

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) by AU, UNECA and UN Women *Newsletter*



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WELCOME

Dear Readers,

The year 2020, marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and was expected to be a ground-breaking year for GEWE. However, amidst the immeasurable health, economic and social crisis the world is facing due to coronavirus, even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being reversed. With limited health and economic infrastructures and existing social, political and environmental vulnerabilities, the situation is further exacerbated in Africa.

Since the outbreak, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the socio-economic welfare of African women and girls. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities and structural injustices causing a profound threat at social, economic as well as humanitarian level. Reports show a vast increase of abuse such as intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic and sexual abuse of women and girls in many cases by family members, exacerbated by the pandemic enforced lockdowns.

As a result of the pandemic and its overwhelming impact on women and girls and its threat against the strides that have been made towards GEWE, the African Union Commission- Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AUC-WGDD) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) have placed their best foot forward and continued to put in place instruments, guidelines and strategies to ensure all COVID-19 responses adopt a gender lens every step of the way.

This second edition of the GEWE quarterly newsletter features good practices, knowledge and efforts by the AUC and UN Women towards addressing COVID-19 and its impact as well as key activities carried out by the two institutions on other relevant GEWE agendas in the third and fourth quarters of 2020.

Enjoy your read!

ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS AROUND COVID-19

Young African Women Entrepreneurs' Coaching & Capacity Building on AfCFTA

With the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, there has been a high-level realization by various stakeholders and political leadership that, for effective implementation of the agreement, all stakeholders especially women must be included at all levels. Against this background, the AUC Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in collaboration with UN Women, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Trade Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Center for Accelerated Women's Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) organized two-days coaching and capacity building sessions on 21 & 22 December 2020.

The coaching session offered a platform for young women entrepreneurs to identify opportunities and risks that may confront them in AfCFTA implementation, particularly during and in the unprecedented COVID-19 times. The session was interactive and fostered exchange of ideas and insights to better un-

derstand the challenges and trade barriers confronting women-led businesses and how these barriers should be effectively addressed in gender-responsive AfCFTA policy and programming.

The sessions were carefully developed to cover key areas of interventions such as; entrepreneurship and capacity development, technical assistance and trainings needed to support women-owned businesses to take advantage of opportunities created through the AfCFTA. It aimed to create a mindset change among the women entrepreneurs to visualize operating big businesses, help them understand their role in orga-



nizing themselves to ensure an enabling environment to trade through government regulations and support them identify opportunities in underutilized sectors taking note of the fact that knowledge of the agreement can only be operational if businesses operate.

Second Webinar by African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI): 'Disrupting the Status Quo: Innovation in Africa during COVID-19 by the African Girls who Code'

The AUC- Department of Social Affairs (AUC-DSA) in collaboration with UN Women and partners organized the AGCCI Webinar Series which is a continuation of the in-person regional hackathons and consultations that the young learners had priorly participated in back in 2018 and 2019 with the first successful virtual consultation held in June 2020.

The adverse consequence of existing ICT infrastructures particularly on young girls are notable now more than ever. The current global crisis has exacerbated the misuse of digital platforms as a tool of sexual and gender-based violence in addition to exposing them to cyber-bullying, internet trolls, uncontrolled exposure to dubious websites. Thus, it is important that platforms such as these webinar series are available to reach out to young girls to understand their unique situations, assess the challenges they are facing due to school closures and subsequently propose best practices.

The 2nd webinar took stock of the progress achieved and provided opportunity for business partners to some innovative ideas to address some of the unmet needs of the learners, especially in identifying feasible innovative ventures and mechanisms to scale up their

innovations while at home during this COVID-19 period and beyond.

The sessions concluded by acknowledging the shared responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that COVID-19 does not undermine all progress made around girls' right to education through various commitments made by Member States at global and continental levels towards the attainment of quality education for girls in line with the goals of Agenda 2063.



