

African Women Major Group Position on SDGs Under Review

April 2019

Introduction

The theme of Agenda 2030 is 'leave no one behind' and on the continent, this is linked to the Agenda 2063 vision of an "integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" that is citizen driven. In order to achieve the sustainable development goals that are inclusive of all African people including African women and girls in all of their diversities, harmful traditional practices and discriminatory social norms that reinforce and entrench gender inequality must be addressed and abolished. Fulfillment and realization of rights of women and girls should be at the centre of ensuring transformative, sustainable and resilient societies. This year's theme for the 5th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is; "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality." Ensuring the rights of all women and girls including those who are marginalized and criminalized is what is needed for equitable and inclusive societies across the continent.

Across Africa, women and girls, including rural women, women living with HIV/AIDs, disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex women, and those who live in protracted conflict areas, face multiple and intersecting forms of gender-based discrimination in private and public spaces, e.g. public spaces such as the workplace and when they take up in governance and leadership. In addressing gender inequality in the context of sustainable development, it is important to be inclusive and ensure that no woman or girl is denied access to education, healthcare, employment, human rights, freedom of expression and the right to land and to livelihoods because of cultural, social and religious norms and beliefs. Adolescent girls, young women, elderly women, rural women, women and girls with disabilities, women living with HIV/AIDs, lesbians, bisexuals, trans and intersex women are disproportionately impacted.

Gender based discrimination starts early and is structurally embedded due to systemic barriers that impact girls access to education and subsequent completion, retention, and transition of girls within the education system. This in turn has a bearing on the kind of work they are channelled into. In both private and public spheres, women face gendered occupational segregation, and multiple barriers such as lack or limited access to factors of production such as land, capital, financial resources and technology, as well as gender-based violence due to cultural mindsets and stereotypes. Legal barriers further compound gender inequalities at all levels. These obstacles make it harder for women to get on an equal footing with men at home and in the world of work, sustaining a discriminatory status quo of gender unequal societies.

Practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early, and forced marriage have a negative impact on girls education due to high rates of school dropouts and teenage pregnancies, leaving many girls behind for the rest of their lives. Maternal death is more likely in communities where women have the least economic and political power and agency to survive ill health and treatable diseases, as suffering and death are seen as natural and inevitable elements of the status of women. Throughout their lives, women and girls continue to face challenges including, unpaid domestic carework/labour, depleted natural

resources, vulnerability to natural disasters, under-representation in policy and decision making, increased number of dependents, unfavourable land tenure systems, lack of access to information, poverty and poor nutrition. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by these challenges across the continent and their right to a life of dignity and safety can only be upheld by addressing the structural barriers they face on a daily basis.

Structural Barriers

In Africa, women and girls face social, cultural, economic and institutional barriers such as discriminatory inheritance. Due to patriarchal social norms, property rights are gendered at the expense of women and girls. From an economic standpoint, women are highly disadvantaged as they do not start life with endowments acquired through inheritance which they could convert to entitlements such as access to capital and other factors of production to initiate income generating activities. As such, the majority of African Women have weak bargaining and no fall-back positions, which renders them extremely vulnerable. In some cases, legislation is in itself a barrier for women and girls as many laws are gender neutral and multiple legal systems pose a challenge when pursuing justice. Laws including customary laws must be explicit e.g. "men" and "women" so that access by women and girls and control over resources such as land can be guaranteed and protected.

Structural barriers, and negative practices that exist in Africa which impede sustainable and inclusive development are:

- Unpaid domestic carework,
- Gender based violence,
- Sexual harassment in the workplace,
- Under representation of women in leadership and governance,
- Poor financial empowerment,
- Lack of access to quality education and skills development,
- Lack of quality and comprehensive health care services including sexual health and reproductive and menstrual health management,
- Privatisation of public services further marginalize women and girls and add onto already disproportionate burden of unpaid care work,
- Harmful traditional and cultural practices (e.g. widowhood rites, disinheritance, early and forced marriages, corrective rape, sexual slavery, virginity tests, FGM, etc.).
 - Early and forced marriage where girls are forced to drop out of school for marriage. This practice does not only deny girls the right to education but also education / information regarding marital rights such as inheritance and equal sharing of property in polygamous marriages.
 - Early marriages can lead to obstetric fistula – Girls bodies and reproductive organs are premature and as a result can develop fistula during childbirth, a condition that ostracizes girls and women from the society.
- Some cultural obstacles impede the ability of women to grow and thrive by depriving them of their human rights such as their right to land and to forests products, inheritance and in many cases, to decision-making. Poverty and lack of access to accurate and non-judgemental information and services increases the vulnerability of women and girls to STIs and different forms of rights violations.
- The impact of extractives especially mining on women and girls (exposure to toxic substances from mining, discriminatory practices that inhibit women from fully engaging in mining, increased violence against women in the artisanal mining, sexual

