

African Women's Decade 2010-2020

Three Years on: 2013 Annual Review



Make *Every* Woman Count

Promoting the Empowerment of African Women & Girls

Founded in December 2010 two months after the launch of the African Women's Decade, Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) is a young African women-led organisation that promotes and advocates for the empowerment and rights of African women and girls. MEWC provides timely and accurate information, resources and tools to support and strengthen the work of African women's rights advocates, African women's grassroots, organisations and activists. Through its campaigns and publications, MEWC monitors and raises awareness of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 launched in October 2010 by the African Union.

MEWC is both a platform for African women & girls, a space for shared ideas, and a voice for those who have largely gone unheard. Unlike many organisations working towards women's rights, we seek to strengthen the voices of African women and girls so that they can take the lead on Africa's social, political and economic development.

Mission

MEWC's mission is to ensure that African women and girls have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so that they can fully and equally participate with men in the public dialogue and decisions-making influencing decisions that will determine the future of their families, communities and countries.

Vision

MEWC's vision is a world where African women and girls are fully empowered to participate in economic, political and social development and influence decisions that affect their lives; a world where African women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, access and opportunities to resources, education, healthcare, employment, leadership and decision-making.

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African Women's Decade: 2013 Annual Review

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Foreword

MEWC's Annual Review of the African Women's Decade (AWD) aims to evaluate the progress, or lack thereof, being made to include and promote the rights of women at country, regional, and Pan-African levels.

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

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

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

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

Objectives of the report:

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

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

Challenges:

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

As an organisation still in its 3rd year, monitoring all the 54 African countries is difficult and time-consuming. With limited access to resources or field representatives, we rely on UN, local news reports, World Bank, NGOs, International Institutions and individual country to gather information.

With diligent research, we were able to report what has been happening on the continent in 2013 in relation to women's issues. However our accuracy and precision with data would benefit from access to better resources, more time and full-time staff researchers and writers.

Introduction

Yet another year has gone by since the Continental Launch of the African Women's Decade in Nairobi, Kenya by the African Union (AU). The launch of the Decade was an important step forward taken by the AU to re-invigorate commitments for accelerated implementation of agreed global and regional commitments of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).

The Decade has arguably given an incredible momentum to the move forward in women's rights agenda on the continent and a framework for accelerating actions.

Three years on since the launch of the African Women's Decade, where are we?

In 2013, the continent celebrated the 10th anniversary of The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which was adopted by the African Union on July 11, 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique to supplement the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

Its adoption remains an important milestone in the progress towards full and effective enjoyment of women's human rights in Africa. By providing a comprehensive framework for the promotion, protection and respect for the rights of African women, the Protocol is thus, the first international instrument to speak specifically to the rights of women in an African context. It is a groundbreaking legal instrument, reinforcing women's rights provided in other regional and global human rights instruments.

The Protocol specifically guarantees African women's rights to: protection from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDs and to adequate, affordable, and accessible health services. It also expresses a State's duty to protect girls and women from practices and situations that increase their risk of infection, such as child marriage, sexual violence, and FGM. The Protocol further guarantees women's right to family planning education.

10 years after the adoption of the Protocol, 48 countries out of the 54 African Union members States have signed the African Women's Protocol and 36 have ratified it as of June 2013, making it one of the highest ratified instruments in Africa. As for its implementation, important strides have been made at national level to ensure legislative recognition of women's rights.



A report entitled "Journey to Equality: 10 Years of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa"² was prepared by the Solidarity for African Women's Rights in association with Make Every Woman Count and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, and launched in August 2013 in Lilongwe – Malawi.

2013 also was marked by a renewed commitment from the African Union Commission highest ranking decision-makers. As part of the framework of its "Pan - Africanism", African Renaissance and 2063 Agenda³, a two-day women's conference was organized in May for "women's voices to be heard loud and clear as we reflect on the past, assess our current state and plan for the future."

The AU Commission Chairperson, rightly mentioned in her opening remarks at the event that " We will say there are enough women when we have true gender parity and 50% of women everywhere; unlike now, when we can count them on one hand. We have two Presidents – Liberia and Malawi - and a few more Vice Presidents. We must move towards a situation when we don't have to count them, because they are enough. We must ensure that by the end of the African Decade of Women in 2020, we see tangible improvements in the situation of women."

As the World has been reflecting in 2013 on future development goals and whether or not to adopt new Sustainable Development Goals, African activists and women's organizations have joined the debate to try and make sure that the concerns of African Women are taken into account. The hope is that the ball is not going to be dropped towards 2015 and there will be a specific Sustainable Development Goal on Gender Equality and Women's Rights and that other Goals will also aim at an inclusive and equitable development.

Some recent data is cause for Continent-wide pride: The Inter – Parliamentary Union's latest report on women in parliament, showed that by the end of 2012, Sub-Sahara Africa had an average of 20.4 per cent women MPs which is 7 percentage points higher than in 2002 (13.6%)⁴. The region had four of the Inter – Parliamentary Union's top 10 ranked parliaments in the world in 2012⁵, including Rwanda in the unchallenged lead. The presence of women in parliament in some African countries has made a difference

to the adoption of gender-sensitive policies. Thanks to the advocacy work and lobbying from individual advocates, women's organizations and other members of civil society, some countries such as Rwanda, Senegal, Algeria, and South Africa have adopted affirmative policies including quotas to increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

As the continent is moving forward with its 2063 vision, women are clearly paving their way to fully participate in the continent's promising future.

However, ten years on since the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, the voice of the African woman still remains a whisper in the darkness. The struggle to gain a fair share of political power and economic opportunities continues. Today, women's bodies are still being used as a weapon of war by warlords and women are still being denied access to health care and education.

Although girl's education has improved undoubtedly in most African countries, the completion rates remain low, and many girls still are unable to go on to secondary or tertiary education. Across the continent, millions of young girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation, a practice that widely continues.

In order to improve women's lives on the continent, African Governments and their development partners must urgently transform their promises into concrete actions and deliver effectively on gender equality and women's rights. It has been said time and time again, and maybe if we say it once more it will be heard: Africa could not yesterday, cannot today and won't be able tomorrow, to afford the cost of denying the enjoyment, fulfilment and exercise of their full potential to half of its population.

While we wait for the dream of gender equality to come true, we will continue to support and hold accountable all those who have committed themselves to the 10 points of the African Women's Decade (African Union, Member States, Development Partners) and with this report we are inviting you to join us in this critical struggle.

Rainatou Sow
Executive Director, Make Every Woman Count

2013 Report Highlights

Below are some of the highlights of the 2013 report. To find out more in depth about each country, and for reference, please go to the specific country profile.

Women's Political Participation:

- ☞ Women were overwhelming voted in September 2013 elections at 63.8% of Rwanda's parliamentary seats (lower house) – a nearly 8% jump since its last elections,
- ☞ As of 2013, 13% of Sudan's parliament is female, the highest percentage in the country's history.
- ☞ Algeria became the first state in North Africa to reach the established 30% quota established in the Beijing Platform with a parliament comprised of nearly 31.6% women in 2012
- ☞ The March 2013 general elections in Kenya resulted in a total number of women in parliament at 83, the national assembly at 65 (18.6%) and the Senate at 18 women (26.5%)
- ☞ Tanzania is in the process of drafting a new Constitution with aims to increase women's participation in parliament by having each constituency represented by two MP's, a female and a male, to ensure gender balance – April 2014
- ☞ Comoros, one of Africa's poorest countries, has one of the lowest percentages of women in parliament 3.03%
- ☞ In January 2013, only eight women were elected to a 508 member lower house of parliament in Egypt

Reproductive Health

- ☞ Chad and Somalia are the countries with the highest maternal death ratios at over 1,000 per 100,000 live births
- ☞ Equatorial Guinea has reached the MDG for maternal mortality, below 300 per 100,000
- ☞ Infrastructure has been singled out as a significant cause of maternal mortality in Liberia, following increasing numbers of women dying on the way to the hospital due to poor road conditions
- ☞ In Comoros, maternal mortality is at 280 deaths for every live birth
- ☞ Only 62% of births in Lesotho are attended by skilled personnel
- ☞ In South Africa, contraception is widely available and free at government clinics, with contraceptive prevalence among married women at 60% in 2012
- ☞ Less than 75% of births in Benin are attended by skilled personnel; and contraceptive prevalence among married women is as low as 17%

HIV/AIDS

- ☞ In the Republic of Congo, the number of pregnant women infected with HIV has decreased from 3.4% in 2009 to 2.8% in 2012
- ☞ In Malawi, it is estimated that 57.2% of persons living with HIV/AIDS are women
- ☞ Rwanda has 91% coverage on prevention of mother-child transmission
- ☞ Over 20% of girls in Botswana aged 15 to 19 are HIV positive, while the pregnancy rate is 17%
- ☞ South Africa has taken strong measures to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, reducing the number of newly infected women declined by 28% in the past 3 years - 60% of maternal mortality is attributed to HIV
- ☞ In 2012, 42% of pregnancy-related deaths in Lesotho were attributed to HIV - the number of women acquiring HIV infection has declined by 15% since 2009
- ☞ 31% of the female population in Swaziland is living with HIV, contrasting with 20% of men, rising to 49% for women between the ages of 24 and 29

Education

- ☞ In Sao Tome and Principe, the overall literacy rate is 84.9% and the female literacy rate (77%). Girls have equal access to primary and secondary education as boys. It is one of the countries on track to meeting MDG2 of attaining universal primary education by 2015
- ☞ South Sudan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Only 16% of girls and women are literate
- ☞ At a net enrolment rate of 29% for girls and 42% for boys, schooling in Burkina Faso is among the lowest globally
- ☞ A UNESCO 2012 report found 53% of poor girls living in the Northern region of Ghana had never been to school, compared with 41% of poor boys
- ☞ Literacy rate is at 41% in Guinea, but only 30% among women, compared to 52% for men. On average, girls attend school for 8 years and boys for 11 years
- ☞ In Liberia, teen pregnancy, early parenthood and child marriage remain serious barriers to girls' education,
- ☞ Only 8% of adult women in Mauritania have reached a secondary or higher level of education compared to 20.8% of their male counterparts

Violence Against Women

- ☞ In Djibouti, despite having decrees and legislation against FGM, 93% of the girls and women have undergone some form of FGM - 9 out of 10
- ☞ Somalia has the world's highest level of FGM, 98% of Somali women between 15-49 have been cut or mutilated
- ☞ At least 68% of women in Zimbabwe have suffered from gender-based violence perpetrated by men – 650 women and girls were raped in the last 10 months in 2013 in the capital Harare only.
- ☞ In a UN survey from April 28th 2013, 99% of women report they have been victims of sexual assault in Egypt.
- ☞ Child marriage is very high in Sudan, 48% of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, with some being as young as 12 years old.
- ☞ 67% of women in Botswana have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime, A smaller, but still high, proportion of men (44%) admit to perpetrating violence against women.
- ☞ In January 2013, the Moroccan upper house of parliament removed the provision in the penal code that allowed perpetrators to escape prosecution by marrying the victim of the assault
- ☞ In South Africa, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every eight hours

Economic Empowerment

- ☞ Eritrean women make up 30% of the workforce, and are very active in the informal sector. Women control about 40% of all small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- ☞ 88% of women in Mauritius are literate, with more women than men at tertiary level
- ☞ 3,652 women in Rwanda own manufacturing businesses countrywide. In agriculture & fisheries, females constitute the majority at 81.9%.
- ☞ In Lesotho, women make up 40.3% of the workforce but female participation in firm ownership remains low at 18%.
- ☞ Women constitute 45.2% of the economically active population in South Africa

Central Africa Region Summary

Central Africa has been the epicentre of Africa's largest conflicts to date in eastern DRC and Central African Republic.

Central African Republic (CAR) experienced a coup d'état in March 2013. The subsequent unstable and violent situation has led to high rates of violence against women and a growing disregard for women's human rights. UN experts have warned that the violence in CAR is "genocide".⁷

From late 2012 and throughout 2013, eastern DRC saw a huge upsurge in violence between armed groups. In late 2012, the rebel group M23 briefly held the city of Goma. Civilians living around Goma, in villages along the borders of Uganda and in the DRC have been caught in the crossfire. Mary Robinson was appointed as the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, and she highlighted the importance of the role of women in the peace processes taking place in Kampala.⁸ However in reality, "the inclusion of women's voices in the formal process of peacemaking appears to have been limited."⁹

Elsewhere in Central Africa, women's health and economic prospects look dim. Women's situation in Angola is unsafe, domestic violence and sexual violence are increasing, and their general influence on decision-making is limited. Chad has one of the highest maternal death rates at over 1,000 per 100,000 live births. In Cameroon, women produce about 80% of the country's food needs while owning only 2% of the land. In Congo-Brazzaville, indigenous women have very little access to

maternal health care: compared to 94% of the population with access to antenatal care, only 37% of pregnant women from indigenous communities receive such services. While 93% of Congolese women have opportunities to give birth in a health centre, only 4% of indigenous women do so. ¹⁰



Angola

Women's situation in Angola is unsafe. Domestic violence and sexual violence is increasing, and the general influence on decision-making is limited. Angola signed the CEDAW in 1986,¹¹ and has signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol,¹² but does not have a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.¹³

Economic Empowerment

No particular improvements have happened in terms of women's economic empowerment in Angola during the year. What can be noted is that there have been calls for initiatives, seminars and convents to be held.¹⁴

Gender-Based Violence

Angola enacted a law in 2011 criminalising violence against women.¹⁵ Yet all the while the number of cases in the country are increasing. However, few cases are reported to police and so few perpetrators are punished for their acts.¹⁶ Sexual violence and rape is common in the country, and is according to reports especially high against female street-vendors.¹⁷

There has been an increase in the number of domestic violence cases in 2012 and 2013.^{18 19} This has become a priority for politicians in Angola and the Secretary of State for Family and Women's Promotion has stressed the importance of working on these issues to create a safe and balanced society.²⁰

Women, Peace and Security

In 2012 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited several countries, including Angola. One of the results of this visit was a joint communiqué, where the government made commitments to address issues of sexual violence.²¹ In 2013 there have been no reports of advancements or particular work targeting sexual issues, so it remains to be seen when these commitments will be turned into public action.

Women's Political Participation

In August, the Angolan Minister for Family and Women emphasised the importance of improved communication and dialogue with and for young women as a means to improve social justice, women's rights and peace. An important part of this initiative was to increasingly bring in young women's voices and opinions through dialogue and conversation between the government and the national Youth Council.²²

Cameroon

In Cameroon, the Constitution ensures equal rights for women and men. However when looking at actual laws, customary law and the state of women's situation in the country it is possible to conclude that women do not enjoy full access to their human rights. Cameroon ratified CEDAW in August 1994²³ and signed the Maputo Protocol in July 2006.²⁴ The country has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.²⁵

Economic Empowerment

Cameroonian women produce about 80 percent of the country's food needs while owning only 2 percent of the land. At the same time the Cameroonian law guarantees equal access to land for all.²⁶ Prevailing customary laws prevent women from accessing their legal rights.^{27 28} This is something that hinders women from acquiring economic revenues. Women are still mainly employed within the informal sector working, which adds to the instability in income and work security.²⁹

Gender-Based Violence

According to the Foreign Minister of Cameroon, Mr Moukoko Mbonjo, the country has implemented the majority of the recommendations proposed in a UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review.³⁰ Yet all the while, high levels of violence against women remain the status quo in Cameroon.

Women's Political Participation

Cameroon does not have a high representation of women in decision-making positions, although women are represented within all governmental decision-making bodies. In the parliament women hold about 14% of the seats, and six out of 30 state ministers are women.

The Senate was elected in April 2013. Only 20 out of the 100 seats were held by women. 70 places were distributed through elections, and 30 were appointed by President Paul Biya. In the electoral portion, women acquired 17 places, and the president appointed three women senators.³¹ After these appointments, the Secretary General of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) said: "female candidates were strongly encouraged throughout the course of this election, not just to meet gender quotas, but mainly to highlight the place our party gives to women and to their vision."³² Yet at regional level women hold only 6% of the mayoral posts, meaning that only 25 out of a possible 360 mayors are women.³³

In the recent elections for parliament and local councils, there were some issues due to a new

biometric registration system. This system required that photos and fingerprints of the voters were registered before voting. In Cameroon, especially in the Northern regions, culture sometimes prohibits, especially women, from having their photo taken. This means that there is a high possibility that several women in the country were kept from casting their votes.³⁴

On the 30th September 2013, Cameroon held municipal and parliamentary elections. In the run up to these elections there has been a lot of work done to improve the participation of women and the nominations of women by the parties.³⁵ Several projects and campaigns have been launched in the country to increase the number of women in decision-making positions to at least 30%.³⁶

Central African Republic

During the past year, the situation in the Central African Republic has been unstable after a coup d'état in March 2013, where the Séléka forced President Bozizé to flee. The country's interim leader is President Michel Djotodia. The unstable and violent situation has led to high rates of violence against women and a growing disregard for women's human rights. The Central African Republic accessed CEDAW in 1991³⁷, has not adopted a National Action plan for the UNSCR 1325, and nor has the country ratified the Maputo Protocol.³⁸

Economic Empowerment

Due to the situation in the country many people have had to flee their homes and will thus not be able to carry out their income generating activities to the same extent.³⁹ Women do have legal rights to inherit land, however customary law often overrules this.⁴⁰ This is something that often affects widows who have land taken away that is legally theirs, rendering them homeless and landless.⁴¹ Women are not considered heads of households and do not receive direct family subsidies.⁴²

Education

The conflict has had a huge impact not only on health and security, but also on the educational system. In April, UNICEF reported that more than half of the country's schools were shut. The literacy rate for young Central African women is low, only at 27.4%, to be compared with 51.1% for young men, however these inequalities predate the recent conflict.⁴³

Before the conflict, it was estimated that in urban areas between 60 to 70 percent of

women attend primary school, in rural areas the number is only between 10 to 20 percent. In theory, women and men have equal access to primary education, however in practice a majority of girls aged 14 to 15 drop out often due to marriage and children rearing.⁴⁴

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women is prohibited under CAR law, which includes rape, paedophilia, incest and sexual harassment and sex work. However, there is little data available on the prevalence of gender-based violence and violence against women. There are figures from 2009 indicating that one in seven women were raped and that one in four women experience violence at the hands of their partner.⁴⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The health care system has effectively collapsed due to the unstable situation in the country, including access to basic postnatal and prenatal care.⁴⁶ US aid to CAR includes provisions that prohibit their use in providing abortion services, even if part of a wider funding stream.

This means that women who are victims of rape during the conflict, or otherwise, have significantly greater restrictions in accessing abortions.⁴⁷

Women, Peace and Security

During the advancements of the rebels towards the capital Bangui, sexual and gender-based violence has been a common occurrence.⁴⁸ Reports from the country speak of the rape and killing of women, as a result of refusing to accept sexual advances or surrendering food.⁴⁹ Violence is also targeted at men by the Séléka, and children are reportedly recruited to their armed groups.⁵⁰ Most reports speak of the capital Bangui, but many sources point to atrocities being far worse in the Northern parts of the country, where the Séléka uprisings began, and along the way they passed to reach Bangui. It has been reported that the situation for civilians is worsening in the Northern parts of the country as the number of individuals joining the rebel group is increasing. Women are seemingly the main target for the rebels, in

the form of rape and sexual abuse.⁵¹ Due to the country's geography, it is difficult to access parts of the land and major airports are controlled by rebels. This security situation means that few international aid and security programs can be launched in the country.⁵²

The country also has presence of LRA rebels who reportedly abduct and sexually abuse women and girls.⁵³

Women's Political Participation

In a G23 press-release regarding the platform for the participation of women in the peace consolidation in the Central African Republic, several points were raised on how to include women in the post-conflict work. Among other things it was proposed that the government be composed of at least 30% women. Stating "after more than 50 years of independence and in face of chaos which male domination has led us to, Central Africans require men in general and our leaders in particular a change in mentality, a reconsideration of their fellow women"⁵⁴

Chad

It is difficult to obtain news and reports on women's situation in Chad. The country ranks low in international gender indexes: the Human Development Index places Chad at 184 of 187 countries,⁵⁵ and the Gender-related Development Index at 152 out of 157.⁵⁶ The World Economic Forum ranked Chad 133 out of 135 in its Global Gender Gap Report.⁵⁷ Chad ratified CEDAW in 1995 and signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004. As of July 2013, the Maputo Protocol has not been ratified.⁵⁸ Chad has not adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The government has reported that social and cultural norms impede women's access to land although legislation does not explicitly discriminate against women. As a result of their economic status, women remain disadvantaged.⁵⁹ However, with the help of the Initiative for the Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs (IEEWEP) many women in southern Chad were involved in various activities such as selling water, flour milling, and soap making. The IEEWEP also streamlined the farming practices of women, enabling women to transition from subsistence farming to managing small agriculture businesses.⁶⁰

Education

UNICEF's plans for 2013 are to provide good quality education to 340,000 children of school-going age. Currently only 50% of school-

aged children have access to primary education.⁶¹ In June 2013 the World Bank's Board of Directors approved a \$US15 million International Development Assistance (IDA) grant to fund an Education Sector Reform Project, which is aimed at helping over a million children in Chad. This will support 30 schools and 600 teachers at higher secondary level. The focus will be on mathematics and science.⁶²

Human Rights of Women

According to the Amnesty International 2013 report, women's rights are not protected. There is evidence that authorities in Chad have failed to address sexual violence. In January 2013 prison guards at Moussoro prison in N'Djamena sexually assaulted women detainees. After intervention from the Ministry of Justice the women were transferred to Amsinere prison. However, by the end of the

year no independent investigation on the atrocities had taken place.⁶³

The Chad government has not implemented the 2011 draft code to raise the status and role of women in terms of authority over the family. The draft code indicates “the married couple assume together the same responsibilities during the marriage and in family relations.”⁶⁴ The current law does not entitle women to equal rights with regard to parental authority during marriage, and as such, parental authority is not clear.

Gender-Based Violence

Law in Chad prohibits rape, but there is no prohibition on marital rape.⁶⁵ Domestic violence is not prohibited, but battery and assault is regulated under the Penal Code.⁶⁶ Concern has been raised about the level of gender-based violence in the country.⁶⁷

Reports estimate that at least 90% of Chadian women have experienced some form of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, making the implementation of this initiative all the more important.⁶⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Chad and Somalia are the countries with the highest maternal death ratios at over 1,000 per 100,000 live births.⁶⁹ In March 2013, the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO) for the Sahel countries of West Africa, including Chad, developed an initiative with the aim of mitigating and treating malnutrition especially in the under 5 age group. Furthermore, the initiative aimed to improve the situation and health of pregnant and lactating women.⁷⁰ Contraceptive use is very low in Chad, with only 49% of married women even having knowledge of their use.⁷¹

Women, Peace and Security

According to the 2013 UNHCR Country Profile for Chad, the political and security situation in Chad is stable. The relationship with Sudan has improved and there is now co-ordinated work

between the Chad and the Sudanese border monitoring force. In September 2012 Chad was host to approximately 90,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).⁷² The Chadian Security Force provided support in the refugee camps and internally displaced person (IDP) sites. One of the UNHCR objectives for Chad is to provide security in relation to violence and exploitation. Over 75% refugees who suffered from violence and torture were given support.⁷³

Women suffer more from environmental challenges as they are usually the caregivers in the home and need to provide for their families. They often need to travel long distances in search of firewood and water, which are scarce in Chad and this creates tensions amongst refugees and IDP. The UNHCR has taken the step of taking firewood to the refugees but often the supply is not enough. When women go out to find firewood they are at risk of being beaten by the farmers for taking their wood. The UNHCR has conducted some conservation efforts by providing fuel-efficient cookers, with the aim of reducing the need for wood. This way they do not need to travel far in search of wood thus reducing the risk of being physically attacked.⁷⁴

Women's Political Participation

The participation rate of women in politics in Chad is low. As of September 2013, only 14.9% of women, amounting to 28 out of 188 seats were held by them in parliament.⁷⁵ It has been reported that women, especially in rural areas, do not receive appropriate civic or voter education. The practice of “family voting” exists in the country. This means that a male head of household or village chief can instruct women on how to cast their vote, or even vote for them. The major constraint for women's political participation is the lack of literacy and education. Furthermore, the mere process of voting, with travelling and waiting to cast a vote often conflicts with the woman's schedule of domestic chores, rendering it very difficult to vote.⁷⁶

Congo-Brazzaville

Congo-Brazzaville has a national gender plan, however there remain many challenges to women having full access to their human rights. Congo-Brazzaville ratified CEDAW in July 1982.⁷⁷ The Maputo protocol was signed in February 2004 but it has not been ratified.⁷⁸ Congo-Brazzaville has not adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The rate of unemployment for women aged 15-29 is at 28.7% in Brazzaville. The Minister for the Promotion of Women and Integration of Women in Development has announced that she is dedicated to encourage and help women organise. Part of this effort is investment in information access, education and communication technology as part of a household income generating campaign.⁷⁹

Education

There has been a considerable change during the last two decades in the schools of the Congo. The number of women teachers has increased significantly. In one school just outside of the capital Brazzaville, only one out of 20 teachers is a man. The country also has a high literacy rate; figures from 2011 indicate it to be close to 90%.⁸⁰

Gender-Based Violence

There is no specific law criminalising violence against women and children, but there are laws and regulations that indirectly protect women and children in cases of violence. In an attempt to improve women and children's protection, a monitoring project in three districts has been launched. It is carried out in collaboration between government institutions such as the departmental directorates in the districts.⁸¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The number of pregnant women infected with HIV has decreased, from 3.4% in 2009 to 2.8% in 2012.⁸² In September it was announced that the provision of antiretroviral (ARV) drug treatments for thousands of HIV/AIDS positive persons in Congo had been suspended. The country does not have enough ARV drugs and therefore the Ministry of Health and Population has stopped the ARV treatment. The problem is a result of a break in the supply and distribution chain, and according to the Ministry they are working on resolving this problem. The fact that ARV drugs cannot be provided has been condemned as a violation of human rights.⁸³

94% of the population has access to antenatal care, yet only 37% of pregnant women from indigenous communities receive such services. While 93% of Congolese women have opportunities to give birth in a health centre, only 4% of indigenous women do so.⁸⁴ One explanation for this is the fact that most communities are located far away from health centres. An additional worrying fact is that the indigenous population has decreased from 10% of the total population a few years ago to only 2%.⁸⁵

Women's Political Participation

Women's networks in Central Africa including Congo are strong and advocate for women's political participation and women's rights. One of these platforms - the Divas Network - gathered in 2013 to develop how to promote women's leadership.⁸⁶

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has signed and, in a number of cases, ratified an extensive array of regional and international protocols.

In 2008, DRC ratified the Maputo Protocol. In 2009, the country ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In 2010, it launched its National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Women's Political Participation

Women face many barriers to running for political offices in DRC. In the most recent legislative elections, women won 8.6% of the seats, or 44 seats.⁸⁷ The low participation of women in politics has been a key advocacy point for women's groups in the DRC. In 2011, a proposed 30% gender quota was rejected.⁸⁸ The Citizen Alliance for Public Safety believed that women's political participation is key to

advancing women's rights and to end impunity of violence against women. But many women are afraid to join politics, or are feel they must ask permission from their husbands.⁸⁹

Gender-based Violence

Media outlets, international organizations and non-governmental organizations have all publicized the narrative the DRC is the "rape capital of the world." There is no doubt that sexual and gender-based violence has been rife

in eastern Congo, along with poverty, starvation, abduction, assault and assassination. Rather than focus on the “victim” in these narratives, it is important to highlight what individuals and organizations are doing to end the culture of impunity.

In remote areas of eastern Congo, where many women have faced extreme abuse from armed groups, it is very difficult to find courtrooms, judges and lawyers to try a case. This year, a system of mobile courts has been set up to bring traveling judges, prosecutors and lawyers to these remote areas, to ensure justice is accessible. “The courts have brought a measure of justice—and dignity—to victims and demonstrate that, with modest support, local institutions can respond even under the most challenging circumstances.”⁹⁰

Sister Angelique Namaika, a Congolese Catholic nun who founded the Centre for Reintegration and Development, won the prestigious 2013 Nansen Refugee Award. She won the award for her incredible work with refugee women and girls who have been victims of abduction, abuse and rape, committed by rebel groups in eastern DRC. As a displaced person herself, Sister Angelique’s programmes include basic literacy education, career training, small business support—all methods for improving refugee women and girls’ lives so that they can move forward and bring themselves out of poverty.⁹¹ Her work is critical for empowering marginalized women to improve their lives. Today, over three hundred thousand people continue to be displaced through the DRC.⁹²

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), the UN peacekeeping force in eastern Congo, has been disappointing in preventing sexual violence in eastern Congo. Mary Robinson, the new Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region has noted that MONUSCO can play a bigger role in ending sexual violence. According to her, “there is a much stricter sense of implementation and zero tolerance of gender based violence from now on and that would be part of tackling the armed groups.”⁹³ While MONUSCO has insisted it will act on its stronger mandate, it remains to be seen if mass atrocities including sexual violence will continue.

Women, Peace and Security



Congolese Women Rejoice after Signing Peace in Goma UN Photo

In light of the escalation in violence this year, the UN brokered a peace deal in February 2013 in Addis Ababa and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) facilitated talks between the DRC and the M23 in Kampala. Mary Robinson highlighted the importance of the role of women in the peace process.⁹⁴ Despite these spoken promises and peace negotiations that brought together an impressive number of diplomats and heads of state, “the inclusion of women’s voices in the formal process of peacemaking appears to have been limited.”⁹⁵

The framework set out by the ICGLR outlines measures, which the Congolese government must follow by implementing major governance reforms. However, the peace process has largely been devoid of key women stakeholders. References to sexual and gender-based violence has been present, however “the PSC Framework does not explicitly address women’s protection needs nor does it include measures to secure their participation over the course of its implementation.” A peace process without key women’s voices is no peace process at all and could not possibly include the reforms needed to secure protection for civilians or stability for the region. “By more aggressively pursuing the Women Peace and Security Agenda, peacemakers can have a strategic entry point from which to push for progress in areas that have historically resisted reform, particularly in the governance, security and justice sectors.”⁹⁶

Ending the culture of impunity, and implementing key security sector reforms in eastern Congo, would be critical for tackling issues of sexual and gender-based violence. Women’s voices in the peace process, therefore, are integral to providing a deeper understanding of security sector reforms needed to ensure the protection of women and girls. Women should be fully integrated at all

levels of governance, justice and security reforms.



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

Equatorial Guinea

Human rights in Equatorial Guinea are a major challenge; women's human rights especially so. The authoritarian regime is considered one of the most repressive in the world,⁹⁷ and broader struggles for rights and representation frame the women's rights movement.

Equatorial Guinea has signed and ratified CEDAW⁹⁸, and has also signed the Maputo Protocol but not ratified it.⁹⁹ There is currently no National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.¹⁰⁰

Women's Human Rights

Equatorial Guinea is a major centre for the trafficking of women and children for forced labour and forced sex work. There is a law, passed in 2004, that addresses human trafficking yet very little of it is implemented.¹⁰¹ In 2006, under guidance from the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID), the government established a Social Development Fund including projects on women's affairs.¹⁰²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Equatorial Guinea has reached the Millennium Development Goal (MDG5) for maternal mortality, below 300 per 100,000, and has relatively low HIV rates. Child mortality has improved steadily over the past decade¹⁰³ but remains short of the MDG target of 63 per 1000, last measured at around 118 per 1000 in 2012.¹⁰⁴ Although current data is scarce, reports have indicated that access to contraception is very low, at around 10% in 2010.¹⁰⁵

Violence against Women

This year saw a distinct change in tone from the government on issues of violence against women; announcing a National Action Plan to

“Promote Multisectorial Women and Gender Equality”¹⁰⁶ through shelters, education programmes and studies on women's health and domestic violence.¹⁰⁷ Yet the repressive laws, policing and trafficking industry that continue to threaten women's safety, have yet to be acknowledged or addressed.