JOIN US:
3:00 – 4:30 pm (EAT) | 8:00 – 9:30 am (NYT), 21 October 2020
<https://unwomen.zoom.us/j/94527389245?pwd=U1JlSGJoV244WVcyNTNDYldQTEh0eDZ09jIiwia29ja3F7FTWP>

DISRUPTING THE STATUS QUO

Innovations during COVID-19 by African Girls Who Code
African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) Webinar

SPEAKERS

Mme Letty Chiwara UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, AU and ECA	H.E. Prof Sarah Anyang Agbor AU Commissioner (Human Resources, Science & Technology)	Dr. Jane Marie Ong'olo Head of Division, Social Welfare, Vulnerable Groups and Drug Control DSA/AUC	Ms. VERLOT Candice Counsellor, Political Section, European Union Delegation to the African Union (AU/ EU Youth Hub)	Mr. Jean Constantinesco Counsellor, Political Section, European Union Delegation to the African Union (AU/ EU Youth Hub)
Representative of Ministry of Communication and technologies at Tunisia	Ms. Doroba, Hendrina Chaiwe Human Capital and Employment Division at the African Development Bank	Ms. Dianne Dusaide (Rwanda) Programme Officer, Master Card Foundation - AWLN	Ms. Nomso Kana (South Africa) Young Nuclear Expert (Artificial Intelligence) - AWLN	Ms. Stephanie Maubah (Cote D' Ivoire) GIS Expert and STEM advocate

About AGCCI
The African Girls Can Code Initiative is a four year project that will bring together Girls from all over the African continent across different languages to spark their interest in ICT as a career path and to empower them as young promising innovative women on the Continent.

INTERGENERATIONAL INITIATIVES

Beijing+25 Regional Consultations and Global Intergenerational Dialogue to develop 'Africa Young Women Manifesto'

The Office of the Youth Envoy of the African Union (OYE) in collaboration with WGDD organized five 'Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Regional Consultations and Global Intergenerational Dialogue', which were co-organized with the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Young Women Leaders Caucus and the International Youth Task Force for Beijing + 25 to develop Africa Young Women Manifesto.

The event took place over a five-day period between October 16 and 30 2020 in the five African regions con-

vening over 1500 participants under the overall theme **FEM- FOSTER-ENABLE-MOBILIZE.**

The regional consultation/Barazas is the second phase of the three phase Africa youth Beijing+25 mobilization which was structured through breakout sessions reflecting the Action Coalitions Themes, which culminated in the adoption of an African Young Women Manifesto. The manifesto is a key outcome of the baraza and is a political document that sets out critical issues of concern for African Young Women and makes 10 practical demands for addressing them.

African Women Leaders Network Intergenerational Retreat on Leadership

The Young Women Leaders' Caucus (YWC) of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), in partnership with the African Union and the United Nations, particularly the Office of the African Union Envoy on Women Peace and Security (WPS), Office of the Youth Envoy (OYE) and the AU Department for Human Resources, Science & Technology Department (HRST) and UN Women organized the second "African Women Leaders Network Intergenerational Retreat on Leadership in Africa" as part of the "1 Million by 2021" Initiative: Africa unite for youth - Bridging the gap and reaching out to African youth."

The intergenerational retreat sought to reinforce more intentional, inclusive and transitional leadership of women; build a sustainable, innovative and cross-generational mentorship structure that will propel emerging and current African women to lead as well as solidify the AWLN membership criteria and AWLN young women's caucus call to action. The retreat guides the design and delivery of a solution-oriented "[Plan of Action 2020-2022](#)" as part of the African Women Leaders Network's young women leadership pillar, to be implemented by both emerging and senior AWLN women leaders and with the support of the guiding institutions – the African Union and the United Nations

and of supporters, including the Republic of Kenya and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The intergenerational retreat took place over two days on December 15 and 16, 2020 and provided an opportunity for joint long-term collaboration with the larger AWLN Forum, the AWLN National Chapter, the African Union and the United Nations on Women's Leadership on strategic frameworks, including Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, as well as the 1 million by 2021 Initiative.



