

# Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, First Regular Session 2024

## UN-Women's Operational Response in Africa Briefing Paper

### 1. Context

Across Africa, the status of gender equality varies greatly, with commonalities across many countries, as well as stark contradictions as evident through political, social, and economic indicators.

In terms of **women's political participation and leadership**, it is encouraging to note that at least 13 countries in Africa have made great progress in women's representation in parliament, where women's representation has reached 30%. East Africa has the highest representation (32.2%) in Africa compared to West Africa which is lagging at 17.7%. The 11 elections in 2023 yielded slight increases in the number of women elected or appointed in Eswatini, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Nigeria, Djibouti, and Benin. In 2024, there are expected to be 14 national and local elections across the two regions and 12 for president, several of which will take place in fragile contexts and have ramifications not only for their future stability but also regionally. The number of women elected is expected to remain largely unchanged in countries where quotas and reserved seats are applied such as South Sudan, South Africa, and Mozambique. In others where there has been unrest around the elections (e.g. Senegal) and internal conflict leading to tensions and displacement in parts of the country (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso), there are concerns that such unrest and internal conflict could negatively affect women's ability to contest and exercise their vote, leading to a further decrease in the current number of women in elective positions.

In the area of **economic empowerment**, more than 50 per cent of the African population is female, and yet resources, opportunities, and decision-making in all sectors are still heavily swayed towards men. For example, the labor force participation rate for women is 60.9% and 72.7% for men in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup>, and 2022 data indicates that since 1990, female labor force participation has decreased compared to other parts of the world<sup>2</sup>. The average financial inclusion gender gap in Sub-Saharan Africa stands at 11.3 percent, varying across countries, reaching a high of 24% in Nigeria and a low of 6% in Mauritius<sup>3</sup>. In East and Southern Africa (ESA) approximately 40% of women and girls live on less than USD 1.90 per day. In sub-Saharan Africa, agri-food systems account for a higher share of women's employment than men's (66% to 60%)<sup>4</sup>, however, female smallholder farmers productivity is 20-30% lower than that of their male counterparts because of limited access to productive resources, lower levels of knowledge and skills to adapt to climate change, and unequal distribution of unpaid care work. Land ownership is skewed, with women claiming just under 13% compared to 36% of men having exclusive ownership of land, exacerbating gender disparities.

Such economic inequalities are of particular concern in a context where the African Development Bank revised its initial growth projections for 2024, from 4.3% in May to just 3.8% in November 2023<sup>5</sup>, and conflict, high debt and the risk of defaulting and energy crises are expected to have a negative effect on economic growth

---

1 World Bank Gender Data 2022

2 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=ZG>

3 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/139191548845091252/pdf/134167-WP-AFR-IFC-MCF-Field-Note-10-DFS-and-Gender-PUBLIC.pdf>

4 FAO. 2023. The status of women in agrifood systems. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5343en>

5 <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/2023-africas-macroeconomic-performance-and-outlook-update>

rates. Declining agricultural production, triggered by drought and climate change, has worsened food insecurity, impacting over 36.1 million people, as staple prices, including maize, soared 300% higher in 2023.

**Austerity measures by governments** are already affecting development spending on education, health care and subsidies that provided a safety net for vulnerable populations – a safety net already characterized by gender inequality, as the overall social protection coverage remains modest and is marked by notable gender disparities. In the African region, only 3.9 percent of women benefit from comprehensive legal coverage, in contrast to 10.8 percent of men. This discrepancy reflects the prevalence of vast informal labor markets, with women often concentrated in the most vulnerable forms of informal employment. Raising of consumption taxes and introduction of higher tariffs for government services as part of austerity measures is furthermore having a detrimental effect on household incomes, leaving female headed households and other vulnerable groups particularly exposed<sup>67</sup>. Austerity measures will increase women's care work, further reducing the time they can devote to educational and income-generating activities and affecting the type of jobs they hold, their earning potential, their ability to enjoy leisure and their health. In Senegal, for example, women already spend an average of 4 hours and 9 minutes daily on housework and childcare compared to 27 minutes for men<sup>8</sup>.