violence against women in the mining communities, women human rights defenders being attacked by state security and mine security officials).

- Lack of access to heritage in some African countries that have population of a specific religion. Men in these countries control resources such as land and women are not able to join the Assemblies of Irrigation or Water Resources in order to utilize their lands fully.
- Lack of political will and non-implementation of sustainable development policies.

Interlinkages with Other Goals and Agenda 2063

Women and girls in Africa share the same challenges and aspirations. The SDGs are interlinked and the African Union recognizes the linkages between Agendas 2030 and 2063. In order to ensure the SDGs and Agenda 2063 are implemented using equitable, inclusive and sustainable approaches, there are potential constraints that require coordinated policy interventions to protect the most vulnerable groups, promote equitable access to services and development opportunities, and manage competing demands over natural resources to support economic and social development within environmental limits. In-order to ensure inclusive societies for sustainable development, women led and gender-transformative approach plays a pivotal role to ensure the actualisation of Goals 4 and Goal 8. Yet it is clear that African governments are not implementing quotas and affirmative action previously agreed to.

There continues to be gender based discrimination including lack of protection for women human rights defenders, and poverty being sexist. More than 50% of young girls and women are not able to access sanitary towels due to economic constraints. In order to achieve sustainable development, it is important that governments take urgent actions to guarantee women's secured access to land and economic resources. Affirmative action must be taken in favor of women.

Women and girls in African countries suffer heavily from negative consequences of environmental degradation. This is particularly true for the populations living in environments that are ecologically vulnerable in terms of decreasing fertility and agricultural lands, deforestation and reduced pastures. Of special concern are the effects of environmental degradation on women's sexual and reproductive health, agricultural output and income generating activities related to both timber and non-timber resources. Women are often responsible for environment and family resources management however they lack the support and resources they need in order to participate in decision making regarding the use, management and governance of natural resources. SDG 13 must focus on the ways women and girls are bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change, especially women and girls in the lower echelons of society, in both urban, rural and coastal communities.

In some African countries torn by war, women are the most affected population group. The specific circumstances of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict states are not addressed. SDG 5 seeks to end violence and discrimination against women and girls, but also to provide them with equal access to education, health care, economic opportunity, political participation, and gender parity in all aspects of society. To achieve this in states transitioning out of conflict, women must be empowered in every facet of life, and that is not the case in transition states and countries of conflicts.

The interlinkages and interrelatedness of the Goals must be recognized by adopting a gender and age lens in addressing the structural barriers in the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. SDGs are intertwined and success of one goal leads to the success of other Goals, for example, a peaceful society provides an enabling environment to build partnerships to implement the SDGs. And more importantly women and girls must be included in all stages of decision-making processes. The full participation of women and girls in all their diversities is critical to achieving an inclusive, equitable and transformed African continent.

Women manage the environment from four perspectives; namely socio-economic, ecological, biological, and socio-cultural as well as time. They must be supported in all the roles they play daily which include handling resources, interaction with nature, and ability to conserve the environment. It is crucial to ensure comprehensive and wide ranging, non-conditional social protection systems and programs, living wages, equal pay for work of equal value as per ILO recommendation 100, secure rights to land and forests, as well as addressing unequal burden recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work.

