

African Women's Decade 2010-2020

Mid-Term Review



Make *Every* Woman Count

Promoting the Empowerment of African Women & Girls

ABOUT Make Every Woman Count

Founded in December 2010 two months after the launch of the African Women's Decade, Make Every Woman Count is an African woman led-organisation, is an African woman-led organisation which serves as a mobilizing, networking, information, advocacy and training platform for African women by building their leadership capacities to influence policy and decision making. MEWC works to strengthen the voice, impact and influence of African women's rights advocates and organizations.

Our mission is to strengthen the voice and impact of African women's rights organisations, feminists, CSOs and activists through the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate and coordinate the sharing of experiences, ideas, information, and strategies to promote African women and girls rights.

The objectives of MEWC are to:

- Serve as a comprehensive source of information, research findings and resources, institutions, developments and events on women's rights in Africa;
- Track and report on progress African countries are making in the area of women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Facilitate periodic report identification of good practice and constraints, as well as strengthen networking and sharing of information in the area of gender mainstreaming;
- Provide a regional perspective on the status of women in Africa;
- Provide a database for African women's organisations, grassroots, researchers and activists and various stakeholders to access country-specific or sub regional data regarding women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment;

We aim to achieve these objectives through the following approach:

- **Information:** Offering information, resources and guidance to women's organisations, grassroots movements and activists working on the ground to empower women and girls.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Providing African women with a platform for sharing ideas, learning and creating linkages to build up leaders in African society.
- **Participation:** Monitoring the participation of women in national and local politics.
- **Accountability:** Producing an annual report as an audit of the status and condition of women in each African country.
- **Capacity building:** Providing training and skills development to increase women's awareness of their legal status and democracy concepts as well as their leadership, entrepreneurship and communication skills.

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African Women's Decade 2010-2020: Mid-Term Review

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PARTNERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inspired by the launch of the African Women's Decade (AWD) in 2010 and by the Beijing Platform for Action, an outcome of the 1995 Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, which recommended the creation of mechanisms to monitor gender equality and the advancement of women, MEWC's Annual Review of the AWD evaluates the progress, or lack thereof, being made to include and promote the rights of women at country, regional, and Pan-African levels.

The main goal of the AWD is to enhance the implementation of African Union countries' commitments related to gender equality and women's empowerment and to support activities resulting in tangible positive change for African women at all levels.

The decade emphasises a grassroots, approach to development and leaders have encouraged women and those that advocate for them to take ownership of the decade and seize it as an opportunity for sharing effective strategies. In spite of these laudable goals, MEWC identified an information vacuum following the initial launch of the AWD and could not find any evidence that progress, or lack thereof, towards the decade's goals was going to be assessed systematically.

Concerned that the critical issues confronting African women were quickly returning to the shadows, MEWC embraced the principles of the AWD and stepped up to the challenge of tracking results and demanding that long overdue attention to gender parity in Africa not become derailed.

This is achieved by presenting each country on the continent with a background and a presentation of progress and developments made within different areas during each year of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020.

We evaluated each of the levels around our central gender issues: Women, Peace and Security; Violence Against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; Education; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health.

The report is divided into sections according to regional visions of the African continent, and then reports on each country are presented individually. Countries are classified by regions based on the United Nations country grouping¹.

For the Mid-Term report, we have tried as much as possible to gather information/data over the last five years since the launch of the decade to give an idea of the progress, or lack of progress being made in every country in Africa in relation to formal commitments made to improve the rights of women at national and regional level.

The data and information in this report came from credible sources such as the UN, World Bank, World Economic Forum, Inter-Parliamentary Union to give you a good overview of the situation on the continent.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The objective of the AWD monitoring program is to hold African governments accountable to the commitments they made to gender equity in policy decisions in the context of the African Union's African Women's Decade.

In order to fulfil this objective, MEWC publishes a report during each year of the AWD that summarizes the status of women in each country in Africa and the progress, or lack thereof, made towards the goals of the AWD.

The report has been publicised as a credible resource by various women's organisations and they have been use to lobby Governments, to advocate for new policies for the advancement of gender equality.

MEWC aims to publish an annual report throughout the 10-year duration of the African Women's Decade to provide an overview of status of women's rights in Africa. It is important to keep track of countries progress with regards to gender equality in Africa for several reasons:

- a) To monitor progress being made on the continent, in general and in each country over the period of the Decade
- b) To offer evidence of best practice of enhancing gender equality and the human rights of women
- c) It is a way of monitoring progress achieved on the continent and will thus function as a resource for accessing developments throughout the decade.
- d) Furthermore, the report can function as an incentive for countries to improve their efforts in the areas of gender equality and the human rights of women.

CHALLENGES

As an organisation with limited access to financial resources, monitoring all the 55 African countries is difficult and time-consuming. With limited access to resources or field representatives, we rely on UN, local news reports, World Bank, NGOs, International Institutions and individual country to gather information.

With diligent research, we are able to report what has been happening on the continent in relation to women's issues. However our accuracy and precision with data would benefit from access to better resources, more time and full-time staff researchers and writers.

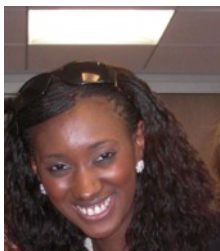
- ☞ Lack of funding: This has been a key challenge in the realisation of this report
- ☞ Limited Access to information, data, resources
- ☞ Limited access to resources or field representatives

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FOREWORD



As we are now halfway- into the African Women's Decade, it is time to ask ourselves; 'Where are we now in terms of women's rights on the continent?'

Just few years ago in December 2008, a proposal for an Africa Women's Decade (2010-2020) was initiated by the African Union (AU) Ministers for Gender and Women Affairs at their meeting held in Maseru, Lesotho. The idea was adopted in February 2009 by the AU at the 12th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In October 2010, the AU launched the African Women's Decade in Nairobi, Kenya with the themes of having both a "grassroots approach to gender equality and women's empowerment."² Delegates from around the world attended the launch. The aim of the African Women's Decade is to advance gender equality by accelerating the implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), through dual top down and bottom up approaches, which is inclusive of grassroots participation.

The launch of the African Women's Decade has been a unique turning point for advancing women's rights on the continent. Though there have been many efforts in the past to bring gender issues to the table, it is worth noting that never before has there been such momentum around the issue of gender equality in Africa. Since the start of the Decade in 2010, we have witnessed an unprecedented move by AU members States for the advancement of women's rights. Many decisions have been taken to guarantee the rights of women and girls; the African Union has been playing a leading role in this shift. The AU has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by adopting important decisions which form the basis of the AU Gender architecture such as the Constitutive Act, the AU Protocol on Women's Rights, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Africa Women's Decade, and the Fund for African Women. The AU declared in January 2015 "Year of Women's Empowerment and Africa's Development for the Concretization of Agenda 2063" as the theme for its 24th Summit. The year 2016 was once again marked by a renew commitment from the AU, when they adopted the 26th AU Summit as the "Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women.

Some states have made considerable advancements in protecting women from sexual violence and encouraging women to participate in politics and election. Most have gender policies or some kind of national women's mechanism, such as a Ministry of Gender or Ministry of Women's Affairs. There are aspects of gender equality in many constitutions and some countries have passed other laws on different aspects of women's rights. All these initiatives have created a favourable environment for the advancement of women's right at national, regional and continental level.

Halfway into the Decade, women's groups and civil societies organisations (CSO) have a lot to show for their efforts. Over these years, women have taken to the streets to protest against a variety of issues affecting them; from advocating for new policies, combatting rising food prices, to the lack of female political and economic participation through to demands for peace negotiations. By such actions, women have continuously demonstrated their commitment and their willingness to see their country change for the better.

The last few years, since the launch of the Decade, have proved promising for African women's status within public bodies. Women are breaking the political glass ceiling in many countries and finding their way into roles traditionally occupied by men. According to the 2012 data from the Inter- Parliamentary Union, women now occupy 20.2% of parliamentary seats in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is slightly higher than the world average of 19.5%.

At the dawn of the African Women's decade, Joyce Banda was appointed as the first Malawian woman president in 2012, followed by Catherine Samba-Panza in 2014 joining Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia to make three female heads of state in Africa, while Gambian Fatou Bensouda was elected as the first female International Criminal Court prosecutor. One of the biggest highlights since the launch of the Decade was the appointment of the first female Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Dlamini-Zuma. As of October 2015, out of the 54 Member States of the AU, only 37 countries have ratified the Maputo Protocol; Sierra Leone being the last country to have ratified on 30 October 2015. Prior to this ratification, the last ratification was that of Cameroon on 13 September 2012³.

According to the UNDP “2015 Millennium Development Goals Report”, the maternal mortality ratio in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen by 49% over the last few years.

In across the region of Central Africa, high maternal mortality rates have gradually and consistently been dropping. In São Tomé and Príncipe, the maternal mortality rate has declined since 1990, from 410 per 100,000 live births to 156 per 100,000 births in 2015.

In Angola, following the adoption by the ruling party⁴ of a quota, requiring a minimum of 30% female representation⁵, the rise in women's representation in the National Assembly has dramatically increased from 9.5% in 1992⁶ to 36.8% in 2015.⁷

Across the East African Region women's political participation is generally on the rise. Some East African states have proudly boasted female leadership in the top echelons of their government. Malawi had Dr. Joyce Banda as their first female President from 2012 – 2014, Ethiopia appointed Aster Mamo as their first female Deputy Prime Minister in 2014, and Mauritius recently elected their first female president, Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, in June 2015. Most countries have seen a rise in female literacy and education, as well as improvements in reproductive health initiatives.

As of September 2015, Seychelles was ranked fourth on the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Women in Parliaments: World Classification, with women occupying 43.8% of Parliamentary seats.⁸ Women's parliamentary representation is also on the rise in Uganda from 31.5% in 2010 to 34.97% in 2015.⁹ In Kenya women currently comprise 19.7% of seats in the Lower House compared to 2011 when they only made up 9.8% (upper house seats not included)¹⁰ In Madagascar, women made up 12.5% of the Lower House in 2011 compared to 20% in 2015¹¹.

In North Africa, the most notable gains in the last decade have come from Algeria. Through Article 2 of the 2012 Law on the Representation of Women, it was required that female candidates comprise between 20 to 50% of any candidate list for legislative elections.¹² As a result, Algeria became the first Arab country to achieve 30% female representation in parliament.¹³ Similarly in Morocco, in the most recent 2011 Parliamentary elections, 60 out of 395 seats were reserved for women.¹⁴ While elections have never been held in an independent South Sudan, since the country's creation, women have represented 27% of the National Legislative Assembly.¹⁵ This is similar to Sudan where 24% of women are represented in the national parliament.¹⁶

In West Africa, Cape Verde and Senegal stand out for their achievements in improving female political participation, not only within the region, but globally. With 11 women and 8 men in its Cabinet, Cape Verde is ranked second in the world for the proportion of female government ministers. In 2012, Senegal adopted a law requiring parties to ensure that women make up at least half of candidate lists. As a result, the percentage of women in the Lower House has more than doubled from 18% to 42.7% following the 2012 election¹⁷, making Senegal the seventh-best ranked country in the world for female representation¹⁸.

Despite these laudable successes made in terms of legislation, the reality in terms of implementation throughout the continent remains a huge disappointment. While some countries have passed laws and constitutional amendments to prohibit or at least curb gender-based violations, many still ignore the basic rights of women and even pass laws further expanding their legal mistreatment. Gender-based violence is a serious problem throughout the continent, perpetuated by cultural acceptance, lack of legal protection for women, and frequently weak law enforcement where legislation does exist.

According to a 2014 UNICEF survey, 66% of women aged 18 to 24 in Kenya had reported physical violence prior to age of 18.¹⁹ Malawi also has very high rates of gender based violence, with 41% of women reported being victims of physical and sexual violence in 2010,²⁰ while 40% experienced sexual violence, and 30% experienced other physical violence in 2012. West Africa has the highest rates of child marriage in the world: 50% of girls in Burkina Faso, 55% in Mali and 76% in Niger are married before the age of 18. Maternal mortality rates in Chad are the highest in the region, with 980 per 100,000 live births.

West Africa has a high concentration of countries that practice female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Though Gambia and Nigeria recently outlawed FGM/C, the practise is still widespread throughout the continent. In Guinea, 97% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting and/or excision²¹.

Both States and Non-States Actors must ensure that women's rights are fully implemented so that laws passed actually have a tangible impact on the lives of the people. There must be a strong system of monitoring, reporting and

accountability to ensure that Governments turn their commitments into concrete actions. Moving forward, it is paramount that we acknowledge the importance of accountability and resources to build a framework and create actual implementation of the national, regional and international laws and policies that advance women's rights and gender equality.

This report, the 5th published by 'Make Every Woman Count' sets out to objectively report the progress, or lack of progress, being made in every country in Africa in relation to formal commitments they have made to improve the rights of women and their fullest participation in all aspects of life. Our aim is to monitor and hold organisations to account. This report marks the half-way point in the Decade. It must be hoped that by 2020, the report will clearly be able to indicate that the protocols and statutes signed have made even more impact on the wellbeing, safety and full participation of women in every walk of life.

Rainatou Sow

Executive Director, Make Every Woman Count



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Mid-Term Review Highlights

Below are some of the highlights of the Mid-term Review . To find out more in depth about each country, and for reference, please go to the specific country profile.

Education

- **Seychelles** is the only country in Africa that has fully achieved education FOR ALL with a literacy rate of 94%.
- **Swaziland** has enacted a Free Primary Education Act, which is meant to ensure that all children will have access to and be able to complete primary schooling, with statistics revealing a 97% enrolment rate.
- Illiteracy affects 37% of **Moroccan** women overall and 55% of women don't have access to basic education in rural area.
- Girls' school enrolment in **Ethiopia** rose from 41% in 2000 to 83% in 2011
- Almost 80% of **South Sudanese** are illiterate; a majority of these are women.
- In **Swaziland** 86% of girls are enrolled in primary education versus 84% of boys.
- 73% of girls living in urban areas in the **Republic of Congo-Brazzaville** have now completed primary education.
- **Sao Tome and Principe** is one of the countries on track to meet MDG2 for attaining universal primary education by 2015. The adult literacy rate remains 93% for men and 86% for women.
- The 2015 literacy rate in **Chad** is 30.6%, the lowest in the Central region. The 2015 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report on Chad places the country at the bottom of all countries for educational attainment, representing no change on its 2010 ranking
- **Burundi**, Female primary completion rate rose from 49% in 2010 to 72.4% in 2013.
- Girls' school enrolment in Ethiopia rose from 41% in 2000 to 83% in 2011.
- **Mauritius** has the highest percentage of female enrolment in tertiary education at 62% in the SADC region
- **Mozambique** is progressing towards the goal of gender parity in education with 85% of girls / 90% of boys enrolled in primary education in 2015.

Economic Empowerment

- **Cameroon**, Women's participation in the labour force was 63.6% in 2014 compared to 54.0% in 2010.
- **DRC**, the most recent data shows that women consistently made up 50% of the labour force between 2005 and 2013
- In 2012, **Kenya** ranked first out of 141 economies in terms of women's access to property, job opportunities and credit.
- **Rwanda**, the percentage of women in the labour force is slightly greater than the percentage of men: 88% of women / 87% of men in 2010 and 88% of women / 86% of men in 2013.
- **South Africa**, the national government missed its target to have 44% of top-level jobs to be occupied by women by 2014. It is currently at 20.6%.
- It is estimated that 60% of all small and medium businesses in **Ghana** are owned by women.
- **Guinea-Bissau**, the ratio of female to male labour force participation has increased from 80.4% in 2000, to 84.3% in 2005, to 86.9% in 2013.
- **Niger**, around 40% of women aged 15-64 participate in the labour market, compared to 91% of men
- **Algeria**, 16.3% of women are enrolled in workforce. Women represent 19.5% of the total labour force.
- **Egypt**, unemployment rate is higher for women (25%) than men (9%) while the rise of the female labour force participation rate would raise the GDP by 34%.
- In **Morocco** only 24.7% of women are engaged in the labour force while 67.2% of men are.
- **Tunisian** women face difficulties in finding employment, statistics points out that only about 26% of women (74% of men) were active in the labour market.
- Female unemployment in **Botswana** is at an estimated 20% for 2013/14.
- In **Lesotho** women's occupational pattern is relatively more spread across subsistence agricultural farming (26.9%) textile manufacturing (22.9% from 9.5% in 1995), government employment (46.2%), and in household activities.
- In **South Africa**, an estimated 38% of businesses are owned by women.
- **Gambian** women constitute 78% of the economically active population involved in agriculture compared to just 57% of men and that women are responsible for 40% of total agricultural production.
- According to the World Bank, 81% of **Togo** women are classed as economically active

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

- **DRC**, in 2015 80% of births were attended by skilled personnel compared to 61% in 2009.
- **Ghana** is noted by the Joint UNAIDS Programme as one of the five countries in West Africa where HIV prevalence declined by more than 25% between 2001 and 2011.
- **Central African Republic**, The 2013 maternal mortality rate of 880/100,000 live births is an improvement from 1,100/100,000 recorded in 2005. The birth rate for adolescent females has also dropped.
- **Rwanda**, Women's access to antiretroviral drugs has increased from 49% in 2010 to 75% in 2014.
- **Burundi**, female access to antiretroviral drugs has increased dramatically from 27% in 2010 to 56% in 2014
- **Djibouti**, in 2012, 88% of women received pre-natal care, and 71% of births were carried out in a medical facility.
- **Ethiopia**, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is the only medical centre in the world dedicated exclusively to fistula repair. 1 in 67 women die due to pregnancy, whereas the figure was one in 24 in 2000.
- Access to contraception has risen from 28% in 2009 to 76% in 2015 in **Mauritius** and ARVs are now free, and access rates have gone up from 12% in 2009 to 93% in 2015.
- **Somalia**, maternal mortality rate has fallen from 820 per 100,000 live births in 2010, to 775 in 2013, and 732 in 2015
- **Uganda**, the law permits mandatory HIV testing for pregnant women and their partners, and allows medical providers to disclose a patient's HIV status to others.
- **Uganda**, 58% of women have a skilled birth attendant,²² up from 42% in 2006 and 50% in 2008
- **Algeria** has seen a steady decline in its maternal mortality ratio from 180 in 2010 to 89 per 100,000 live births in 2014.
- The maternal mortality ratio in **South Sudan** is very high. In 2015 it was recorded that 789 women died per 100,000 live births in the country.
- **Namibia** has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, and women account for 53% of all reported new HIV cases. There are 250 000 people living with HIV in Namibia. Of those, 130 000 are women aged 15 and up.
- Over 95% of HIV positive pregnant women have access Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes in **Botswana**, allowing for a reduction in mother to child HIV transmission.

Violence Against Women

- **Chad** and **CAR** appear amongst the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage in a 2014 UNICEF report
- The Ministry of Family and Women Empowerment estimates that 60% of all women in **Angola** have suffered some form of Gender Based Violence.
- A 2012 UNFPA report lists **Congo Brazzaville** amongst the countries showing a decline in the rate of child marriage
- **Gabon**, Violence against women is still widespread with the figure of 1 in 4 women being a victim of sexual violence remaining unchanged since 2010.
- **Djibouti**, the rates of female genital cutting have allegedly declined from 93% in 2006 to 78% in 2013.
- **Malawi**, the 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey found that 41% of women reported being victims of physical and sexual violence. According to the 2012 Gender Based Violence Baseline Survey, 40% of women had experienced sexual violence and 30% experienced other physical violence.
- **Somalia**, 2,891 incidents of GBV were reported between January - August 2014 in Mogadishu alone.
- **Tanzania**, there was a 4% decline in child marriage rate between 2004 – 2013
- **Zimbabwe**, UNICEF data from 2015 indicates that 31% of girls are married before their 18th birthday and 4% married before their 15th.
- **Burkina Faso**, FGM prevalence has declined by 27.5% in the past 12 years; and 192 people were convicted under the law against FGM/C between 2009 and 2013
- 97% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years in **Guinea** have undergone FGM/C
- **Niger** has the highest rate of child marriage in the world - 76% of girls are married by age 18, and 28% are married by age 15
- In April 2014, the **Uganda's** parliament passes a resolution that acknowledges for the first time the need to provide gender-sensitive reparations to the women and men who suffered at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army during the 20-year insurgency in northern Uganda, including crimes of sexual and gender-based violence
- In **Ethiopia**, 74% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced female genital mutilation
- **Algeria** has recently adopted an executive decree recognising women who have been raped during the "dark decade" as victims of terrorism. 10 000 women or more will receive a monthly compensation from 16000 Algerian Dinar up to 35000 Algerian Dinar.

- In 2014, **Egypt** launched the first prosecution addressing female genital mutilation/cutting after a 13 years old girl died in June 2013 as a result.
- **Congo** developed a national action plan for 2013-2017 to address gender-based violence.
- Sexual violence against women in **DRC** remains a grave issue where vast majority of accused go unprosecuted. Recently, a new post, Presidential Advisor on Conflict-related Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, has been created to help tackle VAW (violence against women).

Women's Political Participation

- **Mauritius** made history on June 5th, 2015, by electing its first female president
- **Cameroon**, the percentage of women in the National Assembly had risen from 16 (8.9%) in 2005 to 25 (13.9%) in 2010 to 56 (31.1%) in 2015.
- **Republic of Congo**, following the October 2014 elections, women held 19.4% of seats in the Upper House, represents a rise on 13.9% following the October 2011 elections.
- **Madagascar**, the percentage of women in ministerial level positions had increased between 2005 – 2014, from 6% to 31%.
- **Malawi**, women's representation in local government increased from 0% in 2009 to 11% in 2015.
- With 43.8% of Parliamentary seats, **Seychelles** has one of the highest percentages of women in parliament in the world. Women's seats in Parliament have increased from 23.5% in 2010 to 43% in 2015.
- **Zimbabwe**, women's seats in the National Assembly increased from 15% in 2008 to 31.48% in 2013, and Senate seats increased from 24.2% in 2008 to 47.50% in 2013.
- **Algeria**, female representation in parliament has increased from 8% in 2010 to 32% in 2014 and is the first Arab country to achieve 30% female representation in parliament.
- In 2010, women in **Egypt** held 13% of seats in parliament, in 2012 they held only 2%
- **Libya**, As a result of government quotas in 2014, 16% of elected representatives in Libya were women
- **Sudan**, the percentage of women represented in Sudan's national parliament has increased over the last five years from 19% in 2009 to 24% in 2014
- **Senegal** Ranked 7th in the world for female political participation, with women holding 42.7% of parliamentary seats
- A referendum was sought in April 2014 on the longstanding debate over the 30% women's participation quota in **Liberia**.

Women Peace and Security

- In 2015, **Kenya** ranked 28th in military and police contributions to UN Operations, with a total contribution of 951 of which 19% were female
- In 2000, women entered into **Malawi's** Defence Force, and The Malawi Defence Force Act of 2004, confirmed the country's commitment to "maintaining a healthy well trained, equipped, disciplined and gender sensitive force."
- As of 2015, **Rwanda** ranks fifth in Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations with a total contribution of 5685 people (283 female).
- **Zambia**, in 2014, women comprised 10% of those in defence forces, and there is a 30% quota reserved for women police on peacekeeping missions.
- **Namibia**, one of the highest percentages of women in the National Defence Force on the SADC States list
- The **Great Lakes Women's Platform** was launched in DRC in January 2014 by UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson

**World Economic Forum – Global Gender Gap Index 2015
African Country Rankings**

(34 Of the 54 countries of Africa included in the Index out of 148 world countries)

<i>COUNTRY</i>	<i>RANK (Of 148 world countries)</i>
<i>Rwanda</i>	6
<i>Namibia</i>	16
<i>South Africa</i>	17
<i>Burundi</i>	23
<i>Mozambique</i>	27
<i>Kenya</i>	48
<i>Tanzania</i>	49
<i>Cape Verdi</i>	50
<i>Botswana</i>	55
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	57
<i>Uganda</i>	58
<i>Lesotho</i>	61
<i>Ghana</i>	63
<i>Malawi</i>	68
<i>Senegal</i>	72
<i>Cameroon</i>	90
<i>The Gambia</i>	98
<i>Liberia</i>	112
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	114
<i>Zambia</i>	116
<i>Mauritius</i>	120
<i>Ethiopia</i>	124
<i>Nigeria</i>	125
<i>Angola</i>	126
<i>Tunisia</i>	127
<i>Algeria</i>	128

<i>Benin</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Guinea</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Mauritania</i>	<i>132</i>
<i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>	<i>133</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>136</i>
<i>Mali</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>Morocco</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>Chad</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>34 Of the 54 countries of Africa included in the Index</i>	

Complete Mothers' Index 2015 – African Countries

(The final Mothers' Index Ranking is also based on women's educational, economic and political scores - Source: Save the Children)

COUNTRY	LIFETIME RISK OF MATERNAL DEATH (1 in number stated) 2013	UNDER 5 YEARS- INFANT MORTALITY (per 1000 births) 2013	MOTHERS' INDEX RANK (out of 179 countries)
<i>Ethiopia</i>	<i>5,700</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Libya</i>	<i>2,700</i>	<i>14.5</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>15.2</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>South Africa</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>43.9</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>25.2</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Cape Verdi</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Namibia</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>49.8</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>Gabon</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>56.1</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>21.8</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Botswana</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>46.6</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Angola</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>167.4</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Rwanda</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>121</i>
<i>Equatorial Guinea</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>95.8</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Senegal</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>55.3</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Morocco</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>30.4</i>	<i>125</i>

<i>Sao Tome</i>	100	51	130
<i>Lesotho</i>	64	98	=133
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	53	88.5	=133
<i>Tanzania</i>	44	51.8	136
<i>Kenya</i>	53	70.7	138
<i>Zambia</i>	59	87.4	139
<i>Uganda</i>	44	66.1	141
<i>Swaziland</i>	94	80	142
<i>Mozambique</i>	41	87.2	144
<i>Sudan</i>	60	76.6	146
<i>Burundi</i>	22	82.9	147
<i>Republic of Congo</i>	48	49.1	148
<i>Mauritania</i>	66	90.1	150
<i>Togo</i>	46	84.7	152
<i>Ghana</i>	39	73.8	154
<i>Madagascar</i>	47	56	155
<i>Eritrea</i>	52	49.9	156
<i>Malawi</i>	34	67.9	159
<i>South Sudan</i>	28	99.2	=159
<i>Djibouti</i>	130	69.6	161
<i>Benin</i>	59	85.3	163
<i>Guinea</i>	30	100.7	164
<i>Comoros</i>	58	77.9	165
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	44	97.6	=166
<i>Liberia</i>	31	71.1	=166
<i>Nigeria</i>	31	117.4	=166
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	21	160.6	169
<i>Guinea-Bissau</i>	36	123.9	171
<i>Chad</i>	15	147.5	172
<i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>	29	100	173

<i>Gambia</i>	39	73.8	174
<i>Niger</i>	20	104.2	175
<i>Mali</i>	26	122.7	176
<i>Central African Republic</i>	27	139.2	177
<i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i>	23	118.5	178
<i>Somalia</i>	18	145.6	179
<i>No data for Seychelles</i>			

Women in National Parliament in Africa

55 African countries out of 193 countries are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House as of 1st May 2016. (Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union)

RANK	COUNTRY	LOWER OR SINGLE HOUSE				UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE			
		ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	% W	ELECTIONS	SEATS*	WOMEN	% W
1	<i>Rwanda</i>	16.09.2013	80	51	63.80%	26.09.2011	26	10	38.50%
4	<i>Seychelles</i>	29.09.2011	32	14	43.80%	---	---	---	---
6	<i>Senegal</i>	01.07.2012	150	64	42.70%	---	---	---	---
"	<i>South Africa</i> ¹	07.05.2014	399	169	42.40%	21.05.2014	54	19	35.20%
"	<i>Namibia</i>	29.11.2014	104	43	41.30%	08.12.2015	42	10	23.80%
15	<i>Mozambique</i>	15.10.2014	250	99	39.60%	---	---	---	---
19	<i>Ethiopia</i>	24.05.2015	547	212	38.80%	05.10.2015	153	49	32.00%
20	<i>Timor-Leste</i>	07.07.2012	65	25	38.50%	---	---	---	---
23	<i>Angola</i>	31.08.2012	220	81	36.80%	---	---	---	---
25	<i>Tanzania</i>	25.10.2015	372	136	36.60%	---	---	---	---
27	<i>Burundi</i>	29.06.2015	121	44	36.40%	24.07.2015	43	18	41.90%
31	<i>Uganda</i>	18.02.2016	427	143	33.50%	---	---	---	---
37	<i>Algeria</i>	10.05.2012	462	146	31.60%	29.12.2015	143	10	7.00%
38	<i>Zimbabwe</i>	31.07.2013	270	85	31.50%	31.07.2013	80	38	47.50%
40	<i>Tunisia</i>	26.10.2014	217	68	31.30%	---	---	---	---

41	Cameroon	30.09.2013	180	56	31.10%	14.04.2013	100	20	20.00%
45	Sudan	13.04.2015	426	130	30.50%	01.06.2015	54	19	35.20%
"	South Sudan	06.08.2011	332	88	26.50%	05.08.2011	50	5	10.00%
66	Mauritania	23.11.2013	147	37	25.20%	08.11.2009	56	8	14.30%
67	Lesotho	28.02.2015	120	30	25.00%	26.03.2015	33	8	24.20%
69	Equatorial Guinea	26.05.2013	100	24	24.00%	26.05.2013	73	10	13.70%
72	Cabo Verde	20.03.2016	72	17	23.60%	---	---	---	---
77	Eritrea	01.02.1994	150	33	22.00%	---	---	---	---
"	Guinea	28.09.2013	114	25	21.90%	---	---	---	---
86	Madagascar	20.12.2013	151	31	20.50%	29.12.2015	63	12	19.00%
"	Kenya	04.03.2013	350	69	19.70%	04.03.2013	68	18	26.50%
101	Sao Tome and Principe	12.10.2014	55	10	18.20%	---	---	---	---
103	Togo	25.07.2013	91	16	17.60%	---	---	---	---
107	Morocco	25.11.2011	395	67	17.00%	02.10.2015	120	14	11.70%
"	Malawi	20.05.2014	192	32	16.70%	---	---	---	---
"	Libya	25.06.2014	188	30	16.00%	---	---	---	---
122	Chad	13.02.2011	188	28	14.90%	---	---	---	---
"	Egypt	17.10.2015	596	89	14.90%	---	---	---	---
"	Turkey	01.11.2015	550	82	14.90%	---	---	---	---
125	Niger	21.02.2016	171	25	14.60%	---	---	---	---
128	Gabon	17.12.2011	120	17	14.20%	13.12.2014	99	18	18.20%
130	Somalia	20.08.2012	275	38	13.80%	---	---	---	---
131	Guinea-Bissau	13.04.2014	102	14	13.70%	---	---	---	---
139	Djibouti	22.02.2013	55	7	12.70%	---	---	---	---
"	Zambia	20.09.2011	158	20	12.70%	---	---	---	---
142	Sierra Leone	17.11.2012	121	15	12.40%	---	---	---	---
146	Mauritius	10.12.2014	69	8	11.60%	---	---	---	---
149	Liberia	11.10.2011	73	8	11.00%	20.12.2014	30	3	10.00%

150	Ghana	07.12.2012	275	30	10.90%	---	---	---	---
157	Botswana	24.10.2014	63	6	9.50%	---	---	---	---
159	Burkina Faso	29.11.2015	127	12	9.40%	---	---	---	---
"	Gambia	29.03.2012	53	5	9.40%	---	---	---	---
161	Cote d'Ivoire	11.12.2011	251	23	9.20%	---	---	---	---
163	DRC	28.11.2011	492	44	8.90%	19.01.2007	108	5	4.60%
164	Mali	24.11.2013	147	13	8.80%	---	---	---	---
165	Central African Republic	14.02.2016	128	11	8.60%	---	---	---	---
168	Congo	15.07.2012	136	10	7.40%	12.10.2014	72	14	19.40%
169	Benin	26.04.2015	83	6	7.20%	---	---	---	---
178	Nigeria	28.03.2015	360	20	5.60%	28.03.2015	108	7	6.50%
182	Comoros	25.01.2015	33	1	3.00%	---	---	---	---

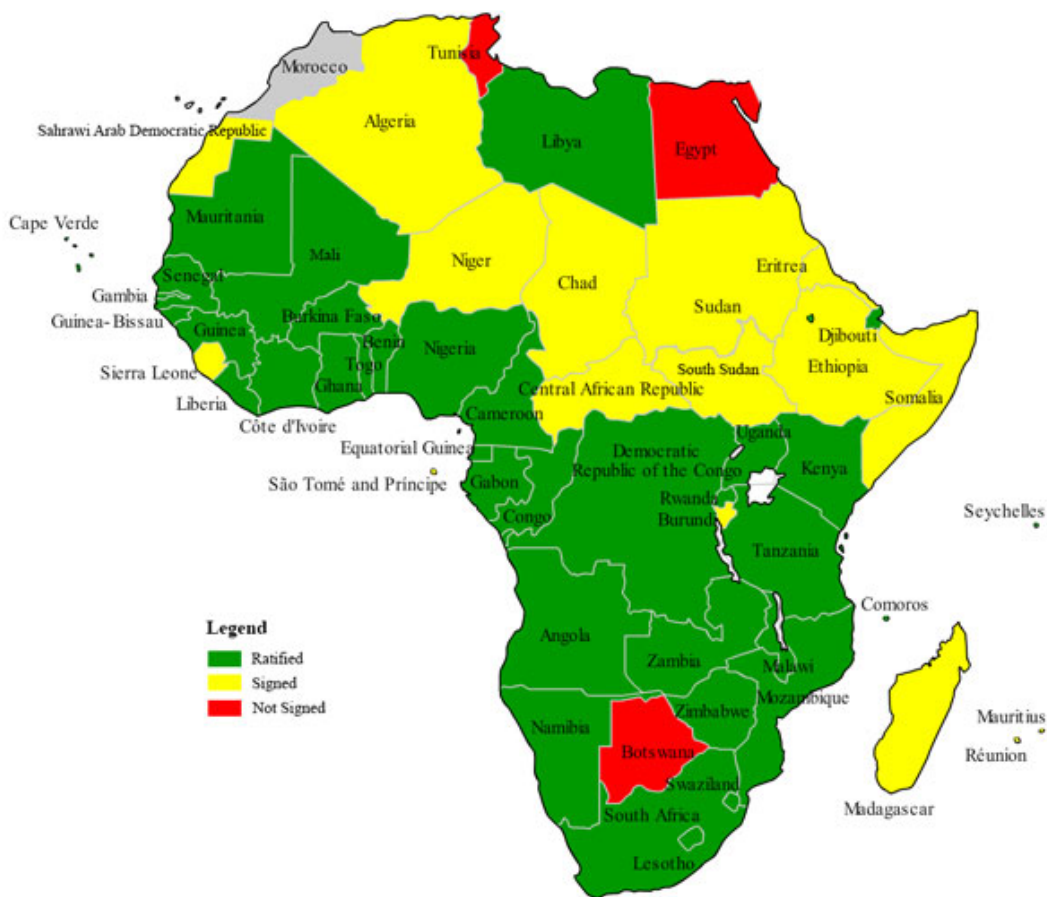
- *Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament*
1 - South Africa: The figures on the distribution of seats do not include the 36 special rotating delegates appointed on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of the 54 permanent seats.

Status of Ratification of the Maputo Protocol As in May 2013

As of October 2015, out of the 54 Member States of the AU, only 37 countries have ratified the Maputo Protocol; Sierra Leone being the last country to have ratified on 30 October 2015. Prior to this ratification, the last ratification was that of Cameroon on 13 September 2012.

17 countries have not yet ratified the Protocol and these are Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Tunisia.

Botswana, Tunisia and Egypt have not signed or ratify the Protocol



(Source: *Journey to Equality: 10 Years of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa*²³ - Courtesy of Roy Gitobu, Fahamu Networks for Social Justice)

CENTRAL AFRICA REGION

All countries within this region have either acceded or ratified CEDAW, however the majority of them have not adopted a National Action Plan for UNSCR1325, with only the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) doing so. All countries have either ratified or signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol).

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

A number of new laws and governmental programmes aimed at protecting and advancing the human rights of women have been drafted, approved, or implemented throughout the region. These range from a National Policy for Gender Equality and Equity approved in 2013 in Angola²⁴ to a draft code on the person and the family in Chad, which will raise the status and role of women in the family²⁵.

In family law in particular, women's rights in the region are at present limited. In Equatorial Guinea, equal property rights are not guaranteed for married women and married men retain the right to choose their place of residence²⁶, while DRC's current Family Code limits the rights of married women and contradicts other prohibitions against discrimination based on sex²⁷. While several of the countries in the region do have legal recourse against domestic violence or spousal abuse, reports indicate that women are reluctant to bring legal actions, either through a lack of faith in, or understanding of the legal system.

Women's Political Participation

Women's representation in either a political office or decision-making capacity in governance has slightly increased in all countries in the region, with the exception of Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, where rates have dropped slightly. Despite these improvements in representation in the majority of countries in the region, only Angola, Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville are reported as having quotas in place for women's participation in governance.

In spite of the slight increase in women's representation in Equatorial Guinea, the country overall has weak representation of women in decision-making positions both in public and private spheres, with only voluntary quotas in place²⁸. Meanwhile in Cameroon, a Parliamentarians' Network for Gender Advancement²⁹ has been established. In Congo-Brazzaville despite provisions within the electoral law for minimum percentages of women in party lists at local and national levels, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms in place and the provisions are largely ignored in practice³⁰. In CAR, presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on 18 October 2015 were postponed until 2016 due to violence and instability in the country.³¹



UN Women Offering Computer Training in Juba – UN Photo

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality rates in Chad are the highest in the region, with 980 per 100,000 live births³². The main causes are cited as being adolescent pregnancy, multiple closely spaced births and lack of access to medical care, coupled with a severe shortage of health care providers³³. Despite the high figure for Chad, this does actually represent a slow but steady drop in maternal mortality when compared to recent years (2010: 1,500 per 100,000³⁴).

Across the region, continuing high maternal mortality rates have gradually and consistently been dropping. The lowest rate in the region is in São Tomé and Príncipe, which records 156 per 100,000 live births in 2015 compared to 162 per

100,000 in 2010. The main causes of maternal mortality in the region are generally cited as being a lack of access to medical care and of trained medical personnel. Women in DRC³⁵ and Chad³⁶ are reported as being particularly vulnerable to obstetric fistula due to poor availability and local access to maternal care.

Throughout the region there remains a disproportionately high number of women living with HIV/AIDS. For example, the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index records the HIV/AIDS age-standardized deaths per 100,000 in Cameroon as being 221.8 for females and 191.3 for males, while the percentage of women aged over 15 living with HIV/AIDS in DRC was 59% in 2014³⁷. The only country in the region where HIV/AIDS is more prevalent amongst males is in São Tomé and Príncipe, where 39% of people with HIV/AIDS are female. However, this percentage has been gradually increasing since 2010 when the percentage was 35.1%

Violence Against Women

There is an overall lack of enacted or enforced legal protection for women against violence in the region. While the legal prohibition of gender-based violence is present in all countries except Angola and Gabon, such legislation has not been effectively enforced or socially integrated in any of the countries. For example, while rape is illegal in Equatorial Guinea, the law is not effectively enforced. Victims are reluctant to report and officials reluctant to act.³⁸ While a National Action Plan for 2013-2017 to address gender-based violence³⁹ has been reported in Congo-Brazzaville, there remain detrimental social attitudes towards domestic violence and intimate partner abuse⁴⁰ and sexual harassment and violence in particular⁴¹.

Two Central African countries (Chad and CAR) appear amongst the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage in a 2014 UNICEF report.⁴² With the child population of Africa due to grow rapidly over the coming years, millions more girls will be at risk of child marriage, with Africa anticipated to have the largest share of child brides by 2050.⁴³

Women, Peace and Security

Only CAR⁴⁴ and DRC⁴⁵ have adopted a National Action Plan for UNSCR1325.

Conflict is widespread across the region. In those countries affected by conflict, women are especially vulnerable. There have been reported attacks against female migrants from the DRC in Angola,⁴⁶ with rape, sexual slavery, and abduction for forced marriages perpetrated by armed groups reported in CAR⁴⁷ and a failure to prosecute perpetrators of rape in the post-conflict period in Congo-Brazzaville⁴⁸.

Education

In all countries in the region where the literacy rate is recorded, there has been a gradual increase in the literacy rate of women over recent years. This improvement is apparent regardless of high or low comparative rates. In Chad, where the 2015 literacy rate is 30.6%, the lowest in the region, this is an improvement on the 18% rate recorded in 2004⁴⁹. Meanwhile in Equatorial Guinea, the 2013 female literacy rate was 92% compared to 82% in 2000⁵⁰.

The 2015 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report on Chad, places the country at the bottom of all 145 countries for educational attainment⁵¹. This represents a lack of movement in ranking since 2010, when Chad was placed at the bottom of all 134 countries⁵². There are reported dropouts from school by females throughout the region due to sexual harassment at school, teenage pregnancy and early/forced marriage. In the DRC, the prevalence of sexual violence against and harassment of girls at and on the way to school has been raised as an issue of concern,⁵³ while in Angola many schools have no access to water and sanitation, meaning that female students often drop out after the onset of menstruation⁵⁴.

Economic Empowerment

According to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index⁵⁵ released in 2015, which included all nine of the Central African countries, the highest ranking country in Central Africa is Angola, which is ranked at 25 out of the 52 African Countries included in the Index. While Chad is 44 out of 52 in the Gender Equality Index⁵⁶.

The ratio of female to male labour force participation has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade for those Central African countries where records are kept.

Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index⁵⁷ ranks only three of the nine Central African countries (Cameroon, Chad and Angola). Amongst these countries, the biggest improvement is in Cameroon, which has risen from 114 out of 134 countries in 2010 to 90 out of 145 countries in this latest report⁵⁸. Angola represents the largest decline in the Index, dropping from 81 out of 134 countries in 2010 to 126 out of 145 in 2015⁵⁹. However, Chad has consistently appeared in the bottom five of all countries in the Index since 2006⁶⁰ with only a very marginal improvement.

ANGOLA

Despite ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in September 1986 and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) in August 2007, Angola still does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Following a civil war, which ended in 2002, Angola continues to deal with the humanitarian impacts of over two decades of conflict. However, while the post-war economy and government has had problems implementing greater human rights for women, there does appear to be a shifting awareness and a will to change policy and practice within Angola.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

In 2011, the Law Against Domestic Violence (Law No 25/11 of 14 July) was approved and a National Policy for Gender Equality and Equity was passed in 2013 by Presidential Decree No. 222/13⁶¹. However, there remains no provision for affirmative action in the Angolan Constitution as homosexuality⁶², sex work and abortion continue to be criminalised⁶³.

Speaking in April 2015, the Minister of Family and Woman Promotion highlighted a "significant investment in her sector" in terms of gender policy formation and legislation that was not possible during the years of the civil war⁶⁴. These policies and legislative procedures included constitutional reforms and review processes to align with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and addressed the contradictions between the constitution, laws and practices.

The majority of Angolan women live outside urban areas⁶⁵. In 2012, a national programme to support rural women was adopted together with a National Strategy for Combating Poverty. The impact of the National Programme and National Strategy has yet to be formally reported⁶⁶.

Women's Political Participation

The ratio of male to female-held parliamentary seats worsened from 2012 to 2013 (0.618 to 0.517)⁶⁷. However, following the adoption by the ruling party⁶⁸ of a quota requiring a minimum of 30% female representation⁶⁹, the rise in women's representation in the National Assembly has dramatically increased from 9.5% in 1992⁷⁰ to 36.8% in 2015.⁷¹ The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance records the number of parliamentary seats held by women in Angola at 57.68, which is a marked increase from the figure of 23.51 in 2005⁷².

In April 2015, the Secretary of State for Human Rights reported that the Government had taken action that allowed for the significant representation of women in decision-making positions: "Today we have about 33% as a percentage of women in parliament, 30% in the Judicial System and 20% in the Government."⁷³

The UN Women Global Study on 1325: Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, published in 2015, includes Angola in the list of post-conflict countries that have made significant strides in terms of women's representation in parliament.⁷⁴ The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report ranks Angola among the world's top 25 countries for women in parliament.⁷⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2015, the maternal mortality rate was estimated by the World Bank to be around 477 per 100,000 live

births⁷⁶. While the current rate is very high, it is a significant improvement on the 2008 rate of 1,400 per 100,000 live births reported by the World Health Organisation⁷⁷. The high rate of maternal mortality in Angola is attributed to both the low percentage of births attended by qualified health personnel (49%) and low ratio of population to qualified health care providers, with one health care provider per 10,000 people⁷⁸. In March 2012, the National Audit Committee for the Prevention of Maternal and Neonatal Deaths was established by presidential decree. While it is not yet functional⁷⁹, the Committee was established in order to implement the recommendations of the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa.

Abortion remains illegal except to save a pregnant woman's life. According to a Joint NGO submission to CEDAW, an amendment to the Penal Code in order to revise the conditions under which abortions can be performed was drafted in 2011 but, as of 2013, it had yet to be adopted⁸⁰.



Based on data gathered between 2009 and 2013, UNFPA estimated that the total HIV prevalence rate is 2.4% with 1.7% among pregnant women who have received prenatal care⁸¹. Only 18 % of HIV positive pregnant women are reported to be receiving PMTCT. This is by far the lowest number in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region⁸².

Violence Against Women

In July 2011, the Government adopted Law 25/11 on Domestic Violence⁸³. This law criminalises domestic violence and offers protection to victims and their families and includes an action plan and monitoring system in all provinces. New definitions of domestic violence include the failure to adequately support a pregnant woman and the outlawing of traditional marriages with girls under the age of 14⁸⁴. Despite this, Angola remains the only country in the SADC to have no laws on sexual assault, sexual harassment or human trafficking⁸⁵. The Ministry of Family and

Women Empowerment estimates that 60% of all women in Angola have suffered some form of gender-based violence⁸⁶. There is little data available on the prevalence of child marriage in Angola.

There has been reported violence in Angola against female migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Research conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2011, and re-reported in 2015, stated that members of the security forces “routinely commit violence against female Congolese migrants in a number of transit prison facilities where migrants are detained before deportation. Corroborated abuses targeting women include rape, sexual coercion, beatings, [and the] deprivation of food and water”⁸⁷. Human Rights Watch reported in 2015 that the Angolan Government had undertaken efforts to achieve more humane conditions for migrants, but had been unable to find evidence of any credible investigation into the security forces.⁸⁸

Women, Peace and Security

While there is no reliable data, it is reported that during the civil war (1975-2002) many women were raped or abducted⁸⁹. In April 2015, the Angolan deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Hélder Lucas chaired a United Nations Security Council open debate entitled ‘Women, peace and security: Sexual violence in conflict’. According to Lucas: “Sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is one of the most blatant violations of human rights whose elimination requires the end of gender inequality and change of mentality of aggressors, victims and the society at large.”⁹⁰

Education

According to the World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, Angola ranks 141 out of 145 for education⁹¹. This represents a steady drop in ranking when compared to previous years (2006: 107 out of 115; 2010: 125 out of 134; 2013: 127 out of 136⁹²). UNICEF reported that the net school attendance ratio between 2008 and 2013 was 17.4% for females and 20.6% for males. The SADC Gender Protocol 2015 Barometer reports that many schools have no access to water and sanitation, so female students often drop out after the onset of menstruation⁹³. In addition, the barometer reports that enrolment in post-conflict countries, such as Angola, remain low and children often face challenges, including crowded classrooms and poor learning conditions⁹⁴. Angola is among the five lowest

performing countries on the Educational Attainment subindex of the Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2015.⁹⁵

Economic Empowerment

Angola is ranked at number 25 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index released in 2015. This Index ranks 52 of the 54 African countries on the equality of opportunities, representation and rights. The report places Angola fifth in the top-10 ranking of African countries for the performance of laws and institutions and points out that it has among the fewest legal barriers to women's entrepreneurship on the continent.⁹⁶ The World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index ranks Angola at 126 out of 145 countries⁹⁷. This represents a drop in ranking when compared to previous years (2006: 92 out of 115⁹⁸; 2010: 81 out of 134⁹⁹; 2014: 121 out of 142¹⁰⁰).

According to a 2015 study by UN Women in Angola, equal remuneration was available to women in the workplace together with non-discriminatory hiring in regards to gender¹⁰¹. 2012 UNDP data indicate that the labour force participation rate (female-male ratio) is

fairly high (82%) in comparison to the average of 0.711 in low human development countries¹⁰². This has remained steady with the modelled International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimate for 2015 given as 82% for Angola¹⁰³. However, while the difference is marginal, the current rate is not as high as the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) reported rates of previous years (1990: 86%; 2000: 89%)¹⁰⁴. Women in employment are granted a 13-week minimum fully funded maternity leave.

Despite these indications, in 2013 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) highlighted discrimination against women in the labour market together with the low level of women in formal employment as issues of concern¹⁰⁵. While the African Development Bank reported in 2015 that Angola has among the fewest legal barriers to women's entrepreneurship¹⁰⁶, it has also been reported that female-headed households are subject to discriminatory treatment¹⁰⁷. The 2015 UN Women study also indicates that there are no bans on sexual harassment in Angolan workplaces. In addition, there is no supported provision of paternity leave in Angola.¹⁰⁸

CAMEROON

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Cameroon in August 1994 without reservations¹⁰⁹. The Maputo Protocol, signed in July 2006, was ratified on 13th September 2012¹¹⁰. Cameroon does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325¹¹¹.

Since early 2014, Boko Haram has committed massacres and attacks in the north of Cameroon. This has led to serious humanitarian consequences for the Cameroonian population¹¹². Cameroon authorities have introduced several new anti-terrorist laws in an attempt to address the threat posed by Boko Haram¹¹³.

Cameroon is ranked 153 out of 188¹¹⁴ in the latest Human Development Index and is among the low human development countries. This represents a slow but positive upwards shift of 2% since 2008¹¹⁵.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

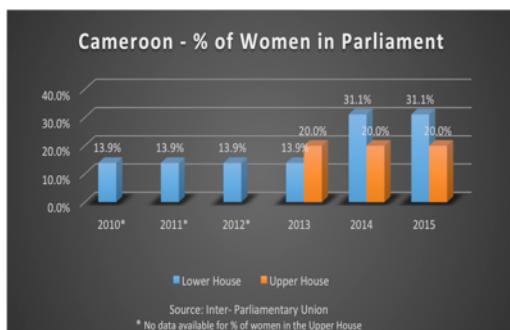
The most recent CEDAW review of Cameroon in 2014, reported an ongoing revision of discriminatory provisions of the Penal Code and the Civil Code and the drafting of a Code of the Person and the Family. However, the Committee raised concerns about the lengthy delays in finalising these legislative reforms and the discriminatory provisions that remain in the domestic legislation and in the draft bills¹¹⁶.

While the Committee welcomed the activities undertaken by Cameroon to increase the legal literacy of women, concern about the lack of effective access to justice for women and continued application by court of discriminatory customary and traditional laws was expressed¹¹⁷. Indeed, customary law remains the norm for many citizens living in rural areas in Cameroon, estimated to be 42% of the total population, with many unaware of their rights under civil law¹¹⁸. While customary laws generally provide equal rights and status for men and women, men may

limit women's rights to inheritance and employment¹¹⁹.

Women's Political Participation

The 2014 CEDAW review of Cameroon reported positively on the adoption by Cameroon of an Act (2012/001) in 2012 requiring political parties to consider a gender balance in addition to a strategic gender and elections plan in the same year. These initiatives were accompanied by the establishment of a Parliamentarians' Network for Gender Advancement¹²⁰. The percentage of women in the National Assembly has risen from 16 (8.9%) in 2005¹²¹ to 25 (13.9%) in 2010¹²² to 56 (31.1%) in 2015¹²³. However, beyond the National Assembly, the Committee raised concerns about the generally low participation of women in the Cameroonian Government with women holding 20% of the Senate, 14% of ministerial positions, and 24% of the Judiciary. While earlier data is unavailable on the percentages of women in these positions, the 'Women in Parliaments' ranking of Cameroon has steadily increased. In 2005, Cameroon was ranked 106th¹²⁴, 84th in 2010¹²⁵, and in September 2015 Cameroon was ranked 33rd by the Inter-Parliamentary Union¹²⁶.



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality rates in Cameroon remain high. The main causes are lack of access to medical care and of trained medical personnel, and the high cost of prenatal care, hospital deliveries and postpartum care. In 2015, the maternal mortality rate was estimated by the World Bank to be 596 per 100,000 live births; this is a decline from 2010 when it was 676 per 100,000 live births¹²⁷. While the current rate is very high, it represents an improvement on the 2010 UNDP rate of 1,000 deaths per 100,000 live births¹²⁸.

The prevalence of HIV in Cameroon was reported in the World Economic Forum's 2013¹²⁹ Global Gender Gap Index as being 5.4% (females) and 3.8% (males)

amongst people aged 15 – 49 years old,¹³⁰ down from 2011, when higher figures (6.4% females and 4.3% males) were recorded¹³¹. However, there remain a disproportionately high number of women living with HIV/AIDS. CEDAW's 2014 review of Cameroon reported the introduction of a 2011-2015 National Strategic Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. This higher rate of prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst women is also reflected in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, which records the HIV/AIDS age-standardized deaths per 100,000 in Cameroon as being 221.8 for females and 191.3 for males¹³².

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is widespread in Cameroon, with a lack of responsive criminal and civil codes¹³³. Domestic and intimate partner violence are not criminalized under the Cameroonian Penal Code¹³⁴. Rape, with the exception of spousal rape, is criminalised, but the police and courts rarely investigate or prosecute such cases¹³⁵. Article 297 of the Cameroonian Penal Code allows a rapist to expunge his offense by marrying the woman he raped¹³⁶. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting is reported to occur in nearly all provinces of Cameroon and across ethnic and religious groups¹³⁷.

Child marriage remains an important issue in Cameroon. The World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index reports the percentage of early marriages amongst 15-19 year old females as being 26%¹³⁸. While comparative earlier data from the Index is unavailable, UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey on Cameroon reports a prevalence of 11.4% (15 years and under) and 36% (18 years and under) in 2014¹³⁹. This represents a very slight reduction in prevalence on 2006 rates (15 years and under: 12.2%; 18 years and under: 41.1%)¹⁴⁰. Prevalence rates vary widely across the country. In the north of Cameroon, 73% of girls are reported as marrying early compared to 13% in the Littoral province¹⁴¹.

Compared to previous years, the latest available data on intimate partner violence in Cameroon (2011) indicates that there has been an increase in the prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (51.1% in 2011 up from 42.4% in 2004)¹⁴². This increase may be due to an increase in reporting, but as the law does not specifically prohibit domestic

violence, there is no clear instigator for a reporting increase.

Women, Peace and Security

As a consequence of Boko Haram attacks and the civil war in the Central African Republic, Cameroon has been host to both refugees from neighbouring countries and internally displaced persons (IDP) in the far north. The total number of refugees and IDPs has increased over recent years and is set to continue growing. As of August 2014, Cameroon has been hosting more than 240,000 refugees and asylum seekers with a projected December 2015 figure of 277,110¹⁴³. Women and children represent 84 % of IDPs and 75 % of refugees in the far north of the country¹⁴⁴. This group are particularly vulnerable to all forms of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence including rape, child marriage, sexual exploitation and HIV transmission¹⁴⁵.

Education

The 2014 CEDAW Review of Cameroon welcomed measures taken by the state party to promote girls' education, reduce their dropout rates, improve the quality of teachers and develop its informal educational activities¹⁴⁶. For example, non-formal education is now provided in rural areas to girls through centres for women's empowerment and there is now a National Literacy Programme that targets women and girls in particular¹⁴⁷.

There has been a reported increase in the enrolment of girls in primary education¹⁴⁸. However, there continues to be a low enrolment rate of girls at all levels of education and a high dropout rate because of child marriage and early pregnancy¹⁴⁹. The 2015 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report on Cameroon places the country at 130 out of 145 countries for education¹⁵⁰. Though not included in the 2014 report, the 2015 ranking is a very small rise on the 2013 ranking (122 out of 136 countries)¹⁵¹ and the 2006 ranking (101 out of 115 countries)¹⁵². However it represents a drop on the marginal achievements of recent years (2011: 118 out of 135; 2010; 117 out of 134).¹⁵³ There is a reported low rate of adult literacy amongst women. However, in 2015 the female adult literacy rate was 68.2%; a slow improvement on the 2010 figure of 64.8%¹⁵⁴.

Economic Empowerment

Cameroon is ranked at number 41 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index¹⁵⁵ released in 2015. The World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index ranks Cameroon as 90 out of 145¹⁵⁶. This ranking is a significant improvement on recent years (2006: 103 out of 115 countries; 2010: 114 out of 134 countries; 2013: 100 out of 126 countries)¹⁵⁷. Meanwhile, according to the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index Women's participation in the labour force was 63.6% in 2014 (males 76.6%)¹⁵⁸ compared to 54% in 2010 (males 82.2%)¹⁵⁹.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Central African Republic (CAR) acceded to CEDAW in 1991¹⁶⁰, adopted a National Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325 in September 2013¹⁶¹, and has signed, but not ratified, the Maputo Protocol. Women's status in CAR remains significantly impacted by the ongoing conflict. CAR has experienced political instability since Independence in 1960. The current outbreak of violence in CAR follows two years of political disputes, which have led to instability and violence perpetrated by two opposing groups (Séléka and Anti-balaka)¹⁶². A ceasefire between the parties to the conflict signed in July 2014 has, according to Human Rights Watch, "been largely ignored."¹⁶³ CAR is ranked 187 out of 188 in the latest Human Development Index and is among the lowest human development countries. This represents a slow drop since 2008¹⁶⁴. CAR is not amongst the 145 countries ranked in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2015¹⁶⁵.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Despite acceding to CEDAW in 1991, no periodic report was submitted by CAR to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women until March 2012. The report submitted in 2012 contained no information beyond 2010¹⁶⁶.

In 2006, CAR introduced Act No. 06.005 on reproductive health and Act No. 06.032 on protecting women against violence¹⁶⁷ and in 2005 adopted a national policy for the promotion of equality and equity followed by the establishment of a sectoral committee on gender and poverty reduction¹⁶⁸. However, there has been little progress in recent years.

A 2014 report described little recent movement by the Government to combat ongoing economic and social discrimination experienced by women¹⁶⁹.

Women's Political Participation

Presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on 18 October 2015 were postponed until 2016 due to violence and instability in the country¹⁷⁰. In 2014 Catherine Samba-Panza became the first female head of state of the Central African Republic.

The most recent available data on the proportion of seats held by women in the National Parliament was recorded as 14% in 2013¹⁷¹ against 11% in 2005 and 7% in 2001¹⁷².

In 2015, 24% of ministerial-level positions were held by women. This represents a steady rise from 12% in 2010 and 10% in 2005¹⁷³.

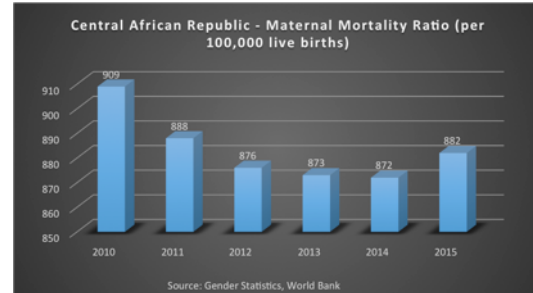
Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2015, the maternal mortality rate for CAR was recorded as 882 per 100,000 live births. This represents a marked improvement from 1,100/100,000 recorded in 2005¹⁷⁴.

The birth rate for adolescents (females aged 15-19) has slowly but steadily dropped over the past ten years. In 2013 the rate was 93/1,000 compared to 102/1,000 in 2010 and 113/1,000 in 2005¹⁷⁵.

Women are more severely affected by HIV/AIDS than men in CAR¹⁷⁶. The percentage of all people who are living with HIV in CAR aged 15+ who are female was 58% in 2015. This percentage has remained steady since 2005¹⁷⁷. Amongst females aged 15-24 years old, the 2% infection rate has not dropped in the years since 2005¹⁷⁸.

Lack of access to adequate healthcare is a major issue for women and girls living in refugee settlements in CAR, many of whom suffer from malnutrition and infectious diseases resulting from poor living conditions and lack of sanitation. A February 2014 assessment of displacement sites in CAR, found that there was no medical assistance available in 90% of the sites¹⁷⁹.



Violence Against Women

The CEDAW Committee reported on the high prevalence of child and forced marriage in CAR¹⁸⁰. The Family Code of 1997 includes legal provisions allowing child marriage, when an authorisation is granted by the Public Prosecutor, and of legal provisions permitting child marriage, when an authorisation is granted by persons exercising parental authority¹⁸¹. A 2014 UNICEF report places CAR amongst the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage.¹⁸²

The United Nations Children's Fund reported in 2014 that the prevalence of FGM has dropped by as much as half in CAR since 1980¹⁸³, estimating that if the current rate of progress continues, FGM/C could be virtually eliminated over the next 15 years¹⁸⁴.

While rape is criminalized in CAR, spousal rape is not specifically prohibited. Police and courts rarely investigate or prosecute cases of rape or domestic violence, and there is no evidence of efforts to combat their occurrence¹⁸⁵.

Since the current conflict, which began in 2012, gender-based violence has been prevalent across CAR and includes rape, sexual slavery and abduction for forced marriages perpetrated by armed groups on both sides of the conflict¹⁸⁶.

Women, Peace and Security

UN peacekeepers¹⁸⁷ and French troops¹⁸⁸ are reported to have committed sexual abuse on girls and women in CAR. In June 2015, an independent review panel was established to review the United Nations' response to the allegations¹⁸⁹.

In May 2015, CAR signed a national disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. However, this ignores lessons learned from similar programmes elsewhere in the 1990s using a similar 'no weapons, no entry' criteria. This criteria risks

excluding otherwise eligible women, in particular those holding support roles¹⁹⁰.

Education

The CEDAW Committee raised a concern in 2014 about the impact of conflict in CAR on the capacity and development of the education system and the security of schools¹⁹¹.

The rate of children not attending school in 2012¹⁹² was 127,690 (female) and 65,962, although this represents a drop in non-attendance since 2005 figures, which were recorded as 181,598 (female) and 133,868 (male)¹⁹³.

In 2012, the net enrolment rate in primary education was 63.3% (female) and 80.6% (male) compared to 41.7% (female) and 57.4% (male) in 2005. However a slight drop in the already low female net enrolment rate in secondary education has been recorded. In 2012 the rate was 9.6% (female) and 18.4% (male)

compared to 10.2% (female) and 18.4% (male) in 2010¹⁹⁴.

Economic Empowerment

CAR is ranked at number 40 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index¹⁹⁵ released in 2015. Meanwhile, the 2015 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) ranks CAR at 52nd (out of 54). Together with South Sudan, CAR recorded the biggest drop in last year's index. CAR has never risen above a rank placement of 49th in the Index¹⁹⁶

The ratio of female to male labour-force participation has remained steady at 85% since 2009¹⁹⁷. In 2014, the CEDAW Committee welcomed the pre-conflict establishment in 2008, of a sectoral committee on gender and poverty reduction. However, it raised concern over the increase in poverty among rural women as a result of the conflict¹⁹⁸.

CHAD

Chad's independence in 1960 was followed by decades of civil war. There remains a general lack of infrastructure with many internal conflicts still unresolved¹⁹⁹ and with many refugees arriving since late-2013 from neighbouring Central African Republic and Sudan²⁰⁰. Since pledging military support to Cameroon in 2015, Chad has experienced some attacks from Boko Haram²⁰¹.

Despite the equal rights provided for women and men in the constitution, women remain broadly discriminated against in practice²⁰². Chad signed the Maputo Protocol on 6 December 2004 but has yet to ratify it²⁰³. Chad ratified CEDAW in 1995 and signed the Optional Protocol for individual procedures in 2012²⁰⁴. However, Chad has not submitted any reports to CEDAW since 2010 with the latest deadline of 1 October 2015 passing with no apparent submitted report²⁰⁵. Chad does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. In 2015, Chad has closed less than 60% of its gender gap, according to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report.²⁰⁶

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

According to Chad's latest report to CEDAW, a draft code on the person and the family has yet to be enacted. Current legislation does grant equality in some aspects of marriage in particular. According to the CEDAW report, the draft code will raise the status and role of women in the family²⁰⁷.

The Human Rights Committee raised concerns following Chad's 2014 periodic report about both the absence of a definition of discrimination and related sanctions in the legislation,²⁰⁸ and the traditional stereotypes and customary laws which continue to undermine women's dignity and violate their

fundamental rights²⁰⁹. Further to this, Counterpart International's 2011 report on Chad found that there was both a wide gap between the existing legal framework designed to protect women and the implementation or enforcement of the framework²¹⁰.

Women's Political Participation

In March 2015, the percentage of seats held by women in single/lower houses of parliaments was 14.9% (with no quota)²¹¹. This figure represents a rise on the 2010 figure of 5.2%,²¹². The 'Women in Parliaments' ranking of Chad has sporadically risen over recent years. In 2005, Chad was ranked 118th²¹³, compared to 123rd in 2010²¹⁴, and in September 2015 Chad was ranked 95th²¹⁵.

Despite these minor rises, Counterpart International's 2011 report on Chad stated that there was no quota for women's political participation²¹⁶. The absence of a provision for independent candidature in legislative elections is reported as presenting a further barrier to women's participation as candidates²¹⁷.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality rates in Chad are high. The main causes are cited as being adolescent pregnancy, multiple closely spaced births and lack of access to medical care, coupled with a severe shortage of health care providers²¹⁸. In 2015, the maternal mortality rate was estimated by the World Economic Forum to be 980 per 100,000 live births²¹⁹. This represents no shift on the 2014 estimate²²⁰, but maintains a slow but steady improvement in recent years (2010: 1,500 per 100,000²²¹; 2011: 1,200²²²; per 100,000, 2013: 1,100 per 100,000²²³).

Women in Chad are particularly vulnerable to obstetric fistula due to a lack of available access to local maternal care. The rate of births attended by skilled personnel had dropped from 21% in 2011²²⁴ to 17% in 2014²²⁵. However, the Government, in coordination with the UNFPA, is reported to be working to address and provide medical care for obstetric fistula in particular²²⁶. The total fertility rate in 2015 was 4.2 births per woman, a drop from 2010 when the fertility rate was 4.6 births per woman.²²⁷

The prevalence of HIV in Chad was reported in the World Economic Forum's 2013²²⁸ Global Gender Gap Index as affecting 3.7% (females) and 2.6% (males) amongst people aged 15 – 49 years old²²⁹. While this represents a drop in prevalence since 2011 (4% females and 2.7% males)²³⁰, there remain a disproportionately high number of women living with HIV/AIDS. This higher rate of prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst women is also reflected in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, which records the HIV/AIDS age-standardized deaths per 100,000 in Chad as being 165.2 for females and 145.9 for males²³¹.

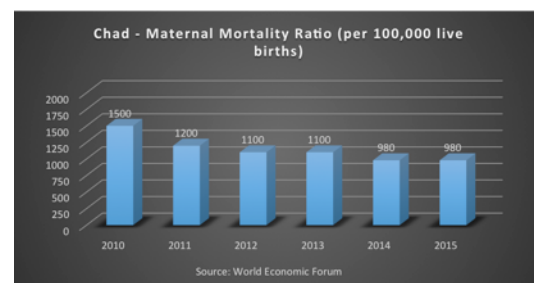
Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains one of the top human rights concerns in Chad²³². Although violence against women is prohibited by legislation, domestic and intimate partner violence remain widely reported. Wives have limited legal recourse in cases of domestic

violence or abuse, with authorities rarely intervening²³³.

Chad has one of the highest rates of child marriage, with the forced marriage of girls remaining a serious problem.²³⁴ A 2014 UNICEF report placed Chad amongst the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage.²³⁵ Despite a campaign launched in March 2012 by authorities to end child marriage in Chad²³⁶, the reported prevalence of child marriage has not dropped significantly over recent years. The 2015 Global Gender Gap Index reports the percentage of early marriages amongst 15-19 year old females as being 45%²³⁷. This rate has been static since 2013 and is only a very slight drop on the 2011 rate of 49%²³⁸.

The percentage of women aged 15 - 49 who have undergone FGM/C was reported to have only marginally dropped to 44.2% in 2010 against 44.9% in 2000 and 2008²³⁹. In 2010, this figure was reported to be as high as 96% in the most prevalent regions of Chad²⁴⁰. During the Universal Periodic Review of Chad in 2013, Chad's delegation reported on the establishment of penalties for the perpetrators of violence against women and FGM/C in the draft Criminal Code,²⁴¹ together with the launch of a national awareness-raising campaign and the establishment of a national coordinating body for prevention and protection of violence against women²⁴². However, in 2014 the Committee reported that, despite these measures, FGM/C remained prevalent²⁴³. A lack of recent statistics was also raised as a concern²⁴⁴.



Women, Peace and Security

It has been reported that little effort has been made to allow women to participate in peace-building efforts in Chad. Nevertheless, Chadian women have used informal channels in order to make some significant contributions²⁴⁵. Concerns were raised in 2014 about violence against refugee and displaced women in Chad and their access to justice within refugee camps²⁴⁶.

Education

Chad is among the 11 countries in the world where the general literacy rate is below 50%²⁴⁷. Despite this, there has been a marginal improvement in literacy over recent years. For females aged over 15 years, the 2015 literacy rate is 30.6% (males: 47.9%) compared to 24.4% in 2011 (males: 45.6) and 18% in 2004 (males: 39.4%)²⁴⁸.

The 2015 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report on Chad places the country at the bottom of all 145 countries for educational attainment, pointing out that it lags behind the rest of the world in this area²⁴⁹. This represents a lack of movement in ranking since 2010, when Chad was placed at the bottom of all 134 countries²⁵⁰.

Economic Empowerment

Chad is ranked at number 44 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development

Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index²⁵¹ released in 2015. This Index ranks 52 of the 54 African countries on the equality of opportunities, representation and rights. The World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index ranks Chad at 142 out of 145 countries²⁵². While this is a slight rise since the 2010 report, when Chad was 133 out 134 countries,²⁵³ Chad has consistently appeared amongst the bottom five countries in the Index²⁵⁴.

Women's participation in the labour force was 65% in 2014 (males 79%)²⁵⁵ compared to 63% in 2010 (males 78%)²⁵⁶. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for women rose slightly from 7.3% (males 6.7%) in 2010 to 7.5% in 2013 (males remaining at 6.7%)²⁵⁷.

THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO (CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE)

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Congo-Brazzaville in July 1982 and signed in 2004²⁵⁸. The Maputo Protocol, signed in February 2004, was ratified on 14th December 2011²⁵⁹. Violence against women and girls²⁶⁰ has been on the increase since fighting following parliamentary elections in 1993²⁶¹.

Congo-Brazzaville is ranked 140 out of 187 in the latest Human Development Index with an index of 0.564. This represents a steady and recovering index ranking since 2000 (2000: 0.501; 2005: 0.525; 2010: 0.565; 2014: 0.561)²⁶². Congo-Brazzaville is not amongst the 145 countries ranked in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2015²⁶³.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

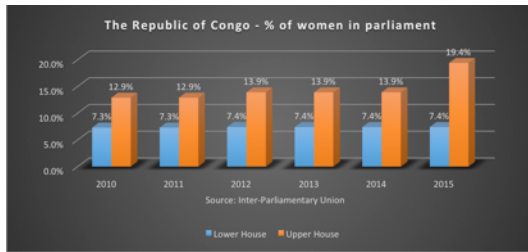
During the Universal Periodic Review tabled by the UN General Assembly's Human Rights Council in 2014, the Congolese delegation reported on the creation of a Ministry for the Advancement of Women in 1992²⁶⁴ and noted that gender equality was guaranteed by the Constitution²⁶⁵.

Congo Brazzaville submitted its first periodic report (combining its initial, second, third, fourth and fifth reports) to the CEDAW Committee in 2003²⁶⁶. Its sixth periodic report was submitted in 2012²⁶⁷. While the Committee welcomed the 2008 development of a National Gender Policy and a 2009-2019 Plan of Action²⁶⁸, concerns were raised about the lengthy delay in bringing domestic provisions in line with CEDAW,²⁶⁹ together with discriminatory legal provisions in the family code, the penal code and the

tax law²⁷⁰ and the absence of laws on violence against women and on trafficking²⁷¹.

Women's Political Participation

As of September 2015, the proportion of seats held by women in the Lower House of Congo-Brazzaville remains at 7.4% attained in the July 2012 elections²⁷². This is only a slight rise on the 7.3% of seats held by women following the June 2006 elections²⁷³. Meanwhile, following the elections of October 2014, women held 19.4% of seats in the Upper House²⁷⁴, up from 13.9% following the October 2011 elections²⁷⁵. In 2015, 11% of ministerial level positions were held by women. This represents a drop from 14% in 2010 and 15% in 2005²⁷⁶. While electoral law provides for minimum percentages of women in party lists at local and national levels, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms so the provision is largely ignored in practice²⁷⁷.



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Following Congo-Brazzaville's most recent periodic report to CEDAW in 2012²⁷⁸, the Committee welcomed the 2007 roadmap to reduce maternal mortality²⁷⁹ together with the 2009-2013 national multi-sectoral strategic framework against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections²⁸⁰. However, the Committee also raised concerns regarding the lack of health infrastructure in the country, the persistently high levels of maternal mortality, the legal restrictions upon women's ability to access legal abortions, the lack of sufficient information provided to women on sexual and reproductive health, the low rate of contraceptive use amongst the population and the disproportionately high number of women living with HIV/AIDS²⁸¹.

In 2015, the maternal mortality rate for Congo-Brazzaville was recorded as 442 per 100,000 live births.²⁸² This represents a steady improvement from 509 per 100,000 recorded in 2010 and 596 per 100,000 recorded in 2005²⁸³.

The total fertility rate (births per woman) remains high. In 2015, the total birth rate was 4.8 births per woman, while in 2010 the rate was 5.0 births per woman.²⁸⁴

Women are more likely to be living with HIV/AIDS than men in Congo-Brazzaville²⁸⁵. The percentage of people living with HIV in Congo-Brazzaville aged 15+ who are female was 61% in 2014. This weighting has slowly increased since 2005 when the proportional rate for females was 57%²⁸⁶.

Violence Against Women

During the 2014 Universal Periodic Review tabled by the UN General Assembly's Human Rights Council, Congo-Brazzaville reported that it had developed a National Action Plan for 2013-2017 to address gender-based violence²⁸⁷. However, there continue to be detrimental social attitudes towards domestic violence and intimate partner abuse²⁸⁸, and sexual

harassment and violence in particular.²⁸⁹ Notably, 73.1% of women in a 2011-2012 report stated that they believed it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife²⁹⁰.

There is little comparative data available on child marriage in Congo Brazzaville, though 2015 data indicates that 6% of females were married by age 15 and 33% married by 18²⁹¹. A 2012 UNFPA report lists Congo Brazzaville amongst the countries showing a decline in the rate of child marriage²⁹².

Women, Peace and Security

Following Congo-Brazzaville's 2012 periodic report to CEDAW in 2012, the Committee raised concerns about the high number of female victims of rape during the conflicts in Congo-Brazzaville together with the failure to prosecute the perpetrators in the post-conflict period²⁹³.

Education

The 2012 CEDAW review of Congo Brazzaville welcomed measures taken to provide free education for 6-16 year olds and adult literacy programmes, together with an awareness-raising campaign on the importance of girls' education²⁹⁴. However, concerns were raised about the obstacles to education experienced by girls and young women, in particular the prioritizing of boys' education by families and the effects of early pregnancy or marriage²⁹⁵.

The primary education completion rate currently sees females more likely to complete school than males. In 2005, the completion rate was 69% of females and 74% of males. The most recent data (2012) shows the completion rate as having climbed to 77% for females, while the male completion rate has dropped to 69%²⁹⁶.

Economic Empowerment

Congo Brazzaville is ranked at number 37 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index²⁹⁷ released in 2015.

The most recent data on participation in the labour force showed that women made up 49.8% of the labour force in 2013, compared to 48.6% in 2010 and 48.8% in 2005²⁹⁸. The unemployment rate for women has been consistently recorded as 7% between 2005 and 2013. This rate is accompanied by a similarly static 6% for men²⁹⁹.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) ratified the Maputo Protocol on 9th June 2008³⁰⁰. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by DRC in October 1986³⁰¹. DRC launched its National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in January 2010³⁰².

DRC has experienced continued armed conflict since 1994.³⁰³ Armed groups of combatants and government soldiers have used rape and sexual violence as weapons of war during the conflict. There exists a culture of impunity resulting in a failure to bring the perpetrators to justice³⁰⁴.

DRC's 2013 Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.338, placing it at 186 out of 187 countries³⁰⁵. It was 176th in 2014. This represents a steady yearly increase in HDI value of approximately 0.02% since 1980³⁰⁶. DRC is not amongst the 145 countries ranked in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2015³⁰⁷.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

DRC submitted its sixth and seventh periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee in 2013³⁰⁸. The Committee welcomed the adoption of the 2009 National Policy on Gender Issues and accompanying action plan, the National Strategy against Gender-based Violence (2009-2010), the establishment of the National Agency for Eliminating Violence against Women and Adolescent and Very Young Girls, the technical coordination committees to fight sexual violence and the National Fund for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children³⁰⁹. However, concerns were raised about the current Family Code, which limits the rights of married women and contradicts other prohibitions against discrimination based on sex in the DRC³¹⁰.

Women's Political Participation

Following the November 2011 elections, women held 8.9% (44 out of 492) of seats in the Lower House³¹¹. This is only a slight rise on the 8.4% (42 out of 500) of seats held by women following the July 2007 elections³¹². In 2015, 8% of ministerial-level positions were held by women³¹³. This represents a drop from 13% in both 2010 and 2005³¹⁴.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

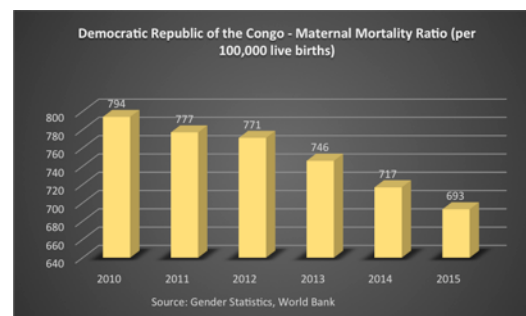
Following DRC's most recent periodic report to CEDAW in 2013³¹⁵, the Committee welcomed the adoption of an action plan on reproductive health, gender and population (2008-2012)³¹⁶. However, the Committee also noted the high rate of maternal mortality, the ineffective implementation of the National Strategy on maternal and child mortality, the frequent cases of vesico-vaginal fistula, the limited access to essential obstetric care in rural areas, the lack

of sexual health education and the criminalization of abortion, together with the high number of pregnancies resulting from rape³¹⁷.

While the maternal mortality ratio is declining in the DRC, it remains high. According to figures from the World Bank, the maternal mortality ratio in 2015 was 693 per 100,000 live births, compared to 794 per 100,000 live births in 2010.³¹⁸ In 2015, 80% of births were attended by skilled personnel compared to 61% in 2009³¹⁹.

While the total fertility rate (births per woman) remains high, it is declining. According to figures from the World Bank, the fertility rate (births per woman) was 5.9 in 2015, compared to 6.4 in 2010.³²⁰

Women are more likely to be living with HIV/AIDS than men in DRC. The percentage of people living with HIV in DRC aged 15+ who are female was 59% in 2014. This weighting has slightly increased since 2005 when the proportional rate for females was 58%³²¹.



Violence Against Women

While the percentage of women aged 15+ who have experienced physical violence has decreased in recent

reports (51% in 2014³²² against 63% in 2007³²³) together with a decrease in women who have experienced domestic violence (57% in 2014³²⁴ against 71% in 2007³²⁵), violence against women as a result of the ongoing conflict is widespread in the DRC.

Following the 2013 periodic report to CEDAW³²⁶, the Committee expressed a deep concern about the prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence across the DRC. Concern was raised about the ineffective implementation of the 2006 Law on Sexual Violence, the 2009 National Strategy against gender-based violence and the zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence. The Committee noted a lack of legal provisions prohibiting domestic violence coupled with insufficient awareness amongst the police and other law enforcement officials, health-care and social workers, the judiciary and the public at large, about violence against women³²⁷.

A Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict (TOE), established in the wake of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), has supported investigations and prosecutions by military magistrates and military mobile courts, and assisted national authorities to develop an implementation plan for the joint communiqué on the fight against sexual violence in conflict. This was signed by the DRC Government and the UN in March 2013³²⁸.

Child marriage remains an important issue in DRC. The minimum age of marriage for females is 15, differing from the minimum age of 18 for males³²⁹. Despite undertaking constitutional reforms between 2009 and 2015 to align with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the minimum age for females remains unchanged³³⁰. There is little comparative data available on child marriage in the DRC, though 2015 data indicates a prevalence of 9% of females married by 15 and 39% married by 18³³¹.

Women, Peace and Security

According to a 2015 UNHCR report, there are some 2.7 million internally displaced persons in the DRC due to armed conflict in the country and around 120,000 refugees from neighbouring countries³³². Rape and sexual violence, as well as the sexual exploitation of women, have been used against these communities by armed combatants and civilians alike³³³. An implementation plan for the joint communiqué on the

fight against sexual violence in conflict was signed by the Government and the UN in March 2013³³⁴.

In 2010, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) registered 933 victims of sexual violence (62 % by armed groups)³³⁵. By 2011, the number of registrations was 861 (42% by armed groups)³³⁶. Despite an increase in 2012 to 1,017 reported victims (36 % by armed groups),³³⁷ due in part to the occupation of Goma in November 2012, the number had dropped to 824 by 2013, though with a return to the majority of cases (63%) being perpetrated by armed groups³³⁸.

Education

During the 2013 periodic report to CEDAW in 2013, the Committee noted that, while there is a free and compulsory primary education policy in the DRC, it is poorly implemented with education infrastructure and funding remaining insufficient³³⁹. The prevalence of sexual violence and harassment of girls at and on the way to school was also raised as an issue of concern³⁴⁰. According to UN Women's 2015 Global study on 1325: [Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace](#)³⁴¹, "The fear of sexual violence keeps an untold number of girls away from classrooms. In many settings, there are very few female teachers, especially in positions of authority, and minimal or no sanitation facilities, which are particularly critical for adolescent girls."

UNICEF has reported a low rate of youth (15-24 years) literacy amongst women. In 2013, the female youth literacy rate was 53.3% (78.9% for males)³⁴². This represents a decline on the 2007 figure of 63% (78% for males)³⁴³. In 2010, the primary school completion rate was 55% for females and 73% for males³⁴⁴. The most recent data (2013) shows the completion rate as having climbed to 65% for females, while the male completion rate has reached 80%³⁴⁵. The percentage of women who have not attained literacy in 2014 was recorded as being 35.6% (11.3% males)³⁴⁶, which represents an increase on the 2007 figure of 40.5% (14.1% males)³⁴⁷.

Economic Empowerment

DRC is ranked at number 36 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index³⁴⁸ released in 2015. Meanwhile, the most recent World Bank data showed that women consistently made up 50% of the labour force between 2005 and 2013³⁴⁹. Women's labour

force participation was also steady at 72% (74% males) between 2005 and 2013³⁵⁰. The unemployment rate for women has been consistently recorded as 9%

between 2005 and 2013. This rate is accompanied by a similarly static 7% for men³⁵¹.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was accessioned by Equatorial Guinea in October 1984³⁵². The Maputo Protocol was ratified in October 2009³⁵³. Equatorial Guinea does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325³⁵⁴.

While Equatorial Guinea has benefited from vast oil revenues, the majority of the population still live in poverty³⁵⁵. Equatorial Guinea is not amongst the 145 countries ranked in the Global Gender Gap Index in 2015³⁵⁶.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

During its report to the Human Rights Council in February 2014, Equatorial Guinea noted that discrimination against women is a constitutional offence³⁵⁷. The country has in place several programmes for the advancement of women, including a 2005-2015 National Multi-sectoral Action Plan for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity³⁵⁸ and support projects for rural women developed by the country's development partners, including oil companies³⁵⁹. In its 2015 report on the Millennium Development Goals, Equatorial Guinea also noted that its 'Plan for Economic and Social Development with Horizon 2020' takes a focus on gender equality, with four of its strategic objectives related to the promotion of gender equality³⁶⁰.

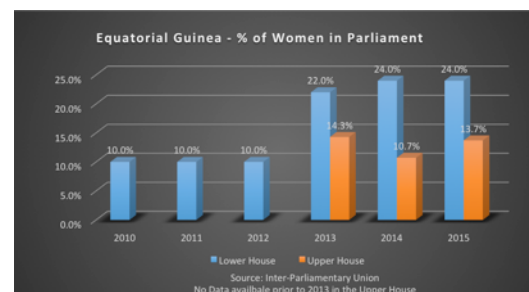
However, in family law in particular, the rights of women remain limited. Married women are unable to legally sign the same contracts as married men, husbands retain the right to choose their place of residence, equal property rights are not guaranteed and wives are required to obey their husbands³⁶¹.

Women's Political Participation

The 2014 report to the Human Rights Council stated that Article 13.2 of the Constitution of Equatorial Guinea requires, "Legal initiatives and mechanisms to promote the adequate representation and participation of women in public posts and in the performance of other functions in all state institutions."³⁶² In the 2015 Equatorial Guinea report on the Millennium Development Goals, weak representation of women in decision-making positions both in public and private spheres was highlighted. However, a slight increase in recent years was reported, together with a slight increase in the presence of women in the executive and legislative branches, most likely as a result of the

manifest will of the Government to promote women³⁶³. The report noted that a, "Positive trend has been that women have gone from only having less prominent roles (social affairs, gender), to deal with the other more prominent roles (economy, justice, education)."³⁶⁴ However, the presence of 'gender' amongst the less prominent portfolios may indicate that negative attitudes, around women's rights in general, still persist.

As of September 2015, the proportion of seats held by women in the Lower House of Equatorial Guinea is 24% following the May 2013 elections³⁶⁵. This is an increase on the 10% of seats held by women following the May 2008 elections³⁶⁶. Meanwhile, in 2015, women held 13.7% of seats in the Upper House.³⁶⁷ This is a decline from 2013 when women held 14.3%³⁶⁸ of the seats in the Upper House, though in increased compared to 2014 when women held 10.7%³⁶⁹ of the seats. There was no data available on women's representation in the Upper House prior to 2013.



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Following Equatorial Guinea's most recent periodic report to CEDAW in November 2012³⁷⁰, the Committee welcomed measures to improve women's access to healthcare, including increased resources for healthcare provision and a programme to mitigate mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission³⁷¹. However,

the Committee also raised concerns regarding high rates of both teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases³⁷².

In 2013³⁷³, the maternal mortality rate for Equatorial Guinea was recorded by UNICEF as 290 per 100,000 live births³⁷⁴. This represents a steady improvement from 240/100,000 recorded in 2010³⁷⁵ and 680/100,000 recorded in 2005³⁷⁶. It was reported in January 2014 by various NGOs, that 21.8% of maternal deaths were due to HIV/AIDS³⁷⁷. The Human Rights Council reported in July 2014 that 498 community health workers and 1,216 midwives had been trained to work in rural areas since the previous Universal Periodic Review³⁷⁸.

The total fertility rate has gradually declined since 2010 when the rate was 5.2 births per woman, to 4.8 births per woman in 2014 and 4.7 births per woman in 2015.³⁷⁹

Women are more likely than men to be living with HIV/AIDS in Equatorial Guinea³⁸⁰. The percentage of people living with HIV in Congo-Brazzaville aged 15+ who are female was 56% in 2014³⁸¹. This weighting has remained the same since 2010³⁸².

Violence Against Women

In its 2015 report on the Millennium Development Goals, the Government reported gender-based violence as being a major challenge for the country: “[There is] no clear social awareness about violence against women being a violation of human rights and a public health problem; women learn from an early age to accept, and even to tolerate domestic violence no longer react to such things”³⁸³. Among partnered women, 30.7% have suffered humiliations and threats, 20.1% minor assault, 18.8% sexual assault and 10.2% serious assault and attempted murder³⁸⁴.

In January 2014, the Human Rights Council summary of Equatorial Guinea included reports from NGOs on the trafficking of minors and the forced marriage of some of the trafficked girls³⁸⁵. No official measures were reported as having been taken to protect such minors³⁸⁶ though there exist some government programmes and legislations to deter child marriage (though not forced marriage)³⁸⁷. There is little comparative data available on child marriage in Equatorial Guinea, though 2015 data indicates that 9% of females are married by 15 and 30% married by 18³⁸⁸.

While rape is illegal in Equatorial Guinea, the law is not effectively enforced with victims reluctant to report and officials reluctant to act³⁸⁹. Spousal rape is not specifically criminalized under law³⁹⁰. A husband is exempt from facing criminal penalties for rape, as is the perpetrator if he marries the victim³⁹¹. There is no law prohibiting domestic violence, nor any legislation specifically addressing sexual harassment³⁹².

There is no clear annual comparative data available on violence against women in Equatorial Guinea.

Women, Peace and Security

There is no relevant information for Equatorial Guinea.

Education

During the 2012 periodic report to CEDAW, the Committee noted that the National Literacy Programme for Women and Girls adopted in 2008 was still in a preparatory phase³⁹³. The persistently low enrolment of girls in secondary schooling, despite efforts, including school construction in all municipalities and remote areas, was raised as a concern³⁹⁴. It was reported that many girls leave school due to sexual harassment at school, teenage pregnancy and early marriage³⁹⁵.

UNICEF has reported a high rate of youth (15-24 years) literacy amongst females. In 2013, the female youth literacy rate was 98.5% (97.7% for males)³⁹⁶. This represents an improvement on the 2007 figure of 95% (but a drop to 95% for males)³⁹⁷. A similarly high rate has also been reported by The World Bank amongst females aged 15 and above. In 2013 they calculated the female literacy rate at 92% (97% males) compared to 82% in 2000 (95% for males)³⁹⁸. This represented a 10% improvement for females since 2000, bringing them to greater parity with male literacy rates³⁹⁹.

Economic Empowerment

Equatorial Guinea is ranked at number 34 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's (ADB) first Africa Gender Equality Index⁴⁰⁰ released in 2015.

The Human Rights Council reported in 2014 that equal pay was established by the presidential decrees governing the minimum wage and was also incorporated in the Constitution⁴⁰¹. Additionally, Equatorial Guinea's Employment Act states that no

factor directly related to the biological status of women, including pregnancy and prenatal care, can be used as grounds for dismissal from employment⁴⁰².

During the 2012 periodic report to CEDAW, the Committee noted that Equatorial Guinea does not seem to fully understand its obligations under CEDAW to eliminate discrimination by public and private actors in employment⁴⁰³. While the Committee raised concerns about the widespread poverty and lack of specific measures to address poverty and discrimination against rural women, it welcomed the

Self-Employment Programme for Rural Women (PRAMUR)⁴⁰⁴. The Committee highlighted traditional practices, prevalent in rural areas, preventing women from inheriting or acquiring ownership of land and other property or from accessing financial credit and capital⁴⁰⁵.

The most recent data shows that 83% of females (88% males) in Equatorial Guinea were participating in the labour force. This figure has changed little since 2010 when the rate was 82% (88% males).

GABON

Gabon ratified CEDAW in January 1983. Since the ratification, Gabon has submitted two reports. In January 2005 Gabon ratified the Maputo Protocol. It has not yet launched a plan of action for UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Human rights of women / gender policy formation

During the CEDAW review in 2015, the Committee expressed concern that the application of the Convention has been limited in practice and that the Convention has not been given sufficient visibility as a legal basis for measures for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality in the state party.⁴⁰⁶ While the Constitution of Gabon guarantees equality before the law, the Committee is concerned that the Constitution and national legislation lacks an explicit definition of discrimination in accordance with Article 1 of the Convention, as well as provisions on the equal rights of women in line with Article 2 (a) of the Convention.⁴⁰⁷

The Committee welcomed the political declarations on increasing the representation of women in political life and decision-making bodies, as well as the establishment of quotas for the representation of women in parliament.⁴⁰⁸

The Gabonese Government stated in its reply to CEDAW, that it is taking steps to achieve gender equality through a series of reforms initiated since 2009, such as Gabon's Human Investment Strategy.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, the reforms seek to do more by promoting gender issues across all government bodies, both at the national and the decentralized level.⁴¹⁰

Amongst other human rights violations, violence against women remains widespread in Gabon.⁴¹¹ The law prohibits domestic violence, and penalties range from two months' to fifteen years' imprisonment.⁴¹²

While women rarely filed complaints with civil authorities, an NGO opened a centre to assist victims of domestic violence, and the Government offered some in-kind support.⁴¹³

There is no law that prohibits sexual harassment. It has been reported that sexual harassment against women in the military was pervasive, and a widespread problem in Gabonese society.⁴¹⁴ However, according to the Government of Gabon, sexual harassment in the workplace is being included in the draft revision of the Labour Code now being prepared.⁴¹⁵

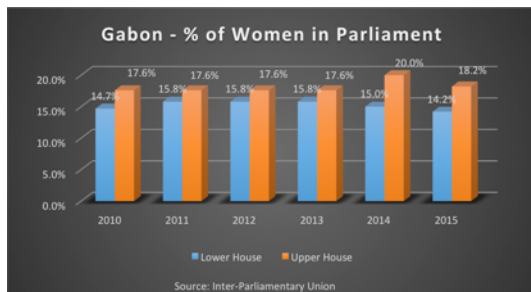
Women's political participation

In 2012, although the President of the Republic of Gabon mandated a 30% representation of women in decision-making bodies, the country has yet to achieve this goal.⁴¹⁶ As of September 2015, 14.2% of the seats in the Lower House were held by women.⁴¹⁷ This is a decrease from previous years. In 2014, women represented 15% of the Lower House⁴¹⁸, and in 2011 they represented 15.8%.⁴¹⁹

In the Upper House, as of September 2015, women represented 18.2% of the members.⁴²⁰ This is also a decrease from 2014, when 20% of the members were women⁴²¹, but an increase from 2011 when they represented 15.8% of the members.⁴²²

The proportion of women in ministerial level positions has continued to decline. In 2015, women represented only 12.5%⁴²³ of the ministers compared to 18.8% in 2014⁴²⁴ and 20.7% in 2010.⁴²⁵

While much remains to be done with respect to women's political participation, it is worth noting that Rose Francine Rogombe served as acting President of the Republic in 2009 and was the first female elected to the Senate.⁴²⁶



Reproductive health and HIV/ AIDS

The total fertility rate has marginally declined since 2010 when the rate was 4.1 births per woman, to 3.9 births per woman in 2014 and 3.8 births per woman in 2015.⁴²⁷ As of 2012, the contraceptive prevalence was 31.1%.⁴²⁸ This is a decline from 32.7% in 2000.⁴²⁹

Maternal mortality has decreased from 327 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2009, to 314 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012, and 291 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015.⁴³⁰ While Gabon has made some progress in lowering the maternal mortality rate, lack of access to basic health care, including obstetric care for rural women remains an issue.⁴³¹

According to data from the World Bank, female adults living with HIV (% of population ages 15+ living with HIV) was decreasing, but has shown some signs of increasing again. In 2009, 67.5% of the population ages 15+ living with HIV were women, compared to 67.2% in 2010, 66.8% in 2011, 66.4% in 2012, 66.5% in 2013, and 66.6% in 2014.⁴³²

Abortion is permitted in Gabon, but only where a continuation of the pregnancy could imperil the mother's life. Data is lacking on what percentage of women seek a consultation about abortion and what percentage of maternal deaths are due to abortion.⁴³³

According to UNICEF, between 2002 and 2012, 21.9% of the children were married before the age of 18.⁴³⁴

Violence against women

Violence against women remains a great concern in Gabon, and because of an increase in the number of reports of incest and marital rape, a comprehensive

response is being mounted through a national survey on violence. The survey will provide up-to-date information on levels and types of violence against women and, upon completion, should afford a better understanding of the scale of the problem.⁴³⁵

According to the Demographic and Health Survey (EDS II) carried out in 2012, one in five women in the 15–49 age group, or 21%, had been victims of sexual violence, and of those women who suffered violence, only 43% sought assistance.⁴³⁶

According to UNICEF's report "Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children", nearly 40% of girls aged 15 to 19 years had experienced some form of physical violence before the age of 15 between 2005 - 2013.⁴³⁷

While Act No. 09/04 preventing and combating trafficking in children was adopted in 2004, data on the extent of trafficking in women and girls is lacking.⁴³⁸ No statistical data is currently available, nor is any study underway.⁴³⁹ Moreover, according to the US Department of State, existing laws do not prohibit all forms of trafficking.⁴⁴⁰ The Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee to Monitor Child Trafficking, the focal point for coordinating government anti-trafficking activities, held its first meeting in early 2013, after 12 months of inactivity, and drafted a National Action Plan to combat trafficking for 2014.⁴⁴¹

Discussing rape remains taboo, and women often opt not to report it due to fear of reprisal or shame, and only limited medical and legal assistance for rape victims is available.⁴⁴² As a result, there are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of rape, it is estimated to be a frequent occurrence.⁴⁴³

Women peace and security

While Gabon contributed military and police personnel to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations MINUSCA and MINURCAT, none of the members were female.⁴⁴⁴ There is no data available indicating how many, if any, women serve in the army.

Education

The literacy rate shows a decrease for women after a previous increase, while the reverse is true for boys. The literacy rate for girls in 2004 was 76.3%, 84.9% in 2012 but down again to 81% in 2015.⁴⁴⁵ While for

the boys, the literacy rate was 87.5% in 2004, down to 79.9% in 2012, but rising again to 85.3% in 2015.⁴⁴⁶

The adult literacy rate for both women and men shows signs of improving again. In 2004, the female adult literacy rate was 95.6% in 2004, 89.4% in 2012, and 90.5% in 2015. This can be compared to the male adult literacy rate, which was 97.8% in 2004, 87.4% in 2012, and 87.8% in 2015.⁴⁴⁷

The most recent data available for gross enrolment rates for girls and boys, published by UNESCO in 2011, showed that enrolment of boys was slightly higher than that of girls. According to UNESCO, the female enrolment ratio was 162.4% compared to 167.3% for boys.⁴⁴⁸

According to the Government of Gabon, the education system as a whole has no gender problem, as girl's enrolment is virtually identical to boys in primary education. However, it recognizes that failure and dropout levels, however, are relatively high for girls.⁴⁴⁹

Economic Empowerment

According to figures published by the World Bank, female participation in the labour market has remained largely the same since 2009. From 2009 to 2011, women represented 45.8% of the total labour force, while from 2012 to 2013 women represented 45.7%.⁴⁵⁰ When looking at labour force participation of women as a percentage of the

female population aged 15 and older, there is an increase. In 2009, 56.5% of this section of the female population participated in the labour force, 57.1% were involved in 2011 and 57.7% in 2013.⁴⁵¹

Despite economic growth, few jobs have been created.⁴⁵² Nevertheless, unemployment rates among women (as a percentage of the female labour force) shows signs of declining. In 2013, 25.6% of women were unemployed, compared to 27.5% in 2011, and 28.6% in 2009.⁴⁵³ Similar trends can be seen in the unemployment rate for men (as a percentage of the male labour force). In 2013, 14.4% of men were unemployed, compared to 14.2% in 2011, and 15.1% in 2009.⁴⁵⁴

The Department of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, after processing the 2012–2013 statistics of the Business Development Centre, reported that on average in Gabon, men account for 79% of all business owners and women only 21%.⁴⁵⁵ Among Gabonese nationals, however, the proportions in 2012 were only 53.3% for men but 46.62% for women.⁴⁵⁶

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRINCIPE

Sao Tome and Principe signed CEDAW in January 2003 and ratified the Maputo Protocol in February 2010. However, São Tomé and Príncipe has not adopted a National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

While rape, including spousal rape, is illegal and punishable by two to twelve years' imprisonment,⁴⁵⁷ domestic violence remains widespread according to reports. In cases where domestic violence results in harm to the victim's, the law prescribes imprisonment from three to eight years, and when such violence leads to loss of life, the law allows for eight to sixteen years of incarceration.⁴⁵⁸ Although women have the right to legal recourse, including against spouses, women are often ignorant of their legal rights, or reluctant to bring legal action because of the cost and

lack of confidence in the legal system to address their concerns effectively.

Sexual harassment is prohibited under the law, and the Government enforces the penal code provisions.⁴⁵⁹ While sexual harassment reportedly occurred, there is no data available on its extent in São Tomé and Príncipe.⁴⁶⁰

The Associação São-tomense Para Promoção Familiar successfully advocated for the decriminalisation of abortion in Sao Tome. Decision makers, parliamentarians and community leaders were

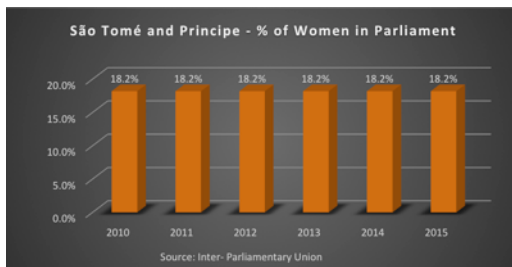
convinced to close certain loopholes in the penal code that had criminalized abortion.⁴⁶¹

There are no reports submitted under CEDAW concerning the measures, if any, the Government has taken to promote gender equality and fulfil the obligations of the Convention.

Women's political participation

As of September 2015, women held 18.2% of the seats in Parliament, with the percentage remaining unchanged since 2010.⁴⁶² The proportion of ministerial level positions held by women has declined from 38.5% in 2010⁴⁶³, to 7.7% in 2015.⁴⁶⁴ In 2012, 9.1% of the ministerial-level positions were held by women⁴⁶⁵, and in 2014 15.4%.⁴⁶⁶ However, one seat on the five-member Supreme Court, and 6 of the 12 judgeships on the circuit courts were held by women.⁴⁶⁷

No woman has served as President of São Tomé and Príncipe, however, in the 2011 election two women ran for President.⁴⁶⁸ While no woman has been elected President, from 2002 to 2004, Maria das Neves Ceita Baptista de Sousa served as Prime Minister of São Tomé and Príncipe, and, from 2005 to 2006 Maria do Carmo Trovoada Pires de Carvalho Silveira held the post.⁴⁶⁹



Violence Against Women

While violence against women remains a problem in São Tomé and Príncipe, civil society activists work to raise awareness regarding women's rights and gender-based violence.⁴⁷⁰ According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, between 2008 and 2009, 13.1% of women aged 15- 49 reported that they had been the victims of sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴⁷¹ However, there are no data available on the prevalence of sexual violence since 2009.

In the UNICEF report, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children', less

than 30% of girls aged 15 to 19 years had experienced any physical violence since the age of 15 between 2005 - 2013.⁴⁷² Of the girls aged 15 to 19, 25% had experienced physical violence by their current husband or partner, 3% by current or former boyfriend, 32% by their father or stepfather, and 4% by a friend or acquaintance.⁴⁷³

There is no law against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in São Tomé and Príncipe, but there are no known cases of FGM/C in the country.⁴⁷⁴

There are no confirmed reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within São Tomé and Príncipe.⁴⁷⁵

Women, Peace and Security

São Tomé and Príncipe does not contribute troops, experts or police to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, and there are no data available on the percentage of women who serve in the army.

Additionally, there are no data available on the percentage of women who are victims of sexual violence in conflict.

Education

According to UNESCO, the gross school enrolment ratio for both girls and boys continues to decline. In 2008, the ratio was 128.8% for girls and 129.2% for boys, falling to 116.3% for girls and 120.1% for boys in 2012.⁴⁷⁶ The most recent figures reported in 2013, show that the trend continues with a gross enrolment for girls of 115.1% for girls and 118% for boys.⁴⁷⁷

Similarly, the literacy rate for the population aged 15 to 24 is also declining. UNESCO reports that the literacy rate in 2001 was 94.9% among females aged 15 to 24 and 96% for males, compared to 84% for females aged 15 to 24 and 83.2% for males in 2015.⁴⁷⁸

However, the adult female literacy rate has increased from 77.9% in 2001 to 81.8% in 2015.⁴⁷⁹ This can be compared to the adult male literacy rate, which has decreased from 92.2% in 2002 to 68.4%.⁴⁸⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNICEF, approximately 5% of women between the ages 20 and 24 years old were married before age 15, while 34% of women in the same age group were married before age 18.⁴⁸¹ According to the 2013 United States Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices in São Tomé and

Principe, the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe did not focus its efforts on combating early marriage as it perceived high pregnancy and school dropout rates among teenagers as more widespread and higher priorities.⁴⁸² However, in the 2014 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in São Tomé and Príncipe, it is noted that the legal minimum age of marriage without parental consent is 18 years and the government largely enforced this law.⁴⁸³

The fertility rate for women in São Tomé and Príncipe has slightly decreased from 4.8 births per woman in 2010 to 4.5 births per woman in 2015.⁴⁸⁴

In São Tomé and Príncipe the maternal mortality ratio has gradually decreased from 166 per 100,000 live births in 2009 to 156 per 100,000 live births in 2015.⁴⁸⁵

As of 2009, the contraceptive prevalence was 38.4%, however, there is no comparative data available to indicate whether the prevalence has stayed the same, increased, or decreased.⁴⁸⁶

According to the World Bank, the percentage of female adults with HIV has gradually increased, from 34.3% in 2009, to 35.1% in 2010, 36.9% in 2012 and 39.1% in 2014.⁴⁸⁷ UNICEF provides ARV coverage to more than 90% of HIV positive women and children, in support of the Agenda to Eliminate Mother-to-Child

Transmission (MTCT).⁴⁸⁸ However, discrimination against women with HIV/AIDS remains widespread in communities. The Government promoted government-sponsored workshops and awareness campaigns to reduce societal discrimination, and also provided free HIV/AIDS testing and distributed ARV drugs to all recognised patients.⁴⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

Women's participation as part of the total labour force has only marginally increased from 37.3% in 2009, to 37.5% in 2011, and 37.6% in 2013.⁴⁹⁰ However, according to figures published by the World Bank, the female labour force participation rate of women (% of female population ages 15+) has increased from 45.9% in 2009, to 46.9% in 2011 and 47.7% in 2013.⁴⁹¹ According to the most recent data published in 2011, female labour force participation rate was 43.7%, compared 76.6% for male labour force participation.

There are no restrictions on women seeking employment, as women have the same rights as men to work. The same applies to setting up business and access to property. Maternity leave is mandated by the law (the allowance is 90 days) and during this leave period 100% of the salary is paid.⁴⁹²

EAST AFRICA REGION

In recent years the landscape for women in East Africa has been generally improving. All countries have signed, and most have ratified CEDAW (with the exception of Somalia). Most countries have also signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol; with the exception of Somalia and Mauritius (who have not signed), and Burundi, Madagascar, Eritrea, (whom have signed but not ratified its provisions). Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda have all adopted a National Plan of Action for 1325. Other countries are in the process of adopting National Action Plans: Kenya has drafted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, but it has not passed through both houses of parliament, and Madagascar is currently in its validation stage.

A few East African states have proudly boasted female leadership in the top echelons of their government. Malawi had Dr. Joyce Banda as their first female President from 2012 – 2014, Ethiopia appointed Aster Mamo as their first female Deputy Prime Minister in 2014, and Mauritius has very recently elected their first female president, Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, in June 2015.

Most countries have seen a rise in female literacy and education, as well as improvements in reproductive health initiatives, but women continue to face many challenges despite some progressive legislation in place to combat them. Some very serious issues include: continued violence against women including rape (in a few cases as a weapon of war), child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), high HIV prevalence (despite improvements), high maternal mortality and low-levels of education (despite improvements) to name a few. Another point of concern is the growing campaign against LGBTI persons, cropping up across the region.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

There have been numerous initiatives by governments to improve the human rights of women in East Africa. However, while some countries have passed laws and constitutional amendments to prohibit or at least curb gender based violations, many still ignore the basic rights of women and even pass laws further expanding their legal mistreatment.

Seychelles is among the most progressive when it comes to policies towards women, having a Gender Secretariat to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all programmes and activities throughout their society.⁴⁹³ This has led to changes throughout the country including the decriminalization of homosexuality. Malawi has also adopted a number of gender sensitive policies over the past decade. Prevention of domestic violence, child-care protection, and gender equality acts are just a few of the changes in the past few years that have helped advance the country.⁴⁹⁴ Malawi has also recently passed several marriage laws, though their Parliament must amend the Constitution before they will take effect.⁴⁹⁵ Kenya has passed several positive acts towards gender equity, however gender violence and marriage violations continue in parts of the state party.⁴⁹⁶

Unfortunately, while several of the counties in East Africa have made strides towards enacting laws protecting women's rights there are many that have fallen short in their efforts, if they attempted anything at all. Zimbabwe continues to violate rights of LGBT people guaranteed in the new Constitution⁴⁹⁷ and, although human rights abuses have decreased, overall they still have high occurrence rates^{498 499}. Ethiopia has adopted CEDAW into its Constitution, but, like Zimbabwe, violations of the Convention's principles occur unchecked through the country⁵⁰⁰. And over the past few years there has been a growing campaign against homosexuality, where same sex relations have been unlawful since 2005⁵⁰¹. Somalia is broadly considered to be one of the worst places in the world to be a woman, as the collapse of the state led to an emphasis on customary and sharia law⁵⁰². In Uganda, although strict legislation on violence against women has been passed, women are still vulnerable, as the laws have not been effectively implemented. The government has accused organizations of engaging in 'political activism' and, in one case, suspended an NGO working on sexual rights, arguing that it was 'promoting homosexuality'⁵⁰³.

Women's Political Participation

Across the East African Region women's political participation is generally on the rise. Perhaps Rwanda is the best poster-child for gender-inclusive politics, with the highest number of female Parliamentarians in the world. It has been said that the increase in women's political participation since the 1994 genocide has also enhanced educational and economic opportunities in the country. Gender quotas in Burundi have led to significant increases in the number of women participating in government.⁵⁰⁴ In Ethiopia gender mainstreaming is now encouraged in all governing bodies.

As of September 2015, Seychelles ranks at fourth on IPU's Women in Parliaments: World Classification, with women occupying 43.8% of Parliamentary seats.⁵⁰⁵ Women's parliamentary representation is on the rise in Uganda from 31.5% in 2010 to 34.97% in 2015.⁵⁰⁶ In Kenya women currently comprise 19.7% of seats in the Lower House compared to 2011 when they only made up 9.8% (upper house seats not included).⁵⁰⁷ In Madagascar, women made up 12.5% of the Lower House in 2011 compared to 20% in 2015,⁵⁰⁸ and the percentage of women in ministerial level positions has significantly increased from 17% in 2010 to 31% in 2014,⁵⁰⁹ to 20% in 2015.⁵¹⁰

However, not all countries have seen an upturn in women's seats. For example, in Djibouti, women's seats dropped from 13.8% to 12.7% between 2010 and 2014. Likewise, in Zambia, the percentage of women in Parliament decreased from 14% in 2010 to 12.7% in 2015.⁵¹¹ In Mauritius, women's parliamentary seats fell from 18.8% to 11.6% between 2010 and 2014.⁵¹² In Malawi, the percentage of female Parliamentarians decreased from 20.8% in 2011 to 16.7% in 2015,⁵¹³ and the percentage of women in Ministerial level positions also dropped from 27.3%⁵¹⁴ in 2010, to 11.1%⁵¹⁵ in 2015. However, Malawi did see an increase in female Supreme Court Justices, from three in 2011 to nine in 2014 (out of 33), and women's representation in local government increased from 0% in 2009 to 11% in 2015.

In 2010, Madagascan female activists requested that the Constitution be amended to include women's participation in politics, with a specific goal of 30% female politicians in parliament by 2012 and 50% by 2015, following The SADC Gender Protocol (This goal has yet to be reached).⁵¹⁶ Likewise, A policy has been drafted in Mauritius to secure the representation of women, one of which being a mandatory 30% representation of either gender in all political parties,⁵¹⁷ and in 2013 the New Local Government Act was implemented, with an aim to make elections at a local level gender neutral.⁵¹⁸ In Mozambique, there are no mandatory parliamentary quotas,⁵¹⁹ but the FRELIMO party has used gender quotas since 1994, requiring that 40% of candidates to national assembly and local government should be women.⁵²⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Across East Africa, maternal mortality rates are falling, however, as many countries have weak healthcare systems, much more needs to be done to ensure women's safety. For example, in Ethiopia only 10% of women deliver with the assistance of skilled personnel, and has a high rate (along with its neighbour Eritrea) of pregnancy related complications, like Obstetric fistula.⁵²¹ In Comoros, the maternal mortality rate has fallen but still remains high. Between 2010 and 2015 maternal deaths had dropped from 388 to 335 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births according to the World Bank.⁵²²

Rates of contraception are up across the region, however, women still have to contend with cultural norms and pressures and the general belief that larger families are more desirable. In Madagascar, the contraceptive prevalence rate has significantly increased for married women or women in a union, from 27% in 2011 to 40% in 2014. Even more so, Mauritius saw an increase in female access to contraceptives from 28% in 2009 to 76% today.⁵²³

Early marriage is a serious problem across the region despite in-country legislation that prohibits it. As of 2015, 42% of girls were married before age of 18 in Zambia (with rates of up to 60% in some regions) with little to no change since 2002,⁵²⁴ and in Zimbabwe, 31% of girls were married before their 18th birthday, and 4% before their 15th.⁵²⁵ Also, as of 2015, half of Malawian girls are married before the age of 18 according to UN women. In Kenya, early marriage rates are actually on the rise, from 17%⁵²⁶ of women 15 - 19 in 2011 to 20%⁵²⁷ in 2014. Early marriage rates declined in Ethiopia, from 30% in 2011 to 27% in 2014 of women 15 - 19 years old,⁵²⁸ but in the Gondor region, almost half of the underage girls are married.⁵²⁹ In Uganda 10% of girls were married before 15, and 40% married before 18,⁵³⁰ and in Somalia, 8% of girls were married before the age of 15 and 46% before the age of 18.^{531 532}

HIV rates have primarily decreased across the region with some noteworthy accomplishments. One success story is Mauritius, where ARVs are now free and access to them has skyrocketed from 12% in 2009 to 93% in 2015.⁵³³

While an issue that spans both reproductive rights and violence against women, female genital cutting/mutilation (FGM/C) remains in practice in many East African countries. In Somalia, while recent data is limited, it is well known that FGM/C is widespread, and World Bank Data from 2006 suggests a 98% prevalence rate.⁵³⁴ In Ethiopia, 74.3% of women between the ages of 15 to 49 had undergone FGC,⁵³⁵ according to the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey, 23% of young girls had undergone FGC in 2013, with the highest figures in the Amhara region at 47%.⁵³⁶ In Kenya, the

rate of FGM/C was 27% in 2008/2009,⁵³⁷ and the 2001 criminalisation of FGM/C has only driven the practice underground with parents are taking their daughters to remote regions in Kenya to have the practice done “secretly”.⁵³⁸ There is a law prohibiting FG/MC in Djibouti, but there appears to be little to no implementation of this law.⁵³⁹ There is however positive data indicating a drop in FGM/C incidences in the country, showing a drop from 93% of victims in 2006 to 78% in 2013.⁵⁴⁰

Violence Against Women

Rates on violence against women are hard to capture. Most survivors of gender-based violence do not report to authorities, out of fear of retaliation, stigmatization or outright rejection. In some countries, like Djibouti, cases are dealt with by the traditional justice system, and usually involve the families of victims and perpetrators, making the reporting process a difficult one.⁵⁴¹ Also, as a result of war in countries such as Burundi, Uganda, Eritrea and Somalia, women's bodies became the frontline for abuse and retaliation – thus compounding an already systemic issue. The justification of wife beatings in the region is very high, illustrating pervasive culture of violence against women: 39% of women justified wife beatings in Comoros (2015), 68% in Kenya (2014)⁵⁴², and 81% in Ethiopia (2005).⁵⁴³

A good example for the region is Kenya. According to a 2014 UNICEF survey, 66% of women aged 18 to 24 in Kenya had reported physical violence prior to age of 18.⁵⁴⁴ In 2013, 45% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced either physical or sexual violence, with 21% of them specifically reporting sexual violence,⁵⁴⁵ and it was estimated in 2008, that as many as 95% of sexual offenses were not reported to the police.⁵⁴⁶

Malawi, like Kenya, also had very high rates of gender based violence, 41% of women reported being victims of physical and sexual violence in 2010,⁵⁴⁷ with 40% experiencing sexual violence, and 30% experiencing other physical violence in 2012.⁵⁴⁸ To combat this, Malawi has since launched a three-year campaign to slash number of cases of sexual violence against women, girls and children by 15% by 2017.⁵⁴⁹ There are statistics that indicate over a 50% decline in cases of gender-based violence, from 29, 488 reported cases in 2012 to 15,601 in 2013. The decrease came as a result of intensive community awareness campaigns. In 2014, the Malawian Police stated that Gender Based Violence rates could greatly decrease if “local chiefs collaborated with law enforcement rather than encouraging the shielding of perpetrators”.⁵⁵⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Uganda (2007), Rwanda (2010), and Burundi (2011) all have National Action Plans for UNSCR 1325. Uganda developed a 5-year, National plan of action in 2007 to implement UNSCR 1325, 1820 and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Regions in order to ‘address sexual violence against women in armed conflict’.⁵⁵¹ In Rwanda, women have been critical in the process of transitional justice through their participation in the *gacaca* system (system of community justice inspired by Rwandan tradition) and played a central role in the reconstruction of their country following the genocide.⁵⁵² The post-conflict situation has given women the opportunity to be more involved in decision-making at all levels of society. As of 2015, Rwanda ranks fifth in Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations with a total contribution of 5685 people (283 female).⁵⁵³ Women in Rwanda play a large role as UN Peacekeepers and observers in Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali and CAR, but are under-represented in the higher ranks of Rwandan military and police.⁵⁵⁴ Burundi is an example of a country where “effective mobilisation by women's groups in peace-building and constitutional reform processes has secured concrete constitutional and policy gains for women, including quotas and some social and economic rights”⁵⁵⁵, while there are still, undoubtedly barriers to women's involvement.

Ethiopia is also a top African contributor to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, ranking 2nd in Military and Police Contributions in 2015 with a total contribution of 8,309 (523 female / 6.3%).⁵⁵⁶ Ethiopia was also the leading contributor of female peacekeepers to UN missions, but only one served in a senior leadership role.⁵⁵⁷

In Madagascar, the Congress of Transition passed a law in 2012 that all 22 regions in Madagascar must be represented by a woman and a man with respect to national reconciliation.⁵⁵⁸ According to the Institute for Security Studies, “Malagasy women play an important role in reconciliation at district, provincial and national level. At community

level, various women movements go beyond different political affiliations to deliberate on new priorities for women's rights during and after the transition process".⁵⁵⁹

Education

Improvements in girls' access to education are abounding across East Africa (although there are still setbacks due to traditional beliefs, gender roles, and sexual and reproductive health demands.) Rwanda has one the highest primary school education enrolment rate in Africa at 96.5%, with the net enrolment rate is 98% for girls and 95% for boys, on target to meet the MDGs. Seychelles has achieved gender parity in primary education and girls even outnumber boys in secondary and tertiary education.⁵⁶⁰ In Uganda, a higher percentage of girls than boys enrol in primary education, at 92% versus 90% of boys.⁵⁶¹ Girls' school enrolment in Ethiopia markedly increased from 41% in 2000 to 83% in 2011.⁵⁶² Tanzania reached a gender parity index of 0.99 for Net Enrolment Ratio in 2007 (98% for boys and 97% for girls)⁵⁶³ and the most recent data available (2014) show that this has remained constant.⁵⁶⁴ In Djibouti, the government has made primary education compulsory while emphasising equality,⁵⁶⁵ and total enrolment levels for girls entering primary school rose from 58.5% in 2009 to 63.9% in 2013,⁵⁶⁶ and rates for entering secondary school rose from 80.6% in 2011 to 100% in 2013.⁵⁶⁷ The Mauritian government has taken matters a step further, and even imposes penalties on parents of children who do not attend school.⁵⁶⁸

Some countries, like Somalia, have many barriers to overcome, with only 42% of children enrolled in school, (and only 36% of those girls) as of 2015.⁵⁶⁹ Decades of civil war and the collapse of the central government left Somalia's education system in ruins, with 90% of schools destroyed. Today, if students are lucky enough to be enrolled in school, they face obstacles such as inadequate schooling facilities and textbooks, shortage of qualified teachers, and a lack of a standardised curriculum.⁵⁷⁰ The Ministry of Human Development and Public Services published an education sector strategic plan (2013/2014-2015/2016) for the South Central Zone for a broad-based education system and the "rehabilitation and restoration" of education, to address the destruction (and closure) of schools and low school enrolment and literacy rates.⁵⁷¹



Students at Mozambique Samao Muthemba Secondary School – UN Photo

Other countries in the region face similar challenges. In Burundi, 38% of the poorest girls aged 7 to 16 have never been to school or in a classroom setting.⁵⁷² Girls' enrolment in Eritrea continues to loom behind boys', due to the cost of education, which forces families to choose which child goes to school, and almost always favours boys.⁵⁷³

Literacy rates are generally increasing across the region. In Comoros, females between the ages of 15 – 24 had a literacy rate of 77.6% in 2000, which increased to 87.1% in 2013, and 88.2% in 2015 – compared to males who had rates of 84% in 2000, 86.5% in 2013 and 86.9% in 2015.⁵⁷⁴ In Zambia, young women's literacy rates increased from 58.5% in 2007 to 62% in 2015.⁵⁷⁵ In Ethiopia, the female adult literacy rate has also significantly increased from 43% in 2011,⁵⁷⁶ 59% in 2012⁵⁷⁷ and 59% in 2014.⁵⁷⁸ Other countries have remained fairly constant, like Uganda, where literacy for girls has been 82% from 2006 - 2012.⁵⁷⁹

Even though Mozambique is progressing towards the goal of gender parity in education, women's literacy rates are substantially lower than men's (36% and 67% respectively). In Eritrea, women's literacy lags behind men's at 45% (compared to 67%).⁵⁸⁰ The literacy rate for adolescents in Zimbabwe remains high overall and slightly higher for females at 92.1% than males at 89.6%,⁵⁸¹ although it has had a troubling decline from 1992 when rates were 96.5% for males and 94.4% for females.⁵⁸²

Women's Economic Empowerment

In general, there is a lack of comparative data available in the East Africa region on female employment statistics. Specifically, there is a scarcity on information such as: women's informality and self-employment rates, time spent in paid and unpaid work, gender pay gaps, gendered poverty rates, and education and training in non-traditional careers. All of these factors make it difficult to have clear evidence on the economic empowerment (or more likely, disempowerment) of women. What is known is that women are primarily found in the informal sector, and remain vastly underrepresented in many occupations, as a result of lower levels of education, often more limited financial resources, and discriminatory attitudes.

It should be noted that women's employment rates in the region are not necessarily shockingly "low," aside from Djibouti (39%/2013),⁵⁸³ Somalia (37.2%/ 2013),⁵⁸⁴ and Comoros (35.2%/2013),⁵⁸⁵ but they are primarily lower than men's. The primary issue is that across the majority of the region, the rates of women's employment have stagnated. While most countries have legislation that prohibits discrimination, this does not translate into increased financial success for women in the formal sector. For example, in Zambia, the percentage of women enrolled in the workforce or active in the labour market is at rates similar to 1990 (73.6% in 1990 compared to 73.1% in 2013) and remains lower than men's (86.0% for women, 85.6% for men).⁵⁸⁶ Likewise, rates in Tanzania have also remained similar from 1990 (when women comprised 86.9% compared to 88.1% in 2013).⁵⁸⁷ In Zimbabwe as of 2014, labour force participation was 85% for women and 91% for men,⁵⁸⁸ and this has been steady over the past decade.⁵⁸⁹

While Kenya is another country where female employment rates have remained the same, the country has been applauded for their commitment to encouraging women's economic prosperity. In 2006, after noting the vast number of women marginalised by the economy, the government set up The Women Enterprise Fund to address poverty alleviation through the socio-economic empowerment of women.⁵⁹⁰ According to the 2012 Women, Business and the Law Report by the World Bank, Kenya ranked first out of 141 economies in easing women's access to property, job opportunities, credit among other rights.⁵⁹¹

In Malawi, women's employment figures rose over the past five years. The World Economic Forum's "Gender Gap Index" very clearly shows Malawi's improvement from 65th in 2011 (out of 135 countries)⁵⁹² to 34th in 2014 (out of 142)⁵⁹³. Also, unlike the majority of East African countries, women actually make up a greater percentage of the workforce.⁵⁹⁴ Likewise, in Seychelles, women's employment rates increased from 61.9%⁵⁹⁵ in 2011 to 68%⁵⁹⁶ in 2014.

BURUNDI

In 2015, in spite of gains towards realising the rights of women, escalating violence in Burundi threatens women's futures. In late-April 2015 President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his candidacy for a third term, which was followed by an attempted coup in May and ongoing violence.⁵⁹⁷ In July he won a predictable landslide victory in a disputed election marred by violence and an opposition boycott.⁵⁹⁸ Burundi has a small population of just over 10 million, and "the situation has forced over 220,000 Burundians, mostly women and children, to flee to neighbouring countries. Rwanda alone is now home to over 90,000 Burundian refugees".⁵⁹⁹ This violence comes on the heels of punctuated periods of election violence following the end of Burundi's 12-year war in 2005 that killed 300,000 people.⁶⁰⁰ Burundi did adopt a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on 13 December 2011. Additionally, Burundi ratified CEDAW on 8 January 1992⁶⁰¹ but has signed but not yet ratified the Maputo protocol.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Human rights defenders in Burundi face challenges and are not able to carry out their work freely.⁶⁰² The continuing political unrest in Burundi has meant that the human rights of women are threatened. An investigation undertaken by Amnesty International in May/June 2015 revealed that Burundian police used excessive force against women and children to silence

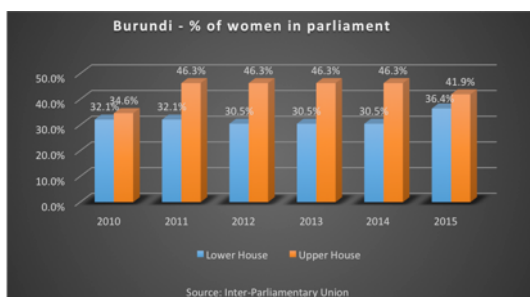
President Nkurunziza's opponents.⁶⁰³ Women and children comprise the majority of the 8000 people to have fled from Burundi to South Kivu, and women reported threats of rape from armed men or faced having to bribe their way through roadblocks.⁶⁰⁴

In 2012, women succeeded in pushing for dramatic changes to Burundi's Penal Code.⁶⁰⁵ 98% of the proposals from a team comprised of The Association for the Defense of Women's Rights, the Women's

Centre for Peace, 20 members of parliament from the three main political parties (the ruling party CNDD-FDD, UPRONA and FRODEBU), representatives from international and local NGOs working on the rights of women and children, and human rights practitioners including the Burundian Association of Female Lawyers were incorporated into the new Penal Code.⁶⁰⁶ In the new code, domestic violence, rape and violence against children under the age of 18 are all well-defined and detailed and the acts themselves are dealt with thoroughly. According to Article 559 of the revised Code, for example, rape is now punishable with life imprisonment and with no possibility of “remittance, amnesty, lenience or grace”.⁶⁰⁷ However, the new Penal Code also criminalises same-sex relationships.⁶⁰⁸

Women's Political Participation

Gender quotas in Burundi have led to significant increases in the number of women participating in government, which is an important initial step in ensuring meaningful participation of all members of society.⁶⁰⁹ As of 1 September 2015, 36.4% of seats (44 out of 122) in the Lower House were occupied by women and in the Upper House or Senate, this number rose to 41.9% (18 out of 43).⁶¹⁰ The percentage of women in the Lower House has increased moderately, while declined slightly in the Upper House. According to the World Bank, in 2015 34.8% of ministerial level positions were held by women.⁶¹¹ This is a slight decline from 2014, which had 36.4% women, but still a marked increase from 2005 (10.7%) and 2010 (28.6%).⁶¹² The US Department of State indicates that the Supreme Court has seven women out of 25 members, and the Constitutional Court has 3 women out of seven members.⁶¹³



The 2015 elections had eight candidates, none of which were women.⁶¹⁴ In 2014, 52% of registered voters were women⁶¹⁵ but the percentage of women who voted in the recent presidential elections is unknown. However, despite a high representation of

women in the legislature and high numbers of voter registration, gender discrimination remains widespread in Burundi's political landscape. Leadership training is seen as one avenue to bridge the gender gap through equipping women with the necessary skills to become effective leaders.⁶¹⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to UNAIDS' 2014 report, the number of people living with HIV in Burundi is 85,000,⁶¹⁷ and women represent a disproportionate percentage of adults (15+) with HIV at 59% in 2014, an increase from 57% in 2010.⁶¹⁸ Female access to antiretroviral drugs has increased dramatically from 27% in 2010 to 56% in 2014, compared to male access, which has just increased from 23.4% to 38.8% during the same period.⁶¹⁹ HIV prevalence for adolescent females (15-24) has stayed steady at 0.4% compared to adolescent males, which has stayed constant at 0.3%.⁶²⁰

Burundi's civil war resulted in the internal displacements to camps, where the living conditions were poor and access to healthcare was limited.⁶²¹ Furthermore, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) have failed to deal with the spread of HIV. In a conflict setting, the sexual behavior of people tends to change and extra-marital relations exacerbate the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.⁶²² Burundi has demonstrated its willingness to address the issue. It is committed to increase the country's modern contraceptive prevalence rate to 40% by 2020, a 28% increase on 2010's rate and to double the number of users of modern contraception from 2012 to more than 644,000 individuals by 2015. The government of Burundi aims to create a national population board, which will integrate population, health and environmental objectives; increase government allocations to family planning by 10% year on year from 2015; expand family planning service delivery points; and improve family planning services by training health providers.⁶²³

According to the most recent World Bank data the fertility rate is 6.0 births per woman (2013) down from 6.4 in 2009.⁶²⁴ The adolescent fertility rate has also decreased from 32 per 1000 live births in 2010 to 29 in 2014.⁶²⁵ In spite of advances in reducing maternal mortality Burundi continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality ratios with 712 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015, down from 796 in 2011, and 910 in 2005.⁶²⁶ Given this fact it is surprising that in 2010,

98.9% of pregnant women were receiving prenatal care.⁶²⁷ There are skilled attendants at 60% of births.⁶²⁸ There are no restrictions on the use of contraceptives, and the most recent World Bank data indicates that rates of contraceptive coverage are rising from 9% in 2006 to 22% in 2010.⁶²⁹ However, they remain low due to male opposition and lack of family planning.⁶³⁰ The legal age of marriage for girls is 18 and is 21 for boys.⁶³¹ According to the most recent World Bank data, in 2010 20.4% of women age 20-24 were married before the age of 18, and increase from 17.8% in 2005.⁶³² UNICEF reports similar figures with 3% of girls married before age 15, and 20% married before 18.⁶³³ However, the US Department of State reports that forced marriage is illegal and rare.⁶³⁴

Violence Against Women

During the civil war, violence was directed predominantly towards civilians and women suffered disproportionately, but despite the end of the war the prevalence of violence against women has not improved.⁶³⁵ Although rape is prohibited under law – including spousal rape – with penalties up to 30 years imprisonment, and domestic abuse carries punishments from fines to 5 years imprisonment, the enforcement of these laws is not uniform and domestic and sexual violence remain serious problems.⁶³⁶ The incidence of domestic and sexual abuse of women soared to high levels in Burundi following the civil war, as women and girls were beaten and raped by combatants during the war. Interviews revealed that women were unaware that domestic violence was punishable by law. Awareness-raising workshops have also been organised to help men understand the negative consequences of their actions.⁶³⁷

Burundi is characterised as having “very high” rates of sexual violence, but statistics are difficult to find because wartime rape prevalence data is very problematic and levels of (baseline) sexual violence vary across countries in peacetime, and different data collection formats affect prevalence estimates. Almost no data is available on the scope and nature of sexual violence before or during the war in Burundi, with the exception of some year-reports composed by local NGOs, a small-scale survey of IDPs, and a retrospective study initiated by the Burundese Ministry of Human Rights and Gender.⁶³⁸

In representative studies by UNFPA in 2002, and a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in 2005

rates of 20% and 25%, respectively, were reported of any experience of GBV.⁶³⁹ “In both surveys, just over 10% of GBV cases were sexual violence, meaning that 3.3% (in 2002) and 3.2% (in 2005) of all females reported sexual violence (including rape)”.⁶⁴⁰ However, these numbers likely reveal only a fraction of sexual violence incidents because of its status as a taboo topic in Burundi.

According to the US Department of State Centre Seruka, a clinic operated by Doctors without Border in the capital of Bujumbura, sees on average 135 rape cases per month with 68% of victims are minors, and 17% are under age of 5 with an average age of 15.⁶⁴¹ One of the motivations for these rapes is the belief that rape of minors can prevent/cure STDs including HIV/AIDS.⁶⁴² While 70% knew their aggressors, only 30% of victims filed complaints. It is common for men to abandon their wives after rape and for victims to be ostracized by their families, and police and magistrates have sometimes required victims to pay for food and costs of incarceration for those they accused. Victims cite cultural reasons and fear of reprisals as influences on their reluctance to report.⁶⁴³ Furthermore, a study in the Great Lakes regions found that women who engaged in cross-border trade experienced significantly higher levels of violence, as they were often hassled by border guards.⁶⁴⁴ Burundi is seen as a destination for child sex tourism, but no cases reported this year.⁶⁴⁵

It is also a “key source country of persons, especially women, trafficked into Kenya for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. In recent years, Burundi has also become a source country of women and girls trafficked to Lebanon for the purpose of domestic servitude and prostitution”.⁶⁴⁶

Women, Peace and Security

As of December 2006, a total of 21,769 ex-combatants including 3,015 children and 494 women were demobilised indicating that women comprised only 2% of demobilised combatants.⁶⁴⁷ In 2011, in the Ministry of National Defence and Ex-combatants, not a single woman occupies a decision-making position and women represent only 0.040% of all armed forces personnel.⁶⁴⁸ Out of 1,279 uniformed UN Peacekeepers only 30 are women.⁶⁴⁹ In October 2015 Burundi's Second Vice-President, Joseph Butore, indicated that progress has been made in recruitment of women in the defence and security forces, which promotes the effective participation of women to

peacekeeping missions.⁶⁵⁰ However, providing for Peacekeeping indicates that attempts to increase female soldiers and integrate a gender perspective in the army through a gender integration strategy for the National Defence Force have had few visible results, with figures of female soldiers staying under 1%.⁶⁵¹

While barriers to women's involvement in peace-building exist, Burundi is an example of a country where “effective mobilisation by women’s groups in peace-building and constitutional reform processes has secured concrete constitutional and policy gains for women, including quotas and some social and economic rights”.⁶⁵² The current political crisis brings new challenges for women to address conflict. While regional initiatives and civil society organisations in Burundi have worked to restore peace, their efforts have resulted in little success, and there is a lot of work to be done to create a sustainable peace.⁶⁵³

“In line with Resolution 1325, at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in 2006 member states adopted the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women, recommending that all states incorporate the dispositions laid out in international law into their domestic legislation”.⁶⁵⁴ In October 2014 Burundi announced at the UN General Assembly that it has put in place measures to protect women, including the creation of centres for the victims of sexual violence.⁶⁵⁵

Education

People below the age of 25 make up almost 60% of Burundi's population. Burundian youth have become increasingly engaged and are calling for a higher education system that will equip them with entrepreneurial skills to solve intractable problems.⁶⁵⁶ According to the World Education Blog, at 38%, Burundi is one of the ten countries where girls aged 7 to 16 have never been to school or in a classroom setting.⁶⁵⁷ According to the World Bank literacy rates for youth (15-24) in 2008 were at near parity with 88% for females⁶⁵⁸ and 90% for males.⁶⁵⁹ Figures from The World Bank in 2013 indicate that females are expected to complete 10.5 years of schooling, compared to 11.3 for boys.⁶⁶⁰ The World Bank also indicates that graduation rates for girls in lower secondary have increased from 10.3% in 2011 to 14.4% in 2013, but remain lower than boys, which were 17% and 20.9%, respectively.⁶⁶¹ Girls have

made significant progress in primary school completion from 49% in 2010 to 72.4% in 2013, and they have surpassed their male counterparts who had 67.5% completion rates in 2013.⁶⁶² Currently, 105 girls attend school for every 100 boys. However, this national trend, which favours girls, hides considerable disparities in provinces such as Cibitoke and Ruyigi, where more boys attend school than girls.⁶⁶³ Additionally it does not provide information about educational attainment. Burundi joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2012 and received a US\$52.9 million grant for the period 2013-2016.⁶⁶⁴ The project aimed to have at least 58% of students transition from 6th to 7th grade. Burundi surpassed the target with a 62% transition rate.⁶⁶⁵

Economic Empowerment

According to the World Bank labour force participation is constant and at near parity from 2005 to 2013 with 84% for women⁶⁶⁶ and 83% for men.⁶⁶⁷ Women's unemployment rates remained stable from 7.6% in 2005 to 7.4% in 2013⁶⁶⁸, while men's unemployment was slightly lower and also relatively constant with 6.9% and 6.4% for the same period.⁶⁶⁹ The ratio of female to male participation in the labour force is 101.6%.⁶⁷⁰ In 2014, 16.3% of firms had a female top manager.⁶⁷¹

Men and women have equal rights to property⁶⁷² and according to the US Department of State, women are guaranteed equal pay by law, but does not happen in practice.⁶⁷³ Burundi also has a policy of 12 weeks paid maternity leave, which is paid partly by the employer and partly by the government.⁶⁷⁴ Women and men can work the same night hours⁶⁷⁵

Low percentages of both men and women hold an account at a financial institution with women slightly lower than men at 6.5% and 7.3%, respectively.⁶⁷⁶ A report by the International Women's Coffee Alliance found that women reinvest 90% of their earnings in their family, mostly in health and education. Hence, as a step towards women retaining control over their money, the International Trade Centre identified savings institutions prepared to work with women in rural areas.⁶⁷⁷ Women also play a significant role in farming in Burundi. A program by CATALIST – where women must own 30% of the cooperatives - focuses on food security, poverty reduction and regional cooperation for greater stability in the Great Lakes region. The project has a positive impact and

women are now empowered and can make significant contributions to the family household income.⁶⁷⁸

COMOROS

Nestled between mainland East Africa and Madagascar, Comoros is the only member of the Arab League in the Southern Hemisphere. It has been touted as being the best state in the Arab world for women. This is partially due to its constitution, which refers to citizens' equal rights and duties regardless of sex.⁶⁷⁹ Comoros ratified CEDAW in October 1999 and the Maputo Protocol in March 2004. However, Comoros has still not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

CEDAW's 2012 review applauded Comoros' 2007 adoptions of: The National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity and its implementation; The Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy and its plan of action; and the ratification of The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. With the help of United Nations Agencies, Comoros has been able to adopt a gender perspective in these policies and protocols.

However, implementation of CEDAW continues to be an issue. The Committee has attributed this to the country's deteriorating economic situation over the past two decades, as well as the political conflict and the overall poverty of its citizens.

The Committee is concerned about the national machineries in place for the advancement of women, and the lack of influence over decision-makers in government, most notably the General Office for Solidarity and Gender Advocacy. The Labour Code, which includes many provisions for women, such as equal pay for equal work, is far from implemented. Not only do women continue to suffer from discrimination, but sexual harassment has yet to be banned in the workplace. The Office of Female Entrepreneurship was favourably highlighted by the Committee, for their Small Loans Programme for women in the State party. However, it lacks measures to successfully support self-employed women.

As the majority of Comorian women live in rural areas, there are not, as yet, any policies that specifically address poverty and discrimination against these women or guarantee their access to health, housing, education, justice, clean water and sanitation services as well as on their participation in decision-making processes at the community level.⁶⁸⁰

Women's Political Participation

As of September 1st, 2015, the number of Female Legislators was 3%, or one out of 33 seats in Comoros' Assembly of the Union (Assemblée de l'Union). This number has not changed since 2011.⁶⁸¹ One of the key reasons that women are not occupying as much space in the political arena is due to economic disparities between women and men.

Yet, women are slowly starting to inhabit more seats as decision makers in the country – 20% of Cabinet members are female, and women are the heads of: The State Prosecution, Great Mutual Fund of Comoros, Postal Bank and the General Planning Commission.⁶⁸² Further, women are becoming more involved in elections, and during the 2015 municipal elections, 30% of women made up the voting body – a yet unprecedented number.⁶⁸³

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

As per the gendered norms in Comoros, women and adolescent girls become sexually active at an early age, and generally engage in unprotected sex. This exposes them to a myriad of potential issues, including unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), and an increased risk of maternal mortality.