The prevalence of **violence against women and girls (VAWG)** is higher within Africa, where approximately 33 percent of women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime, compared to 31 percent at the global level. The rate is particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa, at 44 per cent. Africa is furthermore home to as many as 15 of the 20 countries with the highest number of child brides globally, several of which are experiencing humanitarian crisis or considered fragile. The rate of child marriages has declined in the past decade in Africa and continues to fall albeit slowly. Accelerating the pace of change continues to be critical, particularly in countries with the highest prevalence, including Niger (76%), Central African Republic (68%), and Chad (67%). Female genital mutilation (FGM) persists as another form of VAWG: it is reported that in 27 countries with available data, 42% of women and girls aged 15-49 years have undergone FGM. There has been notable progress in shifting social acceptance of child marriages in the region, by engaging traditional leaders to speak out and supporting the harmonizing of customary and statutory laws to protect girls.

The **humanitarian context** in Africa remains challenging – for 2023 alone, the Eastern and Southern Africa region was projected to have some of the highest number of people in need of assistance estimated at 76.8 million in 2023, with Ethiopia and Sudan having the largest numbers of over 40 million.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, over 21 million people are displaced, 15 million internally and 6 million as refugees across the region, over 70% of whom are women and children. The conflict in Sudan alone has displaced over 5 million (75% women and children) people, out of which 1 million have fled as refugees to neighboring countries. This situation is replicated across West and Central Africa where UNHCR estimates political instability and armed conflict could drive the number of forcibly displaced and stateless people up by 9% to 13.6 million in 2024, with 8.4 million of them internally displaced.

2023 saw the security and humanitarian context become even more complex as conflict erupted or continued, peace agreements faltered, political instability rose, and non-state armed group activity increased, often in already fragile contexts. The withdrawal of the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the request to end the mission in Sudan and the start of MONUSCO's draw down in DRC in 2024 come at a time when crises and instability in these countries are not abating and are in fact increasing, raising concerns about the protection of civilians and the response to conflict related sexual violence.

---

<sup>6</sup> ActionAid International (2022), The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender, and Austerity

<sup>7</sup> <https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-11/bp-assault-of-austerity-prevailing-economic-choices-are-gender-based-violence-221122-en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/20230323\\_Guidance%20Note-Unpaid\\_care\\_needs\\_LDP\\_Senegal\\_ENG\\_0.pdf](https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/20230323_Guidance%20Note-Unpaid_care_needs_LDP_Senegal_ENG_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> OCHA. Global Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023.

Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), parts of Ethiopia (Amhara region), northern Mozambique, and Somalia are experiencing armed conflict and insecurity. Boko Haram led to increased violence and insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin area - northern Cameroon, western Chad, south-eastern Niger, and north-eastern Nigeria. This has led to immediate rollbacks in women and girls' rights such as increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence, abductions, loss of livelihoods, displacement, an increase in care work, food insecurity, lack of access to reproductive health care and disruption of education. In DRC alone, more than 10,000 survivors of SGBV in North and South Kivu and Ituri sought assistance within two months - June to July 2023<sup>10</sup>. In Sudan, by October there were 49 verified reports of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) involving 101 survivors mostly women and children according to data collected by UN Action; and 185,453 people, mostly women, received lifesaving GBV responses, medical support (including Clinical Management of Rape), legal support, psycho-social support services and material assistance between April and November 2023<sup>11</sup>.

The trend of coups in West Africa continued, with Niger being the latest to experience an undemocratic transfer of power. In countries where juntas have taken over - Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso - political instability and economic sanctions have had a detrimental impact on the state of rights, civil liberties, security and distribution of humanitarian assistance, findings confirmed in analysis produced by the Humanitarian Gender Theme Group in Niger of the impact of the ECOWAS and West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA) sanctions following the coup in that country in July.

## 2. Key UN-Women Responses and Results in Africa

UN-Women's work in the region is framed through our Strategic Plan and the Africa Strategy 2022-2025, which was developed jointly with the African Union and is aligned with the AU Agenda 2063 and the Global Agenda 2030. The Strategy brings together the work of the three regions (East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and North Africa) and contributes to the four impact areas of UN-Women's global Strategic Plan. The Strategy's three outcomes - women's economic empowerment is accelerated; women's leadership in political governance and peacebuilding is enhanced and recognized; and African women and girls live a life free of all forms of discrimination and violence are reflected in continental initiatives UN-Women is supporting across its triple mandate which complement country and regional work.

