



ACTION

ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AFRICA

From Commitment to Delivery

Consensus Statement and Plan of Action

Sixth
The African Development Forum (ADF VI)

19-21 November 2008 - United Nations Conference Centre - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Economic Commission
for Africa



African Union



African Development
Bank



ACTION

ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AFRICA

From Commitment to Delivery

Consensus Statement and Plan of Action

Sixth
The African Development Forum (ADF VI)

19-21 November 2008 - United Nations Conference Centre - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Economic Commission
for Africa



African Union



African Development
Bank

Contents

Preamble	1
Consensus Statement.....	2
Plan of Action: "From Commitment to Delivery"	4

Preamble

1. We, the participants in the sixth Africa Development Forum, representing stakeholders from across the African continent, women and men, governments and civil society, the private sector, youth, traditional and religious leaders, convening in Addis Ababa at the invitation of the African Union Commission, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, supported by the UN family and development partners from 19 to 21 November 2008, examined the situation, experience and hopes of women and girls across the continent and the level of gender equality as well as violence against women, and agreed upon this Consensus Statement and Plan of Action.

2. Aware that, across the African continent, a powerful movement for the creation of a new social order is unfolding. Led by women, men and young people of vision and commitment, Africans are determined that the strengths of their societies can form the foundation of a brighter future. Africans are confident that the future of the continent and all its people, women and men and children, will be secure when Africans enjoy full gender equality, and women are fully empowered and are free from all forms of violence. This dream can be achieved—and is being achieved.

3. Noting that we stand on the threshold of the target date for the Millennium Development Goals, and after more than three decades of solemn commitments, declarations and plans, we find that progress towards realizing the rights of women and girls in Africa and achieving gender equality and addressing violence against women has been disappointing. We need to build on achievements and move forward with commitment. Words have not been followed by enough action. Promises have not always been matched by political will and resources. Indeed, time is up!

4. Recognizing that it is not possible for women to meaningfully participate in development when they are subjected to discrimination, disempowerment, violence and abuse. This is not only a grave violation of women's human rights but also a huge missed opportunity because African women possess formidable potential of strength and power and have been a major force for democratic and developmental change. Violence against women is a key indication that African women are far from enjoying human security in general and personal security in particular, despite the adoption of numerous solemn commitments to end such abuses over the decades.

5. It is critical for women to insist on asserting their rights. It is imperative to ensure the involvement of women from all walks of life, especially at grassroots level, through participatory democratic processes. Equally important is the involvement of men who must play a major role in taking action.

6. Further recognizing that, as emphasized by African leaders at the forum, bold moves have been made to provide increased representation for women, enhanced participation for civil society, and accelerated efforts in support of economic empowerment and social protection. We congratulate and encourage those countries that are making efforts to achieve the effective participation of women in high-level decision making. We urge all African countries to follow best practices and to translate numerical representation into transformative change. We commend the African Union for its Constitutive Act which sets a standard of gender parity at the highest level. We support President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in her ongoing efforts to champion the cause of women and address issues of gender equality.

Consensus Statement

7. Now is the time to reverse injustices that have long been tolerated. Now is the time to put an end to a situation in which one in three women is subjected to violence, human trafficking, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. Now is the time for women, who produce most of Africa's food and cash crops undertake the vast majority of caregiving, to enjoy their rightful access to, ownership of and control over land, food, housing and property. Now is the time for women and girls, who are too often deprived of the right to literacy and education, to be able to fulfill their capabilities. Now is the time for men to engage fully in meeting their responsibilities and fulfilling their own capacities as equal and empowered members of society.

8. African cultures possess profound positive values, but there are also patriarchal elements that are entrenched in African societies and persist despite national and international efforts to transform and to make them consistent with women's human rights. Within this culture, male and female identities are constructed in restricted ways that give low status to women. Weak economic power, subordinate social status and lack of voice define women's experience across the continent. Within this context, there are indications that violations against women are increasing.

