

African Women's Decade 2010-2020

2014 Annual Review



Make *Every* Woman Count

Promoting the Empowerment of African Women & Girls

ABOUT Make Every Woman Count: Founded in December 2010 two months after the launch of the African Women's Decade, Make Every Woman Count is an African woman led-organisation, which serves as a mobilizing, networking, information, advocacy and training platform for African women by building their leadership capacities to influence policy and decision making.

Our mission is to strengthen the voice and impact of African women's rights organisations, feminists, CSOs and activists through the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate and coordinate the sharing of experiences, ideas, information, and strategies to promote African women and girls rights.

The objectives of MEWC are to:

- Serve as a comprehensive source of information, research findings and resources, institutions, developments and events on women's rights in Africa;
- Track and report on progress African countries are making in the area of women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Facilitate periodic report identification of good practice and constraints, as well as strengthen networking and sharing of information in the area of gender mainstreaming;
- Provide a regional perspective on the status of women in Africa;
- Provide a database for African women's organisations, grassroots, researchers and activists and various stakeholders to access country-specific or sub regional data regarding women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment;

We aim to achieve these objectives through the following approach:

- **Information:** Offering information, resources and guidance to women's organisations, grassroots movements and activists working on the ground to empower women and girls.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Providing African women with a platform for sharing ideas, learning and creating linkages to build up leaders in African society.
- **Participation:** Monitoring the participation of women in national and local politics.
- **Accountability:** Producing an annual report as an audit of the status and condition of women in each African country.
- **Capacity building:** Providing training and skills development to increase women's awareness of their legal status and democracy concepts as well as their leadership, entrepreneurship and communication skills.

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	4
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	4
FOREWORD	5
OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT	5
CHALLENGES	6
2014 Highlights	9
ANGOLA	14
CAMEROON	15
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	16
CHAD	17
REPUBLIC OF CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE	17
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	18
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	19
GABON	20
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE:	20
COMOROS	25
BURUNDI	25
DJIBOUTI	26
ERITREA	27
ETHIOPIA	29
KENYA	30
MALAWI	33
MADAGASCAR	35
MAURITIUS	36
MOZAMBIQUE	37
RWANDA	39
SEYCHELLES	40
SOMALIA	41
TANZANIA	42
ZAMBIA	45
ZIMBABWE	46
ALGERIA	50
EGYPT	51
LIBYA	53
MOROCCO	54

SOUTH SUDAN	55
SUDAN	56
TUNISIA	57
BOTSWANA	62
LESOTHO	65
NAMIBIA	68
SOUTH AFRICA	71
SWAZILAND	74
BURKINA FASO	79
BENIN	80
CAPE VERDE	81
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	83
GAMBIA	85
GHANA	87
GUINEA	89
GUINEA BISSAU	91
LIBERIA	92
MALI	93
NIGER	96
NIGERIA	97
SENEGAL	99
SIERRA LEONE	100

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We also wish to thank OXFAM for the financial support received for the publication of the 2014 African Women's Decade report.



FOREWORD

Inspired by the launch of the African Women's Decade (AWD) in 2010 and by the Beijing Platform for Action, an outcome of the 1995 Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, which recommended the creation of mechanisms to monitor gender equality and the advancement of women, MEWC's Annual Review of the AWD evaluates the progress, or lack thereof, being made to include and promote the rights of women at country, regional, and Pan-African levels.

The main goal of the AWD is to enhance the implementation of African Union countries' commitments related to gender equality and women's empowerment and to support activities resulting in tangible positive change for African women at all levels.

The decade emphasizes a grassroots, approach to development and leaders have encouraged women and those that advocate for them to take ownership of the decade and seize it as an opportunity for sharing effective strategies. In spite of these laudable goals, MEWC identified an information vacuum following the initial launch of the AWD and could not find any evidence that progress, or lack thereof, towards the decade's goals was going to be assessed systematically.

Concerned that the critical issues confronting African women were quickly returning to the shadows, MEWC embraced the principles of the AWD and stepped up to the challenge of tracking results and demanding that long overdue attention to gender parity in Africa not become derailed.

This is achieved by presenting each country on the continent with a background and a presentation of progress and developments made within different areas during each year of the African Women's Decade 2013.

We evaluated each of the levels around our central gender issues: Women, Peace and Security; Violence Against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; Education; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health.

The report is divided into sections according to regional visions of the African continent, and then reports on each country are presented individually.

Countries are classified by regions are based on the United Nations country grouping¹.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The objective of MEWC's AWD Monitoring program is to hold African governments accountable to the commitments they made to gender equity in policy decisions in the context of the African Union's African Women's Decade.

In order to fulfil this objective, MEWC publishes a report during each year of the AWD that summarizes that status of women in each country in Africa and the progress, or lack thereof, which governments made towards the goals of the AWD during that year.

The reports have been publicized as a credible resource by various women's organisations and they have been use to lobby Governments to do more in regard to women's empowerment.

MEWC aims to publish an annual report throughout the 10-year duration of the African Women's Decade to provide an overview of status of women's rights in Africa. It is important to keep track of countries progress with regards to gender equality in Africa for several reasons:

- a) To monitor progress being made in the continent in general and in each country over the period of the Decade

- b) To offer evidence of best practice of enhancing gender equality and the human rights of women
- c) It is a way of monitoring progress achieved on the continent and will thus function as a resource for accessing developments throughout the decade.
- d) Furthermore, the report can function as an incentive for countries to improve their efforts in the areas of gender equality and the human rights of women.

CHALLENGES

As an organisation with limited access to financial resources, monitoring all the 55 African countries is difficult and time-consuming. With limited access to resources or field representatives, we rely on UN, local news reports, World Bank, NGOs, International Institutions and individual country to gather information.

With diligent research, we were able to report what has been happening on the continent in 2014 in relation to women's issues. However our accuracy and precision with data would benefit from access to better resources, more time and full-time staff researchers and writers.

- ☞ Lack of funding: This has been a key challenge in the realisation of this report
- ☞ Limited Access to information, data, resources
- ☞ Limited access to resources or field representatives

INTRODUCTION

Almost 20 years ago, in September 1995, thousands of people gathered in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women. From the conference, 189 countries adopted a landmark roadmap “The Beijing Platform for Action”, which was considered as a major achievement to advancing women’s rights and to put women’s rights and gender equality on governments agenda.

Ahead of the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing conference, UN WOMEN launched a major campaign in 2014 around the world to raise awareness on the challenges that remain for achieving gender equality. African women’s rights organisations and activists gathered in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia from 14-16th November 2014 to raise awareness on the challenges that remain for achieving gender equality and to lobby and push African governments to uphold National and International Law and policies to make gender equality a reality.

2014 was also marked by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which has had a disproportionate impact on women, as 75% of Ebola deaths have been women². As health centres focus on the Ebola outbreak, expectant mothers are deprived of access to skilled birth attendants³, and due to the stigma attached to Ebola, mothers are fearful of going to clinics or hospitals for prenatal check-ups.⁴ Because Ebola is spread through bodily fluids, midwives and birth attendants are fearful and some are refusing to help deliver babies.⁵ As a result, there is concern in the global public health community that maternal mortality rates, which were slowly decreasing in the region, will rise sharply.⁶

Four years since the launch of the African Women’s Decade 2010-2020, African Women’s rights activists and organisations have a lot to be proud of. Thanks to their efforts, there have been some important strides in terms of legislation, education, and the presence of women in decision-making across the continent.

In recent years, many African women have been making their way into leadership positions: in January 2014, Catherine Samba-Panza became CAR’s first female head of state when she became interim President, making her the 3rd African woman head of State. On October 26 2014, Tunisia held Legislative elections with women making up just over half of registered voters, and 47% of the candidates running for office⁷.

The year 2014 was a significant year in terms of legislation changes for institutional support to facilitate healing and justice for women survivors of sexual violence. On the 1st of February 2014, Algeria adopted an executive decree recognising women who have been raped during the “dark decade” as victims of terrorism.⁸ In addition, in April 2014, the Uganda’s parliament passes a resolution that acknowledges for the first time the need to provide gender-sensitive reparations to the women and men who suffered at the hands of the Lord’s Resistance Army during the 20-year insurgency in Northern Uganda, including crimes of sexual and gender-based violence.⁹

The Moroccan Parliament also addressed violence against women with an important vote in January, amending a law that allowed rapists to marry their victims.¹⁰ Prior to this amendment, a rapist could avoid prosecution by marrying their victim, with the consent of the family if the girl was under age.¹¹ The move comes two years after 16-year-old Amina al-Filali committed suicide for being forced to marry her alleged rapist to uphold her family’s honour.

Further, In June 2014, Egypt passed a law that criminalised sexual harassment, with offenders immediately being condemned following the amendment.^{12,13}

While access to reproductive health remains one of the biggest challenges for most African countries, The Republic of Congo-Brazzaville has made great improvements to maternal mortality, with a 50% decrease of women dying during childbirth over the last decade. It is one of the few African countries on track to meet its target for maternal mortality under the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.¹⁴

Although peace and security issues remain male-dominated in Algeria, the National Army now counts more women in decision-making positions. On the 3rd of July 2014, the National Army nominated 3 female generals, making four women generals in total this year, and history in the Arab world.¹⁵

Over the past decade, the continent has taken many decisions to *guarantee the rights of women and girls*; the African Union has played a great role in this shift. The AU has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by adopting important decisions which form the basis of the AU Gender architecture such as the Constitutive Act, AU Protocol on Women's Rights, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, Africa Women's Decade, and the Fund for African Women. All these decisions have created a favourable environment for women's empowerment; however, these instruments must be implemented at national and regional level if we are to see positive changes in the life of African women.

The year 2014 was once again marked by a renewed commitment from the AU by adopting "Women's Empowerment Year and Africa's Development for the Concretization of Agenda 2063" as the theme for its 24th Summit in January 2015.

While many African countries have made significant strides in reducing gender inequality, engrained social norms that promote discrimination against women are still very much present. Poverty and traditional customs seem to be the main barriers to overcome in order to see the condition of women improve throughout the continent. There is still a lot of work ahead with regards to policy implementation, women in decision-making positions, education, health and human rights.

Political commitment is key to ensuring women enjoy greater rights. We must ensure that we have a strong system of accountability in place to make sure that African governments turn their commitments into concrete actions. In order to move forward, we need to acknowledge the importance of accountability and resources to build a framework and create actual implementation of the national, regional and international laws and policies that advance women's rights and gender equality.

Rainatou Sow
Executive Director, Make Every Woman Count

2014 Highlights

Below are some of the highlights of the 2014 report. To find out more about each country, and for reference, please go to the specific country profile.

Education

- ☞ **Seychelles** is the only country in Africa that has fully achieved education FOR ALL with a literacy rate of 94%.
- ☞ **Ethiopia** enrolment for girls in primary education has increased to 83%
- ☞ **Swaziland** has enacted a Free Primary Education Act, which is meant to ensure that all children will have access to and be able to complete primary schooling, with statistics revealing a 97% enrolment rate.
- ☞ According to UNESCO, the female adult literacy in **Egypt** will reach 65.6% in 2015. Illiteracy affects 37% of Moroccan women overall and 55% of women don't have access to basic education in rural area.
- ☞ Almost 80% of South Sudanese are illiterate; a majority of these are women.
- ☞ In **Swaziland** 86% of girls are enrolled in primary education versus 84% of boys.
- ☞ 73% of girls living in urban areas in the **Republic of Congo-Brazzaville** have now completed primary education.
- ☞ **Sao Tome and Principe** is one of the countries on track to meet MDG2 for attaining universal primary education by 2015. The adult literacy rate remains 93% for men and 86% for women.

Economic Empowerment

- ☞ **Seychelles** There is no officially sanctioned discrimination in employment, and women are well represented in business.
- ☞ **Ethiopia's** rank in the 2014 Gender Gap Index for Economic Participation and Opportunity has slipped from 2013, with the country ranking 103rd versus 93rd in 2013, but its score has seen some improvement
- ☞ In **Algeria** 16.3% of women are enrolled in workforce. Women represent 19.5% of the total labour force. In **Egypt** unemployment rate is higher for women (25%) than men (9%) while the rise of the female labour force participation rate would raise the GDP by 34%. Only 43% of women have an official employment in Libya.
- ☞ In **Morocco** only 24.7% of women are engaged in the labour force while 67.2% of men are. Women are also more affected by unemployment.
- ☞ **Tunisian** women face difficulties in finding employment, statistics points out that only about 26% of women (74% of men) were active on the labour market.
- ☞ Female unemployment in **Botswana** is at an estimated 20% for 2013/14.
- ☞ In **Lesotho** women's occupational pattern is relatively more spread across subsistence agricultural farming (26.9%) textile manufacturing (22.9% from 9.5% in 1995), government employment (46.2%), and in household activities.
- ☞ In **South Africa**, an estimated 38% of businesses are owned by women.
- ☞ **Gambian** women constitute 78% of the economically active population involved in agriculture compared to just 57% of men and that women are responsible for 40% of total agricultural production.
- ☞ According to the World Bank, 81% of **Togolese** women are classed as economically active

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

- ☞ **Seychelles** The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is among the lowest in Africa
- ☞ In **Ethiopia**, 1 in 67 women die due to pregnancy, whereas the figure was one in 24 in 2000.
- ☞ Swaziland has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world, with a prevalence of 27.4% in the 15 to 49-age range, according to 2013 figures.
- ☞ **Lesotho's** HIV and AIDS prevalence rate among adults aged 15 to 59 remains high at 22.9%. There are 190 000 women aged 15 and older living with HIV.

- ☞ **Namibia** has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, and women account for 53% of all reported new HIV cases. There are 250 000 people living with HIV in Namibia. Of those, 130 000 are women aged 15 and up.
- ☞ Approximately one-fifth of **South African** women in their reproductive ages are HIV positive. For adults aged 15–49 years, an estimated 16.8% of the population is HIV positive.
- ☞ Concerns are raised on the fact that state-provided abortions are still unavailable in 11 cities in **Tunisia**.
- ☞ Over 95% of HIV positive pregnant women have access Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes in **Botswana**, allowing for a reduction in mother to child HIV transmission.
- ☞ It seems that maternal mortality rates have increased from the previous year, even though **Swaziland** reports that 79% of women between ages 15 and 49 made a minimum of four visits to ante-natal clinics during their pregnancy.
- ☞ A national campaign vaccinating girls between 9 to 13 years against cervical cancer was carried out in **Cameroon** in February 2014.
- ☞ As of March 2014, 80% of health infrastructure has ‘effectively collapsed’ in the midst of ongoing violence and conflict in the **CAR**.
- ☞ 50% decrease of women dying during childbirth in **Congo**. But access to health care, especially for those affected by HIV/AIDS remains a serious concern.
- ☞ **Nigeria** continues to be ranked as the second worst country in the world for maternal mortality and under-five deaths, as each day 2,300 under-five year olds and 145 women at childbearing age die

Violence Against Women

- ☞ In April 2014, the **Uganda**’s parliament passes a resolution that acknowledges for the first time the need to provide gender-sensitive reparations to the women and men who suffered at the hands of the Lord’s Resistance Army during the 20-year insurgency in northern Uganda, including crimes of sexual and gender-based violence
- ☞ In **Ethiopia**, 74% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced female genital mutilation
- ☞ Algeria has recently adopted an executive decree recognising women who have been raped during the “dark decade” as victims of terrorism. 10 000 women or more will receive a monthly compensation from 16000 Algerian Dinar up to 35000 Algerian Dinar.
- ☞ **Egypt** has launched this year the first prosecution addressing female genital mutilation after a 13 years old girl died in June 2013.
- ☞ Violence against Women in all its forms is constantly present in **Sudan**. In October reportedly 200 women were mass raped.
- ☞ “According to LMPS [Lesotho Mounted Police Service] Annual Crime Report, sexual offences reported from 2009 to 2014 range from 1500 to 1650 per year. Out of the reported cases about one-third of the total, get taken to court in **Lesotho**.”
- ☞ Over 40% of adolescent girls in **Cameroon** have reported to experience physical violence. Still no legal provisions in place that criminalise female genital mutilation and breast ironing.
- ☞ Over 1,100 reported cases of sexual violence in the first month of 2014 alone in the **CAR**.
- ☞ **Congo** developed a national action plan for 2013-2017 to address gender-based violence. Refugees and migrants continue to remain vulnerable.
- ☞ Sexual violence against women in **DRC** remains a grave issue where vast majority of accused still go unprosecuted. Recently, a new post, Presidential Advisor on Conflict-related Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, has been created to help tackle VAW (violence against women).
- ☞ **Niger** has the highest percentage of child marriage in the world :one in three girls is married before she turns 15
- ☞ A recent survey by Women’s Aid Collective, which assessed rates of torture throughout the country, noted that rape and sexual assaults are the most common forms of torture experience by **Nigerian** women, with 64.4% of women stating they had either been raped or sexually assaulted
- ☞ Approximately 6% of **Gabonese** girls are married by the age of 15, and 22% by the ages of 18. Trafficking is another serious issue.

Women's Political Participation

- With 43.8% of Parliamentary seats, The **Seychelles** has one of the highest percentages of women in parliament in the world.
- The first woman to lead a political party in the Arab world, Louisa Hanoun received 1.37% of votes (more than 140.000 votes), which put her in fourth position among the six candidates during this year's presidential elections in **Algeria**.
- In **Egypt**, 4 women have been nominated in the new cabinet in March. Therefore, women make up 12% of the new cabinet while they were 16% in the former cabinet.
- The first woman has been elected to serve as head of a major **Egyptian** political party: Hala Shukrallah was elected leader of Egypt's Dostour in February 2014.
- During **Libya's** Parliamentary elections 32 of the 200 seats were reserved for women and there were 149 female candidates.
- **South Sudanese** women hold 93 seats out of 382 parliament's seats. They represent 26.5% of the Lower House and 10% of the Upper House.
- On October 26 2014, **Tunisia** held Legislative election, the second in history. 50.5% of the registered voters are women, and 47% of the candidates running for the elections are women, while only 12% placed as head of the lists.
- Catherine Samba-Panza became **CAR's** first female head of state when she became interim President in January 2014.
- Female representation in the National Assembly in Congo remains steady at seven 7%.
- At 8%, female representation remains low in the **DRC** National Assembly.
- A referendum was sought in April 2014 on the longstanding debate over the 30% women's participation quota in **Liberia**.
- In May 2014, Laila Maryam Mint Moulaye Idriss presented her candidacy for the presidential elections, only the second woman in **Mauritania's** history to do so
- Following the elections in **South Africa**, out of the ten seats in parliament, only two seats (21%) are held by women. This is a 1% decline from 2009, and a 14% decline from 2004. The decline also extends to the provincial level, down from 35% in 2009 to 20% women in 2014.

Women Peace and Security

- A 2014 Security Council study on **Angola** reports on various capacity-building activities, including training for relevant state actors, which may have contributed to a reported reduction in incidents of sexual violence.
- The **Great Lakes** Women's Platform was launched in DRC in January 2014 by UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson
- On June 2, 2014 **Gambia** launched its first national action plan to implement the United National Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

CENTRAL AFRICA REGION

The majority of the countries in Central Africa have not yet adopted a National Action Plan (NAP), which would implement the provisions included in the UNSCR 1325. Although all Central African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, there is a lack of enforcement capabilities, in addition to weak anti-discrimination legislation. Essentially, this means that CEDAW has less impact on women's rights than traditional and customary law within Central Africa. In addition, although the Maputo Protocol has been signed by all States, it has not been ratified by many of them, limiting its enforcement capabilities.

Access to education varies greatly between countries within Central Africa. Information is limited in some countries such as Angola and Chad, but is readily available in others.

Both Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe have very high literacy levels, with adults at 94.2% for the former (the highest literacy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa), and 86% for women for the latter. Sao Tome and Principe is one of the few African countries that are on target to meet its Millennium Development Goal for attaining primary education by 2015. The country also has relatively low disparities for literacy



Congolese Women Welcome Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights - UN Photo

rates between females and males. Projects have been launched to promote education for girls, such as in Equatorial Guinea, where an initiative began in 2006, which aimed at improving attitudes towards girls' education by increasing access to schools, as well as community sensitisation. In contrast, access to education in the Central Africa Republic has been severely damaged this year, due to school closures from December 2013 to March 2014, which increased the gender inequalities in literacy rates.

Access to reproductive health care and preventing and treating HIV/ AIDS remain some the biggest challenges for Central Africa. The Republic of Congo-Brazzaville has made great improvements to maternal mortality, with a 50% decrease of women dying during childbirth in Congo over the last decade. It is one of the few African countries on track to meet its target for maternal mortality under the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.¹⁶ In contrast, in the DRC early pregnancy remains a major health concern, with an average of 25% of women aged 20-24 having given birth before the age of 19. One of the major problems with assessing progress in this area, is the lack of available data and statistics from the different countries.

The political participation of women varies greatly between countries; whereas the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville implemented a quota specifying the numbers of women required in elections, Angolan MP Caroline Elias failed to proactively emphasize the need maintain and grow the political participation of women. However, some countries have seen positive trends emerge in women's political participation, such as Equatorial Guinea, where 22% of the lower or single houses are now occupied by women.¹⁷

A general lack of National Action Plans has made protecting the peace and security of women problematic throughout the region. Whilst the Central African Republic adopted a NAP in 2013, and the Democratic Republic of Congo adopted theirs in 2010, no other country has a NAP in place. Reports have also found that the enforcement of the National Action Plan in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been problematic, and varies widely depending on the province in which it is being applied.¹⁸

Sexual violence, domestic violence, and violence against women are prevalent throughout Central Africa, with it occurring in refugee camps, general society and within the family home. Regardless of the political environment, women are subject to verbal, psychological, and physical abuse. Dating as far back as 2004, Equatorial Guinea has been made to curb violence against women; however 10 years later, there has been little progress and with inconclusive results. Worryingly, the perpetrators of violence also include authority figures, including Government Officials and Police, as seen in the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, where female migrants have reportedly faced violence from the police during deportation back to the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹⁹ Domestic violence also remains such a prevalent issue due to traditions and cultural practices that perpetuate the discrimination and stigmatization of women, as seen in Sao Tome and Principe.²⁰

Women continue to face barriers in economic empowerment and economic equality. Some countries, such as the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville have shown progress in promoting women's economics, where the Minister promoted women and girls in science and technology fields,²¹ the creation of professional associations for female medical practitioners,²² and the creation of development projects for women in rural areas.²³ In contrast, the DRC has a significant body of national legislation that discriminates against women, including, for example, the Family Code, the Labour Code and the Penal Code, despite changes being discussed for many years.

ANGOLA

Devastated by years of civil war, Angola is one of the most politically and economically fragile states. It signed and ratified both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol. However, it has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). *Gender-Based Violence*

In March 2014, the Secretary of State for Family and Women Promotion urged civil society and other stakeholders to engage and strengthen the commitment to tackle gender-based violence.²⁴ Similarly, at the 9th meeting of the parliamentary Women Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, also held in March, women ministers insisted that more needed to be done to ensure gender equality.

Since 2011, the country has taken small steps to ensure equality and combat violence against women. This is most visible in the Law against Domestic Violence, the Integrated Gender Indicators Systems, and the creating of the National Department for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children (2012).²⁵

Women's Political Participation

Efforts and campaigns from the outside have been organized to encourage and promote women's voices. Norwegian People's Aid reported an increase in female voters and 38% women in parliament prior to 2012 elections.²⁶

As far as women's representation in government and influence in other decision-making bodies is concerned, Angolan MP Caroline Elias mentioned the 'acceptable percentage of women in political positions' has been achieved.²⁷ However, she did not proactively emphasize the need maintain and grow the political participation of women.

Women, Peace and Security

Without a national action plan and only a brief UN Peacekeeping mandate in the country (between 1997 and 1999), Angolan women's experiences during conflict remain largely ignored. A recent Security Council Report highlights several concerns that need attention, in particular sexual violence and lack of access to justice for survivors in post-conflict situations.²⁸

Economic Empowerment

Women remain economically vulnerable in the face of perpetual inequality. There have been calls for more initiatives and interventions, but no concrete steps have been reported. At the 10th National Meeting of Businesswomen, the Governor of the South-West Province of Namibe, Rui Falcao, stressed the need for

women's commitment and participation for effective economic development.²⁹ At a practical level, the Municipal Director of Family and Women Promotion department, Paula Loureiro stated that providing technical professional training will help support rural women.³⁰

This is just a suggestion and with time limitations it might be best to ignore it this year and add it to next year's report. You could however add a summarising sentence indicating if, or how the country has improved or declined in terms of women's rights and empowerment. Eg While the post war economy and government has had problems implementing greater female empowerment, there does appear to be a growing awareness and will to change policy and practice within Angola

CAMEROON

Cameroon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in August 1994 and the optional protocol.³¹ The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) was signed in July 2006 but has not been ratified.³² The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.³³ The current family code discriminates against women and girls on several points, in particular by stating that girls can legally marry at the age of 15 unlike boys who can only marry at the age of 18. Furthermore, customary laws are persistent and, to a large extent, discriminate against women.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In February 2014, Cameroon hosted the 6th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR) on the theme "Eliminating Women and Girls Sexual and Reproductive Health Vulnerabilities in Africa". The government was represented together with different civil society organisations from across the continent.³⁴ This year, the theme focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Ministry of Public Health, together with the Global Alliance of Vaccines and Immunization, carried out a national campaign vaccinating girls between 9 to 13 years against cervical cancer. This is a cancer caused by the papilloma Virus, HPV which is one of the most commonly sexually transmitted infections.³⁵

Violence Against Women

Cameroon has a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against women, however there is a lack of active measures to eliminate violence against women, although the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women urges the State to ensure effective implementation.³⁶ In Cameroon over 40% of adolescent girls have reported that they have experienced physical violence since their 15th birthday. Furthermore, it has been found that more than 1 in 7 adolescent girls experienced violence during pregnancy. The most likely perpetrators of this violence against girls are siblings, a parent or step-parent, a husband or partner. Physical violence against girls is also frequent within schools in Cameroon. 22% of girls experience in the country reported experiences of sexual violence.³⁷

In 2014, the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women completed a review of Cameroon's commitment to eliminating violence against women. The Committee raised several concerns in particular the lack of sufficient action to eliminate "stereotypes and harmful practices that discriminate against women, including child and early forced marriages; female genital mutilation; breast ironing; the stigmatization of widows and widowhood rites; and the kidnapping of children, especially young girls, for the sale of organs or magic/religious practices".³⁸ There are no legal provisions that criminalise female genital mutilation and breast ironing, and the Committee also emphasised that there is a lack of national awareness-raising campaigns from the State party with the purpose of reducing these harmful practices.³⁹

Women's Political Participation

Women hold 31.1% of seats in the National Assembly, and 20% of the members of the Senate are women, but these two law-making bodies are both headed by men. Only about 15% of councillors and members of the judiciary are women.⁴⁰ The country has not implemented a national action plan following the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference, which means that there is no national quota for women's representation in decision-making bodies; the Beijing Platform for Action sets out that signatory countries should have a quota of 30%.⁴¹ As a way to encourage women's leadership skills, the British Commonwealth through the British High Commission in Yaoundé have established a scholarship scheme for Master Degree level "The Cameroon Women's Scholarship".⁴²

Women, Peace and Security

No major information was reported in 2014. However, it can be noted that Cameroon, being a country surrounded by other countries in conflict, now hosts more than 100,000 newly arrived refugees, of these 48% are women and children.⁴³

While almost one third of parliamentary seats are held by women, changes to legislation and the implementation of protocols are slow in materialising faced with powerful customary practices. The economic pressures resulting from growing refugee populations may be a factor.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Women's status in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains significantly effected by ongoing conflict, violence, and weak governance. The Central African Republic accessed CEDAW in 1991⁴⁴, adopted a National Action plan for the UNSCR 1325 in September 2013⁴⁵, and has signed, but not ratified, the Maputo Protocol.

Education

Many schools in CAR (including public schools) were closed for all or part of the period from December 2013 to March 2014, at which time schools began gradually reopening.⁴⁶ The closures were due to the humanitarian and security situation, and only served to perpetuate the existing inequalities in literacy rates between men and women that predated the 2013 instability.⁴⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

By the end of 2013, the health care system had 'effectively collapsed'. The independent expert, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, was informed by the Minister of Health in March 2014 that 80% of health facilities had been destroyed and access to health services, including pre and postnatal care, was only available through humanitarian organizations.

Violence Against Women

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women raised concerns about the "heightened risk" of violence against women among the high number of internally displaced persons.⁴⁸ While there is little data available on the prevalence of violence against women in CAR⁴⁹, the United Nations' Population Fund (UNFPA) has suggested that the number of victims of sexual violence in the country may be "astronomical".⁵⁰ UNFPA's emergency teams in the country had over 1,100 reported cases of sexual violence in the first month of 2014

alone; it is believed the vast majority of cases go unreported.

Women's Political Participation

Catherine Samba-Panza became CAR's first female Head of State when she became interim President in January 2014. Mrs. Samba-Panza is the third female head of state in Africa, following Malawi's Joyce Banda and Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.⁵¹



*Her Excellency Catherine Samba-Panza –
UN Photo*

It worth noting that 35% of the members of CAR's Transitional Government, established in January 2014, are women.⁵² Additionally, the Transitional Charter, in Articles 80 and 91 respectively, established quotas for the participation of women in the Constitutional Court (three of nine members) and High Council for Communication (four of nine members).⁵³

Women, Peace and Security

Given the recent adoption of a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325 in September 2013, the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, in July 2014, urged CAR to ensure the effective

implementation of the National Plan, including the participation of women in the peace process focusing on national reconciliation, reconstruction, and transitional justice Initiatives.⁵⁴

CHAD

It remains difficult to obtain information pertaining to women's rights in Chad. Women's status in Chad remains significantly affected by ongoing instability and weak governance. The Universal Periodic Review of Chad was presented at the Human Rights Council in March 2014. At this time, the Government of Chad stated that gender equality was a priority for the Government, and that it would continue to pursue measures to address harmful traditional practices and enhance the status of women.⁵⁵ Chad ratified CEDAW in 1995⁵⁶ and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004, but has not ratified it. Chad has not adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE

The Republic of Congo-Brazzaville ratified CEDAW in 1982 and signed in 2004 but has not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol.⁵⁷ Congo-Brazzaville has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.⁵⁸

Education

According to a World Bank Report presented in Brazzaville in June 2014, 73% of girls living in urban areas now complete primary education.⁵⁹

Economic Empowerment

As of 2012, Congo has had a Minister for the Advancement of Women and Integration of Women in Development to champion women's rights in the country. This Minister has been active in supporting women's economic empowerment, including, for example, the promotion of women and girls in science and technology fields,⁶⁰ the creation of professional associations for female medical practitioners,⁶¹ and the creation of development projects for women in rural areas.⁶²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2014 Report⁶³, the Republic of Congo has made a significant effort in the last years to improve maternal morbidity and mortality. Since 2011, the country provides free Caesarean to pregnant women. There has been a 50% decrease of women dying during childbirth in Congo over the last decade; accordingly, Congo is on track to meet its target for maternal

mortality under the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.⁶⁴ However, many significant concerns remain regarding women's health and their ability to access health care. In particular, at the presentation of the Universal Periodic Review of Congo to the Human Rights Council in January 2014, concerns were raised regarding the disproportionate number of women affected by HIV/AIDS.⁶⁵

Violence Against Women

According to Congo's presentation to the Human Rights Council as part of its Universal Periodic Review, Congo developed a National Action Plan for 2013-2017 to address gender-based violence.⁶⁶ However, significant concern remains regarding the level of gender-based violence that continues and the additional vulnerability of specific populations, including refugees and migrants. For examples, there have been reports of female migrants facing violence from the Congolese police while being deported back to the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶⁷

Women's Political Participation

Female representation in the National Assembly in Congo remains limited at 7% (the last elections having been conducted in 2012).⁶⁸

Since 2009, Congo has instituted a quota whereby party lists must include, a minimum of 15% female candidates for national elections

and 20% female candidates for local elections.⁶⁹

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The DRC ratified CEDAW in 1986 and ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2008.⁷⁰ The DRC adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325 in 2010.⁷¹ Women and girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continue to face challenges in all walks of life: in the most recent Gender Inequality Index, the DRC ranked 144th out of 148 countries.⁷² According to a 2014 report⁷³ on gender equality in the DRC, knowledge by public servants of the National Plan for the application of UNSCR 1325 (along with the National Policy on Gender) varies widely from province to province, suggesting little ownership of those directives and a lack of systematic inclusion of gender conditions in government programmes.⁷⁴

Economic Empowerment

The DRC continues to have a significant body of national legislation that discriminates against women, including the Family Code, the Labour Code and the Penal Code. According to public announcements, the Family Code has been under review for several years; however, such revisions have yet to yield any changes to improve the status of women and girls.⁷⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the 2014 Gender Country Profile⁷⁶ of the DRC, women suffer from poorer health than men and are likely to be in worse condition by the time they arrive at a health care facility (if available) than men due to less systematic care provided early on from family and communities.⁷⁷ Access to treatment for HIV/AIDS varies markedly among provinces. Early pregnancy continues to remain a major health concern; a study indicated that an average of 25% of women aged 20 to 24 had given birth under the age of 19. Despite this concern and the prevalence of sexual violence and unwanted pregnancy, family planning services are not often available.⁷⁸

Violence Against Women

Violence against women, including sexual violence, remains widespread in the DRC, in conflict areas as well as in other parts of the country.⁷⁹ Additionally, widespread impunity for perpetrators (including members of security forces) of sexual violence remains common.⁸⁰ According to a 2014 Human Rights Watch Report, while there has been some increase in the number of arrests and prosecutions for

rape, the vast majority still goes unpunished. “The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJFRO) in Congo recorded 187 convictions by military courts for sexual violence between July 2011 and December 2013”.⁸¹

In July 2014, President Joseph Kabila created a new post, Presidential Advisor on Conflict-related Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, and named Jeannine Mabunda Lioko Mudiayi to the position to demonstrate the DRC's commitment to help fight sexual violence.⁸²

Women's Political Participation

Female representation in the National Assembly and the Senate in the DRC remains steady at 8% (the last elections having been conducted in 2006).⁸³ Responding to concerns about this low rate of female representation, President Kabila announced the consideration of the proposal to add “additional seats for which only women could compete in electoral districts of three seats or more in future elections.” No action on this proposal has been taken.⁸⁴

While the principle of gender parity in public institutions is established in Article 14 of the Constitution, mechanisms for adoption were never adopted.⁸⁵ A 2013 law set to establish 30% quotas for female representation was found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court; a revised version of that bill is still expected for 2014.⁸⁶

Women, Peace and Security

For decades women have not been represented, or have been grossly underrepresented in all parts of the peace process, including major peace talks such as the inter-Congolese dialogue.⁸⁷ The Great Lakes Women's Platform

was launched in January 2014 by UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson. However, to date, the participation of women has been "limited".⁸⁸

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

As one of the least developed countries, women's human rights continue to remain a massive challenge in Equatorial Guinea. The country has signed and ratified CEDAW, and has signed but not ratified the Maputo Protocol. There is currently no National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Gender-Based Violence

While the constitution guarantees equality of men and women before law, there is no specific law punishing violence against women. Moreover, poorly enforced rape laws and minimal reporting make accountability difficult.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Promotion of Women has run awareness campaigns in the past that have addressed vulnerabilities faced by women and encouraged debates around the issue of violence against women.⁸⁹

In 2004, Equatorial Guinea responded positively to the recommendations made by the assembly of the Human Rights Council to strengthen institutional framework and human rights mechanisms. The country agreed to take necessary measures – 'putting an end to impunity in cases of domestic violence, adopt legislation that defines gender-based violence as a crime and to offer assistance to victims, expedite the process of elaboration and adoption of a law that defines and prohibits discrimination against women, and above all speed up the process of bringing the National Human Rights Commission in line with the Paris Principles'⁹⁰ and other public policies to take into account cross-cutting gender perspectives. Equatorial Guinea has agreed to reinforce measures to combat human trafficking, as it is considered a major centre for the trafficking of women and children for forced labour and forced sex work. In addition, the government agreed to eliminate discrimination against women in the area of marriage, eradicate the practices of child, early and forced marriage and to ensure equal inheritance rights for men and women.

Women's Political Participation

Regarding women's political participation, the 2004 elections to the House of Representatives, the National Parliament, had resulted in a 14% increase in women members.⁹¹ Although to date, there are no quotas at the national or sub-national level to promote women's political participation⁹², a 2013 IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) study indicated that 22% women occupied seats in the lower or single houses.⁹³ This shows a positive upward trend in terms of women's participation in political spaces.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

A lack of clear consistent data makes it difficult to understand the basic infrastructure and systems that might ensure women's reproductive health rights. Reports dating from 2004 suggest that women have been the hardest hit by HIV/AIDS. Moreover, 'access to health centres and the availability of health workers, contraceptive measures and information were more limited in rural areas.'⁹⁴ In order to address these issues, the country drafted legislation on reproductive health, which included HIV/AIDS programmes. It is unclear whether the legislation has been adopted or implemented.

Education

According to the publication of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, in 2011 Equatorial Guinea obtained the highest literacy rate of 94.2% within Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹⁵ Yet the government faces challenges in terms of translating action plans into specific strategies targeted to accelerate girls' education. The last such initiative, launched in 2006,⁹⁶ aimed at

eliminating gender disparities by creating increased access to schools along with community sensitisation and other mechanisms that encouraged positive attitudes towards girl education. Traditions and customary practices continue to guide decision-making processes in families when it comes to girl child's education.

Economic Empowerment

In the past, the government has adopted measures for women in the labour market that included multi-country collaborative projects. Many of the projects were initiated years ago, and there is a lack of data regarding the progress made in empowering women.

GABON

Gabon ratified CEDAW in January 1983 and the Maputo Protocol in January 2005 but has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.⁹⁷

Economic Empowerment

Women represent a large portion of the unemployed population, with the overall employment rate only reaching approximately 16%. The government aims to reduce poverty and plans to support female entrepreneurs through the Women's Business Centre.⁹⁸

Gabonese women are less likely than men to be the head of household and traditionally cannot get a job without their spouse's permission.⁹⁹

Gabon is a both an intermediary and final destination for West African women and girls. Many women and girls trafficked through the country are subject to forced labour in restaurants and markets, as well as domestic servitude.¹⁰³

In November 2014, UNICEF-Gabon introduced its report on the situation of children in the world to promote equality and human rights of women and children.¹⁰⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The fertility rate in Gabon is 4.1 live births per woman and the mortality rate is 43.3 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁰⁰

34% of women from 15 to 49 are likely to use any contraceptive method and 21% are more likely to use modern methods of contraception. This year, 57% of demands for contraceptives were satisfied.¹⁰¹

Violence Against Women

Approximately 6% of Gabonese girls are married by the age of 15, and 22% by the ages of 18.¹⁰²

Women's Political Participation

Women hold only 15 seats¹⁰⁵ out of 120 (8%) in the National Assembly. However, the current President of the Senate is a woman, the Right Honourable President Rose Francine Rogombé¹⁰⁶, while Mrs S. Moulengui-Mouélé, served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for four years, until October 2014.¹⁰⁷ Gabon is one of the sixteen countries where constitutional reviews are presided by female judges¹⁰⁸, indicating that women reach positions of executive power.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE:

The country is signatory to both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol, which it signed in 2003 and 2010 respectively. However, it still hasn't ratified the Maputo Protocol, which guarantees the 'rights of women as being inalienable, interdependent and indivisible human rights'¹⁰⁹.

As a small island nation that is heavily dependent on foreign aid, Sao Tome and Principe is one of the few African countries that can boast of a relatively stable political landscape. Despite this, the country ranks 144 out of 187 in the Human Development Index 2013 report, and is among the group of least developed countries.

Gender-Based Violence

The Sao Tome and Principe Constitution protects rights of all its citizens and prohibits any discrimination based on gender, race, class, and sex. In a recent study conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGSD), it argues that “there are no gender gaps in access to education and health and not a big poverty gap between male and female headed households. The official discourse encourages gender equality, promoting women occupying high decision-making positions and legal equality between the sexes.”¹¹⁰

Despite legal recourse, domestic violence¹¹¹ remains a serious challenge in Sao Tome and Principe. Traditions and customs perpetuate discrimination and stigmatization against women.

There is no substantial data available on the extent of the violence perpetuated.

Women's Political Participation

In the August 2011 presidential elections, which were deemed rather free and fair by international observers, of the total 55 seats, women held 10 (18.8%)¹¹², 2 of 11 cabinet positions, 1 seat on the five member Supreme Court bench, and 5 of the 12 judgeships on the circuit courts.¹¹³ There is still no system of quotas in place¹¹⁴, which has been considered.

The national assembly elections took place on the 12th October 2014, however it is unclear whether women's representation has increased, decreased, or remained the same. The overall turnout rate was approximately 74.91%¹¹⁵, which is higher than the overall turnout of 66% in 2011.¹¹⁶ The political landscape for women in terms of visibility in major government bodies remains to be seen.

Women, Peace and Security

Sao Tome and Principe has not yet adopted a National Plan of Action. Nor there are any

former or current UN Peacekeeping mandates in the country.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognizes the right of individuals and couples to decide family planning freely and responsibly. A recent UNICEF study reports maternal mortality ratio at 150 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹¹⁷ Poor quality of services, equipment, organisational standards, early pregnancies and general ignorance by future mothers of the signs of a high-risk delivery all contribute to the maternal mortality rates.

Past studies conducted by UNFPA¹¹⁸ estimate that 37% of women and girls between 15 and 49 used a modern method of contraception in 2012.¹¹⁹ Sex education has been incorporated into secondary school curricula, youth-friendly services in schools and other public facilities, including information campaigns by civil society groups.

According to a 2013 UNICEF report, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country is low, at 1.5% among adults ages 15-40 (1.7% among men, and 1.3% among women).¹²⁰

Education

Girls and boys enjoy equal access, and it is significant to point out that Sao Tome and Principe is one of the countries on track to meet MDG2 for attaining universal primary education by 2015. The on-going situation analysis of the school feeding programme conducted by WFP (World Food Programme) also reports that gender disparities in terms of literacy are relatively low. The adult literacy rate remains 93% for men and 86% for women.¹²¹ According to the same WFP report, the southern regions (i.e. Caué and Cantagalo) have the lowest levels of education, where 17% of women and 10% of men have no schooling at all.

Economic Empowerment

Women face discrimination when it comes to accessing opportunities in the job market –

government and otherwise - and represent only a small portion of the formal economy.

Women tend to participate in the local economy or small enterprise development programmes. For instance, women fish traders play an important role in the local economy even though there are notable gender patterns when it comes to who performs what activity. Also known as palayes, these fisherwomen act as an important social and economic force.¹²² Similarly, the Lobata Initiative, a flagship programme based on a partnership between the government, NGOs, community based

organisations, and UNESCO, defines 'women's empowerment as an entry point to reaching MDG1 on poverty reduction and 7 on environmental sustainability'. This integrated and participatory programme is aimed at enabling better livelihoods, creating female leaders and self-confidence among district communities'¹²³ through practice of income generating activities.

EAST AFRICA

An important number of countries make up the Eastern Africa region. Most of them have various levels of economic development, diverse legislations and religions, and hence the position and rights of women differ greatly between countries.

Overall, in terms of education, many countries are reaching gender parity at the primary education level, but most countries still see major disparities in terms of the ratio of girls reaching secondary education. Somalia and Djibouti still rank below average, with girls often being unable to attend even primary education.

In terms of economic development, an important number of countries, including Ethiopia, still have restrictive legislation in place – or customary traditions – which prevent a woman from inheriting or owning land, or from taking loans without their husbands' approval. Overcoming these barriers is key to the economic empowerment of women and to the overall economic development of the region.

Reproductive health and maternal care is improving throughout the region, with an increasing number of women giving birth in a health clinic or with a skilled health worker. Ethiopia and Rwanda, amongst others, have made significant positive strides in this area. However, throughout the region, women still continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and have less access to information on how to protect themselves, both from unwanted pregnancies and from sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, abortion is still a crime in the majority of Eastern African countries.



*Women & Men March to Protest the Striping of A Woman for Wearing a Miniskirt in Nairobi-
Photo Simon Maina (AFP)*

Finally, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to be practiced widely, especially in countries such as Somalia (98%), Djibouti (90%) and Eritrea (89%).

Violence against women continues to be an epidemic in most countries, and to be widely accepted by both men and women. Most countries have legislation in place to prevent such violence, but traditional views and the lack of resources for women to seek help, allow the perpetration of violence against them to continue. In many countries, over 60% of women report having suffered abuse at least once in their lifetime.

Finally, in terms of political representation of women, it is noteworthy that Rwanda holds the world record in terms of number of women in Parliament, as 63.8% of Rwandan Parliamentarians are women.

Poverty and traditional customs seem to be the main barriers to overcome in order to see the condition of women improve throughout the region.

COMOROS

As one of the poorest countries in the world, Comoros ranked 159 in the United Nations Development Programme 2014 Human Development Report.¹²⁴ Comoros ratified CEDAW in October 1999 and the Maputo Protocol in March 2004. Comoros has not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education

The number of girls enrolled in primary school is close to that of boys, with the ratio being 0.96.¹²⁵ That number drops to 0.89 in secondary schools, when more girls drop out of school.¹²⁶ This may partially explain why there are more illiterate women than men in Comoros¹²⁷.

Economic Empowerment

A 2013 poll of 22 Arab nations conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation as part of CEDAW monitoring, Comoros was rated in the first position for women's quality of life.¹²⁸ Among the reasons cited was women's retention of property after divorce and the death of a spouse.

The rate of women employed in Comoros remains low, with only 13.7% of women in wage earning positions.¹²⁹ 66.9% of women who are employed work in the agricultural sector.¹³⁰ One impediment to women business owners is that conventional bank credit is limited because of loan requirements.¹³¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality rate has not changed since 2013, which was 280 per every 100,000 live births.

82.2% of women reported having a skilled attendant present at birth, with 76.1% of women giving birth in a hospital or other medical care facility.¹³²

Only 19.4% of people in Comoros reported using contraceptives.¹³³ Per 1,000 births in

Comoros, 51 of those women were adolescents aged 15-19.¹³⁴

UNICEF figures from 2012 report a 2.1% prevalence of HIV/AIDS among all adults. The number of women infected was not available.¹³⁵

Violence Against Women

66.2% of the population of Comoros lacks access to adequate human waste management infrastructure. This creates a security risk for women, especially in rural areas where women must travel long distances at night to the facilities.¹³⁶ In Moroni, the largest city in Comoros, nearly half of inmates in prisons are being held for sex crimes.¹³⁷

Women who experience domestic violence in Comoros may seek protections through the court system, although extended family of village elders generally address these issues.¹³⁸ Spousal rape is not specifically addressed in Comoros law.¹³⁹

Women's Political Participation

President Ikililou Dhoinine postponed Comoros' general elections for two months without any explanation. Originally scheduled for early November 2014, the president rescheduled the date to late December 2014.¹⁴⁰

Number of women in Parliament has not changed since 2013 with 3.03% of Parliamentary members are women. 20% of politicians in ministerial positions are women.¹⁴¹

BURUNDI

Burundi continues to struggle to build infrastructure and resources in the wake of a civil war that ended in 2005. Burundi has adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and is a party to CEDAW. It has signed but not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol.

Education

Burundi implemented compulsory education in 2005. Despite this, parents often struggle to send their children to school because of school fees and the cost of uniforms and supplies.¹⁴² In addition, overcrowding in classrooms and a lack of qualified teachers remain problems in Burundi.¹⁴³ UNICEF's representative in Burundi, Johannes Wedenig, reported that retention remains a problem in Burundi, with approximately 50% of students dropping out before secondary school.¹⁴⁴ He also noted that girls tend to drop out at higher rates than boys, saying, "At intake, you have basically parity...But then at a certain age, girls drop out more than boys."¹⁴⁵

In the most recent statistics available from 2012, UNICEF reports a literacy rate for 18-24 year old women at 88.1%, approximately one percent lower than men of the same age.¹⁴⁶

Economic Empowerment

Despite slight economic growth in 2013, Burundi remains one of the poorest countries in the world.¹⁴⁷ Issues with domestic revenue, foreign aid, climate change and increasing public tension in advance of 2015 elections contributed to the economic struggles.¹⁴⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

UNICEF does not have figures available for the availability and use of condoms in Burundi, but reports that 21% of women used some type of contraceptive.¹⁴⁹ While 98% of women surveyed reported seeing a doctor at least once during a pregnancy, the number who saw a doctor at least four times dropped to 33%.

Abortion is punishable under Burundi's penal code, and exceptions are made only to save the life of the woman.¹⁵⁰

UNICEF reports that 60% of women in Burundi gave birth in the presence of a skilled attendant, 59% of them in a hospital or other healthcare facility.¹⁵¹ The maternal mortality rate is 74 per 100,000 births.¹⁵²

In its most recent statistics, UNICEF estimates that approximately 1.3% of adults in Burundi are infected with HIV/AIDS. Women comprise approximately 50% of that number, thus an estimated 43,000 women are infected in Burundi. The World Bank reported that the percentage of adults infected with HIV/AIDS has dropped from a previous 3% infection rate.¹⁵³

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a problem in Burundi. It is reported that over 70% of females aged 15-19 agreed that a husband or partner is sometimes justified in hitting or beating his wife,¹⁵⁴ while only just over 50% of boys of the same age answered the same.¹⁵⁵

Due in part to these social perceptions of violence against women, sexual violence is an underreported occurrence in Burundi.¹⁵⁶ Girls and women from rural areas who work as domestic servants are especially vulnerable to sexual violence.¹⁵⁷

Burundi is a source country for trafficking in persons, including for commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls.¹⁵⁸

Women's Political Participation

In 2014, there has been an increase in participation of women in the government. As of 1 January 2014, women in the legislature represented 30.5% (32/105) of the lower house and 46.3% (19/41) in the Senate.¹⁵⁹ In the executive branch, women hold various Council of Ministers positions.¹⁶⁰

DJIBOUTI

Djibouti ratified the CEDAW in 1998. It also ratified the Maputo Protocol in February 2005. It is yet to adopt a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) or the optional protocol to CEDAW.

Education

General school attendance is low for children in Djibouti; only 28% of Djiboutian girls are enrolled in school¹⁶¹. With support from the

Government, UNDP has worked to increase awareness of the value of education and the importance of the role of women in achieving the Millennium Development Goal for Education through the "Caravan on Human

Development" where they transmitted the message through dramatization as well as comic book illustrations to ensure that the message reached a wider audience.

"The Caravan has shown us that a participatory approach is the best way to shed light on the human dimensions of poverty and seek ways of ending it." said Mbaranga Gasarabwe, the UNDP Chief Representative in Djibouti.¹⁶²

According to the 2014-2015 UNHCR Global Appeal Report¹⁶³, it is evident that education is a key priority in Djibouti. The focus for 2014 was to increase the percentage of pupils enrolled in primary school. The UNHCR is also looking at raising the ratio of teachers with a professional qualification. The Office and the Government of Djibouti will work in collaboration to develop the curriculum targeted at the needs of the refugees.¹⁶⁴

Economic Empowerment

Women and children represent over 70% of the population in refugee camps¹⁶⁵ where stable employment is lacking. As such, income-generating activities will be implemented in 2014, as there is a recognised need for this. There will also be a link between vocational training and livelihood activities. Those initiatives are all part of the UNHCR strategic planning for 2014.¹⁶⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognises the right of individuals to freely and responsibly decide on the number and the timing of their children. This was reflected in government run Ministry of Health clinics where they disseminated information on family planning and provided access to contraceptives without restrictions. The government estimates that 33% of women have access to contraceptives.¹⁶⁷

Djibouti commits to decrease the HIV/AIDS prevalence to 1.8% in 2015 and to ensure that all pregnant HIV-positive women receive antiretroviral medication.¹⁶⁸ This is an example of a positive initiative to improve the health status of women. In addition, access to emergency obstetric care for pregnant women

nationally will be increased to 80%. All health centres will be upgraded to deliver a package of emergency obstetric and newborn care and reproductive health services by upgrading them and ensuring that appropriate staff are posted and maintained in the centres. A package of integrated emergency obstetric and newborn care and reproductive health will also be delivered in health services.

Violence Against Women

Djibouti is one of the East African countries with the highest rates of FGM, with more than 90% women undergoing the procedure.¹⁶⁹

A press release published in June 2014 reveals that the abuse of women in Djibouti is widespread. Women are the victims of human rights violations in the name of the fight against terrorism.¹⁷⁰

Women's political participation

According to data compiled by the Inter Parliamentary Union, the percentage of women, as of August 2014, in the lower or single house is 12.7%¹⁷¹.

The political participation of women is instrumental in effecting social change. Women in positions of power have influence over decisions that impact on the lives of women. Female Genital Mutilation is an issue of concern such that a day dedicated to this issue, the International Zero Tolerance Day to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was celebrated by the Djibouti National Union of Women and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Family Planning. A high level sub-regional conference was held on 6 February 2014 under the auspice of the First Lady of Djibouti H.E Kadra Mahamoud. The purpose of the meeting was to consolidate national regional and political commitment to achieve effective implementation of the Resolution banning female genital mutilation worldwide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2012.¹⁷²

ERITREA

Eritrea has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. It ratified CEDAW in September 1995. Eritrea has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

A report by Amnesty International published in 2014 highlights the gravity of human rights violations in Eritrea. “Amnesty International calls on Eritrea to immediately end the use of arbitrary detention without charge or trial, incommunicado detention without access to the outside world, and detention in secret detention centres, as recommended by several states”.¹⁷³ The international NGO also recommended Eritrea to sign and ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Education

Many Eritrean children lack access to education or drop out of school. Learning environments are not child-friendly, and the quality of education remains a great concern¹⁷⁴.

An organisation named the Global Partnership is committed to developing nomadic schools and increasing girls' education in Eritrea. In 2014, a new Gender Analysis Tool was piloted to analyse whether countries are on track to achieve gender equality in 2015.¹⁷⁵ This was prepared by the Global Partnership and the United Nations Girls' Initiative and demonstrates that the issue of poor education for the “girl child” in Eritrea is being addressed.

UNICEF has further developed the concept of nomadic schools through the support of Eritrean Ministry of Education. A 2014 report reveals that UNICEF helped to train 100 teachers and furnished 90 nomadic schools, benefiting an estimated 12,000 children (45% girls). UNICEF and partners are working on a humanitarian strategy to support Eritrea¹⁷⁶. The UNICEF Community Development Programme Target for 2014 was to give 25,000 nomadic children equitable access to quality education. In June 2014, the number of children noted with equitable access to education was 12,000.

The second UNICEF target for 2014 concerning children in humanitarian situations to have access to formal/non-formal education was 5,000 but the UNICEF results on 30 June 2014 showed the target had been surpassed, the number achieved had reached 6,058¹⁷⁷.

Economic Empowerment

The Eritrean government's commitment to gender equality is very visible in its labour and land reform proclamations. The Labour Proclamation, effective from November 2001, provides for the legal protection of women in employment and specifies equal opportunity and maternal-protection benefits for women.

Furthermore, the Land Reform Proclamation (1994 and 1997) grants every citizen the right to use land without discrimination on the basis of gender, religion or ethnicity. Consequently, women have gained equal rights and the

opportunity to access land for farming, building houses, and businesses both in rural and urban areas. Women make up 30% of the workforce and are very active in the informal sector.

Eritrean women control about 40% of all small and medium-sized enterprises. Notwithstanding, Eritrean society remains traditional and patriarchal, and men retain privileged access to education, employment and the control of economic resources. According to the Social Institutions & Gender Index, Eritrean women have access on average to only 9% of available loans from commercial banks due to their lack of collateral¹⁷⁸.

At the 69th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held in September 2014, discussions involved the notable progress that was made towards attaining gender equality in Eritrea. Women, who were previously only involved in manufacturing, are now transitioning to highly skilled sectors due to enhanced levels of education and expanded opportunities. More women now own land and use it for farming purposes or to build houses. Their ownership also extends to business, where they retain control over 40% of all small and medium-sized enterprises¹⁷⁹.

Micro-credit schemes for women have uplifted women economically. According to a media brief by the Universal Periodic Review, micro-credit schemes for rural farmers, women cooperative farms, disadvantaged women, disabled citizens and other vulnerable persons have expanded significantly.¹⁸⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Eritrea is one of only two countries in Africa that is currently on track to achieve the MDG of reducing maternal mortality by 80%. Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births has reduced from 998 in 1995 to 486 in 2010. A number of health indicators have improved due to joint efforts to improve health, education, and transportation infrastructure and service delivery.¹⁸¹

Violence Against Women

Violence against women occurs particularly in rural areas. Domestic violence is a crime; however, domestic violence cases are rarely

brought to trial. Women sometimes refrain from openly discussing domestic violence because of societal pressures. Such incidents are more commonly addressed by traditional authorities, within families, or by clergy than through formal legal structures. A lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and unsupportive societal attitudes hinder the authorities' response to domestic violence.¹⁸²

Although the position of women in Eritrea is comparatively well protected by law, in practice it is a matter for concern. FGM and domestic violence are illegal and yet the occurrence is widespread in Eritrea. The practice of FGM reflects the deep-rooted inequality amongst the sexes. An article published by the Guardian early this year states that the prevalence of FGM in Eritrea is 89%¹⁸³. Girls are forced to marry young in order to escape compulsory military service. It is recognised that girls give birth at young ages, disrupting attendance at school, which in turn has a negative impact on economic development.¹⁸⁴

ETHIOPIA

While Ethiopia has made significant strides in reducing gender inequality, engrained social norms that promote discrimination against women are still very much present. Ethiopia ratified CEDAW on 10 September 1981, while the Maputo Protocol was signed in June 2004, but the country has yet to implement a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Education

Traditionally, access to education has been a significant problem in Ethiopia for both genders, though improvements have been made since the 1990s. However, most of the improvements have been geared towards male children. Thus, statistics showed that in 2009, only 41% of girls made it to the final grade of primary education and only 30% were enrolled in secondary education.¹⁸⁷ This is mainly due to social norms favouring male children over girls as well as early marriages for girls, which are still widespread despite it being illegal for anyone under 18 to be married.

However, the African Report on Child Wellbeing 2013¹⁸⁸ shows these figures have improved significantly, with enrolment for girls in primary education increasing to 83%, though figures remain low for secondary education enrolment.

Economic Empowerment

Women's Political Participation

Only one political election in Eritrea has been held since the country gained independence from Ethiopia in 1994.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report for 2014 indicates that 22% of women hold positions in the lower single house.¹⁸⁵

Women, Peace and Security

The NGO Human Rights Watch states that young girls are forced to join the military service often before reaching 18 years. Allegations of sexual assault are commonplace within these settings. "Women are subject to sexual violence from military commanders, including rape. No mechanisms for redress exist."¹⁸⁶

Ethiopia achieved a 10.6 % growth in GDP between 2013 and 2014, making it one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.¹⁸⁹ Though most Ethiopians' livelihoods are derived from agricultural activities, the country's goal is to strengthen the manufacturing sector.

Despite overall economic progress and various programmes meant to help empower women economically, there are still entrenched social norms making it difficult to reduce discrimination against them, especially in rural areas. Thus, women in rural areas have less access to tools and resources, including credit, irrigation, fertilizer and training, which results in female-led households owning less land and operating smaller farms with lower yields than male-headed households.¹⁹⁰

However, measures are being taken to improve the situation. Thus, the Centre for Accelerated Women's Economic Empowerment and the First Lady of Ethiopia, Mrs. Roman Tesfaye Abneh, launched a programme called

“Connecting 1,500 Women and Young Girls to the Export Market” on 17 February 2014. The project will span two years and its goal is to assist women who have handicraft skills to build small businesses by helping with access to credit facilities, training and market connections. The programme will also train women and young girls in these skills if they do not already have them.¹⁹¹

According to the World Economic Forum, Ethiopia's rank in the 2014 Gender Gap Index for Economic Participation and Opportunity has slipped from 2013, with the country ranking 103rd versus 93rd in 2013, but its score has seen some improvement.¹⁹²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Ethiopia has made significant strides in improving reproductive health. It has been named the most successful country in Africa at curbing pregnancy-related deaths by almost two-thirds, according to Save the Children.¹⁹³ Now only one in 67 women die due to pregnancy, whereas the figure was one in 24 in 2000.

Furthermore, government statistics show that skilled assistance at delivery has grown from 6 % to 10% over the past six years, which has been key to reducing maternal deaths.¹⁹⁴

Access to family planning services and contraception has also increased significantly, allowing women to delay pregnancies and space births, which is essential to the health of the women and their babies, especially since many women give birth before they are 18. According to the Family Planning 2020 Progress Report,¹⁹⁵ one out of every three women in Ethiopia uses modern contraceptive methods.

To expedite the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG) and improve maternal health, a three-day conference was held in Addis Ababa in July 2014 by the government of Ethiopia¹⁹⁶. MDG 5 has two targets, namely to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75% by 2015, compared to

1990, and to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

Violence against Women

Ethiopia has a tradition of violence against women, including practices such as forced marriages, early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), polygamy, denial of inheritance of land and wife inheritance. Unfortunately, little has improved in this area as there is still a significant prevalence of early marriages, despite this practice being illegal. Furthermore, 74 % of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced female genital mutilation.



At One, Fatima was subjected to FGM/C in her Village in Afar Region of Ethiopia, which is one the Worlds' Highest Prevalence Rates. Photo - Kate Holt, Unicef

The country has legislation that punishes acts of domestic violence against women, but, as of 2014, no FMG perpetrators have been criminally prosecuted and courts do not feel domestic violence is a good enough reason for divorce. While abduction of women is a criminal offence, it is still a practice used often to procure brides. While rape may be a criminal offence, the Criminal Code doesn't recognise marital rape.

Women's Political Participation

Women hold 27.8% of the seats in the Lower House and only 16.3% of the seats in the Senate.¹⁹⁷ The last Ethiopian parliamentary elections were held in 2010, with the next elections expected in 2015.

KENYA

In Kenya, women constitute half of the population and play an important role in Kenya's economy. However, they continue to experience discrimination.¹⁹⁸ Nonetheless the Government has made

substantial progress in protecting women's rights by passing a new Constitution in 2010, which provides a framework for addressing gender equality.¹⁹⁹

Kenya's commitment to advancing women's rights is also evidenced in the country's ratification of international treaties that promote women's rights. Kenya ratified CEDAW on the 9th March 1984²⁰⁰ and ratify the Maputo Protocol on the 8th October 2010.²⁰¹ However, Kenya has not yet developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Education

In 2014, the Kenyan Government in partnership with the Department for International Development (DFID) launched a programme that aimed to improve girl-child education performance in the country.²⁰² The project will use an integrated approach to overcome the complex barriers to female education in urban slums by school enrolment, retention, attendance and learning outcomes for marginalized girls.²⁰³ The main barriers to girls' right to education are early marriages which disproportionately affect girls, and poverty. In addition, when families have to make a choice on who gets educated if they don't have enough money, the boys are preferred.²⁰⁴

The Kenyan Government also increased free primary education and secondary schools tuition funds allocation in all public schools by 39% and 33% respectively. The funds will facilitate the payments for national exams, improve feeding programmes in schools and stock all science and technological departments in the schools. The government also increased the funds allocated for the purchase of sanitary towels to help girls during emergencies.²⁰⁵

The Kenyan Government in partnership with the Canadian Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Ministry launched the Innovations in Sustainable School Feeding Project. This project aims to improve the health and education of schoolchildren by providing school meals and health and sanitation facilities in 1,700 schools in marginalized drought-prone areas of Kenya.²⁰⁶ The expected intermediate outcomes for this project include:

- a) Improved educational attainment and health status of school children in most disadvantaged rural areas; and
- b) Appropriate and accountable government-owned school meal programmes for drought-prone areas.²⁰⁷

Economic Empowerment

The government established the UWEZO Fund in 2014 to empower women, youths and persons with disabilities. Through the Fund,

the Government is providing interest-free loans as start-up capital for small and micro-enterprises of varying amounts not exceeding Ksh. 500,000 (USD 5,540.17). The Government has allocated Ksh. 500 million (USD 5,540,170) for capacity building of groups to equip them with management skills for these enterprises.²⁰⁸

In May 2013, The US Embassy in Gigiri - Nairobi, launched the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) Kenya Chapter strategic plan. AWEP Kenya is a local chapter of the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program established by the United States Department of State to increase African women's participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) programme. AWEP Kenya's strategic plan provides a roadmap for AWEP's activities in the next three years. AWEP seeks to continue expanding membership, deepening its network of mentors, and helping thousands of women start new enterprises.²⁰⁹

Women's right to land ownership continues to be violated.²¹⁰ Recently, the Kenya Land for Communities and Women Campaign organized a campaign for six days at the Kenyan coast where the highest concentration of land grabbing is recorded.²¹¹ The campaign was supported by rural women from eight different counties, namely, Siaya, Mombasa, Kwale, Taita-Taveta, Kilifi, Lamu, Tana River and Baringo. The campaign aimed to bring to women's attention the intensity and severity of land grabs in the coastal region and increase their capacity and influence on land governance.

The Matrimonial Property Act was recently signed into law in January 2014. It allows both men and women to have equal property and inheritance rights. Previously a woman had to prove her contribution to the couple's wealth before inheriting property.²¹² The law also affords parties within any form of marriage equal rights.²¹³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In Kenya, more than 5,000 women die every year from pregnancy-related complications.²¹⁴ This puts Kenya at risk of not achieving Millennium Development Goal 5 on maternal

health due to its high maternal mortality rate. 15 governors pledged to increase efforts to reduce maternal mortality in the country after reviewing the dire status of maternal health in their counties.²¹⁵

In 2014, a Reproductive Health Care Bill was introduced in Parliament to provide a framework for the protection and advancement of reproductive and health rights for the women and children.²¹⁶ However, the Bill sparked fury from parents and schools because of a controversial section which allows National and County governments to provide access to contraception and family planning services including contraceptive options, counselling, information and education” to adolescents.²¹⁷

AIDS continues to be a leading cause of death and contributes to almost 15% of deaths in children and 20% of all maternal deaths. In order to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the First Lady of Kenya, Margaret launched in January 2014, the 'Beyond Zero Campaign' in Nairobi.²¹⁸ The campaign culminated into a policy document to control HIV and promote maternal, newborn and child health. The policy document outlines five objectives for advancing this national agenda: (i) accelerate HIV programmes, (ii) influence investment in high-impact activities to promote maternal and child health and HIV control, (iii) mobilize men as clients, partners and agents of change, (iv) involve communities to address barriers to accessing HIV, maternal and child health services and (v) provide leadership, accountability and recognition to accelerate the attainment of HIV, maternal and child health targets. The Ministry of Health also announced in 2014 a budget of USD 400 million to prevent the rate of HIV transmissions, reduce maternal and child death, and increase the number of skilled healthcare workers and facilities in the country.

The Government plans to give cash handouts to girls and young women to deter them from engaging in risky sexual activities in a bid to eliminate HIV by 2030.²¹⁹ Schoolgirls, especially from poor backgrounds, and their families will be given cash handouts and scholarships on condition that they stay longer in school and avoid risky sexual behaviour. In addition, young women, especially those involved in commercial sex work, will be linked with micro-finance institutions, where they can get concessionary loans to start income-generating projects.²²⁰

Violence against Women

Reported incidences of gender-based violence are increasing at an alarming rate in Kenya.²²¹ The leading causes of gender-based violence include cultural norms where women are

viewed as the inferior sex. There is a belief that it is socially acceptable for men to discipline their wives by beating them.²²² To deal with domestic violence cases, the government drafted the Protection against Domestic Violence Bill, which was tabled in Parliament in June 2014.²²³ It addresses among other issues, brutality within families, forced wife inheritance and harassment by in-laws.²²⁴ The Bill criminalizes domestic violence by both men and women, including sexual harassment and physical abuse.²²⁵

The Kenyan Parliament passed a law to secure convictions for human trafficking by providing support to victims and encouraging them to give evidence. Women, men and children are trafficked to work as domestic labourers and are also trafficked for sex work. In August 2014, President Uhuru Kenyatta signed into law the 'Victims Protection Act' to improve support to victims of crime, including provision of a place of safety, food, medical treatment, and psychosocial care and police protection. It also establishes a fund to assist victims.²²⁶



Slogan on a Wall in Kibera, a Slum in Nairobi: Kenya has a Law Against Domestic Violence, but Implementation is Difficult. Photo - Reuters/Zohra Bensemra

On March 20, 2014, The Kenyan Parliament passed The Marriage Act, which allows men to have as many wives as they want without consulting their partners. "When you marry an African woman, she must know the second one is on the way, and a third wife... this is Africa," MP Junet Mohammed told the house, according to Nairobi's Capital FM.²²⁷ The law formalises customary law about marrying more than one person.²²⁸ It also consolidates various laws governing religious, and civil marriages and divorces in the country.²²⁹

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is on the rise in several counties of Kenya.²³⁰ The practice is said to have the tacit approval of community members who feel that it should not be stopped. To curb the practice, the Office of the

Director of Public Prosecution established an Anti-FGM unit. The Anti-FGM unit is comprised of 20 prosecutors²³¹ and is responsible for prosecuting and sensitizing communities on legislation that prohibits the practice.²³²

Women's Political Participation

With the adoption of the new Constitution in 2010, the 30% gender representation recruitment policy in all public offices has seen more women joining senior positions in government, with the number of women ministers being 6 out of the 18 (33%) cabinet Ministries. Hon. Amb. Raychelle Awour Oromo and Hon. Amb. Amina Mohammed are two women holding the powerful positions of Cabinet Secretary of Defence and Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs, which is a first for Kenya.