Education

School enrolment is relatively high in Equatorial Guinea.¹⁰⁸ Gender disparity has been addressed by international aid and charity organizations, but with little investment from the government. Child marriage, pregnancy, household chores, and separation from families, including trafficking and sex work, are all significant factors that force many girls to drop out of school.¹⁰⁹

Economic Empowerment

Programmes exist through business associations to increased women's earning power; promote women entrepreneurs and female-led small businesses. Yet, these initiatives remain largely coordinated from the charitable sector and are not considered strategies of central economic development.

Gabon

Gabon signed the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, otherwise known as the Maputo Protocol, in 2005, but has yet to ratify it. Gabon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in January of 1983.

Economic Empowerment

Gabon ranks 77th out of 86 countries in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index.¹¹⁰ The law provides for gender equality in employment, however the status of women remains constrained due to legal, social and cultural obstacles. Female domestic workers in Gabon are in a particularly precarious position as many of them are trafficked and have been harassed and threatened, with no hope of obtaining legal aid.¹¹¹ No law exists in Gabon to prohibit sexual harassment, and is a widespread problem that prohibits women from achieving their full potential in the workforce.¹¹²

Education

The law provides for gender equality in education; however in practice this is not upheld. Girls and young women, particularly in rural areas, continue to face discrimination.¹¹³ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Centre reports that no gap exists in primary school enrolment rates of boys and girls that would indicate preferential treatment of sons.¹¹⁴

Gender-Based Violence

Although rape and sexual violence against women is very prevalent, it is rarely prosecuted. Domestic violence legislation, while it does exist, is seldom enforced in practice and incidences of domestic violence are significantly underreported and family disputes are settled within the community.¹¹⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNAIDS, there are 37,000 adults aged 15 and over living with HIV in Gabon, of which 25,000 are women. The HIV prevalence rate of adults aged 15 and over is 4.0%.¹¹⁶ Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), is illegal but still occurs, especially among the African non-Gabonese community resident in Gabon.¹¹⁷ Access to contraception has been increasing since 2009. However, when Parliament repealed a measure that forbade contraceptives, estimates indicate that only 12% of women aged 15 to 49 used them.¹¹⁸ In 2010, the last year in which data is available for, Gabon's maternal mortality rate was 230 per 100,000 live births.

Women, Peace and Security

The country has yet to adopt a national action plan on the UNSCR 1325, the United Nations Security Council Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.

Women's Political Participation

Gabon's Constitution recognizes men and women as equals under the law. However, women have yet to attain equal representation in politics. In its 2012 Human Rights Report, the US Department of State reported that women held governmental positions in all branches of government. Of twenty-nine cabinet members, eight were women. Additionally, there were 18 women in the National Assembly and 17 female senators.¹¹⁹ Women currently hold 16% of seats in the national parliament,¹²⁰ and the Minister of Justice is a woman.¹²¹

São Tome and Principe

The constitution declares equal political and economic rights for women and men; however women still face widespread discrimination. In particular, domestic violence and rape remain serious challenges whilst legal action is blocked by conservative family customs.

Sao Tomé and Principe has adopted the Maputo protocol but has not yet ratified it. CEDAW has also been signed but not ratified.¹²² As for UNSCR 1325, Sao Tomé and Principe has not yet adopted a National Action Plan.

Gender-based violence

Women have low protection of their fundamental human rights and continue to be targets for violence, discrimination and stigmatisation.¹²³ The main form of violence against women in 2013 was domestic violence with widespread reports of abuse and rape by partners. Despite constitutional rights to recourse, a culture of silence and misinformation around women's rights in the home has prevented most cases being taken to court.¹²⁴

Women's political participation

São Tomé has conducted nine elections since 1990, recognised as largely free, fair and transparent by international observers, with a formidable 66% turnout at the last elections in 2011. There were two female presidential candidates in these elections: Elsa Pinto and Maria das Neves. Das Neves was former Prime Minister of São Tomé between 2002-2004 and was the first African woman to head a government.¹²⁵

Ten of the fifty-five members of the National Assembly are women, placing São Tomé at 64th place worldwide for female representation.¹²⁶ Data published on 1st September 2013 indicates there are still ten out of fifty-five parliamentary seats occupied by women in parliament. The participation rate is 18.2% and this relates to the lower or single house. There is no representation in the upper house or senate.¹²⁷

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Health

The maternal mortality rate is 70 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹²⁸ There has been a significant decline in the number of maternal and child mortality rates. This is due to the increased number of skilled attendants present to assist women at delivery; an initiative taken to improve maternal and newborn health. Previously it was more common for traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to deliver babies.¹²⁹ While contraception is authorized, it is not

widely used due to lack of funds, and teenage pregnancy rates remain high. Another recent achievement is the lower rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence, which is now less than 1.5%.¹³⁰

Education

The overall literacy rate is 84.9% and the female literacy rate (77%) remains a little lower than the male literacy rate. Girls have equal access to primary and secondary education as boys.¹³¹ Sao Tome and Principe is listed as one of the countries on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG) of attaining universal primary education by 2015.¹³² This further confirms the great strides that have been made to improve education outcomes. It is important to note that despite the success achieved so far, Sao Tome and Principe is vulnerable to economic shocks. It is a fragile state and faces challenges such as climate change and food shortages.

Economic Empowerment

Women continue to play an important role in agriculture and fisheries in Sao Tome and Principe and the outcomes are positive. The country was named among the 11 African countries noted to have made outstanding progress in the fight against hunger.¹³³ Furthermore, 300 young women, aged 15 to 35, have organized community groups to educate and support the conservation of the high biodiversity of the seas and forests around the islands.¹³⁴

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that Sao Tome and Principe has significantly reduced undernourishment, therefore meeting one of the targets set by MDG 1. The target set was to halve the number of people suffering from hunger. This was one of the discussion points at a high-level meeting of African and International Leaders held between 29 June to 1st July 2013. Although this progress has been recognised there is still more work to be done to enhance economic empowerment and reduce undernourishment.

East Africa Region Summary

Several countries in East Africa are drafting and/or implementing new constitutions that have landmark gender policy reforms including gender equity election quotas.

Since the adoption of Kenya's new Constitution in 2010, the 30% gender representation recruitment policy in all public offices has led to more women attaining senior positions in government. There are six female ministers out of the eighteen cabinet positions. However the President fell short of the one-third gender threshold required by the constitution by nominating seven women out of a total of 26 Principal Secretaries. The March 2013 general elections resulted in a total number of women in parliament at 83, the national assembly at 65 (18.6%)¹³⁵ and the Senate at 18 women (26.5%).¹³⁶

Tanzania is in the process of drafting a new Constitution and the first draft was launched on June 3rd, 2013. This draft constitution aims to increase women's participation in parliament by having each constituency represented by two MP's, a female and a male, to ensure gender balance. It is scheduled for enactment on April 26, 2014. On the other hand, Comoros, one of Africa's poorest countries, has one of the lowest percentages of women in parliament, (3.03%).¹³⁷ In Somalia, the government began to draft a new gender bill to safeguard women's rights in politics and education within a broader programme of reforms aiming to promote access to education, health services and participation in governance. This new bill is critical to changing the status of women in a country that has historically been ruled by Sharia law.

Joyce Banda, the first female president of Malawi, continues to advocate for women's empowerment and gender policy reforms. And in July 2013 Burundi hosted a three-day conference of female leaders from across the Great Lakes region to develop a road map for engaging women in peace processes and implementing the 'Peace, Security and Cooperation' (PSC) Framework and the UNSCR 1325.¹³⁸



UNDP Head Visits Four African Countries to highlight Progress on MDGs - UN Photo

However, despite the latter reforms in the region, Eritrea is not following suit. At the 23rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in June 2013, it was reported that torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and religious freedom remain routine in Eritrea. Likewise in Djibouti where Female Genital Mutilation is almost universal, with 9 out of 10 women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 being cut.¹³⁹ 93% of the girls and women have undergone some form of female genital cutting despite having decrees and legislation against the practice.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, a study conducted between October 2012 and March 2013 by Uganda's Makerere University School of Women and Gender studies established that cultural norms are the biggest hindrance to girls' education and women's empowerment in Uganda.¹⁴¹ And in Rwanda, according to the Commissioner of police John Bosco Kabere, some 30,500 women and girls were raped, defiled, beaten or killed in 2012 alone.¹⁴²

Burundi

Burundi endured civil war between 1993 and 2005 and continues to reconcile the social, political and economic upheaval of the conflict. Sexual violence and domestic violence remain widespread, and further discrimination is compounded by a weak governmental and legal infrastructure that fails to adequately promote and protect women's human rights. Although having ratified CEDAW in 1991,¹⁴³ and establishing a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 for Burundi's peace process and security sector reforms in 2011, the state remains one of the 18 African countries yet to ratify the Maputo Protocol.¹⁴⁴

Gender-Based Violence

Sexual violence and gender-based violence and discrimination remain at alarming rates in Burundi. Varying somewhat across regions, sexual violence is prevalent, and physical violence against women is institutionalized through cultural and traditional practices and relationships.

The practice of married men taking in mistresses, or 'concubines', into their household is becoming an increasingly challenging social phenomenon, leading to many social and financial difficulties for the women involved.

In June 2012 the Burundian government opened a comprehensive, multi-service centre for sexual violence and gender-based violence survivors in the central province of Gitega.

At the civil society level there have been a number of organizations addressing and communicating the concerns of survivors, raising awareness of sexual violence and gender-based violence, and referring survivors to other services.¹⁴⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Data from 2010 indicates that the maternal mortality ratio is at around 800 per 100,000 live births.¹⁴⁶ However over the last two years there have been increases in the Burundi Health Sector Development Support Project, receiving a second additional financing budget towards the end of 2012 of \$25 million. The additional funding continues emphasis on seeking health services targeted mostly at pregnant women and children under the age of five.¹⁴⁷

An estimate HIV prevalence rate was reported at 1.4% in 2011 by the government, down from a 3.3% estimate in 2009. Yet HIV treatment coverage is accessible to only 49% of people eligible for antiretroviral therapy and 90% of new HIV infections occur among children. A Global Plan towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015, was

launched in 2011 with Burundi as one its 22 focus countries.¹⁴⁸

Economic Empowerment

Men remain largely in control of household revenues earned by women particularly seasonal agricultural production in rural areas, while customary estate succession, which does not recognise women, remains prevalent.¹⁴⁹

Women, Peace and Security

Campaigns to implement UNSCR 1325 emerged from the peace process in 2004, and were influential in both the 2005 and 2010 national elections. A National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was adopted by the government towards the end of 2011, supplemented by a number of policies supporting its implementation, including a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the National Gender Policy of 2004, the draft penal procedure code, and the draft special law on the prevention of gender-based violence (SGBV).

A number of civil society organizations in Burundi have monitored the implementation of UNSCR 1325: Women and Allies Peacebuilding Network (RAP/WAP), FONTAINE-Isoko for Good Governance and Integrated Development, and the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP) in collaboration with Global Network of Women Peace Builders (GNWP).¹⁵⁰

CEDAW was ratified in 1991 without reservations and was implemented with the establishment of new government departments with explicit focus on women's human rights and institutional reforms.¹⁵¹

In July 2013 Burundi hosted a three-day conference of female leaders from across the Great Lakes region to develop a road map for engaging women in peace processes and implementing the 'Peace, Security and Cooperation' (PSC) Framework and the UNSCR 1325.¹⁵²

Women's Political Participation

In Burundi, since 2012 women hold 31% of parliamentary seats, just 1% over the minimum quota of female representatives constitutionally required since 2005. However this quota has

not been observed at local level where women have scarce representation.¹⁵³

Women are taking an increasing role in ministerial level roles and executive, decision-making positions in government, with 41% of the government now female.

Comoros

Comoros ratified CEDAW in October 1999 and the Maputo protocol in March 2004. Comoros has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

Economic Empowerment

Comoros is one of the poorest countries in the world and is heavily reliant on aid and remittances from Comorians living abroad.¹⁵⁴ Comoros has had many coups, and the political instability has inhibited growth, which averaged only about 1% in 2006-09 but more than 2% per year in 2012-13.¹⁵⁵

According to a report by the African Development Bank, female employment remains low with only 13.7% being wage earners, 69.2% of whom are in jobs with little or no social protection. The civil service employs only 30% of women in junior mostly positions, and of the unemployed, 47% are women.¹⁵⁶

The low level of education and literacy in the country has largely contributed to a subsistence level of economic activity especially in the rural areas where women take on more traditional roles and subsistence farming for their families.

Education

According to UNICEF¹⁵⁷, many parents in Comoros cannot afford to send their children to school, so they send them to Koranic schools, which are free. Primary education is compulsory, with primary and middle school tuition free but other expenses such as transport and books become prohibitive for poor parents.

Yet as of 2011, the adult literacy rate in Comoros was 74.9%, with males at 80.2% and female at 69.7%.¹⁵⁸ There is still inequality though with regards to male-female education ratio at a higher level. The gap between girls and boys narrows at the secondary school and higher education level unlike in technical and vocational education where girls' enrolment remains very low.

The government has made education a priority in recent years and endeavours to provide technical and vocational training with the help of development agencies like UNDP, the World Bank

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a reality in Comoros and it is compounded by social stigma that surrounds sexual violence.¹⁵⁹ Thus women suffer in silence when abused with few cases being reported and families or clans are used to settled disputes of domestic violence rather than courts.¹⁶⁰ The punishment for rape under the law is imprisonment for 5-10 years, or 15 years if the victim is younger than 15 years.¹⁶¹

Although sexual harassment is illegal and punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment, it is relatively common because government does not effectively enforce penalties against it.¹⁶² It should also be noted that since most people do not go to the courts of law, statistics on gender-based violence are not readily available.

Comoros is also believed to be a hub for human trafficking and sex tourism, for both men and women, and children are victims of domestic sex trafficking.¹⁶³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Comoros has a low HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, which was at 0.1% as of 2011, with fewer than 500 people living with HIV/AIDS.¹⁶⁴ Health in the country remains overall poor and there is a lack of reproductive health information and services. Maternal mortality is at 280 deaths for every 10,000 live births.¹⁶⁵

Women Political Participation

As of 2013, the percentage of women in parliament stood at 3.03% accounting for 1/33 members of parliament.¹⁶⁶

Djibouti

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

Economic Empowerment

The government implemented a 2009 law that aims to improve the conditions of low-income women and strengthen the "role and organization" of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Family Planning.¹⁶⁷

Education

General school attendance is low for children in Djibouti; only 28% of Djiboutian girls are enrolled in school.¹⁶⁸ With support from the Government, UNDP has worked to increase awareness of the value of education and the importance of the role of women in achieving the Millennium Development Goal for education through the "Caravan on Human Development" where they transmitted the message through dramatization as well as comic book illustrations to ensure that the message reached a wider audience.

"The Caravan has shown us that a participatory approach is the best way to shed light on the human dimensions of poverty and seek ways of ending it." -Mbaranga Gasarabwe, the UNDP Chief Representative in Djibouti.¹⁶⁹

Gender-Based Violence

In July 2013, UNICEF placed Djibouti among a few African states where Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting remains almost universal, with 9 out of 10 women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 being cut.¹⁷⁰ In its FGM/C report, UNICEF reported that 93% of the girls and women have undergone some form of female genital cutting despite having decrees and legislation against the practice.¹⁷¹

Domestic violence also remains prevalent, though only a few cases are reported.¹⁷² The law

does not specifically prohibit domestic violence but rather it prohibits "torture and acts of a barbaric nature" against others, including spouses, with a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.¹⁷³ However, the police do not always intervene in cases of domestic violence and only the severe cases, often resulting in the death of a spouse, are reported in the media.¹⁷⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognises the right of individuals to freely and responsibly decide on the number and the timing of their children. This was reflected in government run Ministry of Health clinics where they disseminated information on family planning and provided access to contraceptives without restrictions. The government estimates that 33% of the women had access to contraceptives.¹⁷⁵

Women Peace and Security

The Members of the European Parliament criticized Djibouti for the acts of sexual violence against women¹⁷⁶ in its call for the country to respect Civil and Political rights.

Women's Political Participation

In the February 2013 legislative elections, 7 women from the Union of the Presidential Majority Party (UMP) were elected putting the total number of women in the Djibouti Parliament at 12.73%.¹⁷⁷ There is, however, one additional woman substitute of the National Salvation Union Party (USN) bringing the total number to 8 women out of the 65 members of the National Assembly.¹⁷⁸

Eritrea

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

At the 23rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in June 2013, it was reported that Eritrea's human rights situation has not improved since the Council's 2009 Universal Periodic Review. Torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and religious freedom remain routine. Elections have not been held since Eritrea gained independence from Italy in 1993, the constitution has never been implemented and political parties are banned.¹⁷⁹

Economic Empowerment

The Eritrean government's commitment to gender equality is very visible in its labour and land-reform proclamations. The Labour Proclamation, effective November 2001, provides for the legal protection of women in employment and specifies equal opportunity and maternal-protection benefits for women. Further, the Land Reform Proclamation (1994 and 1997) grants every citizen the right to use land without discrimination on the basis of gender, religion or ethnicity. Consequently, women have gained equal rights and the opportunity to access land for farming, building houses, and businesses both in rural and urban areas. Women make up 30% of the workforce, and are very active in the informal sector. Eritrean women control about 40% of all small- and medium-sized enterprises. Notwithstanding, Eritrean society remains traditional and patriarchal, and men retain privileged access to education, employment and the control of economic resources. According to the Social Institutions & Gender Index, Eritrean women have access on average to only 9% of available loans from commercial banks due to lack of collateral.¹⁸⁰

Education

Many Eritrean children lack access to education or drop out of school. Learning environments are not child-friendly and the quality of education remains a great concern. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has been facing extreme difficulties in building on the expansion of primary education for its children. The most recent school data marked a net enrolment ratio (NER) of 49.6 per cent, indicating that about half of the elementary school-aged children (estimated 208,844) are still out of school.

In order to cater for the most marginalized children, the Ministry of Education developed a nomadic education policy in 2008. The Ministry of Education initiated pilot interventions, selecting two communities each in four Zobas. 'Nomadic schools' are formal schools designed to allow more flexibility in terms of the schools' location, physical set-up, school calendar and daily schedule, teacher deployment and modification of the national curriculum at syllabus level, in order to meet the various needs of nomadic children. In 2010/2011, the number nomadic schools expanded to 65, reaching 7,555 children (43 per cent of whom were girls). Whereas, Complementary Elementary Education (CEE),

which is a condensed three-year curriculum, modified from the five-year national curriculum targeting 9-14 year olds, resulted in the establishment of 64 CEE centres, which serve 6,620 children (47 per cent girls). Therefore in total 14,175 children (50 per cent girls) were enrolled in nomadic schools and CEE centres during the 2010/2011 academic year.¹⁸¹

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women occurs particularly in rural areas. Domestic violence is a crime; however, domestic violence cases rarely are brought to trial. Women sometimes refrain from openly discussing domestic violence because of societal pressures. Such incidents are more commonly addressed by traditional authorities, within families, or by clergy than through formal legal structures. A lack of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and unsupportive societal attitudes hinder the authorities' response to domestic violence.

In Eritrea, rape is a crime punishable by up to 10 years of imprisonment. Gang rape or rape of a minor or an invalid is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Sexual assault is punishable by six months to eight years in prison. Spousal rape is not outlawed outright. No information is available on the prevalence of rape.

The law prohibits FGM/C. According to reliable sources, the practice of FGM/C has been largely eliminated in urban areas through government educational campaigns, but FGM/C continues among some of the rural population. In lowland areas, infibulation – the most severe form of FGM/C – is practiced. The government and other organizations, including the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, continued to sponsor a variety of education programmes that discourage the practice.¹⁸²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The World Health Organization's regional office for Africa reported in May 2012 that one of Africa's smallest nations leads the way in reducing maternal deaths measured against the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Eritrea is one of only two countries from Africa that is currently on track to achieve the MDG of reducing maternal mortality by 80%. Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births has reduced from 998 in 1995 to 486 in 2010. Moreover, according to the 2002 Demographic and Health

Survey, prevalence of obstetric fistula is 0.03 per 1000. A number of health indicators have improved due to joint efforts to improve health, education, and transportation infrastructure and service delivery.¹⁸³

In terms of legislation, Eritrean laws ensure the equal rights of all citizens despite their gender. Women have equal rights to education, health services and land, as well as equal rights in the family and equal pay for equal work, just to name a few. Traditional practices that discriminate against women, including female genital mutilation (FGM), is abolished by law. Women also have the right to seek legal and safe abortion in cases of rape and incest, or if the life of the woman is under threat.¹⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

In 2011 women held four ministerial portfolios—Health, Justice, Tourism, and Labour and Social Affairs—but no women held top positions in the military or the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). The only recognized women's organization, the party-sanctioned National Union of Eritrean

Women, provides services, runs job-training programs, and advises the government on women's issues, but it does not engage in public advocacy, and it has repeatedly blocked efforts to organize independent women's groups.¹⁸⁵ According to the inter-parliamentary Union,¹⁸⁶ Eritrea parliament has 33 women constituting 22% of the 150 seats, based on the country's first elections since independence from Ethiopia in 1994, the only general election to be held to date.



Women at Herena Camp for Internally Displaced Persons UN Photo

Ethiopia

Ethiopia ratified CEDAW in 1981 and signed the Maputo Protocol in June 2004. Ethiopia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

Economic Empowerment

One of the fastest growing non-oil economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia is nonetheless plagued by droughts which affect its agriculture- the main source of livelihood for a majority of Ethiopians.¹⁸⁷ Women in rural Ethiopia have limited opportunities to earn money, have fewer resources than men and their access to credit is limited.

In 2013, a women's entrepreneurship development programme was set up by the government of Canada and the World Bank, in cooperation with Ethiopia Ministry of International Cooperation to address the issue of women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia. This programme was aimed at providing Ethiopian women entrepreneurs in urban areas with access to finance, especially microfinance and training in skills development to ensure that the women can become job creators in their communities, thus ensuring economic growth. A total of 17,500

are said to have been the target for this programme.¹⁸⁸

In the words of Yasmin Tayyab of the World Bank, "no country can achieve its full economic potential without the participation of women as key economic actors in society. This project provides access to finance and helps build the entrepreneurial skills of women business owners."¹⁸⁹

Ethiopia also benefits from the preferential trade benefits under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) with the United States. Thus women who work in the textile industry can benefit from this and be able support their families.

Education

Traditionally, the girl child in Ethiopia faces many obstacles in accessing education. Cultural norms, which favour boys' education over girls, early marriages, and the fact that Ethiopia faces frequent droughts, all limit girl's access to education. Household chores and taking care of

their families is also a priority over education for girls.¹⁹⁰

A great disparity is especially found in the transition from primary to secondary school and adult literacy. A recent study found that for every hundred boys who enrol in secondary, only seventy-seven girls do the same,¹⁹¹ and the girl drop-out rates remain high.

Gender-based Violence

Women and girls in Ethiopia continue to face gender-based violence as it is culturally condoned and victims are wary of reporting their attackers. Women are sometimes unaware of the laws outlawing sexual and domestic violence and as a result decide to keep quiet. The training of leaders through workshops has been instrumental in taking steps to fight against this serious problem.

In 2013 UN Women trained approximately one hundred religious leaders to take the lead in the fight against violence against women and girls in Northern Ethiopia.¹⁹² The numbers are alarming, when 68.4 % of women in Ethiopia think that wife beating is justified!

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is yet another harmful practice that women and girls in Ethiopia still face today. According to the government, about 23% of young girls aged zero to fourteen years undergo FGM.¹⁹³ The Amhara region has the highest rate of prevalence at 47%, though numbers vary from region to region.¹⁹⁴

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

Ethiopia is committed to promoting and providing reproductive health services to women and girls. An international conference on family planning was hosted by the Ethiopian government in Addis Ababa in November 2013 with the theme "Full Access, Full Choice".¹⁹⁵ This conference was organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), USAID, UNFPA and Ministries from many countries. Its aim was to tackle family planning methods post-partum. In Ethiopia, many mothers lack

contraception after giving birth, hence having closely spaced children. This can be detrimental to the health of both mothers and children. It is reported that around 287,000 women die every year from childbirth complications, and that one in four women could be saved if they had access to contraception.¹⁹⁶

Ethiopia has been slow in curbing maternal mortality rates. Abortion complications, ruptured uterus, postpartum bleeding and preeclampsia are said to be some of the major causes of maternal mortality in the country. Most women, particularly in rural areas, give birth in their homes without a skilled medical worker or medical facilities. The government and its development partners are trying to reverse this pattern and according to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS), the number of women who delivered with the help of skilled personnel rose from 6% in 2005 to 10% in 2011.¹⁹⁷ The government has taken further initiatives to train more skilled birth attendants through the health extension programme, training 30,000 lay extension health workers to help.

Efforts like these have shown Ethiopia can achieve a degree of success, for example, with regards to child mortality. According to UNICEF, Ethiopia is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that has reduced child mortality by more than two-thirds between 1990 and 2012, and as a result achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4.¹⁹⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Ethiopia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

Women political participation

The last parliamentary elections in Ethiopia took place in 2010. The country has a bicameral parliament and currently women hold 152 of the 547 (27.79%) seats in the Lower House¹⁹⁹ and 22 of the 135 (16.30%) seats in the senate.²⁰⁰

Kenya

2013 marked a new beginning for the Kenyan woman in the political, social and economic spheres as the 2010 Constitution implementation begun to be felt. Kenya ratified CEDAW in March 1984, as well as ratifying the Maputo Protocol in December 2003. Kenya has developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which is yet to be finalised.

Economic Empowerment

The Women Enterprise Fund seeks to provide accessible and affordable credit to support women start and/or expand business for wealth and employment creation has been lauded by women who have benefitted from it. Women can enjoy freedom in their decision making due to the fact that they can now contribute to the family economically. A study conducted by Strathmore University in 2012, revealed that the 2011/2012 financial year saw a significant increase in total number of borrowers from 67,950 in 2010/2011 to 146,400 in 2011/2012, representing a 115% increase.²⁰¹

The government in its 2013/2014 budget showed its commitment to expand opportunities for women. This included the formulation of the Biashara Kenya Bill which will provide a one-stop shop solution to all small and medium size enterprises covering the entire business chain – such as skill and business development, product standardization and branding, access to credit, business incubation services, and market access.

Further the proposed amendment to the Procurement Law 2010 seeks to enhance preference for women, youth and persons with disability by reserving 30% of government tenders for them.²⁰² This means more women will be able to participate in bidding for tenders by the national and county governments. The government has also set aside Kenya Shillings six billion to support a women and youth fund. This means more women both young and old can access interest free loans from the government to start income generating activities.²⁰³

Education

New government data shows that the number of women students entering Kenyan universities rose at the fastest rate ever – by more than 30% in 2012, and for the first time there are more than 100,000 female students in higher education. Kenya's recently released Economic Survey 2013, a document that tracks annual economic data across all sectors, showed that there were some 105,115 female students enrolled in universities in 2012, up from 80,560 the year before.

This highlighted a trend over the past five years that has seen female enrolment rise faster than that of males, whose number rose by 15% – half the growth rate of women – from 117,700 in 2011 to 135,436 last year.

Gender-Based Violence

A report released in April 2013²⁰⁴ on a study on gender-based violence in Kenya revealed that the number of women and children who received treatment at various Gender Violence Recovery Centre clinics in 2011-2012, (1103 (48%) women and 1171 (42%) girls), and the number of calls the child helpline received regarding child protection totalled 6974. Sexual abuse, according to the report is the most commonly reported form of abuse suffered by victims. Between 2011 and 2012 - 2,532 cases reported were sexual and 422 were physical violence. 90 per cent of all reported cases of gender violence were reported by women and girls, 10 per cent by men or boys. "Women and girls bore the greatest burden of pain and suffering".

The report further showed that culture is the leading cause of violence against women. Some men it seemed still subscribed to outdated traditions for example, that battering of a woman is an acceptable method of discipline. Financial insecurity was also a factor. Where the established role of man as leader and provider, but where in some cases the man fails to establish his authority in these areas, he ends up resorting to physical abuse. Alcohol and drugs may also lead many men, unfortunately, into violence against women.²⁰⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The constitution of Kenya 2010 recognises the right to health of all citizens with specific reference to reproductive health rights. To this end, the government scrapped maternity fees in 11 public hospitals with an allocation of Ksh 3.8 billion for free access to maternal health. The number of women giving birth in government health facilities has risen significantly since it introduced free maternity services on June 1 2013. "It's around a 10 percent [increase in deliveries] around the country," says Shahnaz Sharif, the government's Director of Public Health and Sanitation.²⁰⁶

Although scrapping of the maternity fees is a step in the right direction, more needs to be done to tackle maternal mortality, improve access to contraceptives, educate women to further reduce deaths, increase staff at health facilities and provide necessary drugs and equipment for the health centres. Kenya has an under five mortality of 85 deaths per 1000 births according to the 2013 Human Development Report.

Notwithstanding, over the last four years, Kenya has cut down the overall budget for health. In 2013, only Ksh 10.6 Billion shillings were allocated to health translating to 5.7% of the Sh1.6 trillion budget. This is way below 15% recommended by the African Union's Abuja Declaration.

HIV contributes to nearly 40% of indirect causes of maternal deaths in Kenya. According to the data from the 2008-09 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) HIV prevalence is at 8% among women aged 15-49. To reduce this, the Ministry of health in its Kenya National AIDS Strategic Plan (KNASP III) 2009-2013 focused on priority areas of prevention of new infections, improving quality of life of those infected and affected, and mitigation of social and economic impact of the infection. The Ministry has equally developed the fourth edition of Guidelines for Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/ AIDS in Kenya 2012 and Communication Strategy 2012-2015. The main goal is to achieve less than 5% transmission rates through the following strategies: Reducing the number of new HIV infections among children by 90%; Reducing the number of AIDS related maternal deaths by 50%; Reducing by 50% HIV incidence in women of reproductive age and Reducing unmet needs for families to zero among all affected women.²⁰⁷

Women, Peace and Security

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), reported in October 2012 on being in the final stages of the launch of the Kenya National Action Plan (KNAP). The KNAP is premised on four pillars; prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery. It takes a unique approach in comparison with NAPs from other countries by adopting a framework of human security, addressing social, economic and political issues around women, peace and security as well as the continuum of violence rooted in the knowledge that conflicts in Kenya are not just founded on elections. In addition, the KNAP deepens understanding of the multifaceted role

women play in peace processes and calls for their empowerment to foster their substantive and active participation in peace processes, brings policy coherence, seeks to coordinate different actors and creates accountability mechanisms for different actors responsible for its implementation²⁰⁸. The youth have also not been left behind, with the establishment of the UNSCR 1325 Kenya Youth Chapter Facebook page which seeks to bring together youth talking about peace.

Women's Political Participation

Since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2010, the 30% gender representation recruitment policy in all public offices has seen more women joining senior positions in government, with the number of women ministers being 6 out of the 18 cabinet ministries. Two women hold the powerful positions of Cabinet Secretary of Defence and Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs, which is a first for Kenya. However the President fell short of the one-third gender threshold required by the Constitution by nominating seven women out of a total of 26 Principal Secretaries.