9. Although African women have come a long way and are making important strides in advancing their position, most women in Africa continue to suffer in silence with their rights denied. Despite the best efforts of a growing number of women and men activists and champions, women's voices are too rarely heard. Women are disempowered, their work undervalued, their experiences unreported. This is a particularly acute crisis for women who are victims of violence and abuse, who are too often unable to report their crimes and seek justice, solace and remedy. We recognize the courage and commitment of women who have spoken out and who have brought these vital issues to national and international attention. We need to break the silence, to empower survivors of violence to speak and be heard. We need to provide assistance and protection to victims. We need to gather and utilize authoritative evidence and data on violence against women and girls.

10. Recognizing the biological, social, cultural and economic vulnerability of women and girls to HIV, and the close links between violence against women and HIV transmission, along with the implications of the disproportionate impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on women and girls, we call for "structural prevention" efforts, public education, social and psychological services for survivors of sexual violence, and post-exposure prophylaxis. We also call for attention to underlying socio-economic drivers of women's vulnerabilities and equitable access, action to combat stigma and discrimination and efforts to ensure equitable access to treatment.

11. In some African countries, women and girls face unacceptable levels of personal insecurity on a daily basis. The basic lived reality for many women and girls consists of unceasing vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, exposure to sexual harassment, vulnerability to HIV and risk of violence. In response to this crisis of personal safety for women and girls, we call for **universal responsibility to protect and respect women and girls**. This entails urgent and sustained action by all stakeholders, including women and men, families, communities, religious institutions, the private sector, civil society, the media, local and national government, police and security forces, African, global and international partners.

12. We call for safe streets and markets, safe schools and workplaces, safe recreation, safe police stations, safe refugee camps, and safe homes. We call for all members of society to ensure that women and girls can live without fear for their personal safety or the exploitation of their vulnerability. Achieving protection and respect demands that all assume their responsibilities. It requires transforming the

patriarchal social and cultural norms that underpin gender inequalities, changing models of masculinity that degrade women and girls, and ensuring that every faith's message of respect for women and girls is properly heard. It demands taking steps to address the interlocking crises of poverty and lack of services. It needs action to provide the rule of law and access to justice. We call for police services that are gender aware and gender balanced. We call for assistance including psychosocial services to survivors of violence. We call for international peacekeeping forces to prioritize the protection and respect of women and girls, to include female-only contingents especially among civilian police and to include training in gender issues in preparation for deployment. Leadership at all levels is needed to realize the universal responsibility to protect and respect women and girls.

13. We welcome the initiative of the United Nations Secretary General to designate the coming seven years (2008-2015) until the target date for the Millennium Development Goals, as the occasion for his campaign, "Unite to End Violence against Women and Girls through 2015". We endorse this with a **comprehensive and urgent Africa-wide plan of action to eliminate violence against women and girls** including costed and supported national plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

14. We urge governments which have yet to ratify regional international conventions and protocols to do so without delay and to enact domestic legislation to ensure their effective implementation.

15. We urge governments to enter into extradition treaties to combat the trafficking of women and children and to enact domestic legislation to penalize the perpetrators of this crime.

16. We urge a special focus on ending violence against women and girls in situations of conflict, including special responsibilities for regional and international peacekeeping forces. Women in post-conflict situations face special threats and need special forms of protection and assistance.

17. We endorse calls for the universal adoption of the gender parity principle, namely the goal of a 50:50 gender balance in all spheres of political, social and economic life. This is especially important among senior executive and judicial appointments and in legislatures across the entire continent, and should be implemented as rapidly as possible.

18. We call for global, African and national initiatives to ensure financing for gender equality. Governmental and multilateral financial institutions need to redesign macroeconomic policies to address women's needs and gender concerns. These efforts are all-the-more necessary in the shadow of today's simultaneous financial, food and fuel crises which imperil Africa's prospects for achieving the MDGs. ODA cuts should not lead to reduced development and budget spending. Women should not bear the brunt of any economic downturn. Their access to employment and credit should not be jeopardized. The crisis must not be the occasion to deepen gender inequities.