Comoros has laws in place that prevent early marriage, yet they are not fully effective. In a 2014 study by the UNFPA, 11% of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 had reported that they had been married before the age of 18.⁶⁸⁴ In a 2015 UNICEF study, 17% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 reported gave birth before they were 18 years old.⁶⁸⁵

Fertility rates remain high at 4.7 live births per woman.⁶⁸⁶ This has partially been attributed to the lack of agency on behalf of women and girls in sexual and reproductive decision-making, the absence of comprehensive institutionalised sexual education, and

the inefficiency of existing adolescent-friendly reproductive health centres. As of 2015, only 19% of females used contraception,⁶⁸⁷ which was a significant decrease from 2011 when 26% of women were using contraception.⁶⁸⁸

The maternal mortality rate has fallen but still remains high. Between 2010 and 2015 maternal deaths had dropped from 388 to 335 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births according to the World Bank.⁶⁸⁹

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has remained low at less than 1%, however as there is a growing number of young female sex workers and an increase in early sexuality, this could potentially cause a dramatic rise in HIV/AIDS rates in the future. According to a 2015 UNICEF study, only 3% of adolescent girls (aged 15 – 19) were tested for HIV in the last year.⁶⁹⁰

Violence Against Women

In Comoros, there are laws that prohibit rape and domestic violence, but having such laws does not necessarily correlate into increased safety and security for women and girls.

Rape is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment. Although there are legal frameworks in place, many cases of rape are settled between families or by village elders. As such, there are very few statistics on the prevalence of rape and sexual assault. Further, Comorian law does not cover cases of spousal rape, leaving those women with no recourse.⁶⁹¹

More than 10% of girls in Comoros aged 15 to 19 years had experienced physical violence since the age of 15. The persons who committed this physical violence were most often a parent or sibling. The prevalence rate of sexual violence against girls is less than 10% in Comoros, with the largest proportion of girls reporting they experienced sexual violence for the first time between the ages of 10 and 14.⁶⁹²

Much like in the case of rape, Comorian law also prohibits domestic violence, but it is rarely enforced. Therefore, between this and societal pressure to keep quiet, it is equally difficult to capture accurate statistics as to its true prevalence.⁶⁹³ A UNICEF study from 2015 found that 39% of women justified wife beatings, showing a societal institutionalisation of violence against women.

The 2015 U.S. Department of State's, *Trafficking in Persons Report* found that Comorian women and

children are exposed to forced labour and, allegedly, sex trafficking, within the country as well as potential migration to the Middle East.⁶⁹⁴

Women, Peace and Security

The Comoros has not contributed any personnel to UN Peacekeeping Operations between 2010 and 2015. Since 2012, UN Women has been working on a peace-building project in Comoros. The aim of the project is “to understand the issues of gender relations in peace, in peace-building, even in conflicts and how conflicts happen, as well as to build alliances.”⁶⁹⁵

Education

According to a 2015 study by UN Women, 77.5% of Comorian women between the ages of 20 and 59 have no formal education, 13% have primary education, and 9.5% have secondary or higher education.⁶⁹⁶ Following these figures, of the 22.5% of women who are educated, more than half continue on to secondary or higher education. In rural areas, where there is additional pressure for women to fulfill traditional roles, opportunities for education decrease.

In general, men still have higher literacy rates than women, although women's literacy has improved significantly over the past decade (and slightly in the past two years). In 2000, females between the ages of 15 – 24 had a literacy rate of 77.6%, which increased to 87.1% in 2013, and 88.2% in 2015 – compared to males who had rates of 84% in 2000, 86.5% in 2013 and 86.9% in 2015.⁶⁹⁷ Likewise, women's rates have also increased in the population 15 years and older: 63.5% of women were literate in 2000, 72% in 2013 and 73.7% in 2015 – compared to 74.5% of males in 2000, 81.1% in 2013 and 81.8% in 2015.⁶⁹⁸ Both sets of statistics show that even though women are behind men, the growth rate of women's literacy is higher than that of men's.

Economic Empowerment

Comoros ranks at number 42 out of 52 African Countries according to the African Development Bank's 2015 Africa Gender Equality Index. When it comes to economic opportunities, Comoros does slightly better at number 43. The percentage of women in the labour force had increased between 1990 and 2013, when it rose from 27.2% to 35.2%.⁶⁹⁹ However, additional figures show that growth had slowed between 2011 and 2013, when it only rose .1% from 35.1% (2011) to 35.2% (2013).⁷⁰⁰

Unemployment rates have remained steady from 2009 – 2013, as well as and fairly even for women and men, at 7% for women and 6.4% for men.⁷⁰¹ For women who are employed, they get to enjoy a 14-week minimum fully funded maternity leave. While not as generous, men in Comoros are granted 10 days paternity leave.⁷⁰²

While there are laws in place that prohibit discrimination, women often find themselves

discriminated against based on their sex, especially in more rural areas. However, when dealing with inheritance, property rights practices are more favorable to women, and throughout the country, land and homes were usually awarded to women in cases of divorce or separation by The Ministry of Health, Solidarity, and Gender Promotion.⁷⁰³

DJIBOUTI

Djibouti acceded to CEDAW in 1998.⁷⁰⁴ The Maputo protocol was signed in 2003 and ratified in 2005.⁷⁰⁵ So far no national action plan has been adopted to incorporate UNSCR 1325.⁷⁰⁶ Recent information has been hard to access and specific comparative statistics have been difficult to locate.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

There are very few laws or policies in place to protect the rights of women and young girls, specifically in terms of ownership and sexual harassment. The government did cooperate with local organisations to provide training on women's rights; however it is difficult to assess any progress due to an acute lack of data and the overarching influence of customary law.⁷⁰⁷

According to the 2014 Human Rights Report, Djibouti's government is notorious for the use of suppressive force towards any opposition parties in the region.⁷⁰⁸ Among the associated human rights abuses related to excessive force and torture, are discrimination, violence against women and female genital mutilation/cutting.⁷⁰⁹ Officials who committed these acts were seldom punished, largely due to what is believed to be a weak legislature and a long history of impunity.⁷¹⁰

Djibouti law does not require equal pay for men and women and men still inherit the majority of estates according to customary law.⁷¹¹ Sexual harassment is not prohibited and there is a lack of data to quantify how pervasive this issue is.⁷¹² Although the constitution requires equal treatment and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, customary law still places women as secondary with fewer benefits in the work environment in all sectors.⁷¹³

Women's Political Participation

There is a large gap in statistical information surrounding women's participation in political processes. The government decreed that 20% of high-level public service positions are required to be held by women.⁷¹⁴ However the available data indicates that this has yet to be implemented. Figures for 2014 indicate that only 11% of women hold National Assembly seats and only three out of the possible 23 Cabinet Member positions are held by women. In 2010, women held 13.8% of the National Parliament seats, and in 2013 representation dropped to 12.7%, which did not rise in 2014.⁷¹⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The government has made headway in improving health rights and accessibility for women and young girls. Improvement is noted in most areas, although the duality of common law and cultural norms in the region are often conflicting, making it harder for genuine implementation to take place.

Maternal mortality rates have improved from 275 per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 229 per 100,000 in 2015.⁷¹⁶ This could be attributed to the fact that in 2012, 88% of women received pre-natal care, and 71% of births were carried out in a medical facility.⁷¹⁷ The Ministry of Women and Family Planning promotes the right to reproductive health without gender discrimination, as well as recognizing the right to all matters related to the timing of pregnancies and the number of children per family.⁷¹⁸ There are no restrictions on the use of contraceptives in Djibouti and in 2012 it is recorded that 22% of women utilised modern contraception; however women will often need to contend with cultural norms and pressures, as

well as the belief that for most women larger families are more desirable.⁷¹⁹

HIV/AIDS prevalence rates have risen for women and girls. Prevalence rose for females between the ages of 15 and 24 from 6% in 2010 to 8% in 2014.⁷²⁰ In total however, 1.2% of adults are HIV positive, which means that Djibouti's commitment to SDGs has been successful, as their goal of HIV/AIDS prevalence to drop to 1.8% in 2015 has been exceeded.⁷²¹

Violence Against Women

Violence and sexual violence committed against women in Djibouti appears to be a neglected issue. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), rape and other abuses are not statistically comprehensive enough and a pervasive issue of impunity prevents any real reform in this area. As of yet there is no law prohibiting statutory rape.⁷²²

Data surrounding rape incidences is not readily available, as women do not often report to the authorities.⁷²³ A reason for this is often that almost every case is dealt with by the traditional justice system, and usually involves the families of victims and perpetrators.⁷²⁴ The case is similar for victims of domestic or intimate partner violence, as there is no codified law prohibiting domestic violence and incidences are handled by traditional authorities.⁷²⁵ Regarding intimate partner violence, the government prohibits "torture and barbaric acts" but this is not all encompassing and leaves out the varying and complex factors of abuse.⁷²⁶

There is a law prohibiting FGM/C, but according to the information available, there appears to be little to no implementation of this law, and the FGM/C incidence rate is still extremely high.⁷²⁷ The law states that perpetrators of FGM/C are subject to five years imprisonment and those who do not report incidences are subject to a fine.⁷²⁸ These punishments are not enough of a deterrent, and as of yet no one has been charged on either of these counts.⁷²⁹ There is however positive data indicating a drop in FGM/C incidences in the country, showing a drop from 93% of victims in 2006 to 78% in 2013.⁷³⁰

Women, Peace and Security

Data for the inclusion of women in peace processes is not readily available. There have been no recent conflicts in the region and there are no apparent statistics representing women's involvement in AU or UN peacekeeping missions.

Education

Although there is limited recent information available surrounding education for women and young girls, the available data indicates that there has been positive growth in primary school enrolment and completion levels. The government has made primary education compulsory while emphasising equality and striving to end discrimination against enrollees.⁷³¹ However it must be noted that traditional or cultural norms often impede support for young girls or women seeking education.⁷³² Regardless, girls' promotion to secondary school has risen from 80.6% in 2011 to 100% in 2013.⁷³³ Total enrolment levels for girls entering primary school has also risen from 58.5% in 2009 to 63.9% in 2013.⁷³⁴

Women's Economic Empowerment

It is difficult to accurately assess the improvement of inclusive practices in the economy as available information indicates single percentage increases. Female labour force participation rose from 38% in 2010 to 39% in 2013.⁷³⁵ The female to male participation in labour force also increased from 53% in 2010 to 54% in 2013.⁷³⁶ It was reported that 14.2% of companies had women as manager in 2013, but there is no comparative data to indicate if this has subsequently improved or worsened.⁷³⁷

The law does not prohibit discrimination against women in terms of access to credit.⁷³⁸ The law does however provide for paid maternity leave for the duration of 98 days.⁷³⁹ So far, the predominance of employed women work in the informal sector and therefore lack access to all the benefits and securities that are available in formal sector employment.⁷⁴⁰

ERITREA

Eritrea has had a bloody history in its fight for independence. While now free from Ethiopia, human rights abuses still run rampant: many opponents of the government have been silenced, hundreds of people have “disappeared”,⁷⁴¹ and Eritrea is one of the world’s most censored country, (next to North Korea).⁷⁴² The 1997 Constitution has never been enforced; there is no functioning legislature, independent judiciary, elections, independent press, or nongovernmental organizations.⁷⁴³ All power is in the hands of President Isaias Afewerki, who has been in office since 1991.⁷⁴⁴ Eritrea ratified CEDAW on September 5, 1995, however they are not party to the Optional Protocol.⁷⁴⁵ They have not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, nor have they signed or ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol).

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The Eritrean Constitution, ratified in 1997, has strong protections for women’s rights, as a reflection of the high status women attained by participating in the liberation struggle.⁷⁴⁶ The Constitution grants equal rights to women with regard to such key issues as land ownership, family and marriage, equality before the law, inheritance and passing on citizenship to their children.⁷⁴⁷ However this Constitution has never been enforced, and there is significant concern that women’s rights as stated in CEDAW are not being protected in Eritrea.⁷⁴⁸

Despite the promising nature of these policies, it appears that Eritrea is in fact promoting grave injustices and attacks of human rights. The United Nations released a report in 2015 after a year long study of Eritrea on the multiple human rights abuses being practiced in the country.⁷⁴⁹ Approximately 5,000 Eritreans are fleeing the country every month, the UN reported, as a result of the patterns of torture, arbitrary detention and indefinite conscription mandated by the government.⁷⁵⁰ The UN report, supported by further investigation by Human Rights Watch, argues that these human rights abuses are pervasive, systemic and the result of deliberate government policy.⁷⁵¹

Women’s Political Participation

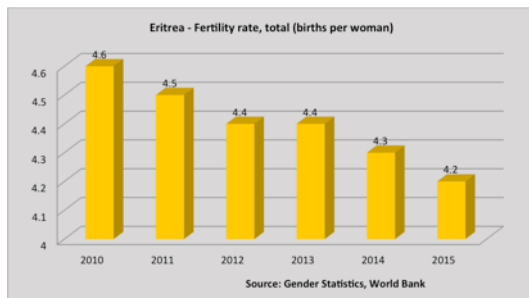
Eritrea has not held an election since 1993.⁷⁵² The government is a unicameral legislature, comprised only of a Lower House.⁷⁵³ The National Assembly comprises 150 members, 33 of whom are women, making the representation of women 22%.⁷⁵⁴ The percentage of women in parliament has remained the same for the period 2010 to 2015.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The health status of Eritrea was at its lowest point when they gained independence from Ethiopia in 1991, and it has been an uphill battle to reach targets of equality and a high level health standard since then.⁷⁵⁵ Great effort has been exerted to these ends, and some of it has paid off: the maternal mortality rate has been reduced from 998/100,000 live births in 1995 to 240 per 100,000 births and 35% of births are attended by skilled health personnel in 2010.⁷⁵⁶ According to UN Women Report on the Implementation of Beijing Declaration, Eritrea is one of the few countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the African continent.⁷⁵⁷ Emergency obstetric care in functional health facilities increased from 40% in 2004 to 82.3% in 2012.⁷⁵⁸ Eritrea introduced magnesium sulphate as a treatment for eclampsia in 2008, initiated home-based postpartum care, introduced maternal and prenatal death audits, and eliminated neonatal tetanus in 2004.⁷⁵⁹ The country has begun tackling the issues of underage marriage and teen pregnancy, which contribute to mortality and morbidity.⁷⁶⁰

The fertility rate dropped from 4.6 births per woman in 2010, to 4.2 births per woman in 2015.⁷⁶¹

There are roughly 12,000-24,000 people living with HIV in Eritrea, with an adult prevalence of 0.7%.⁷⁶² Of the 14,000 adults with HIV, 8,800 are women. The most recent statistics are from 2012, but there is clear improvement from more recent statistics such as a prevalence of 0.8% in 2009, and 1.3% in 2007.⁷⁶³ Eritrea launched their first national HIV/AIDS response in 1992, and saw a decline of 67% in AIDS-related deaths.⁷⁶⁴



Violence against Women

Women gained respect from their country by participating so enthusiastically in the struggle for independence, however the gender-sensitive laws that resulted from that are in direct contrast to the traditional views of women in Eritrean society.⁷⁶⁵ There are many positive laws protecting women's rights in Eritrea, such as the law allowing women to enter into marriages freely with the same rights as men, laws prohibiting bride prices and dowry, kidnapping for marriage is illegal, sentences for rape, and the minimum legal age for marriage is 18.⁷⁶⁶ However these laws carry little clout in a society governed mostly by customary law, and where enforcement is almost non-existent and the government is more concerned with surveillance and control.⁷⁶⁷ A 2001 study found that 40% of women had been victims of domestic violence.⁷⁶⁸ Very few women speak out for fear of social isolation and lack of accountability for perpetrators.⁷⁶⁹ There is no actual legislation to penalise violence against women.⁷⁷⁰

The most predominant forms of violence against women in Eritrea are Female Genital Mutilation Cutting (FGM/C) and underage marriage.⁷⁷¹ Many people in Eritrea still believe that FGM/C can reduce sexual desire in girls and thus protect their virginity and purity.⁷⁷² About 89% of all girls and women in Eritrea have experienced one type of FGM/C.⁷⁷³ As part of their campaign to achieve equality and empower women, Eritrea banned FGM/C in 2007.⁷⁷⁴

Child marriage is particularly high in Eastern Africa, where, despite the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child prohibiting the marriage of any child under the age of 18, over one third of women have been married before 18.⁷⁷⁵ UNICEF reports that 13% of Eritrean girls are married by age 15 and 41% are married by 18.⁷⁷⁶ Eritrea currently sits at 17th in the world for child marriage, an improvement from their ranking of 13 in 2013.⁷⁷⁷

Women, Peace and Security

Eritrean women played a significant role in the independence struggle of the country, and the liberation army was made up of 30% women.⁷⁷⁸ Today, Eritrean law requires that each person serve 18 months of military or national service.⁷⁷⁹ However in practice, most conscripts are spending most of their working lives in national service, where they are subjected to slavery-like practices.⁷⁸⁰ The United Nations has called this practice "the systematic violation of an array of human rights on a scope and scale seldom witnessed elsewhere in the world."⁷⁸¹

Education

The Eritrean National Education Policy of 2003 was premised on the goal of equality between men and women to be achieved through education.⁷⁸² In this document the government commits to the relevant Millennium Development Goals.⁷⁸³ They also put in place a National Literacy Program in 2004 with a main objective of narrowing gender disparity in literacy by increasing women's participation in literacy programs.⁷⁸⁴ In 2012 the literacy rate for women was 61%, while for men it sat at 80%.⁷⁸⁵ In 2013 that number improved for both men and women, taking them to 90.2% and 69.8%, respectively.⁷⁸⁶

Statistics from 2010 show girls' enrolment in elementary school at 86.7% and boys' at 97.3%. The disparity remains about the same throughout middle school (56.2% and 66.7%) and secondary school (29.5% and 39.5%), while numbers clearly drop the higher the education.⁷⁸⁷ In 2011 girls' elementary school enrolment increased to 93%, 62% at middle school and dropped to 27% in secondary school.⁷⁸⁸ The current key challenges facing gender equality in education in Eritrea are: traditional values and cultural attitudes that put a preference on sending boys to school, traditions of girls staying home to do chores, a fear of hurting a girl's marriage prospects, few women in higher education, lack of schools within a reasonable distance to local homes, and limited access to information and facilities for girls, among others.⁷⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

There has been a consistent but small increase in the percentage of women active in the Eritrean workforce, moving from 78.1% in 2005, to 79.6% in 2010, to 80% in 2013.⁷⁹⁰ 60% of Eritreans are engaged in subsistence farming, an area where women play a large role of caring for dependents, cooking and cleaning, fetching water and firewood, and managing

the household in general.⁷⁹¹ Women, who do participate in the business sector, are predominantly found in the informal sector, as a result of low levels of education and limited financial resources.⁷⁹² Women remain vastly underrepresented in many occupations.⁷⁹³

The fact that many more women are illiterate than men determines gender roles in the household and contributes to the patriarchal system, making women's economic situations precarious and their ability to change their situation difficult.⁷⁹⁴ The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare, along with regional governments, the Ministry of Agriculture and

specialised financial institutions have instituted targeting programs aimed at promoting small and medium sized businesses lead by women in rural areas.⁷⁹⁵

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia has had some promising improvements for the rights of women in the past five years. The Deputy Prime Minister is female, Ethiopia ratified CEDAW in 1981 and signed the Maputo protocol in 2004. However, Ethiopia has still not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. From 2000 – 2008, there was a UN peacekeeping mandate in Ethiopia: United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

During the most recent CEDAW review (2011), the Committee applauded the enactment of the new Criminal Code of 2005 which criminalises different forms of violence against women, including: female genital cutting, domestic violence and extra-marital rape, early marriage and marriage by abduction, and trafficking in women and children.⁷⁹⁶ The Committee noted the adoption of the National Plan for Gender Equality (2005-2010) and the Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to Eradicate Poverty (2005-2010).

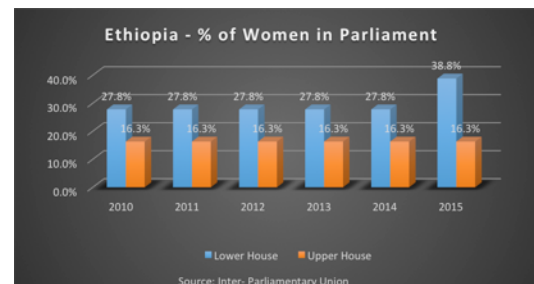
Despite the fact that Ethiopia has adopted CEDAW into its constitution and legal codes, violations of the Convention's principles occur unchecked throughout the country. The Committee is concerned about numerous and consistent reports of violence against women and girls including, "rape, torture, extrajudicial killings and forced evictions, by members of the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) and of private militia groups in the context of armed conflict, in particular in the Ogaden area of the Somali Regional State, and about the impunity enjoyed by the alleged perpetrators of such crimes".⁷⁹⁷

Additionally, while Ethiopia is making efforts to combat human trafficking, it still does not fully comply with the minimum standards for its

elimination. The Government has maintained anti-trafficking law enforcement, but only seems to focus these resources on transnational labour trafficking, with little evidence of investigation or prosecution of internal labour trafficking or sex trafficking.⁷⁹⁸

Women's Political Participation

Gender mainstreaming is encouraged in all governing bodies and now Ethiopia proudly boasts the first female Deputy Prime Minister. Great efforts have been made by The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to encourage women's empowerment including: increasing enrolment of women trainee diplomats from 20% in 2012/13 to 50% in 2014/15 and establishing The Women, Children and Youth Directorate General which aims to mainstream gender in the ministry's day-to-day activities.⁷⁹⁹



As of September 2015, Ethiopia ranks at 15th in Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Women in Parliaments:

World Classification”, where women made up 38.8% (212 / 546) of the Lower Chamber and 16.3% (22 / 135) of the Upper Chamber. In 2014 women held 27.8% (152 / 547) of seats in the Lower Chamber and 16.3% (22 / 135) of Upper Chamber. From 2010 – 2014 the number of seats remained the same, but Ethiopia’s ranking had declined from 30th in 2011, to 40th in 2014.⁸⁰⁰

According to the National Election Board of Ethiopia in 2015, 48% of Ethiopia’s 36.8 million registered voters are women.⁸⁰¹ This is a slight decrease from 2011, when women made up 52.2% of Ethiopia’s 31.9 million registered voters.⁸⁰² However, female candidates increased between 2010 and 2015, from 14.3%⁸⁰³ to 23%.⁸⁰⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Ethiopia enacted a Family Code in 2001 that puts the legal age of marriage at 18 for both sexes compared to 15 in previous years. Yet, early marriage still persists, and in 2012 it was estimated a mere 50% of the population knew about this change in legislation.⁸⁰⁵ As of 2015, one in five girls in Ethiopia are married before the age of 18. In the Gondor region, almost half of the underage girls are married.⁸⁰⁶ Early marriage has declined between 2011 – 2015, from 30% to 23% of women 15 – 19 years old.⁸⁰⁷

Ethiopia has made progress in lowering maternal mortality rates, but a weak healthcare system means many women are still succumbing to preventable complications before, during and after childbirth. Only 10% of women deliver with the assistance of skilled personnel.⁸⁰⁸ Maternal mortality was at 420 / 100,000 live births in 2014,⁸⁰⁹ 350/ 100,000 live births in 2012,⁸¹⁰ and 470 / 100,000 live births in 2011.⁸¹¹ While not a significant change has been noted in the past five years, Ethiopia has come leaps and bounds from 1990, when 1,400 women died for every 100,000 live births.⁸¹²

The fertility rate for women in Ethiopia has slightly declined from 5.3 births per woman in 2011⁸¹³ to 4.6 births per woman in 2014.⁸¹⁴ As of 2015, the rate of contraceptive use for women is 29%, which is a huge improvement from 3% less than 20 years ago.⁸¹⁵ Abortion remains illegal in Ethiopia but with numerous exceptions, and the rate of illegal abortions has declined in recent years.⁸¹⁶

Often a complication of childbirth, and specifically early childbirth, fistula remains a pervasive problem in

the country. The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital was established in 1979, and has since treated 30,000 women for free with a success rate of 92%.⁸¹⁷

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the prevalence rates of HIV among adults aged 15 – 49 had dropped from 2.6% in 2005 to 1.2% in 2013.⁸¹⁸ Ethiopia has seen a significant increase in HIV testing since 2005, and as of 2012, 36% of women had been tested for the virus.⁸¹⁹ In 2011, Ethiopia signed the Global Plan towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive. This plan aimed to ensure that all pregnant women living with HIV had access to HIV prevention and treatment services, and that new HIV infections among children would be eliminated by 2015.⁸²⁰ However, as of 2015, only 24% of pregnant women who are eligible for HIV services receive them, and one out of three children born to an HIV-positive mother is infected with the virus.⁸²¹

While an issue that spans both reproductive rights and violence against women, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) remains in practice despite legislation that prohibits it. The 2005 Demographic and Health Survey reported that 74.3% of women ages 15-49 had experienced FGM/C.⁸²² Since then 23% of young girls had undergone FGM/C in 2013, with the highest figures in the Amhara region at 47%.⁸²³

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a significant human rights violation in Ethiopia. Domestic violence and spousal rape are widely accepted practices, and according to a 2009 WHO study, 70% of Ethiopian women had suffered physical violence from their husband or partner. In 2011, Demographic and Health Survey found that 68% of women justified wife beatings (they agreed with at least one of five presented reasons for violence), which, while high, is an improvement from 81% in 2005.⁸²⁴ A UNICEF study found that more than 50% of boys and 60% of girls between the ages of 15 - 19 think that a “husband/partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner under certain circumstances”.⁸²⁵

While Ethiopian law criminalises rape with penalties of five to 20 years, sexual violence against women in Ethiopia is relatively common. Research from 2012 found that “rape is undoubtedly one of the rampant crimes in Ethiopia”, and linked its prevalence to “male

chauvinist culture, legal loopholes, the inefficiency of different agencies in the criminal justice system, and a deep-seated culture of silence”.⁸²⁶

As is the case with many world conflicts, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the 1990s saw sexual violence being used as a weapon of war, and this violence continues in the Ogaden region. Human Rights Watch stated that “systematic rape has been a feature of the government’s counter-insurgency strategy in the region since 2007, directed against women suspected of having links to the Ogaden National Liberation Front.”⁸²⁷ Unfortunately, there is not much information from the region due to the government’s restrictions on the media, and the lack of access given to humanitarian organisations. This also means that without humanitarian aid, there are no health services or other support mechanisms for the survivors of this sexual violence.⁸²⁸

Human trafficking continues to be an issue in Ethiopia, when Addis Ababa houses one of the largest collections of brothels on the continent (featuring sex workers as young as 8 years old).⁸²⁹ 18 offenders were convicted of human trafficking in 2007,⁸³⁰ 46 offenders were convicted between 2012 – 2013, and 106 in the previous reporting period. According to a 2015 U.S. Department of State report, 99 suspected trafficking cases were investigated, compared with 135 cases in 2013.⁸³¹ As of 2015, Ethiopian officials indicated 58 cases remained on-going in court.⁸³²

Women, Peace and Security

Ethiopia remains a top African contributor to UN peacekeeping operations on the Continent. In 2010, Ethiopia ranked 11th in Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations with a total contribution of 2,388 (96 female / 4%) and in 2015, Ethiopia ranked 2nd with a total contribution of 8,309 (523 female / 6.3%).⁸³³ In 2013, Ethiopia was also the leading contributor of female peacekeepers to UN missions, but only one served in a senior leadership role.⁸³⁴

Education

Girls’ school enrolment in Ethiopia rose from 41% in 2000 to 83% in 2011, according to the African Report on Child Wellbeing.⁸³⁵ The Ministry of Education reported female participation in undergraduate and postgraduate programs rose to 172,237 women in 2012-13 from 144,286 women in 2011-12, continuing the trend of increasing female participation in higher education.⁸³⁶ A nationally representative survey of primary school students in Ethiopia found that exposure to school violence reduced girls’ class participation and school performance, and increased their grade repetition and drop-out rates.⁸³⁷

The female adult literacy rate was 43% in 2011,⁸³⁸ 59% in 2012⁸³⁹ and 59% in 2014.⁸⁴⁰ In 2015, 67.8% of females between the ages of 15 – 24 were literate, and 41.1% of females 15 and older were literate.⁸⁴¹

Economic Empowerment

According to the World Bank, the labour force participation rate for females has remained the same from 2011 – 2013, at 78.2%.⁸⁴² In urban areas women rarely received equal pay for equal work and there were overall fewer employment opportunities. Further, women’s access to credit or the opportunity to own or manage a business was limited by their lower level of education and societal norms.⁸⁴³

The World Economic Forum found that the female unemployment rate (as a % of female labour force) was 22.6% in 2014 and 30% in 2011 / 2012. This can be compared to the male unemployment rate of 11.7% in 2014 and 12% in 2011 / 2012. The World Economic Forum (WEF) also found that in 2014 females comprised 14% of top management positions and 35% of participation in ownership.⁸⁴⁴

Women hold the right to “inherit, acquire, administer, control, use, and transfer property, and they have also equal right with men with respect to use, transfer, administration and control of land, as per Article 35(6) of the Constitution.”⁸⁴⁵

KENYA

Kenya ratified The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984 as well as The Maputo Protocol in 2010. Kenya has drafted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, but it has not passed through both houses of parliament.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

In CEDAW's 2010 review (covering 2006 – 2009), the Kenyan government had taken a number of legislative, judicial, administrative and programmatic actions towards elimination of discrimination against women in a number of sectors since the last CEDAW review. It should be noted that this latest review was prepared in the context of the 2007 post-election crisis, which resulted in widespread violence including the “killing of at least 1,133 people, rape of at least 1,500 women and girls, and internal displacement of at least 350,000 people in Kenya, many of them women and children.”⁸⁴⁶

The Committee applauded Kenya's: Employment Act (particularly as it outlaws discrimination against women based on sex and pregnancy); Sexual Offences Act; Vision 2030 to promote women's rights; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development; Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Act; gender focal points in all government ministries; National Plan of Action to Implement the Gender Policy; Development of a National Plan of Action for the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting; and Kenyan courts for directly applying CEDAW provisions as legal authority in a number of cases to determine pertinent matters concerning women.⁸⁴⁷

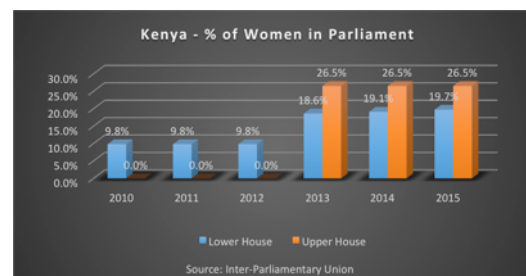
Kenya adopted a new gender-sensitive constitution in 2010, passed the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Act in 2011, and established the National Gender and Equality Commission in 2011. However, despite all of these very positive steps towards gender equity, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) still continues, along with “wife inheritance”, “ritual cleansing”, and gender based violence in various parts of the state party.⁸⁴⁸

Women's Political Participation

Kenya currently ranks 75th in IPU's “Women in Parliaments: World Classification” with females comprising 19.7% of seats in the Lower House and 26.5% of seats in the Upper House. This can be

compared to 2011 when Kenya ranked 105th with 9.8% of women in the Lower House.⁸⁴⁹

A comprehensive study by FIDA and the National Democratic Institute identified significant barriers to women's political participation, including “the consistent failure of political parties to adhere to their own stated procedures for choosing candidates; and harassment, intimidation, and outright violence against women.”⁸⁵⁰ An example of this took place in Kenya's 2013 general elections when several of the female candidates withdrew following threats to their lives, including physical violence against their supporters. Those who managed to continue their campaigns and win the election, continued to face intimidation from their peers.⁸⁵¹



Women's political participation rose significantly between 2002 – 2007 when in the 2007 election, 269 women ran for parliamentary seats, compared to 44 in 2002.⁸⁵² The female to male ratio of women in ministerial positions was 0.50⁸⁵³ in 2014 and 0.18⁸⁵⁴ from 2011 – 2013. Further, the percentage of women employed by the government increased from 24.4% in 2003 to 39.1% in June 2011.⁸⁵⁵

There are fewer female voters in Kenya due to various socio-economic factors including: poverty, poor health, and negative attitudes towards voting fostered by the cultural assumption that leadership belongs only to men.⁸⁵⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2014 the fertility rate was 4.5⁸⁵⁷ children per women, compared to 4.46⁸⁵⁸ in 2013, 4.70⁸⁵⁹ in 2012, and 4.90⁸⁶⁰ in 2011. The contraceptive prevalence for

married women was 58%⁸⁶¹ in 2015 versus 39%⁸⁶² in 2011. The government has pledged to increase modern contraceptive use by 10% in 2015 from 46% to 56%.⁸⁶³ Despite the fact that marriage is illegal under the age of 18, early marriage rates slightly rose from 17%⁸⁶⁴ of women 15 - 19 in 2011 to 20%⁸⁶⁵ in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Kenya is still struggling to meet the MDG's target for reducing maternal mortality set at 147 per 100,000 live births.⁸⁶⁶ In 2014 Kenya's maternal mortality ratio was 400 / 100,000 live births⁸⁶⁷, compared to 360 / 100,000 live births⁸⁶⁸ in 2013 and 2012, and 530 / 100,000 live births⁸⁶⁹ in 2011.

1,400,000 people in Kenya are currently living with HIV, including 700,000 women aged 15 and older.⁸⁷⁰ In 2014 HIV/AIDS remained the leading cause of death in Kenya, responsible for nearly three in 10 deaths in the country.⁸⁷¹ In 2014, the World Economic Forum estimated that female HIV age-standardised deaths were 145.5 / 100,000.⁸⁷² While the prevalence rate of infection has reduced during the past decade, women are still disproportionately affected. Prevalence among women between the ages of 15 to 24, declined from 5.9% in 2003 to 3.0% in 2012 while prevalence among young men remained relatively stable, between 1.1% and 1.5% during the same period.⁸⁷³

Violence Against Women

While there are legal frameworks in place to curb violence against women and children – including the Children's Act (2001), Sexual Offences Act (2006), FGM/C Act (2011) and the National Policy on Prevention and Response to GBV – gender based violence rates remain high in Kenya.

According to a 2014 UNICEF survey, 66% of women aged 18 to 24 in Kenya had reported physical violence prior to age of 18.⁸⁷⁴ In 2013, 45% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced either physical or sexual violence, with 21% of them specifically reporting sexual violence.⁸⁷⁵ This can be compared to the 2008/2009 Demographic and Health Survey where 40% of women of the same age group reported sexual and or physical violence, with 20% of those specifically reporting sexual violence. The same survey also showed that attitudes that support gender-based violence (GBV) are high with 53% of women and 44% agreeing that “a man should beat his wife if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without

telling him, neglects the children, or refuses sexual relations”.⁸⁷⁶ It should be noted that cases of GBV are under-reported due to: social stigmas, fear, shame and negative attitudes towards women. It was estimated in 2008, that as many as 95% of sexual offenses were not reported to the police.⁸⁷⁷

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) has been criminalised in Kenya since 2001, yet this has not curbed the practice, but merely driven it underground.⁸⁷⁸ It has been reported that parents are taking their daughters to remote regions in Kenya to have the practice done “secretly.”⁸⁷⁹ The rate of FGM/C was 38% in 1998 to 27% in 2008/2009, and 32% in 2003.⁸⁸⁰ To assure the implementation of anti-FGM/C laws, the national anti-FGM/C unit was set up in 2014. According to police statistics, of the 71 cases taken to court since 2011, only 16 have resulted in convictions and 33 are pending.⁸⁸¹

Kenya is a tier-two country for human trafficking, serving as a “source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking”.⁸⁸² While Kenya does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, in 2014 the government established the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Advisory Committee, and prosecuted 65 trafficking cases that year (more than double than in the previous reporting period), as well as convicting 33 traffickers (compared to seven in 2013).⁸⁸³

Women, Peace and Security

In 2015, Kenya ranked 28th in military and police contributions to UN Operations, with a total contribution of 951 of which 19% were female.⁸⁸⁴ This is an increase from 2010 / 2011 when women comprised only 7%, but a decrease from 2014 when women comprised 20%.⁸⁸⁵

In 2012, Kenya was in the process of setting up The National Women's Police Association, to promote women's role in law enforcement and security reform. While sex-segregated data by gender is not available publicly for the Kenyan police force, it is estimated that women made up 11% of the 73,000 members as of 2012.⁸⁸⁶ Women are members of the Kenyan Army (both infantry and armour), Air Force, and Navy, though exact numbers are not available.⁸⁸⁷ In 2015, President Kenyatta announced the appointment of the country's first female brigadier of the Kenya Defence Forces.⁸⁸⁸

Education

The literacy rate has had very slight fluctuations in the past few years but has remained fairly steady. In 2014 the female to male ratio was 0.86⁸⁸⁹, compared to 0.93⁸⁹⁰ in 2012 and 0.92⁸⁹¹ in 2011. In 2015, UNESCO statistics show that 74.9% of women over the age of 15 were literate (as opposed to 81.1% of men), and 86.6% of females between the ages of 15 - 24 (as opposed to 85.2% of men.) But women have actually become less literate since 2000, when UNESCO noted that 77.9% of women over 15 were literate and 91.9% of women between 15 – 24.⁸⁹²

Kenya introduced free primary education in 2003, which reportedly increased the number of girls attending school.⁸⁹³ 73.5% of girls were enrolled in primary education in 2004 compared with 75.3% in 2006, 82.2% in 2009 and 82.2% in 2012.⁸⁹⁴

Economic Empowerment

Kenya has been applauded for their commitment to encouraging women's economic prosperity. In 2006, after noting the vast number of women marginalised in the economy, the government set up 'The Women

Enterprise Fund' to address poverty alleviation through the socio-economic empowerment of women.⁸⁹⁵

According to the 2012 Women, Business and the Law Report by the World Bank, Kenya ranked first out of 141 economies in easing women's access to property, job opportunities, credit among other rights.⁸⁹⁶ However, despite these reforms, many women do not know of their existence.

The labour force participation has remained relatively stable in recent years. In 2005, 60%⁸⁹⁷ of women were part of the labour force, compared to 61.5%⁸⁹⁸ in 2011, 62%⁸⁹⁹ in 2012, and 61%⁹⁰⁰ in 2013. In 2014, 49%⁹⁰¹ of firms has female participation in ownership, compared to 33%⁹⁰² in 2011, and, in 2014, 13%⁹⁰³ of firms had females in top management. The length of paid maternity leave is 90 days with the employer paying 100% of the benefits, and paternity leave is 14 days.⁹⁰⁴

As of 2010, the Kenyan constitution offers women equal rights to men when it comes to owning property.⁹⁰⁵

MADAGASCAR

Madagascar has been a country in transition since the political upheaval that began in 2008, which significantly impacted upon human rights – and the rights of women – across the country. Madagascar ratified CEDAW in 1989 and signed The Maputo Protocol in 2004, but has not ratified yet. There is no National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 but it is currently in its validation stage.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Madagascar's constitution includes a non-discrimination clause, which mentions gender, and guarantees equality before the law.⁹⁰⁶ In 2014, CEDAW conducted a review on Madagascar where the Committee found that "In spite of the social and political crisis that has gripped Madagascar since December of 2008, the country has not fallen short of its obligations regarding submission of reports on the implementation of the international human rights instruments that it has ratified."⁹⁰⁷

The Ministry of National Education has produced educational radio programmes to raise public awareness that all forms of violence against women are a form of discrimination under the Convention.⁹⁰⁸ The Ministry of Finance and Budget has set up a national agency within the Treasury Department to coordinate micro-finance to facilitate women's access to credit.⁹⁰⁹ Married men and women have equal rights to property ownership, and men and women

also have equal rights to inheritance, though this is not always actualised.⁹¹⁰

While there is no reliable data available on the number of trafficked persons in Madagascar, it is known that it is a tier-2 source country for both labour and sex trafficking. The Government of Madagascar adopted a five-year national action plan and established a National Bureau to Combat Human Trafficking, but as yet, does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.⁹¹¹ There have been few prosecutions, convictions or compensations given to victims of trafficking. Further, victims are hesitant to report their cases to trained authorities, as they are ashamed or unaware of their rights.⁹¹²

Women's Political Participation

In 2010, Madagascan female activists requested that the Constitution be amended to include women's participation in politics, with a specific goal of 30% female politicians in parliament by 2012 and 50% by 2015, following The SADC Gender Protocol.⁹¹³ This goal has yet to be reached. In 2011, women made up 12.5% of the Lower House and 11% of the Upper House, compared to 17.5% of the Lower house and 12% of the Upper House in 2013. As of 2015, women make up only 20% of the lower house (no data was available for the upper house).⁹¹⁴

The percentage of women in ministerial level positions had significantly increased in the past decade, from 6% in 2005, to 17% in 2010 and 31% in 2014.⁹¹⁵ But as of January 1, 2015, the percentage of women in ministerial level positions in Madagascar had dropped to 20%.⁹¹⁶

In the 2013 election, of the 2,054 candidates for the legislative office 15% were women, including 2 of the 33 presidential candidates.⁹¹⁷ At the constitutional referendum in 2010, 3,204,243 women (44.8 %) were registered as against 3,946,980 men.⁹¹⁸ In 2009, out of more than 1,560 municipalities, only 67 were led by women mayors.⁹¹⁹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The fertility rate has remained relatively steady in recent years. In 2011 it was 4.7⁹²⁰ children per woman, compared to 4.7⁹²¹ in 2012, 4.53⁹²² in 2013 and 4.5⁹²³ in 2014. The maternal mortality rate was the same in 2011⁹²⁴ and 2014⁹²⁵ at 440 deaths per 100,000 live births with a dip in these deaths to 240 / 100,000 in 2012⁹²⁶ and 2013.⁹²⁷

The contraceptive prevalence rate has significantly increased for married women or women in a union, from 27%⁹²⁸ in 2011 to 40%⁹²⁹ in 2015. Abortion is only allowed in Madagascar if the pregnancy threatens the woman's life.⁹³⁰ Madagascar has a low level of HIV prevalence, .1%⁹³¹ of women between the ages of 15 – 49 had HIV in 2011 and .2%⁹³² in 2013.

Violence Against Women

Despite the fact that Madagascan law prohibits domestic violence, it remains a widespread problem. While national statistics on the prevalence of gender-based violence are not available, in 2007 Madagascar's National Institute for Public Health estimated that 55% of women were victims of domestic violence⁹³³ and a 2011 survey that covered Antananarivo, Diego and Tulear, found that about 30% of women reported having experienced domestic violence at least once in their lives.⁹³⁴ Domestic

violence is punishable by two to five years in prison and a fine, dependent on the severity of injuries or whether the victim was pregnant. It was noted that few women took legal action against their husbands, which was partially attributed to the cost of the required medical certificate.^{935 936} In a survey, approximately 44% of boys and 47% of girls aged 15-19 believed that "a husband/partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner under certain circumstances."⁹³⁷

Measures to combat gender-based violence have been established including centres that provide counselling and legal advice on prevention, provision of adequate services and promotion of the right to justice.⁹³⁸ A 2014 survey showed that 15% of girls between the ages of 15 to 19 had experienced acts of physical violence in the previous 12 months.⁹³⁹

In Madagascar rape is prohibited, (excluding marital rape), with penalties ranging from 5 years to life in prison, depending on "the victim's age, the rapist's relationship to the victim, and whether the offender's occupation involved contact with children".⁹⁴⁰ The US Department of State found that in 2014 the public hospital in Antananarivo received 400 victims of sexual violence, which were predominantly minors. It was largely believed that this figure greatly underestimated the extent of sexual violence against women across the country.⁹⁴¹

Further, in 2008, The Morals and Minors Brigade reported having received 10 to 12 rape-related complaints daily. There were 217 cases of rape reported in 2008 in Antananarivo, of these, 130 were investigated. The Union of Social Workers recorded cases of sexual violence at the Public Hospital in Antananarivo. For 2008, they logged 353 cases of sexual abuse, including 91 cases of rape, and in 2011 there were 547 cases of sexual abuse, including rape. For both years it was also believed that this number was a gross understatement for the amount of sexual violence actually taking place across the country.⁹⁴²

The legal age for marriage without parental consent is 18 for both men and women, but child marriage is nonetheless common.⁹⁴³ A 2004 UN report estimated that 34% of girls between 15 and 19 were married, divorced or widowed, and more than a quarter had at least one child.⁹⁴⁴ This rate has not diminished, and in 2015, it was found that 40%⁹⁴⁵ of girls were married between the ages of 15 – 19.

Women, Peace and Security

Following the dissemination of 1325 across the country, the Congress of Transition passed a law in

2012 that all 22 regions in Madagascar must be represented by a woman and a man with respect to national reconciliation.⁹⁴⁶ According to the Institute for Security Studies, “Malagasy women play an important role in reconciliation at district, provincial and national level. At community level, various women movements go beyond different political affiliations to deliberate on new priorities for women's rights during and after the transition process.”⁹⁴⁷

As of 2014, Madagascar had the lowest proportion of women in defence in Africa, at 0.1% from 2010 – 2014. Likewise, Madagascar also had the lowest amount of female peacekeepers, at 3%.⁹⁴⁸ However, women now make up 18% of the Gendermarie (Military Police) thanks to the adoption of a 10% quota in 2010⁹⁴⁹, and the number of women deployed has grown from 3% in 2010 to 17% in 2014.⁹⁵⁰

In 2015, Madagascar ranked 83rd in Military and Police Contributions to UN operations, with a total contribution of 46 of which 7 were female⁹⁵¹, compared to 73rd in 2010, with a total contribution of 63 of which 2 were female.⁹⁵² While the ranking as fallen in 2015, women made up 15% of contributions compared to only 1.5% in 2010. As of 2015, Madagascar is in the validation phase of its National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, and has ranked 2nd in the assessment of overall progress of SADC countries in addressing gender, peace and security issues⁹⁵³

There was no data on female victims of sexual violence in conflicts.

Education

It appears that literacy rates have slightly dropped for both males and females between the ages of 15 – 24. In 2000, 68.2% of females and 72.7% of men of this age group were literate compared to 64% of females and 65.9% of males in 2009, and 64.8% of females to 65.4% of males in 2015.⁹⁵⁴ Likewise the adult literacy rate has dropped. In 2000, 65.3% of females to 76.5% of males 15 and older were literate, compared to 62.6% of females to 66.7% of males in 2015.⁹⁵⁵

Economic Empowerment

The World Economic Forum's “Gender Gap Index” ranked Madagascar 41st (out of 142 countries) in 2014,⁹⁵⁶ compared to 71st (out of 135) countries in 2011.⁹⁵⁷ According to the U.S. Department of State, Women experienced discrimination in employment and inheritance.⁹⁵⁸ From 2011 – 2013, women comprised approximately half of the male workforce at 49%, compared to 87% of men.⁹⁵⁹ Likewise, between 2012 and 2014, 50%⁹⁶⁰ of firms in Madagascar had female participation in ownership. Unemployment rates were 3% of the female and 2% of the male labour force in 2011⁹⁶¹ compared to 3.5% of female and 1.7% of male⁹⁶² in 2014. Madagascan law requires paid or unpaid maternity leave, but not paternity leave.⁹⁶³

MALAWI

Malawi boasted their first female President, Dr. Joyce Banda, who served from 2012 – 2014. The country ratified CEDAW in 1987, and The Maputo Protocol in 2005. There is still no National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Malawi has adopted a number of gender sensitive policies over the past decade, including: The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in 2006; The Child Care, Protection and Justice Act in 2010; The Gender Equality Act in 2013; and The Trafficking in Persons Act in 2015.⁹⁶⁴ Malawi's Constitution includes a non-discrimination clause, which

guarantees equality before the law.⁹⁶⁵ Malawi ratified The Convention on the Rights of the Child, with two Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in 1991, 2009 and 2010.⁹⁶⁶ The Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act that prohibits marriage under the age of 18, was passed in 2015, but due to provisions that the new law cannot override Malawi's constitution,

Malawi's Parliament must amend the Constitution to before it will become effective.⁹⁶⁷

Despite these positive strides, the reality on the ground is not as positive for women. In 2014, The Human Rights Committee reviewed Malawi's periodic report and found that while the Gender Equality Act was an essential step, there were still laws in place that discriminate against women. The Committee also noted the high rates of maternal mortality and abortion-related deaths, as abortion in Malawi is illegal except in life-threatening cases. Domestic violence also remains a widespread problem. The Committee expressed concern regarding some harmful traditional practices taking place in Malawi, such as female genital mutilation / cutting (FGC), ceremonies that lead to the sexual abuse of young girls, and practices that target widows, such as widow inheritance.⁹⁶⁸

Women's Political Participation

In Malawi's Unicameral Parliament, the percentage of female Parliamentarians has decreased over the past five years – from 20.8% in 2011 to 16.7% in 2015 (with a slight increase of 22.3% in 2012 and 2013).⁹⁶⁹ Likewise, the percentage of women in Ministerial level positions has also dropped from 27.3%⁹⁷⁰ in 2010, to 11.1%⁹⁷¹ in 2015. However, the number of female Supreme Court Justices has increased from three⁹⁷² in 2011 to nine⁹⁷³ in 2014 (out of 33), and women's representation in local government increased from 0% in 2009 to 11% in 2015.⁹⁷⁴ Malawi boasted Dr. Joyce Banda as their first female President from 2012 – 2014. During the 2014 election, there were 12 presidential candidates comprising two women, including then president Joyce Banda.⁹⁷⁵

In 2009, Malawi had their highest number of female candidates for parliamentary positions: from 136 women contesting in 2004 to 237 women contesting in 2009.⁹⁷⁶ This increase is partially attributed to the “50 / 50 campaign” which helped to provide women with campaign materials and finances.⁹⁷⁷

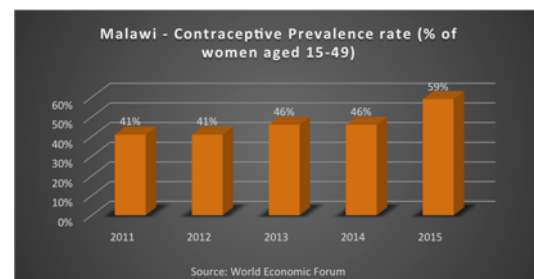
Malawi's Constitution makes no provisions for quotas to ensure women's equal representation as voters. In the 2014 elections, there were 7,535,748 registered voters, with 3,481,361 men (46.19%) and 4,056,183 (53.81%) women.⁹⁷⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Abortion is illegal in Malawi, with a maximum punishment of 14 years imprisonment, except in cases where the pregnancy is life threatening for the woman. However, Government statistics indicate that 70,000 women in Malawi have primarily illegal abortions each year, and 17% of them die in the process. Because of this, The Malawi Law Commission is considering a new bill liberalising abortion.⁹⁷⁹

The contraceptive prevalence rate has increased between 2011 and 2014 from 41%⁹⁸⁰ to 59%⁹⁸¹ in 2015. The fertility rate has remained high from 5.6⁹⁸² children per woman in 2011, to 5.5⁹⁸³ in 2014. The maternal mortality rate is also high and has not improved in recent years. It was the same at 510 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011⁹⁸⁴ and 2014⁹⁸⁵ but had a slight dip in 2012⁹⁸⁶ and 2013⁹⁸⁷ to 460 deaths per 100,000 live births. The percentage of women between the ages of 15 – 49 living with HIV has slightly decreased from 13.2%⁹⁸⁸ in 2011 to 12.1%⁹⁸⁹ in 2013.

The Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act was passed in 2015 banning marriage under the age of 18, but is ineffective until the Constitution is amended.⁹⁹⁰ While the Constitution directs the government to “discourage” child marriage, it does not specifically prohibit it; marriage can take place at 15 or 16 with parental consent. So while this new Act increases the age of marriage, it does not entirely prohibit child marriage as the Constitution currently overrides the Act.⁹⁹¹



In 2012, The UN Population Fund assessed Malawi as having one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, ranked 8th out of 20 countries.⁹⁹² According to the World Economic Forum, 37%⁹⁹³ of women between the ages of 15 – 19 were married in 2011 and 26%⁹⁹⁴ in 2015. According to UN women in 2015, half of Malawian girls are married before the age of 18. UN Women is currently working with traditional leaders to annul these marriages.⁹⁹⁵

Malawi does not yet have any laws that prohibit female circumcision,⁹⁹⁶ and the government rejected the UNHRC's recommendation to criminalise the practice.⁹⁹⁷

Violence Against Women

Malawi's Domestic Violence Law was created in 2006 as a response to widespread incidents of violence against women and children, and touted a maximum imprisonment of 14-years for offenders. Yet, as of 2014, this law seems to have had little impact. It was reported that "domestic violence continues to dominate caseloads of the Malawi Police Service's Victim Support Unit with cases including disfigurement and mutilation." Between January and June of 2014, 6,900 cases of gender-based violence were reported to the police, the majority of which were domestic violence.⁹⁹⁸

Malawi's law criminalises rape with a maximum penalty of death. Although official government data on the prevalence of rape or spousal rape along with conviction figures were unavailable, it has been reported that "rape arrests and convictions were an almost daily occurrence".⁹⁹⁹ The 2010 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey found that 41% of women reported being victims of physical and sexual violence.¹⁰⁰⁰ According to the 2012 Gender Based Violence Baseline Survey, 40% of women had experienced sexual violence and 30% experienced other physical violence.¹⁰⁰¹ A 2014 UNICEF study estimated that more than 20% of women between the ages of 15 – 19 had experienced physical violence since age 15.¹⁰⁰² Malawi has since launched a three-year campaign to slash number of cases of sexual violence against women, girls and children by 15% by 2017.¹⁰⁰³

There are statistics that indicate over a 50% decline in cases of gender-based violence, from 29,488 reported cases in 2012 to 15,601 in 2013. The decrease came as a result of intensive community awareness campaigns. In 2014, the Malawian Police stated that Gender Based Violence rates could greatly decrease if "local chiefs collaborated with law enforcement rather than encouraging the shielding of perpetrators".¹⁰⁰⁴

Malawi is a tier-two source country for trafficking – including the trafficking of men, women and children for forced labour and women and children for sex work. Most of Malawi's trafficking victims remain within the country, with transportation from the south to the central and northern regions. The Government of Malawi does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, in February 2015, passed anti-trafficking legislation establishing a comprehensive legal framework to address trafficking in persons. It reported investigating

27 trafficking cases involving 47 offenders and convicted 25 traffickers. The government identified 242 trafficking victims, an increase from 119 the previous year.¹⁰⁰⁵

Women, Peace and Security

Malawi's deployment of women peacekeepers has decreased in recent years. In 2015, Malawi ranked 32nd in Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations with a total contribution of 908 people (59 female),¹⁰⁰⁶ compared to 2011, when Malawi ranked 28th with a total contribution of 908 (23 female).¹⁰⁰⁷ This decrease has partially attributed to the nature of the missions that Malawi is now participating in: peace-enforcement rather than peacekeeping. Of the women that are peacekeepers, approximately 50% were drawn from Malawi's Police rather than Defence Force.¹⁰⁰⁸

In 2000, women entered into Malawi's Defence Force, and The Malawi Defence Force Act of 2004, confirmed the country's commitment to "maintaining a healthy well trained, equipped, disciplined and gender sensitive force."¹⁰⁰⁹ The number of women has increased from 5% to 8%. No credible national statistics were found on the percentage of female victims of sexual violence in conflicts or women in peace negotiations.

Education

Adult literacy rates have remained fairly constant over the past five years. In 2010, 51.3% of women and 72.1% of men over the age of 15 were literate, compared to 58.6% of women and 73% of men in 2015. While women's literacy has grown at a greater rate than men's (at about 7%), the number of literate women is still markedly lower than the number of literate men.¹⁰¹⁰ However, rates for women and men become much more evenly weighted when looking at the population between the ages of 15 - 24. For this subset, 70% of women and 74.3% of men were literate in 2010 compared to 75.2% of women and 74.9% of men in 2015. Again, while the growth is minimal, women's literacy of this age group grew at a greater rate than men's (at about 5%).¹⁰¹¹

Gender parity now stands at 1:1 in the lower primary school grades but disparities emerge by grade four, when many girls drop out before they acquire basic literacy skills and / or repeat years to a greater extent than boys, due to sexual and reproductive health reasons. According to figures from the Government of

Malawi, only 27% of girls complete primary education, while boys are more likely continue to post-primary education. It was also noted that boys still outperform girls in the mathematical sciences and reading.¹⁰¹²

Economic Empowerment

The World Economic Forum's "Gender Gap Index" very clearly shows Malawi's improvement over the past five years. In 2011, Malawi ranked 65th (out of 135 countries)¹⁰¹³ but has increased in ranking to 34th (out of 142)¹⁰¹⁴ in 2014. Unlike other countries,

women actually make up a greater percentage of the workforce than men. Women made up slightly more than half of the total workforce in Malawi at 52% from 2011 – 2012, and 51% in 2013. Out of the total female population above the age of 15, 85% were part of the workforce from 2011 – 2013.¹⁰¹⁵

According to the World Bank, the female adult unemployment rate (as a percentage of female labour force) was 9% from 2011 – 2013, compared to 6% of men in the same period.¹⁰¹⁶ In 2012,¹⁰¹⁷ 2013,¹⁰¹⁸ and 2014,¹⁰¹⁹ 24% of firms had female participation in ownership.

MAURITIUS

Mauritius made history on June 5th, 2015, by electing its first female president.¹⁰²⁰ The government acceded to CEDAW in 1984, but has no National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325.¹⁰²¹ The country is not currently a signatory to the Maputo Protocol.¹⁰²² It is important to note in order to better understand percentage based data that Mauritius has a small population of 1.3 million and has one of the highest income per capita rates in Africa.¹⁰²³

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The Mauritian government has successfully mainstreamed gender into the majority of its National Development Plans.¹⁰²⁴ They have a ministry of Gender Equality and Child Development and Family Welfare and the constitution promotes gender equality at all levels of human rights provision.¹⁰²⁵ Implementation is an issue however, as these clauses only appear to exist in policy form. There are laws against sexual harassment and assault but more needs to be done to apply these laws in actuality.¹⁰²⁶

Women's Political Participation

Mauritius has secured its pioneering status by electing their first female president. However the levels of women who occupy other political offices are varied. Between 2010 and 2015 Parliamentary seats held by women fell from 18.8% to 11.6%.¹⁰²⁷ However, policy has been drafted to secure the representation of women, one of which being a mandatory 30% representation of either gender in all political parties.¹⁰²⁸ Female ministers have risen to 12% in 2015, an improvement from the 8% of representation in 2012.¹⁰²⁹ On the whole, representation is still not high, and data indicates that nine out of the 23 Supreme Court Judges are female, and eight of the 69 National Assembly Seats are held by women.¹⁰³⁰ These figures are low, but the government has created

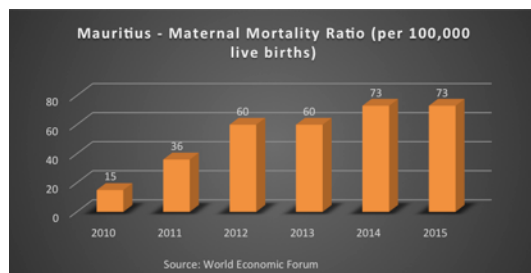
a training program designed to support and empower women wanting to work in political office at any level.¹⁰³¹ In 2013 the New Local Government Act was implemented, with an aim to make elections at a local level gender neutral.¹⁰³²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

There appears to be a positive trend in terms of HIV/AIDS prevalence and treatment. ARVs are now free and access across Mauritius has skyrocketed from 12% in 2009 to 93% in 2015.¹⁰³³ 96% of HIV positive women in Mauritius are receiving Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) and the HIV prevalence level is at an extremely low 0.2% of the population for young people – which has remained consistent since 2010.¹⁰³⁴ The ratio of male to female prevalence is rising however, as women represented 18% of HIV positive persons and in 2015 this rose to 28%.¹⁰³⁵ Although the ratio of young women who are HIV positive has risen, there seems to be a positive upward trend towards improving women's reproductive health and the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Female access to contraceptives is the highest in Southern Africa at 76%, which rose from 28% in 2009- a massive increase.¹⁰³⁶ 100% of births are now attended to by a skilled healthcare professional and all pregnant women in hospital are offered education surrounding HIV/AIDS – all of which can be

considered to contribute to the overwhelmingly positive data surrounding maternal mortality.¹⁰³⁷ Out of all the SADC states, Mauritius has the lowest maternal mortality rate of 73 per 100,000 live births.¹⁰³⁸



Violence Against Women

Gender based violence is still a pervasive issue in the country and although efforts are being made, abuse is still a commonality amongst Mauritians

Roughly 75% of women know of, or have an understanding of the domestic violence act however prevalence is still quite high.¹⁰³⁹ 24% of women say they have experienced a form of gender-based violence in their lifetime and 23% of males admitted to being perpetrators.¹⁰⁴⁰ Of all incidences 23% are related to intimate partner violence which is a main contributor to the severe lack of reporting, as women often fear being forced out of their homes and denied access to mutually agreed resources.

Sexual violence prevalence is either not quantified or information is not made readily available. Reporting is considered to be low due to the pressures associated with fear of retaliation or the traumatic duration of drawn out court processes.¹⁰⁴¹ There is also no law prohibiting marital rape.¹⁰⁴² 1% of women have admitted to being raped by someone who is not their partner.¹⁰⁴³ Although the state does try to provide counselling to victims as well as legal advice.¹⁰⁴⁴

Women, Peace and Security

Due to the limited size and scope of Mauritian international involvement, there is limited data surrounding involvement in peace processes. The country does not have its own National Defence Force; meaning that there is little measurable information surrounding women's involvement in UN or AU related activities.¹⁰⁴⁵ As the police force is the arbiter of all security related activities, women represent 10% of the police service, which is not particularly high, but noting the population size and

the size of the police force, this is not a negative figure.¹⁰⁴⁶

Education

The Mauritian government imposes penalties on parents of children that are not attending school.¹⁰⁴⁷ There is also a new national curriculum that attempts to eradicate gender stereotypes by encouraging boys and girls to take the same subjects.¹⁰⁴⁸ As a result enrolment rates are quite high - at the primary school level, 49% of students are girls at the secondary level it is 52%.¹⁰⁴⁹ Completion rates at the primary level have also risen from 88.2% in 2010 to 90.1% in 2013.¹⁰⁵⁰ However the transfer from primary to secondary education has fallen by 5% between 2010 and 2012.¹⁰⁵¹

Among SADC states there is a common issue with women traditionally studying more gender assigned subjects in tertiary education. Mauritius shatters this mold, and is the only member state that has a higher representation of women in the sciences at 59% female students.¹⁰⁵² There is also a higher percentage of women enrolled in tertiary education as a whole, and exceeds that of all SADC member states.¹⁰⁵³ Women currently outnumber men at the university level, representing 62% of enrolled students.¹⁰⁵⁴

Economic Empowerment

Mauritius has the highest gender wage gap and the lowest female participation in the labour force in the SADC region. Employed men are currently earning 57% more than their female counterparts and only 45% of women are employed in the labour force.¹⁰⁵⁵ Lawfully, the wage gap is illegal, as certain provisions have been implemented in order to protect women from unethical labour practices.¹⁰⁵⁶ However the implementation of these mechanisms is not seen in practice.

Women are employed primarily in unskilled labour, and private sector employment pays less to a female employee.¹⁰⁵⁷ As of 2014, only 30.9% of the female population were entitled to wages.¹⁰⁵⁸ The government does, however, provide for 12 weeks paid maternity leave and there are more opportunities for female business starters that are encouraging women to become entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁵⁹

MOZAMBIQUE

With a history of over 500 years of colonisation, followed by a 15-year civil war, and the rapid growth of the AIDS epidemic, Mozambique has had significant hurdles to overcome in ensuring human rights for its citizens – particularly for women. After the end of the civil war in 1992 Mozambique made significant legal reforms to improve the status of women including the ratification of CEDAW in 1997 and the Maputo Protocol in.¹⁰⁶⁰ While Mozambique has had multiple action plans to address gender equality – National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (2002-2006, 2007-2009 and 2010-2014), the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women (2008-2012), and the National Action Plan on Gender and HIV-AIDS (2011-2015)¹⁰⁶¹ – it does not have a Nation Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The constitution of Mozambique, under Article 36, considers men and women equal before the law in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life. Article 122 states that, “the State will promote, support and improve women’s development and encourage their increasing role in society, in all spheres of country’s political, economic, social and cultural activity”.¹⁰⁶² Attempts to strengthen the legal framework for women are indicated by reform of laws governing land, family, human trafficking, and domestic violence, as well as commercial codes to increase women's access to capital. However, a main challenge in implementing these policies is a lack of funding.¹⁰⁶³

Mozambique ranked 27 out of 142 countries in the 2014 Gender Gap Index (GGI), with overall scores showing little change from 2010 – from 0.733 in 2010, to 0.737 in 2014 (0.00 indicating complete inequality and 1.00 indicating complete equality).¹⁰⁶⁴ Additionally, the GGI disaggregated trends from 2006-2014 show little change in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Political empowerment remains the lowest performing area with a score of 0.358.¹⁰⁶⁵ Despite its ratification of CEDAW, violations of its provisions are, “most apparent in areas of women's property and inheritance rights due to ignorance of the law and social stigmas”.¹⁰⁶⁶ In spite of a legal marriage age of 18, 56% of girls in Mozambique are married before the age of 18, ranking the country as having the sixth highest “child marriage prevalence” in the world.¹⁰⁶⁷

Women's Political Participation

Women in Mozambique have been able to vote since 1975 and as of 2014 they comprise 39.6% of Parliament, and 29% of government ministers.¹⁰⁶⁸ In

2010, women comprised 39.2% of Parliament and 26% of Government Ministers.¹⁰⁶⁹ In the 2014 elections, incumbent FRELIMO were victorious, the President is Filipe Nyusi (M).¹⁰⁷⁰ The current Speaker of Parliament is Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlovo (F) who was the first woman to fill the post and was re-elected in January 2015 (previously elected January 2010).¹⁰⁷¹

There are not mandatory parliamentary quotas,¹⁰⁷² but the FRELIMO party has used gender quotas since 1994, requiring that 40% of candidates to national assembly and local government should be women.¹⁰⁷³ The Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court is a woman, but out of 7 justices there is only one woman.¹⁰⁷⁴ An estimated 67% parliamentary groups are led by women. In 2014, Mozambique ranked 14 among 145 countries on numbers of women in Parliament.¹⁰⁷⁵ Data on registered voters disaggregated by gender (or sex) was not available from the National Election Commission¹⁰⁷⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Thirty-three percent of women (2010-2013) do not make the final decision on their own health care in Mozambique, and 69% of rural women (2010-2014) report difficulties in accessing health care.¹⁰⁷⁷ The fertility rate in Mozambique is 5.2 births per woman (2013) down from 5.5 in (2008).¹⁰⁷⁸ The maternal mortality ratio is 489 per 100,000 live births in 2015, compared to 619 in 2010.¹⁰⁷⁹ Contraceptive coverage is a significant issue in Mozambique since only approximately 5% of the country’s contraceptive needs were met for the first time in 2013. According to World Bank data, the contraceptive prevalence rate has gone from 16.2% in 2008 down to 11.6% in 2011.¹⁰⁸⁰ World Economic Forum data also indicates a drop although over a slightly different timeline from 17% in 2010¹⁰⁸¹ and 12% in 2014.¹⁰⁸² However, both indicate a troubling recent decline in contraceptive

prevalence to rates near those of 2003 at 11.7%.¹⁰⁸³ This is additionally problematic given the high rates of HIV in Mozambique. The rates of skilled attendance at birth were on the rise but have decreased in recent years according to the Republic of Mozambique's Beijing+20 progress report (47.7% in 2003, 55.3% in 2008, and 54.3% in 2011).¹⁰⁸⁴ This is corroborated by the 2010 Gender Gap Report from 2010 (48%),¹⁰⁸⁵ but differs widely from the 19%¹⁰⁸⁶ indicated in the 2014 Gender Gap Index prompting questions about data collection methods. Rates also vary widely in urban versus rural settings.¹⁰⁸⁷

Although the legal marriage age is 18, globally Mozambique has the sixth highest prevalence of child marriage resulting in higher likelihood of HIV infection, obstetric fistula, and other health related issues, as well as negative effects on educational attainment.¹⁰⁸⁸ According to UNICEF 14% of girls are married before the age of 15, and 48% married before the age of 18 in 2015,¹⁰⁸⁹ and the Population Council reported even higher numbers of 21% by age 15, and 57% by age 18.¹⁰⁹⁰ Data on female genital mutilation/cutting in Mozambique is not available from UNICEF,¹⁰⁹¹ but the IPU indicates that it is "reportedly not practiced".¹⁰⁹² As a result of reproductive health advocates' lobbying Mozambique passed a law in December 2014 decriminalising abortion under specified conditions. Health advocates argued that 11% of maternal deaths in Mozambique were caused by unsafe abortions. Currently the law specifies that abortions must be carried out within 12 weeks of pregnancy (in the case of rape, this period is extended to 16 weeks) and abortions must be carried out in recognised and designated health centres by qualified practitioners.¹⁰⁹³

Mozambique is one of 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that accounts for 81% of all people living with HIV in the region.¹⁰⁹⁴ Around 1.5 million people are living with HIV in Mozambique, which has a prevalence rate of 11% (13.1% for women and 9.2% for men).¹⁰⁹⁵ Adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have a high prevalence rate of 7%, which doubles to 15% by the time they reach 25.¹⁰⁹⁶ The overall prevalence in 2009 from females 15-24 was estimated to be 11.1% – nearly three times higher than their same-age male peers (3.7%).¹⁰⁹⁷ According to UNAIDS this has decreased to 6.1% for young women and 2.7% for young men in 2014,¹⁰⁹⁸ meaning rates have decreased but young women's prevalence rates are still over twice that of young men. Out of individuals that are

HIV-positive women make up a disproportionate 59%.¹⁰⁹⁹ Progress has been made in increasing Antiretroviral Therapy (ARVT) coverage for women to reduce mother-to-child transmission rose from 39.9% in 2009 to 92.2% in 2013.¹¹⁰⁰ There is currently a National Action Plan on Gender and HIV-AIDS (2011-2015).

