

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) by AU, UNECA and UN Women *Newsletter*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Inside the 33rd African Union Summit
- Other High-Level events
- IWD 2020 Commemorations
- United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- Regional GEWE and COVID-19 response
- In other news

WELCOME

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of this joint quarterly newsletter by the African Union (AU), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and UN Women. We are happy to introduce this newsletter as an information sharing platform to promote multi-stakeholder collaborations among stakeholders towards accelerated action for GEWE in Africa.

The newsletter will feature good practices, knowledge and efforts by the AUC, ECA and UN Women that help ensure Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEWE) in Africa is sustained. The platform highlights planned meetings and agendas and initiation of new policy frameworks, gender equality advocates and other stakeholders that identified entry points for engagement and contribution to regional policymaking, monitoring and implementation.

This year we are launching the newsletter through publishing two special editions. This first edition will be highlighting on key activities carried out by the three institutions in the first two quarters of 2020.

We look forward to receiving your feedback and questions to improve future editions of the newsletter.

Enjoy your read!

INSIDE THE 33RD AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT

The AU declares 2020-2030 as the African Women's Decade (AWD) on "Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women"

The 2020 AU Summit offered various platforms and opportunities for African women and girls to rally support and advance actions towards the implementation of commitments on GEWE. This translated into the declaration of years 2020 to 2030 as the new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion. In this declaration, African leaders recommitted to scale up actions for the progressive gender inclusion towards sustainable development at the national, regional and continental levels.

This new declaration comes right at the end of the AWD (2010-2020) on Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Its overall goal is that every woman must be able to

work, be paid and participate in the economy of her country. For these goals to be realized, African Governments must put in place policies and targeted complementary measures and programs such as; targeted entrepreneurship, business management and technology training, financial literacy, financial planning, investment and capacity building, particularly for women small business that help women to overcome the constraints of accessing finance, as well as market information and networks. Additionally, The AUC emphasizes that this milestone cannot be achieved solely through the efforts of the commission, but also through the collective hands of civil societies and the women bodies.

AUC- WGDD, OSE and AWLN convene a High-Level Consultative Event on GEWE

The African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Development

Directorate (AUC-WGDD) in collaboration with the Office of the





Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE), the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), and with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation convened a High-Level Consultative Dinner and High-Level Breakfast meeting on 07 and 8 February 2020, respectively.

The event brought together African Heads of State and Government and including the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the outgoing AUC chairperson H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt and the incoming chairperson, South Africa President H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, the UN Secretary General H.E. Antonio Guterres and the Deputy Secretary General H.E. Amina J. Mohammed, UN Women Executive Director H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, heads of states and Government including the president of Ethiopia H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde and the prime minister of Canada H.E. Justin Trudeau and senior AWLN Women Leaders, including H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia and AWLN Patron. The event also brought together African Women Former Heads of State, key institutions in charge of promoting GEWE, the private sector, women leaders in different sectors and youth leaders to coordinate innovative, constructive and cooperative actions to accelerate the implementation of impactful delivery of gender equality and

African leaders and partners called upon AU Member States to urgently put in place strategies and mechanisms to ensure education continuity for girls and young women in emergency situations

On the 5th of February 2020, during the 4th edition of the High-Level Dialogue on Gender Equality and Education, African leaders and partners called upon all the AU member States to urgently put in place strategies and mechanisms to ensure education continuity for girls and young women in emergency situations.



women's empowerment initiatives.

A key outcome of the High-Level meetings was the African Women's Declaration on African Women Decade 2020 to 2030 as the "Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women" that led to the development of the [Heads of State and Government Declaration](#). The African Women's Declaration was presented to the Assembly by H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa to the AU Heads of State and Government Assembly and adopted. In addition, the [outcomes of the 35th GIMAC CSO Gender Pre-Summit](#) which was held on the 3rd and 4th of February in on the margins of the 33rd AU Assembly were also integrated into the declarations.

Furthermore, the African Women Leadership Fund (AWLF) was launched in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). AWLF is an impact Fund aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment through multi-layered prioritization of women. It supports women Fund Managers as well as provide direct support for women entrepreneurs to empower women to ascend to business and economic leadership positions.