19. Budgetary policies and outcomes are not gender sensitive. We call upon African countries to formulate and implement budget policies in such a way that taxation measures and expenditure allocations promote gender equality and women's empowerment and help end violence against women.

20. Noting that deep and enduring poverty is the daily experience of most African women and girls, and that overcoming female poverty and child poverty form the core of poverty reduction measures, we call for governments and international development partners to **prioritize and implement social protection policies and programmes**. Among the array of possible measures that can directly overcome female poverty we especially note cash transfers, old-age pensions, child support grants, social

housing schemes, compensation to caregivers, and measures to empower persons living with disability. Among the measures that are highly effective in tackling gender-related poverty are universal primary education, equal opportunity for school attendance at all levels, equal opportunity for income generation, and universally-accessible reproductive health services.

21. In the lead up to the Doha Meeting on Financing for Development and in the light of the financial crisis and rising food and volatile fuel prices, and in the context of climate change, development partners should sustain the ODA commitment they made in Monterrey and at the G8. Despite this crisis, we urge development partners to invest in women. At the same time, we urge African governments to increase investments in women and gender equality, funded by domestic resources. The financial crisis is no excuse for delaying action.

22. African Union Member States and development partners are encouraged to finance the AU's African Women's Fund in an expedited manner to an extent sufficient for it to fulfill its mandate. We furthermore call upon the United Nations to create a UN agency focused on gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women and children. As the High Level Panel on UN Reform has reiterated, this agency should be funded to a minimum of \$1 billion per year, and provided with the standing and expertise to provide global leadership on these issues. As the MDG target date draws close, implementation of all MDGs relevant to women, girls and gender, and especially Goal 3, should be accelerated with investment of greater resources and more energy.

23. African Member States are signatory to a rich corpus of international, regional and subregional declarations, resolutions, goals and conventions which provide a solid foundation for the Consensus Statement and Plan of Action of this Forum. We call for law reform to ensure that national laws and legislation protect women and girls and promote gender equality. However, the principal challenge before us today is **to translate these commitments into meaningful action** that can transform the lives of women and girls across the African continent.

Plan of Action: "From Commitment to Delivery"

24. The Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Ending Violence against Women and Girls, Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women consists of the following priority actions that can have far-reaching impacts:

- (a) Africa-Wide Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls;
- (b) Financing for gender equality, women's empowerment, ending violence against women and girls;
- (c) Reliable data on gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women and girls.

4. Ending All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls: "Act Now, No Time to Wait!" We call for a three-year Africa-Wide Campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls, to be launched in 2009. This should take the form of a universal responsibility to protect and respect women and girls, including campaigns to transform patriarchal values, to end harmful traditional practices, to put a stop to the trafficking of women and children, to prevent and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, whether in peacetime, conflict or post-conflict situations, and to strengthen the educational, health, policing, judicial and social service institutions that should prevent and punish such violence. It should address such underlying economic and social causes of vulnerability as women's weak legal

rights to land, housing and property. Viewing gender-based violence as a major security threat of concern to national and international authorities, the campaign should entail breaking the silence and encouraging and supporting survivors to speak out. It should compile best practices for tackling harmful traditional practices. It involves mobilizing the grassroots. It involves the mobilization of men.

5. Governments which have not yet signed and ratified all international and regional conventions and protocols relevant to gender equality and the protection of women and girls from all forms violence, should do so without delay. All countries should enact corresponding domestic legislation and take the necessary measures to transform these commitments into national action plans.

6. Government should identify and support community programmes that aim at increasing awareness for families on gender equality issues and ending all forms of violence against women as part of the campaign. Governments should establish gender desks or departments in all law enforcement and national security institutions to promote the ending of violence against women and girls.

7. Governments need popular education programmes at all levels to help deconstruct negative culture in an innovative way, making effective use of the African Women's Human Rights Observatory to monitor actions and assess the impact of these programmes. African research institutions and civil society should be supported to explore ways of pursuing these goals.

8. Religious and traditional leaders and institutions should subscribe to national laws and international standards in interpreting cultural practices and religious doctrines.

