

**AFTER SO MUCH ADVOCACY, WHAT NEXT?**

**By**

**Grace Ongile, Ph.D.**

**UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS**

**PAPER PRESENTED AT THE 2013 FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS,  
YAOUNDE CAMEROUN, 5<sup>TH</sup>-9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013**

# 1.

## Introduction

A number of African countries have acceded to various international legal frameworks protecting the human rights of women including the Beijing Platform For Action, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Additionally, many governments have shown commitment to achieving gender equality by adopting a National Gender Policy (NGP) and mainstreaming gender into national priorities. Despite existence of these key policy documents addressing women's empowerment and equality issues however, implementation of policies remains an overarching issue. Furthermore, ministries of Women Affairs/Gender charged with the mandate of gender equality and women empowerment , are weak in terms of capacity and often have very minimal budgetary allocation.

A number of inter-related factors are responsible for the African continent poor gender equality indices including patriarchy, socio-cultural factors, the paucity of gender disaggregated data for the advancement of women and gender development, and the absence of adequate legal frameworks to protect women's rights and ensure gender equality. No wonder, implementation of Millenium Development Goal 3 will fall short of the set targets in almost all the African countries. Additionally, there is weak institutional capacity to programme in a gender responsive manner by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These huge capacity gap that need to be addressed. Key challenge remains that of lack of legal frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is now globally recognized as a sine qua non for poverty reduction, improving health, equitable economic growth and enhancing efficiency of public services and investments. The attainment of gender equality is not an end in itself, it is also a means to an end, a human rights issue and a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development.

Gender equality and women's empowerment continue to be central themes in global treaties, covenants, and declarations because they are now acknowledged as catalysts to people-centred development, good governance and attainment of globally agreed targets.

In spite of the policy and international legal provisions, the history of development policies demonstrates that of neglect of the gender equality variable.

Gender mainstreaming involves, however, much more than increasing women's participation; it involves identifying and addressing the gender perspectives in all areas of development. It involves assessing the implications for women and men of ANY planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997).

**Gender Gaps:** According to the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report, 86 out of 133 countries improved their gender gap between 2012 and 2013, with the lowest disparities globally in Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden. But progress remains slow on some dimensions: while the global gender gap in health and survival is almost closed at 96 per cent, and in education at 93 per cent, the global gender gaps for economic equality and political participation are only 60 and 21 per cent closed respectively.

The 2013 Global Gender Gap Report reveals a slow measures inequality of outcomes between men and women in health and survival, educational attainment, economic participation, and political empowerment progress on economic equality and political participation.<sup>1</sup>

Recent Africa Review Report citing the Global Gender Gap Report 2013, notes that :

---

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum - Global Gender Gap Report 2013

*“While powerful gender gaps remain in many African countries today, the region has made substantial gains in narrowing the gap, at least within all sectors of the society.”*

The Global Gender Gap Report 2013 rates Lesotho – for the fourth consecutive year – as the country with the smallest gender gap in Africa. South Africa takes the second slot, followed by Burundi, Mozambique and Malawi as the continent's most equal societies in terms of gender parity.

West and North African countries rank nearly at the bottom of the Index with Cape Verde being the only country ranked in the top 50. The Index measures gender-based disparities by focusing on the gaps between men and women in four key categories or sub-indices: Economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Countries are then ranked according to their proximity to gender equality by establishing whether the gap between men and women in the chosen indicator has declined.

The report notes that the distinguishing feature of the Index is not whether “women are winning the battle of the sexes”, but rather if “outcomes for women equal that for men”.

According to the report, sub-Saharan Africa has closed 66 per cent of its gender gap, and it has outperformed Europe and Central Asia, coming second after North America, on the economic and opportunity sub-index. On the educational attainment sub-index, sub-Saharan Africa continues to show the highest gender gap, ranking last on that category, the report notes.

No country in the world has attained gender parity, however, the highest ranked countries – Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden – have closed between 81-87 per cent of their gender gaps. While Yemen – the lowest ranked country – has closed a little over half of its gender gap.

The Global Gender Gap Index was developed in 2006 by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to address the need for a comprehensive measure of gender parity that can track global progress towards equality.

