
Concept Note

2023 Women Leaders' Consultation on Positive Masculinity

Theme:

Consolidating Commitments Towards the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Date: 30-31 October 2023

Time: 10:00 AM - 05:00 PM

Venue: Moroni, Comoros

Background

The Inaugural AU Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa, was held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on 25 November 2021, under the leadership of H.E. Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the 2021 AU Chairperson in collaboration with H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa and the 2020 AU Chairperson; H.E. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and 2022 AU Chairperson; H.E. Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana and the AU Leader on Gender and Development Issues in Africa; and H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the AUC Chairperson. The Conference was also hosted in partnership with the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) under the leadership of its Patron, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of the Republic of Liberia and facilitated by H.E. Madam Bineta Diop, the AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate of the AUC, supported by UN Agencies. The main outcome of the conference was the Kinshasa Declaration and Call to Action on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, which was subsequently adopted as an Assembly Decision during the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government in February 2022 (Assembly/AU/Dec.819. XXXV). The same decision institutionalizes the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. The Assembly also appointed H.E. President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi as the first AU Champion on Positive Masculinity (Assembly/AU/Dec.837. XXXV).

The Second Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity in Leadership was held from 10 to 11 November 2022 in Dakar, Senegal, under the leadership of H.E. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and 2022 AU Chairperson. Following the conference, the Dakar Call to Action which seeks to accelerate implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration was adopted. The Heads of State committed to advance, promote, and accelerate actions to prevent, sustainably address, and end the scourge of violence against women and girls on the continent.

Drawing from the outcomes of the two conferences, the AU Heads of State and Government during their 36th Assembly held from 18 to 19 February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted a historic decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.865(XXXVI) to negotiate the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVAWG). Once adopted, the CEVAWG will be the first continental and global legal instrument for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. In this regard, the 3rd Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity will focus on the CEVAWG Convention and also take stock of the implementation of the outcomes of the first and second Conferences, i.e. the Kinshasa Declaration as well as the Dakar Call to Action.



Preceding the AU Men's conference each year, a series of consultations are held with stakeholders representing AU citizens; these include consultations with Traditional and Religious Leaders; Women's Rights Organizations; Men's Organizations; Business; Young People; Women Leaders and Male Leaders in various sectors such as Media and Sports. The outcome reports from the stakeholder consultations will feed into the recommendations to be made to Heads of State and Government.

Rationale for the consultation with women leaders

The AU Men's Conferences are in part a response to a global call for a radical shift in strategies and efforts employed to prevent and eliminate all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls. VAWG is the most widespread form of abuse and its unprecedented escalation during the Covid 19 pandemic gave impetus to accelerated efforts to explore alternative actions to push back the scourge. Financial inclusion interventions have been identified as one of the actions that can improve gender equality, empower women, and reduce levels of domestic violence. This link can be explained by the reduction in household financial stress, the reduction in women's financial dependence on men, and the possibility for women to end a relationship if they so wish. Studies show that, in certain contexts, the mere possession of a bank account can reduce the risk of domestic violence. Conversely, research shows that "an increase in the share of women subject to violence by 1 percentage point can reduce economic activities (as proxied by nightlights) by up to 8 percent. This economic cost results from a significant drop in female employment. Results also show that violence against women is more detrimental to economic development in countries without protective laws against domestic violence, in natural resource rich countries, in countries where women are deprived of decision-making power and during economic downturns.¹

The African Union has declared 2020-2030 the Decade of Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women, and there are promising initiatives offering women financing and credit solutions, money transfers, food aid, and support for women's groups and networks of female entrepreneurs. Emphasizing, this the African Union's Agenda 2063 calls for the allocation of at least 25 per cent of public procurement to be for women-owned businesses and Goal 17: Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life Target 17.4: Stipulates that at least 25 per cent of annual public procurement at national and sub-national levels are awarded to women. However, coverage of these programs and policies remains low, and inequalities between men and women continue to be the root cause of violence against women and girls.

Given the societal, legal and normative changes required to create an environment conducive to improving gender equality and women's financial inclusion, a significant involvement of men at the highest level is fundamental. The Kinshasa Declaration and its Call to Action, as well as the AU Decision, call for men to actively participate in the creation of an enabling environment for gender equality by following and supporting women's efforts. The engagement of men, especially those in leadership positions will promote positive role modelling and championing policy and programmatic changes in the public and private sectors that enhance women's financial inclusion and, in turn, promote more gender equitable relationships between men and women. Men's engagement, however, should be a deliberate partnership and ally-ship with women's movement in a relationship of accountability. The 3rd Men's Conference will continue to be informed by women's leadership and its outcomes will be guided by the proceeds of the multi-stakeholder pre-conference consultations with women leaders; young people; traditional and religious leaders; academia; private sector and civil society.