9. The police, the judiciary, and all other law enforcement agencies should enforce laws to protect women and girls from violence including rape and trafficking and apprehend and punish perpetrators. In addition, they should establish women-friendly practices and institutions for responding to violence. These elements should be included in the training modules for police and judicial officers. Ministers responsible for gender should put in place oversight mechanisms to regularly monitor violence against women and girls and steps take to stop it.

10. Gender issues and the prevention of violence against women should be integrated into in the formal and non-formal education curricula at all levels, and the media should be trained in gender equality and ending violence against women, for them to play a pivotal role in this campaign. Civil society and national human rights commissions should be involved in this effort.

11. New ways should be found to develop and disseminate recourse mechanisms which engage with victims of violence, encouraging women to speak out and report on their experiences and obtain the necessary ongoing protection and support.

12. In situations of armed conflict where state responsibilities cannot be fully exercised, regional and international mechanisms for protecting women and girls must be developed and implemented. Governments and international organizations, including peacekeeping forces, should draw up and enact action plans to realize the aims enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1820, steps should be taken to prevent and punish rape as a war crime.

13. Countries should put in place the necessary medical, psychosocial and economic assistance mechanisms to provide all necessary assistance to survivors of violence to ensure their future health, social and economic status and security.

14. A Task Force comprising the AU, ECA and ADB, the wider UN system, Regional Economic Communities, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, governments and national stakeholders including civil society, should be formed to drive the campaign.

15. Financing for Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Ending Violence against Women and Girls. Realization that financing has been a major impediment to the implementation of gender-specific commitments and obligations, this Forum calls for specific financing of gender equality, empowerment of women and ending violence against women within each country's Medium Term Expenditure Framework. The Forum calls for implementation of action at national, regional and international level.

16. African governments should formulate and implement taxation policies and expenditure allocations that address gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women. This should include budget transparency and public expenditure tracking on gender equality and investments in women to ensure effective monitoring. Budget literacy at all levels, including civil society, should be increased.

17. Each sectoral ministry should formulate a comprehensive plan for promoting gender equality within the Medium Term Expenditure Framework. The respective national Ministries of Finance and Planning should ensure that each sectoral ministry allocates sufficient resources to these programmes in compliance with the financing for gender equality principles. Parliament should be supported to become a real force to play its oversight role in this regard.

18. The AU, ECA and ADB in collaboration with the UN system should establish a Joint Task Force to build the capacity of government institutions to establish the mechanisms to institutionalize this activity within twelve months with a view to completing the exercise within three years. In addition, the Joint Task Force should support training government officers and civil society to track the allocation and use of financial resources with respect to gender impacts and ending violence against women. Furthermore, the Finance Act should be reviewed to make the Minister of Finance accountable to Parliament on gender related resource allocation.

19. The launching and operationalization of the AU's African Women's Fund, in accordance with the decision of the AU Assembly, should be undertaken within the deadline of July 2009 set by the Executive Council. National governments, international partners and the private sector should be encouraged to provide it with sufficient finance for it to fulfill its mandate.

20. The proposed United Nations women's agency should be set up during 2009 and funded to a minimum of \$1 billion per annum, to ensure that resources and expertise reach all levels especially the grassroots.

21. Governments and development partners should use the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action as powerful tools for governments' and development partners' implementation of their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

22. Collecting Reliable Data on Gender Equality and Violence against Women and Girls. Establishing sound data on all aspects of gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women and girls is a necessary precondition for establishing the best policies and monitoring the effectiveness of actions. Data also include the life stories of women and girls who are survivors of violence and exploitation. In addition to being collected, it is equally vital that data are analyzed, disseminated and used as the basis for designing and implementing programmes and monitoring and evaluating activities.

ACTION

**ON GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AFRICA**

ICT should be used for better dissemination of data. All member states and partners should cooperate in strengthening the African Gender and Development Index developed by the ECA and building capacities and strengthening systems for collection, analysis, dissemination and use of sex- and gender-disaggregated data. The AU, ECA and ADB should jointly publish a regular report, "The State of Africa's Women" based on these data.



Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo

