ACTION

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

The Sixth African Development Forum

gender equality

empower women

end violence against women

Issues Paper 2

Empowering
African Women

The *Sixth* African Development Forum (ADF VI)

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

Economic Commission
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Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ART	Anti-retroviral Therapy
AU	African Union
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CBO	Community-based Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REC	Regional Economic Community
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
WHO	World Health Organization
WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network

1.   Introduction

1.   Gender equality and women's empowerment are development goals in themselves; they are key to sustainable development, particularly in Africa. The continent's average annual growth rate of approximately 5.8 per cent still remains significantly lower than the 7 per cent annual growth rate required to reduce poverty by half by 2015, if the poverty Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target is to be reached. The achievement of higher economic growth depends on successful promotion and implementation of gender equality and social, economic and political empowerment programmes and interventions specifically targeted at women. Ensuring that women have access to education and training, productive assets, including land, credit and time-saving technology, is *sine qua non* to achievement of the 7 per cent annual growth rate needed to achieve the MDGs in Africa.

2.   Over the last six decades, from the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, important progress in gender equality and women's empowerment as a development end in itself has been made. Progress has also been made in the development of global and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment (see annex I for the detailed list of commitments). Chronological steps in this journey are illustrated in the roadmap presented in figure 1. Although the UDHR included the rights of all including women, prevailing tradition, prejudice, social, economic, and political interests combined to exclude women.

3.   The First United Nations World Conference on Women, held in 1975 in Mexico City, led soon after to promulgation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that was passed in 1979. Following the Third World Conference held in Nairobi, issues relating to women have been increasingly integrated into global meetings, and summits and have been addressed within conventions. Some of the major relevant international frameworks developed on gender equality include the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)[1], the Cairo Programme of Action on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and the MDGs[2]. Since 2000, the activities of the World Conferences on Women have been integrated into the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which has responsibility for review of implementation and review of current challenges as well as for definition of forward-looking strategies.

4.   African countries for the most part have been signatories to these conventions and have ratified them and made commitments to address gender equality. At the continental level, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government have adopted two instruments specifically to promote gender equality and women's empowerment: the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted in 2003 in Maputo; and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted at the AU Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa in July 2004.

5.   Besides these overarching commitments, African countries have also adopted several sector-focused declarations on HIV and AIDS, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, education, peace and security, water and sanitation, energy, climate change and others. (See annex II for the detailed list of the declarations). These sector-focused declarations fully acknowledge the centrality of gender equality, and women's empowerment in achieving progress in development within the sector and

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1   Provides a framework on gender equality and empowerment of women in 12 critical areas of concern which are: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, economic disparity, power sharing, institutions, human rights, mass media, environment and the girl child.

2   MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

commit the countries to address gender equality issues systematically. At the subregional level, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have adopted gender policies, declarations and guidelines for promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Figure 1: Key Dates on the Roadmap to Women's Empowerment
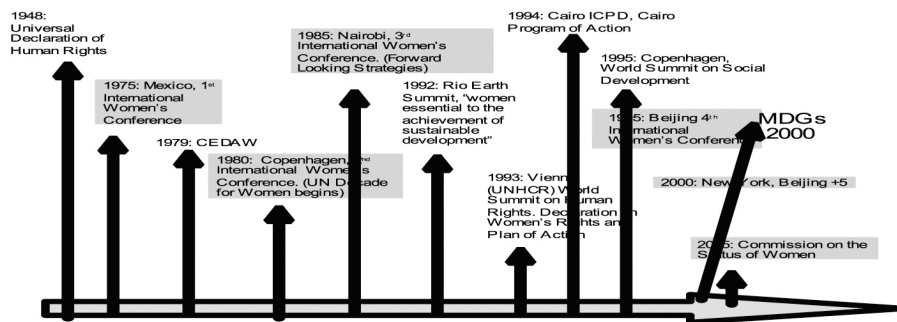
6.   Despite these commitments and declarations, progress has been slow in overcoming gender imbalances and the prevalent gender-based violence. At the Africa continental level, achievements noted by the 'Outcome and Way Forward' document that emanated from the Beijing plus Ten review process in 2004 included: policy, and legal and institutional reforms in many countries (UNECA 2005a). However, advances in policies and legislation at the macro-level have not necessarily resulted in progress on gender equality and women's empowerment on the ground, largely due to barriers in implementation.

7.   For example, many laws and policies are not enforced due to entrenched values and power relations at the macro- and micro-level, shaping local policies, communities and cultural beliefs and women's daily lives. Women have fewer opportunities for social development through access to education, health care, water and sanitation; economic development through access to employment and productive resources; and political participation, reflected in imbalances in decision-making. These are the strategic areas that must be tackled if progress is to be achieved in the agenda for gender equality.

8.   As the continent marks the 50th anniversary of one of its institutions, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), answers to the following questions are critical to defining the priorities for action on the continent:

- Why is implementation of the declarations on gender equality and women's empowerment lower than expected?
- What can member governments, AU and United Nations agencies do to scale up 'what is working', and 'best practices'?
- What more should member governments, AU and United Nations agencies do, at a practical level, to ensure achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors?

9.   The aims of this issues paper are to underscore the key challenges constraining implementation of the commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment and to propose a framework

for discussion at the Forum, out of which an action plan to accelerate translation of commitments into reality can be developed. The paper essentially argues for more empowerment of women through the creation of opportunities such as employment, improved land rights, education, and decision-making among others, which enable them to challenge gender inequality and discrimination.

10.   The focus is on the core dimensions of gender empowerment, namely: economic empowerment (land and property rights; agriculture; employment, trade; and Information and Communication Technology (ICT); social empowerment (education, training and skills development; health, including reproductive health and rights, access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care, water and sanitation); and political empowerment (governance, conflict, peace and security). The paper also addresses two emerging issues: climate change, and food security.

11.   Under each of these thematic areas, the relevant declarations that have been adopted are discussed, as well as the progress made on gender equality and empowerment of women, the key challenges remaining and suggestions for issues to be discussed in the Forum. The paper ends with some conclusions.

2.   Economic empowerment

2.1   Gender, land and property rights

12.   Land is an important factor of production for a wide range of economic activities in Africa. Rights of access, use and control of land are therefore central to securing the lives of rural women in countries where the main sources of income and livelihood are derived from these natural resources. Widespread limits on the ability of African women to own land has serious repercussions on their effective engagement in economic activities. There is evidence also of land policies that have the effect of deepening the already high level of female land tenure insecurity by ignoring their rights and/or interests and thereby increasing their own vulnerabilities in addition to those of their households.

13.   The issue of land and property rights of women, such as those of inheritance practices, need to be addressed. These rights are included in those protected under CEDAW, whose article 14, p. 83 stipulates that "*State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas … and…shall ensure to such women the right … to have access to land and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform…*". The BPFA also called upon governments "*to enact and enforce legislation that guarantees equal rights to succession and inheritance, regardless of the sex of the child so that the girl child is not discriminated against in acquisition of land and other family properties*".

14.   Almost all African countries have put progressive land policies and legal instruments to support the land rights of women in place. However, implementation of these policies and enforcement of legislation are hampered by the socio-cultural and economic constraints discussed below.

Challenges

15.   A fundamental issue is that women face major obstacles in owning and controlling land as a result of: customary law; some legal clauses that do not allow joint ownership of land by married couples under statutory tenure; and non-synchronization of the inheritance and marriage laws with the Land law. In situations where women can own and control land, such as where they can buy the land

from the land market, women are constrained by such socio-economic factors as illiteracy, lack of capital and implements, lack of collateral, and lack of farm management experience, training and advice.

16. Where supportive legislation is in place, obstacles include shortages of staff, inadequate resources and equipment, and above all, the preference of the communities themselves, which follow traditions and cultural norms that, unfortunately, are generally gender biased. Whether land is vested in the President, the State, in public boards, or in citizens, the status of women's rights in relation to land ownership has not improved very much. It still depends on the power wielded by traditions and customs - usually biased ones - which are widely practiced and which prevail over statutory systems despite the progressive constitutions and laws that have been enacted by most countries in Africa.

17. Another challenge is that gender differences in property rights hinder natural resource management. Property rights greatly influence land care; farmers with long-term access to land have a greater incentive to sustain that land and develop ways of preserving and regenerating it. Clearly, the ability of women to own or cultivate land over the long term will affect the management of natural resources. In Ghana's cocoa-growing region where land is transferred as gifts, wives acquired land as a gift with strong, individualized rights, in return for helping their husbands establish cocoa farms. The way the help is valued, however, differs by gender; men must plant 20-25 per cent of a parcel with cocoa trees before the land is transferred to them but women have to plant 40-50 per cent of the land before acquiring it as a gift. Still, the emergence of gift transfers has gone some way in empowering most women (Quisumbing, 1999).

18. There are also cases when modern land tenure exacerbates gender inequality in land and property rights especially when communal land tenure regimes get replaced by land titling, resulting in women losing usufruct rights to common land as the titled owner fences off the land. Violation of women's rights to land and property ownership has also been observed in land reform programmes and land redistribution where land is allocated to a family and the man gets ownership on the assumption that he is the bread-winner and that the family is a unified entity, with each household member acting in the best interest of each individual in the family.

19. Women also suffer disproportionately from the fact that in some countries, conflict, violence, and, especially large-scale forced population movements have lead to a general decline in tenure security in rural areas. In some countries, this problem is compounded by inequitable distribution of land, and an increasing scarcity of land due in part to environmental degradation and inadequate land management policies and in part to an ever-growing population requiring increasing resources and land. It is clear that in such countries, women will stand to benefit from development policies that centre on addressing endemic tenure insecurity and lack of access to land for large parts of the population.

20. Finally, women also suffer from some of the adverse consequence of the rapid urbanization process that is taking place in many countries in Africa, especially in countries that for some reason have seen a dramatic increase in female-led households. Urban migrants, and especially those amongst them that before their migration to the city belonged to the rural poor, often face significant challenges in obtaining or formalizing secure property rights over their urban dwellings. Women would undoubtedly gain from urban development plans and policies that would pay sufficient attention to the plight of urban migrants and their need to have stable and predictable rights over the property they inhabit or use.

Progress

21.   In line with commitments under various international human rights instruments, a substantial number of African countries have taken measures to promulgate national constitutions that broadly reflect fundamental human rights principles. In addition to these, other instruments also guarantee the rights of all citizens to land though in some countries these instruments tend to be gender-neutral without specifically stating the position of women. This vagueness has rendered many of those instruments non-effective in reducing gender biases against women on land and property rights.

22.   Countries are undertaking different initiatives to promote the land and property rights of women. In Kenya, community watchdog organizations and other groups providing home-based care for those living with HIV/AIDS have designed interventions to secure the property rights of women. Property rights grabbing situations are negotiated mostly with male members of the family with the aim of ensuring that women and girls are not deprived of land and other property (Kimani, 2008).

