Meeting of the First Advisory Panel for Establishment of the
 African Women's Rights Observatory (AWRO)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
20 -21 April 2007

Introducing the African Women's Rights Observatory: Women in Power towards Democracy and Gender Equality

INSERT LISTS with numbers and names OF TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

Foreword

The African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGS) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the UNDP Regional Gender Programme for Africa Bureau (RGPAB) have initiated an African Women's Rights Observatory (AWRO). Managed by ACGS and aiming to collect, process and produce data in various forms in the United Nations, AWRO will be a centre for disseminating information and sharing best practices on achieving women's human rights, across the borders in Africa. By using networks and relationships already built between civil-based organizations, governments and multilateral organizations, AWRO will reach a wider audience than ever before. In this way, individuals in different countries, representing a rage of institutions, can benefit from other countries' experiences.

Reporting on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) at Ten (ICPD+10), the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other related agreements and declarations has shown the need for an Observatory in which information gathered can be accessed and shared. Information generally, and especially on African women, is scattered and varied. Establishing an Observatory will help to centralize pertinent and updated information to provide a regional perspective on the situation of women. At this level, such information-sharing gives a platform to countries at different levels of setting up observatories, through which they can learn from one another's experiences.

The BPFA recommended the creation of National Observatories on the advancement of women in each country. Some countries have successfully established such structures through which they collect information and monitor progress made on the status of women. An Africa-wide Observatory of women's human rights, however, will be able to compile the information gathered at national level through national observatories and provide a regional perspective on the status of women.

Access to statistics on African countries continues to be a challenge throughout the continent. Data collection is still mostly done by individual academicians or national statistics bureaus, often infrequently. AWRO will track and report on how African countries are achieving the specific and interrelated objectives of women rights, and establish a monitoring base of the BPFA and other related women's human rights instruments. It will also facilitate periodic identification of good practices and constraints, and strengthen networking and sharing of information in the area of women's human rights. In addition to taking a proactive role in disseminating information and making statistics available, the Observatory is envisaged as instrumental in opening spaces for dialogue. To make sure that as many stakeholders as possible benefit, the reports produced will be published electronically and in hard copy.

This is the first AWRO publication, and it reports on women in decision-making based on the findings of the African Gender and Development (AGDI) exercise

undertaken in 12 countries[1] in Africa. Additionally, although Rwanda is not part of the pilot phase of AGDI, data on women's access to politics and decision-making have been added as a best practice example, as the traditionally patriarchal country has made remarkable progress towards gender equality since 1995. Similarly, data on Senegal and Nigeria have been included, as both countries are going through parliamentary and presidential elections in the first half of 2007.

ECA developed AGDI in response to the need to develop a tool that could measure the gender gap between women and men irrespective of a country's level of socio-economic development. Based on nationally available data, this tool could be used regularly to monitor progress in addressing gender inequalities, women's empowerment and respect for their human rights. After an intensive period of developing AGDI together with various stakeholders including academic institutions, followed by a data-collection phase, ECA has compiled the findings on "gender equality: women in decision-making" as the first thematic area that AWRO addresses. The "women in decision-making" theme is taken within the context of good governance. This will be followed by a comprehensive report in 2007 on women's access to land and credit.

To tackle gender inequalities successfully, it is imperative to have reliable information and data on hand, harmonized and centralized. It is hoped that the Observatory will be a pool of knowledge to serve Africa in its efforts to address respect for women's rights.

---

[1] The first 12 AGDI pilot countries included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. Additionally, whenever available, data on Rwanda have been presented.

1. INTRODUCTION: GOOD GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

Although international organizations define the concept of good governance in different ways depending on their interest area, three core values of good governance are accepted universally: equality, accountability and transparency. The concept of good governance does provide a multi-faceted and comprehensive umbrella definition of equality and it is evident that development and poverty reduction are not possible without these elements. In the African context, in which approximately half of the population are poor and over half of the population are women, development of gender mainstreaming strategies alongside poverty reduction strategies is a major concern of national and international bodies.

In its broad sense, good governance is defined, for example by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as "the mechanisms and processes required for citizens and groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations"[2] The Ghana National Programme for Action (GNPOA) identifies a the central pillars of democratic governance as "a credible electoral system and multiparty politics, broad participation in decision-making and decentralization, reduction and prevention of conflicts and promotion of peace, enjoyment of human rights, effective implementation of existing law and developing of legislation"[3]. Women's empowerment and gender equality are not specifically raised by GNPOA as a major area of concern in developing good governance.

Since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985, participation of women in decision-making has been a central issue on the global agenda. The BPFA as well as its review processes noted with concern that despite various efforts, gender inequalities persist. The inequality between men and women in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels is one of the BPFA critical areas of concern. It has been noted that despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government and examples such as GNPOA reveal that despite the BPFA commitments, there is a long way to go to achieve gender parity.

Women represent the majority of the world's poor, with limited access to the economic, educational and political spheres. To tackle poverty efficiently, no society can afford to leave women behind. To include women effectively in the strategies for poverty reduction, they have to gain footage in decision-making in areas that affect them directly, and in issues of common interest. Participation of women in decision-making in politics and other areas of public life is a critical indicator that measures the level of women's agency, that is, their capacity to influence public policy-making and implementation, and their demand for respect of their rights. Participation of women in politics should go beyond the traditional definition of electoral politics, to include their negotiating power through

---

[2] UNDP Strategy Note on Governance for Human Development 2004.
[3] African Peer Review Mechanism. Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana 2005.
http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf

independent organizations. Such participation in politics and other spheres of decision-making is critical, to ensure that women's civil, economic, social and cultural rights are addressed, after having been widely accepted by African countries at the legal and broad policy levels. Women are more likely to introduce bills that promote families', women's and children's rights. Additionally, some studies have shown a positive correlation between reducing corruption and women's participation in politics[4].

AGDI findings show that the 12 African countries which piloted the index are generally scoring well in the area of adopting gender-sensitive policies and setting up legal frameworks to protect women's rights. However, the challenge of implementation in terms of planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation remain a serious challenge. For example, in the case of Uganda, although women are reported to have relatively high representation in trade unions and employers associations and to have achieved greater income-generation opportunities in the informal and agricultural sector, their general literacy rate and representation in public sector remain low. [5]

Although Uganda has taken rapid steps towards gender equality, the country follows the pattern that can be identified in most African countries: women's representation in public spheres remains significantly lower than men's, and will remain low if access to adequate education is not guaranteed. Women's participation in political parties throughout the trial countries also remains low – a factor that deserves special attention as the most important channel to influence in public life. Globally, Rwanda has made remarkable steps towards gender equality during the decade of re-building after the genocide and therefore sets a role model to the rest of the Africa.

The work towards good governance challenges governments to critically evaluate their own socio-cultural, political and economical environments, and it is important that experts in the national arena are able to draw cause-and-effect hypotheses between different areas of life, and incorporate gender issues in them effectively. In general, AGDI reports indicate significantly lower participation of women in decision-making compared to men and point to the critical need to have a serious focus on gender and governance in Africa.

2. STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSE TO GENDER INEQUALITIES: THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS OBSERVATORY

Despite the progress achieved in the areas of policy and legislation, the AGDI reports revealed that throughout the pilot countries, translating commitment into action for the promotion and protection of the rights of African women leaves much to be desired. The main reasons mentioned in the reports are:
- Lack of expertise in the field of gender; and

---

[4] UNDP fact sheet, Parliamentary Development http://www.undp.org/women/mainstream/ ParliamentaryDevelopment.pdf
[5] Women's representation in trade unions and employers associations is reported to be 50 per cent or more, while their representation in public sector positions is on average one third. The literacy rate of women is 0.670.; AGDI Country report, Uganda 2005.

- Lack of adequate funds to implement or further develop the existing gender policies.

Successive forums organized at the regional and global levels confirm this challenge and call for realization of women's rights. Forums such as the Seventh African Regional Conference organized by ECA in 2004, Beijing +10 and ICPD+ 10, as well as national AGDI reports persistently and frequently affirm the problems of implementation[6]. In 2005, the landmark year for BPFA follow-up - the 10-year review, Beijing +10 - revealed that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa failed to meet the international targets[7]. Tracking progress in implementing the commitments by African governments continues to be a concern for the United Nations and all other stakeholders. AWRO is an initiative for addressing this particular challenge.

3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

3.1 Introducing the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI)

The AGDI data gathering took place in 2000-2002 and the most recent available data from each country were used to compile the power block findings. As some of the pilot countries have had parliamentary elections after the data collection process, ECA undertook further research to update the country reports. The countries participating in the pilot phase of AGDI were Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda.

