

**Economic commission for africa**

**Sixth African Regional Conference On Women; 22-26 November 1999, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Mid-Decade Review Of The Implementation Of The Dakar And Beijing Platforms For Action In The African Region**

**Assessment report on:  
Institutional mechanisms for the  
advancement of women**

**NOVEMBER 1999**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Economic Commission for Africa, African Centre For Women gratefully acknowledges all people and institutions who have in different ways enabled the compilation and publication of the twelve thematic assessment reports. Special thanks are extended to the following:

### **Financial assistance** from :

- The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
- The World Bank
- The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- The Government of France
- UNDP
- UNIFEM
- ILO
- ECA

The **Consultants** who gathered data, drafted the reports and presented the same to the thematic assessment workshops of the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women; Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22-26 November 1999.

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### ***Disclaimer***

The views expressed in the thematic assessment reports are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the organizations which provided financial assistance.

At the time of reproducing this version of the CD-ROM, the translation of the thematic assessment reports was in progress, hence the presentation of the reports in the original languages.

## ACRONYMS

ACW	African Center for women
ADB	African Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARCC	African Regional Coordination Committee for Women in Development
AAWARD	Association of African Women in Research and Development
AWCPD	African Women Committee on Peace and Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CWD	Committee on Women in Development
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department of Foreign and International Development
EA-SSI	Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of women
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FAWPN	Federation of African Women Peace Network
FEMCOM	Federation of National Associations of Business women in the COMESA
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GTZ	Germany Technical Cooperation Agency
IACWGE	Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
INSTRAW	Institute for Training and Research for the Advancement of Women
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MGYCS	Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services
NCWD	National Commission for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUEW	National Union for Women in Development
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PFA	Platform for Action
PTA	Preferential Trade Area
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SRDC	Sub-Regional Development Center
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations International Fund for Women
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
USD	United States Dollar

WAWA	West African Women's Association
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WIDSAA	Women in Development Southern African Awareness
WLSA	Women and the Law in Southern Africa
WILDAF	Women in Law and Development for Africa

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reviews progress made on the African continent in the theme *Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women* since the adoption of the Dakar and Beijing Declarations. It incorporates assessments from various sources including: the Internet; official documents of the United Nations, ECA/ACW and other organisations; minutes of meetings and reports from workshops. It also incorporates the assessments and ideas generated during the 6<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference on Women held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 22-26 November, 1999.

According to the Workshop on Institutional Mechanisms of the above-mentioned conference, national machineries define the main institutional arrangements for implementing the global and regional platforms. The Workshop noted that national machinery refers to a single or combination of structures established by a country to advance gender equality. The machinery is usually created by government and managed by public sector officials and the wider civil society, including NGO and private sector structures.

It was also noted that in the Global Platform for Action commitments were aimed at achieving three strategic objectives (h.1, h.2 and h.3) in the theme on institutional mechanisms viz: *“create and strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies; integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects;”* and *“generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.”* Some of the actions for achieving these objectives were: vesting the responsibility for advancing women’s issues in the highest possible levels; developing strategies and methodologies for mobilizing resources; empowering women through research, information, education, training, lobbying, and advisory services; coordinating various actors on the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels; monitoring impact; building capacity for gender analytic research and disaggregated data collection and dissemination; changing laws to suit the concerns of women for gender equality; ensure that policies undergo thorough gender analysis before they are adopted; etc.

Since the Beijing and Dakar Platforms, various commitments were undertaken at various levels to accelerate implementation. For example, at international level the UN system committed to achieving an internal gender distribution rate of 50/50 by the year 2000; ensuring accountability of individual managers for implementing the strategic plan in their areas of responsibility; enabling the focal points for women to effectively monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan; etc. At regional level the OAU, ECA, ADB adopted the *African Platform for Action* as a common position for the advancement of women in Africa. This served as the basis for their internal gender policies and efforts. At sub-regional commitment level, inter-state agencies such as SADC made their own commitments through instruments such as the SADC declaration. Institutional frameworks for implementation were therefore put in place to accelerate the implementation of these sub-

regional efforts. Similarly, at national level, countries adopted and adapted the Beijing and Dakar Platforms into their own platforms for action. Some chose the theme of institutional mechanisms as a priority but all had to create or strengthen their institutional arrangements in order to effectively implement their action plans.

As regards progress, a lot has been achieved as all countries have: set up national gender machineries for coordination; adapted the global and regional platforms to national action plans; enhanced the capacity of their machineries; enhanced of legal, regulatory or policy frameworks; and some have started generating and disseminating gender disaggregated data; NGOs on gender issues have proliferated. At the regional level the OAU and ADB have enhanced their women's departments and efforts for gender mainstreaming. The ECA has: re-invigorated the African Center for Women (ACW); re-invigorated sub-regional development centres (SRDCS) and established gender focal points within them; through the ACW, organized sub-regional follow up workshops international/ regional conferences, conducted surveys, training and advisory services, publications, etc. There is also a noticeable increase in using the emerging new information technologies such as the Internet to accelerate achievement of gender balance goals by all stakeholders.

However, challenges still remain. The 6<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference in Addis Ababa pointed out some of these including: most national machineries are still in the evolutionary stage and face many financial, human and material resource constraints; their ability to provide the intellectual leadership and co-ordinate programmes is extremely limited; the rural communities are still beyond reach; the need to strengthen systematic partnership and consultation with NGOs and civil society economic crises and political conflicts also pose serious challenges. Furthermore, in many countries, the macro-indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress have not been fully articulated and in some countries national machineries also suffer from a lack of autonomy and authority to influence policy and operate independently and effectively.

Some recommendations have therefore been put forward to accelerate the institutional mechanisms for advancement of women. The Conference Workshop recommended: the recognition of national machineries as the co-ordination and consultative mechanisms for the whole national process of implementing the Platforms for Action; establishing a gender management system for co-ordination and collaboration, with strong NGO input and clear terms of reference for all components; avoidance of duplication of efforts, parallel responsibilities, and uncoordinated interventions at all levels through systematic and participatory planning; government and NGOs are partners for development and should not work as opponents; further strengthening of national machineries through appropriate legislative and policy support, human, technical, material and financial resources, gender focal points, etc.

Other recommendations in this paper include: addressing the low levels of training for members of women's associations; tackling the persistent high illiteracy rates of women; addressing the trivialisation of gender issues and

resistance at various levels; addressing uneven commitment of countries within sub-regions.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Institutional structures and mechanisms at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels are the vehicles through which the goals and vision of the Global and African Platforms for Action can be realized. The capacities and visions of these institutional arrangements help to determine the level and quality of achievements. The elements of the institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women are: policy guidelines and frameworks; organizations, institutions and their cultural or traditional, values, attitudes, behaviour and practices; formalized incentive systems, that is, rewards and punishments; regulations, operating procedures and standards such as affirmative actions and quota systems in recruitment or selection procedures; and laws, constitutions and visions.

In general, a variety of structures and mechanisms for the advancement of women exist to give expression to women's and gender issues at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. The **national** level comprises:

- Government structures that deal with gender or women's issues such as: ministries of gender or women's affairs; and/or national women's bureaux or commissions of women in development; gender focal points in all ministries relevant to the advancement of women including education, planning, health and environment; legal/regulatory frameworks, among constitutions, laws, budgetary and auditing systems, which are part and parcel of institutional mechanisms in the public arena; international instruments, conventions, declarations and other agreements which by implication constitute institutional (regulatory) frameworks for dealing with gender issues.
- Political party structures such as women's leagues, branches, desks/associations; political advisers on gender at various levels of government or ruling party machinery such as presidential offices and offices of First Ladies. The degree of involvement in gender or women's issues varies in different countries.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), umbrella organizations as well as the broad range of civil society networks; and women's associations
- Private sector organizations, initiatives and networks; chambers of commerce, financial and credit institutions, employers as well as employers associations involved to varying degrees in gender issues.

Different countries have managed to harness the energies and abilities of these different actors to varying degrees. Some government gender-related machineries have made successful efforts in linking up with all these actors with a view to creating a working relationship, which is active, vibrant, "national" and all encompassing. Coordination arrangements and mechanisms, which are functional, harmonious and capable of delivering results, have been put in place. This is due to the committed and visionary leadership at the highest levels of government, the women's movement and civil society organizations. Such leadership has been demonstrated through sustained and unflinching financial, material and moral support.

Some countries, however, are still struggling to establish viable and workable machineries that go beyond the government circles and that are truly national, encompassing all other gender/women's organizations. In these countries, the government gender machineries operate with limited financial resources, personnel and capacity to provide the leadership and coordination functions required to effectively link with civil society and the private sector. With the recent proliferation of local and international NGOs and associations the situation has become even more complicated. It is almost impossible to harness and

coordinate all the actors in the field for maximum impact on commonly identified priorities. The result is duplication and overlap and difficulty in assessing impact of the resources spent by each actor. Those that suffer most are at grassroots level, especially in the rural areas, where in many cases, the activities in place have failed to produce significant, visible and lasting impact. The women's movement is yet to provide adequate direction to the rural masses in the most plausible way towards implementing the African and Global Platforms for Action

At the **international** level, the United Nations system takes the lead through its Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE); Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and the Commission on the Status of Women. The above institutions assist in one way or other to translate the Global and African Platforms into reality.

