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The Girl-Child

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major theme for discussions on development, and unfavourable in view of the persistence, indeed aggravation, of the political and social crisis as well as poverty in the continent.

10. Girls represent half of the 303 million children aged 0-14 who make up 43 per cent of the total population of Africa. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the child as every human being below the age of 18. Yet at this age in most sub-Saharan African countries, almost half of the girls are already married, have had their first babies and try to face their responsibilities as individuals, wives and mothers in an environment in which their roles and positions are largely predetermined. In addition to the specific objectives of the Beijing and Dakar Platforms, the issue of giving attention to the girl-child also features among a series of global commitments made by various international conferences since the 1990 New York World Summit on the Child whose objective was:

- (a) To reduce by half, during the period 1995-2005, the proportion of children suffering from malnutrition;
- (b) To achieve the objective of 80 per cent rate of schooling for boys and girls by the year 2000 and bring down the rate of illiteracy for both men and women to 8 per cent by 2015;
- (c) To improve the reproductive health of women throughout their life time; and
- (d) To promote respect for the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

11. . . Today, public opinion, governments and development aid organizations increasingly acknowledge the fact that no tangible progress can be achieved in improving the situation of women if the inequalities, discrimination and marginalization are not dealt with from the root, by questioning the very process of socialization, the relevance and efficiency of development projects and programmes and by involving young people and children in matters concerning them.

12. The problems facing the girl-child are interacting and inter-linked. In analyzing progress and constraints, efforts should be made to reflect these links by highlighting three indicators identified as key determinants of the situation of the girl-child: education, health and legal protection.

2. Education and school attendance

2.1. Progress and achievement

13. According to UNICEF's 1999 report on the situation of children devoted to education during the period 1990-1996 Africa recorded a progressive rate of schooling of 61 per cent for boys and 51 per cent for girls at the primary school level and 28 and 23 per cent, respectively, for the secondary school level.

14. Some countries have exceeded 90 per cent rates of schooling for example: Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Malawi, Egypt, Mauritius and Zimbabwe. Fifteen countries have attained or almost attained universal education.

15. The gap between the rates of schooling for boys and girls is gradually narrowing as a result of the massive social mobilization campaigns undertaken in countries during the past few years in favour of education for girls. Kenya and Mauritius have attained parity between male and female primary school enrolment rates of (85 per cent and 96 per cent, respectively).
16. Incentives and non-conventional strategies have been used to obtain satisfactory results. Malawi established free primary education in 1994, and this increased the rate of school attendance by 80 per cent. Uganda made primary school education free for four children per family in 1997; the result is the doubling of school attendance, which moved up from 2.6 million to 5.2 million students.
17. In Egypt, the community schools, in which parents and communities fully participate, constitute a model of active learning particularly attractive for girls. Kenya attained parity in education through a multidimensional strategy based *inter alia* on gender training, qualitative and quantitative research, nutritional support, and mobile community schools for single mothers and the remote areas. Also institutionalized was the readmission of girls who dropped out of school because of pregnancy.
18. Zambia has developed a new Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education (PAGE) which demonstrates that sensitization to gender discrimination should begin at home and that the involvement of parents through joint student - parent meetings is necessary for success. The Ministry of Education defined the criteria for determining whether a school is respecting gender differences or not. These criteria include a rate of enrollment of 45 per cent for each of the sexes, no less than 40 per cent of teachers of each sex, separate toilets for girls and boys and teaching free from sexism.
19. In Senegal, the girls' education project (SCOFI) has helped, since 1994, to improve the gross rate of female formal education and increased women and girls' literacy in the informal system. Through social mobilization, strengthened by the personal involvement of the President, school enrollment in first grade increased from 41.5 per cent in 1994 to 53.4 per cent in 1996. SCOFI committees were created virtually throughout the country, and open discussions on non-registered students as well as girls' enrollment were re-instituted in 1997. A gender education watch organization (ORGENS) was established with a view to introducing a gender perspective in the educational system and to combat sexist stereotyping in schools and school manuals.
20. The experience of a large number of countries has shown that reducing disparities at the very beginning of the planning process has made actions more effective. The equity and school improvement project of Guinea has increased the gross rate of school attendance from 40 per cent to 53 per cent in five years, from 20 per cent to 40 per cent in the rural areas and from 29 per cent to 42 per cent with regard to girls. All the activities of the project were planned to have an impact on girls. A nutrition and educational health component has been included in the project.
21. The value of girls' education is increasingly being recognized not only as an individual human right but also as fundamental human rights for the entire community, because of its proven multiplier effects on the reduction of fertility and maternal mortality, improvement of family health and welfare, increase of agricultural productivity and income and increase of the general productivity of women and the economy as a whole. The recommendations and strategies adopted by the conferences of JOMTIEN on Education for All (1990), Ouagadougou on Education for Girls (1993), and Cairo on Population and Development (1994), have created favourable grounds for the implementation of the strategies of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms.

with regard to girls' education.

22. Although catering for the girl-child through alternative health and development programmes has not been given due attention in educational programmes, it is a need that is beginning to feature among the concerns of countries. The examples of South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius and Kenya's health programmes for the girl-child and the experiences of Nigeria and Botswana, all of which were pilot projects, have demonstrated the relevance of these models of pre-school education which include the physical, emotional, cognitive and cultural development of the young infant in a context in which the community fully participates.

23. Everywhere, it has been shown that mobilization becomes effective in increasing the rate of girls' school attendance and in ensuring that they continue schooling. Qualitative and quantitative research has produced relevant responses to the problems of inadequate female school attendance and drop out rates.