Furthermore, the new governance structure reserves 47 seats for women at the National Assembly and 16 seats at the Senate. In addition, one of the two youth representatives in the senate must be a woman and the same case applies to the two representatives of people with disabilities. The Constitution also calls for political parties to respect and promote gender equality and equity. The March 2013 general elections resulted in a total of 83 women sitting in parliament. The National Assembly has 65 women (18.6%)²⁰⁹ and the Senate has 18 women (26.5%) according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).²¹⁰

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

Madagascar

Although the constitution of Madagascar prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender and offers equal rights to men and women, a different reality persists for many women in the country as discrimination and violence against women are still lived realities for many.²¹¹

Madagascar ratified CEDAW in March 1989, as well as signed the Maputo Protocol in February 2004. However, Madagascar is one of the 18 African nations yet to ratify the protocol.²¹² Furthermore,

Madagascar has not yet developed a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and does not have a UN peacekeeping mandate.²¹³

Economic Empowerment

The law in Madagascar allows for equal rights to land, yet often these rights are denied in cases of inheritance, compounded by legal pluralism²¹⁴ and the reality that many are married through customary practices rather than common law. In a nation where 80% of the population lives in rural areas, this is a significant barrier to women's empowerment.²¹⁵ In rural Madagascar 35% of households are run by women resulting in few opportunities to engage in the formal economy.²¹⁶

On a positive note, many initiatives are working to challenge this and women's membership in microfinance networks have increased from 15% in 1999 to 45% in 2006²¹⁷ and later to 46% in 2010.²¹⁸ Sex work as an economic means has also been reported in Madagascar with young women or youth choosing this outlet to support their families or education.²¹⁹

Education

According to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) Madagascar is on track in achieving MDG's 2 and 3 to achieve universal primary education and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education.²²⁰ The country held an action plan to promote the enrolment and completion rates and though the Ministry of Education has not determined official gender-disaggregated enrolment statistics, it is estimated as low for enrolment and a non-factor for completion rates.²²¹

The Madagascar Action Plan emphasised the need to ensure the enrolment of all children, significantly improved the completion rate (from 57% in 2006 to 95% in 2012) and reduced the repetition rate (from 20% in 2006 to 10% in 2012), in line with the 'Education for All' plan and the MDGs. The Ministry of Education updated this Plan to be eligible to access a second instalment of catalytic funds during 2007 as part of the Fast Track Initiative. However, UNICEF reports that in Madagascar, more than a million children are not in school with issues of rural poverty, social inequality and disability at the forefront of the issue.²²²

Gender-Based Violence

In the 2012 Human Rights Report by the United States, Violence against women and trafficking of women and girls were highlighted as a key human rights issue in Madagascar.²²³ The law prohibits domestic violence and rape, but does not include spousal rape.²²⁴ It is suggested by organizations on the ground that violence against women is underestimated statistically, with the reality being much higher than that reported and alleged rape by security forces is an unaddressed area of concern.²²⁵ Early and forced marriage also remains problematic²²⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Many women and girls in Madagascar are embroiled in a complex cycle of reduced health due to lack of sex education, family planning and poor health care provisions. Maternal mortality rates in Madagascar increased in 2010 with the ratio of deaths per 100,000 live births being at 498 compared to 269 in 2004.²²⁷ Maternal mortality rates are currently being monitored with a new SMS (short message service) system.²²⁸ Birth complications and births outside of proper medical facilities remains an issue.²²⁹ The national rate of HIV/AIDS in Madagascar is 1% and rates among pregnant women remain low although the transmission of STD's including syphilis remains high.²³⁰

Women, Peace and Security

In 2009, President Andry Rajoelina ousted then-president Marc Ravalomanana, since when Madagascar has faced serious economic and social instability and citizens face insecurity, violence and poor governance.²³¹ The participation of Malagasy women in national peace and security issues is crucial, namely in the Zone Rouges (Red Zone) where in nearly 200,000 square meter of territory the government exerts little or no control and banditry thrives.²³²

Women's Political Participation

The last national assembly elections took place in October 2010, with 64 of the total 365 lower house seats being won by women and 20 of the 164 upper house seats won by women.²³³ The country's long awaited 2013 election, scheduled

for July 24 has been postponed to August 23rd, after a dispute arising from the candidacies of Lalao Ravalomanana and Andry Rajoelina. Lalalo, the wife of the former president, is the

only female running for president and the Southern African development committee, African Union and European Union have denounced her campaign.²³⁴

Malawi

Malawi ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on March 17th 1987. It also ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 20th of May 2005. It is yet to adopt a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) or the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.²³⁵

Economic Empowerment

Since taking office, President Joyce Banda has held women empowerment high in her agenda.²³⁶ "The message I am trying to send is 'Nothing for us without us' – nothing for women without their involvement and inclusion. We need to make deliberate efforts and policies that will aim at eliminating the structural barriers posed by poverty and gender inequality in economic empowerment of women because such efforts will have long-lasting improvements on the welfare of a woman."²³⁷

She appointed Ms Anastasia Msosa as the first female Chief Justice in the country in June 2013²³⁸. This was after she had appointed Hawa Ndilowe to be the first ever female Head of the Public Service in March. The President has often spoken about the importance of empowering women. She notes that even after women's active participation in the fight for independence in the 1960s and their involvement in liberation movements in Africa, "women did not get prominent decision-making positions to correspond to their inputs in the struggles."²³⁹

A project funded by African Women Development Fund in collaboration with a local NGO, the Girls Empowerment Network (GENET) has been implementing a socio-economic empowerment project, which provides financial assistance to young women in Southern Malawi in an effort to empower vulnerable women and girls in the area.²⁴⁰ The money is to be used by the women to create a business of their choice, with monthly supervision from GENET.²⁴¹

Education

Young girls in Malawi are plagued with forced marriage at a young age.²⁴² Even though

education is compulsory in the country, 1 in 10 children are not enrolled in school and only 25% of those who do, move on to secondary school.²⁴³

There exists a Joint Programme for Adolescent Girls (JPAG) introduced by UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and UNESCO²⁴⁴ whereby girls, through already existing youth networks, are encouraged to go back to school after dropping out. The programme has been operating since 2010 aimed at advancing the rights of adolescent girls. Through the programme, the girls have access to full scholarships and are provided with school shoes, uniform, notebooks and equipment.

Now at the tertiary stage, the programme supports youths who cannot go back to school by training them in skills such as electronics, hair dressing, tailoring, carpentry and bakery and providing them with a start-up business capital.

Gender-Based Violence

There is high incidence of gender-based violence in Malawi with statistics showing that in 85% of the cases, the perpetrators are usually men against women and girls.²⁴⁵ In an effort to curb the violence, a number of measures have been employed from 2013. The Men for Gender Equality Now, a Malawian NGO started a campaign to educate men in an effort to change their attitudes and making them agents of change.²⁴⁶

In addition to this, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), working together with the government aims to build a university of science and education in Malawi, which is deemed to be key in the development of women and girl child education.²⁴⁷

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health, together with the Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSAHC) has been working to create policies that would curb gender-based violence and the sexual abuse of children.²⁴⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to statistics, the average fertility rate in Malawi is 5.7 children per woman ²⁴⁹ however, the Ministry of Health has recently said that women in the country have not embraced female condoms, but rather use other forms of birth control which puts them at a higher risk for HIV contraction and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections.²⁵⁰ It is noted that women form a larger part of the persons living with HIV/AIDS; it is estimated that 57.2% of persons living with HIV/AIDS are women.²⁵¹

In July 2013, Malawi through the Maternal Health and Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI) was named as the recipient of a 5 year 8\$ million grant announced by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation aimed at improving maternal and infant health in the country.²⁵²

Women's Political Participation

The latest elections in Malawi were conducted in May 2009, with the late President Bingu wa Mutharika coming into power with Joyce Banda, his running mate securing the vice presidential post. Also in the running was Loveness Gondwe, of the New Rainbow

Coalition who made history as the first woman to ever run for the Presidential post. Ms Joyce Banda was also the first female to hold the office of the Vice president, a post she held until April 2012 when she took office as the President following the untimely death of the President Bingu wa Mutharika. This move made her the second female president in Africa, after Eileen Johnson Sirleaf, the president of Liberia.²⁵³



H.E Joyce Banda, President of Malawi

The 2009 election saw the number of women in the Parliament rise from 14% to 22%. 125 women stood in the election, with 43 being successful, in addition to a female Vice President. While these developments have been pleasantly welcomed, they are still below the 30% required by the Southern African Development Community (SADC).²⁵⁴

Mauritius

Mauritius ratified CEDAW in July 1984. It signed the Maputo Protocol in January 2005 but has not ratified it. Mauritius has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

Mauritius is ranked highly ahead of most African countries when it comes to its economy. The World Bank ranked it the top African country to do business in the 2012 World Bank Doing Business Report. It ranked 19th globally.²⁵⁵ The World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index for 2013-2014 further ranked Mauritius 45 out of 148 countries, ahead of all African countries.

This economic environment, coupled with that fact that 88% of women in Mauritius are literate, ²⁵⁶ with more women than men qualifying at tertiary level, provides a

significant boost to women's economic empowerment. However, women still lag behind men though when it comes to economic empowerment as they tend to be stuck in traditional roles, which do not generate much income per se.

The government, in addressing this inequality, enacted an Equal Opportunities Act in 2012 to provide protection against all inequalities. A Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment was also established to address poverty issues.²⁵⁷

Education

The literacy level of women in Mauritius is at 88% and there are more women than men at the tertiary level.²⁵⁸ According to the Ministry of Education Statistics for end of 2012, enrolment in primary school stood at 51% for boys and 49% for girls.²⁵⁹ At secondary school level, there were more girls enrolled in secondary school than boys with the numbers at 52% for girls and 48% for boys.²⁶⁰

Mauritius has made good progress in reducing gender disparities as far as education is concerned especially at the higher levels of education, with girls making higher numbers at secondary level instead of lower as is usually the norm. In the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region, Mauritius is said to be the country with the highest level of female enrolment at tertiary level with 61%.²⁶¹

Gender-based Violence

According to the SADC Gender Protocol 2013 Barometer, one in four women in Mauritius have experienced gender-based violence in their lifetime.²⁶²

The government of Mauritius has passed several pieces of legislation in the fight against gender-based violence, including the Protection from Domestic Violence Act of 1997 (last amended in 2007); the Sex Discrimination Act, the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 and the Labour Act to protect women in the workplace.

The SADC protocol also seeks to halve gender-based violence statistics by 2015. Mauritius set up a Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, which provides services like counselling and legal services to survivors of gender-based violence.²⁶³

In a validation workshop held in September 2013, it was discovered that sexual harassment in the work place remains a huge problem in Mauritius, which needs to be addressed. Not only are employees fearful to report the abuse, but also they are not aware of where to seek

help.²⁶⁴ Therefore, more sensitization and awareness training is needed, as well as setting up work place policies that address sexual harassment and how it should be managed.

In September 2013, the government of Mauritius announced an initiative developed by its family welfare protection unit in the Gender Ministry to support both victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence by providing therapy and other services. This initiative, the Victim Empowerment and Abuser Implementation Programme, is geared towards gender mainstreaming in the programmes to address gender-based violence.²⁶⁵

Reproduction Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNAIDS estimates for 2012²⁶⁶, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate for adults aged 15-49 years is 1.2% and women aged 15 years and above living with HIV are 2,800.

Mauritius is a signatory to the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals and is on track to meeting some of those goals by 2015. The government also provides free family health services and HIV testing, prevention and support services countrywide.

Women's Political Participation

The Constitution of Mauritius does not have provision for any quotas for women's political participation at any level.²⁶⁷ Mauritius has a unicameral parliament and the last legislative elections took place in 2010. Of the 69 members of the National Assembly, 13 are women accounting for 18.84%.²⁶⁸

These numbers, however, are low especially compared to the high literacy levels of women in the country and more women need to be encouraged to participate in politics. Quotas need to be introduced in the electoral system as these would guarantee that women have a starting point and a chance for representation.

Mozambique

Mozambique adopted the Maputo Protocol in 2003, and ratified in December 2005.²⁶⁹ CEDAW was ratified in 1997.²⁷⁰ Mozambique has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.²⁷¹

Human Rights of Women

Mozambique has been active in mainstreaming gender issues into national policies and

programmes, ranging from publicizing the law on domestic violence against women, supporting integration gender perspectives into national development policies and programmes, and the institutional strengthening of the Councils for Women's Advancement. This gender mainstreaming is being supported and funded by the Catalan Development Cooperation Agency, which will disburse 60,000 euros to finance activities contained in Mozambique's National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women, for the period 2010-2014.²⁷²

However, despite best interests, discriminatory laws, violence against women, access to land, education and health remain key areas of concern for Mozambique women.²⁷³ Though the constitution and formal law prohibit discrimination based on gender, discrimination and violence persist.²⁷⁴

Women's Political Participation

There has been an increase in women's participation in politics in Mozambique, yet women's inclusion in the political sphere still has many barriers.²⁷⁵ Currently there are no quota systems or legal provisions to ensure full representation of women in Mozambique.²⁷⁶

In 2011, eight of 29 ministers were women and 91 of the 250 seats in the National Assembly were held by women and there are no women in the Supreme Court.²⁷⁷ However, the National Assembly has an office dedicated to raising awareness on women's issues such as domestic violence and trafficking.²⁷⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Twenty years after the end of the post-independence civil war Mozambique has succeeded in several advancements in regards to health. However, low use of contraceptives, a high HIV prevalence, maternal mortality and abortion remain persistent issues.²⁷⁹ The prevalence of modern contraceptive use among married women has remained at only 11%. 13.1% of women and 9.2% of men between the ages of 15-29 test positive for HIV.²⁸⁰ Specific regions warrant great concern. Evidence from local medical clinics indicates that in regions of Matola, the prevalence of HIV in women is as high as 23 percent, more than double the national average.²⁸¹

Violence Against Women

Issues of domestic violence, general discrimination against women, abuse, exploitation and trafficking remain widespread in Mozambique.²⁸² Violence against women has been described as an uphill task for women and activists in Mozambique, and the Mozambique Interior Ministry's (MINT) recent study revealed that more than 50% of women in the country have suffered some form of physical, sexual or psychological violence.²⁸³

The fatal targeting of elderly women on the basis that they are witches is a continuing problem in Mozambique with sixteen women killed in 2011.²⁸⁴

While the country passed a law against domestic violence in 2009, spousal rape and violence goes unpunished. The case of a woman being raped by seventeen men in December 2012 in northern Mozambique highlighted the police's inadequacies in investigating rape allegations. Investigators allegedly have yet to visit the crime scene and the 17 attackers walk free as local tradition clashes with law.²⁸⁵

Women, Peace and Security

Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reconciliation (DDR) programmes carried out in Mozambique have been criticized for not having focused enough on women, given they were often forced against their will to fight, serve and act as sex slaves for rebel fighters right across war torn countries in Africa including Mozambique. Further, many women participated as soldiers in the conflict, yet were unable to benefit as a male soldier would from the DDR program.²⁸⁶ Women's organizations, such as the Human Rights League (LDH) and the Women's Forum, have been mobilizing on the ground on issues of peace and security.²⁸⁷

Education

The second MDG, Achieve Universal Primary Education, is an important goal in Mozambique with the latest government statistics indicating that just over 60 percent of Nampula district students are able to finish primary school and move on to secondary school. Yet from those, less than 15% complete their secondary education. According to UNICEF, 100% of the children in the country are enrolled in primary school, up from 69 per cent in 2003—a praiseworthy increase.²⁸⁸ On Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's recent visit in Mozambique, he noted the country's progress and stressed the importance of maintaining quality education and educating girls.²⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

The Catalan Development Cooperation Agency recently distributed 78,000 US dollars for the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women with aim to prioritize training for women and publicity for women's rights.²⁹⁰ Mozambique is mainly an agrarian country and

the government has recognized women's role in agricultural activities, specifically with their Population Policy, which is an incentive programme for women to participate in professional training. Although women have right to land, there remains a lack of education on land ownership.²⁹¹

Rwanda

Rwanda ratified CEDAW in 1981, and the Optional Protocol in 2008. It also ratified the Maputo Protocol in June 2004 and developed its first National Action Plan (NAP) for UNSCR 1325 in 2009.

Economic Empowerment

Rwanda has recovered tremendously since the 1994 genocide. Its zero tolerance for corruption under President Kagame and the RPF has ensured that it enjoys robust economic growth. Rwanda is considered one of the least corrupt countries in Africa and was ranked the third easiest place in Sub-Saharan Africa to do business in 2013 by the World Bank.²⁹²

Women in Rwanda are actively participating in the country's development agenda. At a meeting with Rwandan women representatives in July 2013, President Kagame stated that:

"No country in the world can achieve sustainable development without promoting gender equality and it's in this regards that I want to assure you as women that our government will continue to put in place mechanisms and strategies aimed at improving gender equality in Rwanda because women and girls are a key pillar in our national socio-economic transformation."²⁹³

According to the Gender Statistics Report 2013,²⁹⁴ about 3,652 women in Rwanda own manufacturing businesses countrywide. In agriculture and fisheries, females constitute the majority at 81.9%. Women can now also access credit without seeking consent from their husbands, and can even compete for the same jobs as men.²⁹⁵

Rwanda's also has long-term development goals, which are embedded in its Vision 2020 that seeks to transform Rwanda from a low-income agriculture-based economy to a knowledge-based, service-oriented economy by 2020.²⁹⁶

However women and girls in Rwanda continue to face many challenges with regard to their economic empowerment and access to financial resources even though they appear to not face any legal restrictions. The new Labour Code has

also reduced the maternity leave from 12 weeks to 6 weeks, something which has not been welcomed by Rwandan women in the work force.

Education

Rwanda is one of the countries promoting education in East Africa, both in the sciences and the arts. It has promoted ICT and is becoming the leader of ICT education in the region. The Ministry of Education in Rwanda has made tremendous progress in investing in education and providing basic education from 9 years to 12 years. Statistics from the Ministry of Education at the end of 2012, published in February 2013, show that at pre-primary level 51.6% girls were enrolled in schools, 50.7% at primary level, 52.2% at secondary level, 39.3% at vocational level and 44.21% at tertiary level.²⁹⁷

Gender-based violence

President Kagame in July 2013 said that "ending violence against women and girls is a moral duty and legal obligation and a definition of who Rwandans are as a nation."²⁹⁸ This statement reflects the stand of Rwanda on ending gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. The Rwanda Constitution of 2003 prohibits gender-based discrimination and the country has passed laws prohibiting violence against women and has actually set up mechanisms in implementing these laws.

An example is the Isange Centre in Rwanda which provides free medical, legal and psychological services to victims and survivors of gender-based violence and this centre can be used as a model for other countries to respond to violence against women in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Despite the efforts of the government, challenges still remain largely due to ignorance of the victims as regards to their rights and their reluctance to come forward to report the perpetrators of the violence against them. According to the Commissioner of Police John Bosco Kabere, in 2012, some 30,500 women and girls were raped, defiled, beaten or killed.²⁹⁹ These are alarming figures indeed in a country that is fighting this scourge. Much more needs to be done including raising awareness.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Rwanda has been lauded by UNAIDS for its significant progress and response in tackling HIV/AIDS and being on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG 6) on HIV/AIDS. The country has 91% coverage on prevention of mother-child transmission and 87% antiretroviral coverage for people living with HIV.³⁰⁰ Rwanda has also been at the forefront of pushing the implementation of the African Union's Roadmap on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity, which helps countries build long-term and sustainable solutions to HIV/AIDS.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Rwanda is also the first country in Africa to develop and implement a national strategic plan to prevent and treat cervical cancer, with the government providing free vaccinations to girls from primary school and above beginning in 2011. As of end of 2012, 135,139 (96.6%) of 139,968 eligible girls had been fully vaccinated against the HPV virus that causes cervical cancer.³⁰¹

Women, Peace and Security

Rwanda has largely recovered from the 1994 genocide, one of the worst in history where an estimated 800,000 people lost their lives. Rape, torture and violence against women were

meted out indiscriminately to mainly Tutsi women and Hutu moderates and the women of Rwanda are still recovering from the after effects of this terrible time. Rwanda's government showed its commitment by signing its first National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 in 2009 and has undertaken many programmes to rehabilitate its citizens during the long recovery from the genocide.

The Gacaca courts have had tremendous success countrywide with regard to grassroots justice and reconciliation. The government of Rwanda set up a fund to help survivors of genocide, the Fund for Support to Genocide Survivors (FARG).³⁰² Yet this good policy is falling short of helping the intended recipients. About 800 women, mostly single mothers who were raped during the genocide are finding it hard to support the children that were born as a result and are finding it impossible to get help under the FARG fund. So the Bill establishing this fund needs to be amended to include the women whose children were born after December 31st 1994.

Women's Political Participation

Women are at the forefront of politics in Rwanda. The country is considered as a model globally when it comes to women's political participation. Rwanda has the most women in parliament in the world at 63.75%.³⁰³ Women were overwhelming voted into power at the last parliamentary elections that took place in September 2013 with women taking 51 out of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁰⁴ Both the new president Donatille Mukabalisa and the Secretary-General, Immaculee Mukarurungwa are women. Rwanda's political will to invest in women political participation has therefore ensured that not only is it a model for other countries with regards to women's representation but it has set the bar high.

Seychelles

Seychelles ratified the Maputo Protocol in March 2006 and CEDAW was ratified in May 1992. Although the Seychelles has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, it has a small relatively inactive military with no engagements. There have been free and open elections since 1993 with no military challenge to state rule.³⁰⁶

Human Rights of Women

Seychelles has very strong record for the rights of women. It enjoys both a culture that largely

values and promotes women's role in society, and a state that has taken significant steps to ensure women's human rights are protected. Challenges do remain; particularly around

domestic violence and women's representation in senior positions within the public and private sectors where patronage networks are strong. Unlike most African nations, it has largely achieved the targets set by the UN Millennium Development Goals and has had no major threats to state security or stability.

Seychelles is ranked as a middle-income country and has a small population.³⁰⁷ These factors have made Seychelles an environment conducive for initiatives addressing women's rights. Comparing the progress of women's rights in much of mainland Africa to that in the Seychelles would seem disingenuous given this comparative advantage. Instead the rate of progress made in the Seychelles

Economic Empowerment

Patronage systems and corruption remain significant obstacles for women's engagement in major economic and business decision making roles.³⁰⁸

Education

In Seychelles, education is free and compulsory for 10 years or up to the age of 16 and has strong parity rates for girls.³⁰⁹

Gender-Based Violence

Domestic violence against women remains a problem in the Seychelles. Police rarely intervene in domestic violence unless it involves a weapon or major assault. Authorities often dismiss the few cases that reach a prosecutor, and courts tend to order light sentences for perpetrators.³¹⁰ There is a

proposed law to address domestic violence.³¹¹ Rape, including spousal rape, and domestic abuse are criminal offenses punishable by a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment. There has been a National Action Plan (NAP) in place to tackle gender-based violence for two years.³¹²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Despite a strongly Catholic culture, Seychelles has strong record on a range of health issues relating to women, including on family planning and maternal health.³¹³

Women's Political Participation

Women won 11 of 25 parliamentary seats and a further three women were nominated under the compensatory seats, bringing the total number of women to 14 out of the full 31 members (45.16%).³¹⁴ The first female judge was appointed to Supreme Court in January 2013.³¹⁵ Patronage structures remain a significant barrier for many women achieving high office in government.³¹⁶

However, Seychelles also has a strong matriarchal tradition, with female headed households as the norm and domestic? Decision-making widely accepted as a female role. At the state level there is a Gender Secretariat within a government ministry tasked with facilitating gender mainstreaming in line with SADC's Protocol on Gender and Development across government policies, programmes, and through its engagement with the private sector and civil society.

Somalia

Somali state has neither signed nor ratified CEDAW, and although the Maputo Protocol was signed in February 2006, it remains unratified. Somalia has also not developed a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.³¹⁷

Human Rights of Women

Women's human rights in Somalia remain in a serious state of crisis. Somalia's general crises of peace and security, nutrition, displacement, health care and education compound both the challenges women face and are obstacles for women securing their basic human rights themselves. Many Somali women and children are currently refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, facing further challenges and marginalisation. There little data available on the status of women and gender equality in

Somalia, but reports continue to illustrate how women in Somalia experience systematic discrimination under Sharia law and traditional practices. Simultaneously the economic liberalisation and militarisation of labour and retail markets continue to break down already weak social bonds across the nation. This has left women in a double bind; remaining marginalised by the worst of an old social system that takes them hostage to the demands of rapid liberalisation, with no means to gain

position in Somalia's emerging governance and economic systems.

Economic Empowerment

Credit and secure loans are very hard to come by in Somalia, especially for women who largely have little personal property to offer as collateral to the few banks that offer loans. Women engaged in business tend to have small retail operations, selling fuel, clothes and cosmetics. There remains no state assistance, in terms of either financial or physical security, for female-led businesses despite the unique obstacles that women face to enter and become competitive in the marketplace.³¹⁸

Education

Enrolment rates for girls in schools have increased over recent years to almost parity with boys. However a range of factors continue to keep the numbers of girls completing school very low. These include the distance required to travel to schools, safe sanitary facilities, availability of learning materials, gender sensitive teaching practices, and the time consuming responsibilities girls are more likely to take on at home. There remains a range of international and locally led non-governmental projects to support education for girls in Somalia, yet with very few local or national government initiatives, the progress made has been slow and insecure.³¹⁹

A government-led initiative will make women's rights a mandatory element of university courses from 2014, including support for academic advisory panels for public education on women's rights.³²⁰ A proposed bill on women's rights may also guarantee 60% of free education places will be awarded to women.

Gender-Based Violence

Somalia has the world's highest level of female genital mutilation according to a 2013 report by UNICEF, indicating that 98% of Somali women between 15 and 49 have been cut or mutilated. The practice extends beyond Somalia's borders where Somali women live in neighbouring countries where the practice is continued. It remains a deeply rooted traditional practice, often limiting women's ability to practice sex and give birth until undergoing a further invasive procedure.³²¹

Women face public harassment routinely in Somalia. Reports indicate women are increasingly arming themselves to ward off

potential attackers in public places in the capital Mogadishu, particularly along beaches and around nightclubs. One court case in particular signalled the regression of legal protections for women. A woman who accused security forces of rape was convicted under Sharia law for fabricating the accusation, and detained along with a journalist who reported the accusation.³²² These convictions were later overturned.³²³ The African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has also been investigated for the alleged drugging and gang rape of a Somali woman by AMISOM troops in a military camp in August 2013.³²⁴ The UN reported 1,700 rapes in Mogadishu's 500 camps last year, with many thought to be perpetrated by security forces.³²⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Many Somali women lack the right to decide upon the use of contraception and the timing of pregnancies. Psychological and physical demands can be made upon women and those who reject such demands can go on to suffer forms of violence.³²⁶ Child and maternal mortality rates in Somaliland remain very high alongside very low numbers of medical personnel and facilities.³²⁷

The HIV rate in Somalia is very low, at below 1%, however the actual prevalence HIV/AIDS may be higher due to the widely held perception that it is related to 'illicit' sex and women's reluctance to seek medical support.³²⁸



Somali Women & Girls Wait to See a Medical Officer - UN Photo

Women, Peace and Security

Women in Somalia and Somaliland have historically made strong and meaningful impacts on the political bargains and local peacebuilding that have led to the gradual consolidation of the states and their security. Yet this work has received no recognition or

acknowledgment or formal inclusion in the peace and security processes. Women are actively excluded from security matters and achievements at local level are overlooked and not sustained by Somalia's formal security and political institutions.³²⁹

Women's Political Participation

In July 2013 it was reported that the government was drafting a new gender bill to safeguard women's rights in politics and

education within a broader programme of reforms, aimed at promoting access to education, health services and participation in governance.

Despite a 30% quota for parliamentary seats reserved for women, women make up less than 16% of the current parliament. This discrepancy would be challenged under the proposed law, accompanied by the implementation of further quotas in other government branches.³³⁰

Tanzania

Tanzania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and the Optional Protocol in 2004. The country ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in 2007. Tanzania does not have a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

Agriculture provides the main source of livelihood for a large majority of the population in Tanzania— accounting for more than two-thirds of employment. The agricultural sector is particularly 'feminized', with up to 80 per cent of rural women taking part in agricultural activities. Although women form the backbone of Tanzania's economy, they often are excluded from the decision-making process, which affects their everyday lives.³³¹

There is a lack of resources to establish women business centres, which would offer women training on quality and better packaging of their products so as to attract internal and external markets. Women are unable to access loans from financial institutions such as commercial banks as they lack collateral, especially land and property. Emphasis should be placed on addressing social, economic political and cultural barriers that limit women's rights and hinder them from unlocking their full participation and potential in economic growth and poverty reduction.³³² A good example is the Tanzania Women's Bank (TWB), which offers loans to women's groups. It has recently announced that clients can now repay their loans on a monthly basis and not a weekly basis as before.³³³ This in turn gives the women more time to repay their loans and avoid defaulting on them, and thus losing their businesses. However, more women need to be able to access financial institutions services for loans and saving opportunities to enhance their working capital and the growth of their businesses.

Education

Gender Parity Index (GPI) has been achieved at the ratio of 1:1 in Primary Education. This implies that boys and girls are enrolled at the same level in primary schools. Tanzania has managed to eliminate gender disparity at primary education level before 2015, which was the timeframe set for the attainment of the MDGs.³³⁴

The net attendance ratio in primary education stands at 77.4 with the boys representing 74.7 and girls with 80.1. The ratio of girls to boys in primary education is equal with 1:1 and 0:9 for secondary education and 1:5 for tertiary education. Female enrolment in primary schools as of 2012 stands at 50.5%, however the enrolment at Form I in secondary schools stands at 49.4% but decreases to 32.1% at the time of completion in Form VI.³³⁵ This can be attributed to the fact that 39% of females with primary education were married or in a union at age 18, compared to only 5% of women with secondary education or higher according to the United Nations Population Fund report on child marriages in Tanzania. However this is a decline from 41% since 2004.³³⁶ Pregnancy is the leading cause of girls dropping out of school in Tanzania. In January 2010, a new policy was passed that allowed girls to return to school after pregnancy and the current draft constitution also takes the unprecedented step of making education a guaranteed right for every Tanzanian.

Gender-Based Violence

More than one-third of all women (39%) in Tanzania have suffered from physical violence at some point since age fifteen. 33% of women suffered from acts of violence during the past twelve months. This proportion is substantially higher for divorced/separated/widowed women (46%) than single women (21%). More than four-fifths of women who have ever experienced physical violence report that the perpetrator of the violence was a current or former husband/partner. One in five women have experienced sexual violence, and 10% of women had their first sexual intercourse against their will.³³⁷

Tanzania has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the world affecting the girls' health, education, future employment and reaching their full potential in life³³⁸. The Law of Marriage Act (1971) allows for boys to marry at eighteen and girls to marry at fifteen. They can marry at fourteen if courts approve their request. Girls under eighteen need parental permission to marry. In addition, Customary Laws run parallel to Statutory Laws. The Local Customary Law (Declaration) Order, GN 279 of 1963 allows each ethnic group to follow and make decisions based on its customs and traditions. Minimum age of marriage is not provided in the constitution. The attendant consequences are increased experience of domestic and sexual violence. Girls married early are more likely to experience violence, abuse and forced sexual relations. Marital rape is not criminalized in Tanzania, rendering child brides even more vulnerable. Poor families in Tanzania force their children into marriage either to settle debts or to make money and escape the cycle of poverty. Child marriage increases poverty and girls who marry young are likely to miss out on education. However there are calls for the draft constitution to end child marriages by increasing the age of marriage to eighteen years.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The 2010 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) noted that maternal mortality ratio for Tanzania is 454 deaths per 100,000 live births. However, the government has put in place several initiatives to increase the number of nurses so as to reduce child and maternal mortality and improve general health care delivery. These include the Primary Health Services Development Program (2007-2017), National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction and National Multi-Sectoral Framework (NMSF).³³⁹

According to latest 2011-12 Tanzania HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey (THMIS), 5.1% of Tanzanians age 15-49 are HIV-positive. HIV prevalence is higher among women (6.2%) than among men (3.8%). HIV prevalence is higher in urban areas for both women and men than in rural areas. A comparison of the 2007-08 THMIS and 2011-12 THMIS HIV prevalence estimates indicate that HIV prevalence has declined slightly from 5.7% to 5.1% among adults age 15-49. Similarly, HIV prevalence has declined among women, from 6.6% to 6.2%, and among men, from 4.6% to 3.8%. However, the gains in the fight against HIV and AIDS are likely to be reversed if the decision by major donors who have been contributing 98% of the funds reduce funding, and more so if the government fails to generate local replacements for this funding. According to The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), HIV/AIDS is no longer an emergency case, hence local efforts could easily handle the pandemic in a sustainable way.³⁴⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Tanzania does not have a NAP on UNSCR 1325 and has experienced peace over many years.