AGDI consists of two major blocks of various indicators that capture various fields of life. The first block, the Gender Status Index (GSI), presents the quantitative data in gender relations, while the second block, African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), measures the qualitative issues in realization of the gender policies of African governments.

AGDI therefore incorporates indicators from the major international and African charters and conventions and integrates a number of variables that have particular salience for African men and women. In developing AGDI, ECA has tried to capture and address the underlying gender relations in the African cultural and social environment, through nationally available data relevant to the selected quantitative and qualitative indicators. By consulting various specialists throughout the process of developing AGDI, special attention has been given to making it as practical as possible and able to serve a wide range of users beyond the academic world.

Gender Status Index (GSI)
The GSI measures women's access to income, resources and education in relation to men. Additionally, it measures whether women have the same opportunities as

---

[6] Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +10) Decade Review on the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action: Outcome and Way Forward. Addis Ababa, 12-14 2004 in www.uneca .org/beijingplus10/outcome_and_way_forward

[7] More on specific Beijing Platform for Action commitments, see for example http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/

men to achieve positions of power in public and private sector and in civil society. It consists of three major blocks: the social power block, the economic power block and the political power block. Each block is divided into various components, which are further divided into sub-components and then into indicators/variables.

Each indicator in the GSI's Political Power Block is calculated in the same way, indicating the number of women compared to the number of men. For instance, the number of women in Parliament in Mozambique is 78 of the total number of members, 250, and the number of men is 172, the indicator is 78/172=0.453. The lower the indicator figure is, the lower is women's participation in decision-making. To meet the gender equality target, the indicator should be 1. It must be remembered that GSI measures equality in quantitative terms exclusively, while AWPS elaborates the causes of (in)equalities in a qualitative manner.

African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS)

As purely quantitative data is not adequate in capturing and analysing all aspects of gender inequalities, such as degree of respect for human rights or impact of HIV/AIDS on women, the AWPS was developed to complement the GSI. The AWPS acts as a tool for measuring government policy performance in empowerment and advancement of women. It measures the governments' progress in ratifying the international conventions and turning commitments into action on a national level and leaves more room for the countries to include country-specific needs than does the GSI. All the issues are quantified in a simple manner, using scores 0-2 depending on the national performances in various fields. It is also tailored for easy use by both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have access to national data.

4. TOWARDS EQUALITY: POWER RELATIONS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS

In general, democratic politic*s* and practices have taken significant steps, and competitive multi-party democracy has been strengthened in many African countries in the past two decades. A number of countries have given good governance top priority on their agendas and are moving in the direction of free and fair electoral systems. However, despite the positive steps taken to date, much remains to be done and the 12 pilot countries represent very different stages of democracies and very different stages of addressing gender inequalities. Furthermore, this report gives only a glimpse of the development of gender equality in Africa today as many African countries have taken significant steps in promoting women's participation in politics.

4.1 Political systems

Looking purely at political systems, excluding issues on human rights or women's rights in particular, three main patterns of party democracy are being practiced on the African continent: a) multiparty democracy with two or more independent parties competing for political power (Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa); b) multiparty democracy with two or more independent parties, one of

which is dominant (most of the AGDI pilot countries, namely Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania and Tunisia[8]); and c) one or no parties (Uganda).

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mozambique and Uganda have a presidential system, in which a single executive, the President, who is usually elected by the people, appoints the Cabinet. Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and Tanzania have hybrid governmental systems that combine elements from presidential and parliamentary systems. Of the pilot countries, only Ethiopia represents a purely parliamentary system.[9] In the case of Madagascar, accurate data are currently not available and data collection will be conducted by ECA in 2007. In general, even if the country has managed to establish a sustainable and stable government and an environment where individual rights and freedom are cherished, women's rights still remain a secondary concern.

Rwanda and Ghana were among the first African countries in which the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was launched. Where Rwanda is today politically, economically and socially is heavily influenced by the violence in 1994. The country has taken great steps towards ethnic and gender equality. Efforts towards democracy have been made in several forms: policies, law reforms as well as economic reforms. The Government has given special attention to decentralization of power and has recognized the issue of land as one of the critical areas in the peace-building process. Compared to other African countries, and globally, the country's performance in promoting gender equality is outstanding.[10]

Ghana, with a less dramatic past, was the first African country to gain independence from Great Britain, in 1957. Since then, Ghana has experienced different political phases, starting from one-party authoritarian government, followed by dictatorship, military regime and today's multiparty democracy. The constitution was revised in 1993, following a period of security and peace, political stability and development of good governance, including freedom of speech, and freedom of association and participation. Great efforts have been made to achieve transparency in governmental actions, to prevent conflicts and to build both intra- and inter-country relationships.

However, despite recognition of several elements of good governance, the APRM Country Review Report of Ghana challenges the Ghanaian Government to ratify international conventions with time-bound targets in several areas, including three conventions on women's rights, namely CEDAW 1995: Amendment to the article 43 (2), CEDAW, 1999; and Optional Protocol and Protocol Against Human Trafficking in Women and Children, 2000[11].

---

[8] African Peer Review Mechanism. Country Review Report of Rwanda. 2005. p 46
[9] ECA. African Governance Report 2005: p 22
[10] Ibid.
[11] African Peer Review Mechanism. Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana 2005. Op cit. p. 15

The Ghanaian and Rwandan experiences follow the pattern of overall political development in Africa. Elements of good governance are acknowledged by the leadership but there is a great need to:

- Further build and strengthen governmental and institutional structures towards stability and "good governance"[12];
- Tackle corruption and increase transparency;
- Develop media as an impartial and neutral source of information;
- Decentralize power, be it political, economic or social; and
- Include women and vulnerable groups in public spheres.

Ghana is lagging behind in implementation of international conventions, including the aforementioned as well as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the African Union (AU) Convention against Corruption (2003) and the Protocol on the African Court of Human and People's Rights (1998). [13] Any country's participation in the international arenas by implementing common conventions is a crucial part of the process towards good governance. This process builds transparency and credibility and raises the country's general socio-economic position on the global map.

While the core values of good governance and democracy based on neo-liberal theories, free markets and individual freedoms are necessary in meeting the principles of human rights and are welcomed in most African countries, they have not succeeded in promoting equality from a gender perspective. The AGDI reports show that most progress in inclusion of women in decision-making has been made in countries where governments have adopted affirmative action measures to include women in public arenas. These results show that government interventions towards greater equality are necessary in strengthening the local structures towards just, stable and free societies. Both politically and economically, women's competitive advantages remain alarmingly low for various reasons, one being that statistics rely heavily on individual success stories.

4.2 Women's participation in political arenas

Due to patriarchal social backgrounds, traditions, customs and laws in most African countries, women have been highly underrepresented in the political systems despite their representing a significant share of the population and workforce. However, studies show that African governments are taking important first steps with regard to ratification of international conventions, adoption of resolutions and declarations, enactment of national laws and formulation of gender policies. Despite some positive developments, the countries need to do more to implement their commitments, through measures that include adequate budget allocations and establishment of effective institutional mechanisms[14].

Three major categories can be identified when surveying women and their decision-making power in Africa:

---

[12] See Chapter 1 in this document
[13] African Peer Review Mechanism. Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana 2005.
http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf
[14] ECA 2006.

(a)   "High-flyer" countries, such as Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda that have made remarkable progress, have put strong affirmative action policies in place to empower women's access to decision-making positions, or have promoted women in other forms. In the case of Uganda, only two decades ago women had zero representation in parliament and local councils, but very rapid steps have been taken in promoting women's rights especially after adoption of the new constitution in 1995. In South Africa, promotion of gender equality has been given great emphasis especially in the post-apartheid period and today women hold various positions in the public sector. Rwanda, a global success story on gender equality in politics, has the highest women representation in parliament in the world.

This is due to the intensive re-building of the country after the 1994 genocide, high-level political commitment to inclusion of women, effective cooperation between community-based organizations (CBOs) and the government, and to the serious demographic gap created after thousands of men lost their lives in the early 1990s. Today, women represent more than half of Rwanda's population.

(b)   Countries where policies have been put in place and structures established to promote gender equality, but actual women's representation in the decision-making has taken off slowly. Of the 12 pilot countries, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Tanzania and Tunisia represent this category.

(c)   Countries with weak or non-existent representation of women in decision-making positions, and where protective laws are not fully implemented. Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana and Nigeria are some that fall in this category.[15] In the case of Ghana, Article 17 of the Constitution bans all forms of discrimination, but there are no laws to protect women's political rights, or their access to education. Article 35(6) (b) of the Constitution provides that the State takes appropriate measures to achieve reasonable gender balance in recruitment to public offices.[16] However, AGDI statistics show that this is yet to be achieved in Ghana.