24. The most successful countries have built their success on the following factors:

- (a) An educational programme focused on poverty reduction;
- (b) A clear definition of objectives, focus on the results to be attained and openness to new ideas;
- (c) High-level of policy commitment;
- (d) Sustained community involvement through social mobilization and the involvement of all the public, private and community actors in the follow-up;
- (e) Close coordination among all the actors;
- (f) Use of qualitative and quantitative research; and
- (g) Continued financial commitment.

2.2 The Constraints

25. The improvement in the level of schooling of girls results from the overall improvement of the educational system. Yet, during the past few years, armed conflicts, economic pressures of the debt problem, structural adjustment policies and population increases have greatly contributed to regression as opposed to achieving the universal education objectives.

An unfavourable social and economic environment for girls' education

26. The social and cultural environment has many mechanisms for keeping women in a state of subordination, which inhibits the mental, social and emotional development of the girl-child.

Inefficient schooling system and poor quality teaching unsustainable for girls

27. One third of the children enrolled in primary schools drop out before reaching primary five and most of these are girls living in rural areas. One in every six children repeats their primary school classes as against one in every 13 in Latin America or Eastern Asia. Of all the

developing regions of the world, Africa continues to have the lowest level of primary school attendance (compared to Asia, 88 per cent) whereas the number of children to be educated is rapidly increasing. According to UNESCO and UNICEF projections, the number of primary-school-age children will increase by 52 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa during the period 1995-2020 - already an indication of the magnitude of the challenge.

28. The issue of girls abandoning school is topical, even in countries that have attained parity at the primary school level.

Insufficient political will to combat the inequalities

29. There is a wide disparity between what needs to be done and what is actually being done. Only a few countries have established the lasting mechanisms and procedures for sustaining the largest number of girls and disadvantaged children in the educational system.

Paying little attention to research

30. Only a few countries have been able to establish study and research programmes or improved statistical systems to allow for integration of gender concerns into educational problem analysis.

Poor integration of early childhood aid into educational programs

31. Where a mother pursues an outdoor activity, daughters, especially those of poor families, are often compelled to miss school to cater for their brothers and sisters. In towns, pre-school education is limited and costly.

Poverty of families

32. In addition to its negative effect on the capacity of girls, poverty also dampens their esteem, especially their ability to determine their school career. According to ADB sources, 40-45 per cent of the 730 million Africans live in poverty. Of these, 30 per cent belong to the poor strata of society, 70 per cent of which is made up by women. Under the circumstances, the education of the girl-child is increasingly being determined by the need to use them for immediate profits as vendors or housemaids or to help their mothers in looking after their younger brothers and sisters.

33. In urban areas, where education is subsidized, introduction of school fees for cost recovery leaves parents with little choice between making their children to work or go to school - and the majority of those who consequently abandon school are girls.

The debt burden and structural adjustment policies

34. Even by spending 4 per cent of their GNP, many countries still find it difficult to maintain their current rate of school attendance. Reducing the disparity between boys and girls requires substantial investment in the educational system and focussing on the target group. Although everyone is aware that financing education, particularly that of girls, is the best investment to make, the financial commitment is insufficient to meet the needs.

35. For the World Bank, which has been the major donor for education in Africa, the new loans pledged for education in Africa fell by a little more than \$US 400 million in 1993, to just

over \$US 50 million in 1996 and rose again to \$US 300 million in 1998. IDA loans which amounted to \$US 417 billion in 1993 steadily declined henceforth to no more than \$US 132 million in 1996.

36. Repayment of the educational debt, like that of the other social sectors, constitutes a heavy handicap. The World Bank's estimates put Africa's public debt at \$US 223 billion in 1997 and 33 of the 43 most indebted countries were African. In 1996, Africa spent as much money servicing debts (about \$US 12 billion) as it did on education and health combined.

3. Health

3.1. Achievements and progress

37. Health is a necessary precondition for development. The state of the health of children and adolescents is all the more important as it largely determines their future life and well-being.

38. According to the United Nations, the fertility rate in Africa has been declining during the past five years. The rough estimate of fertility is 5.31 children per woman which is a significant reduction. Since 1980, the fertility rate in North Africa is thought to have declined by a third, by 12 per cent in East Africa and by 2 per cent in West Africa.

39. Infant mortality has also been declining although it is still higher in Africa than in the other developing regions of the world: 86 deaths per 1000 live births during the period 1995-2000.¹

40. Since the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the issue of the reproductive health and sexual lives of adolescents, generally considered taboo, has yet to be appropriately addressed.

41. The outlook of health programmes has improved, thus making it easier to conduct surveys, studies and research which have yielded useful data on the sexual lives of adolescents, their intensity and precocity.² Thus, 80 per cent of young girls of about 20 years old have a more or less regular sexual activity. The age of first sexual relations is 15 or 16 years in most countries. The effect of AIDS on young girls in particular is also well defined.

42. Many countries established or strengthened their reproductive health programmes, improved their legal framework and made the work of NGOs, the private sector and youth organizations involved in reproductive health, easier. Centres of instruction and counseling for adolescents have been established in the Republic of Tanzania, Senegal, Kenya and South Africa and these provide a wide range of professional services. Anti-AIDS school clubs have been set up and such an organization as the Society of Women Against Aids in Africa (SWAA) is devoted to training and counselling young girls for AIDS prevention. Uganda has established an Anti-AIDS Commission located in the Office of the President.

43. Knowledge of contraceptive methods has improved. According to population and health

¹ The variation is from 86 per 1,000 live births in East Africa to 96 per 1,000 live births in Southern Africa.

