EN CALL FOR PEACE

AFRICA

Eastern Africa

Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda

Northern Africa

Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia

Southern Africa

Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mazambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

West Africa

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bisao, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo

EASTERN AFRICA
Despite Country Differences, Common Challenges

Countries in the Eastern African subregion are shaped by different historical backgrounds. Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been relatively peaceful over the past 20 years. Burundi and Rwanda have suffered from the genocide that took place 10 years ago, while Eritrea and Ethiopia continue to have hostile borders. Somalia is just emerging from 14 years of civil war. Despite these differences each of these countries has taken similar action with regard to international treaties. This may be due to regional cooperation under partnerships such as the Commission for East African Cooperation of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and the Arusha Peace Accord for Burundi and Rwanda.

The status of women in the subregion continues to be low, and lack of education contributes to women's poverty, which has increased over the past 10 years. There is little awareness of international conventions that protect women's rights, and governments and NGOs have not made the effort to promote these conventions, apart from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

HUMAN RIGHTS

CEDAW Compliance
In the Eastern African subregion all of the governments have signed and ratified CEDAW except for Somalia, which has not had a functioning government for 14 years. Somalia's new government has much to do to set the stage for good governance, making it difficult to predict when it will sign and ratify the Convention. In Ethiopia CEDAW has been translated into Amharic, the national language. Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have all signed and ratified CEDAW without reservation.[1]

None of the Member States have signed or ratified the CEDAW Optional Protocol with the exception of Burundi which has signed but not ratified. Most governments need to take steps to make CEDAW more operational at municipal level.

National Law
In all of the countries, apart from Burundi, Kenya and Somalia, Sharia and customary law has prevailed in the absence of a government), national law does not discriminate on the basis of sex. In addition, all persons are considered equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection. In Burundi, women and girls do not inherit due to the precedence given to traditional laws over statutory laws. Although not all discriminatory legislation has been repealed in Kenya, the draft constitution (Bill of Rights), the Refugee Protection Bill (2003) and the HIV/AIDS Bill (2004) if adopted will address this. Almost all of the governments have established ministries that deal with women's issues.

In Ethiopia, this is stated in Article 25 of the Constitution. Currently, Ethiopia is revising its Family Law and the Civil Code. The Penal Code is also under review. In addition, a National Action Plan is being developed to implement CEDAW. All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the Constitution.

Uganda has put in place a 30 percent affirmative action policy and developed a National Plan of Action for women. In Kenya, legislation exists on the girl child, specifically the Children's Act adapted from the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Burundi, the issue of non-discrimination is not a priority as the Government struggles to recover from the 1994 genocide. Traditional beliefs about women's role in society there affect women's ability to advocate for their rights. However, the Government has put in place a 40 percent affirmative action policy in favor of women in decision-making.

In Tanzania, the Law Reform Commission was given a mandate to identify laws contrary to the Constitution with regard to gender discrimination. These laws, submitted in 1992, are still under the review of the Attorney General. Legislation that has been introduced on the status of women includes the 1984 Bill of Rights, which guarantees fundamental freedoms to all persons and bans discrimination based on sex, race or religion. The Land Acts of 1999 gives women the same rights as men to acquire, hold and use land. The Sexual Offenses (special provisions) Act of 1998 elaborates on sexual offences against women and children, broadens sentencing and provides for compensation. It also recognizes the trafficking of women as an offense and criminalizes female genital mutilation (FGM) when performed on children under 18.

None of the countries in the subregion has laws specific to minorities, indigenous peoples or immigrant women. Kenya is the only country in the subregion where there is a pending refugee bill.

Public Awareness
Human rights education is a new concept in Africa, a continent that is replete with human rights abuses as a result of intermittent inter- and intra-country conflicts. Until recently, most governments perceived human rights education as a challenge to their authority, making it a low priority. Across the subregion human rights awareness is low. Whatever human rights education exists is carried out mainly by civil society organizations, and women are rarely the recipients. There are no government guidelines on human rights education and awareness.

In Somalia, according to the Women's Development Organization (IIDA), human rights guidelines are derived from the Koran. In Uganda, Makerere University has established a department for gender and women's studies, although this has a narrow reach. In Kenya, there have been limited efforts undertaken to increase human rights awareness. The Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya developed a training manual in collaboration with the Kenya Police and provided some human rights education for members of the national security and armed forces.

Overall, adult education in the subregion lacks budgetary support and school curricula do not include women's rights as a separate subject. In Tanzania the Government had set a target in line with the Beijing Platform for Action to provide human rights education to at least 30 percent of women by the year 2000, but this plan has not been institutionalized to date.

Violence Against Women
Patriarchy still exists in African society. Even when the law does not discriminate on the basis of sex, women traditionally have a lower status in society. Negative cultural practices such as FGM, rape of women and young girls (virgins), and polygamy still exist in many societies.

In Somalia, the absence of a functioning government for 14 years has made women and girls vulnerable. FGM exists on a large scale but many people do not recognize the

practice as a violation of women's rights, making its eradication that much more difficult.

In Ethiopia, legislation exists to prevent and punish domestic violence, but it is not enforced because of patriarchal traditions and women's lack of awareness regarding their human and legal rights. The penal code is being revised to include punishment of violence against women but this will take time. There is no research on violence against women and no support systems, such as shelters or physical/mental health services.

In Kenya, government action on violence against women has been mostly slow and unsatisfactory. There is no law on domestic violence in place. A Domestic Relations Bill was drafted in 2002 and a Refugee Protection Bill was drafted in 2003. However, neither of these Bills has been enacted. CEDAW has not been domesticated, which means that it cannot be implemented by the courts of law.

Some positive measures in Kenya include training of judicial, legal, medical, social, educational, police and immigrant personnel to deal with violence against women, and gender is being mainstreamed in programs related to violence. The draft constitution has been fully engendered and is awaiting consensus before implementation. There are also efforts to promote research and data compilation. This includes a survey in Nairobi conducted by the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya on issues related to domestic violence. Plans are underway to survey the whole country, funds allowing. Victims of domestic violence are provided with direct services, but not by the Government. There are no special services for migrant, immigrant and indigenous women who are victims of domestic violence and abuse.

In Burundi, there are some provisions in the Penal Code on Family and Persons to prevent and punish domestic violence; however, these are not enforced because of traditional beliefs that domestic violence is "not so harmful". A policy to mainstream gender in all policies and programs related to violence against women was adopted in 2003 as part of the National Gender Policy. Women's organizations and the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion are the main lobbyists for legislation on violence against women. According to the main women's umbrella organization in Burundi, government legislation still has not translated into practice. Programs to train judicial and other officers are run by NGOs and not the Government.

In Rwanda, there are programs to train

judicial, legal, medical, social, education, police and immigrant personnel on violence against women. There is also a policy to mainstream gender in all polices and programs related to violence against women.

Presenting a peace declaration at ECA meeting.

Research in this area is conducted by NGOs, not the Government.

None of the countries in the subregion have legislated compensation for victims of domestic violence. Government security personnel receive little education on violence against women. In general, governments do not provide any support systems to victims of violence; this is done by NGOs. In some cases efforts have been made to make police stations more gender responsive, but these efforts are scattered.

Governments in the subregion also do not give any attention to special groups such as refugees and internally displaced women. Yet in Kenya, refugees living in camps in the North often experience rape at the hands of fellow refugees and local male members of the community. In Uganda, armed conflict in the North that has raged for 18 years has resulted in hundreds of young women and children being displaced, and many forced to become wives or sex slaves of the rebels. These women and girls, known as abductees, live in internally displaced persons camps when they return home. There is no special legislation in place for abductees.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Security Council Resolution 1325

There is little or no public awareness about Security Council Resolution 1325 or the International Criminal Court in the Eastern African subregion. However, Uganda is doing relatively well when it comes to putting women at the forefront of the peace process after 18 years of war in the North waged by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The chief peace negotiator between the Government and the LRA is a woman. The 2003 draft policy for internally displaced persons aims to involve

women in the peace process, and three out of seven regional commissioners on the Amnesty Commission 2002 are women. The Minister of State for Defense is also a woman.

In Ethiopia, women have been absent from decision-making in peace processes. This was especially true with regard to the war with Eritrea (1998-2000). In Somalia, there is little public knowledge about Resolution 1325. However, Somali women have traditionally played a role in peace processes. They have participated in peace conferences and have also been represented in committees on the stability and development of the country. Challenges remain, however, with regard to traditional beliefs about women's role. For example, clans find it embarrassing to have women represent them at peace talks and other fora, and it is considered culturally taboo for women to sit and talk among traditional and religious leaders, who are mostly men.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Internally Displaced

The Government of Ethiopia has programs to facilitate the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced women into society but temporary camps still have hygiene and sanitation problems. In Somalia, following more than in a decade of inter-clan warfare, recurrent drought and flooding, many people are internally displaced. Currently there are no particular provisions in place to protect internally displaced women's and girls' human rights.

In Uganda, the war in the North has left a population that is destabilized and afraid to live in their own homes. They therefore live in internally displaced camps with poor sanitary conditions. The Government so far does not have any coherent plan or policy in place to integrate them back into society.

Kenya has a more complicated refugee situation than other countries in the subregion. This is due to the fact that it houses over 240,000 refugees from Burundi, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan and other countries. Living conditions are often characterized by crime, poor health, malnutrition and lack of shelter; rape is common. The Government has put some mechanisms in place to protect the human rights of refugees and internally displaced women and girls.

In most countries, including Kenya, refugees are registered as dependents of their spouses. This means that they do not have individual documentation, limiting their free-

> In Rwanda, the number of women in decision-making has increased dramatically with the introduction of quotas.

dom of movement. They are also not able to secure employment. In Kenya, asylum seekers do not receive protection or assistance of any kind until their status is established. The Government has programs to help refugees and internally displaced persons but only those who have gained asylum. If the Refugee Bill 2003 is enacted, there will be a Commissioner who will head a Department of Refugees to ensure the safety and protection of women and children refugees. A Refugee Committee, under the Ministry of Home Affairs will also be formed.

To address the problems of women refugees in Kenya, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights and other humanitarian organizations have encouraged the involvement of female refugee leaders in all issues affecting refugees; the establishment of refugee women committees; the introduction of mobile courts to try criminals; the deployment of security officers to refugee camps and the setting up of education centers in refugee settlements.

The International Criminal Court

Public awareness of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is extremely low. Uganda became a party to the ICC in June 2002. Ethiopia is also a party, although there is little public knowledge or awareness. Kenya is not a party to the ICC although this is in the works.

POWER AND DECISION–MAKING

Representation

A Beijing+10 review conducted by the Eastern Africa Subregional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) revealed that the most progress has been in the area of decision-making, even though no countries have reached the 30 percent critical mass considered necessary for impacting policy.

In Ethiopia, women's representation in decision-making positions has increased, with women taking 42 out of 547 positions in the 2000 elections, compared to only a third of this in the 1995 elections. In the country's regional councils there are only 244 or 12.9 percent female representatives out of 1,891 council members. For the 2005 elections the Government has promised to increase the number of women candidates in their vari-

ous constituencies. A 30 percent quota for women is to be implemented in May 2005.

Uganda has 30 percent representation of women in Parliament and at all governance levels from the local councils to the village level. The Ministry of Gender is the main ministry governing women's affairs in the country. It formulates gender sensitive policies, programs and plans as well as mainstreams gender at all levels of the development process. It has ensured the establishment of gender desks and focal persons in all the key ministries including agriculture, education and health. However, the Ministry lacks funds and human resources. Awareness about affirmative action is high, yet methods of implementation are poor. In most cases women are not consulted about political appointments.

In Kenya, women's representation has substantially increased, especially in decision-making and in education and training. However, women's participation is low in public administration and in the judiciary. To achieve equal representation, the Government has established a Gender Commission, and appointed more women as cabinet ministers and assistant ministers. There is also emphasis on gender mainstreaming by the government institutions. These positive measures require legislative and constitutional reform. As mentioned before, the draft constitution has been engendered. Successes include the increase in number of women in leadership positions, including public office, and improved lobbying for women's issues in Parliament. Kenya has a Ministry of Gender, which is coupled with Sports and Other Cultural Activities. It is a low priority ministry, however, in which political appointments are regularly considered a punishment rather than an honor. At present, a male heads the Ministry, while the Assistant Minister is a woman. The women's bureau is housed in this Ministry and budgetary allocations remain miniscule.

In Burundi, there is a Ministry for Social Affairs and Advancement of Women, which is headed by a woman. However, the patriarchal character of the country's society has long determined the status of Burundi women. Women have more duties than rights and must subordinate themselves to the customs governing relations in society. Statute law has tried to correct the situation, and Burundi's

family code has been amended. Although very few women occupy leading positions in the National Assembly and in public or private corporations, attitudes are improving.

In Tanzania, constitutional amendments theoretically grant women the equal right to vote and be elected to public office, yet the participation of women in politics and ministerial positions has been increasing at a very slow pace. For instance, women constituent seats against total seats for 1985, 1990, 1995, and 2000 were 19.2 percent, 17.9 percent, 17.8 percent and 19 percent respectively. Similarly, the number of women accessing ministerial positions has remained stagnant and has never exceeded four. The majority of parliamentarians remain male, and hence men monopolize the leadership positions. It is felt that there is lack of political will to promote and support women's access to political leadership positions. A number of other factors account for the low participation of women in politics, including the patriarchal system, low levels of education for women and a lack of confidence to aspire to electoral positions. Constraints notwithstanding, the constitutional amendments and changes in the formal politics have to a large extent created and increased democratic openings and opportunities for effective participation of women. The Constitution also stipulates that special seats should be allocated to women.