Box 1: Women in power: global highlights
> ➢ Participation of women in decision-making, particularly in the political arena, has increased due to affirmative action measures implemented either by legislation or by political party decisions. Globally, 90 countries implement affirmative action measures and 20 of these are in Africa.[17]

---

[15] ECA. African Governance Report 2005. Op. cit. pp 30-32. AGDI country reports
[16] African Peer Review Mechanism. Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana 2005.
http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf
[17] http://www.idea.org

- Rwanda is the leading country in the world in women's representation in parliament. Women represent 48% of parliamentarians with 38 out of 80 parliamentary seats.[18]
- AU has passed a decision to ensure 50 per cent gender parity at the highest level of its Commission, and 50% of the AU Commissioners are women. This is unprecedented for any regional organization[19].
- There is no correlation between women's participation in decision-making and a country's GDP[20].
- Proportional representation is the best electoral system for women's representation; ten of the top countries worldwide in women's representation use this type of electoral system. South Africa is one of these countries. Eight of the countries where women are not represented at all use the "first-past-the-post system in which the winner takes all[21].
- The first female Head of State in Africa, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President of Liberia, was elected in 2005.
- Globally there are 11 women Heads of States out of 193 countries.[22].
- With achievement of 49% representation, Tanzania has the highest percentage of women top administrators and managers[23].
- Women represent 30% of councillors in South Africa's local government. The African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, the main political party, reserves 50% of local government posts for women[24].
- The 2006 International Women's Day was dedicated to Women in Decision-making.

5. THE POLITICAL POWER BLOCK AND THE GENDER GAP

The Political Power Block of the GSI consists of two components and shows women's access to decision-making positions compared to that of men. The first component, "Public Sector" is defined as 'executive, legislative and judiciary power', while the second component is defined as "Civil Society". The boundaries between these two categories are left open as in some countries they tend to spill over into each other and there can also be shifts depending on the political context.

The public sector component is divided into five indicators while that for civil society is divided into six. The former shows the number of women and men in parliament, cabinet of ministers, judiciary, senior civil service and local government, while the latter shows the number of women and men in the decision-making positions of political parties, trade unions, employers associations, professional syndicates, CBOS and NGOs.

---

[18] IPU 2006.
[19] AU 2003.
[20] UNDP 1995.
[21] http://www.wedo.org
[22] IPU 2006
[23] UNDP 2005
[24] http://www.wedo.org

Table 1 shows a comparative range of indicator values for selected countries.

Table 1. Power and decision-making values in the public sector component

Indicator		Country												
		Benin	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Egypt	Ethiopia	Ghana	Madagascar	Mozambique	Rwanda	South Africa	Tanzania	Tunisia	Uganda
Members of Parliament	F	6	13	16	27	137	25	21	87	65	131	97	58	99
	M	76	98	164	706	504	205	229	163	41	269	222	301	233
Cabinet Ministers	F	5	4	6	2	6	4	2	8	3	21	8	6	16
	M	29	32	54	73	46	24	19	32	20	28	38	37	51
Higher court judges	F	29	7			12	14	13	0	10	32	7	13.3	9
	M	32	24			37	72	38	7	7	206	35	86.7	32
Members of Local Councils	F	527	228	138	849	171,083	341	38			1,220	995	20.6	5,388
	M	14040	864	945	46,787	655,336	4,241	1161			5,188	2,422	79.4	7,523
High Civil Service	F	111	29	17.1	7,019	415	72	40	188		833	55	1,259	250
	M	858	482	82.9	20,695	1286	717	319	1,342		3,550	275	7,799	911

Source: African Women's Report, ECA 2006. For Rwanda: Government of Rwanda 2007; John Mutamba 2005; Office of the Status of Women of South Africa 2006; IPU 2007.

Parliament

Since the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995, many African countries have improved their focus on women's participation in decision-making. Some countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tunisia have made remarkable progress while other countries follow quite far behind. All the pilot countries have made progress in increasing the share of women parliamentarians in their latest elections, except Madagascar and Egypt where women's representation has regressed. In all the countries progressive in this area, affirmative measures have been taken by political parties or by electoral laws. This is also the case with Rwanda, where as many as 65 out of 106 seats in the Parliament (61.3 per cent), including both upper and lower house, are held by women. However, proportionally, women hold more positions in the lower than in the upper house (48.8 per cent and 34.6 per cent)[25].

[25] http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

Among the AGDI trial countries, South Africa (48.7 per cent) and Mozambique (34.8 per cent) have exceeded the 30 per cent benchmark of women representation in parliament, Uganda following very closely with 29.8 per cent[26]. Ethiopia and Tunisia have also made remarkable progress, with Ethiopia increasing from 7.6 per cent before the 2005 elections to the current 21.3 per cent. Tunisia has gone up from 11.5 per cent to 19.2 percent. Despite the progress, Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Egypt and Madagascar have recorded less than 10 per cent women's presentation in parliament.

Nigeria and Senegal will have parliamentary elections in 2007. To date, women's participation in the State Assembly in Nigeria has been under 10 per cent except for Ministers Special Advisers, a field in which Nigerian women gained 12.8 per cent representation in the 2003 elections.[27] In Senegal, women's representation in the National Assembly has been slightly under 20 per cent. In both of these countries, United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNDP are actively working with local counterparts and women's networks towards empowerment of women as part of democratization and promotion of good governance.

Currently, although there are some female directors-general in the public service in Nigeria, women's representation throughout the public sector remains lower than in all the AGDI countries except Egypt. Many of the states of Nigeria do not have any female representatives in parliament at all[28]. Senegal, where the next National Assembly elections take place in June 2007, a new law ensuring gender balance in legislative polls was passed in March 2007. This is expected to double women's representation in the next National Assembly in Senegal[29]. In Nigeria, no laws have been passed guaranteeing women's participation in politics, but a bill, seeking to give domestic applicability to CEDAW has been passed to the National Assembly[30]. Given the current social and political environment in Nigeria, women are not likely to gain significant footage in the next elections.

---

[26] UN, see for example http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm, paragraph 182
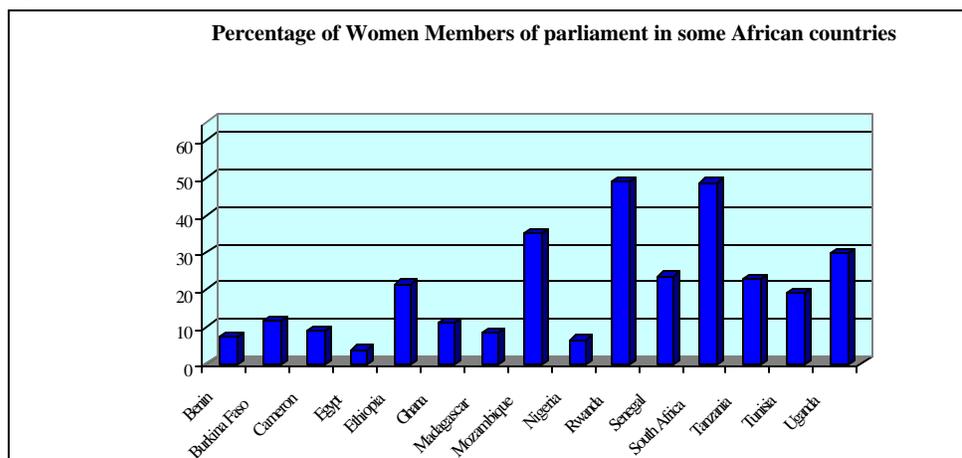[27] UNDP. National Millennium Development Goals Report 2004 – Nigeria
[28] UNDP, Niger Delta Human Development Report, p 58
[29] Afrol news, March 2007. http://www.afrol.com/articles/24891
[30] UNIFEM Nigeria 2007

Figure 1

Percentage of Women Members of parliament in some African countries

Cabinet ministers

A ministerial position is the highest decision-making profile within the public service. Although the appointment of women as ministers in Africa is still low, it is interesting to observe that apart from Mozambique and Egypt, all the countries have more women ministers than parliamentarians in proportional terms. This reflects the fact that any affirmative action can be translated more effectively at the Governmental level rather than at the parliamentary level, subject to election modalities.

According to the AGDI field trial, South Africa is the leading country in appointing women in ministerial positions; 21 women out of 28 (75 per cent) followed by Uganda 16 out of 51 (31.4 per cent). In Benin, 5 out of 27 (18.5 per cent) ministers are female while in Egypt only 2 out of 73 (2.7 per cent) ministers are female. In Rwanda, ranking as the second country in Africa, women hold as many as 50 per cent of the ministerial positions[31]. Women also hold some of the traditionally male-appointed hard portfolios, such as Minister of Justice and Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Environment[32].

There appears to be a correlation between the level of women's presence in parliament and the number of women ministers. Countries that have performed relatively well in ensuring women's presence in parliament, have also performed well in appointing females to ministerial positions. Action backed by political commitment has guaranteed and led to an increased number of women in both executive and legislative bodies.

