. public security), and enhanced oversight of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the related Women, Peace and Security Council Resolution.

UN Women Mali provided the Malian Ministry of Women, Children and Family with a consultant for the drafting of the Beijing+25 national report of **Mali**, which is based on statistical evidence and local research studies, interviews with key stakeholders from the government and CSOs, and various regional consultations carried out in Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Bamako on 22–25 May 2019. These multi-stakeholder consultations, facilitated by persons designated by the Ministry of Women, Children and Family, allowed the achievements and implementation blockages encountered at national, regional and local levels to be highlighted.

### CEDAW REPORTING INCREASING AND GREATER FOLLOW-THROUGH ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** is a key authoritative legal instrument on women's rights that defines the scope of discrimination against women and that is legally binding for its Parties. It calls on governments to promote gender equality and work proactively to eliminate prejudices based on stereotyped gender roles, covering a number of critical social, economic, cultural, civil and political human rights. It has been widely adhered to by all 12 countries under review, including 9 ratifications and 2 reservations to Article 16.<sup>4</sup> Its 1999 Optional Protocol on complaint and enquiry mechanisms has been ratified/acceded to by nine states.<sup>5</sup> As evidenced in reports regularly submitted to the CEDAW Committee, this has led signatories to sign up to related international conventions, regional and subregional charters, declarations, multilateral agreements and resolutions, as well as developing or strengthening national institutions, and mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality in key national development instruments.

The ninth periodic report of **Cabo Verde** to the CEDAW Committee, submitted in 2018, received technical support from UN Women and was coordinated by the Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity

<sup>4</sup> Mauritania and Niger have made reservations to Article 16 of CEDAW, on family and marriage rights.

<sup>5</sup> Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal have ratified/acceded to the CEDAW Optional Protocol.

<sup>3</sup> The political crisis in Guinea-Bissau affected the development of the Beijing+25 national report, as there was a lack of a legal government in place.



(ICIEG), in partnership with the National Commission on Human Rights and Citizenship (CNDHC), and monitored by a committee with representatives from the Institute for Gender Equality and Equity, the National Commission on Human Rights and Citizenship, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Family and Social Inclusion. The monitoring committee engaged ministries and CSOs through an initial workshop and throughout the data collection process, and multi-stakeholder inputs were included in the final document. During the committee's seventy-third session in 2019, recommendations were made in relation to the CEDAW that the country has acted upon, including recommendations on a draft electoral quota law.

Prepared in a participatory manner and involving a multisectoral process, the fourth periodic CEDAW report of Côte d'Ivoire, submitted in 2018, was considered in the CEDAW Committee's seventy-third session on 1–19 July 2019, in which a series of recommendations were made, namely recommendations on developing an electoral quota law, which the country adopted this year. The UN Women Côte d'Ivoire Country Office coordinated the submission of the confidential report of the United Nations Team to the follow-up CEDAW Committee.

The eighth periodic report of Senegal was submitted to the CEDAW Committee in late 2019. The Ministry of Justice, through the National Advisory Council, and with technical and financial support from the West Africa Regional Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Women, led the preparation of the report and its approval. A dissemination and validation workshop was organized with the participation of representatives of national institutions and CSOs, providing an opportunity to review the legislative and policy framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. The committee considered the report in March 2020, listing several issues on which the country has taken action, including the development of a Women Empowerment Index.

## NATIONAL LEGISLATION BOOSTED BY MORE RECENT INTERNATIONAL LEGAL GENDER INSTRUMENTS

Although the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** has stimulated national commitments to global norms and standards on women's and girls' rights since the mid-1990s, these were incorporated into national legislation only a decade later with the advent of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which came into force in 2005, and only increasingly so in the past five years, coinciding with the adoption of new SDGs. The latter, based on a "leave no one behind" approach and placing emphasis on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16), has provided an authoritative framework, strengthening the legitimacy of development efforts in this realm.

### Child marriage still a sticky issue in West and Central Africa

Although a number of more specific and earlier international women's rights instruments have had less appeal, only a handful<sup>6</sup> have acceded to the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages; nonetheless, non-discrimination on the basis of sex is currently inscribed in all of the countries' constitutions. Most countries under review do not have legislation that places husbands above wives in the private sphere, except in Mali, where the law obliges wives to obey their husbands, and Senegal, where husbands are legally considered household chiefs and carry out this power in the common interest of the family. Nonetheless, despite laws prohibiting child and early marriage setting 18 years as the minimum legal age in most countries, tradition persists in West and Central Africa, accounting for the highest global prevalence of child marriage (39 per cent); this is especially significant in Niger and the Central African Republic, where 76 per cent and 68 per cent of girls, respectively, are married before the age of 18 years<sup>7</sup> (UNICEF, 2018).

**Côte d'Ivoire** acceded to the convention on consent, minimum age and registration of marriage and the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 1995 and 1999, respectively. There is no law requiring women to obey their husbands. The **Marriage Act No. 2019-57**,

voted and promulgated in July 2019 with the support of UN Women, strengthens gender equality, particularly regarding inheritance and for rural women.

No law requires married women to obey their husbands in Liberia. The country acceded to the convention on consent, minimum age and registration of marriage and the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 2005. The 2015 CEDAW Committee concluding observations indicated that Liberian women were still not able to pass on their nationality to their children in the same way as men, leaving children born to non-Liberian fathers vulnerable to statelessness.

**Niger** acceded to the convention on consent, minimum age and registration of marriage in 1964, and no law requires women to obey their husbands. However, the 2017 CEDAW Committee concluding observations on the latest periodic report of Niger indicate extremely high rates of child and/or forced marriage, noting links with high fertility, maternal mortality, illiteracy and poverty rates among women. Both customary and statutory civil laws allow girls to be married without their consent.

### Gender equality in employment garnering legislative support

In alignment with CEDAW and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, women's employment has garnered legislative attention, especially in the past 15 years, specifically and more widely regarding non-discrimination in terms of access to employment opportunities and, to a lesser degree, equal pay.<sup>8</sup> These represent important legal measures towards gender equality and women's empowerment, as in 2019 women (11.7 per cent) were less than half as likely as men (26.7 per cent) to work in formal employment (ILO, 2019). Although there is a high level of female participation in the labour force (58 per cent), women tend to work on their own account (62.3 per cent) or as contributing family workers (24.4 per cent) in the informal economy, without social protection benefits, in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Women are less represented in managerial positions, totalling 31.4 per cent (UN Gender Statistics), which stifles their earning potential.

**Cote d'Ivoire's** Labour Code Law 2015-532 mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value (Article 31.2) and non-discrimination based on

gender in hiring (Articles 4 and 18.5). However, the CEDAW Committee's 2019 concluding observations indicated concerns about the high prevalence of informal (92.3 per cent of women in 2017) and domestic work, sexual harassment in the workplace, and unequal remuneration between women and men for work of equal value. Indeed, in 2019, women (17.3 per cent) were still half as likely to gain access to employee status as men (34.3 per cent), and their average monthly earnings were lower (purchasing power parity US\$397.7) than men's (purchasing power parity US\$502.7).

The Decent Work Act 2015 of Liberia mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value (Section 2.5) and non-discrimination based on gender in hiring (Sections 2.4 and 2.7). The CEDAW Committee's latest concluding observations indicated concerns over sexual harassment in the workplace despite its legal prohibition, occupational segregation, pay gaps between women and men, and the need to increase efforts to include women in the formal economy – the current statistic for women in the formal economy stands at 9 per cent, whereas women outside the formal sector represent 93.1 per cent.

Law No. 2017-021 of 12 June 2017 of **Mali** modifying Law No. 92-020 of 23 September 1992 on the Labour Code mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value (new Article L.95) and non-discrimination based on gender in hiring (new Article L.4). However, ILO statistics indicate that, in 2019, the share of women employees (12 per cent) remained twice as low as that of men (23.3 per cent). In 2014, the average monthly earnings of employees were lower for women (US\$210.9) than for men (US\$367.4). In 2019, women (1.9 per cent) also had a lower level of access to professional and technical management positions than men (5.1 per cent).

The Labour Code of **Niger** mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value (Articles 5, 158, 159 and 243) and non-discrimination based on gender in hiring (Article 5). However, the latest CEDAW Committee's concluding observations indicated that only a very small percentage of women are employed in the formal sector (2.4 per cent in 2019) and that these women are without social protection, are generally in low-paid domestic work, are often exploited, are exposed to precarious working conditions and are subject to abuse by their employers. In the Labour Code, sexual harassment is limited to individuals exercising authority and excludes co-workers.

6 Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Mali acceded to the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women. Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Niger acceded to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.

7 Percentage of women aged 20–24 years old who were first married or in union before they were 18 years old. Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) global databases 2018, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys and other national surveys.

8 Seven countries (Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Niger) mandate non-discrimination based on gender in hiring. Four countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Niger) mandate equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value.



## NUMBER OF DIALOGUES ORGANIZED FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS TO TAKE PART IN GLOBAL POLICY

CEDAW stipulates, in Article 7, the right of women to participate in NGOs and associations concerned with the public and political life of their country (c) and the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and its implementation (b). In 2019, to support this effort, UN Women convened **26 dialogues and created 127 platforms for NGOs** to contribute to global policy discussions in 10<sup>9</sup> out of the 12 countries under review.

UN Women **Côte d'Ivoire** supported the participation of CSOs in the High-Level Political Forum (9–18 July 2019) held in New York and the Summit on Sustainable Development Goals (24–25 September 2019), for which proceedings were subsequently restored in collaboration with the Civil Society Initiative for SDGs in Côte d'Ivoire group. Furthermore, several members of CSOs, including young people, engaged in activities and consultations in Bouaké (23 May 2019) and Abidjan (1 August 2019) during the year prior to convening the national consultation to validate the recommendations on Beijing+25. The Côte d'Ivoire Country Office has a Civil Society Advisory Group, which was established on 30 May 2016, that it plans to renew.

UN Women **Democratic Republic of the Congo** supported a high-level joint solidarity mission with the Office of the Special Envoy for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union from 9 to 12 June 2019. Ms Catherine Samba-Panza, former interim President of the Central African Republic and



Ms Catherine Samba Panza (FemWise-Africa) with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Antoine Felix Thisekedi Tshilombo. © UN Women Democratic Republic of the Congo.

9 All except for Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.



Intergenerational conference with women and youth leaders in Bangui, the Central African Republic, October 2019. © UN Women/Novella Nikwigize.

co-chairperson of FemWise-Africa, led the mission and voiced the need to review local policies and laws that contain discriminatory provisions, so as to enable women to fully participate in political affairs, which the Head of State committed itself to promoting.

UN Women **Central African Republic**, with funding from the Government of Canada, supported the participation of seven young people in conferences and international forums. An intergenerational conference with women leaders and 300 young women and men was held in Bangui on 14–16 October 2019, focusing on young women's role and inclusion in the political and peace agreements' implementation, as they represent the majority of sexual violence victims in ongoing conflicts. Women also experience the most discrimination in a society based on the ideology of patriarchy and continue to be under-represented in political and public office positions.

UN Women **Liberia** supported five gender advocates in participating in global and regional events to influence policy processes. Furthermore, a national HeForShe Taskforce was established to conduct regular dialogues with male peer groups at community and national levels, such as the "Men Bridging the Gap for Gender Equality in Liberia" conference held on 6 September 2019 to raise awareness of women's land rights and women's leadership. On 18 December 2019, Liberia became one of 10 chapters of the African Women Leaders Network, with a focus on women's political participation, young women's leadership and WEE. The Strategic Steering Committee is chaired by Ambassador Marjon Kamara, former Foreign Minister of Liberia, and co-chaired by Dr Evelyn Kandakai, former Education Minister, and members include representatives of leading CSOs on women's rights.



Beijing+25 intergenerational dialogue, Dakar, Senegal. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

In line with the preparation phase of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Generation Equality campaign of **Senegal** was launched with 60 young women and men activists and women leaders who participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. During a dynamic and interactive intergenerational dialogue facilitated by the UN Women Senegal Country Office, participants were able to share knowledge, network and contribute to the production of a knowledge product in the form of a notebook with a two-page briefing on the Generation Equality campaign for wider dissemination.

## 3.2 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GENDER-SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

In the West and Central Africa region, international treaty commitments by governments and their translation into national laws have been complemented with national policies, programmes and institutional coordination mechanisms to implement and enforce the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. In 2019, all countries reviewed took measures in regard to this endeavour, and if these countries had national women's machineries in place with capacities to advocate for gender-responsive budgets, combined with finance ministries that are able to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into public finance and a national strategy to mainstream gender into national statistical data, this led to greater gender equality and women's rights enforcement through a strengthened gender-sensitive justice system and its access for women.

### 2019 key results

- **3 national development strategies gender-mainstreamed**
- **22 national gender equality action plans**
- **7 finance ministries capacitated on gender-responsive budgeting and planning**
- **1 Gender Minister of State (Democratic Republic of the Congo)**
- **3 national AIDS coordinating bodies gender-mainstreamed**
- **3 national strategies for statistics development gender-mainstreamed**
- **5 national statistics coordination mechanisms**
- **2,468 additional women and girls accessed legal aid**

### NATIONAL GENDER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS ON THE RISE

Specialized institutional mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality include gender mainstreaming of national development strategies (NDSs) and gender equality action plans. These assert political commitment and provide frameworks that clearly set out the goals and guide the ways in which to achieve them through a coordinated governance system. In 2019, **three countries gender-mainstreamed their NDS**,<sup>10</sup> and nine countries developed 22 national gender equality action plans of general and specialized scopes.<sup>11</sup> Four countries launched HeForShe campaigns and devised work plans, and one country<sup>12</sup> introduced UN Women's Empowerment Principles nationwide.

10 Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.

11 Cabo Verde and the Central African Republic developed national gender equality action plans; the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria developed gender action plans on women's political participation; Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Senegal developed gender action plans on WEE; and the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Senegal developed gender action plans on WPS.

12 The Democratic Republic of the Congo has launched the Women's Empowerment Principles.



Since 2018, the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of **Cabo Verde** (PEDS) has been gender-mainstreamed into a specific chapter and in the monitoring evaluation framework. As a result, in 2019, the UN Women Cabo Verde Country Office supported the government on a gender-mainstreaming exercise mission of MAPS and INFF serving to identify the accelerators that would allow the country to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

UN Women **Central African Republic** supported the revision of the national plan of equality and equity to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment considerations are taken into account.