Women's Political Participation

Tanzania is in the process of drafting a new Constitution and the first draft was launched on 3rd June 2013. This draft constitution aims to increase women's participation in parliament by having each constituency represented by two MP's, a female and a male to ensure gender balance. It is scheduled for enactment on April 26, 2014 and is currently receiving public comments.

Tanzanian women hold 36% or 126 out of 350 seats in parliament according to the Inter-parliamentary Union statistics as at 1st July 2013³⁴¹ and 27.6% of ministers are women, or 8 out of 29 ministers. There are 3 female deputy ministers and 60 councillors following the 2010 elections.³⁴² The Speaker of Parliament, Hon Anne Makinda, is a woman and in late 2012 a woman was elected in the ruling party CCM's National Executive Committee. Women make up 30% of the cabinet, with women making up nine out of thirty ministers. In addition, three parliament committees namely Community Development, Defence & Security and Constitution, Legal Affairs and Governance are headed by women.³⁴³ The draft constitution guarantees women 50% representation in

parliament, an increase from the current 30% quota. At present, women parliamentarians are appointed to special seats by parties, but under the proposed constitution, political parties

would lose the power to nominate women to parliamentary seats. Instead, voters in every province would elect two parliamentarians, of whom one has to be female and the other male.

Uganda

Uganda ratified CEDAW in 1985, though it has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol. It ratified the Maputo Protocol in July 2010. It is a signatory to the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and has a National Action Plan (NAP) for UNSCR 1325 and 1820 and launched the Goma Declaration in 2008.

Education

Uganda's universal primary education (UPE) and universal secondary education (USE) ensure free primary and secondary education for all children.

According to the World Bank Gender Gap report 2012, the female-male ratio in school enrolment has narrowed significantly. At the primary level, the gap is 92:90, indicating that there are more girls attending primary school, while in secondary schools it is 15:17 and 4:5 at tertiary level.

The Ministry of Education and Sports has stated that the net enrolment for girls at primary level increased from 82.3% in 2000 to 96.3% and gender parity has grown from 48:51 in 200 to 50:51 in 2013.³⁴⁴

However, despite the success at enrolment, retention is a totally different story with pupils especially girls dropping out before they complete the primary level due to a number of reasons. A 2012 study carried out by the Ministry of Education and Sports found out that the main reasons for school drop-out under the USE programmes were early pregnancies, lack of interest by parents, early marriages and distances between home and school.³⁴⁵

A study conducted between October 2012 and March 2013 by Makerere University School of Women and Gender studies established that cultural norms are the biggest hinderance to girls' education and women empowerment in Uganda.³⁴⁶ One of the authors of the study, Professor Bantebya, said that "they had discovered many shocking forms of discrimination against the girl child and that these were entrenched in religious beliefs, cultural norms, attitudes and practices."³⁴⁷ It is important to note that although the government of Uganda has done a lot to spearhead girl child education, more initiatives

that empower women are still needed, especially since most of the drop-outs at primary level are girls.

Gender-Based Violence

The Uganda parliament has passed several laws geared towards preventing gender-based violence and punishing perpetrators who commit these crimes. Good examples are the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act 2010 and the Domestic Violence Act 2010.

Gender-based violence including sexual and domestic violence are happening at alarming rates in the country. Many girls and women in Uganda experience domestic and sexual violence at some point in their lives. Girls are being defiled in their homes, schools and communities with little or no repercussions. The Uganda Demographic Health Survey (2011) indicates that 56% of women ages 15 and 49 experience physical violence while 28% experience sexual violence every year³⁴⁸

A recent act of violence against a 9-year-old girl Hanisha Nambi, shocked the nation. She was found raped, strangled and dumped in an abandoned house in Kawempe, on the outskirts of Kampala city.³⁴⁹ The perpetrators are yet to be brought to book. This is a reflection of what is happening to young girls and women countrywide. It has been reported that between June and September 2013, over 197 cases of sexual violence have been reported in the media and yet this remains the least reported crime due to blaming the victims and victimizing the survivors. The Sexual Offences Bill, therefore, should be a priority among the laws to be passed once it is tabled in parliament.

The Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 has been shelved in parliament once again. There has been uproar in the country, not only among lawmakers but also religious leaders and the public at large, some claiming that the Bill is

western oriented and does not conform to the local customs.³⁵⁰ Victims of marital rape and other forms of abuse occurring within marriage will still have to wait for a law to be passed that would not only protect them, but give them standing should they attempt to seek redress.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNICEF, a woman in Sub-Saharan Africa has a 1 in 16 chance of dying in childbirth.³⁵¹ The Human Development Report 2012 ranked Uganda 161 of 183 countries. In the State of the World's Mothers' Index by Save the Children released in May 2013, Uganda was ranked as 132 out of 176 countries. It was found to be one of the toughest places for mothers.

These rankings show Uganda's grim picture with regards to women's reproductive health and maternal mortality. Maternal mortality rates keep rising and the health services keep deteriorating with hospitals lacking even the basics like gloves and delivery beds. Women who come to the hospitals to deliver have to buy their own gloves or even give birth on dirty floors. Mulago Hospital, the biggest referral hospital in the country, is said to have only 2 beds to deliver 80 expectant mothers daily.³⁵² However, Professor Josephat Byamugisha, the Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology has said that there is a significant drop in the rate of maternal mortality from 707.2 per 100,000 live births in 2004 to 493.2 in 2012.³⁵³

HIV/AIDS cases have gone up in Uganda. Uganda has been seen as a positive case study when it came to combating and preventing HIV/AIDS. For many years in the past, improvements came from a political will in fighting the scourge, raising awareness and providing free drugs and counselling through organisations like TASO. However, in recent years the fight against HIV/AIDS seems to have loosened and the number of people infected has risen, either due to lifestyle or other factors.

There is a correlation between reproductive health and HIV/AIDS with mothers transmitting the virus to their children at birth. The Ministry of Health states that mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS accounts for 11% of the estimated 145,000 new infections occurring each year.³⁵⁴ As a result Uganda has come up with a new intervention strategy, which is aimed at eliminating mother to child

transmission because women and children still bear the brunt of HIV infection.

Women, Peace and Security

Uganda faced civil conflict for many years after gaining independence in 1962. However, most of the country has enjoyed relative peace since 1986 when the NRM government came into power. The people of Northern Uganda on the other hand were plagued by conflict for 20 years and have, only over the past few years been able to return home from the internally displaced camps. As in most conflicts, sexual violence and rape were used as a weapon of war and the women of Northern Uganda are still recovering from the effects, as returnees and former wives of LRA rebel combatants or as IDPs returning home to their communities.

The Uganda government has a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security, which is slowly being implemented. The Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) designed to eradicate poverty in Northern Uganda and the National Development Plan (2010/11-2014/15) are so far being implemented.³⁵⁵

Women's Political Participation

Uganda has a unicameral parliament. The last parliamentary elections were held in 2011. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union,³⁵⁶ the current number of female members of parliament are 135 (34.97%) out of a total of 386 members. Both the speaker of parliament, Rebecca Kadaga and the Secretary General Jane Lubowa Kibirige are women. Uganda uses the quota system and 112 seats are reserved for women district representatives.

Ms Kadaga, the Speaker of Parliament is the first woman speaker in Uganda's history since it gained its independence in 1962 and she was recently elected as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians-International (CWP).³⁵⁷ Ms Kadaga, a lawyer by profession and a member of parliament has been seen as a champion of women's rights and democracy and though her mantle as Speaker has been mired by controversy at times, she is considered to be an exemplary leader and a champion of democracy because of her various rulings in the 9th parliament of Uganda.

Zambia

Zambia ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 2nd May 2006. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Zambia on the 21st of June 1985. Zambia has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Human Rights of Women

A key obstacle to gender equality in Zambia is persistence of discriminatory practices in the family arising from the dual legal system and high levels of gender-based violence. Discriminatory customary laws prevail in areas of personal status, marriage, divorce and inheritance. Article 11 of Zambia's Constitution guarantees the equal status of women. However, Article 23 of the Constitution permits discriminatory laws in the areas of personal law and customary law.

The penal code in Zambia prohibits rape and perpetrators face heavy penalties, including life imprisonment. Marital rape is not prohibited under the penal code.

Political participation

Women represent 14% of the Parliament, 17% of Cabinet Ministers and 13.3% of Deputy Ministers.³⁵⁸

The Executive Director of the National Women's Lobby highlighted the declining numbers of women participating in political saying, "The number of women participating at the local government level has reduced over the years instead of increased. We are focusing on the local government level because we need more women there. Currently Zambia is at 6 percent representation." This statement further indicates that more work is required to encourage women to engage in politics. A project funded by Demo Finland will be implemented in five different districts in Zambia in order to ensure increased participation in the 2016 elections.³⁵⁹

Zambia is lagging behind other countries in sub-Saharan Africa due to poor female representation in legislature. Social attitudes towards women are the underlying cause for this.³⁶⁰ Certain habits and practices are impeding the political participation of women and in turn act as deterrents to social development.

Violence Against Women

Although the nation of Zambia has started the process of integrating legal protective and reporting mechanisms such as CEDAW, gender-based violence continues to be a problem in Zambia with the number of reported cases on the rise.³⁶¹ Zambia's first lady, Dr. Christine Kaseba (also known in Zambia as Mrs. Michael Sata), has called for harsher penalties for perpetrators of violence against women and children in the region.

According to the Zambia Police Services' Victim Support, there has been an increase in the number of reported cases of violence against women and girls with spousal violence and child abuse topping the list. However, others have attributed the increase in the number of reported cases to greater public awareness of the problems of violence in Zambian society. "It is important that we have stiffer penalties so that people think twice before committing such offenses. It will also help us save the lives of the vulnerable, who are mostly women and children," asserts Dr Kaseba. Meanwhile, as advocates work inside the region to reduce domestic violence, the YMCA in Zambia is working with Zambia's youth to teach them about the issue and prevent abuses in the future. The programmes may be a cost effective way to deal with violence within Zambian homes, communities and the larger societies of the YCWA.³⁶²

Violence against women is a serious problem in Zambia and international NGOs have taken steps to address the issue.³⁶³ Between 2005 and 2011, CARE International led the development of "One Stop Model of Comprehensive Support Services for survivors of GBV in Zambia." This gave the survivors access to medical, psychological and legal support at Coordinate Response Centres. USAID and the EU funded the work. The aim of the project was to make perpetrators accountable for their actions. Another project working to end gender-based

violence is A Safer Zambia (ASAZA), which was funded by USAID.

Currently, USAID is the main donor supporting the Stop – GBV programme, which is a successor of the ASAZA project. The ASAZA project was successful in breaking the silence of GBV. Within a three-year period, the level of awareness of GBV increased from 67% to 82%. The current project, Gender Based Violence: Survivor Support, which began in 2012, is being funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). DFID will provide up to £750,000 to support the three-year programme. DFID Zambia will continually monitor progress. Other organisations involved in the work are World Vision, Expanded Church Response to HIV/AIDS Trust (ECR) and the Forum For African Women Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA).³⁶⁴

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

The overall HIV prevalence rate is 14%, with women at the forefront, according to Zambia's most recent demographic and health survey. Women between 15 and 49 have an infection rate of 16%. For men in that age range, the rate is 12%. According to UNAIDS 2012 report, 490,000 women age 15 and up are living with HIV. The number of deaths due to AIDS is 30,000.³⁶⁵

One reason Zambian women are more vulnerable to HIV is that they have difficulties controlling or negotiating sexual relations and condom use, a 2009 U.N. study found. Women also carry an extra burden, as they frequently are the ones to take care of HIV-infected relatives. Iola Morgan, the Zambia country director of the United Nations Development

Program, says future programming must go beyond teaching girls and women about HIV. Girls and women, she says, must start helping to design HIV-prevention programming so their own needs can be known and met.³⁶⁶

Less than 50% of young people between 15 and 24 used condoms during high-risk sex. This indicates the important need to educate the youth. The Government of Zambia is working with community youth groups that are funded partly by USAID. The Safe Love Clubs, found in different locations in Zambia, provide youth with a space for open dialogue on the prevention of HIV. It is hoped that this education will empower the youth to negotiate safe sex.³⁶⁷

Women, Peace and Security

The security sector in Zambia is not gender balanced according to the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer for 2012. With only two years left to meet the 2015 deadline there is pressure to take action. Zambia is not likely to meet the targets set out in Article 28. There is a global awareness that women need to be included in peace and reconciliation processes. To assist with this, the UN developed guidelines for gender-sensitive mediation which SADC countries should take note of.¹²

To improve the situation, gender mainstreaming and budgeting need to be considered to enhance women's representation and participation in the peace process. Action plans need to be developed to end conflict and violence. Training should also be given to women so that they can gain skills mediation.³⁶⁸

Zimbabwe

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

Economic Empowerment

According to the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), over 60% of women working in both the formal and informal sector are now the breadwinners in their families, as their husbands have either succumbed to HIV/AIDS or were retrenched from their jobs³⁶⁹. Most of the work conducted by these women, such as

selling fruits or clothes or doing hair braiding, is undeclared and without a permit.

Education

Overall literacy in Zimbabwe is quite high: 80% of women can read and write, compared to 87.8% of men³⁷⁰. However, girls often lack access to education, especially secondary school education. Various factors, such as poverty,

abuse and cultural traditions prevent a third of girls attending primary school and 67% from attending secondary education³⁷¹. Early marriages and pregnancies also keep girls out of school.

To counter the abuses and increase school attendance, Zimbabwe has initiated awareness campaigns to reduce sexual abuse of girls below the age of 15. The Zimbabwe Republic Police report they have held 669 campaigns so far this year³⁷².

Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women is widespread in Zimbabwe and includes rape, forced marriage and torture. A recent study by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in conjunction with Gender Links has revealed statistics that conclude that at least 68% of women in Zimbabwe have suffered from gender-based violence perpetrated by men³⁷³.

According to a Herald newspaper report, 650 women and girls were raped in the last 10 months in 2013 in the capital Harare alone. The same report also noted that in June this year, 12 cases of murder were before the High Court, an increase of 60% on last year's figures³⁷⁴.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The birth rate of women in Zimbabwe has decreased progressively since the 1960s and is currently at 3.58 children per woman³⁷⁵. However, with 570 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates³⁷⁶. About 10 women die every day from complications related to pregnancy. A study showed that the leading direct causes of maternal deaths are eclampsia, postpartum haemorrhage, infections, malaria and obstructed labour³⁷⁷.

Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest rates of HIV/AIDS infected population. It is estimated that 15% of the population is infected³⁷⁸, meaning that approximately 1.4 million Zimbabweans are infected by the virus, half of them being women³⁷⁹. However, Zimbabwe is an example of political commitment and progress in the AIDS response and has managed to decrease its infection rate from

5.21% in 1994 to 0.86% in 2012³⁸⁰. This commitment has focused on the special needs of women and, as Jan Beagle, Deputy Director of UNAIDS noted during her visit to the country in May 2013, "the communities are doing exemplary work, addressing issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women, using community dialogue and facilitating community actions and solutions"³⁸¹

Women, Peace and Security

Zimbabwe is a source, transit and destination country for the trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and forced labour. The number of prostitution rings continues to grow in the country, as many women and girls are sold into exploitation by their parents. According to the US Embassy in Harare, the Government of Zimbabwe does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so either³⁸².

Women's Political Participation

95% of Zimbabweans approved a draft version of their new constitution in a referendum on 16 March 2013. This draft constitution opens with provisions stating that respect for gender equality is one of the country's founding values. It also includes a section on women's rights, which has been expanded to include socioeconomic and cultural rights. As noted by UN Women, this means new opportunities for women in jobs, education, finance and credit must be ensured by the government and in national funding³⁸³.

The new constitution also includes a special measure to increase women's representation in Parliament, reserving 60 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly for women. Following the general elections held on 31 July 2013, women now hold 85 out of 270 seats, representing 31.48% of the total³⁸⁴. However, only 12% of Zimbabwe's cabinet is female, leading women's groups to protest for more equal representation at the political level³⁸⁵.

Since December 2004, Joice Mujuru is the Vice-President; she is seen as a possible successor to President Robert Mugabe.

North Africa Region Summary

The Arab Spring has demonstrated an important sea change for women in most countries in Northern Africa. In Algeria, policies on free compulsory education have resulted in near parity between boys and girls in both primary and secondary schools. In some cases, women are attending university in larger numbers³⁸⁶ and many are choosing technology-driven programmes.³⁸⁷

In South Sudan, although the transitional constitution gives women equal rights to work, equal pay and equal access to education, and the law ensures equality between men and women, there is still a significant gender gap. In a fledgling state, it is imperative to integrate women's participation in all aspects of society.

As of 2013, 13% of Sudan's parliament are female, the highest percentage in the country's history. However, as is often the case, many of these women represent elite groups and are not representative of broader women's groups in the country. As a result, women in parliament have not addressed two crucial issues: women's civil rights and Muslim family law.

Conversely, many women's groups came together this year in Libya under a common cause: combating domestic violence. Several protests took place throughout the year, including the second Annual Purple Hijab Day, organized by The Voices of Libyan Woman. Over 13,000 Libyans, including teachers, doctors, and imams, joined the organization to support its fight against domestic violence and

raise awareness of how violence violates Islam.³⁸⁸



After President Morsi was ousted in July, Defence Minister General Sisi suspended the constitution and President Adly Mansour became Egypt's interim President. Pro- and Anti-Morsi protests turned violent, including many accounts of violence towards women. While the new government claims to protect democracy, a new law effectively bans protests in Egypt.³⁸⁹ Meanwhile, a new cabinet has been sworn in which includes three women in the ministries of information, health and environment. This is the highest number of women ministers the government has seen in decades.

Algeria

Algeria has made important policy changes this year for women's rights, integration and inclusion. Algeria is a signatory to the Maputo Protocol but has not ratified it. The country ratified CEDAW in 1996 but has not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

In February 2013, the Algerian Minister of National Solidarity and Family Affairs, Souad Bent Jaballah, stated that women's participation in the work force is vital to "achieving sustainable development" in both Algeria and the region.³⁹⁰ Cultural norms and stereotypes still remain obstacles to the full economic empowerment of women and as a result Algeria lags behind other middle-income countries.³⁹¹ The informal sector makes up between 40% and 50% of non-agricultural work in Algeria.³⁹² Women who work in this industry tend to be non-wage employees that work in household production or family businesses. Unemployment remains high among women and youth.³⁹³

Education

Free compulsory access and equal opportunity to education has resulted in consistent ratios of boys and girls receiving both primary and secondary education. It has been reported that women and teenage girls attend university in larger numbers³⁹⁴ and focus particularly on technology driven programmes.³⁹⁵

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence remains an under-reported problem in Algeria. As of the end of 2012, there were no official statistics available on either domestic violence or the prosecution or convictions of rape cases.³⁹⁶ As a result, in 2013 there has been no major advancement in relation to gender-based violence legislation or protection.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2012, UNAIDS commended Algeria on its response to fighting HIV/AIDS in the country. In 2013, Algeria has already paved the way as a leader in the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. This year, the World Health Organisation recommended looser restrictions for the treatment of children and adults using anti-retroviral treatment. Algeria was at the forefront, and was one of the first African countries to implement this recommendation of the World Health Organisation.³⁹⁷

Algeria has also taken a step to ensure that women with HIV/AIDS can participate in the workforce by starting companies from home. In cooperation with the AIDS Solidarity Association, the Direction of Social Action and National Solidarity in Algiers, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), over 50 companies from different industries including crafts, agriculture, retail, and baking, have been created.³⁹⁸ This is a step in the right direction; however, Algeria should further promote the inclusion of HIV positive women in other ventures outside of the home.

There were no major or minor events or statistics published in 2013 that dealt with the topic of reproductive or maternal health in Algeria.

Women, Peace and Security

In March 2013, the UN held its final conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, which aims to regulate the global arms trade, where there is a risk that weapons can be used to violate international humanitarian or human rights law. In 2012, the draft text of the treaty included a gender-based violence provision to prohibit the sale of arms that would result in gender-based violence, in violation of international humanitarian or human rights law.³⁹⁹ Initially, it had been reported that Algeria sought to challenge the provision,⁴⁰⁰ however in 2013, the country signed the finalized treaty, which included the gender-based violence provision.

Women's Political Participation

In 2012 Algeria became the first state in North Africa to reach the established 30% quota established in the Beijing Platform with a parliament comprised of nearly 31.6% women.⁴⁰¹ Although this achievement is commendable, we have to work to ensure that women will hold decision-making roles within the government. Throughout 2013, Algerian women took part in various conferences through private organisations, such as the National Democratic Institute, that aim to promote leadership and political participation of women.⁴⁰² If this is any indicator, we can assume that in the years to come, strong,

capable women will make their mark on the Algerian parliament.

Egypt

Women in Egypt face many obstacles in attaining gender equality and continue to be the main targets of violence, discrimination and stigmatisation. Although Egypt has ratified CEDAW in September 1981, the country has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. In addition, Egypt has not adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325.

Political Participation

In January 2013, only eight women were elected to the 508 member lower house of parliament. Although the parliament is now dissolved, it represented one of the lowest rates of female representation in the world. The percentage of women parliamentarians has fallen from 12% during Mubarak era to 2% during Morsi's presidency. Only nine women were elected to the People's Assembly and comprised fewer than seven percent of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the new constitution.⁴⁰³

On July 4th 2013 President Morsi was ousted by popular will of the people. General Sisi, the Defence Minister, suspended the constitution and President Adly Mansour became Egypt's interim President. On July 9th 2013 President Mansour set a timetable for the referendum on the amended constitution, and for parliamentary elections, which is scheduled to take place in February 2014. After the new parliament convenes, the date for presidential elections will be announced. According to Mansour's decree, a panel representing political, religious and security services will agree final amendments to the constitution and put it to referendum within five months.⁴⁰⁴

A cabinet has already been sworn in which includes three women in the Ministries of Information, Health and Environment. This is the highest number of women ministers the government has seen in decades. Still, due to the transitioning government, the role of women remains to be seen.⁴⁰⁵

Violence against Women

According to a UN survey from April 28th 2013, 99% of women report they have been victims of sexual assault.⁴⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch reported that 91 women were sexually assaulted and raped in Tahrir Square during the June 30th 2013 protests against former President Morsi.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, there have been accounts

of gang assaults with several women requiring surgical intervention after the attacks, and some were "beaten with metal chains, sticks, and chairs and attacked with knives."⁴⁰⁸

Although Egypt outlawed Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in 2007, the procedure is still widely practiced. In June of 2013, the procedure claimed another child's life, 13-year-old, Suhair Al Bata'a. Over 90% of women ages 15–49 years have been cut in Egypt according to UNICEF global database 2012.⁴⁰⁹ The practice is based in religion, and despite major clerics standing against FGM, many still associate the practice with purity.

Economic Empowerment

In Egypt the rate of unemployment is four times higher for women than men. As of 2012 women make up only 24% of the labour market, and participate in the public and private sectors, as well as in agriculture.⁴¹⁰ A majority of women, approximately 72%, work in the informal sector, often as unpaid family workers⁴¹¹. For those who are paid, many have no labour contract, job security, or social benefits.

HIV/AIDS & Reproductive Rights

Egypt has low prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS. According to Global Aids Response Report of 2012 developed by National Aids Program of Egypt, the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is 0.02 per cent; about 2,471 Egyptians are known to be living with AIDS⁴¹². These statistics are estimates since a population-based survey was never conducted.⁴¹³

Women, Peace and Security

Since early 2011, women have protested and risked their lives for the revolution that ultimately toppled former President Mubarak and former President Morsi. There have been demonstrations against sexual violence, street harassment, and rape. Again, due to the transitioning government, the role of women in

the negotiation of peace processes, and reconciliation, remains to be seen.

Education

The ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education in Egypt was last reported in 2010 at 95.86- 96.1% boys and 94.7% girls-, according to World Bank report published in 2012.⁴¹⁴ The quality of education in Egypt is a serious problem. According to UNICEF, less than 10% of government-funded schools meet quality standards that have been set by, but rarely enforced, by the government. It is estimated that about 2.8 million, or 8.1%, of children between the ages of 6 and 18 years have never been enrolled in school.⁴¹⁵ These children tend to live in rural areas, come from

poor households and are wage earners for their families.



Egyptian at Tahir Square Celebrating the Fall of Mubarak Government - UN Photo

Libya

In May of 1989, Libya acceded to the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in May of 2004 ratified the Maputo Protocol. As of 2013, Libya does not have a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

Between 2012-2013 there have been no efforts by the government to implement programmes and promote the economic empowerment of women. Many projects that enhance women's economic participation have been implemented by foreign entities and grassroots organizations. For instance, in 2013 USAID partnered with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) to sponsor the Libya Women's Economic Empowerment (LWEE), which aims to provide capacity training, networking events, and small business loans, to women-owned small and medium enterprises.⁴¹⁶ USAID and MEDA are also in partnership with the Libyan Woman Forum, Phoenix, and Consultants Alliance, to implement this project, which is projected, to last for two years.⁴¹⁷ The first group of 20 women completed their one month training course in August and are now moving onto developing business ideas. There were over 300 applications for the 20 places on this first training course, with applications expected to rise as the programme gains more publicity.⁴¹⁸

Education

In June 2013, Libya teamed up with UNICEF to improve basic education in the country. The programme aims to establish inclusive education mechanisms in schools, provide

training for teachers, establish an education management information system, and promote early childhood education.⁴¹⁹

Gender-Based Violence

In November 2012, The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women granted finance to the International Medical Corps in Libya to address violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations. With this grant, International Medical Corps will work in local communities to reduce stigma against survivors of gender-based violence, and launch safe spaces to provide psycho-social support.⁴²⁰

This year, women in Libya have stood up against domestic violence. There have been several protests throughout the year, including the second Annual Purple Hijab Day, organized by The Voices of Libyan Woman in February 2013. Over 13,000 Libyans, including teachers, doctors, and imams, joined the organization to support its fight against domestic violence and raise awareness of how violence violates Islam.⁴²¹ In light of the success, The Voices of Libyan Women started the Noor Campaign in July 2013, which, with the same mission, aims to reach a wider audience through the use of billboards, television, radio and social media.⁴²²

In March 2013, that Grand Mufti of Libya issued a fatwa against a report from the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW),

which calls on all governments to place more emphasis on the protection of women and girls from violence and discrimination.⁴²³ The Grand Mufti iterated that the provisions ultimately undermine the family, and women's role in maintaining family bonds.⁴²⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Before the revolution in 2011, over 90% of women received pre and postnatal care. However, many foreign medical workers fled the country during the revolution, which may have an effect on access to pre and post-natal care.⁴²⁵

There is no reliable data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country. It is estimated that around 12,000 people are affected by the disease, but the actual figure may be higher due lack of reporting.⁴²⁶ According to the United States Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights for Libya in 2012, there were no reports of violence against HIV/AIDS positive individuals.⁴²⁷

Women, Peace, and Security

In March 2013 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2095 to extend the UN support mission, or UNSMIL, for a year.⁴²⁸ The resolution emphasizes the importance of women in the political process and recognizes

reports of sexual violence during the conflict. The International Criminal Court has collected evidence that supports claims that Gaddafi used rape as a weapon to spread fear. Libya, however, has not prepared a national action plan on UNSCR 1325 and has done little to support women who are survivors of violence.⁴²⁹ It is speculated that Congress is drafting a new law to cover acts of rape during armed conflict. The law would extend monetary support to victims for treatment, options for settlements, and carries a sentence of life in prison for offenders.⁴³⁰ As of September 2013, the law has not been finalized or ratified.

Women's Political Participation

In July 2013 the Libyan Congress passed legislation to reserve, for women, six seats of the 60 in the Constitutional

Commission Assembly. This constitutes only 10% of the seats, leaving women grossly under-represented in the commission.⁴³¹ During the negotiation, parties varied in their response to inclusiveness. While different parties advocated for a greater number of seats for women⁴³², the Block of Justice and Building wanted to reserve only six seats, while the Bloc of Al-Wafa li dimaa Al-Shuhadaa opposed all quotas for women's representation.⁴³³

Morocco

The Kingdom of Morocco is not a member of the African Union so it has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol. The country has however ratified CEDAW in 1993. Morocco has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325; and there is a UN peacekeeping mandate in Western Sahara and Morocco called United Nations Missions for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Economic Empowerment

It is estimated that only 26% of women are active in the labour market, with women comprising nearly 60-70% of the workforce in the agricultural and textile sectors, the two lowest paying sectors.⁴³⁴ Unemployment is only slightly higher for women, at 11%, as opposed to men, at 10%.⁴³⁵ In September 2013, the United States Labour Department's Bureau of International Labour Affairs planned a one million dollar grant to promote the economic empowerment of women in Morocco through collaboration with civil society actors.⁴³⁶

Education

As of 2011, it is estimated that 57.6% of women over the age of 15 can read and write compared to 76.1% of men.⁴³⁷ Customary gender norms are strong in rural Moroccan society and as a result girls are often denied education and instead provide support in the family household.⁴³⁸ In addition, in many rural communities, children are simply too far away from the nearest school to attend. During the 2012 school year, the disparity between urban boys and girls at the primary school level was just 3.5%.⁴³⁹ This percentage greatly increases when moved into the rural areas of the country, with only 26% of girls attending lower secondary schools.⁴⁴⁰ The government has

recognized the failing education system in the country and has made efforts to improve the quality of education and provide universal access to education. Programmes have been launched to help improve the quality of teaching, boost attendance, and provide access to children speaking different languages. In addition, the country adopted an Education Action Plan from 2013-2016, which will build on earlier programs such as the Education Emergency Program from 2009-2012.⁴⁴¹ The question that remains is will these programs have a significant impact on children living in the rural areas?

Human Rights of Women

In March 2013, women of the Kesbat Mehdia Tribe became landowners, something that, in the past, has been exclusively restricted to male tribe members. The process took over six years and resulted in a land sale from a condominium developer to the women of the tribe. It is hoped that this landmark event will encourage positive change for female tribe members, and will become precedent in common case law.⁴⁴²

Gender-Based Violence

A law protecting women from domestic violence has been stuck in parliament for the past eight years. Nearly one in three women are victims of violence, most often spousal abuse and rape. In May 2013, Bassima Hakkaoui, the Social Development Minister and only female minister in the country, stated she would attempt to advance the legislation that has been stagnant in parliament.⁴⁴³ As of October 2013, the legislation still languishes in parliament.