## 2. After so much Advocacy, what next?

**The theme for this congress is “After so much Advocacy, What Next”?**

What is Advocacy? Advocacy is the **active support** of an idea or cause expressed through strategies and methods that influence the opinions and decisions of people and organisations;

In the social and economic development context, the aims of advocacy are to: Create or Change Policies, Laws, Regulations, Distribution of Resources or other Decisions that affect people's lives and to ensure that such decisions lead to implementation. Advocacy is generally directed at policy makers including politicians, government officials and public servants, but also private sector leaders whose decisions impact upon people's lives.

Key tools used for advocacy include media, social and print talk shows, radio and ICT. The key question to ask is how advocacy as a tool can be used for effective planning and implementation for positive change. implementation:

**The following 10 steps should guide our reflections and interrogation as to whether advocacy has been successful, not successful and what needs to be done differently in the context of FIDA mission.**

In terms of Advocacy Planning and Implementation

### 2.1. Preliminary Steps

- a. Identifying the problems and the policy issues
- b. Defining the Advocacy Goal
- c. Consulting and building relationships
- d. Establishing credibility as an advocate

**2. 2. Analysing the Policy Environment:** *Identifying relevant policies, laws and regulations:* Audit of the relevant policies and political institutions;

**2.3 Mapping relations of power and decision making:** Where are policy decisions taken and who has influence over them?

**2.4 Considering the options for policy change:** Would a change in policy alone be sufficient to achieve the advocacy goal?

It is important to note that identification of target (including allies and opponents ) audiences is key. What advocacy approach are most likely to influence the target audiences?

**2.5 Turning to Preparing a Plan of Action:** An effective advocacy tool requires good organisational planning including systematic mapping out the actions to be taken to achieve results. Furthermore, cost considerations are likely to influence cost considerations.

**2.6 Risk Assessment:** What are the main risks to successful project implementation? Risk analysis involves assessing the impact of each particular risk and the likelihood of it happening. It would be important to Identify the key messages: what messages are likely to be persuasive with the primary audience?

**2.7 Communication:** In terms of getting the message across, good communication will lead to effective advocacy. This requires attention to the message, the audience and the means of delivery. The message needs to be clear: it should explain what is being proposed, why it is needed, and what difference it would make.

**2.8 Tools for advocacy:** media – radio, television, press and online media – have a particular role to play in public advocacy initiatives, especially campaign-based approaches ensuring that the right message is communicated.

**2.9 Building Partnerships and Coalitions:** Most advocacy initiatives involve some degree of mobilising public support behind the proposal. Throughout the implementation phase, it is important to monitor and evaluate the process, the results and the policy context.

**2.10 Sustaining the dialogue:** This will also require Identifying the issues and challenges through Need Assessments, Research, documentation and sharing best and good practices. Correct data will ensure that stakeholders build trust along advocacy messages communicated to stakeholders.

### **3. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Experience**

Over many decades, the UN has made significant progress in advancing gender equality, including through landmark agreements such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications.

Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes. For many years, the UN has faced serious challenges in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding and no single recognized driver to direct UN activities on gender equality issues. UN Women was created to address such challenges. UN Women is a dynamic and strong champion for Women and Girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels. Grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the UN Charter.

UN Women has always remained committed in supporting and integrating part of the UNW global thematic areas. These include enhancing its development activities in Expanding Women's Voice, Leadership and Participation, Women's Economic Empowerment, Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Expanding Access to Service and increasing Women's Leadership in Peace, Security and Humanitarian Response. Its intervention strategies include partnership and collaboration with

Government at all levels, Development Partners, CSOs, Private Organizations and the Media, among others.

### **3.1 UN Women Key Focus Thematic Areas: Challenges and Lessons**

The focus of UN Women is on the following key result areas which have potential to transform the gender equality landscape:

- (i) Expanding Women's Voice, Leadership and Participation
- (ii) Women's Economic Empowerment
- (iii) Preventing Violence against Women and Girls and expand access to service
- (iv) Increasing Women's Leadership in Peace, Security and Humanitarian Response

**3.2 Expanding Women's Voice, Leadership and Participation:** Women's political empowerment and participation in decision-making, like all other indicators of gender equality, have been plagued by deep-rooted patriarchal cultures that cut across all the regions within the African continent. Traditional and religious beliefs have contributed significantly to the marginalization of women in all spheres particularly in leadership and decision-making. It is widely considered a cultural taboo for women to assume leadership positions over men. These structural barriers combine with others like women's low socio-economic and educational status, the excessive use of money in politics, political violence, absence of supportive legal frameworks and weak democratic institutions are some of the key challenges under women's leadership.