The government of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** now possesses a gender-mainstreamed NDS identifying specific objectives for women, young people and children. The UN Women Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Office was actively involved in all meetings concerning the National Strategic Plan for Development revision and successfully advocated for the inclusion of gender issues.

UN Women **Sierra Leone** provided technical support to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment concerns are included in the eight clusters of the national development plan, which also includes an entire cluster dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

## GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING POPULAR IN PUBLIC FINANCE

Gender equality and women's empowerment policy implementation is made possible by financing institutional coordination, which requires budget planning and allocation for the operation of specific national women's machineries and programmes aligned with national gender action plans and NDSs. In 2019, with UN Women's support, **seven finance ministries**<sup>13</sup> developed or enhanced their capacities to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into public finance management systems, and **106 national women's machineries and women's organizations** were strengthened with regard to capacities to advocate for gender-responsive budgets in eight countries.<sup>14</sup>

In 2019, a Regional Technical Assistance Center for Central Africa (AFRITAC) Conference was held in Brazzaville,



Participants attending the AFRITAC Conference in Brazzaville, Congo, March 2019. © AFRITAC.

Congo, on 11–15 March to develop the gender-responsive budgeting and planning (GRBP) capacities of 38 senior officials from ministries of finance and women empowerment. During the five days, UN Women **Cameroon** presented GRBP techniques to institutionalize gender accountability mechanisms and translate them into sectoral public policies. It was reiterated that “gender budgets would improve transparency, public policy coherence, and improved budgetary resources allocation and use” (UN Women Africa, 2019).

In the **Central African Republic**, UN Women strengthened the capacity of 123 (88 women) lawmakers' and CSOs' representatives in gender-sensitive budgeting in December 2019. Workshop reports, including the evaluations completed by the participants, showed that they had increased their knowledge in gender-sensitive budgeting and committed themselves to using these tools when drafting policies or amending legal texts, including the public budget.

In 2019, the newly appointed government of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo included a Minister of State responsible for gender, family and children – Beatrice Lomeya Atilite. Mrs Lomeya has had a long political career, having held various positions as a parliamentarian and Vice-Minister for Higher Education, as well as extensive professional experience in the private sector in key accounting positions. Elevating gender equality and women's empowerment to this level allows greater convening power and access to a dedicated yearly budget. Gender focal points are assigned to other ministries and

at the provincial level for enhanced coordination. The UN Women Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Office has engaged the minister in various women's and girls' rights activities.

In **Liberia**, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning is now equipped with a GRBP national policy, after receiving guidance from the UN Women Liberia Country Office, which was instrumental in providing technical support to develop the policy and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

In **Mali**, to implement the national gender action plan within ministries, GRBP was piloted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. With the support of the UN Women Mali Country Office, the expert pool on gender-responsive budgeting developed its work plan, providing guidance to priority ministerial departments<sup>15</sup> with transformational potential on gender equality and women's empowerment. This work plan was used by 34 departments that made contributions to a gender report annexed to the 2020 Finance Act. These ministries are now required to integrate the national gender action plan into their budgets and programmes.



Minister of State, Minister of Gender, Child and Family, Her Excellency Beatrice Lomeya Atilite, during her speech at the celebration of Resolution 1325. © UNDP Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING OF AIDS COORDINATING BODIES IN KEY AFFECTED COUNTRIES

HIV affects women disproportionately in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on national demographic and health surveys carried out between 2009 and 2017, the prevalence of HIV among women aged 20–29 years was up to three times higher than that among men in the same age group, namely in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (UNAIDS, 2019). The entire gamut of HIV prevention possibilities does not reach vulnerable women in the region. It remains necessary to raise awareness of the impact that HIV/AIDS has had in the region and continues to have especially among women. In 2019, **three national AIDS coordinating bodies**<sup>16</sup> and/or relevant sectoral ministries strengthened their capacity to integrate gender-responsive actions into national HIV strategies with UN Women's support.

UN Women **Cameroon** provided technical support in drafting HIV/AIDS and GBV action plans to enhance the response including within religious communities. These plans will be presented and validated by the Ministry of Public Health in 2020.

UN Women **Côte d'Ivoire** supported the national HIV/AIDS programme (PNLS) in (a) organizing a prevention campaign in women's national training and education institutes, (b) delivering guidance on HIV law to peer educators involved in the care of sex workers and (c) promoting the national protection and reporting tool regarding cases of violence against key populations and people living with HIV. The gender evaluation of the national strategic plan for the fight against AIDS and sexually transmitted infections is planned for 2020.

UN Women **Democratic Republic of the Congo** participates in the H6 Partnership, along with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), for regional and national planning. The country office has positioned itself well among organizations to build capacity on gender mainstreaming of the HIV response. In partnership with the Ministry of Public Health, it contributed expertise to the development of a government training module on HIV, gender and human rights for government agencies, NGOs, the security forces, and people living with HIV. Several training sessions were conducted in Kananga in September and October 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Finance Ministries of Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Senegal.

<sup>14</sup> Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Senegal have strengthened gender machineries with regard to the capacity to advocate for budgets for the implementation of the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.

<sup>15</sup> Ministries of Justice, Education, Health, Employment and Professional Training, Rural Development, Water, Decentralization, State Reform, Budgetary Reform and Communications.

<sup>16</sup> Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



## WOMEN COUNT AS CATALYST TO ENHANCED GENDER-DISAGGREGATED STATISTICS

Strongly advocated by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and UN Women, gender-disaggregated national statistical data allow the visualization of inequalities with regard to key indicators and enhanced policies and strategies. In 2019, **national strategies for the development of statistics** were gender-mainstreamed in three countries<sup>17</sup> with UN Women country offices' technical and financial support. UN Women's **Women Count** programme, UNECA and the African Development Bank are leading the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa,<sup>18</sup> a framework for the coordinated national production and continental compilation of gender statistics, to track progress across countries and regions towards the 2030 and 2063 agendas. The research phase of this project has been completed, and indicated that three of the countries under review, namely **Cameroon, Mali and Sierra Leone**, have national gender indicator frameworks in place (UN Women and others, 2019). The capacities of **491 data producers and users** were strengthened, including regarding time use, prevalence of violence against women and other specialized surveys.

**UN Women WCARO** provided technical and financial support to UN Women country offices on gender-mainstreaming national strategies for the development of statistics, namely in Senegal and Sierra Leone. A regional Women Count workshop was organized in Dakar (Senegal) on 26–28 November 2019 to train four West and Central Africa countries and two East and Southern Africa countries on gender statistics assessment implementation, providing an overview of gender statistics production, coordination and communication gaps in a given country. The participants presented their heterogeneous national gender statistics situations, ranging from regularly collecting and using gender evidence to change policies (Cabo Verde), and scheduled activities to integrate gender statistics into the statistical system (Côte d'Ivoire), to having no gender statistics system (the Central African Republic), all of which highlighted Women Count's legitimacy in the West and Central Africa region.

As of 2019, **Côte d'Ivoire** has started a national assessment of gender statistics, and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** has completed this assessment – both of them being Women Count non-pathfinder countries – highlighting the need for a national statistical system reform and effective inclusion of gender statistics.

Through the Women Count project, UN Women **Cameroon** provided technical and financial (US\$300,000) support to gender-mainstream the national statistical system. The National Institute of Statistics began the gender assessment of the national strategy, resulting in the creation of national gender statistics coordination bodies and the adoption, by the National Council of Statistics, of a national normative framework on gender statistics, with a list of Minimum Set of Gender Indicators to be generated by the national statistical system. Although no strategy was developed during the year, the country has engaged in the production of several advocacy documents on the integration of gender statistics into the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics.

Under the Women Count project, UN Women **Senegal** reinforced the capacities of 110 gender data producers and users for gender data collection, analysis, dissemination and planning. In collaboration with Paris21 and the National Statistics and Demography Agency of Senegal (ANSD), the data producers received training on Paris21's Advanced Data Planning Tool (ADAPT) during a joint workshop in Dakar from 5 to 9 August 2019. The ANSD representatives were shown how to incorporate the tool into the country's third life cycle of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and improve data planning. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the current national situation of gender statistics and promote cooperation between ANSD, the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection, UN Women, CSOs and academics who were in attendance.

## STRENGTHENED NATIONAL MACHINERIES FOR PRODUCING GENDER STATISTICS

To improve the production of gender statistics, gender-mainstreamed national statistics development strategies have been complemented with specialized organizational coordination at national level. In 2019, **five national coordination mechanisms governing the production of gender statistics** were established or strengthened with the support of UN Women country offices in three countries.<sup>19</sup> In the region, gender statistical production is organized by different actors, and can be multi-stakeholder oriented, involve specialized research and statistical agencies, or even be coordinated at Interministerial level. Furthermore, **three countries**<sup>20</sup> **developed national reports on the implementation of SDGs and the status of women, men, girls and boys**.

UN Women **Niger** contributed to the establishment of a multi-stakeholder consultation platform initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Protection. The group participants include representatives from the ministry, the National Statistics Institute of Niger, the Statistics Bureau (Dstat) under the Ministry of Finance, CSOs, researchers, service providers and United Nations agencies. Together, they have developed a set of gender indicators, including indicators relating to GBV, with a data collection strategy. For each indicator, a map of relevant entities that are able to provide data has been drawn up as well as a timeline for the data collection.

In 2019, through the Women Count programme, UN Women **Cameroon** partnered with the Ministry of Women and Family to establish an Interministerial Committee on Gender Statistics whose role is to provide

its members with strategic guidance on the production and use of gender statistics for enhanced measurement of progress of the national gender policy and SDGs. On 17 December 2019, the Committee's Second Session took place in Yaoundé, during which the recommendations from the First Session were evaluated and the 2019 technical and financial report was validated. The UN Women Cameroon Country Office Director announced that 63 per cent of tabled activities relating to the Women Count programme had been achieved (La Minute.info, 2019).

In **Sierra Leone**, in partnership with the UN Women Sierra Leone Country Office and UNFPA, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs finalized the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019–2023, in which one of the objectives is the production and use of gender statistics for evidence-based localization of SDGs. Statistics Sierra Leone (Stat SL) is the institution responsible for gender-disaggregated data collection; in the past five years, it has established inter-agency gender statistics coordination mechanisms and reprocessed existing data, such as the Demographic and Health Survey, the Integrated Household Survey and the Beijing+25 reports, which now contain gender-disaggregated data.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the launch of the process for the voluntary national review (VNR) of progress towards the SDGs took place in January 2019 in Abidjan during a working session chaired by the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the progress made to date towards aligning NDS with SDGs and laid the groundwork for ensuing national multi-stakeholder consultations in preparation for the VNR report. All stakeholders, namely from ministries, the National Assembly, the Senate, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CSOs and other agencies, contributed data to the VNR report. The Civil Society Initiative for SDGs (Initiative de la Société Civile pour les ODD en Côte d'Ivoire) conducted various multi-stakeholder consultations throughout the country, the inputs of which were valuable to the report. In July 2019, Côte d'Ivoire presented its SDG VNR report during the High-Level Political Forum "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in New York.



Training of student statisticians. © UN Women Cameroon.

<sup>17</sup> Cameroon, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

<sup>18</sup> The five domains of the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa are economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources; education; health and related services; human rights of women and the girl child; and public life and decision-making.

<sup>19</sup> Cameroon (3), Niger (1) and Senegal (1).

<sup>20</sup> Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.





Launch meeting for the VNR process in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 15 January 2019. © Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

## JUSTICE SECTOR CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ENFORCED WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Enforcing women's and girls' human rights through access to civil law courts of justice to redress any violations of these rights is a central element of gender equality and women's empowerment. In the region, customary law often coexists with common law, and, having less access to formal justice systems, rural women may be referred to alternative dispute resolution institutions. Data on women's participation in formal and informal justice delivery systems are scarce. The Central African Republic, for example, drafted a Truth and Reconciliation Justice Commission and gender manual, which includes elements of women's participation in justice delivery. The UN Gender Statistics database indicates the share of female judges for three countries in the region, namely Cabo Verde (36 per cent), Cameroon (23 per cent) and Nigeria (20 per cent). A study (Bauer and Dawuni, 2016) demonstrates that, in the past decade, women in Africa have ascended to the top of judiciaries, including in the West and Central Africa region, namely as chief justices of supreme courts in common law countries such as Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and as presidents of constitutional courts in civil law countries such as Niger and Senegal. Currently, the Supreme Court of **Cabo Verde** is presided over by Maria de Fátima Coronel, who has held the position of President since 2015, and the Constitutional Court of the **Central African Republic** is presided over by Danielle Daran.

Generally, the countries under review that had adopted measures on gender-responsive budgeting at ministerial level and that had also established specialized gender

machineries performed better with regard to women's access to legal aid, especially when coupled with strong capacity-building of justice personnel on gender issues. In 2019, 2,020 additional personnel of formal and informal justice institutions received support from UN Women country offices to strengthen their capacity to provide justice to women in eight countries,<sup>21</sup> and 2,468 additional women and girls accessed legal aid with UN Women's support in five countries.<sup>22</sup>

In 2019, with UN Women **Nigeria's** technical support, 85 stakeholders (40 female, 45 male) from the judicial sector, security agencies, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the National Human Rights Commission, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the Nigeria Bar Association, Community Security Architecture Dialogue and Peace Architecture Dialogues platforms, CSOs, community members, traditional and religious leaders, Human Rights Coalition members and judges (magistrates, Area Court and Sharia Court) participated in training sessions in Yobe and Borno states that strengthened their understanding of gender, and GBV and its link to human rights violations. In the same year, 1,622 additional women and girls accessed legal aid in the country with UN Women's support. In Nigeria, Direct Services (comprising psychosocial, health and legal services) were provided by the Spotlight Initiative to 1,362 women and girls during the reporting period.

UN Women **Mali** provided technical support to 100 women leaders from different government bodies working on women's rights promotion, security and transitional justice, and strengthened their capacities with regard to conflict resolution and the prevention of radicalization during a training session held in Bamako in October 2019. In the same year, 75 women survivors of GBV received legal aid. Furthermore, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission continued to implement WPS commitments with the technical and financial support of the UN Women Mali Country Office.