Women's roles in power and decision-making have been bolstered by the Government's introduction of quotas with regard to judicial representation (50%), local government (28%), national government (24%) and Parliament (48%). In addition, every political party is obligated to have a number of women in its leadership. Rwanda has succeeded Uganda as the most gender-responsive government in the region.

Impact of Representation

In Ethiopia, the impact of women in the Cabinet is notable as several women-friendly laws have been enacted, including revision of the Family Law; amendment of social welfare policies (e.g. maternity leave, pension for the family) and the civil service policy on employment, promotion and training; and revision of the policy on citizenship. In spite of this, it is difficult to say that women's representation has produced institutional transformation or changes in attitude, infrastructure, behavior, power relations and resource allocation.

In Somalia, there are no legal measures to ensure full and equal participation of women

in power and decision-making. No effective national law enforcement institutions are in place and some areas have local administrative systems where women are rarely considered. Women's priority at the moment is to lobby the newly elected Government to consider mainstreaming gender in power and decision-making bodies. Women were promised 12 percent representation in Parliament out of the 275 seats but only occupy 38 seats.

Uganda has been a model for women's representation in the region since the Movement party came to power 20 years ago. The number of women in Parliament and other decision-making bodies has increased due to the Government's commitment to CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. The Government has implemented policies to facilitate the participation of women and included this in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The Government has also adopted a policy establishing affirmative action programs in areas where women's participation is low. The policy supports quotas, which increase women's power in Parliament.

In Kenya, political parties now have a provision for one-third women's participation. However, this is almost never implemented despite intensive lobbying by women's organizations. As a result, there has been no major impact on government bodies, and women candidates still complain that severe resource constraints lead to poor performance in elections. The Refugee Protection Bill, the HIV/AIDS Bill, the Establishment of the Family Protection Bill, the Affirmative Action Bill, the Children's Bill and the National Hospital Insurance Bill are policies that have been or are being introduced that have a direct impact on women. The presence of women in decision-making positions has led to their participation in the Constitutional Review Process, the election and nomination of women into the ninth Parliament and involvement in the taskforce on laws relating to women. The increase in the number of women in Parliament, has also led to the formation of a Women Parliamentarian Association, comprised of women from all of the different political parties.

In Rwanda, as a result of the large number of women Members of Parliament (48%), there has been greater advocacy and promotion of women' issues. The main impact of women in leadership is the mainstreaming of gender in different programs. Gender is now considered in action plans at both national and local government levels. A Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion has been cre-

ated. Women politicians also lobby within their political parties and advocate for the rights of women.

POVERTY ERADICATION

Macroeconomic Policies, Development Strategies

In general the needs of poor women have not been given special attention at the subregional level, but are addressed by each country individually. Women's lobby groups have played an important role in drawing attention to women's poverty. Many countries tried to involve women in the formulation of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP) but since this was not done countrywide it had little effect when it came to budgeting and allocating resources.

In Burundi, in general, many women live below the poverty line. The state has set up a system to provide health care to families. Health insurance is inexpensive and accessible to all homes. The promotion of income-generating activities for women is also among the Government's priorities. Out of the 17 provinces, 11 have implemented measures towards that end.

Employment Patterns, Women's Work

In Ethiopia, there are laws that prohibit employment discrimination and protect pregnant and elderly women. Policies on equal pay for equal work have been in place for a long time. Indigenous, internally displaced and immigrant women have equal economic opportunities. The Women's Association of Micro-Finance and the Popular Bank of Women were formed as a result of economic policies aimed at supporting female-headed households. A land reform policy has also been formulated and implemented in support of female-headed households.

Women's employment in Ethiopia has improved both in the informal and formal sectors, but the number of women in the formal sector is low compared to the number of men. Women's unpaid work is not visible in the national income accounts, although it is now beginning to be accounted for in the agricultural sector. By law women and men share family welfare responsibilities on an equal basis, but there are problems in implementing this law in some regions because of tradition and patriarchy.

In Somalia, the absence of a central government has taken a toll. However, women's NGOs are playing a crucial role in removing cultural barriers that hinder women's economic activities and participation in

decision-making processes. Unfortunately, unequal pay for equal work is prevalent in the private sector. With the collapse of the state, a number of women started their own businesses, becoming breadwinners for their families.

In Uganda, over 80 percent of the population live in rural areas and agriculture is the main source of food and income. Women produce 56 percent of these products but traditionally have been barred from owing land. The Land Act of 1998 provides equal rights of access to and ownership of land. However, lack of awareness and persistent cultural traditions have ensured that women's right to land remains a contentious issue at the family level.

There has been general improvement in women's employment in both the formal and informal sectors in Uganda. Women are taking executive jobs that were once believed to be for men only. Competition for these jobs is based on education and qualification, not gender. The Government has set up institutions to advance micro-credit finance for women working in the informal sector. Generally women's work in the unpaid sector, such as domestic work, is neither visible in the national accounts system nor counted as a contribution to the economic well-being of the family. Even women's work in the agricultural sector is not accounted for in the national economy.

In Kenya, the formal sector has recognized women as an indispensable asset to the workplace. This has been demonstrated in employment trends and remuneration laws. However, there are no laws and policies in place to eradicate legal, institutional and cultural barriers that discriminate against women. Women's work in the unpaid sector is not visible in national income accounts, though campaigns launched by women are leading to some progress. No measures have been implemented to create conditions of equity in sharing family welfare responsibilities and decision-making within the household. There are no specific economic, social, agricultural or related policies formulated in support of female-headed households.

In Burundi, the Government has encouraged the establishment of associations and development projects for women in the area of economics. Initiatives exist to facilitate women's access to education, jobs and training. However, the dropout rate between primary and secondary education has been very high. Corrective measures will have to be taken where there is a low rate of school attendance.

In Tanzania, while some laws protect women against discriminatory practices in the workplace, a number of laws are gender insensitive. The employment ordinance Cap 366 protects women against discrimination in employment and guarantees paid maternity leave for 84 days every three years. However, employers are not barred from conducting pregnancy tests during recruitment. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention on equal pay for work of equal value has not been ratified.

Women in Tanzania, and particularly the rural poor, find it difficult to access credit facilities and other financial resources needed to improve productivity. Most lending institutions require collateral in the form of land, which women traditionally do not own. Women's lack of education and training relative to men is another barrier to accessing credit. As a result, the majority of rural women farmers have concentrated on subsistence crops rather than cash crop farming, an area dominated by men.

The Civil Service Code of Conduct in Tanzania prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace and provides disciplinary measures against employers (or employees who sexually harass fellow employees). While the Government has demonstrated a commitment to gender equality in several of its policies and legal frameworks, it has yet to demonstrate the political will to transform the working environment. Additionally, the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) does not consider the link between paid labor and unpaid labor. As a result, there is a danger that women's role in the economy as producers of goods and services will remain invisible in poverty reduction initiatives and no resources will be directed to support such activities.

In Rwanda, one of the goals of the National Gender Policy is to eradicate legal, institutional and cultural barriers that prevent or hinder women's economic activity and decision-making. Women's work has improved in the formal and informal sectors due to training organized by various organizations.

EDUCATION

International Agreements

Ethiopia has agreed to the Education for All (EFA) targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To achieve the targets contained in these international agreements, steps are being taken to provide affirmative action in education and training, free primary education, alternative education programs and revised curricula. However, challenges remain, such as poverty, crowded classrooms, the high attrition rate of girls, HIV/AIDS and harmful traditional practices like early marriage.

National action plans in Ethiopia that address equality and equity in education include tutorial programs for girl students at all levels, assertiveness training for girls in higher institutions and the inclusion of gender in the curriculum of teacher education programs. Gender-sensitive educational mass media programs and various audiovisual materials are also in place. However, government support for women's groups that disseminate information on women's equal rights and education is inadequate.

The law against sexual violence in Ethiopia is applicable in schools, and there are girls clubs in schools in which girls are taught how to protect themselves from sexual harassment. There are also adult education programs for women. School curricula have been revised to promote access to education for all women/girls (particularly rural, minority, poor and indigenous women/girls). However, education is not compulsory, even though it is free at primary level.

No public schools have operated in Somalia in the last 14 years. However, there are a number of schools and higher education institutions run by private organizations. Most of these schools are very expensive and many families cannot afford them. Somalia has not implemented the international recommendations in the EFA agreement or the MDGs. Women's groups and other local NGOs continue efforts to realize international norms related to women's equal rights and education with little support from the UN and international NGOs.

While there is currently no education ministry in Somalia, some local NGOs run by women focus solely on girls' education. No particular efforts have been made to promote research and data collection regarding girls' and women's education nationwide, but assessments of the country's education system show that there is a lower enrolment of girls in school than boys.

In Uganda, the right to education for all is provided in the Constitution under Article 30. Article 32 provides for affirmative action, which has been instrumental in the education sector and has contributed to significant improvements in the enrolment of girls, especially at primary level. Although there is no specific legislation addressing girl dropouts, the Constitution provides grounds for the elimination of all gender-related factors that constrain girls' participation in schooling.

There is also an Education Strategic Investment Plan (1997-2003), in Uganda, which spells out strategies to ensure equity of access to education at all levels. Basic education has been a major focus of the plan under the Universal Primary Education Program (UPE). This program provides for free primary education for all. Efforts have also been made to accelerate the enrolment of women and the disadvantaged.

Kenya is implementing the Education for All agreement and the second MDG on primary education.[2] Mechanisms include the introduction of free primary education for all, introduction of bursary funds for needy children and allocation of more funds in national budgets to the education sector. Other steps taken provide opportunities for older people to pursue education without discrimination. There are no measures to deal with the education of girls and women who are displaced or refugees, unless they have obtained asylum. Otherwise, most are educated in refugee camps.

There are efforts in Kenya to promote research and data collection regarding girls and women's education by the Government and the civil society. A data bank has been established in the Ministry of Education with accessible gender-disaggregated data.

In Tanzania, the Government is committed to providing compulsory primary education for all children. For example, the Education and Training Policy of 1995 clearly states that primary education shall be universal and compulsory for all seven-year-old children until they complete the primary level of education. Zanzibar has taken a step further by making compulsory education include two years of secondary education. There is a strong focal point within the Ministry of Education that deals with girls' education. There are also some civil society organizations that focus on women's and girls' education.

In Rwanda, education policies have a gender perspective and gender curricula in education have been introduced. Rwanda's new Constitution considers CEDAW with regard to education. Guidelines for training policies in vocational education have been established to ensure equitable quality education. Special programs are in place against girls' sexual harassment in schools.

Public Policy

In Ethiopia, policies on education are region specific. For example, there is a different schooling system, like girls' scholarships and mentoring programs, for pastoral communities to promote girls' education. Female teach-

ers are assigned to schools in rural areas as role models to raise girls' enrolment ratio. Gender-disaggregated data on enrolment ratios, drop-out rates and repetition rates are collected as a specific measure to combat sex discrimination in education. The Government has also implemented affirmative action measures for women in education and there is a 30 percent quota for women in teachers' training institutions. Nonetheless, in spite of a high number of girls in higher education, there is also a high dropout and attrition rate.

In Somalia, there are no national mechanisms or mass mobilization efforts to promote access to education for women and girls. There is no public education and there are no measures to deal with the education of refugee women and girls. There has also been no compulsory education since the civil war, although during the military regime primary education was compulsory and all levels of education, including universities, were free.

In Uganda, there is a National Gender and Education Policy that addresses the issue of schoolgirl dropouts. The National Youth Policy of 2001 is in place to provide support to youth. The policy promotes principles of equity and equal access to social, economic and employment opportunities.

In Kenya, policies on education have a multi-cultural gender perspective. For example, marriage of schoolgirls is punishable by law. However, there are policy shortcomings on issues such as the girl-child's domestic role versus education. Measures that are in place to deal with sex discrimination in education include re-admission of teenage mothers in schools, gender-sensitive teaching methods and the development of non-formal education projects.

Kenya's Constitution ensures the incorporation of CEDAW and other international norms in education, even though CEDAW has not been domesticated. While there are policies to protect women and girls from sexual harassment in schools, they are not always effective. To some extent sexual harassment goes unnoticed (because women and girls may not be aware of their sexual rights), and little punitive action is taken. There is also a national literacy program aimed at adult women and men, although the quality of the program has declined.

In Tanzania, increased poverty and the state's inability to fund social services at previous levels have made it difficult to achieve education for all. Furthermore, the Government believes that girls who become pregnant should be expelled, contradicting the very principle of universal primary education.

Training workshop on women, peace and security.

In Rwanda, education is compulsory at both primary and secondary levels. The Government has a program to promote access to education for women/girls in rural areas and schools have been established closer to where they live. However, there are no specific programs to increase access to education for minority, poor and indigenous women/girls.

Access and Changes in Practices

In Ethiopia, the school curriculum has been revised to achieve the EFA and MDG targets, which promote access to education for all women/girls (particularly rural, minority, poor and indigenous women/girls). Internally displaced people and refugees use the facilities on an equal basis if they have access. Efforts are being made to increase the participation of girls in education. This has been successful at the primary level but less so at higher education levels. The Women's Affairs Department in the Ministry of Education focuses solely on girls' education. However, information on the labor market and training is not easily accessible to women.