Key Recommendations

1. Mainstream the SDGs into National Development Plans: national governments should as a matter of policy, mandate Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to coordinate and mainstream their activities into the implementation of the SDGs at the sub-national level.
2. Allocate adequate resources/budget into key MDAs to enhance implementation especially to gender ministries and agencies as they are often the least funded ministries and agencies. At the sub-national level, appoint SDG Desk Officers or SDG Focal Persons at MDAs to liaise with the coordinating agency for the SDGs for effective communication.
3. Governments and civil society need to have quarterly meetings on progress and review, that also includes and values the contributions of civil society actors, including women's rights organizations/groups and youth led organizations/groups. The meetings should include feedback on recent progress and challenges, analysis of current human rights performance indicators on progress and policy coherence. Meeting outcomes should inform the implementation of the above-mentioned National Development Plans as per a previously agreed mechanism.
4. Create national steering committees accountable for addressing cross-cutting issues and the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as rural women, girls, people with disabilities, migrants and transgender persons.
5. Involve grassroots/rural women and girls in decision-making bodies in the above-mentioned national steering committees and at all levels in order to promote the rights of all women and girls to participate equally in decision and policy making on issues that affect them and to ensure that public policy is grounded on women and girls lived realities.
6. Enhance the understanding of key SDG stakeholders on sound evidenced-based learning, implementation and reporting during the VNR.
7. African countries should learn from Nigeria by developing SDGs evaluation capability within the public sector.

8. Promote economic growth that recognizes that women are often the face of poverty in their communities. This includes the implementation of economic interventions that recognize gendered aspects of poverty and access. Foster establishment of micro enterprises among low-income families that recognize female headed households in the rural areas.
9. Promote advocacy for women's rights over forest products and secure access for poor rural women to land and other natural resources.
10. Create multiple communication channels with affected civil society members and communities. Such channels should include use of social media to stimulate engagement.
11. Identify sources and/or real causes of obstacles to the equitable sustainable development processes on the continent and develop solutions.
12. Perpetrators of discrimination against women and girls in all their diversities must be held accountable through Maputo Protocol and Plan of Action.
13. All States must offer free treatment for patients of Obstetric Fistula.
14. Plug all illicit financial flows, and curb corruption and prosecute offenders. Women must be involved in curbing illicit financial flows by strengthening their capacity in research and policy analysis, the state should remove barriers that inhibit women's participation in discourses that address illicit financial flows.
15. We call on the African Heads of State and the duty bearers to ensure prioritisation of security for women human rights defenders in Africa especially in the extractive sector .
16. We call on the Heads of State to realize that SDGs do not work in silos and that it is critical to recognize the implementation of SDG 5 and its targets in the implementation of the other goals.
17. Governments should guarantee universal access to quality, affordable, and acceptable age appropriate adolescent girls' friendly comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people in and out of school.
18. Document progress and challenges on a regular basis to allow for learning between African countries.
19. Implement (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) which ensures women's involvement in the peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, as the international community finally reaffirmed the vital role women can and should play in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in the building and maintenance of peace and security.

Governments in the region must be accountable for all indicators under review. UN agencies and NGOs should be given a mandate to monitor the implementation progress through a well-tailored and customized monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with the possibility to have shadow reports developed by several groups that show the impact of SDGs and Agenda 2063 implementation. This should include the production and dissemination of messages focused on gender, peace, human rights, and social equality.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

From an early age, particularly in rural areas, girl education is regarded as less important. This promotes gender inequality and limited opportunities for the girl child. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a gender gap exists in education that increases in severity with each level of education. In Africa, one in every three children, adolescents and youth are out of school – with girls more likely to be excluded than boys. For every 100 boys of primary school age out of school, there are 123 girls denied the right to education.

Girls are disadvantaged in both primary admission and gross enrolment, and repeat at approximately the same rate as males. Once girls are enrolled in primary school, an approximately equal percentage are retained till Grade 4 or its equivalent compared to boys. Although a smaller proportion of females enrolled in Grade 1 actually completes primary school, those enrolled in the final grade of primary continue on to secondary at close to the same rate as boys. Severe disparities exist in girls' access to secondary school, however, as is indicated by the gross secondary enrolment Gender Ratio of 0.50, despite a primary completion Gender Ratio of 0.81. In secondary school, girls repeat at a rate slightly higher than boys, and the secondary completion Gender Ratio of 0.64 indicates that substantially fewer girls than boys complete secondary school. At the tertiary level women are under-represented, with a gross tertiary enrollment Gender Ratio of 0.22, and proportionately fewer women than men are enrolled in STEM. Women and girls make up 34%, 22%, and 12% of the primary, secondary, and tertiary level teaching staff, respectively. Disparities are evident on the output side as well. Women have, on average, slightly more than three-quarters of a year of schooling, a rate that is 40% of rate of men, and only 30% of adult women are literate, just over half the rate of men. Lastly, 32% of women participate in the labor force, a rate that is 63% compared to that of men¹.