Violence Against Women

Mozambique has a National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women (2008-2012).¹¹⁰¹ However, according to 2004 data approximately half (48%) of women are exposed to physical violence in their lifetime.¹¹⁰² Twenty-four percent of women experience sexual violence (IPV or non-partner) over a lifetime.¹¹⁰³ In a 2008 DHS survey 59% of the women who were victims of sexual violence never sought help or informed anyone, and 36% of women aged 15-49 think that a husband/partner is justified for hitting or beating his wife/partner for at least one of the following reasons: if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations.¹¹⁰⁴ There are not "child maltreatment" laws against child marriage, or female genital mutilation/cutting, and the laws against rape, contact sexual violence without rape, non-contact sexual violence, and statutory rape are limited.¹¹⁰⁵

In July 2014, a new penal code provisionally approved by parliament (in spite of the high percentage of women parliamentarians) contradicted the more comprehensive and progressive 2009 Domestic Violence Act (which covers sexual offenses and human trafficking).¹¹⁰⁶ The new proposed penal code included damaging provisions such as: allowing rape charges to be dropped if the perpetrator agreed to marry the victim; vague and limited definitions of rape; defining the rape of a minor as the rape of someone under the age of 12, which directly contradicts laws in Mozambique that define a child as anyone below the age of 18. However, President Armando Guebuza did not sign the penal code into law. Although there is clear domestic violence legislation with clear criminal penalties, there are not protection orders that remove the perpetrator from the home or prohibit contact. Additionally there are legislation, civil remedies and criminal penalties against sexual harassment in employment and education, in accordance with Mozambique's role as a signatory of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). However, there is not legislation

preventing sexual harassment in public places.¹¹⁰⁷ The current anti-trafficking legislation covers all forms of exploitation outlined in the UN Trafficking Protocol. During 2012, 24 cases of trafficking were recorded by the national authorities; 10 persons were prosecuted.¹¹⁰⁸ The International Organisation Migration (IOM) 2011 report records two cases assisted in Mozambique as destination country, by IOM.¹¹⁰⁹

Women, Peace and Security

Mozambique has 0% women in peacekeeping missions, and the Gender Links SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2015) states that it is falling short against targets on “women in peacekeeping forces” and has the lowest proportion of women in peacekeeping out of SADC countries.¹¹¹⁰ The percentage of women in the police have remained low (7%) at similar levels since 2010.¹¹¹¹ In 2014, 5% of Mozambique's defence forces were female.¹¹¹² Mozambique has not made a Plan of Action for UNSCR 1325. In the wake of the civil war (1977-1992) there were on-going landmine issues. Originally ex-soldiers were used to clear the mines – as a way to integrate them back into society and to provide work – but the demographic shifted towards women working as de-miners.¹¹¹³ Women participated in all stages of mine action,¹¹¹⁴ and in September 2015, 13 years after the end of the war, Mozambique was declared free of landmines.¹¹¹⁵

Education

The 1995 Education Policy commits to: “i) creating a gender-sensitive school environment by identifying and defining methods for organizing the educational process and methods for adapting teacher training programmes; ii) developing the district school charter to determine needs and the best positioning of schools; iii) establishing agreements with NGOs, religious groups and other parties to implement education programmes for girls; iv) raising awareness in society to reduce the burden of work on girls; v) promoting alternative, informal education systems focused on life skills; and vi) introducing incentives such as financial allowances for acquiring school materials, scholarships, etc”.¹¹¹⁶ Mozambique is progressing towards the goal of gender parity in education. According to the 2015 Gender Gap Index primary enrolment for girls is 85% compared to 90% for boys¹¹¹⁷, and increase from the 2010 data indicating 77% for girls and 82% of boys.¹¹¹⁸ In 2014, enrolment in secondary school is 17% for girls and 18% for boys,

and only 4% of girls and 6% of boys enrol in tertiary education.¹¹¹⁹ This is an increase from 2010, where 6% of girls and 6% of boys enrolled in secondary education, and 1% of women and 2% of men enrolled in tertiary education.¹¹²⁰

Attendance in primary school increased from 2003 to 2008 – from 65% to 80% for girls, and 71% to 82% for boys, but has shown a decline in 2011 to 75% for girls, and 75% for boys.¹¹²¹ However, attendance in secondary school shows a consistent increase from 7% in 2003 for girls to 17% in 2008, and 22% in 2011, and 8%, 15%, and 21% for boys, respectively.¹¹²² In spite of increasing parity in education, the legacy of unequal educational opportunity remains – 55% of women have no education; 44.6% have only primary; 0.4% have secondary, and women's literacy rates are substantially lower than men's (36% and 67% respectively).¹¹²³ Illiteracy rates for women were falling (74.1% in 2003/4 to 64.1% in 2009),¹¹²⁴ but have remained the same from 2009 to 2014. Youth (age 15-24) literacy rates from 2009 are much higher for young men (79.8%) than young women (56.5%).¹¹²⁵ To address the high levels of illiteracy among adult women the National Literacy and Adult Education Strategy 2010-2014 aimed to use functional literacy methods in order for women to have the capacities and skills necessary to access opportunities and improve their socioeconomic situation.¹¹²⁶

Economic Empowerment

Despite significant reforms to improve the status of women, women's position continues to be undermined by discriminatory attitudes and practices, with females faring worse than their male counterparts on wage inequality and income. In 2013 the labour participation rate was higher for women at 85.5% and 82.8% of men compared to 82% of women, 87% of men according to UN Women in 2015.¹¹²⁷ Unemployment for those in the labour force (15 years and older) over the last decade has remained consistent according to the World Bank, at 9.3% for women, and 7.2% for men.¹¹²⁸ However, this is a modelled ILO estimate and varies greatly from the 1.3% for women and 3.4% for men reported by the World Economic Forum.¹¹²⁹ The female to male earnings ratio is 64/100,¹¹³⁰ and 66.7% of women with earnings are paid less than their spouse. As of 2014, there is not a law mandating equal pay for equal work, nor a gender non-discrimination law in hiring practices. For employed women there is 9 weeks minimum length of 100% total wages, paid maternity

leave.¹¹³¹ Twenty-four percent of firms have female participation in ownership,¹¹³² and only 11% of those employed in non-agricultural sector are women.¹¹³³ Women also face greater difficulties in pursuing high waged positions because they principally bear the load

of domestic responsibilities.¹¹³⁴ The Employment and Vocational Training Strategy 2008-2015 is intended to reduce poverty and has women as one of its main target groups.¹¹³⁵

RWANDA

Rwanda has made incredible progress towards human rights and equality since its shocking 1994 genocide. Rwanda is currently one of the few African countries on track to achieve seven of the eight Millennium Development Goals. The post-conflict situation has given women the opportunity to be more involved in decision making at all levels of society. Rwanda is now known for its example for the promotion of gender equality: with the highest proportion of female representation in Parliament the world (at 56%). Rwanda ratified CEDAW in March 1981 and the Maputo protocol in June 2004. In May 2010, Rwanda launched its Plan of action for UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Rwanda's Constitution provides that all citizens are equal, "without discrimination based on ethnic origin, tribe, clan, colour, sex, region, social origin, religion or faith, opinion, economic status, culture, language, social status, or physical or mental disability".¹¹³⁶ Rape and spousal rape are criminalized, with penalties ranging from five years to life imprisonment for rape and two months to life imprisonment for spousal rape.¹¹³⁷ The law also "provides for imprisonment of three to six months for threatening, harassing, or beating one's spouse", yet domestic violence is common.¹¹³⁸ Rwanda has implemented a "whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder campaign against GBV, child abuse, and other types of domestic violence", and gender based violence was required training for police and military.¹¹³⁹

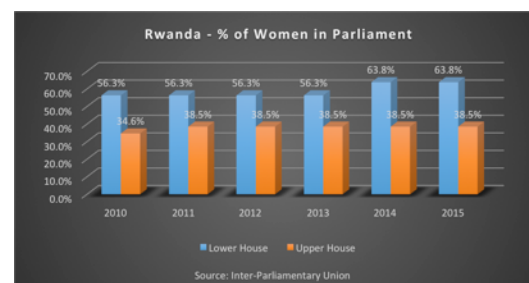
Rwanda also has a number of government funded gender programmes. The National Women's Council works with the government on land, inheritance, and child protection laws as well as serving as a forum for women's rights. Programs addressing women's issues were also led by The Ministry of Gender in coordination with other government ministries, the police, and NGOs. The government-run Gender Monitoring Office "tracked the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment throughout all sectors of society and collects gender-disaggregated data to inform policy processes".¹¹⁴⁰ Women have the right to own land and their own property. When they marry they can choose to bring their assets with their husband or they can keep them separate.¹¹⁴¹ Furthermore, inheritance laws have been passed so that a man's property is split equally between his wife and both female and male children.

In 2009, Rwanda's National Parliament debated whether to make homosexuality a criminal offense, with a punishment of 5–10 years imprisonment. Yet in 2010 Rwanda eliminated the criminalisation provision from its draft code. It is the only African

nation to sign two UN resolutions on sexual orientation and gender identity.¹¹⁴²

Women's Political Participation

One major improvement in post-genocide Rwanda is the increase of women in leadership positions, especially in politics and civil society. Women are no longer confined to the home but have become a force from the smallest village council to the highest echelons of national government. This sudden shift in the gendered dimension of politics had been partially attributed to a basic need, as 70% of the population post-genocide was female.¹¹⁴³



The advancement of women in the political sphere has received global attention as Rwanda has the highest number of women parliamentarians in the world. In order to register as a political party in Rwanda, it is required that 30% of leadership positions are reserved for women.¹¹⁴⁴ As of 1st September 2015, women occupied 63.8% of seats (51 out of 80) in the lower or single house, and 38.5% of seats (10 out of 26) in the Senate.¹¹⁴⁵ Women's participation in ministerial level positions has increased, from 33% in 2010, to 39% in 2014 and 35.5% in 2015.¹¹⁴⁶ Half the country's 14 Supreme Court justices are currently women.¹¹⁴⁷

According to Oda Gasinzigwa, member of the cabinet in Rwanda and Minister of Gender and Family

Promotion, the increase in women's political participation since the genocide in 1994 has enhanced educational and economic opportunities in the country¹¹⁴⁸. Women are now more confident, they own land, and girls can now inherit from their parents and women from their families.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The fertility rate in Rwanda, while decreasing, is currently at 4.51 children per woman¹¹⁴⁹. Contraception is now widely available and women can choose whether or not to have children. In 2010, the contraceptive prevalence rate was 51.6%,¹¹⁵⁰ and in 2014 the percentage of specifically married women using contraception was 44%.¹¹⁵¹ The US Department of State reported that in 2014, 47% of pregnancies were unintended, resulting in the termination of 22% of those pregnancies. Yet, while women wish to exercise their right to abortion, they are not exactly safe, with three out of 10 abortions requiring treatment for complications.¹¹⁵²

According to a report published by UNFPA in May 2014, maternal death rates are on the decline¹¹⁵³. Rwanda is one of 11 countries that had a high mortality rate in 1990, but is on its way to meeting the MDG on reducing maternal mortality. In 2014, the maternal mortality ratio was 320 per 100,000 live births, a decrease from 390 in 2009¹¹⁵⁴. UNFPA and its partners are ensuring that more work is being done to empower health workers, especially midwives, to distribute life-saving supplies such as clean delivery kits.¹¹⁵⁵

Women over the age of 15 comprise 61.03% of the population with HIV, but only 1.3% of females between the ages of 15 – 24 are HIV positive.¹¹⁵⁶ Women's access to antiretroviral drugs has increased from 49% in 2010 to 75% in 2014, and surpassed men's access, which was 44.4% in 2010 and 65.4% in 2014.¹¹⁵⁷ An increasing number of infants born to women living with HIV received prophylaxis and antiretroviral treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Over 7500 infants born to pregnant women living with HIV received virological test for HIV within 2 months of birth.¹¹⁵⁸

In Rwanda the legal age for marriage is quite high, at 21 years old, yet in 2010, 13% of the population was married (common law) under the age of 18.¹¹⁵⁹

Violence Against Women

A 2009 study revealed that violence against women was rampant in Rwanda. The primary form of violence that women experience is intimate partner violence (IPV) including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.¹¹⁶⁰ While violence against women in Rwanda is illegal, societal notions regarding gender roles normalize the practice. In 2014, 48% of girls believed that a husband is sometimes justified in hitting or beating his wife.¹¹⁶¹ The incidence rate of domestic violence is higher amongst women living in poverty.¹¹⁶² Furthermore, disparities in educational attainment have a correlation to abuse, with no education attainment reporting an incident rate of above 20%.¹¹⁶³

Although rape and spousal rape are criminalised in Rwanda, in 2014, 41% of women over the age of 15 had experienced physical violence and 22% sexual violence.¹¹⁶⁴ Of the rape cases reported to authorities, 47% were statutory rape in 2013.¹¹⁶⁵ Also in 2014, 56% of women had reported verbal or physical sexual harassment in public places and 42% of women in Kigali feared walking to school alone.¹¹⁶⁶ According to the 2010 Health and Demographic Survey, 48% of women aged between 15-49 had experienced sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. In both rural and urban settings, the likelihood of experiencing sexual violence declines marginally with educational attainment, declining from 24% to 20%.¹¹⁶⁷

Gender-based violence is underreported in rural areas, where many women lack access to education and social justice.¹¹⁶⁸ Steps have been taken to address this issue in rural communities by providing One Stop Centres that offer care and support to domestic violence victims. Rwandan police also have separate gender desks, specifically for women from rural areas and marginalized communities. Gender sensitisation and engaging men has also yielded positive results in changing the attitudes of men towards the effects of gender-based violence. In Rwanda's capital, Kigali, the police have a dedicated hotline for domestic violence.¹¹⁶⁹

Women, Peace and Security

Rwandan women have been critical in the process of transitional justice through their participation in the gacaca system (system of community justice inspired by Rwandan tradition) and played a central role in the reconstruction of their country following the genocide.¹¹⁷⁰ The post-conflict situation has given women the opportunity to be more involved in decision

making at all levels of society.

As of 2015, Rwanda ranks fifth in Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations with a total contribution of 5685 people (283 female),¹¹⁷¹ compared to 2010 when Rwanda was still high, but ranked 9th with 3,686 contributions (86 female).¹¹⁷² Women in Rwanda play a large role as UN Peacekeepers and observers in Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali and CAR, but are under-represented in the higher ranks of Rwandan military and police.¹¹⁷³ In 2012, only 137 women served as police officers – an increase from 50 in 2009.¹¹⁷⁴ The government is attempting to increase the amount of female police officers through targeted recruitment strategies.¹¹⁷⁵

Education

As of 2014, Rwanda had the highest primary school education enrolment rate in Africa at 96.5%.¹¹⁷⁶ At secondary school level only 67% of teachers are adequately educated. In 2010, 56.2% of girls completed primary education and this rate has increased to 64.3% in 2013.¹¹⁷⁷ A recent report noted that girls tend to drop out of school and do not sit their exams in secondary school. Early pregnancies are the main reason for girls having to drop out.¹¹⁷⁸

To close the gender gap in education and reduce the dropout rate for girls, the government and stakeholders have adopted a number of strategies to reduce early pregnancies and to solve sanitation issues, such as separate toilets for boys and girls, which is also critical to keeping girls in school. The government of Rwanda also provides scholarships for girls in primary and secondary schools.¹¹⁷⁹

In 2012, adult women's literacy lagged behind men's at 64.7% compared to 72.4%.¹¹⁸⁰ However, statistics for the population aged 15 – 24 are quite the contrary, with women outperforming men – In 2010, 78% of women of this age group were literate compared to 77% of men, and in 2012, 83.5% of women compared to 81.1% of men.¹¹⁸¹

Economic Empowerment

According to World Bank statistics, the percentage of women in the labour force is slightly greater than the percentage of men: 88% of women / 87% of men in 2010 and 88% of women / 86% of men in 2013.¹¹⁸² In 2011, approximately 43% of firms had female participation in ownership, and 19.7% of firms had females in top management positions.¹¹⁸³ For women who are employed they are given a 12-week maternity leave.¹¹⁸⁴ The ratio of female to male youth unemployment rates were 50% in 2010 and 55.6% in 2013.¹¹⁸⁵

In Rwanda, women have the right to exercise a profession or trade. However, in some cases the husband has the right to oppose her activities if he deems them to be against the family's interest.¹¹⁸⁶ The majority of women's employment is in the agricultural sector.

28% of households in Rwanda are headed by women, and 47% of those are below the poverty line.¹¹⁸⁷ In Rwanda, women are allowed to inherit property and have the same legal rights to property as men.¹¹⁸⁸ However, women encounter difficulties following property claims due to: lack of knowledge, procedural bias, multiple spousal claims (as a result of polygyny), and the threat of gender based violence.¹¹⁸⁹

SEYCHELLES

Seychelles ratified CEDAW in 1992, which affirmed, early on their commitment to gender equity and equality. However, their initial state party report on CEDAW has been overdue since June 1993. The Maputo Protocol was adopted in March 2006, followed by The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in 2008. Seychelles has still not adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Seychelles has a Gender Secretariat whose main objective is to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all policies, programmes and activities of the Government, private sector and civil society.¹¹⁹⁰ Seychelles has adopted various policies directed at

enabling a more gender equitable society. In 2008, the National Strategy for Domestic Violence was adopted, followed by the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence in 2010. In a 2013 CEDAW review, The Committee noted concern regarding the absence of a specific definition on what gender based discrimination is, as well as the delay in the judicial

system processing cases of gender based violence.¹¹⁹¹ Further, while The Family Violence (Protection of Victims) Act was passed in 2000, the number of cases of domestic violence reported to the police has allegedly doubled in the past six years.¹¹⁹²

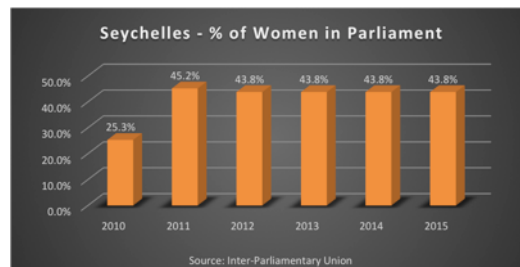
In 2015, The UNHRC noted that “Seychelles had failed to honour its reporting obligations under article 40 of the Covenant and that, despite numerous reminders, the Seychelles has not submitted the initial report, which has been due since 1993.”¹¹⁹³ Due to the lack of reporting, the charting of specific progress is made more difficult.

Seychelles decriminalised homosexuality in 2011. The Constitution of Seychelles makes provisions for all persons to be free from discrimination on all grounds. Article 27 of the Constitution states that “Every person has a right to equal protection of the law including the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set out in this Charter without discrimination on any ground except as is necessary in a democratic society.”¹¹⁹⁴

Human trafficking is a growing problem in the Seychelles, both as a destination and source country for alleged sex-trafficking of women and children. In response to this, the government has created a National Anti-Trafficking Committee (who have developed a victim assistance tool – yet to be finalised and implemented), anti-trafficking legislation and began implantation of the 2014 – 2015 National Action Plan. Further, The Seychellois Department of Social Affairs now provides counselling to female sex workers, some of whom may have been victims of forced prostitution. Yet, despite these efforts, Seychelles still fails to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.¹¹⁹⁵

Women's Political Participation

As of September 1, 2015, Seychelles ranks at fourth on IPU's Women in Parliaments: World Classification, with women occupying 43% of Parliamentary seats (or 14 out of 32 seats). This is an improvement from 2014, 2013 and 2012, when Seychelles ranked fifth.¹¹⁹⁶ In 2011 women occupied the same amount of seats as they do today, but prior to the 2011 elections, women only made up 23.5%, or 8 out of 34 seats.¹¹⁹⁷ The percentage of women in Ministerial level positions has increased in the past five years, from 20%¹¹⁹⁸ in 2010 to 25%¹¹⁹⁹ in 2015.



Seychelles has a female judge in its Supreme Court, Mrs Fiona Robinson, who also happens to be the youngest judge in the Seychelles judiciary, and the first female Seychellois judge of the Supreme Court. A woman also serves as the Justice of the Court Appeal Court, Mrs. Mathilda Twomey.¹²⁰⁰

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the U.S. Department of State in 2015, few couples reportedly used contraceptives, although there were no restrictions to their right of access. The contraceptive prevalence rate has remained the same at 41% from 2009 to 2015.¹²⁰¹ Although women traditionally prefer using nurses or midwives during childbirth, the government provides free childbirth services.¹²⁰² In 2013, the number of maternal deaths was 64 per 1000 live births. This can be compared to 133 per 1000 live births in 2010, showing a significant improvement.¹²⁰³

The legal age of marriage in Seychelles is 15.¹²⁰⁴ The birth rate for women between the ages of 15 – 19 has increased between 2013 and 2014, from 47.6%¹²⁰⁵ to 56.3%.¹²⁰⁶ The total births per woman has remained constant between 2011 and 2015 at 2.23¹²⁰⁷ and 2.2¹²⁰⁸ respectively.

According to a SADC report, in 2012, 0.8% of all 15 - 24 year olds (both male and female) are HIV positive.¹²⁰⁹ In 2009 and 2015, GenderLinks reported that of those living with HIV, 42% were women and 58% were men.¹²¹⁰

Violence Against Women

In Seychelles, rape, spousal rape and domestic abuse are all considered criminal offences and are punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. Seychelles also has laws that prohibit sexual harassment.¹²¹¹ However, according to a 2014 report by the U.S. Department of State, the most significant human rights abuse in Seychelles is violence against women and children.¹²¹²

Rape remains a significant problem, and regardless of the legal structures in place, the government does not effectively enforce these laws to protect women and girls. Due to social stigma, the majority of victims do not report rape. As of September 30th, 2014, there were only seven official reports of sexual assault, and of those, only five cases were pending in court.¹²¹³

Much like rape, domestic violence also remains a problem, even though laws prohibit it. The Seychelles police force has a special unit, The Family Squad, which is tasked with addressing cases of domestic violence, yet this unit is underfunded and ineffective. As of the 2014 data, police rarely intervened unless the violence involved a weapon or major assault, the authorities frequently dismissed the very few cases that actually reached a prosecutor, and those cases that were prosecuted received very light sentences.¹²¹⁴

Human trafficking, specifically sex trafficking, has become a spotlight issue in the past few years. It has been asserted that girls (and some boys) in Seychelles have been forced into sex work by either family members, peers or pimps.¹²¹⁵ The UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, stated: “trafficking in persons in Seychelles is at best insidious and remains hidden as a result of lack of awareness.” The Special Rapporteur highlighted the need to collect data on trends, forms and manifestations of trafficking, as well as its causes and consequences.¹²¹⁶

Women, Peace and Security

In Seychelles, women make up 20% of the defence force. Rates of women as peacekeepers are not available as Seychelles did not contribute any personnel to UN Peacekeeping Operations between 2010 -2015.¹²¹⁷

Education

Article 33 of the Constitution of Seychelles establishes the right of every citizen to education.¹²¹⁸ As a result of the government’s commitment to women’s empowerment, gender parity in primary education has been achieved. In fact, girls outnumber boys in secondary and tertiary education.¹²¹⁹

The Human Rights Council found in a 2014 report that the reason that girls’ performance overshadows boys, is in part because of parental and teacher attitudes that push girls to stay in school. However, there are fields

of study which still remain largely male dominated, such as in the Mathematical Sciences.¹²²⁰

In a UNDP study, from 2005 - 2012, 66.9% of females aged 25 and older had received some secondary education.¹²²¹ However, in 2011, 41.2% of females aged 25 and older had received some secondary education.¹²²²

In 2000 females between the ages of 15 – 24 had a lower literacy rate than males of the same age group, at 77.6% versus 84%. However, by 2015 females surpassed males, with literacy rates of 88.2% versus 86.9%.¹²²³ This same upward trend has not applied to women 15 years and older. In 2000, women’s literacy lagged behind men’s at 63.5% versus 74.5%, and while women’s literacy has increased, they have remained behind men in 2015 at 73.7% versus 81.8%.¹²²⁴

Economic Empowerment

In a 2015 report by UN Women, it was noted that due to the lack of comparative data available in the region, they were unable to create a baseline on women’s economic empowerment. Specifically, there is a scarcity on information such as: women’s informality and self-employment rates, time spent in paid and unpaid work, gender pay gaps, gendered poverty rates, women’s position in supply and value chains, and education and training in non-traditional careers.¹²²⁵

What is known is that, technically speaking, women enjoy the same legal, political, economic, and social rights as men, and there is no officially sanctioned discrimination in employment. It also appears that women are well represented in business, and inheritance laws do not discriminate against women.¹²²⁶

In 2011, 61.9%¹²²⁷ of women 15 years and older were part of the labour force, and this rate increased to 68%¹²²⁸ in 2014. Women hold 30% of all management positions¹²²⁹ and comprise 45% of chief executive or middle management roles.¹²³⁰ Women in the formal sector are able to enjoy 14 weeks of paid maternity leave with the option for an additional four weeks of unpaid leave.¹²³¹

In 2012, the World Bank went into a partnership with local Seychellois authorities to professionalise the fishing sector. As a good deal of women earn their living as in this trade, and by formalizing their work it

provides an opportunity in empower and give more responsibility to these women. ¹²³²

SOMALIA

Since 1991, with the collapse of the central government, Somalia has suffered from prolonged civil war. The year 2012 saw the inauguration of the first formal government in over two decades, on the heels of drought and famine in the Horn of Africa in 2011. Widespread political, social and economic instability continue. Conflict and insecurity are negatively affecting women's safety, well-being, and economic opportunities. Somalia lacks internationally comparable data for analysis of any meaningful contributions towards women's economic empowerment and gender issues. ¹²³³

According to UNDP's Somalia Human Development Report 2012, Somalia was the 4th most unequal country in gender terms. ¹²³⁴ Somalia became a signatory to CEDAW in February 2006, but has not ratified it. ¹²³⁵ It has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol, ¹²³⁶ and does not have a Plan of action for UN Security Council Resolution 1325. ¹²³⁷ (Please note, the data/situation varies between the Central Southern part of Somalia, the North West Zone, and Somaliland).

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Somalia is broadly considered to be one of the worst places in the world to be a woman – a situation that predates the presence of Islamic extremism. Women suffer severe exclusion and inequality in all dimensions of the index – health, employment, and labour market participation. Traditional laws, used in lieu of a state judiciary, are highly discriminatory against women and cannot be used to empower them. ¹²³⁸ Additionally, Somalia has extremely high rates of maternal mortality, rape, female genital cutting and child marriage. Violence against women and girls is common, and women's participation in politics and decision-making is limited. ¹²³⁹ Rape and domestic violence are endemic, while women have been almost entirely excluded from political and judicial structures in the country. The collapse of the state led to an emphasis on customary law and sharia law, and a reliance on clan-based political representation. None of these systems are particularly favourable to women. ¹²⁴⁰

In early February 2014, Human Rights Watch met with various government officials in Mogadishu, including the new Minister of Women and Human Rights Development and members of the president's policy unit, who reaffirmed the government's commitment to combatting sexual violence. In particular, the officials said they would be revising the government's draft national gender policy to include specific provisions to address sexual and gender-based violence. ¹²⁴¹ Human Rights Watch called on the Federal Government of Somalia to take serious measures to prevent security force personnel and

others from committing sexual violence and to hold perpetrators accountable. As a top priority, the government should take all necessary actions to ensure victims who report sexual abuse do not face retaliation by government security forces and intelligence services, as occurred in three high-profile cases in 2013. ¹²⁴²

Women's Political Participation

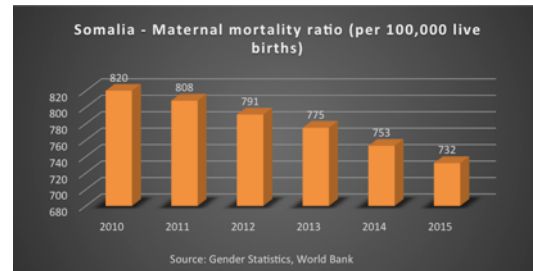
Political uncertainty remains in Somalia, and women continue to experience marginalisation from decision-making processes, and limited representation in government. In 2012, Somalia's first formal parliament in more than 20 years was sworn in, ending the mandate of a transitional government. ¹²⁴³ Women's political participation is addressed in Article 3 of the provisional constitution, which stipulates that "women must be included, in an effective way, in all national institutions, in particular all elected and appointed positions across the three branches of government". ¹²⁴⁴

Despite a quota of 12% reserved in the 2004-2012 Transitional Federal Parliament for women, ¹²⁴⁵ female parliamentarians held 6.8% of the seats as of January 2012. ¹²⁴⁶ The 2012 Federal Parliament's Garowe Principles I (2011) and Garowe Principles II (2012) legislate a quota in the House of the People of 30% reserved parliamentary seats for women. ¹²⁴⁷ However, there are also no legal provisions guaranteeing this quota ¹²⁴⁸ and currently 13.8% of parliamentary seats in the House of the People (lower house) are held by women. ¹²⁴⁹ During the transitional government only 5.6% of ministerial seats were held by women, ¹²⁵⁰ under the new Federal Government's first cabinet in

September 2012, this rose to 20%, and 15% of deputy ministers were women.¹²⁵¹ However, ministerial representation has decreased and the cabinet approved in February 2015 has only three female ministers (12%).^{1252 1253} Out of a total cabinet including ministers and deputy ministers (66 positions), women hold 5 positions (8%).¹²⁵⁴ The Upper House of Parliament does not yet exist, as members will be elected from the 18 regions of Somalia and from the Federal Member states, whose formation is ongoing.¹²⁵⁵ The National Constituent Assembly, which approved the new Federal Provisional constitution, had a quota of 30%, and women formed 25% of the total members. At the time of publication there is just one female presidential candidate, Fadumo Dayib, for the 2016 elections.¹²⁵⁶ In Somaliland, 5.7% Ministers are women, 2% of parliamentarians are women, and there is 1 woman in the house of male elders (1.2%). In Puntland, 4% of ministers are women, and 3% parliamentarians are women.¹²⁵⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The total fertility rate has remained steadily high in the decade between 2010 and 2014, at around 6 births per woman.¹²⁵⁸ Data for 2015 was not available. The adolescent fertility rate is decreasing, with 105 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2014, down from 117 in 2010. (It had been steady at 127 up to 2007).¹²⁵⁹ World Bank data suggests that the maternal mortality rate has fallen from 820 per 100,000 live births in 2010, to 775 in 2013, and 732 in 2015.¹²⁶⁰ The most recent data on contraceptive prevalence is from 2006 and indicates that 15% of women age 15-49 who are married or in unions use a contraceptive method. In 2014 UNAIDS estimated that there are 35,000 people living with HIV in Somalia, of which 15,000 are women.¹²⁶¹ The rates of adolescents living with HIV are quite low – 0.2% of both young men and young women (15-24) (2013 data).¹²⁶² However, the number of AIDS-related deaths is increasing (between 2005 and 2013), because of a lack of access to antiretrovirals. Increasing numbers of females have access to antiretrovirals (7% in 2014 vs. 2% in 2009)¹²⁶³ and new infections in children (e.g. through mother to child transmission) have fallen 22% between 2005 and 2013, though in 2013 there was only an estimated 3% of pregnant women with HIV receiving antiretrovirals.¹²⁶⁴



The most recent available data on child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGC) from 2006 indicates that they remain significant issues in Somalia. In 2006, 8% of girls were married before the age of 15 and 46% before the age of 18.^{1265 1266} Early Marriage has a higher prevalence in the central south than in Somaliland or the North West zone.¹²⁶⁷ FGM/C is widespread, but recent data limited. World Bank Data from 2006 suggests there is a 98% prevalence of FGM/C.¹²⁶⁸ The majority of women underwent FGM/C between the age of five and nine.¹²⁶⁹ Though 98% of women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM/C, only 65% think the practice should continue (2006 data).¹²⁷⁰ In 2011, UNICEF MICS data from surveys in the North East Zone and Somaliland suggested that approval of the practice may be falling (e.g. 57.8% in North East zone¹²⁷¹ and 28.9% in Somaliland).¹²⁷² In 2012, the provisional constitution banned on FGM/C, though critics emphasise that this is legal change will be hard to enforce in practice.¹²⁷³ The Minister of Women and Human Rights said the government is trying to enforce this ban. In 2014, the region of Puntland outlawed the practice in 2014, with Islamic scholars issuing a fatwa, clarifying that the practice is not religious doctrine.¹²⁷⁴ Health Authorities, UN agencies and WHO collaborated on a National Strategy and Action Plan for Reproductive Health, 2010-2015, with three priorities: birth spacing, safe delivery, and addressing harmful practices like FGM/C.¹²⁷⁵ There is some progress being made in training health professionals, midwives and birth attendants.¹²⁷⁶

Violence Against Women

As with many other areas there is significant underreporting and an absence of data on violence against women. There is a high prevalence of GBV related to decades of conflict, insecurity, environmental shocks, and widespread use of harmful traditional practices. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are particularly at risk due to living conditions and risky livelihood practices, and limited clan protection.¹²⁷⁷ Data were not available on the

percentage of women/girls who have experienced physical violence or the percentage of women/girls who are victims of sexual violence/rape/assault and most statistics seem to be on numbers of reported cases in Mogadishu. Between January and November 2012, UN partners and service providers registered 1,700 rape cases in Mogadishu and surrounding areas, of which 1/3 were against children.¹²⁷⁸ The UN also reported 800 cases of sexual and GBV in Mogadishu for first 6 months of 2013¹²⁷⁹ and 2,891 incidents of GBV were reported between January and August 2014 in Mogadishu alone. Of these, 28% were cases of rape and 9% were sexual assaults. These numbers are regarded as a gross underestimation, as fear of stigma and reprisals inhibits reporting. Most reported cases (81%) involved internally displaced persons.¹²⁸⁰ The UN estimates that sexual violence committed by armed forces ranges from 40-70% of total offences. Reporting is limited due to fear of reprisal; survivors frequently forced to marry their rapists as a form of “restitution” ordered by customary courts.

The US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report from 2014, emphasises that “information regarding trafficking in Somalia remains extremely difficult to obtain or verify”.¹²⁸¹ Somalia remains a Special Case of Trafficking in Persons for the twelfth year. Government possessed minimal capacity to investigate and persecute most crimes in spite of Somalia being a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children. There is almost no data on domestic violence. But data from 2006 indicates that 76% of ever-married women age 15-49 believe that there are at least some situations in which a husband is justified in beating his wife, and 64% of the same agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she refuses to have sex with him.¹²⁸²

The government has drafted a sexual offences bill to change the definition of rape as a crime against a person, rather than “Crimes against Morals and Decency”, where it sat in Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code.¹²⁸³ It will criminalise gang rape and introduce legislation against child marriage, human trafficking, sexual harassment and offences committed against vulnerable groups such as internally displaced people. The new law will also outline role of public officials and police in investigating and prosecuting cases, in addition to criminalising the obstruction of justice, protecting identity of injured parties and witnesses, and prohibiting out-of-court settlement of sexual offences cases”.¹²⁸⁴ However, legislation just

one part of process, and the proposed law fails to address marital rape or domestic violence.¹²⁸⁵ Currently the bill is being scrutinised in committees, and consultations are underway. There are slightly different processes across Somaliland, Puntland and South Central regions.¹²⁸⁶ In May 2014, the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, with support from the United Nations, developed a national action plan to combat sexual violence in conflict.¹²⁸⁷ In July 2014 a three-day training set up by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights gave 50 women training in capacity building on ways to combat gender-based violence.¹²⁸⁸

Women, Peace and Security

In 2014, the Federal government of Somalia controlled Mogadishu but had limited influence outside the capital city (al-Shabaab retained control of many rural areas in southern and central Somalia). Self-declared independent Republic of Somaliland and semi-autonomous Federal State of Puntland retained control of security and law-enforcement in their respective regions. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) commenced a new round of military operations in early March 2014 to recover al-Shabaab controlled territory.¹²⁸⁹ The 2015 Human Rights Watch Report on sexual violence in conflict states that scale and scope of sexual violence in Somalia remains unknown due to underreporting, but “it is clear that internally displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to rape by armed men, including Somali government soldiers and militia members. Government forces and allied militia have also taken advantage of insecurity in newly recovered towns to rape local women and girls. Some soldiers from Uganda and Burundi deployed as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia sexually exploited and assaulted women and girls on their bases in Mogadishu. In some cases women and girls were offered humanitarian assistance, medicine, and food in exchange for sex”.¹²⁹⁰ The AU and troop contributing countries are investigating allegations (in 2015) “but accountability for these abuses has been limited”.¹²⁹¹

The number of women in Somali National Army has been increasing since the ousting of Al-Shabab from Mogadishu in 2011, with estimates of 1,500 women for every 20,000 army personnel.¹²⁹² The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was set up by the AU Peace and Security Council, with the full support of UN. It is made up of around 22,000 troops

and police and only around 1.49% of AMISOM personnel are women¹²⁹³

Education

Decades of civil war and the collapse of the central government left Somalia's education system in ruins. 90% of all schools were destroyed during and after the war. Now, if students are enrolled, they face obstacles such as inadequate schooling facilities, shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate text books, and a lack of standardised curriculum.¹²⁹⁴ The Ministry of Human Development and Public Services published an education sector strategic plan (2013/2014-2015/2016) for the South Central Zone for a broad-based education system and the "rehabilitation and restoration" of education, to address the destruction (and closure) of schools and low school enrolment and literacy rates.¹²⁹⁵ Similar documents exist for Somaliland¹²⁹⁶ and Puntland.¹²⁹⁷ As of 2015 only 42% of children were enrolled in school, and only 36% of those enrolled were girls. Despite increases in secondary school enrolment girls make up only 28% of secondary school students.¹²⁹⁸ However, this does indicate an increase from 2006 attendance rates, which were 25% for boys and 21% for girls in primary school, and 10% for boys and 5% for girls in secondary school.¹²⁹⁹ There are not available data on literacy rates for girls versus boys, or adult women versus men, but overall literacy rates are extremely

low with estimates at less than 25%.¹³⁰⁰ Poor learning outcomes are reflected in high repetition and drop out rates and low examination rates. Only 37% of girls who transitioned from primary school took Form Four exam in 2011/2012.¹³⁰¹ Only 15% of the teaching forces are women, with the majority being unqualified.¹³⁰²

Economic Empowerment

In the 23 years from 1990 to 2013 women's participation (age 15 and older) in the labour market increased a mere 2.2 percentage points and remains low (from 35% to 37.2%), particularly in comparison to men (78.2% in 1990 and 75.5% in 2013).¹³⁰³ However, the youth unemployment rate (age 15-24) for females versus males is relatively similar (11.3% and 10.2% respectively),¹³⁰⁴ but the unemployment gap increase for adults with women at 74% and men at 61%.¹³⁰⁵ According to UN Women, few women are active in profitable areas of the economy focused on exports/imports and most Somali women are excluded from asset ownership. Women are also first to suffer when natural resource access/attainment comes under pressure due to cultural restriction on access/ownership, etc. Women's participation in the non-agricultural sector is highest in Puntland.¹³⁰⁶ Data on business ownership for Somali women is not available.

TANZANIA

Since gaining independence in 1964, Tanzania has enjoyed relative peace and stability, and its first multi-party democratic elections took place in 1995. In spite of having ratified CEDAW in 2006, the Maputo Protocol in 2007 many forms of violence against women persist including domestic violence, early marriage, and female genital cutting.¹³⁰⁷¹³⁰⁸ Tanzania ranks 47th out of 142 countries in the Gender Inequality Index with a rating of 0.718, and it does not have a plan of action for UNSCR 1325.¹³⁰⁹¹³¹⁰

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Women suffer under discriminatory inheritance laws. For example, widows have legal right to inherit husband's property but they are often denied this under customary law (enforced in 30 districts). This law indicates that widows have "no share of the inheritance if the deceased left relatives of his clan; her share is to be cared for by her children, just as she cared for them".¹³¹¹ The 2015 UN committee recommended that Tanzania take steps to "revise or repeal laws, customs and practices that discriminate against women".¹³¹² In 2014 Tanzania took steps to address this through the proposed constitution, which

would override customary practices that weaken women's rights to land (where women's rights were tenuous and heavily discriminated against).¹³¹³

In Tanzania, witch hunting is a significant problem with an estimated 765 murders of people accused of being witches in 2013. This is up from 640 in 2012, and over 500 of the victims were women.¹³¹⁴ Elderly women are most at risk of being attacked/accused of witchcraft. Human rights groups say deep seated cultural beliefs, the low status of women and the need to hold someone responsible when misfortune strikes have created a culture where allegations against older women/subsequent violence is tolerated.¹³¹⁵

Women's Political Participation

The National Assembly consists of 350 members, and the most recent elections were in 2010 where 36% (126 out of 350) of parliamentarians elected were women.¹³¹⁶ This is a noteworthy improvement from the 30.7% before the 2010 elections.¹³¹⁷ Of the 350 National Assembly seats, 102 are reserved for women under the Elections Regulations 2010 – Members of Parliament for Women Special Seats.¹³¹⁸ Of the 126 women elected, 21 were elected from constituencies, 102 were elected under the “Special Women” seats, as required, two of the five members from Zanzibar are women, and there is one woman out of the 10 appointed by the president.¹³¹⁹ In 2010, a woman took up the post of presiding officer for the first time.¹³²⁰ Additionally in 2015, 32.3% of ministers are women (10 out of 31)¹³²¹, an increase from 26.9% (7 out of 26) before the 2010 elections.¹³²²

Voter turnout in 2010 was low, around 40%.¹³²³ In a report on the 2010 Tanzania Election, Gender Links explores the role of biased media coverage in influencing politics and electoral outcomes, and indicated that women are underrepresented as news sources (21%) and 18% of those sourced in political stories. In the electoral period, men make up 88% of the quotes.¹³²⁴ In the 2015 elections, both main presidential candidates (CCM and Ukawa) were men.¹³²⁵ Although, Anna Mghirwa was the sole female candidate,¹³²⁶ and the candidate for the ruling party (CCM) has chosen a woman as his running mate.¹³²⁷ This indicates marginal improvement from the 2010 elections, which saw seven candidates, all male.¹³²⁸ However, 238 women ran for parliament, 770 women ran at the district level, 29 ran for the house of representatives, and two ran for presidency/vice presidency. This is 8.5% of overall candidates.¹³²⁹

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

Fertility rates in Tanzania remain high at 5.4 and there has been an average rate of reduction of 0.7 since 1990.¹³³⁰ ¹³³¹ In 2014 the adolescent (age 15-19) fertility ratio of 122.7 births per 1000 indicates an increase from 2010 where there were 116 births per 1000.¹³³² ¹³³³ According to data from the World Bank, the maternal mortality ratio has fallen from 514 per 100,000 live births in 2010, to 398 per 100,000 live births in 2015.¹³³⁴ As of 2010, 4.4% of married women had access to contraceptives. In 2010, 50.6% of births were attended by skilled personnel, ranging from 33% in the poorest quintile to 90.4% in the richest.¹³³⁵

According to World Bank data, the prevalence of HIV in women aged 15-24 has fallen from 3.1% in 2005 to 2.6% in 2010, and 2.1% in 2014.¹³³⁶ HIV prevalence is moderately high in Tanzania, but women are one of the most vulnerable groups. The adult population that has HIV is 5.7%; prevalence among females is significantly higher than among males (6.6% and 4.6%, respectively).¹³³⁷ In 2011, women comprised nearly 60% of people living with HIV.¹³³⁸ Tanzania is a “low prevalence” country for female genital cutting (FGM/C). 2014 data indicates rates of 15% countrywide,¹³³⁹ though there are variations in prevalence by region. The practice is mainly concentrated in the central regions, with Manyara region seeing 71% prevalence.¹³⁴⁰ The overall rate has not changed since 2004-5.¹³⁴¹

Violence Against Women

In 2010, UN Women reported around 39% of women had experienced physical violence (intimate partner and non-partner)¹³⁴² and around 20% of women had experienced sexual violence (intimate partner and non-partner).¹³⁴³ The police launched a three-year action plan on gender-based violence that encourages trained police officers to speed up investigations and prosecution of gender-related cases, and to open “gender desks” in each police station manned by women police officers. Doubts have been expressed about the implementation of this plan.¹³⁴⁴ However, there has been an increase in reporting of assaults on girls. For example, in Dar es Salaam, there were 519 reports of violence against girls in the first nine months of 2014, a 67% increase from the whole of 2013.¹³⁴⁵ Rather than indicating an increase in violence this may indicate and increased confidence in the police resulting in larger numbers of victims reporting the assault. A survey carried out by Tanzania's Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children in 2011 highlights the vulnerability of children to physical and sexual violence in the country, and indicates that nearly 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys experience sexual violence.¹³⁴⁶

Child marriage is a pressing issue and data from 2013 state that on average, almost two out of five girls will be married before their 18th birthday, and about 37% of women aged 20-24 were married/in union before age 18. There is a 4% decline since 2004. Legally the Law of Marriage Act (1971) allows for boys to marry at 18 and girls to marry at 15 – or at 14 if courts approve their request, and girls under 18 need parental permission to marry. However, Customary Laws run

parallel to Statutory Laws. The Local Customary Law (Declaration) order GN 279 (1963) allows each ethnic group to make decisions based on its customs and traditions, which can result in girls being married at ages lower than is permitted constitutionally.¹³⁴⁷ Due to inaccurate birth and marriage records, it is difficult to record exact figures of child marriage in Tanzania. Child marriage is particularly prevalent in rural areas.¹³⁴⁸ FGM/C is also an issue, as indicated above, but Tanzanian authorities' efforts to end child marriage/FGM/C are intensifying and a new commitment was signed in February 2015 by government and development partners to intensify efforts.¹³⁴⁹

Tanzania is a source, transit and destination country for the trafficking of men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. The incidence of internal trafficking is higher than that of transnational trafficking, and the exploitation of young girls in domestic servitude continues to be the largest human trafficking problem – though cases of child trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation are increasing along the Kenya-Tanzania border.¹³⁵⁰ The Government of Tanzania does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but it is making efforts – by convicting four international labour traffickers, awarding compensation, and other measures. However, it does not “punish offenders with sentences commensurate to the seriousness of the crimes committed” or apply “stringent penalties”.¹³⁵¹ In 2013, for the fourth year, it failed to allocate funding to the victims' assistance fund established by the 2008 anti-trafficking act.¹³⁵² In 2011, the International Organisation Migration (IOM) reported that Tanzania had assisted in 47 trafficking cases.¹³⁵³

Women, Peace and Security

The GenderLinks SADC Gender Barometer does not have verified data but estimates that percentages of women in the army are likely to be above 20%.¹³⁵⁴ In 2013, the percentage of women deployed in peacekeeping missions was 6%, down from 8% in 2011.¹³⁵⁵ Currently Tanzania does not have a Plan of Action for UN Security Council 1325.

Education

Since 2000, Tanzania has had a spectacular increase in primary school enrolment, growing by 50% between 2000-2003.¹³⁵⁶ UNESCO reported a gender parity

index of 0.99 for Net Enrolment Ratio in 2007 (98% for boys and 97% for girls)¹³⁵⁷ and the most recent data available (2014) show that this has remained constant.¹³⁵⁸ Enrolment in primary school is high, and notably shows a higher percentage of girls than boys attending school (85% for girls and 82% for boys in 2015).¹³⁵⁹ However, according to figures from the World Economic Forum, this is a decline from 2010 when the enrolment in primary school was nearly 100% for both boys and girls. In 2010 the literacy rates were 73% for girls and 76% for boys, and in 2012 they rose to 85% for girls and 87% for boys,¹³⁶⁰ indicating that literacy rates are also improving and the gender gap is small and decreasing. However, secondary school enrolment is significantly lower for both boys and girls, and there is a slightly larger gap based on gender (26% for girls, and 30% for boys).¹³⁶¹ Attendance rates also suffer and unlike primary school, slightly more boys than girls attend (24.4% for girls and 26.2% for boys in 2012). In Tanzania the difference in literacy rates between adult men and women in 2010 was 60.8% for women and 75.5% for men.¹³⁶² In 2014 the overall literacy rates had increased, but more for men than women (61% for women and 79% for men).¹³⁶³

Economic Empowerment

Although there is a high, albeit stagnant, labour force participation rate among women (86.9% in 1990 and 88.1% in 2013) it is still lower than men (90.2% in 2013)¹³⁶⁴ and primarily represents work without pay (63.9%). Additionally only 27.1% of employed women received some form of compensation such as cash, cash and in-kind, or in-kind only.¹³⁶⁵ Women's unemployment rates in 2013 were nearly double men's at 4.5% and 2.4% respectively.¹³⁶⁶ In 2009, the national estimate of female unemployment was 3% and in 2011 4%. For men, the figure was 2% in 2009 and 3% in 2011.¹³⁶⁷ According to 2014 International Labour Organisation data, “the proportion of women-owned enterprises (WOEs) (including micro, small and medium and private sector) is reported to have increased from 35% in early 1990s (NISS, 1991) to 54.3% in 2012 (MIT, 2012)”.¹³⁶⁸ The 2014 Global Gender Gap Index indicates that 14% of firms have women as top managers; 25% of women had female participation in ownership.¹³⁶⁹ In Tanzania, the earnings of women in formal wage work who are exposed to severe partner violence are 60% lower than women who are not exposed.¹³⁷⁰

UGANDA

Uganda has a long history of civil war, internal conflict, armed insurgency and election-related violence. Women and children are disproportionately affected, and also represent the vast majority of internally displaced persons and refugees.¹³⁷¹ Conflicts in Uganda and the Great Lakes region have been characterised by gross human rights violations including human trafficking, torture, abduction, systematic sexual violence, and sexual slavery. In spite of the ratification of CEDAW in 1985,¹³⁷² the Maputo Protocol in 2010,¹³⁷³ and the launch of a National Action Plan for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in December 2008,¹³⁷⁴ Uganda remains low on the Gender Inequality Index at 0.682 (1 = inequality).¹³⁷⁵

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

According to Womankind Worldwide “The 20-year armed conflict in northern Uganda has left a complex and traumatic legacy, including a brutal culture of violence against women”.¹³⁷⁶ Many Ugandan women will face rape, domestic violence, and early and forced marriage in their lifetime. Although strict legislation on violence against women has been passed, such as the 2010 Domestic Violence Act, women are still vulnerable as the laws have not been effectively implemented. A 2012 report by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) also highlights failures in implementation.¹³⁷⁷ Knowledge of the 2010 Domestic Violence Act is not well known by the population. The situation is exacerbated by widespread attitudes and beliefs that justify violence against women and girls. Women have also been excluded from peacebuilding, post-conflict recovery and decision-making processes, resulting in a marked failure to address their needs and concerns. Despite the adoption of international commitments, Uganda's progress in addressing women's rights is slow.¹³⁷⁸ The Human Rights Watch 2015 “Human Rights World Report” indicates that there is a concerning trend in 2015 that goes against even slow progress on women's rights.¹³⁷⁹

In 2012, the Marriage and Divorce bill was still pending before Parliament – after 14 years – which would fix the minimum legal age for marriage for both sexes at 18, grant women the right to choose their spouse and the right to divorce spouses for cruelty, and prohibit the customary practice of “widow inheritance”. It also defines matrimonial property, provides for equitable distribution of property in case of divorce and recognises some property rights for partners that cohabit. However, the Bill does not apply to Muslim marriages, nor does it prohibit polygamy or payment of the “bride price”.¹³⁸⁰ In 2013, the speaker of the Parliament adjourned the house and requested members to go and consult their constituencies on the bill. In February 2015, she “resurrected” the bill and

notified MPs that passing the Marriage and Divorce Bill is one of the outstanding issues parliament has to consider in the current session.¹³⁸¹

In 2013, the National Land Policy was approved. It directs the government to pass legislation to “protect the right to inheritance and ownership of land for women and children”, and to ensure equal land rights for men and women in marriage.¹³⁸² It calls for an overhaul of the Succession Act and revisions to the Land Act, and for the restoration of powers of land administration to traditional leaders, provided they are sensitive to the rights of vulnerable groups.¹³⁸³ Eighty percent of land in Uganda is held under undocumented customary law. Some advocates believe this is a hindrance to women's land rights because of the commonly held belief that customary tenure generally favours men. However, in some places – including Northern Uganda – women have strong land rights enshrined in the customs/traditions of their tribes.¹³⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

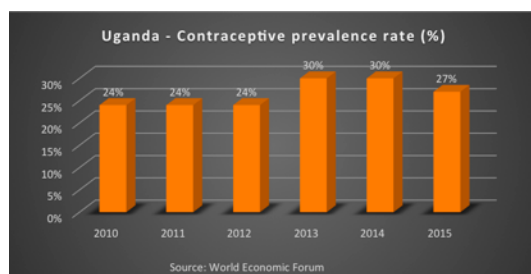
Women's representation in parliament is on the rise from 31.5% in 2010 to 34.97% in 2015.¹³⁸⁵ The Ugandan Parliament has 375 total members; 238 are elected members, 137 are indirectly elected members, and 11 are members appointed by the President who do not have voting rights. Of the 375, there are 112 women district representatives and 117 of the 137 indirectly directed must be women.¹³⁸⁶ In 2011, 443 candidates were running for the 117 special seats reserved for women.¹³⁸⁷ Ministers are 29.6% women (8/27), which is slightly lower than the 2010 figure at 32%. There is a woman Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, who was elected in May 2011, and a woman, Jane Lubowa Kibirige, was elected to the post of Secretary General in February 2012.¹³⁸⁸

“Women in Uganda are known to turn out more on polling day than men. But due to poverty, the effective participation of citizens, especially women during elections, is manipulative, many are bribed and vote

without scrutinizing the manifestos and abilities of candidates".¹³⁸⁹ Additionally, some women face intimidation by their spouses thereby preventing them from listening to campaigns and voting for candidates of their choice.¹³⁹⁰ In spite of barriers to voting, surveys in the media have discovered that women are diligent voters, often taking time off on Election Day to endure long lines and the fickle weather elements to cast their votes.¹³⁹¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In spite of its reputation for having one of the most successful HIV/AIDS programmes on the continent, 2015 saw Uganda sign the HIV Prevention and Control Act into law. The law permits mandatory HIV testing for pregnant women and their partners, and allows medical providers to disclose a patient's HIV status to others. Both of these stipulations directly affect women and are violations of human rights related to consent, privacy, and bodily autonomy. Contrary to international guidelines, the new law criminalizes intentional HIV transmission, attempted transmission, and behaviour that might result in transmission by those who know their HIV status. The act has been widely condemned by health care providers as counterproductive to national HIV goals, discouraging people from seeking testing and treatment.¹³⁹² Uganda still ranks in the top ten countries for HIV prevalence, with an overall prevalence of 8.3% in 2011 for women (up from 7.5% in 2004-5) and 6.1% for men (up from 5.0% in 2004-5).¹³⁹³ Women are disproportionately affected because of issues related to early marriage and early sexual debut. In general, HIV prevalence has been rising since its lowest rate of 6.4% in 2006 for whole population.¹³⁹⁴



Fertility rates in Uganda are declining, and a 2014 Global Gender Gap reports that rates are 6.0 children per woman down from 6.7 in 2006, and 6.2 in 2011.¹³⁹⁵ Fertility rates are substantially lower in urban areas with rates falling from 4.4 (2006) to 3.8 (2011) compared to rural areas rates of 7.1 and 6.8

over the same time period.¹³⁹⁶ Adolescent fertility (births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19) is also declining from 131 in 2011 to 115 in 2014; however, adolescent fertility is an ongoing problem as Uganda still remains in the top 20 countries with the highest rates.¹³⁹⁷ Maternal mortality has also dropped to 360 (deaths per 100,000 births) in 2013 from 410 in 2010.¹³⁹⁸ In 2015, the contraceptive prevalence rate was 27%¹³⁹⁹ of women married or in unions, this is a slight decline from 2014 when it was 30%¹⁴⁰⁰. Notably, prevalence varied widely between urban and rural setting with 43% and 21% prevalence, respectively.¹⁴⁰¹ Fifty-eight percent of women have a skilled birth attendant,¹⁴⁰² up from 42% in 2006 and 50% in 2008.¹⁴⁰³

Uganda has one of the highest child marriage prevalence rates globally, with 10% of girls married before 15, and 40% married before 18.¹⁴⁰⁴ In 2006, about 46% of the women aged 20-24 were married/in union before age 18 indicating a 15% decline since 2000 (54%).¹⁴⁰⁵ In June 2015 Uganda launched its first ever National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, which was developed in partnership with civil society organisations and UN agencies. The strategy is a five-year plan, which aims to create a society free from child marriage and teenage pregnancy.¹⁴⁰⁶ Uganda has very low rates of FGM/C compared to other African countries, with an estimated prevalence of 1.4%. However, there are regional variations with the highest prevalence in Karamoja (4.5%) and Eastern Region (2.3%) and between ethnic groups. Among the Pokot (in Karamoja Region), female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is near universal at 95% and among the Sabin/Sebei (in the Eastern Region) the practice is estimated at 50%. FGM/C is closely associated with early marriage and bride price shows that overall the rate increased between 2006 and 2011 (0.6% to 1.4%); but decreased in certain regions.¹⁴⁰⁷ A law prohibiting FGM/C was signed into law in 2010.¹⁴⁰⁸

Violence Against Women

According to a 2011 survey, 56.1% of women would experience physical violence in their lifetime, down slightly from 59.9% in 2006, but is still very high. Over a lifetime, 27.8% of women surveyed in 2011 would experience sexual violence/rape/assault, which is down significantly from 39% in 2006. Over a lifetime 50.5% of women will experience physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a partner.¹⁴⁰⁹

The 2014 trafficking in persons report states that Uganda is source, transit, and destination country for men, women and children; both labour and sex trafficking. Women and children from the remote Karamoja region are particularly vulnerable to domestic servitude, commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging. During 2014, the government reported identification of Ugandan trafficking victims in 22 countries. Government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so by raising public awareness. Fifty-six defendants were prosecuted in 2013 (double number reported in 2012) and two sex trafficking offenders were convicted. This was the first conviction of trafficking offenders since 2009.¹⁴¹⁰ Until August 2006, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) abducted children and adults in northern Uganda to serve as soldiers, sex slaves, and porters. While there have been no LRA attacks in Uganda since 2006, Ugandan children previously abducted remain unaccounted for, and some may remain captive with LRA elements currently located in the DRC, Central African Republic, and South Sudan.¹⁴¹¹ According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) report, there were 14 cases of women victims of trafficking in 2009, and 20 in 2013.¹⁴¹²

Women, Peace and Security

In 2010, there were 1,566 female soldiers in the Uganda People's Defence Forces (corresponding male soldiers withheld due to compromise of national security). They made up 1% of colonels; 3% of majors; 8% of captains; 2% of lieutenants; and 11% of sec. lieutenant,¹⁴¹³ with an overall estimate of 4% (2014).¹⁴¹⁴ There were 13 women out of 61 peacekeepers,¹⁴¹⁵ and elsewhere (e.g. in AMISOM, the "African Union Mission in Somalia") 3.1% of peacekeepers are women (193/6223).¹⁴¹⁶

In 2007, a 5-year, national plan of action (2008-2012) was created for the implementation UNSCR 1325, 1820 and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Regions in order to 'address sexual violence against women in armed conflict'.¹⁴¹⁷ It is led by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and forms part of a broader national strategic framework on the advancement of women; however, there is no indication of who would finance implementation.¹⁴¹⁸ The National Actions Plan (NAP) does discuss organising seminars and training to overcome the major challenge to implementing UNSCR 1325 – the

lack of knowledge about existence and content. The NAP also has a specific section on ending impunity.¹⁴¹⁹ Additionally, Uganda has combined multiple resolutions into one action plan, making it more relevant to its situation. The plan identifies five goals with strategic objectives, strategic actions, performance indicators, impact and key actors for each.

Education

Literacy rate for adolescent girls (15-24) have remained relatively constant since 2006 and was 82% in 2012. Adolescent boys' literacy rates also remained relatively constant and were 5% higher than girls at 87%.¹⁴²⁰ In 2014 adult literacy rates show a much greater disparity between men and women with 65% literacy for women and 83% for men.¹⁴²¹ However, both men's and women's adult literacy rates have increased since 2006 when they were 62% and 81%.¹⁴²² A higher percentage of girls than boys enrol in primary school (93% and 90%, respectively).¹⁴²³ Although enrolment in primary education remains high, the number of girls and boys enrolled in primary education has declined since 2010. Attendance rates for girls in 2006 were 81.52% for girls and increased to 88.27% (2011), for boys, attendance was 82.57% and increased to 88.22%.¹⁴²⁴ Attendance rates in secondary school decline dramatically from primary school, yet show an increase in attendance from 2006 to 2011, and a higher number of girls than boys. In 2006 14.05% of girls attended secondary school compared to 20.90% in 2011, and 11.68% of boys attended in 2006 up to 15.58% in 2011.¹⁴²⁵

Economic Empowerment

The percentage of women enrolled in the workforce or active in the labour market has remained stagnant with 78% in 2006 and 77% in 2014, and is slightly lower than men at 80%.¹⁴²⁶ The 2015 UN Progress of Women report indicates that 19.8% of women are not employed; 30.7% are employed but with no pay; and 49.5% are employed with pay (cash, cash and in kind, and in kind only).¹⁴²⁷ Uganda has low but increasing levels of unemployment.¹⁴²⁸ In 2013, 4.5% of women in the labour force over 15 years of age were unemployed compared to 3.2% of men.¹⁴²⁹ According to the 2010/11 Census of Business Establishment, 44% of businesses with fixed premises in the country were owned by females, a significant 19% increase from a rate of 37% in 2001/2002. This indicates a 253% growth in the number of women-owned businesses in that ten-year period compared to 153%

growth of male-owned businesses during the same timeframe.¹⁴³⁰ According to the 2014 Global Gender

Gap Index 15% of firms have women as leaders and 26% firms have female participation in ownership¹⁴³¹

ZAMBIA

Zambia ratified CEDAW in 1985, and the Maputo Protocol in 2006,¹⁴³² and over the first five years of the African Women's Decade Zambia has made strides in addressing GBV with the passage of the Anti Gender-Based Violence Act and the National Guidelines of Multi-disciplinary Management of Gender-Based Violence of 2011. It does not have a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Zambia has experienced broad political stability and has been classified as a peaceful country based on relatively low levels of violence and crime within the country and external factors such as military expenditures and wars.¹⁴³³ In November 2013, a draft constitution was submitted to President Sata to be approved via referendum. Despite exclusion from the formal process, civil society organisations decided on ten minimum conditions that the draft constitution should include. Among these were “(1) fundamental rights, with particular emphasis on equal protection with respect to socio-economic rights, (2) traditional customs with a need to eliminate repressive customary practices that prejudice women and the enjoyment of their human rights, and (3) equality before the law to ensure equal treatment of women, particularly with respect to access to employment and political space”.¹⁴³⁴ When measured against these conditions, some degree of progress has clearly been made. For example, customary law is required to be consistent with values of the draft constitution thus outlawing customs that recognise negative practices such as gender-based violence, or deny land rights. Women would gain additional rights such as the ability to choose their family name, to change the nationality of their children, and the draft demonstrates gender sensitivity in its pronouns. However, it does not address reproductive rights, maternal mortality, or bodily autonomy and abortion is outlawed and punishable as murder. Additionally it overlooks quotas for women in political representation.¹⁴³⁵

Although the draft constitution calls for equitable access to and ownership of land, as of September 2013, the draft constitution has still not been adopted.¹⁴³⁶ Since the new constitution is still in draft form, customary law continues to discriminate against women with respect to property ownership and inheritance and is protected by the Constitution. One

example of this is in the area of land ownership, 94% of which is under customary law. In rural areas, women cannot inherit control over land. A local chief may decide to allocate a plot to a single woman with children, but a married woman would never be assigned a plot in her own right. Both male and female local chiefs behave in the same way in this regard. In contrast, women in urban areas can purchase land in their own right.¹⁴³⁷

Women's Political Participation

There are no reserved seats for women in Parliament¹⁴³⁸ and the percentage of women in Parliament decreased from 14% in 2010 to 11.5% in 2012.¹⁴³⁹¹⁴⁴⁰ As of 2015, this figure has risen slightly to 12.7% (20/158 seats). In the 2015 presidential elections one out of three candidates was a woman, and she came in third.¹⁴⁴¹ In 2015, 20% of ministers were women indicating an increase from 2010.¹⁴⁴² Only around 6% of local councillors were women in 2011, down slightly from 7% in 2005.¹⁴⁴³¹⁴⁴⁴ While these figures indicate significant issues with women's participation in political leadership it is important to note that five out of nine justices are women, and the chief justice is a woman.¹⁴⁴⁵

Female voter turnout for the 2015 presidential election was low at 33%. According to the Zambia National Women's Lobby, low voter turnout can be attributed to hurried manner of replacing voters' cards. Many people, especially women, were disenfranchised because of factors that prevented them from replacing their cards. Low voter education was also a factor since print and electronic media dominated and did not reach citizens in rural areas. The disparity between men and women's literacy rates also played a role with women comprising most of the voters who required assistance.¹⁴⁴⁶ In the 2011 election (parliamentary), voter registration was evenly spread between men and women.¹⁴⁴⁷ However, while roughly equal numbers

registered the amount of women who actually voted was lower than men.¹⁴⁴⁸

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Data shows that the fertility rate has declined from 5.8 births¹⁴⁴⁹ per woman in 2010, to 3.5 births per woman in 2015.¹⁴⁵⁰ The adolescent birth rate has declined to 93 per 1000 in 2014 from 126 in 2006.¹⁴⁵¹ Progress has been made on maternal mortality from 262 per 100,000 live births in 2010, to 224 in 2015.¹⁴⁵² The contraceptive prevalence rate, while low, is increasing from 41% in 2007 to 49% in 2013/14.¹⁴⁵³ In 2013, Zambian First Lady, Christine Kaseba, launched an 8-year campaign for the Zambian Government to raise the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate to 59%.¹⁴⁵⁴ The presence of a skilled attendant at birth has decrease slightly according to WHO data¹⁴⁵⁵

Although HIV prevalence has decreased from 13.7% in 2009 it still remains high (12.5% in 2014)¹⁴⁵⁶ and the percentage of individuals living with HIV is disproportionately female with women representing 52% of people living with HIV/AIDS in 2015.¹⁴⁵⁷ Additionally, among young women aged 15-24, HIV prevalence is more than twice that of their same-age male peers.¹⁴⁵⁸ Comprehensive knowledge about HIV is also lower in females than it is in males (37.8% versus 40.8%).¹⁴⁵⁹ In Zambia, it is mandatory for every pregnant woman to undergo HIV testing so that if she is positive, she can start treatment to reduce the chance of mother to child transmission. Between 2009 and 2011, Zambia saw a 55% decline in the number of new paediatric HIV infections. Meanwhile, 86% of pregnant women living with HIV received efficacious ARVs for PMTCT in 2011, up from 58% in 2009.¹⁴⁶⁰

Violence Against Women

In 2007, nearly half (46.5%) of Zambian women indicated experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and importantly this is only slightly lower than the 46.8% that experience IPV and non-partner physical violence, indicating that the majority of women experience violence from partners.¹⁴⁶¹ 16.7% women experience intimate partner sexual violence and 20.2% experience intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence.¹⁴⁶² However, the SADC Barometer indicates significantly higher numbers stating that 69% women experience IPV, and 72% experience GBV over their lifetime.¹⁴⁶³ Additionally, Zambia, at 29%, had the highest experience rate out of SADC countries of non-partner rape, and at 81%, the highest experience sexual harassment in the workplace.¹⁴⁶⁴

In 2015, child marriage remains a significant issue with 42% of females married before age of 18 with little to no change since 2002, and rates of up to 60% in some regions.^{1465 1466} In 2013 the Government of Zambia launched a nationwide campaign to end childhood marriage, focused on engagement with traditional leaders and law reform. In 2015, Zambia started to develop a five-year national action plan to end child marriage.¹⁴⁶⁷ Zambia is a country with low prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting (FG/MC) with rates estimated at 1% predominately concentrated in migrant communities.^{1468 1469} In 2008, the Zambian Anti-Human Trafficking Act aimed to counter-trafficking activities by building the capacity of law enforcement and civil society.¹⁴⁷⁰ A National Action Plan followed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. Furthermore, internal trafficking of women and children is thought to be common in the country.¹⁴⁷¹ Despite high trafficking estimates the Institute of Migration only recorded 14 cases of human trafficking that received assistance in 2011.¹⁴⁷²

From 2009 to 2015, Zambia has progressed in laws on domestic violence; comprehensive treatment for HIV/AIDS, including post-exposure prophylaxis; human trafficking laws; a National Action Plan on GBV; constructing a composite index for measuring GBV; and obtaining baseline data on GBV from four provinces.¹⁴⁷³ The Anti Gender-Based Violence Act, outlaws gender-based violence such as physical, sexual, economic and psychological violence.¹⁴⁷⁴ The government is also partnering with international-based organisations to implement the one-stop centre for GBV victims in various districts. At national level, Government has developed a framework that will provide guidance in responding to incidences of GBV. In addition to the Anti Gender-Based Violence Act of 2011, the National Gender Communication Plan 2010 to 2014, and the National Guidelines of Multi-disciplinary Management of Gender-Based Violence of 2011 attempt to address existing gender inequalities and gaps in response.¹⁴⁷⁵

Women, Peace and Security

The numbers of women in the Defence Forces/National Service are increasing, and in 2013 “Defence Secretary Leon Panetta was lifting the military’s official ban on women in combat, which opened up hundreds of thousands of additional front-line jobs to them”.¹⁴⁷⁶ Women comprise 10% of those in defence forces (2014).¹⁴⁷⁷ Additionally there is a 30% quota reserved for women police on

peacekeeping missions, and there are women in Zambian peacekeeping organisations.^{1478 1479} Zambia also increased its deployment of women peacekeepers from 10% in 2010 to 16% in 2014.¹⁴⁸⁰ It does not have a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Education

Young women's literacy rates (age 15-24) have increased from 58.5% in 2007 to 62.1% in 2015. In 2014, adult literacy rates were markedly skewed towards men with 72% for males and 52% for women.¹⁴⁸¹ Additionally problematic, is that literacy rates for men and women have both decreased and the gap has not narrowed since 2010 when it was 81% versus 61% for women.^{1482 1483} Boys' and girls' enrolment in primary school has decreased from 94% in 2005 to 91% in 2013 for boys, and 94% in 2005 to 92% in 2013.¹⁴⁸⁴ Primary school attendance has increased only marginally since 2001-2 (61% girls, 67.9% boys), to 72% for girls and 71% for boys in 2013.¹⁴⁸⁵ Attendance in secondary school declined significantly and girls have lower attendance than boys (44% for girls, and 47% for boys in 2013). However, while low, secondary school attendance has doubled since 2001-2 and has maintained near parity (22.6% for girls and 20.6% for boys).¹⁴⁸⁶ In tertiary education, Zambia has equal numbers of men and women enrolled.¹⁴⁸⁷ While issues of parity may seem to have been addressed, disparities in learning

outcomes prevail where “boys in Zambia outperform girls in both reading and maths, with girls’ reading achievement having declined very significantly between 2000 and 2007”.¹⁴⁸⁸ Additionally illiteracy is 15% higher amongst girls than boys aged 15-24 despite girls having a higher attendance rate than boys at the primary level and with “gender disparities in favour of males at nearly all levels of education in Zambia”.¹⁴⁸⁹

Economic Empowerment

The percentage of women enrolled in the workforce or active in the labour market is currently at rates similar to 1990 (73.6% in 1990 compared to 73.1% in 2013) and remains lower than men's (86.0% for women, 85.6% for men).¹⁴⁹⁰ In 2008, labour market participation was significantly lower at 70.3% for women and 78.8% for men.¹⁴⁹¹ Unemployment is higher for both women and men than it was in 2008 (both at 8%) and is higher for men than women at 14.1% of men in 2014, and 11.3% for women.^{1492 1493} In 2014, 24% of firms had female top managers and 50% firms had female participation in ownership. Zambia is progressing on the issue of women in business with women comprising 16.9% of the boards of major companies, due to government programmes.¹⁴⁹⁴

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has experienced political and economic turmoil for over a decade. Zimbabwe has a high Gender Inequality Index of 0.701 (1 being total inequality)¹⁴⁹⁵ despite having ratified CEDAW in 1991, and the Maputo Protocol in 2008.^{1496,1497} Zimbabwe does not have a National Action Plan for UN Security Council Resolution 1325.¹⁴⁹⁸

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Political violence is a widespread problem with high levels of repression reported before the 2013 elections. Since September 2012, nearly every single civil society organisation of note in Zimbabwe working on civil, political and human rights issues had their offices raided, or leadership arrested, or both.¹⁴⁹⁹ Although human rights abuses have decreased overall, they still have high occurrence rates.¹⁵⁰⁰ A Gender Commission was appointed by parliament in 2015¹⁵⁰¹ to ensure gender equality and address gender discrimination by investigating gender-related violations; advising public and private institutions on steps to ensure gender equality; recommending

prosecutions for criminal violations of rights relating to gender; securing appropriate redress for violations of rights relating to gender; and convening an annual Gender Forum. This is an independent commission established by Chapter 12 of the Constitution. However, the Gender Commission does not have any significant functions beyond those it can exercise under the Constitution.¹⁵⁰²

Women's Political Participation

Zimbabwe has a bicameral parliament made up of the National Assembly and Senate, and elections are held every five years. Both the President of the National Assembly and the Secretary General are men.¹⁵⁰³ The President of the Senate is woman, and the Secretary

General is a man.¹⁵⁰⁴ Since the 2013 election, 85/270 seats (31.48%) were held by women,¹⁵⁰⁵ a noteworthy increase from the 2008 election when 15% were held by women.¹⁵⁰⁶ This is largely due to the quotas being implemented in the National Assembly in 2013 that reserve 60 seats for women in the 2013 and 2018 elections. Interestingly women's seats in the Senate increased from 24.2% in 2008 to 47.50% in 2013 (38/80)¹⁵⁰⁷ without quotas for women.¹⁵⁰⁸ In the 2013 elections, fewer women candidates stood for election at the national level.¹⁵⁰⁹ The Zanu-PF and both the Movement for Democratic Change formations fielded a combined 90 women compared to 663 males who participated in the elections.¹⁵¹⁰ In compared to 157 total in 2008, (78 from Zanu-PF, and 79 from MDC) which had surpassed the 30% quota that support groups were looking for¹⁵¹¹

In 2010, in the coalition, 18.6% of ministers were women (8/43). In 2015 (after the 2013 Zanu-PF electoral majority), it went down to 11.5% (3/26).¹⁵¹² In 2012, 18% of urban councillors and 19% of rural district councillors were women.¹⁵¹³ However, women's representation in local government decreased from 19% to 16% following the 2013 general elections.¹⁵¹⁴ In the constitutional court, four out of nine judges are women and the chief justice is a man.¹⁵¹⁵ The 2013 elections showed a dramatic 68% increase in the number of women who claimed to have voted. The 2008 elections were marred with intimidation and violence and saw the decline of women's participation in electoral processes (both in voters and official candidates). Research indicates that 62% of women experienced violence in the 2008 elections, compared to 20% in 2005.¹⁵¹⁶

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2015, Zimbabwe's fertility rate was 3.5 births¹⁵¹⁷ per woman down slightly from 4.0 in 2010.¹⁵¹⁸ There is also a steady decrease in adolescent fertility rates from 116.7 in 2008 to 110.4 in 2014. Maternal mortality decreased from 446 deaths per 100,000 in 2010 to 369 in 2013, but has since increased to 443 in 2015.¹⁵¹⁹ Contraceptive prevalence rates were at 59% in 2001,¹⁵²⁰ without a significant increase from 55% in 1990 and stalling since 2006 where it stood at 60%.¹⁵²¹ Skilled attendance at delivery shows a troubling and consistent decline from 73% in 1999, to 69% in 2006, to 67% in 2009,¹⁵²² to 66.2%, in 2012.^{1523 1524}

Two thirds of the population in Zimbabwe is under 25 years of age and in 2014 HIV prevalence was higher

among women (7%) aged 15-24 than among men of the same age (4.8%) despite overall decreases since 2008.¹⁵²⁵ Zimbabwe has the sixth highest number of annual adolescent AIDS-related deaths in the world.¹⁵²⁶ HIV prevalence among pregnant adolescents is declining but remains a persistent problem with rates at 9.85% in 2013, down from 12.5% in 2011.¹⁵²⁷ Sex work is a factor of the high rate of prevalence of HIV in Zimbabwe – 25% of sex workers are living with HIV/AIDS, compared to 15% prevalence in the general population¹⁵²⁸

Violence Against Women

In 2010/11, a DHS survey found that 29.9% of women will experience physical violence (intimate partner and non-partner) in their lifetime, a noteworthy reduction from 36.2% in 2005/6.¹⁵²⁹ The same survey found that 27.2% of women will experience sexual violence (intimate partner and non-partner) in their lifetime, a slight increase from 25% in 2005/6.¹⁵³⁰ A more recent study from Gender Links with 6,600 respondents indicates that intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious problem with 69% of women experiencing, and 41% of men admitting to perpetrating IPV in their lifetime. Far less men admit to perpetrating violence than women who experience it.¹⁵³¹ About a quarter (26%) of women in Zimbabwe experienced some form of IPV (33.1% experienced physical IPV, and 21.8% experienced sexual IPV) in the period 2011-2012.^{1532,1533} IPV prevents women from being able to negotiate condom use, and puts them at higher risk of HIV infection. 22% of women report that their first sexual intercourse was forced or against their will. This rises to 28% among women whose first sexual experience was under the age of 15.