---

[31] Government of Rwanda 2007.
[32] John Mutamba. Strategies for Increasing Women's Participation in Government. 2005. pp 9-10.

There is no systematic investigation of the portfolios held by women in governments. However, national reports indicate that women are usually appointed in social sectors such as education and health. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that women are being appointed to highly influential portfolios in Africa. The following are some of the most notable examples:

- The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mozambique
- The Vice President in Zimbabwe, Gambia, and Burundi
- Deputy President in South Africa
- Minister of Finance in Namibia, Nigeria, Liberia and Tanzania
- Minister of Foreign Affairs in Niger and South Africa
- Minister of Justice in Cape Verde (ECA, 2005)
- Minister of Trade in Sierra Leone
- Minister of State, Senegal

Figure 2

Proportion of Women Ministers in Some African Countires
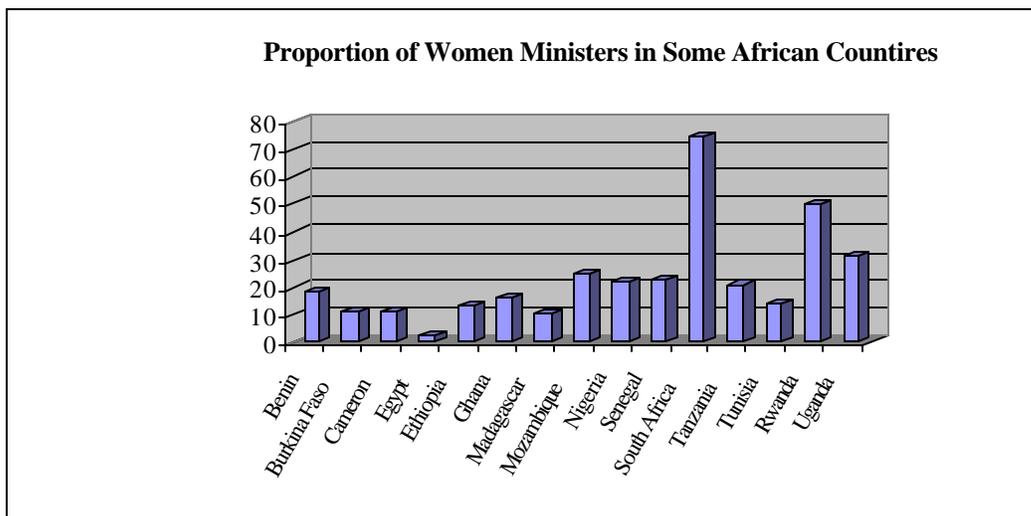
Higher court judges
Participation of women in the judiciary syst em at a significant level is one of the factors that could facilitate women's access to justice, particularly in gender-related cases such as matrimonial litigation and violence against women. However, this link has to be established by further research. Benin is the leading country in appointing women judges, 29 out of 32 (90.6 per cent). While Mozambique performs well in women's parliamentary representation and female ministerial appointments, it performs very poorly in female judicial appointments among the countries that provided data on female judges. None of the 7 higher court judges in Mozambique are women. Data on the number of female higher court judges were not available for Cameroon or Egypt.

In Rwanda, 7 out of 17 (41.2 per cent) senior officials or judges of the Supreme Court are women. In the recovery process in mid-1990s, the courts were overwhelmed due to the high number of cases in convicting the civil war crimes.

To manage with the workload, the *Gacaca* court, a traditional and country-wide known system, literally meaning "grassroots" court, was given an official status. Women represent 29 per cent of the judges in *Gacaca* – a remarkable achievement in a society, where women's access to public decision-making has traditionally been very limited[33].

Figure 3

Proportion of Female Higher Court judges
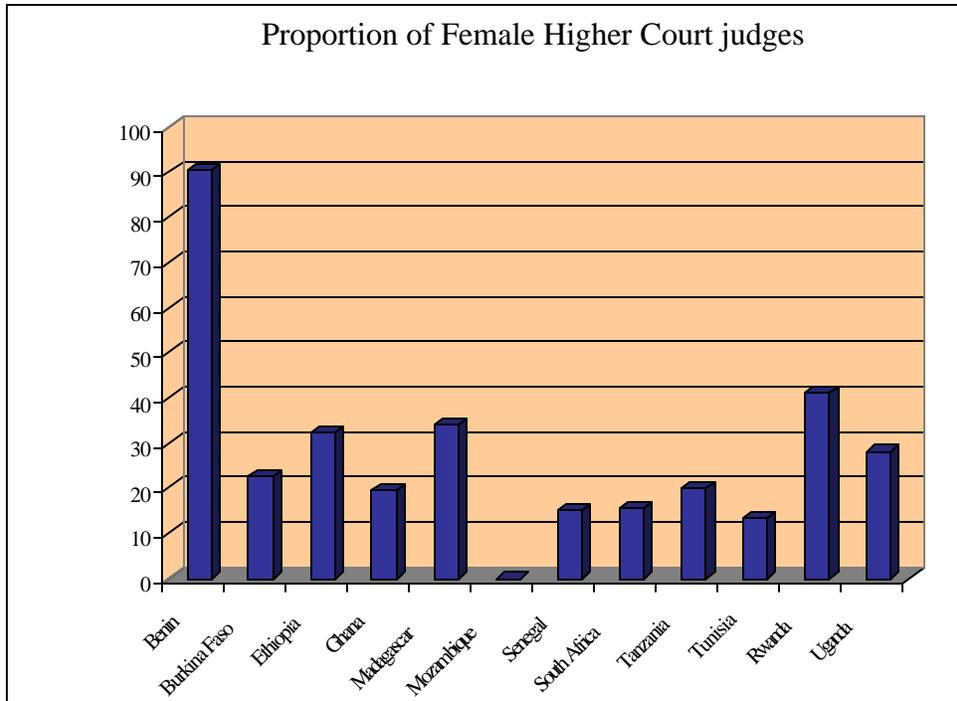
Local councils
Participation of women in local governments is an important step in decision-making at the community level, in the context of the decentralization taking place in many African countries. However, women do not participate in decision-making at the expected level, even where they are actively engaged in the economic activities of their communities.

Although women's under-representation is widespread, there are great differences from one country to another. Some countries such as Uganda are performing relatively well in women's representation in local government. Uganda takes the lead with 71.6 per cent women's representation, while Tanzania follows with 41.1 per cent. Both countries have employed affirmative action at the level of local government for women candidates. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, South Africa and Tunisia have an average of 20 per cent female representation in the local councils.

[33] Ibid.

Egypt (1.8 per cent) Benin (3.8 per cent) and Madagascar (3.3 per cent) lag far behind. Data were not available for Mozambique.

**Figure 4**

Proportion of Women members of local councils
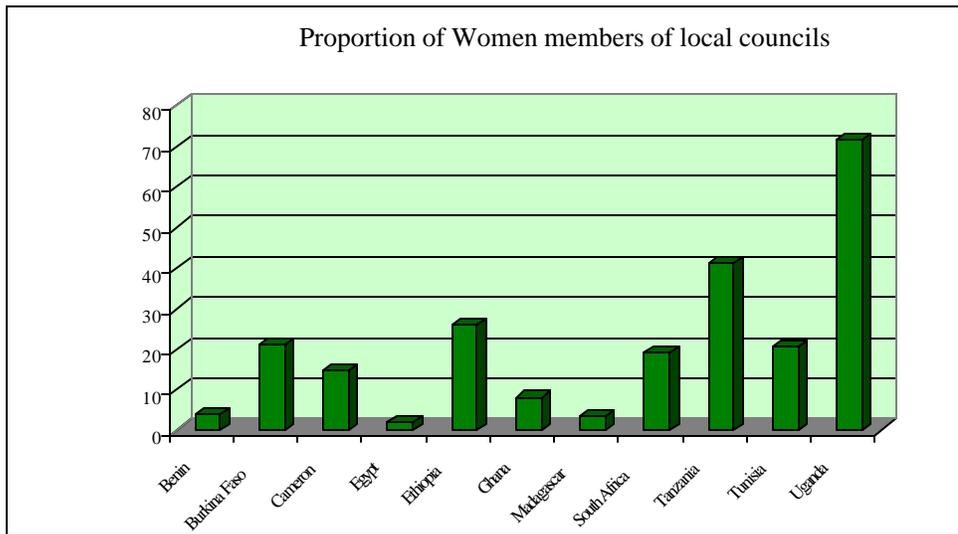
Senior civil service
Egypt (33.9 per cent) and Ethiopia (32.3 per cent) have relatively better female representation in senior civil service positions. Burkina Faso (5.7 per cent) Madagascar and Benin (12.5 per cent and 12.9 per cent) demonstrate weak representation of women in senior decision-making positions. In Rwanda, women hold 30 per cent of the senator positions, but only 1.9 per cent of t he burgomaster or district mayor positions[34].