UN Women **Liberia** supported the capacity development of 20 legal aid providers. A total of 94 officers (61 women and 33 men) from the Ministry of Health (nurses), the Ministry of Justice (case liaison and victim support officers), the Women and Children Protection Sections and the Liberia National Police, psychosocial counsellors, gender coordinators and the Ministry of Justice special prosecutors have enhanced skills in case management following capacity-building training with tailored sessions. In 2019, a total of 87 child victims of sexual and



International Youth Day © UN Women Mali.

gender-based violence (SGBV) and witnesses were provided with access to justice. With support from the SGBV Crimes Unit (Margibi County prosecution offices), the total number of SGBV survivors that accessed legal investigative services at the C.H. Rennie Hospital amounted to

39 (37 women and 2 men). In addition, 232 female pre-trial detainees gained access to legal aid and assistance in all prison facilities in Liberia. The pre-trial detention rate, especially regarding women, reduced from 43 per cent in November 2017 to 21 per cent in June 2019.

## 3.3 WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In **West and Central Africa**, UN Women achieved great results with regard to the political participation of both women and girls. Although the countries have strengthened their political knowledge transfer, have adopted new laws because of a new form of leadership, have showcased political talent through the media and have enabled girls to have a head start in politics, men have also been encouraged to speak out against violence against women in politics.

Country offices were encouraged to technically support, and conduct "lessons learned" workshops to analyse the 2019 general election results and reflect on the general approaches adopted to support women's participation in politics. In 2019, two "lessons learned" workshops were conducted in **Guinea-Bissau** and **Nigeria**, which significantly improved the relevance of UN Women's involvement in the upcoming elections.

### 2019 key results

- 9 out of 12 countries have electoral quota laws
- 15 per cent of seats in parliament are held by women on average
- 36 experts capacitated to increase women's political participation

<sup>21</sup> The Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

<sup>22</sup> Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.



## SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: FIVE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS ADOPTED TO PROMOTE GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICS

In the region, although only Nigeria has ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and three other countries have acceded to it,<sup>23</sup> there have been some significant advances with regard to gender equality in political representation. Although women's rights to stand for election and to vote have mostly been in place since the 1950s, laws establishing quotas for women's parliamentary representation and even parity have only more recently been achieved with significant progress in gender-sensitive legal and electoral reform. Currently, 10 countries<sup>24</sup> under review have adopted electoral quota laws – the adoptions mostly occurred in the 2010s. Five of these countries passed such laws in 2019 with the support of UN Women country offices.

After two years of intense work, in which UN Women provided technical and financial support to the Women's Caucus, the National Women's Organization and the government, the Parliament of **Cape Verde** approved the Parity Law with a qualified majority of Members. The law stipulates the principle of parity as a minimum of 40 per cent representativeness of any gender. Lists that are not compliant with the principles will be first notified and then rejected if not corrected. The law also provides guidelines on how the list should be developed to ensure that women would be selected for winning positions.

The **Central African Republic** adopted new Electoral Code No. 19-011 in August 2019. The gender-sensitive law advances include the abolition of the requirement of built property (land tax and title deed) as a criterion for eligibility for legislative elections; a reduction in the deposit amount for the legislative elections from 500,000 Central African CFA francs to 250,000 Central African CFA francs; and the choice of a female candidate in the event of a tie between two candidates. In addition, lists of candidates must have no less than 35 per cent of women, as required by the Law on Parity (Article 281) in municipal, legislative, senatorial and regional elections. In the **Central African Republic**, a gender-sensitive electoral quota for women, as per Law No. 19-011 of 20 August 2019 on the Electoral Code, was promulgated. The new code provides that, during municipal, legislative,

senatorial and regional elections, women from political parties associations and groups must represent at least 35 per cent of the candidates.

Law 2019-870 of 14 October 2019 related to women's representation in elected assemblies imposes a 30 per cent quota for women candidates in **Côte d'Ivoire**. This will improve women's representation in the National Assembly, the Senate and the regional, district and municipal councils. The government has announced that it will provide more funding to political parties that achieve 50 per cent female representation in their candidate lists (Abidjan.net, 2019).

The **Republic of Guinea** adopted, on 2 May 2019, the Law on Parity, which establishes that women must make up 50 per cent of the candidate lists for elective positions. Article 2 of this new parity law, passed by a unanimous vote, replaces the previous 30 per cent quota of women candidates (Article 129 (2) of the Electoral Law) and stipulates that "parity applies to any list of candidates for national and local elections, as well as for the holding of elective offices in public institutions". Articles 3 and 6 further specify that candidate lists must be alternately composed of candidates of both sexes and are otherwise inadmissible. The UN Women Guinea Country Office and UNDP supported the Women's Parliamentarian Forum in drafting and adopting the new law with funding from the Government of Canada.

**Niger** possesses an electoral quota for women, as per Law 2000-008 of 7 June 2000 establishing the quota system. In December 2019, the National Assembly of Niger voted a new law on electoral quotas for women, which modifies and completes the existing Law No. 2000-008 of 7 June 2000. The new quota law significantly increases the representation of women in elective (from 15 per cent to 25 per cent) and nominative (from 25 per cent to 30 per cent) decision-making positions. UN Women has played a critical role in the process of drafting this new law by providing technical support.

Out of the countries under review, 10 have adopted electoral quotas for the inclusion of women in political parties' electoral lists. Of these countries, seven have electoral quotas of 30 per cent and above. As per the latest data on women's representation in parliament (excluding the Senate), with regard to the top four countries, where women hold between 25 per cent and 43 per cent of seats, three have electoral quotas (**Cabo Verde, Mali and Senegal**) and one does not (Cameroon).

## STRENGTHENED TECHNICAL CAPACITY FOR STAFF, EXPERTS OF THE REGION, WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LAWMAKERS

The level of expertise of the West and Central Africa region in training women in politics increased through the first regional training of trainers session, held in Dakar from 1 to 4 November 2019 for anglophones and from 5 to 8 November for francophones. A group of 36 experts were trained on the UN Women Manual for Political Leadership and Candidate Training. It is a tool for delivering a comprehensive training curriculum designed to support UN Women's programmes on women's political empowerment and leadership, specifically by helping expand the pool of qualified women willing to run a campaign, win and serve in elective office. The experts delivered sessions using the manual and the Workbook for Women Candidates, which presents the same materials as the manual in a format intended for self-use by training participants. The training of trainers session was led by the author of the manual, Ms Susan Markham. Among the 36 experts, 16 trainers were selected among the most qualified, and they are now ready to be deployed in countries and in the region to train women candidates in elections.

The capacity of **17 UN Women staff** members from 11 country offices was reinforced through a four-day workshop on BRIDGE gender and election training in partnership with UNDP. The overall objective of the workshop, held from 17 to 20 September 2019 in Dakar, was strengthening the capacity of UNDP and UN Women programme staff working in areas of women leadership and political participation, governance and election to enhance their technical engagement with relevant stakeholders, including electoral management bodies, women candidates and voters, national electoral laws and policies from a gender perspective.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, dialogue spaces and capacity-building for parliamentarians led to the development of a common position presented by female members of the parliamentary caucus in plenary session to support the quota bill, which was adopted in October, providing for 30 per cent representation in elected assemblies. Moreover, Members of Parliament enhanced their skills on gender-responsive law reform through capacity-building initiatives facilitated by UN Women in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, the National Assembly of Quebec, and the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Francophonie. Support in 2019 effectively contributed to the inclusion of gender provisions (definitions of rape and related penalties) in the new penal code.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, a platform called Dynamique Nationale des Femmes Candidates, formed by more than 3,000 women who ran for office in the 2018 elections, was launched with the objective of supporting and mentoring women aspirants to the next election. The network was convened by UN Women, in coordination with UNDP and with additional support from Canada. Members of the network as well as members of the National Network of African Women Leaders rolled out the UN Women training curriculum, resulting in a pool of over 300 trainers ready to train aspirant women candidates. In addition, over 300 elected deputies at provincial level and ministers strengthened their capacities with regard to gender mainstreaming in provincial parliamentary work and local governments through a two-month multidisciplinary training programme designed and implemented by UN Women, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in seven provinces.

In **Guinea**, the awareness of more than 700 community leaders (346 women and 392 men) of women's representation in district and regional councils was increased as a result of a national advocacy campaign conducted from 17 to 24 February in some regions and continued from 22 to 28 May 2019 (after the reporting period) in other regions. The campaign targeted 140 representatives from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization in several governorates. More than 150 representatives of political parties, 58 representatives of CSOs and 320 representatives of local councils participated, in addition to the 43 representatives of local branches of the Electoral Commission.

In **Mali**, 3,200 women of all ages acquired specific knowledge of the roles of different election management bodies with the support of UN Women. In addition, 200 potential candidates (aged 21–60 years) reinforced their skills in election management and campaigns. Overall, 29 media professionals were able to deepen their understanding of the electoral process, and more than 1.2 million women were made aware of various aspects of the electoral process.

Technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing and capacity-strengthening activities were provided to parliaments and parliamentary bodies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In **Niger**, UN Women deployed an international expert on gender and elections, enabling sustained technical support to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and the National Observatory for Gender Promotion, to successfully advocate for the quota amendment bill, enacted

<sup>23</sup> Three countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Sierra Leone).

<sup>24</sup> Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone possess electoral quotas for women's representation in parliament.



by the National Assembly in December. Staff capacities were also developed within the Independent National Electoral Commission through dedicated training provided by UN Women and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. A BRIDGE workshop on gender and elections (held in Niamey on 13–16 September) enabled 20 programme managers of the Independent National Electoral Commission to enhance their knowledge of and skills in promoting gender equality in the 2019–2021 electoral cycle, and a roadmap for finalizing the electoral body's gender policy was agreed through a consultative workshop (17–20 September).

UN Women **Nigeria** provided technical and funding support to the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs so that it could conduct training programmes to increase the participation of women in the Kogi and Bayelsa governorship elections. This resulted in a capacity enhancement of 100 women leaders from four major parties. An additional 200 young female politicians were trained under the mentorship programme.

### SHOWCASING POLITICAL TALENT

UN Women West and Central Africa is proud to see its female political leaders in the spotlight. Therefore, collaborations with the media for accurate and gender-neutral leadership portrayal as well as collaborations with cultural institutions, such as museums, is key.

In **Cameroon**, a gender diversity barometer was developed by the National Communications Council. This tool aims to provide sound evidence to inform gender-responsive decision-making by the media while promoting social norms change and positive perceptions of female political leaders. It is a result of the strategic partnership established between UN Women and the National Communications Council ahead of the 2018 presidential elections. The first set of results were published in September 2019 and were used to build the capacities of 80 gender focal points of key national media.

An advocacy campaign conducted in **Guinea** raised the awareness of more than 700 community leaders of women's representation in district and regional councils.

In **Niger**, 85 media representatives (65 women and 20 men) were trained to ensure a gender balance in the electoral media coverage, in partnership with the Maison de la Presse and the Association of African Women Communication Professionals.

In **Nigeria**, 20 female politicians were portrayed in the magazine *SHAPE* (Showcasing Her Ability in Political Engagement). The magazine highlighted the women's contributions and accomplishments in politics, and communicated the challenges the women face in public.

In **Senegal**, the semi-permanent (two years) exhibit on African women's leadership by the Musée des Civilisations noires was designed to present the participation of female political leaders in Africa by using a wide range of information technologies that allow more information to be included in each section of the exhibition.

### A HEAD START FOR GIRLS IN POLITICS

To ensure a bright gender-neutral future in politics, West and Central African nations have worked tirelessly to provide opportunities in politics to girls and young women. Not only have young women sparkling bright ideas and courage, but they also portray a drive for change. Young women are able to move nations forward and change both leadership and the political landscape for good. Currently, 23.7 per cent of members of the parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa are women, whereas in West and Central Africa 15 per cent of the political leaders are women. Nonetheless, 50 per cent of all voters are female, which is a great step in the right direction. The progress in terms of legal reforms, which could positively affect election results in 2020 and 2021, was noted, and young women in politics will play a significant part in the change.

In the **Central African Republic**, the capacities of more than 200 young women to participate in political life were enhanced as a result of a meeting on intergenerational partnerships and political leadership, organized by the African Girl Centre and supported by UN Women in March 2019 and attended by 186 young women from the leadership club of the University of Bangui and 47 young women from various CSOs. These intergenerational meetings, planned at least three times per year, aim to expose young women to the challenges and opportunities of pursuing a political career and participating in public life. Almost 150 girls decided to engage in politics by joining various political parties and carry out voter registration campaigns for girls.



*Intergenerational partnerships and political leadership meeting, Bangui, Central African Republic, March 2019. © UN Women Central African Republic.*

In total, 100 young female aspirants from various political parties in **Nigeria** were trained in leadership skills during a four-month young female politicians' mentorship programme. In addition, 75 young women trained and interacted with both the first elected female president in Africa and the first female Chief Justice of Liberia.

In **Liberia**, 50 young women who now actively empower other young women through community-led initiatives were trained under the Leadership Mentoring Programme.

UN Women **Côte d'Ivoire** supported the creation of the flagship "Incubator programme for girls in politics" to increase young women's confidence as change makers and influencers in their own communities through their political enrolment and ability to manage conflicts. In addition, young women interested in politics have organized themselves in a platform of 50 youth organizations for the affirmation of women in Côte d'Ivoire.

The overall objective is to significantly increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies by 2025 by mobilizing young girls in Côte d'Ivoire and effectively engaging them in political action. This programme is structured around two main goals: raising the awareness of and training at least 100,000 girls in political culture, governance and a culture of peace, as well as mentoring and coaching 250 young girls who will become future candidates in upcoming elections.



*Launch of the incubator programme for young women in politics, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 31 October 2019. © UN Women Côte d'Ivoire.*

### STRENGTHENED TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF KEY POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS TO MONITOR AND MITIGATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

In the **Central African Republic**, the capacities of 33 media professionals (18 female and 15 male) to cover gender and women's empowerment issues were enhanced in Bangui. A network of gender-sensitive journalists was established to promote equal media coverage during elections, and report on and sensitize the public to violence against women in politics.

UN Women supported national efforts to mitigate violence against women in elections through national peace rallies, which gathered together 1,500 women in **Nigeria** – in Abuja and in 14 States – in February 2019. The rallies encouraged women to participate in elections and sensitized the public to the importance of violence-free elections using the slogan "Women for Peace". In addition, the awareness and capacity of 130 paramilitary personnel were strengthened with regard to effectively responding to violence against women in elections in Abuja.