UNICEF data from 2015 indicates that child marriage is a ongoing issue with nearly 1/3 of girls (31%) married before their 18th birthday and 4% married before their 15th.¹⁵³⁴ Additionally data from 2005 indicates that 34% of women in monogamous unions enter into those relationships by age 18, compared to 56% for women in polygamous unions.¹⁵³⁵ The Marriage Act allows girls age 16 to marry while the minimum age for boy is 18. The Customary Marriages Act does not specify a minimum age of marriage. However, the new 2013 Constitution stipulates that "no person may be compelled to enter marriage against their will' and calls on the state to ensure that 'no children are pledged into marriage'".¹⁵³⁶

Zimbabwe is a source, transit, and destination country for sex trafficking and forced labour.¹⁵³⁷ Zimbabwe has passed legislation that tightens penalties for human trafficking (2014) and seeks to appoint a committee on trafficking in persons with a mandate to formulate and implement a national plan of action against trafficking in persons. It also seeks to create centres for victims of trafficking. In 2011, only five cases of trafficking were assisted according to International Organisation for Migration. These cases were not disaggregated by gender.¹⁵³⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Women are recruited into the Zimbabwean army, but gender is not mainstreamed.¹⁵³⁹ From 2010-2015, the percentage of women in the defence forces remained constant at 20%.¹⁵⁴⁰ In the army, 0% of women have attained the position of general, lieutenant general, major general and brigadier general.¹⁵⁴¹ Eight out of the ten countries in the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance that send peacekeepers on UN missions send women peacekeepers. At 29%, Zimbabwe sent the highest proportion of women in 2014, despite deploying a higher 35% in 2013. However, it is still a 5% increase from the 2010 figure of 24%.¹⁵⁴² Zimbabwe does not have a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Education

The literacy rate for adolescents remains high overall and slightly higher for females (92.1%) than males (89.6%)¹⁵⁴³ in spite of a troubling decline since 1992 when rates were 96.5% for males and 94.4% for females.¹⁵⁴⁴ In 2015 adult literacy rates are higher for men (88.53%) than women (84.55%), but indicate an increase in overall literacy from 2011 (80.07% female, 87.76% male).¹⁵⁴⁵ Enrolment in primary education

indicates a troubling decrease from 2010 (91% female, 89% male) to 2014 (84% female, 82% male).^{1546,1547}

However, primary school attendance rates have increased slightly from 2006 (85% female, 85% male)¹⁵⁴⁸ to 2012 (88.7% female, 87.5% male),¹⁵⁴⁹ as have secondary school attendance rates (2006: 44% female, 45% male;¹⁵⁵⁰ 2012: 48.6% female, 47.7% male).¹⁵⁵¹ Tertiary education enrolment rates are quite low with 5% of females and 7% of males attending in 2014.¹⁵⁵² The SADC Barometer indicates that between 2009 (baseline) and 2015, Zimbabwe has met its target of enrolling equal numbers of girls and boys in primary and secondary school.¹⁵⁵³

Economic Empowerment

The Zimbabwean economy has endured rampant inflation and the collapse of agriculture-based economy, leading to critical food and fuel shortages.¹⁵⁵⁴ In 2014, labour force participation was 85% for women and 91% for men.¹⁵⁵⁵ This has been generally steady over the past decade (84% for women, 91% for men)¹⁵⁵⁶ and increased from 1990 (67.1% for women, 79.5% for men). The World Bank states that in 2013 unemployment was nearly equal for men and women (5.3% men, 5.4% women) indicating a decrease for men since 2008 (6.9%) but an increase in unemployment for women (4.6%).¹⁵⁵⁷ However, national unemployment estimates are much higher with women as high as 9.9% in 2012 and men at 12.1%. In 2014, 17% of firms had women as top managers, and 56% firms had female participation in ownership.¹⁵⁵⁸ Land reform is biased towards men and is an ongoing issue since the land reform programme does not mention women or address institutions (such as unequal power and gender relations, which relate to customary practices) that prevent women from accessing land.¹⁵⁵⁹

NORTH AFRICA REGION

Over the last five years, most of North Africa has experienced significant upheaval ranging from revolution to civil war. The Arab uprisings and their subsequent transitions raised significant questions about how women's rights would be impacted. Despite the active roles women played in the uprisings, they have largely been sidelined in the transition, raising serious questions regarding what the future of women's rights will be in a region where significant gender gaps already existed. Meanwhile, in countries such as Sudan and South Sudan, renewed violence continues to threaten the basic safety and security of women and girls in all facets of life.

While the challenges women and girls in North Africa face to achieve gender equality are ever present and at times increasing, there have been notable achievements. This is particularly true when it comes to establishing quotas in parliament to ensure women's representation, establishing laws that guarantee equality of the sexes and taking efforts to reduce maternal mortality ratios across the majority of the region.

Notably, the overwhelming majority of countries in North Africa have adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, though many have done so with several reservations to ensure the dominance of Islamic Sharia Law. Only one country with the legislative power to do so, Sudan, has yet to adopt CEDAW. Yet none of the countries in North Africa have adopted the Framework for Action for Resolution 1325.



Egyptian at Tahrir Square after the Fall of Mubarak - UN

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

In the last five years several governments in North Africa have passed laws that ensure equality between the sexes, prohibit discrimination and outlaw harassment. For example, the constitution in Algeria prohibits discrimination based on gender and provides for gender equality¹⁵⁶⁰, and the 2014 Egyptian¹⁵⁶¹ and 2011 Moroccan¹⁵⁶² and Libyan constitution's guarantee equality for all citizens without discrimination.¹⁵⁶³ In the most progressive legislation, Tunisia's 2014 Constitution made it one of the few countries in the Middle East and North Africa region to have a constitutional obligation to work toward gender parity in elected assemblies.¹⁵⁶⁴

However, while on paper women's rights have been enhanced through constitutional provisions against discrimination and harassment, women across North Africa continue to face significant challenges to their rights. In Libya for example, the law against discrimination lacks implementing legislation, and operating with limited capacity, the Government did not effectively enforce these prohibitions.¹⁵⁶⁵

In Morocco, while its legislative efforts toward equality are laudable, the Family Code continues to contain discriminatory provisions for women with regard to inheritance and the right of husbands to unilaterally divorce their wives.¹⁵⁶⁶ Similarly, a challenge in South Sudan comes from the tension that exists between statutory and customary law, where customary laws and traditional practices among South Sudan's many tribes play a critical role in regulating society in ways that are often harmful to women.

In Algeria, women continue to face discrimination in many aspects of the law and through traditional social practices¹⁵⁶⁷ and as recently as 2014, religious extremists advocated for practices that restrict women's behaviour, including freedom of movement.¹⁵⁶⁸ In Egypt, the nation was ranked the worst country to be a woman in the Arab world. A massive spike in sexual harassment and assaults on women participating in protests occurred following the revolution.¹⁵⁶⁹

Women's Political Participation

Women were active participants in the 2011 uprisings and since then, while many women's organisations have been sidelined in the transition process, many governments in North Africa have passed legislation requiring quotas to ensure female representation at different levels of government. Yet this has not been without its challenges.

Despite their active role in the Arab spring uprisings, since revolution, women's status in Egypt has regressed in the realms of civil rights, freedoms and equal representation. In 2012, women obtained only 2% of the 2012 parliament seats, 10% less than in 2010.^{1570,1571} Meanwhile, Libya has enacted laws to ensure women and men are equally free to participate in elections and a system of quotas has been instituted at each level of government to help overcome some of the social and cultural limitations to women's political participation.¹⁵⁷² Following the revolution, Tunisia also adopted a new constitution that emphasised gender equality and the first constitution to give all citizens, both men and women, the right to present themselves as presidential candidates.¹⁵⁷³ Furthermore, a quota to include women on party lists for the October 2011 National Constituent Assembly election resulted in about 5,000 women candidates.¹⁵⁷⁴

The most notable gains in the last decade have come in Algeria. In 2012, Algeria has experienced a substantial increase in the participation of women in parliament and leadership positions. Through Article 2 of the 2012 Law on the Representation of Women, it was required that female candidates comprise between 20 and 50% of any candidate list for legislative elections in Algeria.¹⁵⁷⁵ As a result, Algeria became the first Arab country to achieve 30% female representation in parliament.¹⁵⁷⁶ Similar to Algeria, in Morocco, in the most recent 2011 Parliamentary elections 60 out of 395 seats were reserved for women.¹⁵⁷⁷ Finally, while elections have never been held in an independent South Sudan, since the country's creation, women have represented 27% of the National Legislative Assembly.¹⁵⁷⁸ This is similar to Sudan where 24% of women are represented in Sudan's national parliament.¹⁵⁷⁹ While there have been no elections in Western Sahara, women have played a prominent role in Western Sahara's independence movement. Their involvement has spanned a guerrilla war and, for the past two decades, a mostly peaceful protest movement.¹⁵⁸⁰

Finally, while gains have been made in electoral representation, there are concerns in North Africa regarding women's political participation. According to the Transitional Governance Project, women participated dramatically less than men in the first transitional elections, with the gap greatest in Libya. In Tunisia, 75% of men and 65% of women voted in the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections. In Egypt, 77% of men and 58% of women voted in the first 2011-2012 transitional parliamentary elections. However, in Libya, the gap in voting in the 2012 General National Congress election was 84% for men, compared to only 59% for women.¹⁵⁸¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Despite the regional upheaval, significant gains have continued to be made in decreasing maternal mortality rates and improving access to health services across the much of the region, although with a few exceptions.

Since 1990, Algeria has seen a steady decline in its maternal mortality ratio (MMR). In 2014, the country's MMR was 89 per 100,000 births. This represented a decrease from 180 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010.^{1582,1583} Notably, the percentage of births with a skilled attendant present has also increased from 73.9% in 1990 to 99.1% in 2013.¹⁵⁸⁴ Similarly, in 2013, Egypt had a maternal mortality ratio of 35 in 100,000. This represented a decrease from 50 in 100,000 births from 2010.¹⁵⁸⁵ Tunisia experienced a similar drop from 56 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 46 in 2014.^{1586,1587} From 2010-2013 the maternal mortality rates for women in Morocco also decreased from 240 women dying per 100,000 live births to 100 per 100,000 live births. Of concern however, is the increase in Morocco of this statistic to 120 in 2015.

Women's health protections are weak in Libya, in particular with regard to health needs that stem from sexual violence, domestic assault and harassment. As a result of a fragile security situation and cultural norms, access to women-specific health clinics and response services for sexual violence is limited.¹⁵⁸⁸ Similarly, women in South Sudan have struggled to gain access to health care, and compounding the problem, since the outbreak of violence in 2011, sexual violence is on the rise again.¹⁵⁸⁹ Only 40% of pregnant women in South Sudan receive prenatal care while skilled health personnel attended only 19% of births in South Sudan.^{1590,1591}

Recorded rates of HIV/AIDS are not reported to be widespread in the region, though underreporting and a lack of access to services could contribute to some of these low-recorded rates. In Algeria for example, UNAIDS estimates that

4,600 females aged 15 are living with HIV. This is 46% of the reported 10,000 adult cases in the country.¹⁵⁹² It is estimated however, that around 30,000 people suffer from AIDS in Algeria.¹⁵⁹³ Religious values and conservative social norms are widely thought to contribute to such under-reporting. Even in Tunisia, which is globally recognised for the work being done in the country to fight the virus, there are enormous stigma and misconceptions, which hamper the work.¹⁵⁹⁴

In Morocco, according to studies of HIV transmission modes, the majority of infected women (70.7%) were infected by their spouses. Despite the high prevalence rates among women, access to means of protection, including the female condom is still difficult for women, particularly in disadvantaged areas.¹⁵⁹⁵

In Egypt, it is reported that 2,400 women aged 15 and over are living with HIV 1.8% of detected HIV cases are due to mother-to-child transmission. It is believed that only 21.1% of HIV-positive pregnant women receive antiretroviral medicines to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission.¹⁵⁹⁶ At 6%, an even lower percentage of women living with HIV in South Sudan receive antiretroviral treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV to their unborn children.¹⁵⁹⁷

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a pervasive problem in most countries in North Africa. While some legal progress has been made to stop violence against women by criminalising harassment and some forms of rape, significant work remains to be done in many areas. In many countries that experienced political upheaval in 2011, violence against women has surfaced in new ways, particularly as women have actively participated in public demonstrations and as a result faced increased levels of sexual violence in public. This includes sexual harassment on the street, rape and in severe cases group sexual assaults at public gatherings.¹⁵⁹⁸ In Sudan and South Sudan, renewed violence has resulted in severe increases in sexual and gender-based violence.

In Libya for example, during the armed conflict in 2011, women were subjected to rape and sexual violence by both Qaddafi armed forces and opposition groups.¹⁵⁹⁹ A full prosecution of the perpetrators has yet to happen. While a decree by the Prime Minister in 2014 promised compensation for victims of sexual violence, the government has not allocated any funds for this purpose.¹⁶⁰⁰

Violence against women is prevalent in South Sudan and cases of sexual violence against women have soared following the outbreak of the civil war.¹⁶⁰¹ The scale of violence in 2014 was particularly concerning. An estimated 74% of sexual violence victims were under the age of 18 with harmful traditional and cultural practices in South Sudan continuing and often directed towards women and girls.¹⁶⁰² Similarly, in Sudan, international agencies and government agencies assisting rape victims estimated that rape cases were underreported due to victims' fear of reprisal and stigmatization. Furthermore, investigative and prosecuting authorities often obstructed access to justice for rape victims.¹⁶⁰³

There are no comprehensive statistics available on how widespread sexual and gender-based violence is in Algeria, for example. Of significance however, in March 2015, the National Assembly of Algeria passed a law on domestic violence. The law safeguards the financial interests of married women and introduces the concept of harassment.¹⁶⁰⁴ Similarly, it was only in 2010 that Tunisia conducted the first national survey of violence against women. The official study found that 47% of women ages 18–64 had been subjected to at least one form of violence once in their lives, with little variation between urban and rural areas. At 31.7%, physical violence was the most common form of violence.¹⁶⁰⁵ In even more startling statistics, violence against women remains a problem in Morocco where it was found in a 2011 national study that 62.8% of women, aged 18-64 had been victims of some form of violence during the year preceding the study.¹⁶⁰⁶

Women Peace and Security

Despite being active in the 2010-2011 revolution, women are not actively participating in the rebuilding of institutions or their participation is/was very limited.¹⁶⁰⁷ A report in 2013 revealed that women had no presence in peace negotiations or national reconciliation processes. When they are present, their engagement is limited to the end of the conference or workshop in which they participated.¹⁶⁰⁸ In on-going conflict zones, women similarly have found themselves shut out of peace negotiation processes.

For example, since the 2011 uprisings in Egypt, women's human rights defenders and women who have protested have been subjected to violence and arbitrary detention, making it even more challenging for women to speak out against inequality. In South Sudan, while women have faced tremendous hardships they are continuing to raise their voices to challenge gender-based violence and end the conflict. With the formal peace process largely closed to women and civil society activists, South Sudanese women are bringing dialogue to the community level, putting pressure on the parties and creating women's groups. Through such processes, the women of South Sudan are finding other ways to make a difference and to be heard.¹⁶⁰⁹ Finally, Sahrawi women in the refugee camps in Algeria have attracted attention from international media due to their visibility when they organise demonstrations and are vocal against the Moroccan government.¹⁶¹⁰

Education

Across much of North Africa, there have been encouraging trends with regard to the literacy and educational attainment of women and girls. With the exception of Sudan, South Sudan and Western Sahara, primary school enrolment is high or universal for most girls. While the figures do continue to drop at the secondary level, the increasing number of women enrolled at the university level is encouraging.

Algeria has made considerable progress on gender parity in education, having largely achieved gender parity in primary and lower secondary education. With 58% of enrolment in upper secondary education, girls outnumber boys.¹⁶¹¹ In Morocco, similar trends appear in primary education where female enrolment rates have increased from 87% in 2010 to 95% in 2012 and 97% in 2014.¹⁶¹² Thus, Morocco has had significant success in advancing primary education for girls to levels that are on par with male counterparts at primary levels of schooling.¹⁶¹³ In Tunisia, where 54% of primary school teachers are women, the enrolment rate in primary education for girls and boys is almost equal and has remained unchanged since 2009.¹⁶¹⁴ Notably, at the tertiary level it is estimated that about 6 of 10 university students are women in Tunisia.¹⁶¹⁵

The literacy rate in Libya declined from approximately 90% in 2010 to 85.6% for women in 2015.¹⁶¹⁶ Although most likely influenced by the revolution, this still represented an overall increase from 2003 where 72% of females over the age of 15 were recorded as literate.¹⁶¹⁷ In Egypt, as across much of North Africa, there remains a divergence between rural and urban rates of illiteracy. The incidence of illiteracy among female-headed households is 85% in rural areas and 57% in urban areas. Cultural constraints and the heavy burden of household chores are factors contributing to poor girls' low education achievement.^{1618,1619}

South Sudan's education indicators remain among the worst in the world, despite increases in school enrolment over recent years. Although basic education is free and compulsory in South Sudan through to grade eight, under the 2012 General Education Act 2012, many children did not attend school due to the armed conflict.¹⁶²⁰ A lack of schools, conflict, and muddy terrain during the rainy season were likely reasons why it has been a challenge for children to receive an education. It is estimated that more than one million primary school aged children, mostly from rural areas, are not in school.

Economic Empowerment

Gender stereotypes defining what women can and cannot do has a strong impact on their opportunities to enter the labour market across the region. Where women do enter the labour force, they continue to earn much less than their male counterparts. This in turn has a strong effect on women's financial independence and lowers their chance to become economically empowered.

In 2014 in Algeria, women represent approximately 16% of the active work force. However this is a dramatic decrease from the 39% of women that were recorded to be active in the labour market from 2010-2012.^{1621,1622} In slightly higher numbers, 27% of Moroccan women were active in the labour force in 2014.¹⁶²³ In 2015, 27% of women are enrolled in the workforce in Tunisia.¹⁶²⁴ This is compared to 74% of men, a number, which has remained unchanged since 2010.¹⁶²⁵ In Egypt, women represented 23.9% of the workforce in 2014 but faced extensive discrimination in the labour force and social pressure against pursuing a career. Women's rights advocates claimed Islamist influence as well as traditional and cultural attitudes and practices prevented further gains by women.¹⁶²⁶

With regard to wages, while Labour laws provide for equal rates of pay for equal work for men and women in the public but not the private sector in Egypt, in 2012 the World Economic Forum found that women received 82% of the income of their male counterparts. In Morocco, the 2011 constitution does not require equal pay for equal work.¹⁶²⁷ Reflecting the lack of legal protection, a 2012 study showed that women's wages on average were 15% below those of men.¹⁶²⁸

In South Sudan poverty is rampant with 57% female-headed households living below the poverty line, this is 9% higher than male-headed households.¹⁶²⁹ This occurs for many reasons. While the transitional Constitution recognises women's right to own property and inherit their husbands' estates, in practice, patriarchal customary laws limit women's inheritance rights. Similarly in Sudan, women are significantly under-represented in employment. The labour force participation rate for women is 23%, compared with 73% for men. The percentage of women recorded as "economically inactive" is 74%, compared with 26% for men. The Bureau of Statistics in Sudan identifies being a "full time homemaker" as one of the two key reasons for this economic inactivity.¹⁶³⁰

Finally, a concerning trend with regard to educational attainment and economic activity is found in Tunisia where women represent 60% of all university students and graduate at higher rates than their male counterparts. Yet in 2012, only one in four women was active in the national labour market.¹⁶³¹

ALGERIA

Notable strides have been made in Algeria since 2012 to ensure the representation of women in parliament. The Algerian constitution also protects against discrimination based on sex, yet a lack of enforcement and accountability means that in practice, women in Algeria still face serious discrimination, in particular with respect to personal status laws.

Algeria acceded to CEDAW on 22 May 1996 but has not ratified the optional protocol. Their next report is due to committee 1 June 2016.¹⁶³² In 2003 Algeria signed the Maputo Protocol but has yet to ratify it. Finally, the Government does not have an action plan for UNSCR 1325.¹⁶³³

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The constitution in Algeria prohibits discrimination based on birth, race, gender, language, and social status. It also provides for gender equality. Yet, women in Algeria continue to face discrimination in many aspects of the law and through traditional social practices.¹⁶³⁴ For example, Algerian women continue to face discrimination in inheritance claims and they often do not have exclusive control over the assets they bring to a marriage or that they have earned.¹⁶³⁵ Algerian law also contains traditional elements of Islamic law that prohibit Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, although authorities have not always enforced this provision.¹⁶³⁶

In March 2013, the CEDAW Committee urged the government to reform the Family Code to give women equal rights with men in relation to marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.¹⁶³⁷ The Committee also urged the government to withdraw Algeria's reservations to CEDAW, ratify the Optional Protocol

to CEDAW, enact laws to protect women against domestic and other violence, and address gender inequality in education and employment.¹⁶³⁸

Finally, as recently as 2014 religious extremists in Algeria have advocated for practices that restrict women's behaviour, including freedom of movement. In some rural regions, women face extreme social pressure to veil as a precondition of freedom of movement and employment.¹⁶³⁹

Women's Political Participation

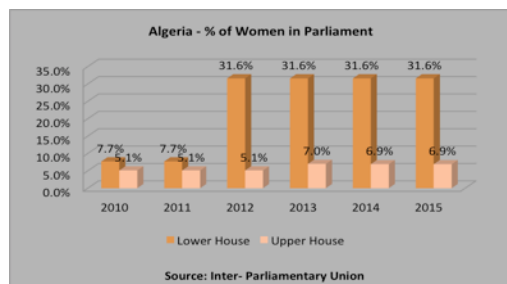
Since 2012, Algeria has experienced a substantial increase in the participation of women in parliament and leadership positions. Article 2 of the 2012 Law on the Representation of Women required that female candidates comprise between 20 and 50% of any candidate list for legislative elections in Algeria.¹⁶⁴⁰ In accordance with this provision, of the 462 candidates elected to parliament in 2012, 147 were women. This increased the rate of female representation from 8% in 2007 to 31,6%, a third of the legislative body.¹⁶⁴¹

Notably, this was a higher proportion of female representation in parliament than in any other Arab country. It also made Algeria the first Arab country to achieve 30% female representation in parliament.¹⁶⁴² In 2015 there were just 20% women in ministerial positions in Parliament.¹⁶⁴³

Additionally, in 2013, the Algeria Declaration recommended the establishment of an operational Algerian Female MPs' National Caucus. The Algerian Lower-House of Representatives requested UN Women provide the needed financial and technical assistance to facilitate a smooth and effective launching of this initiative.¹⁶⁴⁴ The Algerian female MPs National Caucus was set to officially launch in June 2015.

In 2014 Louisa Hanoun, the first woman to lead a political party in the Arab world, ran for the presidency of Algeria. She is the only woman to have run for this office.^{1645,1646} In 2014 Ms. Hanoun was placed fourth out of six candidates with 1.37% of votes.

Finally, highlighting the increased role of women in the political process in Algeria, by 2015 the country had also increased the number of female ministers from four to six. This represented a 7.9% in female representation in cabinet.¹⁶⁴⁷



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Since 1990, Algeria has seen a steady decline in its maternal mortality ratio (MMR). In 2014, the country's MMR was 89 per 100,000 births. This represented a decrease from 97 the year before and a dramatic decrease from the 180 per 100,000 live births in 2010.^{1648,1649} Notably, the percentage of births with a skilled attendant present has also increased from 73.9% in 1990 to 99.1% in 2013, and most recently 97% in 2015.^{1650,1651}

In Algeria from 2010-2014, the number of women using contraceptives has held steady at 61%. 46%

used birth control pills and more than 4% utilised an intrauterine device. Importantly however, societal and family pressures have restricted women from making independent decisions about their health and reproductive rights.¹⁶⁵²

Officially, UNAIDS estimates that 4,600 females aged 15 are living with HIV in Algeria. This is 46% of the reported 10,000 adult cases in the country.¹⁶⁵³ It is estimated however that around 30,000 people suffer from AIDS in Algeria.¹⁶⁵⁴ Religious values and the highly conservative nature of Algerian society have resulted in AIDS being regarded as a shameful disease that is very often associated with prostitution, infidelity or promiscuous lifestyle. As a result, the actual number of people who are HIV-positive is unknown. The stigmatisation that surrounds the disease also results in women who are positive being rejected by their community.¹⁶⁵⁵

In November 2014, female leaders from the Middle East and North Africa met in Algeria to call for an advancement of gender equality, greater responsiveness to HIV with universal access to HIV treatment and prevention in the region.¹⁶⁵⁶ Algeria's HIV response was cited as an example to follow due to its policy of providing universal access to HIV prevention and treatment services, including free antiretroviral medicines to those in need.¹⁶⁵⁷

Violence Against Women

While some legal progress has been made to stop violence against women, it remains a pervasive issue. There are no comprehensive statistics available on how widespread sexual and gender-based violence is in Algeria. A 2005 study by the National Institute for Public Health found that 5.4% of the violence perpetrated against women was of a sexual nature.¹⁶⁵⁸ Due to the stigma attached to rape and other sexual assaults, victims of sexual violence often do not report abuses and this estimate is therefore thought to be much higher.¹⁶⁵⁹ In 2013 alone, almost 30,000 complaints were filed by women subject to violence.¹⁶⁶⁰ In 2014, police figures showed that 58% of cases involving violence against women resulted from domestic incidents.¹⁶⁶¹

In 2014, Algerian authorities began to take positive steps to address violence against women. The authorities published a decree to provide financial compensation for female victims of sexual violence by

armed groups during the internal conflict that engulfed the country in the 1990's.¹⁶⁶²

Furthermore, in March 2015, the National Assembly of Algeria passed a law on domestic violence. The law safeguards the financial interests of married women and introduces the concept of harassment. The law has been criticised for not defining the types of violence that can be committed within the family, mirroring gaps in existing provisions on rape and other forms of sexual violence.¹⁶⁶³ Of additional concern is a clause in the law that also allows a victim of domestic violence to pardon the perpetrator and a provision that allows a man who has raped a woman under 18 to obtain immunity from prosecution if he marries the victim. Significantly, the National Council has not yet adopted the new law.

Before the new laws in 2015, the Algerian Family Code of 1984 and revised in 2005, condemned non-marital rape as illegal, while marital abuse was not. Many of its elements were inspired from Sharia law and limited the rights of women.¹⁶⁶⁴

Women, Peace and Security

In 2014, Algeria hosted the First International Women's Congress for a Culture of Peace. This Congress, whose focus was on "Giving Voice to Women", also constituted a gesture of recognition and solidarity by and with women, who are often the targets of violence. This was the first event on such a scale in a Muslim country dedicated to women and peace. Notably, it was not repeated in 2015.¹⁶⁶⁵

On the 3rd of July 2014, the National Army nominated three female generals, to bring the total to four female generals in 2014. This again was a move that made history in the Arab world.¹⁶⁶⁶

Education

Algeria has also made considerable progress on gender parity in education achieved in many educational levels. The literacy rate for women is at 73%, and 87% for men.¹⁶⁶⁷ Currently, parity has nearly been achieved in primary and lower secondary education. In upper secondary education, girls outnumber boys. In 2014, the proportion of girls enrolled reached 95% in primary, 49% in secondary and 40% in tertiary education.¹⁶⁶⁸ Women are also the majority at the university level. The Algerian

Government provides free education at all levels, including higher education.¹⁶⁶⁹

Economic Empowerment

In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report for 2014, Algeria ranked 126th overall and 136th for economic participation and opportunity.¹⁶⁷⁰ In 2015, they fell to 137th worldwide for economic participation and opportunity.¹⁶⁷¹ This is in contrast to 2012 when the country ranked 120th overall and 131st for economic participation. In 2007 the country ranked 107th overall.¹⁶⁷² There are a number of reasons for this drop most notably the dramatic decrease of women participating in the labour force.

Women represent approximately 16% of the active work force.¹⁶⁷³ This is a dramatic decrease from the 39% of women that were recorded to be active in the labour market from 2010-2012.¹⁶⁷⁴ Notably, while the national average rate of unemployment in 2013 was 8% overall, 19% of women were unemployed.¹⁶⁷⁵ Similarly, the percentage of women in the labour force compared to men has also dropped from a high of 0.47 in 2010 to 0.21 since 2013.¹⁶⁷⁶

In Algeria, married women are permitted to take out business loans and use their own financial resources. They possess equal rights in regard to property and business ownership, they may enter into contracts, and female landowners' names are permitted to be listed on property titles. Yet women have faced discrimination in employment, with women being less likely to receive equal pay for equal work or promotions. For example, despite the fact that women were once 39% of the labour force, female access to management positions has remained limited to 9%.¹⁶⁷⁷ In 2015, women make up only 11% of legislators, senior officials and managers.¹⁶⁷⁸

Finally, the housing crisis that has developed since the early 1990s is a major obstacle to women's emancipation, particularly for divorced or single women. Despite several programmes launched by the government, housing remains insufficient, rents too high, and the housing infrastructure extremely precarious.¹⁶⁷⁹

EGYPT

Despite the Government guaranteeing equality for all citizens without discrimination in the 2014 Constitution, there are still serious issues of discrimination against women in Egypt that have increased since 2011 including serious human rights violations.¹⁶⁸⁰

The Egyptian Government ratified CEDAW on 18 September 1981 with multiple reservations made upon signature and confirmed upon ratification. The reservations are based on ensuring Egypt's compliance does not run counter to Islamic Sharia Law.¹⁶⁸¹ The Government has not signed the Maputo Protocol and does not have a National Action Plans for implementation for UNSCR 1325.¹⁶⁸²

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Women played a significant role in the revolutions that have taken place in Egypt since 2011. Although women's rights have improved on paper through legislation since then, a spike in sexual harassment, assaults on women participating in protests and discriminatory laws combined with an increase in trafficking ultimately resulted in Egypt being ranked the worst country to be a woman in the Arab world in 2014.¹⁶⁸³

Article 9 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution guarantees equality for all citizens without discrimination.¹⁶⁸⁴ Unlike Egypt's past constitutions, which have limited women's rights to those compatible with Islamic law, the 2014 constitution affirms the equality of the sexes. However, this has not resulted in practical improvements for women.¹⁶⁸⁵ Some laws and traditional practices continue to discriminate against women. Personal status laws in Egypt continue to discriminate against women in relation to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.¹⁶⁸⁶ Additionally, women frequently face job discrimination and substantial social—and often legal—restrictions on their activities, leading to low female participation in the economy and in social and political institutions.¹⁶⁸⁷

In March of 2016, the Egypt Support Coalition, a party that holds 250 seats in the 595-seat legislature, unveiled proposed legislation to ban the wearing of the niqab by women in public institutions.¹⁶⁸⁸ Earlier this year, the University of Cairo banned female professors from wearing the niqab in lecture halls.¹⁶⁸⁹ The national court upheld the decision by the University.¹⁶⁹⁰

Women's Political Participation

After the elections of October 2015, women make up 14% of seats in national parliament – an increase in comparison to previous parliaments.¹⁶⁹¹ However

many were disappointed to see women appointed to only three Ministerial positions (Social Solidarity, International Cooperation and Immigration) out of 34.¹⁶⁹²

Despite their active role in the Arab Spring uprisings, since the January 25th revolution, women's status in Egypt has regressed in the realm of civil rights, freedoms and equal representation. Women have been denied their fair share of representation, obtaining only 2% of the 2012 parliament seats. In contrast, 12% of seats were preserved solely for women in the 2010 parliamentary elections during Mubarak era with women holding 13% of seats.^{1693 1694} Notably, the 2013 and 2014 Egyptian constitutions revoked the previous women's quota in the parliament. The 2014 constitution only provided a quota in the local councils.¹⁶⁹⁵ The first woman to head a municipality in Alexandria was appointed in June 2015.¹⁶⁹⁶

Article 5 of the new House of Representatives Law does outline the criteria for electoral lists. It provides that the new House of Representatives will include at least 56 women and 24 Christians, a substantial increase over the 2012 parliament, which included 11 women and 13 Christians.¹⁶⁹⁷ Yet, religious and cultural barriers continue to limit women's political participation and leadership in most political parties and some government institutions.¹⁶⁹⁸

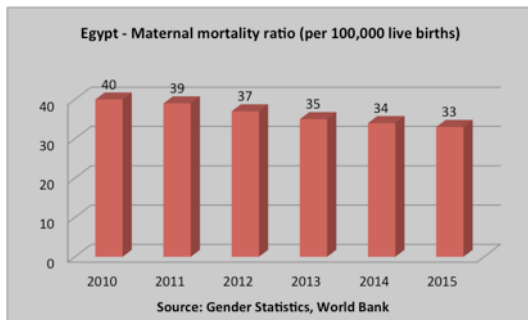
Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2013, Egypt had a maternal mortality ratio of 45 in 100,000. This represented a decrease from 50 in 100,000 births from 2010.¹⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, Egypt's 2014 Demographic Health Survey (EDHS) indicates that the fertility rate in the country has recently increased after more than 20 years of decline. Between 1980 and 2008, fertility dropped from 5.3 children per woman to 3.0 children per woman. But since 2008, fertility has risen to 3.5 births.¹⁷⁰⁰ The EDHS also showed a small, 2% decrease in the use of contraceptives, including both modern and traditional

methods. The survey said 3% fewer women obtain contraceptives from public health facilities compared to 2008.¹⁷⁰¹

The maternal mortality rate is 33 per 100,000 live births.¹⁷⁰²

Egyptian law recognises the basic right of married couples to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children. The government does not restrict citizens' family-planning decisions, although men and women did not always have the information and means to make decisions free from discrimination and coercion. Women in particular face social, cultural, and religious barriers to make reproductive decisions and access necessary health care.¹⁷⁰³ The contraceptive prevalence rate in Egypt is 59%. According to 2014 data, the unmet need for family planning is approximately 13%.¹⁷⁰⁴



The Ministry of Health and Population has distributed contraceptive materials and provided personnel to attend births, postpartum care to mothers and children, and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases at no cost. Yet, NGOs have reported this was not adequate to meet the needs of the entire population, particularly outside large urban areas.¹⁷⁰⁵

In Egypt, it is reported that 2,400 women aged 15 and over are living with HIV. 1.8% of detected HIV cases are due to mother-to-child transmission. It is believed that only 21.1% of HIV-positive pregnant women receive antiretroviral medicines to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission.¹⁷⁰⁶

Violence Against Women

Since the January 2011 anti-government uprisings, Egyptians have lived in a state of political instability, violence and turmoil. Throughout the political upheaval one constant has remained: violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls remains prevalent in Egypt, in the home, in the public

sphere and in detention. Those responsible include state actors, such as the security forces, as well as non-state actors, including spouses, family members and unknown assailants in the streets.¹⁷⁰⁷ A recent report from the Egypt Centre for Women's Rights states that one in every four married women has experienced domestic violence.¹⁷⁰⁸

Violence against women has surfaced in new ways since 2011, particularly as women have actively participated in public demonstrations and as a result faced increased levels of sexual violence in public. This includes sexual harassment on the street, rape and in severe cases, group sexual assaults at public gatherings.¹⁷⁰⁹ 500 cases were documented between June 2012 and June 2014 and represent a small sample of the 99.3% of women and girls in Egypt, the UN reported in 2013, who had been subjected to sexual harassment.¹⁷¹⁰ Furthermore, Egyptian rights groups documented at least nine incidents of mob sexual assault and harassment in Cairo's Tahrir Square between June 3 and June 8, 2014. Seven men were eventually handed sentences ranging from imprisonment to life for the attacks.¹⁷¹¹

On June 5, 2015 interim President Mansour issued a law that, for the first time, defined and outlawed sexual harassment and set escalating penalties for different offenses.¹⁷¹² The law provides prison terms of up to five years and fines of up to \$7,000, but critics have argued that the law is inadequate, citing a lack of protection for witnesses who come forward.¹⁷¹³

Seeking recourse for domestic such violence is challenging in Egypt, as there are no laws to prohibit domestic violence or spousal abuse and any claims require an assault victim to produce multiple eyewitnesses. A 2011 survey of 1,503 households in Minya, Sohag, Cairo, and Alexandria found 81% of men believed they had the right to beat their wives and daughters.¹⁷¹⁴ Furthermore, spousal rape is not illegal, and the penal code allows for leniency in so-called honour killings.¹⁷¹⁵ While the law prohibits rape, the legal definition is limited.¹⁷¹⁶ An additional point of concern is the individuals who purchase Egyptian women and girls for 'temporary' or 'summer' marriages for the purpose of prostitution or forced labour; these arrangements are often facilitated by the victims' parents and marriage brokers, who profit from the transaction.¹⁷¹⁷

While no law criminalises domestic violence, other forms of violence against women, including child

marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), have continued in some areas, despite laws prohibiting them. In 2008, Unicef estimated that 91% of married Egyptian women aged between 15 and 49 had undergone female genital cutting, 72% of them by a doctor.¹⁷¹⁸ In November 2014, the country's first trial for FGM/C began and ended in an acquittal for the 13-year old girl's father and the doctor who performed the procedure. The prosecutor appealed the acquittal.¹⁷¹⁹ In 2015, a 5-year "National Strategy for FGM/C Abandonment" was being finalised that would combine the efforts of all national and international partners.¹⁷²⁰

Women, Peace and Security

While women were active participants in the 2011 and subsequent uprisings against the government, they have historically only been permitted only to serve in the medical corps of the armed forces and were excluded from compulsory military service. Furthermore, women were excluded from high-level positions in large sectors of the economy controlled by the military, since women do not serve in the military and thus were not given access to these jobs.¹⁷²¹ In 2011, women made up 15 out of the 5476 Egyptian military and police personnel participating in UN Peacekeeping operations, while in 2015 only one woman served.¹⁷²²

However, since the 2011 uprisings, women's human rights defenders and women who have protested have been subjected to violence and arbitrary detention, making it even more challenging for women to speak out against inequality. For example, in June 2014, seven female human rights defenders were detained for protesting against the Protest and Public Assembly Law, while calling peacefully for the release of imprisoned human rights defenders in Egypt.¹⁷²³

Education

In 2014, Egypt ranked 109th out of 142 for education attainment.¹⁷²⁴ In 2015, Egypt had an average female literacy rate of 65.4%.¹⁷²⁵ Literacy rate of women aged 15-24 for the same year was 86%, 6% less than men of the same age, but a substantial improvement on the average for all women in Egypt.¹⁷²⁶ Egyptian women's groups such as the Egypt Centre for Women's Rights link low levels of educational attainment for women with their willingness to accept violence against them.¹⁷²⁷

The incidence of illiteracy among female-headed households is 85% in rural areas and 57% in urban areas. Cultural constraints and the heavy burden of household chores are factors contributing to poor girls' low education achievement. While at the level of primary school the female to male ratio of attendance is relatively unchanged from 2010-2014 at roughly 97%, unemployment rates among young girls completing secondary school remains high and is a disincentive for their completion of secondary school.^{1728,1729}

Economic Empowerment

In 2014 Egypt ranked 131st out of 142 for economic participation and opportunity.¹⁷³⁰ Women represented 23.9% of the labour force in 2014 and the female unemployment rate reached in 24.8%, three times that of men.¹⁷³¹ In 2015, women make up slightly more of the labour force, at 26%.¹⁷³² This is slightly lower than the 2013 rate where women were 25.1% of Egypt's unemployed, compared to 10% of men.¹⁷³³ This is also an improvement from 2011 government statistics that reported that women were five times more likely to be unemployed than men but overall represents an absolute increase in unemployment for women which stood at 19% in 2010 and 23% in 2011.^{1734,1735} Thus, women in Egypt consistently face higher rates of unemployment than men.¹⁷³⁶

Women face extensive discrimination in the labour force and social pressure against pursuing a career. Labour laws provide for equal rates of pay for equal work for men and women in the public but not the private sector. In 2012, the World Economic Forum found that women received 82% of the income of their male counterparts. Women's rights advocates claimed Islamist influence as well as traditional and cultural attitudes and practices prevented further gains by women.¹⁷³⁷

There have been increased calls for women in leadership roles, particularly among judicial appointments. This area saw some improvement in 2015, when 26 women were appointed to judge positions in Primary Courts A and B.¹⁷³⁸ However the 2015 census shows only 25% of civil servants are women, and that approximately 20,000 women are working in the informal sector as domestic workers.¹⁷³⁹ In these situations women are unprotected by any legal umbrella, and are subject to extreme violations and squandering of their rights.¹⁷⁴⁰

One notable area of improvement is in the percentages of businesses owned by women. The number of firms with female participation has increased from 16% in 2011 to 34% from 2012-2014.¹⁷⁴¹

LIBYA

Since the 2011 revolution, Libya has been engulfed in chaos and violence. The affect this has had on women and girls has meant difficulty in obtaining equal rights and gender equality. The country is currently submerged in a civil war, which began in 2014, in which multiple groups are battling for control of the country: the Islamist-backed General National Congress in Tripoli and the House of Representatives which was elected in 2014, but forced out to Tubruq.¹⁷⁴² The Libyan government adopted CEDAW on 16th May 1989 with reservations related to Islamic Sharia.¹⁷⁴³ The Maputo Protocol was ratified on the 23rd May 2004. The Government of Libya does not currently have a Plan of Action for UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.¹⁷⁴⁴

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Since the revolution of 2011, and further since the breakout of civil war in 2014, the human rights of women in Libya have changed dramatically. In a country of moderate, but conservative Muslims, the absence of law and order in the country has allowed citizens; paramilitaries and militia are imposing "self-justice" according to their own standards and beliefs.¹⁷⁴⁵ In February 2016, the United Nations released a report in which they highlight the extensive human rights abuses in Libya, where perpetrators face complete impunity and the control of government is non-existent.¹⁷⁴⁶ While the Government has passed significant laws to improve the rights of women, in practice women continue to face discrimination and intimidation. Notably, the Government passed a Constitutional Declaration, which was finalised in August 2011, which states that citizens are equal under the law and includes prohibitions against gender-based discrimination. However, the law currently lacks implementing legislation, and is operating with limited capacity. With the government failing to effectively enforce the law, societal discrimination against women has continued in Libya. Islamic Sharia governs family matters, including inheritance, divorce, and the right to own property. While civil law mandates equal rights in inheritance, women often received less due to interpretations of Sharia that favour males.¹⁷⁴⁷

Amid the breakdown of law and order during the 2011 uprisings, women's rights activists have faced intimidation and in some cases assault by militias. Some armed groups have also imposed restrictions on women based on their ideological beliefs in many

spheres of life.¹⁷⁴⁸ Increasingly since 2011, unveiled women have been stopped, harassed and threatened at checkpoints.¹⁷⁴⁹ In troubling incidents, guards have harassed female university students in Tripoli and male students have insisted that a wall be constructed at the university in Derna to segregate the sexes. Not isolated incidents, guards at the court trying former Gaddafi regime officials have denied female Libyan journalists access to the court because of their gender. Additionally, in April 2015, they also denied access to foreign female journalists unless they wore headscarves. Furthermore, women have also faced harassment while attempting to travel out of Libya without a male guardian.¹⁷⁵⁰

The presence of the Islamic State, or ISIS, in Libya is increasing. There have been a series of attacks on women activists in Libya since 2014 by the group, including the assassinations of well-known activists such as Salwa Bugaighis and Fareeha Al-Berkawi.¹⁷⁵¹ The purpose of these attacks is to send a broader message that women should not be seen or heard in the public sphere, notes the report by the UN.¹⁷⁵²

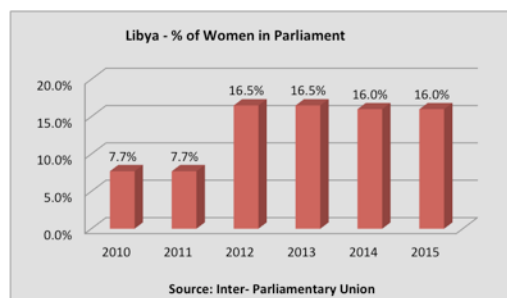
Women's Political Participation

Under Libyan law, men and women are equally free to participate in elections but social norms often limit women's activity or their chances for election. As a result, since the fall of the Gaddafi government a system of quotas at each level of government has helped to enable women's political participation. However, despite the quota's, women's political participation remains limited and women's political influence in government has not been realised as they are denied access to positions of power or prevented from taking part in political activism.¹⁷⁵³ In some

cases, women's human rights defenders, as well as their families, have faced threats and intimidation on the basis of their gender from armed groups to withdraw from public life and stop advocating for women's rights, equality and the demobilisation of armed groups.¹⁷⁵⁴

As of September 2015, Libya is ranked number 91st on IPU's "Women in Parliaments: World Classification", with 16% of representatives, 33 women, in the General National Congress women taking office.¹⁷⁵⁵ This was a notable increase from the 7.7% of women elected in 2010¹⁷⁵⁶ and 5% in 2005.¹⁷⁵⁷ This increase, that began in 2012 in the General National Congress, is attributed to the progressive quota system adopted in Libya. While it has helped women gain office, in 2012 of the 33 elected women, there was only one woman among the 12 ministers selected.¹⁷⁵⁸ Despite the work of women's right groups in Libya this quota was not extended to the 2013 election for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly in Libya (CDA). In this case, as a result of a rising and large conservative opposition, women's groups were forced to concede to an agreement of just 10% of seats (6 out of 60) being designated for women.¹⁷⁵⁹ Finally, in the most recent election to the House of Representatives, a somewhat higher women's quota was established for women at 15%.¹⁷⁶⁰

Furthermore, in 2014, The High National Electoral Commission undertook actions to ensure participation of women in the interim government. Nevertheless, during the transition, observers have reported that authorities increasingly precluded women from previously accessible professions and the civil service.¹⁷⁶¹



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Women's health in Libya, in particular with regard to health needs that stem from sexual violence, domestic assault and harassment are weak and not protected. As

a result of a fragile security situation and cultural norms, access to women-specific health clinics and response services for sexual violence is limited. Additionally, a lack of clinics, services and established referral chains for victims of violence have been documented as limiting women's access to services. Often, when such services are available, women and girls face considerable challenges, including violence, when travelling to these clinics. The threat of significant cultural stigma, which prevents or discourages women from using the services, is also a key deterrent.¹⁷⁶²

The fertility rate for women in Libya has been decreasing slightly over the last 15 years. In 2000, the average woman had 3.1 children in Libya. In 2010 this statistic had dropped to 2.5 and then to 2.05 in 2015.¹⁷⁶³ Under Libyan law, couples and individuals do have the right to decide freely the number, spacing, and timing of their children. According to pre-revolution statistics, the UN estimates that 28% of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 used a modern method of contraception.¹⁷⁶⁴ Notably, the overall contraceptive prevalence rate in Libya in 2012 was 45%.¹⁷⁶⁵ This was a slight increase from 41.9% in 2007.¹⁷⁶⁶

Similarly, the maternal mortality rate in Libya has also been decreasing since 2000. In 2000, the maternal mortality ratio was 17 per 100,000 live births; 11 in 2005 and most recently 9 per 100,000 live births in 2010 and 2015.¹⁷⁶⁷ This decrease in maternal mortality is probably attributable to the high prevalence of skilled health personnel at childbirths. In 2014, it was documented that more than 90% of mothers had received prenatal and postnatal care in the previous year. However, the outbreak of widespread fighting in July 2014 decreased available skilled medical personnel, since many foreign medical workers fled the country. This has affected women's access to reproductive and maternal health-care services.¹⁷⁶⁸

Violence Against Women

Since the beginning of the revolution, gender-based violence, including sexual assault, have been and remain a serious concern in Libya. During the armed conflict in 2011, women were subjected to rape and sexual violence by both Qaddafi armed forces and opposition groups.¹⁷⁶⁹ A full prosecution of the perpetrators has yet to happen. While a decree by the Prime Minister in 2014 promised compensation for

victims of sexual violence, the government has not allocated any funds for this purpose.¹⁷⁷⁰

Under the transitional government the situation has not improved. In contrast, since the 2011 revolution, the transitional government has added to the problems in several notable ways. The government has passed a law that sanctions impunity for serious human rights violations, including sexual offences while also reversing a law that was intended to reduce the prevalence of polygamy and finally by allowing policies that limit women's freedom to engage in public life.¹⁷⁷¹ Further contributing to the systemic nature of violence against women in Libya, the interim constitution of 2014 does not specifically address women's rights.¹⁷⁷² Additionally, there is no legislation in place in Libya regarding domestic violence and sexual harassment and only generalised and poorly implemented legislation is in place concerning rape.¹⁷⁷³

In Libya, rape is only considered a crime against a woman's honour rather than against her person.¹⁷⁷⁴ Libya's primary criminal legislation is the 1953 Penal Code that is largely based on Islamic Sharia. This law, while it does criminalise rape, does not recognise marital rape and criminalises abortion.¹⁷⁷⁵ Furthermore, by law, a convicted rapist must marry the victim with her agreement, or serve a prison term of up to 25 years. Contributing to the environment of impunity and underreporting, rape victims who failed to meet high evidentiary standards could face charges of adultery.¹⁷⁷⁶ In the most troubling development, several women have also been reported to have been killed by male relatives in so-called "honour killings" in the Sabha area.¹⁷⁷⁷

These laws contribute to the challenges that women in Libya face reporting violence. Libya has weak reporting structures, which in combination with social barriers such as cultural stigma, contribute to widespread underreporting of the problem.¹⁷⁷⁸ The UNDP reports that there is a lack of confidentiality for women at police stations, offices, and in hospitals as well as a lack of specialised staff, including trained police officers, to record incidents and finally a lack of reporting outlets. Less than 10% of interviewees included in the UNDP report viewed police stations as a possible place to report violence.¹⁷⁷⁹ This inability to report is concerning not only because it demonstrates a lack of access for women to necessary support

services but also because it makes it a challenge to assess the trends in violence against women over time.

Women peace and security

Women's right to security is limited in Libya, largely because of the fragile security situation in the country since 2011. The right of women in Libya to freedom of expression and security is limited because of they often lack access to public spaces across the country, particularly in the east, at night and when travelling alone.¹⁷⁸⁰ Their security has further been eroded with the control of ISIS, paramilitaries and militias that have taken over vast regions of the country.

Women's participation in the formal security sector, such as the military, the police force and the judiciary is limited. In 2014, it was estimated that there were 600 women in the military, 500-1500 female police officers (1-3% of the police force) 20% of judges, and 15-20% of prosecutors.¹⁷⁸¹ One of the main reasons for women's limited participation in the security sector is the widespread societal disapproval of women's participation. This disapproval stems from a general cultural aversion to including women in the traditionally male-dominated sphere of security and a specific social stigma towards women in the security sector related to the use and inclusion of female security staff during the Gaddafi era.¹⁷⁸²

Education

The literacy rate in Libya was 85.6% for women and 96.7% of men in 2015. Although this was a decrease from the 90.7% literacy rate for women in 2010 and 98.6% for men,¹⁷⁸³ it was an increase from 2003 levels, which recorded that 72% of females over the age of 15 were literate compare to 92.4% of males.¹⁷⁸⁴

In 2003 it was reported that, on average, females completed 17 years of primary to tertiary education while males completed 16 years.¹⁷⁸⁵ More recent statistics on school enrolment are difficult to obtain as the revolution in Libya and the subsequent conflict has disrupted schooling for thousands of students across the country, leaving many schools empty due to lack of materials, damage, or security concerns.¹⁷⁸⁶ In cities controlled by militias or paramilitaries, the situation is even worse, with groups imposing religious decrees on the population. In March of 2013 Libya's grand mufti (the highest official of religious law) stipulated that women can only attend university if it is gender-segregated.¹⁷⁸⁷ An earlier call by the cleric called for

gender segregation in all public institutions, including hospitals.¹⁷⁸⁸

Economic Empowerment

In 2015 women represented 60% of the labour force in Libya.¹⁷⁸⁹ Yet, women have faced significant social forms of discrimination, which affect their ability to access employment, their presence in the workplace,

and their mobility and personal freedom. The National High Electoral Commission noted incidents of increased social pressure on women to leave the workplace, especially in high-profile professions such as journalism and law enforcement. In rural areas societal discrimination has also restricted women's movements to local destinations and impaired their ability to play an active role in the workplace.¹⁷⁹⁰

MOROCCO

Significant progress has been made advancing gender equality in Morocco over the last ten years, in particular in the Constitution in 2011 that guarantees equal rights for women and men. Yet significant challenges remain. Gender equality remains a goal to be attained rather than one achieved. The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco adopted CEDAW on the June 21st 1993 with reservations.¹⁷⁹¹ The government expressed its readiness to apply the provisions of CEDAW provided that, among other provisions, it did not conflict with the provisions of Islamic Sharia.¹⁷⁹² As Morocco is not a member of the African Union, it has not ratified the Maputo Protocol. The Government has also not ratified the Plan of Action for Security Council Resolution 1325.¹⁷⁹³

Human Rights of Women

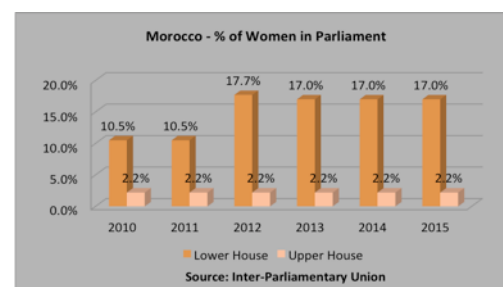
In 2014, Morocco adopted a Family Code that, at the time was hailed by women's rights groups as a big step forward in advancing women's rights. Further progress was made in 2011 when the country passed a new constitution guaranteeing gender equality. Most notably, the 2011 constitution provides women equal rights in civil, political, economic, cultural, and environmental affairs.¹⁷⁹⁴ Yet obtaining equality remains a challenge in Morocco as the Family Code continues to contain discriminatory provisions for women with regard to inheritance and the right of husbands to unilaterally divorce their wives. Reforms to the code in 2004 improved women's rights in divorce and child custody and increased the age of marriage from 15 to 18.¹⁷⁹⁵ Additionally, under the 2004 Family Code, legal limits were placed on polygamy.¹⁷⁹⁶ However, the implementation of family law reforms has remained a problem in Morocco as the judiciary lacked willingness to enforce the new provisions, as many judges did not agree with them.¹⁷⁹⁷ Thus, while under the Family Code the family is the joint responsibility of both spouses and divorce is available by mutual consent, in practice this can be a challenge.

Further challenges remain for the realisation of women's equal rights. For example, a Muslim woman's share of an inheritance, determined by Islamic Sharia, varies depending on circumstances, but is less than a man's. For example, under Sharia, daughters receive half what their brothers receive.¹⁷⁹⁸

Women's Political Participation

In the most recent 2011 Parliamentary elections, while 60 out of 395 seats were reserved for women¹⁷⁹⁹ they won 17% or seats to become Members of the Lower House.^{1800 1801} Thus, in September 2015, Morocco was ranked 87th on IPU's "Women in Parliaments: World Classification".¹⁸⁰² The 2011 elections also saw an increase in the number of women in the Chamber of Representatives, from 34 to 67 representatives in parliament.¹⁸⁰³

While women's increased representation in Parliament is significant, the overwhelming majority of women elected only ran on women's national lists, rather than on local district lists. When women did run in local constituencies, they were usually not elected. Overall, only 2% of women hold district seats, a number, which has remained consistent since 1993, the first year women entered parliament in Morocco. This suggests there is a limited constituency willing to elect women to parliament.¹⁸⁰⁴



Currently, only 7 women hold positions of power that allow them to influence parliament.¹⁸⁰⁵ This is consistent with women's broader representation in society where they hold only 16% of Ambassadorial postings, 20% of judicial postings and 11.8% of prosecutors.¹⁸⁰⁶ Thus, despite their many successes, women still face significant barriers to reaching the highest echelons of power.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

From 2010-2013, the maternal mortality rates in Morocco decreased. In 2010, 240 women were dying per 100,000 live births. In 2011 this dropped significantly to 110 and then again to 100 per 100,000 live births for 2012 and 2013. However an increase in the number of deaths in 2015 was recorded with 120 women dying per 100,000 live births.¹⁸⁰⁷ Overall, these statistics largely reflect the fact that skilled health attendance at delivery and postpartum care are available in Morocco for women who are able to afford and access the care. In 2014 it was recorded that skilled health personnel had attended approximately 74% of births in Morocco, in previous years.¹⁸⁰⁸ In an effort to improve access, in 2014, the government launched a national action plan for maternal health in 2014 targeting areas with lower coverage.¹⁸⁰⁹

While the percentage of women using contraceptives increased to 67% in 2014 from 63% between 2010-2012¹⁸¹⁰, the number of births per woman has also increased from 2.40 in 2010 and 2011 to 2.7 in 2013 and 2014.¹⁸¹¹ These numbers may reflect that women generally are not discriminated against in accessing sexual and reproductive health care, including for sexually transmitted infections. Contraception is legal, and most forms are widely available.¹⁸¹²

With regard to HIV, between 2011 and 2013 the number of reported cases of females with HIV between the ages of 15 and 49 has increased from 0.10% in 2011 to 0.20% in 2013.¹⁸¹³ 60% of females living with HIV fall into the age group 15-24, which demonstrates that there is a high vulnerability among the female population. According to studies of HIV transmission modes, the majority of infected women (70.7%) were infected by their spouses. Despite the high prevalence rates among women, access to means of protection, including the female condom is still difficult for women, particularly in disadvantaged areas.¹⁸¹⁴

Violence Against Women

Violence against women remains a problem in Morocco. A 2011 national study found that 62.8% of women, aged 18-64 had been victims of some form of violence during the preceding year.¹⁸¹⁵

Importantly, in January 2014, parliament agreed an amend Article 475 of the Penal Code that removed a provision that previously allowed men who raped girls under 18 to escape punishment by marrying their victims. Despite the removal of this provision, women remain inadequately protected against sexual violence in Morocco. For example, while a sexual assault conviction may result in a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine for the perpetrator, police are slow to act in domestic violence cases, and the government has generally not enforced the law in this regard.¹⁸¹⁶ Furthermore, in September 2014, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that Morocco had not adopted a legislation criminalising all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape, despite the fact that violence against women and girls was reported to be pervasive in the home.¹⁸¹⁷ Additionally, consensual sex outside marriage remains a crime in Morocco.¹⁸¹⁸

Sub-Saharan migrants who are prevalent in Morocco are at high risk of sexual victimisation and subsequent ill-health.¹⁸¹⁹ This occurs as Morocco is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children who are subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Moroccan girls, some as young as 6 years old are often subjugated to work in domestic service in cities. They often then become victims of forced labour, experiencing non-payment of wages, threats, restrictions on movement, and physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. While the Government has been making efforts to improve the situation and comply with international law, it does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.¹⁸²⁰

Approximately 16% of women between the age of 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18. This figure is unchanged since 2010.¹⁸²¹ The Family Code of Morocco states that marriages of minors must have judicial authorisation, but it does not specify a minimum age. This is contrary to Article 16 (2) of CEDAW.¹⁸²² Figures released by the Ministry of Justice in 2012 show that 41,098 underage marriages took place in 2010, an increase of 23% since 2007.¹⁸²³

Women Peace and Security

The Governments of Liberia, Mexico, Morocco, Senegal and South Korea and the Palestinian Authority have signed the Call to Action on Protecting Girls and Women in Emergencies.¹⁸²⁴ It is a collaborative campaign to mobilise donors, UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders on protecting women and girls in humanitarian emergencies. It outlines concrete steps for all humanitarian stakeholders to take from 2015-2020.¹⁸²⁵

Notably, Morocco is the occupying power of Western Sahara. Occasionally the government faces resistance from the Sahrawi independence movement, which employs many women in its military, while many more participate in protests. Moroccan women have struggled in recent years to make the Government enforce laws promoting women's rights.¹⁸²⁶

Education

Over the last five years the male to female ratio of adult literacy has steadily increased from 0.64% in 2010 to 0.76% in 2014.¹⁸²⁷ Significantly, similar trends appear in primary education where female enrolment rates have increased from 87% in 2010 to 95% in 2012 and 97% in 2014.¹⁸²⁸ Thus, Morocco has had significant success in advancing primary education enrolment levels for girls to levels that are on par with male counterparts at primary levels of schooling.¹⁸²⁹

However, after primary education, adolescent girls in Morocco continue to drop out of school at a higher rate than boys. 60% of girls of primary school age are not enrolled in school.¹⁸³⁰ A majority of girls living in remote, rural villages are likely to stop their schooling around the age of twelve because of lack of access to middle and higher education in their immediate vicinities. Parents of teenage girls are also often unwilling to let them travel long distances away from home due to concerns for their safety and social restrictions.¹⁸³¹ In rural areas, 27% of girls did not attend higher education, compared with 19% of boys.¹⁸³²

In contrast to rural areas, higher education in recent years has improved significantly for girls in urban locations. According to a 2011 High Commission for Planning report, 26% of girls attended high school compared with 22% of boys. Furthermore, as of 2009-10, women accounted for 53% of those enrolled in higher education.¹⁸³³

Economic Empowerment

The 2011 Constitution in Morocco does not require equal pay for equal work.¹⁸³⁴ Reflecting the lack of legal protection, a 2012 study showed that women's wages on average were 15% below those of men.¹⁸³⁵

In 2014, 27% of Moroccan women were active in the labour force. This was a slight decrease from 2010 to 2012 where 28% of women were recorded as active in the labour force.¹⁸³⁶ Consistently over the 2010-2014 period this represented a male to female ratio of .34, ranking Morocco 135th out of 142 countries in 2014 for economic participation.¹⁸³⁷ Unemployment among women is 9.6%, compared to 9.1% among men.¹⁸³⁸ Women have also experienced difficulty in accessing credit and owning and managing businesses.¹⁸³⁹

A notable obstacle for women entering the labour force is that sexual harassment in the workplace is criminal only when it is an abuse of authority by a superior, as stipulated by the penal code. Violations are punishable by one to two years' imprisonment and a fine. NGOs in Morocco have reported that the widespread sexual harassment of women in the workforce has contributed to the low rate of female participation.¹⁸⁴⁰

The government has led some efforts to improve the status of women in the workplace, most notably through the 2011 constitutional mandate for the creation of an "Authority for Gender Parity and Fighting All Forms of Discrimination", an institution that was being developed jointly between the parliament and the Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (CNDH).¹⁸⁴¹

Additionally, the Government has initiated several measures to mitigate the impacts of poverty on women including the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) and the Multisectoral Programme against violence based on gender (Tamkine Programme). Beginning in 2005, the programme's aim was to strengthen the ability of the poor, including women, to benefit from microcredit. This was a significant advance because despite the revision of the Commercial Code of 1995, women in Morocco continued to face challenges obtaining loans, in part because they often did not have assets or bank accounts. Thus far, while the programme still needs to be evaluated, it appears to have not significantly contributed to the empowerment of women.¹⁸⁴²

SUDAN

Armed conflicts in several Sudanese states continue with devastating effects on civilians. These conflicts have been characterised by civilian deaths and injuries; sexual violence against women and girls; unlawful destruction of civilian property and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians.¹⁸⁴³ The conflict has severely hampered the ability of women to attain equal rights in the country. The Government of Sudan has not yet ratified CEDAW. Nor has it ratified or signed on to the Maputo protocol. Finally, the government does not have a plan of action for UN Security Council Resolution 1325.¹⁸⁴⁴

Human Rights of Women

Sudan has yet to adopt a new constitution, despite the end of the transition period in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The interim constitution states, that all persons are equal before the law without discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religious creed, political opinion, or ethnic origin. Other articles of the constitution encourage tolerance between different tribes and provide protections for women, children and persons with disabilities.^{1845 1846 1847} Yet, in practice, authorities continued to apply Sharia law that violate international prohibitions on cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. The penalties are applied disproportionately to women and girls, typically for “crimes” that include private beliefs and decisions about marriage, sexuality, or dress code and amount to discrimination.¹⁸⁴⁸ The law prohibits ‘indecent dress’ and punishes individuals with a maximum of 40 lashes, a fine, or both. Authorities have applied these laws more frequently against women than men and applied them to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Furthermore, Public Order Police continue to monitor public gatherings and cultural events, often intimidating women and girls, who fear police would arrest them for “indecent” dress or actions.¹⁸⁴⁹

Furthermore, in accordance with Islamic judicial interpretation, a Muslim widow inherits one-eighth of her husband’s estate; of the remaining seven-eighths, two-thirds goes to the sons and one-third to the daughters. Depending on the wording of the marriage contract, it is often much easier for men than women to initiate legal divorce proceedings. In certain probate trials, the testimony of women is not considered equivalent to that of men; the testimony of two women is required. In other civil trials, the testimony of a woman equals that of a man.¹⁸⁵⁰

The Muslim Personal Status Act 1991 establishes a strongly patriarchal system governing marriage, the marital relationship and divorce, in which women do

not enjoy legal equality. This law establishes a limited number of “rights” for wives, requiring a wife to care for and obey her husband in all matters that do not contravene the law and to be faithful and safeguard his property.¹⁸⁵¹

Presently, when a woman or girl reports she has been raped, she faces possible prosecution. Effectively, a female victim has to prove her own innocence by demonstrating that the encounter was non-consensual and the burden to provide evidence is overwhelming. Many judges in Sudan require that four competent men testify on the victim’s behalf. This is both nearly impossible to obtain and if a woman fails to do so, she is liable to be prosecuted for adultery. The punishment for adultery is 100 lashes if she is not married and execution by stoning if she is married. Furthermore, because the law lacks clear guidelines on its interpretation and implementation, which allows judges wide discretion that is often unjust to victims seeking redress. All of these factors, combined with the traumatic stigma and fear of community reprisals, often deter women and girls from reporting crimes of sexual violence and limits their chances of achieving justice even if they do.¹⁸⁵²

Women's Political Participation

The percentage of women represented in Sudan’s national parliament has increased over the last five years from 25,6% in 2010 to 30,5% in 2015.¹⁸⁵³ These statistics are reflective of the fact that, prior to 2014, women were guaranteed one-quarter of the seats in the National Assembly.¹⁸⁵⁴ Furthermore, in 2014, women held five of 30 seats in the Council of States, and seven of 56 cabinet positions.¹⁸⁵⁵ As of September 1st 2015, Sudan ranked 36th for the percentage of women parliament in the Inter- Parliamentary Union’s “Women in Parliaments: World Classification”.¹⁸⁵⁶

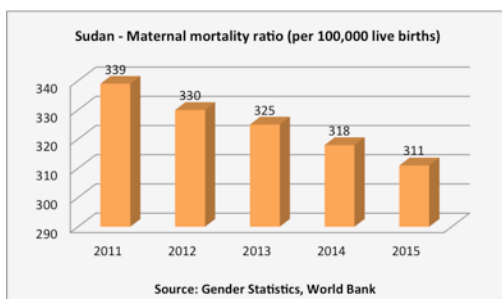
In June 2014, government authorities shut down the Salmah Women’s Resource Centre, a women’s rights organization in Khartoum. The closure was the

latest of several in recent years, which renewed fears among activists that the government would further suppress civil society and specifically women's rights activists.¹⁸⁵⁷

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

The maternal mortality ratio in Sudan has continued to improve over the last fifteen years. From a high of 460 deaths per 100,000 live births from 2001-2005 the death rate dropped to 390 deaths per 100,000 live births from 2006-2010. The ratio in 2015 stands at 311 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁸⁵⁸ High maternal mortality rates in Sudan have stemmed in large part from lack of access to reproductive health and emergency obstetric care, particularly in rural areas, a lack of access to family planning services, poor sanitation, and chronic undernourishment in poorer areas. The leading causes of maternal deaths in Sudan were infection, malaria, anaemia, and haemorrhage.¹⁸⁵⁹ Of additional concern are the very low ages of marriage for boys and girls which are approximately, of 15 and 10 respectively.¹⁸⁶⁰

Significantly, the prevalence and access to contraceptives for women ages 15-49 has decreased from 9% in 2006 to 7.6% in 2010 but¹⁸⁶¹ the UN Population Division estimated that 12% of girls and women ages 15-49 used a modern method of contraception in 2012 and couples were able to decide freely on reproductive problems. Contraception, skilled medical attendance during childbirth, and obstetric and postpartum care however, were not always accessible in rural areas.¹⁸⁶²



There is no national law prohibiting FGM/C in Sudan. FGM/C is a traditional practice in the country and according to UNICEF and the UN Population Fund, the national prevalence among girls and women 15-49 years old is 88%. Within the country the prevalence rate varies geographically and depends on the custom of local ethnic groups.¹⁸⁶³ A 2010 survey concluded 34.5% of girls aged five to nine were cut, as compared

with 41% in 2006. Of girls and women aged 15-19, 37% favoured FGM/C in 2010, compared with 73% in 2006. The decrease in rates is possibly attributed to the 2008 commitment made by the Government, with the support of UNICEF to eradicating FGM/C by 2018 in Sudan.¹⁸⁶⁴ Yet, while national attitudes towards FGM/C have shifted downward, the high prevalence rates persist and provisions criminalizing FGM/C have been removed from the Child Health Act in Sudan.¹⁸⁶⁵

Finally, there is documental social discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. The conservative nature of society in Sudan has made discussion of sex out of wedlock and related issues a challenge, particularly for activists and members of the international community addressing these topics.¹⁸⁶⁶ As a result obtaining statistics and receiving care remain a challenge.