At the **regional** level are such institutions as the African Center for Women (ACW) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); the Gender Unit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the Gender Unit of the African Development Bank (ADB); NGOs, associations, networks, working groups among others; and regional offices of the UN and Development agencies

At the **sub-regional** level there are such institutions as: women's or gender structures that fall under the sub-regional inter-state agencies such as the Gender Unit of the Southern Africa Development Community and the West African Women's Association (WAWA) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and various kinds of programmes, NGOs, associations, networks, working groups and so on.

The main body of this paper is organized in the framework of the three *Strategic Objectives* of the Global Platform for Action regarding institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The Global and African Platforms for Action set certain strategic goals and actions required for the theme *institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*. The document made certain observations regarding the status of institutional arrangements at the time. Among other issues, it noted that: "National machineries for the advancement of women have been established in almost every Member State *inter alia* to design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women." It also observed that, "National machineries are diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness, and in some cases have declined. Often marginalized in national government structures, these mechanisms are frequently hampered by unclear mandates, lack of adequate staff, training, data and sufficient resources, and insufficient support from national political leadership."<sup>1</sup>

It is unfortunate that five years after these observations were made, the situation seems to have changed only marginally. In many countries, old structures have been given

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Public Information, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, New York, 1995, p.115

additional mandates as a direct result of the Global and African Platforms for Action but very little additional capacity has been given concomitant with the task at hand. Donors,

however, are trying to put resources into building the required capacity, although some argue that these resources are still inadequate.

The Global Platform acknowledges that methodologies for collecting, analysing and using gender-disaggregated data that are well advanced, but are not being applied or are applied inconsistently. There has been progress in this area. Some countries (such as Malawi South Africa and Zambia) are trying to increase their capacity for handling disaggregated data. Efforts are being made to train staff in research centers and statistical offices in methodologies for collecting, processing and publishing gender disaggregated data as well as engendering national budgets.

## **2.1 GLOBAL AND AFRICAN PLATFORMS: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

The Global Platform identified three Strategic Objectives (H.1, H.2 and H.3) under the theme *Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women* viz.

*“Create and strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies; integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects;” and “generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.”*

The actions to be implemented to achieve each objective are presented in subsequent sections in the form of *questions for assessing progress*.

Actions were proposed in the Global Platform for Action to realize these goals. The African Platform for Action indicated the existence of structures and proposed measures to create or strengthen others. At the sub-regional level, such institutions as ECOWAS, Preferential Trade Area (PTA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), SADC, the Arab Maghreb Union, The Central African Customs and Economic Union, the Western African Monetary Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Development Bank (ADB) are mentioned as the lead institutions to spearhead implementation. At the regional level, the mandated institutions are the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) – the former Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) -- for which the African Centre for Women in ECA and the OAU Women’s Unit serve as Secretariat. At the international level, the African Platform emphasizes the role of the United Nations and its agencies. At the country level, the National Preparatory Committee is proposed as the one to monitor implementation. ARCC (now CWD), was to coordinate, monitor and evaluate implementation at the regional level in collaboration with sub-regional inter-state institutions such as SADC, the Joint OAU/ECA/ADB Secretariat, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and relevant United Nations Agencies such as UNIFEM. The ECA Conference of Ministers, OAU Heads of State and Government, and the OAU Council of Ministers should be informed of progress every 2 years. A review of the effectiveness of donor programmes related to gender and development should also be carried out.

### 3. COMMITMENTS TO THE GLOBAL AND AFRICAN PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

#### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Among the 12 critical areas of concern of the Global Platform for Action was the theme “Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women” whose proposed actions

governments and all actors at the international level such as the United Nations system, committed themselves to implement. Besides ensuring that the goals of gender equality are fulfilled on a global scale through its agencies and its Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations system is committed to: achieving an internal gender distribution rate of 50/50 by the year 2000; appointing more women as special representatives and envoys; ensuring accountability of individual managers for implementing the strategic plan in their areas of responsibility; working toward creating a gender-sensitive environment; and enabling the Focal Points for Women to effectively monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan.<sup>2</sup>

The Inter-Agency Committee for Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) was created specifically to ensure implementation and monitoring of strategies and that the goals and objectives of the critical area *women in power and decision-making* were fulfilled. Furthermore, the General Assembly mandated the Commission on the Status of Women to integrate into its work programme a follow-up process to the Beijing Conference, in which the Commission should play a catalytic role by regularly reviewing the critical areas of concern in the Global Platform for Action.

#### 3.2 REGIONAL COMMITMENTS

OAU committed itself to the *African Platform for Action: A Common Position for the Advancement of Women* when the Heads of State and Government of OAU signed the *Addis Ababa Declaration on the African Platform for Action on Women* on 28 June, 1995. The Platform specifically mentions the importance of institutional arrangements for implementing the action plan for advancing the position of women. These include the national gender machineries, sub-regional, regional and international structures such as the UN system. It also urges the setting up of a follow-up mechanism for the assessment and monitoring of the implementation of the Platform for Action having a “core structure with the mandate of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating implementation of, and accountability to, the Platform of Action...at international, regional and national levels.”<sup>3</sup>

The ECA is committed to putting gender at the forefront of its programmes of assisting Africa in its social and economic development via gender mainstreaming. As a result, it has elevated its African Centre for Women to division level and started a process of increasing capacity for gender mainstreaming throughout the Commission.

#### 3.3 SUB-REGIONAL COMMITMENTS

In the Southern African Region, the concern of SADC with gender issues dates back to 1990, way before the Beijing Conference, when its Council of Ministers resolved to give

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, E/CN.6/1998/1, p.5

<sup>3</sup> UN-ECA/OAU (1994) *African Platform for Action: African Common Position for the Advancement of Women*, p.49

priority to issues of gender and development. A SADC Gender Policy Framework was created by article 21(3) of the SADC Treaty and Protocol and Gender and Development concerns provided for in Article 22 of the Treaty.

The SADC Institutional Framework for advancing gender issues includes: a Standing Committee of Ministers; an Advisory Committee of NGOs and government officials; a Management Committee consisting of three member countries and one serving as a secretariat; gender focal points in all coordinating units and regional commissions; and a gender unit in the Secretariat. A SADC Plan of Action for Gender and development was

created to audit current programmes, mainstream gender into SADC Programmes; and for training, setting targets and developing indicators.

The SADC gender programme is administered by UNIFEM to promote women in decision-making. Other organizations include Women in the Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) and Women in Law and Development for Africa (WILDAF). Constitutional guarantees, customary law and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are implemented through these organizations. Nevertheless, a lot of work still needs to be done in such areas as legislation, enforcement and capacity building.

### 3.4 NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

African Governments are committed to set up national gender machineries for coordination, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation of all gender mainstreaming efforts. National machineries are "...institutions or formal entities recognized by governments and entrusted with particular responsibility for the advancement of women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in monitoring the ramifications of gender relations in a given society, and acting as advocates on behalf of women."<sup>4</sup>

Many countries already had national gender machineries even before the Global and African Platforms. Since then, some have shown progress in upgrading gender units to departments or ministry levels<sup>5</sup> while others have kept their previous governmental structures or machinery/focal point<sup>6</sup> but added on the Global Platform to the already burdened structures. In a few notable cases, for example Eritrea, the national machinery is outside of the governmental structures altogether. Others such as Ghana still make statements of commitment to set up institutional structures beyond what is already in place.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *African Platform for Action: African Common Position for Women*, Dakar, 1994, p.49

<sup>5</sup> For example, Zambia strengthened and elevated the Women in Development Department at the National Commission for Development Planning to the Gender in Development Division at Cabinet Office; in Swaziland, the gender programme did not have a Ministry until 1996 when it was placed under Ministry of Home Affairs;

<sup>6</sup> Seychelles, Eritrea, Malawi, Kenya, etc. – though some modifications to the total machinery may have been effected e.g. renaming or re-constitution of the old structures; creation or addition of sectoral focal points; increased or strengthened networks; etc

<sup>7</sup> See: Ghana, Accra, National Reports on Progress Made in the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, p.3 - 6

## **4.0 CREATION AND STRENGTHENING OF GENDER MACHINERIES**

To assess progress in the creation and strengthening of national machineries and governmental bodies, the following key questions have to be asked:

- Has the responsibility for advancing women's issues been vested in the highest possible levels of government?
- What forms have the national gender machineries taken?
- Have inter-ministerial coordination structures been established and strengthened?
- How strong are the networking and monitoring capabilities of the national machineries?
- How effective have they been in advancing the gender concerns of women. For example: gender mainstreaming government and organizations' policies, programmes

and projects; developing strategies and methodologies for mobilizing resources and the energies of women, men, and society in general; empowering women through research, information, education, training, lobbying, and advisory services to the Government; coordinating various actors on the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels; monitoring impact; building capacity for gender analytic research and disaggregated data collection and dissemination; changing laws to suit the concerns of women for gender equality; etc.

- If they have not been effective, why not? If they have been effective, what lessons have been learned?
- Have legislative bodies played their role in advancing the status of women?
- Have ministries been given the mandate to review policies, programmes and projects from a gender perspective and in light of the Global and African Platforms?