While many African countries have made commitment ensuring that 30 per cent female representation in all structures of power by end of post Beijing decade, this commitment often times remain as policy directive lacking well grounded legislation to ensure implementation.



In many countries, laws that discriminate against women are still intact; embedded in socio economic cultural norms. A lot of work is yet to be done in addressing gender biases, addressing mindset, intentional barriers, access barriers, structure of public institutions and developing tools for monitoring and evolution of gender issues such as gender budgeting.

It has been argued that women's participation and leadership is not only an essential prerequisite for poverty alleviation and gender inequality but also a basic human rights condition. The critical challenge however is that despite the commitments made in promoting gender equality women continue to be under-represented in decision making at all levels.

We know that in terms of political participation we have 35% affirmative action in countries like Nigeria. But recent events have shown the vulnerability in appointive positions because they are subject to the whims of the appointer. The gender friendly posture became a victim of political survival when most of the female cabinet members were dropped in power struggle. The reality is that they were not elected, had no real financial base or the required support of women. So the question is, if women are not elected what happens? Do we keep waiting and relying on fate to decide how we must go in political careers?

Congratulations to Cameroon for **more than doubling their representation in the National Assembly**. This follows the announcement of the results of the legislative elections held on 30 September 2013. The results of the elections, announced in October have ensured that the National Assembly now has 56 women deputies, out of a total 180, i.e. 31.1 per cent. This increase has been attributed to synergy between actors, adoption of an Electoral Code and involvement of a gender expert and sustained strategic interventions, including advocacy efforts, capacity strengthening and awareness-raising.

“This is a clear testimony of how involvement of all key stakeholders was critical in the electoral process i.e Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), the organization in charge of elections, along with the Government, legal framework, media, traditional and religious leaders, and women candidates” Furthermore, advocacy targeted public opinion with key aim of increasing in a visible way the representation and participation of women in decision-making bodies.

UNW Regional Director Ms Josephine Odera stated that :

*“ While the results are historic, the work must continue with a double emphasis. First, it must focus on adopting specific measures to ensure the equal participation of women and men in the electoral process – measures at a legal or constitutional basis and not just voluntary. Second, the work must concentrate on strengthening the capacities of elected women representatives so that they can take on any task assigned.”*

According to UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the launch of Women Leading Africa Programme in Namibia on 24 October, 2013 noted that:

*“we need more women leaders! When women lead side by side with men, it is good for equality and democracy. It is good for peace and stability. It is good for business . When women and men make decisions together, the decisions better reflect and respond to the diverse needs and rights of the entire population.”*

### **Key lessons learnt**

Some important lessons learnt in the implementation of the above programme include: The need for gender-responsive constitutional and legal frameworks that are expansive enough to include the internal mechanisms of relevant institutions such as political parties and National Electoral Commissions; A systematic, gender-

responsive, sector-wide approach that highlights the roles of all stakeholders has remained a productive approach in this regard and should be strengthened; Timeliness remains critical success factor for all planned initiatives and should be improved upon by all stakeholders; responsive resource allocation is key for results delivery.

**3.3 Economic Empowerment of Women:** Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. Yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Available data indicates that expanding the economic opportunities available for women is vital for poverty eradication. However, this requires a strong emphasis on gender-sensitive employment creation, the provision of productive resources such as land, credit, technology and skills, and simultaneous investment in care services that reduces the burden on women's unpaid domestic and care work.

Thus, women's economic participation and empowerment are regarded human rights issues fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs. Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts.

Statistics shows that higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term.

A major critical policy challenge is how to integrate the principles of gender equity and women empowerment framework within macro-economic frameworks and/or national development planning frameworks, such that gender equity concerns drive reforms across sectors, and at all levels – national, state, and at the grassroots.