Violence Against Women

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Women, and Child Affairs in Sudan is responsible for matters pertaining to women. The Violence against Women Unit oversees branch units in 17 states and is responsible for overseeing the National Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women. It monitors and reports on women's problems and works with civil society and other stakeholders.¹⁸⁶⁷

In Sudan, the law establishes the legal age of marriage at 10 for girls and 15 or puberty for boys. There were no reliable statistics on the extent of child marriage, but child advocates reported that it remained a problem, especially in rural areas. According to UNICEF estimates, 12% of women aged 20 to 24 were first married or in a union before they were 15 and 34% were married before reaching 18.¹⁸⁶⁸

Instances of rape continued to be a serious problem throughout the country, especially in conflict areas.¹⁸⁶⁹ International agencies and government agencies assisting rape victims estimated that rape cases were underreported due to victims' fear of reprisal and stigmatization. Furthermore, investigative and prosecuting authorities often obstructed access to justice for rape victims. Under Sudanese law, a woman who accuses a man of rape and fails to prove her case can be tried for adultery. Victims sometimes refuse to report their cases to family or authorities due to fear they would be punished or arrested for "illegal pregnancy" or adultery. Because there was no official tracking of rape cases, no information was available

on the number of persons prosecuted, convicted, or punished for rape.¹⁸⁷⁰

While Sudanese law prohibits violence in general, it does not specifically prohibit domestic violence. Nor does the law address spousal rape. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, was common but due to a lack of reporting, there were no reliable provenance statistics. Women who filed claims of domestic violence were subjected to accusations of lying or spreading false information, harassment, and detention. Consequently, many women were reluctant to file formal complaints, although such abuse constituted grounds for divorce. Police normally did not intervene in domestic disputes. Statistics on the number of abusers prosecuted, convicted, or punished were not available.¹⁸⁷¹

Furthermore, Sudanese law treats any sexual contact outside a legally recognised marriage as a crime. While both men and women can be prosecuted, women made up the vast majority of the accused offenders and of those found guilty.¹⁸⁷²

Finally, Sudan is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Internal trafficking occurs in Sudan, including areas outside of the government's control. Sudanese women and girls, particularly those from rural areas or those who are internally displaced, and labour migrants and refugees are especially vulnerable. Sudanese girls are vulnerable to sex trafficking in restaurants and brothels. An anti-trafficking law was passed in 2014 and the number of verified incidents has declined since 2012. However it does not fully comply with the minimum international standards for the elimination of trafficking.¹⁸⁷³¹⁸⁷⁴

Women Peace and Security

The decades long armed conflict and violence in Sudan has had a devastating impact on the lives of women and girls. Women and girls have suffered indiscriminate rape and have been abducted by all sides in the conflict. Authorities often obstruct access to justice for abused female victims.¹⁸⁷⁵ Conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, attempted rape, abduction for the purposes of sexual exploitation, indecent assault, sexual humiliation and serious injuries or killings following rape, remains a prevailing feature of the conflict. In 2014, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

(UNAMID) documented 117 incidents involving 206 victims, as compared with 149 cases involving 273 victims in 2013. Victims ranged in age from 4 to 70 years. Of the victims, 204 were female and 2 were male.¹⁸⁷⁶ Furthermore, in a particularly disturbing incident in 2014, serious allegations were levelled against the Sudanese armed forces regarding a mass rape of some 200 women and girls in Tabit, North Darfur over a period of 36 hours beginning on 30th October 2014. Despite several attempts by UNAMID to reach the area, government authorities granted access on only one occasion in November.¹⁸⁷⁷

Finally, a consistent challenge for women is the under-reporting of sexual violence in conflicts because of stigma, the risk of retaliation and a lack of access for monitors. An inadequate means of safe reporting, and weak government represent additional problems.¹⁸⁷⁸

Education

The WHO noted in 2013 that 66% of females aged 15 or older were literate.¹⁸⁷⁹ School enrolment from 2005-2012 at the primary and secondary level remained roughly constant with a male to female ratio of 0.89% in 2005 and 0.90% in 2012.¹⁸⁸⁰ In 2009, the net enrolment in primary education was 64% for girls, compared with 69% for boys. Notably, there was a significant gap in the proportion of male and female children who had ever attended any school; 72% and 52% respectively for boys and girls. Despite the existence of an adequate proportion of women in universities and at other higher education institutions gender stereotypes in Sudan often affect women's access to higher education.¹⁸⁸¹

Economic Empowerment

Women are significantly under-represented in employment. Labour force participation for women is 23%, compared with 73% for men. The percentage of women recorded as "economically inactive" is 74%, compared with 26% for men. The Bureau of Statistics in Sudan identifies being a "full time homemaker" as one of the two key reasons for this economic inactivity.¹⁸⁸²

Several laws in Sudan limit women's access to employment and women are routinely subjected to less favourable treatment in both pay and benefits and are also discriminated against in efforts to attain promotions.¹⁸⁸³ Section 19 of Sudan's 1997 Labour Law prohibits women from working night shifts, with the exception for women working in administrative,

professional and technical jobs. Furthermore, the Public Service Regulations of 1995 and the Social Insurance Act 1990 both define “family” in such a way as to prevent women in employment from receiving benefits which accrue to men.¹⁸⁸⁴ Finally,

women face a range of barriers to accessing certain jobs such as land surveyors or oil engineers. Many companies will not hire women for these roles as they argue that they cannot protect them.¹⁸⁸⁵

SOUTH SUDAN

Since South Sudan's independence activists have continued to advocate for the protection of women from on-going sexual violence and for the provision of humanitarian aid, as well as for the greater engagement of women in the peace processes and conflict resolution.¹⁸⁸⁶ South Sudan has not ratified the Maputo Protocol, nor has it adopted a Plan of Action for UN Security Council Resolution 1325.¹⁸⁸⁷ South Sudan has, however, ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, although at time of writing they had yet to deposit all the instruments of ratification to finalise the process of South Sudan being a party to the treaties.¹⁸⁸⁸

Human Rights of Women

After decades of civil war, South Sudan became independent in 2011. Despite the official end of war in South Sudan, women's well-being and security remains under constant threat and this only escalated with the fresh outbreak of violence in the same year. While the government has committed to ensuring equality and rights for all in its interim constitution, its laws are often a source of insecurity for women.¹⁸⁸⁹ In early 2016, the United Nations released a report detailing the monstrosities perpetrated by the government in South Sudan. In particular it highlights the extensive use of rape as a weapon of war, which has become common practice by government soldiers and armed militias.¹⁸⁹⁰

South Sudan had not been party to any core international or regional human rights treaties until September 2014, when President Kiir signed the Convention against Torture and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights after South Sudan's Legislative Assembly (SSLA) passed them.¹⁸⁹¹

A further challenge to achieving women's rights in South Sudan comes from the tension that exists between Statutory and Customary law. Customary laws and traditional practices among South Sudan's many tribes play a critical role in regulating South Sudanese society, many of which are harmful to women. Under customary law, a divorce is not final until the wife and her family return the full dowry to the husband's family. As a result families often dissuade women from divorce. Traditional courts usually rule in favour of the husband's family in most cases of child custody, unless children are between

three and seven years of age.¹⁸⁹² As a result of the tension between the two legal systems, discriminatory practices, such as early and forced marriage and domestic abuse, alongside the effects of conflict, continue to limit women's ability to access their rights.¹⁸⁹³ Violence and discrimination against women and children by government actors and within communities have been documented to be widespread in South Sudan. Additionally, the trafficking in persons, government incitement of tribal violence, and child labour, including forced labour, has also become common occurrences in South Sudan.¹⁸⁹⁴ Thus, although the interim constitution of South Sudan guarantees the rights of women to equal pay and property ownership, significant challenges remain in obtaining women's equal rights both in the law and in every day practice.¹⁸⁹⁵

While ongoing efforts by the government and the aid community to eliminate discriminatory facets of customary law are supported by human rights advocates, many South Sudanese are opposed to such efforts. Supporters of customary law caution that such a process would result in an impure version of customary law and that the social value of old traditions should be maintained.¹⁸⁹⁶

Women's Political Participation

As of September 2015, South Sudan is ranked 46 on IPU's “Women in Parliaments: World Classification.”¹⁸⁹⁷ While elections have never been held in South Sudan as an independent country, since the country's creation women have represented 26,5% of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA).¹⁸⁹⁸ The

transitional constitution requires at least 25% female participation in the legislative and executive branches of government at the national and state levels and they compete for the other 75% of seats. Women held 99 of the 332 filled seats in the NLA but only four women served in the 21-member cabinet, while five of 12 deputy ministers were women. At the State level, women only occupied five of the 50 seats in the Council of States. Thus, at the state level the government has largely failed to meet the 25% representation requirement for women.¹⁸⁹⁹

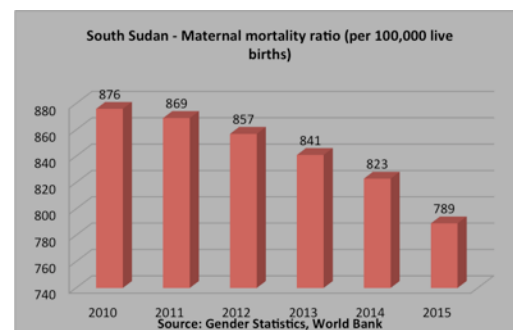
While the Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus has envisioned an increase in the percentage of female Members of Parliament to 42 or 43% in the next elections, deep cultural prejudices present significant obstacles for women aiming to become politically active in South Sudan. Widespread discrimination against women, cultural practices, such as early and forced marriages, that limit women's access to education, high illiteracy rates among women and cultural attitudes which have largely limited women's participation in the formal peace process are key obstacles.¹⁹⁰⁰

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

In South Sudan, couples were not subject to coercion or violence in deciding the number, spacing, and timing of children, but few couples had access to accurate information and modern contraceptive methods. Rumours and misconceptions about contraceptives are widespread in the country, and many men are opposed to family planning.¹⁹⁰¹ High illiteracy limits female access to accurate information concerning their right to control their own fertility and malnutrition creates complications during pregnancy.¹⁹⁰² Furthermore, mistrust in the government's medical system runs deep in South Sudan and in the past two years, public perception of health services has suffered even further, due to dwindling resources and tensions with unpaid and overworked staff.¹⁹⁰³ Finally, the dowry system in South Sudan has also limited some reproductive choices for women, since men who have paid dowries to marry often believe they should have the final say in domestic decisions.¹⁹⁰⁴

Women in South Sudan have struggled to gain access to health care, and compounding the problem, since the outbreak of violence in 2011, sexual violence is on the rise again.¹⁹⁰⁵ Only 40% of pregnant women in South Sudan receive prenatal care while skilled health

personnel attended only 19% of births in South Sudan. This leaves 81% of women without care.^{1906,1907} As a result, the WHO once recorded South Sudan's maternal mortality rate as high as 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births,¹⁹⁰⁸ the highest maternal mortality rate in the world by far.¹⁹⁰⁹ The maternal mortality rate in South Sudan, since independence, has fallen but remains devastatingly high. In 2011 it was recorded that 869 deaths per 100,000 live births occurred while in 2015 it was recorded that 789 women died per 100,000 live births.¹⁹¹⁰ Overall, a woman's lifetime risk of maternal death was one in seven. The leading cause of maternal death and disability was lack of medical care for treatable conditions, such as infection, haemorrhage, and obstructed birth.¹⁹¹¹ Notably, many aid workers at several agencies believe the official numbers actually understate the situation, since many women in South Sudan die in their homes or en route to hospitals, where their deaths go unrecorded.¹⁹¹²



In one notable improvement, the number of registered midwives in South Sudan increased from just eight in 2012 to 85 in 2015.¹⁹¹³

An estimated 6% of women living with HIV receive antiretroviral treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV to their unborn children.¹⁹¹⁴

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is prevalent in South Sudan and cases of sexual violence against women soared following the outbreak of the civil war.¹⁹¹⁵ The scale of violence in 2014 was particularly concerning, and continues. An estimated 74% of sexual violence victims were under the age of 18, with harmful traditional and cultural practices in South Sudan continuing and often directed towards women and girls.¹⁹¹⁶

As a result of a general lack of awareness of their rights, stigmatisation of victims, pressure exerted by

families, and inadequate training of police and other representatives of the justice system, violence against women and girls goes largely unreported in South Sudan.¹⁹¹⁷ After the latest phase of conflict began in December 2013, sexual and physical violence against women and girls escalated. To date, women and girls in Protection of Civilian sites, and many others in areas affected by the conflict live in constant fear of physical assault, rape and sexual exploitation as women and girls increasingly became targets of revenge following skirmishes and attacks on towns.^{1918 1919}

Early and forced marriages are also a common occurrence in South Sudan and challenging forced marriage is seen as an attack on South Sudanese culture.¹⁹²⁰ While the law provides that every child has the right to protection from early marriage, it does not explicitly prohibit marriage before age 18. According to the Ministry of Gender, nearly half of all girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 19 were married, and some brides were as young as 12 years old. In some parts of the country, women are seen as assets because of the bride price attached to them.¹⁹²¹

In other circumstances early marriage has sometimes reflected efforts by men to avoid rape charges, which could not be brought by a married woman against her husband. In such an instance, a man would avoid rape charges by marrying his victim as sexual intercourse within marriage is defined as “not rape” in the law.¹⁹²² At times, such arrangements are encouraged by families of victims to avoid public shaming. Such a practice has also applied to many abducted girls, often subject to repeated rape, who were forced into marriage.¹⁹²³ It has been documented that girls as young as 9 years old in Eastern Equatoria state have been forced into marriages, at times as compensation for inter-clan killings with some girls possibly subsequently subjected to sexual slavery or domestic servitude.¹⁹²⁴

Thus, while rape is punishable by up to 14 years’ imprisonment and a fine, the government has not effectively enforced the law. There was no information available on the number of persons prosecuted, convicted, or punished for rape, and convictions of rape were seldom publicised.¹⁹²⁵ With levels of violence increasing in South Sudan, such trends are especially alarming for young women and girls.

With regard to domestic abuses, Sudanese law does not prohibit domestic violence. Violence, including spousal abuse, against women was common, although there were no reliable statistics on its prevalence. When the option is available, women are often reluctant to file a formal complaint, and police seldom intervened in domestic disputes.¹⁹²⁶ This is reflective of the fact that 79% of South Sudanese women feel that a husband beating his wife is a justifiable action.¹⁹²⁷

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is a criminal offense under the penal code in South Sudan. Although not a common practice, FGM/C has occurred in parts of the country, particularly along the northern border regions in Muslim communities. In 2014, there was a 1.3% prevalence rate of FGM/C in the country.¹⁹²⁸

Finally, South Sudan is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. South Sudanese women and girls, particularly those from rural areas or who are internally displaced, are vulnerable to domestic servitude throughout the country. Some of these women and girls are sexually abused by male occupants of the household or forced to engage in commercial sex acts. South Sudanese girls, some as young as 10 years old, have been noted to be subjected to sex trafficking in restaurants, hotels, and brothels in urban centres, at times with the involvement of corrupt law enforcement officials. Thus, child prostitution also remains a problem.¹⁹²⁹

Women Peace and Security

Sexual violence remains prevalent in South Sudan, exacerbated by impunity and a militarised society in which gender inequality is pronounced. Factors such as forced disarmament, the circulation of illegal arms, mass displacement, cattle raiding, inter-communal violence and food insecurity have increased the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence. Such violence is, however, trivialised by law enforcement officials and the community. Moreover, medical, legal and psychosocial services are available only in limited areas and some facilities have been deliberately targeted during the fighting.¹⁹³⁰

The scale and severity of sexual violence in South Sudan has increased with the outbreak of the current conflict between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People’s Liberation

Movement/Army in Opposition in December 2013. Incidents of sexual violence have been reported in all 10 states. Repeated offensives and counteroffensives have led to cycles of revenge attacks and rapes, often ethnically motivated.¹⁹³¹ Conflict-related sexual violence is noted to be widespread and has included cases of gang rape, of pregnant women being cut open and of women being raped using wooden sticks or plastic bottles.¹⁹³² Almost two years since the eruption of the conflict in South Sudan, the situation continues to deteriorate with women and small children making up the majority of most recent casualties, according to UNICEF.¹⁹³³

According to a report released by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on 8th May 2014, there was credible evidence to suggest that acts of sexual violence committed in the context of the conflict could amount to crimes against humanity. Documented forms of sexual violence include rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, abduction, castration, forced nudity and forced abortion. According to UNMISS at least 31 victims of rape have died as a result of their assault, while some survivors were impregnated, mutilated or infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. More than 200 allegations of abductions of women and girls taken as “wives” and/or for the purposes of sexual slavery by both parties to the conflict are under investigation. Other trends have an ethnic dimension that mirrors the divisions of the conflict.¹⁹³⁴

While women and girls in South Sudan have faced tremendous hardships, they are continuing to raise their voices to challenge gender-based violence and end the conflict. With the formal peace process largely closed to women and civil society activists, by bringing dialogue to the community level, putting pressure on the parties and creating women's groups, the women of South Sudan are finding other ways to make a difference and to be heard.¹⁹³⁵

Education

South Sudan's education indicators remain among the worst in the world, despite increases in school enrolment over recent years. Although basic education is free and compulsory in South Sudan through to grade eight under the 2012 General Education Act 2012, many children did not attend school due to the armed conflict.¹⁹³⁶ A lack of schools, conflict, and muddy terrain during the rainy season were reasons why children did not receive an education. It is

estimated that more than one million primary school aged children, mostly from rural areas, are not in school. Furthermore, the completion rate in primary schools in South Sudan is less than 10 per cent, one of the lowest in the world.¹⁹³⁷ Such low rates of primary school completion and high gender, geographic and wealth disparities pose enormous challenges to the development of South Sudan.¹⁹³⁸

In 2010, only 16% of women over the age of 15 could read and write, and only 37.1% of girls were enrolled in primary school.¹⁹³⁹ In 2014, the U.S. Department of State estimated that the overall literacy rate for girls was 40% in South Sudan and 60% boys.¹⁹⁴⁰ These rates reflect the fact that in 2013, 38.9% females were enrolled in primary education while 31.9% were enrolled as secondary school students.¹⁹⁴¹ However, a significant barrier for many girls in South Sudan is that most teachers in the country were men, and in many communities, it is not acceptable to send girls into a male-dominated public space.¹⁹⁴²

Even before the start of the most recent crisis, some 57% of children and adolescents in South Sudan did not attend school.¹⁹⁴³ This has only been exacerbated by the recent outbreaks of violence. The renewed conflict in Central and North Darfur triggered large displacements in the area just as national basic education exams were due to take place. An estimated 32,000 of the displaced were pre- and primary school-aged children between the ages of 4-13 years, half of whom were girls. The sudden influx of new arrivals into schools as a result of the displacement also burdened the over-crowded host community schools, which often had a shortage of education supplies and teaching personnel.¹⁹⁴⁴

Economic Empowerment

In South Sudan poverty is rampant, with 51% of the population living below the national poverty line. The 57% female-headed households have a poverty incidence that is 9% higher than male-headed households.¹⁹⁴⁵ This occurs for many reasons. While the transitional Constitution recognises women's rights to own property and inherit their husbands' estates, in practice, patriarchal customary laws limit women's inheritance rights. Women also experience discrimination in employment, pay, credit, education, inheritance, and ownership and management of businesses or land. Although women have the right to own property and land under the transitional Constitution, community elders have often sought to

prevent women from exercising these rights because they contradict customary practice. Furthermore, traditional beliefs tended to discourage women from assuming leadership positions because of the belief this undermines domestic duties.¹⁹⁴⁶

High illiteracy rates and rigid gender roles are just two of the many challenges for the women of South Sudan. Today in South Sudan, women's lives are still

inextricably linked to livestock with women, in many cases, often being valued and exchanged in terms of cattle. Wealthy men with large herds marry several women. When a dowry payment occurs, men of a clan pool their livestock to secure a choice bride for their male relatives, when the woman then moves in with his family, they send her father, brothers and uncles cows.¹⁹⁴⁷

TUNISIA

The 2011 revolutions in North Africa began in Tunisia. While a new constitution was adopted following the revolution that claims to grant gender equality, it has yet to be implemented within legislation. Tunisia ratified The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. Tunisia then ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in late 2008.¹⁹⁴⁸ Notably, although Tunisia ratified CEDAW in 1979, it also adopted reservations that allow the country to opt out of several provisions with regard to women's rights within the family.¹⁹⁴⁹ Tunisia, however, has not yet ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) and has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).¹⁹⁵⁰

Human rights of women

Regarded as a leader on women's rights in the Middle East North Africa region,¹⁹⁵¹ Tunisia prohibited polygamy, compulsory marriage, and the duty of obedience, set a minimum marriage age, and made divorce a purely judicial matter in the 1956 Personal Status Law. It also instituted a policy of compulsory education for boys and girls, maintains a birth control policy, and has granted women the right of abortion and employment.¹⁹⁵²

As Tunisia transits from an autocratic regime to a democracy following the 2011 revolution, the rights of women, especially those who live in more remote and disadvantaged regions, are being given additional support and focus. Women participated as organisers and demonstrators of the revolution. As a result, gender equality has been central to discussions of Tunisian politics, predominantly as it has related to elections and the drafting of the constitution.¹⁹⁵³ Thus, Tunisia's new constitution, adopted on January 27th, 2014, has strong protections for women's rights, including Article 46, which provides that the state will commit to protect 'women's established rights and works to strengthen and develop those rights,' and guarantees 'equality of opportunities between women and men to have access to all levels of responsibility and in all domains.' These provisions make Tunisia one of the few countries in the Middle East and North Africa region with a constitutional obligation to work

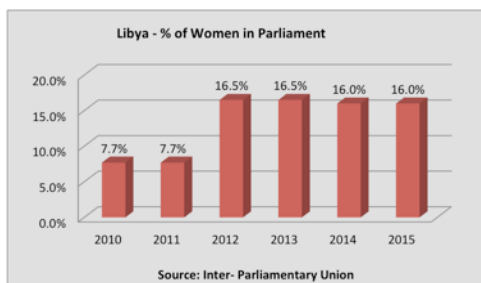
toward gender parity in elected assemblies.¹⁹⁵⁴

Although Tunisia has one of the most progressive personal status laws in the region, the Personal Status Code still contains discriminatory provisions. The Personal Status Code grants women equal rights in divorce, and children born to Tunisian mothers and foreign fathers are automatically granted citizenship, but the father still remains the legal guardian.¹⁹⁵⁵ Tunisian daughters are denied an equal share of an inheritance with brothers, and sometimes other male family members, such as cousins, who are legally entitled to a greater share. Article 58 of the personal status code gives judges the discretion to grant custody to either the mother or the father based on the best interests of the child, but prohibits allowing a mother to have her children live with her if she remarries. No such restriction applies to fathers.¹⁹⁵⁶ Furthermore, until a new law was passed in November 2015, Tunisian authorities had a long-established practice of preventing women, but not fathers, from leaving Tunisian territory with their children without the spouse's authorisation. Now, either parent is allowed to authorise a minor's travel.¹⁹⁵⁷

Women's political participation

Following the revolution, Tunisia adopted a new constitution that emphasised gender equality. Article 20 of the constitution states that "all male and female citizens have the same rights and duties. They are equal before the law without discrimination."

Furthermore, the Constitution is the first to give all citizens, both men and women, the right to present themselves as presidential candidates.¹⁹⁵⁸ A quota to include women on party lists for the October 2011 National Constituent Assembly (NCA) election was instituted into law by the transitional government. As a result of the newly introduced legislation for parity and alternation provisions in candidate lists, about 5,000 women candidates participated in the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections.¹⁹⁵⁹



This measure, drafted and supported by Tunisian women's civil society groups, attempted to enhance gender parity in representation, though it was limited because the law did not specify how high on party lists women were to appear. Consequently, many parties ignored the spirit of the law by meeting the requirement to include women on party lists but offering them the lowest positions on the list.¹⁹⁶⁰ With 93% of the candidate lists headed by men, this resulted in women forming 27% of the elected members of the Assembly.¹⁹⁶¹ Furthermore, female candidates were underrepresented in public media composing less than 10% of coverage in public media. This served to impose constraints on female candidates' abilities to garner support.¹⁹⁶² Despite this, 68 women out of 217 members (31.33%) were elected to Parliament during the election of October 2014; an increase from 28% in 2010.¹⁹⁶³ Additionally, in the most recent election, Kalthoum Kannou, a lawyer, was the first female presidential candidate in Tunisia She will stand again in the 2019 presidential elections.¹⁹⁶⁴

Women's participation in politics is often limited because most electoral rallies in Tunisia are held late in the evening, so most of the audience are men, excluding women from participating¹⁹⁶⁵. Yet women in Tunisia appear to have made up the majority of voters in the most recent elections. According to a report released by Gender Concerns International, 50.5% of registered voters in Tunisia were women.¹⁹⁶⁶

Reproductive health and HIV /AIDS

In 2012 Tunisia was listed as one of five countries in the Millennium Development Goal report to have recorded significant declines in maternal mortality (more than 50%) between 1990 and 2008.¹⁹⁶⁷ In 2010 Tunisia had a maternal mortality ration of 67 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁹⁶⁸ In 2015 the maternal mortality ratio decreased to 62 deaths per 100, 000 live births.¹⁹⁶⁹ As a result, in 2015, Tunisia ranked 104 out of 184 countries for its maternal mortality rates.¹⁹⁷⁰ The major factor behind this success lies in the voluntary political commitment focused on gender-related concerns, including access to family planning, the legalization of abortion, the creation of the National Board for Family and Population, and the Tunisian Safe Motherhood Program initiated in 1999¹⁹⁷¹. Furthermore there was an improvement of the proportion of women giving birth with a skilled birth attendant, improved access health institutions, increased dissemination of information about contraception and a better supply of health attendants¹⁹⁷². Notably, the prevalence of contraceptives from 2008-2012 was 62.5%.¹⁹⁷³

Abortion laws in Tunisia began to be legalised in 1965, by making it available to women with more than five children. Despite its progressive stance on the issue, state-provided abortions are still unavailable in 11 cities in Tunisia, and the National Board for Family and Population (ONFP) has highlighted recent reports of women being denied abortion services. Significantly, the newly adopted Constitution strengthens the reproductive rights of women, especially in terms of access to abortion.¹⁹⁷⁴

The fertility between 2005 and 2013 was 2.0 children per woman.¹⁹⁷⁵ Between 1990 and 2013, the fertility rate decreased yearly by 2.5%.¹⁹⁷⁶ However, of concern is the increase in the adolescent fertility rate during this time. Between 2005 and 2010, the adolescent fertility rate was 6 and then increased to 7 per 1000 live births between 2011 and 2014.¹⁹⁷⁷ Similarly in 2005, there were no reported incidents of child marriages but in 2013, 2% of women/girls were married before the age of 18.¹⁹⁷⁸

Tunisia has one of the most far-reaching and comprehensive approaches to fight against HIV/AIDS in North Africa and the Middle East, and the rate of infection is relatively low. Only 0.1% of women live with HIV/AIDS, a rate that has remained the same since 2005¹⁹⁷⁹. This translates into approximately

2,700 reported cases of women aged 15+ living with HIV.¹⁹⁸⁰ It is estimated that 2,300 persons out of the 10.8 million living in Tunisia were infected in 2012. However, there is still a significant amount stigma and widespread discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS, and there are recurring misconceptions about the causes and the spread of the virus, which in turn hampers work to hinder the spread.¹⁹⁸¹

Violence Against women

It was only in 2010 that Tunisia conducted the first national survey of violence against women. The official study found that 47% of women ages 18–64 had been subjected to at least one form of violence once in their lives, with little variation between urban and rural areas. At 31.7%, physical violence was the most common form of violence, followed by psychological violence at 28.9% and sexual violence at 15.7%, 7% were also subjected to economic violence, when one intimate partner has control over the other's access to financial resources, reinforcing dependency.¹⁹⁸² A 2014 study reported that there had been an unprecedented rise of violence against women in Tunisia, including sexual violence, particularly since the 2011 revolution. This has largely been attributed to economic stress and political instability.¹⁹⁸³

In the new constitution, adopted on 27th January 2014, Article 46 states that the state must “take all measures to eliminate violence against women.” This Article is the outcome of efforts of rights activists in Tunisia. It is a constitutional recognition of violence against women and requires the State to protect women from it.¹⁹⁸⁴ Tunisia removed its 1985 reservations to CEDAW on 23rd April 2014, fulfilling another long-standing demand of rights activists and feminists. These positive results were achieved through long years of campaigning.¹⁹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, these various laws and policies have not provided the necessary protection for women from violence in all forms.¹⁹⁸⁶ Significantly, legislation in Tunisia fails to define sexual violence in line with international definitions, failing to distinguish between public or private violence.¹⁹⁸⁷ The private sphere (husband, fiancé, friend) is where a woman is most likely to be exposed to violence. The intimate partner is the author of physical violence in 47.2% of cases, of psychological violence in 68.5% of cases, of sexual violence in 78.2% of cases, and of economic violence in 77.9% of cases. Family members are the

authors of physical violence in 43% of cases, of psychological violence in 16.7% of cases, and of economic violence in 22.1% of cases. Outside the private sphere, violence against women is sexual in 21.3% of cases, psychological in 14.8% of cases and physical in 9.8% of cases.¹⁹⁸⁸

Tunisian women have reportedly been forced into prostitution under false promises of work both within the country and elsewhere in the region, such as Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. Tunisian girls, primarily 15 to 18 years old, are exploited in prostitution in the coastal cities of Sousse and Sfax. However, the Tunisian Government did not report identifying any trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, including women in prostitution, vulnerable children, foreign migrants, and repatriated Tunisian nationals, nor did it provide specialised protection services for trafficking victims, as distinct from other vulnerable groups.¹⁹⁸⁹

Women peace and security

Despite being active in the 2010-2011 revolution, women are not actively participating in the rebuilding of institutions or their participation is/was very limited.¹⁹⁹⁰ A report in 2013 revealed that women had no presence in peace negotiations or national reconciliation processes. When they are present, their presence often ends with the end of the conference or workshop in which they participate.¹⁹⁹¹

One avenue that young Tunisian women have found to continue participating in public life and contributing to the peace process is to offer services such as human rights education and training, and a centre for women surviving violence. This has given some women's groups the legitimacy to do other, more politically visible work such as lobbying decision-makers.¹⁹⁹²

Tunisia is one of five countries that is part of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's, “Middle East and North Africa 1325 Project”. The aim of the project is to enhance capacity and outreach of women's organisations to address peace and security issues at the national level.¹⁹⁹³ These discussions allowed women to focus closely on their legal rights including through practical, legally accessible national constitutions and personal status laws. In the case of Tunisia, a key concern was the threat of losing existing legal protections, especially in light of the cultural backlash that occurred when the Islamist government was elected until 2014.¹⁹⁹⁴

Education

According to UNICEF, the youth literacy rate for women and girls aged 15-24 is 96% compared to 98% for boys and men.¹⁹⁹⁵ In 2010 the adult literacy rate of females aged 15 and above was 71%. There was a slight increase to 72% in 2011 but there has been no data since then.¹⁹⁹⁶

In 2010 it was recorded that 54% of primary school teachers in Tunisia were female, while 45% of secondary school teachers were women. At the Tertiary level, 42% of teachers were women.¹⁹⁹⁷ Notably, at the Tertiary level it is estimate that about 6 of 10 university students are women.¹⁹⁹⁸ The enrolment rate in primary education for girls and boys is almost equal and has remained unchanged since 2009.¹⁹⁹⁹

Economic Empowerment

Whilst Tunisia has demonstrated political progress, challenges still remain. Girls represent 60% of all university students in Tunisia and graduate at higher rates than their male counterparts. Yet in 2012, only one in four women was active in the national labour market.²⁰⁰⁰ In 2015, 27% of women are enrolled in the workforce.²⁰⁰¹ This is compared to 74% of men, a number, which has remained unchanged since 2010.²⁰⁰² Additionally, 15.5% of women are unemployed compared to 12.4% of men. Despite an increased unemployment rate in 2011 for both men and women, the unemployment gap for both sexes has remained similar.²⁰⁰³

There are no restrictions in Tunisia in terms of women opening businesses. Women can also open bank accounts in the same way as their male counterparts. Women have equal ownership rights to property but do not have equal inheritance rights.²⁰⁰⁴ Women business owners in Tunisia have cited family commitments and culture as challenges for doing business. The majority do not perceive discrimination against women in registration and licensing systems, though informality tends to be much higher among women-owned businesses. In Tunisia, women's access to bank loans is on a par with men's.²⁰⁰⁵

Informal employment accounts for 50% of jobs. A survey conducted in 2013 on informal workers in Greater Tunis shows that unlike men, all women are aware of their labour situation and some say "informal work is our lot in life".²⁰⁰⁶ Violence in informal work places is pervasive and many women are victims of violence and sexual harassment. A survey by the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development on full time domestic workers, of which 96.7% have no job contract; also shows that 14.2% of respondents claim to have been victims of sexual abuse at the hand of their employers.²⁰⁰⁷

WESTERN SAHARA

Western Sahara, a mainly a desert territory in northwest Africa, is the subject of an almost forty-year dispute between Morocco, which claimed sovereignty over the region in 1975, and the Algerian-backed independence-seeking Polisario Front.²⁰⁰⁸ A ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front and Western Sahara's Sahrawi people, has been monitored since 1991 by a UN peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.²⁰⁰⁹

The territory is classified by the United Nations as a non-self-governing territory.²⁰¹⁰ Perhaps because of its status in the United Nations, Western Sahara has not ratified nor has it signed CEDAW. While the Maputo protocol was signed in June 2006 but there has been no Plan of Action created for UN Security Council Resolution 1325.²⁰¹¹

The current political climate in Western Sahara makes tracking achievements or setbacks on the attainment of gender equality, and human rights more broadly, problematic. International humanitarian and development organizations as well as journalists have limited access to the territory making the collection of reliable statistics almost impossible. Thus, the country summary for Western Sahara is largely based on data collected in the refugee camps in Algeria or is based on qualitative data and anecdotes from civil society groups active in Western Sahara.

Human Rights of Women

Islam, as practiced by the Sahrawi, is considered to be a tolerant and liberal interpretation. Women in Sahrawi society enjoy relatively strong civil liberties, and they are prominent in activist circles and in the pro-independence movement. Some observers attribute this to the liberal interpretation of Islam in

Sahrawi society, as well as the nomadic roots of the culture while others ascribe it to the challenge of living in refugee camps or under occupation.²⁰¹²

Operating from refugee camps, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic has been able to draw upon local traditions is its institutionalization of women's rights. Traditionally, women have total autonomy in

managing their daily activities in and around the tent. Any form of violence against women, verbal or physical, is condemned and the man is usually ostracised by society.²⁰¹³ Thus, in Sahrawi culture and society, women hold a prominent position both inside and outside of the home. They are not restricted to domestic duties and the confines of their homes as a social norm; rather they are often leaders both in the family and in the public sphere.²⁰¹⁴

The National Union of Sahrawi Women was created in 1974 and is especially present in the refugee camps. It is a powerful force that has successfully brought together thousands of Sahrawi women to advocate for their involvement in political and economic processes in the search for peace.²⁰¹⁵ Notably, the movement also has representation and influence in Morocco-controlled territory, though its reach is difficult to assess.

The Morocco-controlled parts of Western Sahara are divided into several provinces that are treated as integral parts of the Kingdom of Morocco. The 2011 Constitution of Morocco guarantees equality for women. Parliament recently removed a clause from the penal code in Morocco that had, in effect, allowed some men to escape prosecution for raping a minor if they agreed to marry her. The code retains other discriminatory provisions, however, such as the criminalization of consensual sex between unmarried people. This provision places rape victims at risk of prosecution if the accused rapist is acquitted.²⁰¹⁶

In Morocco and Moroccan controlled territories of Western Sahara, the Family Code discriminates against women with regard to inheritance. Reforms to the Code in 2004 improved women's rights in divorce and child custody, and increased the age of marriage from 15 to 18. However, judges reportedly routinely circumvent this law. In September 2014, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that Morocco had not adopted a legislation criminalizing all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape, although violence against women and girls in the home is reported to be pervasive.²⁰¹⁷ Furthermore, despite laws prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 15, thousands of children under that age—predominantly girls—are believed to work as domestic workers. In September 2014, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that the government had not

taken effective measures to remove children from hazardous domestic labour.²⁰¹⁸

Women's Political Participation

Women play a prominent role in Western Sahara's independence movement. Their involvement has spanned a guerrilla war and, for the past two decades, a mostly peaceful protest movement. Female activists attribute this to a number of reasons including the Sahrawi population's moderate interpretation of Islam, the freedom they derived from their nomadic roots and the traditional gender roles which they believe gives women the time to demonstrate.²⁰¹⁹

Every 15th day of the month there is an organised nonviolent demonstration throughout the major cities of the occupied territories of Western Sahara: El Aaiún, Smara, Dakhla, and Boujdour. The largest demonstration is in El Aaiún on Smara Street, which is the most heavily populated city in the territories. This city is also where the most prominent and vocal activists live, notably Aminatou Haidar and Muhammad Dadash.

In preparation for the monthly demonstration, the Moroccan security forces line the length of Smara Street and police are fully dressed in riot gear with multiple armoured vehicles crowd the street corners of connecting streets and alleyways.²⁰²⁰ Through these monthly protests, Sahrawi activists claim that one of the main tasks is to support, morally and economically, those who have suffered prison or their relatives.²⁰²¹

Today, the majority of the protesters on the street are Sahrawi women. This is representative of the greater composition of Sahrawi activists throughout the occupied territories. Although men and women both actively participate in resistance projects, Sahrawi women facilitate most of the communication between activists from one city to another. They organise protests, mediate activist press conferences, work in clandestine journalism, and collaborate with international human rights organizations on a consistent basis.

While the primary objective of the resistance projects is the achievement of self-determination, the primary method of resistance is nonviolent. Both men and women activists emphasise the importance of pacifism and draw on international law to support their cause. Since the brokering of the ceasefire by the United Nations, Sahrawi activists have been fully dedicated to

peaceful methods of protest and resistance in the face of violent state suppression.²⁰²² Moroccan security forces often forcibly disperse Sahrawi women activists who have taken to the streets in Laayoune, capital of occupied Western Sahara.²⁰²³

Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

While few statistics exist, the average woman in the Western Sahara is known to have had 4 children in 2015 and 4.3 in 2011.²⁰²⁴

Violence against women

Despite the arguably strong position of women in Sahrawi culture, some refugees, including alleged victims, have given credible accounts that some practices of slavery, including enforced domestic servitude, continue among a small minority of the refugees in the Tindouf refugee camps as well as in the remote areas of Western Sahara that are currently under Polisario control.²⁰²⁵

Furthermore, while representatives of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic claim that any form of violence against women, verbal or physical, is condemned it is reported that adultery and sex out of wedlock are punishable by one to five years in prison. The same punishment is also applied to any woman who is proven to be pregnant illegitimately. Such crimes are considered “moral crimes” and the punishment is often applied in a way that discriminates on the basis of sex as women are disproportionately impacted due to prevailing social and cultural attitudes and because pregnancy serves as “evidence” of the offense.²⁰²⁶

Women Peace and Security

In a message to the International Conference on Western Sahara Women's Right for Resistance, held in Windhoek, Namibia, 2-4 November 2015, delivered by Mr. Mhamed Khadad, Member of the Polisario Front leadership, it was outlined that the conflict in Western Sahara cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely and that the current UN framework is not working. It was further highlighted that there is increased frustration among the Sahrawi in Western Sahara and in the refugee camps at the lack of

progress being made towards a process of self-determination. Women's activists furthermore highlighted that women are constantly harassed and beaten, their houses are raided and arbitrary arrests are common, even among children less than 15 years-old.²⁰²⁷

Furthermore, in 2015, a Saharawi delegation of civil society in the Saharawi refugee camps, Occupied Territories of Western Sahara and the Diaspora participated in the twenty-ninth session of United Nations Council of Human Rights organised in Geneva. The Sahrawi women living in occupied Western Sahara reported that they have been imprisoned in the Moroccan secret prisons in Sla Tazmamarat prison and Agdz among others and that Sahrawi women also receive punishment and torture through their children and the murder, disappearance and arrests of their husbands.²⁰²⁸ Furthermore, on 14 April 2015, Moroccan police attacked the home of human rights defender Aminatou Haidar as she hosted United Nations representatives to discuss human rights abuses against the Sahrawi people. A known advocate, she has peacefully denounced Morocco's human rights violations in Western Sahara and advocated for the Sahrawi peoples right to self-determination.²⁰²⁹

Sahrawi women in the refugee camps have attracted attention from international media due to their visibility throughout the refugee camps in Algeria. In the camps they organise demonstrations, are vocal against the Moroccan government, and consistently challenge the prevailing narratives that marginalise and depict Sahrawi women as victims.²⁰³⁰

Resistance efforts among the Sahrawi consists predominantly of women. The women act as a closely-knit and well-organised network of activists engaged in managing projects of peaceful resistance in each city within the Occupied Territories. In addition to organizing peaceful monthly protests, women in Western Sahara and the Sahrawi movement also document and report instances of violent oppression with their own clandestine news team. Sahrawi women are also the main facilitators of the network and the sources of communication between cities.²⁰³¹

SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION

All countries within this region are SADC member states. This means that these countries have committed to achieving the 28 goals for gender development and equality as stipulated by the SADC gender protocol of 2011.²⁰³² The majority of these goals align with MEWC's Annual Review on the efforts and progress made by each state, and indicate where improvements and significant change need to be addressed. All these countries have ratified CEDAW, however the majority of them have not implemented a National Action Plan for UNSCR1325.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The constitutions and provisions for women's rights vary vastly between all countries. Botswana is lagging behind as it is one of the few SADC members that has not made constitutional provisions for women, as well as being one of the two states that has no affirmative action to address gender inequality.²⁰³³ South Africa's Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill has lapsed.²⁰³⁴ Both Namibia and Swaziland are still deeply reliant on customary law. In Swaziland women are still classified as minors and in both Swaziland and Namibia women have very limited inheritance rights under customary law.²⁰³⁵ Customary law is still the main arbiter on matters related to land and marriage in rural areas in both these countries.

Lesotho has undertaken a comprehensive National Action Plan to ensure economic, social and political equality for women, with mechanisms to help empower women and increase decision-making capacity at a government level.²⁰³⁶ For this reason, the UNDP review in 2013 ranked Lesotho as the highest in Africa for striving to achieve gender equality.²⁰³⁷ All these countries now have a gender affairs department, indicating a regional shift towards the improvement of monitoring systems for women's rights.

Women's Political Participation

The deadline to reach 50% representation of women in political office or decision-making capacity in governance by 2015 has not been achieved by any of these countries.²⁰³⁸ South Africa has had uneven rates; the level of female premiers falling 22% between 2009 and 2014, compared to single percentage increases noted in female voter participation, female judges and parliamentary seats held by women.²⁰³⁹ From the information available, Swaziland has not endeavoured to increase women's political participation and policy mechanisms for women are not adhered to. However a small increase in women in local government has been noted between 2009 and 2015 of 4%.²⁰⁴⁰



Young Somali Women - UN Photo

Namibia is the only SADC state to currently have a female Minister of Finance, and globally is one of the leaders in female participation in government at 40% representation.²⁰⁴¹ Lesotho also has uneven levels of progress; a high 67% female representation in the judiciary at all levels and the third ever female Chief of Justice in Africa.²⁰⁴² However women's representation in parliament has dropped 11% between 2010 and 2015.²⁰⁴³ Botswana is in the top 5 of developing states for female participation at 30%.²⁰⁴⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Botswana and Swaziland have rates higher than 20% prevalence of HIV for men and women, and the stagnation in these figures are often accredited to longer life spans for those living with HIV/AIDS.²⁰⁴⁵ In Swaziland, women account for 59% of HIV infection within the country.²⁰⁴⁶ Women in the Sub-Saharan region still account for 58% of HIV/AIDS infections in Southern Africa.²⁰⁴⁷ Lesotho has the third highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world; as a result

they have drafted a National Action Plan on Women, Girls and HIV /AIDS, which has had significant success between 2012 and 2017.²⁰⁴⁹

Practises such as forced sterilization were still on going in Namibia in 2013, but the Supreme Court ruled that the government was responsible as they took place in state run hospitals – resulting in the government paying reparations to the victims.²⁰⁵⁰

All Southern African countries in this section have lowered their maternal mortality rate substantially; however they have not met the SADC target of 75% reduction for 2015.²⁰⁵¹

Violence Against Women

The rates of gender-based violence vary among these countries; however it is acknowledged that prevalence is high amongst all SADC states. Lesotho has an 86% lifetime prevalence of gender-based violence, one of the highest in the region.²⁰⁵² And Botswana has a 62% level of intimate partner violence.²⁰⁵³ Intimate partner violence is the highest representation of abuse in Southern Africa.²⁰⁵⁴ The lack of effective mechanisms being implemented to protect women from abuse is a major factor in perpetuating prevalence. Swaziland as yet, has no law prohibiting marital rape.

Issues of underreporting skew data that indicates gender-based violence as well as incidences of sexual violence. State statistics when compared to real time occurrences, are extremely variant, which makes it difficult to assess the scope of sexual violence incidence. The South African Police Service reported a 5.4% drop in rape incidences, however civil society figures reflect a heightened prevalence.²⁰⁵⁵ Numerous sources indicate that the conviction rate of perpetrators is as low as 4%.²⁰⁵⁶ Not only is this a massive issue across Southern Africa, but gender-based violence also facilitates the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly in the case of women and young girls.

Women Peace and Security

None of these countries have adopted a National Action Plan for UNSCR1325.²⁰⁵⁷ South Africa is still leading within the SADC group in terms of female representation in the National Defence Force at 30%, with Namibia at a close second at 23%.²⁰⁵⁸ Swaziland has little available data to illustrate the extent to which women are included in peace processes.²⁰⁵⁹ Lesotho has achieved its goal of 20% female representation; however gender specific budgeting and resource allocation has not been implemented in order to show real change.²⁰⁶⁰ Botswana only recently implemented gender equal employment in the defence sector, and as a result are one of the bottom two SADC states in terms of overall representation. However they did reach their 20% goal of female representation in the police force.²⁰⁶¹

Education

Equal enrolment for boys and girls among SADC states is improving gradually. The World Economic Forum listed Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa among 25 countries worldwide that have fully closed gender gaps in their measurement of educational attainment.²⁰⁶² Although many are yet to achieve gender parity, there has been noticeable improvement on a regional level. Namibia and Botswana have achieved gender parity at both primary and secondary levels ahead of the 2015 deadline.²⁰⁶³ South Africa also achieved its target of equal enrolment for adolescents aged 15.²⁰⁶⁴ However, primary level enrolment for girls has fallen by 3% in Lesotho between 2012 and 2014.²⁰⁶⁵ Swaziland's primary level education is now free and has subsequently influenced an increase of students of up to 5000 pupils, however in rural areas male students are often given preference.²⁰⁶⁶

Although there are some improvements in enrolments and attendance; issues of entrenched values are often core contributors to heightened dropout rates for girls, and their subject selection in tertiary education. In Swaziland women and girl's graduation levels are as low as 34% and contributing factors are believed to be sexual harassment and overall preference often given to male students.²⁰⁶⁷ Botswana has problems with teenage pregnancy, preventing girls from completing secondary education.²⁰⁶⁸ South Africa and Lesotho are the few countries that have roughly 50% of women electing to take science-based courses in university, which are often considered to be more gender specific. On the whole, progress is being made in the region, but entrenched ideas and gender norms need to be addressed before women and girls are able to equally participate and benefit fully from education.

Economic Empowerment

Women on average earn much less than their male counterparts throughout the region.²⁰⁶⁹ In South Africa, unemployment is already high, but poverty alleviation programmes have little or no gender specific mechanisms to assist women in finding work.²⁰⁷⁰ Women in Swaziland need permission from a male representative of their family in order to get a job.²⁰⁷¹ This displays the difficulty of assimilating customary law with common law in many of these countries, which affects women's ability to be financially independent. Among SADC states Lesotho has the highest level of female unemployment at 28% with little progress being made in going forward.²⁰⁷²

Namibia has made strong efforts in attempting to alleviate poverty and unemployment, particularly for women and girls living in rural areas. After implementing a gender specific National Action Plan, women's participation in the work force rose from 62% in 2000, to 74% in 2014.²⁰⁷³ Although progress is slow, it is consistently rising showing some improvement in the country. Botswana has also embarked on the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, which seeks to comprehensively address the issues that impede women's access to the work place, as well as access to equal pay.

In 2014 SADC Heads of State signed the Protocol on Employment and Labour, which is a gender specific policy.²⁰⁷⁴ As this was agreed so recently, real progress on the protocol can only be thoroughly addressed at the agreed upon review date.

BOTSWANA

Botswana has made notable progress in attempting to ensure equal rights for women and young girls. They ratified CEDAW in 1996, and have introduced the National Policy on Gender to tackle economic and social disparity in Botswana.²⁰⁷⁵ To date they have not yet signed the Maputo Protocol, the SADC Protocol on gender, or implemented UNSCR 1325, but have made successful headway with the Maputo Plan of Action as well as the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.²⁰⁷⁶

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Changes have been made to national government and policymaking in order to incorporate gender issues, however there is still a way to go. Botswana has a dual legal system consisting of customary and common law.²⁰⁷⁷ Customary law is recognised as having factors that are not always conducive to human rights and as a result are always biased in favour of men in areas such as land ownership and inheritance.²⁰⁷⁸ Nationally, however, customary law is considered inferior and answerable to common law.²⁰⁷⁹

The national government has successfully reviewed and revised many laws to target gender disparity and economic inequality. They have also renamed the Women's Affairs Department to the Gender Affairs department, indicating a conscious change within the governmental framework.²⁰⁸⁰ However, it is considered to be a severely underfunded sector of government with too few resources to make significant progress towards gender parity.²⁰⁸¹ The National Vision Programme for 2016 focuses on poverty alleviation for the public of Botswana, but specifically targets the unequal levels of economic

opportunity for women and girls²⁰⁸². There is however, still no equal work for equal pay law, no law to prevent any gender-biased criteria for employment, and maternity leave is still 12 weeks at half pay.²⁰⁸³

The full domestication of CEDAW is underway, with a successful monitoring process performed by the Gender Affairs Department of Botswana.²⁰⁸⁴

Women's Political Participation

According to the 2015 UN Women's review: women hold 30% of decision making positions within the public sector; putting Botswana in the top 5 of global developing countries with this level of participation.²⁰⁸⁵ There is however, no process in place to increase the level of women's representation in parliament.²⁰⁸⁶ And from 2005 and 2015 women's representation fell from 11% to 10%.²⁰⁸⁷ Women's participation in local government, however, rose from 18% to 19% between 2009 and 2015.²⁰⁸⁸ Additionally, Botswana has both a female governor of the central bank and head of the National Assembly.²⁰⁸⁹

Botswana is yet to formally commit to the SADC Protocol on gender and development.²⁰⁹⁰ The state budget for the inclusion of women as electoral

candidates has been considered to be not gender sensitive enough and after Botswana was declared a middle-income country, NGOs crucial to creating programmes for training aspiring female politicians, were impeded due to the withdrawal of donor funding.²⁰⁹¹ There are also no gender quota systems in any sphere of the government of Botswana to ensure the equal participation of women.²⁰⁹²

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

HIV accounts for 50% of deaths in Botswana.²⁰⁹³ There is also a 25% prevalence rate among adults between 15 and 49 - one of the highest in the world.²⁰⁹⁴ Women are the most affected by HIV/AIDS.²⁰⁹⁵

The World Economic Forum indicated that Botswana made the biggest improvement in their Health and Survival subindex.²⁰⁹⁶ The National Operational Plan for HIV Prevention has included the spread of knowledge regarding the importance of condom use as well as improving access to condoms for all.²⁰⁹⁷ However, information for young girls regarding condom use is scarce, and even with growing awareness women and young girls are often not in a position to negotiate the use of condoms with their partners.²⁰⁹⁸

Due to the vast gender disparity, women carry the higher social and economic burden surrounding HIV/AIDS resulting from their functioning as caregivers for the sick and those orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS.²⁰⁹⁹ This then limits a woman's ability to participate in the workplace and secure economic independence illustrating the profound effect that HIV/AIDS has had on Botswana in all areas.

Women represent 57% of HIV positive persons in Botswana.²¹⁰⁰ Female access to ARVs improved from 49% in 2010 to 69% in 2014.²¹⁰¹ As of 2015, 95% of HIV positive pregnant women have access to the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme.²¹⁰² In 2013, the maternal mortality rate was down to 170/100 000 live births, showing a significant improvement from 340/100 000 in 2005.²¹⁰³ Although HIV prevalence is high, a noticeable increase in the conditions of women living with HIV is apparent.

Abortion is still illegal in Botswana and is punishable by a 7-year sentence, unless it is classified to be a result of rape, or could potentially endanger the life of the mother.²¹⁰⁴ The national government has a list of

recommendations of ways to prevent unsafe abortions including 'delay sexual intercourse until you are over 21 years of age and are financially independent'.²¹⁰⁵

Violence Against Women

Over the last five years there have been efforts made to support initiatives to inform communities on gender-based violence.²¹⁰⁶ On the part of government institutions: (i) The criminal justice system has been trained in dealing with gender-based violence and (ii) the Botswana Police Service has incorporated a gender focus at all levels.²¹⁰⁷ The Gender Affairs Department conducted a study with the support of UNDP and UNFPA regarding gender-based violence in 2011.²¹⁰⁸ The key findings were:

- There is a 67% prevalence of gender-based violence in Botswana.
- Of that 62% of gender based violence is intimate partner violence
- 48% of Botswanan men have admitted to committing some form of violence

This study was to be conducted again in 2014/2015, but as of yet no such project has occurred.²¹⁰⁹ In 2012 the police force committed to improving data retention to fully understand the scope of rape incidences in Botswana.²¹¹⁰ There is still no National Action to end gender-based violence.²¹¹¹

Women, Peace and Security

In 2007, the Botswana Defence Force began to enlist women as cadet officers.²¹¹² So far there are 100 women in the Botswana Defence force, but accommodating women's specific housing requirements has proven to be a challenge.²¹¹³

Botswana reached and surpassed its 20% goal for women's representation in the police force.²¹¹⁴ They remain, however, in the bottom two countries in women representation of SADC member countries because the programme was only implemented recently.²¹¹⁵

Education

Botswana has made significant progress in ensuring equal access to education for both boys and girls. Women's literacy levels are high, sitting at 97% between the ages of 15 and 24.²¹¹⁶ Whereas the female adult literacy rate is 86.7%, displaying recent improvements in literacy levels.²¹¹⁷ Gender parity at both primary and secondary levels has been achieved;

ahead of the 2015 deadline. 2014 data shows that women's enrolment in tertiary education outnumbers that of men.²¹¹⁸ A policy has been drafted to help reintegrate women and girls back into the schooling after dropping out due to pregnancy.²¹¹⁹ This indicates a strong policymaking scheme in Botswana for the equal access to education for both boys and girls.

Teenage pregnancy is still the biggest contributor to girls' dropout rates in school, however gender, HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health and life skills have now been included in the national curriculum which may improve student retention.²¹²⁰

Economic Empowerment

The Government of Botswana has identified unequal access to work as a key inhibitor to the welfare of women and girls.²¹²¹ Poverty eradication is also a major target, as it has a national impact on limiting women's ability to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. It has been

acknowledged that poverty affects men and women differently.²¹²² With women remaining the most affected by poverty and unemployment.²¹²³

To tackle these issues, the Gender Affairs Department has created the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme (WEEP), which consists of: 1) Financial support to Women's civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations in creating projects that enhance income generation for women and girls. 2) The creation of the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency, which gives financial and technical assistance in promoting citizen, owned enterprise. This is a gender-neutral facet of the WEEP. 3) Financial aid to women farmers, who make up a large portion of farmers in Botswana, but do not have equal access to resources.

Women still statistically earn less than men, even though they hold more positions in civil service than men, they hold lower level positions and as a result earn less.²¹²⁴ However women are now more likely to earn the same pension benefits as men.²¹²⁵

LESOTHO

Like many SADC member states, Lesotho has yet to implement a National Action plan on UNSCR 1325.²¹²⁶ Lesotho ratified CEDAW in 1980 and is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action.²¹²⁷ The state has undergone periods of unrest and political upheaval over the past year, which could impede progress and the prioritizing of the equality of women on the state agenda.²¹²⁸

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Lesotho has a dual legal system, which consists of common law and customary law- the former allowing for gender sensitive policy, but the latter being traditionally gender biased.²¹²⁹ Women are considered to have the same legal status as men under common law, except for issues of inheritance whereby customary law determines outcomes.²¹³⁰

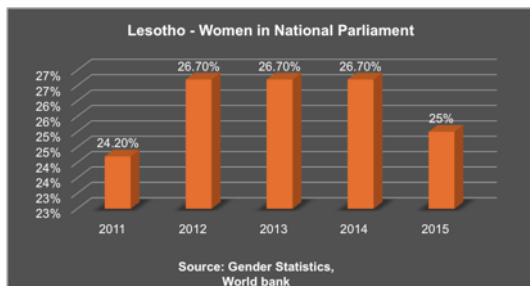
The government has implemented a National Strategic Development Plan, which includes Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programmes, Gender Equality and Economic Rights Programmes and the spread of information regarding economic rights in rural areas.²¹³¹ The government also has a Department of Gender that is attempting to integrate gender into development by way of: 1) Economic empowerment – alleviation of poverty; 2) Social empowerment – targeting gender based violence and HIV/AIDS prevalence;

3) Political empowerment – increasing women's representation in government and increasing decision making capacity.²¹³²

The Department is tackling these issues by way of media, promoting participation in public activities and workshops.²¹³³ The Status Report on the progress of MDGs 2013 ranked Lesotho the highest in Africa in striving for gender equality.²¹³⁴

Women's Political Participation

The law requires a minimum of one third of municipal council seats to be held by women and proportional representation for political parties demands an equal number of men and women.²¹³⁵ Gender quotas have been implemented in 2011 through the Local Government Electoral Act and the National Assembly Electoral Act.²¹³⁶ Women's roles are considered more often non-descript in political parties, however, due to these being limited to that of treasurer or secretary-generals.²¹³⁷



A positive growth has been specifically noted in the judiciary. It consists of 67% female employees, 50% of judges and 56% of magistrates are women and they have recently appointed the third ever-female Chief Justice in Africa.²¹³⁸ 26.70% of parliament is represented by women in 2014 and 25% in 2015; however this is a significant drop from 2010 where women consisted of 37%.²¹³⁹ Women's representation in ministerial positions has also dropped from 32% in 2010 to 22% in 2015.²¹⁴⁰ However, women do now account for the majority of registered voters in Lesotho. Figures for 2015 are 675,116 women to 534,963 men.²¹⁴¹

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Lesotho has the third highest prevalence of HIV in the world, resulting in it being one of the major priorities on the National Agenda.²¹⁴² Also high levels of maternal mortality have resulted in the government-run Roadmap for Accelerating Reduction of Maternal and Newborn Morbidity and Mortality, which was implemented 2007 and hopes to achieve its aims in 2017.²¹⁴³ In 2010 the maternal mortality rate was 560 per 100 000 births, and by 2013 was down to 490.²¹⁴⁴

The Ministry of Health has begun to implement various programmes to educate and aid women, which include: 1) The Safe Motherhood Programme, which aims to reduce childbirth morbidity. Women of child-bearing age are educated in taking care of themselves and attending necessary medical check-ups; 2) The Family Planning Programme, which helps women time their pregnancies and educates them regarding the use of contraception.²¹⁴⁵; 3) The Adolescent Health Programme, which educates young girls about reproductive health, safe sex, HIV/AIDS and includes counselling in schools.

Coupled with this, the National Action Plan on Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS is an ongoing plan between 2012 and 2017, aims to reduce the negative impact of HIV/AIDS by targeting 5 areas: (i) prevention; (ii) education; (iii) Gender Based Violence;

(iv), property and inheritance rights; (v) putting value to women's care work and access to care and treatment.²¹⁴⁶ Between 2010 and 2014 58% of HIV positive people in Lesotho have been women and in the same time period women who have access to ARVS has increased from 31% to 40%.^{2147,2148}

Violence Against Women

Gender based violence is a pervasive issue in Lesotho and statistics reflecting their prevalence have been considered inaccurate due to underreporting in cases of abuse or violence.²¹⁴⁹ Sexual assault and rape are also not often reported, therefore accurate data on the scope of the problem is difficult to assess.²¹⁵⁰ There are numerous factors contribute to underreporting; studies have shown that over half of Lesotho's population is considered to have 'conservative' opinions surrounding entitlement to sex.²¹⁵¹ For example 15% of interviewed men believed that if they are denied sex, abuse is justifiable.²¹⁵² From a study of 3358 citizens it was found that 86% of women had experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime.²¹⁵³ Approximately 15% of girls will be married before age 19.²¹⁵⁴ On reviewing the state's implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2015, an upward trend in sexual violence was noted, indicating little to no improvement for the protection of women and young girls.²¹⁵⁵

The efforts on the part of the government appear to be sparse and lacking coordination to target the issue. There is only one government-run safe haven for victims of gender-based violence, the rest are under the control of NGO or civil society bodies.²¹⁵⁶ There hasn't been much yet in terms of implementation of the Domestic Violence Bill, which has been on the state agenda since 2000.²¹⁵⁷ However, there has been implementation of a National Action Plan to combat gender-based violence among other issues surrounding harassment or abuse against women, and the government aims to eliminate all gender-based violence by 2030.²¹⁵⁸

Women, Peace and Security

Lesotho reached its goal of 20% inclusion of women in police services in 2015.²¹⁵⁹ But the Lesotho Defence Force Act of 1996 is not gender sensitive and makes no specifications for gender equality, and as of yet no amendments have been made, albeit a small improvement has been noted.²¹⁶⁰ As a result all peace related activities are dominated by men.