### **4.1 TYPES OF INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND VESTING OF RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **4.1.1 INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:**

The United Nations system has committed itself to incorporate and mainstream gender in policies, programmes, positions and so forth, to ensure the implementation of the Platform. The office of the United Nations Secretary-General takes the overall responsibility for the global implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Platform through the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and committees it services. These include the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE); commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) such as those on the status of women, human rights, sustainable development, population; and relevant United Nations entities such as: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

#### **4.1.2 REGIONAL LEVEL**

##### **4.1.2.1. The Organization of African Unity (OAU)**

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) committed itself to the African Platform for Action through a Declaration of African Heads of State on June 28, 1995. This Platform, which was also developed in preparation for the Beijing Conference, as the African position paper, expresses similar concerns as the Global Platform for Action. All the 11 critical

areas of concern raised in the African Platform (and to which a commitment to address them was made through the Declaration by Heads of African States), require institutional mechanisms to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate actions and report to various authorities and interested parties on an on-going basis. The OAU, as the supreme regional political body, is vested with the mandate of overseeing the *political* commitment and implementation of the Global and African Platforms through its annual forums with African ministers and Heads of state. The OAU has the leverage to bring gender issues to the highest levels of African governments for their serious commitment and implementation. A Gender Unit exists within the OAU to assist in the quest to put gender issues at the fore of development efforts by African politicians.

In most African countries the executive branches of government take the primary responsibility for proposing policies, plans, programmes and projects. Gender mainstreaming therefore lies first and foremost in the hands of the Heads of state and government, ministers and principal advisers. Indeed where progress has been made in mainstreaming gender issues, it was because the top leadership, especially the president and the cabinet, took personal interest and vigorously pursued the goals of women's advancement albeit with a strong push from strong women's movements. In many cases, Legislative Assemblies still lack the analytical and resource capacities available to the executive branches/civil services for policy scrutiny and analysis that could enforce gender mainstreaming. As a result they remain quite weak in spite of multi-party democratic systems and have little capacity to change the prevailing situations.

Consequently, the OAU still needs to take a much more proactive role in influencing African politics and African political leaders to seriously account for their commitments to empower women and to advance their status. The OAU has a significant role to play in ensuring that African governments act in accordance with the declarations which they sign, and demonstrate in actions their commitments vis-a vis tackling gender concerns.

##### **4.1.2.2 The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**

The Economic Commission for Africa's mandate is to promote social and economic development in the African continent. It has adopted a serious approach to the issues of gender, the empowerment of women and the advancement of their social, political and economic status. This commitment has been witnessed by the various conferences, workshops, meetings and activities that ECA has initiated, sponsored, conducted or participated in over the past 20 years. These efforts are aimed at taking gender issues to the top of the African development agenda. The creation of the Committee on Women in Development (CWD) and the African Centre for Women (ACW) further signifies a serious commitment to these issues. There is already a process in place toward enhancing the gender mainstreaming capacity of the divisions in ECA in view of its commitment to

include gender equality as a development objective and gender mainstreaming as its strategy. This has become more apparent since 1996 when the new leadership of ECA

initiated a structural reform process with gender becoming a focal point for development and with the elevation of ACW to the level of a division.<sup>8</sup>

### **i) Committee on Women and Development (CWD)<sup>9</sup>**

CWD is a committee made up of representatives of ECA Member States, civil society and experts and has superseded AARC. AARC had been set up "...at the instance of the first Africa Regional Conference on Women specifically to assist and advise ECA on the integration of women in development, to ensure the implementation of policy recommendations, to mobilize the resources required for the purpose, to follow up and evaluate sub-regional activities and organize the Africa Regional Conference on Women."<sup>10</sup>

### **ii) The African Centre for Women (ACW)**

Since 1996, ACW has been receiving greater attention and promises for enhanced capacity to service ECA internally and the African continent regarding gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The new programme for the Centre is contained in its strategic plan for 2000 – 2005. It aims to assist member countries (as well as divisions in ECA) to mainstream gender in programmes, policies, projects and laws. ACW also intends to focus on advocacy, networking, training and coordination in order to facilitate the advancement of women in Africa at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

The main problem faced by ACW is its own capacity to provide the services required internally by other Divisions as well as externally at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. The regular budget for the Centre is limited, amounting to not more than US\$2 million per year. Reliance is put on extra budgetary resources for certain activities but receiving such resources is unpredictable. The need to urgently boost the capacity of the Center cannot be overemphasized as it is the pillar on which all the Center's activities are dependent. Currently in ACW there are only five core professional staff in addition to a Regional Advisors, one on women's economic empowerment and one on women's human and legal rights, whose mandate is to service the entire African region rather than to carry out the internal work of ACW. This seriously limits the ability to provide the quantity and quality of services required. ACW therefore relies heavily on short-term solutions, such as working with external consultants.

The work of ACW has however been relatively strengthened through the recent initiative to revive the Sub-Regional Development Centres (SRDCs) of ECA. This initiative was aimed at decentralizing the work of ECA making it more relevant to sub-regional needs and priorities.

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<sup>8</sup> ECA African Centre for Women, Strategic Plan for the Period 2000 – 2005, Addis Ababa, November 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Formerly ARCC –Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development.

<sup>10</sup> ECA, Report of The First Meeting of Ministers of the Committee on Women and Development, April, 1999, p.3



### **4.1.2.3 The African Development Bank (ADB)**

The African Development Bank as a regional institution mandated to assist in the development of African countries through financial aid, has a role to play in promoting gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women through the programmes and projects it finances. In fact, the ADB is proposing to use *good governance* as one of its conditions for giving assistance to African countries. This is a window of opportunity for ADB to demonstrate its commitment to advancing the position of women on the African continent. Since women's rights are human rights and development without focusing on gender issues is no development at all, ADB respects both fronts to address the concerns raised in the Global and African Platforms.

### **4.1.2.4 Others**

There are other bodies operating at regional level and these include mainly NGOs such as FEMNET. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference it was learnt that there is also an African Commission for Human Rights and Peace and a Special Rapporteur for Women's Rights in Africa. The latter's capacity needs strengthening.

## **.1.3 THE SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL**

### **4.1.3.1. Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

The 1998 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development by Heads of State was a major landmark for women's advancement in the sub-region. It reaffirms its commitment to the Forward Looking Strategies adopted at the third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi (1985), the African Platform for Action and, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Declaration endorses SADC's decision to establish a *policy framework* for mainstreaming gender in all SADC activities; putting in place an *institutional framework* for advancing gender equality which includes a Gender Advisory Committee, a Gender Unit<sup>11</sup> and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in all sectoral initiatives. The Declaration has an addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children with proposed legal, social, economic, cultural and political strategies to tackle this "strongly condemned" phenomenon.

### **4.1.4 NATIONAL LEVEL**

In addition to their placement in high offices of government as explained above, one of the most important structural aspects of the national machineries are the linkages they establish with civil society actors such as: NGOs with their own gender networks; different types of media; educational institutions and research centres; grassroots women's associations; and financial and credit institutions in private, semi-private and public sectors. Further strengthening of important linkage with bodies that belong to governing institutions of the country such as the Parliament or local governing councils is vital. There are women's caucuses that have come up in legislative assemblies such as in Malawi and Zambia, both at national and local levels.

Below are examples of government structures responsible for improving the status of women:

- Malawi: the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services<sup>12</sup> (MGYCS)

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<sup>11</sup> Which reports directly to the SADC Council of Ministers and has therefore much influence.

<sup>12</sup> Very recently changed from Ministry of Women, Children, Community Services and Social Welfare.

and the National Commission for Women in Development (NCWD) with representatives from government, civil society and NGOs.

- Kenya: the Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Heritage, Culture and Social Services
  - Ethiopia: the Women's Affairs Office in the Prime Minister's Office.
  - Senegal: this responsibility is vested in the Ministry of Family, Social Action and National Solidarity.
  - Nigeria: the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, along with the Family Support Programme, utilizing the offices of the First Lady at federal, state and local government levels and the Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development at state level.
  - Botswana: the National Women's Machinery which was elevated to a "fully-fledged government department" called the Women's Affairs Department.
  - Swaziland: the Ministry of Home Affairs was given a mandate for gender issues in 1996 and UNFPA employed a gender officer on secondment to the Ministry.
  - Ghana: the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) under the Office of the President
  - Zambia: the Gender in Development Division in the Cabinet Office
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- Uganda: the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
  - Mali: the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family.

Other countries use structures outside the government machinery to implement the Global and African Platforms. The Republic of the Seychelles has a Gender Steering Committee comprising public sector and NGO representatives. Eritrea has the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), an NGO (also called Union) established in 1979 and which has now over 200,000 members at regional, sub-regional and community levels. It has now been entrusted with coordinating the implementation of the Global Platform and has a Plan of Action that coincides with the Global Platform.<sup>13</sup>

## 4.2 CHALLENGES

One of the major challenges faced by most countries is lack of the required resources to implement the approved programmes. This can also be evidenced in some organizations and institutions at all levels (local to international) even within the agencies of development partners.

In some countries, the macro-indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress have not been fully articulated and are not yet operational. As a result, clear, objective and precise monitoring and evaluations cannot take place. It is also difficult to follow up the expenditures on specific themes (e.g. empowerment and institutional mechanisms since disaggregated expenditure figures are not readily available. South Africa is a case in point. "The Government's budget for Global Platform implementation is hard to assess since expenditures are not disaggregated specifically for the Platform or the Women's Convention or gender-related issues."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Being outside the governmental structure NUEW's mandate needs further clarification as well as development of a stronger, more powerful, networking system that can ensure more effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Platform for Action.