There is lack of access to education for girls especially those in protracted humanitarian context areas. In Nigeria, 60% of the children that are out of school are girls. Schools and institutions do not recognize the needs and concerns of girls and women. Many girls and women feel uncomfortable at schools and workplaces, this is exacerbated by school based gender-based violence and lack of access to adequate sanitation service. Additionally limited access to quality sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) information and services continues to create vulnerability among the young people in particular adolescent girls and young women in Africa. SRHR challenges in addition to poor parent child communication, and increased access to misinformation contributes to the high dropout of school rates. And as mentioned above, there are more girls who are out of school than boys and this has an impact on their ability to participate in important decision making at the family, community and national levels. Quality education including sensitization enables women to access credit and resources and in some cases form saving groups for entrepreneurship to support their families. Women are able to join table banking groups where they learn innovative farming for better produce and marketing their products.

Women and girls are often viewed and limited to their roles as mothers and their reproductive abilities. In many African communities, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men continue to prevail as many people invoke the preservation of African

¹ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTFINDINGS/685507-1161268713892/21097067/find06.htm>

culture to justify the subordination of women. Advocates of gender equity have, in the recent years, lobbied for women's participation in leadership and management in all spheres. This is also true even though women are represented in teaching and administrative positions in higher institutions, they are underrepresented in leadership and management positions. There are both formal and informal barriers preventing qualified women from ascending to senior positions in universities. These barriers include discriminatory recruitment and promotion procedures, gender stereotyping, sexual harassment and exclusions from informal male networks, glass ceiling and dual responsibilities among others.

The lack of political will, legal frameworks and community involvement to ensure access to equitable education to all, has been detrimental to the rights of women and girls. For example, in Tanzania, the government has made statements to ensure pregnant girls could stay in school but this needs to be backed by political will. In Kenya, lack of prioritization of the SDGs especially the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls and boys, has led to an increase in teenage girls getting pregnant. This was evident during the previous national exam period reports. In Egypt, for example in 2016, over 45,000 girls dropped out of school. Women fare badly in accessing the limited higher education in D.R.Congo.

Sensitization on the importance of education and curbing stereotypes of women and girls as not having the aptitude for technical subjects, would help them secure decent jobs. Quality education for women and girls will enable them to live dignified lives. Better-educated women are likely to promote better living standards for themselves and their families, as well as provide education for their children as a means of eradicating poverty.

Recommendations

- Include skills development as part of formal and informal education programs for young women and girls and address menstrual health needs and hygiene.
- Include age appropriate, gender sensitive, culturally relevant comprehensive sexuality education that empowers adolescents and young people especially adolescent girls and young women to make healthier life decisions.
- Promote a violence-free learning environment and support young mothers to continue and finish school.
- Provide all groups of the population including persons with disabilities, from primary school ages to adulthood, access to education and development related to social education.
- Promote integration of the concepts of development, including demography, into all curricula, in particular. The analysis of the causes of the main problems and development in a local context, with particular emphasis on the participation of women decision-makers at all levels.
- Governments should increase budget allocations to education sectors beyond personnel emoluments to cover infrastructure, books and other essentials that restore the dignity of the learner and the teacher
- African countries need to focus on quality education by upgrading the education system for both female and male graduates to fit in a competitive education system to reduce illiteracy and local and/or regional migration of people in search for good wages and jobs.

- Education authorities are encouraged to establish gender sensitive pre-employment or on-the-job training programs, or to assist in the development of programs for all teachers, administrators and educational planners, as well as non-formal educators in all sectors.

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all:

Perceptions of poverty and wellbeing are relative dependent on individuals as well as particular communities, although there are some common indicators. Men and women experience poverty differently and their perception of poverty and wellbeing differs. Men have different priorities, relative to women, as regards the status of wellbeing. In these perceptions, significance of integrating gender into understanding of poverty through soliciting people's own perceptions of wellbeing, in addition to the generation of gender sensitive profiles that are location specific is fundamental.