The March 2013 general elections resulted in a total number of women in parliament at 83. The National assembly has 65 women (18.6%)²³³ and the Senate has 18 women (26.5%) according to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).²³⁴ The one-third-

gender requirement rule though not implemented for the parliamentary elections, it was applicable in the case of County Assemblies under Article 177 of the Constitution. Of the 1,450 county wards, only 85 women were elected, meaning an additional 600 women representatives were nominated.

However, just one year after the election, which saw a massive step towards women's representation in leadership positions in Kenya, it has been reported in 2014 that some MPs are planning to amend the 2010 Law in order to reduce the number of women in the Kenyan Parliament and in county assemblies²³⁵. Standing up against those who intend to change the 2010 law to reduce women's seats, the Chairman of the Council of Governors, Isaac Ruto, fully supported the women by stating that MPs did not have powers to reduce women's seats. He also pointed out that: "The council is fully behind the women and those planning to scrap the seats are daydreamers who belong to the past".²³⁶

MALAWI

The government of Malawi is cognisant of the fact that the promotion of women's and girl-child rights will accelerate their social and economic empowerment in addition to advancing gender equality. As a result, substantial efforts have been made by the government of Malawi to implement government programmes that empower women.²³⁷

Malawi's commitment to advancing women's rights is evidenced in the country's ratification of international treaties that promote women's rights. On March 12, 1987, Malawi ratified CEDAW²³⁸ and ratified the Maputo Protocol in May 2005.²³⁹ However, Malawi has not yet developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Education

In Malawi, only half of Malawian girls aged 15-24 are literate.²⁴⁰ Gender parity stands at 1:1 in the lower primary school grades but disparities emerge as early as Grade 4, with girls dropping out before they acquire basic literacy skills and repeating years to a greater extent than boys.²⁴¹

The Malawian government signed an agreement with Norway to support a new United Nations (UN) programme designed to promote access to education for girls in Malawi.²⁴² This programme includes school meals, health services, measures combating gender-based violence, sexuality and human rights education and further professional training for teachers.²⁴³ Norway is providing NOK 112 million (equivalent to 17,248,657 US Dollars) for this programme over the course of three years.²⁴⁴ It is envisaged that through the programme, positive ripple effects in the areas of maternal and child health and women's

rights will be achieved.²⁴⁵ The programme will be implemented initially in selected schools in Dedza, Salima, and Mangochi districts.²⁴⁶

The National Girls' Education Strategy was launched in May, 6th 2014 at the Bingu Conference Centre in Lilongwe²⁴⁷. The strategy aims at advancing girls' education and tackling the barriers that girls face in terms of their participation and access to education in comparison to boys.²⁴⁸ The Ministry of Education will guide stakeholders in Malawi with technical input aimed at increasing school enrolment of girls and creating suitable learning environments for their educational advancement.²⁴⁹

According to the World Bank statistics²⁵⁰, boys always have more opportunities and better access to education than girls. In primary schools, for example, 45% of the boys that enrol complete studies and 30% proceed to

secondary school. For girls the figures are lower recording 31% and 22% respectively. However, male participation in education is also of concern.

Economic Empowerment

The Ministry of Gender supports women's economic empowerment through a community savings and investments cooperative (COMSIP) programme.²⁵¹ With the assistance of extension workers from the Ministry of Gender, the programme has mobilized 99,153 public works participants into 4,457 savings groups across Malawi's 28 District Councils.²⁵² Savings mobilised through COMSIP groups have been invested in lending to members, and in some cases for groups, investments for retailing, bee and pig keeping, and irrigation farming, among others.²⁵³ The COMSIP programme has enabled a total of 1,275 groups with 27,252 beneficiaries—65% of them women—to undergo training in financial literacy and business management. The new skills acquired by the women have helped them to improve their business performance and subsequently leverage more finances.²⁵⁴



Maize in Malawi: Women Account for 70% of Africa Food Production but Often Do not Have Secure Access to Land. Photo: Redux/Hollandse Hoogte/Arie Kievit

The Malawi Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, launched a Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) Fund to provide specialist knowledge and technical assistance support to viable enterprises in Malawi.²⁵⁵ Indigenous owned, rural-based and female owned enterprises, which are compliant to regulations, such as tax compliance, will be given special consideration when evaluating applications.²⁵⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Malawi increased its financial allocations to health, directing 30% of the health budget to the needs of women and children.²⁵⁷ Malawi's commitment is embodied in the Every Newborn Action Plan, which was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in Geneva in

2014.²⁵⁸ By increasing the percentage of budget allocated to the health of women and children, the Malawian government aims to reduce neonatal mortality from 31 per 1000 births to 25 per 1000 live births by 2015, strengthen the health system for maternal, newborn and child health interventions and support innovation for reproductive health.²⁵⁹ The 2014 Malawi Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) survey findings shows that the neonatal mortality rate has declined to 29 deaths per thousand of live births. However, the findings indicated that infant and under five-mortality rates remained high at 53 and 85 per 1000 live births, respectively.²⁶⁰

Research in Malawi has shown that women are more susceptible to HIV infections in comparison to men.²⁶¹ This has been attributed to lack of economic opportunities, low educational levels, social and political discrimination in addition to harmful cultural norms.²⁶² In addition, almost a third of new infections occur in women under the age of 30 because of traditional coming of age ceremonies that introduce young girls to sex.²⁶³ Often young girls are paired with older men who sleep with several girls at special initiation camps.²⁶⁴ To curb the practice, the National AIDS Commission, which is the Malawi government's coordinating arm for HIV activities, has developed educational programmes that involve community leaders, social leaders, and opinion experts to ensure that such harmful practices are eradicated.²⁶⁵

The Malawi Government has developed a Road Map to improve the national HIV prevention strategy.²⁶⁶ The plan includes key milestones such as undertaking an analysis of the existing programmatic and financial gaps on HIV prevention; collecting community perspectives through community dialogues with couples, young women and girls and sex workers; and creating a think tank to reach consensus on the innovative strategic directions to apply on HIV prevention.²⁶⁷

The Government launched the 2014 International Candlelight Memorial, HIV Testing, and Counselling Week (HTC).²⁶⁸ The primary focus for the HTC Week Campaign is on couples and young people, with a deliberate attempt to enable couples and young people from all over the country, particularly those in hard to reach communities, access HIV and AIDS services.²⁶⁹ During the HTC Week, all communities are encouraged to access HIV testing and counselling services in all the districts in the country.²⁷⁰

The HIV and AIDS Bill will be tabled during the next sitting of the Malawian Parliament to address contentious issues such as the

criminalization of deliberate HIV transmission and mandatory testing for pregnant women.²⁷¹

Violence against Women

The Government prioritizes the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.²⁷² Malawi has a domestic violence law with harsh penalties. However, the law has done little to reduce domestic violence incidents against women.²⁷³ Domestic violence continues to dominate the caseloads of the Malawi Police Service's Victim Support Unit.²⁷⁴ The cases include disfigurement and mutilation. Between January and June 2014, the police handled 6,900 cases of gender-based violence.²⁷⁵ The causes of domestic violence are attributed to cultural practices and lenient court punishments.²⁷⁶ In a report submitted to the Human Rights Committee in 2014, the Government reported that the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act was being reviewed by a Special Law Commission.²⁷⁷

The Malawi Police intends to roll out a new Training Manual to ensure Malawi police conduct themselves in line with human rights standards.²⁷⁸ The new training manual was necessitated by the emergence of rights-related issues such as human trafficking and gender-based violence.²⁷⁹

Women's Political Participation

The tripartite election in May 2014 resulted in the decline of Malawi's gender ratio in parliament.²⁸⁰ 22% of the outgoing Members of Parliament (MPs) were female (42 women out of 193 outgoing MPs).²⁸¹ However, the incoming parliament was only 16% female (32 women out of 193 elected MP).²⁸² In addition, only 3 of the 20 members who make the Malawian cabinet are women.²⁸³ President Peter Mutharika expressed his concern regarding the low participation of women in politics and has tried to compensate for the low representation of women in the cabinet by appointing women to political positions.²⁸⁴

MADAGASCAR

Madagascar ratified CEDAW in March 1989. Although it has signed the Maputo protocol in February 2004, it still has to ratify it. To date, Madagascar has not developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and has no UN peacekeeping mandate²⁸⁵.

Education

According to the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), Madagascar is on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 as well as to achieve universal primary education and to eliminate disparity in primary and secondary education²⁸⁶. In 2011, the primary education enrolment ratio was at 99% for girls against 98% for boys with a near parity index²⁸⁷.

Despite these significant efforts, the impact of the 2009 political crisis led many households across the country to experience a loss in revenues²⁸⁸; this ultimately increased the likelihood of children, particularly girls, not attending school, as they were needed to work in order to supplement family income²⁸⁹. In line with this, UNICEF reported that 78% of school districts in Madagascar showed a lower enrolment for girls²⁹⁰. Nonetheless, the Madagascar Action Plan highlighted the need to guarantee enrolment for all children and to improve the completion rate from 57% in 2006 to 95% in 2012 as well as to reduce the repetition rate from 20% to 10% between the periods 2006 to 2012²⁹¹.

In a country where children make up more than half of the population and where half of the

nation lives on less than \$1 a day, issues such as child labour and child marriage have to be seriously addressed in order to fulfil its commitment towards education²⁹².

Economic Empowerment

Madagascar has seen piecemeal development ever since the implementation of its first free general elections in 1992. The economic situation even worsened with the overthrow of President Marc Ravalomanana in 2009. According to the country's National Institute of Statistics: "poverty levels rose from 68.7% in 2005 to 76.5% in 2010"²⁹³. This led many women and young girls to choose sex work as a financial method to support both their education and/or families²⁹⁴. The United Nations humanitarian news agency IRIN, reported that the number of registered sex workers escalated to 29,000 compared to 17,000 in 1993²⁹⁵.

On a positive note, Malagasy women are gradually gaining more economic power through involvement in new projects such as microfinance²⁹⁶. Yet despite these efforts, women remain highly under-represented in the local economy and are often unaware of opportunities²⁹⁷.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Madagascar is one of the few Sub-Saharan African countries with a low use of contraceptive. Many women are trapped in a cycle of reduced health due to lack of sex education, family planning and birth control. Maternal mortality is very high in the country. In fact, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the maternal mortality ratio in 2010 was 240 deaths for 100,000 live births²⁹⁸.

In a bid to change this, Madagascar launched a Short Message Service to monitor maternal mortality, particularly in rural areas²⁹⁹. The country is now slowly moving towards a positive path in terms of access and use of contraceptives with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)³⁰⁰.

Gender-Based Violence

By law, domestic violence is prohibited in Madagascar; it nonetheless remains a widespread problem across the country. The National Institute for Public Health estimated in 2007 that 55% of women were victims of domestic violence³⁰¹. The reality is that legal institutions lack trained personnel and resources to implement legislation³⁰². A US organisation on the ground described Madagascar's justice sector as plagued by poverty and corruption³⁰³. The situation further deteriorated with the 2009 political turmoil,

which virtually led institutions to stop functioning due to the lack of funding³⁰⁴. As a result, many cases of violence remain unreported.

Women's Political Participation

Madagascar is a signatory member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. This protocol requires 30% of senior positions to be filled by women by 2012; however, the political landscape in the country is pretty much dominated by men.³⁰⁵ Until March 2009, there were only four women in the cabinet, 10 women in the 127-member national assembly, and five women in the 33-member senate³⁰⁶. In 2013, the presidential elections were postponed due to fear of election rigging and disagreements arising between candidates.

Women, Peace and Security

Since the overthrow of President Marc Ravalomanana in 2009 by Andry Rajoelina, the country faced severe upheaval economically and socially and the people within it, particularly women endured chronic violence and insecurity³⁰⁷. The SADC Protocol and national NGOs provided a platform for peace and Malagasy women played a major role in reconciliation processes at all institutional levels including district, province and national levels³⁰⁸.

MAURITIUS

Mauritius ratified CEDAW in 1984. It signed the Maputo Protocol in 2005 but has yet to ratify it. To date, Mauritius has not established a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Education

Mauritius is making remarkable progress in terms of education. Free education has tremendously benefited girls and opened gates to various fields due to a better educational attainments³⁰⁹.

As of March 2014, 103,686 students attended primary education of which 49% were girls³¹⁰. The enrolment ratio was 96% with a near parity index for boys and girls. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the number of students progressing to secondary education in 2013 was at 71% and 73% in 2014 with a proportion of 52% of girls respectively against 48% of boys³¹¹.

In terms of performance, female students significantly surpass boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, with a pass rate of 85.8% for girls against 76.1% for boys in

2013³¹², indicating how much Mauritius is reducing gender disparities.

Economic Empowerment

Economically speaking, Mauritius is ranked as the top African country in doing business according to the World Bank³¹³. With one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa, Mauritius emerged as a regional commercial centre.³¹⁴ Its economic development has largely been established by an active involvement of women, particularly in the manufacturing sector³¹⁵. The number of women registered at the National Women Entrepreneur Council increased by 153% between 2005 to 2013 from 1,900 to 4,815³¹⁶. In addition, the agro-industry sector has proven to be more attractive to women over the years³¹⁷.

Though Mauritius made significant progress in economically empowering women, there are

still some forms of inequality. Nearly 60% of women work in the manufacturing sector, 91% in textile factories³¹⁸. Few women truly hold professional senior management posts or full time paid employment in the private sector³¹⁹. In a bid to address this, the Mauritian government undertook numerous legal reforms among which, the Equal Opportunities Act (2012), aimed at providing better protection against all forms of discrimination³²⁰.

Gender-Based Violence

According to Gender Links (GL), about 24% women in Mauritius experience some forms of gender-based violence at some point in their life, and similarly 23% of men admit committing violence at least once in their lifetime³²¹. The Government of Mauritius takes this concern very seriously and has committed to implement a National Action Plan to halve gender-based violence for 2012-2015³²². This includes the enforcement of laws in a bid to ensure the recognition and protection of rights. Sexual harassment in work places and schools has also been highlighted as a problem that needs to be addressed.

In an effort to eliminate gender-based violence, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, aims to provide direct services that will meet the needs of survivors of GBV, including a 24-hour hotline and improved access to counselling services³²³. The plan also harnesses community education and mobilisation of all sectors of society, including men and boys, to raise awareness and change social norms about GBV³²⁴.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Though Mauritius is not a signatory of the SADC Gender Protocol, the country has made significant progress in improving maternal health and is on track to meeting some of the

Millennium Development Goals by 2015³²⁵. The Government provides free health care facilities as well as special prenatal care to expectant mothers with a high level of skilled personnel. Despite these efforts, there has been a rise in the maternal deaths ratio recently with a number reaching 65 per 100,000 live births in 2009³²⁶.

The Government of Mauritius further aims to promote sexual and reproductive health by providing information and services through the launch of a National Sexual Reproductive Health Strategy and Plan of Action between the periods 2009-2015³²⁷.

According to UNAIDS 2013 estimates, the HIV/AIDS rate was 1.1% for adults aged 15 to 49. The number of women aged 15 and above living with HIV was 2,600 in 2013 against 2,800 in 2012³²⁸.

Women's Political Participation

Mauritius is one of the few countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region with the least number of women in decision-making and, along with Botswana are the two member states to yet ratify the Protocol on Gender and Development³²⁹. In the 2010 general elections, 10 women (14%) were elected in the 70-seat House of Assembly and only three women serve as cabinet ministers, jointly representing just 12%³³⁰. In a bid to move towards gender parity in decision-making, a new gender law quota has been introduced requiring at least one-third of women to be candidates in local elections³³¹.

Women's participation in local elections improved significantly following this amendment. In the 2012 Municipal Council Elections, women accounted for 37% of elected members compared to 12.7% in 2005³³².

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique ratified CEDAW in April 21, 1997³³³ and ratified the Maputo Protocol in December 9, 2014.³³⁴ However, Mozambique has not yet developed a National Action Plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In 2014, the World Economic Forum ranked Mozambique as one of the best countries in Africa for promoting gender equality in its Global Gender Gap report.³³⁵ The report takes four areas into account - economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Mozambique was ranked 19 in economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment. However, it was ranked 129 in education attainment and 104 in health and survival.

Education

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 94% of girls in Mozambique enrol into primary schools but more than half drop out by the fifth grade.³³⁶ 11% continue on to study at the secondary level and 1% enrolls in college.³³⁷ The challenges that girls face in accessing education include: parents' perception that educating girls is not important³³⁸, early marriage, and pregnancy.³³⁹ Only 40% of Mozambique women are literate.³⁴⁰

The Mozambique Government, in collaboration with its partners, has established adult education programmes that target women.³⁴¹

Economic Empowerment

Women in Mozambique have insecure rights to land. Although Mozambique's constitution protects women against discrimination, the lives of Mozambique women, especially those who live in rural areas, are regulated by customary laws and traditional practices that favour men.³⁴² There are still some formal laws in existence that put women at a disadvantage in inheriting property. Mozambique's inheritance law for instance, gives widows lower priority than the parents of her deceased husband.³⁴³ Mozambique women have the option of enforcing their land rights in formal court system, but only a few women can afford to hire a lawyer to represent them in the formal court system. Though local community tribunals provide a platform for women to advocate for their land rights, they tend to be male-dominated.³⁴⁴

Mozambique does not have a specific policy framework for women's enterprise development. The Ministry of Commerce facilitates economic growth and has established the Institute for the Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises (IPEME) as the implementing arm for small and medium enterprise development programmes. However, these programmes do not have entrepreneurship promotion programmes specifically targeting women. In 2009, women-owned businesses represented 24.4% of registered businesses.³⁴⁵

The female labour force is heavily concentrated in agriculture, with 94% of economically active women working in the farming industry.³⁴⁶

Outside agriculture, women find employment in trade, business services and public administration. There are more men employed in these sectors in comparison to women.³⁴⁷ The survey also indicated that women were more likely to be unemployed than men.³⁴⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Mozambique is one of the ten most HIV affected countries in the world.³⁴⁹ It is estimated that nearly 1.5 million Mozambicans are living with HIV. Around 800,000 are women.³⁵⁰

In 2011, 91% of women aged 15-49 years were attended at least once by a skilled health provider during pregnancy.³⁵¹ Maternal mortality ratio in Mozambique was estimated to be 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013.³⁵² The causes of maternal death are attributed to: abortion, sepsis, embolism, haemorrhage, and hypertension.³⁵³ Births attended by a skilled health worker were estimated to be 54.3% in 2011.³⁵⁴

In July 2014, the Mozambique Parliament approved a ground-breaking legislation to legalize abortion.³⁵⁵ This law only allows abortions to be performed by health professionals in health facilities, upon the submission of a woman's written request.³⁵⁶

Violence against Women

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Commission of the Mozambican Parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, redrafted the Penal Code and removed sections that were discriminatory against women.³⁵⁷ For example, an article on rape was dropped, which allowed sexual offences to be dropped if the rapist married his victim.³⁵⁸ The new Penal Code recognizes marital rape as an offence.³⁵⁹ The Penal Code also makes any assault against a spouse or partner punishable with a prison term of between one and six months.³⁶⁰ Psychological violence against spouses or partner is also recognized as an offence and carries a prison term of between six months and a year.³⁶¹

In 2009, only 10% of cases of domestic violence were reported to police³⁶². In Nampula, Mozambique's most populated province, the Ministry of Interior Centre registered 912 cases

of domestic violence against women in the first six months of 2013 for Women and Children who are victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation.³⁶³ Domestic violence cases tend to be settled privately rather than through the formal judicial system³⁶⁴. This is due to the fact that domestic violence is still treated mainly as a private matter.³⁶⁵ Other reasons for not reporting violence include: the victim can deal with it alone or through the extended family, the violent act is considered as “not serious”

and finally fear of retaliation from the perpetrator.³⁶⁶

Women's Political Participation:

As of 2013, women held 98 out of 250 seats (39.20%) in Parliament.³⁶⁷ 29% of women held ministerial positions, 20% are deputy Ministers and 36% are provincial governors³⁶⁸. In addition, three of the seven Supreme Court justices are women and 54.5% of all judges are women.

RWANDA

Rwanda ratified the Maputo Protocol on June 25, 2004 and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on March 2, 1981. Rwanda launched its National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in May 2010.

In the last 20 years, Rwanda has made important progress in promoting women's rights and gender equality. Rwanda counts the highest number of women parliamentarians in the world (63.8%) and its Presidential Cabinet counts ten women, constituting 35% of its total³⁶⁹. Rwanda has also implemented a national gender-mainstreaming programme. However, in rural Rwanda, works still remains to be done, in terms of access to land and combating violence against women.

Education

Rwanda has the highest enrolment rate for primary school education in Africa with 98% of girls going to primary school. Being close to having achieved universal primary education, Rwanda is on track to meet their Millennium Development Goal. However, attendance drops in secondary school, with only 30% of girls enrolled³⁷⁰. Rwanda nevertheless has more girls than boys enrolled in school.

Economic Empowerment

In 2000, the Government of Rwanda launched Vision 2020: a programme that aims to transform Rwanda into a knowledge-based, middle income economy³⁷¹. Vision 2020 includes a series of measures aimed at promoting women's rights and gender equality.

However, in rural Rwanda, where the majority of the population lives, there is a strong need for more secure land rights for women. Customary law often undermines women's rights to own and inherit land so they are often pressured to relinquish it to their brothers³⁷², despite the fact that recent laws enable women to own and inherit property³⁷³.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Rwanda has decreased its fertility rate to 4.62 children per woman³⁷⁴. That number remains high but is in constant decline. The majority of births is now taking place in health care facilities and are attended by a skilled doctor or midwife.

The maternal mortality ratio has decreased to 320 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013 from 1000 in 2000³⁷⁵. Infant mortality is also dropping regularly, from 44 per 100 live births in 2010 to 37 in 2013³⁷⁶.

An estimated 200,000 people live with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda, half of which are women³⁷⁷. UNAIDS writes that Rwanda has made considerable effort and progress in combatting the AIDS epidemic. HIV prevalence has remained stable since 2005, and is higher among women than among men (3.7% compared to 2.2%)³⁷⁸. Women aged 35-39 are the most vulnerable with an infection rate of 7.9%. The disease however, heavily affects female sex workers, with an estimated 51% infected.

Violence against Women

Violence against women remains prevalent in many parts of the country. 48% of women reported having experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime³⁷⁹. However, most cases go unreported as the majority of cases are handled in a traditional manner, within the family³⁸⁰.

Despite efforts by the government to decrease instances of gender-based violence through its National Strategic Plan, remaining challenges need to be addressed, including: limited knowledge of the law, economic/livelihood dependence on the perpetrator by the victim, insufficiency of human, material and financial resources to address GBV cases³⁸¹. The Strategic Plan also focuses on the importance of including men in the fight against GBV and several non-profit initiatives have emerged to address this challenge.

Women's Political Participation

Rwanda has the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world: women currently hold 63.8% of the seats³⁸². Ten women are members of the Cabinet – representing 35% of all members. Half of

Rwanda's 14 Supreme Court justices are also women³⁸³.

According to Swanee Hunt (former US Ambassador to Austria and founding director of the Women and Public Policy Program), two factors were key in creating an environment that encourages women to pursue their ambitions and gain the necessary skills for public life: President Kagame's personal commitment and broader structural and social changes, which took place as a result of the genocide and the institutional chaos which followed³⁸⁴.

Women, Peace and Security

Rwanda is a source and, to a lesser extent, transit and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking³⁸⁵. According to the CIA, Rwanda does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking³⁸⁶.

Rwanda still hosts several refugee camps, mostly with refugees fleeing the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to UNHCR, almost 75,000 refugees were hosted in four camps in Rwanda in March 2014³⁸⁷.

SEYCHELLES

The Seychelles ratified the Maputo Protocol in March 2006 and CEDAW was ratified in May 1992. Seychelles has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education

The educational system in the Seychelles is well functioning; in fact, the Seychelles is the only country in Africa that has fully achieved education for all with a literacy rate of 94%³⁸⁸. The policy of free and mandatory education has ensured that boys and girls up to age 16 have access to primary and secondary schooling and the participation rate is almost 100%.³⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

Seychellois society is largely matriarchal and men and women generally enjoy equal rights.³⁹⁰ Although absolute poverty does not exist in the Seychelles, data suggests that there are pockets of poverty that are predominantly female. Notably, beneficiaries of Social Security

payments, temporary employment schemes have a majority female participation rate. There is no officially sanctioned discrimination in employment, and women are well represented in business.³⁹¹ Women are privy to employment, access to credit, equal pay for equal work, or to owning or managing a business.³⁹²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognizes the right of couples and individuals to make, freely and responsibly, their decisions regarding children. Health clinics and local health NGOs are free to disseminate information on family planning under the guidance of the Ministry of Health. However, it is forbidden to distribute condoms

at educational institutions. The occurrence of teenage pregnancy is high.³⁹³ There are no restrictions on the right to access contraceptives, but reportedly, few couples use these measures. The government provides free childbirth services, although women traditionally prefer using nurses or midwives during childbirth and for prenatal and postnatal care, unless the mother or child suffer serious health complications. Men and women receive equal access to diagnosis and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.³⁹⁴ The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is among the lowest in Africa.³⁹⁵

Violence Against Women

Women are protected against violence under the 'The Family Violence (Protection of the Victims) Act 2000' as well as the '1996 Amendment to the Penal Code'.³⁹⁶ Perpetrators

of violence are subject to a fine, a conviction and possible jail sentence. Despite this, violence against women is a serious and growing problem in Seychelles, given that most people consider it a private matter, and that "society as a whole is still unwilling to openly acknowledge that this type of violent behaviour is abnormal and criminal", according to a recent study.³⁹⁷

Women's Political Participation

With 43.8% women holding Parliamentary seats, The Seychelles has one of the highest percentages of women in parliament in the world.³⁹⁸ Further, as sign of progress, women enjoy an increasing role in decision-making positions. For instance, women constitute the majority of the national broadcasting company's production and journalistic staff and occupy most senior posts.³⁹⁹

SOMALIA

While Somalia signed CEDAW in 2006, it has not ratified it yet. Somalia has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol and has not adopted a National Action Plan on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Education

Somalia has one of the lowest enrollment rates of students in the world. Only 42% of children attend primary school, and only 36% of those numbers are girls.⁴⁰⁰ The number of girls in secondary school is even lower at 28%.⁴⁰¹ After two decades of conflict and the implementation of a central federal government in 2012, international aid organizations are attempting to increase access to education.⁴⁰² Somalia's Minister of Human Development and Public Services requested UNICEF to assist it with providing access to education to children, and UNICEF is currently working on an education initiative scheduled from 2013-2016.⁴⁰³

Only 15% of teachers are women, and many of them do not have formal education.⁴⁰⁴ Poverty and child labour are forces that keep many children out of schools to work in low wage jobs such as nannies.⁴⁰⁵

Economic Empowerment

The continued violence and unrest in Somalia has forced many women into displaced persons

camp outside Somalia. Some women are working with international organizations such as UN Women to learn a skill and provide for their families.⁴⁰⁶ Women in these programmes often learn agricultural techniques in order to plant crops and sell the produce for profit.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Poor governance and poverty have resulted in poor health and a lack of access to reproductive health for women in Somalia.⁴⁰⁷ Many women require permission from male family members to go to a health centre.⁴⁰⁸ Combined with the long distances that women sometimes have to travel to access health care and the danger of rape and sexual assault while travelling, these factors make access nearly impossible for some women.⁴⁰⁹

Only 3.4% of births in Somalia are attended by medical doctors.⁴¹⁰ The use of modern contraceptive methods among married women of childbearing age in Somalia is very low at 1.2%.⁴¹¹ The maternal mortality rate for women in Somalia is very high at 1,400 deaths for every 100,000 live births.⁴¹²

The most recent figures available are from 2012 and report a 0.5% HIV/AIDS rate among adults in Somalia. Stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS impedes treatment for infected individuals.⁴¹³

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is unfortunately a daily occurrence in Somalia. About 98% of women have experienced female genital mutilation in the country.⁴¹⁴

Incidences of rape and sexual assault are also very high in Somalia. A recent Human Rights Watch report detailed that sexual assaults are being perpetrated not only by civilians, but also by United Nations peacekeepers and African Union soldiers stationed in Somalia.⁴¹⁵

Continued armed conflict between government forces and armed militia groups has contributed to the lack of security for women. Women who report instances of sexual violence have not found justice. For example, one woman and the journalist to whom she told her story of rape were both prosecuted.⁴¹⁶

Women in displaced persons camps are especially vulnerable to sexual assault, yet a response to reported rape is often nonexistent.⁴¹⁷

Women's Political Participation

Only 14% of the members of Parliament are women.⁴¹⁸ Rebel and extremist groups threaten women and oppose their participation in any aspect of politics. The newly appointed cabinet to the president announced in January 2014 is comprised of only 10% women.⁴¹⁹

Women, Peace and Security

Women's voices have traditionally been excluded from discussions surrounding peace and security in Somalia.⁴²⁰ However, nonprofit organizations in the country have stepped up efforts to include women in the discussion, for example, by training women on monitoring and reporting suspicious activities linked to militia groups.⁴²¹

TANZANIA

Tanzania ratified the Maputo Protocol in March 2007 and ratified CEDAW in 2006, but has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR).

Education

The average number of years of education received by Tanzanians is 5.11, and this figure does not account for gender disparities.⁴²² The literacy rate of 15-24 year old males is 76.5% versus 72.8% of females of the same age.⁴²³ Girls in Tanzania are forced out of school for various reasons, often to be married.⁴²⁴ Four in ten girls in Tanzania are married before the age of eighteen.⁴²⁵ Girls who are married or become pregnant are often expelled from school.⁴²⁶

Economic Empowerment

The draft constitution provides that women have an equal right to own land, which has the potential to make a huge impact on women's economic equality in Tanzania.⁴²⁷ Traditional practices discriminate against women who seek to use and own land in Tanzania.⁴²⁸ Currently, about 40% of cases brought to court by women involve a dispute over land rights.⁴²⁹ Women in Tanzania own only 1-2% of the land in the

country⁴³⁰, although they contribute about 50% of agricultural labour.⁴³¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Although it is illegal, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains a problem in Tanzania, with 14.6% of females between the ages of 15-49 having experienced FGM; the number for older women is much higher.⁴³² The FGM procedures are often performed by individuals with no medical training, which increases the risk of infection.⁴³³

The maternal mortality rate in Tanzania is 460 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁴³⁴ Figures from 2010 reveal that 34% of women in Tanzania used contraceptives.⁴³⁵ 44% of women in Tanzania become pregnant or mothers before the age of 19.⁴³⁶

The adult prevalence of HIV is 5.1% in Tanzania.⁴³⁷ Infections in women aged

between 23 and 24 stand at 6.6% as opposed to 2.8% in men in the same age group.⁴³⁸

Violence Against Women

Human Rights Watch released a report in 2014 regarding the violence experienced by child brides in Tanzania.⁴³⁹ The Marriage Act of 1971 sets the age for marriage at 15, and 18 for boys.⁴⁴⁰ The report detailed that girls in these marriages experience domestic violence, rape, and other forms of sexual assault by their husbands. In the event that a dowry is paid, young girls find it harder to leave the marriage because of the inability to pay back the dowry.⁴⁴¹

Proponents of Tanzania's draft constitution hope that it will enforce women's rights against violence. The latest statistics available from the

World Health Organization reveal that 41% of women in Dar es Salaam have experienced sexual or physical violence by a partner.⁴⁴²

Women's Political Participation

In January 2014, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete appointed two women to cabinet positions.⁴⁴³ Tanzania has a quota system in place to ensure women are appointed to government positions.⁴⁴⁴ The draft constitution contains a provision that guarantees 50-50 representations of women in parliamentary elections.⁴⁴⁵

Tanzania has completed a draft constitution that will be voted on in 2015. Of the 201 members of the Constituent Assembly, 100 are women.⁴⁴⁶

UGANDA

On 22 July 1985, Uganda ratified CEDAW.⁴⁴⁷ On 22 July 2010, Uganda ratified the Maputo Protocol.⁴⁴⁸ In 2008, Uganda developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.⁴⁴⁹

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index, Uganda is the least gender-equal society in East Africa.⁴⁵⁰ In 2014, the WEF Global Gender Gap Index ranked Uganda 88 out of 142 countries⁴⁵¹ for its performance in gender equality. Uganda was ranked 97 in economic participation and opportunity, 128 in educational attainment, 107 in health and survival, but 29 in political empowerment.⁴⁵²

Uganda has a legal and policy framework in place to protect women's rights. Notable laws include the Domestic Violence Act 2010 and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (2010).⁴⁵³ Uganda's commitment to protecting women's rights is also evidenced in the country's ratification of international treaties that promote women's rights.