23.   In Rwanda, the Government passed a law in 1999 giving women inheritance rights equal to those of males, overruling traditional norms by which only male children could inherit. This has enabled widows and female orphans of the 1994 genocide to secure land. Currently, United Nations agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to raise women's awareness of their rights and to support efforts to entrench equality of access in national laws.

24.   In order for interventions to be meaningful, governments and other stakeholders must recognize the urgent need to develop policies and legislation that address women's land rights issues, as well as reforms of land institutions that speak to the challenges faced by women as they attempt to gain access to land and secure their land rights. Supporting national policy processes with interventions at the subregional and continental levels is critical to providing the necessary guidance, monitoring and lesson sharing to catalyze policy formulation and implementation.

25.   In this regard, the AU-ECA-AfDB Land Policy Initiative, which was established in 2006, is developing a Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa to be endorsed by the AU Summit of Heads and States and Government in 2009. Benchmarks and indicators on land policy suggested in the framework will provide guidance on how to track progress on reforms with a view to addressing land-related issues such as gender inequality in land ownership and tenure security for women.

Issues for discussion

- What are the good practices in promoting women's land and property rights (community, national, subregional and regional? How can they be scaled up?
- What are the obstacles that continue to hinder implementation of legislation and policies that would enable women to acquire land and property? In particular, what else is needed to strengthen and enforce legislation? What are the capacity-building needs for women, for NGOs, for Government sectors, for AU, AfDB and the United Nations?
- What can be done to reinforce the positive aspects of customary land tenure systems? How can the land rights of women in customary land tenure regimes be integrated with the statutory legal systems?

- How can broader development strategies support the strengthening of women's property rights, for example in such areas as retaining the girl child in school, improved access to credit, technologies, markets and others?

2.2   Gender and agricultural production

26.   Significant differences in gender roles exist between women and men in securing food security and agricultural production in Africa. Women are the dominant agricultural producers, traders and food providers in most countries. Despite the fact that they are responsible for most of the food production in Africa, they generally lack access to land titles, credit, information and skills. Equitable, effective and sustainable agriculture and rural development cannot be pursued without an explicit recognition of these realities. Women's empowerment is central to raising levels of nutrition, improving production and distribution of food and agricultural products, and enhancing the living conditions of rural populations.

Progress

27.   Over the past four decades, progress has been achieved in gaining recognition of the importance of women in the agricultural sector. Some key AU Declarations reference the need to address the gender inequalities experienced in agriculture. This includes the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) adopted in 2003 which calls for 6 per cent agricultural growth rates and supports the mainstreaming of gender issues into all agricultural and related policy; the 2003 Maputo Declaration that commits African leaders to allocate at least 10 per cent of public expenditure on agriculture and rural development; the 2004 Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water; and the 2006 Abuja Fertilizer Summit which adopted a number of resolutions to promote the supply and use of fertilizers by African farmers including urging countries to take concrete measures to address the fertilizer needs of women farmers. African leaders also agreed to engage in consultations at national and regional levels with all stakeholders including women, aimed at promoting their active participation in all aspects of agricultural and food production.

28.   In many countries, gender has been mainstreamed into sectoral agricultural policies. The empowerment of women engaged in farming has been enhanced through various initiatives including: training; literacy activities; provision of subsidized inputs; and improved access to market information, credit, and extension services. NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other civil society organizations, private sector and development partners are playing a key role in promoting gender equality in the agricultural sector because of the retreat of government from rural development in some countries. Africa is the only region in the world in which the average per capita food production has been consistently falling for the last 40 years, resulting in a high level of poverty and malnutrition.

Challenges

29.   Africa's small-scale farmers both male and female are confronted with major challenges that include: limited access to farm inputs such as high-yielding seeds; organic and mineral fertilizers needed to replenish depleted soils; tillage services; simple water management systems to allow farmers to deal with erratic rains; and poor road infrastructure. Also lacking are strong market, research, extension, and finance systems. Small-scale farmers today also need the support of government policies that promote sustainable and productive African agriculture, and which ensure that farmers can get access to markets.

30.   However, within this broader set of challenges to agricultural production, women farmers are worse off than men. Agricultural research, extension and credit services still do not fully meet the needs of women farmers. Initiatives to empower women have largely failed since they have not been supported by appropriate technologies. Women's effective participation is further constrained by limited land and property rights and limited access to capital, education and the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Urban agriculture faces similar problems as the rural sector. Climate change is also having an adverse impact on agricultural production with marked gender dimensions.

31.   The dearth of sex-disaggregated data and indicators has limited meaningful integration of gender concerns into policies. It has also led to difficulties in monitoring the effect of the limited policy measures. Work led by FAO to mainstream gender considerations into agricultural statistics on the continent has produced a number of examples of 'good practice' with regard to agricultural censuses and surveys. However, lack of easily available gender- disaggregated data in all countries means that women's contribution to agriculture is poorly understood.

32.   The greatest challenge is the persistence of gender bias and gender blindness: all farmers are still generally perceived as "male" by policymakers, development planners and agricultural service deliverers. Yet, strategies that promote gender equality in smallholder agriculture which specifically target both men and women in agricultural technology dissemination can have a greater impact on poverty compared to those that only target men. It is critical that agricultural inputs be made accessible to both men and women. In addition, strengthening women's property rights to enable women to hold individual or joint title to land and strengthening women's rights with respect to inheritance, divorce, and violence against women increase women's ability to participate actively in the development process. (IFPRI, 2005).

33.   Agricultural productivity increases dramatically when women have equal access to productive inputs. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), women have less access to education and to labour, fertilizer, and other inputs than men do. When women obtain the same levels of education, experience, and farm inputs that currently benefit the average male farmer, they increase their yields for maize, beans, and cowpeas by 22 per cent (Ruel et al, 1999). In Burkina Faso, men and boys provide more labour to field plots controlled by men than to women's plots, while women primarily contribute the labour on plots they control. Men have greater access to non-household labour and fertilizer for their plots than do women. Not surprisingly, farm plots controlled by women have 20-40 per cent lower yields than plots controlled by men. Total household agricultural output could increase by 10-20 per cent if currently used inputs were also allocated to women's plots (IFPRI, 2005).

34.   Long-term strategies should aim to address the underlying problems of gender inequality in agricultural development and to support women's crucial contributions to agricultural production. Other long-term strategies need to include improved access of women and girls to education, health, marketing infrastructure, technologies, irrigation water and clean energy sources. Women must also be included alongside men in the design of food and agriculture policies and donor assistance programmes. Involving more women in development processes may require special outreach and training for poorer and less educated women and for those who hesitate to voice their needs in front of men for cultural reasons.

Issues for discussion

35.   The declarations adopted by African countries recognize the critical role played by women in agricultural production. However, translating these declarations to reality on the ground has not been fully realized.

- What are the good practices in promoting addressing gender equality in agricultural production (community, national, subregional and regional)?

- What concrete steps should partner governments take to overcome the obstacles that continue to hinder implementation of strategies and policies that enable women to contribute more meaningfully to agricultural production and food security? This is with particular reference to access to technologies, credit, land and property rights, skills and education, training and extension services.

- What are the necessary actions to be taken by partner governments, AU, AfDB, the United Nations and other agencies to expand women's effective participation in agricultural policy-making and trade negotiations to ensure that the resulting policies are not gender blind?

- How can gender-inclusive statistical database be strengthened across the continent so that data, both qualitative and quantitative, can inform and shape policies for gender-sensitivity and responsiveness?

2.3   Employment: the vital link for women's empowerment

36.   Women in Africa experience greater challenges in accessing decent jobs than do men. Prejudices, stereotypes and biased institutions that have resisted decades of legal reforms and policy measures undertaken by governments with the support of workers and employers against unequal treatment at work are some of the causes of gender inequality in employment. The patriarchal system and the customary laws and norms have in turn caused massive discrimination against women in laws, regulations and practices, which have negatively impacted women in many forms.

37.   Yet, providing access to income-generating employment for women and movement away from vulnerable employment into wage and salaried work or stable self-employment can be a major step toward economic empowerment and freedom and self-determination for many women. The benefits of women accessing decent employment are both economic and social and go beyond allowing families to access a decent standard of living to contributing to poverty eradication and economic development.

40.   An Extraordinary AU Summit was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in September 2004, to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and underemployment. During this Extraordinary Summit, a Declaration, Plan of Action and a Follow-up Mechanism were adopted, calling upon member States to place employment at the centre of their economic and social policies. In particular, the Plan of Action provides key objectives and guidelines for member States to formulate their own mechanisms based on their national needs and specificities. One of the key priority areas of the Plan of Action is the empowerment of women by integrating them into labour markets and offering them opportunities to participate in development of national policies.

41.   The Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 10) also identified the issue of women's empowerment as one of the continent's priorities. To this end, it put forward recommendations for increasing and improving women's access to the labour market, for giving greater recognition to their economic contribution (market and non-market), including in macro-economic policies and

gender-sensitive budgeting, and for ensuring them a greater participation in economic decision-making (UNECA, 2005a).

Women and unemployment in Africa

42.   Despite recent signs of economic progress, SSA continues to be the region with the highest poverty rates in the world. The insufficient creation of decent jobs in the region and widespread poverty continue to be heavy burdens on women. Employment to population ratios were high for both women and men, 56.9 and 79.7 per cent, respectively, in 2007 (ILO, 2008). However, the fact that a large proportion of women are working should not be interpreted as a positive development (as it might be in other regions with higher levels of development) since the comparably high shares of employment are strongly related to the elevated incidence of poverty and creation of "working poor". A poor person has to work at any job available in order to subsist, regardless of the quality of that work.

43.   The male employment-to-population ratio continues to be higher than the female ratio. More-over, the gender gap between women and men has not changed over the last ten years, neither for youth nor for the total labour force. The difference between female and male employment-to-popula-tion ratios was 22.7 percentage points in 2007 as well as in 1997 (ILO, 2008).

44.   There is also a difference between the unemployment rates for young women and young men. In SSA, young women tend to have lower levels of unemployment. Youth unemployment rates are 13.9 per cent for women and 13.6 per cent for men (ILO, 2008). This does not imply, however, that young women in SSA have better access to the labour market; rather, they do not have the "luxury" to search proactively for a job and hence take up employment in the informal sector, or remain outside the labour force. Both these situations are not reflected by unemployment figures. In North Africa, the situation is reversed, with young women having a higher degree of unemployment (30.7 per cent versus 21.7 per cent).

45.   The burden of vulnerable employment continues to fall heavily on women in the agriculture sector. Improvements in employment status and sectoral distribution seem to benefit men more. In 2007, the share of women with a wage and salaried job stood at only 15.5 per cent, which represented half of the share of men at the same time. In Africa, most of the working poor, including women, are found in the informal economy. As witnessed across the continent, women are highly represented in the informal sector as employees, entrepreneurs or unpaid home-based workers (Chen 2001).

