PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON INEQUALITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

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in partnership with:
WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA

Building a Pan African Social Movement

Voices of African women and girls at the grassroots on their world post 2015” – a portrait of gender inequality

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Methodology

• Global checklist developed to guide community consultations
• 45 workshops held in 13 countries
• Six of this countries - workshops held with women
• Sex and age disaggregation
• ACORD staff encouraged to be part of the process
• Individual testimonies collected from women
The workshops

• The aim of the workshops was to hear from women at the grassroots, and to privilege their ideas and perspectives, and capture their voices.
• To confront the issues at the grassroots and therefore facilitate some bare minimum requirements for the framework itself.
• What has emerged is a portrait of gender inequality, both social and economic, as it is lived out in the everyday reality of African women and girls.
**Sexual and gender-based violence**

- Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) deprives women and girls of their most basic fundamental rights of physical integrity, keeps them from attaining their fullest in social, economic and political spheres and causes widespread mental abuse and trauma.
- Rape, intimate partner violence and female genital mutilation the most commonly raised forms of SGBV.
- For many, sex and gender-based violence was closely tied to social norms and attitudes, traditional gender roles, and how power is distributed at household level.
- As much as awareness was raised as an issue, participants also focused on how legal institutions are able to enforce laws against SGBV, noting that even if they are reported there are few convictions. Corruption and lack of participation by women cited as major reasons for this inaction.
- Participants spoke of how in conflict women and girls particularly vulnerable to SGBV, and in post-conflict societies face stigma and social exclusion.
Voices from the grassroots

“Going to school one bright afternoon, I met three men who pushed me into the bush and raped me in turns. I went through the agonising pain as they took turns to rape me. Later they threatened me not to tell anyone or risk being beaten each time I meet them” – 21 year old participant from Mozambique

“When there are cases reported community leaders converge and take a decision on the matter. Most of the cases are decided in favour of the men as the committee is principally composed of men.” – Participant from Tanzania

“Lots of girls suffered violence during the war. Apart from the rebels, people from the neighbourhood did harm to girls and women. Most often, it was sexual violence and stripping them of possessions. If a girl or a woman tried to denounce the man who raped her, the latter could kill her because it was a war situation.” – Participant in South Sudan
Access, ownership and control over resources

• In the workshops unequal access to land was a key issue consistently across countries, both between men and women, and women and agricultural investors. Women asserted that when they are able to access land adequately, and receive appropriate political support to do so, they are able to secure stable and prosperous livelihoods.

• Women described how unequal access to technology and skills meant they couldn’t benefit from commercialisation of agriculture.

• Participants underlined that technology and access to training can help women shape the agricultural landscape, participate in financial markets and even break down social barriers.

• Described how women have unequal access to credit. The ability of women to access credit was linked to not just their ability to grow their income, but their financial independence within households and their ability to meet the needs of their communities.

• Women expressed concerns about exploitation of natural resources at the expense of small holder farmers and specifically women. Women in the workshops outlined the fact that it is them more than men who often play the role of conserving and managing the natural resources on which their communities depend.
Voices from the grassroots

“My land was illegally seized. My husband was in prison. Whenever I claimed this land, I was told that I would receive compensation as soon as my husband was released from prison. But after his release from prison, nothing has changed. They always impose new conditions that have nothing to do with the law. It is exhausting” – Participant from Bugasera, Rwanda

“Here in Niono, women in general and especially the displaced have very limited access to land and credit to conduct agriculture. With land, we either rent or husbands rent it for us. In addition to that, it takes money to pay rent and buy labour and inputs, so that the need for financing structures for us becomes very crucial because we are always the first to be requested by the family, our children and even the community for any need whatsoever.” – Participant in Niono, Mali

“Natural resources, such as pasture, water and different trees were managed thoroughly in the past through the community, especially by us women. Now, because of the past years of drought, resources are being destroyed more rapidly, for example trees were cut to make charcoal for sale. So we need to protect and manage our resources, but it is hard.” – Female pastoralist, Borena, Ethiopia
Women as active citizens

• Women acknowledged the progress that has been made in terms of active citizenship and participation of women in decision making processes, especially in political leadership

• But the opportunities for participation have not been equitable, young women, women from marginalized communities and poor women have not enjoyed the same opportunities when compared to the more educated women from upper and middle classes

• Women cited traditional custom, discrimination, economic dependency, gender-based violence, time spent on domestic labour and other factors prevent women from enjoying their rights and entering and effectively participating in decision-making processes

• Women identified oppression and dominance at home as a challenge to their overall empowerment, and their ability to make crucial decisions about their families
Voices from the grassroots

“Despite the limited forums through which people can participate in the decisions of government, this current government has uplifted women in many ways. Women are given special considerations in all matters, for instance, there are special posts on different committees for women... This I feel has increased their participation” – Participant in Uganda

“Women in our community are facing many challenges. Decisions are made by men in most areas. Cultural influence has also contributed a lot to this situation. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations are trying to raise awareness on gender issues. But still there is a gap to be filled.” - Female, Vice-chairman of a women’s saving and credit cooperative in Ethiopia

“When we empower women in the community it is very important because a woman will support her community. If she has some money she will spend wisely and the community will benefit from this. Women help children and more so the ones who cannot sustain themselves. Let’s empower women to stand strong in the society.” – Participant in Mount Elgon, Kenya
Access to basic services

