

## **UN-WOMEN EXECUTIVE BOARD SECOND REGULAR SESSION 2022**

### **Background Note: UN-Women's operational response in Sub-Saharan Africa**

#### **1. Context**

Africa is home to 54 recognized sovereign states and is the second largest and second-most-populous continent on earth. The continent had an estimated population of 1.2 billion people in 2016 and is projected to reach over 1.8 billion in 2035. Women account for more than 50% of the total population. Additionally, Africa is the world's youngest continent: almost 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25.<sup>1</sup> The young generation is technologically savvy and is becoming increasingly urban.

Africa is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies. According to a recent report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), African real GDP growth is projected to range from 1.1% to 7.7% in 2022 and from 1.3% to 8.1% in 2023. Across the continent, the economic growth over the two years remains consistent.

Despite Africa's dynamism, women do not share equally in its journey towards prosperity: progress towards gender equality has stalled, and African women lag their peers in other regions and most spheres of development<sup>2</sup>. In 2021, the World Economic Forum released the Global Gender Gap Index 2021, which shows that due to the impact of COVID-19, the global gender gap has increased by a generation from - 99.5 years to 135.6 years. The report showed that with the current relative pace, gender gaps can potentially be closed in 52.1 years in Western Europe, 61.5 years in North America, and 68.9 years in Latin America and the Caribbean. In sub-Saharan Africa, that period jumps to 134.7 years, while in the Middle East and North Africa logged 142.4 years<sup>3</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the global economy, with most economies in Africa contracting in 2020. While most countries returned to growth in 2021, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has triggered a global economic shock that is hitting the region. All countries in Africa are not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets by 2030. Climate action (SDG 13) is the only SDG indicator for which countries have registered significant progress on the continent.

According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), since the Ukraine crisis began, oil prices have reached their highest levels since 2008, wheat prices have soared to a 14-year high, and fertilizer prices have surged by nearly 30 percent. Commodity-price spikes and supply-chain disruptions are compounding inflationary pressures, causing currencies to depreciate and food and fuel costs to skyrocket. For example, Rwanda and Tanzania import over 60 percent of their wheat from the two countries. That figure is nearly 70 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and exceeds 80 percent in Egypt. Russia alone supplies 45 percent of Namibia's

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1 <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation>

2 <https://www.mckinsey.com/2019>

3 <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/digest>

wheat, and 100 percent of Benin's. These macro trends have high human costs as many as 25 African countries depend on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine. According to UNECA, over 40 billion U.S. dollars in debt repayments were due in 2021, and debt service is expected to exceed 7 percent of Africa's GDP in 2022 even before the Ukraine crisis and the U.S. Federal Reserve's interest-rate hikes. As the crisis has intensified, access to international capital markets has tightened.

To regain economic momentum and accelerate progress toward the SDGs, African countries must be more deliberate in unlocking the contribution of all their people - especially women and the youth – who have been left behind.

The extremely fragile situation faced by the West and Central Africa region is the result of several overlapping crises – environmental, political, developmental, and humanitarian exacerbated by the immediate and long-term impact of COVID-19 thus causing a deplorable and complex humanitarian context. The 2021 report of the UNISS<sup>4</sup> shows that the countries of the region reported over 215,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 by the end of 2020, and over 19.4 million people were being affected by food insecurity by the end of 2020. The latter has been projected to increase to over 25.9 million people by August 2021. It significantly disrupted and slowed the implementation of various country programmes. The response and recovery plans must therefore seek to enhance national social protection systems to provide timely protective assistance during shocks.

In most sub-Saharan African countries, women are informally employed (UN Women, 2017). In the Eastern and Southern Africa the women in the informal sector of employment are approximately two-thirds.<sup>5</sup> Most of these women are to be found in the small-scale agriculture and informal cross border trading.<sup>6</sup> Women's unemployment rates continue to be higher than men's unemployment rates at seven and six percent respectively.<sup>7</sup> In West Africa, informal employment including agriculture accounts for 92% of the economy, with women participation reaching as much as 89.7% (Source: ILO 2018).