46.   Beyond the overall challenge of creating employment opportunities for all Africans, women experience particular difficulties in finding decent jobs. Discrimination in education and training, hiring and remuneration as well as inflexible working conditions, lack of access to productive resources and inadequate sharing of family responsibility continue to restrict opportunities for African women to find a decent job or set up a business. There are many intersecting factors that are behind these barriers, which are exacerbated by discrimination based on gender and other attitudes about women in the workplace. These include issues under two main areas: (a) inadequate or inappropriate skills that are not demanded by employers, which stems from inequalities in education and training; and (b) lack of access to credit and inadequate business skills, both of which are required when setting up a business.

47.   Although employment regulations do not explicitly discriminate against women, family laws and conventions limit women's access to jobs. Many employers, especially in the private sector, tend to shy away from hiring women workers considering the costs of maternity leave provisions required

under the law. Poverty and unemployment, in combination with inadequate legislation and poor law enforcement also foster trafficking in girls and women. Immigration legislation that limits possibilities for safe and legal migration may induce women to turn to traffickers. These women may end up as domestic workers having to endure abuse and exploitation or may be forced into prostitution.

48.   Women continue to perform the majority of unpaid work including caring for children, the sick and the elderly as well as performing household chores. This vital work means that women have less leisure time than men. With this lack of free time, it may be more difficult for women to pursue vocational opportunities and take advantage of workforce development programmes.

Progress

49.   To address these barriers, some African governments have developed employment policies, plans and programmes to overcome gender inequalities in the labour market. For example, countries such as Kenya have established a youth entrepreneurship fund to help young women set up their own businesses. Despite these attempts, considerable efforts are still required to develop, and more importantly, implement interventions that target women and assist them in gaining decent employment.

50.   Gender disparities in accessing markets are still evident in many countries. What kind of policies can be defined to tackle such kind of disparities? Traditionally, investment and trade policies have been considered "gender blind" i.e. they did not have any particular effect on men's or women's access to opportunities and capabilities. However, in a more and more globalized world, trade policies can have different impacts on men and women and it is important to identify these and address them.

51.   There are several employment frameworks that are being explored for empowering women including in the areas of: rural employment; ICTs; micro-credit and entrepreneurship development; skills acquisition, literacy and numeracy training, and enterprise development for women. Major bottlenecks that need to be addressed to improve women's participation in decent self-employment include entitlement and access to productive resources, in particular credit, land and equal inheritance rights, and access to markets and more remunerative business opportunities.

52.   Affirmative action programmes in self-employment, entrepreneurial skills development and small and medium enterprise development are strongly recommended because they are significant for at least three related reasons: they represent a potentially viable alternative to wage employment; sometimes, such employment better enables women to combine work with their reproductive role and family responsibilities; and because the successful development of self-employment and micro-enterprises will determine whether the informal sector is a sector of last resort or might be a viable and sustainable source of decent employment for women.

53.   Tackling the issue of gender inequality and discrimination comprehensively and ensuring women's socio-economic empowerment hinges on addressing the underlying root causes or chronic structural conditions for gender inequality including a multiplicity of social, economic, political, cultural and other factors.

Issues for discussion

* How do member governments overcome barriers to implementing the 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation?

- What policies are needed to promote decent jobs for women in African countries? What are good practices in targeting women? Where should governments focus - the supply side (education, training, etc.) or the demand side (job creation)?
- What should member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to operation-alize conventions and legislation that address challenges in the labour market for their most vulnerable women, such as young women, women with disabilities, and teenage mothers?
- What should member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to ensure protection and empowerment of women in the informal sector?

2.4   Gender and trade

54.   Despite the notable progress achieved in some areas, such as increased access to education for women and girls (at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels) and increased participation in the labour force, most women in the world are still at a disadvantage in terms of their roles and positions in the economic and political arenas. In particular, women lag behind men in most regions of the world in their ability to gain from international trading patterns (USAID, 2005). Trade, as an important aspect of globalization and a major source of growth and development, can have strong implications for gender equality. Therefore, one of the many instruments for improving and ultimately eliminating gender disparity in economic spheres is through a gender-sensitive trade policy.

55.   Regardless of the increasing interest, especially in the last decade, in the gender dimensions of trade among development practitioners, policymakers and civil society, there is still lack of concise and easy-to-digest information on the key gender issues in trade (BRIDGE, 2006). Trade can have positive effects on employment, growth and empowerment and can therefore increase wealth and well-being. It can also have negative impacts – particularly on the lives of poor people and those marginalized by gender.

56.   Studies on trade and poverty revealed that trade has different impacts on different groups among a population. Trade policies affect men and women differently due to gender inequalities in access to and control over economic and social resources and decision-making. Their impact is also filtered by the different roles that men and women have within societies. For instance, trade liberaliza-tion has led to an increase in employment opportunities for women – particularly in export-oriented sectors such as textiles in some countries. In others, the sectors of textiles and clothing were negatively affected as a result of the phasing out of the Multifibre Protocol and the accession of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Therefore, as trade policies and measures impact on men and wom-en differently, they need to be reviewed and monitored and adapted as necessary to foster women's empowerment as part of the strategy. Such empowerment is strengthened by integration into the national and international trading system.

57.   There is a consensus among gender economists that while trade liberalization has expanded women's access to employment, the long-term goal of transforming gender relations remain unmet and appears unattainable without state intervention in markets. Women are often hurt more by adjustments than are men since their mobility and opportunities for alternatives are even more limited (World Bank 2004). Intensified cost competition among low-income countries drive already low female wages down even further. However, it has been predicted that the processes of globalization, by increasing demand for female labour, should drive up their wages relative to men's. Some studies indicate a narrowing of gender wage gaps in some countries (Tzannatos, 1999), although in other countries, gaps have widened (Standing, 1999; Berik et al., 2004).

58.	If trade is meant to reduce poverty in the developing world, the need for the active involvement of women is unquestionable. In other words, for trade to accrue development gains to women, and to the whole nation, gender issues should be mainstreamed into trade policy and trade agreements both at national and international levels. This, in turn, requires freeing women from persistent constraints regarding employment, pay, entrepreneurship and access to business financing. Developing countries need to design and implement national trade policies that strengthen the contribution of trade to the empowerment of women. Women's access to credit, the creation of an enabling business environment for women and gender-sensitive initiatives are among the few options that can help to address the existing gaps in economic and trade policies.

59.	Therefore, as gender-sensitive trade policies and institutions can effectively support the achievement of gender equality goals and accelerate economic growth and sustainable development, greater coherence is needed between gender equality and the trade policy environment and its implementation at the international, national, and sectoral levels. Moreover, the participation of women and gender experts in trade policymaking and negotiation processes should be promoted at all levels, and multi-stakeholder mechanisms should be established to reorient the trade agenda in support of a pro-poor and gender-sensitive development framework. In addition, a quantitative analysis of the impact of trade on gender through a sound consideration of the relationship between changes in the export share of manufacturing output and the female intensity of the labour force in Africa will enrich the current knowledge. It will also help in policy formulation to reduce gender inequalities.

Challenges

60.	Factors that constrain women's ability to participate in international trade include lack of income and access to productive resources, market saturation, lack of decision-making authority, as well as socio-cultural norms and poverty. Women face greater obstacles than men due to lack of both access to and command over income and assets such as land and credit. Women's lack of access to financing and other resources means that they are not as able as men are to seize the opportunities provided by national and international trade.

61.	Throughout the world, women are often disadvantaged by inheritance laws and practices that preclude or reduce their share of inheritance or land, one of the most economically tangible assets (USAID, 2005). In many African countries, men hold formal land titles and women's land rights are contingent on their status as a wife or mother. Any change in the civil status for the woman alters her land rights and access to a critical productive resource. When women do have land, they often lack formal title to the land or the power to decide how to dispose of it. They also often farm the smallest and most marginal land, which means it may be difficult for them to produce cash crops or other products for export.

62.	Market saturation from too many firms attempting to sell the same type of products to the same international markets, may also negatively impact sustainability of areas such as primary commodities and handicrafts exports, where women predominate (BRIDGE, 2006). The attitudes and beliefs of socio-cultural norms also determine what roles are appropriate for men and women. The continued overburdening of women in domestic and reproductive tasks tends to affect their ability to gain access to market and product development information.

Issues for Discussion

63.   Among the key questions that need to be addressed at this Forum are:
- What can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to overcome the gendered impacts of trade on employment opportunities, conditions of work and the gender wage gap?
- What practical steps can AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take in order to mitigate the impacts of various international trade agreements on women? What measures should be taken to improve these agreements and what are the roles of member governments, AU and the United Nations agencies?
- What can member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to make trade policy and practice more gender equitable? What practical steps can member governments take to encourage and protect the participation of women in the national and global trading systems?
- How can member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies overcome the *challenges* to women's participation in trade at community, national and international levels?

2.5   ICTs in Africa: reducing the gender digital divide

64.   Modern ICTs, such as mobile telephones, Internet and e-mail have become an integral part of doing business and interacting at all levels in society, even in the poorest developing countries. Though ICT adoption in Africa has been very low, penetration of ICTs, particularly mobile telephony, has grown rapidly in recent years. Despite this progress, women's lack of access to ICTs remains a major challenge in Africa, a situation which is due to lack of control over access to ICTs, the stereotypical portrayal of gender roles, and women's limited access to professional careers and decision-making positions in general. Enhancing women's participation in the information economy would produce a range of benefits, including increased creativity, expertise and competitiveness in the technology sector of a country, and hence, facilitation of the development of an information economy, increased productivity and economic growth (Huyer and Sikoska, 2003).

65.   In addition, the need for women's increased access to information and knowledge resources is particularly important for development when one looks at the different and multiple roles women play in society: *productive* (entrepreneurship, food production and trading); *reproductive* (child care, subsistence agriculture, health care and education) and *community* (community infrastructure, water and sanitation and natural resource management) responsibilities (Huyer and Mitter, 2003).

Progress

66.   Several initiatives have been undertaken to mainstream gender issues in ICT policy and development: the Global Knowledge Conference in 1997; the Task Force through the 1998 World Telecommunication Development Conference resolution; the UNECA/Cisco Networking Academy for African Women, founded in 2001; the second Global Knowledge Conference in March 2000; and the call for the establishment of a gender unit within the Telecommunications Development Sector by March 2002 by the World Telecommunications Development Conference.

67.   All these initiatives have stressed the importance of integrating and mainstreaming gender issues and gender equality considerations into ICT policy, programmes and projects at all levels to promote the social, economic and political empowerment of women. In international forums, the

potential impact of ICTs on developing countries has been explored, as well as how the benefits emerging from the information society could be made available to women and men in an equitable manner. The issues of collaboration in developing gender-responsive approaches to telecommunications and ICT policy development have been discussed and gender-specific structural barriers that reinforce women's lower usage of ICTs have also been identified under these initiatives.