In **Sierra Leone** alone, 290 Peace Ambassadors were trained by the International Rescue Committee, the All Political Parties Women Association and the Local Councils Association of Sierra Leone to engage male political leaders in the issue of violence against women in politics. These ambassadors have resolved conflict and spoken out about this important topic at both national and community levels. Together with strategic partners, such as countries' parliaments, male political leaders as well as decision makers made key contributions to achieve tangible results for gender equality.



### 3.4 WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In West and Central Africa, one of the most notable developments made was in regard to the empowerment of female entrepreneurs and female farmers. UN Women's WEE section provided technical support to country offices mainly through the overall reactivation of the WCARO WEE network.

UN Women WCARO conducted a baseline assessment and developed an action plan for capacity-building of the WEE network. On a bimonthly basis, the WEE network has received WEE tools and resources. In addition, a WEE webinar series on the topic of national strategies for WEE, in which WCARO supported all country offices in streamlining their strategic planning efforts for all WEE programmes, was kicked off in November.

#### 2019 key results

- 7 countries implemented climate-smart agriculture value chains
- 1 baseline assessment and action plan for capacity-building of the WEE network
- 50,000 more women reached through climate resilient agriculture programmes
- Support given to reform access to land and national WEE strategies

#### THINKING GLOBALLY, ACTING LOCALLY

The UN Women West and Central Africa Office supported the Government of **Senegal** in the formulation of the National Strategy for Women Economic Empowerment, which was approved in September 2019. The national strategy comprises key reforms to support the participation of women and girls in the economy over the next 15 years. In the strategy action plan, female entrepreneurship, women's participation in strategic value chains, girls' participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and social and unpaid care protection are among the evidence-based interventions to kick-start the implementation process. The strategy also includes a governance chapter, which is aimed at strengthening the role of the Ministry of Gender as a coordinator rather than an implementer.

Although the involvement of WCARO in WEE was strong in the 12 country offices that already existed, an additional two countries – Chad and Togo – were added to cover women's participation in the Climate-Smart Agriculture

Value Chains flagship programme, as UN Women did not have a country presence. In **Chad**, UN Women, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the implementation of the flagship programme's activities, such as training 90 women in the shea value chain and transforming the organization of producers into a national platform.

#### SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TO THRIVE

In the **Central African Republic**, more than 40 women created the Association Les Femmes Unies de Catin (Women United in Catin) for mutual support. UN Women continues to provide financial support for starting businesses and training women in business management.

UN Women **Côte d'Ivoire** organized a six-day practical workshop on the topic of organic cosmetic products based on shea butter and cocoa, together with the Centre for Women Entrepreneurs. The training enabled 30 female beneficiaries to acquire the necessary practical knowledge of cosmetic emulsion, packaging and organic raw materials. This achievement led the women to build their small businesses and position themselves on the national and international market with quality products that meet international standards.

Overall, 500 young women and adolescent girls have accessed nine months of literacy and numeracy skills training, inclusive of business development and financial management skills, in **Liberia**. UN Women Liberia and the telecommunication operator Orange partnered up to enhance the capacities of women entrepreneurs to effectively and efficiently develop and manage their business resources using information and communications technology via Orange Money. In total, 35 women created employment opportunities with Orange as mobile money agents. The Orange Money training curriculum was piloted with 749 female entrepreneurs from 35 communities to raise awareness of the use of the platform, and 16 new village saving and loan associations groups (comprising 420 rural female entrepreneurs) were formed, together with rural women farmers who are trading agriculture produce across the south-east of the country.



Inauguration of the African Women Leaders Network. © UN Women Liberia.

In addition, the Liberian Women Leaders Network chapter's advocacy has focused both on increasing political participation and on mentoring young women for leadership and to promote WEE.

In **Mali**, the directory of "women's businesses" (online database) registered 103 businesses owned by women. In the area of fish farming, UN Women supported 300 new female entrepreneurs, bringing the number of women entrepreneurs supported by UN Women to around 900; these women are organized into 19 cooperatives.

UN Women **Nigeria** monitored more than 250 female beneficiaries who have benefited from financial literacy and skills training, which included money-saving skills, accessing financial services, and information on how to record business transactions and calculate profit margins. Overall, 36 per cent of the women reported increased business turnover. In addition, 145 developed growth plans for their businesses. UN Women Nigeria and partners also provided the trained beneficiaries with more than 1,000 sets of simple equipment and accessories as start-up capital, which allowed them to set up a total of 123 profitable cottage enterprises.

#### SUPPORTING WOMEN TO SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNITIES

Nearly 2,800 women from 10 villages increased their income and improved time-consuming activities to secure their income. As partner to the UN joint programme on rural women, UN Women **Niger** provided equipment to female beneficiaries so that they could improve their time usage. The installation of these multifunctional platforms has significantly reduced the time and workload needed for women to process the same local products. Subsequent training sessions on milling and maintenance allowed the women to gain control over their resources, thus making them less dependent on men. As a direct outcome of these interventions, 1,848 female beneficiaries of the project saw their household income increase.

UN Women **Nigeria** mobilized 12,000 women who were organized into 15 agribusiness organizations and cooperatives in several states and who worked towards climate-smart agriculture value chains, including for rice and shea nuts/butter. This was achieved by accessing value-added processing technologies, climate-smart inputs,





A fish-drying oven of the Seribala women's group, which is part of the fish-farming project in Ségou, Mali. © UN Women Mali.

financial services and markets through affirmative procurement. Furthermore, 580 conflict-affected women and girls in Borno and Yobe states benefited from entrepreneurship and financial management training to contribute to strong communities.

In **Sierra Leone**, the national database recorded a total of 480 farmer groups that targeted more than 10,000 women through the support of both the government and UN Women's partners. A total of 21 businesses were created, and jobs were provided to more than 200 young women, whose income is growing steadily. Overall, 17 of the 21 businesses reported a minimum of 30 per cent income level growth. In total, 60 per cent of the employees who have been acting as sales agents reported improvements in their earnings.

### WOMEN AS NEW LANDOWNERS

UN Women **Liberia** supported five key CSOs (e.g. Liberia National Rural Women Structure, WIPHA and Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia) and the Liberia Land Authority in engaging in developing guidelines and regulations to move the implementation of the Land Rights Act (LRA) forward. UN Women also supported the convening of CSOs at a one-week national retreat, in Gbarnga, Bong County, with representation from 15 counties, on raising awareness of the LRA and its implementation. A factsheet on customary land rights in particular was developed and disseminated. It highlighted basic and fundamental

provisions of the LRA that enable one to easily understand key messages of the LRA. A draft declaration was then produced, describing the position of the CSOs on key contentious issues that require redress by the Liberia Land Authority. Overall, 75 national leaders of the Liberia National Rural Women Structure and 45 national leaders of the Liberia Marketing Association have increased their knowledge of the LRA and how it relates to land ownership for women. These female leaders have also raised awareness among over 749 rural women at district and community levels. Five local media institutions are engaged in gender-sensitive awareness-raising for local communities and training for other local journalists on the LRA.

Through its flagship programme on climate-smart agriculture, UN Women **Mali** has reached more than 20,000 women working in the shea, onion and potato value chains. It has supported women's access to land by allocating 239 hectares to female producers and securing an additional 139 hectares.

UN Women **Nigeria** supported the formation of a women's land rights network and conducted a series of advocacy actions for women's secured rights to land by targeting political leaders, such as members of the State Assembly and traditional rulers. These efforts caused the state Ministries of Agriculture and Land to allocate up to 150 hectares of fertile land areas to 15 women farmer organizations benefiting from UN Women's climate-smart agriculture projects.

### BUY FROM WOMEN INITIATIVE AIMS FOR GOLD

The Buy from Women digital platform is an example of how to use technology and innovation to advance WEE in West and Central Africa. Designed by UN Women, Buy from Women provides cross-cutting services to the four pillars of climate-resilient agriculture initiatives. Although the platform has a strong focus on the fourth pillar ("Access to markets") by facilitating market links between women and buyers, it is also a vehicle through which to access critical production, climatic and market information. The platform also serves as a registry to build credit histories of women users and strengthens their credit records by allowing them to access mainstream finance in the medium term. Buy from Women serves as a one-stop shop for women agri-entrepreneurs to connect to buyers, find information and inputs for production, and thus improve their access to finance. With a user-centric design, the platform is in constant evolution so that it can adapt to the needs of female agri-entrepreneurs. In the reporting period, the platform was launched in **Mali** in the context of the Climate Resilient Agriculture Value Chains, and more than 700 women are already marketing their products through the platform.

The UN Women Buy from Women initiative is being piloted in **Liberia**, with the long-term aim of connecting smallholder farmers to information, finance and markets via information and communications technology. Through Buy from Women, UN Women Liberia provided the targeted women with high-quality agricultural inputs for agriculture production, which helped them to enhance their incomes through better techniques and inputs during the reporting year. The country office supported 341 beneficiaries by providing them with access to high-quality seeds, tools and machinery so that they could invest in agriculture. There is an increase in productivity with regard to beneficiaries, wherein they have been observed to have acceptable quantities of appropriate food available as well as adequate income through their respective businesses.



A woman trained in improved rice post-harvest processes, which increased her income. © UN Women Mali.

### WOMEN TAKE OVER CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

The WCARO and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office WEE sections collaborated in joint advocacy to promote women's participation in climate-smart agriculture value chains in Africa in the context of the Global Gender Summit organized in Kigali in November. Both offices organized an event as part of the main programme of the summit, featuring UN Women's programme and examples from East and West Africa. UN Women continues to be a key partner for the planning and operationalization of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. UN Women's participation in the strategy's working groups has resulted in the inclusion of the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Women's Empowerment programme in the UN Support Plan for the Sahel 2018–2030.

**Buy from Women serves as a one-stop shop for women agri-entrepreneurs to connect to buyers, find information and inputs for production, and thus improve their access to finance.**



3.5 ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

VAWG is one of the most prevalent and deep-rooted human rights abuses in the world. The impact of GBV reverberates through the victim’s wider community and country, as it reinforces other forms of inequality and affects a country’s overall development. In West and Central Africa, GBV is widespread and deeply rooted in the sociocultural context of women’s subordinate status to men, cutting across borders, race, class, ethnicity and religion. A woman’s right to live free from violence is upheld by international agreements, such as CEDAW and the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Such international agreements provide the basis for UN Women to support countries in adopting and implementing laws and policies aligned with such standards. UN Women works to prevent and respond to violence, build capacities, raise awareness and increase access to services for survivors by partnering with governments, United Nations agencies, CSOs and other institutions.

2019 key results

- 1 law criminalizing rape and paedophilia (Senegal)
- 1 amendment to the sexual offence bill (Sierra Leone)
- 1 prevention strategy implemented (Liberia)
- Awareness-raising activities reached over 4 million people
- 5 districts abandoned FGM (Sierra Leone)
- The Seven Count Policy signed by 112 traditional leaders (Liberia)
- 3,555 vulnerable women in conflict-affected areas economically empowered

WOMEN’S PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW

When laws that protect women from GBV are in place and enforced, they convey a strong message that VAWG is not tolerated. This, in turn, has the ability to change attitudes and behaviours in the long term, especially when accompanied by awareness-raising activities and wide-reaching initiatives. Unfortunately, domestic violence and harmful traditional practices have historically been seen as private matters that exist separately from official legal frameworks. UN Women aims to shift the narrative towards the accountability of perpetrators by placing an emphasis on strong legal and policy responses to prevent VAWG.

UN Women WCARO contributed to multiple **momentous legal advances** in the region in 2019. Most notably, new legislation seeking to protect women and girls and end impunity was implemented in **Senegal, Sierra Leone** and **Liberia**. In addition, UN Women WCARO oversaw

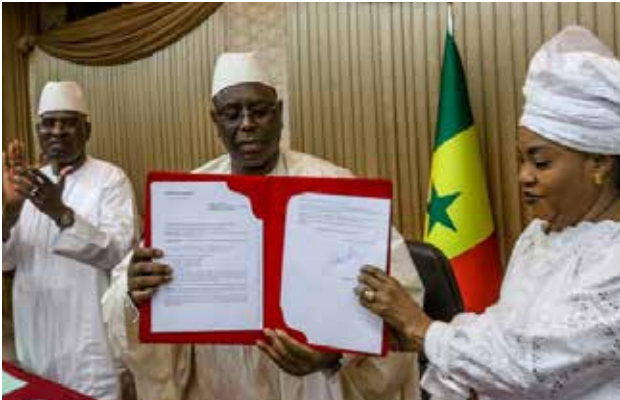
significant developments aimed at protecting women from sexual harassment; in the Central African Republic, a draft law to protect women is under way, and in Nigeria the anti-sexual harassment law is gaining substantial awareness and endorsement.

SENEGAL LAW CRIMINALIZING RAPE AND PAEDOPHILIA

On 30 December 2019, the Senegalese government **strengthened sanctions for perpetrators of rape and paedophilia** through the adoption of a **law criminalizing rape**. This result would not have been possible without the support of UN Women, which, together with women’s rights associations, provided technical support to the Collective of Women Parliamentarians of Senegal. Representing a **major step forward** in efforts to **harmonize domestic legislation with international and regional commitments**, this law was passed unanimously.

This law has since been promulgated by His Excellency Macky Sall, President of Senegal and UN Women HeForShe Champion, during a ceremony at the presidential palace. This occasion brought together prominent stakeholders in this momentous step towards strengthening the position of Senegal as a leader in efforts to end VAWG. Oulimata Sarr, Regional Director of UN Women in West and Central Africa, welcomed the enactment of this law and reaffirmed the support of UN Women, which will put in place the necessary means to accompany the government and stakeholders to guarantee the effective application of the law.

Following sustained advocacy from women’s groups and other stakeholders, the government of Sierra Leone passed an amendment to the **sexual offence bill**, which criminalizes all forms of VAWG. UN Women played a



President Macky Sall signs the decree promulgating the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia in Senegal. © Presidency of the Republic of Senegal.