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, women already did three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men with women on average doing around 4.1 hours per day compared to men who on average do around 1.7 hours. For women living in rural areas these figures can vary widely, particularly in areas with limited access to regular basic services such as energy, water, and sanitation, as women and girls tend to bear the brunt of the unpaid labour to collect and manage these resources and services for daily household consumption. Furthermore, illness or other crises in the household can increase the time spent by women and girls on care-giving and domestic work. This has been brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated the care demands on women and girls due to pandemic-related measures and lockdowns. As evidenced from previous epidemics, women and girls tend to be the ones who take on the bulk of the extra care needed when national systems are unable to cope. Addressing unpaid care work is

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<sup>4</sup> See: [UNISS PROGRESS REPORT - English - UNISS \(unis-sahel.org\)](https://www.unis-sahel.org/)

<sup>5</sup> South Africa women in informal section average approximately 35 percent while in other countries almost women's employment is in the informal sector (e.g., Burundi 99 percent; Mozambique 98 percent; and Madagascar 96 percent) (Statistics provided by ESARO analysis)

<sup>6</sup> data for 2019 ILO estimates from World Bank databank accessed Sept 09, 2021

<sup>7</sup> data for 2019 ILO estimates from World Bank databank accessed Sept 09, 2021

particularly relevant in West, Central and Southern African contexts where access to decent work is limited and women's employment options are significantly constrained by societal expectations that burden them with disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work.

More than 80% of sub-Saharan African countries, women are more exposed to informal employment (UN Women, 2017). **Informal employment economy** including agriculture in West Africa counts for **92%** with women participation reaching as much as 89.7% (Source: ILO 2018). The productivity and earnings of the informal sector are low. Women's dominance in the informal sector is attributable to **inadequate access to property, education, capital, public services, social protection and infrastructure**, as well as to skill deficit, gender-based discrimination and occupational segmentation in the labour market (Hearle et al., [2019](#)). Women dominate rural and agriculture production which is mainly for subsistence and subject to climate change negative impact. In ESAR, on average approximately two thirds of women in the region are employed in the informal sector<sup>8</sup> predominantly in the small-scale agriculture and informal cross border trading. The landmark deal of the Africa Continent Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has potential to be a boon for women's employment in the region should it be implemented in a gender transformative manner.

Forty years after the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) entered into force, the political participation of women is still a challenge across the globe. Women face structural and cultural obstacles to participating in political life. While it is a success story that the representation of women in parliaments has increased from 11 percent in 1995 to 25 percent in 2021<sup>9</sup>, there are still various countries where women make up less than 5 percent of parliamentarians.<sup>3</sup> Worldwide, in 1995, no parliament had reached gender parity. In 2021, the lower or single chambers of parliaments of four countries have at least 50 percent women among the parliamentarians<sup>10</sup>. Among the 20 parliaments with a representation of women of more than 40 percent, five belong to African countries. In ESARO, it is well-known that Rwanda has made the greatest progress with 61.3 percent of women in Parliament, South Africa (46.7 percent), and Namibia (44.2 percent) the rates are high, but other countries such as Eswatini (12.2 percent) and Botswana (11.1 percent) the rates remain low.<sup>11</sup> Challenges persist and despite gains in participation women are not sufficiently represented and obstacles to women's full participation are unrelenting: higher poverty levels, a lack of financing, unequal care duties, exclusionary institutions historically designed by men, discriminatory social norms about gender roles negatively shape perceptions about women's role in public life, and widespread violence against women

<sup>8</sup> South Africa women in informal section average approximately 35 percent while in other countries almost women's employment is in the informal sector (e.g., Burundi 99 percent; Mozambique 98 percent; and Madagascar 96 percent) (Statistics provided by ESARO analysis)

<sup>9</sup> UN-Women Facts and Figures, Women's leadership and political participation, 15 January 2021 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>, IPU Women in Parliament 1995-2020. In lower and single houses of parliament, the percentage of seats held by women increased from 11.6 to 24.9 percent. Upper houses saw the percentage increase from 9.4 to 24.6 percent

<sup>10</sup> Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and the United Arab Emirates. IPU states in its monthly ranking that at least 40% women were elected to parliament in 22 states in 2021, <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=4&year=2021>

<sup>11</sup> Specific appointments of women include Kenya's Chief Justice, South Sudan's Speaker of Parliament, Uganda's Vice-President and Prime Minister, and Tanzania's Head of State, and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence

in public life, including online abuse and cyberbullying, threatens women's right to participation.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report, the most persistent gender gaps exist in political participation. Women face a double hurdle: not only are there significant barriers to attaining leadership positions, but even once they are secured, women are likely to find it difficult to exert real influence in those roles. The absence of full political empowerment of women, including as decision-makers in peace processes, continues to negatively impact the realization of all human rights, economic and social growth, as well as international peace and security. Women are significantly under-represented as voters, candidates, and electoral representatives around the world but more specifically in countries in West and Central Africa. Coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is exacerbating inequalities for girls and women and threatening to unravel decades of progress toward gender equality, meeting and protecting the unique needs of all girls and women is more urgent than ever before.