In Kenya, there have been changes in the curriculum to address the heavy load of subjects that students study. Science subjects are being promoted over the arts, and textbooks have been made more gender sensitive. Steps have been taken to promote access for all women and girls, including special groups such as minorities, the poor and the indigenous.

In Tanzania, the Primary Education Master Plan and various other educational programs promote activities and set targets to enhance girls' enrolment and retention and improve their performance to enable them to move to higher levels.

In Rwanda, the Forum for Women Educationists (FAWE), has established gender clubs in secondary schools, introduced a gender curriculum and conducted research on why Rwandan girls don't go to school.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Decision-Making

In Ethiopia, there has been little improvement in the participation of women in the natural resources and environment sector. Environmental degradation due to climate change has impacted negatively on women's workload. For example, some women are now forced to travel further to collect water and fuel. Compromised food and water security has led to a greater risk of malnutrition and a lack of hygiene.

In Somalia, while women are free to own land, national resource distribution has not taken place for many years because resources have been under the control of gunmen. In cases where it did take place, women were marginalized.

In Kenya, the participation of women in the natural resources and environment sector has increased over the past decade and women lead most community based environmental organizations. With regard to women in environmental decision-making, the Assistant Minister of the Environmental Ministry is a woman. There are also several women officers. NGOs dealing with environmental issues are also comprised predominately of women. Despite this, there is no gender unit in the environmental sector and there are no gender-specific policies on the environment. Local women's interests are represented at national level through a bottom-up approach. For example, at the annual meeting of the Green Belt Movement, a Kenyan environmental NGO, there were more women than men from rural areas in attendance.

Gender Impacts

In Somalia, the civil war has resulted in wanton destruction of the environment and natural resources, mostly by rebel groups. Women have been absent from decision-making on natural resources and the environment. As a result there have been no gender-specific environmental policies.

In Kenya, Hon. Prof. Wangari Maathai, Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and the Chairperson of the Greenbelt Movement, won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace. She was the first woman from Africa to win the Prize. However, obstacles to women's full participation still exist. This includes the failure of the Government to domesticate inter-

In 2004, the Green Belt Movement's Wangari Maathai became the first woman in Africa to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

national treaties, women's lack of education, traditional practices that discriminate against women and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Kenyan women constitute 52 percent of the population and are the major producers of food. They are, therefore, the most affected by environmental problems. In addition, a very small percentage of women have access to safe portable water—50 percent in rural areas and 75 percent in urban areas. In rural areas, women must travel long distances to search for water and firewood.

Right to Natural Resources

In Ethiopia, the Constitution gives women and men equal rights to natural resources. This includes equal rights to land. Most other natural resources are owned by the state. However, women are not trained on intellectual property rights and are not involved in decision-making processes on protected lands. In Somalia, women have the right to inherit assets/property in accordance with Sharia law, and manage it as they choose.

In Kenya, there have been major developments regarding women's land and water rights, intellectual property rights and access to water and sanitation. Women's participation in environmental management has increased the budgetary allocation towards the National Environment Management Program by 73 percent. Women are also participating in decision-making on protected lands.

In Rwanda, women have a right to inherit land. They also have access to water and participate in decision-making processes over protected lands. In the past decade, more women have been planting trees and maintaining water sources. However, women do not have positions in decision-making bodies on the environment and natural resources at either the government or non-governmental level. There are also no gender units or specialists for the sector.

HEALTH

Access and Affordability

In Ethiopia, women have the right of access to health centers without discrimination, although there are problems obtaining these services. Health care has not evolved to a level where there is cultural and gender sen-

sitivity in relation to religious and ethnic diversities, or to where human rights and ethical standards are focused on ensuring consent. It is understood, however, that adolescents and girls have special needs and there is an effort to address, these. Obstacles to full and comprehensive access to primary health care include a lack of resources, both in terms of financial and human resources.

In Kenya, not all women have access to quality affordable primary health care. Quality care is provided by private hospitals, which are unaffordable to poor women, who resort to herbal treatment and indigenous medicines. However, women who have been detained in correctional centers are treated free of charge. Health care services are also not gender or culturally sensitive in relation to the diversity of religious and ethnic communities. Human rights and ethical standards are also sometimes not adhered to. Young girls and adolescents have their special medical needs met to a small extent, but mostly by NGO-run clinics and drop-in centers.

In Somalia, in the absence of central government authority and apart from private clinics, local NGOs run medical care centers are run by local NGOs at various locations with the support of international partners. These services are inadequate to cover needs. In Tanzania, there is little information about access to quality primary health care. There is no information available about the sensitivity of health services relative to culture and gender, or on human rights and ethical standards. Not all women have access to quality primary health care in Rwanda.

Reproductive Health

In Ethiopia, obstacles to sexual and reproductive health services and maternal health care include a lack of resources and traditional beliefs that discriminate against women. While women and girls have some information about family planning, prenatal and postnatal services and abortion, they do not have much access to family planning measures or safe abortion, which is illegal in Ethiopia.

In Somalia, women who visit medical care centers receive, to some extent, information on reproductive health. However, this information is insufficient. Because there has been no government in place, NGOs have

been monitoring and collecting data on maternal health.

In Uganda, reproductive health issues are addressed through the Multi-sectoral AIDS Control Approach (MACA) and have been integrated into other relevant sectoral policies such as the National Health Policy, National Adolescent Health Policy, National Youth Policy, National Gender Policy and School Health Policy (still a draft). The National Health Policy addresses issues of maternal mortality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, including essential antenatal obstetric care, family planning and adolescent reproductive health. The National Gender Policy facilitates the mainstreaming of gender in health services delivery. The Ministry of Health also has a program that advocates for sexual and reproductive rights and supports capacity building through training to improve the performance of public sector and non-governmental staff delivering services.

In Kenya, women living in urban areas have better access to sexual and reproductive health information than women living in rural areas, especially where town centers are far from their homes. Family planning, prenatal and post-natal services and emergency contraception are not always easily available. There is no specialized treatment available for unsafe abortions, as abortion is illegal in Kenya. At present there is a debate on whether or not abortion should be legalized. Laws exist that specifically address maternal health, particularly maternal mortality and morbidity, but they are not fully implemented because of diverse cultural and religious beliefs. Lack of political support has meant that the National Social Health Insurance Fund Bill has faced opposition from some quarters.

Policy commitments in Tanzania give women and girls full access to information regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights and to quality family planning. However, the translation of this policy into practice is low, and resource limitation is a big challenge to the realization of the policy goals and commitments for this sector. Abortion is illegal in Tanzania, although it counts for 16 percent of maternal morbidity and mortality.[3]

HIV / AIDS

In Ethiopia, HIV/AIDS information and services are available to most women, unlike other health services, because of high government and NGO involvement in the area. Women are involved to some extent in the design of services.

In Somalia, the provision of HIV/AIDS-related health services and information is in

the beginning stages. HIV/AIDS prevalence is low compared to neighboring countries. Local NGOs and international partners are undertaking campaigns on HIV/AIDS awareness-building and prevention measures. As a result, women and girls are receiving relevant information. Health professionals, social workers, religious scholars and youth are the main disseminators of this information.

In Uganda, the Government has put in place a number of policies dealing with HIV/AIDS. Uganda recognized the problem of HIV/AIDS in 1982 and responded by formulating and adopting a Multi-sectoral AIDS Control Approach (MACA) in 1992 and a National Operation Plan in 1993. The Uganda AIDS Commission was established under the Office of the President. The Commission developed a comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Policy that tries to ensure that all people, especially women, are protected from HIV/AIDS through access to information.

In Kenya, HIV/AIDS-related health ser-

vices and information are available to all women, including pregnant women and girls, sex workers and transgendered individuals. The Government has established a health committee to oversee work around the HIV/AIDS pandemic, although women's representation on this committee is low. Government and civil society disseminate information on HIV/AIDS. Currently, no laws and policies exist to protect people living with HIV/AIDS and provide them with government benefits. An HIV/AIDS bill is soon to be tabled in Parliament, advocating for free treatment of non-discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.[4]

In Tanzania, the Government has formulated and is implementing a National Policy on HIV/AIDS. Additionally, a National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS (2003-2007) and a Community Based Strategic Framework for the Protection of Women and Children Against AIDS and HIV (2001-2005) have also been developed.

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Notes

1. African Gender Development Index, Tanzania.

2. Forum for African Women Educationalists.

3. Ministry of Health, Tanzania, 2003.

4. Kenya Network of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (KENWA), Kenya.

NORTHERN AFRICA
Modest Gains Underscore Lack of Government Commitment

The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 was perceived as a important victory by women from North Africa, who felt that gender-based discriminatory practices and cultural beliefs could no longer be justified or accepted.

However, progress is slow and women in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia are frustrated by the strategies their respective government have adopted to implement CEDAW. These have often failed to implement and achieve the goals and objectives of the Convention.

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and the Millennium Declaration in 2000, North African countries have recognized the importance of gender equality, education, health and women's empowerment. However, progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment remains modest and economic globalization has worsened the living conditions for women across the board.

Despite some gains, the development context has not worked in favor of North African women. Although Algeria has adopted programs aimed at strengthening women's participation in political, economic and social spheres, the three countries tend to focus on

women's participation in development as opposed to integrating a gender perspective into development programs.

National policies and programs have been established to eradicate illiteracy, especially among women and girls. Health problems remain acute among women, especially in rural areas. NGOs play a critical role in dealing with HIV/AIDS-related care.

Tunisian women have benefited from progressive legislation on personal status adopted during the Bourguiba era (1956) and Moroccan women have recently obtained reform of their Moudawana (family code) giving them relatively extended personal rights, including within the family, Algerian women are still negotiating the revision of their retrograde Personal Status Code.

Despite some gains, such as remarkably increased participation of women in the Moroccan Parliament, or the eligibility of Algerian women to take part in presidential elections, North African women remain under-represented in decision-making, and legal and de facto inequalities persist. In addition, the 30 percent quota recommended by the UN and demanded by women's organizations is yet to be implemented.

Ultimately, commitment at the highest political level is essential to achieving gender equality and poverty eradication.

HUMAN RIGHTS

CEDAW Compliance

A review of the ratification status of the main international instruments relating to women's rights reveals only partial accessions of the three countries in question. Such accessions are generally qualified by

reservations, particularly when it comes to CEDAW. This is partly explained by the simultaneous commitments of the three countries to other regional instruments in connection with Islamic, Arab and African communities. Most of the reservations to CEDAW relate to laws derived from religious scriptures such as the Koran.

All three countries have implemented certain laws in order to be in line with CEDAW's provisions. For example, Morocco has adopted the Reform of the Mudawana (Code relating to Personal Status or Family Law), passed a new Labor Law, drawn up a Bill relating to the employment of girls, and repealed Art 418 of the Penal Code relating

to adultery. As noted above, Algeria is in the process of revising its Personal Status Code.

While legislation in the three countries is not unfavorable to women in general, the implementation of anti-discrimination laws remains problematic.

National Law

In all three countries, equality of men and women is enshrined in the constitution.

In Algeria, Article 29 of the Constitution states: "Citizens are equal before the law, with no possibility of discrimination on the basis of birth, race, gender, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance whatsoever."

In Morocco, Article 5 of the Constitution states "every Moroccan citizen is equal before the law." It therefore enshrines the equality of women and men in their right to vote and be eligible for elective office, and the substantive law affirms the equality of political rights.

In Tunisia, Article 6 of the Constitution of 1959 recognizes that all citizens have the same rights and responsibilities and are equal before the law, and Article 20 recognizes the right of both genders to vote.

The laws containing gender discrimination that have a disproportionate impact on women include those related to marital age; the protection of the rights of women and children; the right to divorce; the institution of family courts; pensions for divorced mothers having custody of their children; the right of women married to foreigners to transmit their nationality to their children; the community of property in marriage; and violence against women and sexual harassment.

Violence Against Women

With regard to violence against women, some progress has been made. In terms of physical and emotional abuse of women, awareness campaigns have been started in the three countries, lessening the silence that surrounds the issue. There has also been revision and adoption of legislation, most notably in Morocco's Penal Code, which seeks to end sexual harassment.

Counseling centers for women victims of violence are being put in place in all three countries, and a data collection system has been established at the police station level in Morocco. This progress is due in large part to the actions of the civil society in the three countries, particularly the autonomous feminist movement of the Maghreb.

Within the Gender and Development program—being conducted jointly by the UN

Development Program (UNDP), the UN Development Fund for women (UNIFEM) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)—a National Strategy to Fight Violence against Women (Stratégie Nationale de Lutte contre la Violence à l'Egard des Femmes) has been developed in Morocco. This focuses particularly on advocacy and the setting up of NGOs, as well as supporting the counseling centers in charge of psychological and legal issues for women victims of violence.

There has also been support for a pilot program researching and preventing violence against handicapped women, including awareness-raising in schools in the Meknes region of Morocco, conducted by the Association for the Rehabilitation and Development of Handicapped Women (Association pour la Réinsertion et le Développement de Femmes Handicapées).

In Algeria, a program developed by the "SOS Women in Distress" association (SOS Femmes en Détresse) with the Government includes in particular public awareness-raising in the face of this phenomenon, vocational training, and emotional counseling for women victims of violence.

Representation

Since Beijing, there has been an increase in awareness and it is now possible to see some positive steps, including a woman candidate in the last Algerian presidential election and a significant rise in the number of women Members of Parliament in Morocco, which has put that country at the forefront of the Arab world.

Political training programs have been launched. The Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc) has created an Education Center for the Advancement of Civic Visibility and Women's Empowerment, which has the potential to serve Algerian and Tunisian women as well, since the Democratic Association already collaborates with other regional programs.