**leading role in building the capacity of the women’s groups**, in order for them to be able to successfully advocate in the government and ensure the bill was passed. As well as increasing the sentence for perpetrators of rape and paedophilia to a **maximum penalty of life imprisonment**, this act also denounces family members who do not report the rape of their girls or who negotiate payment in exchange for their female child’s hand in marriage, as well as traditional or religious leaders who cover up sexual offences.

In **Nigeria**, UN Women provided technical support and raised awareness for the **anti-sexual harassment bill 2019** through the **Survivor Summit**, organized by UN Women in line with the European Union–United Nations Spotlight Initiative and in coordination with the Government of Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs and various CSOs. Held during the **16 Days of Activism** in 2019, this summit enabled stakeholders to discuss strategies to enable women affected by GBV to transition from victims to survivors. Most significantly, a spotlight on the issue of rape in tertiary institutions led to **the holding of a public hearing for the anti-sexual harassment bill 2019**, which constituted a positive step towards the implementation of this crucial legislation.

A SPOTLIGHT ON NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS

The Spotlight Initiative is a global partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of VAWG by 2030. Under its second pillar of change, the Spotlight Initiative seeks to work closely with UN Women to enhance institutions through overarching



Panel discussion during the Survivor Summit, 2019. © UN Women Nigeria.

national strategies and plans. Having such structures in place will enable governments and organizations to be more efficient in addressing the issue of VAWG. In 2019, three countries in the West and Central Africa region worked alongside the Spotlight Initiative to implement centralized and cohesive strategies that will improve the countries’ capacity to prevent VAWG.

In **Liberia**, the Spotlight Initiative supported the validation of the first ever **comprehensive prevention strategy** on SGBV. This strategy was developed and validated through the support of UN Women, in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, various CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, and women and youth groups, including members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community. This strategic document, which is being piloted as the **first of its kind in the region**, represents an **innovative approach towards the active prevention of SGBV**. Focused on achieving strengthened community engagement and coordinated action, this comprehensive prevention strategy will reform and revolutionize SGBV prevention efforts in Liberia.

As a lead UN Spotlight agency in Lagos, UN Women supported the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development by providing technical support for the **development of the United Nations’ “Delivering as One” evidence-based annual plan and budget**. UN Women’s strengthened partnership with stakeholders in **Nigeria** is further evidenced by the technical support that resulted in the launch of the country’s first **online sexual offenders register and database**. With an estimated 2 million girls in Nigeria experiencing sexual abuse every year, this consolidated register seeks to expose repeat offenders.





The Minister for Gender, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, UN Women Head of Agency and other partners during the validation of the comprehensive prevention strategy. © UN Women Liberia.

In 2019, the Government of **Mali**, supported by the Spotlight Initiative, implemented a national programme to strengthen, coordinate and consolidate all actions aimed at ending VAWG. In line with this programme, the National Police Force of Mali has developed an action plan for the holistic management of GBV cases. This country-wide **holistic strategy** is a positive step in the fight against GBV, as it represents a significant achievement with regard to providing security and support for victims.

## ADVOCACY, AWARENESS AND ACTIVISM

The best way to end VAWG is to prevent it from happening in the first place. This is why nationwide frameworks and strategies must be accompanied by awareness-raising activities that address the structural causes of VAWG and break down sociocultural barriers. Having an increased awareness of VAWG can, over time, challenge sociocultural inequalities and social norms. UN Women supports training and educating initiatives that contribute to a more accurate understanding of GBV and its causes and consequences across all levels of society. The year 2019 was effective in terms of increasing advocacy, raising awareness and undertaking wide-reaching activism. In addition to the successful 16 Days of Activism campaign, many countries in West and Central Africa, including Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Mali, achieved notable capacity-building successes, with a further seven countries focusing on school-based awareness programmes that seek to tackle GBV through early interventions.



Training on school-related GBV (SRGBV) in secondary schools in Sierra Leone. © UN Women Sierra Leone.

## EDUCATING YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS

To ensure future generations are equipped with the knowledge they will need to live a life free of violence, it is vital that an intergenerational dialogue is created between older generations and today's youth.

Following a joint initiative between **UN Women and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Sierra Leone**, **20,000 community members were sensitized** to school-related GBV (SRGBV) through radio and television discussions. Furthermore, to ensure that the school environment is safe for girls, **360 mentors were trained on reporting SRGBV**, and an additional 40 teachers were trained to respond to SRGBV cases as HeForShe ambassadors.

In the **Central African Republic**, **240 students, parents and teachers** from three schools were made aware of harassment in the school environment, as well as menstrual hygiene management. Students were **given access to information and support** for the hygienic, dignified and secure management of menstrual hygiene. This awareness campaign resulted in the students forming a **deeper understanding of the consequences of SRGBV** on the victim's life and on the community. They are now aware of the concept of harassment prevention and are able to identify and report this violence.

## POWERFUL AWARENESS-RAISING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Through primary prevention activities in **Cameroon**, approximately **35,091 people were made aware of the causes and consequences of GBV** through meetings and awareness rallies with religious groups, whereas more than **50,000** members of the community were reached through a **radio and social media campaign**. In addition to such awareness-raising activities, **500 security forces**



Silent walk against rape in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. © UN Women Côte d'Ivoire.

**and 50 community leaders** in the north-west and south-west regions have seen their ability to understand the different forms of GBV improve.

As a Spotlight country, **Niger** launched an initiative in collaboration with **76 CSOs** to ensure that they are better informed and positioned to end VAWG. These CSOs were carefully identified and mapped onto an **online database**, thereby strengthening the capacity of all CSOs involved, as well as facilitating the monitoring and protection of VAWG defenders. Furthermore, several **interactive radio programmes**, including debates and interviews on GBV and issues related to maternal and child health, reached a total of more than **1,391,160 men, women, boys and girls**.

As part of the fight against GBV in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, UN Women partnered with traditional and religious leaders to produce an **awareness-raising video** in five languages (French, Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili and Tshiluba). This video has raised awareness of issues related to VAWG **among more than 1,000 people**. It has also encouraged wider community engagement and has informed leaders about better decision-making that will help to eradicate violence.

## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

To mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, the 2019 UNiTE campaign marked the annual 16 Days of Activism by adopting the theme **"Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape!"**. In 2019, all WCARO countries participated in a variety of activism events, including awareness-raising activities, marches, film screenings and social media campaigns, establishing a united stance against VAWG and rape.

In 2019, the **Central African Republic** joined the rest of the world in marking 16 Days of Activism to end VAWG by conducting **awareness-raising activities** that brought together youth leaders and women's organizations. As part of the campaign, **UN Women joined forces with**

**UNAIDS** to promote understanding of the link between rape and HIV, which was reiterated by the UN Women Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Mr Salvator Nkurunziza. Experts from both organizations took this opportunity to **inform students about prevention and response mechanisms against SGBV and HIV in the Central African Republic**.

To mark the 16 Days of Activism in **Côte d'Ivoire**, UN Women mobilized the efforts of bilateral and multilateral partners, CSOs, the private sector, the media, artists, women's associations and youth movements to form a united front in the fight against VAWG. The campaign enabled the **sensitization of about 8,000 people**, including **5,000 girls and boys** from about 10 secondary schools, colleges and universities in Abidjan. Students gathered to share experiences and raise awareness of GBV at their schools, and to participate in a silent march alongside all major stakeholders.

The official launch of the campaign in Côte d'Ivoire involved a screening of the award-winning film *Resolution*, which projects the reality of domestic violence and its impact on the family. **The launch gathered a diverse audience of 1,000 people**, including national authorities, UN personnel and the general public. The film inspired **young students to pledge to denounce violence and raise awareness in their communities**.

In line with Spotlight objectives, UN Women, the Government of **Nigeria**, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and CSOs organized a **Survivor Summit** to discuss strategies for providing support to women affected by GBV, to **enable them to transition from victims to survivors**. Nigeria has implemented multiple successful campaigns using radio shows, mass media and social media, and it has been estimated that around **4.2 million people have been reached** by such interventions that seek to transform negative social norms and stereotypes.



First Lady of Lagos, wife of the Vice-President, and State and UN Women Representative at the Survivor Summit, December 2019, Lagos, Nigeria. © UN Women Nigeria.



## ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND ACTIVISM: A FOCUS ON MALI

As a result of capacity-building, awareness-raising, advocacy and consultation activities, **significant changes in behaviour and mentality are evident** through the institutional and social frameworks of Mali. UN Women's contribution to capacity-building and advocacy has been fundamental to the significant change in the mentalities and attitudes of stakeholders regarding gender equality issues and the promotion of women's and girls' rights. UN Women's progress during 2019 was **visible at community level**, as evidenced by the organization of an awareness-raising march of more than **2,000 young people** in Bamako. Alongside partners UNFPA and UN Women, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Bamako Office has worked with local schools to promote inclusive strategies for young women and adolescent girls.

- In total, **30 teachers** and school directors have **strengthened their capacities** with regard to GBV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and have **developed action plans** to combat violence in schools and communities.
- Overall, **114 people**, including religious leaders and traditional authorities, were reached by **focus groups** on the themes of GBV, SRH and gender equality.

"I learned a lot during this training on GBV. I now know that I have obligations to my children, especially their education, my wife and even the neighbours. From now on, I promise not to commit GBV that I did before. I sincerely thank you for this initiative, good luck to the project," said Mr Hassane Bocoum, advisor to a village chief.



A participant at the march against VAWG, Bamako, Mali, 2019. © UN Women Mali.

In addition, the MUSKOKA project of Mali addresses the needs of women and adolescent girls by empowering them and promoting their rights. **Improvements have been noted** in terms of disseminating information, raising awareness, and building the capacities of actors for the prevention of GBV, the abandonment of social practices that are harmful to women and girls and the promotion of women and adolescent girls' SRH rights. Over the past year, the following has been achieved:

- Overall, **8,742 people** deepened their understanding of GBV through 824 discussion sessions and radio debates.
- In total, **60 peer educators** became ambassadors within their communities and schools. They have acquired knowledge of GBV, the socioeconomic empowerment of adolescent girls and SRH. As well as initiating advocacy activities for the adoption of a law against GBV, these ambassadors are able to provide young girls and adolescents with accurate information about SRH and refer them to health services.
- Through the technical and financial support of UN Women, **180 education stakeholders**, including 125 men, have improved their knowledge of GBV and SRH in order to **set up six action plans to prevent and respond to GBV** in schools.
- As spaces for intergenerational dialogue, **120 village GBV-monitoring committees have been established**. Composed of community leaders, these committees allow communities to hold constructive discussions and debates on gender equality and GBV.

**"I learned a lot during this training on GBV. I now know that I have obligations to my children, especially their education, my wife and even the neighbours. From now on, I promise not to commit GBV that I did before. I sincerely thank you for this initiative, good luck to the project,"** said Mr Hassane Bocoum, advisor to a village chief.

## ZERO TOLERANCE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

FGM is the most widespread form of VAWG and is practised in a large majority of countries in West and Central Africa. As part of the fight against FGM, 2019 saw the very first African summit on FGM and child marriage in Dakar. The Government of Senegal and the Ministry of Women, Family and Gender marked this important day with a summit that brought together UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, the Ministries of Health, Justice, Education and Youth, CSOs and youth organizations. The summit enabled all major stakeholders to gather and discuss forward-looking African-led solutions and recommendations based on human rights, laws, social norms, qualitative and quantitative data, male engagement, the central role of traditional and religious leaders, and cross-border practices.

UN Women WCARO played a fundamental role in the growing motivation and regional incentive to eliminate FGM, which was exemplified through 2019's influential summit. By forming strategic partnerships and working directly with traditional circumcisers, as well as implementing alternative economic livelihood schemes for chief community circumcisers, UN Women has been central to positive advances towards the elimination of FGM in four countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

**Sierra Leone**, which has one of the highest rates of FGM in Africa, is one of the few countries where the practice remains legal. In 2019, however, **five districts in the country abandoned FGM entirely**, which is encouraging progress towards the abandonment of the practice. **UN Women continues to work directly with traditional circumcisers** to build on the progress made by the temporary ban of FGM in 2015, following the Ebola virus disease outbreak. As a result of UN Women's interventions, alongside the HeForShe campaign, **FGM abandonment is increasing**.



Stakeholders at the first African summit on FGM and child marriage, Dakar, Senegal, 2019. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

### Mafulka Chiefdom

Following the circumcisers abandoning the practice, the Mafulka community constructed a school for the children of the Chiefdom, using timber from the bush where the decommissioned FGM shrines used to be. In a truly historic and emblematic development, HeForShe male advocates elected an all-women board to lead their villages.

A UN representative commented on these developments: "I never would have believed that this would ever be possible. But here we are. It has happened. They are actually abandoning Poro Societies (for men) and Bondo bush shrines for women (where the FGM was performed) and [using] the trees from that bush to erect the roofs of the school that will educate their children".

In **Nigeria**, UN Women inaugurated and continue to support, both technically and financially, the **Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa**, which ensures that **harmful perceptions are altered** within communities. Gatekeepers for women and young girls have been further supported through coalition building, sensitization and engagement with harmful gender norms. As a result of the unanimous and united support from UN Women, the Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa and community gatekeepers, **gender-responsive perspectives and policies are being adopted** and pathways have been forged to end FGM in its entirety.



ELIMINATING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION: A FOCUS ON LIBERIA

The Seven Count Policy

As a result of the UN Women’s constructive partnership with the Government of **Liberia**, through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders, the **Seven Count Policy was signed** by 112 traditional leaders; this demonstrated their **commitment to end FGM**. The Seven Count Policy has resulted in the suspension of FGM and other Sande activities for one year. The commitment to **zero tolerance of FGM has been validated by 11 out of 15 practising counties** in Liberia.

A database of circumcisers

Over the past year, over **1,115 traditional circumcisers have been recorded on a database**, as a result of an increase in trust and commitment from the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders. This database will inform the efforts of Liberia to end FGM.

Alternative economic livelihoods

A total of **300 circumcisers** from the country’s database have received **alternative economic livelihood support**, thanks to the Spotlight Initiative. Four vocational and heritage centres will act as multipurpose centres so that the women can learn new skills in their areas of interest. This initiative empowers traditional community figures to abandon their roles as circumcisers.



Traditional leaders celebrating during the launch of an alternative economic livelihood intervention. © UN Women Liberia.