68.   ICTs are important tools for women to inform themselves, undertake training and share information across networks, as evidenced by various initiatives that exist on the continent. More broadly, the use of ICTs can promote participation of women in policymaking and decision-making processes, enabling them to advocate for accountability from governments and ensuring that commitments made are implemented. One example of an innovative initiative is the SMS campaign undertaken by the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), in collaboration with Womensnet, South Africa and APC-Africa-Women. In 2007, they conducted an SMS-based campaign during the broader initiative on 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign, to highlight issues of violence against women. The daily text messages were posted on a blog.[3]

Challenges

69.   Despite all the initiatives outlined in the previous section, African women continue to be marginalized in accessing ICTs from causes ranging from illiteracy, socio-cultural attitudes and preconceptions about women's interaction with technology, to a lack of understanding of the resource and situational obstacles experienced by women. The inability to read and write in particular is a major barrier to women's access to ICTs.

70.   Another important restriction for African women is their domestic responsibilities, including household chores, daycare, child-bearing and subsistence activities. Women's roles in the family and community mean that their workday is considerably longer than that of men. As a result, time is a precious resource for women, and a major constraint to ICT knowledge acquisition and use. They are less likely to have free time to learn how to use the internet. Cultural attitudes and practices can preclude both opportunities for use of ICTs as well as training in their use, in restricting or prohibiting women's interaction with men in public and, in some instances preclude women's travel outside their homes. Additionally, in many cultures, women and girls are considered to be less capable of understanding scientific and technical concepts (Huyer and Sikoska, 2003).

71.   Another important challenge is women's access to and control over ICTs; there is a huge gap between women and men's access to telecommunications infrastructure. ICT infrastructure is largely concentrated in urban areas, while the majority of women in Africa are located in remote and rural areas with unreliable infrastructure (both electricity and phone lines). Simply stated, if the technology is not available then women cannot have access to it, use it and much less learn to control it.

72.   Lastly, it has been argued that the language of the internet excludes many people, and the content itself is often not relevant to the situation or lives of African women. Women's viewpoints, knowledge, experiences, and concerns are inadequately reflected on the internet, particularly issues of women in developing countries. There is need therefore for women to develop, promote, and publish their own perspectives and knowledge to ensure that they are represented on the internet and in their own voices.

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3   See http://www.wougnet.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29&Itemid=1.

Issues for Discussion
- What can member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to promote women's access to and use of ICT, especially for economic empowerment?
- What initiatives have the different countries put in place to achieve this and what challenges have been faced so far?
- What practical steps should member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations and other agencies take to get ICT to rural areas and especially to reach rural women and girls? How can they be used to promote women's participation in rural development?
- What indicators should be used by member governments, AU, AfDB and the United Nations and other agencies use to measure effectiveness of existing ICT policies in reducing the gender digital divide in Africa? What are examples of good practices in member States?

3. Social empowerment

3.1 Gender education, training and skills development

73.   A decent education and acquisition of skills for citizens are crucial ingredients for driving economic growth and broader development. However, in most African countries, access to education and training has lagged behind other developing regions, which has been a major factor in the low growth rates and high poverty levels witnessed on the continent. Without the right skills and experience, African women, particularly young women, find it increasingly difficult in a globalized world to find a decent job, and ultimately, be empowered to carry out the lives they value.

74.   The BPFA calls on governments to take measures in several areas of education. Through the MDGs adopted in 2000, governments, in line with the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All, re-iterated their commitment to achieve universal primary education (UPE), which is Goal 2 of the MDGs, and to eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education by 2015, which is Goal 3. CEDAW clearly prohibits discrimination against girls and women in the field of education.

Progress

Measures taken by African Governments to close the Gender Gap in Education

75.   African States have explicitly expressed their commitment to ensure girls' and women's right to education and training. Most recently, during the 7th African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +10), member States stressed that gender disparities in schooling undermine national efforts for human capital development, thereby slowing down the pace of economic and social development. Concerns were expressed over persisting disparities in enrolment, retention and completion rates; illiteracy rates; and women's low participation in science, mathematics and computer and other science studies (UNEAC, 2005).

76.   Progress in advancing the education and training of girls and women has been driven by universal measures to lower barriers to education for all children, but also by redistributive and targeted approaches to address gender-based barriers. Most African countries report that they have taken specific measures to enhance the access, retention and performance of girls in primary education, addressing both demand and supply factors. In most cases, measures included: adoption of new or enforcement of existing equality legislation on access to education for girls and women through reducing

or eliminating school fees and imposing penalties on parents who do not fulfill their responsibilities to send their children to school; elimination of school fees for girls in rural areas; encouragement of female facilitators from the community; scholarship trust funds for girls; community sensitization campaigns for girls' education; training and hiring of more female teachers; use of similar school curricula for boys and girls; transportation for girls; free school canteens; free boarding schools, especially for girls living in remote areas; conditional food aid in rural areas; scholarships to disadvantaged families; allowances to needy students, or a school allowance for each enrolled child; and studies and surveys on barriers to girls' enrolment.

77.   **Equal Access to Education**: Overall, there have been considerable improvements in primary enrolment ratios in Africa over recent years as well as overall increased enrolment of girl-children. According to the United Nations 2008 MDG Report, the net enrolment ratio for girls in primary education in SSA increased from 49.9 per cent in 1991 to 67.8 per cent in 2006, while in North Africa it increased from 75.5 per cent in 1991 to 93.1 per cent in 2006 (United Nations, 2008).

78.   At the same time, disparities between girls and boys in accessing primary education have been reduced, as the ratio of girls to boys in primary education (gender parity index) has increased in SSA from 0.83 in 1991 to 0.89 in 2006 (United Nations, 2008). The gap between girls and boys is closing in many countries and if current efforts are sustained, most African countries will be able to eliminate gender disparities in primary education by 2015 (UNECA, 2008).

79.   Although women are still underrepresented in technical and vocational training and are concentrated in few science-related sectors, they have started entering activities usually dominated by men, such as mechanical and electrical engineering in many African countries. The number of women and girls pursuing ICT training is also increasing in many countries through formal and informal education, both private and public.

80.   **Resource allocation for and monitoring of the implementation of educational reforms:** Since 2000, expenditures devoted to education increased in the majority of African countries driven by higher economic growth, increased tax revenues and higher expenditure ratios allocated to the education sector. Between 1999 and 2005, 10 African countries allocated at least 6 per cent of their GDP to education. Across a sample of 24 SSA countries, the share of education expenditure increased in 18 countries.

Challenges

81.   Africa has one of the lowest rates of female literacy and the highest gender disparities in adult literacy. In SSA, 62 per cent of the 155 million adults who cannot read or write are women.

82.   Despite all the progress made in accessing education to all, and in particular to girl-children, equal access to opportunities provided by the school and training system is still not a reality for many African girls and women. Girls in most African countries still experience low enrolment, completion and survival rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education; limited employment opportunities and low returns, as women are overcrowding traditional female jobs and sectors. Progress in net enrolment ratios for girls in primary education has been uneven, between and within countries and the region is still home to 33 million children who do not have access to education, of whom 54 per cent are girls (UNECA, 2008).

83.   In many SSA countries, girls repeat and drop out more often than boys due to poverty and economic hardship, school fees, early marriages and pregnancy, lack of transportation and access to

schools, reluctance to send adolescent girls to school, lack of access to disaggregated, hygienic bath-rooms, sexual harassment and abuse by teachers and fellow students, genital mutilation, heavy house-work, unsafe, overcrowded and poorly equipped schools, and low quality, irrelevant education. In many sub-Saharan countries, HIV/AIDS is also contributing to increasing drop out from primary school.

84.   Progress towards gender parity in SSA has deteriorated at the secondary level in recent years (the ratio of girls to boys gross enrolment ratios has decreased from 0.82 in 2000 to 0.80 in 2006). Moreover, for most countries for which data are available, women represent less than one third of science-related students but over two-thirds in humanities, arts, education, social sciences, business, law, services and health and welfare. This skew increases the difficulties faced by women in finding a decent job in the formal economy once they have left tertiary education.

85.   Other challenges include: insufficient attention to gender disparities in education policies and programmes; lack of an enabling environment characterized by long and unsafe walking distance to schools; low number of female teachers; low teachers' expectations of female students; poor water and sanitation facilities; and over-crowded class rooms and violence in and around schools. Also, the majority of countries still allocate very low shares of GDP and total expenditures to education and the sector is heavily dependant on international aid (UNESCO, 2008).

Recommendations

86.   In light of the continuing gender disparities, African policymakers and international partners should accelerate their efforts, including:
- Improving the quality of education for women;
- Increasing primary completion rates and access to post-primary schooling through incentive schemes, such as abolishing school fees for girls and making direct payments to households conditional on attendance of girls;
- Creating safe school environments for girls and women free of violence and sexual harass-ment;
- Increasing the number of female teachers at all levels of education to act as role models;
- Making critical infrastructure investments in order to lessen the time burden on women and young girls and enable low-cost service delivery;
- Ensuring that women develop skills that are demanded by the labour market and not just those dictated by cultural attitudes through training schemes targeting women, including apprenticeships and technical and vocational education and training programmes; and
- Providing training for women in both the formal and informal economy.

Issues for discussion
- What practical steps can member State governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take to overcome barriers to female net enrolment and gender parity ratios at the secondary and tertiary levels?
- What can member State governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to strength-en diversification of vocational and post-secondary education for women and girls into the non-traditional areas?
- What are the most promising practices to combat the persistent obstacles in achieving the targets of gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education?

3.2 Gender and AIDS: Empowering women, working with men

87. Addressing gender issues is an integral and essential dimension in the response to the AIDS epidemic. HIV and AIDS in SSA is feminized; gender inequality, low socio-economic status of women, and gender-based violence also make women and girls much more vulnerable to HIV infection. The choices that individuals believe they have, or do not have, determine the actions that they take as a result (UNAIDS 2005). Widely held beliefs, expectations, customs and practices within a society, and behaviour patterns and roles significantly influence the way men and women will be affected by HIV and AIDS. Different cultures and societies assign different and unequal power to men and women, determining the capacity of men and women to protect themselves from HIV and to effectively cope with the impact of AIDS.

88. The effects of gender inequality leave women and girls more at risk of exposure to HIV. For example, less access to education and economic opportunity results in women being more dependent on men in their relationships, with many resorting to transactional sex to support themselves and their children.

89. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa and the conflicts that are prevailing in many of the countries, women become much more vulnerable to HIV infection. Conflicts lead to displacement, which in turn leads to poverty, powerlessness, and social instability, which are risk factors for HIV (Spiegel and 2004). Conflicts lead to the breakdown of norms and values of societies, as well as to the sexual exploitation of women and girls.

90. Women may be forced to leave their homes and families in search of work or safety. Many internally displaced people (IDPs), migrant and refugee women turn to sex work to support themselves or their families (Spiegel 2004). Others are made vulnerable to HIV by virtue of the disruption that mobility causes to their families and social support networks.