“The African Continent’s Hope is Based on Economic Empowerment of Women for Effective Leadership”

**3.4 UNiTE to End Violence against Women and Girls campaign** is the **UN Secretary General’s** response to the call from women from all parts of the world for collective sustainable efforts to eliminate the scourge of violence against women and girls. It is a Multi-year effort (2008-2015) aimed at **preventing** and **eliminating** VAW&G in **all parts of the world as well as providing services to** survivors. It was launched globally on 25 February 2008 by the UNSG. The **UNiTE** Campaign calls on governments, civil society, women’s organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to **join forces** in addressing the global pandemic of violence against Women & Girls. It seeks to empower women and their communities to stop gender-based violence, end impunity and demanding accountability.

Africa UNiTE is the regional component of the United Nations Secretary General’s Global Campaign and a continent-wide partnership to end all violence against women and girls. The rationale for the Africa component of the SG’s Campaign on violence against women is rooted in the commitments made by African countries through ratification of various international and regional instruments that specify obligations for the elimination of violence against women. By 2015, Africa UNiTE aims to achieve the following six goals in all countries:

- Adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against
- women and girls
- Adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans
- Strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls
- Increase public awareness and social mobilization
- Address sexual violence in conflict
- Ensure safety for women and girls in public places

**3.5 Women’s Leadership in Peace and Security** :The specific experience of women and girls in armed conflict is closely linked to their status in societies. As noted by the Beijing Platform for Action in paragraph 135, “while entire communities suffer the consequence of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly

affected because of their status in society and their sex". Women do not enjoy equal status with men in any society where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict; they will be further exacerbated during conflict. Again, if women do not participate in the decision making structures of a society, they are unlikely to become involved in decisions about the conflict or the peace process that follows. Women's role in formal peace processes generally includes early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and global disarmament.

The United Nations is Moving Forward to tackle new and emerging issues in the struggle for gender justice. Consequently, as recently as 21 October 2013, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed Resolution 2122 which creates roadmap for systematic approach to "implementation of commitments on women, peace and security".

This resolution, which emphasizes the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building, has also been passed by the UN Security Council. It highlights the critical importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to international peace and security.

The resolution includes concrete measures on the development and deployment of technical expertise for peacekeeping missions and UN mediation teams supporting peace talks; improved access to information and analysis on the impact of conflict on women and women's participation in conflict resolution in reports and briefings to the security council; and strengthens commitments to consult, as well as include, women in peace talks.

Recognition by the UN of the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and their role in conflict resolution and peace-building, **earlier** in 2000, the Security Council passed the landmark resolution 1325. Since then there has been progress in getting women more active in conflict resolution processes. UN Women points to the fact that in 1993 women made up just 1% of uniformed peacekeepers, while by 2012, of the 125,000 peacekeepers, women comprised 3% of military personnel and 10% of police personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.

Addressing the UN Security Council, UN Women Executive Director Ms. Mlambo-  
Ngcuka highlighted women's catalytic role in conflict resolution.

*"Women's leadership is central to reconciliation and conflict resolution and to peace building efforts that bring results for families and communities. That is why I welcome today's resolution on women's peace leadership," she said.*

The resolution recognizes that the impact of conflict on women is exacerbated as a result of inequalities. For example, because of unequal citizenship rights and lack of access to identity documents women and their children may be rendered stateless, lack access to basic services for survival or lack the ability to reclaim land and property, post-conflict. It is important to note that this resolution addresses the rights of women who are pregnant as a result of rape during conflict; and need for international community to ensure that humanitarian aid includes support for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape.

In addition, the resolution places gender equality and women's empowerment as critical to international peace and security, underlining that the economic empowerment of women greatly contributes to the stabilization of societies emerging from armed conflict.

**5. Gender Empowerment Using Mobile Technologies:** As UN Women, we are taking advantage of ICT in our work.

*"we must do everything possible to ensure that ICT is given prominence as a powerful means of advancing women's Rights, empowerment and gender equality."<sup>2</sup> (UN Women Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka noted in New York on 20 September 2013 at the Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender)."*

UN Women is committed to working with Broadband Commission for the adoption of the target to achieve gender equality in access to high- quality, high-speed Internet by 2020. This is a demonstration of using ICT in its work on advocacy ensuring that more work is done in an effective way for women and girls.

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/9/ed-speech-to-broadband-gender-gro...\\_10/31/2013](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/9/ed-speech-to-broadband-gender-gro..._10/31/2013)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) adopted its gender mainstreaming policy in June 2013 thus making ITU another UN Women Partners.