² Blanc, A., and Way, A. Contraceptive Knowledge and use and Sexual Behaviour: A comparative study of adolescents in developing countries. Demographic and health surveys, Macro International, 1997.

surveys conducted in Kenya, Rwanda or Zimbabwe, 90 per cent of young girls claim to have knowledge of at least one contraceptive method and 60 per cent of girls use at least one method in Cameroon.³

44. With regard to nutrition, Senegal and Madagascar have successfully developed two community nutrition projects, which have significantly improved the nutritional status of children and mothers and also improved the income of families through a sound community strategy.

3.2 Constraints

45. Nothing in the progress reviewed indicates that it will indeed be prolonged or sustainable. Reproductive health and the AIDS pandemic are the most serious problems currently facing young people and adolescents. In addition to their medical implications, they also have deep social, cultural and economic consequences.

46. **Reproductive health is one of the areas where it is difficult to distinguish between women and the girl-child.** Pregnancy at an early age, usually during adolescence, is harmful to the health of mothers and their children. Adolescent fertility is particularly high in Central Africa (206 births/ 1000 women); 158 births/1000 women in West Africa; and 145 births/1000 women in East Africa⁴.

47. Lack of information and of access to contraceptive services makes adolescents to engage in secret abortions, which largely contribute to maternal mortality. A study conducted by IPPF shows that, in Nigeria, 72 per cent of the deaths of mothers aged above 19 years are due to abortion complications. Maternal mortality reflects the ills surrounding the act of procreation. Africa alone accounts for 40 per cent of the world's maternal deaths⁵.

Tragic incidence of AIDS on the health and lives of girls and their families.

48. AIDS alone is capable of wiping out all the success achieved in the area of infant survival in many countries, particularly in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. UNAIDS forecast for South Africa and Zimbabwe indicates that AIDS will increase infant mortality by 100 % by the year 2000.

49. Out of the 8 million children made orphans by AIDS in the world, 90 per cent live in Africa: Uganda 11 per cent; Zambia 9 per cent, Zimbabwe 7 per cent and Malawi 6 per cent. According to UNAIDS, the number of children whose parents are HIV-positive even surpasses that of the orphans.

50. The impact of AIDS is not only on infected children. In the most affected countries, millions of these children have lost their parents and other guardians responsible for them, their feeding, education and emotional development. Many of these children have a slim chance of receiving primary education and are very vulnerable to ill treatment or violence. This situation even affects girls more owing to the lesser consideration they receive compared to boys.

³ United Nations Expert group meeting on adolescent girls and their rights, 1997.

⁴ The World Youth. Population Reference Bureau, 1996.

⁵ OMS. Center Panafricain pour la formation aux situations d'urgence, 1995.

51. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the instability created by conflicts continue to affect the health as well as the physical and mental well-being of girls and women.

4. Legal protection and rights

4.1 Achievements and progress

52. Because of their vulnerability, children have a right to social and legal protection against all forms of violation and aggression. This requirement is all the more important for girls who, right from birth, are subjected to gender discrimination and the poor status accorded women by society. In this connection, most African countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). By 1997, only seven countries had not yet ratified the latter.

53. Since 1994, the number of countries, which have adopted laws on violence against women and girls, has increased.

54. In 1996, Burkina Faso took legal measures in the Penal Code to prosecute parents, genital mutilators and accomplices of FGM.

55. In Senegal, under the Government's initiative, the National Assembly adopted new laws (laws 9905, articles 319b, 320 and 321) in January 1999 which strengthen the protection of the child, particularly the girl. These new texts aim to vigorously prevent and severely punish perpetrators of genital mutilation, sexual harassment, rape, pedophilia and the corruption of minors. A follow-up Committee was set up to sensitize public opinion on the scope of these laws. There is an Observatory of Women and Girls Rights comprising various human rights organizations and women's organizations. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry responsible for family affairs are being established.

56. Mali and Kenya are implementing ambitious action plans to eradicate FGM for the period 1998 -2005 and 1999-2019. Ghana in 1894 and Cote d'Ivoire in 1998 (concerning sexual harassment and forced marriages), Togo in 1998, Djibouti in 1995 and Egypt in 1997, passed laws on FGM and violence against women.

57. In July 1998, the Council of Ministers and the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration expressing their commitment to the campaign to eradicate HTPs.

58. With regard to labour legislation, 11 countries have ratified convention no 138 of ILO on the minimum age for employment, set at 15 years.

59. Generally, social mobilization has made it possible to sensitize public opinion to the rights of the child. The children's parliaments, the mayoral associations in defence of children, the village initiative in defence of human rights (Senegal) and the traditional communicators and leaders have successfully embarked on this task. The national committees on the Convention on the Rights of the Child are active in 22 countries.

4.2. Constraints

These concern:

- (a) Persistent socio-cultural attitudes and practices which go against all efforts to promote children's rights in Senegal, and girls rights in particular; and
- (b) The emergence of new forms of violation of the rights of the child through abusive exploitation of their labour and child slavery which need to be emphasized.

60. In spite of the fact that there has yet to be an appropriate mobilization against the economic exploitation of children, this practice is one of the most intolerable violations of the rights of the child and girls are particularly vulnerable to it. The worst forms of this seriously hampers their development and constitutes a serious violation of their most fundamental rights.

61. The placement of children traditionally linked to apprenticeship has been abused by internal as well as transborder networks run by intermediary agents who control the passage of the small girl from the village to the city and eventually abroad.

62. The situation of housemaids is all the more worrying as it is widespread and socially accepted. Whereas boys' labour is usually considered as a learning process, that of housegirls is the only one hired on a remunerative basis making them to be exposed to real physical and psychological risks (harassment and sexual aggression, prostitution, emotional stress etc.). Today, women's participation in the production and the development of informal sector activities calls has increased demand for infant and cheap labour, which can only be provided by the rural areas.