### *Governance and participation in public life*

- UN-Women supports governments to improve the status of women in politics and decision-making by providing analysis, tools to monitor and track progress as well as supporting the exchange of best practices across the region. UN-Women developed the **Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Monitor 2022** in collaboration with UNDP and the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) to review the status of women in politics and decision-making in the region and recommend to Member States strategies for accelerating achievement of their targets and goals by 2030. In 2024 there will be various elections in a third of the countries in Africa, all but two in the ESA and WCA region (18)<sup>12</sup>, and UN-Women will continue to support this work. The African Union Election Observation Missions have been supported with tools and materials to promote gender sensitive election observation.
- Seventeen gender-responsive national/local multi-sectoral policies, strategies, and plans on gender were adopted across five countries (9 in Kenya, and one each from Cameroon, CAR, Liberia, Nigeria, Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda). In addition, fifty-two laws across the ESA region were adopted or

---

<sup>10</sup> SRSRG Binetou Keita briefing to the Security Council on the situation in DRC, 28 September 2023

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-response-dashboard-30-november-2023#:~:text=Humanitarian%20organizations%20require%20US%242.6,received%20as%20of%2030%20November.>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eisa.org/election-calendar/>

amended to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. UN-Women developed the capacities of over 190 partners in 2022 enabling them to promote/influence gender responsive legislation and advance gender equality and women’s empowerment through national and/or local (multi)sectoral strategies, policies and/or action plans.

- UN-Women continues to partner with women leaders to strengthen their collective voice to influence and advocate for peace on the continent. Thirty-two<sup>13</sup> **African Women’s Leadership Network (AWLN)** National Chapters have been launched in partnership with the AU and the UN and have engaged in diverse spaces. The Kenya Chapter engaged in calls for peaceful elections and provided support to women candidates. The Kenya Young Women Caucus successfully advocated for greater engagement of women in climate change discourse during the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi in 2023. The Uganda Network provided solidarity and support to women candidates in Kenya and Zimbabwe during their respective general elections. AWLN’s contributions ensured that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) is gender responsive. To strengthen the capacity of elected women leaders, UN-Women is providing technical support for **regional peer learning among Parliamentary Gender Committees** of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Member States. This support focuses on sharing experiences and enhancing skills in reviewing legislation, regulatory and policy frameworks related to women’s representation in Electoral Management Bodies (EMB), as well as offering guidance on political party strategies for developing gender-responsive policies to strengthen women’s representation in EMBs.

### *Women’s economic empowerment*

UN-Women is advancing key strategies to promote women’s economic empowerment including supporting women’s entrepreneurship and job creation through gender responsive procurement, transitions to green jobs and promoting regional trade; building resilience to climate change; transforming the care economy; and promoting gender responsive macro-economic policies including investments in expanding social protection systems.

- UN-Women has leveraged African governments’ investment in gender responsive social protection mechanisms in the context of the post-COVID19 recovery, to position **the care economy** in the policy agenda of governments in the region. UN-Women is now scaling up home-grown approaches to the care economy in Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, and Nigeria while continuing advocacy and institutional strengthening of actors across the policy value chain. UN-Women is also providing financial and technical support to the development of the Kenya Care Policy, the second care policy initiated by a government in sub-Saharan Africa; and advancing analytical work to inform development and policy initiatives such as the ground-breaking flagship 10-country analysis in ESA, that demonstrates the intersection between women’s care work responsibilities and their incomes in waged employment.
- UN-Women is implementing Gender Responsive Procurement in multiple countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, and Nigeria), supporting the adoption and reform of legal frameworks for gender responsive procurement by governments and opening opportunities for women owned businesses from both government and private sector. For example, in Kenya in 2022 there was a 20% increase in the value of Access to Government Procurement Opportunities awarded to women, youth, and persons with disabilities, from USD 298 million in 2020/21 to USD 360 million in 2021/22. USD 197 million (54.8%) of this total affirmative procurement value went to women. In 2023, a total of 22,965 tenders were awarded to women in Kenya, having increased from 20,877 in 2022, representing a 10% increment in one year.
- UN-Women is working at continental and country levels to develop and implement the protocols for the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, raising awareness, developing skills, providing analysis

---

<sup>13</sup> DRC, Cote d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Congo Brazzaville, Seychelles, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco, Liberia, Cameroon, Benin, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali, Mozambique, Malawi, Niger, Kenya, Namibia, Tunisia, Gabon, Lesotho, Sao Tome, South Africa, Zambia, Angola, Senegal, Guinea, Ghana, Rwanda, and Gambia.

of data and trends, and opening opportunities for women's economic empowerment on the continent. Four key focus areas have been identified to promote women's rights within the AfCFTA: (1) information and knowledge awareness, (2) access to productive and financial resources, (3) representation and inclusion, and (4) creating an enabling environment for trade.