**The prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG)** is higher within Africa, where approximately 33% of women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime compared to 31% at the global level.<sup>12</sup> The rate is particularly high in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 44%.<sup>13</sup> There is also evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an intensification of VAWG to even further around the world, and particularly in Africa.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, it is reported that Africa is home to as many as 15 of the 20 countries with the highest number of child brides globally.<sup>15</sup> The high rate of child marriage in Africa entraps women and girls in a cycle of poverty, contributing to their poor socio-economic status. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another form of VAWG: it is reported that in 27 countries with available data, 42% of women and girls aged 15-49 years have undergone FGM.<sup>16</sup>

Addressing *conflicts between customary and statutory law* in line with the international and regional frameworks and social norms are therefore a priority in West and Central Africa as shown by data from **10 countries of WCA which have the highest child marriage prevalence levels in the world**, all above 50%. Niger has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world at 76%. The Central African Republic (CAR) has a prevalence of 68%, and Chad is at 67%. Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea have the highest percentage of female circumcision around the world.

<sup>12</sup> OECD. (2021). *SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa*. <https://www.oecd.org/dev/sigi-2021-regional-report-for-africa-a6d95d90-en.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Muluneh, M.D., Stulz, V., Francis, L., & Agho, K. (2020). Gender Based Violence against Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cross-Sectional Studies. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17030903>

<sup>14</sup> UN Women. (2021). *Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19*. <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>; AUC-WGDD, UN Women, OHCHR and UNFPA. (2020). *Gender-Based Violence in Africa During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/gbv-in-africa-during-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>15</sup> OECD. (2021). *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> OECD. (2021). *op. cit.*

Human trafficking is also a form of VAWG practiced in Africa. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that 77% of victims in sub-Saharan Africa are trafficked for forced labour against 30% in the Middle East and North Africa while 20% are trafficked for sexual exploitation in sub-Saharan Africa against 30% in Middle and North Africa.

## 2. UN-Women’s response 2018-2021: key results together with our partners

*Key success of the implementation of the Strategic Notes 2018-2021* are for both regions (1) strategic partnership with networks of community leaders to transform gender inequitable social norms or non-traditional actors such as IFIs to advance women’s economic empowerment; (2) the provision of a holistic response to survivors of Violence against women (VAW) through increased access to essential multi-sectoral response services, including “one stop centres”; (3) important laws and gender strategies in the region to continuing mainstreaming gender and providing standards to country frameworks; (4) partnerships with Resident Coordinators to link development with humanitarian responses and mainstream gender; (e) the use of innovation toward advancing women’s economic empowerment and EVAW, such as digital applications across thematic areas including: a digital web SMS SGBV monitoring and warning platform or tools such as COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker in collaboration with UNDP and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) as useful tools for collecting data <sup>17</sup>.

ROs have and continue to utilize technology and innovation in management and operations to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of work. ROs are also in the process of developing a youth strategy which will complement the SN focus on young women as a priority population in the ESA region. Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and Western and Central Africa Office (WCARO) are working to promote the Women’s Empowerment Principles through the dissemination of good practices and promoting linkages within the thematic areas. ESARO has developed a regional Generation Equality Forum engagement strategy for Country Offices and Non-Resident Agencies to provide entry points for supporting implementation of and accountability for the Generation Equality Acceleration Plan (GAP) in the region and has convened the first regional dialogue with Gender-Based Violence Coalition leaders and commitment-makers in the region. WCARO has supported Generation Equality commitments and process in all WCA countries: information sharing, capacity building, advocacy strategy and communication for stakeholders’ mobilization. Countries organized pre-GEF consultations with States, CSOs, Youth, private sector for advocacy and engagement to the forum.

Both Regional Offices (ROs) will employ a four-prong focus, which cuts across its outcome areas, to support the implementation of global and regional normative frameworks including those related to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), CEDAW, UNSCR1325, and related resolutions on women, peace and security Empowerment of Women and Girls in the

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<sup>17</sup> WCARO 2020 Annual Report

Humanitarian Action Policy and Accountability Framework, and relevant regional and national frameworks. Through the SNs, WCARO and ESARO will tackle this challenge through its 1. Technical support and advisory services to the Country Offices working on this at the national level; 2. Capacity building and in dialogue with intergovernmental entities, specifically the RECs and AU through the African Strategy 2.0 ; 3. Collaboration and knowledge generation and exchange with regional women’s movement and networks to hold duty-bearers accountable on this; and 4. Coordination and support to UNCTs in COs and NRAs as well as through regional UN platforms (e.g. periodic CEDAW reporting and BfPA periodic reviews, SDGs voluntary reporting etc.).