63. The rapid growth of child exploitation caused by poverty and the consequent traffic in children can no longer go unchallenged and require greater attention and concrete measures to eradicate them.

Spread of armed conflicts

64. Since 1996, 20 African countries have experienced various forms of armed conflicts which have left on the roadside 8 million refugees, half of whom are children, and 30 million displaced persons. WHO⁶ sources give more comprehensive data indicating that 550 million persons in 35 countries have been directly or indirectly affected by conflicts during the period 1990-1995.

65. Women and children are particularly traumatized by harmful acts committed during and after conflict: attempts on their lives and their physical and mental well-being, rape, malnutrition and continuous displacement. The social structures are disrupted resulting in the dislocation of family, destruction of communities and the systems of social protection. Children are deprived of schooling and their rights to citizenship, a name and civil status. The situation of girls is all the more fragile as their mothers are themselves extremely exposed. Some of them find themselves having to become breadwinners for the younger children now parentless.

⁶ WHO African Centre for Emergency Preparedness, 1995.

Inadequate application of the laws and conventions on the rights of the child

66. In spite of the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Well-being of the Child has only been ratified by 12 States instead of the 15 required for its entry into force.

67. The inability of the current normative and institutional measures to address issues such as the use of children for domestic work is another factor that facilitates the growing exploitation of children for housework. The main problems here are: lack of agreement on the minimum age for employment and completion of compulsory schooling, the inability of labour inspectors to act, and the often private nature of the practices.

5. The commitments made by major organizations to implement the strategies of the Platform

5.1 The commitments made by regional organizations

68. The resolution adopted at the end of the Dakar fifth Africa Regional Conference emphatically invited the governmental organizations, in preparing and implementing their programmes, to focus their efforts on the major areas of the Platform.

69. It also requested African Governments, bilateral and multilateral development institutions, the United Nations and specialized agencies to support the gender approach in project formulation and implementation in their respective fields of activity.

70. In this connection, the three regional organizations: OAU, ECA and ADB, were mandated by member States to see to the implementation of the Beijing World Platform. A joint OAU/ECA/ADB Secretariat was established to this end to serve as a framework for consultations.

ECA's commitment is demonstrated in:

71. The raising of the status of the African Centre for Women (ACW) which has become a full-fledged Division of ECA.

72. The Centre is the focal point for the follow-up of the Dakar and Beijing conferences. It has organized four regional follow-up meetings for West Africa in Dakar in November 1997, Central Africa in Bangui in June 1998, North Africa in Rabat in November 1998 and East Africa in Seychelles in February 1999. These meetings defined the status of the formulation and implementation of national plans of action and preparation of evaluation reports.

73. It prepared guidelines and indicators for following up the implementation of the Platforms and provided advisory services to Mauritius and South Africa for the preparation of their national action plans on gender equality; to IDEP on integration of women in economic development and planning programmes; Guinea and the Niger on individual rights. It has also carried out various training and research activities.

74. For the purpose of capacity building, ACW has two regional advisors specialized in

women's rights and women's empowerment, respectively. The services of these regional advisers are provided free to States upon request.

Strengthening the Committee on Women and Development (CWD ex ARCC)

75. As an advisory organ coordinating policies on women, CWD was reactivated in 1997 with revised terms of reference. It is responsible, inter alia, for:

- (a) Examining , periodically, the progress made in the implementation of the Platform;
- (b) Mobilizing resources for the implementation of the action plans at the subregional level; and
- (c) Organizing the exchange of information, data and experiences on national gender policies.

76. CWD has been active in advocacy with Africa's decision-makers. It supported the adoption by the latest OAU Summit (1999) of a Resolution on speeding up the implementation of the Regional and Global Platforms. The Summit recommendations included the establishment of a "gender" adviser post in the office of every Head of State and systematic participation of women in the statutory meetings of OAU.

Inclusion of the gender perspective in the activities of all the divisions of ECA, staff training and sensitization on this approach.

77. The organization of a Forum on creation of new opportunities for emerging generations within the framework of the 40th Anniversary celebrations, which enable young girls and boys from all walks of life to express their concerns and views, is the only activity that has directly involved young people.

The OAU showed its commitment through:

Mobilization of African policymakers to adopt the Dakar and Beijing Platforms.

78. The African Heads of State and Government and the Ministers of economic and social development have adopted resolutions expressing their approval of the Platform's recommendations.

Protecting the rights of the child

79. Since 1990, with its support to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the preparation of the African Charter on the Rights and Well-being of the Child, adopted in 1990, OAU has steadily stood for the protection of children, as a matter of policy and strategy.

80. OAU's contribution to the struggle against child labour is effected in its analysis and perception of labour from an African dimension as well as in its search for consensus in this area. The African common position on the most intolerable and most abusive forms of child labour, approved by the last Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Ouagadougou in June 1998, was a step forward in this connection.

81. In 1997, OAU set up a Special Committee to examine the situation of children in countries where there are conflicts and pursued its campaign to promote the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Well-being of the Child. The Addis Ababa Declaration adopted by the Summit of Heads of State and Government in July 1998 contains their commitment to campaign for the eradication of HTPs.

Mobilization for education for all

82. In terms of education, OAU proved its commitment to universal education in Africa by proclaiming the period 1997-2006 the Decade for Education in Africa during its thirty-second Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Yaounde in 1996.

83. The Decade was officially launched in 1997. The Programme of Action which was prepared with the assistance of UNICEF and the IDRC has a specific objective aimed at expanding education and reducing the wide range of gender inequities and the disparities, between the rural and urban areas. Successfully improving the quality of education and vocational training will surely have an impact on the situation of the girl-child.