- As climate change accelerates, UN-Women is working on strengthening gender responsive policies as well as convening stakeholders on **gender-responsive transition to the Green Economy**. For example, UN-Women is working with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Global Green Growth Institute to match existing climate finance products to the needs of grassroots women, women cooperatives, and women businesses. UN-Women has also supported the development of the ECOWAS Action Plan on Women in the Green Economy which was adopted in February 2023.
- **At the programmatic level, Digital inclusion for rural women's access to market and finance-** UN-Women's Buy from Women Digital Inclusion Initiative was officially launched in Liberia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa with the government and private sector partners and women-led rural cooperatives. This mobile and web-based platform empowers women smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs by improving their access to diversified supply chains and market opportunities, the management of their assets, their access to knowledge and information critical to the growth of their business (market prices, weather forecasting, training contents on digital, financial, and business skills), and by establishing a digital commercial and financial identity. For example, within the first months of operation, the Liberian women-led cooperatives generated income of over 80,000 USD through the sales of products. UN-Women in these countries is supporting the governments' digital financial inclusion strategies via mobile money and by linking women's entrepreneurs to affordable finance.
- **Gender-responsive digital innovations for rural women's resilience to shocks** – UN-Women and the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) are leveraging mobile technology and developing innovative business models with the private sector to enhance the resilience of rural women to climate change and natural disasters. For example, in Mali, in partnership with OKO, an African startup that provides affordable, digital-enabled crop insurance to farmers in emerging markets to strengthen their resilience, the project is developing digital innovations to provide women farmers with a financial safety net to strengthen their resilience to climate change. Through the innovations introduced by the project, OKO managed to rapidly increase the rate of women among its newly registered customers by registering 1,100 new women for crop insurance. This innovative project proved that a gender-responsive approach can lead to increased women's access to insurance and overall sales. UN-Women has successfully replicated this approach as part of its 3R Programme in Senegal to improve access to health insurance for rural women, by working with the National Agency for the Universal Health Coverage (CMU) and enabling over 1000 rural women members of a farmers' network to enroll in national health insurance for the first time, accessing coverage for themselves and their households, and reaching nearly 7,000 people.
- Women across various value chains in 9 countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda) have increased productivity and incomes through their participation in **Climate Smart Agriculture** projects of UN-Women. Over 150,000 women farmers have been reached with climate resilient technologies and innovations. For example, in Malawi, 10,401 women farmers doubled groundnut productivity using modern farming methods, weather forecast and market information. In Uganda, more than 1,400 women and 150 men were equipped with skills and technologies on aquaculture, increasing their returns by USD 0.140 per kilogram and making USD 139.7 more per ton of fish sold in comparison to the price from middlemen. Through the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) with FAO, IFAD, and WFP, 12 cooperative groups composed of 1,181 members (927 women and 254 men) in Rwanda increased their agricultural production, income and improved livelihoods using drought tolerant techniques. In Kenya, in 3 arid and semi-arid counties women farmers (734) increased their collective income from USD 17,640 in 2022 to USD 202,174 in 2023. Women who accessed group savings and loan facilities increased their savings from USD 55,294 in 2022 to USD 89,685 in 2023, and 47,324 out of 200,000 small holder farmers sold 23,320 metric tons of agricultural produce after gaining access to services such as inputs, markets, and mechanization.

- As new technology rapidly transforms the world of work, preparing young women for the digital economy is also a priority for UN-Women in Africa. The African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) has benefitted 1400 girls from eleven countries<sup>14</sup>, an additional 700 girls will be reached by December 2025.

### ***Ending violence against women and girls***

There is increased and wide scale engagement on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG), ending impunity, and promoting positive social norms in the region. Policy work on prevention of EVAWG has been implemented with three interconnected strategies focusing on strengthening the normative framework; strengthening the women's movements through coalition- building and transformative feminist action; and changing negative/ harmful social norms to address the root causes.