Generally, women are highly represented in the less qualified and less well paid majority of the civil service, such as nursery and primary school teachers, and they do not feature prominently in decision-making positions. This indicates the high need for promoting women's access to higher education. Affirmative action measures are helpful to address the challenge to some extent. For instance, Ethiopia has an affirmative action policy for civil service recruit ment and promotion that support female civil servants.

---

[34] John Mutam ba. Op. cit. 2005. p 9

Figure 5

Proportion of Female high civil service
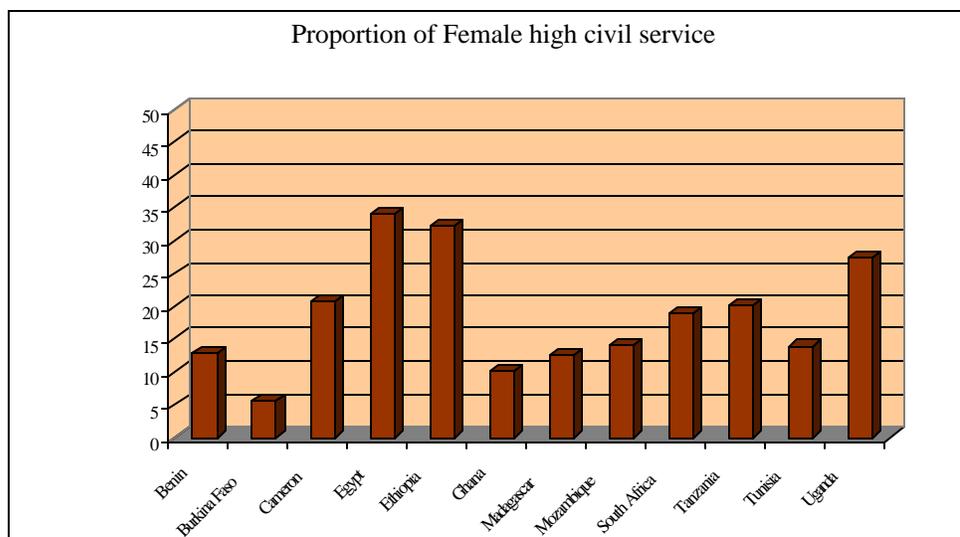
5.2 Decision-making in civil society

Table 2. Power and decision-making in the civil society organizations component

Indicator		Benin	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Egypt	Ethiopia	Ghana	Madagascar	Mozambique	South Africa	Tanzania	Tunisia	Uganda
Senior positions in political parties	F	86	119		226	31	8	86	0	24	1	119	9
	M	386	850		5,414	637	60	386	31	71	22	728	50
Senior positions in trade unions	F	69	41		1	622	25	20	102	6	2	1	30
	M	269	180		22	3010	180	104	270	17	10	99	59
Senior positions in employers' associations	F	1	57			10	11	18		3	4	21.2	10
	M	6	346			119	42	77		40	11	179.8	20
Senior positions in professional syndicates	F	5	18		10	41	5	3		17	1		5
	M	26	52		498	180	33	16		39	15		22
Heads or managers of NGOs	F	10	19		18	40	147	56	93	59	76	35	378
	M	20	80		82	406	444	703	304	41	222	8,470	1,567
Heads of CBOs	F	4	144			74	71	2					

	M	33	437			3780	319	16					

In general, AGDI findings show that gender-disaggregated data collection for civil society indicators is weak at the national level. National statistical reports have certain types of indicators, but most do not indicate the status of women within the civil society framework. Data were not available at all for the civil society sector in Cameroon.

Political parties

Active participation of women in decision-making positions in political parties is highly correlated with increased participation in many other areas of governance. Political parties nominate candidates for elected public office in most countries. Further, studies show that women's voting trends and the policies that they support are dictated by their political parties rather than their choosing political parties based on their own ideologies. Thus, the political party is one of the major determinants of whether women get into political office or not. Some platforms that work to enhance participation of women in politics stress that it is only through the transformation of political parties that effective participation of women in politics will become more possible[35].

According to AGDI findings, even in those countries where elections produce a reasonable number of elected women, their place within political party leadership is still very low. For instance, while Mozambique has the highest percentage in women's representation in parliament, there are no women at high-level positions in any political party.

In general, participation of women in the leadership of political parties is minimal and for countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia and Tanzania women's representation is below 5 per cent. South Africa has the highest representation of women in political parties, 25.3 per cent, while Madagascar follows with 18.2 per cent. Uganda comes third with 18 per cent.

---

[35] http://www.ndi.org

Figure 6

Women holding senior positions in political parties in percentage
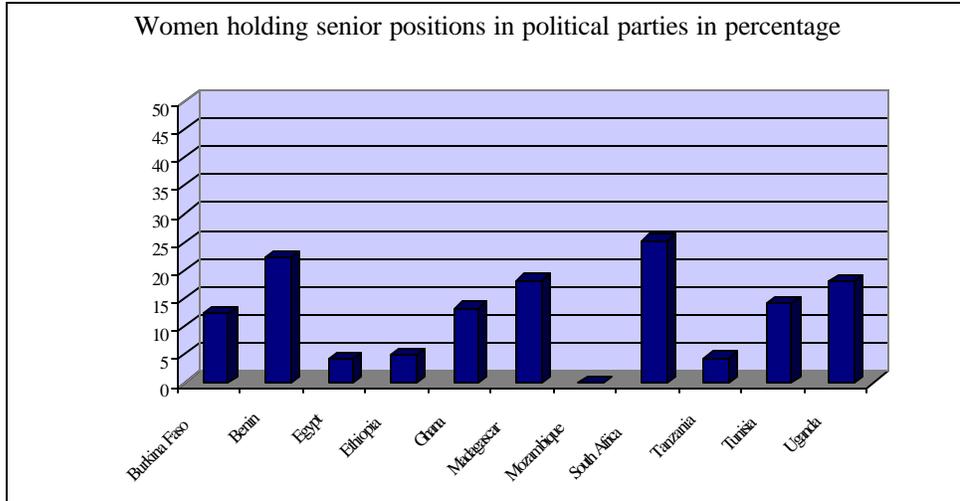
Trade unions

While women's representation remains low in civil service positions, their representation in trade unions in some countries is satisfactory. Uganda has a relatively high representation of women in the leadership of trade unions (50.8 per cent) Mozambique is in second place with 37.8 per cent, while South Africa follows with 26 per cent. Tunisia and Egypt remain below 5 per cent representation.

Figure 7

Women holding senior positions in trade unions
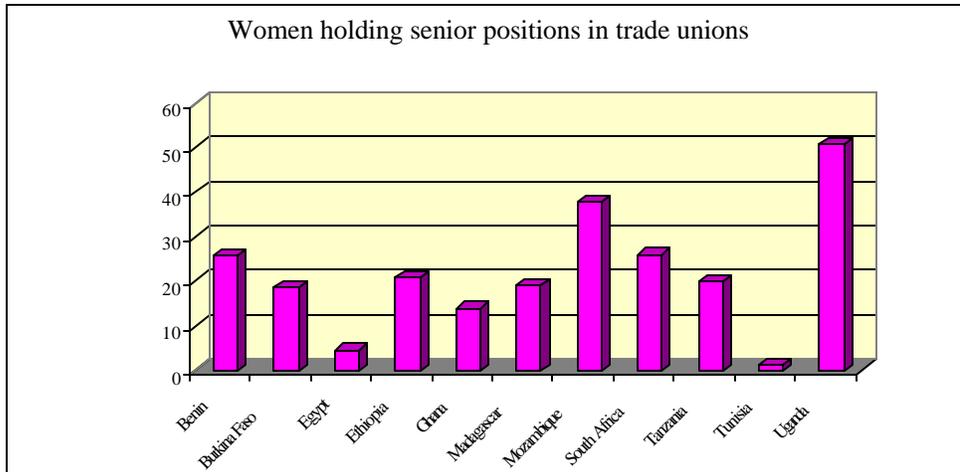
Employers associations

The prerequisite for membership in employers associations is either entrepreneurship or having ownership or influential position in the economic sector. As women's access to economic activities in general remains low compared to men throughout the continent, their representation in employers associations is consequently low. In regard to women's participation in employers associations, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda, are performing better than the other countries. Uganda, with 50 per cent representation of women, is the leading country; Tanzania follows with 36.4 per cent and Ghana comes third with 26.2 per cent representation. Data were not available for this indicator in Cameroon, Egypt or Mozambique.