Education

The Ministry of Education and Sports developed a booklet to teach primary school girls how to manage their menstrual periods, in a bid to reduce the number of school dropouts.⁴⁵⁴ The booklet was launched at a conference, "Break the Silence on Menstruation, Keep Girls in School," which was the first of its kind in Uganda organized by the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Civil society actors and other organizations.⁴⁵⁵ The purpose of the conference was to draw attention to the largely neglected challenges that affect girls during their menstrual period, the most outstanding being missing school.⁴⁵⁶

The Minister of Education and Sports launched the National Strategy for Girl's Education (NSGE) 2014-2019 in September 2014.⁴⁵⁷ The NSGE 2014-2019 addresses newly emerging concerns in Uganda's education sector in general and in girls' education in particular.⁴⁵⁸ These concerns include among others; new policies and programmes at the international and national level regarding girls' education, girls' access to education, emphasis on the quality of education, promotion of science education, among others.⁴⁵⁹

The Uganda Parliament passed a motion that requires government to allocate resources for menstrual hygiene management in schools.⁴⁶⁰ The intervention is aimed at reducing the dropout rate of girls from school.⁴⁶¹ Under the motion, government is required to set aside funds for the Ministry of Education and Sports

to support menstrual hygiene programmes like provision of washrooms, painkillers, and emergency pads, among others for the girls in school.⁴⁶²

Economic Empowerment

The Uganda Investment Authority and Officials of the Netherlands Embassy in Kampala entered a partnership to equip Ugandan women entrepreneurs with skills and innovations. The purpose of the partnership is to enable women in Uganda to shape their entrepreneurship in an innovative, socially responsible and sustainable way.⁴⁶³

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development together with the International Labour Organization have intensified entrepreneurship and job creation awareness programme among youth and women through the Management Training and Advisory Centre.⁴⁶⁴ Over 5000 youths and women have been sensitized on mindset change.⁴⁶⁵

Uganda's first women's commercial bank was launched in 2014.⁴⁶⁶ Uganda Women's Finance Trust, previously a micro-deposit taking institution is now a fully-fledged commercial bank after it was granted a license by the Central Bank in November 2013.⁴⁶⁷ The bank is expected to promote financial inclusion, which entails spreading access to financial services to those in the population who are not served by financial institutions.⁴⁶⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund and other relevant stakeholders organised the first National Conference on Family Planning in July 28th 2014.⁴⁶⁹ The conference brought together national, regional and international leaders and stakeholders to devise a strategy that can sustain the momentum in revamping Uganda's family planning programme.⁴⁷⁰

The United States Agency for Development (USAID) commended the leadership in Uganda for achieving and surpassing its commitment to increase the level of annual government funding for family planning supplies from three million to five million dollars.⁴⁷¹ A new report titled Family Planning (FP) 2020 progress report, 2013/2014 revealed that beginning with the 2014/2015 fiscal year, Uganda's government increased its allocation for family planning supplies to USD 6.9 million.⁴⁷²

A report released by the Uganda AIDS Commission revealed that about 570 Ugandan girls and young women get infected with HIV every week.⁴⁷³ The report also revealed that Uganda is second to South Africa where 2,363

people get infected with HIV weekly, compared to 468 for Kenya, 491, for Tanzania, 25 for Rwanda and 2 for Burundi.⁴⁷⁴

President Museveni signed the HIV Prevention and Control Act.⁴⁷⁵ The new law punishes intentional transmission and attempted transmission of HIV with prison sentences of up to five years.⁴⁷⁶ The law permits mandatory testing of pregnant women, their partners, and victims of sexual violence⁴⁷⁷. Under this new law, medical and health practitioners are allowed to disclose or release HIV test results without a patient's consent.⁴⁷⁸



Trainee Midwives Demonstrating The Childbirth Process Using A Birth Simulator In Kampala, Uganda. Photo, UNFPA/Evelyn Kiapi

Violence against Women

The Gender Based Violence (GBV) Advocacy Pack under the theme 'Championing prevention and response to GBV' was launched by the Minister of Health to provide an opportunity for government to engage with stakeholders in addressing GBV.⁴⁷⁹ It was revealed at the launch that Uganda loses 0.3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to GBV.⁴⁸⁰ It was also revealed that GBV is the highest in the Eastern part of the country and this is mainly due to poverty, lack of education and cultural norms that condone wife beating.⁴⁸¹

On April 9, 2014, more than six years after the war in Uganda came to a formal end, the country parliament passes a resolution that acknowledges for the first time the need to provide gender-sensitive reparations to the women and men who suffered at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army during the 20-year insurgency in northern Uganda, including crimes of sexual and gender-based violence.⁴⁸²

Women's Political Participation

Uganda's current Parliament is comprised of 133 female MPs placing Uganda 17th in the world with 34.3% women in Parliament.⁴⁸³ Women Representatives make up around 29% of total MPs in Parliament and 84% of all

female members of Parliament. Women also have a sizable share of Cabinet, with State Minister and Shadow Minister appointments.⁴⁸⁴ Women make up around 32% of Cabinet Minister Positions, 30% of State Minister seats and 30% of Shadow Minister Positions.⁴⁸⁵

Women, Peace and Security

On 9 April 2014, the Ugandan Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a “gender sensitive reparations fund” and the offering of reparations for war-affected women and

men.⁴⁸⁶ The resolution called for the government to provide free and accessible health services for war-affected women and children as well as to ensure the integration and resettlement of children born in captivity and formerly-abducted women in their communities.⁴⁸⁷ After the adoption of the resolution, a committee composed of three members was formed to follow up on the government’s implementation of the resolution and update Parliament.⁴⁸⁸

ZAMBIA

Zambia ratified the Maputo Protocol on 2 May 2006 and ratified CEDAW on 21 June 1985. To date, Zambia has still not adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325(UNSCR 1325). According to the UNDP report for 2013, Zambia has a population of 13 million and a poverty rate of 27.5%.⁴⁸⁹ Zambia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 64% of the population living on less than \$1.25 per day.

Education

Girls experience high rates of exclusion from education because of the extreme poverty, most prevalent in the rural areas of Western, Luapula and Northern provinces. These provinces fare much worse than others in government assessments of income levels, education and health.⁴⁹⁰

The involvement of the government can facilitate addressing these issues. The government of Zambia accepts that there is a problem and is working to resolve it. For example, the Education Minister, Dr John Phiri has suggested positive measures that can be taken. Dr Phiri encourages the use of the Women Educationalists Movement to support work in the interest of the girl child.⁴⁹¹ The Zambian Government has assured FAWEZA (Forum for African Women Educationalists) of their continued support to assist in achievement of learning targets for girls in the country⁴⁹².

There are several barriers to young girls completing their education. According to the non-profit organization, Girls Not Brides, Zambia has one of the highest child marriage rates with 42% of women aged 20-24 years married by the age of 18 – a rate that has not improved since 2002. The rates of child marriage vary from one region to another, and are as high as 60% in the country’s Eastern Region. The drivers of this are mainly lack of education and poverty.⁴⁹³

The Government’s Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme endeavours to empower women as small-scale entrepreneurs through the provision of equipment such as hammer mills, beehives, rice polishers, peanut butter processors and treadle pumps. The Ministry also provides start-up capital in form of grants to women groups that are beneficiaries of this equipment.

Whilst there are some positive outcomes from these initiatives, it is also important to recognise that access to finance continues to be a barrier to the economic empowerment of a significant number of women. Currently in Zambia the majority of women are facing challenges in transiting from small-scale to large-scale entrepreneurship.

The nexus between gender-based violence and economic empowerment is clear and capacity building programmes have been introduced as part of projects to empower women economically. The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) in Zambia illustrates this by providing farming inputs and training in vocational skills as a possible means to end poverty.⁴⁹⁴

The Africa Development Bank (AfDB) is also supportive and has pledged to intensify gender mainstreaming in the Bank’s operations and in its regional economic and sector work. The President of the AfDB, Mr Kaberuka pointed out that in 2013, the AfDB approved the USD125-million Africa Small and Medium Enterprise Programme to support SMEs in

Africa. Through its Private Sector Department (OPSM), Kaberuka stated that the Bank is expanding its investment services, including risk-sharing facilities, credit lines, loans, equity - products that can improve women's access to finance.⁴⁹⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the UNAIDS report for 2013, 960,000 adults aged 15-49 (12.5%) were estimated to have HIV/AIDS. The number of women aged 15 and above and living with HIV is between 470,000 – 530,000. The number of deaths due to AIDS is 27,000⁴⁹⁶.

Research has been carried out suggesting that there is a relationship between gender-based violence and the transmission of HIV, with women and girls being affected disproportionately⁴⁹⁷. The negative effects of unequal power relations have also been documented; currently, only 11% of Zambian women felt they could ask their husband to wear a condom, even if they were aware he was HIV-positive.

Violence Against Women

Gender-based violence continues to be a problem in Zambia with the number of reported cases on the rise.⁴⁹⁸

Data was derived from most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of ever-married women aged between 15 - 49 in six countries including Zambia. Results revealed that the overall prevalence of any form of violence (physical, sexual or emotional) is 53.9% in Zambia. Factors consistently associated with spousal violence are partner's

alcohol use, acceptance of wife beating as justified by men/women and history of respondents' father beating her mother. Zambia is known as the southern African country with the highest levels of violence.⁴⁹⁹

Women's political participation

In Zambia, women represent 14% of the Parliament, 17% of Cabinet Ministers and 13.3% of Deputy Ministers.⁵⁰⁰

The country is lagging behind other countries in sub-Saharan Africa due to poor female representation in legislature. Social attitudes towards women could be an underlying cause for this.⁵⁰¹

Women, peace and security

According to the U.S. State Department's 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report, the most prevalent forms of exploitation in Zambia were internal trafficking of women and children for domestic servitude and forced labour in agriculture, mining, textile work, and construction.⁵⁰²

An article published in March 2013 shows that there is dialogue-taking place on how to increase the participation of women in peace-building conversations⁵⁰³.

The SADC barometer in 2013 positioned Zambia 4th out of 15 in terms of peace-building and conflict resolutions, according to Gender Links.⁵⁰⁴ Overall, citizens scored government's performance at 73% based on their perceptions of progress made so far in meeting targets of the SADC Gender Protocol (SGP).

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe ratified the Maputo Protocol on 15 April 2008 and ratified CEDAW on 13 May 1991. Zimbabwe has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and there are no former or current UN peacekeeping mandates in Zimbabwe.

Education

Zimbabwe's literacy rate is 90%, the highest in Africa.⁵⁰⁵ Whilst the literacy rate is high, there is room for improvement especially with regards to the girl child. Despite the decreasing number of girls out of school, many in Zimbabwe are denied a quality education and a chance to reach their full potential. Evidence shows that even a single year of secondary school for a girl correlates with as much as a 25% increase in her future earnings.⁵⁰⁶

Child marriage in Zimbabwe is an impediment to the successful attainment of an education by girls. Zimbabwe has been judged one of the 41 countries in the world with an unacceptable rate of child marriages where girls enter into marriage below the age of 18.⁵⁰⁷

Economic Empowerment

53% of women are employed in the informal sector. Those in the informal sector are vulnerable and prone to exploitation. They may not benefit from any social security, which is a

human rights violation, as those in the informal sector are also entitled to social protection.⁵⁰⁸

The ILO (International Labour Office) is playing a key role in ensuring that women in Zimbabwe are protected by putting in place interventions that include an emphasis on empowerment of working women through awareness raising and advocacy. The organisation is also aiming at building a knowledge base on women-specific working conditions including maternity protection, work organisation as well as gender-based violence in the workplace.⁵⁰⁹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest rates of HIV/AIDS. According to UNAIDS 2013 the estimate of women aged 15 and above in Zimbabwe living with HIV/AIDS is 720,000⁵¹⁰.

There are hotspots of HIV in the border towns, mining areas and resettlement farms. The prevalence of HIV is higher in urban areas than it is in the rural areas. HIV prevalence in the 15-24 age group women is 1.5 times higher than men.

The percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women who received anti-retrovirals to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission in 2013 was 93%. 66% infected pregnant women were assessed for Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) eligibility through either clinical staging or CD4 testing.⁵¹¹ This illustrates the positive interventions that are in place.

A major milestone has been achieved in Zimbabwe in reducing AIDS. A partnership by the National AIDS Council (NAC), NatPharm and some pharmacies in the private sector has resulted in the drop in prices of anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) that will now be accessed for US\$17 down from an average US\$55 currently prevailing.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is widespread in Zimbabwe and includes rape, forced marriage and torture. A recent study by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in conjunction with Gender Links concluded that at least 68% of women in Zimbabwe have suffered from gender-based violence perpetrated by men.⁵¹²

Emotional violence is not identified in police statistics. The CEO of Genderlinks, Colleen Lowa Morna refers to it as "the silent death that women live with daily and which affects their agency"⁵¹³.

The report by UN Women⁵¹⁴ further points out that of the six countries in Southern Africa that have conducted violence against women baseline studies, Zimbabwe's was the largest with 6,600 respondents. While Zimbabwe has a strong legal framework for addressing violence against women and 50% of respondents had knowledge of the country's Domestic Violence Act, the survey indicated high levels of underreporting.

In order to adequately address the issue of violence against women, engaging men in the process is vital. The UNFPA supports a movement named Padare. Their meetings specifically focus on educating men and involving them in attaining gender equality, challenging violence and harmful sexual practices⁵¹⁵ and the clear link between gender-based violence and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.⁵¹⁶

Women's Political Participation

Gender equality is now enshrined within the Founding Values of the Constitution, with special measures to ensure adequate women's representation in the National House of Assembly. The constitution establishes a Gender Commission to protect and monitor women's rights. Consequently, women representation in parliament increased from 18% to 35% – well above the global average, which stands at 21%. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in 2014, women hold 38% of the seats in Parliament.⁵¹⁷

Women, Peace and Security

The human rights of women are violated in Zimbabwe. Women of Arise Zimbabwe (WOZA) experienced several incidents of arrest and violence at the hands of the security sector. The most recent incident occurred in February 2014 during their annual Valentine's Day peaceful protest when several activists faced abuse by riot police⁵¹⁸.

Human trafficking of women is also commonplace in Zimbabwe. The country is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Women are subjected to forced labour in the agricultural and domestic service in rural areas. They are also subject to being victims of prostitution.⁵¹⁹

NORTH AFRICA SUMMARY

UNESCO estimates that the female literacy rate will increase in Egypt and in 2015 reach 65.6%.⁵²⁰ Despite this positive development, women in Egypt face the same problems as women across the region. Limited education results in not finding jobs after leaving school. One explanation for this could be persisting gender stereotypes, which encourage women to stay close to family and household. This is true also for South Sudan, a country where literacy rates are among the lowest in the world, up to 80% of the population are illiterate; a majority of these are women and girls.^{521,522}

Gender stereotypes defining what women can and cannot do has a strong impact on their possibilities to enter the labour market in all countries across the region. This in turn has a strong effect on women's financial independence – if you cannot get a job you have a significantly lower chance at being economically empowered.⁵²³

HIV/AIDS is generally not widespread in the region, and Tunisia is globally recognised for the work being done in the country to fight the virus. Nevertheless, there are enormous stigma and misconceptions, which hamper the work.⁵²⁴

Tunisia is furthermore a country being praised for its progressive stance towards women's reproductive health and rights. The newly adopted constitution strengthens their rights, particularly the right to abortion.⁵²⁵

Algeria is also seeing developments in women's reproductive health and rights, and this year saw the launch of the first website dedicated to women and children's health care.⁵²⁶



Women Sing The Libyan National Anthem During A UN-Sponsored Event Designed to Encourage Female Candidates to Participate Fully in the Country First Free Elections in Nearly Half a Century. UN Photo

Violence against women in the post-revolutionary region has been taken into consideration when new constitution and legislation been drafted and later adopted. In Algeria, a decree was adopted in February 2014 recognising that women who were raped during the “dark decade”, are to be considered victims of terrorism⁵²⁷, and in August amended a new penal code that seeks to protect women from all forms of violence, and increasing women's safety in public spaces.⁵²⁸

In June 2014, a law was passed in Egypt that criminalised sexual harassment with offenders immediately being condemned following the amendment.^{529,530} Egypt also saw this year its first prosecution of female genital mutilation, which had been banned in 2008.⁵³¹ In addition, this year it became illegal for rapists to marry their victims in Morocco where previously they had been allowed to escape prison for their criminal acts.⁵³² A new constitution adopted in Tunisia brought legal reforms, obliging the state to criminalise violence against women⁵³³ with the Ministry of Sports, Youth and Women currently drafting a new law.⁵³⁴ Tunisia also removed its reservations to CEDAW in 1985.⁵³⁵

In South Sudan, violence against women has been described as an endemic, and in contrast to the other countries in the region it has yet to introduce appropriately harsh legislation.⁵³⁶ The law enforcement in the country is weak, leaving women and girls at high risk of violence. According to Amnesty international, both government and opposition forces are perpetrators of this violence.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, domestic violence is generally considered part of married life, leaving women in appalling situations. Additionally, child marriage is increasing being spurred by the current crisis, where marriage of a child can be seen as a way of protecting both family and child.⁵³⁸ In Western Sahara, women and girls are in an equally disturbing situation where they face risk of violence including abduction, torture and rape, as a means to weaken resistance movements in the country.⁵³⁹

Algeria held presidential elections this year, with one woman running for presidency. Out of the 34 ministers in the country 7 are women.⁵⁴⁰ In May 2014, Egyptians went to the polls to elect a new President for a four year term. The country has been going through political turmoil ever since the removal of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 following the Arab Spring.⁵⁴¹ In the cabinet there was a slight decrease from 16% women to only 12%.⁵⁴² However, in 2014, the first woman was elected to serve as head of a major political party in Egypt. According to Hala Shurkallah, the new leader, this is an important step towards changing Egyptian society.⁵⁴³

Libya held its Parliamentary elections on June 25th 2014; the third set of elections after the so-called Arab Spring; 32 women together with 168 men are drafting the new Libyan Constitution to establish that all citizens are equal before the law without discrimination⁵⁴⁴. Tunisia also held legislative elections during 2014. A majority of those registered to vote were women and 47% of the candidates were women, although only 12% were placed at the head of their list.⁵⁴⁵

Positive changes have occurred in some countries or senior posts. On July 3rd, the National Army of Algeria nominated three more female generals, making a total of four ⁵⁴⁶. In Morocco, the National Council for Human Rights has recommended a memorandum to repeal all laws that could be interpreted as discriminatory to women or that challenges gender equality.⁵⁴⁷

Elsewhere, however, serious offenses continue. This year, many women have been arbitrarily arrested in Egypt, and several cases of violence against women detainees have been reported.⁵⁴⁸ In Libya, some women rights defenders have been assassinated or put in prison. Women are also being excluded from the on-going peace and transition processes that the country is currently holding. In South Sudan peace and security remains a remote goal for this newly recognised nation.⁵⁴⁹ In Sudan, women face difficulties in entering decision-making positions and taking leading roles being continuously excluded from formal peace talks and initiatives for peace.⁵⁵⁰

ALGERIA

Algeria has made policy changes this year regarding women's rights and violence against women. The nomination of women at high leadership levels has also made a mark this year. Algeria has been signatory to the Maputo Protocol since 2003, but has not ratified it. The country ratified CEDAW in 1996 but has not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education

No major or minor statistics were published in 2014 relating to girl or women's education, however it is noteworthy that the Algerian Literacy Association (IQRAA) received the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy 2014 for its "Literacy, Training and Integration of Women" programme.⁵⁵¹

Economic Empowerment

Women represent 19.5% of the total labour force in Algeria. While the numbers⁵⁵² indicate an undeniable rise of the female labour force comparing to the statistics of previous years, Algerian women are still struggling to enter the market labour. In fact, women's employment rate does not reflect women's enrolment in secondary education. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women's economic participation remains "very low".⁵⁵³ Women's participation into the workforce is still held back by a "multitude of factors".⁵⁵⁴ The International Labour Organisation (ILO) identified two significant factors acting as a brake on women's employment activity. First, many women are engaged in unpaid home-based activities such as agriculture, livestock management, textile and clothing production. Secondly, traditions and socio-culture norms keep women in specific gender roles acting as disincentives for women to enter the labour force. The Algerian government has set up a financial measure to protect women at an economic level. The Alimony Fund is dedicated to financially support divorced women who raise their children, when the father cannot or will not do so. This state's allocation accounts for 1 billion DA.⁵⁵⁵

HIV & Reproductive Health

There were no major or minor events reported or statistics published in 2014 that dealt with the topic of HIV/AIDS and reproductive or maternal health in Algeria. Nevertheless, the

first website dedicated to women and children healthcare was created this year.⁵⁵⁶

Violence Against Women

Although violence against women remains significant in Algeria, progresses have been achieved this year in the country. On the 1st of February 2014, Algeria adopted an executive decree recognising women who have been raped during the "dark decade" as victims of terrorism.⁵⁵⁷ A monthly compensation of 16000 Algerian Dinar up to 35000 Algerian Dinar,⁵⁵⁸ can be claimed by an estimated 10,000 women.⁵⁵⁹ This act of recognition toward women has been followed by a significant amendment to the penal code. On August 26th 2014, the Government changed the code to protect women against "certain forms of physical, verbal, sexual and economical violence".⁵⁶⁰ Regarding women issues in public space it stipulates that, "the project deals with violence offending women's dignity in public space/area".⁵⁶¹

A draft bill also introduced new sanctions to protect women in their private space. Thus, the bill sets out prohibitions against spousal violence, which has involved or led to the victim suffering "temporary incapacity, a permanent handicap or an amputation". It will also lead to the punishment of "men who will abandon their women, pregnant or not".⁵⁶²

In addition, any punishments will be increased if the accused is a parent of the victim or if the victim is under age, pregnant or handicapped.⁵⁶³ However, regarding these clauses, officials have stated that where a victim forgives the defendant, legal proceeding would be dropped/discontinued in order to "preserve family life".⁵⁶⁴ Accordingly to the spokesperson for the Observatory of Violence against Women, Cherifa Kheddar, these amendments remain insufficient as "a woman remains subject to social and moral pressures to

withdraw her complaint against her husband".⁵⁶⁵

There is still a long way to go to legally protect women and girls in Algeria. According to Amnesty International, Algeria does not have a proper law that recognises violence against women as a penal infraction: "the Penal Code qualifies a rape as a crime without giving a concrete definition".⁵⁶⁶

Women's Political Participation

2014 was marked by presidential elections with Louisa Hanoun as the only woman running for presidency.⁵⁶⁷ She is the first woman to lead a political party in the Arab world,⁵⁶⁸ and this year marks her third presidential candidacy. Louisa Hanoun received 1.37% of votes (more than 140,000 votes),⁵⁶⁹ which put her in fourth of six candidates. Abdel Aziz Bouteflika was finally elected for a fourth mandate.⁵⁷⁰

Women hold 7 ministries out of 34,⁵⁷¹ indicating progress for women's political representation even though none of them hold an executive minister such as Defence, Interior's Affairs or Finance. Minor ministerial posts were allocated; Nadia Labidin was nominated Minister of Culture, Nouria Benghebrit Minister of Education, Mounia Meslem Minister of National Solidarity, of Family and of the Status of Women, and Aïcha Tagabou Minister-Delegate at the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, charged with

Handicrafts. For the first time a woman leads the Ministry of Handicrafts and Tourism: Nouria Yasmina Zerhouni. Two women kept their Ministries: Dalila Boudjemâa is still Minister of Territory Planning and Environment and Zohra Derdouri, Minister of Post and Information Technology and Communication.



Louisa Hanoune, Head of the Algerian Workers' Party and the Only Woman in Algeria Presidential Race in April 2014

Women, Peace & Security

Although peace and security issues remain male-dominated area in Algeria, National Army now counts more women in decision-making positions. On the 3rd of July 2014, the National Army nominated 3 female generals, making four women generals in total this year, making history in the Arab world.⁵⁷²

EGYPT

Women in Egypt still face many obstacles to gender equality. This year, the numerous attacks against women in public space gave a bigger spotlight to the issue of violence against women. Although Egypt has ratified CEDAW in September 1981⁵⁷³, the country has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol⁵⁷⁴. In addition, Egypt has not adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Education

According to UNESCO, female adult literacy will reach 65.6% in 2015. Despite this significant increase, Egyptian women still have a lower literacy rate than men⁵⁷⁵ and 17.6% finish their schooling at primary level. The probability of having neither education nor employment is higher for women (49.4%) than

men (9.3%). Women with only secondary level education are less likely to find job opportunities (76%) and although unemployment rates decrease as the educational level increases, still only "56.0% for female youth above the intermediate level and 46.9% for female university graduates" enter open employment.⁵⁷⁶

Economic Empowerment

In Egypt, women's participation in the labour force remains low. According to UN Women, "only one out of four women participate in economic activities"⁵⁷⁷. Moreover, unemployment rate is higher for women (25%) than men (9%). The International Monetary Fund predicts that a rise of female labour force participation rate would raise the GDP by 34% in Egypt.⁵⁷⁸ Women tend to be concentrated in specific fields such as agriculture, education, public administration, health and social work, retail trade and manufacture.⁵⁷⁹ Women are struggling in the labour force.

More women are unpaid family workers. Almost 29% of young women workers are work unpaid in the family compared to 14.2% young men. In addition, young women have more difficulty obtaining stability in their jobs: "while 51.7% of young men have transitioned to stable and/or satisfactory employment, only 16.3 per cent of young women have completed their transition".⁵⁸⁰

Violence Against Women

Sexual violence against women remains an epidemic phenomenon in Egypt. This violence has been used as a political tool since the revolution.⁵⁸¹ When Egyptians went to Tahrir Square to celebrate Al-Sisi's presidential election on 8th June, Egyptians witnessed a violent mob attack on women. This went viral on social media creating an international outcry.

According to Human Right Watch, more than 500 women survived mob rape and mob sexual assault between February 2011 and January 2014.⁵⁸² Thousands of sexual harassments have also been reported.

On June 4th 2014, Adly Mansour, the interim president, enacted a new law criminalising sexual harassment in Egypt for the first time.⁵⁸³ The law now defines sexual harassment as "accosting others in a private, public, or frequented place with acts, gestures, or suggestions that are sexual or obscene, verbally, physically or through other non-verbal means or actions, including modern means of communication".⁵⁸⁴

Articles 306 (a) and 306 (b) of the Penal Code⁵⁸⁵ define sentences applying to harassers. The defendant can be charged a minimum of 6 months or 1 year imprisonment, and a fine from 3,000 to 10,000 Egyptian pounds. The law intensifies penalties in specific cases. If the offender hold a position of ascendancy over the victim "through employment, family or education" or if "the crime was committed by two or more people, or at least one of the offenders is armed with a weapon",⁵⁸⁶ he can be charged a fine from 20,000 to 50,000 Egyptian pounds and sentenced to 2 to 5 year imprisonment. On June 9th, twenty-five Egyptian rights groups called for a national strategy to implement the new law.⁵⁸⁷

In June, an Egyptian court sentenced seven men to life imprisonment.⁵⁸⁸ The offenders were condemned for "sexual harassing and attacking women" during public rallies in Tahrir Square during the past months. It is the first heavy condemnation since the law has been adopted.⁵⁸⁹

Despite the newly adopted legislation and the historical sentences pronounced in June, there have been numerous critics of the law. The main shortcomings they have cited lie in vague terms that describe sexual violence in the new amendment⁵⁹⁰ and the lack of "good enforcement mechanisms".⁵⁹¹ The Middle East Institute, for example believes that legislative decree is insufficient to guarantee women's security in public space. Instead, the cultural and social dimensions need to be challenged to fully address the problem of violence against women.

Egypt has launched this year the first prosecution addressing female genital mutilation⁵⁹² after a 13 years old girl died in June 2013. Although the practice was banned in 2008 in Egypt, it is still common in rural areas.

Women's Political Participation

In January 2014, Egyptian voted for a new constitution through a referendum and elected the new president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in May.⁵⁹³ The constitutional referendum has addressed women's issues. Article 53 now includes gender in the definition of discrimination. Article 93 reaffirms Egypt's

compliance with CEDAW. The new constitution also insures "the achievement of equality between men and women in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution". Article 6 also gives women the right "to pass on her citizenship to her children".⁵⁹⁴

According to Salma el-Naqqash, a member of the Nazra Institute for Feminist Studies, the new Constitution "is not just more progressive than the 2012 Constitution, it's more progressive than the 1971 constitution, from the gender perspective"⁵⁹⁵.

Regarding women's political representation, female quotas have been prohibited for the House of Representative. However, the new Constitution allocates a female quota of "one quarter of the seats" in elected local councils.⁵⁹⁶ Although the Egyptian Constitution promises positive steps in the text, it seems to fail in bringing a real parliamentary representation for women. As a result, Egyptian women's organisations campaigned for larger role in parliament. The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) called for a gender quota system allocating one out to three seats to women in legislative electoral system.⁵⁹⁷

Four women have been nominated in the new cabinet in March. Dr Doria Sharaf Eddin has

been appointed Minister of Information, Dr Laila Iskandar is in charge of the Minister for the Environment, Nahed Hassan Ashry, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, and Ghada Waley, the Minister of Social Solidarity.⁵⁹⁸ As a result, women make up 12% of the new cabinet although there were 16% in the former cabinet.⁵⁹⁹

Despite this fall in women's representation, the first woman has been elected to serve as head of a major Egyptian political party: Hala Shukrallah was elected leader of Egypt's Dostour in February 2014. According to her, this election reflects "the changes in the people's psyche since the 25th January revolution".⁶⁰⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Numerous women have been arbitrary arrested during demonstrations. On June 21st, seven female human rights defenders were detained for protesting against the Protest and Public Assembly Law, while calling peacefully for the release of imprisoned human rights defenders in Egypt.⁶⁰¹ Amnesty International has condemned those arrests.⁶⁰² In addition, numerous instances of violence against women detained in prison have been reported in 2014.⁶⁰³

LIBYA

Three years after President Gadhafi was overthrown, Libya is still a country that faces violence and turmoil.⁶⁰⁴

Libya has several reservations to the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that the country acceded in 1989. The country ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004. Libya has a National Action plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education & Economic Empowerment

Libyan women make up the majority of university and college students and graduates. However, after earning a degree, women face difficulties obtaining employment, only 43% women enter the formal workforce after they have acquired an education. Possible explanations for this may be persisting gender stereotypes where women are encouraged and

expected to remain close to the home and family.⁶⁰⁵

Violence Against Women

During 2014, women in Libya have faced several violations of their basic human rights. The examples are numerous; a security guard at a university physically and verbally attacked

one student for not wearing a headscarf, although this is not required under Libyan law.

Furthermore, there are religious authorities that seek to further limit women's rights in the country; for example there have been calls to limit women's freedom of movement by requiring them to be accompanied by a guardian if leaving the country.⁶⁰⁶

Women's Political Participation

Parliamentary elections were held on June 25th, 2014; the third set of elections after the so-called Arab Spring. The elections were held to replace the General National Congress with a 200-seat Council of Deputies who will be responsible for drafting the new Libyan Constitution. 32 of the 200 seats were reserved for women and there were 149 female candidates.⁶⁰⁷ The Election Day was violent and the Human Rights activist Salwa Bughasighis

was shot dead, although the attack was generally as separate from the elections.⁶⁰⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Women Rights defenders in Libya face difficulties and threats. During 2014, several women rights activists have been assassinated or put in prison. Furthermore, they are excluded from peace and transition processes and in decision-making.⁶⁰⁹ Libya adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2000 but there is little recognition of the Resolution.⁶¹⁰ A Security Council Report on Women, Peace and Security states that along with South Sudan, Libya is mentioning women's involvement in public statements on the state of affairs in the country.⁶¹¹ However, women rights activists states that what is needed are role models throughout all spheres of society, including women police officers and women in decision-making positions.

MOROCCO

Morocco has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. Morocco ratified CEDAW in 1993, however the country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. The UN peacekeeping mandate in Western Sahara and Morocco⁶¹² (called United Nations Missions for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)) remains present in 2014.

This year, studies on Morocco have reported that the country is far from reaching the commitments made under the 2011 Constitution and the 2004 Family Code (the Moudawana). The Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum ranked the Kingdom of Morocco 133 out of 142 countries in 2014.

Education

A gender report produced by the Minister of Finance and Economy in 2014,⁶¹³ indicated some progresses had been made but there is still a long way to go for women empowerment at the educational level. According to this report, the illiteracy rate is still higher among women, 37% of women affected overall. Illiteracy is even more common in rural areas where 55% of women have no access to basic education.

Economic Empowerment

According to the Minister of Finance and Economy in 2014,⁶¹⁴ women's employment rate is lower than men's. Only 24.7% women are

engaged in the labour force compared to 67.2% men. Women are also more affected by unemployment.

The World Bank examined why female labour participation is low compared to the economic development of the region.⁶¹⁵ They found that "marriage, household inactivity rate, secondary education, and gross domestic product per capita" were important factors. According to the World Bank, gender norms and the nature of economic growth explain the situation: "Economic growth has not been labour intensive, has generated few jobs, and has not been in female-friendly sectors, resulting in weak demand for women, especially urban educated women with secondary education.

And when men and women compete for scarce jobs, men may have priority access because of employers' and households' preferences."

In June, the Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane told the Moroccan Parliament that women should stay at home rather than working. Answering a question about the Government's position on women's rights, he said: ⁶¹⁶ "Today, there is a problem with women's role in modern society". Women don't even find time to get married, to be mothers or to educate their children. Why don't we embrace this sacred status that God gave to women?" His declarations have shocked the country and women's rights actors. One week after the Prime Minister's declarations, women gathered outside Morocco's Parliament asking for his resignation. The 2011 Constitution, stating that "men and women have equal civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and freedoms", did not appear to be respected.⁶¹⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNAIDS, Moroccan women are less affected by HIV than men, although HIV is more common for sex workers. 2% of women sex workers live with HIV while less than 0.1% of Moroccan women live with HIV.⁶¹⁸

Violence against women

Morocco addressed violence against women with an important vote in January. The Moroccan Parliament amended a law that allowed rapists to marry their victim.⁶¹⁹ Prior to this amendment, rapists could avoid jail by marrying their victim, with the consent of the family if the girl was under age.⁶²⁰ This vote an important step for Moroccan women's rights, Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, suggested that "Morocco still needs a comprehensive strategy to protect women and girls from violence, with input from women's rights groups who have been excluded from the process so far".⁶²¹

SOUTH SUDAN

The country has signed and ratified the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. The United Nations Mission (UNMISS) started in 2011 and remains present in South Sudan.⁶²⁷ The South Sudanese conflict has worsened women's issues.



Women from Various Regions of Morocco Hold Placards as they Protest Against Violence Towards Women in Rabat. Photo - Youssef Boudlal/Reuters/Corbis

Human Rights Watch continues to inform public opinion and institutions about girl's exploitation in 2014.⁶²² While the number of child domestic workers has declined, young girls are believed to work in private homes for "up to 12 hours a day for as little as US\$11 per month". They found that these girls are often beaten, verbally abused, and sometimes they have neither access to proper education nor to proper food.⁶²³

Women's Political Participation

In March 2014, the National Council For Human Rights recommended in a memorandum to repeal every law that could be discriminatory to women or be unfriendly to gender equality. According to Article 19 of the Constitution, it concerns all "laws, regulations and public policies with a direct or indirect discriminatory effect".