The government is working to reform rape laws in the country, after the country was strongly criticized over the suicide of Amina al-Filali in 2012 following her violent rape and forced marriage to her attacker.⁴⁴⁴ In January 2013, the upper house of parliament removed the provision in the penal code that allowed perpetrators to escape prosecution by marrying the victim of the assault.⁴⁴⁵ Although additional provisions have been added to help redefine

rape, such as different provisions for crimes committed against minors, virgins and non-virgins, the law continues to discriminate against women based on their sexual history.⁴⁴⁶

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

The Moroccan Ministry of Health unveiled a 2012-2016 Action Plan to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates. There is limited information on the plan; however, one of the programs being launched is collaboration with Mohamed V - Suissi University to provide two university level courses on obstetrics and neonatal care.⁴⁴⁷

HIV/AIDS is a growing concern in Morocco. It is estimated that there are 26,000 people infected by HIV/AIDS, of which 47.9% are women.⁴⁴⁸ Morocco has been working diligently with civil society to help provide access to both information and education to the people, and technical support.⁴⁴⁹

Women's Political Participation

Morocco was awarded the UN Public Service Awards for "Promoting Gender-Responsive Delivery of Public Services" in June of 2013. The prize was awarded for the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior's effort to increase women's participation and decision-making at the grassroots level. The Ministry reached over 8,000 Moroccan and African women by organizing over 100 activities around the themes of gender-equality and participation.⁴⁵⁰

Women are underrepresented in parliament and only represent 17% of the lower house, and around 2% in the upper house.⁴⁵¹ As a result, Morocco lands itself in the 81st position in the world in relation to representation of women in parliament, and in sixth position in the MENA region.⁴⁵² Civil Society organizations, in collaboration with foreign governments and international aid organizations, have been working tirelessly to implement gender-parity clauses as drafted in the 2011 constitution. As of 2013, gender-parity legislation has not been implemented, leaving the door open to discrimination against women and under-representation of women in decision-making roles.⁴⁵³

South Sudan

South Sudan has signed and ratified CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, which calls for the protection of women's rights. As an African Union (AU) state, South Sudan has also adopted AU's Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development strategy.

Economic empowerment

The transitional constitution gives women equal rights to work, equal pay and equal access to education. Although the law ensures equality between men and women, there is still a significant gender gap.⁴⁵⁴ Tradition puts women in a very submissive position. For example, a new land act grants women the right to inherit property from their husbands, but like many guarantees for women, it only exists on paper.⁴⁵⁵ While women comprise the majority of workers in the agriculture area, men-husbands and male employers-can still control their earnings.⁴⁵⁶ Women also lack access to financial services.

Education

South Sudan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Only 16% of girls and women are literate and only 27% of the population can read and write.⁴⁵⁷

A report by the South Sudan Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 70% of children between the ages of 6 and 17 never set foot in a classroom, and that only 1 in 10 children complete primary school.⁴⁵⁸

There are several factors that contribute to the illiteracy rate in South Sudan. These factors include the government's lack of funding for education, a lack of resources and trained teachers, and cultural beliefs that restrict girls' education.⁴⁵⁹

Gender-Based Violence

South Sudan is ranked as an "extreme high risk" country according to a report by global risk analysis firm, Maplecroft. A Human Rights Watch report in August of 2012 accused soldiers from South Sudan's army of rape, torture, and killing of civilians in Pibor County of the Jonglei state but the government has dismissed the reports as "not credible."⁴⁶⁰

According to the Ministry of Gender and Child Affairs, 48% of South Sudanese girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, with some being as young as 12 years old.⁴⁶¹ In cases documented by Human Rights Watch, girls were beaten, abused or taken to the police to coerce them into marriage. It was also documented that in extreme cases girls were held captive and even murdered by their families.⁴⁶²

Many South Sudanese communities see child marriage as in the interest of the girl and her family. It is considered an important way for families to access wealth via the traditional practice of transferring cattle, money, and other gifts through the marriage dowry and can also be a way to escape poverty or violence in the home.⁴⁶³ However, the reality is that girls who marry young are removed from school, and denied the education to provide for themselves. Furthermore, girls who marry young face reproductive health problems, and are more vulnerable to physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse.⁴⁶⁴

As South Sudan goes through the constitutional review process, the issue of child marriage has frequently been discussed. There is currently no minimum age of marriage, something that women activists are hoping the new 2014 constitution will address.⁴⁶⁵

Human Rights of Women

Customary law governs all personal and family matters including marriage and divorce. Chiefs who preside over customary courts tend to be older men with deeply ingrained patriarchal views. These views can be reflected in their decisions.⁴⁶⁶ Research shows that chiefs can be swayed by an interested party and that their judgement is often biased in favour of men.⁴⁶⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

South Sudan has an alarmingly high mortality rate of 2,054 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.⁴⁶⁸ This can be largely attributed to child marriage. Because girls become pregnant before their bodies are physically mature, this puts them at risk for obstructed labour and other complications.

The Ministry of Health recently approved the National Family Planning Policy that will provide a framework for the development and delivery of a family planning services. In addition, the public sector has collaborated with various non-governmental organizations to provide oral contraceptives, condoms, and injectable contraceptives.⁴⁶⁹

The rate of HIV/AIDS is very high in South Sudan. In 2012, an estimated 150,000 were living with HIV.⁴⁷⁰ Of those who were eligible for lifesaving antiretroviral therapy under World Health Organization (WHO) 2010 guidelines, only 9% had access. Only 13% of pregnant women living with HIV had access to

services to prevent transmission of the virus to their child.⁴⁷¹

Women, Peace and Security

In January 2013 the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare launched a three-day conference to develop a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Members of the conference included government officials, non-governmental organizations, and participants from all 10 South Sudanese states.⁴⁷² After deliberation during the conference the agreed pillars of the National Action Plan are Participation, Protection, Prevention, Relief, and Recovery, and there was an emphasis on issues surrounding gender-based violence, access to justice and education, and women's political participation.⁴⁷³ The process of creating the National Action Plan is still ongoing.

Women's Political Participation

As a recently formed state, only gaining independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011, South Sudan lacks true democratic principles and systems of governance that guarantee women's equal participation in political leadership and other spheres of public life.⁴⁷⁴

On International Women's Day 2013, the country's ruling party, Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), announced

plans to increase the women participation quota to 35% affirmative action at all levels of government in South Sudan. Although this is good news, affirmative action must be translated into legislation to have effective force of law.⁴⁷⁵ Until the legislation is passed, women will comprise 25% of all government positions as outlined in the 2011 constitution.



A South Sudanese Vote in Historic Referendum - UN Photo

Cultural factors obstruct women's political participation. For example, a former Minister of Information said that during her tenure, the governor often asked a male subordinate to deliver strong statements, but blamed anything that went wrong in the ministry on her being a woman.⁴⁷⁸

Sudan

Women in Sudan face discrimination on a daily basis. With the rise of conservative Islamist governance, women's rights continue to be threatened and undermined. Although Sudan has signed the Maputo Protocol, it has yet to ratify it; Sudan has neither signed nor ratified CEDAW and has not adopted a national action plan on UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The female labour force in Sudan was last reported at 28.73% in 2010, according to a World Bank report published in 2012.⁴⁷⁹

According to the Constitution, women in Sudan have a right to equal pay and a legal right to paid maternity leave. The entitlement is 8 weeks to be paid at full salary. There are, however, restrictions on women's right to work. Women are not allowed to work between 10pm-6am with the exception of women in administrative, professional, technical work or health services. Furthermore, husbands can deny their wife the right to engage in work outside of the home.⁴⁸⁰

Education

Education is free and compulsory in Sudan for children between the ages 6 and 13 years. The 2012 net primary school enrolment rate for this age group is 69% for males and 64% females. For secondary education it is 21% males and 23% females.⁴⁸¹

Gender-Based Violence

Women in Sudan face the risk of violence on a daily basis. Rape is a common occurrence in Sudan. Women are usually at an increased risk of violence when carrying out daily chores such as the collection of firewood, grass and straw for cooking, selling and building huts.⁴⁸²

Displaced women and children from the Darfur region are also at increased risk of sexual violence when they are on the move, and when they reside in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps⁴⁸³.

In June 2013, reports surfaced that seven displaced women and girls were raped at gunpoint by nine “pro-government militiamen” in military uniforms.⁴⁸⁴ Three of the victims were schoolgirls; the youngest was 13 years old and had to be transferred to hospital for treatment.⁴⁸⁵ To date, the perpetrators have not been arrested.

Female genital circumcision is also highly prevalent in Sudan, with its most severe form, infibulation, being widespread. According to data from the Republic of Sudan, 88% of women and girls are subjected to cutting.⁴⁸⁶

Also, women who do not adhere to the “Islamic” dress code in Sudan can be convicted of “indecent” clothing, which is prohibited according to Article 152 of the Constitution. Amira Osman Hamed, a Sudanese activist, risked flogging to defend the right to leave her hair uncovered in defiance of the law.⁴⁸⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNAIDS, 0.4% or 69,000 people are living with HIV in Sudan in 2012.⁴⁸⁸ Although the rate is below 1%, the prevalence of the disease is expected to rise because of large population movements-refugees, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)-and changing livelihoods with many people moving to urban areas.⁴⁸⁹

The most recent information about maternal mortality in Sudan was published in 2010. Sudan has made tremendous progress over the last two decades to improve maternal and child health. According to Sudan Household Health Survey 2010, there was 60% decrease in maternal mortality per 100 000 live births, from 537 in 1990 to 216 in 2010.⁴⁹⁰ Despite progress, child and maternal mortality remain high; at the current rate, the country will be unable to achieve the targets of Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5-reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.⁴⁹¹

Women, Peace and Security

Following the separation between Sudan and South Sudan, the two countries have signed nine peace agreements in September 2012, more than one year after the split. Despite this milestone, little has been achieved in implementing these agreements, which include defining borderlines, allocating oil revenue, and determining role of security forces along the border. It is important to note there is not one woman in the negotiating process.⁴⁹²

The Institute for Inclusive Security's work in Sudan and South Sudan is currently leading efforts to advance the inclusiveness of women in the ongoing transition process in and between both parties.⁴⁹³

Women's Political Participation

Sudan is the first Sunni country to be governed according to Islamist principles after the 1998 bloodless coup d'état that brought President Omar Al Bashir to power.

As of 2013, Sudan has 13% female parliamentarians, the most in the country's history. It is important to note, however, “strength in numbers” does not mean legal reform of gender discriminatory laws or inclusion of all women since those in government tend to be elite female voices.⁴⁹⁴ As a result, women in parliament have not addressed two of the most important issues - women's civil rights and Muslim family law. They have not been able to bridge the political, ethnic and religious divide and set agendas nor stand together as women to address this gap. The issue stems from what some women refer to as the “correct” interpretation of Islam.⁴⁹⁵

There is also little political participation from rural and uneducated women in Sudan. Women in Sudan still face the informal barriers of illiteracy, poverty and lack of knowledge about politics.

Tunisia

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

Political Participation

When the Tunisian revolution began in late 2010, setting the stage for the Arab Spring, women were protesting alongside men to overthrow former Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. However since the Islamic party Ennahda came to power in October 2011 elections, many feminists and secularists became concerned about the growing Islamisation of the country, particularly with the rise of radical Islamist groups such as the Salafists in the country.⁴⁹⁶

Ennahda party has 42 women among its 89 MPs. These 42 women elected to the constituency assembly are from the Islamist party.⁴⁹⁷ Despite the role women played during the protests, the government only appointed three women to the new cabinet.⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, although the current constitution was rewritten to enshrine full equality between men and women, as opposed to describing women as complimentary to men as indicated in the draft version, this only came in effect after extensive women protests.⁴⁹⁹

Tunisia is currently experiencing growing political unrest with the murder of two leading politicians by suspected Islamist militants of Ennahda. Opposition parties and rival demonstrators are demanding for the dissolution of Ennahda Islamist Party in favour of a unity government that would represent the broadest form of consensus. Ennahda government announced that it would not step down despite growing opposition protests.⁵⁰⁰ Recently, however, after protests intensified, the Islamist-led government has agreed to resign after talks with opponents that were held in early October.⁵⁰¹ Under the deal signed after talks in Tunis, a cabinet of independent figures will be in power until fresh elections.⁵⁰²



Tunisian Woman Voting at the 2011 Election - UN Photo

Gender-based violence

Violence against women is on the rise in post-revolution Tunisia, with many accounts of sexual assault and violence against women and girls.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, access to justice for survivors remains challenging. When a young woman was allegedly raped by police officers, she was charged with indecency and risked six months in prison before the charges were dropped after a huge public uproar.⁵⁰⁴

A small number of protestors are demanding the resignation of the Islamist appointed Minister of Women and Children's Affairs for failing to protect women's rights. The protestors are also holding the Minister responsible for the rising rate of crimes against women committed by former convicts who were released from jail as part of the political manoeuvres between the Islamists and reformers.⁵⁰⁵

HIV/AIDS Reproductive Rights

Tunisia is only one of two African countries where abortion is legal in the first trimester and if the pregnancy is a threat to the mother's health.⁵⁰⁶

Although Tunisia has one of the lowest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world-0.03%-prevalence of HIV/AIDS is growing in Tunisia's high-risk groups such as sex workers, drug addicts and homosexuals.⁵⁰⁷ The risk of getting HIV for these groups is 300 times more than the average.⁵⁰⁸ According to Tunisian HIV Association, the reason for the recent increase in vulnerability among high-risk groups is because they are marginalized for customary and legal reasons, which makes it difficult to raise awareness about the epidemic.

Women, Peace and Security

As of 2013, Tunisia has not implemented a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. During the revolution, women were targets for gender-based violence with instances ranging from verbal and physical assault to sexual assault.⁵⁰⁹ The government issued a ministerial declaration that states it will address gender-based violence, however no programs or initiatives have been implemented.⁵¹⁰

Human Rights of Women

Men and women are equal according to the Constitution. They can divorce on equal terms and polygamy is banned, whereas in many Muslim countries men are allowed to take up to

four wives. The law, however, still grants men a greater share of inheritance.⁵¹¹

Many Tunisian women feel the Islamist government threatens their rights. Topless Femen activist, 19-year old Amina, was arrested after she tried to take her clothes off opposite the Uqba Ibn Nafi Mosque. Her actions are in support of women's rights and personal freedoms in Tunisia against Islamists, particularly radical Salafists.⁵¹²

Education

The ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education in Tunisia was reported at 1:1 in 2011 according to World Bank report published in 2011.⁵¹³ The country has strong national laws on education and because of this, school enrolment rates have been high. It is important to note, however, that like many countries in North Africa there is a disparity between rural and urban areas and access to education.

Western Sahara (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic)

Western Sahara is a disputed territory that is primarily occupied by Morocco. It is estimated that 125,000 to 165,000 refugees from the war in 1975 and their descendants still live in poor conditions at refugee camps in Algeria. Western Sahara signed the Maputo Protocol in June 2006 but has neither ratified nor signed CEDAW. Western Sahara has not yet adopted a National Action Plan UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women

During the 3rd International Conference of Occupied El Aaiun, participants encouraged the UN Secretary General and Security Council to incorporate the protection of human rights, in particular women's rights, in the current peacekeeping mission in the region, The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).⁵¹⁴ MINURSO is the only peacekeeping operation since 1990 that does not have a component to monitor human rights.⁵¹⁵ Moroccan forces have used torture, rape, abduction, murder, and other forms of

abuse against Saharawi women to break up resistance movements.⁵¹⁶

Violence Against Women

Saharawi women in Western Sahara play important roles in the local administration and government of the camps they reside in the region. Saharawi women residing outside of the region, most often in Algeria, are not as fortunate. Women have been imprisoned for adultery and rarely take part in government or politics.⁵¹⁷

Southern Africa Region Summary

Southern Africa has made important progress during 2013 in health, education and political representation. Issues of violence, security and domestic abuse remain serious challenges across the region, but progress in these areas can be seen in countries, which have had past successes in the institutional reforms to increase female representation, human rights and participation.

South Africa has taken strong measures to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, reducing the number of newly infected women by 28% in the past three years, and to improve women's participation in its political and economic spheres. It is ranked fourth out of 86 states in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index. However a high prevalence of violence against women and the tying of women's rights to their race, marital status and type of marriage, remain major challenges in South Africa.

Zimbabwe's new constitution includes a section on women's rights, which includes socioeconomic and cultural rights, and includes 60 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly for women. Following the general elections held on 31 July 2013, women now hold 85 out of 270 seats (31.48%) however only 12% of Zimbabwe's cabinet is female.

Currently there are no quota systems or legal provisions to ensure adequate representation of women in Mozambique. Eight of 29 ministerial posts and 91 of the 250 seats in the National Assembly are held by women, and there are no women in the Supreme Court.

Madagascar is on track to make progress with the second and third Millennium Development Goals in universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education. The country held an action plan to promote the enrolment and completion rates and though the Ministry of Education has not determined official gender-disaggregated enrolment statistics it is estimated as low for enrolment and a non-factor for completion rates. However it has been reported that more than a million children are not in school due to factors of rural poverty, social inequality and poor disability access.

Lesotho holds 6th place on economic participation and opportunity in the 2012 Gender Gap Index and appears 11th in terms of labour force participation. Even though the participation of women in economic decision-making in the public service remains low at 33%, there are three women in major economic governance positions: the Governor and the Deputy Governor of the reserve banks and the Acting Economic Advisor in cabinet. In the private sector, women make up 40.3% of the workforce but female participation in firm ownership remains low at 18%.



A Woman from the Ndebele Tribe in South Africa carries a Traditional Beer Container - UN Photo

Swaziland's Deputy Prime Minister announced the enforcement of the Child Protection and Welfare Act to prosecute men who marry underage girls. Perpetrators face statutory rape charges, and they are additionally fined R20,000 (\$2,400) by the child welfare law. The new law also penalizes parents and guardians who collude with adult men to orchestrate a child marriage and offenders face prison terms of up to 20 years.

Botswana

Botswana ratified CEDAW in 1996 and the Optional Protocol in 2000.⁵¹⁸ Botswana has failed to ratify the Maputo Protocol, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, Botswana has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

The government of Botswana has addressed economic gender inequality and is now ranked 119th of 187 countries on the human development and gender equality index.⁵²² There are growing numbers of women in government and the private sector, including some in leadership and decision-making positions.

Human Rights of Women

The Constitution of Botswana guarantees equality before the law and outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex or gender. However, the constitution does not address contradictions between formal and customary law, with no apparent mechanism in place for a constitutional review.⁵²³ For example, unmarried women fall under the guardianship of their father and therefore are widely viewed as second-class citizens or legal minors.⁵²⁴

The National Gender Programme Framework of the Botswana Government was introduced in 1998.⁵²⁵

Botswana is signatory to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development and its addendum on violence against women regional task force along with Lesotho and Mauritius. The Women's Affairs Department represented Botswana in the SADC Task Force, and as a result it facilitates the national consultative process on the Draft Protocol in Botswana.⁵²⁶ Additionally, Botswana is part of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), which promotes the adoption of indices for measuring the progress of gender and development-related issues in African nations. Botswana is one of several countries selected to pilot the implementation of this program, and a National Advisory Panel has been established by the Women's Affairs Department to support the AGDI's implementation in Botswana.⁵²⁷

In Botswana, women are denied the right to inherit land or property. The patriarchal society is such that the first-born male or closest male relative in the family has a right to inherit property. In 2013, a shift in the norm was noted by the BBC. Four sisters, aged between 68 and 80, challenged tradition and won a landmark victory. The sisters won a five-year legal struggle to keep their family home.⁵²⁸ This example demonstrates the extent to which some women are denied human rights. However, the positive steps taken to address

the human rights violations should also be acknowledged to serve as reference points to change the standard practices. These practices are impediments to social and economic development.

Women's Political Participation

In 2010, a number of women were appointed to key managing positions, such as the Botswana Development Corporation and the National Development Bank. However, economic policies have remained largely gender blind.

Though the SADC includes a commitment to reach 30% representation of women in parliament and decision-making positions, Botswana has so far failed to meet these targets. Little has been done in the way of enforcing effective measures, such as quotas, to increase participation. In 2008 there were only 7 women in the 61 seat national assembly, 4 women in the 24-member cabinet and 4 women in the 35-seat House of Chiefs.⁵²⁹ In the October 2009 elections, out of a total of 117 candidates, only 10 were women and only two were elected to parliament.

The United Nations cites the following initiatives to improve women's political participation in Botswana:

- The Women's Affairs Department has embarked on lobbying, public education, advocacy and social mobilization
- The Inter-party Caucus of Women Politicians was established in 1998
- Political education projects by Emang Basadi, an NGO and inter-party caucus, have targeted political parties and their female members
- Advocacy and mobilization programmes by the SADC Gender Department
- Affirmative Action in the selection of specially nominated councillors and Members of Parliament to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the Public Sector, although still only with a small impact

- The Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations has pushed for a National Action Plan that reflects the Beijing Action Plan. In 2010 it commissioned a consultancy to develop a gender budget strategy, but as of yet, no implementation strategy has accompanied this framework.

In October 2012, the Botswana High Court provided a significant boost to the struggle for gender equality by striking down a discriminatory customary law that only allowed men to inherit the family home. This is a significant step forward for women's rights not only in Botswana but also in all of Africa, where women face similar discrimination.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The total number of people of living with HIV in Botswana is 340,000. The number of women over the age of 15 living with HIV is 180,000, according to HIV/ AIDS estimates for 2012⁵³⁰. Both the very high prevalence of HIV/ AIDS and the practice of unsafe abortions remain major problems. Legal codes criminalize abortion, unless pregnancy is a result of rape, defilement, or incest, if it poses a physical or mental health risk to the pregnant woman, or if the unborn child would suffer from serious physical or mental abnormalities or disease. However, much debate around abortion legalization continues to gain media attention.

Over 20% of girls in Botswana aged 15 to 19 are HIV positive, while the pregnancy rate of women with HIV is 17%.⁵³¹ Despite these figures Botswana has one of the most advanced treatment programmes. Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) are readily available.⁵³² A push to legalize abortion with a leading argument of reducing HIV is also prominent in conservative Botswana at the moment.⁵³³

In November 2013, a government official spoke out regarding the legalising of abortion. The Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development explained that due to societal pressure and poverty, women are forced to carry out illegal backstreet abortions. Statistics reveal that 450 incidents of illegal abortions were registered in 2012 in Botswana, while in 2013 until October, a total of 530 cases were reported. The reason for this is that abortion is forbidden by law. A Xinhua report revealed that abortion was a forbidden operation according to the law hence the high incidence of illegal back street operations.⁵³⁴

Violence Against Women

67% of women in Botswana have experienced some form of gender violence in their lifetime, including partner and non-partner violence. A smaller, but still high, proportion of men (44%) admit to perpetrating violence against women. Nearly one third of women (29%) experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the 12 months studied in the survey that formed the flagship research tool in a UNFPA study. In contrast, only 1.2% of Botswana women reported cases of GBV to the police in the same period. Thus, the prevalence of GBV reported in the survey is 24 times higher than that reported to the police. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the levels of GBV cases reported to the police are not accurate. A lack of faith in the system by women is suggested by this.⁵³⁵

The Domestic Violence Act was introduced in 2008 and criminalizes many acts of GBV and offers some protection to victims, yet has several gaps.⁵³⁶ While the minimum sentence for rape is 10 years, the majority of perpetrators are not prosecuted or convicted. Marital rape has not been criminalized and as a result post exposure prophylaxes are not provided to married women raped by their spouse.⁵³⁷

The Abolition of Marital Power Act in 2007 was introduced to abolish common law principles of marital power where the husband has full control over family assets and decision-making.⁵³⁸ But customary and religious codes remain the norm for the lives of most women.⁵³⁹

In 2009, the United Nations estimated that three fifths of women in Botswana experience domestic violence and there was an increase in women being murdered by their partner.⁵⁴⁰ Patriarchal attitudes are a significant underlying factor driving the incidence of GBV in Botswana, and though there is visible progress in the public sphere of equality, this has not translated into equality within intimate relationships.⁵⁴¹ This was reconfirmed this year when Botswana's Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Edwin Jenamiso Batshu, launched the Gender Based Violence Indicators Study, showing persistently high levels of GBV.²³

There are agencies that exist to assist women victims of domestic violence in Botswana. Examples are Women Against Rape (WAR), Women and Law in South Africa and Botswana Young Women's Christian Association.

Kagisano Society Women's Shelter in Gaborone has been in operation since 1998. Its mission is to end GBV in Botswana through counselling, providing temporary shelter, community education and advocacy.⁵⁴² The shelter is mainly for women and children victims of domestic violence and currently has a capacity of 16 clients at one time. More shelters are required to address the problems that exist.

Education

Secondary education in Botswana is neither free nor compulsory.⁵⁴³

According to the Ministry of Education, there has been a dip in the enrolment of girls in primary schools from 50.7% in 1993 to 49.4% percent in 2003. Enrolment in secondary school has also fallen from 53.5% in 1993 to 51.9% in 2003.⁵⁴⁴

While some efforts have been made by the government to increase girls' access to education, girls continue to drop out of school due to pregnancy, early marriage, household responsibilities, violence or the need to earn money to support their families.

A July report by the UNFPA states that in the district of Palapye the number of students who dropped out of school due to pregnancy increased from 453 in 2011 to 730 in 2012. There are numerous reasons for the adolescent pregnancies, such as sexual violence, coercion, poor parenting and the lack of family support systems. The Government of Botswana has adopted an approach towards addressing the challenges of teenage pregnancy. This is not only a health issue but also a development issue. Communities need to empower the youth with skills, so that their rights and health are protected.⁵⁴⁵ Over 80% of children are in school but gender discrimination continues to undermine efforts to achieve universal education.⁵⁴⁶

On a positive note, Botswana is one of the countries quoted to attain gender parity at primary level by 2015. At secondary level, the country is likely to close the gender gap by 2015.⁵⁴⁷

Economic Empowerment

Although the government has invested in creating employment opportunities that are gender sensitive, such as the Amendment of the Employment Act 2010 to improve work conditions for women, the latest data on Botswana reveals a downward trend in the Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-index.⁵⁴⁸

In 2008, 37% of the public service decision-making positions were occupied by women demonstrating an overall improvement compared to 2002 (30%).⁵⁴⁹ However, despite progress, women still hold the majority of 'junior' and undervalued positions and represent a large number of workers in informal sector, jobs that lack security and social benefits. Furthermore, women limited access to property and credit act as major barriers to women becoming entrepreneurs.⁵⁵⁰

Since 2012, the Decent Work Team and Pretoria Country Office have been working towards enhancing the implementation of the Botswana Decent Work Country Programme 2011 -2015.⁵⁵¹ There appears to have been little incentive to promote the participation of women.

There have been laws passed recently addressing gender inequalities: the Public Service Act, passed in 2001, recognizes sexual harassment as misconduct, and the Employment Act in 1996 was amended to allow women to work in mines.⁵⁵² Yet a study by Putting Women First Trust, a local NGO, found that access to services including government services were not gender sensitive and tended to exclude women.⁵⁵³

Young women, for example, do not have access to youth economic programs to the extent that young men do. Women still require their husband's or a legal male guardian's permission to buy or sell land, apply for bank loans, and enter into legally binding contracts. As a result of the lack of access to resources such as land, women specifically in rural areas are more vulnerable to food insecurity and economic shocks both of which perpetuate inequality.⁵⁵⁴

Progress is shown in Molepolole, Botswana. In a Project Concern's International (PCI) initiative, 'Women Empowered', is already showing positive steps towards success since its inception in 2012. On July 31st 2013, a sum of 110, 000 USD was provided by Barclays Bank to PCI Botswana to expand the implementation of GROW methodology (Grass Roots Building Our Wealth) into two new communities in rural Botswana. Public-private partnerships are critical to sustainable international development.

The self-help concept has assisted small groups of women gain financial literacy and encourage communal savings. Leadership, confidence and decision-making skills have been gained

through this initiative. Thirty-two new savings groups have been formed that reach over 600 women in Botswana.⁵⁵⁵

Kagisano Women's Shelter Project runs an Economic Empowerment programme, which equips women with survival skills to help them start income generating projects.⁵⁵⁶

Maatla is an economic empowerment project designed to help caregivers develop marketable skills. The women learn sophisticated methods of farming and crafts are developed such knitting and felting. The main objective of the project is to combat the problem of high unemployment and make women self-sufficient.⁵⁵⁷

Lesotho

Lesotho ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004⁵⁵⁸ and CEDAW in 1995,⁵⁵⁹ but the country has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.⁵⁶⁰

Human Rights of Women

One of the few countries with a reverse gender gap in favour of women, Lesotho remains the forerunner of gender equality in Sub-Saharan Africa ranked 14th out of 135 countries in the 2012 Global Gender Gap Index, despite slipping 5 places relative to its performance in 2011.⁵⁶⁵ According to the African Development Bank, Lesotho's overall positive gender equity performance is attributed to the continuous emigration of males to work in South African mines, resulting in a predominately female-focused domestic economic climate.⁵⁶⁶

Nevertheless, placed 113th in the Gender Inequality Index of the 2013 Human Development Report, Lesotho still lags far behind others in women's political participation and representation, reproductive health, access to property ownership and financial credit.⁵⁶⁷ In addition, a dual legal system recognising customary laws and some cultural practices including child marriage further inhibits the realisation of women's rights and much more is left to be done as the deadline for the 2015 MDGs approaches.⁵⁶⁸

Education

Education continues to be Lesotho's greatest success story guided by the Ministry of Education's 2005-2015 Strategic Plan, a blueprint for policies guaranteeing equal access to education and training for girls and boys alike, including non-formal education, technical and vocational education, ICT and teacher training.⁵⁶⁹ According to the latest figures, female school life expectancy from primary to secondary education is 10 years compared to 9 years for boys.⁵⁷⁰ In primary education, girls have a marginal 2% higher literacy rate than boys, albeit roughly equal

numbers of boys and girls are enrolled in primary schools. This is largely the result of the government's introduction of free and compulsory primary education in 2001. In secondary education, girls account for 56% of students, while at tertiary level the gender gap has widened in favour of females since 2009, with a total increase of 5.6% of female students.⁵⁷¹

Despite being on the right track, challenges persist for Lesotho. The retention of children in early stages of education and sexual harassment in schools and universities are great concerns.⁵⁷² Moreover, gender and development policy advocates have often called for the review and reform of curricula and syllabi to eliminate the perpetuation of stereotypical concepts of gender roles and for gender-sensitive career guidance at all stages of education. Since 2008, the national curriculum in collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO is working to mainstream gender in education and vocational training.⁵⁷³ Finally, the Ministry of Education is still faced with the challenge of developing a sexual harassment policy for institutions from primary to tertiary education and running awareness campaigns about gender-based violence.⁵⁷⁴

Economic Empowerment

Lesotho holds 6th place on economic participation and opportunity in the 2012 Gender Gap Index and appears 11th in terms of labour force participation, painting an overall positive picture for women's economic empowerment.⁵⁷⁵ Even though the involvement of women in economic decision-making in the public service remains low at 33%,⁵⁷⁶ there are three women in powerful positions, the Governor and the Deputy Governor of the reserve banks and the Acting Economic Advisor

in cabinet. In the private sector, women make up 40.3% of the workforce,⁵⁷⁷ yet female participation in firm ownership is low at 18%.⁵⁷⁸ Despite government efforts to redress inequality in land ownership and access to credit, including the 2010 Land Act, which provides for a leasehold system that streamlines land management. Women, especially outside urban areas, still experience difficulties accessing credit, lacking property to use as collateral as well as knowledge of the legal framework.⁵⁷⁹ The ongoing Millennium Challenge Account government project aims to remove these obstacles.⁵⁸⁰

Gender-based Violence

The past few years have seen a plethora of legislative efforts to combat gender-based violence. The National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence was completed in 2011 providing a multi-sector framework for addressing the prevalence of the issue.⁵⁸¹ Since 2011 Lesotho has specific legislation tackling trafficking in persons. In 2013 Lesotho will join five other Southern African countries on a gender-based violence indicators project aiming to establish a holistic database mapping the extent, response, prevention and support on the phenomenon.⁵⁸²

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

Poverty appears to be the biggest driver of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho where it affects over 23% of the population.⁵⁸³ The country's prevalence rate is one of the highest in the world. Women are disproportionately affected with 28.2% of females aged 15-49 years old infected,⁵⁸⁴ accounting for 58% of the total affected population.⁵⁸⁵ According to WHO, in 2012, 42% of pregnancy-related deaths were attributed to HIV.⁵⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the number of women acquiring HIV infection has declined by 15% since 2009 and remarkable progress has been achieved in preventing vertical transmission of HIV.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁹⁵

Namibia

The Government of Namibia ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004, CEDAW in 1992 and the CEDAW Optional Protocol in 2000. Namibia has also ratified the Beijing Platform for Action and the African regional Platform for Action, which asserts the need for gender equality. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was ratified in 2010. Namibia was the first country to have adopted both a policy and action plan aligned to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.⁵⁹⁷

UNAIDS reported that 6 out of 10 women with HIV have receive antiretroviral medicines to prevent mother-to-child transmission in 2012.⁵⁸⁸ Currently, Lesotho is among the pioneers in Africa in the battle against the epidemic, having established a comprehensive plan for nurse-driven antiretroviral delivery programmes, as well as integrated services for mother-baby pairs in maternal, newborn and child health settings.⁵⁸⁹

Huge challenges persist in the area of reproductive health. Maternal mortality is the highest in the region, albeit figures for its exact magnitude vary since only 62% of births are attended by skilled personnel.⁵⁹⁰ Infant mortality rate is equally grave at 65%.⁵⁹¹ Abortion is permitted for therapeutic reasons only and it is not allowed in the context of rape or incest. However, some groundbreaking civil society initiatives around the country are leading the way towards ensuring mothers' health from conception to delivery.