Lesotho has been through a period of unrest, but almost no women have participated in peace-making or peacekeeping processes, although a small number have received training and one woman was sent to Liberia in 2014 as part of peace talks.²¹⁶¹ There is also little to no women's representation in high-level peace talks.²¹⁶² Women formulate 21% of decision-making levels in the police force, and efforts have been made to integrate gender sensitivity into both the defence force and the police force.²¹⁶³

Education

Lesotho has a 95% literacy rate for women and young girls.²¹⁶⁴ Women are considered to be more invested in education than men, which explain the higher levels of enrolment for young girls as well as a higher pass rate at the primary school level.²¹⁶⁵ A reason for this is believed to be related to the early age at which young men and boys work, and that it is not always considered necessary to have an education in the labour force.²¹⁶⁶ There is equal enrolment in tertiary education, but this does not include the sciences, agriculture or technology departments.²¹⁶⁷ Additionally, girls now make up more than half the enrolment in technical and vocational education and training programmes.²¹⁶⁸

However, there has been a notable decline in female primary school enrolment from 51% in 2012 to 49% in 2014.²¹⁶⁹ Female drop-out rates are still significantly higher than that of men: 7.2% to 4.5%.²¹⁷⁰

Economic Empowerment

Out of all the SADC member countries, Lesotho has the highest level of unemployed women measured at 28%.²¹⁷¹ But according to the SADC Gender and Development Index (SGDI) which includes indicators such as male to female unemployment ratio, length of maternity leave and share in agricultural paid labour for women; Lesotho rose from 77 points to 88 points, between 2011 and 2015, an 11 point improvement.²¹⁷² Lesotho is also one of only 3 SADC member states that has a female Governor of the Central Bank.²¹⁷³

Women occupy what are considered more feminine working roles, such as teaching, garment production etc.²¹⁷⁴ In other industries, to date there is still no affirmative action to increase the employment of women or to give access to equal economic opportunities.²¹⁷⁵ Women now occupy only a quarter of decision-making roles in almost all working sectors.²¹⁷⁶ 22% of firms have a female top manager and 18% have female participation in ownership.²¹⁷⁷ The Labour code Wages Act of 2012 offers paid maternity leave for those employed in the clothing, textile and leather manufacturing fields. However it does not appear to be applied to other sectors which displays a limit to the area of work women can partake in.²¹⁷⁸

The Land Act of 2010 allows married women to have equal access and control of land and now joint title deeds are available.²¹⁷⁹ It is also important to note that Lesotho ranks 9/135 in the World Economic Forum's Global Index indicating they have made efforts to close the gender gap.²¹⁸⁰

NAMIBIA

Namibia is a country with varying regions, ranging from rural with minimal access to services, to urban with easy access to government services such as education or healthcare. The Government has both acceded to CEDAW in 1992, as well as adopted UNSCR1325 in 2000.²¹⁸¹ Namibia also signed the Maputo Protocol and acceded in 2004.²¹⁸²

Human Rights of Women and Gender Policy Formation

The World Economic Forum has moved Namibia's ranking up from 40th in the world in 2006 to 16th in 2015 in their overall gender gap index.²¹⁸³ Namibia has made significant headway in policy formation; however there are core issues regarding its implementation. Namibia was the first of SADC member states to sign the protocol on Gender and Development.²¹⁸⁴ It was also one of the first countries to begin to put necessary mechanisms in place for

gender sensitive budgeting.²¹⁸⁵ The constitution is quite unique because it uses gender-neutral language.²¹⁸⁶ The constitution expressly forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, and Namibia has begun to open up the possibility of querying unfair dismissal from the workplace.²¹⁸⁷

Although these forward planning measures are being implemented, like many other SADC member states, the country has a conflict between common law and customary law – the latter being notorious for its

discrimination against women.²¹⁸⁸ Marriage under common law forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, but issues of inheritance or land ownership are still discriminatory in customary law, i.e. widows can have their land seized by the family of the husband.²¹⁸⁹ Coupled with this, is an issue of insufficient funding and implementation to see Namibia's progressive systems through into tangible results such as job creation or the lessening of gender based violence.²¹⁹⁰

Women's Political Participation

Namibia has affirmative action for local authority positions and is currently the only SADC member state with a female finance minister.²¹⁹¹ It is also one of the few countries worldwide that has over 40% female representation in parliament.²¹⁹² Female legislator positions have increased from 37% in 2010 to 43% in 2013.²¹⁹³

On the public level women currently outnumber men in voting registration. Female registered voters account for 657,751, whereas men account for 583,443.²¹⁹⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

There is a National Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS, which addresses the scarcity in data and has begun to institutionalize testing and counselling for women and young girls living with HIV/AIDS.²¹⁹⁵ One of Namibia's most successful projects has been in the provisions of Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmissions (PMTCT). In 2002 it was initiated and in 2011, 314 out of the 340 health facilities in the region provided PMTCT.²¹⁹⁶ Now 85% of women have access.²¹⁹⁷

HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest issues on the state agenda. Prevalence dropped from 18.8% to 18.2% between 2010 and 2012, indicating no significant change.²¹⁹⁸ Unsafe abortions have had an overwhelming effect on women and young girls. These procedures are responsible for almost 20% of maternal deaths in Namibia.²¹⁹⁹ Dozens of HIV positive women have been forced to undergo sterilization procedure.²²⁰⁰ In 2013 the High Court ruled that the government was liable for these incidences, because they took place in government run hospitals. They are now responsible for supplying financial restitution to victims of forced sterilization.²²⁰¹ The aftermath is complex, however, as sterilization is stigmatised in local society.²²⁰²

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a big issue in Namibia. Intimate partner violence has risen and according to local civil society groups, rape incidence has also increased over the past few years.²²⁰³ As in most cases of high sexual violence, statistics are inaccurate and do not represent the exact scope of the issue.²²⁰⁴ Approximately 40% of men and 35% of women believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for one of the following five reasons: burning food, arguing, going out without telling him, neglecting the children or refusing to have sex.²²⁰⁵ Government data indicates only a minor rise in incidents of sexual violence, risen by 1,085 to 1119 between 2011 and 2012.²²⁰⁶

The predominance of customary law in certain regions is a key contributor to the lack of reporting that contributes to skewed and inaccurate data. The Legal Assistance Clinic (LAC) in Namibia believes that almost 1/3 of rape victims retracted their statements as they are often paid off by the perpetrator's family; or intimidated with the threat of stigmatization and shame.²²⁰⁷ In addition to this increasing problem is that out of the arrests made, only 18% of the accused were convicted.²²⁰⁸

With the increase in gender-based violence, the government has initiated the National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action, which aims to reduce levels of incidence by 2016.²²⁰⁹ A conference on this theme resulted in a massive awareness campaign, however shortly after, momentum was lost due to poor media coverage and limited regional reach.²²¹⁰

Women Peace and Security

Namibia has one of the highest levels of positions occupied by women in the National Defence Force. In 2014 women accounted for 26% of positions, and Namibia aims to reach 30%.²²¹¹ Namibia is second only to South Africa on the SADC states list for female inclusion in the defence forces.²²¹²

Education

Women and young girls' are surpassing male participation in education across the region. Comparatively girls' have an 88% primary school completion rate and boys have 82.7%.²²¹³ 113 girls compared to 100 boys are educated at a secondary school level.²²¹⁴ At university level in 2012 men were strongly outnumbered, at 10,389 women to 6430 men.²²¹⁵ Namibia reached gender parity at the

primary level ahead of the 2015 deadline.²²¹⁶ Between 2010 and 2012 women's enrolment rates in universities rose from 7618 to 10.389, indicating a positive and real change to improve the education of women.²²¹⁷

Economic Empowerment

Notable progress has been made in the inclusion of women contributing to Namibia's economy. Namibia has clauses in its constitution that are aimed at addressing gender inequality.²²¹⁸ Another mechanism to improve women's socio-economic inclusion is the National Development Plan, which ultimately seeks to assist poverty-affected individuals, but in particular rural women and girls.²²¹⁹ Women's participation in the work force has increased to 74% in 2014 from 62% in 2000.²²²⁰ With regards to employment, in

general women dominate 50% of the workforce, which is a significant improvement from 43% in 2004.²²²¹ Even 41% of firms have female participation in ownership. However, the female unemployment rate is 33.1% while the male rate is 25.8%.²²²² As an added incentive, the government is attempting to improve benefits associated with maternity leave.²²²³

Although there are improvements, progress is slow and not all areas of the labour force are being positively affected. Women are still functioning in lower-wage positions and will take informal or temporary work, with white men still dominating higher paid and top tier levels in business.²²²⁴ Employment in the agricultural sector has also dropped drastically in terms of women's participation, from 38% to 18%.²²²⁵

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a culturally diverse state, with a history of severe disparity. In 2012 the World Bank declared South Africa to be one of the most unequal states in the world.²²²⁶ Inequality is pervasive and is based on race as well as gender and all policies that attempt to remedy the situations of the previously disadvantaged must mainstream gender, as well as race. In terms of gender, South Africa ratified CEDAW in 1993 and is one of the few SADC member states to have a policy on the implementation of UN SCR1325.²²²⁷ South Africa has also signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol.²²²⁸

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

In 2014, President Jacob Zuma appointed a minister in government responsible for gender affairs.²²²⁹ Following apartheid in 1994, the Women's Charter for Effective Equality was adopted by the government, and it focussed specifically on dealing with issues of gender equality in a post-apartheid context.²²³⁰ However in 2015 the context has changed and the government has not fully implemented effective gender sensitive policy and budgeting.²²³¹ As of 2014, there is still gender discrimination in terms of wages, with no prohibitive law to prevent it.²²³²

The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking Act was established in 2013, which covers the scope of forced marriages and harmful cultural practises, but implementation is poor, and underage or forced marriages are still taking place.

Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation in South Africa is progressing at an uneven rate. In some related areas there have been incremental growth, but in others

noticeable decline. Between 2009 and 2014 the number of female premiers dropped drastically from 44% to 22%.²²³³ But a minor increase was noted between 2009 and 2014 from 55% female voter participation to 56% respectively.²²³⁴ As political representatives, women continue to struggle with male intimidation and are often at a disadvantage to their male counterparts in terms of resources and beneficial connections.²²³⁵ In the past women have held the role of deputy president, which is higher than that of most countries in the southern region.²²³⁶ The proportion of female judges has increased by 4% between 2008 and 2014, and between 2009 and 2014 female ministers gained another parliamentary seat.²²³⁷ Both the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces are female.²²³⁸

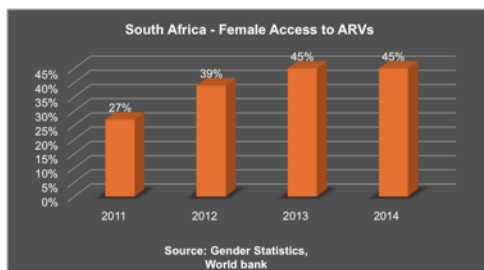
These figures reflect minimal progress towards increasing women's political participation. The only drastic change can be noted is the number of female premiers dropping by over 20% in just 6 years.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world. It has been high on the national government's agenda and certain policies and programmes have been implemented to reverse the high levels of HIV prevalence. South Africa has the world's biggest HIV treatment programme.²²³⁹ In 2014, the Government launched the National Family Planning Campaign to educate women and young girls about HIV/AIDS and the prevention of unwanted pregnancy.²²⁴⁰ Significant progress has been made in numerous areas:

- In 2008 mother-to-child transmission rates were at 8%, and in 2013 they had dropped to 2.6%.²²⁴¹
- Women now represent over 65% of those who have gone for HIV testing since 2010.²²⁴²
- PMTC programmes reached 71% of women in 2009 and 99% of women in 2013.²²⁴³

However, South Africa is not on target to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) that aims to reduce maternal mortality rate to 38 per 100,000 live births.²²⁴⁴ Between 2010 and 2013 this statistic remained at 140 per 100,000 live births.²²⁴⁵ Almost half of pregnant women living in South Africa in 2015 are HIV positive.²²⁴⁶ There is little sign of future improvement in these areas.



Violence against Women

There is an accepted incongruence between the South Africa's constitution and its aims at preventing violence against women and girls, when compared to real experiences.²²⁴⁷ There are, however, strong laws in place to combat sexual violence that focus on the issue of consent.²²⁴⁸ The South African Government has created 19 courts that deal specifically with incidences of sexual violence.²²⁴⁹

There is an on-going debate about the statistics that represent incidence of sexual violence as well as the perpetrators' conviction rate. The police and local civil

society often disagree by wide margins on the prevalence of sexual violence in South Africa, due to factors such as underreporting and withdrawn cases.

- Police statistics show that sexual violence incidence has decreased by 5.4% between 2014 and 2015.²²⁵⁰
- Studies show that out of 25 cases only 1 victim of intimate partner violence will report it (2010).²²⁵¹
- Police data shows that there is a 67.1% conviction rate for sexual offenders.²²⁵²
- Other sources deem the rate of conviction to be as low as 4%.²²⁵³

In 2010, the South African Police Department committed to decreasing incidence of sexual violence by 4%-7% annually.²²⁵⁴ Theoretically, this should be a positive move towards preventing violence against women. However, the reverse is taking place as this removes the incentive for South African police to follow up on reported cases and investigate further. Women have reportedly been turned away, or cases never followed up, so as to keep up the appearance of achieving 4%-7% decrease yearly.²²⁵⁵ The inaccuracy in data and these counterproductive incentives makes it difficult to quantify the levels of sexual violence, and whether or not they are being properly addressed.

Women Peace and Security

South Africa now has the Peace Mission Training Centre for the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which provides training in tackling gender specific issues in conflict areas.²²⁵⁶ It is also equipped with gender specialists to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout the curriculum and that gender specific issues are addressed.²²⁵⁷ Women from other SADC states participate in the courses that the curriculum provides.²²⁵⁸

This has contributed to South Africa being the largest contributor of female soldiers to UN and AU peacekeeping missions.²²⁵⁹ SANDF has also achieved a small but still relevant increase from 27.8% to 28.2% of women's representation between 2011 and 2013.²²⁶⁰ This is one of the highest percentages of women in the military in the world, and the military is aiming to reach 40%. The National Defence Force even has several female two-star generals, as well as the many women participating in combat operations, piloting combat planes and driving tanks.²²⁶¹ Currently gender conferences are ongoing to address the

challenges women face as peacekeepers in conflict zones.²²⁶²

Education

Equal access to education has improved substantially over the past 5 years. Equal enrolment has been achieved for both girls and boys aged 15 since setting the target in 2002.²²⁶³ In 2002 adult women's literacy rate was 67% and as of 2012 it is 81%.²²⁶⁴ It is believed that programmes that lower or attempt to eradicate school fees as well as providing a meal a day for enrolled students have contributed extensively to the increased participation of girls as well as boys.²²⁶⁵

Girls now account for over 50% of enrolment in tertiary education, and data shows that young girls are excelling at literacy and numeracy tests.²²⁶⁶ Where women represented under 50% of science and technology students in 2011, in 2015 they now exceed this number and account for 53% of honours students, 49% of doctoral degrees and 45% of postdoctoral degrees in the sciences and engineering departments.²²⁶⁷

Economic Empowerment

In 2015 South Africa's employment rate is a high 25%.²²⁶⁸ Within this 25% there is a large disparity between men and women, and poverty alleviation programmes do not always have gender specific terms to help unemployed women and young girls.²²⁶⁹ 30% of rural women and 60% of urban women have earned cash labour income within the last year, compared to 60% of rural men and 90% of urban men.²²⁷⁰ The Employment Equity Act prohibits discrimination based on race or gender, but it does not prevent unequal pay for equal work.²²⁷¹ The constitution seeks to protect vulnerable groups from poverty, but women and young girls are still not receiving the

necessary aid to enable them to have access to South Africa's job market.²²⁷² The Government has expanded its social welfare system between 2014 and 2015 and credits certain parts of poverty alleviation to this factor.²²⁷³ For example, the Child Support grant, a conditional cash transfer programme, has facilitated women's access to paid employment and in doing so has reduced poverty, improved school enrolment and attendance. While the programme has helped to reduce poverty, it has also increased stereotypes about laziness or bearing more children to receive benefits.²²⁷⁴

Race disparity is a core issue in South Africa, specifically in terms of employment and economic empowerment. Black women in particular usually have lower income jobs when compared to men, and also occupy positions that entail domestic work or jobs with little or no job security.²²⁷⁵ Women of all ethnicities only accounted for 20.6% top tier positions in the private and corporate sectors – way below the government target for 2014 at 44.4%.²²⁷⁶ White men's median earnings in 2015 are 6 times higher than those of black women.²²⁷⁷

Of all women employed in South Africa, only 11.7% occupy high-skilled jobs.²²⁷⁸ The informal sector is growing and accounts for 21% of jobs, which has grown since 2010 where it accounted for 16.3%.²²⁷⁹ The government hopes that by increasing school enrolment and growing skill levels of South African women they can become more active in the formal sector. However gender specific policy is yet to be implemented and there is still much progress to be made.

SWAZILAND

Swaziland is a monarchy that functions under civil and traditional laws that are often conflicting, and the latter very often impedes process towards the inclusion and betterment of women's situation in society. The government ratified CEDAW in 2004 but has yet to sign or ratify the Option Protocol.²²⁸⁰ The Maputo Protocol was also ratified in 2012.²²⁸¹ There is still no National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, but it is important to note that in 2015 Swaziland hosted the Gender Summit, which facilitated talks around the inclusion of men to help end Gender Based Violence.²²⁸²

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Swaziland is a male dominated society with many traditional laws that do not address the rights of women and men equally.

Constitutionally Swaziland appears to be equitable and fair; however in practice there is still much progress to be made. Like many African countries, there are both common and customary laws that have conflicting principles, the latter often discriminatory against the rights of women.²²⁸³

The constitution includes equality and affirmative action,²²⁸⁴ but there are numerous incidences that contradict this.

- Women not being allowed to hand down their citizenship to their children, as that is considered the man's right.²²⁸⁵
- Women have limited land and inheritance rights.²²⁸⁶
- Women are classified as minors.²²⁸⁷
- Women are still often fined by traditional authorities for wearing trousers.²²⁸⁸
- Marriage rights are more often determined by customary law and hard to assess in terms of equality.²²⁸⁹

In 2014 the Government established a Gender and Family Issues Department, indicating a move to improve conditions, however there is still much to be done in terms of human rights in Swaziland.²²⁹⁰ The Court also overturned a law that prevented women from registering property in their name instead of their husband's.²²⁹¹

Women's Political Participation

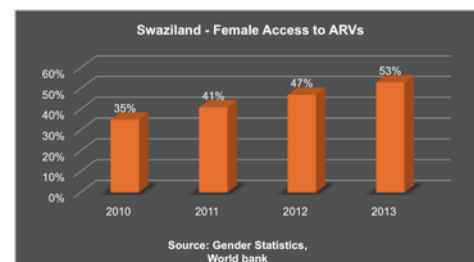
There are constitutional principles in place to ensure that women are represented in parliament, although not always implemented. One is if there are 10 remaining seats in parliament, the King of Swaziland must appoint the remaining posts, half of which must be women.²²⁹² In 2014 only 3 were appointed as opposed to the necessary 5 to reach the 30% representation mark.²²⁹³ There was only some improvement as only one woman was elected into parliament in 2013.²²⁹⁴ The constitution exists in conjunction to customary law, and the traditional political system (Tinkhundla System), which has always marginalized women.²²⁹⁵

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Women have an extremely disproportionate prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection compared to that of men. Women under the age of 24 have 3 times the number of cases of HIV infection when compared to that of men.²²⁹⁶ Since 2010 women aged 15 and

above made up 59% of those who are HIV positive, this remains the same in 2015 that figure remains the same.²²⁹⁷ This is attributed to women's inability to negotiate the use of condoms, the domination of a traditional patriarchal society that infringes on women's rights and the ability to make health-based decisions regarding sex.²²⁹⁸ 12% of women, infected with HIV, contracted the disease through intimate partner violence.²²⁹⁹

The maternal mortality rate goal for Swaziland is 147 per 100,000 live births.²³⁰⁰ Although between 2009 and 2014 this figure dropped drastically from 539 to 310 per 100,000 live births (47% improvement), the goal is still far from being achieved.²³⁰¹ Access to healthcare facilities and lack of efficient transport for those residing in rural areas are major contributors to issues that arise for women seeking medical assistance at the time of giving birth.²³⁰² Abortion is also illegal in Swaziland and it is estimated that unsafe abortions contribute to 19% of maternal mortality.²³⁰³ The Government is the primary provider of free contraception, which has resulted in Swaziland having the highest rate of sexually active women having access to contraceptives, at 65%.²³⁰⁴



Violence Against Women

Sexual violence prevalence is high, and although the Government has drafted policy to improve rates, the statistics are not changing. The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill was implemented in 2013, and prohibits violence in all areas.²³⁰⁵ A national plan of action was being drafted in 2014; however no further information has been reported.²³⁰⁶

On the whole, Swaziland's legislation to combat domestic violence and sexual assault is considered inadequate.²³⁰⁷ Although there is a Domestic Violence Bill has been implemented, as of yet there is no accurate data available to determine the prevalence of domestic violence or how effective the bill is.

- There is currently one centre that deals with victims of gender based violence.

- Marital rape is not considered a criminal offence.
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence legislation is outdated and not suitable to the status of Swaziland.²³⁰⁸

Although the Government has put certain mechanisms in place, and does acknowledge the rising incidences of gender-based violence, there is still a long way to go, particular when dealing with the deeply entrenched societal norms that unbalance power relations between men and women.²³⁰⁹

Women, Peace and Security

There is limited access to data surrounding women's participation in peace processes.²³¹⁰ There have, however, been educational and training programmes around gender and peacebuilding and the inclusion of women in peace processes.²³¹¹

Education

Swaziland has improved its educational system for primary school level for girls and boys. Primary level education is now free, which has contributed to an increased enrolment at the Grade 1 & 2 levels of up to 5000 students.²³¹² Grants for orphans and vulnerable children have been disseminated and now net attendance is roughly 97%.²³¹³ An attempt has also been made to change perceptions on gender specific work, and vocational skills training enables women and girls to learn about traditionally male employment, and get training on how to occupy those roles.²³¹⁴

There are still core issues that inhibit the education of women and girls. Female graduation levels were as low as 38% in 2011 and fell further in 2012 to 34%.²³¹⁵ There are frequent reports of sexual

harassment against female students, which include the withholding of grades by a teacher or lecturer, unless the student performs sexual favours.²³¹⁶ Schools based in rural areas still give preference to male enrollees, indicating that not all schools favour women's education.²³¹⁷ And although there is considered to be gender parity at tertiary levels, women enrolled at university make up less than 50% of those studying any subject relating to the sciences.²³¹⁸ This indicates a more gender specific policy on the subject of education is crucial to maintaining high enrolment for all.

Economic Empowerment

Societal beliefs surrounding gender are far reaching and have a serious effect on women's access to work and financial independence. As they are classified as minors, some women are often not able to access money, get passports, open bank accounts or seek employment without the express permission of a male relative.²³¹⁹ Loans have been denied to married women who are not accompanied by their spouse.²³²⁰ Common law allows women to own property, but customary law does not.²³²¹

Women who are employed are allowed maternity leave, but without pay.²³²² In 2010 women made up 40% of the labour force in 2010, which fell slightly to 39% in 2013.²³²³ That number has remained relatively steady since 1990. The female unemployment rate is approximately 25.6% compared to the male rate at 20%.²³²⁴ In summary, from the data available, there appear to be few mechanisms in place to enable women to participate in the socio-economy as common law does not always override customary law, particularly in rural areas.

WEST AFRICA REGION

All countries in the region have ratified CEDAW, though several have yet to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol. Similarly, while all sixteen West African countries have signed the Maputo Protocol, not all have ratified it. Ten countries have adopted National Action Plans on the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Almost universally, these countries have enshrined principles of equality between the sexes in their national constitutions. The majority have launched actions plans on gender equality, or have incorporated gender into national development policies with varying degrees of success and commitment. All of them were found to have government departments dedicated to women's affairs, though these were often subsumed under ministries for children, the family and moral or social protection, emphasising the way that women's status continues to be defined through the lens of community and kinship relationships. In many of the countries, men are legally defined as the head of the household. In Mali, a 2011 revision of the Family Code actually resulted in greater discrimination against women, with a stipulation that wives must obey their husbands.

The dominance of customary law presents a major barrier to women's rights throughout the region, either through weak governance and enforcement, or official legal provision for different codes to be applied according to ethnic or religious affiliation, as seen in Nigeria and Togo.

Women's Political Participation

Cape Verde and Senegal stand out for their achievements in improving female political participation, not only within the region, but globally. With 11 women and 8 men in its Cabinet, Cape Verde is ranked second in the world for the proportion of female government ministers. In 2012, Senegal adopted a law requiring parties to ensure that women make up at least half of candidate lists. As a result, the percentage of women in the Lower House more than doubled from 18% to 42.7% following the 2012 election²³²⁵, making Senegal the seventh-best ranked country in the world for female representation²³²⁶. In addition, Liberia is headed by Africa's first female head of state, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.



Women in Liberia during the 2011 Elections- UN Photo

These are exceptions, however, and in general, women's political participation remains low in West Africa. Of the remaining countries, only Guinea and Mauritania met the 20% global average for female parliamentary participation, with 22%²³²⁷ and 25%²³²⁸ respectively. Yet the proportion of women in national parliaments has increased in almost all countries in the region, with only Benin²³²⁹ and Mali²³³⁰ seeing a slight decrease.

Just six countries have mandatory quotas for women candidates at the national level. Others have implemented them at lower levels of government, and some political parties have adopted voluntary quotas.

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

West Africa persists in having some of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world. Cote d'Ivoire (720 deaths per 100,000 live births) and Sierra Leone (1100 deaths per 100,000 live births) fare particularly poorly. Encouragingly, maternal mortality has fallen in almost every country in the region over the past five years. However, in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone there are fears that the Ebola crisis could have a damaging impact on maternal health gains, as the already fragile health infrastructure struggles to cope in the aftermath of the epidemic. In some regions of Guinea, the number of births assisted by a skilled attendant has decreased by as much as 87% as fear of infection causes women

to avoid health facilities²³³¹. On the whole, skilled delivery rates have been growing, but there are significant disparities between countries – 29.3% in Niger²³³² versus 63.1% in Ghana²³³³, for example.

Social norms favouring large families and poor provision of reproductive health services continue to inhibit contraceptive use in the region, though it has risen in most countries. Cape Verde is an outlier, with 61.3% of women using some form of contraception²³³⁴ - most West African countries have much lower levels of usage.

Access to abortion is largely restricted. In the majority of the countries it is only permitted in order to save a woman's life. Only in Cape Verde is abortion available without restriction as to reason²³³⁵.

HIV prevalence varies widely in the region. Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria have relatively higher rates, at 3% and 3.2% respectively, while Mauritania and Senegal have a much lower prevalence rate of 0.5%. In most countries, women are slightly more likely to be affected by HIV/AIDS.

Violence against Women

Gender-based violence is a serious problem throughout the region, perpetuated by cultural acceptance, lack of legal protection for women, and frequently weak law enforcement where legislation does exist. Studies show that 91% of Guinean women and 70% of Beninese women have experienced violence in their lifetimes.

Rape of a woman by her husband or intimate partner is not commonly classified as a crime in West Africa, either by law or by social attitudes. In Liberia, 70% of married women reported having been sexually assaulted by their husbands. The only countries that have specific laws against marital rape are Benin and Cape Verde. There is a better track record of legislation against domestic violence – seven out of the sixteen countries have outlawed it as a separate offence. Ghana and Liberia have made strong efforts to increase access to justice for victims through the setting up of special courts for gender-based violence offences, while Guinea-Bissau has launched a national action plan on tackling the problem. Cape Verde passed comprehensive legislation offering protection to victims of violence against women in 2011. However, this still means that women in more than half of the nations in the region have no legal recourse against violence within their own homes. Underpinning the problem is a high level of tolerance for domestic violence. 76.3% of women in Mali and 60% of women in Senegal believe that men are justified in beating their wives in some circumstances.

Several countries, including Guinea, Niger and Burkina Faso, have passed laws prohibiting sexual harassment.

West Africa has a high concentration of countries that practice female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), however prevalence varies widely. 3.8% of women in Ghana have undergone the practice, while in Guinea it is near-universal, experienced by 97% of women. While in most of the countries, the majority of women surveyed expressed the opinion that FGM/C should be eradicated, only 19% agreed with this in Guinea, the lowest proportion of any country where FGM/C is practiced. Figures from Mali show that 57% of daughters of mothers who did not undergo FGM/C themselves had been cut, showing that the practice remains deeply entrenched.

Several countries with already low prevalence, such as Togo and Niger, have seen a decrease in FGM/C. Yet others, where the problem is more widespread, such as Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Mali, have seen rates change very little in the past five to ten years.

At least half of the West African states have outlawed FGM/C, joined by the Gambia in late 2015. However, several have yet to take the first step of creating national legislation to protect girls and women from this extreme violation of their human rights, including Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The secretive nature of the practice, cultural acceptance and family loyalties make it highly challenging to put laws into practice. Burkina Faso stands out as one of the few countries that has success in this regard, convicting 192 people under its anti-FGM/C law between 2009 and 2013. Others have implemented their laws for the first time within the past five years. Cote d'Ivoire made its first prosecutions in 2012, fourteen years after banning the practice. Guinea originally banned FGM/C in 1965, yet the first conviction only came in 2014.

Early and child marriage continues to be commonly practiced, largely as a result of poverty and traditional concepts of gender roles. Many countries have a lower legal age of marriage for girls, or provide for officials to make exceptions permitting underage marriage with the consent of the parents. West Africa has the highest rates of child marriage in the world: 50% of girls in Burkina Faso, 55% in Mali and 76% in Niger are married before the age of 18.

Trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation is a threat to the human rights of women and girls throughout the region. The majority of countries in the region have adopted laws against trafficking. However most have not made significant efforts to enforce these laws or provide comprehensive support to victims.

Women, Peace & Security

Ten out of the sixteen countries in the region have adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Political unrest and insecurity has exacerbated the risk of violence against women in areas affected by armed extremist groups, such as Mali and northern Nigeria. In Cote d'Ivoire, on-going peace building efforts in the aftermath of conflict and incomplete disarmament have left women vulnerable to sexual violence from militarised elements.

The impunity of state actors, including police and security forces, is also a problem. In Guinea, justice has yet to be served for the mass rape of women by soldiers during a massacre of opposition activists in 2009.

On the other hand, nations such as Ghana have made efforts to include women in peace and security operations. Benin and Burkina Faso have implemented some gender sensitivity training within the police and armed forces, though this has yet to be incorporated into a formal framework. Women continue to play an important role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the community level in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and many women grassroots activism was born out of the former conflicts in these countries.

Education

Performance on improving girls' access to education varies greatly between countries. Mauritania and Burkina Faso have approached parity in enrolment for boys and girls at the primary level. In Cote d'Ivoire, the primary enrolment for girls rose from 82% in 2011 to 89% in 2013²³³⁶. The gap tends to grow at the secondary level in all countries, as girls drop out of school due to early marriage, pregnancy, domestic duties or the inability of families to pay for education.

Literacy is highest in Cape Verde, where the youth literacy rate is 97% for both sexes, and the female adult literacy rate increased from 75.5% in 2004²³³⁷ to 80% in 2014.²³³⁸ However there is a significant gender gap in many countries, such as Mali, where the adult literacy rate is 43.3% for men and 24.6% for women²³³⁹ or Niger, where the respective rates are just 23.2% and 8.9%.

Economic Empowerment

Due to the dominance of customary law in most West African countries, women experience widespread discrimination in access to land, property, and financial services, even where there are no formal restrictions in place. Where Sharia Law is applied, women are only entitled to inherit a fraction of the property due to male relatives. A large proportion of women are employed in the agricultural sector, though they are often prevented from having full control over the land they farm.

Some countries have a large gap in labour participation between the sexes, such as Cote d'Ivoire, where the employment rate is 52% for women²³⁴⁰ and 82% for men²³⁴¹. Yet, others have a strong tradition of female entrepreneurship and near parity in economic contribution, such as Togo, where female labour force participation is just 1% lower than that of men.

BENIN

Benin is one of the most stable democracies in Africa, however, it is also amongst the poorest countries in the world, and corruption is widespread²³⁴². Benin ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1992 and the Maputo Protocol in 2005. In 2006, Benin adopted the 2006-2011 Strategic Guidelines for Development, which seeks, among other things, the promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment and improved social protection. In 2012, the country adopted a law on the prevention and punishment of violence against women²³⁴³. Benin has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325²³⁴⁴. Benin was included in the Global Gender Gap report for the first time in 2015²³⁴⁵. It is currently ranked 129th out of 145 countries²³⁴⁶.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The 1990 Constitution of Benin prohibits discrimination based on race, sex and religion, and grants men and women equal economic and social rights as citizens. Article 26 establishes the general principle of equality between men and women, and Article 6 proclaims the equality of Beninese citizens of both sexes²³⁴⁷. In 2009, the Government adopted the New National Gender Promotion Policy that aims to attain gender equality by 2025²³⁴⁸. However, this has not led to any specific policy formation around gender, and international conventions are largely unenforced. Discriminatory family and personal laws also mean that married women are unable to access certain services and functions that would allow them to participate socially and economically in the same way as men. These include applying for a passport or national ID, choosing where to live, and holding the status of 'head of household'²³⁴⁹.

Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation in Benin remains well below the global average and has in fact regressed in recent years. Benin ranks 128 out of 190 countries in terms of the representation of women in parliament²³⁵⁰. While women held 8 out of 83 seats in the National Assembly in 2011²³⁵¹, following the 2015 election that number has dropped to 6 out of 83, or just 7.2%, compared with a worldwide average of 20%²³⁵². Two out of seven of the Justices on the Constitutional Court are women, although the Chief Justice is a man²³⁵³. In 2010, the National Assembly introduced a statutory 20% quota for women in lists for parliamentary elections. However, this was nullified later the same year on the basis that it violated the principle of gender equality as enshrined in the Constitution²³⁵⁴. As a result of the underrepresentation of women in the political sphere, CEDAW has called for an investigation to assess the reasons why the State has not adopted any temporary special measures to increase the participation of women in decision-making positions²³⁵⁵.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Benin is ranked 163 out of 179 countries in Save the Children's Mothers' Index 2015²³⁵⁶. 2013 figures showed Benin having a maternal mortality rate of 340 deaths per 100,000 live births, having dropped from a

rate of 370 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010²³⁵⁷. 87% of births are attended by a skilled health professional. 12.7% of deaths among women of reproductive age are due to maternal causes²³⁵⁸. The adolescent fertility rate fell from 96 to 84 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in the period from 2010 to 2014²³⁵⁹.

13% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 use some form of contraception, with an unmet need of 33%²³⁶⁰. Abortion is permitted by law in order to save the mother's life, to protect her physical or mental health, and in cases of rape or incest²³⁶¹.

An estimated 41,000 women aged 15 and over are living with HIV and the overall adult prevalence rate is 1.1%²³⁶². Annual infections have been dropping since a small peak in 2011. In addition, as the use of antiretroviral (ARV) by pregnant women increases, the number of infected children is dropping, with less than 1000 infections in 2013²³⁶³. A new Strategic Plan for eliminating HIV/AIDS has been developed for 2015-2017 with the support of UNAIDS, WHO, Global Fund and Plan Benin, building on the National Strategic Plan for fighting HIV/AIDS 2012-6²³⁶⁴.

Violence Against Women

While domestic violence is punishable by law, protection orders for domestic violence do not exist²³⁶⁵. A survey by the Ministry of Family and National Solidarity in 2009 indicated that up to 70% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives²³⁶⁶.

Although Benin has laws against rape, including marital rape, there are multiple barriers to the reporting and prosecution of sexual violence, including social stigma and corruption and ineffectiveness among police and other public officials²³⁶⁷.

Female genital mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is banned, however, it is still practiced by a minority of the population, mainly among certain ethnic groups in the north of the country. Around 13% of women in Benin have undergone FGM/C. The Government, in conjunction with NGOs and international partners, has led outreach programmes to educate people about the dangers of this practice²³⁶⁸.

The Benin Personal and Family Code of 2004 sets the legal age of marriage at 18 years of age²³⁶⁹. However,

child marriage (between the ages of 14 and 17) is permitted with the consent of the minor, the parents and a judge²³⁷⁰. 34.4% of married women between the ages of 20 and 24 had been married before they were 18, and 8% had been married before they were 15²³⁷¹. In some cases, it is a traditional part of a forced child marriage for the groom to abduct and rape his bride before their wedding²³⁷².

Human trafficking remains a problem facing both boys and girls in Benin, but a 2014 report showed that the majority of trafficking victims were girls forced into domestic and sex work in Cotonou²³⁷³. The traditional practice of 'vidomegon', whereby a child is sent to live with a wealthier family in order to receive a better education, is known to lead in some cases to exploitation of children as domestic servants, and is prohibited by law. Although Benin has accepted international recommendations on the trafficking of persons, the Government has yet to adopt a bill on trafficking²³⁷⁴.

Women, Peace and Security

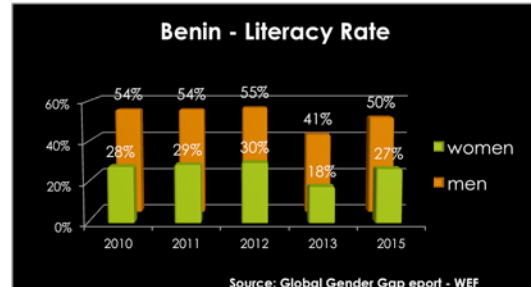
There is low representation of women in the national police and armed forces. Gender training has been delivered to security forces on an ad-hoc basis; however, this has yet to be incorporated into formal training procedures²³⁷⁵.

Benin has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325²³⁷⁶.

Education

While Benin had one of the world's lowest school enrolment rates twenty-five years ago, today almost all children in the country have access to education. Due to political commitment and intervention at the local level, Benin has been able to make gains in this area despite resourcing and institutional limitations²³⁷⁷. In 2006, the Government launched a 10-year education plan, providing the first three years of secondary education to girls for free, in addition to providing free primary education for all. However, gender disparities still remain – Benin has closed less than 70% of its gender gap in education²³⁷⁸. The primary enrolment rate for girls was 88.2% in 2011 (the most recent figures), compared to 75.5% in 2006. 17.4% of girls graduated from secondary school in 2011, compared to 34% of boys²³⁷⁹. However, the female adult literacy

rate appeared to fall from 23.3% in the period 1990-2004 to 18% in 2005-2013²³⁸⁰. There is a significant wealth disparity in female literacy which was 28% for women in 2010, down to 18% in 2013 and then up to 27% in 2015 compare to men which was 50% in 2015.²³⁸¹



Economic Empowerment

68% of women were at work in 2013²³⁸², compared to 78% of men²³⁸³. Women work mainly in the agricultural sector and in Benin's sizeable informal economy²³⁸⁴. They are particularly underrepresented in the civil service and in state institutions²³⁸⁵.

Under the law, men and women have equal rights to land ownership. However, as most land is acquired via inheritance under customary law, which allows only men to inherit, in reality women's access to land is restricted²³⁸⁶. This, in turn, impacts their access to financial services, as agricultural loans and credit are contingent on land ownership. As a result, women are much more likely to obtain microcredit than bank loans²³⁸⁷.

Social barriers to entrepreneurship for women have prompted the Government to initiate a microcredit grant scheme targeting the poorest sectors of the population, particularly women in rural areas, to assist them in developing income-generating activities. At the same time, governmental and NGO-sponsored initiatives continue to educate the public on the legal provisions that provide women with inheritance and property rights²³⁸⁸. On a positive note, Benin ranks relatively high for female economic participation and economic opportunity in the Global Gender Gap report, at 33²³⁸⁹.

BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso ratified the Convention to End All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1987 and the Maputo Protocol in 2006²³⁹⁰. Burkina Faso does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325²³⁹¹

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Article 1 of the Constitution states that all citizens of

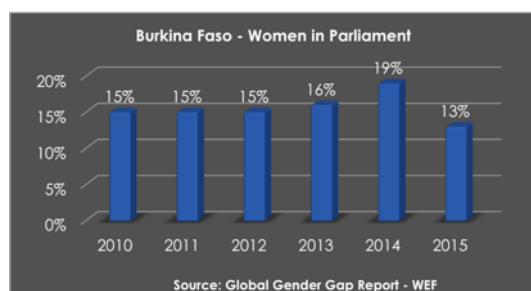
Burkina Faso are equal, and laws regarding personal and family status largely reflect this²³⁹². For example, the law grants equal parental authority to both men and women. Women are permitted to initiate divorce,

and divorced women and widows are no longer required to wait for a period of 300 days before remarrying²³⁹³. However, there is a discrepancy in the legal age of marriage, which is set at 17 for women and 20 for men. Unfortunately, the Family Code and Penal Code are commonly disregarded in favour of customary laws, which often discriminate against women, especially in rural areas²³⁹⁴.

Women's Political Participation

After the overthrow of President Compaore last year, an interim government was appointed, and elections were scheduled to be held in October 2015. However, on 17th September 2015, the interim government was overthrown in a military coup²³⁹⁵, causing the elections to be delayed²³⁹⁶. It is feared that this could have an ongoing disruptive effect on the country's political and economic stability²³⁹⁷.

According to the Transition Charter, women and youth representatives were supposed to be considered when forming the cabinet. 24 women (out of 127 total representatives) served in the most recent National Assembly, and there were 11 women in the 90-member Transitional Council, making up 13%²³⁹⁸. This was an increase from 9.9% in 2002²³⁹⁹. In 2012, the Government enacted the Gender Law, which requires political parties to present ballots with women holding at least 30% of the spots for legislative and municipal elections²⁴⁰⁰. The Law provides financial incentives for parties who reach this quota and imposes fines on those that fail to do so. In the legislative election, 32 out of 74 parties did not meet the target, along with 10 out of 81 parties competing in the local elections²⁴⁰¹. Civil society actors have reported that attitudes to women in politics are changing in some areas, as people have seen positive results achieved under female leadership at the local level²⁴⁰².



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2004, Burkina Faso put into action a national family

planning policy, granting citizens the right to reproductive health and access to free family planning information²⁴⁰³. Yet in reality, family planning and maternal health programmes remain severely underfunded, and around 29% of women have an unmet need for modern contraception²⁴⁰⁴. 16.2% of married women were using some form of contraception in 2011, rising to 17% in 2014²⁴⁰⁵. Doctors often only provide contraceptives to women who have written permission from their husbands. The need to travel considerable distances to access health services is another factor limiting access to reproductive and other health services for rural women²⁴⁰⁶.

While maternal mortality has declined from 440 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013, Burkina Faso still has one of the highest rates in the world²⁴⁰⁷. It was ranked 166 out of 179 countries according to Save the Children's Mothers' Index 2015²⁴⁰⁸. Burkinabé women have a 1 in 44 lifetime risk of dying in childbirth²⁴⁰⁹. Furthermore, for each maternal death, there are around 20 to 30 women suffering from childbirth-related disabilities²⁴¹⁰. The most recent figures, from 2010, show that 65.9% of births are assisted by a skilled attendant, compared to 53.5% in 2006²⁴¹¹. Burkina Faso is one of the few poor countries that seen increased inequality in rates of skilled birth assistance between wealthy and poor women from 2000 to 2013²⁴¹².

Abortion is legally permitted to save the life and protect the health of a pregnant woman, as well as in cases of rape, incest or severe fetal impairment²⁴¹³.

HIV prevalence in Burkina Faso has remained below 1% since 2011, falling to 0.9% in 2014²⁴¹⁴. Women made up 59% of the HIV-positive population in 2010 and 60% in 2014²⁴¹⁵.

Violence Against Women

Rape, excluding marital rape, is prohibited by Article 417 of the Penal Code and is punishable by 5 to 10 years imprisonment (up to 20 if the victim is under 15)²⁴¹⁶. While police will generally investigate allegations of rape, women are often reluctant to report attacks due to fear of reprisals, cultural stigma and lack of legal aid²⁴¹⁷. A number of organisations do exist to counsel rape victims; however there are no official statistics available on the prevalence of rape²⁴¹⁸.

The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence. 15.4% of women have reported experiencing domestic violence in their lifetimes²⁴¹⁹. 71.1% of women and 44.2% of men believe that wife-beating is justified in certain situations²⁴²⁰. There are no government-run shelters in the country for victims of domestic violence, but there are counselling centres in each of the 13 regional 'Maison de la Femme' centres. In addition, the Ministry of Women's Promotion sometimes provides counselling and housing for abused women. The Ministry for Social Action and National Solidarity continues to organise workshops and sensitisation campaigns to educate women about their legal rights²⁴²¹.

The 2008 Labour Code explicitly prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, although there is no legal framework in place to enforce this. There is also specific provision in the Penal Code to protect girls from violence in schools²⁴²².

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) was outlawed in 1997. While 76% of women reported having ever undergone the procedure in 2010, evidence indicates that the prevalence of FGM/C has declined by 27.5% in the past 12 years²⁴²³, with the majority of both men and women surveyed stating that the practice should be abolished²⁴²⁴. Burkina Faso is one of the only countries in the region to have prosecuted perpetrators under legislation banning FGM/C. 117 cases were reported and 192 people convicted between 2009 and 2013²⁴²⁵. During 2014, security forces and social workers worked together to arrest and convict multiple individuals who were performing FGM/C on minors²⁴²⁶.

There are occurrences of violence against women accused of witchcraft, often targeted against older, widowed women living in rural areas. Women rarely take legal action against their attackers for fear of reprisals. There are refuge centres for women accused of witchcraft run by the Government as well as by charitable organisations²⁴²⁷. The previous Government had formed partnerships with traditional authorities to combat the social exclusion of women accused of witchcraft as part of an action plan launched in 2012. It provided financial, legal and psychological aid for victims as well as initiating awareness and education programmes in affected areas²⁴²⁸.

Burkina Faso has a high incidence of early marriage, despite the legal age for marriage being set at 17²⁴²⁹. Around 50% of girls are married before the age of

18²⁴³⁰.

Burkina Faso is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. The Government of Burkina Faso does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. In 2014 to 2015, the Government continued to identify and provide services to a large number of child trafficking victims; however, it did not increase efforts compared to the previous reporting period²⁴³¹. Overall, there were two prosecutions for trafficking in persons and no convictions, a notable decrease from the 22 prosecutions and 18 convictions recorded in the previous year²⁴³².

Women, Peace and Security

The National Gender Policy, developed in 2009, did not define specific responsibilities for actors in the security sector. However, there has been collaboration between the gender units in the Ministry of Security and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the National Police. Efforts have been made to increase women's representation in the security sector, including hiring quotas and media campaigns encouraging female applicants²⁴³³.

Education

Under the law, education is compulsory, tuition-free and universal until the age of 16²⁴³⁴. Burkina Faso has made progress in the gender parity of school enrolment, although it still has the world's seventh lowest gross enrolment²⁴³⁵. Net enrolment for girls in primary school only lags behind net enrolment for boys by four percentage points (62% and 66% respectively, rising from 57.9% and 62.9% in 2010), this gap does not widen from enrolment to completion. The primary completion rate for girls is 56.2%, whereas for boys it is 58.9%²⁴³⁶. Female secondary enrolment was 20.8% in 2010, rising to 23.2% in 2012²⁴³⁷. The country has seen great improvements in parity in net secondary attendance rates between girls in the richest and poorest quintiles between 2000 and 2013²⁴³⁸. The overall adult female literacy rate rose from 15.2% to 21.6% between 1995 and 2012²⁴³⁹.

The Government continues to implement the National Strategy to Accelerate Girls' Education (SNAEF), adopted by the Cabinet in 2012. There is also a joint programme to promote women's literacy led by the Ministry of Education an Literacy and the Ministry for

Women's Empowerment, launched in 2008. These programmes include an emphasis on girls' progression from primary to secondary school, implementing Child-Friendly School (CFS) models, and community mobilization and advocacy²⁴⁴⁰.

Economic Empowerment

Although the law requires that men and women be paid equally, women are often paid less than men. In addition, women tend to hold low-paying and subservient positions. Women make up 45% of the general workforce, but the employment share in non-agricultural positions is only 27% and only 19% firms are owned or co-owned by women²⁴⁴¹.

Women are more likely than men to live in a poor household, with a gender ratio of 115 in the poorest 20% of households²⁴⁴². Despite women making up more than half of the labour force (52%) in the agricultural sector, they have limited access to resources and extension services such as micro-credits, land rights, access to technology and training. They also face legal discrimination with relation to land rights²⁴⁴³. Traditional definitions of land tenure, that emphasise family ownership, tend to prevail over legal statutes for women to own and inherit property. For example, after marriage, any property that belongs to the wife is transferred to the husband's family²⁴⁴⁴.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Post-election violence in 2010 left 3,000 Ivoirians dead and nearly one million displaced. The election in 2015 represented an opportunity for the country to move forward from the political and ethnic divisions that have fuelled its history of civil conflict and embark on a path toward reconciliation and reconstruction, which many believe the current Government has failed to deliver²⁴⁴⁵. Côte d'Ivoire ratified the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995²⁴⁴⁶, and the Optional Protocol in 2012²⁴⁴⁷. It is a signatory to the Maputo Protocol and ratified it 2011²⁴⁴⁸. In 2008, Côte d'Ivoire established a four-year National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325²⁴⁴⁹. Cote d'Ivoire ranks low on the Global Gender Gap Index 2015, at 133 out of 145 countries²⁴⁵⁰.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Equality for women is enshrined in Article 30 of the Ivoirian Constitution, adopted in 2000. Moreover, Article 3 commits the State to taking appropriate action to enable the development of women and to protect their human rights²⁴⁵¹. A designated department of state - the Ministry of Solidarity, the Family, Women and Children - is tasked with the promotion of gender issues and the enforcement of existing legislation²⁴⁵². The Government has developed multiple national action plans with reference to the rights of women, including the National Women's Action Plan (2003 to 2007) and the National Population Action Plan (2002 to 2006). In 2008, a national strategy to combat gender-based violence was launched, aimed at developing a unified, multi-sectoral approach. A national policy document on gender, equity and equal opportunity was adopted by the Government in 2009. Furthermore, national policy on poverty reduction has acknowledged sex-specific aspects and incorporates Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3, which address gender equality and the eradication of poverty²⁴⁵³.

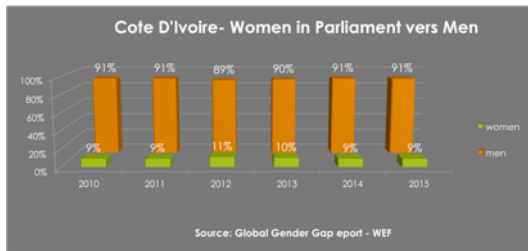
Political Participation

Following years of political instability and violent conflict, Côte d'Ivoire elected its first National Assembly for a decade in 2011, with 90% of MPs being elected for the first time. At that time, the proportion of seats held by women stood at 8.9%. In 2015, women held 9.2% of seats, representing a slight increase. However the numbers fell from a high of 11% in 2012²⁴⁵⁴. Some key government positions are held by women, including the Vice-President of the National Assembly, but proportionally the representation of women in the Cabinet is low, with only five female ministers out of a total of 29. Women make up less than 6% of mayors at sub-national level, and there is just one woman among 31 Council presidents²⁴⁵⁵.

There are no legislated quotas for women candidates at national or sub-national levels. One party, the Ivoirian National Front, adopted a voluntary 30% quota for women at all levels, including candidate lists. However, action has not always been taken as yet to promote this²⁴⁵⁶.

The Government has requested assistance and training from the Inter-Parliamentary Union in improving women's political engagement and representation. In 2013, 24 Ivoirian women MPs developed an action plan for advocating women's rights, with a particular focus on political participation. Due to their low numbers, they intended to set up a caucus to increase their influence and push through legislation aimed at improving women's lives²⁴⁵⁷.

President Alassane Ouattara was re-elected by a landslide in October 2015²⁴⁵⁸. Out of ten presidential candidates, just two were women²⁴⁵⁹.



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Côte d'Ivoire has an extremely high maternal mortality rate, at 720 deaths per 100,000 live births. This has not significantly decreased since 1990, when the rate was 740 deaths per 100,000 live births²⁴⁶⁰. Lack of access to contraception and sexual violence contribute to the country maintaining one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world²⁴⁶¹. The percentage of births attended by skilled health staff has increased since 2010 from 64% to 67%²⁴⁶² and 91% of women receive some form of pre-natal care, up from 85% in 2006²⁴⁶³. However, the cost of a birth attendant's services and the transport to access a health centre can be prohibitive for poor women or those living in rural areas²⁴⁶⁴. In 2010, the Government launched a free programme of mother and newborn care. A positive public response revealed the extent of demand for these services, but the quality and availability of health provision has been negatively affected by increasing patient numbers, shortages of medical staff, and the impact of conflict and instability²⁴⁶⁵.

Côte d'Ivoire has a fertility rate of 4.9 children per woman, having declined from 5.2 in 2000²⁴⁶⁶. 18.2% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 use contraception, an increase on the previous figure of 12.9% reported in 2006²⁴⁶⁷. However, contraceptive uptake remains low, largely due to lack of information, access, and decision-making power within the home. Threats and pressure from husbands

and family members can prevent some women from seeking reproductive health services²⁴⁶⁸. Teenage pregnancy is common. When surveyed, 30% of adolescent girls reported that they were or had been pregnant, and this number rose to 46% in rural areas²⁴⁶⁹.

Abortion is illegal except where the life of the woman is in danger. It is not permitted in cases of rape or incest²⁴⁷⁰.

The HIV prevalence rate for adults aged 15-49 has reduced from 4% in 2010 to 3.5% in 2014²⁴⁷¹. However, Côte d'Ivoire remains one of the countries most affected by HIV in West Africa. Women continue to make up the majority of those infected by HIV, at 59% of the total – this is a 1% increase from the figures in 2010²⁴⁷². In 2008, the Government formulated a National AIDS Control Programme for Key Populations, which committed to providing care, support and prevention services for vulnerable groups, including female sex workers²⁴⁷³. Positive developments have taken place in some areas: for example, between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral medicines increased from 59% to 75%²⁴⁷⁴.

Violence Against Women

Rape is legally punishable by 5 to 20 years in prison, where life sentences can be imposed where the victim is under 15, where the perpetrator is in a position of power, or in cases of gang rape. Spousal rape is not specifically penalised²⁴⁷⁵. The incomplete disarmament of ex-military combatants is a contributing factor to high incidences of sexual violence²⁴⁷⁶. Local and international human rights groups report that rape remains prevalent despite attempts to enforce the law. There were 325 cases reported in 2014, a slight decrease from the previous year²⁴⁷⁷. Victims are often pressured by relatives, police and traditional authorities to pursue an 'amicable' resolution rather than seeking formal recourse through the courts. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire estimates that 60% of rape cases are resolved without the involvement of the formal justice system²⁴⁷⁸. In March 2015, the Ministry of Justice issued a directive declaring that victims are no longer required to provide a medical certificate, at a cost of around \$100, in order to open a rape investigation. This is a welcome move that removes a significant obstacle to justice²⁴⁷⁹. However, as the

certificate often functions as the primary evidence in a rape case, it remains to be seen if this will have much practical impact on prosecutions²⁴⁸⁰.

Domestic violence is widespread, and the law offers no specific protection from it²⁴⁸¹. Studies indicate that 26% of women have experienced violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime²⁴⁸². Women are often reluctant to report domestic violence due to fear of social stigma and pressure from their families. Complaints are also routinely ignored by the police. The Government provides some assistance for victims of domestic violence, including counselling services, through centres operated by the Ministry for Family, Women and Social Affairs. National hotlines for victims of abuse have been publicised by the National Committee to Fight Violence against Women and Children, which also monitors individual cases of violence²⁴⁸³.

Women face a number of harmful cultural practices, including the killing of brides over dowry disputes, levirate (forced marriage of a widow to her dead husband's brother) and sororate (forced marriage of a woman to her dead sister's husband)²⁴⁸⁴.

The minimum age of marriage is set at 18 for women, though it is 21 for men. Courts have the power to allow exceptions to this for reasons that are undefined in law, and child marriage is a significant problem²⁴⁸⁵. 33% of girls are married before the age of 18, and 10% are married before the age of 15²⁴⁸⁶. 2014 saw a landmark case in which a man was tried for attempting to marry his underage daughter to a much older man, the first instance where the law has been put into practice. The mobilisation of community members and civil society to bring this case to court suggest that attitudes towards this traditional practice are changing²⁴⁸⁷.

Although female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) was banned in 1998, the first prosecutions were only made in 2012²⁴⁸⁸. Perpetrators are subject to up to five years' imprisonment and fines of up to \$3,774²⁴⁸⁹. FGM/C is still widely practiced in some parts of Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in rural parts of the north and west, where up to 80% of women have been cut²⁴⁹⁰. Nationwide, 38% of women are estimated to have undergone the practice and studies show that girls are being subjected to it at even younger ages than before. FGM/C is also becoming more common in urban areas, as a result of the large displacement of populations from other regions due to conflict²⁴⁹¹. Yet,

on the whole, public opinion towards FGM/C does appear to be shifting, with the majority of both women and men surveyed (around 80%) stating that the practice should end²⁴⁹².

Côte d'Ivoire is a source, destination and point of transit for trafficking of women and children for forced labour and sex work²⁴⁹³. Law No. 2010-272 Pertaining to the Prohibition of Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labour was put into place just prior to the civil war. Despite weakened governance, Côte d'Ivoire has prosecuted traffickers, and saw an increase in convictions and prosecutions between 2013 and 2014²⁴⁹⁴.

Women, Peace and Security

In 2014, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to continue the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. The goal of this mission is to protect civilians in the light of recent post-election violence and displacement, and to assist the Government with the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the security forces²⁴⁹⁵. The 2010-2011 crisis saw militarised forces return to power in an echo of the previous civil war, with acts of violence, including sexual violence, increasingly perpetrated, with impunity, against the general population by armed groups²⁴⁹⁶.

The national disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process has incorporated gender training into its rehabilitation work with ex-combatants in an effort to reduce sexual violence. During 2014, 20 members of the armed forces, one policeman and nine former combatants were allegedly involved in incidents of rape, although only three have been arrested²⁴⁹⁷. The armed forces have drafted an action plan to combat gender-based violence and assembled a panel of experts in response to the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, with a goal of strengthening accountability and addressing serious violations that took place during the past decades of civil strife²⁴⁹⁸.

Education

There is a notable gap in education between the sexes and the education system has been disrupted by conflict and the displacement of populations. 39% of Ivoirian women aged 15 to 24 are literate, compared to 58% of young men,²⁴⁹⁹ while the adult literacy rate is 30.5% for women and 51.6% for men²⁵⁰⁰. 64% of girls aged 12-18 are out of school²⁵⁰¹. However there have

been positive changes: primary enrolment for girls rose from 82% in 2011 to 89% in 2013²⁵⁰². Many children are unable to register for state services, including education, as nationality laws require children to have at least one Ivoirian parent in order to qualify as a citizen. There are around 700,000 people who are considered stateless. In 2013, Côte d'Ivoire amended its laws to allow stateless persons to apply for citizenship²⁵⁰³.

Economic Empowerment

Discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited by law, theoretically enabling women to participate equally in all areas of social and economic life. Yet in reality, a number of barriers prevent them from accessing resources in the same way as men. Côte d'Ivoire was ranked 43 out of 52 African countries for gender equality, including economic opportunity, in 2015²⁵⁰⁴.

Only 7% of women are homeowners compared to 33% of men. Despite equal land ownership rights under the law, it is rare for women to become landowners, owing to discriminatory practices (such as the favouring of sons to inherit property) and women's lack of knowledge of their rights²⁵⁰⁵.

Under customary practices, the man is considered to be the head of the household and thus the controller of household assets²⁵⁰⁶. Therefore, many women find it difficult to access financial services, as they are unable to meet lending criteria²⁵⁰⁷. Married women may be required to obtain their husband's approval before applying for a bank loan²⁵⁰⁸. Although marriage law provides for separation of spousal property, most couples marry under common law, which grants the husband sole rights to administer property held in common²⁵⁰⁹. Women's organisations have campaigned for tax reforms to allow single mothers to receive deductions for their children²⁵¹⁰.

The labour force participation for women is 52%²⁵¹¹ and 82% for men²⁵¹². These rates have remained stable since 2010. Women are mostly employed in the informal sector and play an important role in agricultural production. However, discrimination in ownership and decision-making power means that they do not receive income proportionate to their labour contribution. For example, studies show that women make up 68% of the labour force in the Ivoirian cocoa industry, yet receive only 21% of the income²⁵¹³.

CAPE VERDE

An archipelago off the coast of West Africa, Cape Verde is a relatively peaceful nation that rarely appears in the world news. It ratified CEDAW on December 5, 1980²⁵¹⁴ and the CEDAW Optional Protocol on October 10, 2011.²⁵¹⁵ Cape Verde ratified the Maputo Protocol on June 21st, 2005.²⁵¹⁶ At present, the country has no National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.²⁵¹⁷ Within the region, Cape Verde stands out for its gender equality and development success stories. The country's ranking in the Human Development Index rose by two points between 2009 and 2014²⁵¹⁸. It ranks ninth in the African Gender Equality Index 2015, the highest position of any West African nation²⁵¹⁹.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

In 2014, Cape Verde ranked 123/187 on the UNDP Human Development Index²⁵²⁰, a small improvement from 118/169 in 2010²⁵²¹. Their score in 2010 was at 0.622, moving to 0.636 in 2013.²⁵²²

Gender discrimination is legally prohibited in Cape Verde.²⁵²³ However, as a largely rural, very diverse set of islands, Cape Verde has had some difficulty in integrating effective measures to ensure gender equality into the National Development Plan.²⁵²⁴ The Government is instituting measures at the national level to combat this.²⁵²⁵

Cape Verde is developing actions in response to Beijing+20, including the preparation of a second National Plan of Equality and Gender Equity, mainstreaming gender issues in various sectors such as

education, health, justice and police through staff training; empowering women for political participation through training and the inclusion of gender concerns in water and sanitation issues.²⁵²⁶

The President of Cape Verde, Dr Joge Carlos Fonseca, has publicly acknowledged that his country continues to face challenges with regard to gender equality.²⁵²⁷ Government measures focus on access to meaningful work, effective and equal political participation and leadership, the eradication of gender-based violence, the strengthening of gender relations and greater involvement by men and boys in the process of gender equality.²⁵²⁸

To this end, Cape Verde launched the "He for She" Campaign nation-wide in March 2015.²⁵²⁹ In addition, Cape Verde joined the Step it Up movement, thereby committing to end gender inequality by 2030.²⁵³⁰

Women's Political Participation

The number of seats held by women in the Lower House is around 21% (15/72 seats)²⁵³¹, which is low, but comparable to North America.²⁵³² However, since the 2014 election, the Cabinet has comprised 11 women and 8 men, putting women in the Cape Verdean Cabinet in a majority and making the country second in the world, after Finland, for the proportion of female government ministers.²⁵³³

Despite the high number of female Cabinet Ministers, as well as persistent efforts to improve female participation, women continue to be underrepresented at the polls.²⁵³⁴ None of the presidential candidates from the last election were female, and women are underrepresented in the House. This is despite the existence of the Electoral Law, which states that “public funding will only be awarded to those political parties or coalitions whose lists presented for national elections, if elected, contain at least 25% women candidates”.²⁵³⁵ No political party has yet adopted a voluntary quota for female candidates.²⁵³⁶

During the 2012 municipal elections, female candidates ran for five of the country's 22 municipal councils, compared to just three in the previous elections in 2008.²⁵³⁷

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Cape Verde has a low prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS.²⁵³⁸ In 2014, the number of people infected was 0.8% of the population, or 3,400 people.²⁵³⁹ The prevalence among adults is 1.1%.²⁵⁴⁰ This is an improvement from 2012, when the overall prevalence of HIV was 1.2%.²⁵⁴¹ Generally women demonstrate a high level of knowledge of HIV prevention.²⁵⁴²

PAI (Population Actions international), a global organization advancing the right to affordable, quality contraception and reproductive health care for women, reports that the number of women in Cape Verde who are able to make an informed choice about their contraceptive methods is below 35%.²⁵⁴³ Popular culture in Cape Verde has been mobilized to promote the use of contraception and bodily autonomy for women. UNICEF reports that between 2009 and 2012 contraceptive usage was at 61.3%.²⁵⁴⁴

There is a skilled delivery attendant at 77.5% of births, and 75.6% of deliveries occur in an institutional setting.²⁵⁴⁵

Abortion in Cape Verde is legal without restriction as to reason.²⁵⁴⁶

Violence Against Women

In July 2011, the Government passed the first legislation affording protection to victims of gender-based violence, strengthening sanctions against offenders and raising awareness of the problem.²⁵⁴⁷ While there is ample legislation prohibiting violence

against women in Cape Verde, the problem is widespread and continues to go unpunished. Legally, the punishment for rape is 16 years imprisonment.²⁵⁴⁸ Spousal abuse is punishable by 2 to 13 years imprisonment. However, as a result of deeply embedded cultural and social norms, as well as lack of sheltered housing, reporting is low.²⁵⁴⁹ According to a 2005 study by the Ministry of Health and National Institute of Statistics, 22% of women and girls in Cape Verde have been victims of gender-based violence.²⁵⁵⁰

There is no sexual harassment policy apart from the 2004 Penal Code provisions.²⁵⁵¹

Child marriage is relatively low in Cape Verde, though it still occurs. 2.8% of girls are married before they are 15, and 18% are married before age 18.²⁵⁵²

In 2007, the Government of Cape Verde launched a National Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence, with a budget reportedly over \$800,000 USD.²⁵⁵³ No evaluation of this plan has yet been conducted.²⁵⁵⁴

While there is no official data on human trafficking, there is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that it is a growing problem in Cape Verde.²⁵⁵⁵ There are currently no laws to address trafficking.²⁵⁵⁶

Women, Peace and Security

While there are laws and continued efforts to improve the status and security of women in Cape Verde, cultural norms and traditions hinder the eradication of gender-based discrimination.²⁵⁵⁷ Women in Cape Verde have less access to higher positions in public and private sector organizations, and their lower economic status leaves them at greater risk for abuse and other personal security threats.²⁵⁵⁸

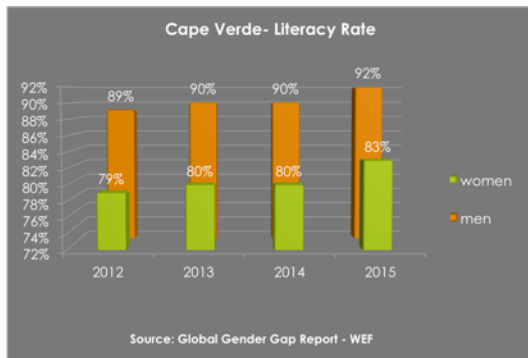
Cape Verde does not currently participate in peacekeeping operations.²⁵⁵⁹

Education

Women experience lower levels of education than men. From the 7th Grade onward, girl's attendance at school drops significantly, largely because they get married or move into full-time care and domestic positions.²⁵⁶⁰ The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index ranks Cape Verde's Educational Attainment at 102/142 countries worldwide.²⁵⁶¹ Despite this, there is a high level of literacy among women in Cape Verde, and it has been improving. The literacy rate among youths is the highest, at 97% for both sexes. In 2004, women's literacy was at 75.5%²⁵⁶², and in 2014 it had increased to 80%.²⁵⁶³ Illiteracy affects rural women over the age of 35 the most, however, between 2000 and 2010 illiteracy fell 12% among this group, from 80% to 68%.²⁵⁶⁴

In a 2014 report on Cape Verde's progress on the Beijing+20 Declaration and Platform for Action, it was noted that Cape Verde had achieved net

enrolment rates up to 96% since the 1990s, with 92% of children completing 6 years of education, and 52% of children completing secondary education.²⁵⁶⁵ The enrolment rates for girls and boys are 92% and 95%, respectively.²⁵⁶⁶ It was reported that girls who do attend school tend to be more successful than their male counterparts and are less likely to drop out or repeat a grade.²⁵⁶⁷ As a result, women in Cape Verde have greater access to higher education than their male counterparts.²⁵⁶⁸ Although there has been some effort made to revise the educational curricula, to improve gender integration and feature less stereotyped images and messages, there are not yet any explicit references in what to gender equality.²⁵⁶⁹



Economic Empowerment

Women's participation in the economy in Cape Verde is minimal. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, Cape Verde is ranked 107/142 for economic participation.²⁵⁷⁰ Women are generally excluded from business opportunities.²⁵⁷¹ Wage discrimination persists and forces women into poverty.²⁵⁷² According to UN Women, women in Cape Verde "experience vulnerability from informal, socially undervalued, low paid, and insecure work".²⁵⁷³ Despite this, women often represent the sole economic support for their families and head 48% of households in Cape Verde.²⁵⁷⁴ The gender gap has increased despite the decrease in the overall poverty rate.²⁵⁷⁵

The Cape Verdean Government has been instituting new programmes focused on single female heads of household. Because of high levels of male emigration, there is a marginalized population of women trying to raise families on their own.²⁵⁷⁶ 40% of these women are unemployed.²⁵⁷⁷ These initiatives hope to integrate women into the formal labour sector, as currently, women work mainly in the informal sector with limited access to modern technology.²⁵⁷⁸

THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

The Republic of the Gambia, commonly referred to as Gambia, is the smallest country on mainland Africa. The majority of the population (90%) is Muslim, and Sharia Law is recognized in matters of personal and property rights. Gambia ratified CEDAW on 1st December 1992²⁵⁷⁹. It ratified The Maputo Protocol in May 2005, and launched its first National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security on 2nd June 2014.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Since 2010, significant policy measures have been taken to improve women's rights in Gambia. The Government instituted policies and worked with international organizations to promote gender equality. However, in a society where patriarchy is so deeply entrenched, these policies have been difficult to enforce.

Section 28(2) of the Constitution states that; "women shall have the right to equal treatment with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities".²⁵⁸⁰ However, in Section 33(5) it is stated that the provisions on protection from discrimination do not apply to laws on adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, and devolution of property on death or other matters of personal law.²⁵⁸¹ The Gambian legal system operates as a combination of English common law, Islamic law and customary

law.²⁵⁸² Family law, for example, supports four different legal systems, all recognized under Article 7 of the 1997 Constitution.²⁵⁸³ With over 90% of the population being practicing Muslims, Sharia Law dictates most legal matters.²⁵⁸⁴ Thus, issues of marriage, polygamy, divorce, and child custody are commonly administered under Sharia Law - severely limiting women's decision-making power and political agency.²⁵⁸⁵

This year, the CEDAW committee reported on the progress Gambia has made since 2005 with regards to women's rights. Gambia has launched institutional and policy frameworks, including The National Education Policy (2004-2015), The Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy (2010-2020), The National Plan of Action Plan on Gender Based Violence (2013-2017) and the Maternal and Child Nutrition and Health Results Project (2014-2018).²⁵⁸⁶ The National Gender Policy (2010-2020) was

established to eliminate gender inequality through concrete gender and development measures: namely, mainstreaming gender equality in governmental policies in the hopes of eradicating discriminatory cultural norms and family codes, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.²⁵⁸⁷ Gambia passed a Women's Act in 2010, a Sexual Offences Act in 2013, and a Domestic Violence Act in 2013.²⁵⁸⁸

These represent considerable progress, but the Women's Act of 2010 has come under severe scrutiny since its inception for not providing enough thorough or concrete efforts to achieve gender equality.

CEDAW and other international bodies remain "concerned that this legislation does not adequately address female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), marital rape or child marriage"²⁵⁸⁹. A culture of patriarchy is deeply embedded in Gambian society, and pervades local and state institutions, as well as family structures.²⁵⁹⁰ The majority of Gambian women work in agriculture, where they are only guaranteed access to land through their marital status, and are only entitled to borrow land from their husbands.²⁵⁹¹ Women are prevented from inheriting land from their husbands unless they also agree to be inherited as property by their husband's family.²⁵⁹² The new legislation does nothing to change this.

Women's Political Participation

Despite a lack of formal restrictions on women's political participation, they remain underrepresented in Gambian politics.

The 2013 Gambian census showed that women make up more than 51% of the country's 1.8 million people.²⁵⁹³ In 2011, they made up 58% of national voters.²⁵⁹⁴ This numerical strength, however, is not reflected in the number of women in leadership positions. Despite having a female Vice-President, Dr Isatou Njie Saidy, who has held the position since 1997, few women run for or are elected into office.²⁵⁹⁵ Possible reasons for this include: women not being taken seriously, the weakness of pro-women policies and a paucity of role models.