Promotion of citizenship is also considered important in enabling women to participate politically; with this objective in mind, a process of analysis and action has been undertaken by women activists in the three countries.

One such measure is the introduction of legislation requiring that political parties and unions put a certain number of women on their lists of candidates. In fact, no autonomous women's labor union yet exists.

Under-representation of women workers within labor unions is apparent almost everywhere. In Algeria, female trade unionists exist in the health and education sectors; in Morocco, they are present in the educational and manufacturing sectors, and in Tunisia, a majority of female trade unionists are found in the textile, health and education sectors. However, the Arab Maghreb Labor Union (Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Maghreb Arabe) has given women workers considerable impetus since it created, in 1995, the Women's Coordination Commission for the Maghreb (Comité Féminin de Coordination Maghrébin).

Other methods being undertaken to increase women's representation are institutional mechanisms being designed to promote gender equality; the compilation of gender-disaggregated databases, which is on the agenda in all three countries; and the inclusion of gender issues in the countries' national development plans, following the development of measuring and monitoring indicators initiated by the Women's Center at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA.) However, due to financial and technical constraints, it is UN agencies, along with certain donors, that are taking on the task of gender mainstreaming.

For example, a program sponsored by UNDP, in support of the Moroccan Statistics Bureau (Direction de la Statistique du Maroc), aims to formulate a national strategy for the production, use and dissemination of gender-disaggregated statistics, including an analytical study of the current situation and the evolution of disparities between men and women, based on the statistics available.

In addition, the Coalition of NGOs (in collaboration with UNIFEM) has developed a research and advocacy program for the promotion of women's political participation with a view to obtaining the revision of electoral laws to promote women's political participation.

Macroeconomic Policies, Development Strategies

At present, the three countries display different dynamics in their modernization and economic transition. Nevertheless, in recent years, women's areas of economic activity have been impacted by a generalized decline in monetary income, an increase in international interest rates and domestic budgetary cutbacks. There has been a relative retrogression of the stabilized wage-earning class; an

increase in female seasonal work; a growth in the informal sector, drawing for the most part on women; and an increase in unemployment affecting women in particular, with, as a corollary, an increase in poverty on the labor market.

Labeled "restructuring of the economy and business" in Algeria, "raising the level of business" in Tunisia and "liberalization" or "privatization" in Morocco, all these reforms imply the withdrawal of the state. Therefore, the promotion of women's place in the economy has become a secondary consideration, all the more so since the ministries responsible for finance and the economy, relatively ignorant of gender issues, take a macroeconomic view of things.

Increasing poverty in the three Maghreb countries is one of the principal threats to economic transition. To eradicate this phenomenon, they have initiated programs to combat poverty where considerable importance is accorded to the most deprived. Among these are women since, in all three countries, the profile of the typical pauper and the typical woman are interchangeable. However, in setting up its programs each country acts according to its own philosophy; thus, Algeria believes that singling out women with regard to certain programs amounts to marginalizing them.

On the whole, all three countries have little room for maneuver in solving this issue since they have important constraints, so they are trying to develop national programs that benefit society as a whole.

Some initiatives are also being undertaken by NGOs with bilateral cooperation, the means at their disposal and the help of multinational bodies. Regional programs could be envisioned, but need to be able to adapt to different levels, since the countries are at different degrees of development.

In Algeria the state has been the principal social and economic player. In the last decade measures have been taken by the Governments, under pressure from international bodies, to develop a view to liberalizing the economy. Currently a transition is underway; from a centralized, planned economy, we are moving towards a free market economy. Although the public sector is showing the way, the private sector is not following. At the same time, industrialization is hampered by a decline in productive investment, which is leading to a decline in the workforce. These changes are having a profound influence on the socio-economic situation of the stakeholders, especially women, caught in the evolution of the Algerian economy.

The full-employment economy Algeria used to know was based on dividends derived essentially from oil, which gave rise to a politics of distribution in which the state was the main job provider. This situation was seen as a way to promote democracy and women's rights. However, the increase in wealth achieved by craftswomen, for example, in small output production (informal domestic environment) has done little to contribute to their independence, according to several studies.

The economic structure of Morocco has also undergone profound changes as a result of macroeconomic stabilization policies developed during the 1980s and 1990s against a backdrop of globalization. The labor market finds itself subject to increasingly powerful imbalances and pressures, which translate into changes in women's roles. The spread of more flexible, informal jobs is contributing to an increase in women's share in the labor market, but which it is also putting them in jobs not covered by labor laws. Regular, full-time, remunerated work is being progressively replaced by different forms, characterized by flexibility and precariousness. Morocco has tried to find alternatives, such as granting small loans to women and setting up a Young Pioneers Program.

In order to successfully enter the global economy, Tunisia continues to invest in the enhancement of human resources. For example, support for education and training accounted for 7 percent of GDP. In addition, to counter the negative effects of globalization, Tunisia is tackling the collateral effects of liberalization with social support in order to preserve the socio-economic equilibrium and temper the excesses of the free market. This helped reduce the percentage of people living in poverty from 6.7 percent in 1990 to 6 percent in the current year.

Employment Patterns, Women's Work

The profound changes undergone by the three economies in recent decades have certainly resulted in a significant increase in women's activity rate in the formal employment sector: Algeria: 12 percent; Morocco; 20 percent; and Tunisia, 24 percent.

Conditions for entering the workforce in Algeria have improved for young men, even though young women are more actively searching for a job. As working women, their situation is characterized by uncertainty and lack of skills; the jobs offered to them continue to be concentrated in a limited number of sectors and professions: manufacturing (43.4%) and services (37%). They are for the most part employed as low-level workers. College graduates are currently unemployed for an average of 23.1 months.

In Tunisia, the evolution of women's entry into the workforce is characterized by an increasing proportion of remunerated positions (held by 70% of working women) and, inversely, by a decline in the number of self-employed women (17.5% in 1999 against 28.0% in 1984). Women are more likely than men to be unemployed (16.7% for women against 15.4 percent for men) and their access to decision-making positions is limited. There are very few women executives—1.6 percent of the total women's workforce in 1990. In 2000, there were 13,274 industrial corporations of which 783 (5.9%) were run by women.

Economic reforms instituted in the three countries have resulted in a decline in purchasing power for wage-earning women. Seventy percent of working women fall into this category, 30 percent of whom earn either the minimum guaranteed inter-professional wage (SMIG) or the minimum agricultural wage (SMAG).

It is with these issues in mind that the three countries have sought to remedy the problem by developing social programs, giving rise to public spending that has reached 20 percent of GDP in some cases.

EDUCATION

International Agreements

All three countries are parties to the UN Convention against Discrimination in Education. The right to education is accorded to girls

Elderly woman in Tunisia.

> The spread of more flexible, informal jobs is contributing to the increase of women in the labor market, but it is also putting women in jobs not covered by labor laws.

and boys alike—in Morocco under article 13 of the Moroccan Constitution and the Royal Dahir of November 13, 1963 which decreed nine years of mandatory basic education. In Algeria, article 50 of the Constitution enshrines gender equality in the right to education, which is mandatory from 6 to 16 years of age. The Algerian legislation—and notably the Ordinance of 1976 on the organization of education and training—are in conformity with international treaties, in particular the International Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 1989 in the chapter on education.

Public Policy

The admission of women into the educational system is a widely accepted idea in these three countries, but the provision of education for girls varies from one country to another and is less widespread and systematic in rural than in urban areas.

Moreover, while relative illiteracy rates have declined in the three countries, one might say that the number of illiterate people has risen if one considers the phenomenon of functional illiteracy that affects boys and girls expelled from the educational system each year.

In all three countries, the right to education is guaranteed, and this education is free according to the conditions established by the law. This explains the remarkable progress achieved in these areas.

Vocational training in the three countries is is also covered by legislation. There are training centers (public and private) as well as technical institutes for boys and girls. But the need for training remains high in the three countries. Vocational training is also too dispersed, too piece-meal, and lacking conceptual thinking, analysis and diversified field experiences.

Generally speaking the demand for vocational training among young women is centered on traditional crafts (weaving, sewing, embroidery, hairdressing). So there is a need to dispel the myth that these are the only prospects for girls that are stable, wage-earning and profitable. With this aim, an NGO is training female plumbers in Fes and soon in Meknes (Morocco) with support from France.

Progress has been made in girls' school enrolment thanks to a number of initiatives, such as awareness-raising campaigns; the creation of girls-only schools; the construction of schools and dormitories in rural areas; the granting of scholarships for girls; and national literacy programs specifically focused on women.

However, the dropout rate for girls is still high in all three countries, particularly in rural areas, as is the illiteracy rate. For all three countries, national literacy programs for girls constitute part of the social programs supported by national structures and international organizations. Yet the results remain limited. A majority of women would prefer vocational training with a view to joining the remunerated workforce.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Decision-Making

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women represent 53.2 percent of non-remunerated agricultural labor in Morocco.

A number of NGOs have launched initiatives to assist disadvantaged rural women. Increasingly, development projects targeting rural women sanction the creation of micro-businesses, a measure definitely in harmony with the demands of the market that should reduce poverty in rural areas, solve the problem of gender inequality and stimulate economic growth. Nevertheless, in order to take advantage of these possibilities, rural women must overcome a number of obstacles including access to markets, training and loans.

In addition, the FAO has developed a plan of action for parity in development. The Subregional Office for Northern Africa has undertaken several tasks concerning this plan. For example, the Compilation and Dissemination of Information relating to Gender Equality in Farming and Rural Development, which includes data on gender roles in the context of regional priorities, is currently being collected in order to make the contribution of women more visible. Also, the role of traditional wisdom in the preservation of biodiversity and food security is being addressed through the Dimitra Program, which is committed to making the voices of rural women heard and to empowering them through access to information and communication it works in close collaboration with local partners in the region.

HEALTH

Reproductive Health

Health, in particular women's reproductive health, is another area where considerable progress has been made. The adoption and implementation of specific programs have reduced maternal mortality rates, especially in rural areas. These programs have involved setting up systems to monitor maternal health, raising awareness among adolescents and encouraging medically assisted births.

HIV/AIDS

The incidence of HIV/AIDS cases in Northern Africa is relatively low (less than 1 percent in most countries). Nevertheless, the epidemiological transition phase in which some countries find themselves, in particular those bordering sub-Saharan Africa countries affected by the pandemic, should encourage highly regional leaders to be more vigilant and rigorous in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

A number of national approaches to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS have been undertaken. The strategies adopted include awareness-raising and prevention campaigns in collaboration with civil society, screening campaigns and the creation of clinics for the infected.

To fight against the spread of the disease, a number of countries in the region have committed considerable resources to establishing reference laboratories, national blood committees, monitoring sites focused on at-risk groups, obligatory screening of blood and blood products and regional units to care for the people infected. A number of information and communication drives focused on the youth have been initiated, as have diagnosis programs and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, along with other preventative and curative measures.

In many instances, efforts to counter the pandemic have been reinforced by the creation of HIV/AIDS epidemic monitoring mechanisms and the passing of laws relating to STDs. These recommend, among other things, informing the patient about which disease he/she is infected with.

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SOUTHERN AFRICA
Women's Equality Depends on Fulfilling Global Promises

Over the last decade the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) has seen some progress in the advancement of women's rights, but gender imbalances continue to persist. In all of the SADC States the increased participation of women in all sectors has contributed to improvements in the economy. In spite of progress in addressing gender inequality in line with the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other regional and international instruments, there are still a number of weaknesses at national and regional levels. This has resulted in slowing down progress towards the achievement of the commitments made in these policy instruments.

At regional level core areas of gender imbalance have not been addressed in sectoral policies, strategies and programs, particularly in the area of women in decision-making and access to and ownership of land and other resources. A second gap is that the SADC Gender and Development Declaration and its addendum is not legally binding This is coupled with the region's failure to incorporate international human rights instruments into domestic laws and policies, without which the rights of women will continue to exist on paper only. There has also been a weakening of the women's movement as the older and experienced generation has not adequately mentored the younger generation. Poor financing and budgeting weakens national gender machineries.

Despite the above shortcomings, all countries in the region have adopted, to some extent, legal frameworks that address gender equality. However, constitutional reform is necessary in cases where customary law discriminates against women. The region has also made great strides in education, bridging the gap between boys and girls from primary through to tertiary levels. However, some of these gains are being eroded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as by the impact of the structural adjustment programs that have removed government subsidies. The same erosion of gains can also be found in the health sector, which has deteriorated over the years due to the introduction of user fees and to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Poverty in the region is increasing due to a number of factors discussed in this section. Unless concerted efforts are made to address the gender disparities in the region, poverty levels will continue to rise.

Overview of the SADC Region

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) was established in August 1992 and is the successor to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, which was originally set up to promote regional integration in 1980. The following countries make up SADC: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Currently SADC has an estimated population of 200 million people, a combined GDP of US$180 billion (1999 est.) and geographical area covering 3.6 million square miles.

The objectives of SADC are, firstly, to achieve development and economic growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration; secondly, to promote self-sustaining development on the basis of collective self reliance and the interdependence of Member States; thirdly, to achieve complementarity between national and regional strategies and programs; fourthly, to promote and maximize productive employment and utilization of the resources of the region; and lastly, to achieve sustainable utilization of natural resources and effective protection of the environment.

There are seven areas for regional cooperation: food security, land and agriculture; infrastructure and services; industry, trade, investment and finance; human resources development, science and technology; natural resources and environment; social welfare, information and culture; and politics, diplomacy, international relations, peace and security.