This one-day event was held under the theme “Silencing the Guns to ensure Safe Schools and Learning Outcomes for Girls and Women’s for Africa’s development “ and provided the opportunity to Member States, development partners and CSOs to underline the need to secure schools and ensure access and retention in education systems for girls and young women, including in conflict and fragility contexts.

Participants recommended that to accelerate the attainment of ensuring learning outcomes for girls, there is a need to put in place incentive policies such as free education, appropriate school infrastructure, alternative education programmes, substantial budget allocation, gender-sensitive curricula, access to

ICTs/technologies in remote areas and emergency situations.

They also welcomed Tech for All Initiative presented by the Executive Vice-President of Huawei Northern Africa Region, Mr. Philippe WANG whose vision is to bring digital to every person, home, and organization. Mr. Philippe WANG says, “We want to make sure that everyone can benefit from digital technology, and that everyone has a place in the future intelligent world”.

OTHER HIGH-LEVEL EVENTS

The 10th PAWO Congress was held under the theme “Accelerate African Women’s Action towards Achieving Sustainable Economic Development within the context of the UN Agenda 2030 and AU Agenda 2063”



The 10th Pan- African Women’s Organization (PAWO) Congress was held from 26 to 28 February 2020 in Windhoek, Namibia. The congress was attended by PAWO members from all over the continent, including

women cabinet ministers, senior women leaders of political parties, and head of women’s wings of political parties.

Under the theme “Accelerate African Women’s Action towards Achieving Sustainable Economic Development within the context of the UN Agenda 2030 and AU Agenda 2063”, the Government of the Republic of Namibia hosted the three-day meeting where the Congress adopted a declaration and key resolutions focusing on peace and security, the boy-child and youth. The Congress also elected a new leadership with H.E. Eunice Lipinge of Namibia as its President and H.E Grace Kabayo of Uganda as its Secretary General. H.E. Assetou Koite was elected Honorary Lifelong President of PAWO.



IWD 2020 COMMEMORATIONS

AUC-WGDD and UN WOMEN joined Ethiopian Airlines to organize an 'All Women Functional Flight' on 8 March 2020

AUC-WGDD and UN WOMEN joined Ethiopian Airlines in organizing an 'All Women Functional Flight' to mark International Women's Day on March 8th, 2020 as well as to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The 'All Women Flight' departed from Addis Ababa on 8 March 2020 and landed on the same day in Washington DC. It was operated by women only, including, among other pilots, hostesses, aircraft technicians, engineers, flights

dispatchers, load controllers and ramp operators. The send-off celebrations were held on 7 March 2020 attended by the President of Ethiopia, and UN Women represented by the Representative to Ethiopia, African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa (OIC) while the AUC was represented by WGDD and the Department of Social Affairs (DSA).

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

[The Africa Review Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action informs the report of the UN Secretary General 25 Years after its adoption](#)

The 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) gathered in New York, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, to carry out a review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and an assessment of the current challenges and gaps that affect its implementation amongst other agendas.

The reformed meeting of the 64th

CSW held on 9 March, 2020 saw that The Africa Review Report on the Implementation of BPFA 25 Years after its adoption (Africa Beijing + 25 Review Report) was incorporated into the report of the UN Secretary General on the Beijing + 25 Review and some aspects of the Africa political declaration were included in the final UN Political Declaration on Beijing +25, that was adopted during the session.



[The AU Youth Envoy \(OYE\) in collaboration with the AUC-WGDD launched the Africa Young Feminist blog "Sauti صوتي"](#)

The AU through the Office of the Youth Envoy in collaboration with WGDD created **Africa Young Feminist blog "Sauti صوتي"**. This platform is a first of its kind in the AU and aims to respond to the multi-dimensional impact of COVID-19 through availing a medium that can amplify the voices of young African women in the continent and the diaspora.

The [annual blog](#) was launched during International Women's Day 8 March 2020 followed by re-launch in May adjusting to COVID-19 outbreak, calling for young women from across Africa and the diaspora to share their stories, in writing, visual, audio and videos to further showcasing their innovation and impact in the community. The [winning stories that have been selected](#) will not only be published on the AU website but will also be part of a compendium that will be available in both digital and printed versions. This project was also made possible with the support of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and Forum for African Women Educationalists.