Women's Political Participation

Following the May 2012 national election, women constitute 22% of Cabinet members, dropping from 39% in 2009, and hold 26% of seats in Parliament.⁵⁹² Despite this slight drop, Lesotho performs well in comparison to others, ranked 33rd in the world for women's political empowerment in the 2012 Global Gender Index and 15th for women in ministerial positions.⁵⁹³ Yet, participation and representation of women in political parties and thus in elections remains a serious challenge in Lesotho, falling well below the SADC quota of at least 50% of women in decision-making positions in both public and private sector.⁵⁹⁴

In May 2013 the Constitutional Court sparked controversy and put the country's path towards gender equality to a halt by upholding a discriminatory section of the Chieftainship Act, which denies all daughters the right to succeed to chieftainship solely on the basis of their gender.

Economic Empowerment

According to the Human Development Report 2013 Namibia ranks 128 out of 186 countries, with a Human Development Index rating of 0.608. Unemployment is also high at 36.9%. 19% of households are classified as poor and 10% as severely poor. The female-headed household poverty level is 22%, compared to 18% for male-headed households.⁵⁹⁸ HIV/AIDS, unemployment, lack of or inadequate access to social services and their poor quality and lack of or inadequate assets such as livestock and land (including poor soils) seem to be the major causes of poverty.

The national machinery tasked with the mandate of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGE CW) strives ensure gender equality and equitable socio-economic development of women and men and the well-being of children. The Ministry has established the Income Generating Fund and Poverty Reduction Programme. Though the fund targets the entire community members, 22% of women living at the poverty level are bound to benefit more. The Ministry also plays a major role encouraging women and men from disadvantaged communities to embark on income generating activities (IGAs) in order to promote self-employment among the urban and rural poor communities.⁵⁹⁹

Education

The 2013, SADC's Gender Protocol Barometer reported the ratio or is it proportion- ask Hal of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Namibia at 49%, 53% and 53% respectively. Government commitment to education has been evident through annual budget allocation of over 22% and policies, which have supported a near universal access to primary education. However, inequitable allocation of resources has caused disproportionate harm, especially to economically disadvantaged children, who do not fully benefit from the educational services being provided. The Ministry of Education (MOE), in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in November 2013 launched the Namibia Education Transition Fund (NETF), a funding mechanism to strengthen support from Development Partners towards MOE's efforts to reduce inequalities and disparity in the sector and provide quality education.⁶⁰⁰

Gender-Based Violence

Namibia has a gender policy and gender-based violence plan of action, although implementation remains a challenge. Girls and women continue to face gender-based violence, which is a long-standing issue around which women, and other organizations have been active advocates.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 39, 767 cases of GBV were reported for the period 2009 and 2012, of which 1, 340 involved murder and 4, 309 rape. To address this, a project called 'Zero Tolerance of Gender-Based Violence' was launched on November 2013 to coincide with the first day of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. The Ministry of Gender Equality of Child Welfare indicates that they will work on collection and dissemination of monthly returns for GBV cases reported to all police stations countrywide and incorporate domestic violence in the national studies such as the demographic health survey of 2012/2013. They will also introduce a legal literacy programme, targeting key service providers like traditional leaders, police, life skills teachers and church leaders. The ministry seeks to come up with laws that will reduce domestic violence and rape as well as amend maintenance and the sexual harassment among others⁶⁰¹.

Traditional social norms such as child marriage and gender inequality in Namibia are thought to encourage various forms of GBV, including intimate partner violence and domestic violence. The Government of Namibia has put in place various legislative measures including the 'Combating of Domestic Violence Act of 2003' to address GBV in the country. However, lack of effective implementation of these laws and policies constrain women and girls from having total protection of their basic human rights.⁶⁰²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to a SADC Gender Protocol 2012 Barometer that was released in December 2012, Namibia has made "remarkable progress" towards meeting the 28 targets of the gender protocol. According to this barometer, Namibia is rated as the fifth best-performing country in the region in the health, education, HIV and AIDS and media freedom sectors.⁶⁰³ Statistics from the Namibian National HIV Sentinel

Survey of 2012 indicate that the HIV overall prevalence rate among pregnant women attending antenatal care was 18.2%. In addition, UNAIDS 2013 progress report released in June 2013 ranked Namibia as one of only seven countries - out of the total 22 sub-Saharan countries - that made "a marked increase in progress in stopping new infections in children", as part of the UN Global Plan to eliminate new HIV infections among children by 2015. The same report shows that for Namibia in 2009 the HIV transmission rate from mother to child including breastfeeding was 19% but has decreased every year since, to 9% in 2012. Also, 94% of pregnant women are reportedly receiving HIV treatment.⁶⁰⁴ To support this improvement The Programme for Accelerating the Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality in Namibia (PARMaCM) was launched in 2013, a joint partnership between the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), the European Union (EU) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to combined their efforts towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 in Namibia.⁶⁰⁵

Women, Peace and Security

With 26% women in the defence force and 46% women deployed in peace-keeping missions, Namibia leads the way, according to a SADC Gender Protocol 2013 Barometer. Namibia does not have a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)

Women's Political Participation

The Parliament of Namibia consists of the National Assembly and the National Council, together forming the Legislative arm of Government. The National Assembly consists of 72 voting members, elected for a term of five years on the basis of proportional representation, plus an additional six nonvoting members appointed by the president. The National Council consists of 26-members, elected for a term of six years, from each of the 13 geographic regions⁶⁰⁶. The current National Assembly (2010-2014) comprises 19 women (25%) notably among them, the Deputy Speaker, Deputy Minister of Defence and Ministers of Finance and Justice.⁶⁰⁷ The National Council on the other hand has 7 women in the 26 member composition representing 26%.⁶⁰⁸ There are currently 42% women councillors at local authority level and 20% of Cabinet members are women.⁶⁰⁹

The Women Parliamentary Caucus was established in 1996 with the aim of addressing common issues confronting women. Its role is to disseminate information, discuss the status of women, examine policies, legislation and budgets in terms of gender equity and advise Parliament on gender issues, its current composition is 25 members.⁶¹⁰ The Swapo Party's Extraordinary Congress in June 2013 resolved that, as of August 26 2013, the 50/50 gender representation amendments would come into effect throughout all party structures and organisations?⁶¹¹ This is in line with the gender equity targets set out by the SADC Gender Protocol 2012 for 50% representation by women and men in politics and decision-making by 2015, a decision reached by SADC Heads of State and the African Union.

South Africa

South Africa ratified CEDAW in 1995⁶¹² and the Maputo Protocol in 2004.⁶¹³ The country has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.⁶¹⁴

Human Rights of Women

South Africa sets the example to the rest of the region, having taken drastic measures to remedy the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and to improve women's participation in political and economic spheres. It is ranked fourth out of 86 states in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index. Despite remarkable progress, the dramatic prevalence of violence against

women and an archaic legal system that differentiates the rights of women on race, marital status and type of marriage, impedes the full realisation of women's rights in South Africa.

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

South Africa has demonstrated tremendous commitment and great progress in reducing the numbers of women acquiring HIV infection

and in ensuring adequate access to HIV treatment for mothers and infants. Female HIV prevalence in 2012 was 22.5% of the population, while male HIV prevalence was significantly lower at 13.10%.⁶¹⁵ In the period 2009-2012, the number of newly infected women declined by 28%,⁶¹⁶ which resulted in fewer children becoming infected. In a country where 60% of maternal mortality is attributed to HIV,⁶¹⁷ 83% of eligible pregnant women in 2012 received HIV treatment for their own health.⁶¹⁸ Save the Children ranked South Africa only 77th out of 176 countries in the State of the World's Mothers Report 2013⁶¹⁹ partly due to the high infant mortality rate, which remains grave at 41%.⁶²⁰

Contraception is widely available and free at government clinics, with contraceptive prevalence among married women at 60% in 2012.⁶²¹ According to UNICEF, 91% of births were delivered by skilled personnel and nationwide 89% of them were delivered at a medical institution.⁶²² Abortion is available on request in South Africa. However, severe weaknesses in the quality of healthcare pose serious challenges in maternity care. Human Rights Watch attributed the continuing high maternal mortality rate to HIV prevalence, poor administrative and financial management, inadequate care quality, and lack of accountability in the health care system.⁶²³ Cases of neglectful and abusive behaviour towards maternity patients by health care workers were documented, including cases in which neglect resulted in patient death.⁶²⁴

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a serious and pervasive problem in South Africa. In 2013 a series of infamous acts of violence against women, including femicide by intimate partners, sparked an international outcry and received media coverage globally.⁶²⁵

South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world. A 2012 study conducted by WHO among people aged 13-23, found that 42% of females and 38% of males reported having suffered a form of physical violence by an intimate partner.⁶²⁶

The rate of femicide in the country is equally troubling. The South African Medical Research Council reports that a woman is killed by an intimate partner every eight hours, a probable underestimation considering that a perpetrator is identified in only 20% of reported cases.⁶²⁷

South African law criminalises domestic violence and rape, including spousal rape, with sentences up to 25 years.⁶²⁸ However, current legislation is considered inadequate and in need for better enforcement. According to an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence Against Women and Children 2012, with the aim of developing new strategies, only some of the few victims who report domestic violence receive adequate support from officials.⁶²⁹ Governmental and civil society initiatives have created designated care centres to support survivors of gender-based violence, which are staffed 24 hours a day by specialist medical staff, social workers and police. They deal with around 20% of all victims of sexual offences in South Africa. Parts of Johannesburg have seen conviction rates reach 89% compared to a poor national average of 7%.⁶³⁰ Despite concerted government action, including efforts to reduce delays in legal proceedings, gender-based violence remains a pressing threat against the physical and psychological integrity of women in South Africa. Following an investigation commissioned in 2012, the South African government has announced in August 2013 the decision to reinstate 22 sexual offences courts by the end of the 2013/14 financial year, with specially trained officials and equipment to reduce the chance of secondary trauma for survivors.⁶³¹

Women's Political Participation



H.E Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, First Female Leader of the African Union

South Africa is placed 7th on women's political participation in the 2012 Gender Gap Index, the top spot in the region on political empowerment, having made remarkable efforts to remove discrimination against women under the dual legal system.⁶³² Women make up 41% of national

parliamentarians⁶³³ and 39% of cabinet ministers.⁶³⁴

In spite of improvements in addressing the gender divide in the public sphere, it is widely acknowledged that women's empowerment is being realised at a slow pace especially in the rural areas.⁶³⁵

In 2013, the country was divided by the proposed return of the controversial Traditional Courts Bill, withdrawn in 2008 amidst widespread criticism.⁶³⁶ Concerns were raised with regards to the entrenched patriarchy of the traditional justice system, as well as its adherence to discriminatory social and economic practices, such as access to land, inheritance, and forced marriage. As it stands at time of writing, no official decision has been taken with regards to the adoption or not of the bill.⁶³⁷

Economic Empowerment

The 2012 Global Gender Gap Index ranked South Africa 70th among 135 countries in the economic participation and opportunity sub-index.⁶³⁸ Overall, women face economic discrimination in areas such as wage equality for similar work, extension of credit, and land ownership. In 2012, women participated in 23% of private firm ownership.⁶³⁹ Several government initiatives targeting the gender gap in economic empowerment have been introduced, although a lot more is still to be done. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provided incentive grants to promote the development of small and medium sized enterprises for women, young people, and persons with disabilities. DTI also operated the Isivande Women's Fund to improve women's access to credit.⁶⁴⁰

According to the most recent figures released by Commission for Employment Equity, women constitute 45.2% of the economically active population.⁶⁴¹ Females currently hold 30.7% of senior management positions and around the country notable progress has been made in terms of women at the skilled level.⁶⁴²

Education

High enrolment rates in primary and secondary education stand as testament to South Africa's ongoing focus on education. Currently, female school life expectancy, from primary to secondary education, is 12 years and equal to that of males.⁶⁴³ Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education reported that in 2012 there were

more male than female (49.7%) learners enrolled in the schooling system. The lowest percentage of female students in ordinary schools nationwide was in Grade 1 (47.8%) and the highest percentage in Grades 11 and 12 (54.4% and 54.5% respectively).⁶⁴⁴ A number of government-led, private-led and UNICEF initiatives are currently in place to enhance girls' performance in maths, science and technology in order to encourage them to pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated fields.⁶⁴⁵

Combating sexism and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation are amongst the priorities of the government's Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025.⁶⁴⁶

Women, Peace & Security

South Africa has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).⁶⁴⁷ Unfortunately, accessing information on the human resource component of the security sector in Southern Africa remains a difficult task, inhibiting, as a result, any adequate monitoring of progress and compliance to resolutions and protocols on gender, peace and security.⁶⁴⁸ Overall, women have greater representation at the lower security levels even though some notable progress is recorded at decision-making levels.

In June 2012, South Africa appointed its first ever female national police commissioner, Mangwashi Victoria (Riah) Pihyega. The country leads the way in the region, with 27% representation of women in the defence sector. One woman serves as Major General (2%) and 31 women (18%) as Brigadier General. Information on the contribution of troops to UN Peacekeeping Missions is guided by more transparency, indicating that South Africa deploys the highest number of women, but still lags behind its regional counterparts in terms of percentage of overall deployments. Women peacekeepers averaged around 14-15% for UN missions in 2011.⁶⁴⁹

A draft Defence Review of South Africa released in 2012 stressed that, in terms of personnel, 'gender-mainstreaming, as well as broad-based representation at all levels, will remain an objective'.⁶⁵⁰ The Review has been criticised for its short-sightedness, as most references to women were in relation to their

impoverishment, marginalisation and victimisation.⁶⁵¹ Much more than the mere inclusion of women in the security sector is needed to create a more secure

environment for women in peace and security.

Swaziland

Swaziland signed the Maputo Protocol and ratified the CEDAW convention in 2004⁶⁵². In November 2012 Swaziland ratified the protocol on the rights of women in Africa, becoming the 35th African Union member state to ratify the protocol.⁶⁵³

The Human Development Index for the nation at 0.522, ranked it at 140 out of 187 countries surveyed.⁶⁵⁴ Swaziland has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. However, despite these shortcomings, the government has demonstrated a commitment to include gender in the national development agenda.

Human Rights of Women

The constitution of Swaziland, adopted in 2006, provides equal legal rights for men and women, yet traditional culture within the country continues to restrict women's human rights. Women are discriminated against from a very young age and have limited participation in economic and public spheres.⁶⁵⁵

The existing dual legal system in the country remains a constant source of conflict. Swaziland's political system, known as the Tinkhundla system, marginalizes women at decision-making levels, which consistently sidelines them into non-political traditional roles.⁶⁵⁶ Several discriminatory laws are still in force, having not yet been aligned with the anti-discrimination measures in the constitution. For example, women still have limited land and inheritance rights and in 2010, land rights granted to a woman were overturned by the Supreme Court.⁶⁵⁷

In September 2012, the Deputy Prime Minister Themba Masuku announced the government's intention to enforce the Child Protection and Welfare Act by prosecuting men who marry underage girls. From now on, perpetrators face statutory rape charges, and they are additionally fined R20,000 (\$2,400) under the Child Welfare Law. The new law also penalizes parents and guardians who collude with adult men to orchestrate a child marriage and offenders face prison terms of up to 20 years.

Women's Political Participation

Extreme discrimination, biased processes, appointment hierarchies and preference for men's leadership, sidelines women in electoral process.⁶⁵⁸ For example, in August 2013 a

woman was banned from being nominated to stand as a member of parliament because she was wearing trousers at the nomination centre.⁶⁵⁹ Currently, Swaziland has the lowest parliamentary representation of their SADC region with only one of the 55 female candidates elected.⁶⁶⁰ Women are mobilizing and working to challenge discriminatory laws and increase women's participation in all facets of public life in Swaziland.⁶⁶¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Swaziland has the highest known HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among the age group 15-49, recently surpassing Botswana.⁶⁶²

31% of the female population are living with HIV, in comparison to 20% of men, rising to 49% for women between the ages of 24 and 29.⁶⁶³ Women, however, are campaigning and mobilization the fight against HIV at a grassroots level and this is a step in the right direction for women's rights in the country. As a downside, a report to the Commission of the Status of Women (2009) stated that women are increasingly bearing responsibility for the informal care of HIV/Aids patients, which will limit their political and social mobility.⁶⁶⁴

In regards to maternal health, Swaziland is among the 11 countries in Africa that have failed to make any progress in the past years towards meeting MGD5 on the improvement of maternal health. It is classified as having an extremely severe maternal health situation by the United Nations.⁶⁶⁵

Violence Against Women

Both the legal code of Swaziland and its customary law provide some protection against gender-based violence, yet it is still quite

common and often tolerated with impunity.⁶⁶⁶ Law prohibits rape and a Sexual Offences and in 2005 the Domestic Violence Bill was introduced that would prohibit marital rape. It still waits to be enacted and despite rape being illegal, there is a lack of enforcement and a social taboo against reporting.⁶⁶⁷

Social attitudes and the normalization of violence remain key factors contributing to the high prevalence of violence against women. According to a government survey conducted in 2008, 60% of men believe it is acceptable to beat their wives.⁶⁶⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Few women are represented in the peacekeeping or security sector in Swaziland.⁶⁶⁹

Education

In Swaziland, there equal rights for women in education. UNICEF data shows that gender parity has been achieved in primary school enrolments and that there is no son preference at this age. However a gap does emerge in secondary and tertiary education in the country, beginning at age 16.⁶⁷⁰

Economic Empowerment

There are currently no affirmative action interventions to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities, and employment conditions in Swaziland fall short of being gender responsive. Women head an estimated one third of households in Swaziland.⁶⁷¹ Women also make up a large part of the agricultural sector and legume crops are considered as specifically woman's sphere of work.⁶⁷²

West Africa Region Summary

In 2013, maternal health, women's political participation and violence against women in post-conflict settings continue to be areas of intervention for governments, international aid and human rights organizations.

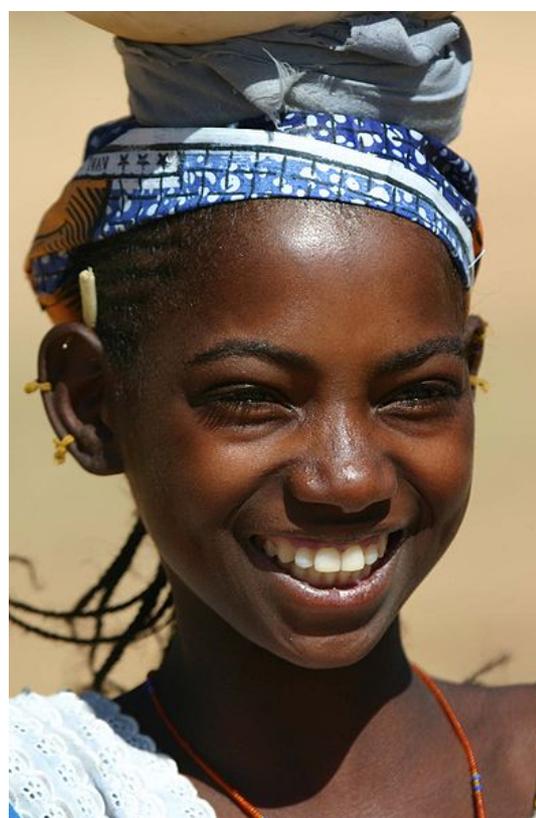
In the area of gender policy reforms, Cote d'Ivoire led globally with the most gender-parity reforms during the past two years. Ivorian women and men are recognized as joint heads of households, and they can claim taxes for children and spouses equally. In the wake of the violence that erupted after the elections in 2010-2011, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security produced a June monthly action point. This called for Cote d'Ivoire to undertake an inquiry into the ongoing impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, as well as the "barriers to women's full participation in justice and reconciliation process."

Women's political participation in West Africa has seen some ups and downs. Burkina Faso has been testing its gender quota law following its Parliamentary elections in December 2012. Unfortunately, women's representation in parliament has stalled at 15.3%. However at the local level, representation of women has increased to 35%. The Guinean Legislative elections, which had been continuously postponed, were finally held on 28 September 2013.⁶⁷³ The previous legislature had 22 women, out of 144 (19.3%) who sat in the National Assembly, which was elected in June 2002. Out of 360 seats in Nigeria's parliament, only 24 are held by women, amounting to 6.7%. In the upper house, women only hold 7 out of 109 seats. Nigeria is ranked 128th out of 142 countries in Inter-parliamentary Union's database for women's representation.⁶⁷⁴

On a positive note, in September, Senegal elected its first female prime minister, a feminist, human rights, reproductive rights, and social justice activist, signaling an important step forward and a new era for the country.

Some of the worst countries in the world to be a mother are in West Africa. "Save the Children" ranks Benin 160th out of 176 states in its annual Mothers' Index Rank.⁶⁷⁵ Niger ranks 172nd out of 175 of the worse countries to be a mother.⁶⁷⁶ Child marriage rates are above 80%

in rural Niger⁶⁷⁷ and 51% of all young women were mothers by the age of 18.⁶⁷⁸ In Sierra Leone, the birth you need to decide which is correct birth or fertility rate remains high as underage marriages, lack of education of girls and traditional cultural practices, continue to be the norm. Furthermore, although knowledge about contraception appears to be high, contraception use remains very low, with only 10% of women reporting using any form of contraception.⁶⁷⁹



Liberia celebrated 10 years of peace this year, signalling the beginning of a transition from healing and reconciliation to reconstruction and development. Nevertheless, Liberia is still ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, where police abuse is rife.⁶⁸⁵

During the conflict in Northern Mali in early 2013, women and girls have been the specific targets of violence such as rape and sexual violence. Despite a successful election in August 2013, there remain thousands of internally displaced people, with over 12,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.

Benin

Benin ratified the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1992⁶⁸⁶ and the Maputo Protocol in 2005⁶⁸⁷. In 2013, severe violations of the rights of women included gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and trafficking and abuse of women and children. The government adopted a new national gender promotion policy in May 2009 with the aim of achieving gender equality and equity by 2025.⁶⁸⁸ Despite this legislation, women continue to face discrimination based on patriarchal gender norms, constrained by the persistence of customary, traditional and religious practices that dominate social life.⁶⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

Women constitute a driving force for the economy; however, they are faced with various barriers to entry in the economy, including difficulties accessing land and credit and being excluded from inheritance rights.⁶⁹⁰ Many women opt to work in the informal sector.⁶⁹¹ Public service employment remains largely male dominated, with women accounting for just under 25% of the labour force in that sector.⁶⁹² Over the course of 2012-2013, the government enacted a microcredit grant scheme targeting the poorest sectors of the population, particularly women in rural areas, to assist them in developing income-generating activities.⁶⁹³ At the same time, governmental and NGO-sponsored initiatives continued to educate the public on the legal provisions that provide women with inheritance and property rights.⁶⁹⁴

Violence Against Women

Women continue to experience violence through harmful traditional practices, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, despite the 2012 enactment of specific legislation on the prevention and punishment of violence against women and girls.⁶⁹⁵ This is largely due to a lack of police training in fact-finding around cases of violence against women as well as poor documentation of gender-based violence, victim ignorance of the legal framework, and social stigma. Statistics are not available on prosecutions or convictions, showing that institutions are ill equipped to address these issues, and the impunity of perpetrators can remain the status quo.⁶⁹⁶

UNICEF lists Benin among countries where FGM prevalence is low. It is estimated that about 13% of women and girls have undergone FGM.⁶⁹⁷ The practice was largely limited to remote rural areas in the north, concentrated within specific ethnic groups.⁶⁹⁸ UNICEF

estimates that 93% of women and girls in Benin, as well as the overwhelming majority of men, oppose the continuation of this harmful practice. Other harmful traditional practices encountered in Benin include child marriage, common in rural areas, despite government and NGO efforts to bring it to an end through awareness-raising campaigns.⁶⁹⁹ According to the 2012 Global Gender Gap Index, 22% of girls aged 15 to 19 were married in that year.⁷⁰⁰

Women's Political Participation

Men continue to hold the majority of key positions in all spheres of decision-making. In 2013 women held 8.4% of seats in national government.⁷⁰¹ Currently, there are eight women out of 83(10%) members of the National Assembly, eight female ministers in the 24-member Cabinet (33%), and two women (28%) serve among the seven justices of the Constitutional Court.⁷⁰² In light of such underrepresentation, CEDAW has called for an investigation to assess the reasons why the State has not adopted any temporary special measure to increase the participation of women in decision-making positions.⁷⁰³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Save the Children ranks Benin 160th out of 176 states in its annual Mothers' Index Rank.⁷⁰⁴ This is largely due to severely high levels of maternal mortality and an under-five mortality rate of over 10%.⁷⁰⁵ According to the latest CEDAW report, high maternal mortality rate is the result of early and late pregnancies, multiple pregnancies and pregnancies too closely spaced, as well as clandestine abortions following unwanted pregnancies.⁷⁰⁶ It is estimated that 11.4% of adolescent girls become pregnant before their 19th birthday; less than 75% of births are attended by skilled personnel; and contraceptive prevalence among married women is as low as 17%.⁷⁰⁷ HIV prevalence

remains low, affecting 1.4% of women aged 15-49 and 0.9% of men.⁷⁰⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Human trafficking remains a severe concern. Benin has consistently been recognised as 'a country of origin, transit, and destination for women, children and possibly men subjected to forced labour, and sex trafficking'.⁷⁰⁹ The majority of victims are identified as girls

subjected to domestic servitude or sex trafficking in Cotonou.⁷¹⁰ The government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but has taken significant steps towards this end. Having enacted anti-trafficking legislation regarding children, it has yet to draft such legislation regarding women.⁷¹¹ Nevertheless, impunity largely persists for trafficking offenders.⁷¹²

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2006⁷¹³ and the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women in 1987.⁷¹⁴ Despite important government efforts to bridge the gender gap, women continue to be discriminated against in both the public and private sectors.

Education

At a net enrolment rate of 29% for girls and 42% for boys, schooling in Burkina Faso is among the lowest globally.⁷¹⁵ With regards particularly to literacy rates and enrolment in tertiary education, the country lags behind most of the world.⁷¹⁶ It is reported that in the period 2006-2012, females made up 48.6% of the total student population in primary and secondary education,⁷¹⁷. Even though the numbers indicate that there is still a lot left to be done, with the support of external development partners, the Burkinabe government has undertaken major innovations in education on all fronts, including girls' education.⁷¹⁸ Initiatives such as school-feeding programmes have led to an increase in girls' and boys' enrolment by 5-6%.⁷¹⁹ Recognising the evident progress in establishing gender equality in primary education, the state has committed to implementing appropriate measures in order to achieve similar results at secondary and tertiary levels.⁷²⁰

Economic Empowerment

Women in Burkina Faso are often discriminated against in the job market, property ownership and access to credit. Female labour force participation is estimated at 45% of the general workforce, most often in low paid, service positions.⁷²¹ This does not account for the informal sector in which a large number of women are employed. Women's employment share in the non-agricultural sector is 27%, while only 19% of firms are owned or co-owned by women.⁷²²

Women face numerous restrictions in relation to ownership rights and access to means of production, despite constituting 65% of rural producers.⁷²³ Despite a law providing universal equal property and inheritance rights, legal provisions are often inhibited by customary and traditional practices, particularly in rural areas where women's rights are limited to use of the land only.⁷²⁴

Male-controlled plots are on average eight times larger than female-controlled plots, which, along with the male-bias in the allocation of productive inputs, results in a 6% estimated loss in total household income.⁷²⁵ According to the World Bank, improving women's property rights would increase total household agricultural production by about 6%, simply by reallocating resources (labour and fertiliser) from men to women.⁷²⁶

Violence Against Women

Although rape is reportedly widespread, there are no specific legal frameworks pertaining to domestic violence or sexual harassment in Burkina Faso.⁷²⁷ Comprehensive legislation responding to rape is in place, but it does not address spousal rape and is poorly implemented⁷²⁸. Even though the government prosecuted several cases of rape in 2012, no statistics have been made available on the number of cases reported or prosecuted.⁷²⁹ In place of government-run shelters for survivors of domestic violence, counselling centres in each of the 13 regional 'Maison de la Femme' centres offer support and advice. In 2012 the Ministry of Women's Promotion housed and assisted 20 abused women, 10 of whom were

referred to attorneys for possible legal action.⁷³⁰

There have also been several cases of violence against elderly women on accusations of witchcraft.⁷³¹ Over the course of 2012, nearly 400 women accused of witchcraft were housed in special centres operating in Ouagadougou⁷³². In response, the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity adopted a 2012-2016 Action Plan to fight the social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft.⁷³³

The country is one of the few in the region to have prosecuted perpetrators under legislation banning FGM enacted in 1996.⁷³⁴ A national action plan for 2009-2013 is in place, pledging 'Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation'.⁷³⁵ According to UNICEF, it is estimated that 76% of women aged 15-49, a total of 9.3 million, have been cut.⁷³⁶ Nevertheless, local support for the continuation of the practice is declining; only 9% of women favouring the continuation of FGM.⁷³⁷ Overall, the most recent data available suggests major progress in reducing FGM in girls under the age of 15 across the country⁷³⁸. The President publicly declared his opposition to the practice in 2009 and called upon all religious and traditional leaders to actively engage in its elimination.