The goal is to promote "equality and parity between men and women in all areas, through legislative, regulatory and public policy".⁶²⁴ A few months later, people demonstrated in the street in Rabat to claim gender parity. They demonstrated about the failure of the authorities to implement the new constitution adopted in 2011.⁶²⁵ In this context, the ADMF (Democratic Association of Moroccan Women) has launched a report studying how gender parity is implemented at institutional and ground levels.⁶²⁶

Education

According to the Sudd Institute report, South Sudan has one of the worse literacy rates in the World. Almost 80% of South Sudanese are illiterate; a majority of these are women.⁶²⁸ According to the report, cultural behaviours are partly responsible. Girls and women can be denied an education because boys' and male's education is perceived as more important. Secondary education is often limited for girls.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is endemic in the world's newest country. Throughout the civil war and the related humanitarian crisis, South Sudanese women have been victims of extreme sexual violence. The United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy on Sexual Violence has declared: "In all my life and experience of nearly 30 years in public service and in the UN and as a government minister, I have never seen what I have seen today".⁶²⁹

Since the beginning of the civil war, the militarised environment and weak law enforcement have put women and girls at risk of violence. According to Amnesty International, government and opposition forces have perpetrated widespread sexual violence against women.⁶³⁰ Women's testimonies are terrifying, reporting that dozens of men sexually abused them with wood sticks if they refused to be raped after the aggressors had killed their male family members.⁶³¹ Furthermore, it has been reported that even The United Nations bases are not safe for women. The Guardian revealed that women were at risk of "harassment and sexual attack when they leave their tents".⁶³² BBC News reported that women have been beaten and raped next to the United Nations bases.⁶³³

According to the International Rescue Committee, the majority of South Sudanese women suffer from domestic violence, stating that violence against women "is widely accepted as being a normal part of married life". Moreover, the current crisis has

exacerbated child marriage. An explanatory point is that for many families, early marriage is a means to protect their daughters and get resources.⁶³⁴

Women's Political Participation

South Sudanese women hold 93 seats out of 382 parliament's seats⁶³⁵. They represent 26.5% of the Lower House and 10% of the Upper House.⁶³⁶

Economic Empowerment

According to the Sudd Institution Report, labour participation is gender divided. Women are expected to carry out household tasks while men are in charge of politics, fighting wars and business.⁶³⁷

Women, Peace and Security

Less than three years ago, the world was celebrating the birth of South Sudan. Since then, the face of the new country has changed. Over the past months, horrific crimes against civilians and women have been a day-to-day reality.⁶³⁸ Almost 2 million people have been displaced within the country or live as refugees abroad.⁶³⁹

In reaction to the civil war, women of South Sudan stood up. On one hand, women looked toward institutional methods in order to be enrolled in the peace process. They called on the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development to engage women "in the political mediation and negotiation".⁶⁴⁰ Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women during her visit in February 2014, stated that South Sudanese women are key partners in peace building in the country: "Peace and stability will not be achieved without the full participation of women at every stage of the process".⁶⁴¹ On the other hand, woman peace activists suggested a non-standard peace-making method: a sex strike to cease the fighting. According to the activists, the idea was to "mobilize all women in South Sudan to deny their husbands conjugal rights until they ensure that peace returns".⁶⁴²

SUDAN

Sudan signed the Maputo Protocol on June 30th, 2008 but has yet to ratify it. Sudan has neither signed nor ratified the CEDAW, nor has Sudan adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Education

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has together with Women's Education Partnership, supported over 300 women students who in 2014 graduated from universities across Sudan and South Sudan. The graduates reported having faced struggles, but that the greatest struggle was to find employment.⁶⁴³

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence is widespread in Sudan. During the International Day for Eliminating Violence against Women, protestors brought attention to this reality to the public outside the UN building in New York. Violence against women in all its forms is constantly present in

Sudan. In October, reportedly 200 women were mass raped. In the Darfur region, which faced genocide 12 years ago, many women are still reportedly raped every day.⁶⁴⁴

Women's Political Participation

As of 2013, Sudan has 13% female parliamentarians, the most in the country's history. The United Nations along with women's rights activists are emphasising the importance of women's role in peace and reconciliation as well as in decision-making positions. Women face significant obstructions from men who do not want to see women take leading roles. Sudanese women are continuously excluded from formal peace talks and initiatives for peace.⁶⁴⁵

TUNISIA

Tunisia has ratified The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the 20th September 1985. Tunisia, however, has not yet ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) and has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Tunisia was one of the countries in North Africa that experienced great turmoil in 2011, which brought with it political changes and a new constitution. This new constitution claims to grant gender equality, however it has yet to be implemented within the legislation. Before this, it is not possible to know how the new constitution will translate into stronger adherence to women's rights.⁶⁴⁶ Following the new constitution, a Constitutional Court has been installed and has a position to wield influence in the lives of women and girls in Tunisia. The inclusion of female judges is highlighted as offering new perspectives to their male counterparts.⁶⁴⁷

Economic Empowerment

Tunisian women face difficulties in finding employment, statistics points out that only about 26% of women (74% of men) were active in the labour market. In terms of unemployment among university graduates, 42% of women were unemployed compared to 22% men.⁶⁴⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Tunisia is a country that has one of the most far-reaching and comprehensive approaches to fight against HIV/AIDS in North Africa and the Middle East, and the rate of infection is relatively low. It is estimated that 2,300 persons out of the 10.8 million living in Tunisia were infected in 2012. However, there are strong stigma and widespread discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS, and there are recurring misconceptions about the causes and

the spread of the virus, which in turn hampers work to hinder the spread.⁶⁴⁹

Tunisia is a country that is often being presented as progressive in relation to reproductive health rights for women, primarily since abortion was made legal in the country. However, state-provided abortions are still unavailable in 11 cities in Tunisia, and the National Board for Family and Population (ONFP) has highlighted recent reports of women being denied abortion services. Nevertheless, the newly adopted Constitution strengthens the reproductive rights of women, especially in terms of access to abortion.⁶⁵⁰

Violence Against Women

The new Constitution adopted in 2014 clearly demands for legal reforms with regards to violence against women. The text reads “the State is obliged to act through public authorities by taking measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women.” This is in line with the 2013 adoption of a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.⁶⁵¹

Another positive step is the removal of the reservation to CEDAW that was made in 1985.⁶⁵² The Ministry of Sports, Youth and Women are in a process of drafting a law that will aim at combatting all forms of discrimination and violence against women in all its forms, encompassing social, political and economic violence.⁶⁵³ However, there is still a long way to go before women are safe from violence.

WESTERN SAHARA

Western Sahara signed the Maputo Protocol in June 2006 but has neither ratified nor signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Western Sahara has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325. Nonetheless, it has a United Nations Peacekeeping mandate operating under The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).⁶⁶⁰

Western Sahara has been a disputed territory ever since the withdrawal of Spain in 1976, resulting in fighting between Morocco, which reintegrated the territory after Mauritania, renounced to its claims in the late 1970s.⁶⁶¹

The United Nations has been seeking a peaceful settlement between the parties by deploying MINURSO in 1991, and later appointing James A. Baker III as a Special Envoy, without ever reaching a solution.⁶⁶² As the major occupying force in Western Sahara, Moroccan law uses censorship to ban the media broadcasting or publishing anything likely to challenge their sovereignty over the occupied territory.⁶⁶³

A report from the Office National de la Famille et de la Population (ONFP) found that violence against women from family members is very high – physical violence (43%), economic violence (22.1%) and psychological violence (16.7%). Furthermore, it was found that almost 50% of all Tunisian women have been subjected to some form of violence.⁶⁵⁴

Women's Political Participation

Tunisia adopted a new constitution that emphasises gender equality; Article 20 reads, “all male and female citizens have the same rights and duties. They are equal before the law without discrimination.”⁶⁵⁵ The Constitution is the first to give all citizens, both men and women, the right to present themselves as presidential candidates. Furthermore, the Constitution refers to the 1959 Personal Status Code that establishes women and girls’ right, among others, to divorce. However, rights groups have raised concerns about the Constitution,⁶⁵⁶ that women’s representation is limited; women can become elected representatives in assemblies but not government.⁶⁵⁷

On October 26th, 2014, Tunisia held Legislative election, the second in history. 50.5% of registered voters were women, and 47% of the candidates running for the elections were women. However, only 12% were placed at the head of the candidate lists.⁶⁵⁸ The Nida Touness party (Tunisia Call) were the winners of the elections taking about 80 of the 217 seats in the National Assembly, followed by the Islamist party Nahda (Renaissance).⁶⁵⁹

Violence Against Women

The on-going conflict and displacement of the Saharawi people, with an estimate of 125,000 to 165,000 refugees has been a burden for women.⁶⁶⁴ In fact, women have been subject to all sorts of repression and violence including abduction, torture and rape used to break up resistance movements.⁶⁶⁵

Today, thousands of Saharawi people, of whom 80% are women, continue to live in refugees camps in Algeria and Morocco under poor conditions and almost totally reliant on international aid. They nonetheless play an important role in the administration and smooth running of the camps.⁶⁶⁶

SOUTHERN AFRICA

From the data available, none of the countries in Southern Africa have adopted a National Action Plan (NAP), to implement the provisions included in UNSCR 1325. All countries within Southern Africa have signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, not every country has signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol, which would provide greater protection of women's rights within each country. Swaziland and Lesotho are the only countries to have ratified the Protocol, demonstrating a commitment by these countries to promoting women's rights.

Educational achievements vary throughout the countries, however Botswana is on target to achieve gender equality in education before the Millennium Development Goals deadline in 2015 and Lesotho has one of the highest rates of literacy in the continent⁶⁶⁷. However, one of the greatest challenges the countries face is teenage pregnancies affecting school attendance and completion rates, as is seen in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, where the "situation...poses a threat to the retention of girls in school, with a high drop-out rate among the 14-17 year age group."⁶⁶⁸ Despite this, some countries, such as Swaziland, continue to have higher enrolment rates for girls than for boys.

Access to reproductive health care and preventing and treating HIV/AIDS remain some of the biggest challenges for Southern Africa, especially in Namibia, which has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world. Although HIV prevalence remains high throughout many countries, some have made significant progress in tackling the issue, such as Botswana which enacted two key documents focused on HIV: National Strategic Framework II (NSFII) 2010-2016 and the National Operational Plan (NOP). In addition, accessing reproductive health care remains a challenge for



Women Human Rights Defenders March at the AWID Forum in Cape Town, South Africa. Photo - Channel Foundation

women in some Southern African countries, such as Botswana where abortion is still illegal. In contrast, Lesotho has a National Reproductive Health Policy, which is specifically aimed at promoting equal access to safe and affordable methods of family planning. Maternal mortality rates remain high, especially in South Africa, where there were "1,560 recorded maternal deaths in 2011 and 1,426 in 2012. More than a third of these deaths were linked to HIV. Experts suggest that 60% of all the deaths were avoidable."⁶⁶⁹

Whilst political participation of women has improved in some countries, other Southern African States have seen a reversal in women's political rights; for example, the number of women holding Parliamentary seats in Swaziland dropped from 22% in 2008, to 6% in 2013. Local government representation also fell from 19% to 14%. Similarly, in South Africa only 2 out of 10 Parliamentary seats are held currently by women, representing a 14% decline from 2004, and at a local level representation fell from 35% in 2009 to 20% this year.⁶⁷⁰ In contrast, Namibia is making significant progress in

achieving greater gender equality in politics, most notably by introducing a “zebra-style 50/50 gender representation on all their party structures and parliamentary candidate lists.”⁶⁷¹

A general lack of National Action Plans has made protecting the peace and security of women problematic throughout the region. However, Namibia is a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which reinforces its commitment to “gender equality and addressing gaps in areas such as peace building and conflict resolution.”⁶⁷²

Domestic violence, sexual violence, and violence against women are prevalent throughout Southern Africa, despite many countries having legislation aimed at tackling this issue. Botswana, for example, enacted the Domestic Violence Act in 2008 and Namibia enacted the Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000) and Combating of Domestic Violence Act (No. 4 of 2003). Although many offences, including rape, are illegal in most countries, many women are often too afraid to report the crimes, as is the case in Swaziland where traditional law still dominates. Despite legislation existing that criminalises gender-based violence, the enforcement and application of the law is often weak and inconsistent, meaning its effectiveness is severely diminished throughout Southern African countries.

Southern Africa women continue to face barriers in economic empowerment and economic equality, with women earning less than men, and women often occupying lower level positions in organisations, as highlighted in Botswana.⁶⁷³ Women often work mainly in the ‘informal sector’ meaning they are not protected by any legislation aimed at promoting equality in the workplace. However, some countries have enacted legislation, which has improved women’s economic rights, such as Namibia, which created the Communal Land Reform Act (Act No. 5 of 2002), which ensures the equitable allocation of land. In addition, The Married Persons Equality Act (No. 1 of 1996) was also passed to provide married women with equal access to bank loans and equal power to administer joint property.⁶⁷⁴

Despite legislation and programmes being in place to promote women’s rights, cultural and traditional practices still negatively influence the economic empowerment of women, preventing equality from being attained.

BOTSWANA

There has been significant progress in Botswana to ensure equal rights and protection of women and girls. Botswana ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 and its Optional Protocol in 2007.⁶⁷⁵ However, Botswana has not yet signed the Maputo Protocol, nor has it adopted the National Action Plans for implementation for UNSCR 1325 (CEDAW).

Education

Botswana has prioritised educational parity at primary and secondary school levels. The implementation of educational reforms and resource allocation has contributed to Botswana's achievements in education and training for women and girls. Botswana's educational strategy is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to achieve universal basic education of 10 years by 2016 and secondly it aims to improve the relevance and quality of basic education.⁶⁷⁶

Furthermore, government has set out to mainstream gender in the education sector in order to:

- Promote equity in educational access and retention
- Enhance the quality of life of students and teachers
- Develop curriculum materials that are gender sensitive
- Promote equal participation of male and female students across subjects and choice of careers
- Promote equal participation of female and male teachers in the teaching of all subjects and teaching pedagogies that empower girls and boys.⁶⁷⁷

Botswana is well placed to achieve gender parity at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels ahead of the MDG 2015 deadline, although statistics for primary and secondary enrolment for 2014 have yet to be reported.

Pregnancy drop out rates continue to offset the achievements made in the education sector thus far, although the statistics for 2014 have not been published. However, teenage pregnancy had declined from 16.5 in the 1990s, to 9.7% in 2013.⁶⁷⁸ Much of this success is due to the Pregnancy Policy that helps to reintegrate girls back into the education

system.⁶⁷⁹ In 2011, 453 learners dropped out of school compared to 730 in 2012.⁶⁸⁰

Secondly, few women are enrolling in courses in science and technology at the tertiary level. Women are underrepresented in these fields that offer a number of occupational opportunities. Lastly, the quality of education between rural and urban areas differs. Botswana's educational reforms are targeted at improving the quality of education in both rural and urban areas.

Violence Against Women

Although Botswana has put significant legislation in place to address gender-based violence (GBV), it remains significantly high. The main piece of legislation that protects survivors of domestic violence is the Domestic Violence Act of 2008.

Current data for 2014 is not yet available, although it has been reported that over two thirds of women in Botswana (67%) have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime, including partner and non-partner violence.⁶⁸¹

According to statistics from the Botswana Police Service, there is an upward trend in violence against women, in particular rape cases, domestic violence, defilement of girls and physical assault.⁶⁸² The prevalence of such cases may be under-reported and underestimated, which may suggest that "levels of gender-based violence (GBV) are far higher than those recorded in official statistics and that women have lost faith in the very systems that should protect them as well as offer redress."⁶⁸³

Gender-based violence restricts women from participating fully in society and the economy.

One of the key drivers of GBV is the economic dependency women have to their perpetrators. Botswana recognises the critical role that income generation can play in eradicating poverty and breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency of women on men."⁶⁸⁴

Botswana has recognized that gender-based violence is also a cause of HIV/AIDS infection in women.⁶⁸⁵ Efforts continue to be made to create the necessary reforms that can protect and respond to the needs of survivors of gender-based violence.

Nine United Nations agencies have launched an ambitious new programme to eliminate gender-based violence in Botswana.⁶⁸⁶ The purpose of the programme is to mobilize political, traditional leaders and establish a youth committee to raise nationwide awareness of the issue. In addition to addressing issues related to enforcing laws that punish gender-based violence perpetrators, the programme will focus on access to services to victims and mechanisms to monitor the progress of services that are being provided.⁶⁸⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Botswana has made significant efforts to address HIV and AIDS in the country. Currently there are an estimated 320,000 people living with HIV in Botswana and an estimated 180,000 women aged 15 and over living with HIV.⁶⁸⁸ At the end of 2013, an estimated 67% of the total HIV infected population were receiving antiretrovirals (ART) according to national eligibility guidelines.⁶⁸⁹ High-risk key populations have been the focus of Botswana's HIV and AIDS strategy, with particular attention on prevention methods that target female sex workers. HIV prevalence among female sex workers is at 61.9%.⁶⁹⁰

Botswana's response to HIV is outlined in two key documents: National Strategic Framework II (NSFII) 2010-2016 and the National Operational Plan (NOP). In 2013, two additional policy documents were drafted; Botswana National Policy on HIV and the Public Health Act, to improve the delivery of HIV care and overall health services in Botswana.⁶⁹¹

Over 95% of HIV positive pregnant women

have access Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes to reduce mother to child HIV transmission.⁶⁹² Abortion is still illegal in Botswana. In October 2013, 530 cases of illegal abortion were reported.⁶⁹³ Backstreet abortions increase women's risk of infection of the reproductive system and in some cases, may result in infertility or death.



A Woman Holding Anti-Retroviral Medicines: Fear of Violence Has Prompted some Women to Hide or Forgo Using Them.

Photo - UNICEF Christine Nesbitt

Current data is not yet available on the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) burden in the general population of Botswana. HPV 16 and 18 are responsible for 70% of cervical cancers⁶⁹⁴ and is a reproductive health issue for women in Botswana. Cervical cancer is the most frequent cancer among women in Botswana and the most prevalent cancer among women between 15 and 44 years of age.⁶⁹⁵ Such a high percentage indicates a need for greater health communication about cervical cancer in the general population of Botswana as an estimated 85% of women in Botswana seek medical assistance only when the cancer is at an advanced stage and cannot be cured.⁶⁹⁶

Economic Empowerment

A series of social safety nets have been implemented to assist the poor in Botswana, namely the Ipelegeng Programme, the Decent Work Programme, and the Poverty Eradication Programme. It is unclear if these programmes have improved the lives of women. Findings from the 2012 evaluation on Botswana's Ipelegeng Programme, state that while the Ipelegeng Programme was relevant to addressing the poor, it was "weak as an Entrepreneurial vehicle."⁶⁹⁷ Furthermore, the

programme should be “redesigned to take on broad gender, age, health status and different group specific issues,”⁶⁹⁸ the extent to which this programme affects the economic empowerment of women is undetermined. The programme is expected to end in 2015.

Evidence on unemployment trends indicates that the national unemployment rate was 19.9% in 2011/12 and 20.1% in 2013/14 respectively.⁶⁹⁹ Female unemployment is at an estimated 20% for 2013/14.⁷⁰⁰ Many women are unemployed, which means that there is a need for more efforts to promote economic independence and sustainable livelihoods.

The Gender Wage Gap Report 2013 suggests that women in Botswana earn less than men. Botswana ranked 85th in the Gender Wage Gap Index 2013, however, more can be done to address inequality between men and women.⁷⁰¹ Women in the civil service tend to occupy lower level positions in organisational structures, and are therefore, at the lower end of pay structures.⁷⁰² Furthermore, women do not have equal access to the means of production in subsistence agriculture even though they constitute a sizeable number of farmers.⁷⁰³ Women make up 60% of the informal sector that is governed by “bye-laws” that do not adequately protect women.⁷⁰⁴

However, a number of micro-credit and financial institutions targeting women entrepreneurs have emerged, spearheaded by the non-government sector and the Government. These programmes have introduced a number of “micro-lending” strategies that women have access to. These include:

- UNDP National Gender Programme
- Financial Assistance Policy
- Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Programme
- Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA)

More research is needed to track the impact of women’s economic opportunities in Botswana. In 2014, senior staff members of the Gender Affairs Department (GAD) of the Government of Botswana visited the Carolina Population

Center (CPC), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC to develop a referral system designed to improve services to gender-based violence survivors.⁷⁰⁵ The referral information system will incorporate (SMS) technology that will reduce the limitations of traditional administrative and data systems.⁷⁰⁶

Women, Peace and Security

In the past few years, there has been more interest in the integration of women into the Botswana Defence Force, especially in combat arms military occupational specialties, such as infantry and artillery personnel, scouts, tankers, cavalry and other combat roles.⁷⁰⁷ In 2013, the US Army Africa personnel enlisted females in the Botswana and Namibia Defence Forces in a Women’s Integration programme. Such programmes are aimed at building capacity and capability within the military and to “incorporate a gender perspective and women, peace and security initiatives in their planning and activities, while promoting, supporting and encouraging African partners to integrate women into their defence forces”.⁷⁰⁸

The integration of women in peace keeping initiatives has been challenging due to stereotypes and cultural norms that might otherwise reject or undermine the presence of women in the military. However, “the diversity and inclusion of females in the Defence Forces maximize and capitalize on different skills, attributes, experiences, and backgrounds that further enhance the Defence Force’s capabilities and contribute to an adaptive, culturally astute Force”.⁷⁰⁹ There are currently, 100 women enlisted in the Botswana Defence Force.⁷¹⁰

Women’s Political Participation

Botswana is committed to ensuring equal representation in political and decision-making positions. There has been an increase in the number of women in key decision-making positions in both the private sector and government parastatals (a company or agency owned or controlled wholly or partly by the government). However, in the build up to the 2014 elections, there were few women pursuing political positions.

To redress this issue, opposition political parties adopted a 30% minimum representation of women within their governance structures.⁷¹¹ The number of key decision positions occupied by women varies between Ministries, however, there are more men occupying these roles compared to women.⁷¹²

Women are active participants in general elections. The number of citizens registered to vote in the 2014 elections has not been published, but more women registered to vote (403,000 women) compared to men (320,000) in the 2009 elections.⁷¹³

Botswana is not a signatory on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol that covers commitments toward achieving gender equality across the region. These commitments also cover the number of women representatives in political parties and at key decision-making positions in government. However, Botswana participated in the 2013 and 2014 Gender Protocol Barometer that has been set up to help track the country's performance against the 28 targets of the SADC Gender Protocol.

As reported in the SADC 2013 Gender Protocol Barometer, "women's representation in cabinet, parliament and local government is low. Only 14% of cabinet ministers; 8% of parliamentarians and 19.4% of the councillors are women."⁷¹⁴ Furthermore, there are no legislated quotas to increase women's representation.

In 2014, the UNDP Global Initiative on Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) was developed, with two key priorities:

- (i) Supporting women's empowerment and expanded participation and leadership in the executive branch of the state; and
- (ii) Contributing to the availability of up-to-date information on gender equality in public administration and of evidence and analysis to facilitate informed policy and decision-making.⁷¹⁵

Botswana is one of 13 countries case studies that will be conducted on the factors that influence women's participation in the public sector by Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA).

LESOTHO

Lesotho ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. Lesotho ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) in October 2004. The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).⁷¹⁶

Lesotho has implemented a range of policies aimed at women and ensuring their participation in the growth and development of the country. However, much work remains to create an environment that promotes women's participation and contribution to Lesotho's economic and social growth.

Gender issues for all national policies are coordinated through the Department of Gender within the Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs (MEGYA).⁷¹⁷ The purpose of this Ministry is to:

- Promote women's economic empowerment;
- Advocate the reform of existing laws that are discriminatory against women; and
- Promulgate new legislation and policies aimed at the protection and promotion of women's rights.⁷¹⁸

Education

Lesotho boasts one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, standing at 95.6% for women and 83.3% for men.⁷¹⁹ Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced in 2000, and in 2010, the Government passed the Education Act of 2010, making primary education compulsory.⁷²⁰

Violence Against Women

Acts of violence are widespread in Lesotho, particularly against women and children, despite the country ratifying the SADC Gender Protocol and other national and international policies (i.e. Sexual Offences Act 2003, etc).

Lesotho's outstanding bill on domestic violence has not been enacted into law. This piece of legislation aims to provide further protection to victims of domestic violence. A number of unlawful acts of sexual violence have gone unreported. In the Beijing 2014 Report, "other studies on the prevalence of GBV reflect underreporting in the police statistics, as many survivors prefer non-legal redress for fear of re-victimisation and violence by the partners or perpetrators."⁷²¹

There is a lack of data and research to substantiate the number of cases that have gone unreported and how responsible agencies are addressing this problem. "According to LMPS [Lesotho Mounted Police Service] Annual Crime Report, sexual offences reported from 2009 to 2014 range from 1500 to 1650 per year. Out of the reported cases, about one-third of the total get taken to court and there is a low conviction rate."⁷²²

Economic dependency is one of the causes for gender-based violence in Lesotho, with women forced to stay in abusive relationships because they are dependent on their spouse's income. In response to this, in 2014, Gender Links embarked on an emerging entrepreneurship project for women survivors of GBV in various countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.⁷²³ The project is aimed at empowering women with entrepreneurship skills so that they become economically independent.⁷²⁴

Lesotho enacted a law in 2011 against human trafficking,⁷²⁵ but has not successfully

prosecuted a trafficking offender and has failed to address systematic weaknesses, including questions of jurisdiction among courts, lack of anti-trafficking training for officials, and official complicity."⁷²⁶

Economic Empowerment

Women in Lesotho find it difficult to gain economic independence in the private and public sectors, both dominated by men. Although there have been some achievements in 2014 worth highlighting.

"At least 56% of Basotho is reported to be living below the poverty line, and the vulnerability assessment report (2014) reported that over 200,000 would be food insecure in 2014. The largest proportion of those affected are women and children."⁷²⁷ The Government of Lesotho is adopting economic reforms aimed at promoting women economic independence such as Vision 2020, National Strategic Development Plan 2012/13-2016/17 and the MDGs that will provide a framework for reducing poverty, especially among more vulnerable and marginalized groups. New programmes and reforms are being introduced in both agriculture and finance sectors to promote women's economic participation, access to markets and economic resources and capacity building.⁷²⁸

According to statistics from Gender Links (2014), women's occupational pattern is spread across subsistence agricultural farming (26.9%) textile manufacturing (22.9% from 9.5% in 1995), government employment (46.2%), and in household activities.⁷²⁹ This suggests that women are still primarily employed in sectors that are traditionally considered more feminine. The Land Act 2010 was enacted to facilitate revision of the land tenure system, and also promote women property rights. However, women account for only 35% of landowners in Lesotho.⁷³⁰

According to statistics from Gender Links (2014), men heavily dominate economic decision-making in the Lesotho public sector at 79% compared to 21% women, suggesting a gender imbalance in economic policy formulation.⁷³¹ The Gender and Development Policy is currently under review with the aim to address women's leadership in economic

decision-making in Government. Similarly, men and foreigners heavily dominate the private sector. However, women are visible in the middle management positions.

It has been difficult for women to access credit, especially in rural areas due to lack of knowledge about the law, capacity to complete credit proposals, and inability to offer collateral. However, the Government has tried to implement legal reforms and micro credit schemes that would directly address these issues. Established micro credit schemes/programmes include:

- Youth entrepreneurship micro-credit scheme
- Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)
- ILO supported Know About your Business (KAB)
- BEDCO Entrepreneurship Training for SMMEs
- Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE)
- Rural Financial Intermediation Programme (RUFIP), and the RUFIP & MFDP Entrepreneurship Training Project
- Support for Financial Inclusion in Lesotho (SUFIL) ⁷³²

Economic empowerment is also linked to leadership positions women can occupy within their communities.

In 2014, the case, *Masupha v The Senior Resident Magistrate for the Subordinate Court of Bera and Others*, was heard. It was an appeal against the decision of the Constitutional Court, which upheld the law denying women the ability to succeed to chieftainship.⁷³³ The decision made denied the daughters of the chief the right to succeed to chieftainship solely based on their gender. This decision goes against the trend of other countries on the Continent that have upheld the rights of women.

Women's Political Participation

There is no new/additional data regarding women's political participation in 2014. Statistics that are available are from previous

years (2012, following the elections is the most recent/reliable data).

From the May 2012 national election women constitute 22% of Cabinet members, dropping from 39% in 2009, and hold 26% of seats in Parliament.⁷³⁴ Despite the figures being relatively low, Lesotho performs well in comparison to others, ranked 33rd in the world for women's political empowerment in the 2012 Global Gender Index and 15th for women in ministerial positions.⁷³⁵ Yet, participation and representation of women in political parties and thus in elections remains a serious challenge in Lesotho, falling well below the SADC quota of at least 50% of women in decision-making positions in both public and private sector.⁷³⁶

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Lesotho's strategy for the prevention of HIV/AIDS is extensive and reflects the Government's commitment to eradicating the disease. Lesotho has put in place reproductive health programmes focusing on safe motherhood, family planning services, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and AIDS and adolescent health. The majority of these programmes are included within the 2009 National Reproductive Health Policy, as Lesotho does not have an official family planning policy. These programmes include:

- Safe Motherhood Programme focuses on the wellbeing of the mother and is aimed at reducing the number of deaths and illnesses associated with pregnancy and childbirth.
- Family Planning Programme is intended to improve the health and welfare of women by enabling them to time their pregnancies by using medically approved methods such as condoms for men and women, injectable contraceptives, pills, female and male sterilization, and intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUCD).
- Prevention of Mother-to-child Transmission of HIV

and AIDS Programme was introduced in Lesotho in 2003.⁷³⁷

The 2009 National Reproductive Health Policy is aimed at promoting equal access to safe and affordable methods of family planning of their choice.

According to UNAIDS Lesotho's HIV and AIDS prevalence rate among adults aged 15 to 59 remains high at 22.9%.⁷³⁸ Women are disproportionately infected and affected by the HIV pandemic. There are currently 190,000 women aged 15 and older living with HIV.⁷³⁹

Peace and Security

Women represent 9.9% of the Peace and Security Sector in Lesotho and 17% of the police services.⁷⁴⁰ There are no legal provisions that support a more balanced representation of women in these areas in the Lesotho Defence Act of 1998 and Police Service Act of 198. Furthermore, there is no data that

substantiates the Government's claims that the country is increasing the number of women employed in the security forces.

Fourteen police women have been trained for peacekeeping though they have not yet been sent on a mission.⁷⁴¹ The Lesotho Defence Force has participated in peace-keeping missions in Darfur, Sudan, with the African Union and the United Nations. However, women's lack of balanced representation "renders them unable to represent women and ensure their involvement in or protection from armed conflict".⁷⁴² Only Lesotho Defence Force men are deployed in all peacekeeping operations and no women in the Defence Force have ever participated in armed conflict. Women have benefited from capacity building and gender training, though there is no women-specific training. There is regular training for both sexes on non-conflict resolution for the army and the police, employing communication strategies to resolve conflict, and on gender-based violence.

NAMIBIA

Namibia became the first Southern African Development Community (SADC) country to ratify the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in October 2009.⁷⁴³ Namibia is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004. Namibia does not have a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are a critical part of Namibia's development agenda. The Government has implemented a range of gender-sensitive laws and policies and has ratified "key international conventions and regional protocols aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and promoting gender equality."⁷⁴⁴ However, these milestones are constrained by poor implementation, capacity and funding.

Education

Few reports have been produced in 2014, however, in 2013, under the Education for All Policy (EFA), education from pre-primary to Grade 7 became free to students. It is envisaged that by 2015, free secondary education will also be realized. The Education for All Policy also addresses issues related to accessing education, which specifies actual distances from home clusters to schools, ensuring that primary and secondary schools are built within a 5km

walking distance.⁷⁴⁵

Females outnumber their male counterparts in enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Despite the high enrolment, there are a number of challenges that still persist. Factors such as inadequate prevention and management of learner pregnancies, economic pressures on young girls from family members and girls' financial dependence on older men still hamper the progress in this area.⁷⁴⁶

Violence Against Women

There is nothing specific to report from 2014, the Namibian government and relevant stakeholders have collaborated under a range of policies and laws aimed at eliminating gender-based violence and redressing issues of inequality. Gender-based violence is one of the Namibian Government's top priorities aimed at protecting victims and punishing perpetrators. The Laws dealing with the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) include: Married Persons Equality Act (No. 1 of 1996); Affirmative Action (Employment Act (No. 29 of 1998); Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000); Combating of Domestic Violence Act (No. 4 of 2003); Maintenance Act (No. 9 of 2003); Criminal Procedure Amendment Act (No. 24 of 2003).⁷⁴⁷ Namibia also ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the additional Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Humans, Especially Women and Children.

In 2014, a series of domestic partner murders gained significant domestic and international attention.⁷⁴⁸ In response, in February 2014, the President of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba, outlined measures the Government would undertake to reduce violence against women and children, including measures to amend constitutional acts to make tighter the requirements for bail, deny parole and give longer prison sentences to perpetrators of GBV.⁷⁴⁹

Economic Empowerment

The economic advancement of women has been enabled by a range of policy frameworks and poverty reduction strategies. Namibia has created an enabling environment and effective policy framework for the implementation of poverty reduction strategies and programmes by the enactment of several laws and policies that support the economic advancement of women. For example, Article 95 of the Namibia Constitution stipulates the Government's promise to actively promote and maintain the welfare of Namibians by adopting and acceding to policies aimed at redressing issues of inequality.⁷⁵⁰ Policies include the:

- National Gender Policy (2010- 2020)

requiring all sectors to implement gender responsive programmes and provide necessary resources to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment.

- National Development Plan (NDP4), geared towards reducing the proportion of severely poor individuals, especially rural women, from 15.8% in 2009/10 to below 10% by 2017. NDP4 has earmarked four strategic economic priorities, which will focus on logistics, tourism, manufacturing and agriculture.
- National Agricultural Policy and National Food and Nutrition Policy (1995), designed to address gender inequality and household food insecurity
- Water Supply Sanitation Policy (2008) provides for the participation of women on the Advisory Council to ensure women's representation and participation in the development of their communities.⁷⁵¹

The Namibian Government has also increased support services to rural women. Laws include:

- The Communal Land Reform Act (Act No. 5 of 2002), ensures the equitable allocation of land.
- The Married Persons Equality Act (No. 1 of 1996) provides women married in community of property equal access to bank loans and equal power to administer joint property and stipulates that immovable property should be registered in both spouses' names.⁷⁵²



Few Women in Africa Work in Regular, Formal Sector Jobs, and Even Those Generally Earn Too Little to Escape Poverty. Photo, Panos/Sven Torfinn

There are no available statistics that evaluate the outcome of these policy interventions. Yet, there are a range of programmes and interventions that are aimed at reducing poverty that have been launched in previous years and continue to contribute to redressing economic inequality in Namibia. Such programmes include, the Green Scheme, food/cash-for-work programmes, micro-grants, the Equipment Aid Fund, small and medium sized enterprise developments, community-based management programmes of natural resources, rural water supply and sanitation programmes, mining, the German Special Initiative, the Rural Poverty Reduction Programme, the San Development Programme, the Constituency Development Fund, and the Decentralized Build Together Programme (DBTP).⁷⁵³ These interventions are aimed at helping Namibia reduce poverty levels ahead of the 2015 target.

Women's Political Participation

Namibia has now signed and ratified a number

of new policies and regional protocols, including the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which calls for 50% women representation in national politics by 2015.⁷⁵⁴ Namibia's development strategy aims to increase the number of women that participate in politics and decision making in the public service. To that end, the Namibian government is identifying an effective way to correct imbalances in the public participation of men and women in parliament.