Despite a reasonably satisfactory representation of women in decision-making for most of the indicators, South Africa's performance for this indicator of membership in employers associations is among the lowest with 7 per cent, along with Ethiopia's 8.4 per cent female representation.

Figure 8
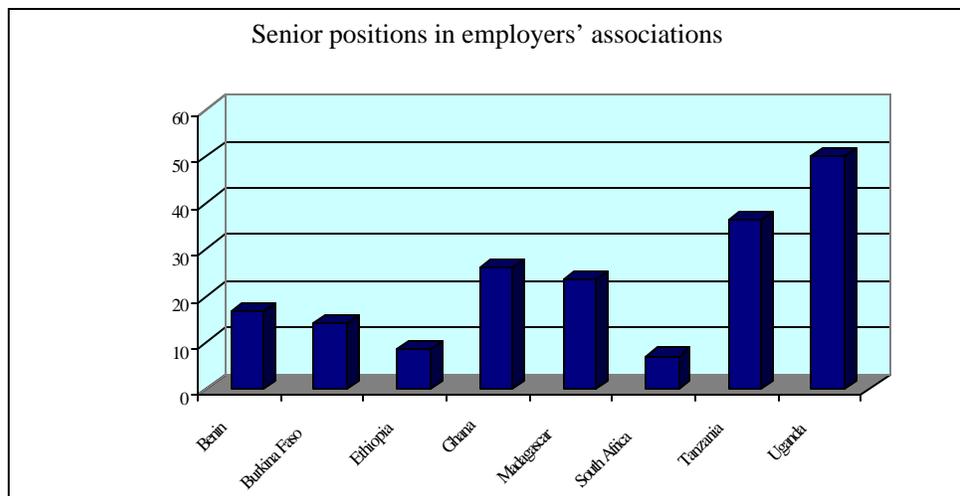
Professional syndicates

AGDI concentrates on professional syndicates in four fields: a) architects, engineers and related professionals; b) legal professionals; c) health professionals (other than nursing); and d) business professionals. The low level of women's participation in the leadership of professional syndicates reflects general under-representation of women in the various professions as well as reluctance to bring those available to leadership positions. Participation of women in the leadership of professional associations is generally low with the exception of South Africa, which has 30.4 per cent of women as leaders of professional syndicates. Burkina Faso is in second place with 25.7 percent and Ethiopia is third with 22.8 per cent, Uganda following closely with 22.7 per cent representation. Data were not available for professional syndicates in Cameroon, Mozambique and Tunisia.

Figure 9

Senior positions in professional syndicates
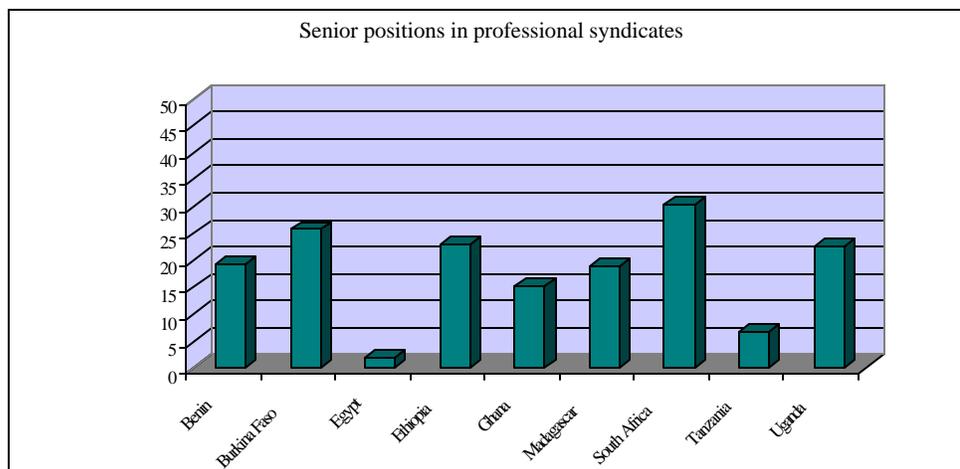
Non-governmental and community-based organizations
Women's CBOs and the more formal structures of NGOs are critical in promoting women's rights. The activities of independent women's organizations remain a critical entry point as women struggle to secure space in the formal political arena. Independent women's movements encourage and support women to get their legitimate space in the governance of their countries and support their effectiveness in their formal political leadership roles.

AGDI findings show that women's participation in NGO leadership is higher than in the other categories of civil society. Following the general trend, this sector is still dominated by men except in South Africa where women represent 59 per cent of the leadership of NGOs. Tanzania has the second highest female representation with 34.2 per cent, while Ghana follows with 33.1 per cent. Benin, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tunisia hold the lowest scores with less than 10 per cent female representation in NGOs.

Figure 10

Proportion of Female Heads of NGOs
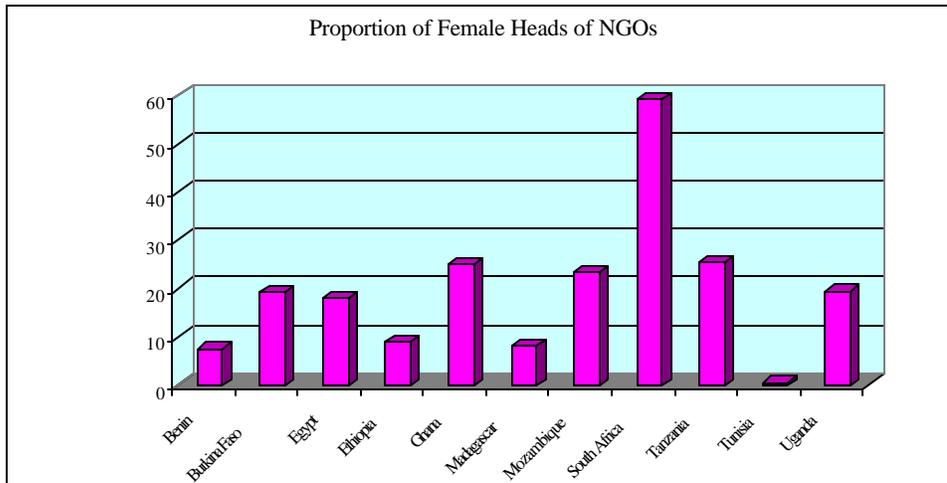
Only five countries have provided data on the number of female heads of CBOs. These include Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Madagascar and Ethiopia. Participation of women in the leadership of CBOs is higher than for NGOs in Burkina Faso and Benin while women's representation in NGOs is higher than for CBOs in Ethiopia, Ghana and Madagascar. In spite of women's active participation and their enormous responsibility within different community organizations, it is interesting to observe that women are not usually found in leadership roles in CBOs. For instance, in the case of Ethiopia, women represent 9.9 per cent of NGO leadership positions, but in the case of CBOs, only 2 per cent.

Figure 11

Proportion of Female heads of CBOs
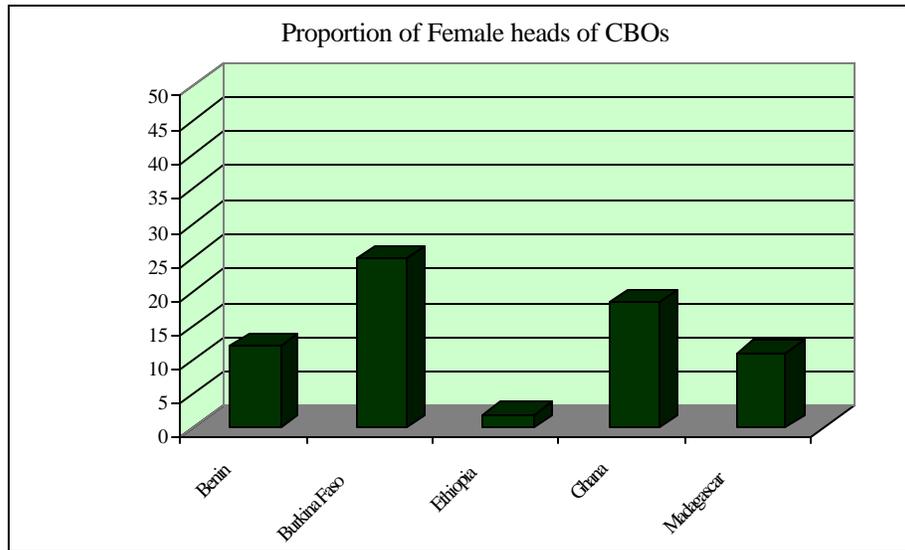
6. THE POLITICAL POWER BLOCK: BOOSTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

AWPS highlights the findings for five indicators showing the efforts of the governments towards increasing women's participation in decision-making. The five AWPS indicators fare described as follows:

(a)   Participation of women in conflict resolution
Especially on the African continent with its sometimes rather violent and unstable past and, in some cases, present, and where infrastructure has been damaged due to unrest, it is imperative that women are included in the efforts towards peace and conflict prevention. This indicator measures the ratification and implementation of United Nations resolution 1325 of 2000.