91. In all societies, the experience of living with HIV is one frequently defined by discrimination, often leading to loss of employment or housing, and denial of treatment and care. Moreover, because of the very different roles and responsibilities assumed by men and women, an HIV-related illness in the family affects men and women differently, and its impact also varies depending on whether the person who falls ill is female or male.

Progress

92. Important steps made by the United Nations in relation to women and the HIV epidemic include: the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which made the gender dimensions of the epidemic explicit by stressing that *gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental elements in the reduction of the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV and AIDS.* In 2002, the Third International Consultation on HIV and Human Rights made the first call for universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support and in 2003, the United Nations Secretary-General's Task Force on Women, Girls and AIDS was established.

93. In 2004, the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS was created and in 2005, country and regional consultations identified stigma, discrimination and gender inequality as major barriers to universal access. At the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS, all member States of the United Nations pledged "to eliminate gender inequalities, and gender-based abuse and violence", while in 2007, the first Global

Parliamentary Meeting on AIDS called for a rights-based response to the epidemic. In 2008, tools for the measurement of gender-inequitable norms and HIV-related stigma were established (UNAIDS 2008).

94.   At the continental level, the AU Commission HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2005-2007 includes targeting of OVC, youth and other vulnerable groups in HIV prevention, care and support programmes. It also advocates gender programmes to ensure equity of access to HIV and AIDS programmes by young girls and women and other vulnerable population groups, including in peacekeeping, African militaries, and other conflict, emergency and humanitarian responses. AU Heads of State and Government at their May 2006 Special Summit, recommitted their countries to accelerate implementation of the 2000 and 2001 Abuja Declarations and Plans of Action on HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria towards achieving universal access to services by 2010.

95.   Efforts to address the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS have been multi-pronged involving actions aimed at strengthening prevention, mitigation, treatment and care. Through extensive and targeted prevention programmes, several African countries have significantly cut their AIDS' prevalence rate while some have succeeded in keeping infection rates low. The adult HIV prevalence rate in SSA has declined from 5.8 per cent in 2001 and from 5.7 per cent in 2006 to 5.0 per cent in 2007. In most countries, HIV prevalence rates have either stabilized or are showing signs of decline (UNAIDS 2007). However, even though a decrease in prevalence rates has been recorded, more women are currently living with HIV and AIDS than men and women still continue to be at increased risk from HIV infection than men are.

96.   The proportion of women infected by HIV is high and is increasing on the continent. As of December 2007, women constituted 61 per cent of people living with HIV and AIDS in SSA, up from 57 per cent at the end of 2003 (UNAIDS 2007). HIV infection is highest among young women 15-24 year old, who are about 3 times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male counterparts.

97.   Up to 22 SSA countries have developed national strategic plans and targets to achieve universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment. Several African countries have approved codes and declarations on non-discrimination against people living with AIDS. Some countries have made some progress in strengthening and protecting the rights of older women, widows and youths to own land and property in the contexts of HIV and AIDS. Many countries are undertaking initiatives to empower infected women to generate income.

Challenges

98.   Although access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) has significantly increased, the coverage rate is still very low and the treatment gap is high. There is need to ensure equitable access to ART for both men and women in all age groups. Gender-based inequalities affect women's access to ART, including restricted mobility, difficulty in accessing transport and child care, lack of treatment literacy, less access to education than men, specific reproductive health concerns, and lack of income (WHO and UNAIDS 2005).

99.   Addressing the gender dynamics that further the spread of HIV requires the participation of both genders; however, involvement of men is still a challenge. Reducing gender inequality requires changing social norms, attitudes and behaviour patterns through a comprehensive set of policies and strategies, requiring coordination in such sectors as health, education, legal and judicial reform, and in both public and private sectors. Operationalization of the various laws and programmes is still lagging behind due to the complexity of the process and limited financial resources.

100.   Greater multi-sectoral efforts are required to develop a supportive environment that promotes gender equality and economically empowers women in the context of HIV. Some specific actions that may make a difference include measures that address the importance of cross-sectoral national strategies. These reach beyond health to include social and economic empowerment through increased access of women and girls to education, employment, credit, social benefits, and land and property rights. Although not explicitly linked to HIV and AIDS, such systematic efforts to increase women's economic, social, and political empowerment must be supported as key components of a comprehensive AIDS strategy (Kim and Watts 2005).

101.   The increase in the demands made on women especially older women as caregivers is substantial. It is important that the needs of caregivers are taken into account in social protection systems and home-based care policies and guidelines.

Issues for discussion

- What indicators should member States, AU and United Nations agencies use to measure progress in implementing the declarations that have been made on gender, HIV and AIDS? How should member States, AU and United Nations agencies monitor what is working with regards to providing universal access to prevention, mitigation, treatment and care with regard to gender and HIV and AIDS?
- What practical steps can member States, AU and United Nations agencies take to overcome challenges in addressing gender and HIV and AIDS, especially in relation to integration and coordination of efforts in the different sectors?
- What can member States, AU and United Nations agencies do to support older women in managing the burden of care related to HIV and AIDS?
- What should member States, AU and United Nations agencies do to increase access to treatment to meet the treatment gap, especially the gender treatment gap? What specific actions should each of the partners (member States, AU and United Nations agencies) take to accelerate and scale up access to prevention, treatment, care and support and ensure gender equity in access to services?
- What actions should member States, AU and United Nations agencies take to strengthen the involvement of men and boys, including older men, in mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on women and girls?

3.3   Gender and health

102.   Gender inequalities give rise to inequities between men and women in health status and access to quality health care services. Women and men differ from each other at a biologic level and differences between interactions of biology and social factors lead to different health outcomes. As an example, poor women are more vulnerable to morbidity from malaria than rich women or poor men, due to poor access to quality health care services, and adequate nutrition. In many instances, social circumstances are the key determinants of poor health outcomes; for example, a woman may not receive needed health services because norms in her community prevent her from traveling alone to a clinic. Therefore, if health outcomes are not just the result of biologic processes, but are also due to societal influences, then they can only be changed through both health and social policy (Sen et al 2002)

103.   The social dimension of gender inequality in relation to health in Africa include women's lack of power in family decision-making, women's lack of choice on matters that affect their lives such as when to get married, when to initiate sex, when to go to school and when to stop going to school, when to have babies, how many to have, and how the children should be spaced. Women's lack of access to resources within the household and the community, coupled with poverty and lack of education negatively impact on the health of women. In the home, women and girls receive less food and often of lower quality protein than do men and boys (Sen et al 2002).

104.   Adverse health consequences that result include high malnutrition rates among women and girls, high HIV rates among women and girls, high morbidity, high fertility rates, and high maternal mortality and morbidity. Clearly, gender inequality contributes to excess morbidity and mortality for women and girls. Access to health care services is generally low in most countries and access to reproductive health services is even lower despite the recommendation of the 1995 World Summit on Social Development that underscored, and that of MDG 5: "to improve maternal health".

105.   There is a large unmet need for family planning and other reproductive health services. Contraceptive prevalence in SSA is low, at 23 per cent, compared to global average of 61 per cent. Fertility rates are high, and the continent has the highest teenage pregnancy and abortion rates. African countries also have a high burden of non-communicable disorders, such as diabetes, hypertension, depression and mental disorders that affect women.

106.   Women's health is intricately linked to the health, nutrition and educational outcomes of their children; women who may be physically weak due to AIDS will not be able to care for their children, even if those children are HIV negative. Women who may have HIV and depression and no support or treatment, do not adequately stimulate or care for their children and this leads to poor health, education and nutritional outcomes for the children. HIV-negative children of HIV-positive mothers have higher morbidity and mortality rates than children of HIV-negative mothers.

Progress

107.   The BPFA raised the need to ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in health care. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) gave unprecedented prominence to women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and rights, emphasizing that they are central to human development, and that the condition of sustainable human development can be attained only once these issues are addressed. The close link between SRH and wider societal issues makes SRH vital to economic and social development in Africa. Apart from the health and empowerment rationale, it is clear that reproductive health and rights are instrumental for achieving the MDGs. In this connection, the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, underscored that development goals cannot be fully achieved without taking into account the dynamics of populations and reproductive health. The 'health-related MDGs', namely, Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), Goals 4 (reduce child mortality), Goal 5 (improve maternal health), Goal 6 (combating HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases), Goal 7 (ensure environmental sustainability), Goal 8 (Developed a global partnership for development), as well as other MDGs important to gender and health, such as Goal 2 (education) and Goal 3 (gender equity) provide an opportunity for monitoring the gender dimensions of health.

108.   The endorsement by African heads of States and Governments of the African Health Strategy and the Maputo Plan of Action on Reproductive Health bears testimony that Africa has included women's health in its development priorities. This has resulted in increased attention to the reproduc-

tive health and rights of women. For instance, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have begun developing their specific strategies for the implementation of continental level policies and commitments related to health. Related undertakings are: encouraging breast-feeding and other infant feeding options, making facilities available for the management of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS, and raising awareness among men on their responsibilities in family life and reproductive health.

109.   In many countries, progress has been made in offering free or subsidized sexual and reproductive health care services and commodities, affordable preventive health services for rural populations and training grassroots health providers. The ICPD + 10 Review noted that 95 per cent of the 43 countries that responded to ECA ICPD at 10 Survey now target men in an effort to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

110.   Many countries have also adopted a road map on reducing maternal, infant and child mortality. Contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 12.3 per cent in 1990 to 21.3 per cent in married women or women in a stable union during the period 1990 to 2005. There is a global decrease in fertility rates, and Africa is no exception, although the high adolescent birth rates prevailing in 1990 have not declined. Antenatal care is a core component of maternal health services. Since 1990 more than two-thirds of women received at least one antenatal care visit during pregnancy, although the medical recommendation is at least 4 visits (UNECA, 2007).

Challenges

111.   Although some countries have paid increased attention to gender and health and reproductive health, the rates of maternal morbidity and mortality are still high. The vast majority of African countries have experienced a very negligible improvement in maternal mortality ratios (MMR) of 1.8 per cent between 1990 and 2005, which amounts to an annual average improvement of 0.1 per cent (WHO, 2007). Thirteen countries in Africa still have a MMR of more than 1000. Maternal mortality ratios are higher in rural than urban areas, in poor part of the country and in poorer countries, than in richer populations within and between countries, in countries and regions that are conflict and post-conflict than those that are peaceful (WHO, 2006). Factors behind the high maternal mortality rates include personal variables such as: limited maternal education, powerlessness in the home, lack of income; community factors such as social capital, gender and cultural norms; health sector-related factors such as inadequate health service delivery, poor affordability of services, low coverage of deliveries attended by a skilled health professional and factors outside of the health sector, such as poor roads, making access to health units impossible.

112.   The main challenge to women's health arises from inequitable distribution of health care services, particularly in rural areas, where the majority of the people live. Challenges include insufficient numbers and quality of human resources for health, insufficient financing, and inadequate health delivery infrastructure. The latest available data on delivery assistance by a skilled health worker show that no progress has occurred in Central, East, Southern and West Africa, as a whole. In 1990, the proportion of births with health personnel in attendance in these four subregions stood at 42 per cent, and this increased to 46 per cent in 2004 and declined marginally to 45 per cent in 2005 according to recent UNSD data.