Namibia has been undergoing an "extensive electoral reform process since 2011, which presented an opportunity for the country to extend its successful local-level legislated quota system (which has achieved 42% local female representation) at the parliamentary level." The country's shift toward gender parity in parliament followed the ruling taken by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) political party who introduced "zebra-style 50/50 gender representation on all their party structures and parliamentary candidates list."⁷⁵⁵ The proportion of seats held by women in parliament was 25% in 2013.⁷⁵⁶ Currently 25 members of parliament out of 72 are women meaning that if the policy is operationalized, as many as 11 male members of parliament risk losing their seats, if 36 seats are filled by women.⁷⁵⁷

There are a number of women in decision-making and leadership roles in civil society.⁷⁵⁸ Women are well represented in decision-making positions in NGOs. Also, gender parity has been achieved with regard to women's representation in foreign missions. However, "very few women are appointed as ambassadors and as minister councillors."⁷⁵⁹

Further, representation of women at management level in the public service has "improved from 25% in 2005 to 38% in 2010, although only three Ministries (Ministry of Veteran Affairs, Ministry of Information Communication Technology and the Ministry of Health and Social Services) have achieved gender equality by recruiting an equal number of women and men to their management cadre."⁷⁶⁰

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Namibia is one of the least densely populated countries in the world. Roughly two-thirds of the population live in rural areas. As a result of this sparsely distributed population, it is difficult and costly to provide health services, especially to those in the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country.⁷⁶¹ However, healthcare remains a top government priority. The Government has increased spending that has yielded improvements in healthcare output and services. Although health expenditure ranks second highest in Africa (6.8% of GDP according to WB 2012), Namibia is not able to provide appropriate health services for all.⁷⁶² Namibia's public health sector "currently consists of one national referral hospital, three intermediate hospitals, 30 district hospitals, 44 health centres, 265 clinics and 6 faith-based health facilities (5 district hospitals and 1 health centre)."⁷⁶³ Namibia hopes to increase access to the health care facilities in all regions.

Namibia has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, and women account for 53% of all reported new HIV cases.⁷⁶⁴ There are 250,000 people living with HIV in Namibia. Of those, 130,000 are women aged 15 and over.⁷⁶⁵ The burden of HIV and AIDS is placed largely on women and girls, "as they have to provide the lion's share of home-based care for those who are ill, as well as support for affected

families."⁷⁶⁶ Furthermore, the "death rate is particularly high among the working-age population despite active and effective antiretroviral services, with the result that, in heavily affected regions, there is a marked preponderance of grandparents and children; most families in this situation are not in a position to ensure their own livelihood."⁷⁶⁷

Women, Peace and Security

The Government of Namibia remains committed to mainstreaming gender equality in all sectors, promoting the participation of women in institutions and decision-making bodies that are involved in peace-keeping and crisis prevention missions.⁷⁶⁸ Namibia also has women representatives in the peace-keeping force and defence force, along with the police force. Namibia is also a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, reinforcing its commitment to "gender equality and addressing gaps in areas such as peace building and conflict resolution."⁷⁶⁹

Namibia is also a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention.⁷⁷⁰

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has made gender equality and the protection of women's reproductive rights key priorities. South Africa ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2002. South Africa is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004. The country has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Education

There have been no specific government reports on education for 2014. The following offers evidence that emerged in other literature. According to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Report 2013, South Africa allocated 20% of the country's budget to education.⁷⁷¹ Budget allocations for 2014 have not been reported yet. The Government introduced "no-fee schools to make it easier for

the poor to send their children to school and make education accessible to all."

Teenage pregnancy in primary and secondary education is a major concern. While teenage pregnancy is most prevalent in poor and rural provinces, the "situation...poses a threat to the retention of girls in school, with a high drop-out rate among the 14-17 year age group."⁷⁷² To address the drop-out rate among pregnant

learners, the country has adopted the Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in 2007, making discrimination on the basis of pregnancy prohibited under the Constitution and the Schools Act.^{773 774}

However, schools can improve the education of adolescents about sexual and reproductive health to minimize “poor school attendance, low academic performance, high repetition rates, and high rates of dropout.”⁷⁷⁵ For example, the 2012 South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey has found worrying HIV prevalence rates among girls and young women. Among the 15 to 19 year old females engaged in both school and university education, the HIV prevalence was estimated to be 8 times that of their male counterparts.⁷⁷⁶

Tertiary education is an important part of Government's development agenda and is addressed specifically in the country's Strategic Plan for Higher Education and Training 2010–2015. By 2012, women made up 58% of all students enrolled in university programmes.⁷⁷⁷ However, poverty remains a challenge for young women who want access to higher education and training in South Africa. To address these issues the Government introduced the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to assist learners with their school funding. NSFAS provides 100% bursary allocations for all students with family joint income of under R122 000.00 per annum.⁷⁷⁸

The South African Government has also “introduced a number of innovative programmes that seek to improve women's vocational choices with special attention given to accelerating their participation in science and technology.”⁷⁷⁹

Economic Empowerment

A number of initiatives and broad comprehensive legislation has been passed in previous years to improve the economic status of South African women. These pieces of legislation include: the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998; Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997; Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, the Preferential

Procurement Policy Framework Act, the Cooperatives Act, among others.

In the South African Beijing Report 2014, women own an estimated 38% of businesses.⁷⁸⁰ However, a number of barriers still persist, largely related to access to capital and the development of skills to grow their businesses. However, South Africa has put in place policies and programmes aimed at helping women access finance and promote economic empowerment. Some of these programmes include:

- Isivande Women's Fund (IWF) is an exclusive fund that aims to accelerate women's economic empowerment by providing more affordable, usable and responsive finance than is currently available;
- The B'avumile Skills Development Programme is a women's empowerment initiative aimed at enhancing talent in the arts and crafts, textiles and clothing sectors among women;
- Technology for Women in Business (TWIB) is an initiative aimed at enhancing the accessibility of Science and Technology in particular in Small, Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMMEs).⁷⁸¹

According to data from Gender Links, women account for only 3.6% of CEO positions, 5.5% chair- person positions; 17.1% of directors in the private sector and 28% of managers.⁷⁸² The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill, which seeks to ensure a 50/50 representation of women in decision-making structures in both the private and public sectors has been approved by cabinet.⁷⁸³ Whether the Bill adequately addresses gender equity in the public and private sector is currently a hotly debated issue.

Other laws such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) in South Africa and the Land Reform Gender Policy aim to better protect women in the labour market. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act is intended to protect employees during and after pregnancy, if they have made contributions to the unemployment fund. Additionally, the Land Reform Gender Policy aims to “create an

enabling environment for women to access, own, control, and use and manage land as well as access credit for productive use of land.”⁷⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

There has been progress in the number of women in decision-making positions in government, the public and private sector. Though the 50/50 quota policy is in place in many political parties, women's representation in parliament dropped from 44% in the 2009 elections to 40% in the 7 May 2014 polls, while that of women in provincial legislatures dropped from 41% to 37%. The proportion of women premiers dropped from 55% in 2009 to 22% in 2014.⁷⁸⁵

In contrast, women judges represent 36% of the judges in the country compared to 13% in 2005 and 30% in 2008.⁷⁸⁶ Gender transformation in the judiciary has been facilitated by the South African Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges, which was launched in 2004. This Association empowers women judicial officers through “continued education, skills development and mentoring programs.”⁷⁸⁷ Further, as of this year (2014), women represent 40% of the magistrates in South Africa.

In the public service, women make up almost 40% of Senior Management Service (3 781 positions filled by women) and more than 50% of employees in the public service.⁷⁸⁸

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Eradicating HIV/AIDS has been a key priority for South Africa for a number of years and there are a number of initiatives that have been implemented in previous years that are aimed at reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country. The National Strategic Plan 2011-2017 is the national response to HIV, STIs and TB. The National Strategic Plan is reviewed each year and adjustments are made as necessary. No review has been published for 2014. The National Strategic Plan is aligned with Government's broader development goals, including the Medium Term Strategic Framework and Programme of Action along with international and regional commitments and targets.

The estimated overall HIV prevalence rate is approximately 10.2% of the total South African population. The total number of people living with HIV is estimated at approximately 5.51 million in 2014.⁷⁸⁹ Approximately one-fifth of South African women in their reproductive ages are HIV positive.⁷⁹⁰ For adults aged 15–49 years, an estimated 16.8% of the population is HIV positive.⁷⁹¹

There are a number of initiatives that have been launched to improve the reproductive health of women, such as the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) launched in 2012 to improve maternal health as a national concern.⁷⁹² Government has also introduced the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine in March 2014 to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer. According to the “Annual Health Statistic 2012, the cervical cancer is the second most prevalent cancer among women, comprising 22.8% of all cancers in this group.”⁷⁹³ Since 1996, South African women have been offered a free Papanicolaou (Pap) smear to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer.

The South African Government provides for the safe termination of pregnancy through the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996 (Act 92 of 1996) and the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Act, 2008 (Act 1 of 2008).⁷⁹⁴ This has reduced the number of deaths and complications due to unsafe abortions.

South Africa has a high rate of maternal mortality. In a report published by Amnesty International, there were “1,560 recorded maternal deaths in 2011 and 1,426 in 2012. More than a third of these deaths were linked to HIV. Experts suggest that 60% of all the deaths were avoidable.”⁷⁹⁵ Many pregnant women and girls are dying due to fears over HIV testing and patient confidentiality, lack of information and transport problems that have kept pregnant women from seeking early antenatal care. The South African public health system offers antenatal care for free. “However, Amnesty International's research found that many women and girls do not attend clinics until the later stages of their pregnancy because they are given to believe that the HIV test is compulsory,” and that their HIV status may be

revealed as they access antenatal care services.⁷⁹⁶

Violence against Women

South Africa is concerned about the high levels of domestic violence against women and has enacted a series of policies/legislation aimed at protecting abused women and children, namely the Domestic Violence Act 1998, the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1997, the Criminal Procedure Second Amendment Act 75 of 1995, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act 38 of 2007.

The South African Government has also introduced a number of interventions to address gender-based violence against vulnerable groups, such as; specialized courts dedicated to sexual offences; Thuthuzela Care Centres to help prevent secondary trauma for

victims of these crimes; specialised police units; resourcing and establishing victim-friendly rooms at police service points; empowering prosecutors, police officers, magistrates and doctors with specialized skills; and keeping dangerous sexual offenders under long-term supervision on release from prison.⁷⁹⁷



*Members of ANC Women's League Outside the North Gauteng High Court.
Photo - Getty Images*

SWAZILAND

Swaziland ratified CEDAW and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004. The country also signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2004, but ratified it in November 2012. It became the 35th member state of the African Union and the 12th member of the Southern African Development Community to ratify the protocol.⁷⁹⁸

Swaziland's 2013 Human Development Index is 0.530, placing it in the low human development category. It ranks 148 out of 187 countries, sliding from its rank of 140 last year. The Gender Inequality Index places Swaziland 115 out of 149 countries.⁷⁹⁹

Education

According to a report given to the Commission for the Status of Women at the beginning of 2014, Swaziland has enacted a Free Primary Education Act, which ensures that all children have access to and be able to complete primary schooling, with statistics revealing a 97% enrolment rate.⁸⁰⁰ However, the report mentions that one of the main causes of high dropout rates among young girls is teenage pregnancy. It was further stated that Girls Empowerment Clubs had been created in various schools to address this problem.

The 2014 Gender Gap Index Report for Swaziland shows that 86% of girls are enrolled in primary education compared to 84% of boys. Secondary education enrolment rates are 38% for girls and 32% for boys.⁸⁰¹

Economic Empowerment

Even though the Constitution states women have the same rights as men, there are still legal structures in place that prevent women from owning property. Furthermore, they cannot take out a bank loan if they are married and are not permitted to conduct affairs unless a male parent or their spouse supports them.

The problem is that old laws are still used to govern and though they should be removed from the statutes, little action has been taken in this direction. A clear example was the suppression of a High Court judgement in 2010 by the Supreme Court, which had given women the immediate right to register property under their own names.⁸⁰²

There are no laws protecting women against domestic violence and since traditional law is still recognized (alongside codified law),

women cannot own property because they are considered to be minors.⁸⁰³

Though many women are responsible for earning money and supporting their families, the only way they can obtain finance is through their husbands. However, initiatives such as the Swaziland Women Economic Empowerment Trust (SWEET), enable women to access micro-financing for income generating activities. SWEET is also helping women invest, thereby creating a saving culture and developing a network for socio-economic opportunities.⁸⁰⁴

A rural project in Swaziland is helping 2,400 rural women earn a living by selling seed kernels from indigenous trees. The United Nations Development Programme has been working with Swaziland Indigenous Products, a company fully owned by women, to ensure the project is sustainable for the long-term. The kernels are used in the production of cosmetic products.⁸⁰⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Swaziland has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world, with a prevalence of 27.4% in the 15 – 49 age range, according to 2013 figures. There are more than 73,000 children orphaned by AIDS, while approximately 4,500 people died from the disease in 2013.⁸⁰⁶ In an attempt to curb the epidemic, Swaziland has implemented a new Extended National Strategic Framework (2014-2018) focusing on high impact interventions and targeting the populations and geographies where most of the infections originate. The programme also aims to reduce HIV costs.⁸⁰⁷

In terms of maternal mortality rates, in 2005 it was estimated at 390 per 100,000 live births, whereas now it is 320. However, it seems that maternal mortality rates have increased from the previous year, even though Swaziland reports that 79% of women between ages 15 and 49 made a minimum of four visits to antenatal clinics during their pregnancy. The government attributes many maternal deaths to delays in decision-making, delay in transport to the closest health facility, and delays delivering the health services required at the facility.⁸⁰⁸

Violence Against Women

There is a high prevalence of violence against women and girls. According to national studies, it seems that emotional and physical abuses have the highest prevalence, while most violence can be classed as domestic. Even though certain types of violence against women, such as rape, are considered criminal offences, traditional law still prevails and, in most cases, women are too afraid to report such a crime.

Swaziland's government has given assurances that legislative framework is being put in place to protect women and children from acts of violence. However, the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill, drafted in 2009, passed by the House of Assembly in October 2011 and then by the House of Senate in June 2013, yet has not been enacted because the King has not given his assent, and there is no indication of how long this may take.

A small victory came in July 2013, when certain aspects of marital power were declared unconstitutional. This is a huge step forward since traditionally, marital power gave the husband all the power, including power to make all decisions regarding the common life of the spouse, power over his wife's property, and power over his wife's person. Marital power, in essence, treats the wife as a minor and the husband as her legal guardian, though it is not in her best interests, but in his. After the ruling of the High Court, women married under civil rites and in community of property have the right to sue and to be sued in their own names.

However, this ruling did not abolish marital power, even though it is unconstitutional. It is likely that there will be no change while the King states that "if a woman is allowed to do things all by herself, that would create disharmony within the family."⁸⁰⁹

Women's Political Participation

After the 2008 elections, women held 22% of parliamentary seats, but in the 2013 elections, this figure dropped to 6%. It appears that Swaziland is unlikely to meet the SADC Gender Protocol target, which is for women to fill 50% of positions in all decision-making areas by 2015. The Senate is comprised of 18 men and 12

women, while 33% of the Cabinet is made up of women⁸¹⁰.

This disparity is mainly due to cultural practices that clearly discriminate against women. Thus, a woman has to ask the permission of her husband to participate in the elections. Furthermore, she generally needs the support of the chief of her constituency, which

is rarely forthcoming. The female electorate also doesn't want to be seen supporting a female candidate who might be challenging the status quo. There is also the issue of poverty, because many votes are sold to the highest bidder and many women candidates cannot afford to buy votes.⁸¹¹

WEST AFRICA SUMMARY

Many of the countries throughout West Africa have not yet adopted a National Action Plan (NAP), which would implement the provisions included in the UNSCR 1325. Cape Verde was in the process of implementing a NAP last year, but faced problems relating to gender equality at both national and local levels. Gambia implemented their NAP in June 2014; however, a copy of the document has not been possible to locate. Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire all have NAP's in action, which assist the protection of women's rights in their countries. Although all West African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, there is a lack of enforcement capabilities, in addition to weak anti-discrimination legislation. Essentially this means that CEDAW has less impact on women's rights than traditional and customary law within West Africa.

Despite progress being made in the area of education, many countries still fall short in this category, such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. These countries are unlikely to reach the goals set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Project, which is due for completion in 2015. Literacy levels still remain very low throughout West Africa, and the disparity between female and male enrolment rates at school remains high. In Benin, for example, approximately 1,000 boys were not enrolled in school, compared to 92,000 girls.⁸¹² However many countries are implementing specific programmes aimed at increasing access to education for all children, and in particular for girls. In Burkina Faso, a National Strategy to Accelerate Girls' Education (SNAEF) was adopted by the Cabinet in 2012⁸¹³ and in Ghana, the MGCubed Project (Making Ghanaian Girls Great) was launched in order to bring more girls back into education, by providing female role models to encourage them.⁸¹⁴



A Woman Displays an Ebola Info Card in Dodo Kortema Village, Kailahun District in Sierra Leone. Photo: UN WOMEN/Emma Vincent

Reproductive health care and HIV/ AIDS remain the biggest challenges for West Africa. The prevalence of HIV/ AIDS varies greatly between countries. Cape Verde and Benin both demonstrate low prevalence rates, with the latter having a continually reducing figure of HIV prevalence amongst women aged 15-49, which has now dropped to 1.1%. This contrasts with Nigeria, which currently has the 2nd highest number of new HIV infections per year in the world, with women most affected as 'gender inequality among women has been identified as a key driver of the HIV epidemic among women.'⁸¹⁵ Maternal mortality rates also remain sub-standard, with Sierra Leone being ranked as having the 5th worst statistics in 2010. In contrast, Benin's statistics continue to fall, and roughly 86% of women received prenatal care during their pregnancy, highlighting the successes that are occurring in West Africa.⁸¹⁶

The political participation of women varies between countries. Many West African states have implemented legislation requiring candidate lists to include increased numbers of women, such as Senegal's Law on Equality of Men and Women in Electoral Lists, which requires a male-female ratio of

50%. Here the impact was immediately evident in the 2012 elections, when 64 women were elected as members of the 150-seat parliament (42.7% seats), up from 33 at the previous election.⁸¹⁷

Statistics have shown that the peace and security of women remains steady in West Africa, although some countries are susceptible to greater problems, such as Benin as a result of human trafficking, or Mauritania as a result of insecurity in Mali and Nigeria. Women remain vulnerable to attacks and threats to their security throughout the West African region, and this situation is worsened by the lack of National Action Plans being in place.

Violence against women remains a grave concern throughout West Africa, where rates of FGM can vary greatly and legislation prohibiting the practice is often not enforced, such as in Gambia and Liberia. However, national and international campaigns against FGM are increasing, with positive results being seen in rural areas where some changes in attitudes can be seen. Child marriage remains problematic, especially in Niger, which has the highest prevalence of the practice in the world, as 1 in 3 girls are married before the age of 15⁸¹⁸. Many countries do not have specific legislation prohibiting domestic violence, spousal rape or sexual harassment, such as Togo and Nigeria. However, Benin, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire have put in place a law that prohibits spousal rape.

Progress in the economic empowerment of women is difficult to assess. Many countries have implemented equality legislation, such as in Benin, Sierra Leone or Togo, however these laws are poorly enforced and regulated. Women continue to face barriers in accessing loans to fund business ventures, and cultural influences can prevent women from inheriting property or owning land, as is the case in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. However, an increasing number of countries are implementing projects that improve access to funds for women, and also aim at changing legislation that prevents women from being economically independent. For example, Gambia is aiming to stop rice being imported by 2016 by investing in women in rural areas and improving their agricultural capabilities.

BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso ratified the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1987 and the Maputo Protocol in 2006.⁸¹⁹ Nevertheless, women in Burkina Faso still face discrimination and various forms of violence, including rape, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and being trafficked for sex work and forced labour.⁸²⁰

On November 1, 2014 President Compaore stepped down a day after civilian protesters took over the parliament in response to the President's attempt to change the constitution in order to extend the term limit on his office.^{821,822}

Education

Burkina Faso continues to make progress in the gender parity of school enrolment, although it has the world's seventh lowest gross enrolment.⁸²³ Net enrolment for girls in primary school only lagged behind net enrolment for boys by four percentage points (62% and 66% respectively).⁸²⁴ The gap does not widen from enrolment to completion and primary completion rate for girls is 56.2%, whereas for boys it is 58.9%.⁸²⁵

The government continues to implement the national strategy to accelerate girls' education (SNAEF), adopted by the Cabinet in 2012.⁸²⁶ There is also a joint programme to promote women's literacy led by the Ministry of Education and Literacy and the Ministry for Women's Empowerment, launched in 2008.⁸²⁷ These programmes include an emphasis on girls' progression from primary to secondary school, implementing Child-friendly School (CFS) models, and community mobilization and advocacy.⁸²⁸

Economic Empowerment

77.5% of women are active in the labour market as opposed to 90% of men.⁸²⁹ Although the law requires that men and women be paid equally, women are often paid less than men. In addition, women tend to hold low-paying and subservient positions.⁸³⁰

Traditional definitions of land tenure that emphasize family ownership tend to prevail over legal statutes for women to own and inherit property. Women are often denied these rights;⁸³¹ for example, after marriage, any property that belongs to the wife is transferred to the husband's family.⁸³²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

HIV prevalence continues to drop, and has stayed below 1% since 2011; in 2013, the HIV prevalence rate was .92%.⁸³³ Still, HIV-positive people are sometimes shunned by their families, and HIV-positive wives are sometimes thrown out of their homes.⁸³⁴ Only 62% of pregnant women that are HIV-positive received

the necessary antiretroviral (ARVs) to prevent mother to child transmission (MTCT).⁸³⁵

Maternal mortality rates dropped to 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013. 65% of births have a skilled attendant present.⁸³⁶ However, only 16% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 used some form of contraception.⁸³⁷

Violence Against Women

Rape, excluding spousal rape, is prohibited by law and prosecuted.⁸³⁸ Due to fear of reprisal and cultural barriers, rape often goes unreported.⁸³⁹ Domestic violence is not specifically prohibited by law and, while domestic abuse happens frequently especially in rural areas, reported cases are usually handled outside of court.⁸⁴⁰ Although there are no state-run shelters for victims of abuse, the Ministry of Women's Protection sometimes counsels and houses abused women.⁸⁴¹ The Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity organized workshops and sensitization campaigns to inform women of their rights.⁸⁴²

Elderly widowed or otherwise unprotected women, usually in rural areas, are sometimes accused of witchcraft by their neighbours and ostracized from their community.⁸⁴³ They usually do not seek legal action fearing retribution against their family and instead take refuge in shelters in urban areas.⁸⁴⁴ The Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity created an action plan to be implemented from 2012 to 2016 that provides financial, legal and psychological support for these accused women.⁸⁴⁵

Child marriage persists, despite the age of consent being 17 years. Approximately, 50% of women are married before they are 18.⁸⁴⁶

FGM is widely practiced, particularly in rural areas, despite being illegal.⁸⁴⁷ 76% of women between the ages of 16 and 49 have experienced FGM. The government has a National Action Plan that aims at eradicating the practice through public education campaigns and by arresting those responsible for performing FGM (punishment includes jail time and fines).

The government also provides support for victims and a free hotline that people can call to report cases of FGM.⁸⁴⁸ FGM prevention efforts have also been integrated into 35% of prenatal, neonatal and immunization clinics.⁸⁴⁹

Women's Political Participation

After the overthrow of President Compaore, an interim government has been appointed until new elections can be held in 2015.⁸⁵⁰ A 26-person cabinet leads the country until the elections, with a former diplomat, Michel Kafando acting as President and Lt. Col. Isaac Yocouba Zida as Prime Minister.⁸⁵¹ According to the transition charter, women and youth representatives were supposed to be considered when forming the cabinet.⁸⁵² The National Assembly participates in the transitional government,⁸⁵³ but only 24 women serve on the 127-person National Assembly despite the enactment of the Gender Law before the last election in 2012.⁸⁵⁴ The Gender Law requires political parties to present ballots with women holding at least 30% of the spots for legislative and municipal elections.⁸⁵⁵

The National Democratic Institute supports a coalition of women's rights organizations that are due to present their second "shadow report"

on the government's efforts in implementing CEDAW by the end of 2014.⁸⁵⁶ The previous report of this kind, published in 2010, provided a necessary second perspective to complement a similar report produced by the Government.⁸⁵⁷

Women, Peace and Security

Women and children are at risk for being trafficked into forced labour or the sex trade.⁸⁵⁸ Women are recruited for seemingly legitimate employment in the Middle East and Europe and then forced into prostitution.⁸⁵⁹ Children are often sent to the cities to study at unregistered Koranic schools, but end up being forced into manual labour or (in the case of girls) prostitution.⁸⁶⁰ The Government has made noticeable progress in prosecuting traffickers - 18 were convicted in 2013 compared to none in 2012 - but it still does not meet minimum standards for addressing trafficking concerns.⁸⁶¹ The Government still does not work to identify possible adult victims of trafficking and has not prosecuted any of the unregistered Koranic schools that recruit children.⁸⁶²

BENIN

Benin introduced gender equality policies into its Constitution in 1990 and ratified the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1992. It ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005.⁸⁶³ However, despite these positive gains in Benin, women still lack equal economic opportunities to men⁸⁶⁴, are less present in schools⁸⁶⁵, and are at risk of being trafficked for sex working or forced labour.⁸⁶⁶ Despite legislation that forbids female genital mutilation (FGM) and restricts underage marriage, these practices continue.⁸⁶⁷

Education

The Government's 10-year education plan, launched in 2006, provides the first three years of secondary school free for girls, in addition to free primary schooling for all.⁸⁶⁸ Still, in 2011 an estimated 92,000 girls were not enrolled in school, compared to 1,000 boys.⁸⁶⁹ Moreover, less than half of female youth in Benin are literate.⁸⁷⁰ In terms of education completion, the most recent statistics (from 2010) show that 26% of women have completed primary school, and 16% have completed secondary.⁸⁷¹

Economic Empowerment

In Benin, women work mainly in agriculture and informal trade.⁸⁷² The agricultural industry is made up of cotton production, the main export and a source of one-third of all

employment in Benin, and food production.⁸⁷³ In urban areas women tend to work in the informal sector, mainly at outdoor markets.⁸⁷⁴ Although discrimination is illegal, women face disproportionate challenges in gaining access to credit and in practicing the right to own or manage a business.⁸⁷⁵ For this reason, women are a key constituency to benefit from the mostly unregulated microfinance sector.⁸⁷⁶ So, women's access to credit may be significantly affected by proposed Government reforms of the microfinance sector, expected to be implemented between 2014 and 2016.⁸⁷⁷ Government regulation may improve the microfinance sector by preventing scams, such as one in which approximately 150,000 depositors lost CFAF 160 billion (US\$320 million).⁸⁷⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

HIV prevalence among people between the ages of 15 and 49 is 1.1% as of 2013.⁸⁷⁹ Annual infections have been dropping since a small peak in 2011.⁸⁸⁰ Also, as the use of antiretrovirals (ARVs) by pregnant women increases, the number of infected children is dropping – with less than 1000 infections in 2013.⁸⁸¹

As of 2013, the maternal mortality rate is down to 340 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁸⁸² In 2012, 86% of pregnant women received prenatal care and 84% of births were attended by a skilled health professional. However, only 13% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 used some form of contraception.⁸⁸³

Violence Against Women

Although there are laws against rape in Benin, including spousal rape, the enforcement and protection of victims are weak.⁸⁸⁴ Social stigma and fear of retaliation make victims hesitant or unwilling to come forward.⁸⁸⁵ Meanwhile, ineffectiveness and corruption among police and other officials create barriers to prosecutions of rape.⁸⁸⁶

Despite being prohibited by law, female genital mutilation (FGM) is still practiced by a minority of the population, mostly in rural areas in the north.⁸⁸⁷ Approximately 13% of the total population of women in Benin have experienced FGM, although among certain ethnic groups the proportion is much higher. 70% of Bariba and Peul women and 53% of Loa-Yokpa women have experienced FGM.⁸⁸⁸ The Ministry of the Family together with NGOs and international partners have led education outreach programmes to educate people about the dangers of FGM.⁸⁸⁹

Child marriage (between the ages of 14 and 17) is permitted with the consent of the minor, the

parents and a judge.⁸⁹⁰ 34.4% of married women between the ages of 20 and 24 had been married before they are 18.⁸⁹¹ In some cases, it is a traditional part of a forced child marriage for the groom to abduct and rape his bride before their wedding.⁸⁹²

Women's Political Participation

Eight of 83 members of the National Assembly are women. There are six female cabinet members, out of a total of 27. Two of seven justices on the Constitutional Court are women.⁸⁹³ In the public sector, women hold only 18.5% of decision-making positions, but hold nearly 60% of lower posts.⁸⁹⁴ A recent study using the Afrobarometer dataset shows that popular support for women leaders in government has dropped from 85% in 2005 to 72% in 2012.⁸⁹⁵

Women, Peace and Security

Benin continues to be a point of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking. A 2014 report identified Beninese girls, forced to be domestic servants and sex workers in Cotonou, as the majority of trafficking victims in the country.⁸⁹⁶ The traditional practice of sending children to live with wealthier families for better educational opportunities is also sometimes used to exploit children for domestic servitude. Children are also forced to work in the agricultural industry (mainly cotton production), in mines and at construction sites, and as vendors or producers of hawked goods on the street or in markets. Cases of child sex tourism – with both boys and girls – have also been reported. Anti-trafficking legislation has been pending review of the Ministry of Justice since 2012. While the Government has taken several steps to prosecute trafficking and the forced labour of children, it still lacks specific protective services for adult victims of trafficking.⁸⁹⁷

CAPE VERDE

Cape Verde is known to be a peaceful and a stable country in Africa, rarely appearing in the news¹. Cape Verde has ratified the Maputo Protocol⁸⁹⁸ and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.⁸⁹⁹ Cape Verde has also ratified CEDAW as early as December 1980⁹⁰⁰ and became a state party to the Optional Protocol of CEDAW by way of accession in October 2011⁹⁰¹.

Last year it was reported that Cape Verde had formulated a National Development Plan, but was facing challenges to implement it at the national and local level using an approach based on gender equality.² Cape Verde is committed to achieving the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including MDG 3 for gender equality and empowerment of women. The Prime Minister's Office, in collaboration with other organisations, organised a National Forum held in May 2014³ to discuss the state of gender equality in the country. The main issues identified included⁴

- Weak political participation of women at the parliamentary and local level
- Women's participation in economic sector and the need to mainstream gender in economic sectors
- Unemployment among women
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls
- Need to formulate gender sensitive social policies
- Need to promote a more conducive environment for girls in school
- Strengthen efforts in prevention of violence against women with a more efficient multi-sectorial response

Cape Verde is also currently in the process of developing a set of actions with respect to Beijing+20⁵. These include:

- Promoting gender equality in rural areas focussing on food security, water and sanitation and other sectors including education, police and justice
- Preparing the Second National Plan on Gender Equality and Equity, including an action plan to fight gender-based violence
- Advocacy and training on women's political participation.

Education

In the Country Report submitted by Cape Verde to the (Small Island Developing States (SIDS) conference¹⁰, it mentioned that, in terms of gender, from the 7th grade there is a reversal in the proportionality between boys and girls. In 12th grade, for every 100 students, only 44 are male.¹¹ The high school featured in the academic year of 2010/11, 62,222 students enrolled, of which 53.8% were female and 58.7% were male.¹²

According to the 2010 data from the National Statistics Institute (INE), higher education has grown exponentially in the last decade, in the order of 209%.¹³ However, an analysis of the data on gender equality revealed that the percentage of women with higher qualifications increased from 42% to 50.9%.

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Cape Verde is quite low compared to other African countries. According to UNAIDS, at the end of 2013, there were between 1300-1800 people (0.4% - 0.6% of adults between the age of 15 and 49) living with HIV.¹⁷ However, a slight increase in prevalence of HIV/AIDS was noticed between 2008 to 2012 with rates remaining static in 2013. The Health Ministry of Cape Verde has collected data, through its different municipal delegations, between 2011-

2013. During this period, out of 1169 registered new infections, 688 were women while 481 were men. This shows an upcoming feminisation of the epidemic.¹⁸

Violence against women

The "Special Law Project on Gender-based Violence" (GBV) became a law in 2011.²⁰ The law envisioned a multi-sectorial response system to crimes against women but the implementation faced challenges in terms of lack of infrastructure, human and financial resources. In April 2014, advocacy training on gender violence was organised for building skills in key stakeholders in Cape Verde²¹. The National Institute for Gender Equality and Equity (ICIEG) led this training, which was attended by members of various government and non-government organizations with a wide range of skills and expertise.⁹⁰² The broad goal of the training was aligned with the following objectives of the 3-year project of UN Women Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (EVAW):

- Prevention through information, sensitisation and education for behaviour changes and mobilization of different actors

- Capacity building and institutional reinforcement to respond and protect women survivors and to ensure coordinated support
- Coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of gender based violence⁹⁰³

In March 2014, A GBV sensitive helping desk at the police station (GAV, Gabinete de Atendimento às Vítimas) and a Centre for Support of Victims (CAV, Centro de Apoio às Vítimas) were inaugurated in the village in São Domingos. The goals of this project are to help GBV victims to report violent incidents and obtain immediate legal advice.²²

Cape Verde passed the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Act in 2011⁹⁰⁴. UN Women described the law as having great potential but expressed concerns about the Government's initiative or ability to set up specific training for capacity building of law enforcement officials, formulating a regular data collection mechanism and setting up a multi-stakeholder response system to GBV⁹⁰⁵

Cape Verde has been placed as a Tier 2 (a Tier 2 country is the one whose government's do not completely comply with standards to curb trafficking but are now making significant efforts to bring their compliance up to those standards in the Trafficking of Persons Report (2014) of the US State Department.⁹⁰⁶ The Report states that the government has acknowledged that sex trafficking is a concerning issue in Cape Verde but has barely made any efforts to enforce laws to combat trafficking.⁹⁰⁷ Law enforcement officials do not have any written guidelines to identify victims of sex trafficking and the Government has failed to protect children who are victims of sex trafficking, and failing to report and provide any record on 17 child victims identified in the Report.

Women's political participation

As of 1st August 2014, Cape Verde is ranked 72 out of 188 countries in terms of women occupying seats in the National Parliament. In the 2011 elections, women won 20.8% of the total of 72 seats.²³

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire ratified the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995⁹⁰⁸ and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004, but has not yet ratified it.⁹⁰⁹ The country is still recovering from post-election violence that displaced hundreds of thousands of people in 2010-2011.⁹¹⁰ Women are underrepresented in government and the economy, face widespread rape and sexual assault; and are victims of cultural practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).⁹¹¹

Education

Côte d'Ivoire is one of the lowest ranked countries on the Global Gender Gap Index, with an overall rank of 131 out of 136, and 133 out of 136 in education.⁹¹² Less than half of young women are literate.⁹¹³ 39% of women aged 15 to 24 are literate, compared to 58% of young men.⁹¹⁴ Many children are unable to register for state services, including school education, because they are considered stateless.⁹¹⁵ In mid-2013 the Government amended nationality laws to allow stateless people to apply for citizenship; at the time there were an estimated 700,000 stateless people in Côte d'Ivoire.⁹¹⁶

Economic Empowerment

52% of women are estimated to participate in the labour market, compared with 81.5% of men;⁹¹⁷ and 18% of households are headed by a woman.⁹¹⁸ Although it is illegal, women face

discrimination in owning or managing a business, and obtaining a job in the formal sector.⁹¹⁹ Women also find it difficult to meet the requirements for accessing credit, such as having the title to a house or land that produces a cash crop.^{920,921} Inheritance laws put women at a disadvantage.⁹²² This is particularly challenging for women who were displaced by the post-election violence and now face increased difficulties in proving their right to the land they evacuated.