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

CSOs and women rights groups have enhanced capacity in the development, implementation, and monitoring of EVAWG programmes in the continent, including identifying key issues and making recommendations to address SGBV, HPs and SRHR issues, utilizing social accountability tools including community score cards, preparation of shadow reports, as well as participating in experience sharing conferences which resulted in the development of resolution presented to key stakeholders for action.

UN-Women with the Spotlight Initiative funded by the European Union works to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The Initiative works through six-areas of action grounded in evidence on what is required to prevent and respond to VAWG. These efforts contribute to improving the enabling environment (including by supporting the development and implementation of laws and policies) and strengthening institutions, preventing violence as well as improving the availability and quality of services for survivors, enhancing data, and supporting women’s movements and civil society efforts.

UN-Women has built upon its *partnership with the Council of Traditional/Cultural Leaders of Africa (COTLA)* and has developed a strategy to guide its future engagement. Support for the establishment and regular convening of COTLA has continued through the Spotlight Initiative, VAW Laws & Policies Improved in Benin, Cameroon, CAR, Gabon, Senegal, Nigeria. Reduction of FGM and Child Marriages in their local communities in Niger, Nigeria, Liberia. Approximately. USD 25 million in grants were to strengthening Women’s rights and other civil society organizations have also been supported through Spotlight Initiative and UN Trust Fund to End VAW as well as the WPS and Humanitarian Fund. The initiative also contributed to bringing local voices to regional arena: more than 2,000,000 youth have been engaged for social norms change.

### **Governance and Women Political Participation**

Programme show that despite the lack of resources, strategic partnerships with Parliaments are key for advancing the legal reforms. Investing to expand the expertise in the continent as a driver for change and capacity building of staff were key to deliver results will be a priority. In WCAR, after almost four years of the *implementation women’s leadership programme funded by the government of Canada*, tangible results in the four countries (Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria & CAR) show that the number of women leaders and candidates increased, *legal reforms have been adopted* or formulated. Large advocacy campaigns were also designed and implemented. Knowledge products were

produced as well as a guide<sup>18</sup>, and the south-south exchanges organized represented another level of advocacy and a unique opportunity for experience and information sharing. Similarly, in ESARO much of the progress in increasing the number of women in national parliaments and at the local level has been due to the adoption and implementation of gender quotas, but more needs to be done to reach gender parity. Across the ESA region, nine countries have enacted either a constitutional or legislative quota for women at national level.<sup>[1]</sup> For example, Lesotho, South Africa and Namibia introduced affirmative action measures in their legislative frameworks. In Namibia, the high representation of women in local governments is largely attributable to legislation requiring political parties to include at least 30% women on their party candidate lists.

### **Women Economic Empowerment**

***Women's land rights are essential for women's empowerment***, poverty reduction and climate resilience. In the past, UN-Women has supported several countries in West and Central Africa in improving legislation to recognize women's property rights, such as in Liberia (2018), or Mali (2017). In 2021, ***UN-Women has concentrated in bridging the gap between land law and practice and supporting the application of land legislation at the local level***. A good practice on normative community level work in the region are the 'Gender responsive Land Charters' developed in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Senegal under ***UN-Women's flagship programme on Women's Participation in Climate Resilient Agriculture Value Chains***. This local level legislation, emanated from a highly participatory process at the community level, is an effective instrument to recognize and protect different aspects of women's land rights.

UN-Women is keen on promoting women's and girls' full and equal participation and leadership to make natural resource management and climate, environment, and disaster risk action more effective. Women and girls are taking climate and environment action at all levels, but their voice, agency and participation needs to be further supported, resourced, valued and recognized. Africa, particularly the Sahel is the epicenter of climate change.

Signature programmes such as Climate Smart Agriculture is key to addressing the issue of economic empowerment through agriculture value chains. The current crisis between Ukraine and Russia emphasizes the need for African countries to address the issue of food security.

### **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

UN-Women is supporting efforts for peace and security in the Sahel and Central Africa regions, which is experiencing complex security, political and humanitarian challenges that are further complicated by the presence of armed groups and devastating human rights violations. Considered as one of the poorest in the world, the Sahel region carries a set of social, political peace and security as well as humanitarian and environment-related challenges. It is home to the resounding constraints of extreme poverty, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, frequent food crises, unresolved internal tensions, the reality of violent extremism (VE) including women and youth radicalization,

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<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit* 12.

illicit trafficking, and terrorist-linked security threats. All UN-Women country offices are also implementing strong programs on WPS and humanitarian response. Nine countries of the Sahel covered by the UNISS have already developed their National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR1325.