REGIONAL GEWE AND COVID-19 RESPONSE

The AU convened series of webinar sessions to ensure GEWE is mainstreamed in COVID-19 response

In June 2020, the AWLN convened a [virtual consultation](#) to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on women in Africa, share their knowledge and undertakings to feed into scenario planning and orient responses at policy and action levels, now and in the recovery period. The meeting was facilitated by AWLN conveners, Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, USG and UN Women Executive Director.

AUC in addition to AWLN hosted series of consultative virtual meeting with various stakeholders to promote the integration of GEWE and women's inclusion in COVID-19 responses. Among the various meetings held, a consultative meeting was organized for AUC Departments on 23 April 2020 where the ['Framework Document on the Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment \(GEWE\): African Union Guidelines on Gender-Responsive Responses to COVID-19'](#) was presented. A key outcome of the meeting was an agreement to include gender perspectives and women's participation in departmental strategies on COVID-19.

24 April 2020

On 24 April 2020, the Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on GEWE met under the theme "the Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" and adopted the Guidelines on Gender-Responsive Responses to COVID-19 and called for a meeting of all AU Ministers in Charge of Gender and Women's Affairs. This was followed by a webinar convened by the Gender Ministers on the 29 April under the same theme where the Guidelines were presented and further adopted.

7 May 2020

On, Thursday, 7 May 2020, African Women Ministers of Foreign Affairs, International Relations and Cooperation held a webinar, under the Co-Chairpersonship of H.E. Dr Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and H.E. Amb. Raychelle Awour Omamo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya, and facilitated by the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. The meeting deliberated on Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with the objective of putting special focus on women's leadership.

12 May 2020

A Ministerial webinar was also held May 12 on the theme "COVID-19 Responses and Recovery: A Gendered Framework" was organized by AUC, ECA in collaboration with UN Women. The [inaugural meeting](#) of African Ministers for Gender and Women's Affairs, under the theme "COVID-19 Response and Recovery - a gendered framework" was co-chaired by UN Women's Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and H.E. Mme Beatrice Lomeya Atilite, Chairperson of the AU STC on GEWE and focused on how to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on African women and girls.

The meeting discussed key lessons learned and good practices in gender-responsive crisis management and mitigation. The Ministers that participated in this high-level virtual meeting sought to address challenges facing women and girls in Africa due to the pandemic while informing response and recovery planning and financing to better address the differentiated impact of the pandemic on women and girls in the continent. The Ministers also evaluated their efforts in implementing the AU guidelines on gender-responsive responses to COVID-19 and discussed what was and was not working; remaining gaps; emerging threats and how to enhance action.

14 July 2020

On July 14th, 2020, WGDD and GIMAC co-organized a [webinar](#) that brought together CSOs from across the continent. The meeting observed that COVID-19 pandemic continues to accentuate the inequalities between men and women and has eroded gains made in the GEWE agenda. From the economy to livelihoods, social protection to peace and security, participants noted that the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply because of their gender.

The meeting underlined that a key distressing challenge facing women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic was the increased exposure to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), intimate partner violence, and abuse. These are exacerbated under lockdowns, which have resulted in limited mobility for women and girls. Participants also highlighted that the impact of border closures and lockdowns on industries along the supply chain are further exposing women to income losses. Furthermore, the increased burden of unpaid care work was also observed, in addition to the mental health, physical health impact of COVID-19 on healthcare workers and frontline female staff.

The meeting concluded by adopting [Civil Society Declaration](#) and emphasized that effective coordination between the AU, Members States, and CSOs is key to ensure institutions and government implement their commitments to GEWE.

[The AU International Center for Girls and Women's Education in Africa \(AU/CIEFFA\) hosted two webinar meetings on "Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women's education in Africa"](#)

The AU/CIEFFA hosted two webinar meetings on May 7th and 20th with the topic "Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women's education in Africa". The two webinars were held in English and French respectively and were attended by experts from the Ministries' of Education and Gender from Sierra Leone, Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Cote d'Ivoire, who all expressed the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of education and the strategies employed in their respective countries to promote continuous learning for students especially girls.

The webinar also included other panelists such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Africa Network on Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), traditional and religious leaders, and the AU/CIEFFA youth alumni.