84. Policy convergence which is also an important objective of this Programme should make it possible for countries to share their experiences and successes in the education of girls.

Establishment of the African Women's Committee for Peace, (May 1998.

85. The Committee's objective is to ensure effective participation of women in all peace-related actions and to see to it that the needs and concerns of refugee and displaced women and children are clearly expressed.

African Development Bank (ADB)

86. As a regional institution working for the economic and social development of Africa, ADB is associated with the various preparatory stages of the implementation of the platforms. Its involvement is reflected in:

The inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting issue

87. Gender issues are henceforth to be taken into account in the preparation of all country strategies, projects and evaluations on major areas of focus, such as agriculture and rural development; human resources development and the promotion of the private sector, good governance; regional integration and economic cooperation.

88. The following measures have been taken:

- (a) Systematic integration of "gender" in all projects submitted to ADB for financing;
- (b) Strengthening ADB's capacity in gender matters;
- (c) Gender training for team-leaders and heads of departments;

- (d) Setting up of advisory interdepartmental committees on women's affairs; and
- (e) Strengthening the human and financial resources of the Women's Unit.

Provision of more financing for women and children;

particularly within the context of poverty alleviation.

Impact

89. This is difficult to feel for the following reasons:

- (a) The commitments made *are political* rather than programmatic. The declarations adopted are not accompanied by mechanisms which enable them to be translated into concrete action;
- (b) *The absence of a regionally-initiated action on the critical areas of the Platform* may be construed as commitment more in principle than to achieving results. Even in the area of education where there has been affirmative action through the Decade plan, results will depend largely on the magnitude of external assistance;
- (c) *There is no mechanism for compelling the various institutions to account for their commitments.* The strategic options, priorities and internal constraints of each institution take precedence over gender policies and moral commitment. For instance, ADB has no statistics to show whether the gender approach has increased financing in favour of women and girls; and
- (d) There has not been much coordination between the OAU, ECA and ADB on the ground.

90. These weaknesses indicate that there are areas to be improved upon during the second phase of the implementation of the Platform. Being the regional focal point, ACW should, in particular, strengthen its ability to penetrate and influence the technical organs of ECA and the regional and subregional economic and social development institutions. The commitment made in connection with the girl-child should be reflected in concrete initiatives and recommendations; the strategic actions suggested during the Forum for the fortieth Anniversary of ECA or events like ADF could help in this regard.

5.2. Commitments of international organizations

91. The commitments made by international organizations and the donor countries following the Beijing Conference are expressed in documents as **the role of development cooperation on the eve of the twenty-first century, the guidelines of the Development Assistance Committee for gender equality and the empowerment of women within the framework of OECD development cooperation.**

In this connection:

92. The Canadian Agency for International Development revised its women and development policy in 1995 and adopted a new **gender equality policy**, which gives greater attention to the exercise of women and girl's rights. The strategic framework defined for each subregion contains the two priority areas of **women and development** and **human rights** which

are among the six priorities of the development aid policy of the Government of Canada; and each country is required to prepare its national strategy for gender equality.

93. To illustrate, the project on Rights and Citizenship of Women in Francophone Africa, initiated in 1997, aims at increasing respect for the rights of women and girls and their participation in democratic life by concentrating on three issues: legal and social equality between men and women; elimination of violence against women and girls and their participation in power sharing.

94. This project which concerns Guinea, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso will support over five years, the establishment of coalitions of organizations committed to the rights of women or the individual and others with decision-making powers and influence. At the regional level, the most important result expected will be the bringing together of these networks in a Forum that will also involve the regional Committee on the Traditional Practices Harmful to the health of Women and girls and the group of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians.

95. In accordance with its commitment to education for all, UNICEF, with the support of the Canadian and Norwegian Governments, launched an **Initiative for girls' education in Africa** which is being carried out in 15 countries* at a cost of \$US 14.950 million. This programme will last until 1999.

96. Initiative for the education of girls (IEG) has assisted countries to test various approaches to bridge the gap between boys and girls. The strategy is double-edged: to mobilize the community to attain this objective and to influence the education system to improve the education of girls.

97. Beyond these initiatives, the global strategy of UNICEF since 1996 has evolved in the context of its new policy for the protection of the child which is based on the recognition of risky situations and on the concept of special protective measures. Most of the activities initiated within the framework are likely to have an impact on girls.

(a) The World Bank has reiterated that the education of girls and women is one of the surest ways of attaining the economic and social development of Africa. One of the most significant achievements since the Beijing Conference has been the adoption in 1997 of a Regional Gender Action Plan, (RGAP);

(b) The second strategic objective of this Plan focuses on human resources development in women through a significant increase of their participation in education, access to adequate health services, nutrition and planning. Recently, the World Bank undertook to increase its investment in education and the development of the girl-child;

(c) ILO, through its programme for the elimination of child labour (IPEC) is providing support for the campaign against child labour. This programme which is operational in countries aims at preventing child labour, abolishing child labour in its most dangerous forms and in the most serious forms as well as improving the working conditions of children. In this same context the "Subregional Workshop on the Trafficking of Domestic Children in West and Central Africa" which was organized with the support of UNICEF from 6 to 8 July 1998 in Cotonou served as a frame for a review and action for greater coordination on the interventions between the countries and subregions in West and Central Africa in particular; and

(d) UNIFEM has launched a regional programme on violence against women in several countries between July 1998 and 1999. The regional seminar organized in Dakar in 1998 on the Law on violence against women enabled 12 countries to compare their national laws and to recommend the necessary amendments particularly on rape, genital mutilation, domestic violence, sexual harassment and forced marriages.

The World Health Organization (WHO) prepared a regional plan of action for the elimination of genital mutilation in Africa 1996 to 2015.