In the East and Southern Africa region, UN-Women is supporting countries faced with humanitarian emergencies mostly climate induced disasters including drought, flooding, and cyclones. Currently, the Horn of Africa faces one of the worst droughts affecting over twenty million people mostly women and girls. The situation is exacerbated by protracted conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan and recent instabilities in Ethiopia, Sudan, and northern Mozambique. Ukraine crisis has resulted in skyrocketing basic commodity prices, further reducing the purchasing power of most poor people, especially women and youth.

UN-Women continues to respond to this situation through diversification of livelihoods and resilience building measures for women in IDP, refugee and host communities and those affected by drought also continues to address sexual and gender-based violence for the women refugee camps in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan among others. Technical support, advocacy, and training to strengthen gender in humanitarian action has also been carried out,

UN-Women continues to advocate and influence regional disaster risk reduction and resilience framework through collaboration with IGAD on their IDDRSI framework and AU Programme of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction.

At UN-Women, while we are deeply concerned about the instability and lack of safety for all those who need to escape, we have a particular responsibility to safeguard women and girls against both the dangers at home and the danger they face that is widely perpetuated through their displacement. While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed violence, women and girls often bear the brunt of many of the harmful consequences. They are on the front line of conflict, yet have fewer resources to protect themselves and, with children, frequently make up most displaced and refugee populations: Only two percent of aid to peace and security interventions in fragile states targets gender equality and much less goes to women's organizations, despite their enormous contribution to peace. Only three percent of our military peacekeepers are women.

Avenues well operational and managerial functioning of key regional women-led organization notably the Network of Peace and Security for Women in ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO) and the Network of Young Women Leaders of West Africa (REPSFECO) were developed in the previous years for the West and Central Africa region as a contribution to the implementation of Women Peace & Security Agenda.

### **Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)**

To address the inequities in unpaid care, UN-Women has developed the 'Transformative approaches to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work in women's economic empowerment programming' programme ('3R Programme') to be implemented in Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa. The overarching goal of the programme is to remove the structural barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work. To contribute to this overarching goal/impact, the programme aims to contribute to National and local



governments develop/strengthen laws, policies and services that recognize and address the disproportionate share of unpaid care work by women and girls, and: Women’s cooperatives and other organizations provide transformative care services in rural and/or urban areas to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

## **Gender Data and Statistics**

Since 2019, UN-Women has made efforts to strengthen the production and use of gender data through a continent-wide approach. As a result, regional partnerships for gender statistics have been fostered, which has led to an increasing number of countries prioritizing gender statistics in their national strategies for the development of statistics. This has helped address critical data gaps on violence against women and women’s economic empowerment. Regional training programmes have been institutionalized as a result of the close collaboration with AfDB and UNECA, which has improved the literacy of gender data producers and users alike. Moreover, a regional Community of Practice is spearheading innovative approaches across the continent. Key results include:

### **1. Creating an enabling environment**

- Regional coordination on gender statistics has been strengthened through strategic partnerships. Since 2012, the continent’s coordination mechanism for gender statistics, the African Group on Gender Statistics (AGGeS) had been inactive due to technical and financial constraints. UN-Women supported UNECA in reigniting AGGeS, which led an evaluation of the first phase of the Africa Programme of Gender Statistics (APGS) and the preparation of its second phase (2022–2026). As a result of collaborative, continued advocacy by UN-Women in support of the APGS, more agencies are now actively supporting the production and use of gender data on the continent. With the increasing prioritization of gender statistics, AfDB funded the establishment of a gender statistics unit at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2021. Further, partnerships within and beyond the UN system have led to the development of training programmes and the production of gender data, firmly rooting gender statistics in the continent.
- New gender data priorities have helped harmonize gender statistics across the continent. As a result of UN-Women’s advocacy and technical support, the Statistical Commission for Africa (SCA) adopted a [Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa \(MSGIA\)](#) providing strategic direction and scope for gender data actors and strengthening regional collaboration among NSOs. The MSGIA is embedded in the APGS and provides guidance to countries on formulating their own national minimum sets of gender indicators. It harmonizes regional and subregional indicator initiatives into a coherent set of fifty-three indicators that were jointly developed by UN-Women with UNECA and AfDB, after a continent-wide consultative process with NSOs, gender machineries, UN agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs). After training from UN-Women, the MSGIA has been used by NSOs in the preparation of Country Gender Equality Profiles.
- An increasing number of African countries have strengthened gender data production and use as a result of UN-Women’s leadership. Women Count’s