The SADC Programme of Action (SPA) spells out the policy objectives, strategies and projects designed to realize the Community's overall goals and objectives. The number of projects under the SPA stands at approximately 407 with an estimated total cost of US$8.09 billion.[1]

Since 1980, SADC States have made firm commitments to eradicate extreme poverty and lift the living standards of the region. Various policies, measures and strategies to address this problem have been put in place. As a result, most Member States registered positive growth rates during the late 1990s.

At the regional level, an average of 3 percent annual economic growth was recorded in the 1990s. While Member States such as Botswana, Mauritius and Mozambique registered an average growth of above 5 percent, the majority of countries recorded annual average growth rates below 4 percent. SADC economies grew at a combined rate of 3 percent in 2000.[2]

HUMAN RIGHTS

The 14 Member States have ratified several key international, regional and national human rights declarations and conventions that promote and protect women's rights in all spheres of life. SADC Member States are party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) and its protocols (1966 and 1989); the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952); and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). At the regional level SADC governments have ratified and acceded to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. An Optional Protocol to the Charter was adopted in 2003 but has not yet been ratified by any of the SADC Member States.

The issue of non-discrimination in the region is addressed through the SADC Treaty and Protocol that obliges Member States not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of gender, among other criteria. The SADC governments have also signed and adopted the 1997 Gender and Development Declaration and its 1998 addendum on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children. This non-binding document is being used as a framework for mainstreaming gender activities and strengthening the efforts by Member States to achieve gender equality. The Declaration is in line with the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, The Africa Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It is considered one of the most

important regional instruments to come into force on gender, development and democracy in recent years, and has set a precedent in Africa in terms of commitment to gender at the highest levels.

All SADC countries operate on constitutional supremacy, i.e. their constitutions form the highest law of the land. With the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Swaziland, all the constitutions include a Bill of Rights derived from the provisions of the UDHR, outlining the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. Several countries have reviewed their constitutions in line with the Beijing Platform for Action.

While discrimination is outlawed in the SADC constitutions, the full enjoyment of women's rights is limited or curtailed to some extent in all of the countries. This is discussed in more detail later in this section. Despite their ratification of/accession to international instruments, the majority of the SADC countries have not translated these instruments into domestic laws, except for Namibia and South Africa. International instruments can only become part of domestic law after ratification by the individual parliaments. Although SADC Member States have demonstrated political will when it comes to international and regional human rights instruments, this has not resulted in an effective mechanism to protect women's rights.

Women comprise 70 percent of the illiterate in the SADC region. As a result many women are unaware of the legal instruments that exist to protect them. There has been little effort to make the content of these laws accessible to the majority of the population. Legal education in most of the SADC countries starts at tertiary levels, and statistics show that a very small percentage of women reach that educational level.

CEDAW Compliance

As noted above, all SADC countries are party to CEDAW. The Kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland have ratified CEDAW but with reservations based on the need to protect their customs and practices.[3] Only four countries—Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius and Namibia—have signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Although CEDAW does not form part of the domestic law in the majority of the Member States, the judiciary can reference it to make judgments on women's rights. CEDAW has been used successfully in Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia in the following cases: *Dow v. Attorney General [1991]*

L.R.C. (Const. [1992] L.R.C. (Const.) (women's right to retain their nationality in marriage and pass it on to their children); *Ephrohim v. Pastory 87 I.L.R. 106 [1990] L.R.C 757* (women's right to inherit and dispose of property); *and Sara H. Longwe v. Intercontinental Hotels 1992/HP/765* (discrimination against unaccompanied women).[4]

CEDAW was used unsuccessfully in Zimbabwe in the case of *Magaya v. Magaya*, an inheritance case in which the Zimbabwe Government through the Supreme Court failed to apply provisions of CEDAW. This resulted in Venia Magaya being disinherited by her half brother. The Court relied instead on constitutional provisions that that are at variance with the provisions of CEDAW and allow for discrimination against women.

As previously mentioned, few international human rights instruments have become domestic law, despite governments having ratified/acceded to them. As a result, there has been insufficient gender mainstreaming in other human rights instruments that are pertinent to the promotion and protection of the rights of women at national and regional levels. However, a number of SADC countries have initiated measures aimed at domesticating provisions of CEDAW and some other international human rights instruments.

It is also reported that in most countries CEDAW has triggered the creation of law reform commissions and the review of national legislation in areas such as violence against women, education, inheritance, citizenship and access to and control of land and other natural resources. In terms of domestic violence, the region in 1998 adopted an addendum to the SADC Gender Declaration that specifically addresses issues of gender-violence.

A number of research organizations have been set up in the region to advocate for legal reforms at both the national and regional levels. Some of them, including Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) and Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (WLSA), work directly with the governments.

National Law

The constitutions of the SADC countries emphasize the notion of "equality before the law," which enables people to exercise their individual rights and use the law to their advantage. However, not all people in the region, in both urban and rural areas, are aware of these constitutional provisions. The majority of people are more comfortable relying on the "living law"—rules and regulations

Box 9. Ratification/ Accession to CEDAW by SADC Member States

Country	Ratification/Accession	
	Yes/No	Reservations
Angola	Yes	None
Botswana	Yes	None
DRC	Yes	None
Lesotho	Yes	Yes
Madagascar	Yes	None
Malawi	Yes	None
Mauritius	Yes	None
Mozambique	Yes	None
Namibia	Yes	None
South Africa	Yes	None
Swaziland[1]	Yes	Yes
Tanzania	Yes	None
Zambia	Yes	None
Zimbabwe	Yes	None

Source: SADC 2002

people use on a daily basis based on their beliefs, norms and practices—instead of the law in the books. People are also discouraged from using the law in the books because of the tedious procedures involved, the cost of litigation and the distance of the courts. The "living law" offers more security because the process is undertaken within the community and the proceedings are familiar.

As noted above, a number of countries have incorporated a Bill of Rights into their constitutions, National constitutions also contain specific articles and sections that prohibit discrimination against citizens on a number of grounds. In Angola the 1992 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. It is notable for granting men and women equal rights within marriage and family law and goes even further by recognizing both registered and non-registered marriages and granting equal protection to both. However, other key aspects of gender discrimination are omitted, such as age, marital status, pregnancy and culture.

The 1966 Botswana Constitution prohibits discrimination but does not extend to areas of personal law. This means the continuation of customary laws that allow for discrimination against women. Botswana, however, is one of the countries in which laws that protect women have been promulgated. The precedent for this was set in the 1991 case of Unity Dow mentioned above.

The Namibian Constitution recognizes equality before the law regardless of sex. It also recognizes affirmative action as a specific tool for the advancement of women. How-

ever, the majority of the constitutions in the region, like that of Botswana, perpetuate discrimination against women at the constitutional level by protecting customary law. Laws that have been passed to protect women against discrimination have to be interpreted through constitutional provisions. Therefore, even though efforts have been made to recognize the role of women and remove discriminatory practices, there is still a lot to be done at the constitutional level.

On a positive note, a number of SADC countries have passed new laws on inheritance that protect women's property from being disposed of after the death of their spouses. Women are also being protected in cases of divorce through the equitable distribution of matrimonial property. Zimbabwe, for example, has passed a new inheritance law, which allows women to inherit from their husbands or fathers and mandates that surviving children will share the estate equitably. The law has also made provisions to protect women in polygamous unions, by equally dividing the estate of their late spouse.

Every member state except for Angola, Mozambique and Swaziland has adopted national gender policies and gender policy plans, which are being implemented.[5] Institutional mechanisms in the form of ministries, directorates and departments/divisions have been formed and established in the Member States to coordinate gender issues. Gender policies have been translated into local languages. In Zambia, for example, the policy has been translated into the seven major local languages of the country. In order to ensure that the gender policy plans are fully implemented, most of the Member States have established gender focal points to which senior personnel are appointed and provided with gender training. In order to monitor the process of gender mainstreaming in the different sectors, the gender focal points are made accountable through reports to their principals and to parliament.[6]

A number of women's lawyers' associations also have been set up to help explain the law and assist poor women with court litigation. Soon after the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Government of Zimbabwe, with financial assistance from the Norwegian Agency for Development Coordination (NORAD), implemented a legal education program that was meant to help communities understand family law, and train trainers of trainers who would assist the community with legal matters.[7] Paralegal centers were also set up in most of the southern African countries to assist the grass-

roots with legal information and litigation. These centers help translate laws into local languages and make it easier for community members to understand the law and make informed decisions.

Violence Against Women

The SADC governments recognize violence as a human rights issue as enshrined in the addendum to the 1997 Gender and Development Declaration. In order to turn this commitment into action, the different Member States are developing national plans, bills and laws that address violence and especially

domestic and gender-based violence. Of note among the actions being pursued in the region is the promulgation of violence acts and sexual offences acts that include the criminalization of marital rape, and the willful transmission of HIV/AIDS.[8] Much work is still needed to educate people on the laws against violence in the region.

A number of countries have set up family courts to hear cases involving rape and child molestation. This approach has been commended for giving women privacy and Protection when going through a rape trial. In addition, SADC countries have been working with civil society and NGOs to set up refugee shelters for abused women. Qualified personnel offer counseling and legal advice to the victims of gender and domestic violence.

Numerous initiatives are being undertaken throughout the region to sensitize and train uniformed personnel, especially the police, on gender and domestic violence issues. Public relations departments have been set up in many police stations, and since 1995 women have been able to report a case of domestic or gender violence in private rather than in the front office of a police station. Social workers are affiliated with police stations to provide initial counseling to the victims.

There has been a marked decline in the reported cases of female genital mutilation (FGM). HIV/AIDS has become a regional priority for Member States, and as a result of better education above the disease, the belief that infected men will be cured if they have sex with a virgin has declined. The belief had resulted in the abuse of young children and had increased the incidence of HIV/AIDS among youth. The use of girl children as an

appeasement token, where girls are given away by their family to another family to remedy a wrongdoing, is now considered a criminal act and has deterred a number of would-be perpetrators.

Peace and Security

Although the SADC region enjoys some degree of peace, both within and between Member States, armed conflicts have emerged in many countries as a result of hosting refugees. Some of the refugees in the region over the last 10 years have come from SADC

countries themselves that have gone through civil wars, for example Angola and the DRC. Some SADC countries have hosted refugees from as far as Burundi and Rwanda. In response to these calamities, the region has initiated various programs to strengthen and inculcate a culture of peace in the region.

Women and children form the majority of the people that are affected by war and armed conflict; however, their participation in peace processes has been negligible. Women are not involved in the decision-making processes that lead to either the declaration or ending of a war. In 2003 the Economic Commission for Africa noted that the SADC governments have helped reunite displaced families and have also played a role in reconstruction processes at different levels.

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Representation

The SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) commits Member States to ensure the equal representation of women and men in national decision-making processes and SADC structures at all levels, and to achieve at least a 30 percent target of women in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005. The 2004 African Union Gender Declaration goes further, calling for gender parity in decision-making and for the Member States to increase the target to 50 percent.

Over the last decade there has been both progress and stagnation in the numbers of women in decision-making positions in the region. The percentage of women in decision making in the public sector has increased in

> Even though efforts have been made to remove discriminatory practices, much still needs to be done at the Constitutional level .

some countries while in others it has drastically decreased. An analysis of the available data reveals that in most SADC countries, women remain under-represented in politics and other decision-making areas.

In 2000 women comprised 15 percent of parliaments in half of the SADC countries. South Africa has the highest percentage of women at 29 percent, almost reaching the 30 percent target for the region. Mozambique had 28.4 percent women parliamentarians in 2000, followed by the Seychelles with 24 percent.[9] Out of the three countries that held elections in 2000, only Tanzania increased the proportion of women in parliament (from 16.3 percent to 21.2 percent) and local government councilors there also went from 25 percent to 33.3 percent. Mauritius and Zimbabwe experienced a drop in the proportion of women in parliament from 7.6 percent and 14 percent to 5.9 percent and 10 percent respectively.[10]

At an average of 17.9 percent, the proportion of women in parliament in SADC is considerably higher than the African average of 11 percent, the average in sub-Saharan Africa of 9 percent and the global average of 13.4 percent. The proportion is also higher than that of Europe and the Americas, which stands at 15 percent. In fact, three of the top ten countries in the world with high female representation in parliament are in southern Africa.[11] However, it should be noted that these three countries are responsible for the

Celebrating the launch of a 50/50 campaign in Namibia.

high average. Half of the SADC countries are actually still below 15 percent, which is far from the 30 percent target of the region. It is even further from the 50 percent target of the Africa Union. At the time that these statistics were compiled there were less than five years left to reach the regional target.[12]

Even countries that are doing well in terms of women's representation in parliament are not necessarily performing well at other levels of decision-making, such as in local government and at senior public service levels. Only South Africa has reached the target of 30 percent, with Botswana and Tanzania showing figures of 15 percent and above. The other countries have percentages of between 4 percent and 14.3 percent.[13] Juxtaposing the parliamentary figures with the cabinet and public sector figures of women's representation, it becomes clear that, other than South Africa, women are underrepresented in SADC countries. This has negative consequences for mainstreaming gender and achieving gender equity and equality as agreed to in the Beijing Platform for Action.[14]

In 2004, three southern African countries—Botswana, Malawi and South Africa—held elections. The other states in the region will be going through the same process this year and into next year. The results of the elections in South Africa showed an increase in the number of women parliamentarian from 30 percent to 32 percent and Malawi had an increase from 8 percent to 17 percent. Malawi thus actually doubled the number of female parliamentarians. On the other hand, Botswana experienced a decline in the number of women in parliament and recorded a drop from 18 percent to 7 percent.[15]

Those countries that have upcoming elections are at risk of experiencing a decline in women's representation similar to what occurred in Botswana. Zimbabwe, for example, will undoubtedly experience a drop in the number of women parliamentarians as a result of the country's uneven playing field.

