

## **Briefing on UN-Women Operational Work in Africa**

### **Executive Board First Regular Session 2020**

### **14 February 2020**

#### **1. Introduction and Context**

UN-Women's Africa Strategy 2018-2021 is derived from the Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It focuses on four strategic outcomes, namely:

- Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from decision making processes
- Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
- Women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from humanitarian action.

The Africa Strategy in addition supports three Pan African cross Regional Programmes; namely

- Ending Child marriage in Africa
- Strengthening the women's movement for Africa's transformation
- Reducing migration and trafficking of women and girls

While gender statistics for localization of the SDGs is the regional flagship programme, the strategy recognizes the role of positive social norms as an enabler.

The uniqueness of the Africa Strategy is that it allows for the three UN-Women regional offices in Africa to better align, and integrate their technical, advisory and policy support in partnership with member states, Regional Organizations including the Africa Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Civil Society organizations and other regional and sub regional structures and institution across the African continent. It further allows each of the Regions to be the Center of Excellence in respective thematic areas, thereby serving as hubs for knowledge and technical expertise on gender equality and women's empowerment on the continent. The governance arrangement between the regional offices, ensures coordinated implementation of this strategy.

Lots of strides have been made in the 2 years of implementation of the Africa Strategy, including:

- Increased engagement and visibility of women in the electoral processes across Africa- Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa; and parity in executive councils in South Africa, Rwanda, Ethiopia. First female Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Sudan and South Sudan; first female Minister of Justice and Attorney General in Ethiopia and first female President in Ethiopia
- Increase in the numbers of women farmers supported with access to and ownership of land, tools, seeds, technology and support services, including financial services for climate smart agriculture in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Chad
- Increased access to preferential procurement for women through increase in number of countries with affirmative procurement policies in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Senegal
- Increased female vendors within UN-Women in Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, RO
- Increased number of discriminatory laws revised/repealed and gender responsive laws against

- VAW/G promulgated in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya
- Women have increased leadership role in peace, security and recovery processes evident in Sudan, South Sudan
  - The African Women's Leadership Networks have been established in 11 countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone

UN-Women Africa team seeks to present transformation of cultural and gender norms with its work with religious and traditional leaders and institutions.

UN-Women works closely with UNICEF and UNFPA in leveraging its convening power across sectors and constituencies, to support the African Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage and FGM/C, with the focus on continental policy engagement, sustaining political will and accountability, and changing cultural norms and practices. The Africa team has invested in religious, traditional and cultural leaders and institutions, as critical partners for addressing negative gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices. UN-Women deepened engagement with traditional leaders, men and boys as key enablers for tackling patriarchy, and influencing socio-cultural norms in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Ending child marriage is one of the targets for achieving results for eight of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) namely; poverty (SDG 1), food security and nutrition (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), economic growth (SDG 8), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16).<sup>2</sup> UN-Women, through its Africa Strategy 2018-2021, targets to end child marriage (ECM) and female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) in certain communities within 10 countries by 2021. This aligns with the African Union Campaign to end Child Marriage (2019 - 2023).

Although, regional frameworks to address Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) are in place and many countries have legislation and policies to address VAW/G, the impact is limited as these provisions do not address the root causes of the problem.

UN-Women initiated comprehensive consultations and dialogues with Traditional and Cultural Leaders and institutions from across Africa, to identify innovative and impactful approaches and strategies of working with them to facilitate the transformation and elimination of negative practices based on cultural and traditional norms. As custodians of culture, Traditional and Cultural Leaders are well placed to significantly influence appropriate changes in these customary and traditional practices.

As a result of the consultations, the following results have been achieved:

- Leadership and ownership by Traditional Leaders in speaking out and working to eliminate child marriage and FGM-C in Africa. Examples of ground- breaking work include in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, DRC, Tanzania;
- A road map for detailed regional dialogues and country level activities developed. This includes the plan to strengthen/establish National Traditional Councils;
- The establishment of the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA)/Conseil Des

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<sup>1</sup> UN-Women, Africa Strategy 2018-2021

<sup>2</sup> UN-Women, Multi-Country Analytical Study of Legislation, Policies, Interventions and Cultural Practices on Child Marriage in Africa (2018, p.18) < <http://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications> > accessed 9 April 2019.

Autorites Traditionnelles d'Afrique (CONATA) which was launched by His Excellency, President Edgar Lungu on the sidelines of the 2019 African Union Summit;

- Registration of the Council is on going
- COTLA/CONATA is continuing to galvanize the voices and actions of Traditional and Cultural Leaders and engaging with other stakeholders including the AU, Regional Bodies, the UN and governments to end child marriage and FGM/C in the continent. Members of COTLA have this year (2019) engaged in meetings/workshops led by different arms of the AUC in Uganda, Egypt, Dakar, Niamey, Mozambique; and
- Establishment of a Steering Committee of COTLA/CONATA to lead the inception work leading to the registration of the Council.