regional efforts in Eastern and Southern, Western and Central Africa have enabled more countries to improve how gender data are produced and used. In Rwanda, surveys were conducted to fill critical data gaps on domestic violence and women's unpaid care and domestic work. Nine countries<sup>19</sup> were supported to conduct gender assessments, which resulted in an increasing national prioritization of gender statistics. Responding to the assessment, governments developed full-fledged gender statistics projects in Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone. In Zimbabwe, UN-Women support served to revitalize its dormant Gender Sector Statistics Committee, which led to an [evaluation](#) of the second National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) that informed the country's third NSDS, which now includes more specific gender statistics plans and strategies than any of its predecessors. Gender data are also increasingly informing national reports, such as Zimbabwe's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2021, strengthening countries' abilities to monitor and report on the SDGs. This has resulted in an increasing demand for UN-Women's support on gender statistics across the continent.

## 2. Increasing data production

- Alternative data sources now hold greater potential to strengthen SDG monitoring. The data landscape is ever-changing, with a greater volume of data being produced outside of surveys and censuses. To holistically monitor the 2030 Agenda, UN-Women championed the development of regional guidelines and assessments on non-traditional data sources, including [administrative](#) and [citizen-generated data](#), which hold the potential to strengthen and harmonize gender data production. Globally, the United Nations Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data have incorporated these guidelines in their work. And national research institutions are following suit. For example, with the support of UN-Women the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Ethiopia embarked on a one-year pilot to collect, analyse, and use citizen-generated data to report on SDG 5 and other gender-specific SDG indicators. The guidelines have strengthened the capacity of NSSs to use non-traditional data sources for SDG monitoring and strengthened NSO collaboration with CSOs in the region.
- A regional training programme has scaled up gender statistics capacity-building on the continent. Building on the momentum for gender statistics created by the APGS, UN-Women, in partnership with UNECA and AfDB, developed a virtual training programme on gender data and statistics in 2020. Conducted annually, the programme convenes data producers and users for a workshop addressing gender data literacy, communicating gender statistics, and producing SDG indicators and thematic surveys through various modules responding to the needs of NSOs. Kenya and Senegal have applied skills gained from these trainings in the design of their first time-use surveys. Similarly, Statistics Mauritius has requested the training material on computing MSGIA indicators for its own

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<sup>19</sup> Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan, South Africa, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire.

training replication. Skills gained on communicating data have also contributed to the dissemination of key knowledge products in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Improving data accessibility and use

- New gender data are fuelling policy action across the continent, including on women’s economic empowerment amid the pandemic and on preventing violence against women. Findings from surveys, assessments and census modules implemented by governments with support from UN-Women, are informing gender-responsive policies and programming across the continent. Findings from Rapid Gender Assessments (RGAs)<sup>21</sup> were used to inform United Nations Country Team’s emergency response frameworks, making them more gender-responsive in [Mozambique](#), [Malawi](#) and [Central African Republic](#). In Ethiopia, the RGA findings informed the design of a UN Joint Project on Sustaining Businesses and Protecting Jobs in the Informal Economy, provided support to Small and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMEs) most affected by COVID-19, including women-owned SMEs. In Rwanda, results from the domestic violence module in the [Demographic and Health Survey](#) 2019/20 were also used to develop a National Violence against Women Policy and produce data on SDG indicators 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. During 2021 ESA-RO also increased the availability of gender data and statistics by conceptualizing and executing a multi country study on gender and public transport covering [Kampala](#) and [Nairobi](#) conducted in partnership with the Stockholm Environmental Institute. The results informed discussions between the Uganda Country Office and the Minister of Transport in Uganda on ways to engender urban transport policies and planning, with a steering committee established that will use the findings to develop an action plan.
- Gender data analysis is informing national reports on the status of gender equality and contributing to SDG monitoring. With the increasing prioritization of gender statistics and gender-responsive policymaking, UN-Women supported 20 countries on the continent to prepare Country Gender Equality Profiles (CGEP). Most of these studies have been done as partnership between UN Women and the AfDB and in the case of DRC also with the EU. The countries covered include South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Rwanda, Somalia, Cameroun, Liberia, Niger, Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and DRC. Similar studies are currently in progress in Burundi, Mozambique, Sudan, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire. These profiles are being used to inform gender programming in these countries as well as the relevant ministries and UN Women’s strategic planning. The CGEPs describe the present situation in each country based on frameworks – including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and the 2030 Agenda on