The rules and procedures that determine the selection of candidates in political parties have profound effects on the number of women that run for elections in the SADC countries. Political parties are usually headed by men and are typically gender blind. Traditional stereotypes are often brought into the political process, and as a result women are marginalized. It is therefore important that candidate selection processes are inclusive, transparent and democratic. This can be achieved through the introduction of quota systems, which some of the SADC countries have implemented. Women are more likely to be elected when political parties use a combination of proportional representation and quotas.[16]

Another approach for bringing more women into public office is instituting a constitutional quota. Tanzania is the only country in the region that has done this, with the Constitution stating that at least 20 percent of MPs must be women.

Women candidates for parliament are also constrained by lack of finances. An interview with the Deputy Speaker of Parliament for Zimbabwe confirmed that the election process there, and processes throughout the region, are not woman-friendly. Women usually have a lower economic status than men and are unable to complete with men who have more resources at their disposal. Women are also less likely to engage in illicit actions, such as bribery, that sometimes occur during an election period.

Impact of Representation

During the past ten years, three countries have appointed female deputy speakers—the DRC, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. A female Prime Minister was appointed in Mozambique. Other countries have appointed women clerks of the national assemblies, a director of public prosecution and ministers responsible for the national gender machineries. In Zimbabwe, a female Vice President has been appointed. This is the second appointment in the region of women to presidential and prime minister levels.

The presence of women in decision-making positions has led to gender mainstreaming in policy formulation throughout the SADC region. This is evidenced by the promulgation or passing of bills that are gender sensitive and that protect women against violence, and improve their inheritance rights.

Women's representation in decision-making positions has also led to the establishment of women parliamentary caucuses, which have brought together female parliamentarians from different parties. A Women's Parliamentary Caucus has been established at the regional level and has been advocating for the 30 percent quota of women in parliamentary positions. Its efforts paid off in South Africa where, as noted above, the number of female parliamentarians increased from 30 percent to 32 percent in the 2004 elections.

POVERTY ERADICATION

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stated in 1995 that more than a billion people in the world were living in poverty, the majority in sub–Saharan Africa. Poverty in all its dimensions is one of the major development challenges facing the SADC region, where there are low levels of

income and high levels of human deprivation. Available statistics indicate that about 70 percent of the population in the region lives below the international poverty line of US$2 per day, while 40 percent of the population—76 million people—live on less than US$1 per day.[17] Recent figures from the World Bank estimate that out of the 14 countries that comprise the region, 80 percent of the population of some countries, such as Mozambique and Zambia, are living in extreme poverty. Out of these figures, more than 60 percent are women from female-headed households and child-headed households, which have risen due to the impact of HIV/AIDS.[18]

During the last decade, the SADC region has made some progress in relation to poverty eradication through micro-financing and credit projects aimed at empowering women economically by providing loans and business training. Governments are also mainstreaming gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and allocating resources and land tenure rights.

One country in the region, Zimbabwe, has created a Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development. Gender budgeting is also another mechanism that has been employed in the region to ensure that an equitable distribution of the country's wealth reaches the poor, particularly women.

All of the countries in the region have put in place mechanisms to allow for equal pay for equal work, and affirmative action has been introduced to ensure women's participation in areas traditionally considered male. Rules and regulations have also been put in place to protect women against employment discrimination in all SADC countries. The implementation of affirmative action measures has also assisted in bridging the gap between male and female employment ratios in the region.

The national machineries for gender are, however, characterized by limited budgets, and are in most cases understaffed, and there is also poor linkage between these and the other sectoral ministries. Another weakness at both national and regional level is that there are few agreed-upon benchmarks and targets, as well as limited monitoring and evaluation tools to track progress on gender equality.

Macroeconomic Policies, Development Strategies

All SADC Member States are impacted by globalization and have at different stages implemented World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies. These policies have resulted in liberal economic reforms that have failed to improve the economic fundamentals, including the disadvantaged position of women and children. With the establishment of structural adjustment programs, the standard of living of women dropped significantly in the region. The removal of subsidies on social services has impacted negatively on women in terms of their access to health services, employment and education for their children. Massive retrenchments have taken place within the formal sector and men have displaced women within the informal sector, which was traditionally women's domain. The neo-liberal policies have also increased the workload of women in all the countries of the region.

In terms of access to health, the reintroduction of the user fees through the structural adjustment programs has led to an increase in infant and maternal mortality rates, reducing the gains that had been made over the years. The same polices have also negatively impacted on women's access to education, especially the girl child, since many parents are now forced to choose between educating boys or girls as a result of economic hardships caused by the removal of subsidies to social services.

EDUCATION

Public Policy

The region has prioritized access to education for its citizens, recognizing the importance of education to poverty eradication efforts. The SADC Member States adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal 2 calls on States to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015. The region adopted the Protocol on Education and Training, which came into force in 2000. The Protocol provides for seven areas of cooperation and seeks to promote a regionally integrated and harmonized educational system, especially with regard to issues pertaining to access, equity, relevance and quality of education interventions. The region has also developed a strategic plan to implement the Protocol. In developing this plan, the region considered the impacts of HIV/AIDS pandemic on education.

Over the past ten years, the region has recorded a significant increase in the enrolment rates of girls, although the net enrolment rates at the primary level remain rather low. At secondary level only four member states have net enrolment rates in the range of 80-100 percent. Tertiary enrolment rates are below 50 percent in most Member States. The region is not fully exploiting the potential of tertiary education, which plays a critical role in the global economy through the high level skills that it produces.

In terms of adult literacy, the region has recorded the lowest average illiteracy rate of 27 percent as compared to other regions in Africa. Some States, however, such as Angola and Mozambique, still have rates above 50 percent. In addition only six Member States have adult literacy rates in the range of 80 percent.

Access and Changes in Practices

A number of gender-sensitive policies have also been put in place in the SADC countries to promote and protect education for girls. Affirmative action programs enable girls to enter tertiary education with lower points that boys and there is a 50/50 enrolment policy at primary levels. The region has also embarked on a program to remove stereotypes in school curricula, especially in the fields of medicine, law and sciences. The introduction and adoption of an affirmative action policy has gone a long way in addressing the negative impacts of stereotypes on women and girls in the region. The Member States have also revised their national education policies to allow for re-entry into school for those girls who become pregnant during their teenage years.

Sexual harassment has been one of the serious issues affecting the continuation of girls' education in most southern African countries. It was and is prevalent among students and by teachers. This has been dealt with by the introduction of policies aimed at protecting girls from such abuse.

Steps are being taken by SADC Member States to attain MDG Goal 3, which calls on States to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005. Even though the enrolment rates in the region have declined, it will at least be able to partially meet this goal by 2015 as the policies and regulations to support the education of girls are implemented.

> Many parents are forced to choose between educating boys or girls as a result of economic hardships.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action calls on governments "to ensure opportunities for women, including indigenous women to participate in environmental decision making at all levels." Even though women are known as managers of the environment and have fostered biodiversity for centuries, their role has been overshadowed in most policy-making. Environmental concerns are not a priority for most countries despite their ratification of a number of international instruments meant to protect the environment. It should be noted that CEDAW is silent on the environment, although Agenda 21—the comprehensive plan of action from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development—has called for the integration of women and gender into the management of the environment.

In the SADC region, women are not adequately involved in this area, a problem compounded by a lack of gender integration into most Member States' environmental policies and plans. In those countries that have engendered their environmental policies and plans, there has been a marked improvement in the representation of women in decision-making areas of environmental management. The Economic Commision for Africa reports in 2004 an increase of 50 percent representation of women in the sector.

An analysis of the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan shows that even though nine targets on environment and sustainable development have been developed, none of them mention gender as an important issue or consider the role of women in environmental management.

Right to Natural Resources

The SADC region is an agro-based economy. The mainstay of its economic development is the sustainable utilization of land and water resources. Agriculture is a major player in the regional economy as it contributes 35 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) and about 60 percent to the employment sector. Of the total SADC population, the majority—70 percent—live in rural areas and are dependent on the land for their livelihoods. Of this 70 percent, 55 percent are women, who do not have direct access and control of the land that they depend on. Due to the dual legal system that is prevalent in the region, women are considered as minors and therefore cannot own property in their own right. They only have secondary users

rights to the land and natural resources that are fundamental to their lives.

Access to and control of land and water is a complex issue in the region. During pre-colonial times, bundles of rights to land that included access to and grazing rights could be held by different persons and group rights to particular areas of land or common property

A show of hands in Namibia.

also existed. The different land rights were transferable from one generation to the next, and decisions on who could use what land were a family matter guided by customs that considered the needs of various persons in the group. Gender, age and position within the family/clan were all factors that played a role in these discussions.

In general, however, the land was managed by the male members of the families and women had secondary rights. The rights of women were of uncertain duration, subject to change and dependent on the maintenance of good relations with the person through whom the land was accessed. In the event that these relations deteriorated, the woman risked being forced off the land. The colonial and postcolonial systems inherited this pattern and it has continued into the postcolonial period in the region, where women still have fewer rights than men.

During pre-colonial and colonial times, access to water was governed by both customary and then contemporary policies. Currently access to water in Southern Africa differs from country to country, although the region does have a protocol on the management of shared water courses. This does not, however, apply to how water is accessed and governed nationally. Fundamentally, a water right is considered a social relationship and an expression of power as it involves access to a valuable resource. Access to land and water in the region is a process of inclusion and exclusion and involves control over decision-making. This is because access to these two resources defines one's position in society and contributes to wealth accumulation.

The southern African countries are undergoing radical changes in policies related to land and water. In most countries of the

region, water is divided into primary and secondary water. Primary water is usually free and designated for domestic purposes while secondary water is now considered an economic good with a price attached to it. In some countries such as Zimbabwe, access to secondary water is now tied to land rights which disadvantages women who do not have direct access to land unless they have acquired it through the market system.

The major cause of change cited in those countries that were formally under colonial rule is to redress the history of racial and social inequity by redistributing the land—emphasising property rights—and the associated allocation of water rights. Two further reasons are to protect scarce environmental resources and to develop a more democratic process of decentralization. The goal is to increase equity in access to key resources and more decentralized modes of governance that would promote more effective use of resources and provide incentives to use resources in more sustainable ways.

However, despite these noble intentions, inequality in rights to land and water still persists and these are derived from gender differentiation, where women have fewer rights and less authority and decision-making power over key resources. Even where there is explicit mention of addressing women's needs and rights, little progress has been made in substantially improving women's roles.

An analysis of women's access and ownership of key resources in the countries of the SADC region shows similarities in the issues that affect women. These can be summarized as an inadequate legal and policy framework, lack of security of tenure, lack of a defined institutional framework, lack of information and lack of political will. A number of countries in the region have or are in the process of developing national land policies while others have started to develop land laws.

HEALTH

In 1999, a SADC Protocol on Health was signed that provides a broad framework for cooperation in health areas posing a major challenge to the region. However, this Protocol has not been implemented. Instead the region has developed the SADC Health Sector Policy paper, which has been guiding its health programs. The paper shows that the average infant mortality rate is 80 per 1,000 live births. Angola has the highest rate at 166 per 1,000 live births. However, in comparison with the rest of Africa—which has a rate of 105 per 1,000 live births—the region has

a low average infant mortality rate, but it lags behind other regions like North America at 6 per 1,000, the European Union at 30 per 1,000 and ASEAN at 45 per 1,000.[19]

HIV/AIDS

Poor health indicators in the SADC region are due to the continued burden of disease, particularly communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, cholera and dysentery. The region has acknowledged that HIV/AIDS is the single greatest developmental and public health concern due to its magnitude. The level of infection of the population of the SADC Member States has put the region at the top of the list of affected regions in the world. Statistics show that at least 20 percent of the whole SADC adult population between the ages of 15 to 49 is currently infected. The highest levels of infection are found in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.[20]

High infection rates like those in Botswana Swaziland, and to some extent South Africa and Zimbabwe, prompted the SADC Heads of State and Governments to adopt the Maseru Declaration on AIDS in 2003. The declaration prioritized five areas of concern in addressing HIV/AIDS, which included the intensification of resource mobilization.

One of the most important outcomes of the Maseru Declaration was the recognition of the role of civil society in the fight against the pandemic. The declaration emphasizes the strengthening of partnerships with NGOs, faith-based institutions, businesses and others. The Declaration also emphasized the importance of mainstreaming the response to HIV/AIDS at the policy and implementation levels.

The different Member States have produced draft reproductive health policy documents to provide guidelines on the mitigation of the pandemic. Programs to prevent parent-to-child transmission have also been launched in different countries of the region, and programs for accessing treatment have also been put in place. Civil society organizations have been involved in treatment awareness campaigns. Free testing centers have been established in a number of countries, and others have instituted an AIDS levy to assist AIDS orphans and other vulnerable groups.

Traditional midwives have also been trained to work in rural areas where health facilities do not exist. However, there are different levels of acceptance or denial of the existence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the stigma attached to the disease persists. In some countries, people still do not believe that AIDS exists. The efforts being undertaken in the region are compatible with Goal 6 of the MDGs, which calls upon States to reduce the number of infected by 50 percent.