Abandoning traditional roles

Mrs Ma-Yatta Fahnbulleh is a respectable woman in her community who was a circumciser for 35 years, circumcising more than 200 women and girls. She used to be the guardian of the bush where the annual circumcisions were held. However, as a result of the alternative economic livelihood initiative, Ma-Yatta has now given the rights to the piece of land she controlled for 35 years to the initiative for the construction of vocational and heritage centres.

“The time has come for me to change after 35 years in the business of bush activities. Many people have asked me to leave bush business [FGM] but my question has always been, what will I do next to help my family? Now that you people have answered my question, I will join you to carry out more awareness on the Vocational and Heritage Centre and the new livelihood project for us.”  
Ma-Yatta Fahnbulleh

ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF GBV

After suffering great trauma, survivors of GBV are treated and given the opportunity to lead a better quality of life through improved services, thanks to the technical and financial support of UN Women. Working closely with partners and undertaking technical consultations with United Nations agencies, independent experts and practitioners, UN Women WCARO has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of and increase accessibility to coordinated services that meet the needs of women and girls who have been subjected to violence.

In 2019, UN Women actively contributed to the improvement of health care for GBV survivors, particularly in Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone, where **1,180 women** have received holistic health care. In addition, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone have implemented income-generating activities (IGAs), **economically empowering 3,555 vulnerable women in these regions**, which will have a lasting effect on their families and wider communities.

With the generous support of the Government of Japan, UN Women and the Food and Agriculture Organization launched the *Amis Afrique* programme in the **Central African Republic**, which achieved **remarkable results**. Over **680 survivors of GBV have received holistic support**, and GBV response mechanisms have been strengthened. A further **3,000 women**, primarily female heads of households, have been empowered to engage in **IGAs**, which has had a **positive impact on 15,000 people** in their community.



A woman beneficiary of IGA. © UN Women Central African Republic



UN Women staff facilitating a menstrual hygiene management workshop with girls in the Tambacounda region, Senegal. © UN Women/Mareme Ndoeye.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **200 survivors of SGBV** in the surrounding areas of the Virunga Park have been trained in agricultural production, entrepreneurship, and income-generating business plans. UN Women has been committed to working closely with community leaders, local authorities, and grass-roots and operational actors to **strengthen the economic resilience of women** and reduce the risk of sexual violence against them owing to the presence of armed guards in the area. This project had a **significant impact on the daily lives of the beneficiaries**, facilitating the reintegration of women who had been rejected and marginalized in the community.

Supported by the Muskoka Fund, UN Women **strengthened the capacities of health service providers**, improved the multisectoral care of victims, and enhanced communications between medical staff and community actors in **Senegal**. This has resulted in a strengthened synergy in community actions, which will **prevent and manage preventable violence and maternal and child deaths**. In six districts, spaces have been installed by UN Women so that victims of violence are able to receive **psychosocial monitoring and support**.



Gender mainstreaming and the needs of survivors of GBV in **Mali** have been significantly improved, thanks to the combined efforts of UN Women, CSOs and the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and Families. Following awareness-raising sessions carried out in the communities, **hundreds of vulnerable women and girls and survivors of GBV were identified** in the Sikasso region, and the following results have been achieved:

- 1) Survivors have access to **free medical care, psychological care and legal assistance**, with **150 women receiving psychological support**, including those suffering from obstetric fistulas. A further **75 survivors received medical care** through surgical procedures for uterine prolapse and hysterectomies.
- 2) **Overall, 215 survivors** have benefited from training designed to help them conduct IGAs at community level and **improve their socioeconomic status**. This key initiative to **provide survivors with the opportunity for a better quality of life** after suffering trauma has been greatly improved, thanks to the technical and financial support of UN Women.
- 3) **In total, 275 vulnerable women and girls** have benefited from **holistic care** carried out in centres that have been established with the support of UN Women.



AgriFeD Project, Senegal. © UN Women/Yulia Panevina

## PINK POWER TUK-TUKS: DAY AND NIGHT ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS IN SIERRA LEONE

UN Women has worked closely with national community-based organizations to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and promote safe sex in Sierra Leone through a successful advocacy campaign. Pink Power Tuk-Tuks provides its beneficiaries with an education on reproductive rights and how to prevent and report sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as offering commercial sex workers income-generating skills.

Currently, more than 500 female commercial sex workers have been reached with this service, with many leaving commercial sex work as a result of their newly gained skills and their ability to generate income from alternative means. For those who choose to continue their work as a sex worker, this campaign has meant that they are no longer abused. In fact, they feel as though their dignity has been restored and their lives have been improved.

## 3.6 WOMEN AND PEACE, SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

A woman's participation in peace, security and humanitarian action is essential for achieving sustainable peace that extends beyond the silencing of guns. Women are crucial partners in economic revival, social cohesion and political legitimacy, and their meaningful participation in peacekeeping ensures a deeper understanding of the deep-rooted causes of conflict and the ability to provide inclusive, holistic resolutions. Unfortunately, women are still largely absent from global peace processes, which can lead to the perspectives and concerns of women and other vulnerable groups being overlooked, despite the fact that women are greatly affected by and involved in conflict, be it as relatives, caretakers, politicians, peace activists or combatants. As a lead actor in WPS, UN Women seeks to maintain peace and security by upholding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international human rights.

In West and Central Africa, a complex and fragile region, a significant number of countries are currently in a conflict or post-conflict context, and threats of violent extremism and terrorism have increased in recent years. Consequently, wide-reaching humanitarian work of UN Women WCARO is increasingly essential in building sustainable peace in the region. Over the past year, UN Women have continued to work closely with CSOs, Member States, regional organizations and other United Nations agencies, among other stakeholders, to provide advocacy efforts, gender expertise and technical support in order to develop regional networks, systems and initiatives that ensure the integration of gender into conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

In 2019, as a result of WCARO leading a regional programme to accelerate the implementation of UNSCR 1325, second generations of the UNSCR 1325 national action plans were signed by five countries: **Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Nigeria and Mali**. The regional programme of WCARO was fundamental to these countries' validation of a **normative framework** that provides them with the potential to escape cycles of conflict, **bring about inclusive and more democratic peacemaking** and turn away from gender inequality and towards gender justice.

**UN Women provided technical support** to the development of an accountability framework to promote WPS in **Sierra Leone**, in order for the second generation of the UNSCR 1325 national action plan to be implemented. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, extensive consultations with multiple stakeholders were held, resulting in national community ownership and participation in the national action plan.

### 2019 key results

- **5 countries signed the UNSCR 1325 national action plan**
- **5 countries implemented training programmes in the justice and security sectors**
- **Mediators and humanitarian actors were trained in 7 countries**
- **316 women were trained in peace huts in Liberia**
- **IGAs transformed the lives of 3,971 women and their families**

### NATIONAL PLANS AND RESOLUTIONS

**UNSCR 1325** and nine subsequent resolutions constitute the WPS agenda, which underscores the importance of women's **meaningful participation in peace processes**. UNSCR 1325 is the most significant national WPS document, as it has the transformative potential to illuminate the often invisible, informal and unrecognized role that women and girls play in conflict prevention and resolution.



Participants in the regional validation meeting on the national action plan. © UN Women Sierra Leone.





Validation workshop for the 1325 national action plan. © UN Women Mali.

In **Mali**, UN Women's ability to mobilize donors and uphold strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Gender, key CSOs, members of the National Monitoring Committee and the Folke Bernadotte Academy led to the **implementation of the UNSCR 1325 national action plan and gender action plans in thirteen ministries**. UN Women facilitated the process of finalizing the national action plan by providing **technical and financial support** at a national workshop, alongside members of the National Monitoring Committee, CSOs, NGOs, government members and other United Nations entities. All the draft reparation policies, laws and **decrees that were drawn up** consider the needs of survivors of GBV and children born of rape.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, UN Women supported the government in developing a budgeted operational plan for the implementation of the second generation of the national action plan to implement UNSCR 1325. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has signed an addendum that makes it possible for the country to develop an action plan with the

Congolese National Police to **prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence**, which is seen no longer as an inevitable effect of armed conflict but as a crime against humanity. Given the current context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the government has focused on ensuring that conflict-related sexual violence is included as a prohibited act in ceasefire requirements and peace agreements.

The Government of **Nigeria** has supported capacity-building and institutional strengthening of the UNSCR 1325 national action plan at national, state and local government levels through consultative meetings, capacity-building training sessions and advocacies with relevant stakeholders from the State Houses of Assembly, government ministries, departments and agencies, security agencies, legislators, community and religious leaders, CSOs, women's groups and the media. As a result, a total of 11 states have localized the national action plan by developing and implementing state action plans, with the help of two expert consultants who worked in close collaboration with the State Ministries of Women Affairs.

## UPHOLDING RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

Establishing, strengthening, and maintaining the rule of law is necessary to uphold peace and protect women's rights and security, as the effects of conflict often endure long after a peace agreement is signed. In 2019, UN Women made key contributions to mainstreaming gender and protecting the rights of women and girls by working alongside justice and security organizations. In five countries in the region – Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Nigeria – UN Women supported the execution of wide-reaching training and awareness programmes for members of justice and security sectors, including officers, security officials, soldiers, magistrates and community leaders. In addition, UN Women played a central role in advocating for and developing multiple gender policies that have been implemented in Liberia.

Owing to UN Women's wide-reaching training activities in **Cameroon**, **557 security personnel**, including 30 military officers who had never received any gender-related training, are better able to protect women and girls from GBV and provide holistic support. In the legal sector, eight magistrates (including two women) and 14 paralegals have an **increased awareness** of best practices when preventing and responding to GBV in legal cases. A further 50 community leaders (including 35 women) have reinforced their understanding of GBV and its consequences, meaning that they are **better equipped to protect and serve the women and girls** affected by the conflict in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon.

In addition to the implementation of the national gender policy of **Liberia** in the Liberia National Police, two joint programmes funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, UN Women and UNDP focused on **mainstreaming gender in the security sector**. These initiatives resulted in the approval of a gender-responsive **legal aid policy**, the development of five gender policies, and capacity-building in justice and security institutions. Notably, 91 per cent of the Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce members have gained the **ability and confidence to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in their organizations**. Consequently, they have advocated for gender mainstreaming in other institutions, including the Liberia National Fire Services and the Ministry of Justice, which are both **developing gender policies in partnership with UN Women Liberia**. As a result of UN Women's ongoing support, women are active participants in **community policing forums of Liberia**. This enhanced engagement between the

Liberia National Police and communities has **improved early response** mechanisms and fostered **greater trust** between communities and the police.

In **Nigeria**, a gender assessment of the security sector (Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and Nigerian Army) was conducted both at national level and in two target states, Bauchi and Benue. Following **robust advocacy and sensitization workshops facilitated by UN Women**, these institutions have committed themselves to implementing the recommendations from the gender assessment. Furthermore, key members of the justice sector in Bauchi and Benue, including chief judges and magistrates, have been **sensitized to the need to mainstream gender perspectives** and promote the rights of women and girls in conflict, post-conflict and other crisis situations.

## BUILDING RESILIENT NATIONS

For local women and their communities, peace is more than an absence of war. Peace is a society characterized by **harmony, tolerance, dialogue and inclusion**. Building resilient communities through women's enhanced skills, coordination and knowledge reduces the risk and potential impact of conflict. **Peacemakers, community leaders and peace ambassadors** are fundamental to creating a more resilient society, and UN Women is at the forefront of expanding women mediator networks that strengthen women's leadership, create synergies among actors and provide a space in which to share essential tools and knowledge. In West and Central Africa, UN Women has efficaciously facilitated the training of mediators and humanitarian actors in the following countries – **Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone** – supporting women in being actively involved in building resilience in their local communities.



Training on Women peace and Security: conflict resolution. © UN Women Cameroon.





Françoise Kabral, student leader and activist for women's rights. © UN Women Central African Republic.

A wider and deeper awareness of peacekeeping has also been cultivated in five of those seven countries, where UN Women has supported **sensitization workshops** and the implementation of dialogue platforms.

In **Mali**, UN Women deployed a **gender specialist** in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NORCAP). As a result of this support and expertise, 33 per cent of projects of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Mali are **gender responsive**, and the gender analysis of national strategies is consolidated through the strengthened capacities of key actors and advocates.

Furthermore, **90 humanitarian actors**, including gender specialists from United Nations agencies and members of NGOs, and **212 community leaders** in Mali have acquired proficient knowledge of the importance of including women and girls in risk and vulnerability analyses. Consequently, these actors are able to accurately **address risks** related to SGBV and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse in the humanitarian planning and response of Mali.

In **Cameroon**, **117 young people** received training to become peace ambassadors. Organized by UN Women, with the technical support of ministries, including the Ministry of Youth, these workshops taught the

participants how to become **leaders, mediators and ambassadors for peace and social cohesion**. Given the challenging sociopolitical situation in Cameroon, the promotion of youth involvement in the peacebuilding process is fundamental in the pursuit of sustainable peace.

UN Women supported the **Central African Republic** in its quest for national reconciliation, social cohesion and the coordination of humanitarian assistance by **educating communities** on the Central African Republic Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and how to actively participate in its implementation. **Sensitization workshops** on women's participation as peacemakers reached a total of **10,688 people (4,680 men and 6,008 women)**, who are now motivated, informed and prepared to fight harmful practices that affect the lives of women and girls.

In **Nigeria**, UN Women have worked to establish community-level multisectoral platforms that serve as **local mechanisms to promote peace and security**, including the Peace Architecture Dialogues and Community Security Architecture Dialogue observatories. These platforms have given the local populations the **confidence to address issues such as GBV and conflict prevention**. Bringing together diverse community stakeholders, these platforms implemented by UN Women have facilitated **constructive dialogue** and fostered **collaboration** to address security issues and promote social cohesion.

## WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING

As the second pillar in UNSCR 1325, women's active participation in peacebuilding is fundamental to the pursuit of sustainable peace. The achievement of this goal would ensure that peace resolutions and agreements accurately reflect and address concerns and needs of women and other vulnerable groups. UN Women have unquestionably been central to fostering increased awareness and community resilience in the region. However, the ability to develop this awareness into participation and the meaningful involvement of women in decision-making processes and peacebuilding activities remains a global challenge. In West and Central Africa, the **Central African Republic and Liberia are paving the way** in terms of women's active involvement in peacebuilding, as can be seen in the meaningful participation of female government representatives in the Central African Republic and the Liberian Peace Hut initiatives, in which the contribution of women is central to the upholding of peace.

