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WORKING PAPER ON :

A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL

PLATFORMS FOR ACTION IN AFRICA

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**FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PLATFORMS FOR ACTION IN THE AFRICAN REGION**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 called the World's attention to twelve critical areas of concern which need to be seriously addressed for accelerating the advancement of women. These areas of concern are of significant importance to Africa as they are similarly identified in the African Platform for Action: African Common Position for the Advancement of Women adopted by African member States in Dakar, Senegal in 1994, during the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women, and endorsed by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in June 1995.

The areas identified in the Global Platform for Action are:

- *The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women*
- *Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training*
- *Violence against women*
- *The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation*
- *Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources*
- *Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels*
- *Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women*
- *Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women*
- *Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media*

- *Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment*
- *Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child*

The areas identified in the African Platform for Action are:

- *Women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment;*
- *Inadequate access of Women to education, training, science and technology;*
- *Women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization;*
- *Improvement of women's health, reproductive health including family planning and population-related programmes;*
- *Women's relationship and linkages to environment and natural resource management*
- *Involvement of women in the peace process;*
- *The political empowerment of women;*
- *Women's legal and human rights*
- *Mainstreaming of gender desaggregated data;*
- *Women, communication, information and the arts;*
- *The girl-child*

In Beijing, several African delegations made commitments to ensure effective implementation of the Platforms. Subject to national priorities, constraints and realities, the commitments are generally to equal access to education, increased participation by women in the decision-making processes, to policy reforms as well as to addressing and reducing the problem of violence against women.

In light of the foregoing, this paper seeks to facilitate the elaboration of an implementation strategy taking into account, the political, economic and social environments prevailing in the continent.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this paper are to:

- (a) provide an implementation framework against which the commitments made in Beijing can be translated into concrete actions; and*
- (b) suggest steps to be taken for attaining objectives set in the Global and Regional Platforms for Action.*

III. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The deciding factors in implementing the Global and Regional Platforms for Action in the African region are a strong political will on the part of governments and the forging of partnerships between governments, civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners, and the international community. A second requirement is the concerted mainstreaming of gender into policies, programmes and activities of the various sectors of development activities. This will require to secure adequate financial resources and to ensure equitable distribution of responsibilities.

There is also need to prioritize actions in order to address the most critical areas in the region. As these areas cross-cut each other to some degree, an implementation strategy that combines related critical areas of concern into integrated programmes and projects, will be more effective and cost-efficient. Such clusters of implementation are also likely to generate a greater impact on the lives of African women. The integrated and cross-cutting programmes should have

built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the regular assessment of their impacts on women and on the integration of a gender perspective into the overall development process.

The suggested approach for the implementation process is essentially:

- (a) Sensitization on and, dissemination of, the content of the Platforms;*
- (b) Formulation of national plans of action;*
- (c) Mobilization of resources;*
- (d) Establishment of structures/mechanisms for coordination, harmonization and monitoring of gender based programmes and activities;*
- (e) Determining the most appropriate approaches for addressing the critical areas of concern.*

(a) Sensitization on the content of the Platforms for Action

A key to effective implementation of the Platforms for Action is the widespread understanding of the content of these documents. To this end, Member States should develop and disseminate widely popular versions of the Platforms. Pamphlets, brochures, posters depicting different critical areas of concern should also be fully distributed to women and men, especially at the grassroots level.

It will also be important to organize nation-wide workshops, seminars for planners, programme officers of various ministries, agencies, institutions and community leaders to create awareness before implementation. Development of promotional materials and exchange of information among Member States on the Platform for Action should also be envisaged.

In addition, regular radio and /or television programmes on various aspects

of gender issues should be introduced where they do not exist, and used to inform the population on the concerns of the Platforms. Likewise, media agencies such as URTNA and PANA should be requested and encouraged to address gender issues in their programmes on a more regular and systematic basis.

Sensitization and gender training workshops constitute another tool for ensuring that the Platforms are adequately exploited for development purpose. Workshops should be organized at local, national, subregional and regional levels for the various categories of actors and stakeholders. The purpose of these workshops will be to forge a common understanding of the Platforms, sensitize all development agents (government ministries, community level workers, educators etc) on the sections of the Platforms related to their sectors of activities, and promote exchanges on gender activities.

(b) Formulation of national plans for the implementation of the Platforms for Action

It is important for all member States to draw from the Platforms for Action, implementation plans which take into account the development parameters and priorities, as well as the political and socio-economic situation of the country. The process of formulation of action plans is already going on at national level. The action plans should identify attainable and measurable goals and activities to be undertaken, a time frame for the realization of the stated objectives and an indication of the expected changes and impacts on women's conditions resulting from these actions. The action plan should also determine the indicators to be used for measuring progress made.

National plans should be designed within the first six months following the adoption of the Global Platform for Action and should be brought to the attention of all development actors (government institutions, NGOs, the UN system, bilateral partners, the public and private sectors).

It should be noted that the implementation of the Plans of Action will require aggressive mobilization of financial and human resources, capacity and institution building as well as coordinated and concerted action among all actors.

(c) **Resource mobilization**

An important factor for the success of the implementation of the Platforms for Action is the availability of adequate resources.

In addition to reliance on the traditional development partners, special efforts aimed at resource mobilization should be made both internally and externally. Strategies for resource mobilization should include allocation of a percentage of the national budget by Governments to the implementation of the Platform for Action; matching funds; income generations; and project elaboration for funding requests. The private sector, national and international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies should be approached while strategically placed women could also be requested to take the lead in mobilizing communities for action on specific areas of the Platforms.

Multilateral and bilateral partners should include in their programmes of assistance and development budgets provisions for inputs into national programmes and projects addressing the various critical areas of concern. Countries should be encouraged to utilize the UNDP Round-Table and World Bank Consultative Group processes to highlight the need for national and donor attention to the Platforms for Action's concerns. In addition, specific consultations with donors could be held. These efforts should result in greater programme rationalization and coordination.

(d) **Establishment of coordination and monitoring structures and mechanisms**

It should be recalled that every country had established a national mechanism for preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The mechanisms were composed of a mix of government representatives, NGOs, and the civil society.

While the mandate of most of these structures may have come to an end after Beijing, the instrumental role that they played throughout the preparatory process should be recognized. Countries should therefore look into the possibility of setting up similar autonomous structures for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Platforms for Action under the chairmanship of the government national machinery.

The structures should establish a data base on women which should be updated at regular periods and which can be used as a tool for planners and decision-makers. For these structures to effectively play their role, and in order to facilitate their linkage with the regional monitoring structure, the ARCC, they should be inter connected either through the electronic mail or facsimile.

A first regional post Beijing Conference is scheduled to take place in Kampala, Uganda in September 1996. It offers an opportunity to review action plans and to analyze constraints and suggested solutions. This conference can be considered as one of the first step in the monitoring process.

(e) **Determining the most appropriate approaches for addressing the critical areas of concern**

The Global as well as Regional Platforms for Action have spelled out actions to be undertaken for the achievement of each strategic objective. It is then

necessary to determine the best way to address these issues bearing in mind the trends in the global market, specificities of each subregion, priorities of the countries and the need to develop realistic, implementable and sustainable programmes. In determining the appropriate approach, countries should look at the necessity for an integrated approach and should distinguish short-term, medium and long-term goals and actions. Maximum use of African - based experts/consultants (women and men) should be considered.

Countries and organizations should also make full use of services offered by subregional and regional institutions such as the ECA Regional Advisory Services.