In addition, a serious issue affecting Burkina Faso is child marriage. According to UN Women, the country appears in the 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage in the world. It is estimated that 52% of girls under the age of 19 are married.⁷³⁹

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

Legislation is in place, which grants all individuals in Burkina Faso the right to reproductive health and access to free family planning information. Nevertheless, maternal mortality rates remain severely high with 300 deaths per 100,000 live births,⁷⁴⁰ attributed largely to lack of access to health care in rural areas. It is reported that skilled personnel attended only 67% of births in 2012.⁷⁴¹

A national action plan is in place to secure the supply of contraceptives for the period 2005-2015. However, contraceptive prevalence remains low with only 17% of married women reporting the use of any form of contraception.⁷⁴² According to a research conducted by the World Bank, almost 30% of Burkinabe women not using contraceptives cite lack of knowledge of methods or resources as the primary reason and 20% of them mention issues of access, distance or cost⁷⁴³. Cultural norms that left decisions regarding birth control to husbands also contribute to the limited use of contraceptives.⁷⁴⁴ Nevertheless, HIV prevalence among women is low: female HIV prevalence among women aged 15-49 is 1.5% and 0.9% among their male counterparts.⁷⁴⁵

Women's Political Participation

Following the Parliamentary elections of 2nd December 2012, when the country's 2009 quota law was applied for the first time,⁷⁴⁶ women held 15.3% of seats in the National Parliament.⁷⁴⁷ Despite evident progress, the underrepresentation of women remains evident in both public and private spheres. Nevertheless, on the level of local representation, due to decentralisation policies, the representation of women increased to 35% by 2011 as opposed to just 9.9% in 2002.⁷⁴⁸

Women, Peace & Security

The conflict in neighbouring Mali in early 2012 has led to thousands of displaced people being forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in Burkina Faso. It has been estimated that, as of August 2012, 17,928 women were included in the large numbers of refugees⁷⁴⁹, a number that is almost certain to have increased significantly following further deterioration of the situation in March 2013.⁷⁵⁰ UNHCR reported they have taken all necessary measures to reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence against women refugees in Burkina Faso, having put in place referral mechanisms to support and improve identification of acts through non-governmental organisations.⁷⁵¹

Cape Verde

Cape Verde, often considered one of the most stable and peaceful countries in Africa, scarcely ever makes the news. Cape Verde has ratified CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol in 1980 and 2005 respectively, but the Government has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Human Rights of Women

Cape Verde has instituted a National Development Plan (NDP), which presents overall objectives and strategies for the country's development. However, Cape Verde has faced some difficulties in designing and implementing effective measures to integrate an approach based on gender equality at the local level. To support and strengthen the integration of gender equality at both the national and local levels, the following measures have been taken:

- The production of data disaggregated by sex, by the National Institute of Statistics and some sectors, such as education, enabling the establishment of indicators and the monitoring of the effectiveness of policies and programs;
- The incorporation by the Ministry of Health of the concept of sexual and reproductive health and consequent application in practice of a gender perspective;
- The incorporation of the gender dimension in the National Population Policy (2004-2015);
- Providing a gender component within the context of the training programme for staff of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (2004).

Gender-Based Violence

According to the Cape Verde Demographic Health Survey, one in every five women has

suffered from intimate partner violence in the country, with 9% affected by serious physical violence. In January 2011, following the sustained advocacy efforts of civil society organizations, the Gender Based Violence Law was finally passed.⁷⁵²

The Gender Programme for Action (2012-2016), which was launched following the legal criminalisation of gender based violence, has focused on three main areas of violence prevention and response: (i) curbing the acceptance of violence through the use of information, education and communications for attitudinal change targeting schools, men's groups and the media; (ii) improving the existing multi-sectoral referral system through the establishment of ten "victim support centres" across the country; and (iii) building the institutional capacity of both government and civil society organizations to implement and monitor the impact of the measures and actions developed to address violence against women.⁷⁵³

The Institute of Cape Verde for the Equality of Gender (Instituto Cabo-verdiano para a Igualdade e Equidade do Genero) is also working with the justice sector to improve victims' access to services.

Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire signed the Maputo Protocol in 2004 but has yet to ratify it. The country signed and ratified CEDAW in 1995. Due to the prolonged civil war, Cote d'Ivoire launched a National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and it has had a UN peacekeeping force present since 2004. The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOWAR) have identified Cote d'Ivoire as a priority advocacy country for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol.⁷⁵⁴

As the country struggles to recover from the socio-political crisis, Ivorian women continued to be the most marginalized, both in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

Women's Political Participation

The country's last election was in 2011 in which 26 women were elected to parliament, occupying only 10.4% of the total seats.⁷⁵⁵ In August 2013, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) partnered with the Women's Network in Cote d'Ivoire to present recommendations to governance institutions

for women's political participation. One of the main advocacy agenda items was calling for the enactment of gender quota to increase women's leadership in government.⁷⁵⁶

On International Women's Day in March 2013, the Network of Women in Cote d'Ivoire's Political Parties (REFEPCI) called for a national gender equality law to be passed, stating that the law would enable more women

to take decision-making roles in governance structures.⁷⁵⁷ According to the World Bank, “out of 29 government ministers, five are women, and only 10% of deputies in the National Assembly are female.”⁷⁵⁸

In 2013, Cote d'Ivoire led globally with the most gender-parity reforms during the past two years. Ivorian women and men are recognized as joint heads of households, and they can claim taxes for children and spouses equally. Prior to 2013, husbands could dictate when and if their wives worked, however now the law stipulates that each can stop the other from working if it is against family interests.⁷⁵⁹

Economic Empowerment

Cote d'Ivoire is the world's top producer of cacao, a major source of income for many farmers in the country. However, strict gender roles for men and women limit women from being able to farm autonomously or own land. In rural areas, 75% of Ivorian women live below the poverty line. Cote d'Ivoire recently removed restrictions that forbid women from getting a job without spousal approval.⁷⁶⁰

Land inheritance remains a serious barrier for rural women to be independent and to earn a living. Even though a 2011 law stipulates that men and women are joint heads of households, many women in rural areas, where cultural practices remain strong, find it impossible to inherit land from husbands or family members.

The Vice President of the Associate of Female Lawyers explained: "Today our law makes no distinction between men and women for the acquisition of properties. But in rural areas some beliefs and customs still have an impact."⁷⁶¹

War and conflict also act as a barrier to women's land ownership in Cote d'Ivoire. Hundreds of thousands of people fled from their farmland during the turmoil over the past ten years, leaving swaths of land up for grabs. Women who lost husbands or brothers during the crisis returned to find that they no longer had claim to what was rightfully theirs. Land conflicts in this resource-rich country has led to extreme violence and unmitigated insecurity for women. One woman who found herself in this situation said: "I cannot resort to violence. I can't do anything as a woman."⁷⁶²



Restaurant Run by Women in Cote d'Ivoire – UN Photo

Education

On the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child, bilateral and international organizations agreed to mobilize efforts to tackle violence against girls in schools, a main cause of low school attendance by girls. In Cote d'Ivoire, programs to promote the education of girls and to combat gender-based violence will be implemented. “This violence may lead to a decrease in school attendance which can adversely affect the course of young girls' lives. For the most part, this violence remains hidden and goes unpunished, making it difficult for public authorities to discover, recognize and respond to it.”⁷⁶³

Women, Peace and Security

Cote d'Ivoire adopted a National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325 in January 2007. Its UN peacekeeping mandate is called the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

In its June 2013 Monthly Action Points to the UN Security Council, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security called for an inquiry into the ongoing impunity for sexual and gender-based violence as well as the “barriers to women's full participation in justice and reconciliation process,” in the wake of the violence that erupted after the election in 2010-2011. The NGO Working group stressed the importance of women in the peacebuilding process, DDR and security sector reform.⁷⁶⁴

The mandate for UNOCI was extended in July 2013 for an additional 11 months reiterating the vital role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the importance of their equal participation and access to justice.⁷⁶⁵

Gambia

Gambia ratified the Maputo Protocol in May 2005. It ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in April 1993, but has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on Violence Against Women. Gambia still has not yet adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.⁷⁶⁶

Human Rights of Women

The legal system of Gambia is mixed and has various sources from English common law, Islamic law and customary law. Notably, with regard to family law, four different legal systems are in operation and are recognised under Article 7 of the 1997 constitution – civil, customary, Christian and Sharia. Hence, while the rights of women are protected under the constitution, such rights can sometimes conflict with other sources of law, especially Sharia law.

The decision-making power of women in the Gambia is limited in most fields, including health, participation in elections and access to the workplace. The majority of women work in agriculture, where inheritance laws are discriminatory, offering them no protection. Under customary law for example, wives are not entitled to the property of their husbands unless they agree to let themselves be inherited by the husband's family. This indicates that the Gambia operates a patriarchal and patrilineal social system.⁷⁶⁷

However, with the declaration of the International Women's Decade (1975 – 1985), Gambian women began to gain some visibility in terms of their participation in socio-economic development, as well as in their decision-making capacity. The period saw the setting up of the National Women's Council and Bureau by an Act of Parliament in 1980 to advise government on women's issues and concerns.⁷⁶⁸

In April 2013, in the city of Banjul, senior police officers were presented with a Gender Training Manual for Safeguarding Rights. The objective of this was to equip the police officers with methods for addressing gender issues effectively. This was done to encourage a culture of democratic and gender-sensitive policing.⁷⁶⁹ This is a positive step towards attaining gender equality in the context of protecting human rights.

Women's Political Participation

There are no legal restrictions against the participation of women in political life, but levels of participation nevertheless remain low.

The low literacy rate and lack of education of many women often prevents them from taking an active part in the political life of their country. It was only in 2002 that women took part as candidates in the National Assembly election, although the President had appointed female parliamentarians in the past.⁷⁷⁰

Since 2009, the President of the National Assembly is a woman, Elizabeth Yamide Francis. However, the position of women in the National Assembly remains the same, with women occupying only four out of 53 seats.⁷⁷¹ Since 1997, the Minister for Women's Affairs and Vice-President is also a woman, Ajalsatou Njie-Saidy, and she was reappointed in 2002.⁷⁷²

In June 2013 leadership training was provided for young women from the University of Gambia. The theme of the workshop was Fostering Young Women's Leadership in Politics. Think Young Women, in collaboration with Tango worked to achieve this goal, with financial assistance from the US Embassy.⁷⁷³ In February this year, young activists demonstrated their passion to effect change by participating in the One Billion Rising event in February, which was part of a campaign to end violence against women.⁷⁷⁴

HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health

Although the Constitution states that all marriages shall be based on free and full consent of the intended parties,⁷⁷⁵ underage marriage remains a concern in the Gambia and some girls are married as early as age 12. The Government of the Gambia acknowledged the problem. On 16 June 2013, a ceremony was held at a mini stadium in the Gambia. The event was attended by NGOs, civil society organisations, ward and women councillors and development workers to pledge against the harmful practices of child marriage and female genital cutting.⁷⁷⁶

There has been a reduction in the maternal mortality rate since 2012. In 2013 the maternal mortality rate is currently 360 for every 100,000 live births.⁷⁷⁷ Although this reduction has occurred since 1980, it still remains an area

for concern. Low standards of obstetric health care, failure to recognise the severity of the problem at the community level, lack of transportation to health clinics and inadequate qualified doctors, as well as delays in seeking health care, are factors contributing to the maternal mortality rate.

According to a 2013 publication by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, the total fertility birth rate in 2011 was 4.8.⁷⁷⁸ This figure can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the frequency of underage marriages, lack of education amongst young women and girls and limited access to contraception. Presently, contraceptive use in the Gambia appears low, with only 17.5% of women reporting using any forms of contraceptive.⁷⁷⁹

UNAIDS recently noted that the Gambia is one of the sixteen countries that is working towards providing antiretroviral medicine to at least 75% of pregnant women living with HIV. This minimises the chances for transmission of the virus to the child.⁷⁸⁰ Women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDs, representing approximately 57% of those with the disease.

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence, including rape, spousal rape and assault, can be prosecuted and can constitute grounds for divorce under civil law. However, there are currently no statistics available and domestic violence is rarely prosecuted as the police treat it as a private matter.⁷⁸¹

In late December 2013, the National Assembly passed a Domestic Violence Bill. The Bill is aimed at the elimination of violence against women, girls and other vulnerable groups. It is a positive step forward in promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls. It is hoped that the Bill will strengthen the existing laws and procedures concerning rape and other sexual offences.⁷⁸²

In recent years, NGOs and women's group working to end FGM have reported threats and intimidation. The government has prohibited the dissemination of anti-FGM messages in the state media, and government officials have spoken out in favour of the practice.⁷⁸³ A publication by Trust Law highlights that education is key to ending FGM and men need to be engaged. A collective effort is necessary to help address the problem. There is evidence from this document that collective declarations

have taken place in communities in Ethiopia, Gambia and Senegal against the practice. Persistence from Gambian activist Isatou Touray has brought about positive change. In January 2013 she helped mobilise the Gambia's seven regional leaders to back a ban on FGM, providing a path for parliament to pass a law later in 2013. Touray and Trust Law are discussing strategies to eradicate FGM by 2020.⁷⁸⁴ It is estimated that about 78% of women and girls have undergone FGM in the Gambia.

The Gambia is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, primarily children, who are trafficked into forced sexual exploitation. Women and girls, and to a lesser extent boys, have been trafficked to neighbouring countries in Africa, including Senegal but also to various European countries. According to the US Department of State, Gambia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, notably due to a lack of funds and limited resources.

Education

The literacy rate of the overall population is 50%. 60% of men and 40% of women are literate and the average number of years spent in school is 9.

While primary school attendance for boys and girls is similar, rates drop slightly in secondary education. Girl's education has not been a priority in many families as it is expected that they will marry.⁷⁸⁵⁷⁸⁶ Primary school attendance, especially for girls, remains lower in rural areas, notably due to poverty and cultural factors. Young girls are often forced into early marriages, are expected to do farming work or to take care of the home. Since 2006, Mothers' Clubs have formed throughout the country to change the situation, notably by building new schools and by going door-to-door to encourage parents to enrol their daughters in school.⁷⁸⁷

Women's Economic Empowerment

In the Gambia, agriculture forms the basis of secure livelihoods for the majority of the population. Women play vital roles in the process of agricultural development, currently providing about 75% of the agricultural labour force.⁷⁸⁸

Women's access to land is nevertheless limited. Under customary practices women borrow, rather than own, the land they cultivate from their husband, their husband's family or other village members. While the law does not

discriminate against women in the area of access to bank loans and credit facilities, banks will often require guarantees in the form of land, which most women are unable to provide.⁷⁸⁹

Ghana

The Ghanaian Constitution grants equal rights to men and women. However, discrimination and gender-based violence continue in Ghanaian society. Ghana ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 13th of June 2007. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified on the 2nd January 1986. Ghana has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)

Economic Empowerment

Ghanaian women predominately work in the agriculture sector of the informal economy. National laws still need to be amended to allow women to inherit land. In May 2013, Claude Maertern, Head of the European Union delegation in Ghana, praised the drafting of an affirmative action policy for women's representation in government and on public boards and the provision of paid maternity leave⁷⁹⁰. He further noted the crucial role that women play in the socio-economic development of their country.

Education

Girls' enrolment and completion rates in primary schools have lagged behind that of boys. Gender differences in access to education also interact with other factors such as geographic location and poverty. Girls who live in rural areas, and girls who live in households with lower levels of welfare (and especially in the bottom 20%), tend to be disadvantaged in comparison to boys under the same conditions. For example, a UNESCO 2012 report found 53% of poor girls living in the Northern region of Ghana had never been to school, compared with 41% of poor boys.⁷⁹¹

Furthermore, violence against girls in schools occasionally prevents them from attending. Such violence ranges from assault to sexual harassment and some girls also report that some teachers have been willing to exchange sexual favours for good grades.⁷⁹²

Gender-Based Violence

According to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), spousal killing remains the worst form of domestic violence

and despite the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732); incidents of domestic violence were still "serious and pervasive in Ghana."⁷⁹³ According to a UN WOMEN report, 'Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice', more than one-third of Ghanaians still believe it is justifiable for a man to beat his wife.⁷⁹⁴ A survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service indicated that 60% of a total number of 11,963 women aged between 15 and 49 years interviewed were also of the view that husbands are justified in beating their wives⁷⁹⁵. Interestingly, a 2013 University of Michigan study demonstrated that among 15 other countries in the world, Ghanaian men were more likely to reject domestic violence than women.⁷⁹⁶

Other forms of violence against women in Ghana include rape, assault and psychological violence. Rape continues to be a problem, especially the way it is portrayed in the media and throughout society: journalists often treat the subject light-heartedly, handling it as an incidence of sex, instead of as rape.⁷⁹⁷ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to occur throughout the country, but with strong regional disparities. Statistics on the matter vary widely; with estimates ranging from a prevalence of 4% in women aged 15-49⁷⁹⁸ to almost 50% for girls under 15 in the Bawku municipality.⁷⁹⁹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Infant mortality rate is 39.7 deaths/1,000 live births⁸⁰⁰ with a birth rate of 4.12 children per woman.⁸⁰¹

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the general population has been decreasing during the last decade. According to Dr Angela El-

Adas, Director General of Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC), Ghana's HIV infection rate has been reduced by 66% since 2003.⁸⁰² Furthermore, Ghana's HIV prevalence has stabilized over the last five years and is currently at an all-time low of 1.37% in 2012.

According to UNAIDS, women and girls are still less knowledgeable (25.4%) about HIV/AIDS than men (33.2%) and they also report lower condom use (18.1% versus 26.2%)⁸⁰³. The prevalence of the disease is also higher in women (0.9%) than it is in men (0.5%).⁸⁰⁴

Sex workers show a higher prevalence of HIV. Dr El-Adas said efforts to achieve a lower HIV prevalence could not be done without the provision of high-impact HIV prevention services to key populations such as sex workers, men who have sex with men (MSM), prisoners and people who inject themselves with drugs (PWID).⁸⁰⁵ UNAIDS has pledged to focus more resources and attention on reducing HIV infection rates amongst sex workers.

Women, Peace and Security

Ghana is known for its peaceful history and no internal conflict currently exists in the country.

Guinea

Guinea signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) on the 16th of December 2003 and ratified it on 17 September 2012. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Guinea on the 9th August 1982. Guinea has not adopted yet a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

Economic Empowerment

The majority of the Guinean population lives below the poverty line, affecting mostly women. Agriculture is the main sector of activity for almost 80% of the population of Guinea and the main income source for 57% of rural citizens.⁸¹⁰ However, despite their substantial role in agriculture, women are rarely landowners as they depend on use-rights received through relationships with male relatives.⁸¹¹ USAID is currently implementing projects to improve women's land rights and to establish governance programs aimed at women's organisations.⁸¹²

Education

Over 50% of the Guinean population is poor, surviving on less than US\$1 per day, and there

However, several refugee camps have been established, with refugees arriving from neighbouring countries torn by conflict. In those camps, women occasionally face some forms of violence, ranging from rape to other forms of abuse and assault.

Human trafficking has also been named as a scourge in Ghana. A number of young girls have been trafficked from Ghana to European countries for prostitution.⁸⁰⁶ The Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Affairs has highlighted the need for more shelters and a home to assist victims of human trafficking.⁸⁰⁷

Women's Political Participation

In December 2012, 133 women were candidates in the parliamentary elections, and 30 women were successfully elected to Ghana's parliament, which represent an increase of 11 per cent women parliamentarians compared with the previous parliament.⁸⁰⁸

Since 2013, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs is a woman, Hannah Serwaa Tetteh.⁸⁰⁹ She is also a Member of Parliament and formerly served as Minister for Trade and Industry.

is a lack of educational support, including infrastructure, equipment, handbooks and teachers. Moreover, the illiteracy of parents limits the chances of providing education for girls.⁸¹³

Literacy rate is at 41%⁸¹⁴, but only 30% among women, compared to 52% for men.⁸¹⁵ On average, girls attend school for 8 years and boys for 11 years.⁸¹⁶ Dropout rates remain high, due in part to the prevalence of early marriages, pregnancies and domestic trafficking.⁸¹⁷

Gender-Based Violence

Despite the fact that FGM is illegal in Guinea since 1965, it continues to be practised widely. It is estimated that 96% of women have been mutilated in Guinea⁸¹⁸, ranking Guinea second after Somalia with the highest rate of FGM.

Surprisingly, only 19% of Guinean women and girls, compared to 42% of men and boys think the practice should stop.⁸¹⁹

Domestic violence is common, but no prevalence rates were available as the crime often goes unreported to the police. Rape is a criminal offence, but is rarely prosecuted and marital rape is not considered illegal.⁸²⁰

Following the violence during the 2009 popular uprisings, a Guinean police officer was finally arrested and charged for the rape of a woman in the Stadium of Conakry in May 2013.⁸²¹ As women were specifically targeted during the 2009 uprising, and few perpetrators have yet been punished for their crimes, the fight against impunity must remain a priority, according to the UN.⁸²²



Bloody Monday: The September 28 Massacre & Rapes by Security Forces - Photo Human Rights Watch

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The fertility rate remains high in Guinea, with 4.99 children per woman while contraceptive prevalence rate is low at 5.6%,⁸²³ With 528 deaths for 100,000 births, maternal mortality remains high, often due to maternal malnourishment. 63% of pregnant women suffer from anaemia.⁸²⁴ Qualified medical personnel attend to less than 50% of births.⁸²⁵

Prevalence of HIV/AIDS is higher among women, 0.9% compared to 0.4% in men. After a peak in 2003, the prevalence rate has slowly decreased and is now estimated at 1.36%.⁸²⁶ Women report a higher condom use (67.8%) than men (57.8%). However, figures continue to show a high infection rate of 34% among sex workers.

Women, Peace and Security

Warfare in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone has caused more than 1 million refugees to flee to Guinea during the past decade.⁸²⁷ UNHCR currently runs three refugee programmes in Guinea covering 5,400 Liberian refugees and 5,600 Ivorian refugees, as well as 300 refugees of other nationalities and asylum-seekers. Guinea has registered 44 Malian refugees since the Mali crisis and may receive more.⁸²⁸

Women's Political Participation

For years, women in Guinea have been discouraged from active political participation, and few attained positions of prominence in the government.⁸²⁹

In late 2012, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) compiled a directory of potential women candidates to encourage greater inclusion of women on party lists during the legislative elections. More than 120 women were nominated by their parties for inclusion and submitted their information for incorporation into the directory.⁸³⁰

The current government has only three female ministers out of a total of 29 members: Ms. Hadja Diaka Diakité, Minister of Social Affairs, Women and Children; Ms. Hadja Mariama Baldé, Minister of Hotel, Tourism and Craft Industry; and Ms. Hadja Ramatoulaye Bah, Minister of Industry and Small and Medium Companies.⁸³¹

The previous legislature had 22 women, out of 144 (19.3%) who sat in the National Assembly, which was elected in June 2002.⁸³² Legislative elections, which had been continuously postponed, were eventually held on 28 September 2013.⁸³³ Elected lawmakers will replace a transitional council that had been in place since 2010.⁸³⁴ The final results of the election are still being counted. The Election Commission suggested turnout had been high, with 40% casting their votes by midday. However, the run-up to the elections was marked by ethnic and religious violence and the party of President Alpha Condé was accused of trying to rig the elections.⁸³⁵

Guinea-Bissau

The country ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in August 1985 and the Maputo Protocol in June 2008. In 2010 the country adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The Commission of Women Workers (CNMT) and The Association of Women in Economic Activity (AMAE) are the main umbrella organizations working at multiple levels on issues of women's legal and economic empowerment. They are addressing access to justice, credit schemes, and barriers to entry in the labour market. The organizations are also supporting various types of economic initiatives.

Gender-Based Violence

On the 19th July, Guinea-Bissau outlawed domestic violence, responding to an estimate of 60% of women being physically or sexually abused.⁸³⁶ Although the Guinea-Bissau's constitution has outlawed domestic violence since 2009, the police were only mandated to assist women who willingly reported the crime.

The 2013 Domestic Violence Law follows the 2009 law outlawing domestic violence, and the 2011 law criminalizing child marriage and female genital mutilation. However, the new Domestic Violence Law prohibits violence in the home perpetrated by men and women and stipulates that neighbours or family members may report the crime, taking the sole responsibility from the victims of domestic violence. The jail sentence for a conviction of domestic violence charges is between 2 and 12 years.

Reproductive Health and HIV/Aids

To support of the implementation of the law against female genital mutilation passed in 2011, the National Committee for the Abandonment of Harmful Practices (CNAPN), a government-led group of NGOs, requested the assistance of different groups with the organization of a training programme to generate awareness on the content of the law. Three government ministries and 27 different NGOs in Guinea-Bissau took part in the programme. This will compliment UNFPA's efforts to establish regional networks for gender-based violence case management in Guinea-Bissau and in the regions of Bafatá and Cacheu in 2012.⁸³⁷

Furthermore Guinea Bissau will be developing and implementing HIV prevention programmes targeting vulnerable groups, with the aim of reducing the number of new HIV infections. The development of the prevention programmes is a result of the review of the legislation on the protection of people living with HIV/AIDS, undertaken in August 2012 and the outcome of the 2012 mapping study undertaken in 2012.⁸³⁸

Women, Peace and Security

The UN Secretary-General's report in July 2013 noted that the security forces continued to commit grave violations of human rights and there was a lack of civilian control and oversight over the defence and security forces⁸³⁹

Although gender sensitive peacebuilding and conflict resolution workshops were held for religious leaders and members of civil society in 2012⁸⁴⁰, the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security (NWGWPS) highlighted the continued absence of women in these political processes.⁸⁴¹ The NGO Working Group also noted the absence of women, peace and security content in the previous Council considerations on Guinea-Bissau and in the mandate of the United Nations mandate in Guinea-Bissau⁸⁴². Furthermore, the role of the women's Civil Society Organization (CSO) and associations, within the context of the transitional plan, remains unclear. Guinea Bissau developed a National Action Plan in 2010 for the implementation of UNSCR 1325⁸⁴³, which provides a working framework and identifies a number of entry points for the integration of a gender perspective in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

Women's Political Participation

With political elections scheduled for this year, the participation and representation of women under the new government is yet to be defined. In 2012, women's organisations and female candidates benefited from needs assessment and training opportunities on women's political participation. However, there appears to have

been no activities or /initiatives held since, neither by NGOs nor the government following

up from these programme.

Liberia

Liberia ratified the Maputo Protocol on the 14th of December 2007 and CEDAW on the 17th of July 1984. Liberia is one of a few African countries with a National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

The Women, Peace and Security Network - Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) implemented an ICT training programme for women, with the aim of enhancing the job readiness and marketability of female high school students.⁸⁴⁶

A government initiative, called the Next Level Business Program, is aiming to support women entrepreneurs facing obstacles to entering markets and securing credit. The Ministry of Gender is aiming to train women vendors in business-skills, in order to give them the skills needed to be economically autonomous.⁸⁴⁷

Women's Political Participation

Liberia's last legislative election was in 2011. At present, only 11% and 13% of seats in the lower and upper houses of Liberia's legislature are held by women.⁸⁴⁸ What is more, Liberia has been ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.⁸⁴⁹ However, there have been reports from civil society and international NGOs that there have been gradual increases in female participation in community meetings and local level decision-making.⁸⁵⁰

Violence Against Women

Liberia became the 20th nation to sign the 'Say No to Violence Against Women' agreement.⁸⁵¹ The National Research Council has been conducting research and organising community outreach campaigns to combat sexual and gender-based violence. According to the Ministry of Gender and Development's Gender-Based Violence Unit, rape and domestic violence accounts for over 70% of all reported cases of gender-based violence.⁸⁵² Doctors Without Borders (Medecins sans frontier - MSF) reported in 2011 that 92% of females treated for rape in its Liberia facilities were under 18. Earlier this year, a candlelight vigil was held in the memory of six children who lost their lives from complications from rape and sexual assault. In the ceremony this year,

President Sirleaf brought light to the need for justice for survivors of rape, highlighting how even though cases are sent to court, it remains difficult to present enough evidence.⁸⁵³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Among the various challenges facing progress in maternal health in Liberia, infrastructure has been singled out as a significant cause of maternal mortality, following increasing numbers of women dying on the way to the hospital due to poor road conditions.⁸⁵⁴

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Liberia has launched its US\$32.5 million Country Program, which runs from 2013 to 2017. The five-year program, according to UNFPA, seeks to improve the lives of the people of Liberia especially the youth and women. The health plan aims to reduce maternal mortality and improve healthcare for women and girls.⁸⁵⁵

Women, Peace and Security

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In a speech commemorating the occasion, President Johnson-Sirleaf attributed much of the lasting peace to the important role played by women. "Today, the women of Liberia are enthusiastic about the gains made leading to the celebration of 10 years of peace. With war behind us, our women have turned their attention to peacebuilding, strengthening mechanisms to ensure that peace prevails not only in Liberia, but in our sub-region. Among the organizations that have taken up the cause are: the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), led by Mrs. Theresa Leigh Sherman; and the Angie Brooks International Centre for Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, led by Cllr. Yvette Chesson-Wureh, which promotes the Women Situation Room, for the peaceful conduct of all elections in Africa. MARWOPNET, among many women-

led groups, are advocating for peace and security institutions to integrate women.”⁸⁵⁶



Liberian Women Honour President Sirleaf in Thanksgiving Event - UN Photo

While women's peacebuilding groups have made important headway in post-war Liberia, police corruption remains an obstacle to Liberia's programs in security reform. "Underpaid and inadequately supplied, Liberian police officers demand bribes at every

stage of an investigation," thereby losing credibility to protect civilians from injustice.⁸⁵⁷

Education

Teenage pregnancy, early parenthood and child marriage remain serious barriers to girls' education, especially in rural areas. 'Bush schools', traditional rural schools, where girls learn how to maintain household duties, contribute to early pregnancy and marriage rates. "When a girl passes the initiation ritual, marked by female genital cutting, and graduates from the bush school, she is considered ready for marriage and childbearing, no matter her age. Most girls never return to their regular studies."⁸⁵⁸

Mali

Mali ratified the Maputo Protocol in January 2005. It also ratified CEDAW in September 1985. Mali has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. On 25 April 2013, the United Nations approved a peacekeeping operation to take over from the African-led mission in Mali on 1 July 2013.⁸⁵⁹

In 2012, civil unrest and conflict erupted in Northern Mali, prompting a military intervention by France in January 2013. Within a month, most of the north had been retaken. In a democratic presidential election conducted in July and August of 2013, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was elected president.⁸⁶⁰ The conflict, however, has led to more than 300,000 internally displaced people and over 12,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.⁸⁶¹

Economic Empowerment

Although Malian law gives women equal property rights, traditional practice and ignorance of the law often prevent women from taking full advantage of their rights. Approximately 36% of women participate in the labour force, mostly in the agriculture sector.⁸⁶²

According to the World Bank, Mali recently removed restrictions that forbid women from getting a job without spousal approval, as well as enacted equal inheritance rights for spouses, while strengthening married women's property rights.⁸⁶³

Education

The literacy rate in Mali remains low at 33.4%, with only 24.6% of the country's women being able to read.⁸⁶⁴ Girls stay in school an average

of six years and it is estimated that over 35% of children below the age of 14 are forcibly employed.

Gender-Based Violence

During the conflict in early 2013, women and girls have been the specific targets of violence such rape and other forms of sexual violence. In the country's transition, issues such as forced marriage, forced polygamy, public floggings and beatings, as punishment for "immoral acts" should be addressed.⁸⁶⁵

With 55% of girls married before the age of 18, Mali ranks seventh in terms of child marriage.⁸⁶⁶ Forced marriages are reportedly common, and women are being sold and forced to remarry.⁸⁶⁷

Female Genital Mutilation remains widely practiced in Mali and it is estimated that 89% of girls have undergone some form of genital

mutilation⁸⁶⁸. Interestingly, 58% of girls who have been cut are daughters of mothers who oppose the practice.⁸⁶⁹

Domestic abuse continues to be tolerated and widely practised. Malian women rarely report such violence because of social pressures to stay silent and the lack of an effective mechanism to encourage and protect women who report. There are no government services offered to victims of domestic violence.⁸⁷⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Mali has the second highest birth rate in the world, with 46.06 births per 1000.⁸⁷¹ According to a report by Save the Children, Mali ranks 173rd out of 175 in the worse countries to be a mother.⁸⁷²

Compared to other African countries, the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS remains relatively low at 1.1%, women representing approximately 50% of the infected.⁸⁷³ Some 110,000 people are estimated to be living with HIV in Mali and 30,000 are receiving antiretroviral therapy.⁸⁷⁴ The population reports low knowledge about the disease (just above 50% for both men and women) as well as low condom use (38.8% for men and only 16.7% for women).⁸⁷⁵

Women, Peace and Security

Mauritania

Mauritania is a signatory to both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which it ratified in 2001 and 2005 respectively. However, despite having ratified CEDAW, it has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on violence against women.⁸⁸⁰ Moreover, it has reserved its right to abide by only those articles, which comply with the Sharia Law and the Mauritania Constitution.⁸⁸¹

Gender-Based Violence

Mauritania is now ranked 155th of 187 countries on the human development index⁸⁸² and the gender inequality index valued at 0.643,⁸⁸³ which tells an important story in terms of the wide gaps in gender equality and its implications on health and education outcomes, empowerment, participation in politics and the labour market.