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WEST AFRICA
Women's Progress Hampered by New Obstacles

At the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to review implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action five years after its adoption, the participants acknowledged that effective implementation of all the actions would require a universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which outlines legal and political measures as well as programs designed to achieve equality between men and women, regardless of their marital status, in all aspects of political, social and cultural life.

The outcome of the Beijing +5 regional appraisal—the 6th African Regional Conference on Women for the Mid-Decade Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action—organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and held from November 22-27, 1999 in Addis Ababa, was a document strengthening the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and setting new priorities for the next five years.[1] The participating States agreed to review the document after five years and evaluate progress in the critical areas of concern.

The following is an account of the extent to which the commitments made have or have not improved the living conditions of women in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo).

HUMAN RIGHTS

CEDAW Compliance
Every West African nation has ratified CEDAW, and only Niger expressed reservations.[2] In an effort to keep to commitments, considerable efforts have been made, notably in Ghana where a reform process was initiated after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action with a view to complying with CEDAW's provisions and implementing the Platform. In Cape Verde reforms also have been adopted in connection with marriage and divorce, violence and women's political rights. Positive discrimination measures

have been adopted to counter the difficulties women face in enjoying their right to participate in the management of public affairs.

Women's human rights organizations in the region are lobbying to ensure ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding Women's Rights, adopted at the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in July 2003; the process is relatively advanced at year-end 2004.

As with other countries subsequent to the UN women's conferences, especially in the 1990s, the subregion has witnessed a blooming of NGOs working relentlessly for a culture respectful of women's rights. These organizations, often in conjunction with governments, have implemented a variety of programs for the protection, advocacy and promotion of the rights of all women, regardless of their social background.

While the realization of the full rights of women depends primarily on women themselves, it also depends on the various players participating in the implementation of women's rights. Thus, though it is possible to see significant advances in the fulfillment of women's rights in initiatives carried out over the past few years by organizations such as WILDAF and UNIFEM, much remains to be done, since the great majority of players such as magistrates, judges and lawyers responsible for applying the law admit to being unaware of the existence of CEDAW. Others, such as doctors, police officers and traditional and religious leaders, became committed to a greater respect for CEDAW after outreach actions and training.

Only Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal have signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

National Law

As far as possible, the States grant equal rights to men and women. Nevertheless, gender discrimination and religious extremism continue to hamper women in their ability to fully enjoy their freedoms and basic rights.

These customs and traditional values are more often than not underpinned by religious belief, but also by gender-discriminatory laws. The cascade of death penalties handed out to women in the name of the Shari'a in the north of Nigeria conclusively illustrates how a given interpretation of religious precepts leads to discrimination against women in their daily lives.

Numerous laws in the internal legal arsenal still contain provisions that deny women's rights and contribute to the reinforcement of discriminatory practices against

them. Some constitutions, while affirming the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination, nevertheless exclude women from the benefits of these provisions in the areas of personal status and subject marriage to customary rules, precisely the areas where the most blatant violations of women's rights are committed.

In nearly all West African countries the laws governing the individual and the family confer the monopoly of power and decision-making on the husband, seen as the head of the family. The institution in Mali of obligatory obedience to the husband is a clear illustration of the non-recognition of women's right to make decisions in the household, which is true of most African legislation. In Togo, the law allows the husband to oppose his wife's practising a separate profession. In the same country, customary succession legalized by the code governing individuals and families forbids women's access to inheritance.

In Mali and Senegal, an article of law authorizes the application of Islamic succession, which grants woman only half the share a man inherits. In a number of countries, the law applied to labor relations forbids women's access to certain kinds of employment, or makes the permanent employment of interns conditional on the production of a medical certificate stating that they are not pregnant. To these discriminatory laws are added legal loopholes that do nothing to protect women from new forms of abuse of rights.

In some countries, the relatively undemocratic environment reinforces discrimination

and inequality. Women often have difficulty accessing the judicial system due to a lack of education on legal concepts. The non-enforcement of existing laws, the lack of resources allocated and sexist prejudice are other factors bearing on women's capacity to enjoy their rights.

With repeated abuses of young children's rights in recent years, specific legislation has been adopted at the continental level to protect young boys and girls. This legislation is only slowly being translated into national legislations for greater protection of children, the future of the subregion. This explains in part the proliferation of sexual and non-sexual exploitation and trafficking of children—above all, young girls. Unfortunately there has been little work in this area to effectively fight these different abuses.

On a more positive note, Benin adopted a very progressive family law in the subregion. This law bans polygamy, which was previously legal. Laws putting an end to female genital mutilation have been adopted in Benin Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Tago. Senegal has also passed a law punishing domestic violence. However, it should be noted that the arsenal of national legislation needs to be improved and brought in line with international and regional norms relating to human rights.

Public Awareness

In order to help bring about gender equality, NGOs have set up services such as legal aid and the training of paralegals and of person-

Women's weaving project in Senegal.

nel involved in law enforcement. NGOs have also been active in awareness-raising with regard to the rights of women and in advocating for the adoption of new legislation and the reform of discriminatory law.

As a result of these various initiatives, one has seen in the past few years an awakening of women in the subregion who want to claim and exercise their rights. The violence to which they are exposed is no longer a taboo subject, part of the "private matters" about which one must stay quiet. Women are daring to demand to be heard and to be helped in putting an end to the violence. Even if, today, the pressure of family and society is still present and prevents many women from speaking out, people are more attentive to the rights of women.

In a region where approximately 60 percent of women are illiterate, the actions of NGOs vis-à-vis the people are conducted in the local population's languages to make the law more accessible. Support materials and various publications are also made available in the local languages. Thus CEDAW, for example, has been simplified and published in four national languages in Senegal. Similarly, NGOs have used other didactic material such as cartoons and drawings to carry information to non-reading populations.

Efforts are being made to integrate training in the human rights of women into the training programs of stakeholders implicated in the establishing of these rights. In countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, NGOs have been able to obtain government agreements so that these training sessions can perpetuate awareness-raising initiatives and ensure that the rights of women become part of the culture. Similarly, over time, these notions may be introduced to all educational levels in the school system.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is an obstacle to achieving the goals of gender equality, peace and development. Women's rights organizations and several governments have worked to fight against violence. Among the different forms of violence, they have above all underlined female genital mutilation, physical violence, rape and sexual harassment. The mobilization in the past few years against the unacceptably cruel practice of female genital mutilation led, as noted above, to several countries of the subregion adopting legislation against this practise. It is nevertheless deplorable that in the whole subregion, only Senegal has passed specific legislation against

domestic violence and sexual harassment.

The NGOs have focused their awareness-raising campaigns on the effects of violence against women and on providing legal services. Apart from medical services and social support, Benin and Ghana have attempted to meet the needs of women by setting up refuges for the victims of violence. Other initiatives include the establishment of a coalition to fight violence against women, calling on public authorities to condemn all acts of violence against women and girls, and lobbying for laws consistent in their approach to violence. NGOs have also undertaken the training of judicial and extra-judicial players such as magistrates, judges, lawyers, police officers, doctors and traditional and religious chiefs, all of who intervene in the domain of women's rights.

Significant progress has been made in most countries. There are anti-violence committees composed of women and paralegals, but also of litigators, teachers and even parents of pupils concerned with sexual harassment.

Beyond the traditional initiatives represented by awareness-raising and lobbying

In Liberia, women are active not only in fighting against a war they did not want, but also in looking for peaceful solutions alongside men.

for the adoption of laws, NGOs have recognized the important role men can play in the fight against violence, and to this effect, have begun involving them as partners. In Togo, for example, contrary to the actions adopted by NGOs in the early days— which consisted of training women as paralegals in order to raise awareness and bring help to other women—there have been experiments to train male paralegals in order to get the message across to both men and women. This experiment has been successful and has produced some very encouraging results. As a result it has been expanded. Men sensitized by their male peers are more receptive and keen to collaborate with respect to women's rights. They include radio hosts, both urban and rural.

The impact of all these initiatives on the population is often difficult to measure because changes in behavior and mentality take place slowly. Women continue to suffer various forms of violence. Once again, the cultural and traditional marginalization of women and girls, the difficulty of implementing laws and women's ignorance regarding their rights are the main obstacles.

Peace is inextricably linked to both gender equality and development. All over the world, and particularly in Africa, women are becoming the prime targets of violence in armed conflicts.

Security Council Resolution 1325

There are conflicts under way in the subregion. Women are the principal victims of human rights violations, which take the form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading abuse such as rape, sexual harassment, sexual slavery, forced displacement, etc.

Efforts are being made by NGOs and governments alike (the latter not always committing fully and in good faith) to raise awareness among the general population and political players regarding the culture of peace and the struggle against the proliferation of small arms.

There have been some advances in the creation of effective and practical mechanisms designed to prevent crises involving women. Sierra Leone, for example, at the university and at the primary school level, has introduced "peace teaching" to ensure that citizens are aware of the ravages of armed conflict. But greater efforts are still needed in this field, particularly in order to prevent women and children from being the principal victims of conflicts.

In Liberia, for example, women are active not only in fighting against a war they did not want, but in looking for peaceful solutions alongside men. They have organized themselves into groups such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network and Women in Peacebuilding Network in order to talk with the parties involved in the war or the search for the return of peace including the Economic Community of West African States, international institutions, leaders of the rebel factions and diplomats. Women have participated in negotiations for a durable peace in Liberia as well as in the subregion. They have used a variety of strategies including sit-ins and other demonstrations, lobbying and media exposure to attain their objectives.

This quest for peace has not been easy. Throughout this time-consuming process, women have been confronted with a lack

Box 10. Women in Parliament in West Africa

Country/ HDI Rank	Lower or Single House				Upper House or Senate			
	Elections	Seats	Women	Percent Women	Elections	Seats	Women	Percent Women
Guinea/40	06 / 2002	114	22	19.3	—	—	—	—
Senegal/41	04 / 2001	120	23	19.2	—	—	—	—
Sierra Leone/59	05 / 2002	124	18	14.5	—	—	—	—
Gambia/63	01 / 2002	53	7	13.2	—	—	—	—
Burkina Faso/72	05 / 2002	111	13	11.7	—	—	—	—
Cape-Verde	01 / 2001	72	8	11.1	—	—	—	—
Mali/79	07 / 2002	147	15	10.2	—	—	—	—
Ghana/83	12 / 2000	200	19	9.5	—	—	—	—
Cote d'Ivoire	12 / 2000	223	19	8.5	—	—	—	—
Togo/94	10 / 2002	81	6	7.4	—	—	—	—
Benin/95	03 / 2003	83	6	7.2	—	—	—	—
Nigeria/99	04 / 2003	360	22	6.1	04 2003	109	3	2.8
Liberia/105	10 / 2003	76	4	5.3	—	—	—	—
Mauritania/111	10 / 2001	81	3	3.7	04 2002	56	3	5.4
Guinea-Bissau	04 / 2004	102	?	?	—	—	—	—
Niger	11 / 1999	83	?	?	—	—	—	—

Source: Table from Inter-Parliamentary Union; available from http://www.ipu.org.

of the financial support needed in order to be present where peace is discussed. Another ever-present difficulty is the absence of women in decision-making positions. Nevertheless, different initiatives have been taken by women in conflict resolution during the past few years, and it is worth noting that, given the opportunities and adequate means, women could be significant builders of peace, capable of playing a neutral role, which is necessary to devise lasting solutions.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Internally Displaced
The majority of displaced persons are women and children. They live in precarious circumstances, lacking both aid and support. Homeless, they are also exposed to violence. Since they are impoverished and without financial resources, it is difficult for refugees and internally displaced women to obtain legal assistance when they need it. Despite their good will, NGOs are generally unable to offer adequate help to these women due to a lack of financial resources. States seem also to lack the necessary means. Apart from these financial difficulties, it should be added that during consultations in "legal clinics." interviewees

subjected to various forms of violence in the context of conflicts usually refuse to press charges for the assaults they have suffered, more often than not for fear of reprisals.

A number of initiatives have been implemented but are far from meeting requirements due to a lack of resources. Awareness-raising campaigns have been conducted through the media. Trained paralegals also serve as conduits for awareness-raising. Specialized organizations such as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Red Cross have, as far as possible—and often in collaboration with local NGOs—given help to victims and especially to women and children. In Guinea and Sierra Leone, the UNHCR has initiated the training of women working with refugees and displaced people in order to reinforce their capacity.

The International Criminal Court
All the countries of the subregion—with the exception of Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and Togo—have ratified the Statutes of Rome establishing the International Criminal Court. There have been few initiatives to educate the different populations on the subject of the court, however.

POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for justice and democracy. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality and sustainable development cannot be achieved.

Representation
Women's representation in governmental bodies as well as in public administrative entities, has shown a slight improvement, and more women are taking part in the electoral process. Some countries including Cape Verde, Ghana and Niger have implemented positive initiatives meant to promote women's participation in decision-making bodies. These initiatives have led to noticeable progress.

Women's leadership capacities have significantly improved compared to their situation 10 years ago. An initiative launched by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) created a network of women parliamentarians and ministers who work with NGOs to change the population's mentality with regard to the need to participate in the management

of public affairs. Progress in this area has been weak due to the high female illiteracy rate and the persistence of socio-cultural attitudes. These obstacles sometimes make expectations seem illusory and perpetuate the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies.