More women and girls suffer as they search for jobs, at times they are overlooked for promotion in preference for their male counter-parts, while they should earn the promotion by right. Young women in Africa continue to be discriminated against and continue to access indecent jobs. There is an increase of high intensity working jobs in the region with low wage earned, for instance in big corporations, franchising, factories, taxi businesses, etc. Young women continue to work in extractive industries where they potentially face discrimination with regard to wages paid. Unfair discriminatory practices still exist in the mining sector where men are likely to be recruited and not women. Hence, women end up being involved in providing catering services and other menial tasks within the mining sector. Uganda is almost through with setting of the minimum wage for all and hopefully this will improve women's productivity at given workplaces.

Due to cultural and economic transformation experienced, some of the traditional groups have transformed into women economic groups (WEGs). The number of WEGs is on the increase largely because most credit providers prefer giving loans to women organized in economic groups. Unfortunately, many of the WEGs do not survive beyond two years due to lack of business skills, insecure tenure rights, culture as well as institutional frameworks that influence the WEGs survival. There is limited time for women to improve the quality of goods and services they have selected for their income generation purposes. Strategies for enhanced sustainability of WEGs includes business skills, training, greater sensitivity to existing gender imbalances as well as more favourable loan repayment periods and interests rates.

Africa's rapidly growing economy is projected to create between 54 million and 72 million new wage-paying jobs by 2020. However, there is a serious talent gap on the continent. Nearly half of East African employers in a 2014 survey cited a lack of skills as the major reason they did not fill vacancies. Additionally, employers found that up to 63% of graduates from East African universities were "lacking job market skills"².

² The McKinsey & Company report

Recommendations

- Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic care work for women and girls.
- Improve access to clean, efficient and affordable energy to reduce the burden on women caused by household energy provision.
- Decent work standards need to ensure living wages, violence and harassment free work environment, parental leave, social security benefits and equal pay for work of equal value.
- Support and enhance leadership and skills development for women experiencing social discrimination in their respective communities. - through the organization of meetings with local authorities, target groups and / or local beneficiary populations, as well as other local partners.
- Promote and support income generation activities targeted at vulnerable groups of the society, including marginalized and vulnerable women and girls (through increasing budget allocation for women in the informal sector). The objective should be to provide answers to the problems related to the violation of the Human Rights and the reduction of the poverty and socio-economic inequality. The state must refrain from using force on women involved in informal economy (such as vendors), who frequently encounter clashes with the municipal police especially in the urban areas.
- Promote law reforms processes to guarantee secure rights to land, forests and other natural resources to rural women, including indigenous women.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Inequality within and among countries has risen over the years. In Africa, even though countries have recorded impressive growth over the last two decades, this growth has benefited a few, mostly multinational companies and the local ruling and business elite at the expense of most of the populations. A number of factors account for this situation such as corruption and illicit financial flows, weak public spending on social services, the structure of African economies which are largely dependent on the extraction and export of raw materials like gold, diamond, copper, oil, cocoa and coffee, low wages and income, persistent gender inequality, political capture by the elite, conflict and social unrest among other.

At the global level Africa is reduced to the periphery of governance and decision making processes which tend to reinforce the historical exclusion of African countries from global economic governance. Global trade and investment rules are skewed in favour of the West and against African countries. This limits their ability, capacity and policy space to promote broad based socio-economic development to address growing inequalities within countries and between African countries and the rest of the world. Majority of Africans, mostly women and children, are denied their rights and/access to social services such as quality health care, education, food, water and sanitation, infrastructure among others. Globally inequality has been recognized as a challenge. It limits the opportunities for social groups to participate in and make significant contributions to social, cultural, political and economic life. There is a need to address inequality by promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable governance and multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization. In order to ensure sustainable economic growth and favorable trade systems, international parties should extend support to third world countries.