(b)   Affirmative action measures
This indicator measures whether or not government has adopted affirmative action programmes and to what extent these have been implemented in those areas where women's representation has been traditionally low**.**

(c)   National machineries
This indicator was developed to measure whether or not governments have put adequate mechanisms in place to implement gender policies and other tools towards gender equality.

(d)   Enhancing gender equity within governance institutions

Governments are encouraged to fulfil the expectation of at least 30 per cent female representation in parliament and other government bodies. This indicator measures whether action has been taken to reach this target.

(e)   Gender mainstreaming

Together with strong national machineries, gender mainstreaming should serve as a tool to include gender equality in all the activities, including the functions of the various government departments. This indicator measures progress in developing and implementing gender mainstreaming policies and programmes.

The guidelines for using AGDI describe the process of scoring as follows: "For all the cells where possible a three point score, 0-1-2 will be used. In this way progress or deterioration will be visible. Because of its transparent nature, it will facilitate lobbying and advocacy efforts of parliamentarians working on gender issues as well as NGOs lobbying government for better performance."[36]

AWPS serves to measure how much effort is made by governments to put laws and policies in place, with adequate human and financial resources, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and all other necessary means to realize commitments made under various regional and international instruments. The international and regional commitments in which the five indicators are committed include CEDAW and its additional Protocol, the African Women's Protocol, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and United Nations resolution 1325 on conflict resolution.

Table 3. AWPS composite score of political power blocks

	Benin	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Egypt	Ethiopia	Ghana	Madagascar	Mozambique	Rwanda	South Africa	Tanzania mainland	Tanzania Zanzibar	Tunisia	Uganda	Total
UN Resolution 1325	0	0	0	14	0	5	1	0		7	0	0	0	0	27
BPFA National machinery	19	20	0	14	9	12	0	9		15	16	9	14	13	150
Affirmative action	0	6	2	10	7	8	0	0		13	10	9	10	11	86
Decision-making positions	0	1	3	14	7	8	0	0		10	10	13	3	7	75
Gender mainstreaming	19	4	0	10	5	7	2	5		11	10	12	4	10	99
Total	36	31	4	62	28	40	3	14		56	46	43	31	41	

---

[36] ECA 2004. For more information on AGDI and AWPS, please visit www.uneca.org

Women in the decision-making arena

AGDI data show that Egypt has scored the highest in this category of indicators with half of the possible scores. However, the country scores are low in most of the quantitative indicators[37]. This could mean that Egypt is weak in translating policies and laws to action. Of the 12 countries, Cameroon and Madagascar also perform quite poorly overall compared to the other trial countries. Most countries are performing well in establishing national machineries and in adopting gender policies. Nearly all countries marginalize women's perspectives in conflict prevention and resolution engagements, except South Africa and Egypt, which have demonstrated some effort in this regard and Rwanda, which has put special effort into inclusion of women in the peace-building process. Most pilot countries are not performing well in ensuring gender parity within government institutions.

National machineries

One of the most important steps that African countries have taken since the 1985 United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi has been to establish national gender machineries. The need for the establishment and effective functioning of national machineries is identified as one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. National machineries, government institutions as well as NGOs, in promoting women's equality, have a crucial role as supporters to the governments in implementing commitments towards greater gender equality.

National machineries should be seen as "watchers" providing information and tools to support women's rights in various fields, including ensuring women's access to decision-making positions in the country, and monitoring and evaluation of progress in close collaboration with other government bodies. Therefore, it is imperative that national machineries are established in mutual understanding with the government, and that the machineries enjoy the full trust of the ministries.

All pilot countries have established national machineries in different forms. Six countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda) have developed gender planning at the level required. Countries did not establish concrete targets, except Tanzania, that has measurable and time-bound targets. All countries reported inadequate funding and lack of expertise to influence policy. In other words, gender policies have been established and gender focal points appointed in different arenas, but in many cases, these efforts have remained loose and independent activities, not necessarily meeting the issues at hand.

For example, the Ethiopian AGDI report reveals that there is an existing, comprehensive national policy on gender mainstreaming including incorporating women's affairs in the government structures by establishing a Department of Women's Affairs in all ministries and governmental organizations at federal and regional levels. However, there are no guidelines to carry out the required

---

[37] The GSI Political Power block average of Egypt is 0.059, women representing less than 6 per cent of all the decision-making categories. ECA 2006. See also the GSI information in this document.

mainstreaming effectively and no targets for the planned activities[38]. The reports also consistently indicate a high need for gender mainstreaming training. If there is no commitment to gender mainstreaming or secured and adequate resources from the regimes, the national machineries remain inefficient and uncoordinated, and the policies developed remain general jargon with very little significance in making women's voices heard in decision-making.

In the re-building process of the society, Rwanda from top to lower levels has shown serious commitment to including women in the public spheres. The national gender policy adopted in 2003 introduced the principle of a gender component in all local government plans. The Ministry of Gender has played a critical role in boosting women's participation by intensive attention to policy, advocacy and collaboration with CBOs. Grassroots organizations in the communities have also formed an important link in the Ministry's efforts to include rural women in development and decision-making. [39]

Conflict resolution
The African Women's Protocol provides for 'the rights of women to peace' under Article 10 and a provision on the protection of women in armed conflict under Article 11. Article 10 emphasizes the right of women to participate fully in fostering a culture of peace and in conflict resolution programmes in line with UN resolution 1325. Article 11 addresses protection of women and children during armed conflict and reaffirms these protections under humanitarian laws. It is encouraging to see this 'new generation of rights' in the African Protocol, given the frequency of conflict causing great suffering of women and children, among other consequences. Women have high stakes in conflict prevention and peace building in Africa.

According to the AGDI findings, even countries with internal conflict or potential conflict have not been attempting to integrate women's views and their participation in conflict-resolution programmes. Most scored 0 on most of the variables in this area, which means they are not making any form of effort. It may also be that conflict is not an issue in a particular country, and hence is not given much thought in the public life[40].

Tunisia and South Africa score better for the efforts they have made to include the voices of women in conflict resolution. In the serious conflict in the Gambella region of Ethiopia, the Inquiry Commission investigating the conflict in 2004 was composed of only male members, according to the AGDI national report.

In Rwanda, women played a critical role in peace building after the genocide. John Mutamba writes, "The cessation of the insurgency in the north of the country in 1998 was almost certainly due to the active role of women as mediators and civilian authorities. Women also played a critical role in mobilizing their displaced husbands and relatives to repatriate to Rwanda". Although there were

---

[38] ECA. African Gender and Development Index (AGDI): Ethiopian Trial. 2004.
[39] John Mutamba. Op cit. 2005.
[40] ECA. 2006.

not a significant number of Rwandan female guerrillas of RPF[41], they did contribute to stopping of the genocide and building peace in the country. A small number of them joined the formal administration and even more importantly, formed an association, *Ndabaga,* for promoting peace, which has had a key role in making women's voices heard in the peace-building process. Former female rebels and government combatants work together in the association[42].

Affirmative action

Affirmative action has been an important policy tool to level the opportunities for women competitors in the field of education, employment and politics. The right of women to affirmative action in all these areas is explicitly guaranteed by international laws such as CEDAW. Article 4 of CEDAW states that "Adoption by State Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination."

CEDAW guarantees women's right to "temporary special measures" for a broader spectrum of women's rights including economic, social and political. The African Protocol provides affirmative action to ensure the rights of women in "the political and decision-making process". Article 9 states that State Parties "shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action…"

In the case of Africa, the impact of affirmative action is most visible in the political arena. Nonetheless, it has remained controversial. It is argued that women who come to power through affirmative action are token representatives and that it is discriminatory against men. The point emphasized by such opinion is that they will not be able to push an independent agenda that serve women's empowerment since they are beholden to the party that brought them to power. In some cases, it has been considered a reverse discrimination and become a court case. The Supreme Court of Lesotho has dismissed an appeal lodged in opposition to an affirmative action measure employed for local government women candidates[43].

The *pros* and *cons* of affirmative action might be debatable, but a critical mass of women's presence and participation has had a notable impact on policy debates. Moreover, affirmative action is critical to rectify the accumulated legacies of discrimination against women. At a global level, experience shows that quotas and affirmative action measures have been the most effective policy tools for increasing women's participation in decision-making[44].