Through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, UN-Women has achieved extraordinary results in this comprehensive programme that targeted Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, and Niger<sup>15</sup> in the WCAR region. Notable results include the banning of FGM by traditional leaders in Liberia and the mobilization of the women's movement in Nigeria that led to an 91% increase in local governments adopting legislation that increased women's protection against violence. The Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa publicly committed to abolishing harmful traditional practices, which contributed to a reduction in the incidence of early marriage in Malawi and in Niger and female genital mutilation in Liberia. The Spotlight initiative also contributed to an increase in the number of VAWG reported cases that are referred to courts in Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. For example, in Malawi, 9336 cases were recorded in 2022 out of which 5258 were reported to the police, 1161 brought to court out of which, 501 VAWG cases resulted in conviction. In addition, in 2022, with support from UN-Women, over 70,000 women and girls received GBV shelter, counselling and services in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Malawi.

To strengthen regional normative frameworks for ending and responding to VAWG, UN-Women is collaborating with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to elaborate an ECCAS **Regional convention to prevent and respond to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**. Partnerships with feminist organizations and the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa/Conseil des Autorités Traditionnelles D'Afrique (COTLA/CONATA) aim to strengthen institutional capacities, resilience, coalition building, networking, and leadership for ending VAWG. As part of its social norms work, UN-Women developed a strategy (2022-2025) with COTLA/CONATA which focuses on bringing social norms change in support of gender equality and upholding the rights of women and girls in Africa. COTLA/CONATA, traditional leaders in Zambia and Malawi engaged in **harmonizing customary norms with statutory laws**. They also contributed to a shift in social and cultural norms in Niger, Nigeria, and Tanzania to reduce child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and harmful practices. Traditional leaders also played a role in improving legislation and policies in parliament in Zimbabwe and advocating for social justice for victims of gender-based violence in Sierra Leone.

A continental approach was furthermore taken to strengthen accountability and reporting by AU member states by supporting the operationalization of the African Union (AU) Data and Research Gender Observatory and Scorecard to ensure periodic, inclusive, and quality reporting on commitments to end VAWG.

### ***Women, peace and security***

Through its triple mandate, UN-Women plays a central role in the implementation of the WPS agenda in Africa.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ethiopia, Burundi, Cote D'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>15</sup> The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative was a global joint EVAW programme that operated in 31 countries in Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, Asia & the Pacific.



UN-Women has invested in *creating an enabling environment for women's participation in peace processes* in Africa by supporting all countries to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement the UNSCR 1325. 22 countries out of the 24 covered by WCARO in the West and Central Africa region and 11 countries from ESARO have developed and are implementing their NAPs. In addition to NAPs, UN-Women has supported work on gender mainstreaming in government policies and regional organizations such as AU, ECOWAS, ECCAS, IGAD, SADEC, EAC, and G5 Sahel which have also developed Regional Action Plans on SCR 1325.

UN-Women has helped *build local and regional capacities for peace* through an active movement-building of women and youth peace activists. For example, it has created the Regional Women's Platform for Peace and Security in the Sahel region, coordinated the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WYPSWG-WAS) with UNOWAS, and provided regular support to the REPSFECO (Women's Network for Peace and Security in West Africa), which is based in 15 countries in the ECOWAS region. UN-Women's efforts have helped to build capacity among key peace actors such as peace commissions and the Secretariat of SCR 1325 in post-conflict countries. UN-Women has built the advocacy capacity of these organisations to ensure that their voices are heard at the national, regional, and international levels, and has supported their participation in peace and security forums. UN-Women has established *partnerships with specialized training centres in the region* such as the Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School in Mali and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana to build the capacity of *women leaders as mediators*. A vast network of women mediators has been created at the grassroots level in several countries in conflict including Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya etc. At the community level, these women play an essential role in conflict prevention, conflict management and reconciliation, and they have an enormous potential that will be harnessed to put an end to communal conflict and the prevention of violent extremism.

Finally, UN-Women contributed to strengthened protection of women and girls in conflict-affected countries. UN-Women works in collaboration with the defence and security forces as well as the judicial system in different countries in the region for strengthened prevention of conflict and violent extremism. Nine countries are implementing projects financed by the Elsie Initiative Fund to promote more participation of women in Peacekeeping missions. Moreover, in mission settings, UN-Women is working at country, regional and headquarters level to ensure gender concerns are addressed in the UN Mission withdrawal processes for example in Mali, Sudan, and DRC. This includes reinforcing technical capacity as well as resources available to ensure that the protection and empowerment of women and girls will continue to be supported by the UN after draw-down of the Mission.