<sup>14</sup> WEDO, *Mapping Progress*, op. cit., p.160

Gender machineries at almost all levels lack the necessary human resources with the requisite skills. Equipment and other material resources are also not adequate. For example, South Africa, which is taken as one of the leading African countries in political empowerment of women, has a relatively small government budget allocation to gender programmes as compared to other programmes. "The Commission on Gender Equality has a budget of Rand 2 million (US\$405,000) compared to the Human Rights Commission's budget of Rand 6.4 million (US\$1.3 million) and the Truth Commission's Rand 72 million (US\$14.6 million)."<sup>15</sup> Malawi, like many of her neighbours, has very few gender specialists in the national machinery. In 1998, the Women's Affairs Division of the Ministry had only one person in the "super-scale" bracket and 19 persons at professional officer/chief technical officer levels where 7 posts were still vacant.<sup>16</sup> Results of a study showed that only 16% of staff in the Ministry of Women, Youth and Community Services had ever received gender training of some sort or were familiar with gender planning or had knowledge of gender documents.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry relies on outsiders and grassroots people beyond the government machinery, to provide required expertise. Even these may not have the full level of expertise required to provide the critical service needed to

mainstream gender in policies and programmes while at the same time be able to service government departments and the entire machinery.

Also in many countries, the central government gender or women's machineries were created before the Beijing Conference. After the Conference, the Declaration and Platform for Action, women's machineries were assigned extra responsibilities to implement the Platforms. This significantly increased the burden but their capacity (extra personnel, training/skills pool, financial, and material resources, etc.) did not increase accordingly. One of the activities that have been delayed is the formulation of the national gender policy in Kenya and other countries. Kenya's was finalized sometime in 1998 but still awaited cabinet approval as at July 1999. The result is delays in implementing a full and nationally agreed-upon gender programme.

Based on the Kenyan case, several interesting observations can also be made. For example, the Women's Bureau is a *unit* within a *division* of Social Services which itself is within a Ministry that has *several* other divisions (the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Heritage, Culture, and Social Services). Indeed many other countries have a similar set up for the central government gender structure i.e. placed within a larger composite ministry which has a single budget. The Ugandan Gender Department, as a result of a recent rationalization or civil service reform process, has also been put together with Culture and Community Development "...affecting efforts to raise the status of and empower women."<sup>18</sup> Thus, there are lingering issues of lack of autonomy and authority to influence policy and operate independently and effectively.

Although Cameroon has a national action plan formulated in consultation with NGOs and which identifies priority areas, resources are not directly or specifically allocated to each of those areas. There are also no time-bound targets or benchmarks.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.166

<sup>16</sup> Eno & Mtimuni, *Institutional Needs Assessment of Government Agencies Responsible for Gender Issue*, 1998, p.23

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.20

<sup>18</sup> Uganda: National Progress Report, August 1999, p.2

The Action Plan in Congo-Brazzaville is said to have been derailed by the civil war. In Mali, like everywhere else, inadequate resources are given as a major block to progress.<sup>19</sup> In Burkina Faso, some of the constraints are: the lack of financial, material and human resources (in quantity and quality); difficulties in coordinating ministerial actions for the advancement of women; difficulties in identifying and coordinating NGOs and women's associations; a low level of training of members of women's associations; persistence of women's high illiteracy levels; and isolated activities of associations/NGOs, which make it difficult to measure the real impact and report on real progress.

In Senegal, the government determined what it needed to implement in its action plan but realized that it could not afford the cost – even with outside donor assistance. Also it is difficult to know how many NGOs are involved in implementing the Senegalese Action Plan and there is a tendency for many of them to work in isolation. This limits the impact of their efforts.<sup>20</sup>

## 5.0. INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

All the African countries have by now put in place national structures, starting from the highest levels of government and extending to the wider society, to empower women and advance their status.<sup>21</sup> The effectiveness of these structures depends first and foremost on the vision, zeal and conviction of the topmost state/political leaders – the Presidents, Prime Ministers, etc. Countries such as Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda have made some significant advances in empowering women and advancing gender equality because of the clearly demonstrated political commitment of their leaders. This seems to be the outcome of a strong, well organized and well orchestrated women's movement that relentlessly looks for results and that has highly committed people (women, men and the youth) who are prepared to sacrifice their time, resources, reputations, etc. for the benefit of the cause – and especially for the benefit of the rural masses of women. Resources and capacity building for the national gender machineries come as a result of such high commitment, vision, organizational abilities and personal sacrifice.

Some of the key questions to be asked in assessing the effectiveness of national machineries in this area are:

- To what extent have public policies undergone gender impact analysis before they were passed?
- Has there been regular monitoring, review and analysis of on going policies, programmes and projects so that women are direct beneficiaries?

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<sup>19</sup> Indicated, for example, by lack of logistical or resource empowerment of the regional machinery such as regional coordinators who could have assisted in diffusing and implementing the action plan throughout the entire country.

<sup>20</sup> WEDO, Mapping Progress, *op. cit.*, p.154

<sup>21</sup> It appears that a distinction should be made between the *Government* Gender Machinery and the *National* Gender Machinery. The former should comprise only those structures created by governments and are managed by public sector officials. The latter is much wider and encompasses government structures, private sector structures and civil society organizations/structures. For this reason, *national* gender machineries present greater coordination and effectiveness challenges than the *government* gender machineries.

- Has any analysis, research etc. been done to understand and take into account the role of women in remunerated and unremunerated jobs as their contributions to the national economy?
- Has CEDAW been ratified and actions, strategies and methodologies been designed to ensure its speedy implementation?
- What policies, strategies and methodologies have been adopted to enhance equality between women and men, and promote cooperation and coordination within the central government in order to ensure gender mainstreaming?
- Have relationships developed between the gender-relevant branches of government, research and women's studies centers, educational institutions, private sectors, civil society and NGOs especially those dealing with women's issues, the media and all others? Have legal reforms been undertaken?
- What measures have been undertaken to increase women's participation in all spheres of life both as agents and as beneficiaries?
- Have direct links been established with national, regional and international bodies dealing with the advancement of women?
- What kind and amount of gender training and advisory assistance to government agencies the national machineries have provided?

## 5.1 INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The UN system has made headway in setting up or strengthening institutional structures and re-arrangements to accommodate and implement the Global Platform for Action. For example, the directive to achieve a 50/50 gender distribution in all UN agencies at national, regional and international levels; the support to regional bodies to push and make gender mainstreaming a priority in policies, projects and programmes on the regional and national levels; the setting up of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender

Equality; efforts being undertaken to encourage the accumulation and use of disaggregated data including engendering the budgets for UN agencies (using UNICEF as a case) and national budgets.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, there is concern that with the slow rate of progress, the goal of achieving the 50/50 requirement by 2000 may not be achieved. If the current trend continues, this goal may not be reached until 2013 for posts subject to geographical distribution and 2018 for posts not subject to geographical distribution.<sup>23</sup>

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) shows figures that portray how the United Nations system is faring in improving gender balance in the system. The data show that generally the situation is improving in all the UN agencies, organs, funds and programmes<sup>24</sup>. However, progress seems to be slow and there is still a long way to go towards parity especially at the highest echelons of the system. For example, the data show that about half of the Professional level women are at P-3 level and below; women hold only 20% of the system's geographical posts at the P-5 level and above; as the grade levels increase, the number of women thins out.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The UN is currently sponsoring capacity building for gender disaggregated data through consultants and UN volunteers in countries such as Malawi.

<sup>23</sup> Posts subject to geographical distribution rose by less than 1% per year between 1984 and 1996 while posts not subject to geographical distribution rose by less than half a percentage point. (ICSC, *op. cit.*, p.8)

<sup>24</sup> For example, recruitment of women at the senior levels (P-5 and above) accounted for 4.8% of all recruitment in 1998, compared to 2.6% in 1993.

<sup>25</sup> UN, International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), Gender Balance in the United Nations Common System: Progress, Prognosis, Prescriptions, December 1998

Among other things, women's situation in the system can improve through: top level commitment; policy development – including establishment of focal points and on-going revision of targets; expanding recruitment sources; facilitating work/life balance; enhancing the working environment; follow-up mechanisms.<sup>26</sup> Some of these issues are being addressed, and some have already shown results.

## **5.2 NATIONAL LEVEL**

At the national level, inadequate financial, human and material resources is the major constraint to progress in enhancing institutional capacity for the advancement of women. Almost all countries have mentioned that they have inadequate human and financial capacity to implement their Platforms for Action. This is in spite of indications that since the Beijing Conference resources from donor assistance and some government budgetary allocations to national machineries have seen some significant increases.

Led by the initiative of the United Nations system, gender equality and mainstreaming has formally come to the top of the agenda for development. Most, if not all, major development partners and lending institutions on the African continent are now incorporating gender-mainstreaming requirements in their assistance programmes. The total amount of resources being put into this priority area is difficult to measure and aggregate for all development partners operating on the global scale. One reason is that there are numerous actors presently operating in this area. Secondly, gender being a crosscutting issue, it is difficult to isolate or disaggregate the gender components of most development resources going into projects and programmes e.g. physical infrastructure.<sup>27</sup>

A lot of development programmes in Africa, including efforts to empower women and advance their status, are dependent on the generosity of development partners. This is therefore understandable in the African Platform for Action (p.48) development partners are asked to commit 20% of development assistance, instead of 17%, to human development programmes. Developed countries are also asked to allocate 0.7% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to helping poor countries. The United Nations Agencies, Programmes, Funds and so on are supposed to allocate 20-25% of their regular budgets on gender-related work in order to support the implementation of the Platforms for Action. Any proceeds from debt buy-back schemes and equity conversion should be allocated to women programmes. Multi-lateral partners are urged to set up special windows for channeling finances to women entrepreneurs.

