

ECA - CEA



**Economic Commission for Africa
African Center for Gender and Development**

*The African Women NGO Consultative Meeting
22-23 July Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

**Outcome of Africa's 5 Sub-Regional Evaluation
Meetings on Beijing +10**

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1. Introduction

Africa's decade review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action includes three major steps: countries reporting on progress achieved and constraints encountered, sub-regional review meetings conducted in all five sub-regions of the continent ; and regional review which will be concluded by the 7th African Regional Conference on Women on Beijing + 10, due to take place in October 2004 at ECA Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The outcome of this process will be Africa's input into the global Beijing + 10 review process.

The coordination of the review process at the global level will be the responsibility for the Division of the Advancement of Women (DAW). DAW will prepare a Synthesis of the Outcomes of the five continental decade review conferences into one Draft Global Report on Beijing + 10. This Global Report will be presented to the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women for review and endorsement in March 2005, in New York, USA.

2. Objective of the sub-regional meetings

The Sub-Regional Evaluation meetings which constituted the second phase of the review process in Africa were conducted in the 5 sub-regions of the continent. The objectives of these meetings were:

- To conduct a qualitative review of the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its impact in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women
- To review the challenges and constraints encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
- To discuss and build consensus on priority gender issues from a sub-regional perspective and
- To recommend measures to address them during the post Beijing period

3. Participants

The innovative aspect of these meeting lies in the fact for the first time sectoral ministries were associated in the review process to measure the extent to which gender has effectively been mainstreamed in national development policies and programmes. In conformity with one of the major strategies recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action underlining the accountability of all sectoral areas to mainstream gender in their policies and programmes, five ministries that impact on the welfare of women significantly or to which women's contributions are unaccounted for despite their significant input into the GDP (Health, Agriculture, Finance, Planning, Trade and Industry) were invited to participate in the meetings. The meetings were also attended, as in the past, by government experts from national gender machineries, sub-regional intergovernmental organizations, sub-regional non-governmental organizations, national NGOs and UN agencies.

4. Progresses made

In terms of achievements, participants noted that most countries with a few exceptions, had committed themselves to CEDAW, adopted national gender policies and introduced national institutional mechanisms to promote the advancement of women. In most countries, CEDAW have triggered the review of national legislations in specific areas such as violence against women (northern and southern Africa sub-regions) land rights (eastern and sub-regions) family law (most sub-regions) education, economic empowerment (SADC sub-region) Specific programs and projects containing a gender component were implemented in most countries as part of national poverty reduction strategies.

Throughout the 5 sub-regions, participants acknowledged that tremendous progress was made in terms of improving women's access to political life and to decision making organs. The adoption of gender parity by the African Union and the election of a women to head the Pan-African parliament were noted as significant indications of this trend. Notable successes were also registered in the area of micro financing and in some instances allocation of revenues towards women's initiatives.

The signing of the SADC gender Declaration by all member States of the sub-region was acknowledged as a substantive achievement. The southern Africa sub-region was also applauded for introducing a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the Declaration by the ministers of gender affairs of all the countries of the sub-region.

In the northern Africa sub-region, it was noted that tangible progress was made in the area of human and legal rights with laws passed to improve or protect women and in the integration of gender concerns in national development planning and budgets.

In terms of education and training of girls and women, most sub-regions have registered a significant rise in the enrolment of girls and some countries even adopted a 50/50 enrolment policy.

All sub-regions acknowledged the progresses underscored in the area of labor Law: most countries enacted national legislations in harmony with international labor instruments and thus integrated a gender dimension in their labor legislation.

In all sub-regions participants underscored the importance of strengthening collaboration/partnership between civil society, private sectors and governments. The important role played by NGOs in the implementation of the platform was equally acknowledged in most sub-regions.

5. Emerging and urgent issues

Among the emerging and urgent issues raised in the context of gender equality, the alarming rise in the spread of HIV, particularly among women and adolescent girls and the emergence of trafficking of women and children were the most widely acknowledged in the sub-regions. Moreover, participants of all the 5 sub-regions pointed out the growing incidence of HIV on women living in poverty and in 4 out of 5 regions the correlation between gender, HIV and conflict. It was recognized that in addition to physiological factors predisposing women and girls to the HIV/AIDS infection, cultural and social inequities, economic marginalization and the insecure environment of conflict situations worsen women vulnerability to the disease.

In general, the meetings broadly acknowledged one major observation the first is that the women movement have suffered a set back since Beijing and the second is the correlation between the aggravation of the situation of women and the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the society at large despite the enactment of progressive gender sensitive legislations

6. Constraints identified

Despite the considerable progress as mentioned above, all sub-regions noted that important areas critical to gender equality and the empowerment of

women have remained for the most part unchanged. The major constraints recognized in most sub-regions were:

- The lack of sustainable political will and effective commitment to gender equality by sectoral ministries
- The huge gap between the adoption of gender policies and their implementation
- The fact that the gender dimension is still not adequately taken into account in the preparation of national budgets due the unavailability of gender disaggregated data
- The unchanged financial, technical and political weakness of gender machineries
- The systematic marginalization of women from mainstream peace processes while they remain the major victims of such situations
- The non-acknowledgement of the economic value of informal/ unpaid work done by women particularly in the rural areas which undermines poverty eradication strategies and efforts.
- The ad-hoc nature of budgetary allocation for gender programmes
- The rise of the HIV/AIDS pandemic
- The proliferation of conflicts and political instability exacerbating sexual violence against women
- The society's lack of awareness on women's rights issues

7. Recommendations

In most sub-regions participants proposed that:

- Governments across the region should strengthen the mandate and resources of national gender machineries to facilitate their participation in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the adequate integration of gender concerns in sectoral policies, programmes and budgets
- Governments across the region should institutionalize gender mainstreaming in all sectoral ministries
- Countries should ratify the additional protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- National Laws on women and family should be harmonized with international instruments adopted by countries
- Gender disaggregated data should be made available and in this respect all regions commended ACGD for their contribution to fill the gap

- Gender sensitive budgeting should be strengthened and systematically implemented in all sectoral ministries
- Partnerships between governments and civil society in the implementation of gender mainstreaming programmes should be consolidated
- Women should be systematically included of in mainstream peace processes