<sup>20</sup> A number of short videos showcasing the work done during Women Count as part of the regional program and programs in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were produced. See: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications>

<sup>21</sup> In ESAR: Ethiopia, South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda and Eswatini. In WCA similar assessments were conducted in Central Africa Republic, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Senegal (2 rounds), Benin, DRC, Niger and Sierra Leone. Country reports and corresponding databases are all posted on <https://data.unwomen.org/publications>

Sustainable Development – and contribute to national SDG monitoring and reporting through VNRs. In Rwanda, UN-Women supported data analysis of the national Labour Force Survey to produce the [National Gender Statistics Report 2019](#). Together with a thematic report on key labour force indicators for people that highlights the disproportional time spent by women on unpaid care work compared to men, the national report informed CSO advocacy efforts directed towards parliamentarians to assess gender-responsive budget statements – a requirement under Rwandan law.

- Knowledge-sharing between gender data users and producers has been institutionalized through the inter-agency exchange forum, expanding the national production of gender statistics into new areas. UN-Women has enhanced peer-to-peer learning through the establishment of a Community of Practice (COP) on Data and Statistics in the Eastern and Southern Africa region in 2020. The COP, attended by NSOs, Ministries of Women and UN-Women Country Offices, has increased visibility for gender statistics and has led to the establishment of stronger ties between gender data focal points. By facilitating knowledge exchange, the COP session on the development of Women Economic Indices presented by the Kenyan NSO inspired Zimbabwe’s NSO, ZIMSTATS, to put the development of their own index in their work programme.

### **UN System coordination**

WCARO and ESARO’s coordination work aims to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and that mechanisms are in place to promote accountability across the regional coordination platforms. The ROs Coordination interventions centre on UN-Women’s triple mandate: normative, operational/programmatic, and institutional coherence. On normative concrete actions have been made in terms of facilitation of national level periodic reviews of BPfA and CEDAW (Countries where UN-Women is physically present and Non-Resident Agency (NRA) countries), coordinating the pre-CSW 66 Africa Experts and Ministerial meetings resulting in **a very strong outcome document** informed by- 7 International instruments; 10 regional ones on GE and Women rights; 8 instruments on climate change and environmental and disaster risks. The outcome document contains 6 strategies that will guide actions in Africa to achieve GEWE in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programmes. Furthermore, as part of the system wide coordination work support is given to GEF Action Coalition leaders in the region, and on following up CSW commitments. Operational and programmatic support has been provided to UNCTs through the regional UN coordination platforms (OIBCs, PSG and the RCP); review of draft CCA/UNSDCFs from across the continent with DCO support, elaboration of UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecards and capacity building on the Human Rights Based Approach, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) and Leaving No One Behind principle through training sessions for countries developing new Cooperation Frameworks. Dialogue and knowledge products to inform GEWE mainstreaming have been produced and leveraged through the Regional Gender Thematic Groups in ESAR and WCAR.

The first ever **UN-Women Africa strategy** was in place between 2018-2021. It brought together the work of the three regions (East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and North Africa). In recognition of the diversity of the political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, the first strategy was based on what the three regions have in common and aimed to unify UN-Women's work on the continent, leveraging on the shared experiences between its regions. It was aligned to the UN-Women Global Strategic Plan 2018-2021; the AU Agenda 2063 and the Global Agenda 2030.

The design of the strategy was geared towards enabling the three UN-Women regional offices in Africa to better align, integrate their technical, advisory and policy support in partnership with member states, Regional Organizations including the Africa Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Civil Society Organizations and other regional and sub regional structures and institution across the African continent.

The new **Africa strategy 2.0** will be aligned to the global UN-Women Strategy 2022-2025, based on the Regional Strategic notes which reflect specific regional reality, while mutualizing efforts to address continental challenges related to Gender Equality and women empowerment.

### **3. Moving forward: priorities to achieve scale and impact in the period 2022-2025**

WCARO and ESARO seek to refine its comparative advantage as a catalyst for accelerating change through deepening partnerships, co-creating knowledge and gender data, mobilizing resources, and coordinating efforts toward an environment focusing on regional priorities that address different dimensions of change including sustained engagements with duty-bearers to be more accountable for financing and implementation of gender commitments (systemic change), strengthening partnerships and efforts on evidence-based approaches to transform harmful behaviours and practices that perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequalities (social and cultural change), enabling safe spaces and convening platforms to coalesce rights holders to hold duty bearers accountable (relational level change), , making the connection between action and results through gender data, research and analysis (knowledge for change) and advancing GEWE accountability through effective coordination of UN regional mechanisms and platforms (peer influence change).