Most countries' budgets for the gender machinery are miniscule as compared to what development partners put in. In Malawi, for example, the Government contributed about MK20 million to the national gender machinery for 1999 while the partners contributed around MK200 million yet these resources were not adequate to cover the priority activities.<sup>28</sup> In Egypt the gender budget has increased to 10% of the total government budget. In Namibia it has increased to 11% of the total annual budget. In Swaziland it is said that the budget for gender and development has risen by 200% with several bilateral and multi-lateral agencies giving assistance but this may still not be adequate. This contrasts with Cameroon where "since Beijing the budget for women's programmes has dwindled. The government has not allocated any of its budget for implementation of the

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<sup>26</sup> ICSC, *op. cit.*, p.8

<sup>27</sup> This justifies the call for mainstreaming gender into all policies, programmes and projects and the need for collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data in all sphere of development undertakings.

<sup>28</sup> The donors are: ADB, DANIDA, E.U., GTZ/DFID, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the WORLD BANK.

Platform.”<sup>29</sup> Countries therefore need to find more sustainable ways of funding their own gender initiatives even as they look to development partners for assistance.

### **5.3 REGIONAL LEVEL**

#### **5.3.1. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)**

ECA has been an active inter-governmental organization at the Africa regional level with regard to advancing the status of women, mainly through its African Centre for Women. At the sub-regional level, gender focal points have been appointed in the SRDCs to work in collaboration with ACW. ACW has taken a decision to focus its work in specific strategic directions, namely, poverty reduction through strengthening women's economic role, fostering the leadership role of women, and promoting the human and legal rights of women. ACW also plays a role in monitoring and promoting the implementation of the African and Global Platforms for Action; and by defining and implementing strategies for mainstreaming gender in the programmes of ECA.<sup>30</sup>

ECA, through ACW, has among many other things, organized sub-regional Beijing follow up meetings in all of the five sub-regions of Africa. At these meetings, member countries were guided in the preparation of a viable national action plan, and how to assess and report on progress made towards implementing the Global and African Platforms for Action during the up-coming reviews. ACW has also organized international and regional conference on the commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ECA entitled “African Women and Economic Development: Investing in Our Future”. The Strategic plan for up to 2001 was developed and surveys were undertaken in Eastern and Western Africa on the status

of women's access to productive resources and human rights within the family;<sup>31</sup> senior staff and gender focal points of substantive divisions of ECA and gender focal points at the SRDCs have been trained in the basics of gender analysis. Advisory services have also been provided to Member States, and publications have been and continue to be disseminated. Recent productions include for example, the regular *African Women's Report*, 53 country brochures portraying the socio-economic status of women in Africa<sup>32</sup> and the outputs of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference.

#### **5.3.2 THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)**

The OAU has a Women's Unit and has organized several conferences or workshops, for example, in Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda, mostly in collaboration with ECA or local initiatives. With respect to implementing the Global and African Platforms, the OAU has focused on promoting the role of women in conflict resolution and peace. In November 1996, OAU and ECA organized a Women Leadership Forum on Peace in Johannesburg, South Africa, with a view to securing the participation of women in the OAU mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. A recommendation was made to form the Africa Women Committee on Peace. Another conference, “Peace, Gender and Development”, was organized by the OAU and ECA in Kigali, Rwanda in March 1997. In

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<sup>29</sup> WEDO, *Mapping Progress*, *op. cit.*, p.43

<sup>30</sup> ECA, Report of The First Meeting of Ministers of the Committee on Women and Development, April, 1999, p.6

<sup>31</sup> Recommendations and strategies for action by ACW and actors in the field were derived from these studies.

<sup>32</sup> These brochures were updated and produced in book format for the 1999 Sixth Regional Conference on Women.

addition, as part of the All Africa Trade Fair in Kaduna, Nigeria.<sup>33</sup>, the OAU held a workshop in collaboration with the African Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and ECA.

### **5.3.3 THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)**

The ADB has also started to mainstream gender and to require that programmes and projects submitted for financing should incorporate or consider gender issues. Other initiatives include: considering a policy on good governance as a condition for country assistance<sup>34</sup>; enhancing its internal gender skills; conducting gender training for ADB team leaders and heads of department; forming an inter-departmental advisory committee on women's issues; as well as human and financial capacity building for the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit of ADB, which deals with gender.<sup>35</sup> Further, a new lending criteria which ties the level of development lending to a particular country to its efforts in implementing gender sensitive development is in place. This is beginning to solve the problem of lack of enforcement and accountability, as governments will be held accountable for what their actions.

### **5.3.4 OTHER REGIONAL BODIES/INSTITUTIONS**

There are numerous other regional (and sub-regional) bodies, institutions, NGOs, associations and so on,<sup>36</sup> as well as offices of international agencies<sup>37</sup> operating at the regional and sub-regional levels. Some have emerged as a direct result of the Beijing Conference while others have always been in existence. With the emergence of new information technologies such as the Internet, e-mail and web-based discussion groups, new monitoring and evaluation networks, easier communications between stakeholders, have emerged and can be expected to have a noticeable impact on progress towards implementing the platforms for action.

### **5.3.5 CHALLENGES**

Africa as a whole has faced many challenges in implementing the platforms. The 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference noted some of these in its workshop on institutional mechanisms viz:

- Although some government machineries have made successful efforts to link up with all stakeholders, most national machineries are still in the evolutionary stage. A great many machineries are still operating with limited financial, human and skills resources. Thus, their ability to provide the intellectual leadership and co-ordinate programmes is extremely limited.
- Many countries still lacked decentralized structures to effectively reach the rural communities. Capacity building in gender analysis, planning and mainstreaming is vital to the effective performance of national machineries. Systematic partnership and consultation with NGOs and civil society on the strategies for implementation of the Platforms for Action is also necessary.

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<sup>33</sup> ECA, The Eighteenth Meeting of the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development, April, 1997, p.4

<sup>34</sup> Which can create a conducive environment to push governments into gender mainstreaming.

<sup>35</sup> ECA/ACW, *Report of the First Meeting of Ministers of the Committee on Women and Development*, April 1999, p.6

<sup>36</sup> AAWARD, WILDAF, WILSA, African Women Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD), Women in Development Southern African Awareness (WIDSAA) programme

<sup>37</sup> Such as UN agencies (UNIFEM, UNESCO, UNDP etc.)



- The shift in government priorities due to the economic crisis, the recurrent conflicts and outbreak of hostilities in Africa have also been major obstacles to the effective role played by the national machineries. Relevant government departments should make budgetary allocations to reflect gender equity concerns and needs of the National Machinery. There is a need to establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure timely implementation of commitments.
- In many countries the macro-indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress have not been fully articulated. There is a need to ensure a minimum threshold of gender mainstreaming capability and capacity. Placing the machineries in the highest political office would give them political clout and authority, and political will is imperative to ensure co-operation and advancement on gender programs. Similarly, it should be noted that some machineries have been assigned extra responsibilities to implement the Platforms, without the requisite increase in capacity and resources. In some countries, they also suffer from a lack of autonomy and authority to influence policy and operate independently and effectively. In countries where national action plans were formulated in consultation with NGOs to identify priority areas, resources were not directly or specifically allocated. There were also no time bound targets or benchmarks.
- Lack of information and poor sensitisation of policy and decision-makers, together with the low-level of training for staff and Gender Focal Points makes implementation difficult. In one case an observation was made that sometimes people are trained but end up being misallocated or not used effectively in mainstreaming gender.
- There is a need to decentralise to the grassroots levels to increase popular participation.
- Some countries have started to develop tools and methodologies for statistical research on gender. However, the general cost of monitoring, training, maintaining

databases, reporting, evaluations and research very high for African economies even without considering actual mainstreaming of gender.

## **5.4 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### **5.4.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

Much has been accomplished since the Beijing Conference in terms of activities performed under institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. Examples include: credit and other schemes for the economic empowerment of women have been set up or enhanced; laws and constitutions have been revised as a direct result of the Global Platform; mechanisms for empowering the girl-child and campaigns to promote women's human rights and stop violence against women have been initiated; programmes have been set up to sensitize communities, organizations and institutions addressing gender and women's issues and train women parliamentarians; NGOs directly or indirectly addressing gender issues have proliferated as a result of the Global Platform; efforts have been made to promote the gender disaggregation of data and utilization of such data for example in the national planning and budgeting exercises of some countries.

However, the precise and objective measurement of the specific impact of activities accomplished in certain themes such as empowerment, remains elusive. The

implementation of activities is usually taken as a measure or indicator of progress. For example, many countries take the final adoption of a gender policy or action plan, the implementation of workshops, conferences and sensitization programmes and so on, as the indicator of progress, instead of the *observable reduction in gender inequality* which should be the expected result of these activities. It is therefore, difficult to directly connect and justify actual or real progress from the numerous activities being conducted in each country (except only in subjective ways) because true, objective measures or indicators of real progress have yet to be fully developed and used in most countries.<sup>38</sup>

However, anecdotal information from several countries shows that some progress has been made. The rate of progress varies between themes and issues - being quite slow in themes such as political *empowerment* or issues dealing with removal of attitudes and entrenched patriarchal traditions. Also, many national machineries and their mechanisms for interfacing with other sectors of society still lack capacity. Many are still beset by human, financial, and material resource inadequacies. This long-standing problem still keeps national machineries from delivering satisfactory results. They fail to effectively coordinate, monitor, and evaluate national efforts of gender analysis and mainstreaming.