• Inequality in accessing basic services a key issue for women, especially concerning realising their reproductive health rights
• Women see gender inequality linked to access and affordability of quality professional reproductive health services, as key contributors to high maternal mortality in their communities
• Reproductive health responsibilities are still borne primarily by women, and women earn less and have less control over household savings. Women highlighted the link between gender inequality and specifically the limited decision making space that women have to the lack of basic services.
• Women across the workshops said that both their communities and their governments must prioritise women’s and girls’ access to education, and asserted that it holds the potential for women to realise improved well-being and livelihoods, as well as social independence
Voices from the grassroots

“We are tired of watching our wives die because there is no hospital in Turbi where they can give birth” - Male participant in Turbi, Kenya

“Some men hijack resources meant for the women, which affects their access to services. For instance, if you have your chicken, your husband may sell them and use the money to meet his own needs and not the needs of the entire household.” – Participant in Northern Uganda

“I urge my fellow women to embrace education, let us go back to school especially if you dropped out. We need to train and get skills that can help us engage in income generating skills” – Participant in Kenya
Unpaid care work and domestic labour

• Women in the workshops provided a vivid image of gender inequality in the household, and how the unequal distribution of domestic labour and care work hold back development

• Women described how domestic labour restricts their ability to contribute to their families’ welfare. The expectation that they must provide domestic care work means they cannot adequately build their own livelihoods, which impacts on their own health and well-being

• Participants described the expectation by their partners that they must be responsible for domestic work and the fact that no services are in place to reduce this burden

• Women have entered labour market, but need access to technology to reduce burden of domestic labour

• Although women have moved gradually to productive work, this had not been matched by a similar shift in men entering the caring and unpaid care work fields
Voices from the grassroots

“We as mothers we are very challenged because our husbands go to work and we are left at home. Taking care of the children is hard work and most of the men go for work and come home very late when the children are asleep often on an empty stomach.” – Participant from Kenya

“We used to get up at five am in the morning to go in search of firewood or roots in lean periods and we could meet any kind of unpleasant surprises, even snake bites and rapists... But this year I can say that these events are rarely seen. Through sensitisation carried out by village chiefs under the palaver tree, as well as those made by religious leaders, people are learning... This allowed us to relax a little because this year, the men helped us with our vegetable gardens and they cleared and rehabilitated the wells. Many women of my association tell their husbands accompanied them to the fields or the woods, others say they were helped by their husbands in clearing their land” – Participant in Mali
Recommendations for the framework

• So we have made some general recommendations - not detailed proposals here, for example arguing which targets should go under which goal etc.

• We are also in NO WAY arguing that the following recommendations constitute a full suite of targets and indicators.

• Instead we make recommendations ONLY for the issues women raised with us during the workshops, rather than all issues pertaining to gender equality.

• Hence highlighting ideas of how the framework can address these specific issues that women have raised.
Ending Violence Against Women

• A comprehensive set of targets on ending sexual and gender-based violence against women; must include specific targets on the social norms, behaviours and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women, including FGM and all other harmful traditional practices

• Must include targets that address the current mechanisms to provide justice and support to women, with explicit recognition of and targets for both public and customary institutions

• Indicators measuring access to justice and the effectiveness of justice institutions

• It must have explicit targets and indicators related to SGBV suffered in conflict-affected and post-conflict states, support services and reparations and women’s involvement in peace building processes
Increasing ownership, access and control over resources

- Provision to increase land tenure security and the recognition of land rights, with specific targets for women
- Address investments in inputs, infrastructure, research, extension services specific to the needs of small-scale food production, the nature of which should be appropriate to local and national realities with specific indicators on access for women
- Targets for the reach of pro-poor financial institutions and financial instruments, both of which must be strictly defined, amongst women
- Measure the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities to climate change, with specific targets on adaptation finance, disaggregated by sex
Women as active citizens

- Targets for women’s representation, in terms of numbers and in terms of capacity for participating effectively in public institutions at all levels
- Targets on working with men as partners to promote women’s active participation in politics should be a key strategy for promoting women in decision-making
- Commitment to and targets for citizen-led monitoring and regulation of policies is essential, and this should be disaggregated by sex
- There should be targets addressing decision-making power at household-level and community level with a set of indicators aimed at gauging women’s attitudes to how this has improved
- Gender-balanced policies aimed at balancing the professional and private roles of women and men
Access to Health and Basic Services

- Indicators aimed at reducing maternal mortality and those that measure the availability of maternal care, with particular emphasis on vulnerable and remote groups
- Indicators to measure the quality of maternal health facilities, including trained staff
- There should be a goal on universal access to primary and secondary education recognising and legally entrenching citizens right to education, with targets specific to women and girls
- Targets and indicators must also focus on attendance and completion rate when measuring access, with disaggregated data for women and girls
- National policies and programmes must be designed to attract and cater to women’s needs for tertiary education and must focus on measuring gender parity at tertiary level
The Burden of unpaid work

• The framework must have a target for reducing women’s time spent in unpaid domestic work, with significant resources committed to provide the data to measure this.

• Targets for increasing affordable childcare and community-care for the elderly and other dependents, with indicators measuring access.

• Targets aimed at increasing investment in and access to labour-saving technologies in small-scale food production, disaggregated by sex.
Thank you!