

## **THE AU GENDER POLICY**

### **Background**

The AU's approach to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality has been informed by UN frameworks and specific needs of the African Continent, in particular, the 1948 United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Additionally there are also UN instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Humans, and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The commitment of the African Union (AU) to gender equality is rooted in the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. This commitment is reinforced by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2006.

The Gender Policy takes into account the AU Policy on Migration, the AU Nutrition Strategy, the African Position on the Family, the African Social Policy Framework, the Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health, the African Youth Charter, the outcome of the African Development Forum on Gender Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Programme (CAADP) and other key AU Decisions, Declarations and instruments having a bearing on the advancement of women and gender equality,

### **Purpose**

The main purpose of the Policy is to establish a clear vision and make commitments to guide the process of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment to influence policies, procedures and practices which will accelerate the achievement of gender equality, gender justice, non discrimination and fundamental human rights in Africa.

### **Vision**

The vision is to achieve an African society founded on democracy, gender equality, human rights and dignity and recognizes the equal status of women and men, girls and boys, with both sexes thriving together harmoniously, in a peaceful and secure environment characterized by equal partnership in decision-making in the development of the Continent.

### **Goal**

The main goal is to adopt a rights' based approach to development through evidence-based decision-making and the use of gender-disaggregated data and performance indicators for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. It seeks to promote a gender responsive environment and practices and undertake

commitments linked to the realisation of gender equality and women's empowerment in Member States, and at the international, continental, regional and national levels.

## **Objectives**

1. To advocate for the promotion of a gender responsive environment and practices
2. To initiate and accelerate gender mainstreaming in institutions, legal frameworks, policies and programmes
3. To promote the development of guidelines and enforcement of standards against sexual and gender-based violence
4. To develop a Gender Management System (GMS) within the AU
5. To address gender-based barriers to the free movement of persons and goods across borders throughout the Continent;
6. To promote equitable access for both women and men to and control over resources
7. To facilitate the implementation of remedial measures to address existing inequalities in access to and control over factors of production including land.

## **Mandate**

The mandate for this gender equality and women empowerment Policy derives from three main factors:

- a) The strong AU commitment to gender equality
- b) The aspirations and achievements of the African women's
- c) The necessity to consolidate the positive experiences that have taken place.

## **Policy Values and Principles**

The Gender Policy will be guided by the following values and principles:

1. Promotion of good governance and the rule of law,
2. Adherence to the principle of gender equality between men and women,
3. Observance and adherence to the principle of gender equality,
4. Guaranteed fairness and equal treatment for all;
5. Adherence to the Parity Principle as enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the AU
6. Promotion of the principle of shared responsibility, accountability and ownership of the commitments made by the AU;
7. Promotion of regional integration as a vehicle for the advancement of the African Continent and its peoples;
8. Application of the principle of subsidiarity to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the Policy at all levels.

## Rationale

Both women and men have worked for the liberation of the continent, and for the economic emancipation, solidarity and cohesion necessary for its integration and unity. Therefore, they should participate and benefit equally in development processes. Thus, the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment should be mainstreamed into all the institutional arrangements at policy and programming levels in all AU Organs, Regional Economic Communities (REC) and Member States.

## Commitments

The Policy commitments are overarching and anchored on the pillars of the AU Organs, RECs and Member States' institutional policy statements, strategic plans, roadmaps and action plans for achieving gender equality and women empowerment targets in:

1. Creating an enabling and stable political environment
2. Legislation and legal protection actions against discrimination, for ensuring gender equality
3. Mobilising stakeholders for implementing the AU Gender Policy
4. Rationalisation and harmonisation of RECs' gender policies and programmes
5. Mobilising resources for implementing the AU Gender Policy
6. Capacity building for gender mainstreaming
7. Implement gender mainstreaming in all sectors.
8. Maintaining peace, security, settlement of conflicts, reconstruction and promote the effective participation of women in peacekeeping and security including efforts aimed at reconciliation in post conflict reconstruction and development.

## Targets

1. **Parity Targets:** Put in place policy, institutional mechanisms and processes by 2010 and strive to achieve parity in AU Organs, Member States and RECs by the year 2015.
2. **Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa Targets:** Endeavour to achieve full ratification & enforcement of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by 2015 & domestication by 2020.
3. **SDGEA Targets:** Achieve the targets in the various commitments set out in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

## Institutional Framework for Implementation

Gender Mainstreaming is accomplished through the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS) that puts in place structures, mechanisms and processes. The GMS is intended to advance gender equality through political will, forging partnerships with stakeholders, and building capacity and sharing good practices. The GMS will be established with these enabling structures:

1. The Executive Management Level (Political will)
2. Gender Management Team (GMT)
3. Gender Directorate/Division (the Lead Agency)
4. Departmental/Sector Focal Points

5. Satellite Gender Focal Points in partner institutions, centres of higher learning, Universities, public and private sector institutions
6. Gender-Commission/Expert-committees/Technical-working-groups/Gender-taskforces
7. Media