AGDI findings indicate that almost all countries that performed well in increasing women's participation in decision-making, particularly in political life, have used affirmative action policies as indicated under the section on women

---

[41] Rwandese Patriotic Front
[42] John Mutamba. Op. cit. 2005.
[43] www.archive.idea.int
[44] UNDP fact sheet, Electoral Assistance
http://www.undp.org/women/mainstream/ElectoralAssistance.pdf

parliamentarians. Constitutions of Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania have provisions for affirmative action. In South Africa, the ruling party, ANC, has adopted an affirmative action policy of 30 per cent to ensure a reasonable presence of women in parliament.

Rwanda has gone the furthest with legislation, as the 2003 Constitution provides that women should be granted 30 per cent of posts in all decision-making organs. The rest of the pilot countries do not have a constitutional or other legal framework that guarantee affirmative action, but for example in Kenya, women have been active in pushing for adoption of affirmative action measures, as women represent less than 8 per cent of the seats in parliament and only 4.1 per cent of the local authorities[45].

However, even countries that provide a legal framework are weak in developing plans and indicators of implementation. For instance Ethiopia did not adopt a subordinate legislation to implement the constitutional right of women to affirmative action. Ten years after adoption of the Constitution, the ruling party has adopted a 30 per cent quota for women at the level of the federal parliament for the May 2005 election. Nonetheless, the election resulted in 20 per cent women parliamentarians. Similarly, Ghana's AGDI national report shows that in spite of the adoption of a guideline in Ghana for 40 per cent representation of women only 18 women (less than 10 per cent) were elected to parliament in the 2000 election.

Leadership of governance institutions

Because participation of women in decision-making is important, it is critical that they assume leadership roles within their institutions. In the absence of opportunity structures and of the required networking and mentoring, women may assume official positions but remain backbenchers and marginalized. Under this situation, they are unable to influence and impact on decisions. The lack of gender parity within various institutions also negatively influences gender mainstreaming efforts.

AGDI shows that efforts made by countries to increase parity in leadership of governance institutions are lower than for any of the salient indicators used to assess qualitative progress. In a comparative assessment, pilot countries have paid little attention to assisting women to be equal and effective players in institutions in which they have been included. This is the most disregarded agenda next to increasing women's participation in conflict resolution.

It also shows that Egypt, Tanzania and South Africa are making some effort to push women up the ladder to top decision-making. The Ethiopian national AGDI report indicates a great unbalance between men and women in the leadership of the federal parliament; out of the 12 parliamentary committees, only one (the women's committee) is chaired by a woman. In Rwanda, women are well presented in the government bodies, holding half of the ministerial positions as well.

---

[45] Women's Direct Service Centre. Education Centre for Women in Democracy. Kenya 2006

Gender mainstreaming

Various efforts have been made to mainstream gender through gender initiatives at different levels and sectors of society. Gender focal points have been appointed in various government and civil society bodies. The AGDI national reports uniformly indicate that the national machineries are not effective due to the lack of necessary human and financial resources. The draft African Women's Report identifies three universal interrelated problem areas in nominating gender focal points: a) people assigned as focal points do not have the necessary expertise to be influential in their institutions; b) they are expected to undertake the gender task in addition to their 'regular' assignments; c) they do not have the required budget and may not be in high enough positions to access decision-making processes; and d) in some cases, they have not internalized gender issues and/or are not interested at all.

AGDI indicates that, excluding Cameroon and Madagascar, all the countries have gender mainstreaming guidelines in place, or the countries are in the process of developing them. Some countries such as Ethiopia have developed sector-specific gender mainstreaming guidelines. Benin reports adequate performance in almost all of the variables under this indicator.

In most of the pilot countries, mainstreaming is a challenge due to inadequate or incomprehensive planning, inadequate budget and human resources, and inadequate research, information dissemination and monitoring and evaluation. The concept of mainstreaming is very abstract and to some extent, it seems that gender mainstreaming is seen as bringing women's issues into the public attention, rather than incorporation of gender equality values and measures in all the areas of life, including inclusion of all social classes of both sexes in the public life. Mainstreaming is therefore not an end itself but is a strategy towards gender equality alongside the country's other development strategies.[46]

Therefore, to mainstream gender in the arenas of decision-making successfully, it is crucial that high-level government officials are engaged and committed to the process. Furthermore, if a country fails in providing adequate education to women, or adequate opportunities for income generation, it is likely that women will not be seen soon in decision-making positions. In some cases, AGDI reports are inadequate to evaluate the real success of country-specific gender mainstreaming strategies.

Egypt reports that their National Council on Women (NCW) is a national institution responsible for the advancement of women and consists of 11 specialized executive committees. NCW has established a network including NGOs and research centres, but its nature is that of a coordinating body without executive power. It is providing gender planning and tailor-made training for the ministries and is "committed to gender mainstreaming in all ministries"[47].

---

[46] See for example, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm
[47] Egypt National Field Trials Using the ECA-Designed Research Instruments for Developing the African Gender and Development Index. Final Report.

Without executive power commitment and the full support of all government bodies, the results and sustainability of the NCW gender-mainstreaming activities will remain fragile and unsustainable. Greater gender equality is not likely to concretise in the near future. In the case of Mozambique, the report describes an overall gender-mainstreaming plan and strategies, and mentions the Operative Group on the Advancement of Women for incorporating gender planning in the ministries and other institutions. However, it does not deepen the information on the specific activities taken to date or on planned future activities to ensure effective gender mainstreaming[48].

Inadequate reporting may partly indicate that the countries are not familiar with mainstreaming strategies, or that it is not seen as significant as some other development aspects may be. In general, AGDI findings conclude that in most countries, the financial and human resources provided to put commitment into action for gender mainstreaming are insufficient. However, the fact that gender policies have been put in place indicates that the governments have realized the need to eliminate gender inequalities in their societies.

---

[48] African Gender and Development Index. Mozambique Report 2005.

Box 2: Advances made by the African Women's Protocol over other international and regional conventions

➢ The Protocol is the first international convention to articulate woman's right to abortion explicitly, when pregnancy endangers the life or health of the pregnant woman or when it results form sexual assault, rape or incest.
➢ It is the first binding instrument to prohibit Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
➢ It goes beyond the standards of other conventions on the issue of gender-based violence. It has prohibited violence against women in private, including domestic violence and marital rape, as well as in public spheres. It guarantees the protection of women from both physical and verbal abuse in an unprecedented manner.
➢ It is the first international instrument to forbid forced marriage explicitly. It is also the first women-specific convention to specify a minimum age of marriage. Apart form the Protocol, the only international convention that provided 18 years as the minimum age for marriage is the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child).
➢ The Protocol is the only human rights treaty to articulate choice for monogamy explicitly as the "preferred form of marriage" and to assert a widow's right to child custody, inheritance and the right to remarry a person of her choice.
➢ It has articulated women's right to peace and women's right to be protected during armed conflicts.

7. CONCLUSION

AGDI findings show that representation of women in public spheres remains low throughout the 12 pilot countries. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms appear to be very fragile or non-existent in every country, and there is great need to strengthen national policies, practices and follow-up mechanisms. Some countries, such as Rwanda, have taken remarkable steps in both empowering women and reporting on the results but establishment of AWRO should raise performance, monitoring and reporting in most countries..

Of the pilot countries, Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda can be considered as flagship countries in promoting women's participation in parliament, although further strengthening of gender equality is needed and necessary. AGDI statistics have also shown that all three of the countries have 24 percent or more women in both government and civil society positions, while in Egypt, women's representation remains generally under 10 per cent in public life. In light of these findings, women's representation in both government and civil society sectors remains under 20 per cent on average.

For AWRO and other bodies, when drawing conclusions on the development of gender equality in each country, it is important to adjust the available data to the

socio-cultural environment. For example, there is great variation in the number of decision-making positions in government and civil society sectors in each country. In Mozambique, women are well presented in parliament (over 30 per cent), but have zero representation in higher courts. This could be a sign of gender-based discrimination, or of a need for more women in the legal professions or of pure coincidence.

In Africa especially, it is not enough to look at and promote equality from a gender angle. An exhaustive and complementary approach to promoting human rights, good governance, freedom of speech, and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups as full members of a society is required. Governance is not good and the principle of equality is violated, if women's participation in decision-making, and their access to education and health remain limited, and when their economic opportunities are limited to making ends meet in the informal sector.

Governments are encouraged to further strengthen their structures and to adapt a holistic development plan that evolves from the specific social and economic needs of the nation, ensuring adequate funds in the social sector, ensuring education for all with an adequate level of knowledge on public activities, and continuing the work towards greater gender equality by making it a crosscutting issue throughout the process.

To conclude, participation of women in decision-making will be monitored by AWRO not only as a women's right issue that is also instrumental for the protection of other aspects of women's rights but also as a crucial resource for efficient, effective and sustainable development nationally and regionally and for legitimacy and compliance with prevailing international laws and standards in the community of nations.