5TH SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON GEWE - EXPERTS AND MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

The AUC-WGDD convened the [5th Specialized Technical Committee](#) on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (STC on GEWE) on 27 November 2020. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by a technical Experts' meeting on the 23 and 24 November 2020.

The [5th STC](#) convened against the backdrop of an unprecedented global COVID-19 Pandemic which has negatively impacted the advancement of gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights in Africa. The STC prioritized statutory matters as well as urgent and important AU Gender Agenda issues that require Ministerial consideration, adoption and decisions. The session also featured a presentation on the '[surge of Gender-based Violence \(GBV\) during the pandemic](#)'; a study commissioned by AUC-WGDD, UN Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOCHR).

Concerned by the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and women's empowerment, the recently-passed 2nd African Union (AU) Mid-Year Coordination Summit adopted a decision calling for the "development and implementation of [AU Guidelines on Gender-Responsive Responses](#) as a framework to integrate gender equality and women's agency in decision-making processes in Africa's COVID-19 responses and Post COVID-19 recovery plans". Therefore, this STC as the primary policy-making platform on GEWE will lead in the implementation of this decision.

COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS

#AfricaEndGBV- 2020 Regional Commemoration of 16 Days of Activism

In line with 2020's Africa's commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism AUC-WGDD in partnership with UN Women, OHCHR, UNFPA organized a series of continental advocacy-related activities under the theme '*Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Action to Guarantee Women's Safety in Africa*' with the aim to mobilize the commitment of AU MSs and other stakeholders to ensure that the public health crisis will not deprioritize the rights of women and reverse the achievements made in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The advocacy tools included a **multi-stakeholder policy dialogue**, [online communication and visibility campaign](#) and developing a **policy paper** titled '*Gender-based Violence in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic*'. The [policy paper](#) was featured at the 5th STC on November 27 2020 and later presented at the [multi-stakeholder policy dialogue](#) that took place on December 10 2020 at the backdrop of International Human Rights Day.



POLICY PAPER

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Policy Dialogue on

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS:

"Action to guarantee women's safety"

THURSDAY **10** DECEMBER 2020 11:00 AM - 01:30 PM (EAT)

www.au.int

The Policy Dialogue brought together policymakers, development partners, UN system, representatives of civil society organizations, media and young women and men activists against gender-based violence to deliberate on key areas of action for gender-responsive COVID-19 prevention and management informed by evidence from the policy paper. Participants of the dialogue highlighted the threat COVID-19 has posed to re-

verse the gains made in ending GBV and key priorities requiring urgent action by MSs and other stakeholders and adopted a [call to action](#) with concrete recommendations on mainstreaming Gender in their response to COVID-19 and to ensure GBV is eliminated from Africa. The partners also developed a series of [key messages](#) that informed the online communication and visibility materials which were disseminated through the 16 days of activism social media platforms handled by the partnering institutions.

2020's regional 16 days of activism commemorations aimed to promote the 16 Days of activism and its goals, raise awareness on the impact of COVID-19 on the increased rate of VAWG in Africa, promote dialogue on actions that have been taken, promising practices, the opportunities as well as the gaps in combating VAWG in the context of COVID-19, enable the identification of practical recommendations on priority actions to end VAWG by stakeholders and seek commitments to the establishments and strengthening of multi-stakeholder partnership at continental and national levels in Africa.

Relevant Links

- [African Women's Decade](#)
- [Policy brief- Realizing the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage: Emerging lessons from child marriage programming in Malawi and Zambia](#)
- [Animation video- 'Enough'](#)
- [Africa's Eyes on Beijing](#)

Upcoming events

- International Women's Day event: a multi-stakeholder dialogue on Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19
- Africa Consultative meeting on the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65)
- Celebration of the International Women's Day
- Online event African Women Authors: celebrating women in arts, culture and heritage
- African Girls Can Code Initiative side event at the 53rd session of the Economic Commission for Africa (COM-21): March 20-21 2021

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