The role played by UN-Women in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda is recognized in Africa and the Heads of States from the Sahel region even recognized and encouraged it at their Summit held on 16 February 2021, in N'Djamena (see Final Communiqué §34)<sup>16</sup>.

UN-Women successfully partnered with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and increased financial support to gender equality. The Fund piloted a new Gender Promotion Initiative in Niger, Mauritania and the Gambia allocating resources for dedicated gender-responsive peacebuilding joint projects. For instance, the joint UNODC-UNFPA-UN-Women project for Mauritania amounts to USD 3 million.

### ***Humanitarian action***

- UN-Women has focused on building skills and providing tools to humanitarian actors (government Ministries, NGOs, regional women's networks and platforms, women led organizations, Humanitarian Country Teams

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://allemagneenfrance.diplo.de/fr-fr/actualites-nouvelles-d-allemande/actualites-des-relations-franco-allemandes-seite/-/2443004> <https://allemagneenfrance.diplo.de/fr-fr/actualites-nouvelles-d-allemande/actualites-des-relations-franco-allemandes-seite/-/2443004>

(HCTs), UN agencies) to enable them to integrate gender in the design of interventions across Uganda, Burundi, South Sudan, Kenya, and several countries in West and Central Africa.

- By issuing real-time gender alerts, UN-Women succeeded in drawing attention to the humanitarian situation and needs of women refugees and IDPs in, for example, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. In Niger under the leadership of the Humanitarian Gender Theme Group, a Gender Alert highlighted the effects of sanctions by sub-regional bodies (ECOWAS and the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA) on women and girls after the military coup as a contribution to the UN’s dialogue on limiting the negative impact of the sanctions on humanitarian assistance in the country.
- Assisting women to rebuild their livelihoods is a key strategy in UN-Women’s humanitarian response. Vulnerable women and girls affected by the conflict have access to innovative financial and technological services through the establishment of Village Savings & Loans Association which have led to enhanced access to credit and increased incomes by between 58% and 173% for over 10,000 women in Mozambique, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda.
- More than 40,000 women and girls who were affected by humanitarian crises in Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda adopted positive coping mechanisms by accessing mental health and psychosocial support services such as second chance education, psychosocial and counselling support, and referrals for protection and justice services.
- UN-Women coordinates the Regional and national Gender and Humanitarian Groups which include the main international agencies and NGOs working in the humanitarian field.

### ***Disaster Risk Reduction***

- To strengthen capacities for **disaster risk reduction and adaptation for resilience** in the Sahel Region, working with UNDP, UNDRR and ECOWAS, UN-Women has ensured that the baseline data collection for the Sendai Framework Monitoring on disaster risk reduction in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Chad considered gender issues and was guided by the “leave no one behind” principle.<sup>17</sup>
- ***Tools on gender and DRR have been developed to support humanitarian analysis.*** For example, a Gender Sensitive Risk Assessment guide and A guide for collecting Sex Age Disability Disaggregated Data were adapted for the Sahel region to support governments, NGOs, and CSOs.
- Partners and Women organizations have been trained on gender and DRR and on mainstreaming gender sensitive DRR into countries’ overall development planning and national budgeting.

### ***Cross-cutting priorities***

#### **UN Coordination**

The elaboration of the WCA Regional Coordination Strategy highlighting a menu of services for UN-Women support to all countries in the region, including countries where UNW is not present, has enhanced partnerships with Regional Organizations and Regional Economic Committees, resulting in strengthened UNW positioning in intergovernmental processes.

In support of the Management Accountability Framework (MAF), UN-Women continues to support the UN system across the region in countries. UN-Women leads the UNCTs and coordination groups in integrating gender in Common Country Analysis (CCA) and UN Cooperation Frameworks (CF) and has partnered strongly with DCO

---

<sup>17</sup> As part of the project on “Strengthening capacities for disaster risk reduction and adaptation for Resilience in the Sahel Region: fostering risk-informed solutions for sustainable development”.



as Peer Support Group member to mainstream gender into planning processes in a total of 14 countries elaborating their UNSDCF in 2023 and in 8 road maps for those of 2024 and producing gender analytical knowledge products.<sup>18</sup>

UN-Women enhanced capacities of the RCO and Gender Thematic Groups in Coordination in the region including Roll out of the Standards and Procedures Guidance for GTGs, UNCT SWAP Gender Score Card. This allowed the sharing of best practices and the operationalization of GTGs in countries where UNW is not present such as Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Cabo Verde, and Equatorial Guinea. As a result, thirty-two countries in Africa presented the UNCT SWAP Gender Score Card by the end of 2023, out of which 36% met or exceeded requirements for at least 60% of the UNCT-SWAP standards.