In 2013, the Human Rights Committee (HRC) released a report considering the initial assertions made by the Government of Mauritania vis-à-vis implementation of the

The 2012/13 conflict has made women more vulnerable to sexual and physical violence and such abuses are on the rise, especially in Northern Mali.⁸⁷⁶ The United Nations estimates thousands of women in Mali are survivors of sexual assault by the rebels.⁸⁷⁷ Following the unrest, UNHCR reports that "basic services are no longer provided to the population, and violations of human rights have been reported. As a result of the presence of heavily armed groups, Northern Mali is largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors."⁸⁷⁸ Hence, approximately 200,000 Malians have found refuge in neighbouring countries: Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso.⁸⁷⁹



Young Woman Read Peace Caravan Flyer in Gao, Mali -UN Photo

provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(1966). The report underlined the Mauritanian Government's will to promote and uphold the basic human rights of freedom of movement, expression and equality despite 'lack of experience'.⁸⁸⁴ Important questions were raised pertaining to women's participation in decision-making, how surveys were conducted, the kind of rehabilitation programmes for affected women, and the criminalization of practices of FGM and rape (including marital

rape).. In response, the Government maintained that they aimed towards the harmonization of all religious texts and adhere to women's rights in line with international standards.

Earlier this year, Acting Together for Human Rights (Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme)⁸⁸⁵ reported on their programme devoted to promotion of women's rights in Mauritania. Some of the testimonials⁸⁸⁶ collected during the process highlight the harsh realities women have to face. Early marriage, force feeding (upholding the traditional ideal of beauty 'fat is attractive') and female genital mutilation (FGM) are dire circumstances for those women who are born into slavery.

For instance, when it comes to the harmful practice of FMG, it was noted in UNICEF research in 2012, that around 70% of girls and women aged 15-49 years have been subjected to this violence.⁸⁸⁷

Child marriage⁸⁸⁸, domestic violence and rape are urgent human rights challenges that face Mauritanian women and places them at higher risk. The Country Report for Human Rights Practices (2012)⁸⁸⁹ categorically points out that rape, spousal rape and spousal abuse are illegal but the Government has not enforced the law effectively. Many complainants still depend on family to resolve the issue instead of the courts, due to fear of stigmatization and the weak legal redress mechanisms.

In 2013, Mauritania has the world's highest proportion of people per capita in slavery. According to one NGO in Mauritania, up to 20 percent of the Mauritanian population are enslaved.⁸⁹⁰ A recent US report on trafficking states 'Mauritania is a source, transit, and destination country for women, men, and children subjected to conditions of forced labor and sex trafficking'⁸⁹¹ and that girls and women are the worst affected. In January 2013, parliament approved a draft law against slavery and torture broadening the 2007 law's 10-year statute of limitations but remains rather ineffective when it comes to prosecutions. In March 2013, the Government announced the creation of the National Agency to Fight against the Vestiges of Slavery, Integration, and Fight against Poverty, but this agency is still not operational.

Women's Political Participation

The cause of women's political empowerment was reinforced in 2011 through the adoption of

reforms that substituted 20% places set aside for women on electoral lists with 20 women on the national list.⁸⁹² In addition, the HRC reports (2013) that the Government has put in place 'a network of women ministers and parliamentarians, established regional committees for resolution of family disputes, and created a national sectoral group for gender issues.'⁸⁹³

In the past, women have occupied 21 of the 91 seats (22.11%) in the 2006 National Assembly elections and only 8 of the 56 seats in the Senate in 2009⁸⁹⁴

Currently, women hold about 19% of National Assembly seats, 17% of Senate seats, and 30% of municipal council seats.⁸⁹⁵ A recent case study on women's political participation, conducted in the Sahel region, states that only 3 women occupy top party positions.⁸⁹⁶ Given the backdrop of political and social turmoil, which had embroiled Mauritania for several years, barriers still remain for women to enter the political space. For example, a recently issued fatwa restricts women from participating in politics stating 'women can run for the presidency as long as they have no chance of winning. They can just do it for fun'.⁸⁹⁷ This statement was met with severe criticism from the Association of Female Heads of Families, one of Mauritania's vibrant women's rights organizations viewing it as blatantly violating the constitutional principles.

Nevertheless, there are women's groups and other prominent organizations like the National Democratic Institute that is committed to the issue of women's political empowerment. The home-bred Advocacy Initiatives Group for Women's Political Participation (GI3P) actively encourages this agenda. Through discussions, awareness-raising public events and other such activities, it hopes to garner much needed support amongst both the political parties and citizens to increase the women's quota to at least one-third of representatives and senators, and one-half of municipal councillors.⁸⁹⁸

It remains to be seen, however, what shape the political landscape will take in terms of women's visibility after the recently held legislative and municipal elections

Women, Peace and Security

The UNSCR 1325 has been seen by the international community as a critical tool for

moving the gender equality agenda forward in conflict and post-conflict situations. However, Mauritania has not yet adopted a national plan of action that seeks to promote the protection of women during armed conflict and their participation in peace and security decision-making, nor there are any former or current UN Peacekeeping mandates in Mauritania.

However, more recently Dakar hosted a regional workshop⁸⁹⁹ that focused on the key issue of equal and full participation of West African women in peace and security agenda. The primary objective was to formulate a joint programme that ensured protection of girls and women's rights in a conflict scenario and that they assumed an important role in peace building processes.

The concern was also raised in another UN backed conference on Women's Leadership in Sahel held in Brussels in April 2013.⁹⁰⁰ It was recommended that at least 30% of women participate in decision-making and conflict resolution initiatives and supported equally by national governments, regional organizations and international efforts.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government recognizes the right of individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly when it comes to family planning, but reproductive issues largely remain a sensitive topic and a focus of some women's groups. According to the Human Rights Practices report (2012), 'government health centre did not provide unmarried women with access to contraception, and did so for married women only with the consent of the husband.'⁹⁰¹

However, new commitments were announced recently at the International Conference on Family Planning in Addis Ababa. The Mauritanian Government will commit 'to allocating health commodity security funds for family planning and, along with its partners, commit to mobilizing additional resources for the implementation of its national family planning action plan'⁹⁰² by 2014. UN's Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform reports that Mauritania has committed to increasing expenditure on health to 15% by 2015, including a budget for reproductive health commodities with a focus on contraceptives increasing their prevalence from 9% to 15%.⁹⁰³

Similarly, ongoing projects supported by external agencies have been working towards providing access to maternal and neonatal functional care.⁹⁰⁴ The include French NGOs Sante Sud and Sanofi Espoir Foundation in partnership with Mauritania's national hospital and Association for the Health of Mothers and Children

As far as the AIDS pandemic is concerned, the recent UNAIDS Global report (2013) states that Mauritania is one of the many low-income countries where the national response remains dependent on international funding.⁹⁰⁵

Most data on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS still dates back to 2007-2009/10, which makes it difficult to undertake any effect analysis.⁹⁰⁶ Hence, contextually relevant data is needed to inform national strategies, which integrate gender equality and human rights.

Education

Basic education is free and mandatory in Mauritania but access to schools. However, the risk of violence, abuse and neglect, caused by the political instability in the region, has undermined children's right to education particularly in rural areas,. According to a UNICEF country report 2012-2016, 'preschool education remains underdeveloped. The gross secondary school enrolment rate is 26.8 per cent, with a girls-to-boys ratio of 0.9.'⁹⁰⁷

The Human Development Report (2013) confirms this abysmal state of affairs, pointing out that only '8% of adult women have reached a secondary or higher level of education compared to 20.8% of their male counterparts.'⁹⁰⁸ Studies have shown that the under-enrolment of girls at the secondary level was largely determined by socio-economic factors and more supply- related reasons, such as distance from school and the quality of teachers). As a result, a revised National Plan for Education Sector Development plan to support 54 youth networks and clubs both in and out of school aimed at changing prevailing attitudes and encouraging citizenship awareness activities.⁹⁰⁹

Outside the government plan of action, Terre des hommes (Tdh) and its local partner Association des Femmes Cheffes de Famille (AFCF) (Association of Female-headed Households) have been working persistently to protect young girls who work as domestic helps and ensure their fundamental rights are respected. The project, set up in the 9

departments of the town of Nouakchott, identifies the victims, extends them psychological, legal and financial support, in addition to literacy and sewing classes in absence of formal schooling opportunities.⁹¹⁰

Economic Empowerment

Without an enforced Government action plan, women remain economically vulnerable in the face of perpetual inequality. The HDR (2013) reported that female participation in the labour market is 28.7% compared to 79.2% for men.⁹¹¹ They were discriminated against and rarely involved in the formal economy. Unemployment among women was 47.3% and 25.2% among men.⁹¹² The report explained this gender disparity as an outcome of the socio-cultural patriarchal ideology that restricts women's movement in the labour market. The predominance of religious education (over formal university education) and the needs of an economy centred on male-dominated

mining, fisheries and construction, may explain why women's labour might be less in demand.

Action to promote women entrepreneurs in Mauritania comes from the capacity building forum supported by Centre for International Private Enterprise, bringing together the Association of Employers of Mauritania (UNPM) and the Women Entrepreneurs and Traders Union (UMAFEC), building better representation and advocacy for policy reforms.⁹¹³

In 2012, a conference took place in Tunis to debate women's integration into social, economic and political life in Islamist countries.⁹¹⁴ Female voices from Mauritania were heard, and although no straightforward answers were suggested, the conference acted as an important forum for issues related to women's participation in public spaces post-Arab Spring period even though Mauritania was never directly affected by the popular unrest.

Niger

Niger signed the Maputo Protocol in July but has not ratified it yet. CEDAW was ratified in October 1999. Niger has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Economic Empowerment

Almost 60% of the population lives below the poverty line.⁹¹⁵ The vast majority of women (82%) live in rural settings. Women perform the majority of domestic chores and work mostly in the craft industry, agriculture and breeding of small animals.⁹¹⁶

Education

Only 38.4% of girls in Niger enrol in secondary school; the majority never progress beyond 5th grade.⁹¹⁷ Early marriage is one of the main causes for girls to drop out of school early, around the age of 12 to 14.⁹¹⁸ The lack of gender equality or women's empowerment, linked with poverty and tradition, are some of the root causes⁹¹⁹ of early school dropout. Literacy rates remain low, with only 29% of the population being literate⁹²⁰ and a wide gap remains between men (42%) and women (15%).⁹²¹

Gender-Based Violence

Domestic violence is pervasive in Niger and often seen as normal, even by women. Such violence includes sexual abuses, early marriage, trafficking and psychological abuse.⁹²²

The rate of early marriage, sometimes affecting girls as young as 9, is the highest in the world. Every 3 in 4 girls marry before their 18th birthday. In some areas, the rates are even higher: in the region of Diffa, 89% of girls marry as children.⁹²³

The prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) varies widely through communities in Niger. The practice is still common among certain ethnic groups such as the Gourmantche where 65% of girls have undergone FGM. The rate is around 13% among the Peuls and about 3% among Nigerien Arab girls. However, the overall national rate has fallen to approximately 2% from 5% in the late 1990s, according to UNICEF.⁹²⁴ Niger outlawed FGM in 2003. In June 2013, approximately 14,000 people from 20 villages in Niger committed symbolically and publicly to end FGM in a ceremony where the First Lady, as well as representatives from UNICEF, were present.⁹²⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to a report by Save the Children, Niger ranks 172nd out of 175 in the worse countries to be a mother.⁹²⁶ Child marriage

rates are above 80% in rural Niger⁹²⁷ and 51% of all young women were mothers by the age of 18.⁹²⁸ Having babies before young women's bodies are fully mature increases the risk of premature births and other complications.⁹²⁹ Niger struggles with an extremely high infant mortality rate, which in 2012 the government estimated at 51 deaths per 1000 live births.⁹³⁰ Niger has the highest birth rate in the world and women have almost seven children each.⁹³¹ 80% of women are unattended during childbirth and 17% of women give birth alone.⁹³²

Estimates of 33,000 women are currently living with HIV/AIDS in Niger, making up about half the total infected population. The overall number of infections is low with a high prevalence in specific risk groups, including sex workers (20.89%) as well as migrating and travelling women.⁹³³

Women, Peace and Security

Nigeria

In August 2013, Nigeria launched its national action plan on UNSCR 1325 under the DFID supported 'Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme' and in partnership with the Ministry of Women Affairs. Nigeria ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2004 and CEDAW was ratified in 1985.

Economic Empowerment

Zamfara State is examining the possibility of ensuring women six months paid maternity leave. This is a response to an investigation into the causes of child malnutrition and the recommendations for greater opportunities for breast feeding infants. If this initiative were to become law it would mark a significant economic protection for women in Zamfara and if proved successful could be replicated nationwide.⁹³⁸

One bank claims to have financed 50,000 female small business leaders in Abuja over the past five years. Foreign investment is increasing and women are clearly a major part of the growing sections of the economy, as well as the more traditional agricultural sectors. However, the unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs have not been explicitly and comprehensively addressed by federal or state governments.⁹³⁹

Education

This year saw the launch of a major international initiative to address girls' access

to education in Nigeria, partnering Nigeria's Ministry for Education, the UN and other international aid agencies. The initiative outlines a comprehensive approach through civil society and local governance to address the wide gender gap in education.⁹⁴⁰ The most marginalised areas of the country in the North have the greatest disparity of boys and girls in education and literacy.⁹⁴¹

Women's Political Participation

There is currently a low representation of women at all levels of government in Niger. The last elections were held in January 2011 and 15 women, out of 113, are currently members of Parliament, representing 13.3%.⁹³⁶ In the current government, 5 out of 35 ministers are women⁹³⁷. The limited access of education and high illiteracy rates among women are the main factors in constraining women's political participation.



Women Attending Literacy Class in Nigeria – UN Photo

Gender-Based Violence

Many years of persistent advocacy from civil society organizations paid off this year, when Nigeria successfully passed major reforms to address domestic violence. The Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Bill includes a stronger definition of rape, harsher sentences for sexual offences, compensation for victims, institutional protection through restraining orders and a rehabilitation fund for victims of violence.⁹⁴²

In the ten years since passing the Child Rights Act, which sets the minimum age of betrothal and marriage to 18 years old, around a third of Nigeria's states have yet to enact it.⁹⁴³ Amid growing pressure to overturn the Act in August 2013, Nigeria's lawmakers decided not to revise the section of the law that considers married females, including those below age 18, as adults.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In the first quarter of 2013 there were 11,600 maternal deaths recorded, an average of 45 women per day. 10% of maternal deaths in the world are believed to be in Nigeria, the highest rate after India. Nigeria's Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics has cited delays in seeking and accessing healthcare as the central challenge for the government in addressing the crisis.⁹⁴⁴

Senegal

In September, Senegal elected its first female prime minister, a feminist, human rights, reproductive rights, and social justice activist, signalling an important step forward and a new era for the country. Senegal ratified the Maputo Protocol in December 2004 and CEDAW in February 1985. Senegal does not have a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Senegal's constitution provides that all people have a right to decide their own family planning and have a right to maternal health care. However, "in practice, poor medical facilities constrained these rights, particularly in rural areas and in some urban areas where lack of funds led to closing maternity wards and operating rooms."⁹⁴⁸ Senegal's maternal mortality rate, according to the UNFPA, is 410 per 100,000 live births.⁹⁴⁹

It's clear that maternal mortality remains a serious problem in Senegal. Maternal deaths

Women's Political Participation

Out of 360 seats in Nigeria's parliament, only 24 are held by women, amounting to 6.7%. In the upper house, women only hold seven out of 109 seats. Nigeria is 128th place out of 142 countries ranked in Inter-parliamentary Union's database.⁹⁴⁵ The next election will be held in 2015.

Women, Peace and Security

Nigeria launched the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security in August 2013.⁹⁴⁶ This is a significant and important step towards ensuring women participate in security sector reform, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Nigeria.

At the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly this year, the Minister of Women Affairs, Zainab Maina, said that, while Nigeria is making progress in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, Nigeria is also "stressing the importance of compliance with council's resolution 1820 on ending acts of sexual violence against women in conflict situations." Nigeria established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women and Peace. She also stressed that women will take leadership roles in the security sector, such as the police and defence.⁹⁴⁷

can be prevented through better access to health services and knowledge of sexual health and family planning practices. Women and Health Alliance International (WAHA), is working in the region to address the risks related to maternal and infant mortality and has piloted an innovative project in Senegal involving motorbike ambulances. Pinpointing problems of delays in appropriate care, WAHA's motorbike ambulance project has helped save many lives by providing easy access to health centres for women.⁹⁵⁰

Gender-Based Violence

The US Department of State cites, among other human rights abuses, sexual and gender-based

violence, discrimination against women, harassment, FGM, child marriage, and domestic violence, as major problems in Senegal. The law prohibits rape, however spousal rape is not prohibited. The rate of spousal rape could not be quantified, due to it being seldom reported. While the government rarely enforces the law prohibiting rape, the punishment ranges from 5-10 years.

In stable countries, according to the IRC, domestic violence is often more prevalent than violence against women committed by armed groups. However, in Senegal, despite a law enacted in 1999 prohibiting domestic violence, enforcement has been incredibly weak. This is “mainly due to the difficulty of obtaining evidence - medical reports are expensive, while prejudice often puts overwhelming societal pressure on women, which prevents them from reporting abuse”⁹⁵¹ NGOs, including the Committee to Combat Violence against Women and Children (CLVF), are working to sensitize police forces and communities. According to CLVF, police are beginning to change tactics and referring women to counseling centres.⁹⁵²

Women's Political Participation

Aminata Touré was elected as Senegal's first female prime minister in September 2013. Touré has been a lifelong human rights and women's rights advocate, working on issues of social and economic justice. She was previously Senegal's justice minister, challenging corruption and injustice. “She brought Karim Wade, son of the previous president, to trial and then to prison. She oversaw the arrest of Chad's former president Hissène Habré and made sure the subsequent trial wouldn't be delayed for decades.”⁹⁵³ Within a few days as prime minister, she named her cabinet consisting of only 4 women and 28 men

However, since the last election in 2012, of the 150 seats in parliament, women hold 64, which amounts to 42.7%.⁹⁵⁴ Senegal has a gender quota that stipulates candidate lists must have alternating male and female candidates. According to the Quota Project, “As Senegal has a parallel electoral system the provisions of parity apply to both the list of candidates submitted for seats elected through a

proportional representation contest (PR) and the seats contested through a plurality/majority contest in multi-member constituencies.”⁹⁵⁵ It is clear that the quota law has acted as a turning point for women's political participation in Senegal, allowing for small, but important steps being made at all levels for women in decision-making positions.



Aminata Toure, Senegal Prime Minister - RFI Photo

Women, Peace and Security

Senegal is often lauded as one of the more peaceful, stable and democratic countries in the continent. However, many people do not know of the 30-year conflict in Senegal's southern region, Casamance, one of the longest running conflicts in the continent. The conflict recently gained more attention with US President Obama's visit to Senegal this year when he urged Senegal President Macky Sall to find a peaceful solution to the decades-long war.⁹⁵⁶ The US launched the Casamance Peace Initiative in 2012 in an effort to bring stability to the region and has dedicated US\$2million to support the endeavour. Half of the money will go towards addressing the refugee problem in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau.⁹⁵⁷

Over the 30 years, women's groups have led the peacebuilding efforts in Casamance. This year, women's organizations have banded together to mobilize for peace, asking the government to restart peace negotiations. They are also calling on the government to allow civil society groups, particularly women, to be at the peace negotiation tables, noting that women's voices are integral to the peacebuilding process.⁹⁵⁸

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone signed the Maputo Protocol on 9 December 2003 but has not ratified it. The country ratified the CEDAW on 11 November 1988 and launched its National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in March 2010.⁹⁵⁹

Human Rights of Women

Changes in legislation since 2007 have improved the conditions of women in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance laws. In the event of death, inheritance is divided among the surviving family. "The vast majority of Sierra Leonean women live under the traditional land tenure structure, that does not recognise a woman's right to own property."⁹⁶⁰

Customary law remains influential, depending on the region of the country, and reinforces discrimination against women, as it perpetuates the predominance of men over women. Customary law applies in 12 out of 14 districts in Sierra Leone.⁹⁶¹

In August 2013, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) together with the National Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and the National Human Rights Defenders held a workshop on the implementation of recommendations made during the Universal Peer Review related to women's and sexual rights. The project discussed aims of engaging women human rights defenders and all people working on women and sexual rights. ISHR is collaborating with Sierra Leone National Human Rights Commission.⁹⁶²

Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation has improved in the last decade, but nevertheless remains limited. West Africa Women Election Observers (WAWEO) was formed to monitor the elections this year. 10 women observers were deployed across the country to monitor 57 polling stations. The 2012 election revealed abnormalities and inequality among women and men for political participation. The WAWEO report indicates that only 12.5% women were awarded symbols to contest for parliamentary seats.⁹⁶³

The First Lady of Sierra Leone, Sia Nyama Koroma, pledged to promote gender equality, stating that the constitutional review process is a great opportunity for women to mobilize and ensure their voices are heard in governance reform. She stated: "We should try now to reconsider ourselves as a unit, by speaking with one voice and aiming at one objective if we should surmount the huge challenge of overcoming the inequalities we face as women in the governance of our motherland."⁹⁶⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Sierra Leone ranks among the worse countries in the world in terms of maternal mortality, with a rate of 890 deaths for 100,000 live births. A skilled birth attendant attends less than half of all deliveries and less than one in five takes place in health facilities.⁹⁶⁵ Women's health needs in general, including access to maternal care, are given low priority by their own families, community leaders and government. One in every 8 women is at risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth.⁹⁶⁶

The birth fertility rate has decreased only slightly in Sierra Leone since the 1960s, and is currently at 4.9 children per woman.⁹⁶⁷ The fertility rate remains high as underage marriages, lack of education of girls and traditional cultural practices, continue to be the norm. Furthermore, although knowledge about contraception appears to be high, contraception use remains very low, with only 10% of women reporting using a form of contraception.⁹⁶⁸

In an effort to cut the country's high maternal mortality rates, a campaign led by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) is encouraging communities to challenge their local healthcare clinics to provide good and accessible care. This programme is led by Dr. Mohamed Yilla, who believes that if communities hold their health services accountable, high maternal mortality can decelerate.⁹⁶⁹

Although Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest countries in the world, over the last five years significant improvement has been noted to reduce maternal and child mortality.⁹⁷⁰ Before the general election in November 2012 Sierra Leone's health spend was 7.5%, after the election it increased to 10.5%. This programme significantly contributed to the necessary increase in budget money towards health care.⁹⁷¹

A multi-sectoral project funded by the United Nations Family Planning Association (UNFPA) and UN Women to empower teenage girls through life-skills training has been launched in an effort to address sexual health issues of teenagers in Sierra Leone. The project will establish teenage clubs in schools so that girls benefit from peer support, parent-teacher meetings, mothers' groups and sensitization workshops for community leaders.⁹⁷²

Violence Against Women

Although the 2007 Domestic Violence Act made domestic violence a criminal offence, the police rarely intervene in such cases, which are considered a private matter. Rape is an offence punishable by up to 14 years of prison, but the law does not yet recognise spousal rape. There are presently no reliable statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence, but it appears to be an accepted part of relationships, even for some women.⁹⁷³

Physicians for Human Rights estimates that during the civil war, which began in 1991, between 215,000 and 257,000 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report also revealed that women faced other forms of bodily violence including forced drugging, abortion, and sex. Many women were victims of torture and abuse. Reports by Physicians for Human Rights and Amnesty International revealed that women who were survivors of sexual violence often faced a myriad of sexual health problems related to the violence they experienced.⁹⁷⁴

While many organizations seek to empower women to address issues of sexual and gender-based violence, the Fambul Initiative Network for Equality (FINE) sees an important intervention opportunity in working with men, who are often seen as only the perpetrators of the crimes, rather than as agents for change. FINE works with volunteers to sensitize male community members on women's health, respect for women, and smart family planning.⁹⁷⁵

The Kenema district is tackling domestic violence with assistance from Action Plus. Action Plus, a partner of Action Aid International, is working in communities to promote gender equality and help women gain access to justice. "Under recent legislation, domestic violence is now a criminal offence...Women can now inherit property and girls are protected from early and forced marriage."⁹⁷⁶ These are important steps, but discrimination still continues.

Women, Peace and Security

There are still over 27,000 refugees from Liberia living in Sierra Leone.⁹⁷⁷ Many of these refugees are at a greater risk of sexual and physical violence, with limited access to health care and education.

The UN extended the mandate for its peacebuilding office in Sierra Leone in March 2013, recognising the challenges still to be overcome.⁹⁷⁸ The NGO working group on Women, Peace and Security released a statement calling for a renewed commitment to mainstream women, peace and security in Sierra Leone during and after the phase out of the UN peacebuilding programs. "It is vital that women continue to receive political and financial resources to ensure their full and equal engagement in Sierra Leone's future. This is particularly important regarding support for women-led civil society organizations."⁹⁷⁹

Education

The literacy rate in Sierra Leone remains low at under 40%, putting Sierra Leone in 174th out of 183 worldwide. National legislation requires children to attend school for at least nine years, but a shortage of schools, (many were destroyed during the civil war,) and of teachers has made implementation impossible. Presently, only 64% of children complete primary school and fewer go on to attend secondary education.⁹⁸⁰

Several organizations are working to address girls' access to education. Plan International USA is implementing a project called Girls Making Media, in which girls from some of the poorest parts of the country can learn how to read, write and produce broadcast radio programs, "empowering them to speak up for themselves and raise awareness of the issues they think are most important."⁹⁸¹ Educaid is working to help girls who have dropped-out to return to school.⁹⁸²

Economic Empowerment

Women form the majority of the agricultural workforce but have limited land ownership rights; as such rights are governed by customary rules.⁹⁸³ There have been several government initiatives to boost women's economic empowerment, in partnership with UN organizations and international non-governmental organizations. The "Women on Wheels" project is a women's economic empowerment initiative geared towards providing job access for women through skills training workshops.⁹⁸⁴



Rural Women Selling Mango and Potato Jam

- UN Photo

Togo

Togo ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2005. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in 1983. Togo has not adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

In 2013, Togo experienced some improvements in women's rights and empowerment, particularly with an increase in the number of women in parliament after the July elections. However, significant challenges remain, especially in regards to the lack of laws addressing gender-based violence and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Economic Empowerment

Togolese women historically have faced pervasive discrimination that has limited their opportunities, including their participation in the economy. Even though men and women have equal rights under civil law, most women are not aware of their legal rights, making customary practices pervasive. Under customary law, women cannot own land and men are given authority over their property.⁹⁸⁵

Many international organizations have taken steps to improve women's access to the economy. For example, Crossroads International has partnered with a local organization, Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action Femme, Démocratie, et Développement to train women to be paralegals. The purpose of this initiative is to not only provide career training for women, but also to train them to create awareness about women's civil rights. More than 150 women are now serving in their communities as paralegals.⁹⁸⁶

Another initiative that strives to create more economic opportunities for women is Women and Associations for Gain both Economic and Social (WAGES). WAGES is a project of CARE international that has provided financial services to almost 4,000 women in its first three years.⁹⁸⁷ WAGES is now an officially recognized nonprofit microfinance institution in Togo and is expanding to reach more women.

Education

Education in Togo is gendered, with girls less likely to complete schooling than boys, especially secondary schooling.⁹⁸⁸ The most recent data indicates a significant difference between the literacy rate of Togolese men (74%) and women (48%).⁹⁸⁹ Child trafficking and forced child labour continues to be impediments for education for both girls and boys.⁹⁹⁰

Gender-Based Violence

GBV and domestic violence are major issues threatening the security of Togolese women. Currently, Togo does not have a law addressing domestic violence. In 2013, women parliamentarians started campaigning for the passage of a law, currently stuck in committee, which would protect women and children from violence.⁹⁹¹ Even though rape is punishable by up to ten years in prison, the stigma attached to rape victims leads to underreporting. Furthermore, rape within marriage is not legally considered rape.⁹⁹² Polygamy remains legal in Togo.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is prohibited in Togo, but UNICEF estimates that about 4% of women have undergone the procedure. Women in Muslim communities are also more likely than other women to have been cut.⁹⁹³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is major health concern in Togo. The number of people in Togo living with the disease is estimated to be about 130,000, which accounts for approximately 2.9% of the population. Most recent data indicates that women account for about 65,000 (50%) of those infected.⁹⁹⁴ While the prevalence rate is one of the highest in the world, it has slowed in recent years and has put Togo on track to meet the MDG6.⁹⁹⁵ However, because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, life expectancy remains low at 59 years for women and 56 for men.⁹⁹⁶

Women face other health challenges, including reproductive health and a high unmet need for contraception. Togo has a high maternal mortality rate with 300 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁹⁹⁷ Additionally, of the Togolese women who want contraception, 41% still do not have access to it.⁹⁹⁸ Togo's government passed the Reproductive Health Law in 2007 to support access to reproductive health information and services. While there have been positive advances because of the new law, such as free intrauterine devices (IUDs) for women, the government health programs are hampered by a lack of staff and trained health professionals.⁹⁹⁹ Non-profit organizations and private sector actors have therefore been very important in meeting the health needs of men and women. For example, in 2013, Engender Health and the U.S. Agency for International Development announced their partnership in a five-year initiative to address the lack of access to family planning.¹⁰⁰⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Togo has not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Togo's last major outbreak of violence was in 2005 during the presidential elections, in which women were targets of rape and GBV.¹⁰⁰¹ Since then, Togo has experienced relative stability. Togo is currently serving as a member of the UN Security Council, which adopted a resolution in October 2013 urging

women's equal participation in security and peace processes.¹⁰⁰²

Women's Political Participation

Historically, Togolese women have had limited leadership roles in politics and government. After several years of political restructuring, Togo's long-awaited legislative elections took place on July 25, 2013, the first since 2007. The ruling party, Union for the Republic (UNIR), won two-thirds of the total seats.¹⁰⁰³ As a result of the elections, Togo now ranks 89th on IPU's listing of women in national parliaments with women holding 14 of the 91 seats in the parliaments. This is an improvement over the 2007 elections, where women ranked 106th and held 9 of 81 seats.¹⁰⁰⁴ During the last presidential election in 2010, Brigitte Kafui Adjamagho-Johnson became Togo's first female candidate for president.¹⁰⁰⁵ Although she did not win, her candidacy marked an important step for gender equality.

In terms of institutional measures to increase gender parity, Togo passed a legislative candidate quota law on June 18, 2012. According to the law, one third of the candidates for each political party must be women.¹⁰⁰⁶ However, as some have pointed out, the quotas do not guarantee an increase in women in office because political parties will marginalize the female candidates. For example, female candidates may be listed on the bottom of the ballot, making them less likely to be chosen.¹⁰⁰⁷ As can be seen from the July 2013 elections, while Togo saw an increased number of female elected, women still only occupy 15% of the parliamentary seats

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