Restaurant Run by Widows Women in cote d'Ivoire. UN Photo

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The maternal mortality rate is high, with 720 deaths in 100,000 births, which has not significantly improved since 1990, when the rate was 740 deaths per 100,000 births.⁹²³ 91% of women receive prenatal care.⁹²⁴ The number of skilled birth attendants has steadily increased, with a skilled attendant present at 67% of births in 2013.⁹²⁵ In urban areas skilled birth attendants are accessible, but in rural areas the cost of transport to a birth attendant is often a barrier.⁹²⁶ For poor women in urban or rural areas, the cost of the birth attendant's services is another barrier.⁹²⁷

The fertility rates for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 is 130 births per 1000 girls.⁹²⁸ Only 18% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 report use of contraceptives.⁹²⁹ Fear of violence or the threat of violence from a husband or family member can prevent a woman from seeking family planning services.⁹³⁰

Côte d'Ivoire has a national HIV prevalence of 4.7%, but when this rate is split by gender there is a noticeable gap; 6.4% of women are HIV positive, while only 2.9% of men are HIV positive.⁹³¹ Only 30% of women between the ages of 15 and 49, who have multiple partners, reported using condoms, and only 16% of female youth have knowledge of HIV prevention.⁹³²

Violence Against Women

Rape, excluding spousal rape, is punishable by law, with sentences varying from five years to a life sentence (in cases of gang rape, where the victim is under 15, or if the perpetrator is in a position of power).⁹³³ However, the government does not enforce these laws and as a result rape occurs frequently, especially in the west of the country.⁹³⁴ In 2013, the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reported 350 rape cases, including 60 gang rape cases, an increase from the previous year.⁹³⁵ Often victims are encouraged by family

members or the police to reach an agreement with the perpetrator outside of court.⁹³⁶ Also, in some cases victims were told that they need to present a medical certificate proving the rape, for a cost of 50,000 CFA (USD103). Without the certificate, the court lessens the perpetrator's sentence.⁹³⁷

Domestic abuse is also widespread, although not prohibited by law.⁹³⁸ According to The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) one in three women has been abused by her partner or former partner.⁹³⁹ Women who report domestic abuse to the police are often ignored, and families encourage them to stay with abusive partners rather than face social stigma.⁹⁴⁰ The Ministry of Family, Women and Social Affairs does offer counselling to victims of domestic abuse and rape at government-run centres.⁹⁴¹

Traditional practices such as dowry deaths (the killing of the bride during a dowry disagreement), and forced marriages of a widow to her husband's brother (levirate) or of a woman to her sister's widower (sororate) are prevalent.⁹⁴² Also, while it is illegal for a girl under the age of 18 to be married, girls as young as 14 are forced into marriages.⁹⁴³ 36% of women were married before the age of 18.⁹⁴⁴

FGM is commonly practiced in certain areas of Côte d'Ivoire despite being illegal. It is most common in rural areas in the north and northwest of the country where 74% and 80% of women have experienced FGM (respectively).⁹⁴⁵ Punishment for practicing FGM ranges from fines to imprisonment.⁹⁴⁶

Women's Political Participation

Women are not well represented in national government. In the National Assembly, out of 253 members only 26 are women, and only 11 mayors are women out of a total of 197.⁹⁴⁷ Legally, women are not held back from holding political office, but cultural beliefs discourage women's political participation.⁹⁴⁸ Still some women hold prominent positions; the Vice President of the National Assembly is a woman, and five cabinet positions of 33 are held by women.⁹⁴⁹ Gender equality activists have called for the implementation of a quota law to increase the number of women candidates on ballots.⁹⁵¹

Women, Peace and Security

On June 25, 2014 the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that continued the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).⁹⁵² The goal of this mission is to protect civilians in light of recent post-election violence and subsequent displacement, and assist the

government of Côte d'Ivoire in its efforts to reform the security sector and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).⁹⁵³ The post-election violence in 2010-2011 reignited violent dynamics of the civil war (which ended in 2003) such as the use of paramilitary forces and mercenaries.⁹⁵⁴ The internally displaced population is estimated to be 70,000 concentrated in the western and south-western parts of the country.⁹⁵⁵ For women, the rise of these forces brought back the threat of sexual violence perpetuated with impunity by these armed forces.⁹⁵⁶ The Working Group on Women, Peace and Security also raised

concerns about barriers to women's full participation in Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and other peace building efforts.⁹⁵⁷

Trafficking for forced labour or sex work is also a risk for women and, especially, children.⁹⁵⁸ Côte d'Ivoire is a source, destination and point of transit for trafficked people, but it is mainly site to internal trafficking.⁹⁵⁹ The government has made some progress in addressing child trafficking by increasing prosecution of traffickers and efforts to identify child victims of trafficking, but it still needs to take similar steps to reduce the trafficking of adults.⁹⁶⁰

GAMBIA

Gambia ratified the Convention for Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in April 16th, 1993 but has not ratified the optional protocol to CEDAW as of 2014.⁹⁶¹ In June 2010, the Government enacted a Women's Act to legislate the provisions of the National Policy for Advancement of Gambian Women and Girls. This Act also reflected the provisions of CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women in Africa.⁹⁶² In the same year, the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Gambia formulated the Gambia National Gender Policy 2010-2020 as a part of the government's strategy of overall growth and eradication of poverty.⁹⁶³ The Women's Act does not include the family matters of the Muslim population in its ambit. The issues of marriage, polygamy, divorce, and child custody are subject to Sharia Law.⁹⁶⁴ One of the criticisms of the Act is that it failed to address women's right to land and female genital mutilation.⁹⁶⁵ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Gambia as 172 out of 187 countries in their 2014 Human Development Report,⁹⁶⁶ however, due to lack of data the Gender Development Index could not be calculated for this country.

The legal codes of Gambia incorporate customary and religious laws including the Sharia law, which governs the Muslim population of the country.

Education

The Government has a comprehensive education policy (2004-2015). The objective of the policy is to provide better access to, and quality of, education reflecting the importance of education in social and economic empowerment of women.⁹⁶⁷ In 2013, the President declared free basic education for all Gambians.

Since 1994, there has been a very encouraging increase in the enrolment of girls at school. During that time, the enrolment of girls grew at an annual rate of 6% while that of boys grew by only 2%. This trend resulted in the growth of girls' gross enrolment ratio (GER) from 61% to 71% in 2000, with growth continuing from

1998 to 2000 unlike the male gross enrolment ratio (GER).⁹⁶⁸

Economic Empowerment

The economy of the country is dominated by agriculture and tourism.⁹⁶⁹ Migrant remittances also form a large part of the economy.

A report in September 2014 highlighted the fact that women in Gambia face disproportionate barriers that prevent them from accessing financial assistance, participating in the economy and improving their lives. The same report stated that there are social and cultural norms in Gambia that prevent women from interacting with people

outside of their relatives, further preventing them from obtaining information about financial services.⁹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, no further details are available regarding the kind of assistance that rural Gambian women need or desire, the details of the socio-cultural hurdles faced and any recommendations to overcome them.

In September 2014, the Office of the Vice President of Gambia, along with relevant partners including The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organised a development forum focused on closing the gender gap in Gambia.⁹⁷¹ The background paper to this conference emphasized that economic empowerment of women in Gambia can only be achieved through agricultural development in the country. The background paper also stated that Gambian women constitute 78% of the economically active population involved in agriculture compared to just 57% of men and that women are responsible for 40% of total agricultural production.⁹⁷² The paper also agrees that the high numbers do not translate into an improved socio-economic status of women in Gambia.⁹⁷³

Gambia has a Vision 2016, the objective of which is to stop the import of rice into Gambia by investing in rural women in agriculture and transforming rural farming communities.⁹⁷⁴ This vision is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) but no concrete documents are available yet to support this vision or the plans of the government.⁹⁷⁵

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

The latest data on HIV/AIDS is from 2013.⁹⁷⁶ As this time, an average of 13,000 people were living with HIV in Gambia out of which an average of 6900 were women between the age of 15 and above.⁹⁷⁷ No deaths due to AIDS have been reported for this period. The Government of Gambia, in its National Health Policy (2011-2015), has set a target to reduce the prevalence of HIV1 from 1.1% to 0.5% and that of HIV2 from 0.7% to 0.1% by 2015.⁹⁷⁸

In the high level meeting organized in Cairo by the United Nations earlier this year, Gambia was one of the countries that reported on the

implementation of the HIV/AIDS policy in the country. Gambia also presented the challenges faced to achieve sexual and reproductive rights in the years to come. Unfortunately, no further information is available on the challenges or the status of implementation mentioned by the government in this meeting.⁹⁷⁹

Gambia allows abortion only on grounds of saving the life of the mother and/or to preserve the mental and physical health of the woman.⁹⁸⁰ Apart from a brief UN report in 2000, no data or statistics on abortion are available for Gambia.

Violence against women

The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) into four types⁹⁸¹ with Type I being the most extreme and involving the removal of complete or partial removal of clitoris. According to the latest Situation Analysis Report of Children and Women (SITAN) of 2001⁹⁸², Type I mutilation is most frequently practiced in Gambia. Unfortunately, the religious leaders, traditional circumcisers and politicians are not convinced that FGM as a practice should be banned across the country⁹⁸³ and hence the government has also not come out strongly with any law or policy to protect women and girls against this practice. Interestingly, there is no data of death or injury caused to women due to FGM in Gambia. This is surprising given the severe risks, including death, involved in the process.

The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices affecting Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP) has been working tirelessly, since its inception in 1984, against FGM. Earlier this year, they organized a refresher training on FGM and other harmful traditional practices affecting women, girls and children.⁹⁸⁴ This workshop provided a platform for sharing of best practices to fight FGM at a local and community level. The women's rights activists are demanding more concrete action from the government and have drafted a bill against FGM, which has been subjected to several discussions among stakeholders. The Women's Bureau of the government stated that the campaign against FGM should be pushed forward but does not seem to be taking a firm stance on the pending bill.⁹⁸⁵ The Executive Director of GAMCOTROP reported that more

than 128 circumcisers have “dropped their knives” and 900 communities in Gambia have stopped practicing FGM.⁹⁸⁶

In the Trafficking of Person's Report of 2014⁹⁸⁷, the US State Department has placed Gambia as a Tier 3 country (A Tier 3 country is the one whose government does not fully comply with standards to curb trafficking and does not make any efforts to do so).⁹⁸⁸ The Government of Gambia did not fully comply with the minimum standards for elimination of trafficking and no effort to do so was noticed. There was also no comprehensive data on trafficking offences. The government made negligible efforts to protect victims of trafficking and did not formally recognize anyone to be a victim of trafficking.⁹⁸⁹

Women's political participation

Women in Gambia make up 51% of the total population of 1.8 million people⁹⁹⁰ and as of 2011 women constituted 58% of national voters. Unfortunately this numerical strength of women is not represented in the political scenario across the country.⁹⁹¹ There are only 4 elected women representatives and 1 nominated female Deputy out of a total of 53 National Assembly members. This disparity is reflected at the local level as well, where only 5 out of 1,873 village heads are women.⁹⁹² Amie Sillah, a gender activist and a politician in Gambia explains that most female politicians in the country spend time campaigning for their male counterparts and raising donations for their campaign.⁹⁹³ Even with a female Vice President and a constitution that guarantees

1000

women's right to political participation⁹⁹⁴ and criminalizes gender discrimination⁹⁹⁵, the women in Gambia remain largely politically marginalized. One of the outcomes of this marginalisation, Sillah emphasises, is that the laws concerning women are also “watered down” and only the clauses that men want are enacted.⁹⁹⁶

General elections in Gambia are due to be held in 2016. Earlier this year, The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices affecting Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP) launched a campaign for political reforms to “ensure the effective participation of women in all positions of political leadership.”⁹⁹⁷ It is hoped that in the next elections women will aim for elected positions and not remain in nominated positions only.

Women, peace and security

On June 2, 2014 Gambia launched its first National Action Plan to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, This came after the Women Advancement Forum in Banjul. ⁹⁹⁸ This National Action Plan was reiterated by Bintou Gassama, a deputy parliament secretary at the Office of the Vice President, while speaking at a forum for raising awareness on UNSCR 1325.⁹⁹⁹ She agreed that implementation of the plan has been slow in Gambia due to lack of political commitment and low awareness of UNSCR 1325 and technical knowhow.

GHANA

The constitution of Ghana included the principle of equality between men and women.¹⁰⁰¹ It also includes equal rights of women at work and prohibits all customary practices that dehumanize¹⁰⁰² or cause mental or physical injury to the person.¹⁰⁰³ Ghana ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986¹⁰⁰⁴ and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2011.¹⁰⁰⁵ Ghana ratified the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1989¹⁰⁰⁶ and the Maputo Protocol in 2007.¹⁰⁰⁷ The UNDP Human Development Report has placed Ghana at 138 out of a total of 187 countries.¹⁰⁰⁸ The report places Ghana at 122 out of the 149 countries for which the Gender Inequality Index (Gender Inequality Index calculates gender based inequality in three dimensions- reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity) was calculated.¹⁰⁰⁹

Education

The latest education statistics are from 2012¹⁰¹⁰. Further updates are not available. The government website for education, at the time of writing this report, was under maintenance and could not be accessed.

In Ghana, 45.2% of adult women have attained at least a secondary level of education in contrast to 64.7% of their male counterparts.¹⁰¹¹

In Kpandai a special school has been set up by a Danish Development Organisation, IBIS, together with the Ghana Education Service and the Kpandai District Assembly.¹⁰¹² The aim of this school is to provide holistic psychological and social development to girls. The District Chief Executive for Kpandai, Mr. Jator Jasper Moayi, hopes that this school will improve gender parity in the region and create a better future for girls.

These efforts seem to be in line with the government's education strategic plan of 2010 - 2020 which aims to improve gender parity in education, bridge the gender gap in access to education, mainstream gender issues in all levels of education and achieve gender equality by 2015.¹⁰¹³

Economic Empowerment

Female participation in the labour market in Ghana is at 67.2% compared to 71.2% for men.¹⁰¹⁴



Selling Tomatoes in Accra, Ghana: Women Face Many Hurdles in Expanding Their Business Beyond "Micro-Level". Photo Alamy Images/Ulrich Doering/Africa Renewal

The legislation concerning the oil and gas sector in Ghana lacks gender balance.¹⁰¹⁵ The

Ghana National Petroleum Act 1983 has been deemed to have gender blind provisions and a lack of gender balance in the composition of the board. Similarly, the Petroleum Exploration and Production Law, 1984 fails to cater to the special interests of women and children.¹⁰¹⁶ Four women's rights organizations in Ghana along with STAR-Ghana (Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana) are working towards mainstreaming gender equality into the oil and gas sector of the country.¹⁰¹⁷ They seek the inclusion and protection of women's interests within the regulatory framework of the industry. This project would ensure stakeholders work towards women participating effectively in, and benefitting equally from, the industry by equipping the stakeholders with necessary tools and methodologies to achieve gender balance and equity.¹⁰¹⁸

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

The latest data from the Ghana Health Service (GHS, 2012) shows that 75,000 teenage girls between the age of 15 and 19 fell pregnant in 2011. However, there is no data on the outcome of these pregnancies.

In 2013, an average of 220,000 people were living with HIV in Ghana out of whom an average of 110,000 women aged 15 and above were living with HIV.¹⁰¹⁹

Women and adolescents from various regions of Ghana are undergoing training on comprehensive sex education where the emphasis is on raising awareness on sexual health and not just emphasizing abstinence. In Tarkwa Nsueam, a workshop was organized by the Human Rights Advocacy Centre to educate the participants on topics like human rights, laws on sexual and reproductive rights and age of consent.¹⁰²⁰ The main objective was to make the participants peer educators in their respective schools and institutions.

Violence against women

Statistics from the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) indicate there were 986 defilement cases in 2010. This figure jumped to 1,176 in 2011. In 2012, the country recorded 10 spousal murders, the majority being husbands killing wives.¹⁰²¹

Ghana is a Tier 2 country (a Tier 2 country is the one whose government does not completely comply with the standards to curb trafficking in persons but is making significant efforts to do so).¹⁰²² In the Trafficking of Persons Report 2014 released by the US State Department,¹⁰²³ trafficking of Ghanaian children within the country is reportedly higher than transnational trafficking. The Ghanaian Government has been active in prosecuting trafficking cases and enforcing the anti trafficking law in Ghana. However, it has not provided an adequate operating budget so the anti human trafficking unit has failed to provide training to its officers. The Government has also not been able to provide protection to victims and has not set up a mechanism to identify such victims. There has been a noticeable decrease in protection efforts, as the Human Trafficking Fund has been allocated no budget for a second consecutive year. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection also received no funds for its operations.¹⁰²⁴

Women's political participation

In 2013, 30 out of the 275 total seats the Lower House of the Parliament belonged to women¹⁰²⁵ and the UNDP Human Development Report of 2014 assessed that 10.9% of all parliamentary seats in Ghana are held by women.¹⁰²⁶ Although women constitute 51% of Ghana's population,

only 10% of women held public office in the country.¹⁰²⁷ Ghana News Agency statistics indicate that only 17 out of 72 Ministers of State (24%) are women¹⁰²⁸

In 2014, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in an effort to promote gender equity as a part of Ghana's sustainable development agenda, began the process of consolidating five major legislations on local governance and decentralization (The District Assemblies Common Fund Act 1993 (Act 455), Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462), National Development Planning System Act 1994 (Act 480), Local Government Service Act 2003 (Act 656) and the Internal Audit Agency Act 2003 (Act 658).¹⁰²⁹ This is a part of the government's decentralization process to raise accountability with respect to women's participation and representation in local governance.

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has a programme to monitor women's participation in public discourse in Ghana. This programme has revealed that out of the 1,599 political activists who were featured in radio programmes in Ghana between June and August 2014, only 121 (8%) were women. This suggests that political parties consistently exclude women in the media.¹⁰³⁰

GUINEA

Guinea ratified the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1982¹⁰³¹ and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2012.¹⁰³² Guinea was the point of origin for the Ebola outbreak that began in March 2014.¹⁰³³ As of November there have been nearly 2,000 reported cases and over 1,100 deaths,¹⁰³⁴ and 14 of 33 districts in the country have had cases of the virus.¹⁰³⁵ The outbreak has caused setbacks and resource depletion in multiple sectors including public health and education.

Education

Primary school is tuition-free and compulsory for all six years.¹⁰³⁶ Secondary school is not compulsory, resulting in lower attendance rates, particularly for girls.¹⁰³⁷ While 56% of girls attend primary school (compared to 66% of boys), only 11% attend secondary school (compared to 21% of boys).¹⁰³⁸ The literacy rate for females above the age of 15 is just 12%.¹⁰³⁹

Due to the Ebola outbreak schools did not reopen in October 2014 in order to protect students from catching the virus.¹⁰⁴⁰

Economic Empowerment

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children is working to advance legal equality for women, but in practice they still face significant discrimination that carries economic consequences.¹⁰⁴¹ According to traditional laws, upheld mainly in rural areas, women are not allowed to own land but may work on family-owned land and earn a wage.¹⁰⁴² Women also find it difficult to obtain loans, and are not paid the same wages as men for similar work.¹⁰⁴³

Only 23% of salaried, non-agricultural workers are women.¹⁰⁴⁴

17% of households in Guinea are female-headed.¹⁰⁴⁵ The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 65.5% of women participate in the labour market, as compared to 78% of men.¹⁰⁴⁶ Women also face more under- and unemployment than men.¹⁰⁴⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

As health centres focus on the Ebola outbreak, expectant mothers are deprived of access to skilled birth attendants.¹⁰⁴⁸ Due to the stigma attached to Ebola, mothers are also fearful of going to clinics or hospitals for prenatal check-ups.¹⁰⁴⁹ Because Ebola is spread through bodily fluids, midwives and birth attendants are also fearful and refuse to help deliver babies.¹⁰⁵⁰ As a result, there is concern in the global public health community that maternal mortality rates, which were slowly decreasing in Guinea, will rise sharply.¹⁰⁵¹ The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) also worries that women and girls will be deprived access to family planning services, with a possible outcome of more unplanned pregnancies in the near future.¹⁰⁵²

For pregnant women, the Ebola fatality rate is 95%, for the mother and fetus.¹⁰⁵³ Infection is also very likely for the nurse, doctor or midwife who attends the birth since birth involves many bodily fluids, all of which would carry the virus of an infected mother.¹⁰⁵⁴

Previous to the Ebola outbreak, the maternal mortality rate was 650 deaths per 100,000 births and it had been decreasing consistently for decades.¹⁰⁵⁵ 85% of pregnant women received prenatal care¹⁰⁵⁶, but only 53% of births had a skilled attendant present.¹⁰⁵⁷ Contraception use rates are also very low, with only 5.6% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 reporting usage.¹⁰⁵⁸ Fertility rates have dropped to 158 births in 1,000 women, a significant reduction from a rate of 186 in 2000.¹⁰⁵⁹

HIV prevalence is 1.7% of people between the ages of 15 and 49.¹⁰⁶⁰ In 2013, 3,000 HIV-positive pregnant women received treatment to prevent mother to child transmission and child infections dropped to 1,400.¹⁰⁶¹ Knowledge about the spread of HIV and condom use among people with multiple partners is higher among men than women.¹⁰⁶²

Violence Against Women

Rape and domestic violence occur frequently and are rarely prosecuted, despite being

illegal.¹⁰⁶³ Spousal rape is not considered a crime and is not punished.¹⁰⁶⁴ The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children estimates that 87% of women have been victims of domestic violence.¹⁰⁶⁵ However, fear of social stigma and retribution discourages women from reporting such abuse.¹⁰⁶⁶ The most recent available data from 2003 estimates that 20% of women treated in a hospital are victims of sexual assault.¹⁰⁶⁷

The legal age for marriage for girls is 17, although traditional practice allows marriage as early as 14.¹⁰⁶⁸ In Middle Guinea and the Forest Region, families sought marriages for girls as young as 11.¹⁰⁶⁹ Early and forced marriage is common; 63% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18.¹⁰⁷⁰ Despite the prevalence of this technically illegal practice, there are no records of prosecutions for child marriage.¹⁰⁷¹

Despite being illegal, female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely practiced in all regions and by all religions.¹⁰⁷² FGM is one of the causes of high rates of maternal and infant mortality.¹⁰⁷³ FGM prevalence is decreasing among girls under 18 years-old; 100% of women aged 45 to 49 experienced FGM compared to 89% of girls aged 15 to 19.¹⁰⁷⁴

Women's Political Participation

The first parliamentary election took place in September 2013, after more than two years of delays and political instability.¹⁰⁷⁵ Of the 115 seats of the National Assembly, only 25 are held by women.¹⁰⁷⁶ Five of 38 cabinet members are women.¹⁰⁷⁷ The electoral code requires 30% of all candidates presented by a political party to be women. However, not all parties fulfilled this requirement in the 2013 election and the rule was not enforced.¹⁰⁷⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Guinea is primarily a source, and sometimes a destination, for human trafficking for forced labour and sex work.¹⁰⁷⁹ Children are the most common targets.¹⁰⁸⁰ Within Guinea, children will be forced to work in the mines, as street vendors, domestic servants and sex workers.¹⁰⁸¹ The Government of Guinea is taking steps to address trafficking, including investigating and prosecuting traffickers.¹⁰⁸² However, not enough funding has been provided to law enforcement and members of the judiciary for training in issues related to trafficking.¹⁰⁸³

GUINEA BISSAU

Guinea Bissau ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985¹⁰⁸⁴ and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2009.¹⁰⁸⁵ Guinea Bissau has signed the Maputo Protocol in 2008 but has yet to ratify it.¹⁰⁸⁶ The UNDP has ranked Guinea Bissau at 177 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index placing it in the low development category.¹⁰⁸⁷ Neither the Gender Development Index nor the Gender Inequality Index could be calculated for this country due to lack of relevant data.¹⁰⁸⁸

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS estimated in 2013 that there are on average 41,000 people in Guinea Bissau living with HIV and that there are 21,000 women aged 15 and above who are living with HIV in the country.¹⁰⁸⁹ No other data is on HIV/Aids is available.

Violence against women

In 2011, Guinea Bissau passed a legislation banning female genital mutilation and cutting¹⁰⁹⁰ but no further updates are available on status and implementation of this law. In 2013, the country also passed a law against domestic violence.¹⁰⁹¹

In terms of human trafficking, the US State Department, in its 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report¹⁰⁹² has designated Guinea Bissau as a Tier 3 country (which is a country is the one whose government does not fully comply with standards to curb trafficking and does not make any efforts to do so).¹⁰⁹³ The Government of Guinea Bissau had failed to make any tangible efforts to prevent and enforce laws regarding trafficking in person. It had also failed to provide adequate protection to victims of trafficking.¹⁰⁹⁴

Women's political participation

Guinea-Bissau held its long awaited presidential elections on April 13th, 2014. As no candidates won an absolute majority, a second round was held on May 18th. There were no female candidates in these elections.

Articles 24 and 25 of the 1984 Constitution of Guinea-Bissau prohibit all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or religion¹⁰⁹⁵. Despite these provisions enshrined in the Constitution, women in Guinea Bissau are still lagging behind in terms of political representation.

An official study by the Transitional Government and the Women's Political

Platform, with the support of The United Nations Integrated Peace-Building in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) was launched on March 18th, highlighting the decline of women's political participation from 20% between 1998 to 2004 to 10% in 2013¹⁰⁹⁶.

Some women have held positions of power in the country; Adiato Djaló Nandigna was acting Prime Minister from February to April 2012. She was the first, and to date, the only woman in Guinea Bissau history to hold such a position. Unfortunately, the government she was serving was deposed in a coup and she did not hold this position for long. The People's National Assembly has 14 (13.73%) women member.¹⁰⁹⁷ including the Minister of Defense, Cadi Mane; Minister of Justice, Carmelita Pires; Minister of Health, Valentina Mendes and Minister of Social Affairs, Tamba Nhasse Giloni Nan¹⁰⁹⁸.

Between February and March 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur of Extreme Poverty and Human Rights visited the country and called upon the future elected Government to prioritize the equality of women in all spheres of life and to consolidate a legal framework that would increase the role of women in decision-making bodies.¹⁰⁹⁹

Overall, the lack of gender-related data is indicative of ongoing instability in the country and likely the lack of focus on female involvement in decision-making at a governmental level¹¹⁰⁰. Adopting quota incentives and economic support to change attitudes might help. Guinea-Bissau has not yet adopted the quota system. However, the issue of women's rights in Guinea Bissau is slowly but steadily growing with initiatives to end gender-based violence, FGM, and to promote economic empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

Women, peace and security

In the past, the UN Integrated Peace-building

Office in Guinea Bissau has made efforts to mainstream women and the peace process in the country. It is hoped that this would be continued in future Security Council meetings. The roles of women and challenges they face in

peace building, conflict prevention and other reformative processes need to be reflected upon and supported in the future.¹¹⁰¹

LIBERIA

Liberia ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2007. They signed CEDAW on the 17th of July 1984 but have not ratified the optional protocol.¹¹⁰² Liberia is one of a few African countries with a National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The Ministry of Gender is aiming to train women vendors in business-skills, in order to give them the skills needed to be economically autonomous.¹¹⁰³ In 2011, there was a joint Government and United Nations initiative launched in Liberia focused of the attainment of equality and women's empowerment with the UN agencies: ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNOPS, UNMIL and the World Bank all participating.¹¹⁰⁴ In 2014, The Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) and UN Women teamed up to foster empowerment in Gbarpolu County through giving cash loans, farming implements and seedlings to women.¹¹⁰⁵ According to UN Women, "around 600 women have been trained in literacy, entrepreneurship and other skills to enhance their physical and economic security."¹¹⁰⁶

The Liberia Association of Research Fellows (LARF) reported s the low participation of women in the media, who made up only 21% of the country's media practitioners.¹¹⁰⁷

Political Participation

Despite electing the first female Head of State on the African continent, Liberia is lagging behind when it comes to women's representation in government. While the country has made some progress under the leadership of Johnson-Sirleaf during her second mandate in 2011 in terms of democracy and sustainable development, the representation of women in the same period has noticeable decreased.

For instance, after the 2006 election, women lawmakers in Liberia held 17 out of a total of 94 seats, while after the 2011 election that number had fallen to 13 out of 94 seats¹¹⁰⁸.

In 2014, Liberia's Minister of Labour, Cllr. F. Juah Lawson stated that, "No nation thrives well when its women are suppressed and kept outside the epicentre of national decision-making."¹¹⁰⁹ A referendum was sought in April 2014 on the longstanding debate over the 30% women's participation quota in Liberia.¹¹¹⁰ No further updates about this have been found.

Education

Teenage pregnancy, early parenthood and child marriage remain serious barriers to girls' education, especially in rural areas. 'Bush schools', traditional rural schools, where girls learn how to maintain household duties, contribute to early pregnancy and marriage rates. When a girl passes the initiation ritual, marked by female genital cutting, and graduates from the bush school, she is considered ready for marriage and childbearing, regardless of her age.¹¹¹¹

The Government of Liberia launched its National Girls' Education Policy in April 2006, which called for unity around universal childhood education. According to the United Nations Girls Education Initiative, "The policy aims to provide universal, free and compulsory primary education and reduce secondary school fees by 50%. It outlines activities to recruit and train more female teachers, provide counselling for girls and life skills education in schools, increase the availability of scholarships for girls and strengthen health systems in schools. And it calls for ending the impunity of teachers who sexually abuse and assault students."¹¹¹²

Reproductive Health and HIV

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare stated in July 2013 that despite a 5% decrease in maternal deaths, the rates are still too high

with 770 out of every 100,000 women dying during childbirth.¹¹¹³ The United Nations Population Fund reported in January 2014 that they would provide delivery kits to mothers and children in Paynesville and Gbarnga. These include cloth, bucket, food and other essential materials.¹¹¹⁴ As of December 2013, Liberia only had 800 midwives for the population of over 3.5 million and the UNFPA has highlighted the urgent need to train more to deal with maternal mortality.¹¹¹⁵

Today, with the outbreak of the Ebola, Liberia faces a new challenge to its already weak health system. Pregnant women face a double threat of dying from Ebola or dying from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

“According to some preliminary data, the percentage of deliveries assisted by skilled birth attendants has gone from bad to worse in Liberia. The figures from May to August show that only 38% of pregnant women sought skilled birth attendance, down from 52% in 2013. Only 25% of mothers received postnatal care compared with 43% in 2012, and 40% of mothers received the recommended four antenatal care visits before delivery, down from 65% of pregnant women last year¹¹¹⁶.”

Violence Against Women

In January 2014, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf called upon Liberia’s female lawyers, gender advocates and civil society to “think out of the box”¹¹¹⁷ about the growing crime of rape against young girls in Liberia. 14 women leaders from the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL), the Women NGOs Secretariat (WONGOSOL) met to discuss their concerns about the rise in this crime.¹¹¹⁸ From the period of November 12th, 2013 to January 7th, 2014, there were 119 cases of rape reported in Liberia—a stark rise from 83 in the period before.¹¹¹⁹

issues at the recent launch of the book 'The Women's Guide to Security Sector Reform in Liberia'.¹¹²⁵

In 2014, on Valentine’s Day in Monrovia, more than five hundred activists joined the One Billion Rising Campaign to end violence against women.¹¹²⁰

The Ministry of Gender and Development issued a statement in late January calling on communities to not practice FGM—which is still practiced in Liberia despite known harms.¹¹²¹ In early 2014, The Women Against Female Genital Mutilation (WAFGEM) led a major campaign to eradicate “female genital mutilation as well as sensitising people, particularly girls and women on the harmful effect of female genital mutilation.”¹¹²²



Women Participate in the "16 Days of Activism Campaign, Launched by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). UN Photo

Women, Peace and Security

Since September 2003, there has been a UN Peacekeeping mandate in Liberia: United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In 2013, the 10th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was commemorated in Liberia.¹¹²³

It has been one of UN most expensive peacekeeping operations.¹¹²⁴ Various women’s organisations in Liberia have been called on to assist with security.

MALI

A West African country of 15.8 million people, 5.0 million (32%) of Mali’s population are aged 10-24.¹¹²⁶ Mali ratified CEDAW in September 1985 and, two decades later, the Maputo Protocol in January 2005. Mali has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.¹¹²⁷

As a consequence of the armed conflict that began in January 2012 in Northern Mali¹¹²⁸, women and

girls' human rights have been hugely violated.¹¹²⁹ The Security Council adopted the Resolution 2164 on June 25th 2014 to promote human rights and support stabilization in Mali.¹¹³⁰

Education

According to UNICEF¹¹³¹, Mali has adopted the 'Fast Track Initiative' to accelerate the process of reaching universal primary education by 2015. Gross enrolment stands at 80%, with 70.7% girls enrolled.

The consequence of the war in the North of the country over the last years has resulted in the closure of most schools. Adult literacy rates for 15 to 24-year-olds are 47% for men and 31% for women. Thousands of children, especially girls, barely complete primary school¹¹³². Young girls, as well as boys, were exposed to forced begging or forced labour in gold mines. So far, 50 cases have been identified by the authorities.¹¹³³

Economic Empowerment

Some improvements have been noticed lately in Mali, in regards to gender parity in accessing institutions and using property.¹¹³⁴ However, although married Malian women can get a job without their husband's permission, open a bank account and register a business, they are less likely to be head of household, choose where to live or confer citizenship on their children.¹¹³⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Mali is listed by the United Nations (UN) among the countries with high dependency ratios and possibility of demographic dividend¹¹³⁶. 12% women from 15 to 49 were likely to use any contraceptive method this year and 11% were likely to use modern methods. Overall, only 29% of women's demands for contraceptives have been met.¹¹³⁷

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is still an issue in Mali. The Network of Malian Parliamentarians fighting violence against women organized a

session in August 2014 to facilitate the empowerment of its members on legal and practical aspects of the issue.¹¹³⁸

It is reported that around 55% of girls married before the age of 18, Mali ranks seventh in terms of child marriage.¹¹³⁹ Forced marriages are reportedly common, and women are being sold and forced to remarry.¹¹⁴⁰

Female Genital Mutilation remains widely practiced in Mali and it is estimated that 89% of girls have undergone some form of genital mutilation¹¹⁴¹.