98. The recommended strategies aim at:

(a) Involving communities in the identification of physical, psychological, and emotional problems of the practices in question;

(b) Developing human resources towards integrated and participatory approaches for the elimination of such practices;

(c) Developing and producing together with the people concerned materials and programmes on information, education and communication on the cultural aspects and focused on specific targeted groups; and

(d) Promoting multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration for planned activities and interventions.

99. At the medical level, the action plan supports the inclusion of a model on HTPs in the training programmes of medical and paramedical personnel.

100. It was launched in 1997 for 26 countries in the region. It has a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to eliminate this practice as well as taking responsibility for the medical complications arising out of this practice. WHO has undertaken to provide assistance to the countries in the preparation and implementation of their national plans.

- WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA launched in 1997 a "Joint Declaration on Female Genital Mutilation" in which they affirmed their joint commitment to assist government and communities to promote the health and development of women and children, and
- UNFPA, in providing support to the Cairo Programme of Action whose objectives are similar to those of the Beijing Conference, committed itself to the empowerment of women and the reproductive health of young women. It has assisted several countries to establish integrated reproductive health programmes and has supported the involvement of groups such as parliamentarians, religious leaders and traditional communicators in their implementation.

101. The African Forum on the Reproductive Health of Young People organized in January 1997 by UNFPA in collaboration with ECA and OAU brought together 500 boys and girls from 48 countries. The recommendations and the resolutions of this Forum were presented to the OAU Council of Ministers.

Impact

102. Many countries deplored the fact that the commitments made in Beijing have not been followed by concrete actions as expected. While all the donors had supported the formulation of

national plans of action to varying degrees, the funding of projects continues to be problematic.

- Most of the programmes were being carried out prior to Beijing and apart from health programmes, no new initiatives or new programmes were established. The initiative to educate girls will be completed in 1999. Its expansion and the durability of its achievements have not been totally guaranteed;
- Some donors reduced their financing in areas having a direct impact on child welfare. Examples are the World Bank and USAID's financing in the specific areas of education and health, although the restrictions are not uniform;
- In identifying support, the case-by-case approach was given priority over a block regional initiative. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to have an overall picture of the funds really made available for countries;
- Donors often have their own priorities as to the areas and geographical locations to concentrate on within countries or among subregions;
- The gender approach has yet to be put into full operation in most countries, owing to lack of political will and/or a complete understanding of its instruments; and
- Coordination of assistance has yet to be improved.

103. Combating poverty and the inequalities causing it is among the strategic options of most development partners of Africa. Reflecting it in documents and assistance programmes should be well handled by those responsible for women and girls affairs and the organizations representing them.

5.3 The commitments of the NGOs

104. With regard to education, health and rights, civil society organizations are fully involved alongside communities and decision makers.

105. The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Harmful to the Health of Women and Children (IAC) organized a regional meeting in Dakar in 1997 and a symposium on female genital mutilation (FGM) as violence against women, for religious leaders and medical personnel, in Banjul from 20 to 23 July 1998, at the end of which Declarations and recommendations were adopted.

106. The Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has been actively involved in policy sensitization on the ground in favour of the education of girls and has distinguished itself by awarding scholarships in many countries.

107. Regional or subregional NGOs, like the Society of Women Against Aids, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), the *Association des Africaines pour la Recherche et Développement (AFARD)*, the network *African Women Leadership in Agriculture and environment (AWLAE)*, the *Réseau des femmes de l'Afrique Centrale (RESEFAC)* have been very active in their areas of action. Government-NGO cooperation shown in the national reports of numerous countries is doubtless one of the strong points in the

implementation of the Platform.

Impact

108. This has been felt in (i) the dissemination of the Platform and advocacy with national and international institutions; (ii) the pilot actions carried out on the ground; and (iii) the mobilization of communities. However, the scope of these actions, in terms of area covered, remains limited and the capacity of their initiators weak.

6. Outcome and recommendations of regional and subregional meetings and conferences on implementation

109. Since 1995, numerous meetings have been held at the regional, subregional and national levels to sharpen the strategies, prepare plans of action and adopt common positions for implementation.

- With regard to education, a series of meetings held at various levels maintain that many consultations organized with the support of donors led to the Proclamation of a Decade for Education for all and the adoption of its programme of action during the eighth Conference of African Ministers of Education held in Harare in 1999.

110. The most remarkable are:

(a) The two **mid-term evaluation Meetings** of the JOMTIEN Conference organized in Yaounde in 1996 for Central and West African countries and in Johannesburg for Eastern and Southern African countries;

(b) The **African Conference on the empowerment of women through functional literacy and the Education of the Girl-Child** held in Kampala emphasized the need to develop opportunities for girls; to ensure security and welfare of girls in the educational systems; to provide incentives to encourage girls to take technical and scientific subjects and to prevent exploiting the labour of housemaids;

(c) The **seventh Conference of African Ministers of Education** held from 20 to 24 April 1998 in Durban adopted a Declaration of commitment to establish policies and action plans aimed at encouraging the education of girls and keeping them at school;

(d) The **Amman Consultation** of June 1996, within the framework of the evaluation of the recommendations of the JOMTIEN Conference enabled Africa to examine the progress made by the region. The JOMTIEN Conference put on the agenda a new vision of education which stressed:

- (i) The links between the respect of gender differences and the education of girls. The education of girls became an absolute necessity. The educational systems must attack the cultural and political obstacles to gender equality and pay attention to the differences between boys and girls;
- (ii) The crucial importance of early child care given that learning begins from birth and is encouraged by adopting a comprehensive approach;

- With regard to FGM, ACW and UNFPA organized an international training seminar on FGM in Addis Ababa from 27 to 29 March 1997. This technical meeting was aimed at developing a model for integrating the eradication of the practice in UNFPA programmes for reproductive health, population and development programmes; and
- The joint ECA-UNICEF-UNFPA meeting examined the joint commitments of the Cairo Programme of action and the Beijing Platform in light of the reproductive needs of adolescents.