Recommendations

- Address corruption and illicit financial flows.
- Ensure fulfillment of ODA's commitments.
- Address elite and corporate capture of states' autonomy and transparency.
- Governments need to spend more on social services and make public spending more equitable.
- Promote and create decent work with decent wages.
- Put women's economic empowerment at the centre/heart of policy making.
- Make governance work for everyone by promoting participatory and inclusive governance.
- Right to development needs to be respected and supported.
- Encourage the implementation of macroeconomic policies that are favorable to women's and girls' development.
- Support initiatives that developing countries take at the national, regional or international levels to diversify the commodity sector.
- Assist developing countries in applying commodity policies and collecting and using market information.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 13 needs to align with the Paris Agreement, given that UNFCCC negotiations set the framework for climate change actions. Food system actions can have synergies and trade-offs, as illustrated by the case for nitrogen fertiliser. Transformative actions in food systems are needed to achieve SDG 13 (and other SDGs), involving technical, policy, capacity enhancement and finance elements. But transformative actions come with risks, for farmers, investors, development agencies and politicians. Likely short and long term impacts need to be understood. SDG 13 actions that reduce emissions can have positive impacts on other SDGs (e.g. 3, 6, 12, 14, 15); but such actions should not undermine the adaptation goals of SDG 13 and SDGs 1, 2, 5, 7 and 10. Balancing trade-offs is thus crucial, with SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) as being central.

There is still much to do as evidenced by continued deforestation, generations craving for more wider space, mainly the rich claiming expansion at the expense of the marginalized. Various studies have shown that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region faces a multitude of threats to its biodiversity and natural ecosystems, as a result of habitat loss and the general land degradation processes associated with human expansion and economic growth. There is a need to actively disseminate approved technologies for climate change adaptation to grassroots communities. Research is lying idle with no funds to aid the next actions.

Women are affected by climate change more than their male counterparts, they are the ones who collect fuelwood, fetch water and cook in open fires, or use hot ovens. Many are the heads of the families as single mothers and need to be educated to know the causes and impact of climate change. This way they will then own the fight against climate change and own the implementation.

Recommendations

- "Climate justice" should be used in place of climate change to highlight unequal and unjust development practices by countries and corporations as well as their responsibility and accountability to reverse and mitigate against climate impact.
- Human rights standards should be popularized such that, development plans at the local level are cognizant of SDGs. Vulnerability should drive our selection/prioritization for actions.
- Benchmarking studies should be undertaken by policy makers on what works well in other countries.
- Provide opportunities for study tours for women leaders, and sensitizing women about their role in control of population growth.
- Implement environmental awareness programmes, and create of national demonstration centers from which women can learn techniques for environmental protection.
- Review and define policies to ensure the best possible land use and sustainable land management.
- Strengthen national and international mechanisms for the treatment and exchange of information on climate change impacts and related technical assistance to ensure effective and efficient availability of information that is produced at the local level, provincial, national and international, with due regard to national sovereignty and intellectual property rights. The purpose is to stress the significance of the role of women in environmental management.

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The objective of global perspectives on sexual violence against women is to examine the manifestations of sexual violence against women in armed conflict and custodial situations. Historically direct and/or indirect institutionalized sexual violence against women remains one of the most intractable violations of human rights. In civil conflicts and guerilla insurgencies, women are considered spoils of war and are targeted for sexual violence in attacks that include rape, murder and sexual slavery. In conflict situations, women who become internally displaced or international refugees are still liable to be victimized in the refugee camps and in areas around the camps such as being forced to offer sex for food or sanitary products. In classic custodial situations, women suffer sexual and other physical forms of abuse. Femicide continues to be on the rise, including of women human rights defenders. In times of conflict, women bear the greatest responsibility to ensure survival of their communities. Traditional gender roles that oblige women to care for the sick and welfare of the family have further increased women's vulnerability in times of war. As full members of society, women and girls deserve to be part of peace building processes. Sexual abuses of women by different combatants and militias are current practices in the eastern part of the DR.Congo and the Great lakes region. Those responsible for heinous acts such as rapes; murders and others atrocities, are not worried by law, and in some cases they circulate under the very eyes of societies.

Without peace, stability, human rights, and effective governance based on the rule of law, we cannot hope for sustainable development. The SDGs aim to significantly reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process, as is reducing the flow of illicit arms and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance.