At the regional level, by leveraging on the Opportunity/Issued Based Coalitions (OIBCs), UN-Women seeks to influence and bring synergies to the work of different UN entities. UN-Women is a co-convenor of 3 out of 6 Opportunity/Issued Based Coalitions (OIBCs), in West and Central Africa which has provided an opportunity for accountability, knowledge sharing and technical support on gender in relation to youth, climate change, data, economic transformation, peace and reinforcing regional collaboration. As a member of the IASC, UN-Women is providing quality and timely technical support to the Regional IASC Humanitarian Partnership Team (RHPT) and the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) Steering Committee.

## Intergovernmental support

In 2023, as in previous years, UN-Women supported the Africa pre-CSW68 consultations, convened jointly with the AU Women Youth and Gender Directorate (WGYD), UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and UNDP to prepare a common position on the priority theme: ***Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.*** Alongside this, UN-Women has embarked on a region-wide study which will assess the influence of the Africa Common Position on the CSW Agreed Conclusions from 2019 to 2022 and evaluate the progress and challenges in implementing recommendations from the Africa Common Position and the Agreed Conclusions. Implementation of the agreed conclusions of the sixty-fifth session of CSW was advanced through the adoption of new laws promoting gender balance in decision-making in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Also in 2023, UN-Women supported the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Government of Gabon organized a Conference of Gender Ministers from the ECCAS, in partnership with UNOCA and UNDP. The Conference sought to build a **Common Agenda in Central Africa for the Promotion and Empowerment of Women** and adopted a **Declaration and a final Communiqué** detailing priority areas to be addressed.

## Generation Equality Forum

Generation Equality has presented an unparalleled opportunity to bolster GEWE policies and outcomes and deliver transformative results across policy, programmatic, and advocacy commitments through collaborative multi-stakeholder actions. With UN-Women support, governments across the region are translating their GEF commitments into national and regional commitments.

The government of Burkina Faso, as co-leader of the Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, is currently chairing a process to develop a sub-regional roadmap to implement eight regional commitments to achieve universal access to women's sexual and reproductive rights by 2030. Kenya has continued to record strong performance on implementation of its commitments on GBV. South Africa has translated their Action Coalition

---

<sup>18</sup> 2023: Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, and Seychelles. 2024 Road Maps: DRC, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan

commitments into economic transformation programmes and policies for women and young women. Cote d'Ivoire, inspired by the Generation Equality methodology, announced new commitments in four Action Coalitions (Gender-Based Violence, Economic Justice & Rights, Technology & Innovation and Feminist Movements & Leadership), fostering lasting change through GEWE policy and programming. Burkina Faso continues to mobilize more countries in West Africa to join the Coalition for Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Discussions with five other countries (Benin, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Togo) have begun towards establishing a regional Generation Equality committee and national Generation Equality technical committees and technical teams under health ministries. Annual and medium-term five-year operational plans are being developed, along with national action plans and regional resource mobilization plans.

Tanzania, as Generation Equality Midpoint moment co-host, organized the High-level Generation Equality Africa Regional Meeting, hosted in November 2023 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, convening Ministries of Finance and Gender from 21 African countries. Participating governments made recommendations on enhancing women's access to resources and fair employment conditions, investing in feminist technology, bolstering women's involvement in peace and security efforts, prioritising funding for women's health, and addressing gender-based violence. The meeting concluded with a commitment to sustained action, ensuring greater availability to gender data, accountability, and transparent reporting to achieve the goals set by the Generation Equality Forum, and providing a roadmap to guide future efforts to transform the economic and social status of women and girls in Africa.

## Gender Statistics

UN-Women has supported 24 countries since 2018 to strengthen the gender responsiveness of national statistical systems by increasing financial support for gender statistics, integrating gender equality in national statistics strategies, capacity building, establishing coordination mechanisms for gender statistics at all levels of government, and committing to regular monitoring of gender-related SDGs and national policies. The foundation for this was set by strengthening the capacities of 866 data producers and users in the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of gender statistics.