113.   In countries where there is armed conflict and political instability, health delivery systems have been disrupted and investment in the health sector is low. In these situations, NGOs and faith-based organizations play a major role in providing health services, and there is need to strengthen the con-

tribution from these organizations. There is also a large unmet need for family planning and other reproductive health services. Monitoring progress on gender and health is hampered by the lack of appropriate data.

114.   A major challenge is that women's health is taken to refer to only the reproductive functions of women or else as a form of providing care to the woman, in order to prevent her infecting her child with HIV (as in PMTCT programmes that only provide antiretroviral therapy during delivery, and no other support to the mother). Women's morbidity and mortality, due to injuries, as an example, is almost invisible, and yet a big percentage of female deaths due to injuries are as consequences of gender-based violence. Women do abuse alcohol and drugs, and yet rehabilitation units for alcohol and substance abuse are often not designed to admit women. Shelters for abused women, who often abuse alcohol, do not take in those who have an alcohol or drug abuse problem.

115.   Health care service providers are gender blind, never asking women about gender-based violence or alcohol and substance abuse, or screening for depression, and yet women are very frequently in health units, taking children for routine check ups and immunizations, or taking children for health visits. A health care provider may repair a fracture resulting from domestic violence, but not make an effort to link the woman to a support programme or to legal aid services.

116.   Another challenge is that financing of health is also gender blind; it is assumed that if STI services are provided, then both men and women will have access, and yet women find it difficult to get STI treatment in an STI Clinic, preferring either care at a gynecological clinic or at a general practitioner's.

Issues for discussion

117.   Despite numerous commitments at international, continental, regional and country levels, why have these commitments not been translated into action?
- What can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to overcome the challenges hampering progress towards gender equality in health and in reproductive health?
- What practical steps can member governments, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take to ensure implementation of protocols, laws and conventions that mitigate the gender norms, values, and other societal inequality issues that are perpetuating disease, disability, death and high mortality among women? What should be done at family, community, national and global levels?
- What measures can be taken to improve statistical capacity at national level to more effectively collect and analyse data by sex and systematic monitoring and evaluation of progress?
- How are member States, AU and United Nations agencies documenting and dissemination and using the lessons and experiences on effective practices to improve health, in particular reproductive health and rights, for women? Such lessons could include, but are not limited to, male involvement in women's health, and community-level health services.
- What, at a practical level, should member States, AU and United Nations agencies do to promote multidisciplinary and holistic approaches to addressing gender equity issues in health?

3.4   Gender, water and sanitation

118.   Much of the suffering from lack of access to water and sanitation is borne by the poor, those who live in degraded environments, and overwhelmingly by women and girls due to their prescribed roles. Gathering water for domestic use is both time and labour consuming. According to a report of the Millennium Task Force on Water and Sanitation, rural African women and girls commonly walk 10 kilometres each day to the nearest water source, often twice that in the dry season. This prevents them from engaging in productive work, or, in the case of girls, from attending school. While affecting all school-age children, poor school sanitation facilities hit girls hardest, pushing many from the classroom at a young age, or when starting puberty for lack of privacy and dignity.

119.   Improved access to water can, therefore, make a significant difference in the life of a woman, in terms of a drastic reduction in time and energy spent fetching water. Water technologies such as water pumps can enable easier access to clean water. The benefits are not only in terms of saving time and energy, but also in terms of improved health and increased opportunities to access education.

Progress

120.   African countries have adopted many declarations relating to water and sanitation over the past decades. The most recent declarations include: the Thekwini Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene, adopted in February, 2008; the Tunis Declaration on "Accelerating Water Security Africa's Socio-Economic Development" adopted in April 2008; and the AU Summit Declaration on Water and Sanitation adopted in July 2008. Most of the declarations acknowledge the importance of gender equality issues with regard to water and sanitation. Leaders have commited to focus on the poor and vulnerable and to adopt gender-sensitive strategies.

121.   There was an increase in the proportion of people with access to improved clean water supply from 49 to 56 per cent over the period 1990 to 2004. However, the rural-urban gap is still high. North Africa is on track to universal coverage. The progress made in sanitation coverage in Africa was not as good as in improved water supply; SSA has seen a very modest increase in sanitation coverage from 32 per cent in 1990 to 37 per cent in 2004 (UNECA, 2007). The rural-urban sanitation gap is larger for improved water supply.

Challenges

122.   Despite some progress made on the water and sanitation MDG, some of the major challenges experienced by countries include limited resources, low priority accorded to sanitation, few government resources, wide urban and rural disparities, high levels of poverty and income inequality, weak integration of environmental sustainability into government policies, institutional weaknesses, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, and population growth. Inadequate attention to gender issues on water and sanitation is highlighted as one of the major challenges constraining progress.

Issues for discussion
- How can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies use the major achievements in mainstreaming gender perspectives into water and sanitation efforts at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, including in policies, strategies, action plans and programmes to address the existing gaps and challenges?

- What practical steps can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take to address the rural-urban gap in access to clean water and sanitation, and the particular impacts it has on women and girls?
- What do member States, AU and United Nations agencies need to do in order to address critical issues for women in relation to development of suitable and affordable technologies for water, and sanitation at national and local levels? As an example, how can infrastructure be improved to ensure access of water and sanitation to women?

4. Political empowerment

123.   Political empowerment has many facets: direct participation in decision-making at all levels (national, regional, district and community), participation in the electoral process by taking part in democratic elections at all levels, access to information on government policies and possessing the capacity to influence and question interventions. The BPFA underlined the need to strengthen women's political empowerment by stressing that "Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in all levels of decision- making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

4.1   Gender, governance, peace and security

124.   There is a consensus that good governance[4] , which is underpinned by the participation of all segments of society, especially those who have been traditionally excluded - women and young people - is a prerequisite for sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs (UNECA, 2005). The perspectives of half of the population in nation building, socio-economic transformation and reconstruction need to be taken into consideration. The imperative for including women in all structures of governance is based on the fact that inequalities in representation are not only a violation of women's basic human rights, but are also inimical to long-term socio-economic development. The establishment of MDG 3 with an indicator that monitors the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament has provided an opportunity at national and regional levels to monitor progress on the empowerment of women and their involvement in political decision-making.

125.   There is also another consensus on the need to include women in all aspects of decision-making related to peace, including conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict reconstruction, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building. Women who are affected by conflicts, wars and humanitarian emergencies in ways that are different from men, need to influence the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families in the first place, the political destiny of their communities, as well as their nations.

126.   Many legal and policy instruments have been adopted at both the international and regional levels to promote the participation of women in governance, peace and security initiatives. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights for example recognizes the right of every person to take part in the government of his or her country. CEDAW recognizes equality between women and men through

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4   UNDP defines governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences. Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable...And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on the broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources."

ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as to hold public office at all levels of government. The BPFA promotes the effective participation of women in decision-making. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security adopted in October 2000 calls for the integration of a gender perspective in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. In addition, it urges parties of armed conflict to respect and implement international law on the rights and protection of women and girls, take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, support local women's peace initiatives, and involve women in all stages of peace processes.

127.   Another instrument, The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 58/142 on Women and Political Participation (2003) urged member States to eliminate all discriminatory laws in their national legislatures, counter "negative societal attitudes about women's capacity to participate equally in the political process", and "institute educational programmes in the school curriculum that sensitize young people about the equal rights of women".

128.   At the regional level, two major instruments (The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women, and The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa) recognize that equal participation of women and men in decision-making and peacebuilding processes can contribute to greater equality between women and men. As it has become widely recognized throughout the continent that good governance is essential for transforming Africa's economy, the imperative is to build upon NEPAD and the framework of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which seek to ensure that national policies and procedures conform to agreed political, economic and corporate governance codes and standards.

129.   In view of these commitments, African governments and regional bodies and other political actors are expected to enact laws and put policies in place to promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making including the legislature, leadership of political parties, the judiciary, local government, decision-making positions in government and private sector institutions, and peacebuilding initiatives, among others.

Progress achieved

130.   Compared with previous decades, the past ten years have seen the fastest growth in the numbers of women in parliament. Several African countries have achieved over 30 per cent representation in parliament (Rwanda 48.8 per cent, Mozambique 34 per cent, South Africa 33 per cent, Burundi 30.5 per cent, Tanzania 30.4 per cent, Uganda 30.7 per cent and Namibia 26.9 per cent). See IPU, 31 August 2008. Where quota systems exist, as in Uganda and South Africa, there has been some increase in the visibility of issues affecting women, as well as to some degree, in the visibility of mechanisms for ensuring the broader inclusion of women in decision-making.

131.   Progress has also been achieved in setting up legal and policy frameworks at national level to address the issue of violence against women and girls in conflict situations. Many countries have also enacted laws designed to eliminate violence against women and punish offenders. At the international level, United Nations peacekeeping operations regularly adopt measures to reduce the incidence of violence against women in conflict areas across Africa, and many initiatives and good practices in conflict resolution and peacebuilding have been launched.

132.   The African Women's Committee on Peace and Development, created in 1998 by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and ECA, aimed to mainstream women's voices and concerns in peace

negotiations and conflict resolution processes. Other noteworthy initiatives undertaken across the continent have been the capacity-building of both men and women on conflict resolution skills.

Challenges

133.   Although many African countries have made some progress in the area of women representation in parliament and ministries, such progress has not led necessarily to adequate budgets, institutional frameworks and policies for implementing gender programmes for gender equality (UNECA, 2007). Some countries do not even have national strategies to increase women's participation in decision-making. As a result, women are still under-represented in decision-making positions in governments, civil society and the private sector in almost all African countries.

134.   The ten-year regional review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in 2004 in Addis Ababa reported on the introduction of measures aimed at increasing the participation of women in decision-making at different levels and noted that "gender equality and equity principles were not yet fully integrated into democratization processes. This means   that women continue to be underrepresented in most structures of power and decision- making, including leadership position in political parties, local government, the public and private sectors and civil society organizations".

135.   The AU 50/50 gender parity principle is not yet replicated and implemented at all levels of national, subregional and regional governance. This must be done through affirmative action and set timelines. Women's access to elected positions at municipal and parliamentary levels must be supported to reach these targets. Leadership training programmes for women, especially young women, should be developed and supported to enable them to exercise responsibilities at all levels.

136.   The major challenges affecting effective participation of the women include illiteracy and lack of confidence, which make the women unable to effectively articulate the issues and make contributions. Gender relations of power and party politics are also major challenges. They are also subjected to cultural attitudes that do not recognize the right of women to lead. The persistence of stereotypical attitudes towards gender roles of women and men create a pervasive climate of discrimination and entrenched stereotypical ideas relating to the role of women in public life. African governments demonstrate lack of the necessary political will, to allocate the human and financial resources required to meet the goals of gender equality and gender justice. Women are typically judged to have less leadership ability than men with similar characteristics, and the same actions performed by men and women in leadership situations are evaluated more negatively when women are the leaders. The unequal power relationships which exist in the private sphere are reflected in the public sphere where society still looks down on women entering politics. Although progress has been made in administering free and fair elections, most elections are still characterized by violence that discourages women from participating. Besides, elections cost money and many women do not have the wealth or financial networks required to launch a political career.