With regard to *changing or influencing laws and policy frameworks*, the national machineries have achieved some progress such as changing or shaping laws, constitutions, visions and policy framework papers to make them more gender sensitive. Countries such as Eritrea, Malawi, Senegal, Tunisia and Uganda, have reviewed the Constitution and laws on inheritance, marriage and divorce to make them more gender sensitive. In several cases, (for example, Eritrea, Namibia, South Africa), affirmative action and a quota of women in public institutions required by the Constitution, has guaranteed women's access to policy and decision-making organs of society at various local, regional and national levels. In South Africa and Uganda the gender machineries and specialized women's groups such as Namibia's Women and Law Committee, WILSA and WIDAF, have been involved in raising the issues, sensitizing the communities and pushing for

reviews of laws and constitutions. The gender machineries have also been involved in the creation of long-term, shared development visions in their countries (e.g. in Uganda 2025, Malawi Vision 2020, etc.) to ensure that the future of the country and the strategies used to realize such futures fully recognize and take into account the position and role of women.

However, it is one thing to review and amend laws and constitutions but another to translate these into reality and tangible results for the benefit of the intended persons. A major problem which affects progress in this area is *enforcement* and holding culprits accountable for contravening the changed laws, constitutions, conventions, declarations, etc.<sup>39</sup> The capacity for enforcement is lacking and needs to be built through further sensitization and awareness programmes, institutional building, stronger lobbying, networking and advocacy. The intended beneficiaries of these reviewed laws and constitutions still need to be informed, educated and trained in making use of the laws and constitutions.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This situation is observable in Zambia, Swaziland and all other countries which have used activities performed as an indicator of progress.

<sup>39</sup> Culprits can be governments or other authorities who choose to ignore the statutes, agreements, conventions, declarations or who choose not to rigorously enforce them. They can also be those members of society who actually contravene the statutes.

<sup>40</sup> Affirmative action and quotas for example have not had the maximum benefit in empowering women because of many cultural, attitudinal, behavioral and socio-political factors which need to be removed (see: Africa Leadership Forum: *Index on the Status of Women*, 1999 p.65-66).

Efforts are being made in many countries to publish material in easy-to-read form so that the knowledge can be passed on quickly to the intended beneficiaries. For example, Namibia and other countries have translated their national gender policies and some revised laws, into major local languages to empower all women with the knowledge of the content. Radio programmes, public meetings, workshops and conferences are being conducted in many countries to discuss with and empower women by transmitting the new knowledge on their rights, new laws and institutions that can assist them. Some countries have even set up hotlines through which women in need of assistance can get help.

The effectiveness of National Machineries is hampered by many other factors. Most of these have to do with inadequate internal capacity to deliver the required results. The required skilled human resources, finances, material resources and networking, lobbying and advocacy capabilities are not available at the required levels for effective achievement of goals. There is a lack of mechanisms for strategic resource mobilization and utilization campaigns consciously targeting each of the specific themes mentioned in national action plans (Some national plans are not presented as strategic action plans). There continues to be a paucity of gender research and gender disaggregated data. There is a lack of precise, objective and measurable indicators of achievement and systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Moreover, the external environment – lack of political will; high illiteracy levels; rigid cultural practices, attitudes and values; politics; economic liberalization policies, structural adjustment programmes and other external conditionalities - continue to constrain the effectiveness of the national machineries. In some countries progress is very slow in formulating a gender policy. Without a commonly agreed national gender policy, there is no nationally accepted pact to give a shared sense of purpose and direction to achieving the goals of the Global and African Platforms for Actions.

## **5.5 CHALLENGES**

In many countries mechanisms for monitoring progress and activities by various actors have yet to be developed.

In some cases civil strife is blamed for hampering progress and rendering national machineries ineffective. In other cases national machineries still do not exercise full, direct and decisive influence on the policy formulation process. They can only make recommendations. In many North African countries, legislation in areas, which challenge religious forces, is sometimes difficult to implement.

In Egypt for example, NGOs felt that they were not consulted in drawing up the framework paper although they were consulted many times after it was written. Efforts must be made to strengthen the relationship between NGOs and Government.

Several other factors constrain efforts to mainstream gender into policies, plans, programmes and projects. These have been indicated elsewhere as: low level training of members of women's associations; persistence of women's high illiteracy rates; isolated and uncoordinated activities of associations and NGOs; national machineries that lack capacity (financial, material, human) to perform tasks such as effective coordination, networking, lobbying, monitoring, evaluation, strategic generation and utilization of funds, etc.; some gender machineries are marginalized and cannot directly influence the policy making process.

National Assemblies in many countries also require capacity building especially in terms of building their analytical capabilities, building their knowledge of gender issues and analysis; building and enhancing networks with civil society organizations, research centers and academics working on gender issues. The challenge is to increase the number of Parliamentarians who have analytical and resource capabilities as well as access to information at par (as much as possible) with those of the civil servants or the Executive Branch of government, which prepares the policies, plans and programmes. Without this, Parliamentarians cannot perform their mandate of checking and balancing the Executive Branch and its initiatives, which may not be gender sensitive. They cannot effectively scrutinize and challenge policies, plans, budgets etc. in Parliament when they fail to meet the gender standards set in the African or Global Platforms or indeed any other convention (such as CEDAW) to which the government has acceded.

SADC has specifically noted the following challenges: setting unrealistic expectations; the trivializing of gender issues and resistance at various levels; parallel and uncoordinated efforts by other agencies leading to wasteful duplication, even within SADC itself; communication problems; uneven commitment of countries; lack of an innovative role to strengthen SADC initiatives; and strained NGO-Government relationships.<sup>41</sup>

## **6.0 GENERATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GENDER DISAGGREGATED DATA AND INFORMATION FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION**

Basing on the Global Platform, the pertinent questions to be raised regarding the generation and dissemination of disaggregated data in general, but especially at the national level, are as follows:

- Have disaggregated statistics related to individuals by age and sex, and pertinent to the gender issues of the country, started being collected, stored, analysed and published in user-friendly manner for all types of users including non-technical ones?
- Is this data, disaggregated also by socio-economic and other relevant indicators including number of dependents?
- Is the data disseminated and used for policy and programme formulation?
- How frequently have centers of women's studies and research centers been engaged in research, debates, policy-formulation etc. and in efforts to develop and test appropriate indicators and research methodologies for strengthening gender analysis?
- Has data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including their participation in the informal economy improved since 1995?
- What comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment including unremunerated work has accumulated since 1995 to estimate the quantity and value of such work for possible reflection in national accounts?
- Have any time-use studies been conducted?
- Has international classification of activities for time-use statistics that are sensitive to the difference between women and men remunerated and unremunerated work, been developed?

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<sup>41</sup> ECA, Report of Sub-Regional Follow-up Meeting on the Implementation of Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action – Eastern and Southern Africa, 15-18 February, 1999, p.8

- Have there been attempts to collect, disseminate and use gender-disaggregated statistics for men and women with disabilities including their access to resources?
- Have there been regular reviews of the official statistical system by the collectors and users of the statistics to ensure that it is adequate in its coverage of gender issues?
- Have any employers, trade unions, NGOs, etc. conducted studies on the sharing of power and influence by women and men in decision making positions in the private, public and other sectors of the society?

## **6.1 INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

Regarding disaggregated data-bases, monitoring and evaluations of progress on mainstreaming gender, the United Nations International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) pledges to: continue providing strategic analyses of various factors affecting women's opportunities for United Nations service; showcasing creative initiatives undertaken to increase female staff representation; continue maintaining the gender balance database and share it with United Nations organizations and other interested parties as well as to collaborate with them in preparing guidelines for staff with decision-making responsibilities that must be accountable for ensuring gender balance; develop a recruitment source database that targets female nationals from developing countries, particularly the under-represented countries with economies in transition.<sup>42</sup>

## **6.2 REGIONAL LEVEL**

Much concern is being raised regarding the slow progress being made in collecting, storing, analysing and publishing data in user-friendly form and using it in national accounts, budget, planning and policy-making exercises.

The First Meeting of Ministers of CWD<sup>43</sup> in April 1999 gives some indication of how far countries and sub-regions have gone in ensuring availability of disaggregated data. For example, the report from the West African SRDC shows that it has mainstreamed gender into the Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in West Africa; and produced and circulated a questionnaire on the disaggregation of gender mainstreaming data in social and economic development in West Africa. But as an indication of what still remains to be done, it is shown that reports on mainstreaming gender concerns into development policies and programmes need to be produced.

The SRDC in North Africa reports that it prepared a study on policy measures for enabling women to play a greater role in the economic and social development of North Africa in 1997. The center also collected and analysed data on women and gender issues; prepared a study on gender equity and economic and social empowerment of women within the cultural context of North Africa; and prepared an ad hoc meeting of experts on gender equity and economic and social empowerment. Reflecting what still needs to be done in North Africa, the Center intends to: produce studies and documents on gender and cultural disparities in North Africa and women's empowerment in the sub region; build databases on women and gender issues in North Africa; and identify productive approaches and strategies for reducing gender disparities.