111. The meetings produced positive results:

- On the main issues: education, health, protection of the rights of the child, peace and gender equity, and *common positions* as well as *regional or subregional strategies* were adopted as an evidence of political commitment.

112. The various institutions involved strove to increase synergies in carrying out their respective terms of reference, although much remains to be done.

113. There are also gaps linked, *inter alia*:

(a) To inadequate operational coordination leading to repetitions or duplication, and lack of follow-up of the recommendations made;

(b) To the fact that partners did not know how to go about implementing some commitments made especially within the context of structural adjustment.

7. Commitments by governments

7.1. Achievements and progress

114. African Governments strove to implement the global and Regional Platforms by adopting a series of institutional, legislative and policy measures.

115. For most African countries, the absolute priority was universal primary education by increasing the rate of schooling of girls. It is now largely agreed that the education of girls will significantly reduce fertility rates, improve mother and child mortality rates and bring about an overall improvement of the living conditions of families.

At the institutional level

(a) The naming and vocation of Ministries responsible for women's affairs in many countries now include the children's dimension;

(b) National committees have been set up in the Office of the President (Ghana and Zambia) and at the ministerial level, to follow-up on Beijing, with youth representation;

(c) The rights protection NGOs have been given increased support by States;

(d) State-NGO cooperation in inter-sectoral coordinating committees has significantly improved;

(e) Children's parliaments and youth organizations have multiplied and serve as appropriate frameworks for sensitizing children to the issues of discrimination and rights and for making them to participate in discussion fora.

At the legislative level

(a) A large number of countries have ratified CEDAW. To date, only seven countries have yet to do so. Measures being taken to prohibit FGM are gaining ground. New laws in force are helping to set up a legal framework for gender equality, which is a great achievement for women;

(b) Harmonizing national laws with international conventions as well as subregional cooperation on rights have been strengthened in West Africa and OAU. Although not crowned with success, these efforts have led to social and political dialogue on the girl-child.

At the policy and programme level

(a) Educational policies have been revised to better target girls and address gender and residential disparities, for example, in Kenya, Zambia and Guinea;

(b) Women's literacy has been integrated in most projects established for men;

(c) Reproductive health advisory services have been set up to meet the specific needs of young people;

(d) Other departments and sections have been involved in the implementation of the Platform; and

(e) There is now a better perception of data search and collection. The experience of Kenya stresses their importance in gender planning exercises.

At the resource level

(a) Here the situation is varied. Some countries have been able to mobilize resources on their own budgets as well as through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In Kenya, the budget allocation for women's affairs increased by 20 per cent in 1997. The recorded increases are 1 per cent in Mali, 50 per cent since 1995. In Côte d'Ivoire, the increase was 70 per cent between 1995 and 1999; Senegal plans to finance its plan of action before the deadline;

(b) Furthermore, donors have supported the funds to promote the economic activities of women aimed at reducing the negative impact of structural adjustment, and this has improved the socio-economic situation of families. Some other countries have not taken the necessary steps to increase resources to change the real situation of women and girls, either directly or through specific projects or indirectly by supporting the sectors most beneficial to them. The Ministers responsible for women and children's affairs do not usually participate in round table negotiations between governments and their financial partners to present or defend their projects.

7.2. Constraints

Political and institutional constraints

(a) Whereas the tasks are extended or strengthened, the financial support has not been enough for the tasks assigned to the national machinery addressing the problems of women and the girl-child;

(b) After Beijing and Dakar, few countries established capacity-building programmes to which they accord capacities which they consider very important. Their ability to coordinate the action of various actors and influence sectoral policies is still limited;

(c) In many countries the unstable political and institutional environment has relegated implementation of the Platform to second place;

(d) Scarcity of resources and competition between the various structures involved in the implementation often overtake complementarity;

(e) Young people, girls in particular, do not have the necessary capacity to impose their overall concerns in the implementation of the Platform. Their various concerns are individually included in sectoral strategies resulting in partial solutions;

(f) Finally, not all countries have included the girl-child among the priority areas of their Plans of action. At the time of writing this report, the countries which had clearly included the girl-child in their priority areas are Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Swaziland, Egypt, Tunisia and Kenya. Most countries have integrated the education and health matters (Côte d'Ivoire) in their priorities; and

(g) Generally, sources of information on the girl-child are insufficient.

Economic and financial constraints

116. Implementation of the Platform takes place in domestic environment of structural adjustment and debt-servicing and in an external context of dwindling aid flows to Africa.

117. All reports stress the insufficiency of resources and the difficulty of mobilizing them. The reasons for this are given in the preceding chapter on education.

8. Follow-up mechanisms at the regional, subregional and national levels

8.1 Achievements and progress

118. The Platform indicated a number of mechanisms at the regional, subregional and national levels which can be used (i) to leverage inclusion of the provisions of the Platform in national and developmental policies and programmes and (ii) to measure the level of implementation of the actions undertaken.

At the national level

119. Three types of machinery have been set up in accordance with the realities of each country:

(a) Coordination mechanisms: national follow-up committees established by ministries responsible for women's affairs which, in most cases, are responsible for the implementation of the national plans of action. These mechanisms have enabled other ministries, NGOs and youths and women's organizations to participate in the implementation of the Platform;

(b) Technical mechanisms made up of sectoral units responsible for gender matters within key ministerial departments (Kenya, Ethiopia);

(c) Focal points who are resource persons responsible for pursuing the objectives of the plans of action in their respective sectors.