Evidence indicates that ICT use by women improves productivity, generates income through ICT businesses thus closing gender wage gap.

Furthermore, in the area of education, ICT makes this possible in terms of accessibility thereby improving the quality of education as well as going further to enlighten women on issues of health, commerce, value chain from production to marketing.

Through partnerships with governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system, UN Women uses ICT in the following areas:

- To end **violence against women**: providing mobile phone apps to report safety risks and to get access to services for survivors of gender-based violence.
- To advance **women's leadership and participation**:, online platform for women across the globe called IKnow Politics, where women can connect and get information on how to run for office and get elected.
- To enhance **women's economic empowerment**: UN Women is launching launching with Canada a new new global Knowledge Gateway to empower women with knowledge, resources, networking and training.
- In terms of improving information system, UN Women is in partnership with Airtel This aims at "providing women farmers with real time information on markets, policy environment and connect them to each other for learning and support".

UN Women is convinced that ICT should be given prominence as a powerful tool in advancing women's rights, empowerment and gender equality.

A key recommendation from UN Women in its commitment to ICT is that "the next two Commissions on the Status of Women will review Beijing and the MDGs and put forward recommendations for post-2015.

**Technology can be a game-changer for women and girls. It can make the 21st century a women's and girls' century (UN Women Executive Director).**

## 6.Rethinking Advocacy – Innovative Strategies

It is of great importance to continue to enhance the tools that are available to women's empowerment; Advocacy is one of such effective tools;

- Inculcate the right type of confidence and assertiveness among women Leaders who can express proper ideological message and inspire confidence;
- New ways of thinking and acting, educational activities, research about women's activities and means of communication and advocacy skills among women's organizations are needed;
- Education is the most important channel for encouraging women to advocate and speak out;
- Common understanding of the concerns of women, gendered political awareness, advocacy and lobbying skills and networking are important for the process of training women for economic empowerment and political careers;
- Special attention should be given to involvement of young women and importance of collaborating with men
- that ICT should be given prominence as a powerful tool in advancing women's rights, empowerment and gender equality.
- Value of data for advocacy: step up the management of data by networking with members and member countries of FIDA and collect, collate data, for informed Advocacy for more gender based decisions and resolutions.
- The data can then be used in informed action on Women's health and sexual, reproductive Rights, participation in politics and decision making in terms of peace and security specific efforts are needed to increase the number of women on official delegations<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Let me give you one real and homely example of the value of data in advocacy. Some years ago, in Kenya, it was discovered that the level of absenteeism by girls in primary school was getting too high. An NGO conducted a research, which showed that the high level of absenteeism was because the girls had no access to sanitary pads. Consequently, whenever their period came, they skipped school. According to a news report: The Kenyan government recently approved \$4 million to provide free sanitary towels to girls in school to stem the loss of school days...." See: Lacking Sanitary Pads, Girls Miss School in Dadaab Refugee Camp, From: [http://www.ungei.org/news/kenya\\_2922.html](http://www.ungei.org/news/kenya_2922.html))



- Working with men: “The fight against gender discrimination needs to involve men much more than is currently the case. Engaging more men in reform is important, as women alone cannot achieve gender equality and women’s Rights.”<sup>4</sup>
- Gender Tool Kit: This acts as a pointer to the vast but largely unexplored resources available to aid gender mainstreaming globally and indeed catalyse greater results for gender responsive planning, policy development and implementation.
- Closing gender gaps: will need for further research to better understand both the causes and consequences of persistent gender parity gaps.

In conclusion, key recommendation to FIDA is as follows: Sometimes we have to “take the bull by the horn” and start at the grassroots level in order to bring the attention of the world to issues that affect gender. At other times, instead of waiting for total domestication, we can take the instruments piece by piece or clause by clause and push for legislation on them. That way we can circumvent the issue of rejecting treaties or protocols and move it forward to reservations on certain clauses. This way, we can assist our government and leadership to work in tandem with international good practice without the fear of losing sovereignty.. As a fact, some FIDA chapters constructively and actively engages government and they listen.

Lastly, advocacy is a never ending process. It is dynamic and must be sustained with clear concrete benchmarks and targets; effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track and assess progress. This platform must be used to collate and document progress capturing good practices and share lessons.

---

<sup>4</sup> UNWomen Nigeria news. Vol 1, No. 1. Pg. 12