In the **Central African Republic**, following more than two years of negotiations with the support of the African Union and the United Nations, the government and rebel groups signed a Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in February 2019. Significantly, **three out of the seven government representatives were women**, which led to the agreement providing specific measures for the prevention of and reduction in GBV, as well as access to transitional justice and reparation.

Françoise Kabral, a student leader, and activist for women's rights in the Central African Republic, stated the following: "We need to involve young women as part and parcel of the implementation of the agreement because, when women are involved in decision-making processes, they can change the world because they are the ones giving life and they have the power to educate and shift mindsets".

In **Sierra Leone**, **300 women** participated meaningfully in the National Women's Conference and were then able to prioritize women's issues during the National Peace and Cohesion Conference. This has led to an increased community awareness of the need for women's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding efforts, which has, in turn, inspired **63 women** to train as peace ambassadors with UN Women.

## THE PEACE HUTS OF LIBERIA

The **Peace Huts of Liberia** were implemented following decades of war, and they have now become traditional spaces for female inclusion in the reconciliation and resolution of conflict. **Promoted and championed by UN Women as safe spaces**, these Peace Huts are powerful platforms where decisions on WPS can be made and women can meaningfully engage in peacebuilding within their community. The Peace Huts of Liberia **successfully raise awareness within communities regarding peacebuilding priorities**, such as upcoming elections. According to the local police, the Peace Huts have been key to reducing and even preventing violence in the community. In 2019, UN Women supported the **training of 316 women from the Peace Huts of Liberia** in conflict prevention, management and resolution, in order for them to continue their meaningful contribution to local peacebuilding.

**"We need to involve young women as part and parcel of the implementation of the agreement because when women are involved in decision-making processes, they can change the world because they are the ones giving life and they have the power to educate and shift mindsets"**

Francoise Kabral,  
a student leader



The women of the Peace Huts of Liberia. © UN Women Liberia.



## REHABILITATION AND RECOVERY

In 2019, 35 million women and girls required humanitarian aid and protection. In the light of this global context, the provision of gender-responsive aid and targeted protection for women in conflict-affected areas that results in effective humanitarian outcomes and sustainable recovery efforts is vital. The fourth pillar of UNSCR 1325 highlights the specific needs of women during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction, as this humanitarian work plays a fundamental role in upholding sustainable peace.

With persistent levels of gender inequality being exacerbated by conflict, income-generating initiatives that facilitate women's reintegration into the community and the economy are essential. Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response is one of UN Women's flagship programmes, which seeks to restore dignity, promote the resilience of female-headed households in crisis and provide durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced people. In 2019, UN Women provided direct humanitarian aid to the Central African Republic, Mali and Niger, and implemented and supported multiple IGAs and initiatives in Cameroon, Liberia, Mali and Nigeria, which have transformed the lives of **3,971 women** and their families.

Through interventions and support from UN Women, Prison Fellowship programmes in **Liberia** have provided female inmates with the opportunity to acquire skills that will **improve their livelihoods**. In 2019, a total of **119 women were empowered economically** through skills that have the potential to transform their lives.

UN Women increased its **direct humanitarian aid in Mali** by providing **2,400 displaced people**, including 1,600 women in the camps of Mopti and Ségou, with household kits that have enabled them to **protect their families** from harmful mosquitoes, keep their families clean and healthy, and look after their domestic needs.

In certain **conflict-affected areas in Mali**, **168 community focal points** are in operation, thanks to the dedicated support of UN Women. In these intervention areas, 197 survivors of GBV have received **holistic services**, including medical, psychological, economic and legal assistance. A further **1,967 women and girls** affected by conflict are now **economically empowered**, thanks to UN Women's support. These victims of conflict were provided with access to productive resources, including funding and income-generating kits, and they have since begun working on practical production activities.



Household kits delivered to authorities and displaced women in Mopti. © UN Women Mali.

### Sewing success story

Ellen Korpo Jallah from Monrovia in Liberia was arrested in 2019 following a land dispute. While she was in prison, the Prison Fellowship, through the support of UN Women, gave Ellen the opportunity to turn her life around by acquiring a new skill. Ellen was determined to learn how to sew, and the Prison Fellowship enabled her to purchase material so that she could make clothes to sell while in prison. The training that Ellen has received during this difficult period of her life has empowered her to transform her circumstances when she leaves prison.

As Musa Kargbo, an instructor from the Prison Fellowship, explains, these programmes have the potential to transform people's lives: "The impact is really felt when they come out and they start to practice what they were taught and even teach other people". This is something that Ellen is eagerly awaiting, as she looks forward to opening her own shop and teaching other women how to sew.

UN Women implemented the Protection, Empowerment and Resilience Building project, which focused on conflict-affected women and girls in Borno and Yobe in **Nigeria**. With generous funding from the Government of Japan, **399 conflict-affected women and girls** are now able to **generate an income for their families** through their newly acquired **vocational skills**, thanks to their training on **entrepreneurship and financial management**. Furthermore, a total of **1,770 female-led households** (supporting approximately 8,500 household members) received equipment and accessories to use as start-up kits and machines, which has led to **67 per cent of the women successfully generating an income** through producing and selling products.

## PEACEBUILDING ACROSS BORDERS

Working in collaboration with other countries in the region is advantageous in terms of making progress and achieving peace resolutions. In 2019, with the financial support of the Peace Building Fund, UN Women was successful in creating constructive and collaborative cross-border programmes with countries in West and Central Africa, including **Niger** and **Senegal**, accelerating peacebuilding progress and encouraging regional cohesion.

### Knowledge sharing between Liberia and Mali

During the process of developing the second generation of the national action plan of Liberia, UN Women facilitated a platform for knowledge sharing between Liberia and Mali composed of members of legislative bodies and governments. Using this platform, the implementation of the national action plan and strategies for the promotion of women's participation in the security sector were discussed, and, as a result, these countries have

exchanged views on national best practices and lessons learned in terms of promoting gender-sensitive security and peacebuilding.

### Building peace for sustainable and inclusive development in Senegal and Mali

UN Women WCARO, in partnership with the Senegalese National Commission for Border Management, held a two-day capacity-building workshop for border communities in Senegal and Mali. This workshop, which focused on border management for promoting and sustaining peace, was attended by over 120 participants from both Senegal and Mali, including traditional and religious leaders, women and children, and local authorities from both countries.

Participants received training on women's participation in targeted interventions that address the needs of border communities, and they reiterated their commitment to sustaining a peaceful environment by formulating a roadmap for the future. So far, four functional Peace Huts have been built by the National Commission for Border Management, although many more are expected to be completed in the months ahead.





# KEY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ACHIEVEMENT IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

© UN Women/Yulia Panevina

## 4. KEY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ACHIEVEMENT IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

### FORGING PARTNERSHIPS TO SPEED UP RESULTS



Project agreement between Oulimata Sarr, UN Women, and Antoine Sire, BNP Paribas, under the leadership of Ndeye Saly Diop Dieng, Minister of Women, Family and Gender. © UN Women/Baptiste Firroloni.

### DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

We have been attempting to reduce inequalities and injustice towards underprivileged communities, and your support brings us closer and closer to this goal. The European Union, Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Germany, Canada, China, Italy, Denmark, Japan, BNP Paribas, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Government of Austria, the United Nations Development Fund, the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization have generously increased their regular contributions to our cause. We are grateful for your selfless support. Thanks for being great partners and advocates for gender equality causes. Partnerships with governments and civil society groups, the private sector and committed individuals are essential. When we bring our expertise and resources together, we become a powerful force for progress. Here is how your contributions have been changing lives.



EMPOWERING WOMEN TO BOOST ECONOMIES

Our stories



AgriFeD Project, northern Senegal. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

Khoury Gueye, President of Khor Groupement d’Intérêt Economique, which brings together 200 women:

**“We wake up very early to collect water lily seeds and then turn them into edible cereal. We walk 12 km to sell this product. Since we have been focusing on agriculture, women of the village have been bearing most of the household expenses. Today, no more women are going to Mauritania to work as domestic workers.”**  
Senegal



AgriFeD Project, northern Senegal. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

Sokhna Ndiaye, Member of Khor Groupement d’Intérêt Economique:

**“I was a cleaning lady in Mauritania for four years and I earned 40,000 FCFA per month. I could not support my children with this salary, so I decided to return to Khor. Since working in the agricultural sector, I have been able to support myself and my family. I can pay daily workers and even self-finance my campaigns.”**  
Senegal



Astan Tandja Diawarala aged 30 years, mother of a child, Mali. © UN Women Mali.

**“There were two of us who received the training for the design of improved stoves and I also trained other women in the village. I noticed that not only are improved stoves very fast for cooking, but they also protect children from the fire. So, I am no longer confronted with the strong heat from my old fireplace.”** Mali



## STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!

**Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society, the private sector and young people advance the 2030 Agenda**

Working with governments, civil society, the private sector and youth organizations has become an increasingly crucial part of the delivery of UN Women results.

Under the leadership of the regional office, UN Women Senegal, together with women's rights associations and civil society, provided technical support to the Collective of Women Parliamentarians of Senegal, resulting in the passing of the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia in Senegal. The law was adopted unanimously and acclaimed by parliamentarians.



Women parliamentarians and women from CSOs celebrate the promulgation of the law criminalizing rape and paedophilia by the Senegalese President. © Presidency of the Republic of Senegal.

Dozens of female victims have testified on Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission stations. Field teams have improved their approaches to raising awareness and welcoming women survivors of GBV. Feeling secure with regard to their physical and moral integrity, as well as the confidentiality of their depositions, the members of victims' organizations were able to participate in the first public hearing, the preparation of the reparation policy and the memory strategy.

During the **first African summit** against the **early marriage** of girls, which took place in Dakar from 16 to 18 June, representatives of the Sunni institution Al-Azhar, based in Cairo, announced a *fatwa* prohibiting marriage of minors. This is an unprecedented measure for this mosque known for its sometimes very rigorous interpretations of religious laws.



Public hearing of a victim during the 1st hearing of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, Bamako, Mali. © UN Women.

**“Marriage is based on consent, which requires the young woman to be of age, and that is what makes the union valid.”**

Salah Abbas,  
Al-Azhar's deputy  
grand imam



First African summit against early marriage, Dakar, Senegal. © UN Women/Khadidiatou Ndiaye.



The Minister for Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection leads the launch ceremony for the SYSC platform against GBV, which brings together women from 34 CSOs, in Dakar, Senegal. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

“Marriage is based on consent, which requires the young woman to be of age, and that is what makes the union valid,” said Al-Azhar's deputy grand imam, Salah Abbas, during the first African summit dedicated to FGM and forced marriage.

**UN Women works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards.**

UN Women's partnership with governments and civil society has been strategic and innovative and is aimed at strengthening political solidarity and feminist movement building. This relationship is founded on the principle of leaving no one behind and premised on the reality that women and girls suffer intersectional discrimination.

In 2019, the partnership between governments and civil society was central and resulted in fruitful outcomes. Sixty-three civil society actors and 10 journalists strengthened their capacities in the area of governance, particularly with regard to the electoral law in Mali. CSOs supported advocacy of the adoption of many laws in the



Women from 34 CSOs launch a platform to fight against GBV (Synergie des organisations de la société civile pour l'élimination des violences basées sur le genre. Dakar, Senegal. © UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly.

region (Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, etc.). UN Women has set up a Civil Society Advisory Group in various country offices. The groups are expected to play a key role in advising on UN Women programming aspects, including CSOs' role in intergovernmental processes, and reporting on normative frameworks.



## UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES/ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

Beside specific south–south and triangular partnerships related to data and knowledge, UN Women WCARO continues to collaborate with – among other organizations – UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, UNAIDS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the International Organization for Migration.

UN Women WCARO continues to **chair the Regional Gender Thematic Group**, which is an advocacy and technical platform designed to ensure that gender is properly addressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and joint programming in West and Central Africa. One of the main results in 2019 was that the capacities of eight staff members from six United Nations agencies were strengthened with regard to **gender audit**. These newly trained staff members will now be able to ensure the application of participatory gender audit principles and tools within the functioning of their respective agencies and spread the knowledge of this crucial aspect, significantly strengthening the gender equality principles' integration into the system. United Nations coordination and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment at regional level have been further strengthened by the joint support offered by the Regional Gender Thematic Group members providing technical orientations and policy advice to the United Nations country teams of the region upon demand.

**The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks** of four countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone) in the region have been gender-mainstreamed with the support of the regional office in reviewing related documentation and providing technical inputs. In 2019, three countries in West and Central Africa implemented the United Nations Country Team System-Wide Action Plan Gender Equality Scorecard (Cameroon, Liberia and Mali).

The capacity of 16 UN Women and **23 UNDP staff members** from 25 countries was reinforced through a four-day workshop on the area of women's political participation and elections, to enhance their technical engagement with relevant stakeholders, including electoral management bodies, women candidates, voters and national CSOs.

To strengthen UN Women's partnership with regional organizations, the following have been or will be implemented:

- A memorandum of understanding was signed with the Economic Community of West African States, and consultations are currently under way for the development of a three-year programme.
- UN Women signed a contract with the Secretariat of the **G5 Sahel**; it is also strengthening the role of women's organizations for peace and security and will build the capacities of the G5 Sahel Joint Force so that it can better protect women while fighting against violent extremism.