In Central Africa, the SDRC has ensured the engendering of the Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in the sub-region, integrated gender into its databases and organized a

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<sup>42</sup> ICSC, *op cit.*, p.10

<sup>43</sup> ECA, Report of The First Meeting of Ministers of the Committee on Women and Development, April, 1999.

meeting to help set up the Central African Women's Network (RESEFAC). But challenges for future programmes have been outlined to include: revitalization of RESEFAC; improvement of statistical data; and integrating the gender approach into SRDC studies and databases. The difficulties of securing gender sensitive data and gender disaggregated data at sub-regional and international levels were reiterated. "One of the causes of this was the lack of dialogue between the generators and the users of such data."<sup>44</sup> The Center intends to start facilitating such dialogue and to encourage sharing of data and research findings between itself and member countries; building partnerships for the promotion of gender equity; highlighting effects of globalization and how to take advantage of it; and pressing the need for including gender perspectives in budget analysis and decision making.

With regard to *building capacity for gender analytic research and disaggregated data collection, analysis and dissemination*, progress has been quite slow. Only recently have many countries started to take measures to increase capacity and the rate of implementing activities in this area.<sup>45</sup> The UN system itself has just started to push its agencies to emulate the UNICEF example of engendering the budget. It is noted elsewhere that "...the statistical data on the basis of which national priorities were set did not sufficiently take into account the objectives of the Global Platform. Those objectives were still being relegated to the back burner and national development programmes did not genuinely reflect the economic role of women."<sup>46</sup>

### 6.3 SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL

SADC disseminates the *Gender Monitor*, a regular publication tracking developments, activities, achievements and innovations in the sub-region. It also has published a country by country book series called *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Southern Africa*, to present the information on the status of women in the sub-region.

Other sub-regions such as Central and West Africa compile the *Survey of Economic and Social Conditions* to investigate and report on conditions and status of the general populations. Gender is now being mainstreamed in these studies.

### 6.4 NATIONAL LEVEL

In Eritrea, it is noted that indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating impact are still to be developed. "A monitoring mechanism within the government's institutions should be introduced in order to be able to measure and follow up the indicators of women's development."<sup>47</sup>

Kenya's national report on progress in implementing the Global and African Platforms does not mention progress in establishing indicators and mechanisms to monitor in each of the 12 themes adopted.<sup>48</sup> What are termed "indicators and sources of data" in the action

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.9

<sup>45</sup> Egypt, Malawi, being examples.

<sup>46</sup> ECA, Report of The First Meeting of Ministers of the Committee on Women and Development, April, 1999, p.3

<sup>47</sup> National Union of Eritrean Women, *National Report on the implementation of the African and Global Platform for Action for the Advancement of Eritrean Women*, Asmara, June 1999

<sup>48</sup> Except may be in health where there is indication of "established Systems Research and Evaluation Unit." (p.15). There are also initiatives to improve on gender disaggregated databases and working with the Central Bureau of Statistics, to update such databases and to establish "statistical indicators on the status of women in the country" But this falls short of mentioning the creation of a comprehensive and elaborate monitoring system.

matrices (or what are referred to as the *matrices on progress made*) are just sources of data (or activities accomplished) and cannot comprehensively measure progress or impact in the subject matter.

The collection of data disaggregated by age and sex, and pertinent to the gender issues of the various countries, have been started although most are a long way from fully achieving the goal. It has only been four years since the Global Platform, and most countries have just developed their action plans, which they are now beginning to implement. Some do not even have their gender policies in place yet and therefore have not formulated a clear framework for future action. However, in the last two or so years, activities in this area have begun. Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda are cases in point, even though publications of the data in user friendly form for all kinds of users may not have advanced enough.

## 6.5 CHALLENGES

Monitoring, training, maintaining database, reporting, undertaking evaluations and research, are expensive propositions for African economies, particularly when considering the question of mainstreaming gender. Research centres, universities and statistical offices or bureaux are facing declining budgets in real terms every year. To mainstream gender, training of people in new methodologies and sensitivities, new planning and tools for gender analysis and planning is needed. It requires resources in addition to the zeal and commitment of the top political leadership.

Politics and the need for political expedience are also a major challenge not only for the theme of institutional mechanisms for women's advancement and disaggregated data, but for women's advancement and empowerment as a whole.<sup>49</sup> Politicians may not be too pleased with data that show that they are not doing well vis-a-vis gender issues, HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, etc. They may at the same time have other (largely short-term) pressing needs which, for the sake of expedience, they would rather spend the society's resources on. In such a situation, the short-term "priorities" may take precedence over

everything else and only lip service is paid toward the more substantive long-term strategic issues such as gender (and all its related aspects such as disaggregated data).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This can be evidenced by the way women leadership quotas, affirmative action commitments, even democratic systems in general are manipulated to render them ineffective for the purposes they were intended to serve.

<sup>50</sup> In fact, this reality can apply to how all the critical *long-term development* issues on the African continent (AIDS, environmental degradation, civil wars and lack of internal security, respect of human rights etc.) are treated. Frequently, the term "lack of political will" has been adopted and applied to all these situations (which are quickly turning into major calamities) where the political leadership seems unable or unwilling to start taking serious measures to correct the situation but would rather spend society's resources on short-term (sometimes private/personal) interests.

## **7.0 CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 REGIONAL LEVEL**

The 6<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference on Women was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22-26 November, 1999. The Workshop on Institutional Mechanisms made several observations and recommendations as directly quoted below:

- Recognition of national machineries as the co-ordination and consultative mechanisms for the whole national process of implementing the Platforms for Action.
- Establishment of a gender management system for co-ordination and collaboration, with strong NGO input and clear terms of reference for all components.
- Duplication of efforts, parallel responsibilities, uncoordinated interventions should be avoided at all levels through systematic and participatory planning.
- Government and NGOs are partners for development and should not work as opponents.
- National machineries should be strengthened through appropriate legislative and policy support, human, technical, material and financial resources.
- National machineries should be placed at the highest level of government and have full authority to make decisions.
- They should have the capacity to provide technical expertise on all matters relating to the advancement of gender equality
- National machineries should ensure that gender focal points are appointed in all line ministries, agencies and programmes. These Gender Focal Points should be at levels that give them access to policy formulation and decision making
- Gender Focal Points should be provided with clear terms of reference, training and information
- Countries to undertake gender audit of all sectoral activities at all levels national, provincial and district levels.
- Training in gender analysis and gender auditing should be provided for the staff of national machineries and all gender focal points
- National machineries should prioritise the development of gender sensitive indicators to facilitate their monitoring function. Such indicators should be qualitative and quantitative in nature and include measures for:
  - Political will and support;
  - Degree of institutionalisation of policies, structures, resources;
  - Clear objectives and targets of national machineries at all levels;
  - Existence of an inclusive national policy on gender and the advancement of women;
  - Each Head of State should appoint an Advisor on Gender.
- An Act of Parliament should be passed that enables the national machinery to play its co-ordinating role, and allocates the resources needed to implement the Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women.



- National machineries should depend mostly on government funding or locally mobilized funds. External assistance should only be supplementary.
- Women ministers and members of parliament should form strong networks and support structures for advocacy for strengthening the machineries.
- In the context of regional integration and the promotion of an African Renaissance, statutory sub-regional groupings should develop sub regional plans of action, and political and legal frameworks that can serve as additional tools for reinforcing action at the national level.
- Concerted efforts should be made to engender the proposed Pan -African Parliament.
- Regional assessments should be regularly carried out by the OAU and the ECA to ensure that each member country is carrying out its commitments and responding to gender equality needs

Another important conference for ECA/ACW was the “African Women and Economic Development: *Investing in our Future*” held from 28 April to 1 May, 1998 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of ECA. It brought together participants and stakeholders from all walks of life to discuss gender/women’s issues and the way forward for Africa. Many topics were covered including: globalization; good governance; information technologies; access to productive resources; gender and economic development; and many others relating to gender and development. The outputs of the Conference were published in a series of publications and the Conference was also instrumental in the creation of ACW’s Strategic Plan for 1999-2005.

The Eighteenth Meeting of the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for Integration of Women in development (AARC) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24-26 April, 1997. Among other things, this meeting was instrumental in reshaping and revitalizing AARC as well as renaming it as the Committee on Women and Development (CWD)<sup>51</sup> with revised terms of reference and rules of membership. It was agreed that CWD should continue to report directly to the Conference of Ministers and should become a committee of experts meeting every two years. It should work in cooperation with the civil society, NGOs and donor agencies. Moreover, the meeting made the following pertinent recommendations to the up-coming Conference of Ministers, to demonstrate the need for speedy action in certain areas:

- A culture of developing and using gender disaggregated statistics generally, and particularly in the ministries of Finance and Planning should be established;
- Allocation of budgets should be made in such a way to reflect the gender equity issue based on participatory and actual needs;
- Budget and time allocation must be made for training policy makers in gender-aware and gender-sensitive planning;
- Members of the CWD should be included as experts in the ECA Conferences of Ministers of Finance, Economic Development and of Social and Development Planning;

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<sup>51</sup> The CWD’s terms of reference (TOR) were given as: to undertake periodic reviews of progress in the implementation of regional and global plans for action; harmonize and coordinate the sub-regional programmes on the integration of women in development; mobilise resources needed to implement programme activities at the sub-regional level; facilitate the sharing of information and experiences relating to the advancement of women among the various member states. The ACW serves as the secretariat for CWD and facilitates the implementation of these TOR and implementation of resolutions.

- Monitoring mechanisms for women's programmes should be put in place within the ministries to ensure timely implementation of commitments especially with regard to budgetary allocations;
- Coordination of external aid must be effective in order to ensure that the percentage allocated to women's projects and gender concerns is honoured. In addition, governments should institute a mechanism to match donor funds allocated to women's programmes;
- A mechanism for negotiating debt cancellation against national funds allocated to addressing women's concerns and gender inequality should be instituted.