At the regional level, deepened partnerships with UNECA, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and subregional actors have resulted in greater coordination on gender statistics across the continent. Together with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), UN-Women supported the development and launch of the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics Phase III five-year strategic plan which aims to guide gender statistics work and coordination across the continent, avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that the scarce resources allocated are used efficiently. UN-Women also supported development of the Southern Africa Development Community's first-ever gender statistics strategy which will contribute to improving the harmonization of gender statistics production in the region.

Through the Women Count Programme, over 75 gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data collection initiatives were supported since 2017, including surveys and administrative data, contributing to increasing the availability of gender-related SDGs from 31 per cent to 48 per cent in 2022. The data has influenced several policies and programmes in the region. In **Kenya**, UN-Women supported the National Bureau of Statistics to conduct Kenya's first-ever time-use survey and used the data to produce a care needs assessment, which served as the basis for developing the Government's first-ever national care policy. In **Senegal**, time use data and findings from the first-ever time use survey and household satellite account, supported by UN-Women, has prompted the Ministry of the Economy to develop interventions to address women's unpaid care and domestic work. Meanwhile, **Uganda**'s first-ever national survey on violence against women and girls has informed several pieces of legislation including anti-sexual harassment policies.

Since 2023, UN-Women has expanded its work in Africa in new areas to increase the production of data on diversity, discrimination, and inequality, including through a new project with the UN Statistics Division focused on citizen-generated data which will strengthen the participation of civil society in statistical processes. UN-Women is also collaborating with the Praia City Group and its Task Team on Non-Discrimination and Equality, to expand methodological guidance on collecting and utilizing administrative data to measure discrimination and inequality.

## UN-Women's partnerships with international financial institutions

- **The World Bank** has partnered with UN-Women in South Sudan to support the Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare to implement a four-year USD 64,500,000 project: "South Sudan Women's Social and Economic Empowerment Project". The project aims to increase girls and women's access to livelihoods, entrepreneurial, and GBV services and to strengthen the government's capacity to provide these services in ten States and two administrative areas.
- In addition, UN-Women in South Sudan is partnering with the **African Development Bank** (AfDB) on a US\$2,145,000 project aimed at increasing employment opportunities, market access, and incomes for women and youth in South Sudan.
- In collaboration with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, as part of its global leadership of the Generation Equality Forum, UN-Women, and IMF Africa Regional Technical Assistance Center (AFRITAC) hosted a high-level dialogue on financing for gender equality and a capacity-building workshop with African Ministers of Finance and Gender in 2023. Key outcomes included commitment to increase spending on gender-responsive economic development initiatives, promote gender-responsive budgeting, invest in public care systems, support decent work, and strive towards a more gender-transformative economic system.
- In WCA, UN-Women has partnered with the World Bank and the AfDB to advance women's economic empowerment in Senegal, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and DRC (private sector reform). WCARO has recently contributed to IMF edited book on inclusive growth in Africa with a chapter on Gender and Green Economy (to be published in 2024).

### 3. Priorities for the future

**UN-Women Africa Strategy 2.0 (2022-2025)** will continue to be a key part in driving UN-Women's future work in the region. Three regional offices (WCA, ESA and Arab States) will continue to work together to deliver as ONE in the following three outcome areas through evidence-based policy influence and accountability at continental level, targeted and catalytic interventions, and scaling up successful and innovative models.

- **Outcome 1: Women's economic empowerment is accelerated.** Priority will be to continue the work on (1) Positioning women's priorities in the Africa Continental Free Trade Framework across all its sectors, (2) Establishing sustainable mechanisms to enhance women's resilience to unexpected shocks through the development and the adoption of gender-responsive continental contingency plans with a special focus on prevention, preparedness, and sustainable recovery interventions.
- **Outcome 2: Women's leadership in political governance and peacebuilding is enhanced and recognized.** Priority will be (1) The promotion of a young generation of women leaders through leadership capacity development, and (2) Supporting an intergenerational platform where members of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) provide coaching to aspiring young women leaders.
- **Outcome 3: African women and girls live a life free of all forms of discrimination and violence.** Under this outcome, UN-Women will prioritize support for: (1) The creation and implementation of a strong accountability mechanism to translate commitments to protections for women and girls; (2) accelerating the transformation of negative social norms through continental multi-actor' movement of gender activists, such as the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA) and 3) addressing cross-regional gender equality issues (migration, trafficking, etc.) in a more coherent and coordinated manner.

**\*\*End\*\***