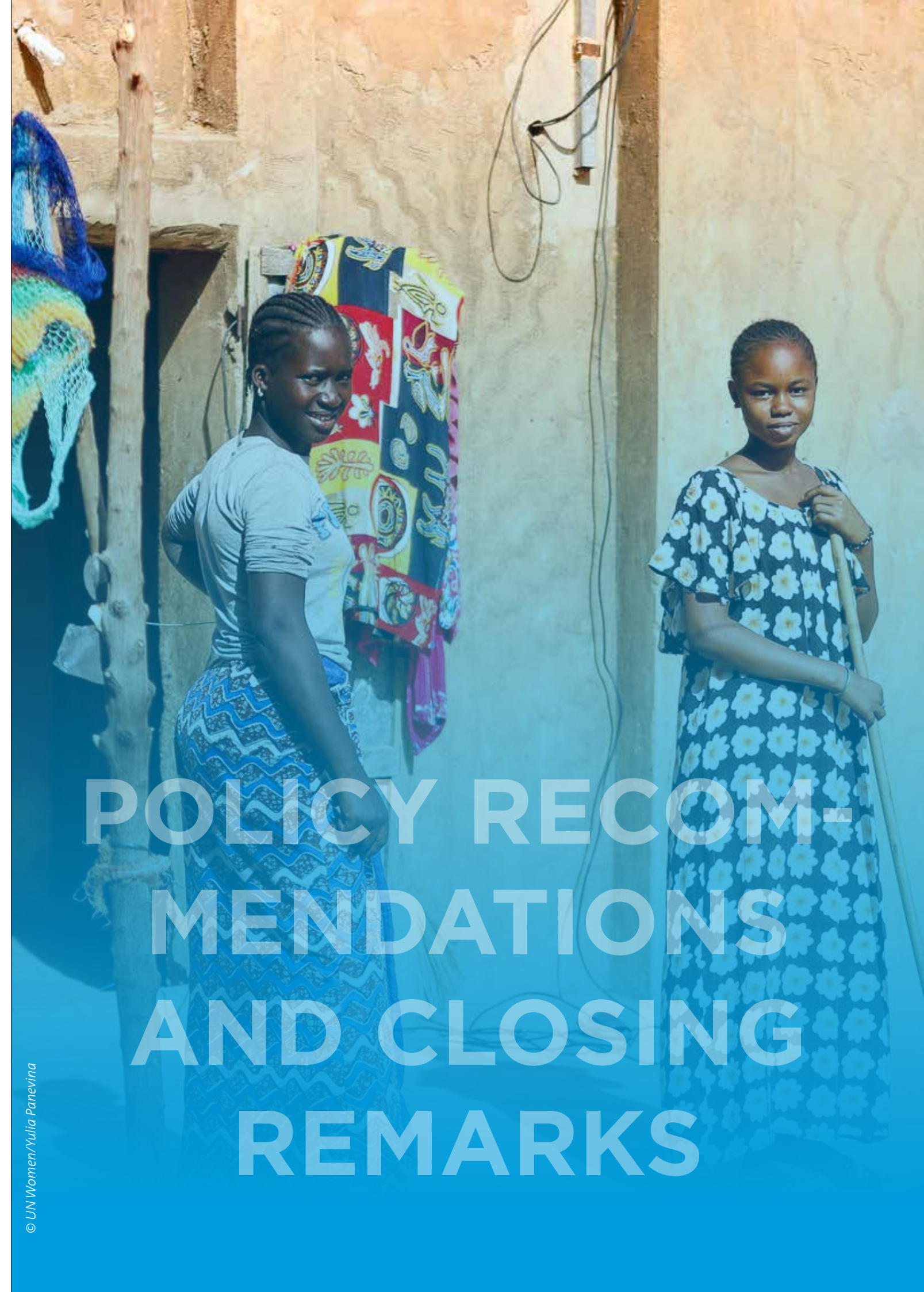
Partnerships for **evaluation capacity** development initiatives will be promoted to support the capacity of governments, national and regional evaluation associations, and networks with respect to **gender-responsive evaluation**.

## RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Significant progress was noted in terms of resource mobilization – a WCARO objective in 2019 was to raise US\$25 million. By 31 December 2019, US\$22.39 million had been reached. Thanks to the leadership of top-level management, 90 per cent of the target was hit.

The regional office is also attentive to the need to build on its strength in regard to resource mobilization in an environment of shrinking donor engagement. In this sense, donor reporting and donor relations strengthening rank high in the region's priorities.

**These newly trained staff members will now be able to ensure the application of participatory gender audit principles and tools within the functioning of their respective agencies and spread the knowledge of this crucial aspect, significantly strengthening the gender equality principles' integration into the system.**



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS



# 5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Global norms

Adherence to key global international gender norms is common among countries in the West and Central Africa region. Significant effort has been made to report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to mark its twenty-fifth year anniversary, and increased follow-through on CEDAW recommendations is being made possible through enhanced national gender mechanisms and key partnerships, including those with UN Women WCARO and country offices. However, more specific women's international instruments have garnered less attention, and greater efforts are needed to translate international commitments into national legislation and effective regulation.

- **Ratify specialized international conventions on women's rights.** Commit to international women's conventions on marriage consent, married women's nationality and women's political rights. These critical instruments provide solid frameworks in which to address prevalent issues of child marriage in the region, as well as children's statelessness and women's participation in political and public life.
- **Review national laws to repeal and replace discriminatory provisions.** Assess national laws in key priority domains, such as health, education, employment, access to justice and rural women, to identify discriminatory provisions and legal voids that create barriers to the development of women's full potential with regard to social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights.
- **Improve regulations and programmes to enact change for women and girls.** Regulate laws so that they are vigorously implemented through policies and programmes for enhanced progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment as evidenced in women's and girls' everyday lives – receiving the special health care they need, attaining the highest education levels, being gainfully employed and being engaged in shaping their nation's policies.

### Governance systems

In the West and Central Africa region, countries have embarked on some profound governance reforms to improve alignment with international gender norms commitments. UN Women WCARO and country offices continue to provide critical technical and financial support to raise the profile of gender equality and women's empowerment at government level and throughout the implementation agencies. Accelerating this process requires increased gender mainstreaming in governance systems to improve gender policymaking based on evidence and systematic enforcement.

- **Reinforce women's machineries with budgetary oversight and control.** Raise the profile of gender equality and women's empowerment by establishing a Minister of State to address these issues at a higher level of governance. This will not only increase visibility but, through a dedicated budget, ensure enhanced coordination of gender action plan implementation among key relevant ministries with high transformational potential.
- **Leverage the Women Count programme to accelerate gender statistics production and use.** Gender-mainstream national statistics development strategies and carry out national assessments of the situation of gender-disaggregated statistics and gender-specific data to improve overall policymaking based on statistical evidence, making sure to integrate an intersectional perspective to effectively observe the "leave no one behind" approach of the SDGs.
- **Capacitate the judiciary for enhanced justice delivery for women and girls.** Clearly indicate the hierarchy between common law and customary law, and, when access to formal justice is difficult, provide alternative dispute resolution mechanisms so that they can be used for mediation in civil matters, mostly in rural areas where communities have less access to formal justice systems.

### Women's political participation

In the West and Central Africa region, the advancement of women in public and political life has gained traction in the past decade, as can be verified through a growing number of electoral quota laws, and women's representation in both electoral and nominative government positions. However, in several countries, women's actual representation in parliaments remains low, thus curtailing their influential power on matters that affect women and girls. Hence, it remains critically important to work on changing the prevailing patriarchal values that permeate societies in the region and that create barriers to women's and girls' participation in political affairs.

- **Establish and increase quotas for women's political participation.** Adopt legislation to ensure that a critical mass of women is represented in parliaments and in nominative government positions at national and subnational levels. Women make up half of the population demographic, and it is thus critical that their voices are heard in political decision-making.
- **Train young people and women on political leadership.** Provide forums and promote youth and female participation in global policy discussions. Women and girls are often the most affected by poverty, conflict and climate change, and possess unique knowledge of their needs and adaptation; therefore, equipping them with the skills they need to most effectively shape policies can be very beneficial to them and society.
- **Engage men in attitudes and behaviours that support gender equality and women's empowerment.** Raise awareness among men and boys of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment as a human rights issue, as well as encouraging reflection on detrimental patriarchal values and promoting healthy masculinities among men and boys.

**More specific women's international instruments have garnered less attention, and greater efforts are needed to translate international commitments into national legislation and effective regulation.**

### Women's economic empowerment

In the West and Central Africa region, much progress has been made in women's economic empowerment by developing key flagship programmes that address their needs relating to climate-smart agriculture and market access, and developing women's entrepreneurship through enhanced business skills and training. These endeavours must be developed at scale to maximize the benefits to the greatest number of women and girls in both rural and urban settings. This is critical, as gender discrimination remains pervasive with regard to access to education, productive resources and employment, and its presence in these areas stifles women's and girls' livelihood potential.

- **Ensure women's access, control and ownership of land and other productive resources.** Guarantee women and girls land tenure security to assert their economic empowerment through asset capitalization that can be reinvested to increase land productivity. Ensuring women's access to climate-smart agricultural extension services and markets, business and negotiating skills is critical to enhancing their livelihoods.
- **Increase women's participation in the formal employment sector.** Formalize the informal non-agricultural sector in which women are prevalent and often find themselves in low-paid and unsafe working conditions, to enable their protection under labour laws and access to social benefits (pensions, health care and paid sick leave). Promote women's inclusion in existing formal employment, with equal pay and access to managerial positions.
- **Promote gender-informed social protection policies, frameworks and strategies adapted to the region.** Continue policy dialogue and support reform to strengthen social protection in areas that are critical to women and girls. Particular attention needs to be given to solutions that recognize, reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care, and social protection mechanisms for those working in the informal economy.



## Violence against women and girls

In the region, significant advances have been made to address GBV in various countries, namely rape, paedophilia and sexual harassment, through legislation adopted with growing consensus. If laws are a reflection of society, these mark a heightened awareness among the population and policymakers of the need to effectively address these issues. Providing the necessary support to women and girls, as well as enforcing these progressive laws, will be crucial to eradicating VAWG.

- **Enact legislation to protect women and girls from multifaceted GBV.** Promote zero tolerance by adopting laws prohibiting and severely punishing GBV in private and public spheres to stem the violence that women and girls face (FGM, child marriage, sexual harassment, rape, murder) and that is exacerbated by local conflicts, violent extremism and climate-related disasters.
- **Provide care and support public services, including victims' access to justice, social and legal services.** Accompany women and girls through the difficult personal and administrative process of dealing with the aftermath of GBV, which leaves physical, emotional and psychological scars, by providing easy-to-access, one-stop public support services to alleviate their hardships, including access to justice mechanisms.
- **Bring perpetrators of GBV to justice, paying particular attention to peace and conflict situations.** Criminalize all GBV, including rape as a weapon of war, and proactively contribute to reversing the burden of shame by systematically convicting perpetrators. Women and girl victims are often ostracized by society, and community sensitization must be carried out to free women and girls from these taboos.

**It is important to include women and girls in decision-making on these issues and recognize their agency in increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian response.**

## Women and peace, security and humanitarian action

In 2019, the West and Central Africa region continued to be affected by ongoing conflicts, violent extremism and climate-related disasters that prompted humanitarian action to enhance prevention, preparedness, recovery and resolution interventions to ensure sustainable, safe and peaceful societies. As women and girls are particularly affected and vulnerable, and rely on fewer resources to cope with and recover from these events, it is important to include women and girls in decision-making on these issues and recognize their agency in increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

- **Gender-mainstream and sex-disaggregate data on conflicts and climate-related disasters.** Identify the common and differentiated needs and vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys in conflicts and climate-related disasters through relevant indicators and sex-disaggregated data collection, to better understand how these events affect them and enhance the results of interventions.
- **Adopt national action plans implementing UNSCR 1325 on WPS, and gender-mainstream national and local disaster risk reduction strategies under the Sendai Framework.** Recognize that women and girls as disproportionately affected in conflicts and climate-related disasters and commit to addressing their specific needs through the translation of key international instruments into national institutions and mechanisms.
- **Increase women's participation in processes relating to peace negotiation and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as in disaster risk reduction prevention and resilience.** Reaffirm the essential role of women and girls in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in the planning and implementation of risk reduction, preparedness and recovery action plans by systematically including them in decision-making on these issues.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Political commitment and institutional capacity-building are increasingly felt throughout the region, and UN Women WCARO has worked to raise awareness of new laws, policies and programmes, as well as the need to dismantle negative social and cultural norms and practices that are detrimental to women and girls and that prevent women from taking part in decision-making on matters that concern them. Indeed, women's inclusion in political and public life is an urgent and extremely important aspect of enabling progressive change, and one that women have full legitimacy in being actively engaged in, as they are disproportionately affected by socioeconomic discrimination, ongoing conflicts and the negative impacts of climate change.

Achieving significant legal and normative work does not systematically lead to efficient organizational structures and processes, or the effective enforcement of women's rights. Therefore, besides the continued work of UN Women WCARO to develop effective and efficient gender-sensitive governance systems, it is important to consider an enhanced policy coherence approach to gender equality and women's empowerment, and what combinations of measures have proven to be effective to enable change for women and girls. Regular monitoring and evaluation assessments and the sharing of best practices between countries in the region are critical to this endeavour, as they experience similar challenges in their journeys towards making gender equality and women's empowerment a reality.

Although most countries have adopted labour laws aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, especially regarding the prohibition of gender discrimination in hiring, more needs to be done to integrate women into the formal employment sector, where they continue to be minimally represented, often with lower salaries, with fewer opportunities for progression and subject to unsafe working environments. UN Women WCARO has played a key role in enhancing women's economic empowerment through technical and financial support for programmes in critical areas of interest to women, namely climate-smart agriculture and their inclusion in value chains, developing women's entrepreneurial spirit and skills, and widening the scope of girls' education to increase their contribution to society and prospects of a better life.

WCARO has played a fundamental role in multiple notable achievements in the region, particularly in terms of legal amendments and advances. UN Women continues to significantly increase its efforts to engage people at community level in awareness-raising activities and events, with particular attention being paid to young and adolescent girls. An increasingly strong legal framework, coupled with increased awareness, is conducive to progress towards ending VAWG. However, what must remain a priority is the execution of comprehensive and region-wide policies and agendas that focus on enforcement and implementation.

The year 2019 has brought diverse results in a region that is home to many political and security challenges. In spite of this context, there has been much progress in line with UNSCR 1325 and the national action plans that implement its recommendations. These national action plans must now be localized, and efforts must be made to ensure that they are enforced. Positive results have been seen in terms of awareness-raising at community level and IGAs, which have proven vital for rehabilitation. However, progress must now be made, building on successful community-based peacekeeping initiatives such as the Peace Huts in Liberia, towards the increased and meaningful involvement of women in the decision-making process on regional peacekeeping agreements.

**Women's inclusion in political and public life is an urgent and extremely important aspect of enabling progressive change, and one that women have full legitimacy in being actively engaged in, as they are disproportionately affected by socioeconomic discrimination, ongoing conflicts and the negative impacts of climate change.**



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