While Positive Masculinity is an acceptable terminology worldwide, the AUC, through the Presidential High-Level Initiative, will seek to define a Common Africa Position (CAP) on Positive Masculinity to guide the development of the AU EVAWG Convention and ensuing actions, including the enhancement of women's financial inclusion, to end discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa. To that

¹ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2021/11/19/The-Heavy-Economic-Toll-of-Gender-based-Violence-Evidence-from-Sub-Saharan-Africa-509667>



effect, a Position Paper has been commissioned, whose outcomes will be adopted during the 3rd Men's Conference.

To this end, Women Leaders are convening a high-level Women Leaders' Consultation on the 3rd African Union Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, themed, *Driving Commitments Towards Women's Economic Empowerment and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*. As a pre-conference meeting, the aim is to discuss strategies to ensure that male leaders make commitments to end VAWG and gender inequality by enhancing women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion and remain accountable to women and girls in Africa.

Objectives

The 2023 Women Leaders' Consultation on the 3rd AU Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity aims at providing a platform for discussion on the role that strategies to boost women's empowerment and financial inclusion can play in addressing VAWG. In addition, it will provide a platform to take stock of the state of implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration and the Dakar Call to Action. The Women Leaders' Consultation will generate strategies that can increase the economic power of women in Africa through the development and implementation of gender-responsive economic and financial policies.

Recognizing that violence against women, including economic violence, seriously violates and impairs the enjoyment by women and girls of their fundamental rights, in particular their fundamental rights to life, security, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity, the Consultation will particularly pay deeper attention to the development of the AU EVAWG Convention.

Specifically, objectives are to:

- Follow up on progress of implementation of commitments made by Heads of State and Government during the 1st and 2nd AU Men's Conference and take stock of actions by male leaders in EVAWG, in line with the Kinshasa Declaration and the Dakar Call to Action, to develop and implement gender-transformative social, economic and financial policies.
- Identify best practices and illustrating cases of 'Positive Masculinity' and men championing women's economic power across various sectors, including its role in the elimination of VAWG.
- Strengthen collaboration and partnership with stakeholders toward promoting gender equity in financial inclusion and respect for women's rights.
- Receive the outcomes of the AU Position Paper on Positive Masculinity and adopt a Common Africa Position on Positive Masculinity, including positioning around enabling women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion.
- Integrate in the Consultation outcome document the preliminary findings of the Case Study on Comoros' Matriarchal System of Women's Leadership and Empowerment, including its impact on women's economic empowerment.
- Make recommendations for the draft AU EVAWG Convention and agree on strategic and political action to facilitate its adoption.
- Adopt the outcome document with the recommendations of the 2023 Women Leaders' Consultation on Positive Masculinity, including the political, economic and legal best practices that can accelerate women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion, which the Heads of State and Government and other male leaders should commit to implement.

Expected Outcomes



The conclusions of the 2023 Women Leaders' Consultation are expected to feed into the outcome document of the 3rd Men's Conference, and its recommendations aligned with the AU Position Paper on Positive Masculinity and the Common Africa Position on Positive Masculinity. The Women Leaders' Outcome document is also expected to contribute to the drafting of the AU Convention on VAWG, which will provide one comprehensive instrument that will encompass all forms of violence against women and girls. The Convention will complement and expand the standards set by other international and regional women's human rights instruments such as the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform. The AU EVAWG Convention will include measures for prevention, protection, response, extensive multi-stakeholder co-operation and ensuring the establishment of specific EVAWG reporting and monitoring mechanisms. Prevention measures will include actions to increase women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion in Africa, and the Consultation will identify solutions for changing harmful norms that contribute to economic inequalities between men and women. The Convention provides an opportunity to decisively respond to the scale of the challenge across the region, the impact it has on the realization of women and girls' rights overall and addresses the systemic weaknesses in responding to it.

It will secure political commitment and leadership as well as amplify renewed state accountability to protect, promote and fulfill women and girls' rights to live free from violence.

Format

The 2023 Women Leaders' Consultation on Positive Masculinity will include female Heads of State and Government; women in the private sector; women from rural areas; traditional and religious leaders; youth; women leaders including in the financial, employment and banking sectors; young and senior leaders working towards eliminating violence against women and promoting women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion such as civil society organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners, UN agencies, government agencies, and institutions across Africa and the diaspora.

Date and venue

The 2023 Women Leaders' Consultation on Positive Masculinity will be held from 30-31 October 2023 from 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM (EAT) in Moroni, Comoros.

**For more information, the organizing Team² will address all queries.*

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