120. In Tunisia, coordination is done by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Family which shares implementation with NGOs. This Ministry prepares a follow-up report which is submitted every three months to the National Council on Women and the Family chaired by the Prime Minister.

121. Egypt has set up a national follow-up commission made up of 20 experts as well as specialized committees within various ministries.

At the regional level

122. ACW has pursued a fundamental strategy for the implementation of the Platform. In this connection, it is supported:

(a) Internally, by the consultative and coordination mechanisms of ECA overseen by the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development of member States and the joint OAU/ECA/ADB secretariat.

(b) Externally, by the Committee on Women and Development which it helped to reactivate. This Committee has held biennial meetings of ECA alongside the implementation of the Platform.

123. Technically, ACW has facilitated the preparation of national action plans and evaluation reports by providing useful guidelines, indicators and models to countries. Its contributions to the ECA high-level meeting helped to consolidate the Platform as an important issue in the major debates on economic and social development of the continent.

124. The African Commission on Human and People's Rights and subregional organizations (Economic Community of West African States, Southern Africa Development Community, Economic Community of Central African States) are also part of the mechanism.

At the international level

125. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child ensures observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. States prepare periodic reports which must contain gender disaggregated data.

8.2. Constraints

At the national level

126. There is:

- (a) Insufficiency of gender disaggregated data and lack of understanding of the problems of young people owing to lack of relevant studies and research;
- (b) Poor indicators on young people; data concerning them are often mixed up in statistics about women;
- (c) Absence of quantified objectives concerning the girl-child in the Platform is a weakness, even though most countries have integrated them in the national strategies;
- (d) Coordination mechanisms are often weak; and
- (e) There is often a lack of information dissemination at various national and local levels and among various actors.

At the regional and subregional levels

127. Also there is:

- (a) Outside ACW, a distance between the mechanisms and their communities of action as well as lack of visibility in their actions;
- (b) Poor definition of the objectives of the Platform by subregional institutions, apart from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which adopted a declaration on Gender in 1997 and is striving to implement it;
- (c) Poor representation of women in decision-making bodies;
- (d) Limited communication in spite of current technological advances and difficulty of coordination;
- (e) A weak Women's Unit in OAU, in spite of the recommendation by women that it should be strengthened.

9. EVALUATION WORKSHOP: GUIDELINE QUESTIONS

128. The evaluation of the implementation of the African Platform five years after the fifth Regional Conference is an opportunity to review and assess the ground covered and to **readjust the prospects vis-à-vis** the challenges identified in 1994 and thereafter. It seems to be so short a time since the Dakar and the Beijing conferences. Also, the question of analyzing the progress made as well as those proposed here are aimed at helping actors in the search for actions and strategies to enable them to achieve the Platforms' objectives quickly.

129. The following four concerns about the girl-child should serve as guidelines:

(a) *The question of methodology* for identifying the specific situation of young girls vis à vis women, boys and other target groups. The experience of some countries has shown that knowledge of this group helps to better target actions, define adequate operational strategies and increase the efficiency of actions in terms their results;

(b) What have been the methods, approaches and tools used to this end?

(c) Which horizontal and cross-cutting mechanisms have been used by countries to establish integrated strategies for the advancement of the girl-child? What technical and institutional conditions are necessary?

(d) How can censuses and other surveys be used to compile data banks on women and young girls?

Questions on the feasibility and relevance of focusing on the girl-child who is considered as having needs similar to those of women and other specific groups. The experience of countries has shown that positions vary on this;

(a) On this subject: some countries have included the issue of the girl-child in their priorities, others have treated the issue under specific sectors;

(b) What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these options? What positive results could be expected therefrom? How can integrated strategies be established in favour of the girl-child?

130. The responses to these questions illustrated by the experiences of countries can help countries to have a better perception of the strategic impact that the inclusion of the girl-child in their national priorities can have.

Questions requiring inter-generational relations between women and girls

131. The democratization context and the demand for some autonomy of action and decision requires involvement of the family and, within it, women in their role as mothers, vis-à-vis the aspiration of young girls.

(a) How can women concretely cater for the concerns of young girls?

(b) How can young people be made to effectively demand their own independence?

Questions on the content of projects and programmes for young girls

132. Poverty has deprived many young people, particularly young girls, of parental support. Yet their chances for future harmonious development must be safeguarded. In the face of this challenge:

- (a) How can girls be given access to better information and adequate health services to meet their needs during the various stages of their development? In particular, how can gender concerns be better integrated into anti-AIDS programmes?;
- (b) What are the most appropriate strategies for maintaining girls in the educational system?;
- (c) What are the best approaches and strategies for integrating parents in educational and health activities concerning young people?;
- (d) How can the educational, health and legal protection needs of young girls in special conditions - under-aged housemaids, refugee or displaced girls and orphans - be met in order to reduce their vulnerability?;
- (e) What are the most relevant indicators for assessing the situation of the girl-child?;
- (f) How can the interest of national actors and international partners be drawn to the situation of the girl-child?; and
- (g) What initiative can be taken at the national, subregional and regional levels to improve the situation of the girl-child?.

Questions on international and regional mechanisms

- Are the mechanisms for following up on the implementation of the Platform sufficient, insufficient or appropriate for following up on the situation of the girl-child as a specific area of concern?
- In view of the experience of the first five years of the implementation of the Platform, what strategic actions can be taken to improve the efficiency of these mechanisms?
- How can the interaction between the national, subregional, regional and international mechanism used for the advancement of the girl-child be improved?
- What role should ACW play in the advancement of the girl-child?