How to address these issues?

137.   Strengthening the effective role of women in political participation can be achieved through training programmes to build the confidence and self esteem of women politicians, as well as their skills in leadership, networking and advocacy. In addition, women's participation at all levels (central government, local government, in decision-making, and in other areas, such as the private sector, civil society and the media) is essential for bringing their priorities and needs to bear on decisions that directly affect their lives.

138.   Significantly, enhancing progress in implementation requires scaling up of investments and use of existing promising practices. Other supportive mechanisms include: transparent selection processes within political parties; access to public funding; the provision of training for women candidates and elected officials; sensitization of voters; and protection from violence. Measures by governments and civil society and the media are required to change social attitudes and mobilize support for women candidates and elected officials. Just like men, women are both victims and actors in wars and armed conflicts and are also a key resource in peacebuilding processes.

139.   Yet, they are still marginalized when it comes to formal post-conflict peacebuilding processes, both at the national and regional levels. This under-representation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction has led to programmes that are insensitive to gender issues and that exacerbate gender inequality.

140.   Women's engagement in peacebuilding is sometimes based on the assumption that women and girls are not associated with violence. Therefore, greater awareness and documented knowledge of the role played by women during conflicts is needed to fully assess their potential for contributing to the building of a sustainable peace. Policymaking in conflict and post-conflict situations require good statistics based on gender-sensitive conflict monitoring systems. Currently, these are weak. Gender-sensitive conflict monitoring systems use information about women and men and gender relations to understand conflict dynamics, and identify actors and processes that would prevent conflict and build peace in a gender-sensitive way.

Issues for discussion

141.   The strategic role of women in governance structures, as well as in peacebuilding and reconstruction in conflict or post-conflict countries has been underlined by the various Declarations adopted by African countries. Issues to be discussed include the following:
- What practical steps can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take to replicate the lessons learnt on expanding women's participation in governance and policy-making at different levels?
- How can member States, AU and United Nations agencies improve the quality of women's participation in decision-making, and how can they monitor whether women's participation has made a difference in pro-women decision-making?
- What practical steps can member States, AU and United Nations agencies take to translate the lessons learned and good practices into scaled-up policies and programmes that promote greater participation of women in peacebuilding processes?
- What do member States, AU and United Nations agencies need to do in order to initiate/strengthen gender-sensitive data collection on governance and conflict monitoring systems?

5.   Emerging issues

5.1   Climate change

142.   The link between sustaining the environment and the sustenance of livelihoods has been clearly established. This is especially the case when considering the adverse implications that climate change has on a host of factors essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction, such as food security and health. Some of the current and projected impacts of climate change on Africa's

development include: exposure to increased water stress and water-related conflicts; desertification, deforestation, and food insecurity; energy insecurity; increased risk of disease including malaria, rift valley fever, cholera and meningitis; and degradation of coastal areas. The impact of climate change on rural livelihoods especially is not gender neutral; climate change deepens existing gender inequalities.

143.   Women bear the major responsibility for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security. Because of their socially ascribed roles, unequal access to resources and technologies, and limited mobility, women in many contexts are disproportionately affected by natural disasters such as floods, fires, and mudslides. Climate change thus exacerbates existing inequalities.

144.   Any sudden or progressive changes in the environment which adversely affect people's lives or living conditions may force them to leave their homes, either temporarily or permanently. Women's vulnerability is heightened by their socio-economic status, care-giving roles and relative lack of power. Women's role as the main caregivers, for instance, has them looking after their children's safety before their own. In addition, women's lower literacy rates may prevent them from being alerted of a nearing disaster at an early stage.

145.   Therefore, it is essential to develop and implement policies and initiatives that will address the gender dimension of problems resulting from climate change and improve the participation of women in decision-making processes related to this area if responses to environmental change and disasters are to have an equally positive effect on women and men. In addition, supporting women's active participation in preparedness and response efforts can only improve their role within families and communities.

146.   At the international level, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN-FCCC) is an International Environmental Treaty, which was produced at the 1992 Earth Summit. The main goal is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas in order to combat global warming. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994 and by 2007, all African countries except Somalia were signatories. The Kyoto Protocol, adopted by the Parties to the UNFCCC in 1997 set binding targets and time-tables to cut down greenhouse gas emissions. In December 2007, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali adopted the Bali Action Plan, which confirmed that effectively addressing climate change requires mitigation and adaptation action, as well as technology and financing.

147.   In the follow-up to the BPFA, the General Assembly highlighted the need to "involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and establish or strengthen mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impacts of development and environmental policies on women" (UNDAW, 2008).

148.   At the regional level, the African Heads of State and Government at the 8th AU Summit in January 2007 adopted a Declaration on Climate Change in which they committed to integrate climate change and climate change adaptation strategies into national and subregional development policies, programmes and activities; and to undertake targeted awareness raising to ensure that climate change considerations are taken into account in all sustainable development initiatives.

Progress

149.   African countries have ratified the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and are at different stages in implementing it. Forty-six countries have ratified or acceded to the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and are engaged in its implementation. National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) were initiated by UNFCCC to support Least Developed Countries in prioritizing actions that need to be taken in light of climate change to avoid or reduce its harmful effects. Twenty-two countries have completed their NAPAs, and the common areas that have emerged as high-priority actions by African countries include: strengthening early warning systems; adaptation of land use practices; coastal erosion and storm protection; and disaster risk reduction. A number of these projects have been submitted for funding.

150.   In addition, the Joint ECA Conference of Ministers and the Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance of the African Union Commission (AUC) held in April 2008 approved the establishment of the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) by AU, UNECA, and AfDB. The Centre will influence policy, and develop resources and infrastructure for disaster preparedness and management.

Challenges

151.   Despite the progress made with regards to addressing and responding to climate change, many challenges remain with particular regard to addressing effects on women. The UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol are the two main frameworks for action on climate change. Unfortunately, from their inception, neither the UNFCCC nor the Kyoto Protocol has recognized gender as a separate issue to be addressed within the debates surrounding climate change. At subsequent conferences, however, gradual progress has been made and at the Bali Conference in 2007, various parties articulated their commitments to gender mainstreaming.

152.   Actions to assessing the gender impacts of climate change and developing relevant policies and strategies are hampered by lack of reliable gender-disaggregated information and lack of financial support. Participants at the WEDO-UNFPA Workshop on Gender and Climate Change in Dakar in June 2008 noted that while NAPAs do incorporate gender as a "guiding principle" in their drafting, they largely present women as victims. None of the NAPAs so far address women as key actors and experts, and few target women for activity implementation.

153.   Governments should be encouraged to mainstream gender perspectives into their national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change, through carrying out systematic gender analysis, collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data, establishing gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks and developing practical tools to support increased atten-tion to inclusion of gender perspectives in policies and programmes on sustainable development and climate change. Consultation with and participation of women in climate change initiatives must be ensured and the role of women's groups and networks strengthened.

> **Box: Priorities for addressing gender equality issues in climate change**
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> - Increased resources are required for scaling up low cost technologies that are available to increase gender equality in accessing climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies.
> - Increased participation of women is needed as women tend to be underrepresented in decision-making on sustainable development, including on climate change mitigation efforts.
> - Equal access of women to training, credit and skills-development programmes to ensure their full participation in climate change.
> - Mainstreaming of gender perspectives into national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change.
> - Systematic gender analysis, collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data, establishing gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks and developing practical tools to support increased attention to gender perspectives in relevant policies

Issues for discussion

- What should member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies do to scale up and replicate achievements of mainstreaming gender perspectives into climate change efforts at national, subregional and regional levels (in policies, strategies, action plans and programmes?)
- How can member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies overcome the gaps and challenges in engendering policies and programmes on sustainable development and climate change?
- What steps should member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take to reduce the vulnerability of women and to reduce the negative impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to their critical roles in rural areas in provision of water, food and energy? What good practices can be provided?
- What steps should member States, AU and United Nations agencies take to increase the participation of women in decision-making on climate change at different levels? What are the best practices?
- In a practical manner, how can member States use the major contributions of women as agents of change in mitigation and adaptation to climate change at local levels? What good practices exist, and how can these be more effectively utilized by member States, AU and United Nations agencies?
- What steps need to be taken by member States, AU and United Nations agencies to create public-private partnerships to curb the impact of climate change, especially with regards to women?

5.2   Food security crisis

154.   Women in both rural and urban areas are almost exclusively responsible for guaranteeing food security and well-being for their households either through smallholder farming of food crops, or through income earned from informal sector income-generating activities or employment on commercial farms. Although the prevalence of undernourishment has declined over the last two decades from 36 per cent in 1979-1981 to 27 per cent by 2005, the absolute number of people undernourished has risen over the same time period (FAO, 2008).

155.   Since the 1950s, various binding and non-binding international and regional instruments[5] have emphasized the right to adequate food. Yet, it is one of the most frequently violated targets set by the World Food Summit[6] in 1996 for reduction of hunger. In relation to MDG 1, which calls for the halving of the number of people going without adequate food by 2015, only 17 per cent of SSA countries are on track, and only 12 per cent of the SSA population is on track (World Bank 2004). The Beijing Declaration and the BPFA of 1995 called on countries to develop agriculture and fishing sectors where and as necessary in order to ensure appropriate household and national food security and food sufficiency, and to promote equitable distribution of food within the household. Although review of the progress made in BPFA implementation after 10 years did not single out food security, it can be deduced from the poverty status of African women that many face problems with food security. This is being made worse by the current rising food prices and financial crisis.

156.   Recent developments have seen a rapid increase in global food prices due to increasing food demand from large and populous Asian countries, the conversion of land from food- to agro fuel crops, and increases in energy and fertilizer prices. African countries as net-food buyers are negatively affected by the rapidly increasing global food prices resulting in higher incidence of food insecurity. Of the 34 countries that FAO identified in July 2008 to be experiencing a food security crisis and requiring external assistance, 21 are in Africa (FAO, 2008). Food insecurity caused by food price increases is disproportionately affecting women in both urban and rural areas, who are central to assuring household food security.

157.   Yet, at the same time women are disproportionately absent from contributing to policy discussions aimed at identifying solutions. As the driving force behind African agriculture, rural women must play a vital role in finding solutions to Africa's food crises. They are involved in all aspects of food security, but are ignored by policymakers. Although the food crisis calls for an urgent response from national governments and the international community, urgency is not an excuse for misguided policies that fail to address the gender implications of the crisis.