Although activities have started on some of the above recommendations, full implementation is awaited and the situations being referred to still exist. These recommendations comprise some of the actions to be taken with immediate effect (by year 2000).

The Africa Leadership Forum held a Conference in January 1997 in Accra, Ghana called *Empowering Women for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Challenge for Politics, Business, Development and Leadership*. Regarding women's empowerment, the Conference recommended that African countries be ranked – based on a progressively refined set of indicators – to reflect their accomplishments as regards women's participation in the political and economic spheres, particularly with respect to leadership positions, and the advancement of women in general.<sup>52</sup> The Conference noted that benchmarks should be set for measuring progress. The benchmarks would become the targets for policy makers, companies and society at large, which would feel compelled to devise strategies for the attainment of the targets.

The African Leadership Forum Study Report observes that women's level of empowerment is a measure of (or is determined by) collective capacity, within public institutions (which are presumably male dominated), to take action to change present structures of inequality. Women's empowerment is therefore not necessarily a result of competencies (or self-reliance) of individual women. This is the case because the structures within which women's empowerment takes place have other social, economic, political, legal and ideological factors that hamper women's participation in policy and decision making roles.

## **7.2 SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL**

From the end of 1997 to the beginning of 1998, ACW organized a series of sub-regional follow-up meetings to the Beijing and Dakar conferences on women. These meetings served to guide participants in ensuring the development of a viable national action plan as well as to build their capacity for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on progress (especially in preparing country reports for the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women in November, 1999) through making evaluation tools available.

From the reports of these meetings, the role, progress and constraints of institutional mechanisms since the Global and African Platforms become quite clear. The biggest of these meetings was the one for Eastern and Southern Africa (February 1999 in the Republic of the Seychelles), where government officials, parliamentarians and regional

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<sup>52</sup> African Leadership Forum (April 1999), *Towards Improved Leadership for Women's Empowerment in Africa: Measuring Progress and Improving Strategy* (Final Draft), p.4

represented 22 African countries and sub-regional NGOs. Also present were inter-governmental organizations and United Nations Agency representatives.

Progress reported under the theme of institutional mechanisms included the fact that: many countries had ratified CEDAW and were revising their laws to make them gender sensitive. Malawi, Uganda and others had gender-sensitive constitutions and the rest were also revising theirs. All countries have by now set up their national machineries, some of which even have decentralized, gender focal points in various ministries, national task forces for various functions such as monitoring and inter-ministerial committees.

Some challenges were noted. For example, civil strife in several countries slowed progress, though at the same time made the need to involve women in conflict resolutions and peace starkly clear. Resource mobilization and utilization; as well as the Action Plan formulation processes encountered challenges which are typical of the whole gender-in-development environment, namely, limited capacities of stakeholders in women's issues; low public awareness; lack of commitment by some stakeholders; limited human, technical, and financial resources especially for national machineries; lack of updated statistical data; lack of exposure and experience; lack of effective coordination; negative, difficult and strong cultural beliefs; problems of communication and information dissemination and misunderstanding of the gender concept.

Regarding gender disaggregated data it was noted that only six among them -- Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe -- had already started fulfilling the requirements for gender disaggregated data. It was also noted that eleven countries had developed indicators of progress in various sectors (e.g. education, employment, women in decision-making, gender focal points, etc.),<sup>53</sup> while others were still in the process of establishing these.

Some of the government representatives did not know what proportion of their government budget goes into women's programmes or national platforms for action. Out of 18 countries that responded to an ACW questionnaire, 16 noted that they did not have a specific budget for implementing the Platform for Action while the two, which have, do not receive adequate funds. However, several countries indicated the existence of monitoring mechanisms through quarterly or annual reports to government machinery, cooperating partners, gender network coordinating committees, etc.

It was also noted that many NGOs were active in the sub-region covering issues such as: women and the law; information, education and communication on women's human rights and other women empowerment issues; peace and conflict resolution; regional integration, entrepreneurship and economic empowerment; etc.<sup>54</sup>

### **7.3 NATIONAL**

At the national level various countries organized and conducted meetings, seminars and workshops as follow-up to the implementation of both the African and Beijing Platforms.

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<sup>53</sup> The indicators were a mixture of measures of *impact* and measures of *activities accomplished*.

<sup>54</sup> Some of these being: FEMNET, WILDAF; EA-SSI; FAWPN; FEMCOM etc.

## **8.0 THE WAY FORWARD**

### **8.1 BY THE YEAR 2000**

- The generation, dissemination and utilization of disaggregated data and maintenance of disaggregated database needs to be accelerated together with efforts to develop and employ effective indicators of impact.
- Systems for disseminating information for the education and empowerment of women (especially at grassroots levels) need to be accelerated.
- Headway has been made in establishing institutions for the advancement of women but some of them are “marginalized in national government structures without a clear mandate.”<sup>55</sup> For those national machineries outside the government structure, mandates have to be elaborated and enforced and clear linkages set up and re-enforced with the policy-making structures. This also applies to the national machineries embedded in the government structure, although this need may not be as great in the former case.
- Resource mobilization and utilization strategies by national machineries have to be put in place and employed aggressively since most countries still lament the lack of resources (financial, human, material) in quality and quantity.

### **8.2 BY THE YEAR 2005**

- At the regional level, the ECA/ACW, OAU and ADB need to set up a concrete and systematic regional monitoring, evaluation and information recording system to track impact. This can be done through SRDCs and other sub-regional bodies, regarding what each government and national machinery is doing to achieve the Global and Regional Platforms on the African continent. The information should be categorized and published for each aspect of the questions noted in the annex This progress tracking, monitoring and publishing system (similar to the SADC Gender Monitor), will provide a more comprehensive constantly up-dated picture of what is going on. It makes it easier to conduct periodic one-off evaluations of the whole picture or aspects of it.
- Ensure that the NGO community – especially local NGOs and women’s associations – acquire full capacity (in financial, human, material resources) to service the grassroots communities.
- Build capacity of local and national legislatures in gender issues knowledge and gender analysis so that they can effectively scrutinize and revise government proposals, policies, budgets etc. before passing them. International agencies also need to build this capacity.

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<sup>55</sup> SADC, *Into The future: SADC and Gender*, A report of the SADC Gender Workshop (January 1997) and the Ministerial Workshop on Gender (February 1997), p.24

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that regional, sub-regional and national authorities have earnestly sought to put in place the formal institutional arrangements to implement the Global and African Platforms. They also have attempted, and continue to attempt, to apply gender research tools for data collection, disaggregation and dissemination and to monitor progress. Almost all have developed their priorities as contained in national plans for action based on Global and African Platforms and some based on national development plans. Development partners and NGOs have intensified their roles and networking with government authorities to ensure speedy and more effective implementation.

However, a lot more remains to be done and the challenges are quite many. Concerns have been raised regarding the small number of professional (specialized), well-trained and well-motivated staff in gender machineries, especially at the national level. The workloads that these staffs have to bear, especially as the environment of the issue becomes congested by every development partner, government and authority, research centers and NGOs attempting to implement gender or women's programmes, can be too overwhelming at times.

Furthermore, especially where there is lack of commitment and zeal, there is often a lack of "institutional memory." Many workshops, meetings, and conferences are held and attended by many officials from different institutions and organizations. Numerous recommendations, conventions, agreements and proclamations are acceded to but little output is seen as a result. Some of the institutions, organizations, machineries which are supposed to implement the conventions, agreements, platforms and so on cannot even readily make available to interested parties the documents they acceded to. Institutional memory and implementation are blocked by the existing organizational or institutional culture and traditions. There is the occasional deliberate forgetfulness because gender sensitivity brings with it the added burden of changing one's old ways and habits, new assignments and orientations (many people, especially in bureaucratic settings, are averse to change or new and extra assignments).<sup>56</sup>

African institutions, organizations and societies have cultures that may be characterized by some or all of the following: aversion to reading and keeping abreast with new ideas and developments (either because of time and resource constraints or other reasons); aversion to information gathering and information sharing (again maybe because of resource constraints, but also because of personal, cultural/traditional barriers or other factors); aversion to conscious uninhibited search and use of research data in policy and decision making, coupled with a preference for subjectivity, rules of thumb, hunch, etc. (because of the need for political expedience, personal whims, etc.). It is one thing to generate gender-disaggregated data, but another to have people make good use of it in their thinking, decisions and policy-making.

The *gender in development* concept is still new and still misunderstood by many in organizations, institutions and society in general. It is also misinterpreted by most people including those in the highest institutions or bodies of policy-making and decision-making. Admittedly, some gender sensitization programmes have been and are still being

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<sup>56</sup> Coupled with "institutional bias" where gender-insensitive policy, programme and project designers do not consciously think of gender mainstreaming, there is evidence indicating the "evaporation" of the gender sensitivity which *may have* characterised earlier stages of the policy, programme or project design process.

conducted such as for Permanent Secretaries, Chief Executives and Army officers, but much work still needs to be done to remove entrenched values, traditions, attitudes and

long-held ways of doing things which are detrimental to women's advancement and participation in policy and decision-making.

Gender programmes and mainstreaming of gender are actually carried out by gender national machineries as well as by individuals in organizations, institutions, communities (e.g. traditional leaders).

Even where one finds gender focal points in place, there is no guarantee that gender mainstreaming will take place. There is therefore dire necessity to ensure mastery of a minimum threshold of gender mainstreaming capability for every official who prepares or advises on policy, programmes and projects so that they all feel gender mainstreaming is their responsibility.

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