Women's Political Participation

While Mali's political situation is slowly getting better, women's participation is limited and their human rights aren't fully respected yet.¹¹⁴² Out of the 147 seats of the Malian parliament, 14 are held by women, representing a mere 9.5% of the parliamentarians in 2014.¹¹⁴³

Women, Peace and Security

Throughout the armed conflict in Mali from 2012 to 2013, women have been the targets of severe war crimes, mostly sexual assaults. Even though the political situation tends to be slightly better, Malian women aren't enjoying their full human rights¹¹⁴⁴ and there is no National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 yet.

A former lawyer and current head of the Malian branch of the Peace and Security Network of Women in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) area, Saran Keïta Diakité was designated as the first listener to the victims' testimonials during the armed conflict.¹¹⁴⁵ During a workshop organized by her network to empower Malian women, she claimed the absolute necessity of including women in peace negotiations and particularly in the National Peace and Reconciliation process at a national and local scale.¹¹⁴⁶

Mauritania

Mauritania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2001 and the Maputo Protocol in 2005, but has not yet signed or ratified the Optional Protocol to the former. Moreover, the government lifted its general reservation to CEDAW (which stated that only those articles which comply with Sharia Law and the country's constitution would apply) in 2014¹¹⁴⁷. Mauritania has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

In June 2014, the precarious situation of women and girls in Mauritania captured the attention of the international community. Media attention was drawn when a fatwa containing a death threat was issued by the leader of the radical Islamist group Ahbab Errassoul (Friends of the Prophet) against the female human rights defender Aminetou Mint El-Moctar¹¹⁴⁸.

Education

UNESCO reviewed Mauritania's Country Report at the 58th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (June – July 2014). During this session, it was noted that within the reporting period, two gender equality related projects, financed under the UNESCO Participation Programme, which were proposed by the Mauritania National Commission for UNESCO, were implemented. These two projects are: "Girls' and women's education in Mauritania" and "Education and the role of the media in the promotion of cultural diversity"¹¹⁴⁹.

Literacy parity for the age group 15-24 is expected to be achieved as soon as 2015¹¹⁵⁰. However, currently only half of women and girls over the age of 15 are literate, and only 39% of girls are enrolled in primary education. While 20.8% adult men reach at least secondary level education, only 8.0% adult women do so¹¹⁵¹. Similarly, the mean number of years of schooling for women is just 2.6%, compared to 4.9% for men¹¹⁵². Both these figures are lower than the mean across Sub-Saharan Africa¹¹⁵³. Generally, children who do not have birth certificates are unable to enrol in school and face an increased vulnerability to trafficking¹¹⁵⁴. Moreover, due to the lack of water, sanitation facilities and the quality of education, retention rates for both girls and boys in primary education are low¹¹⁵⁵.

Economic Empowerment

Labour market participation for both women and men in Mauritania has only decreased a little in the past year, dropping from 28.7% to 28.6%, and from 79.2% to 79.0% respectively, according to the 2014 UNDP Human Development Report. It should however be noted that only 12.4% of economically active women are employed¹¹⁵⁶. Mauritania is one of the lowest performing countries in the world with regard to wage equality for similar work¹¹⁵⁷. Daughters and widows still do not have inheritance rights, and women's access to land ownership and credit remains limited.¹¹⁵⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2014, the Mauritanian government ran a vaccination campaign, which targeted mothers and children, and continued work with the National Commission to Combat HIV/AIDS, in partnership with religious leaders¹¹⁵⁹. The prevalence of HIV in the female population aged 15-49 is 1.4%, and that of the male population for the same age group is 0.9%¹¹⁶⁰.

The 2014 birth rate is 31.83 births per 1000 population¹¹⁶¹ and maternal mortality stands at 626 deaths per 100,000 live births¹¹⁶². Within urban areas in the region, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate ranges from 14-34%, whereas unmet need is estimated to be between 21-35%¹¹⁶³. As a member of the Ouagadougou Partnership, Mauritania aims to raise the prevalence rate of modern contraceptives to 18.5% by 2018 throughout the country.

In 2014, the government made a budgetary commitment to invest in reproductive health and family planning, and the national assembly renewed the mandate of its working group on reproductive health¹¹⁶⁴. In January 2014 USAID and EngenderHealth launched a five-year programme, "Agir pour la Planification Familiale", to improve access and expand use of family planning services¹¹⁶⁵.

Violence Against Women

Rape is not currently defined within the Mauritanian criminal code, which prohibits victims from seeking legal redress and prevents perpetrators from being punished. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, polygamy and force-feeding¹¹⁶⁶ continue to take place in Mauritania. Because of the perceived link between religion and female genital mutilation, a fatwa against the practice has been developed by religious leaders to discourage its continuation.

In its combined second and third periodic reports on the implementation of the provisions of CEDAW in July 2014, Mauritania announced that a Commission to combat gender-based violence (including female genital

mutilation) and an observatory to oversee the work of non-governmental organisations on these issues had been set up. Moreover, it reported that work was being done at local and regional levels to highlight the centrality of family relations in addressing gender-based violence¹¹⁶⁷.

Mauritania's 2014-2018 National Action Plan to prevent and combat violence against women is currently in place¹¹⁶⁸ and is supported by UN Women¹¹⁶⁹. In July 2014, Mauritania's delegation to CEDAW stated that a draft framework law on all forms of gender-based violence is to be expected by the end of the year¹¹⁷⁰.

Slavery, including domestic servitude, sex trafficking and sex slavery, continues to take place at an alarming rate in Mauritania¹¹⁷¹. The country is also considered to be a regional hub for trafficking¹¹⁷².

In February 2014, following a consultative process with the Mauritanian Government, civil society, other national actors, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mauritania took positive steps towards the eradication of all practices of slavery by adopting a roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery¹¹⁷³.

Women's Political Participation

In the last three years, women's political participation has been on the rise¹¹⁷⁴. The country made progress in regards to the implementation of the 2006 law on quotas, as six of the eleven new ministers appointed to cabinet were women¹¹⁷⁵. Currently 23% of Mauritania's members of parliament and 25% of cabinet members are women, and the capital city has a female mayor¹¹⁷⁶. Out of the country's 218 mayors, six are women, and 25.2% of civil servants are women¹¹⁷⁷. In May 2014, Laila Maryam Mint Moulaye Idriss presented her candidacy for the presidential elections, only the second woman in Mauritania's history to do so¹¹⁷⁸.

Women, Peace and Security

The absence of a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 hinders Mauritania's progress on women, peace and security.

Furthermore, insecurity in northern Mali and north-eastern Nigeria has caused instability in the Sahel region, where over 20 million people face food shortages. Mauritania is currently providing food assistance to 10% of its population, around 300,000 people, as a result of food insecurity¹¹⁷⁹.

NIGER

In the 2014 Human Development Report, Niger was ranked last on measures of gender equality among the 187 countries with low human development. Niger has not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol, which, together with CEDAW, was signed in 2004. Niger has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education

Niger participated in a high-level regional workshop on gender equality in Togo in February 2014, where the importance of addressing cultural norms and effectively implementing gender equal legislation was highlighted. It was reported that in Niger the number of years of education had been increased, in order to keep girls in schools longer and thereby combat child marriage¹¹⁸⁰. However, child marriage remains a widespread problem in Niger, with anecdotal evidence

suggesting that parents are hesitant to send their daughters to school "out of fear the girl might marry a teacher"¹¹⁸¹.

Whilst 71% of all children enrol in elementary schools, local NGOs have estimated that the female literacy rate is as low as 15%¹¹⁸².

Economic Empowerment

In Niger, 56% of urban households and 96% of rural households are affected by multidimensional poverty¹¹⁸³. The labour

participation rate of women (aged 15 and over) is 39.9%, compared to 89.8% for men. Women in Niger are legally discriminated against with regards to the inheritance of property¹¹⁸⁴.

A research study, completed by the Danish Institute for Human Rights in July 2014, showed that whilst family law is becoming more gender equal in Niger, women are very likely to face social difficulties and economic hardship following marriage dissolution. This tends to be the case as divorce often comes about in an informal manner, and is laden with stigma¹¹⁸⁵.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In July 2014 UNFPA reported that the School for Husbands programme, which was set up in 2008 to challenge social norms, has contributed to positive changes for women's reproductive health. For example, there has been a significant increase in the number of women using family planning methods and receiving prenatal consultations¹¹⁸⁶.

The maternal mortality ratio (measured in deaths per 100,000 live births) is 590.

Violence Against Women

In May 2014, CARE reported that the Men Engage Initiative in Niger (which works in partnership with men for women's empowerment), which has featured mass communication campaigns, has led to a reduction of violence against women¹¹⁸⁷.

However, Niger has the highest percentage of child marriage in the world – one in three girls is married before she is 15¹¹⁸⁸. Moreover, modern forms of slavery persist and young girls are vulnerable to trafficking to neighbouring countries, in particular Nigeria¹¹⁸⁹.

Women's Political Participation

According to the Human Development Report 2014, women hold 13.3% of seats in parliament¹¹⁹⁰. Although quotas on political representation are enshrined in law, these are not widely implemented¹¹⁹¹.

Women, Peace and Security

The terrorist group Boko Haram has been known to operate in Niger, and has consistently targeted women and girls¹¹⁹².

NIGERIA

Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was developed in 2011, mainly by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and eventually launched in late 2013. In addition, Nigeria ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, more commonly known as the Maputo Protocol, in 2004, as well as ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985.

Education

The impact of a major international education initiative launched in 2013 (See: MEWC Report AWD 2013, pg 88) resulted in an increase to the national budget this year. The 2014 education allocation of N424.3 billion was passed in April, and represents 9.04% of the total national budget¹¹⁹³, although this still falls short of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's recommended 26%, which is required in order to make a significant impact to education standards.¹¹⁹⁴ Although an increased budget addressed minor educational issues, major problems still persist, such as 'inadequate funding, infrastructure decay and shortage of qualified teachers, as well as failure to upgrade existing teachers to match evolving trends.'¹¹⁹⁵ The impact of insufficient educational provisions is reflected in the illiteracy rates,

currently at 56.9% for adults, and roughly 70% for the whole population.¹¹⁹⁶

Boko Haram insurgents have also greatly affected Nigerians' access to education in 2014, with the kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls in the north of the country representing a 'direct attack on the right of women to an education'¹¹⁹⁷. The northern part of Nigeria (the area most affected by Boko Haram) recorded the lowest literacy levels for the country.¹¹⁹⁸ Nigeria's number of out-of-school children is the highest in the world. Although the law provides for education equality, in reality women and girls are still unable to access education in the same way as men and boys. Nigeria currently has a 'female youth literacy rate of just 38%.¹¹⁹⁹ The poor quality of the education provided means that even after 5-6

years of schooling, 80% of 15-24 year olds are unable to read a sentence.¹²⁰⁰

Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation in Nigeria continues to be ranked amongst the lowest in the world. In the Lower/Single House of Parliament, women hold only 24 out of 360 seats, which amounts to just 6.7%.¹²⁰¹ The situation is similar in the Upper House, where women only hold 7 out of 109 seats, amounting to 6.4%.¹²⁰² Whilst Nigeria was ranked 128th out of 142 countries in 2013 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's database, the country's performance this year resulted in them dropping to 136th.¹²⁰³ Nigeria's next Parliamentary elections will be in 2015.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Nigeria continues to be ranked as the second worst country in the world for maternal mortality and under-five deaths, as each day 2,300 under-five year olds and 145 women at childbearing age die.¹²⁰⁴ Whilst an average of 45 women died each day in 2013 from childbirth or pregnancy complications, that figure rose to 110 in 2014¹²⁰⁵, highlighting the worsening state of reproductive healthcare within the country. Currently, fewer than 20% of Nigeria's health facilities have emergency obstetric care and "only 35% of deliveries are attended by skilled birth attendants"¹²⁰⁶ meaning the chance of a woman dying from pregnancy or childbirth in Nigeria is currently 1 in 13.¹²⁰⁷ Nigeria also has the 2nd highest number of new HIV infections each year, with women being particularly affected as 'gender inequality among women has been identified as a key driver of the HIV epidemic among women.'¹²⁰⁸ Only 18% of pregnant women with HIV are able to access the necessary antiretroviral drugs that protect and prevent the transmission of the disease to their children, meaning over 1/4 of pregnancies result in the child being born with HIV.¹²⁰⁹

Violence Against Women

Despite the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill being passed by the House of Representatives last year, it has yet to be voted and approved by the Senate, meaning it is still not in force.¹²¹⁰ The Bill is the result of 9 other bills being combined, in order to remove obsolete legislation and update current laws. The Bill's aim is to eradicate all violence in both private and public spheres. It includes provisions for compensation for victims; a fund providing financial support for the rehabilitation for the victims; harsher sentences for perpetrators of sexual offences and various additional orders aimed at offering greater protection for victims. A Sexual Offences Bill is also currently before the House of Representatives, but is yet to be passed.¹²¹¹ It

is aimed at offering greater protection to the victims of rape in Nigeria, as well as increasing the punishment to life imprisonment for rapists.¹²¹² A recent survey by Women's Aid Collective, which assessed rates of torture throughout the country, noted that rape and sexual assaults are the most common forms of torture experienced by Nigerian women, with 64.4% of women stating they had either been raped or sexually assaulted.¹²¹³ Gender-based violence is not just restricted to the general population, but also exists within Governmental Agencies, such as the police and army. Nigerian women are also at risk of being subjected to violence from these agencies.¹²¹⁴

Women, Peace and Security

Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP), which was launched last year, was the first step towards protecting women and promoting peace and conflict prevention throughout the country. However, it has been noted that 'Nigeria's NAP does not discuss disarmament issues despite the recent conflicts and use of small arms that have affected women, children and the civilian population in general.'¹²¹⁵ Legislation to protect women from violence and sexual assaults is yet to come into law, despite Bills being before the House of Representatives.

Economic Empowerment

Some of the main problems currently facing women in Nigeria are related to the cultural and traditional beliefs that prevent them from attaining economic equality with men. Despite women working and farming land, they are often prevented from owning that land or property.¹²¹⁶ Programmes do exist that promote increasing women's earning power; promoting women entrepreneurs; or encouraging small female-led businesses to expand. These are often funded via international, charitable organisations or initiatives, such as Enhancing Nigerian Advocacy for a Better Business Environment (ENABLE), which is funded by the UK Department for the International Development (DfID).¹²¹⁷ However, Nigeria's Ministry of Communication Technology recently received an international award for the progress made by using ICT and Communication Technologies to improved gender empowerment.¹²¹⁸ Progress is being made with gender economic empowerment, in recognition of the important role it plays in achieving the Millennium Development Goals 2015. Nigerian women are receiving greater financial support from banks to encourage greater participation in business and agricultures.¹²¹⁹ Women currently constitute 60-80% of the trading urban workforce, and 65-70% of small-scale activities in rural areas.¹²²⁰

SENEGAL

Senegal's 2001 Constitution guarantees equality between women and men in Article 7. The country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and the Optional Protocol on Violence Against Women in 2000. The country has not been required to submit a report to the CEDAW Committee since 1994. Senegal ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2005. A National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity was developed in 2005 and is due to run until next year.

Education

Currently, the literacy rate for females throughout the country is roughly 39%.¹²²¹ Education is one of the major challenges Senegal currently faces, with the illiteracy rate increasing by 37% since 1990, mainly as a result of the growth in the population.¹²²² In addition, only 7.2% of women have attained a secondary education.¹²²³ The high rates of illiteracy prevent women from being able to understand and exercise their rights, which can lead to a generation cycle of rights abuses and violations. With UNICEF estimating that two thirds of women aged 15+ are illiterate, in conjunction with only 16% of girls finishing primary/elementary school, access to education for females continues to be restricted and unsupported throughout Senegal.¹²²⁴

Women's Political Participation

Senegalese women have full political participation rights, enabling them to stand for elections and to vote.¹²²⁵ Women's political participation in Senegal has seen both improvements and setbacks over the last decade. Whilst gender equity legislation was passed by Parliament in 2007, that would have ensured equality in gender representation in political candidates lists, the Constitutional Council later ruled it to be unconstitutional.¹²²⁶ However, in 2010, the Law on Equality of Men and Women in Electoral Lists was adopted by the National Assembly, with the impact immediately evident in the 2012 elections, when '64 women were elected as members of the 150-seat parliament (or 42.7% of seats), up from 33 after the previous election.'¹²²⁷ Essentially, the legislation aims to ensure political gender equality at all levels of politics, and does so by 'requiring political parties to submit alternating lists of men and women candidates, with a male-female ratio of 50%.'¹²²⁸ Failure to comply with this requirement results in the candidate lists being inadmissible.¹²²⁹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Senegal continues to be ranked among the lowest countries in the world for maternal mortality, with it being 28th worst in 2010.¹²³⁰ However, progress continues to be made each year with the maternal mortality rate falling from 19.5% in 2005 to 16.4% last year.¹²³¹ Despite this, roughly 320 women die from pregnancy related causes during every 100,000 live births.¹²³² However, the number of maternal deaths indirectly related to AIDS has almost double in frequency between 2005 and 2013, rising from 10-17.¹²³³

Currently, 66.2% of births are attended by skilled birth attendants, an increase from 63.6% in 2010, and the general fertility rate per 1000 women, aged between 15 and 24, continues to fall each year and stands at 155 at present.¹²³⁴ The lifetime risk of maternal mortality stood at 1 in 54 in 2010.¹²³⁵ There are currently 24,000 women living with HIV/AIDS throughout the country, meaning it ranks among the lower rates for the disease throughout Africa.¹²³⁶ Although the Constitution provides everyone with the right to have control over their own family planning, as well as a right to maternal health care, 'in practice, poor medical facilities constrained these rights, particularly in rural areas and in some urban areas where lack of funds led to closing maternity wards and operating rooms.'¹²³⁷ The discreet use of contraception by women has been increasing in Senegal, due to the cultural and social pressures that force women to have large families and to continue having children. This pressure has 'reportedly led some husbands to ask health workers to terminate the use of contraceptives by their spouses.'¹²³⁸ Abortion is illegal in the country, except where the life of the mother is in imminent danger; an exception that was added in 1967.¹²³⁹ This strict abortion law is 'amongst the most draconian in Africa.'¹²⁴⁰ 60% of illegal abortions are performed on females aged 19-25 years old, and it is estimated that 1 in 10 deaths of pregnant women die from illegal abortion complications.¹²⁴¹ In addition, 38% of female

criminal detention result from backstreet abortions and infanticide.¹²⁴²

Violence Against Women

Rape is widespread in Senegal, despite it being illegal, although spousal rape is not recognised by the law.¹²⁴³ The punishment for rape can vary between 5 – 10 years imprisonment, however, the Government and police rarely enforce the rape legislation, meaning prosecutions for the crime are undeniable low, as highlighted by the Ministry of Justice's statistics in 2009 which showed 47% of accused rapists were unpunished and were released without even being put on trial.¹²⁴⁴

In addition, violence against women is also against the law; with assaults being punished a prison sentence between 1 – 5 years as well as a fine.¹²⁴⁵ Where an assault does occur, if the victim is a woman, both the prison sentence and fine are increased.¹²⁴⁶ The punishment for domestic violence is much greater in comparison to other African nations, with a prison sentence of 10 – 20 years, and life imprisonment if the act results in the death of the person.¹²⁴⁷

Despite this legislation being in place, cultural norms and traditions have prevented meaningful implementation of the law and therefore prevented women from being properly protected from violence, especially where the violence occurred within a family unit.¹²⁴⁸ This was recognised by the Committee to Combat Violence against Women and Children, who criticised 'the failure of some judges to apply the domestic violence laws.'¹²⁴⁹ One of the biggest obstacles to prosecuting rape is the legally allowed practice of using women's sexual history in order to defend the man.¹²⁵⁰

Domestic violence accounts for more than 90% of all reported cases of women being subjected to violence in 2011.¹²⁵¹ FGM is a criminal offence, although it is still prevalent amongst girls throughout the country.¹²⁵² Sexual harassment is also a criminal offence in Senegal, which carries a prison sentence of 5 months up to 3 years, in addition to a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 francs.¹²⁵³ However, as with other legislation, sexual harassment legislation is not effectively enforced, and 'women's rights groups claimed victims of sexual harassment found it difficult, if not impossible, to present proof that was sufficient to secure prosecutions.'¹²⁵⁴

Women, Peace and Security

The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). There is no current or previous UN Peacekeeping programme or mandate in the country.

Economic Empowerment

The country's Constitution provides equal property rights to both men and women in relation to their ability to own land, and numerous Government campaigns have taken place in order to promote the legislation within more rural communities.¹²⁵⁵ As customary and religious law still dominate many rural areas of the country, women's ability to enforce their rights is restricted, and many women are often unaware of their legal rights.¹²⁵⁶ 'Women are legally entitled to acquire and own land independently of their husband or male relatives, and to retain ownership and control over their property after marriage.'¹²⁵⁷



Rural Women Sell Mango and Potato Jam at the Food Processing Shop in Bantantinnting, Senegal. UN Photo

Despite both men and women having equal legal rights to have bank accounts and obtain bank loans, the reality of the situation is that women often face great difficulties in securing loans due to the requirement of providing 'security' for the loan.¹²⁵⁸ Not only are women not recognised by many farming cooperatives as producers (traditionally a male role), but also many women do not have ownership of the land they work, despite them using it.¹²⁵⁹ Both of these factors mean that they are unable to secure finance to help develop their future. Large-scale initiatives were launched by the Government, in an attempt to counteract the economic problems women face.¹²⁶⁰

SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone's National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was developed for the period 2010 – 2014. It was the result of collaboration between multiple

agencies, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, UN agencies, women's NGO's, various media organisations and Government Ministries. It was conducted by a Government Civil Society Task force, and was eventually launched in March 2010. Sierra Leone signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988 without any reservations. In addition, the country signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, more commonly known as the Maputo Protocol, on 9th December 2003; however, it has not yet ratified it.

Education

Despite major problems with accessing education in Sierra Leone, and a 'complex, post-conflict implementation environment, Sierra Leone has witnessed significant improvements in the education sector'¹²⁶¹, especially in relation to the economic, social and political context within the country. These changes have meant 'the Local Education Group in Sierra Leone felt the need to update the sector plan,¹²⁶² resulting in a revised action plan on education provisions in the country. The original Education Sector Plan covered the period 2007 - 2015, however, a new plan came into action this year for the period 2014 - 2018¹²⁶³ based on data relating to the successes and failures of previous educational goals. The Plan has a three-year implementation plan, and focuses on three critical areas: 'Increasing Access; Quality and relevance; and System Strengthening

Only '9.5% of adult women have reached a secondary or higher level of education compared to 20 % of their male counterparts',¹²⁶⁴ Youth literacy rates current stand at 50-59% and adult literacy rates are less than 50%¹²⁶⁵; both statistics place Sierra Leone amongst the lowest ranked countries worldwide. The country's 'Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act' provides free education for all children, with a minimum requirement that children attend school until the age of nine.¹²⁶⁶

Women's Political Participation

Whilst women's political participation in Sierra Leone is slightly higher than other African countries, women's involvement continues to be limited. Currently only 13.2% of Parliamentary seats are held by women¹²⁶⁷; however, this is a slight improvement to the figure during the 2012 elections, where in the Lower/ Single House, women only held 15 out of 124 seats, amounting to 12.1%¹²⁶⁸. Sierra Leone currently ranks as 114th out of 189 countries by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's database.¹²⁶⁹ The President pledged his support for a national campaign, which proposes a 'minimum quota of 30% of women in political decision making positions.'¹²⁷⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Sierra Leone continues to be ranked as one of the lowest countries in the world for maternal

mortality, with it being the 5th worst in 2010¹²⁷¹. However, progress continues to be made each year with the maternal mortality rate falling from 24.2% in 2005 to 16.7% last year.¹²⁷² Despite this, roughly 1100 women die from pregnancy related causes during every 100,000 live births.¹²⁷³ Currently, 63.6% of births are attended by skilled birth attendants, an increase from 59% in 2010, and the general fertility rate per 1000 women, aged between 15 and 24, continues to fall each year and stands at 148 at present.¹²⁷⁴ The lifetime risk of maternal mortality currently stands at 1 in 23.¹²⁷⁵ There are currently 31,000 women living with HIV/ AIDS throughout the country, meaning it ranks among the lower rates for the disease throughout Africa.¹²⁷⁶ In general, women's health requirements and needs 'including access to maternal care, are given low priority by their own families, community leaders and government.'

The Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone has also had a disproportionate impact on women, as 75% of Ebola deaths have been women¹²⁷⁷ and a total of 1,267 deaths have already been recorded in the country.¹²⁷⁸ In response to this, UNICEF has pledged \$61 million to help fight the outbreak in Sierra Leone and to prevent the disease from spreading.¹²⁷⁹

Abortion remains a criminal act under The English Offence Against The Person Act 1861.¹²⁸⁰



A Campaign Volunteer Gives A Demonstration on Proper Hand Washing. Photo, UN Women /Emma Vincent

Violence Against Women

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs presented the country's sixth report to the CEDAW Committee in February 2014, "The report presents a snap shot of the status of women in Sierra Leone from 2007 – 2011 and highlights government's efforts in undertaking a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms."¹²⁸¹ Domestic violence was made a criminal offence in Sierra Leone in 2007 by the Domestic Violence Act.¹²⁸² However, domestic violence remains widespread, as very few cases are actually reported to the authorities, and those that were often resulted in out-of-court settlements and very few prosecutions.¹²⁸³

By 2010, only one domestic violence case had actually been prosecuted under the Act, highlighting the frequent inadequate investigation and interference by traditional leaders.¹²⁸⁴ Violence against women is perpetuated by their 'lack of access to the police, exorbitant fees charged by medical officers and pressure to make out-of-court settlements'¹²⁸⁵ and contributes to 'impunity and state inaction'¹²⁸⁶.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is still highly prevalent, but often under-reported.¹²⁸⁷ Similarly, rates of child marriage in Sierra Leone remain very high, despite the Child Rights Act 2007 and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2007 being passed, which sets the legal age for marriage at 18 and also requires both parties to consent to the marriage.¹²⁸⁸ Cultural and customary practices remain in force within the country.¹²⁸⁹

In 2004 rape was made a criminal offence and is punishable by up to 14 years in prison, however rape by a spouse is not recognised by law (See MEWC AWD Report 2013, pg 92).

'Saturday Courts' were created in order to try and reduce the huge backlog of sexual violence and gender-based violence cases within the country.¹²⁹⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Sierra Leone's National Action Plan (NAP), launched in 2010, was the first step towards protecting women, promoting peace and preventing conflict throughout the country. However, it has been noted that 'despite a recent history of conflict that involved small weapons, there is no mention of disarmament, small arms, or illicit trade in Sierra Leone's NAP.'¹²⁹¹ This is particularly important as women and children are the least protected during times of conflict, and so are disproportionately harmed compared to men.

Economic Empowerment

Despite women forming the majority of the workforce in agriculture, they continue to have limited land ownership rights (See MEWC, AWD Report 2013, pg 92). Women continue to be under-represented at all levels in the economy, due to the status of women being 'immersed in deep cultural discrimination by traditional customs and laws which must be overcome in order to achieve gender equality.'¹²⁹²

The promotion of gender equality is seen as an important and direct way to counteract the violence within the country, which has one of the highest rates of violence towards women and girls in the world.¹²⁹³ Men are now taking a more active role in promoting equality, for example, the Men's Association for Gender Equality-Sierra Leone (MAGE-SL) is a 'non-profit and a network of male-led organisations working towards the promotion of gender equality through advocacy, dialogue and raising awareness on gender policies, women's rights and empowerment in Sierra Leone.'¹²⁹⁴

The adoption of the Devolution of Estate Act 2007 has had a positive influence on women's economic empowerment, as the Act requires property to be distributed equally between the deceased's children and spouse, whilst also criminalising the 'expulsion of widows from their homes after the death of the husband.'¹²⁹⁵ Similarly, the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act 2007 enable both husbands and wives to acquire property.¹²⁹⁶ However, customary law, which exists alongside the country's legislation and religious laws, prevents a wife from inheriting her deceased husband's property.¹²⁹⁷ Land often belongs to a family and is controlled by the male head of the household, meaning women are often only able to access land through a husband or male relative.¹²⁹⁸

TOGO

Togo signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1983 without any reservations. In addition, the country signed and ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, more commonly known as the Maputo Protocol, on 12th October 2005.

Education

Education within the country remains sub-standard and below expectations, despite many advances made within the last few years. The system was severely damaged by both political and economic problems within Togo that prevented meaningful development and restricted access to education for many.¹²⁹⁹ Despite free education for children of primary school age being introduced in 2008, and considerable improvements being made in increasing the gross enrolment, accessing basic education and the standard of education remain insufficient.¹³⁰⁰ Not only are adult literacy rates extremely low, standing at 64.8% for females as a per cent of males for 2008 to 2012¹³⁰¹, but children between the ages of 5 and 14 are increasingly forced to work in order to help support their families, and therefore are unable to attend school.¹³⁰²

Whilst access to education is limited, the poor quality and standard of teaching is also an area for concern. Classrooms are overcrowded, often with over 50 students per teacher, and there are few qualified teachers in the schools, leading to a poor standard of education throughout the country.¹³⁰³ Gross enrolment in Togo has increased considerably over the past few years, and compares favourably with other African nations.¹³⁰⁴ However basic education standards remain low, which is fuelled by the insufficient funding by the Government, where only 4.5% of the annual budget was allocated to education in 2011¹³⁰⁵, falling far short of the amount needed to reach the Millennium Development Goal of a literacy rate of 75% by 2015.¹³⁰⁶

An education project called the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative Programme Project for Togo aimed to improve access to education within the country, as well as the standard of teaching. The programme was due to end on May 1st 2014, however an extension of 6 months was granted and it eventually closed on October 31st 2014. The objectives of the

programme were '(i) increase coverage of and retention in basic education, (ii) support improvements in the quality of teaching, and (iii) strengthen institutional and community capacity in implementation and management of the project.'¹³⁰⁷ In addition, due to a lack of qualified teacher, 4 new teaching training institutions were planned for 2014.¹³⁰⁸

Women's Political Participation

Women continue to be under-represented in all levels of politics throughout the country, despite progress being made in the National Assembly, where 14 females hold seats in the 91 seats National Assembly, which was an increase of 6 women in comparison to 2012.¹³⁰⁹ Women also hold 7 seats out of 27 in the Cabinet, which demonstrates better political participation equality.¹³¹⁰

Although both men and women have equal rights to vote and participate in politics, but in reality 'there are few women in positions of leadership, either in formal politics or civil society.'¹³¹¹ However, changes made to the National Electoral Law in 2013, where candidate lists must include equal numbers of both men and women, should have an immediate effect on the equality of women's political participation in Togo.¹³¹² In addition to this 'a 2013 law on Political Party and Electoral Campaign Funding provides that 20% of public funding allocated to political parties be distributed in proportion to the number of women elected in previous legislative elections, and that 10% of public funding be distributed in proportion to the number of women elected from each political party in previous local elections.'¹³¹³ Both are positive steps in promoting gender equality within the country.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Access to reproductive health services is legal in Togo, with women having the right to access contraception, as well as information relating to contraceptive methods.¹³¹⁴ However, in reality, access is relatively poor, with only 13.1%

of women aged 15-49 using a modern form of contraception in 2010 and 37.2% stating that their family planning needs were not being met.¹³¹⁵ Access is particularly restricted in rural areas.¹³¹⁶ Abortion is legal in Togo in the following situations; in cases of rape or incest; foetal impairment; or to save the pregnant woman's life.¹³¹⁷

The Government passed legislation in 1988 banning the harmful practice of FGM, and it is relatively uncommon in the country, with 12% of women aged 15-49 having undergone the practice in 1996, down to 3.9% in 2010, and down again to roughly 2% in 2012.¹³¹⁸ The penalty can range from 2 months to 10 years imprisonment, depending on whether the woman died, as well as a fine ranging from 100,000 CFA to 1,000,000 CFA; in addition, people who are aware of the practice being carried out can also be punished by a prison sentence of 1 month to 1 year, as well as a fine of 20,000 – 50,000 francs.¹³¹⁹ Health is one of the few Millennium Development Goals that Togo has the possibility of reaching by the deadline next year.¹³²⁰ The prevalence of HIV is low, although specific recent statistics are unavailable; however the rate of adults living with HIV was 3.6% in 2001, which reduced to 3% in 2008.¹³²¹

Violence Against Women

The practice of FGM is relatively low, compared to other African nations, as previously mentioned. Domestic violence is not specifically criminalised by legislation, and police rarely intervene in matters of a domestic nature, despite it being reportedly widespread throughout Togo.¹³²² One of the main problems fuelling domestic violence is the lack of available information for women in relation to their rights, leading many to believe the violence was justifiable, as shown by a report in 2010 stating that 43.4% of women believed husbands were justified in beating their wives if it related to certain things.¹³²³

However, women's rights NGO's state that a change in attitude towards domestic violence is occurring, with more women becoming aware of their rights.¹³²⁴ Rape is illegal, including marital rape, and carries a punishment of between 5-10 years imprisonment.¹³²⁵ However, it is reportedly widespread throughout the country, and although police do investigate and pursue charges when accusations are made, due to the public stigma

attached to being a rape victim, few women actually report the crime.¹³²⁶ Sexual harassment is also illegal in Togo, with the Labour Code 2006 providing protection for women against sexual harassment within the workplace.¹³²⁷

Women, Peace and Security

The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). There is no current or previous UN Peacekeeping programme or mandate in the country.

Economic Empowerment

According to the World Bank, 81% of Togolese women are classed as economically active.¹³²⁸ Married women are able to have a job or a trade, giving them equal rights to their husband; this was part of a new piece of legislation in 2012 (Persons and Family Code).¹³²⁹

However, as the majority of women work in the informal employment sector, they are unprotected by employment legislation, meaning although they theoretically have equal rights to men, in reality women's rights are much less protected.¹³³⁰ Pregnant women are entitled to paid maternity leave, for up to 14 weeks, which is half funded by the woman's employer and half by the Government.¹³³¹ It is also illegal for employers to discriminate against women when hiring new employees, but also in relation to salaries, under the Labour Code 2006.¹³³²

Although women have equal access to bank accounts and loans, in reality, due to women's salaries being much lower than men's, they are often unable to provide the banks with the required guarantees to secure a loan.¹³³³

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- 1324 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1325 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1326 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1327 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1328 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1329 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1330 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1331 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1332 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>
- 1333 <http://genderindex.org/sites/default/files/datasheets/TG.pdf>