NGOs in the subregion have made a considerable effort to encourage the participation of women in all spheres of promotion and protection of women's rights. They have strived to ensure that policy and programs integrate a gender perspective for greater impact and results. They have used sensitization campaigns, training sessions designed to reinforce women's leadership capabilities, and the lobbying of public authorities to strengthen women's position.

The increased presence of women in various bodies can be seen as the result of NGOs' sensitization of and pressure on the various governments. In Togo, women's representation in government has gone from one to five of 23 government ministers and six out of 81 Members of Parliament. Some countries, such as Cape Verde, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria have for a number of years had a high-ranking official or office responsible for gender issues close to the prime minister or in an influential position within the government. Gender mainstreaming in all areas of life remains a distant goal despite these few areas of progress.

In all countries of the subregion, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has encouraged the institution or the reinforcement of national mechanisms for the advancement of women. Sometimes government departments—ministries or state secretariats, for example—are set up as operational structures to implement national policies for the promotion of women. In some countries, the mechanism takes the form of an ensemble of high-level administrative structures. Regardless of their characteristics, these bodies have worked to increase the impact of policies directed towards gender equality.

The strategy implemented through these structures consists of incorporating a gender-specific perspective in all laws and policies as well in programs and projects (the gender-related development index of the countries in the subregion ranges from 0.278 and 0.456).

National mechanisms have created gender focal points in other departments and to a certain extent have helped to compile and disseminate gender and age-disaggregated statistical data. The lack of adequate human, financial and material resources is the main obstacle faced by the various institutional mechanisms. Moreover, their activities are hindered by structural and communication issues within them and with other governmental departments. Finally, in certain cases they are manipulated and, as a result, adopt a partisan approach that limits the effectiveness of their actions on behalf of women.

These obstacles are compounded on the one hand by national government institutions that as yet have little understanding of gender equality and the need to root gender issues in every aspect of the nation's life; and on the other, by the institutional mechanisms' inability to affect programs across all sectors.

POVERTY ERADICATION

Poverty is a complex, multidimensional and endemic problem. As a significant factor in the feminization of poverty, globalization has reinforced the inequalities of the world's economic order by limiting women's access to and control of the international market.

Macroeconomic Policies, Development Strategies

In the subregion, women are more present in business because of their legendary thrift. One can mention the *Nanas Benz* in Togo's textile sector, whose renown for the trade of printed materials for the past 30 years spread beyond their frontiers, making them famous worldwide.

Numerous initiatives and strategies have been developed by the States to reduce poverty and inequality, including support structures for micro-projects favoring women, development of micro-finance and the creation of women's savings and loans banks.

For their part, NGOs have made a great contribution to the fight against poverty through sensitization campaigns, micro-credit to women and training in managerial methods. However, human development indicators for the countries of the subregion as a whole remain very low.

The initiatives undertaken give women control of neither the resources nor the means of production. This explains, for example, the situation of the *Nanas Benz* who, after the economic and political crisis suffered in Togo from 1992 on, are the ones benefiting least from the wealth they produced.

Generally speaking, the strategies for fighting poverty have not always taken into account women's specific needs and interests. The absence of synergy between the various programs initiated by governments has had a negative impact.

Almost no action has been taken to ensure that national policy on international and regional trade agreements does not have negative effects for new and traditional business activities.

Employment Patterns, Women's Work

In West Africa, women still earn less than men for work of equal value, and most

Box 11. Female Economic Activity Rate

Country/ HDI Rank	Female Economic Activity Rate		
	Rate (percent) 2002	Index (1990=100) 2002	As percent of male rate 2002
Mauritania/ 152	63.2	97	74
Gambia/ 155	69.7	101	78
Senegal/ 157	61.7	101	72
Guinea/ 160	77.1	98	89
Benin/ 161	73.2	96	90
Ivory Coast/ 163	44	102	51
Guinea-Bissau/ 172	57	100	63
Mali/ 174	69.8	97	79
Burkina-Faso/ 175	74.7	97	85
Niger/ 176	69.3	99	75
Sierra Leone/ 177	45	106	54
Togo/ 143	53.5	101	62

Source: United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Human Development Report 2004, 229-232.

find themselves in underpaid sectors, under-qualified and with little or no prospect of advancement.

Legislation exists across the subregion protecting against discrimination in the workplace and guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. However, there are no policies in place to reevaluate the work of women, much less any adapting of hours and working conditions to take into account family responsibilities and needs.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is widespread, but the issue has so far received very little attention from governments. As a result of public awareness-building initiatives by NGOs, proposals for legislation covering sexual harassment are before the Governments of Benin and Togo.

Regarding women in rural areas, NGOs have launched micro-financing programs in order to strengthen women's capabilities. These programs are committed to creating jobs for women in rural areas by helping them to organize and become autonomous, and by offering them loans and training.

EDUCATION

International Agreements
In compliance with international agreements, including the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015, there has been significant progress in most countries in support of educational infrastructures. Such initiatives have included the opening of training centers, designing and implementing support programs for girls' school enrolment, women's literacy programs and the formulation of coherent national educational and training policies.

The main obstacle to the implementation of international agreements is the lack of financial resources, which has a considerable impact on the number of qualified teachers available. Initiatives undertaken by women's rights organizations have for the most part been supported by bilateral and multilateral partners rather than the state.

Public Policy
Strategies have been developed in almost every country of the subregion for girls' school enrolment; the general rule is that enrolment is mandatory until age 15. In Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo, positive action policies in favor of girls, have been adopted to promote their enrolment. Admission quotas, scholarships and training of young girls in technical and scientific fields have also been priority programs for governments.

These initiatives are indicative of the will of governments to implement the recommendations of Beijing and to create the conditions necessary for the realization of the MDGs. Significant results have been obtained—improvement in the rate of school enrolment for young girls, a higher retention of girls within schools, and an increase in the number of girls signing up for scientific and technical studies. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that nowhere in the subregion do education policies and programs take women's specific concerns into consideration. Most education initiatives are of a general nature and do not particularly target the advancement of young girls. The efforts of women's organizations must be highlighted. These NGOs have raised public awareness regarding the importance of sending girls to school to counter illiteracy. They have also advocated for political and legislative reforms.

Despite progress, much remains to be done in order to overcome obstacles hindering the achievement of the initiatives taken; namely, a lack of financial resources, sexual discrimination against girls, the persistence of sexist stereotypes and socio-cultural obstacles, sexual harassment in schools and poor school infrastructure.

Access and Changes in Practices
Education is one of the areas where noticeable progress has been made. Nevertheless, reforms designed to obtain results that are free of stereotypes remain embryonic. Reform of the educational system must continue.

Several countries have achieved little or no progress on female literacy, with too few initiatives taking into concern women's double workload. The average literacy rate stands at around 40 percent, with extremes of 7 percent in Niger and 54 percent in Ghana.[3]

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resources management.

Decision-Making
A National Environmental Program was developed in most countries and involved women in the decision-making process. Within this framework, *butanization* campaigns have been implemented encouraging households to use butane gas instead of fire-

wood or coal. A related initiative has focused on the promotion of "improved" fireplaces aimed at reducing the quantity of firewood and coal used for cooking. Consequently, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and a number of other countries in the subregion have trained women in the building of economical and ecological, "self-cooking" fireplaces.

Without producing definitive answers to environmental problems, these campaigns have raised community awareness on the real danger of not adequately protecting the environment. The consumption of firewood has diminished, but not significantly.

Wells have also been dug to improve access to clean water in rural populations. Some countries, such as Benin, have created committees to manage the environment and natural resources in the forestry sectors. They have also established tree nurseries so that women can start reforestation.

Despite an acknowledgment of the importance of the role played by women in the management of the environment, socio-cultural hindrances still exist. The absence of gender-based analysis in the implementation of environmental and natural resources policies continues to present a great challenge.

Gender Impacts
In the past few years, a number of governments have included in their development strategies income generating initiatives for women, as well as training in the management of natural resources and protection of the environment.[4] The only merit of these initiatives is that they limit damage. They are rarely thought through carefully enough and often fail to take into account all aspects of the problem and the parties concerned. Signs of the environment's progressive degradation remain palpable.

Initiatives such as reforestation campaigns, the creation of cooperatives for waste collection, the setting up of projects for the manufacturing of stoves and solar-powered ovens appear to have had little influence on the population's general behavior.

In other cases, environmental protection programs have contributed to the impoverishment of women by depriving them of income derived from the sale of firewood or coal. The very limited progress made by the States in this area is linked to the fact that communities have yet to become aware of the acute environmental risks threatening women, and of the advantages of bringing together men and women in the protection of the environment.

Another factor that limits progress is wom-

Box 12. Higher School Enrolment for Girls

Country/ HDI Rank	Net Primary Enrolment for Girls				Net Secondary Enrolment for Girls			
	Female rate (%)		As percent of male rate		Female rate (%)		As percent of male rate	
	1998	2001/2002[e]	1998	2001/2002[e]	1998	2001/2002[e]	1998	2001/2002[e]
Mauritania/ 152	58	65[g]	0.94	0.96[g]	-	13[g]	-	0.83[g]
Gambia/155	57	70[g]	0.89	0.92[g]	20	24[g]	0.72	0.75[g]
Senegal/157	54	54	0.84	0.89	-		-	
Guinea/160	37	54	0.69	0.78	7	7[g,j]	0.38	0.38[g,j]
Benin/161	-	58[g,h]	-	0.69[g,h]	10	13[f,g]	0.46	0.48[f,g]
Côte d'Ivoire/163	51	53	0.75	0.74	-		-	
Guinea-Bissau/172	-	38[h]	-	0.71[h]	-		-	
Mali/174	34	32[g,j]	0.70	0.72[g,j]	-		-	
Burkina Faso/175	28	29[g]	0.68	0.71[g]	6	6[f,g]	0.59	0.65[f,g]
Niger/176	20	28	0.64	0.68	-	4	-	0.66
Sierra Leone/ 177	-							
Togo/143	78	86	0.79	0.84	14	17	0.44	0.48

Source: United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Human Development Report 2004, 225-228. UNDP, Human Development Report 2002.

e. Calculated as the ratio of the female enrolment ratio to the male enrolment ratio

f. Data refer to the 2000/01 school year

g. Preliminary UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates, subject to further revision. Data refer to the 1998/99 school year

h. Data refer to the 1999/2000 school year

j. Data refer to the 1998/99 school year

en's restricted access to resources and technical information, which prevents them from participating concretely in decisions concerning the environment.

Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal and have ratified the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and Biological Diversity.

HEALTH

Access and Affordability

Efforts have been made to ensure that health care services are more accessible to the population, but they still remain insufficient. The economic crisis that has swept through the countries of the subregion in the past decade has dramatically contributed to the lack of medical coverage of women's basic health care needs, although some countries (for example, Ghana) have strived to implement policy on specific forms of cancer affecting women, such as breast and cervical cancer.

Reproductive Health

Various States and NGOs work on raising awareness among women across the social spectrum regarding the general and reproductive health care programs available. Women's right to control their pregnancies has found broader acceptance following intensified family planning campaigns initiated by NGOs and state-sponsored bodies.

Health care professionals are not still likely to ask for spousal consent before allowing women access to family planning services. With the increasing acceptance of reproductive health rights, attention is being focused on the specific needs of adolescents. Thus in Ghana, for example, paralegals have been trained to deal with problems related to the reproductive health of adolescents, and to conduct sexual abuse case studies and publish the outcomes.

The adoption of laws and policies concerning maternal and infant health, family planning, vaccination and pre- and post-na-tal monitoring has facilitated the implementation of programs related to the health of women, men and children.

Women's poor access to health care due to factors such as lack of infrastructure, low life expectancy or socio-cultural obstacles explains the continuing high rate of maternal mortality, especially in rural areas. Maternal mortality varies between 480 and 1,800 deaths per 100,000 births,[5] while the percentage of births assisted by qualified personnel varies between 16 and 66 percent depending on the country.[6]

All countries in the subregion have laws protecting girls against under-age marriage, but it must be noted that this custom is still practiced and that young girls are even abducted to be given in marriage.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is recognized as a problem that strikes at the heart of humanity, particularly women who represent the

most vulnerable members of society. This vulnerability is partly linked to their social and legal status, and partly to their physiological make-up.

Measures have been taken to combat the disease, including the creation of virus-screening centers, where free services are sometimes offered, and the provision of retroviral drugs at low prices. These initiatives have helped to foster a growing awareness among the population of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Such efforts are often hindered not only by poverty—public spending on health varies between 0.8 and 2.6 percent of GNP[7]—but also by socio-cultural obstacles that increase women's vulnerability. The lack of disaggregated health care data constitutes a considerable handicap in the launching and effective follow-through of initiatives.

NGOs are very active in awareness-raising campaigns and the promotion of food and sanitary hygiene directed at women in particular. A number of NGOs operate medical facilities that take in and care for the most disadvantaged.

None of the countries in the subregion have passed laws specifically protecting people living with HIV/AIDS. Legislation has been drafted and is in the process of being passed by some parliaments, such as Togo's. Programs designed to help HIV-positive people are also being set up to varying degrees in the region.

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Notes

1. Women in decision-making, the human rights of women, globalization, HIV/AIDS, and conflicts.

2. With regard to article 2, paragraph (d) and (f); article 5, paragraph (a); article 15, paragraph 4; article 16, paragraph 1 (c), (e) and (g); and article 29.

3. UNICEF survey conducted on women's rights and socio-economic development in West and Central Africa, February 2001.

4. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Human Development Report 2004, 207-210.

5. Ibid., 168-171.

6. Ibid., 156-159.

7. Ibid.