Recommendations

- Promote the rule of law and strong and independent national and regional justice systems and institutions, prevent and combat conflict and wars and illegal arms deals by developed countries with countries in conflicts. The state must fully prosecute state security officers who sexually violate women's & girls' rights especially in states undergoing political transition (e.g. Zimbabwe). Gender equality within the judiciary system is key for women and girls to effectively access justice.
- Create trust between different ethnic groups who were in conflicts, and are unable to gather around table.
- Women's right to freedom of expression, association, assembly and access to information must be fully respected by the state. The police and other security agencies must refrain from using force on women exercising these rights.
- Mobilize women to defend their vital interests, and empower women to defend their rights and control their own destinies.
- Mediation, training, education and research must be among the actions, with an emphasis on women's capacity-building at the grassroots level. promote respect for fundamental rights and dignity.
- Promote basic human rights for women and transgender people.
- Involve local community (all ethnicities) in the processes of seeking lasting peace, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among the different social groups in the region.
- Engage women in the peace-building missions to instil peace in the conflict zones.
- Renounce all the human rights violations women are often victims of.
- Produce and disseminate messages focused on peace, justice and human rights.
- increase financing support to state institutions such as the Gender Commissions, Human Rights Commissions and National Peace and Reconciliation Commissions for the effective implementation of women's human rights.

SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

There are no major initiatives focusing on gender equality, and there is some ambiguity in terms of women engagement in partnership frameworks, especially lack of inclusion of women-led NGOs in initiatives or on SDGs reporting mechanisms in general. There is, also, failure to fully finance the SDGs as well as lack of / inadequate stakeholder engagement to bring about coherence and interlinkages. There have been many promising breakthroughs but nothing has been done with regard to accountability and seemingly financing policies have not been taken into consideration. We need to understand how many targeted communities have been reached, how many women and girls' lives have changed as a result

of empowerment and the rate at which the communities demand and access to basic services in regard to sustainable development goals has increased.

Recommendations

- Work closely with CSOs, women's rights and feminists organisations to ensure gender responsive and transformative approaches to development.
- Finance community based organizations, empower local governments with monitoring and evaluation skills and collaborate actively with stakeholders to attain the SDGs.
- Private sector accountability should be mentioned in line with upholding human rights principles and ending tax evasions.
- Adopt and implement strong coordination mechanisms between all ministries / government departments to ensure coherence and holistic approaches to implementation of SDGs.
- Financial institutions and international development agencies should review their policies and programs, taking into account the goal of sustainable development.
- Planning and mobilization of resources and actions of international support for the benefit local communities.
- The state must enhance its domestic resource mobilization strategies in order to finance local development processes. Dependency on aid limits developing countries' ability to formulate its own economic policies. Women's rights groups must play a pro-active role in reshaping economic policies using a women's rights lens.
- Develop cooperation between organizations intervening in the field, and local partners on the ground.
- Promote advocacy, counselling, and sensitization of the rural communities in human rights, reproductive health and gender equality.
- Abolish gender discrimination issues that impede women to enjoy the fullness of their basic rights.
- There has been a lot of misuse of funds for SDGs; for instance money for education is often used for other purposes, scholarship for poor children is diverted to students who do not need the services. This must be addressed.
- Encourage the participation of the private sector, local communities, indigenous peoples, youth, women, user groups and NGOs in forest-related activities, and their access to information and training programs in the national context.
- Create mechanisms to facilitate the active participation of all stakeholders, particularly communities and local populations, in land use and land-use decision-making.
- Women Major Group, faith based organizations, and all other non-state actors need to be engaged for holistic implementation of the SDGs.
- There is a great need to have State and non-state actors to work together for achievement of agenda 2030.
- Balance the gender in the implementation of the SDGs.

Contributors

1. Cecile Bibiane Ndjebet, The African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), Cameroon
2. Chantal Umuhoza, SPECTRA: Young Feminists Activism, Rwanda
3. Crispin Swedi Bilombele, Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Développement (ANFD), New Dawn for Women and Development
4. Donatus Lili, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Kenya
5. Françoise Kpeglo Moudouthe, Eyala, Cameroon
6. Gertrude Kabusimbi Kenyangi, Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN), Uganda
7. Hawa Nibi Amenga-Etego, Foundation for Grassroots Initiatives in Africa (GrassRootsAfrica), Ghana
8. Kaaya Christine Nakimwero, Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change-Uganda (PFCC-U), Uganda
9. Mageda Esolyo, Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health, Kenya
10. Nozipho Wright, ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, Botswana
11. Olabukunola Williams, EVA Nigeria
12. Rose Pélagie Masso, The African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), Cameroon
13. Shaima Aly, Kenana Association for Sustainable Development and Women Empowerment
14. Tafadzwa Muropa, Citizens Manifesto, Zimbabwe