The panelists discussed the response actions they are taking to minimize the impact of COVID-19 school-related lockdowns on learners including; Leveraging on traditional media like radio, using TV and newspapers to deliver learning to students, rolling out online learning platforms for students and ensuring gender-related issues are part of the priorities when

designing nationwide response framework.

The webinars spotlighted on three major issues of concern; Increased vulnerability of girls to SGBV during the nationwide school, heightened risk of girls not returning to school after the lockdowns are lifted and widening the digital gap between the wealthy and poor and the digital gender divide since the school lockdowns began.

[UN System response to increased rates of violence against women and girls: A political engagement strategy on GBV and COVID-19](#)

Given the growing urgency of addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the context of COVID-19, and considering the context of escalating reports, UN systems decided to scale up their efforts, specifically to: Primely, devise a political engagement strategy for senior leadership to engage influencers at all levels, and mobilize the social and cultural shift necessary to tackle GBV.

Secondly, to ensure advocacy on GBV is evidence-based through greater engagement of big data and rapid assessment surveys. And finally, to strengthen women's CSOs as full partners in COVID-19 response and recovery work.

[ECA's policy brief spotlights women's wellbeing and health care systems amidst COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), optioned a new [Policy Brief](#) titled Gendered Effects of Health Emergencies: The effects of the COVID-19 Outbreak on Women's Wellbeing. This Policy Brief is a

culmination of extensive work by ECA on the economic impact of COVID-19 that shows that the availability of good healthcare systems reduces the care burden on households, in particular women who shoulder the majority of unpaid activities in the home, including looking after the sick.

Director, Thoko Ruzvidzo, of the ECA's Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division that penned the Brief states that, *"African countries should also consider the merits of decentralizing their health services to enhance health response capacity locally; learn from Ebola crisis; and maintain health care services including sexual and reproductive health services."*

African countries must do more to improve the continent's fragile health delivery systems in order to cope with pandemics such as the coronavirus which has infected tens of thousands of people within weeks in 52 countries with 533 deaths with in the first few weeks of entering the continent.

IN OTHER NEWS

The AUC, UN and EU have signed a historic USD \$40 million regional programme to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa

AUC, UN and the European Union (EU) signed a three-year Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme on 27 April. A historic USD 40 million regional programme of the Spotlight Initiative focuses on the strengthening of AU Member State legislation and policy processes in the specified areas, the generation of quality and reliable data and the support to women's movements and relevant CSOs. The [Initiative](#) will work to eliminate all forms of **violence against women and girls**, including harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.

The initiative is funded by the EU and the design and implementation is guided by the AU's Agenda 2063, the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ([Maputo Protocol](#)) and the Maputo Plan of Action for the operationalization of the continental policy framework for sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as other key regional instruments.

RELEVANT LINKS

- [7 possible actions- women rights and COVID-19: an information sheet that provides guidance on possible actions that could be taken to reduce the risk of women and girls being left behind as a result of the pandemic.](#)
- [We are Generation Equality #IWD2020: A visual documentary to commemorate the 2020 IWD by ECA](#)
- [The AU and UN launches the "She Stands for Peace" book, recognizing and celebrating outstanding African women and girls who have exceptionally advanced the women, peace and security agenda in Africa.](#)
- [AU/CIEFFA Launches the Compendium of Regional and International Legal Instruments on Girls' & Women's Education and Monitoring the implementation of these Instruments](#)

IMPRINT

Published by:

African Union(AU), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa(UNECA) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women(UN Women)

Implemented by:

African Union, The Women, Gender and Development Directorate, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, www.au.int

Contact: Ilwad Elmi Mohamed, ELMIMOHAMEDI@africa-union.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Center for Gender, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, www.uneca.org

Contact: Syed T Ahmed, syed.t.ahmed@un.org

UN Women, Liaison to AU and ECA, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, www.unwomen.org

Contact: Dukaye Amare Mergia, dukaye.mergia@unwomen.org

Design:

Chong Liu (UN Women) chong.liu@unwomen.org

Photos and Infographics:

Cover page: UN Women/Ryan Brown
P.3: from the top, African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) with the support of AU and UN Women, African Union Commission
P.4: African Union Commission
P.5: from the top, African Union Commission, UN Women