 158.   Rather, the food price crisis provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of women's contributions to agricultural production and household welfare and to emphasize what we have known for many years: that gender discrimination impedes agricultural productivity and rural development, and that women are not passive victims but a necessary part of ensuring food security.

159.   Food security is also influenced by a broad range of issues, including population growth, control and mobility, resource distribution, agricultural production, climate change, environmental degradation, declining crop yields, socio-economic status, development, land ownership rights, access to micro-finance, HIV and AIDS and access to healthcare services (FAO, 1987). All these issues are central to the poor, especially poor women, yet their role in food security has remained practically invisible and taken for granted to policymakers. Most of these problems have a disproportionately negative impact on rural women, due to their lower socio-economic, legal and political status despite their critical roles as producers and household managers.

160.   Women are involved in all the three pillars of food security that include food production, food access and food utilization (IFPRI, 2005). They work on small farms, the informal sector and in urban

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5   These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Human Rights Covenants (including the United Nations Bill of Rights), several Declarations and Plans of Action of the World Conferences of the 1990s and 2000s, and the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition. In essence, all these instruments declare that every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and to maintain their physical and mental faculties.
6   The 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) set a target of a reduction in the number of hungry people by at least 20 million every year between 2000 and 2015.

gardens to produce cash crops. In terms of access to food, women ensure that each family member receives an adequate share of food, and they are primarily responsible for providing food, to which they devote their time and their income. It is also women who are more involved in the way food is utilized, making sure that the family derives good nutrition from the food they grow, buy and prepare. In many cases, food preparation involves a substantial amount of time for collecting fuel and preparing ingredients.

161.   Yet, gender bias and gender blindness persist: farmers are still generally perceived as "male" by policymakers, development planners and agricultural service deliveries. Policymakers often ignore the gender dimensions of food security, assuming that food insecurity impacts on men and women equally, and therefore action taken is gender blind. Data evidence as well as observations of the reality on the ground show that women are more adversely affected than men.

162.   The rising food prices will adversely affect women and female-headed families more than other groups in society. Many studies have revealed that female- and child-headed families are often the poorest in Africa[7]. They have very little income and often do not own land or any other productive asset. Consequently, when food becomes expensive, they fall deeper into poverty. On the other hand, the rising food prices should provide an incentive and opportunity for many countries in Africa to strengthen the contributions of their farmers and to pay more attention to the contributions of women in particular, to national economic growth and poverty reduction.

163.   However, policymakers in Africa often lack information on the gender impacts of food inse-curity, the likely effects of global food crises on their country, on gender relations, and on capacity to identify, design, and implement policy actions that minimize risks and maximize opportunities. The deficiencies in information and analysis can lead to over and under reactions, resulting in policy and market failures.

164.   Responses to the recent food security crisis require both short- and long-term strategies that address gender inequalities. Short-term strategies include appropriate policies and measures to mitigate the effects of rising food prices on living standards, especially for vulnerable groups. These include food transfers and such social safety nets as food for work or cash for work. Longer-term strategies should be aimed at boosting domestic agricultural production that is supportive of the poor in rural, peri-urban and urban areas and should address underlying gender inequalities.

165.   The Declaration adopted by the High-Level Conference on World Food Security with the theme 'The Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy' held in June 2008, emphasized the need for long-term strategies to include liberalization of international trade in agriculture by reducing trade barriers and eliminating market-distorting policies. Addressing these measures will give farmers, particularly those in developing countries, new opportunities to sell their products on world markets and effective support to increase productivity and production. The Declaration also called for in-depth studies to ensure that production and use of bio-fuels is sustainable in accordance with the three pillars of sustainable development and takes into account the need to achieve and maintain global food security. It is important to indicate that such studies need to reveal the gender implications of bio-fuels.

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7   Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action concluded that the number of women living in poverty was increasing in some African countries, especially where women headed families.

Issues for discussion
- What immediate steps should member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies take given the increasing vulnerability of African women to food security and rising food prices? What are the implications of bio-fuels for African women?
- Which gender-sensitive policies to address the food crisis should be put in place by member States, AU, AfDB and United Nations agencies? What practical steps need to be taken at the three levels to get the policies into place and to support implementation?

6.   Conclusions

166.   This issues paper has examined some of the challenges facing Africa in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It has also identified a number of issues for discussion by participants at the Forum, the outcome of which will provide a Plan of Action for dealing with and overcoming these challenges. What has clearly emerged in the analysis is the fact that African countries have adopted many declarations and commitments. However, translation of these declarations into national policies has not yielded substantial progress on gender equality on the ground.

167.   In the areas where progress has been made, in particular primary education, very targeted initiatives to promote gender parity were implemented and the amount of resources allocated for the sector was increased. The Forum will discuss how countries can adopt and scale up strategies that have proven to be effective. It is also important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policy and programme implementation and to map out how effective practices can be documented and be widely shared across the continent.

168.   Some of the common challenges highlighted by the themes to be discussed at the Forum include:
- How to strengthen implementation of the various conventions, frameworks, policies, laws and regulations that support the empowerment of women in all aspects of development. In doing this, what are the roles and responsibilities of member States, AU and United Nations agencies, and what are the practical steps that need to be taken?
- How to monitor and evaluate, in a gender-sensitive manner, the implementation of the various conventions, legislations, frameworks, and policies. What are the indicators at the various levels, that is, member States, AU and United Nations agencies? What are the reporting mechanisms?
- How to increase the involvement of men in the formulation and implementation strategies to empower women.

169.   It is hoped that at the end of the Forum, concrete next steps will have been identified to take the empowerment of African women to the next level.

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ANNEX I: Conventions and Declarations on Women and Gender Issues

No.	Conventions/Declarations	Year	Level
1	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CE-DAW)	1979	International
2	Optional Protocol - CEDAW (OP-CEDAW)	1999	International
3	Cairo Declaration on Population and Development	1994	International
4	International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)	1999	International
5	Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)	1995	
6	Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	2000	International
7	UN Resolution 1325	2000	International
8	ILO Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration	1951	International
9	ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination	1958	International
10	ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Leave at the Work Place	2000	International
11	ILO Convention 103 on Maternity Protection	1952	International
12	The Dakar Declaration on Population and HIV/AIDS UN General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS	2004	International
13	The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness	2005	International
14	UN Security Council Resolution Number 1325	2000	International
African Declarations			
1	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: the Women's Rights Protocol (WRP-ACHPR)	2003	Africa
2	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa	2004	Africa
3	Abuja Framework for Action for the Fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Infectious Diseases	2001	Africa
4	NEPAD strategy on Engendering NPRS Access to agricultural extension Access to technology Equal access to land		Africa
5	The Maputo Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Infectious Diseases	2003	Africa
6	SADC Declaration on Gender and Development	1997	Subregional
7	Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children (Addendum to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development)	1998	Subregional
8	ECOWAS Declaration on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons	2001	Subregional

Source: UNECA and OECD, 2008. Africa Commitments Inventory.

ANNEX II: Sectoral Declarations adopted by African countries

No.	Declarations	Year	Level
Health & HIV/AIDS			
1	African Charter on Human and People's Rights (entered into force 1986)	1981	Africa
2	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003	Africa
3	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1990	Africa
4	Abuja Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Infectious Diseases. Additional: Abuja Framework for Action for the Fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Infectious Diseases	2001	Africa
5	Maputo Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Infectious Diseases	2003	Africa
6	Abuja Call for Accelerated Action towards Universal Access to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Services by a United Africa by 2010	2006	Africa
7	SADC Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS (Heads of State)	2003	Subregional
8	Africa Health Strategy 2007-11 (Ministerial)	2007	Africa
9	Geneva Ministerial Meeting adopting implementation of 2007 plan (Ministerial)	2008	Africa
10	Gaborone Declaration (Ministerial)	2005	Africa
11	Brazzaville Commitment (Ministerial)	2006	Africa
Education			
1	The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All	2000	International
2	AU Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education: Commitments to Multiple Goals	2006	Africa
3	Mauritius Ministerial Meeting for Higher Education by 2020 (Ministerial)	2005	Africa
Agriculture			
1	NEPAD founding statement (agricultural component)	2001	Africa
2	Adoption of CAADP Framework	2003	Africa
3	Maputo Declaration	2003	Africa
4	Sirte Water and Agriculture Summit	2004	Africa
5	Abuja Fertilizer Summit Declaration	2006	Africa
6	Abuja Food Security Declaration	2006	Africa
7	Abuja Food Security Resolution	2006	Africa
Political Governance			
1	African Charter on Human and People's Rights (entered into force 1986)	1981	Africa
2	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003	Africa
3	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1990	Africa
4	NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Economic, Political and Corporate Governance	2005	Africa
5	MOU on the APRM	2003	Africa

No.	Declarations	Year	Level
6	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2004	Africa
7	The African Peer Review Mechanism Base Document	2003	Africa
Economic Governance and Transparency / Corruption			
1	AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	2003	Africa
2	NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Economic, Political and Corporate Governance	2005	Africa
Peace and Security			
1	Establishment of AU African Peace and Security Architecture Protocol, AU Assembly, Durban	2002	Africa
2	Bamako Declaration on a Common African Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons	2000	Africa
3	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003	Africa
ICT			
1	Summit of the Organization of African Unity, Lusaka	2001	Africa
2	Summit of the Organization of African Unity, Yaoundé	1996	Africa
3	AU Summit, Banjul	2006	Africa
4	AU Summit, Libya	2005	Africa
5	Connect Africa Summit, Kigali – Ministerial	2007	Africa
Water and Sanitation			
1	AU Summit on Water and Sanitation Sharm El-Sheikh	2008	Africa
2	Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water	2004	Africa
3	AfricaSan Ministerial Statement	2008	Africa
4	Tunis Declaration "Accelerating Water Security Africa's Socio-Economic Development" - Ministerial	2008	Africa
5	The Abuja Declaration on Water: A Key to Sustainable Development in Africa – Ministerial	2002	Africa
6	The African Ministers' Initiative on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (AMIWASH) - Ministerial	2004	Africa
7	The Brazzaville Declaration - Ministerial	1996	Africa
Energy			
1	AU adoption of Convention of the African Energy Commission (AFREC) (Algiers Ministerial; Durban Heads of State, July	2001	AU
2	Action Plan Africa Energy, Durban	2002	AU
3	AU adoption on NEPAD: STRAP	2001	AU
4	NEPAD (35% population in 20 years)	2001	AU
5	White Paper For a Regional policy Geared Towards Increasing Access to Energy Services	2006	REC
6	Ministerial Declaration on Common Vision	2006	AU ministerial
7	Declaration of Ministers of Water and Energy	2006	AU ministerial
8	Cairo Declaration on Hydrocarbons	2006	AU Ministerial

No.	Declarations	Year	Level
9	Declaration of Ministers of Finance, Finance for Development Conference, Accra: Financing Energy Infrastructure	2007	AU ministerial
Climate change			
1	Declaration on Climate Change by the African Heads of State and Government	2007	AU Summit

Source: UNECA and OECD, 2008. Africa Commitments Inventory.