*It is also urgent to prioritize a principled humanitarian action*, with sufficient humanitarian funding and leveraging the coordination mandate through the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) in the next 2022-2025 period. Further focus is needed to address economic and gender inequalities, linking WEE with governance, the scarcity of resources and climate emergency, unpaid work, and macroeconomic policies.

A main priority for WCAR and ESAR will be expanding donors and sources of funding, and investments in multi-dimensional solutions are required. Duty bearers such as Governments, and right holders including LNOB and women and girls in local communities will need support to be at the forefront as first responders in acute crisis situations through interventions that link the local and the political fronts. For this reason, a key requirement will be to ensure strong coordination through the Coordination mandate

among involved actors with regional and continental bodies and using Resident Coordinators as Champions on GEWE.

Both Regional Offices will engage with select identified donors for potential RO SN support, leverage on the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) commitments to increase domestic financing for GEWE in the region and continue its support work with COs scale up ongoing initiatives. Current resources secured will be used as seed to attract additional resources for programming. There are plans to establish a cluster system where COs with similar programmatic interventions per country context will be grouped together and encouraged to develop joint programmes (cross-border/multi-country) with relevant key stakeholders for resource mobilization.

Regarding oversight, quality assurance and other support to COs, Ros for WCAR and ESAR will continue to provide regular donor intelligence, negotiating donor agreements, technical review of project proposals, resource mobilization action plans, tracking financial expenditure, development and timely submission of quality donor reports, partnerships support and communication for visibility.

WCARO and ESARO are aligning their capacities and resources towards an increased efficiency and effectiveness to provide leadership, facilitate collaboration and co-creation on regionally specific GEWE initiatives through coordination, capacity development and technical support services to its stakeholders including: the COs, NRAs, regional entities, civil society and vulnerable groups, private sector, and UN regional entities.

With this aim, the ROs will endeavor in implementing the new Africa Strategy 2.0 which will be launched during the next continentwide African Union Summit on Africa's Industrialization and Economic Diversification (November 20-25, 2022) and disseminated among Head of States. Donor roundtables and a strong resource mobilization strategy as well as a communication strategy will be at the core of UN-Women's efforts.

On addressing the long standing gap in gender statistics, UN-Women will, through Women Count Phase II build and further strengthen the regional collaboration established with UNECA, AfDB and the APGS to ensure greater coordination on the production and use of gender statistics across the continent; further address gender data literacy gaps; promote the update and use of the MSGIA; advance the use of non-traditional data sources, such as administrative data and citizen-generated data; and mine existing data sources to produce new gender statistics reports to increase the use of data to inform programmes and policies. Specific interventions will include:

- Continuing to support African countries in developing and evaluating national statistical development strategies.
- Building capacities on MSGIA implementation and citizen-generated data production and use, to strengthen gender statistics.
- Institutionalizing regional training programmes and adapting training materials to growing capacity-building demands.

- Supporting the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicators, including SDG indicator five.c.1, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- Advancing methodological work to fill data gaps on women's economic empowerment and violence against women.
- Strengthening dialogue and developing use plans for gender data reports, such as Country Gender Equality Profiles, focusing on both policy and strategy.

On coordination, both WCARO and ESARO SN's have elaborated the focus for the next 4 years. This includes collaborating with our COs and HQ colleagues, to support UNCTs to improve their accountability for GEWE, by carrying out SWAP-Scorecard assessments and the implementation of the recommendations; strengthening the integration of gender in the UNSDCF's and CCAs and ensuring they work towards meeting the QCPR recommendations that 70% or more of available CF resources are allocated to activities with gender equality as a principal or significant objective. UN-Women will continue to collaborate closely with DCO and the Resident Coordinator system, to achieve its coordination mandate.

Both Regional Offices will engage with select identified donors for potential RO SN support, to leverage Generation Equality Forum (GEF) commitments and continue its support work with COs to leverage ongoing initiatives for scale up. Current resources secured will be used as seed to attract additional resources for programming. There are plans to establish a cluster system where COs with similar programmatic interventions per country context will be grouped together and encouraged to develop joint programmes (cross-border/multi-country) with relevant key stakeholders for resource mobilization.

Regarding oversight, quality assurance and other support to COs, ROs for WCAR and ESAR will continue to provide regular donor intelligence, negotiating donor agreements, technical review of project proposals, resource mobilization action plans, tracking financial expenditure, development and timely submission of quality donor reports, partnerships support and communication for visibility.