Currently, women hold 9% of national parliamentary seats.²⁵⁹⁶ In the Gambian political system, 48 members of the House are elected by plurality vote and 5 are appointed by the President.²⁵⁹⁷ In the 2006 election, one woman was elected through the ballot box, one was returned unopposed and three were nominated.²⁵⁹⁸ In the 2011 election, four women were

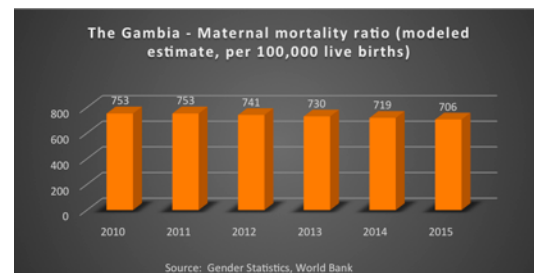
elected and one woman was nominated.²⁵⁹⁹ Activists argue that any pro-women legislation is watered-down, with critical clauses removed or restricted, such as laws on inheritance, female genital mutilation/cutting, and marriage.²⁶⁰⁰ Many people believe this is because women's voices go unheard at higher levels. They are relegated to less important roles, and only hold leadership roles in female wings of parties.²⁶⁰¹

Amie Sillah, a women's rights activist and Gambian politician, calls for an affirmative action quota of 30% women on National Assembly seats.²⁶⁰² The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP) has launched a campaign for political reforms that will enhance effective women's political participation in the 2016 general elections.²⁶⁰³

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

70% of Gambian women deliver their babies at home.²⁶⁰⁴ The skilled attendance at these births has steadily increased from 45% in 1990 to 61.4% in 2013.²⁶⁰⁵

Maternal mortality rates have been steadily improving in Gambia. The rate of deaths per 100,000 live births has decreased from 753 in 2010, to 706 in 2015.²⁶⁰⁶ In that time, the proportion of deaths among women of reproductive age that are due to maternal causes has gone from 26.6% to 18.8%, a decline of almost 8%.²⁶⁰⁷



The estimated total fertility rate in 2013 was 5.8 children per woman, having seen little change since 2010.²⁶⁰⁸ This number has actually decreased since 2010, when it was 4.9 children per woman.²⁶⁰⁹ Only 17.5% of Gambian women use contraception, probably due to cultural norms and expectations about having children.²⁶¹⁰

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects women the world over. Gambia is no different, with women making up 57% of the population affected by HIV/AIDS.²⁶¹¹ In 2013, it was found that nearly 60% of new HIV infections among people aged between 15-24 were female.²⁶¹²

On International Women's Day 2015, the First Lady of Gambia, Zineb Jammeh, acknowledged that the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Gambia required a gendered solution, and as such announced a plan to end AIDS and improve the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls by 2030.²⁶¹³ The National AIDS Secretariat of the Office of the President, supported by UNAIDS, has announced three programmatic interventions to eradicate HIV/AIDS: Gender Competencies of Multi-sectoral Stakeholders, Vulnerability of Women and Girls, and Men and Boys Vulnerability to and Involvement in HIV programmes.²⁶¹⁴

The challenges preventing the elimination of AIDS include stigma, discrimination, lack of resources and cultural practices.²⁶¹⁵ Studies show that the face of HIV is increasingly female, and that the key to overcoming the disease is the empowerment and support of women and girls.²⁶¹⁶

Violence Against Women

Over 75% of Gambian women are subjected to FGM/C.²⁶¹⁷ This number has not decreased, despite numerous efforts to sensitise people to the issue.²⁶¹⁸ FGM/C has deep sociocultural roots, and is the source of serious health problems among women in the Gambia.²⁶¹⁹ FGM/C continues to be legal in Gambia, despite the requirement under Article 4(2) of the Maputo Protocol that all state signatories, of which Gambia is one, enact specific legislative measures to eliminate the practice.²⁶²⁰ The position of the Government on ending FGM/C is unclear. There are tight controls on NGO policies, restricting the dialogue on FGM/C in the media, and the Government has a history of resisting political action on this issue.²⁶²¹ At the same time, it has made efforts to promote education about FGM/C, including it in the national health curriculum, and is working with the United Nations Joint Programme to prevent it.²⁶²² In a welcome move, the President finally banned FGM/C in November 2015.

Gambia currently has a serious human trafficking issue, with thousands of women and girls being forced

into domestic servitude and prostitution.²⁶²³ To date, there have been no significant measures taken to address this issue.²⁶²⁴ The U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report of 2014 categorized Gambia as a Tier 3 country, meaning that the Government “does not fully comply with standards to curb trafficking and does not make any efforts to do so”.²⁶²⁵

Despite the creation of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Acts of 2013, violence against women is still widespread in the Gambia.²⁶²⁶ This is in part due to the lack of criminalisation of marital rape, ineffective implementation of the law, poor support for women victims of violence, and a lack of official disaggregated data related to violence against women.²⁶²⁷

A study conducted in April 2015, entitled “Burden of Intimate Partner Violence in the Gambia - A Cross Sectional Study of Pregnant Women”, found that intimate partner violence (IPV) is experienced by 61.8% of pregnant women in Gambia.²⁶²⁸

Women, Peace and Security

On June 2, 2014, Gambia launched its first National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security following the Women Advancement Forum in Banjul.²⁶²⁹ Deputy Parliamentary Secretary at the Office of the Vice President, Bintou Gassama, reiterated Gambia's commitment to the Plan, and admitted that the Government has been slow to implement it.²⁶³⁰

Education

In 2013, the President of Gambia committed to free primary school education for all Gambians. In keeping with the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, Gambia has reached 97% enrolment in primary education, surpassing the sub-Saharan average of 69%.²⁶³¹ However, disparities remain in access to education in rural areas and to completion rates. While in primary school there are 103 girls attending for every 100 boys, only 74 girls complete their primary education for every 100 boys.²⁶³² Only 47.6% of the female population is literate.²⁶³³

The low retention rates for girls are due to a number of factors, such as lack of female teachers to act as mentors (particularly in rural areas), lack of sexual and reproductive health rights classes, and the embedded cultural practice of peers and teachers sexually

harassing girls at school.²⁶³⁴ Often, girl's education is not a priority for families because of cultural expectations for girls to get married, have children and take care of the farm and home.²⁶³⁵

NGOs and community groups have been forming over the past few years to engage parents in a discussion about educating their girls, and to encourage enrolment and completion. Since 2006, "Mothers' Clubs" have been formed across Gambia with the goal of encouraging parents to enrol their daughters in school.

Economic Empowerment

Women in Gambia largely work in the agricultural sector, making up 75% of the unskilled agricultural labour force.²⁶³⁶ The constitutional stipulation for equal treatment between men and women does not

extend to property rights. Women cannot own the land they work, and must 'borrow' it either from their husbands or neighbours.²⁶³⁷

In their 2015 report on Gambia, the CEDAW committee emphasised the difficulties faced by women in the Gambian economy and urged for reform. Women have quite low participation in the formal labour sector.²⁶³⁸ This is due, in large part, to a work environment that is hostile to women. The Labour Act does not require equal payment between men and women, and sexual harassment is not criminalised by law.²⁶³⁹ Women do not have adequate access to credit, which requires owning land, or other income-generating opportunities and resources.²⁶⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Gambia was ranked second for equal economic opportunities in the 2015 African Gender Equality Index²⁶⁴¹.

GUINEA

The Ebola epidemic has killed around 2,500 people in Guinea since it originated there in early 2014. Although the rate of new infections is in decline, Guinea now faces the challenge of addressing the devastating effects this health crisis has had on its economic and social development. The Government of Guinea has prepared a Post-Ebola Priority Actions Plan (Plan d'Actions Prioritaires Post-Ebola—PAPP) for the period 2015-2017, which builds on existing poverty reduction strategies in the post-outbreak context²⁶⁴².

Guinea ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1982²⁶⁴³. It ratified the Maputo Protocol in April 2012²⁶⁴⁴. Guinea adopted a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2009²⁶⁴⁵. The country was included in the Gender Gap Index for the first time in 2014, ranked 132 out of 142 countries²⁶⁴⁶.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

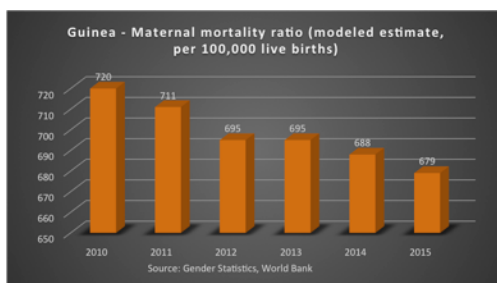
The Constitution was revised in 2001 to include principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. Article 8 states that equality between men and women is a fundamental right²⁶⁴⁷. However, women suffer discrimination in many areas of civil law: for example, parental authority is granted exclusively to the husband, women married to foreign nationals are not able to pass on their Guinean citizenship to their children, and widows are only entitled to inherit one-eighth of their husband's property²⁶⁴⁸. Various discriminatory elements have been under review since 2007²⁶⁴⁹. The Government has drafted a special law on gender equality, which is in the process of being adopted. In addition, a national policy on gender was launched in 2011²⁶⁵⁰.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

120,000 people are estimated to be living with HIV in Guinea, of which 50% are women aged 15 and over²⁶⁵¹. HIV prevalence has remained stable since 2010 at 1.6%²⁶⁵². The Government has made some progress in increasing services for those affected by AIDS: for example, the number of mother-to-child transmission prevention services rose from 161 in 2013 to 262 in 2014²⁶⁵³.

The maternal mortality rate decreased from 720 deaths per 100,000 births in 2010 to 679 deaths per 100,000 births in 2015²⁶⁵⁴. An average of 45% of births are assisted by a skilled attendant, although this number has not changed significantly since 2007²⁶⁵⁵. There are significant regional differences; in urban areas the proportion is 84%, while in rural areas it is 32%²⁶⁵⁶. It is feared that the progress made by the Government in improving maternal health could suffer dire setbacks due to the Ebola epidemic. The national health crisis has exacerbated the poverty, lack of resources and

limited access that already contributed to Guinea's poor performance in this area. In some regions of the country highly affected by the disease, the number of births attended by a skilled health professional fell dramatically between 2013 and 2014, by as much as 87%. Many people are choosing not to attend health facilities out of fear of infection, and some health workers have also refused to attend deliveries, as there is a high risk of the virus being spread via bodily fluids²⁶⁵⁷. Ebola poses a particular threat to pregnant women, as the fatality rate is 95% for both mother and foetus²⁶⁵⁸. In addition, Guinea has seen increased inequality in the rate of skilled birth assistance between rich and poor women from 2000 to 2013²⁶⁵⁹.



Guinea has a fertility rate of 4.9 births per woman, which has fallen marginally from 5.2 in 2010²⁶⁶⁰. The fertility rate among adolescents decreased from 149.7 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2010 to 141.7 births in 2014²⁶⁶¹. The law enshrines the right of women to choose the number and spacing of their children²⁶⁶². However, the latest Demographic and Health Survey figures show contraceptive prevalence at around 7%, hardly changed from the rates reported in the previous survey in 2005²⁶⁶³. There is a 24% unmet need for modern contraception among married women aged 15 to 49²⁶⁶⁴, but Ebola fears have also had an affect on access to family planning. The rate of new clients accepting a long-acting contraceptive method declined by 67% in areas impacted by the epidemic²⁶⁶⁵.

Abortion is permitted in order to save the life or preserve the health of the mother, however, the law does not clearly define the concept of 'health' in this context. Written consent is required from two other physicians in addition to the physician performing the procedure. One of these must be chosen from a court list of experts. Abortion is not legal in cases of rape or incest²⁶⁶⁶.

Violence against Women

Rape is punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison, rising to 20 years in aggravated circumstances and if the victim is under 14. Spousal rape is not recognised by law. A Government survey in 2011 found that 91% of women had been victims of gender-based violence, and 49% had been victims of sexual assault²⁶⁶⁷. Yet only 1% of these crimes are reported to the police, as women fear cultural stigma, reprisal, or lack of cooperation from the investigating authorities. In 2012, 18 cases of rape were referred to the Office for the Protection of Women, Children and Morals²⁶⁶⁸. 20 cases were brought in 2014, the majority of which were carried out against minors²⁶⁶⁹. However, it is reported that the establishment of special protection units, staffed largely by women, to deal with incidents of gender-based violence has led to increased reporting rates and has helped improve survivors' access to services²⁶⁷⁰.

Domestic violence is not specifically criminalised, though charges can be brought under the Penal Code for general assault, which is considered to be grounds for divorce under civil law²⁶⁷¹. However, women rarely report abuse and police are unlikely to intervene in domestic disputes²⁶⁷². Violence appears to be widely culturally accepted as an inevitable part of married life, with 85.6% of women believing that wife-beating is justifiable in some circumstances²⁶⁷³.

Women working in the formal sector experience frequent harassment, but is generally not penalised by employers. A new Labour Code, adopted in February 2014, outlaws sexual harassment along with other forms of workplace harassment²⁶⁷⁴.

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) has been illegal in Guinea since 1965, and the law was strengthened through an amendment in 2000²⁶⁷⁵. Legislation appears to have had little effect, as the latest available figures show that 97% of women have undergone FGM/C, with little variation according to rural or urban residence, region, or level of education. The first prosecution took place in July 2014, when an FGM/C practitioner was sentenced to two years in prison and a \$140 fine after a girl she had cut was hospitalised²⁶⁷⁶. Reporting of the crime is extremely rare, as victims fear stigma and exclusion from their families and communities²⁶⁷⁷. Only 19% of women expressed the opinion that the practice should end, the lowest proportion of any country where FGM/C is concentrated²⁶⁷⁸.

The Government and NGOs have conducted community empowerment activities to educate people

about the dangers of FGM/C and eradicate misconceptions that it is a religious or cultural requirement. These efforts have met with some success at the local level. In 2014, 74 communities made a public commitment to end the practice. But a lack of funding has prevented such programmes from being disseminated throughout the country²⁶⁷⁹. In 2015, religious leaders in the predominantly Muslim country called on families to end FGM/C in order to halt the spread of the Ebola virus, which is contracted through bodily fluids. This is the first time that traditional authority figures have spoken out against the practice²⁶⁸⁰.

The Guinean Child Code outlaws marriage for both males and females under the age of 18. However, early marriage is still commonly practiced, with parents arranging marriages for girls as young as 10 in some regions. The UNFPA reports that Guinea has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world²⁶⁸¹. An estimated 38% of girls aged 15-19 are married or in a union²⁶⁸². No prosecutions for child marriage were reported in 2014²⁶⁸³.

Children are vulnerable to trafficking, including for sexual exploitation. While Guinea was evaluated as having an adequate anti-trafficking legal framework, very few prosecutions have been made, and government data-keeping has been poor. In 2009, the Government reported that 106 trafficked children were identified, but failed to provide any further data²⁶⁸⁴. In 2014, six investigations into trafficking cases were launched, resulting in one prosecution and conviction, however no new investigations were launched in 2015²⁶⁸⁵. The Police Office for the Protection of Women, Children and Morals, which is responsible for investigating trafficking, is hampered by a severe lack of funding. It is reported that corruption and complicity of public officials plays a major role in preventing trafficking cases from being investigated. A shelter for street children was opened in 2013 in the capital, Conakry, but failed to provide any specialised services for victims of trafficking²⁶⁸⁶.

Education

Primary schooling is free and compulsory for all six years, however, secondary schooling is not compulsory. This results in a drop in attendance rates, particularly for girls. According to government figures, around 56% of girls attended primary school, compared to 66% of boys. Only 11% of girls complete secondary education as opposed to 21% of boys²⁶⁸⁷.

Worryingly, Guinea is the only country in the world that saw increased inequality in net secondary school attendance between girls in the wealthiest and poorest quintiles from 2000 to 2013²⁶⁸⁸. Gender parity in primary schooling rose from 0.82 in 2010 to 0.85 in 2013²⁶⁸⁹, while parity at secondary level also rose from 0.52 in 2006 to 0.63 in 2011²⁶⁹⁰. 2010 statistics showed that only 12% of women over age 15 and 22% of women aged 15 to 24 were literate²⁶⁹¹. Factors that lower girls' educational enrolment include sexual harassment in schools, demand for girls' labour at home and early marriage²⁶⁹².

The Ebola crisis has also had an impact on the education system. Schools remained closed in the second half of 2014 in an effort to contain the outbreak, eventually re-opening in January 2015. As a result, students have missed out on months of education, exacerbating already low levels of educational attainment²⁶⁹³.

Political Representation

Guinea held its first 'democratic' elections in 2010, following fifty years of authoritarian rule. Yet, persistent tensions between the government and opposition have delayed key processes that would signal Guinea's full transition to democratic governance. Legislative elections were eventually held in 2013, and the first round of local elections has been announced for early 2016²⁶⁹⁴. In October 2015, President Alpha Conde was elected to a second five-year term, though his political rivals have contested the result and the country has been affected by election-related violence and unrest²⁶⁹⁵.

Women hold 25 (22%) out of 114 seats in Guinea's National Parliament²⁶⁹⁶. This is an improvement on 2010 when women held 19% of seats²⁶⁹⁷. Only five out of 34 cabinet ministers are women²⁶⁹⁸. According to the Electoral Code, 30% of candidates put forward at the local and national level must be women. However, this law is not well-known or applied in practice, and representation remains low, especially at the local level²⁶⁹⁹. There are no voluntary political party quotas²⁷⁰⁰. There was only one female presidential candidate in the recent election. Some advocates for women's representation report that the relative lack of access to financial resources prevents more otherwise politically-active women from running for office. The deposit required from each candidate is equivalent to about \$114,000, which is extremely expensive in local terms²⁷⁰¹. Female voters may also

experience pressure from their husbands to adhere to their political leanings, given the dominance of males over decision-making in the home. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, AFJ-Guinea, an association for female journalists, mobilised women to broadcast their views on key issues in the media and raised awareness of the importance of voting²⁷⁰².

Economic Empowerment

Economic growth in Guinea has been severely affected by the Ebola outbreak. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth shrank from 2.3% in 2013 to 0.6% in 2014²⁷⁰³. Female participation in the labour market has grown only marginally since 2010, from 66% to 67%²⁷⁰⁴. However, the proportion of women to men in the workforce increased from 81.5% in 2005 to 83.8% in 2013²⁷⁰⁵. Guinea was ranked in the bottom third of the Global Gender Gap Index 2014 for wage equality for similar work, with a female to male ratio of 0.59²⁷⁰⁶. Low levels of education and cultural opposition to women's financial independence limit access to employment²⁷⁰⁷. Equality in employment is enshrined in the Constitution and discrimination on the basis of gender is outlawed. These laws only apply to the formal sector²⁷⁰⁸, however, and the majority of Guinean women are employed in informal agricultural labour²⁷⁰⁹.

Women and men are granted equal rights to land under the law, though traditional practice generally prevents women from inheriting and owning land. With regard to non-land assets, women have the right to retain control and use of property that they own independently of their husbands at the time of

marriage. Although no legal restrictions exist on women's access to financial services, in practice they may have difficulty fulfilling the conditions set by commercial banks for granting loans. Therefore, the traditional 'tontine' system remains the main method by which women obtain credit²⁷¹⁰.

Women Peace and Security

In the past decade, politics in Guinea has frequently been marred by violent clashes along ethnic lines²⁷¹¹. The two years of military rule, that followed the death of President Conte in 2008, saw a number of human rights atrocities committed against peaceful protesters before the first democratic elections were held in 2010²⁷¹².

The National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 was launched for the period 2009-2013. It was developed and implemented by the MSAWCP (Ministry of Social Affairs, of Women and Childhood Promotion) in collaboration with Ministerial Departments, United Nations System Agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations²⁷¹³. Encouragingly, the plan details objectives and specific actions aimed at improving the care of and access to justice of gender-based violence victims, including organising information and awareness campaigns, sensitisation and capacity-building for frontline workers, and drafting a law on sexual violence against women and girls²⁷¹⁴. However, in practice, impunity persists for state actors involved in past violations, such as the mass rape of 100 women and girls by security forces during the Stadium Massacre in 2009²⁷¹⁵.

GHANA

Ghana signed the CEDAW on 17th July 1986.²⁷¹⁶ It signed the CEDAW Optional Protocol on February 24, 2000 and ratified it on 3rd February 2011.²⁷¹⁷ Ghana implemented a National Action Plan for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2010.²⁷¹⁸ Ghana is ranked 15th in the African Gender Equality Index 2015, the second-highest rank of any West African country²⁷¹⁹.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

While women are granted equal rights under the law, they experience significant societal discrimination.²⁷²⁰ This is particularly the case in rural areas, where opportunities for education and employment are scarce.²⁷²¹ Article 17[1-2] of the Constitution guarantees equality for all citizens, and prohibits gender discrimination. However, a subsequent article [17-4] permits exceptions to this rule in all matters of personal law.²⁷²² Therefore, matters such as adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, and distribution of property

on death are subject to laws unhindered by a guarantee of equality.²⁷²³

For example, the Intestate Succession Law requires that some of the deceased person's property be left to the spouse; however this law is regularly overruled by protected local customs that do not consider widows to be appropriate inheritors.²⁷²⁴ Similarly, The Children's Act of 1998 guarantees equal parental authority to men and women.²⁷²⁵ However this law is often overruled by customary patrilineal laws, under which children belong to the father's family, and thus

become custody of that family in any marriage dissolutions or disputes.²⁷²⁶

In 2015, the Ghanaian government approved a National Gender Policy aimed at addressing gender-related injustices, and mainstreamed gender equality into national development processes.²⁷²⁷ The Government is currently developing an action plan in order to implement this policy.

Women's Political Participation

The parliamentary system in Ghana consists solely of an elected Lower House, made up of Members of Parliament (government and opposition) and Cabinet Ministers.²⁷²⁸ 2012 saw the election of six women to cabinet (out of twenty positions), and 30 out of 275 parliamentary seats are held by women.²⁷²⁹ Women now make up 10.91% of seats in Parliament, an improvement from 8.3% in 2010, but well below the recommended 30% threshold set by the United Nations.²⁷³⁰

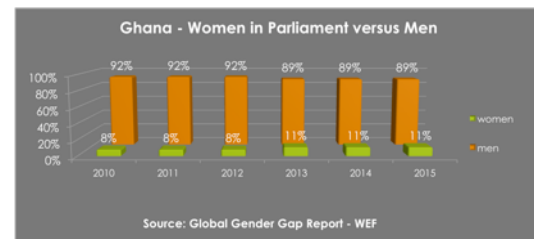
There has been a consistently high number of female candidates running in Ghanaian elections, about 100 running in every election between 2000 and 2008 (equating to 11% of all candidates).²⁷³¹ This number increased in the 2012 election, when 133 women ran.²⁷³² Women regularly show enthusiasm and a desire to partake in political discourse in Ghana²⁷³³, and there has been slow but steady progress in the number of women elected, increasing from 19 in 2008 to 30 in 2012.²⁷³⁴ Advocates call for increasing education and the empowerment of women to run for office and vote in elections. In 2012, women constituted over 50% of registered voters.²⁷³⁵ Ms. Pauline Adobe, peace expert and Commissioner at the Electoral Commission of Ghana, stated that "although women's votes are powerful enough to get men elected to political office, they themselves get rarely elected".²⁷³⁶

Ghana is often applauded for making a seamless transition into an electoral democracy; however, this progress is not reflected in the representation of women in the political and electoral processes.²⁷³⁷ According to the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, in 2012 the biggest hindrances to female participation are the lack of legislation promoting women's involvement in politics and the failure of political parties to support women within their structures.²⁷³⁸

Nana Oye Lithur, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, has called for greater representation of women in decision-making in Ghana.²⁷³⁹ She pointed out that 10.9% representation in parliament is weak compared to other sub-Saharan African countries such as Cameroon and Senegal, where the average is 22.3%.²⁷⁴⁰

Over the past decade, women have been appointed to several high positions, such as Speaker of Parliament,

Chief Justice, Attorney General, Foreign Minister and other cabinet positions, as well as chairpersons of public institutions.²⁷⁴¹ Despite this, they remain a small minority in the upper echelons of decision-making institutions. While the lower and middle levels of the public sector are well-populated by women, they are under-represented at the upper levels, such as chief directors.²⁷⁴² In 2013, there were only five positions occupied by women in the top tier of the Civil Service.²⁷⁴³ The Government of Ghana set up the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in 2001 as an explicit attempt to promote gender equality in the public sector.²⁷⁴⁴



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Maternal mortality in Ghana has decreased from 760 deaths per 100,000 births in 1990, to 470 in 2005, to the most recent low of 380 in 2013.²⁷⁴⁵ The proportion of deaths among women due to maternal causes has decreased from 28% in 1990, to 12.8% in 2005, and 11.9% in 2013.²⁷⁴⁶

The percentage of births where a skilled attendant was present has increased from 55.6% in 2005, to 60.3% in 2010, and 63.1% in 2013.²⁷⁴⁷

Abortion is only legal in Ghana when a woman's mental or physical health is in danger, in cases of rape and incest, or where the foetus is impaired.²⁷⁴⁸

Contraception is used by about 34% of women in Ghana.²⁷⁴⁹

1.37% of the population was affected by HIV in 2013.²⁷⁵⁰ This rate has decreased from 3.6% in 2003 and 2.1% in 2011.²⁷⁵¹ Ghana is noted by the Joint UNAIDS Programme as one of the five countries in West Africa where HIV prevalence declined by more than 25% between 2001 and 2011.²⁷⁵²

The 2013 Global AIDS Report noted that in Ghana, the risk of a woman living with HIV transmitting the disease to her child has decreased from 31% in 2009 to 9% in 2012. This shows progress in HIV treatment and prevention in the country. The report also noted that the coverage of services for women living with HIV to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased from 32% in 2009 to 90% in 2012. Since then, there has been a 76% reduction in new infections among children. Despite these positive reductions in infection and transmission, the spread of HIV in Ghana still has a gendered element. Women continue to be

disproportionately affected by HIV.²⁷⁵³ It is estimated that there are 250,000 Ghanaians living with HIV, with 140,000, or 56%, of these being women.²⁷⁵⁴ Male clients of sex workers, and men with multiple sex partners, are a bridge population, spreading HIV to their female partners.²⁷⁵⁵ Women tend to have less decision-making power in their relationships around the use of preventative measures such as condoms.²⁷⁵⁶

Violence Against Women

Domestic violence and rape are serious problems in Ghana.²⁷⁵⁷ Domestic violence is widespread and accepted as a cultural norm, and spousal rape is not illegal.²⁷⁵⁸ The Government of Ghana has developed programmes to reduce gender-based violence by expanding the police domestic violence and victim support units, creating gender-based violence courts, establishing shelters, and training police on how to approach domestic violence situations.²⁷⁵⁹ In spite of legislation to reduce domestic violence, the problem has become worse in recent years. The most recent Demographic and Health Survey of 2008 showed that nearly 37% of women had experienced physical violence, 20.6% of which was at the hands of an intimate partner.²⁷⁶⁰ One of the biggest obstacles to combating gender-based violence in Ghana is widespread societal acceptance.²⁷⁶¹ While in 2006, 47% of women believed a husband was justified in beating his wife, that number had risen to 60% in 2011.²⁷⁶² The percentage of men who believe violence towards wives is justified has remained the same, at around 45%.²⁷⁶³

Since 2009, Ghanaian government agencies have made significant efforts to promote awareness of domestic violence and mobilize community members.²⁷⁶⁴ In 2011, they established a Domestic Violence and Victim Support Fund to support victims of domestic violence and assist with the implementation of interventions.

Women in particular are in danger of experiencing violence, especially widows and those accused of witchcraft, something that happens with some regularity in Ghana, especially when women are successful or seen as a threat to the patriarchal order.²⁷⁶⁵ Young women in Ghana are also at risk due to the *trokosi* system: a practice of forcing girls into servitude as punishment for crimes by their families.²⁷⁶⁶ UNFPA estimates that there are up to 20,000 girls in this type of slavery in Ghana.²⁷⁶⁷

Ghana serves as a source, transit point and destination for the trafficking of women for labour and sexual exploitation.²⁷⁶⁸ Women and children living in the region surrounding Lake Volta are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, due to the presence of a large agricultural and fishing industry that creates a high demand for labour.²⁷⁶⁹ The police have an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, but it is severely underfunded and has limited capacity to combat the scale of crime it faces.²⁷⁷⁰ Yet the Government in 2013

took steps to address the problem in the cocoa production sector, with the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit rescuing 262 victims of trafficking.²⁷⁷¹

Compared to other West African countries, rates of female genital mutilation/cutting in Ghana are quite low, affecting only 3.8% of women, and 1% of girls.²⁷⁷²

Women, Peace and Security

Ghana is currently ranked the fifth most peaceful of 45 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁷⁷³ It has been a relatively peaceful and stable nation since 1993, when it returned to democratic rule as per the 1992 Constitution.²⁷⁷⁴

Significant effort has been made to prioritize the active participation of women in the framework the government has established to address national conflict.²⁷⁷⁵ In October 2010, Ghana implemented a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.²⁷⁷⁶ However, the 2014 UN Report on the Implementation of the African and Beijing Platform of Action and Review Report for Beijing +20 argues that these initiatives do not yet wholly address the particular issues affecting women, such as social and cultural practices that increase women's vulnerability during conflicts, the displacement of women, and the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence.²⁷⁷⁷

Women remain underrepresented in the appointments of Regional Peace Promotion Officers. Of the eight appointed in 2008, only one was a woman.²⁷⁷⁸

In 1964, the President of Ghana created the Director of Women's Auxiliary Corps to promote gender equality in the Armed Forces,²⁷⁷⁹ although women in the Ghana Armed Forces did not participate in peacekeeping missions until 1984.²⁷⁸⁰ Female participation in peace operations was banned in 1986, but resumed in late 1994.²⁷⁸¹ Currently Ghana has 259 female peacekeepers, out of a total force of 2,809.²⁷⁸² This is the ninth-largest proportion (10.2%) of women in a UN Peacekeeping deployment out of all global contributing countries.²⁷⁸³

Ghana has established a Women, Peace and Security Institute at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, to train students and leaders across the continent in gender and security issues.²⁷⁸⁴ The Institute will offer training based on the five pillars of UNSCR 1325, affirming the critical role that women play in preventing and resolving conflicts.²⁷⁸⁵

Education

Ghana has not yet reached gender parity for enrolment in primary school. For every 113 boys enrolled, there are 106 girls.²⁷⁸⁶ There are gender discrepancies in enrolment at all levels in rural areas of Ghana, where poverty is higher.²⁷⁸⁷

The literacy rate among female youth is relatively high in Ghana, at 83% (with males at 88%).²⁷⁸⁸ The female adult literacy rate is also 83%.²⁷⁸⁹

Female enrolment in Senior High School is increasing, and the completion rate for female students increased significantly from 28% in 2013 to 38% in 2014.²⁷⁹⁰ The number of women enrolled in universities is also increasing, with women representing 33.6% of public university students.²⁷⁹¹

In an effort to fulfill the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity in education, Ghana has set up a programme called the Participatory Approach to Student Success, which provides disadvantaged girls with secondary level scholarships and targeted support.²⁷⁹² So far this programme has reached 15,700 girls.²⁷⁹³

Economic Empowerment

In Ghana, people either belong to a patrilineal or a matrilineal lineage.²⁷⁹⁴ The majority of communities operate on a patrilineal lineage, where men are the heads of families and owners of property.²⁷⁹⁵ In communities of patrilineal lineage, women's access to land is poor, as land is owned and inherited by men.²⁷⁹⁶ Female farmers in Ghana produce 17% less in agricultural yields than their male counterparts, largely due to restricted access to land, equipment and credit.²⁷⁹⁷ In Northern Ghana only 2% of landholders are women.²⁷⁹⁸ There are, however, some matrilineal communities where women can inherit land from their female ancestors or from their fathers.²⁷⁹⁹ These communities are mainly in the Ashanti region, where 50% of landholders are women.²⁸⁰⁰

Women account for 53% of the working population in Ghana.²⁸⁰¹ 67% of Ghanaian women are employed, compared to 71% of Ghanaian men.²⁸⁰² 29% of these are unpaid family workers, and only 9% are working as paid employees.²⁸⁰³ 54% of working women are employed in agriculture.²⁸⁰⁴ There is a big difference between wage earnings of men and women: on average, men earn 2.3 times more than women.²⁸⁰⁵

Unemployment for women is still higher than unemployment among men in Ghana. While unemployment among men declined from 10.1% in 2000 to 4.8% in 2010, it went from 10.7% to 5.8% among females in the same time period.²⁸⁰⁶

A surprising figure reveals that Ghanaian women are more entrepreneurial than their male counterparts. The 2010 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey found that across all countries surveyed, only in Ghana did female participation in entrepreneurial activities exceed that of males.²⁸⁰⁷ The "total early stage entrepreneurial activity" rate for Ghana is estimated at 60% for females, and 42% for males.²⁸⁰⁸ In other words, there are more women in Ghana starting businesses than men. It is argued that economic reform programmes from the 1980s have pushed women into the informal sector, often as sole providers for their households.²⁸⁰⁹ These reforms had resulted in rising prices for basic necessities, widespread unemployment among men, and declining income.²⁸¹⁰ These conditions required women to venture into entrepreneurship to generate income and support their families.²⁸¹¹

GUINEA-BISSAU

Guinea-Bissau has experienced tremendous political turbulence over the last thirty years, with the end of Portuguese colonisation in 1974, leaving the country in turmoil. Civil war and military coups are regular occurrences, making democracy, women's rights and education secondary priorities for a fragile state. In fact, Guinea-Bissau's ranking in the Human Development Index fell by four points between 2009 and 2014.²⁸¹² The country did, however, sign CEDAW on July 17, 1980, and ratified it on August 23, 1985.²⁸¹³ It ratified the Optional Protocol on August 5, 2009.²⁸¹⁴ The Maputo Protocol ratified on June 19 2008.²⁸¹⁵ Guinea-Bissau launched a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in July 2011.²⁸¹⁶

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Guinea-Bissau only gained independence from Portugal in 1974, after years of guerrilla warfare that destroyed all societal and economic structures of the country.²⁸¹⁷ Since independence, the country has been incredibly fragile, suffering from political unrest, civil war, and economic upheavals.²⁸¹⁸ There have been 18

attempted military coups since Independence, which continue to undermine infrastructure.²⁸¹⁹ This fragility has resulted in severe poverty for vulnerable populations, and an inability to sustain development policies.²⁸²⁰ The 2014 elections restored democracy to Guinea-Bissau, and the country's leaders have accepted the urgent need to jumpstart development efforts and boost the economy.

79% of the population lives below the national poverty line, with 33% living in extreme poverty.²⁸²¹ The most recent coup, coupled with a poor cashew nut harvest in 2012-2013 and low producer prices, significantly impacted on vulnerable populations.²⁸²² This has resulted in higher female poverty, and plunged a third of the State into undernutrition.²⁸²³

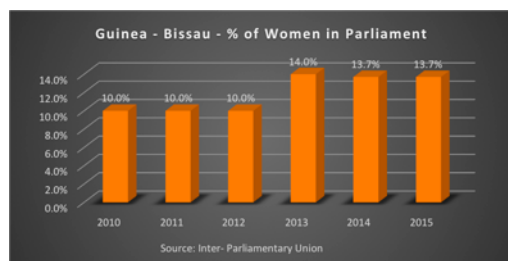
The country went from 164/169 on the UNDP Human Development Index in 2010 to 177/187 in 2014.²⁸²⁴ As a result of the turmoil in Guinea-Bissau, there is not a lot of quantitative gender-related information available. No data for Guinea-Bissau are included in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index, or Gender-related Development Index (female to male ratio of Human Development Index).²⁸²⁵

Despite legal protections, women in Guinea-Bissau experience significant discrimination as a result of cultural traditions and beliefs.²⁸²⁶ Women do not generally receive equal pay for equal work, have significantly less opportunity for education and employment, and face barriers to inheritance and ownership of property.²⁸²⁷

Women's Political Participation

In 2014, the Transitional Government and the Women's Political Platform jointly published a study on the participation of women in politics in Guinea-Bissau, and found that women's political participation has been steadily declining since the country's independence in 1974.²⁸²⁸

Political participation is quite low, with percentages consistently in the low teens. The 2005 elections saw women making up 14% of parliament, with a decrease to 10% in 2008 and a return to 14% in 2013.²⁸²⁹ This is down from 20% in 1998.²⁸³⁰ Women do not exert much influence at the level of government.²⁸³¹ Researchers cite low education levels, low literacy and a precarious economic situation as hindrances to women's effective political participation.²⁸³² However, women participate heavily at the grassroots level of society, and have demonstrated influence in mobilizing citizens.²⁸³³ It has been suggested that Parliament pass a bill to institute quotas for female representation.²⁸³⁴



In 2014, only 8% of candidates were women, with no female presidential candidates, and there is an inconsistent approach to gender issues and the inclusion of women across parties.²⁸³⁵ Only one party, the Patriotic Guinean Union (UPG) adopted a statutory quota of 40% female candidates.²⁸³⁶ As of September 1, 2015, Guinea-Bissau was ranked number 99 on IPU's Women in Parliaments: World Classification.²⁸³⁷

Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDS

The maternal mortality rate in Guinea-Bissau has decreased from 840 in 2000, to 600 in 2010 and most recently to 560 per 100,000 live births in 2013.²⁸³⁸ There is still a high fertility rate in the country, with 4.9 children per woman in 2013,²⁸³⁹ but this is down from 6.6 in 1990.²⁸⁴⁰

There are roughly 42,000 people living with HIV in Guinea-Bissau, out of a population of 1.7 million.²⁸⁴¹ More than half of these cases are women aged 15 and over; 22,000 in 2014 compared to 20,000 in 2010.²⁸⁴² HIV is more prevalent among women, at 1.7%, compared to 0.9% prevalence among men.²⁸⁴³ Condom use is at 37.4%.²⁸⁴⁴ Use of other contraceptives is quite low, with only 16% of married women using any type of birth control.²⁸⁴⁵

About 20% of women are married before the age of 18.²⁸⁴⁶

Violence Against Women

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) was banned by law in 2011 in Guinea-Bissau.²⁸⁴⁷ The Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity has been working with the National Committee for the Abandonment of Traditional Harmful Practices against Women and Children and the United Nations to combat the practice of FGM/C.²⁸⁴⁸ As of 2015, 49.8% of women have experienced FGM/C, a statistic that has remained unchanged since 2012.²⁸⁴⁹

Domestic violence, similarly, remains a problem, despite being prohibited by law. From 2012 to 2015 the data has been consistent, with 40% of both men and women believing that wife beating is justified in some situations.²⁸⁵⁰ 60% of women in Guinea-Bissau have been physically or sexually abused at least once in their lives.²⁸⁵¹ A 2013 Act of Parliament criminalised domestic violence and established support centres for women.²⁸⁵² It remains a problem partly because of a mistrust of the police, resulting in fewer charges being filed, but partly related to the prevalence of forced marriage and human trafficking.²⁸⁵³ In 2014, the Government organised a training workshop for law enforcement authorities on the prevention of harmful practices against women.²⁸⁵⁴ It also produced a national action plan to end gender-based violence, with a goal of achieving significant progress by 2017.²⁸⁵⁵ The plan outlines three pillars: prevention, promotion of an integrated system of

victim support, and institutional and organisational capacity development.²⁸⁵⁶ Activists believe that the physical integrity of women is not adequately protected in Guinea-Bissau, with lax laws and strong cultural beliefs leaving women vulnerable to violence.²⁸⁵⁷

Trafficking in women and children, for the purpose of forced labour and sexual slavery, is widespread in Guinea-Bissau.²⁸⁵⁸ The Institute of Women and Children chaired an inter-ministerial committee in an effort to coordinate government action for human trafficking. Yet there has been little action and no measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex workers and forced labour.²⁸⁵⁹ As of 2015, the Government is ranked at Tier 3 by the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report, meaning they do not comply with minimum standards to prevent human trafficking and are making no effort to do so.²⁸⁶⁰ Guinea Bissau is a source country for children and women subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking, however the extent of this is unclear, as there is no data available.²⁸⁶¹ The new government of 2014 has not made any progress in this area, compared with anti-trafficking efforts demonstrated in previous administrations.²⁸⁶² Despite enacting an anti-trafficking law and adopting a national action plan in 2011, the Government has not demonstrated any notable anti-trafficking efforts or enforcement actions.²⁸⁶³

Women, Peace and Security

Women continue to play a crucial role in peace building and conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau.²⁸⁶⁴ National authorities are working to increase women's participation, and ensure that a gender perspective continues to inform relevant aspects of conflict resolution and peace building, as per UN mandates.²⁸⁶⁵

In 2013, over forty women's groups across the country participated in the formal creation of the Guinea-Bissau Chapter of the ECOWAS Women Peace and Security Network.²⁸⁶⁶ This network aims to coordinate and optimise women's functions and prevent conflict, maintain peace and security, and promote post-conflict reconstruction and the protection of women's rights.²⁸⁶⁷

Education

The turbulent situation that Guinea-Bissau has experienced for the past few decades has had a negative impact on education. The overthrow of governments, extreme poverty and a precarious economic situation made education a secondary priority. For example, following the 2012 coup, more than 90% of state schools closed due to the absence of effective government.²⁸⁶⁸ Girls are not attending school at the same rate as boys in Guinea-Bissau, and

those who do attend are not completing their education in high numbers. The UN cites girls working in the household, agriculture and small businesses as reasons for the gender disparity in dropout rates.²⁸⁶⁹ In addition to the demands put on females, students are not completing their education because of insufficient materials, lack of school manuals and infrastructure, frequent strikes and disruptions, extreme poverty, inadequate teacher training, and seasonal child labour.²⁸⁷⁰ For every 100 boys attending primary school, there are 93 girls.²⁸⁷¹ Completion rate among girls is 56.7%, where for boys it is 71.3%.²⁸⁷² The adult literacy rate is poor, at 68.9% for men and 42.1% for women.²⁸⁷³

In 2010, Guinea-Bissau joined the Global Partnership for Education, with the goal of achieving complete primary education enrolment for all students by 2020.²⁸⁷⁴ The Government has received a \$12 million grant to support education in the country from 2012-2016.²⁸⁷⁵

Economic Empowerment

Women do not experience economic empowerment to the same degree as men in Guinea-Bissau. As heads of household, men hold sole authority over family matters.²⁸⁷⁶ So, while legally women have the same rights as men regarding ownership, their access to land and bank loans is heavily restricted.²⁸⁷⁷ These restrictions are supported by a provision in national law that allows local customs to govern matters of family and property.²⁸⁷⁸ Several NGOs have established operations in Guinea-Bissau with the goal of providing micro-credit loans to women, but local customs are preventing women from accessing them.²⁸⁷⁹

While there are no exact data for the number of women working in any one industry, research shows that women mainly work in the agricultural sector, where cashew nuts and rice are the main crops.²⁸⁸⁰ The World Food Programme supports women's farming organisations in Guinea-Bissau by exchanging farming equipment for fresh produce.²⁸⁸¹ The ratio of female to male labour force participation has increased from 80.4% in 2000, to 84.3% in 2005, to 86.9% in 2013.²⁸⁸²

The recent elections have restored some hope to the economy, with farm gate prices improving and international partners resuming their financial support for the Government.²⁸⁸³ The economy is heavily

dependent on the exportation of cashews and rice²⁸⁸⁴, and is thus very vulnerable to fluctuating global market prices for these commodities.²⁸⁸⁵

Jose Ramos-Horta led the UN peacebuilding mission in Guinea-Bissau from just after the 2012 coup until

2014.²⁸⁸⁶ He argues that “Women are the greatest asset of [Guinea-Bissau], the hardest working; unprotected. They work in the field all day long, then before going home, they fetch firewood, some water, carry the children on their back.”²⁸⁸⁷

LIBERIA

Transitioning to a stable and prosperous state has been challenging for Liberia. Since a 14-year conflict ended in 2003, the country has faced infrastructure deficit and considerable governance and institutional constraints, as well as a continuing risk of instability.²⁸⁸⁸ It cannot be underestimated how severe the impact of this conflict was on Liberian civil society, human rights, and particularly the rights of women. More than 250,000 people were killed, and more than 75% of women experienced violence.²⁸⁸⁹ Since then, the country has made great strides towards women's equality, with the election of Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, in 2006, the achievement of 30% female representation in government, and the establishment of a new court dedicated to carrying out rape trials.²⁸⁹⁰

In addition to the difficulties caused by a long civil war, in 2014 Liberia experienced one of the most severe outbreaks of the Ebola epidemic.²⁸⁹¹ When the UN Security Council declared the crisis a threat to international peace and security, the Liberian Government imposed a state of emergency, which included the quarantine of several Ebola-stricken areas.²⁸⁹² The Government was heavily criticized for this move, which restricted movement and employment in some of the country's most destitute areas.²⁸⁹³

Liberia ratified CEDAW on July 17, 1984.²⁸⁹⁴ It ratified the CEDAW Optional Protocol on September 22, 2004²⁸⁹⁵. It signed the Maputo Protocol on December 16, 2003, ratified it on December 14, 2007, and deposited it on July 15, 2008.²⁸⁹⁶ Liberia launched a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on International Women's Day (March 8th), 2009.²⁸⁹⁷

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

As in many African nations, customary law remains dominant in Liberia, taking precedence over any national law that guarantees equal rights, creating gender discrepancies in access to land, custody of children, and impartial adjudication of disputes.²⁸⁹⁸

Liberia was ranked 143/148 in the 2012 Gender Inequality Index, and 62/86 in the 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index.²⁸⁹⁹ During the fourteen-year civil war, which tore apart civil society, government and daily life in Liberia, more than 75% of Liberian women experienced violence.²⁹⁰⁰ Since then, great strides have been made toward women's equality. Liberia elected the world's first black female President, and Africa's first female president in 2006.²⁹⁰¹ It has also established a new court dedicated to carrying out rape trials.²⁹⁰²

The post-conflict government, led by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, embarked on a large reconstruction and peacebuilding programme, with the goal of transforming Liberia into a “model of post-conflict recovery”.²⁹⁰³ Under her leadership, the Government was able to improve access to education, strengthen the economic roles of women, and increase involvement in political and social spaces.²⁹⁰⁴ Despite this, the majority of women, particularly those in rural areas continue to have low literacy rates, are confined to low-skilled, highly vulnerable employment, and experience gender-based violence as a result of

discriminatory traditional beliefs and practices.²⁹⁰⁵

The Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development acknowledges that girls' and women's vulnerability is formed very early as a result of cultural beliefs that attach a very low value to females in society; beliefs that are reinforced in schools, communities and institutions.²⁹⁰⁶ As a result, girls experience harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), gender-based violence, child marriage and sexual exploitation.²⁹⁰⁷

Women's Political Participation

Liberia has a bicameral legislature, made up of a House of Representatives, a Senate, and a President who is elected by direct popular vote for a term of six years.²⁹⁰⁸

2005 saw the first open, democratic election since the civil war. While women represented 52% of the Liberian population and half of registered voters, only 14% of candidates were female.²⁹⁰⁹ Women won five of thirty seats in the Senate (16.6%) and nine of sixty-four seats in the House of Representatives (14%).²⁹¹⁰ Two women contested the Presidency, out of twenty-two candidates.²⁹¹¹ Against the odds, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won.²⁹¹²

In 2011, the second round of democratic elections were held, amidst significant violence and unrest in the country.²⁹¹³ While President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was re-elected, it was otherwise not a successful

election for female representation. Women won three seats in the Senate, down from five in 2005, now making up only 10% of the Chamber.²⁹¹⁴ The number of seats in the House increased to seventy-three in 2011.²⁹¹⁵ Women won eight seats of these, down from nine in 2005.²⁹¹⁶ There are five women in the twenty-one seat Cabinet, and two women in the five-member Supreme Court.²⁹¹⁷

Observers argue that women do not run for office in Liberia because of lack of education, social and cultural pressure to conform to gender roles, direct threats from their communities and male counterparts, and even unbalanced support from political parties.²⁹¹⁸ In an effort to promote female participation in the electoral process, the current Liberian government introduced The Fairness Bill, which requires 30% female participation in political offices and party leadership positions.²⁹¹⁹

President Sirleaf has made an effort to increase female representation in leadership positions, appointing women to critical roles such as Minister of Finance and Minister of Justice and Commerce. She has also launched national programmes to support schoolgirls and women.²⁹²⁰ Under Sirleaf, at least 15 of 23 Deputy Ministers and Assistant Ministers have been women.²⁹²¹ Despite these efforts, representation remains unbalanced in elected roles, and women's needs and priorities are not sufficiently reflected in decision-making processes and governmental priorities.²⁹²²

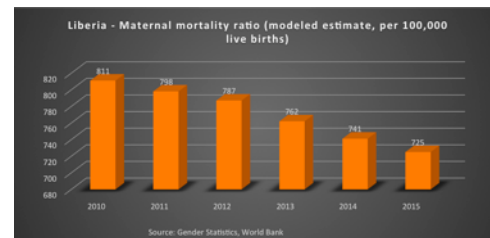
Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The Ministry of Gender and Development reported in 2009, that high maternal mortality in Liberia was due to an acute shortage of skilled labour, inadequate emergency obstetric care, extremely high numbers of teenage pregnancies, inadequate medical supplies, low use of contraceptives, and poor nutrition.²⁹²³ As a result, the Government has made an effort to improve maternal health, and maternal mortality has decreased from 811 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 725 in 2015.²⁹²⁴

In 2013, contraceptive use was 11.4%, unchanged from the year before.²⁹²⁵ 46.3% of births were attended by a skilled attendant, while only 36.9% took place in a health institution.²⁹²⁶ These numbers, again, remained unchanged from the preceding year.²⁹²⁷

In 2012, there were 11,000 women living with HIV, which increased to 15,000 in 2013.²⁹²⁸ Prevalence of HIV remains higher among women, affecting 0.4% of young women versus 0.2% of young men, and 1.8% of all adult women compared to 1.2% of men.²⁹²⁹ Women are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS due to a number of factors, including their inability to negotiate safe sex and early engagement in sexual activity. They also have a higher risk of engaging in sex work because of lack of access to free education, higher school dropout rates, unemployment, and

limited access to information.²⁹³⁰ Men are better educated about HIV, with 27.2% of young men having “comprehensive knowledge of HIV” versus 20.5% of women.²⁹³¹ As a result of women having little decision-making power, condom use is low. However, numbers of women saying they have used condoms have improved since 2012, going from 16.2% in 2012 to 25.6% in 2013.²⁹³² The Government of Liberia has decentralised HIV services to ensure women have greater access to prevention, care and treatment.²⁹³³



Violence Against Women

The cultural context in Liberia tends to perpetuate gender-based violence (GBV), supporting the extensive prevalence of sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, incest, early and forced marriage, wife inheritance, and female genital mutilation (FGM/C).²⁹³⁴ GBV escalated during the 14-year civil war; however, indicators suggest violence continues in peacetime.²⁹³⁵ In 2009, 44% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence, 32% of them reporting violence at the hands of a husband or partner, and 8% at the hands of a policeman or soldier.²⁹³⁶ Attitudes supporting wife-beating and violence against women are encouraged by a culture of patriarchy that puts a low value on women: In 2012, 59.3% of Liberian women believed that wife-beating is justified.²⁹³⁷

UNICEF reports that over the 2002-2012 period, over 65% of Liberian women experienced FGM/C.²⁹³⁸ In 2015, those numbers remain steady.²⁹³⁹

Rape is one of the most highly reported crimes in the country, and Liberia has one of the highest rates of sexual violence against women in the world.²⁹⁴⁰ During wartime, sexual violence against women was at an all-time high, with 77% of women reporting having been raped.²⁹⁴¹ In 2013, 70% of married women reported having been sexually assaulted by their husbands, and 26% of women reported having been raped by a stranger.²⁹⁴² The Overseas Development Institute suggests that rape has been normalised in Liberia, and is seen as a form of “hyper-masculinity”.²⁹⁴³ This is because during the civil war, women were often the breadwinners when men were away fighting, and now in peacetime men are trying to cling to any form of social relevance in a country with high unemployment.²⁹⁴⁴

President Sirleaf has passed several new rape laws, and set up special courts to prosecute violence against

women.²⁹⁴⁵ However, prosecution statistics remain low, with cases being thrown out due to lack of evidence, police bribes, or victims being pressured to drop charges.²⁹⁴⁶ Many hospitals in Liberia have now set up gender-based violence units, although the units remain small and funding is low.²⁹⁴⁷ Sirleaf's efforts are encouraging, but there is still much to be done.

Liberia is a source, transit point and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sexual exploitation.²⁹⁴⁸ Victims are often forced to work as domestic servants, beggars or forced into prostitution.²⁹⁴⁹ Traffickers are commonly family members who force poorer relatives into servitude. The US Embassy reports that Liberia is a Tier 2 country for human trafficking, meaning that the Government does not comply with the minimum standards for preventing and eliminating trafficking. However, they are making efforts to do so, despite limited resources,²⁹⁵⁰ which may account for the ranking remaining unchanged from 2010 to 2015.²⁹⁵¹

The outbreak of Ebola in 2014 severely affected the country and overwhelmed the government's resources and capacity for addressing this issue.²⁹⁵² The Government has yet to prosecute any trafficking offenders and has failed to develop trafficking-specific protective services for victims.²⁹⁵³ However, in March 2015, the Liberian Government did send a delegation to Lebanon to rescue 10 Liberian women who had been forced into domestic servitude.²⁹⁵⁴

Women, Peace and Security

During the civil war, women played an important role in supporting the economy, particularly by becoming breadwinners for their families.²⁹⁵⁵ Women protected their families, their communities, and learned leadership and creativity in a space where men were absent and thus not dominant.²⁹⁵⁶ This created an atmosphere where women strove for leadership, and since then, women have taken on important roles in peace talks and constitutional reviews.²⁹⁵⁷ President Sirleaf has made a concerted effort to include women in post-war reconstruction: appointing women to important Cabinet positions, and participating in UN-led efforts to increase their economic, social and physical security.²⁹⁵⁸

Since 2012, UN Women has run programmes in rural areas of Liberia to train women in literacy, entrepreneurship, leadership and other skills, with the goal of increasing their sense of security in public and private spaces.²⁹⁵⁹ These programmes have included village saving schemes and loan programmes, where women pool their resources, and individually borrow from the funds on a rotating basis.²⁹⁶⁰ With improved economic and physical security, women are more likely to take part in politics, peace building and post-conflict recovery.²⁹⁶¹

UN Women has also been supporting "Peace Hut programs".²⁹⁶² Peace Huts spread across Liberia

during the civil war as places where women of the village came together to mediate and resolve community disputes.²⁹⁶³ In these spaces, women openly and safely discussed issues of inequality and together took decisions on peace and security.²⁹⁶⁴ UN Women continues to support more than 16 Peace Huts across Liberia, and the Liberian National Police is working with the huts to improve crime prevention and violence against women by providing mobile phones.²⁹⁶⁵ The result of this initiative, and of the tremendous support it is receiving, is that women are now seeing themselves as crucial players of peace building and conflict resolution, outside of wartime.²⁹⁶⁶

Women account for 14% of the 1,354 peacekeepers in Liberia.²⁹⁶⁷

Education

Girls experience unequal access to schooling in Liberia, and this is reflected in high levels of illiteracy among girls and women in the country.²⁹⁶⁸ As of 2009, literacy of women in rural areas was staggeringly low, at 26%, versus 61% for urban women.²⁹⁶⁹ This can be compared to literacy rates of 60% of rural men and 86% of urban men.²⁹⁷⁰ In more recent years the numbers have not significantly increased, with literacy of women aged 15-24 remaining at 37% between 2012 to 2013, while for the same age group of men it remains at 65%.²⁹⁷¹ For every 100 boys enrolled in primary school, about 91.6 girls are enrolled. For secondary school, that number drops to 82.²⁹⁷²

There have been several efforts to improve the enrolment and retention of girls at school. President Sirleaf has launched a National Girls' Education Programme that provides; scholarships to girls, recruit and trains female teachers, and provides literacy training for market women.²⁹⁷³ USAID has been administering Let Girls Learn in Liberia, a programme designed to improve enrolment, attendance and retention of 7,000 primary school girls across 60 schools through scholarships, school supplies, hygiene kits, mentoring, tutoring, and gender training.²⁹⁷⁴

The challenges to girl's education persist. Among them are teenage pregnancy, early marriage, poverty, negative peer pressure, male preference in the family and long distances to school.²⁹⁷⁵

Economic Empowerment

Liberia ranks 162 of 169 on the Human Development Index, with 83% of the population surviving on 1 Liberian dollar a day.²⁹⁷⁶ The 2014 Ebola outbreak had serious consequences for the economy, particularly women's economic activity. The travel restrictions and market closures heavily impacted market traders, of whom almost 85% are women.²⁹⁷⁷ Post-outbreak, many female entrepreneurs have had to rebuild their businesses, as many had to default on their loans.²⁹⁷⁸ UN Women has been providing cash

grants to get these women back on their feet and support their businesses.²⁹⁷⁹ Common challenges to women-owned businesses are; constraints on investments, as women make up most small and informal businesses; corruption (particularly in the form of gender-based violence and sexual assault from government authorities); taxes; and limited access to credit.²⁹⁸⁰

Women also make up 80% of the agricultural labour force.²⁹⁸¹ Despite this, they own less land and depend on male relatives to access any land.²⁹⁸² Women are not equally remunerated for their work, and carry out a larger share of unpaid family work.²⁹⁸³ Because of the

prevalence of customary law, which favours men in terms of property ownership, women are in a more vulnerable position when faced with an economic crisis, family conflict, marital breakdown or widowhood. The concentration of women in the informal sector means they have less opportunity to secure a path out of poverty.²⁹⁸⁴

MAURITANIA

Sitting at the very western tip of the African continent, Mauritania borders Algeria, Mali, Morocco and Senegal, thus connecting the Maghreb and sub-Saharan West Africa²⁹⁸⁵. Mauritania signed and ratified CEDAW in 2001, without reservations²⁹⁸⁶. It has not signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW²⁹⁸⁷. Mauritania ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005²⁹⁸⁸. However, it has yet to develop a National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325²⁹⁸⁹.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Mauritania recognises four different legal domains: Islamic law; customary African law; customary Arabic-Bedouin and Berber law; and (modern) civil law²⁹⁹⁰. Islamic and customary laws, which are particularly discriminatory against women and treat them as unequal to men, tend to take precedence in matters of marriage, child custody and inheritance²⁹⁹¹. For example, while the Personal Status Code (2001) stipulates 18 as the legal age of marriage for both men and women, the majority of marriages are conducted under customary law, which determines no minimum age for marriage. Women's second-class status is also enshrined in the Personal Status Code itself, which considers the husband as the head of the household and mirrors Sharia law in granting men the right to unilateral divorce by repudiation with no requirement to provide financial support. While the law states that the consent of both parties is essential to the validity of a marriage, it also considers the 'silence' of a young bride to equate to consent²⁹⁹².

There have been several attempts to draw up a legal code for women and the family; however, the Government has achieved little concrete developments in legislation²⁹⁹³. Due to the prevailing high rate of illiteracy in Mauritania, most women have little knowledge of their rights under the existing law. The Government has made efforts to raise awareness of the Personal Status Code through a programme of 'boutiques de droit' and 'caravanes de droit', as well as radio and television campaigns²⁹⁹⁴.

Women's Political Participation

The Presidential election in 2014 resulted in the reelection of the incumbent, Mohamed Ould Abdel

Aziz. In 2014, women held 25% of seats in Parliament, a modest improvement from 2010, when they held 22% of seats²⁹⁹⁵. Women's representation remains low at all levels of government: they make up 18 out of 95 members of the National Assembly, 10 out of 56 senators, 1,120 out of 3,688 town councilors and only 4 out of 216 mayors²⁹⁹⁶. The Group of Advocacy Initiatives for Women's Political Participation (Groupe des Initiatives de Plaidoyer pour la Participation Politique des Femmes, GI3PF), a national coalition of women's rights activists, has been taking action to promote women's political participation since 2011. Although a national women's was established before the legislative and municipal elections in 2013, GI3PF is advocating for quotas to be strengthened through law. They have also supported female members of parliament to increase the visibility of women's issues in government²⁹⁹⁷.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Mauritania's total fertility rate has declined gradually from 5 children per woman in 2006, to 4.8 in 2010 and 4.7 in 2013²⁹⁹⁸. The percentage of married women using any form contraception rose from 9.3% in 2007 to 11.4% in 2011, thus remaining extremely low²⁹⁹⁹.

The maternal mortality rate remains high, despite a decline from 723 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 602 in 2015³⁰⁰⁰. This high rate is attributable to a lack of skilled birth attendants, poor quality of services, difficulty in accessing services and costs of services and medicines, in addition to overall lack of awareness about reproductive health services among rural women. Health services account for only 4% of the national budget³⁰⁰¹.

Abortion is only legal to save the life of a pregnant woman³⁰⁰².

HIV prevalence among the Mauritanian population is estimated at 0.7%, having declined from 0.8% in 2010³⁰⁰³. Women are disproportionately affected by HIV, and women's share of the HIV-positive adult population has risen from 53% to 54% between 2010 and 2014³⁰⁰⁴.

Violence against Women

According to UNFPA, sexual violence is increasing in urban areas, due to a lack of awareness of and weak enforcement of laws³⁰⁰⁵. Although rape is a criminal offence, it is not clearly defined by law, making it difficult to punish perpetrators³⁰⁰⁶. This also means that marital rape is not specifically outlawed³⁰⁰⁷. Due to the intersection between of national and Sharia laws, rape victims who bring their cases to court risk being accused of 'zina' (unlawful sexual relations outside of marriage), and may be imprisoned themselves³⁰⁰⁸. Moreover, a woman's testimony is only considered to carry half the weight of a man's³⁰⁰⁹. The fear of discriminatory treatment, as well as cultural stigma, means that rape cases are often settled between families³⁰¹⁰. The Government convicted 160 perpetrators under the rape law during the year 2014, however it is reported that wealthy suspects often escape prosecution, or avoid jail sentences if prosecuted³⁰¹¹.

There is no data available regarding the prevalence of domestic violence or sexual harassment in Mauritania, but both are reportedly common problems in society. Spousal abuse is illegal, although penalties are not clearly defined³⁰¹². Women who suffer violence at the hands of their husbands are more likely to seek help from their family, community or an NGO than to approach the police, who are known to rarely intervene in domestic matters. There is no specific law addressing sexual harassment³⁰¹³.

The percentage of women who have undergone FGM/C decreased from 72.2% in 2007 to 69.4% in 2011³⁰¹⁴. FGM/C is traditionally practiced across all ethnic groups, but varies considerably between regions. It is generally carried out on baby girls before the age of six months³⁰¹⁵. The Child Protection Penal Code states that any act or attempt to damage a girl's sexual organs is punishable by imprisonment or a fine, effectively outlawing FGM/C. However, the Law is rarely applied, and the accompanying 'implementation law' remains provisional. The Government has partnered with International Organisations and NGOs to implement an action plan on FGM/C, through reinforcing the law, educating the population on the harmful effects of the practice, encouraging public declarations of abandonment, training reproductive health professionals and counteracting the misconception that FGM/C is a religious requirement. In 2011, Muslim religious leaders issued a regional fatwa against the practice. Government hospitals and

licensed medical practitioners have also been banned from performing the procedure³⁰¹⁶.

Another harmful traditional practice affecting some girls in the White Moor community is forced feeding, or 'gavage', in order to attain excess body weight that is associated with female beauty. Thanks in part to government and civil society campaigns, this practice appears to be declining³⁰¹⁷.

Despite the legal age of marriage being set at 18, the Personal Status Code enables judges to grant authorisation for marriages at younger ages, and early marriage remains common³⁰¹⁸. As of 2013, 14.2% of girls were married by age 15 and 34.4% were married by age 18³⁰¹⁹.

According to the 2014 Global Slavery Index, Mauritania has the highest incidence of slavery in the world³⁰²⁰. An estimated 155,600 members³⁰²¹ of the Black Moor and Afro-Mauritanian communities are considered part of traditional 'slave castes', and are subjected to forced, unpaid labour as agricultural workers and domestic servants through ancestral master-slave relationships³⁰²². The Anti-slavery Law passed in 2007 provides for penalties of 5 to 10 years for perpetrators of all forms of slavery. Although a national agency was set up in 2014 to oversee enforcement and public awareness of the law, it has yet to act on any reports of slavery or slavery-like practices. The Government continues to deny the extent of the problem³⁰²³. Anti-slavery campaigners are frequently subject to harassment, intimidation and detention³⁰²⁴. Women are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation due to their limited opportunities for economic independence³⁰²⁵.

Women, Peace and Security

Mauritania is seen by the West as an important ally in fighting Islamist militancy in the Sahel region. The country continues to be threatened by terrorism, especially in the north and east, although the Government has succeeded in increasing stability and security³⁰²⁶.

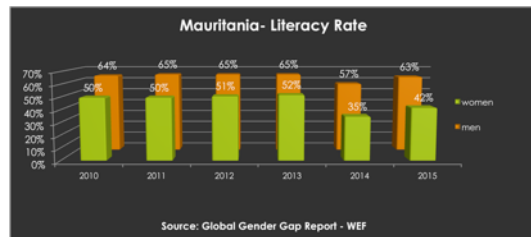
Women have been able to serve in the Mauritanian military service since 2008³⁰²⁷. UN Women reports that women are claiming more space in the peace and security domains in Mauritania through integrated programming addressing the rights of women, during and after crises or conflict situations, enhancing women's place at the peace making table³⁰²⁸. Mauritania has yet to develop a national action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Resolution 1325³⁰²⁹.

Education

The law mandates six years of mandatory education, however it is not rigorously enforced. Children from marginalised groups, including slave castes, often receive no education whatsoever³⁰³⁰. However, the

country has seen some progress with regard to primary school access and completion, as well as the transition to secondary school³⁰³¹.

Mauritania does not have significant gender gap in education at the primary level. Primary school enrolment is in fact slightly higher for girls. In 2009, the primary net enrolment rate was 69.1% for boys and 71.7% for girls, compared to rates of 68.1% and 72.9% respectively in 2012³⁰³². Girls were also slightly more likely to complete primary education (82%) compared to boys (80.5%), according to the most recent figures from 2008³⁰³³. Enrolment in secondary education remains low across the genders. While the percentage of girls enrolled in secondary education increased from 18.3% in 2009 to 24.5% in 2012, the gender disparity increased as boys' enrolment rose from 21.9% to 29% in the same period³⁰³⁴. The literacy rate for women was 50% in 2010 up to 51% in 2012; 52% in 2013; 39% in 2014 and 42% in 2015³⁰³⁵.



Economic Empowerment

Mauritania is consistently ranked low on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report (132 of 145). This can partly be attributed to women's low participation in the work force³⁰³⁶. While the percentage of adult men in the work force has remained consistently above 80%, in 2013, it was reported that only 29% of adult females were actively engaged in the work force, a rate that has not changed since 2010³⁰³⁷. Women earn on average only 28% of what men earn – one of the worst wage gaps in the world³⁰³⁸.

Although the law permits married and unmarried women to register businesses and open bank accounts in the same way as men, in practice, Mauritanian women are often excluded from the formal, traditional financial system, including access to finance and loans³⁰³⁹. Traditional gender roles mean that there is some stigma attached to women's financial independence through business ownership³⁰⁴⁰. Since the 1990s, the Government has taken action to promote microfinance, making it easier for women to borrow money³⁰⁴¹.

The Constitution guarantees men and women equal rights to property ownership. However, married women are subject to some limitations in their rights to administer property, for example, a woman's husband is permitted to intervene if she decides to give away more than a third of her assets. While women are able to inherit property, they are entitled to a lesser share than men under Sharia law³⁰⁴².

MALI

The security situation in northern Mali remains highly unstable due to the ongoing conflict between anti-government groups and the Malian army. Human rights abuses against civilians are reportedly perpetrated by both sides, and targeted attacks against foreign nationals have negatively impacted on humanitarian aid operations³⁰⁴³.

The Constitution of Mali enshrines equality between the sexes and prohibits discrimination based on gender. Mali ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and the Optional Protocol in 2000. It also ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005³⁰⁴⁴. Mali has adopted a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325³⁰⁴⁵.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

The Ministry for Women was established in 1997, however its ability to advocate for women has been limited by the severe lack of legislation protecting their rights³⁰⁴⁶. There is no specific law at the national level that addresses sexual violence or violence against women³⁰⁴⁷. Mali adopted its first National Gender Policy in 2010. This was followed by the launch of the first of three national action plans to cover the period 2011-2018. One of the proposed points of intervention is the creation of legal

instruments to uphold equality between men and women³⁰⁴⁸.

The Family Code was reviewed between 2009 and 2011, with the intention of altering provisions on the age of marriage, custody and inheritance practices. However, following protests by Islamic groups, the law was ultimately revised to include more conservative changes, and the results are arguably even more discriminatory against women than they were previously. For example, the new Family Code defines men as the 'head of the household' and requires

that wives obey their husbands. The Code also permits religious marriages for the first time³⁰⁴⁹.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Mali has a high total fertility rate of 6.9 children per woman, which has declined only a little from an average of 6.8 children per woman in the period 2005-2010³⁰⁵⁰. Due to the common practice of early marriage, the adolescent fertility is also high, although it has decreased from 179 in 2011 to 175 in 2014 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19³⁰⁵¹.

According to Malian law, a woman has the right to decide when and how many children she will have³⁰⁵². However, 71.8% of women stated that it is their husband who makes most decisions regarding their health³⁰⁵³. Modern contraceptive methods have been made available via Mali's public health system since 1993³⁰⁵⁴. In spite of this, the percentage of women using any form of contraception remains low, though it has risen from 8.3% in 2006 to 10.3% in 2013³⁰⁵⁵. 26% of women have an unmet need for family planning, a slight decrease from 27.5% in 2006³⁰⁵⁶.

Despite an extremely poor global ranking for maternal health (176 out of 179 countries according to Save the Children's Mothers' Index³⁰⁵⁷), Mali is making some progress. Maternal mortality decreased from 600 deaths per 100,000 live births to 550 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2010 and 2013. An estimated 59% of births are currently assisted by skilled health personnel, compared to 56% in 2010 and 49% in 2006³⁰⁵⁸. A major problem faced by the country is a critical shortage of health workers, with the vast majority concentrated in the south and in urban areas. 75% of all health workers are based in the capital, Bamako. As a result, rural and northern communities are at a severe disadvantage in their access to skilled healthcare. The extremist insurgency has further exacerbated this problem in the north of the country. International and local NGOs continue to enact programmes to increase the numbers of health personnel and improve the quality of their training on maternal health issues, particularly in remote areas³⁰⁵⁹.

Under the law, abortion is only permitted to save the life of the mother, and in cases of rape or incest³⁰⁶⁰.

HIV prevalence is relatively low, estimated at around 1.4% for the total population³⁰⁶¹ and 0.7% for women aged 15-24³⁰⁶². In 2013, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria approved \$75 million

in funding to improve HIV screening, treatment and prevention in the country³⁰⁶³.

Violence against Women

Mali has no law that addresses violence against women in general. Neither are there any specific laws against domestic violence or sexual harassment³⁰⁶⁴.

According to the 2012-2013 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), nearly 4 in 10 (38%) women have experienced physical violence. 65% of these suffered abuse at the hands of a husband or intimate partner³⁰⁶⁵. Surveys of social attitudes towards domestic violence suggest a worrying level of acceptance. Figures from the 2012-2013 DHS indicate that 76.3% of women believe that a man is justified in beating his wife in certain situations. This is an increase on the proportion of women expressing this view in the 2006 survey (75.2%)³⁰⁶⁶. While there was no equivalent data at national level for men, a smaller-scale study conducted by CARE in 2013 found that 63% of men agreed with the statement; 'There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten'³⁰⁶⁷. Victims can bring charges of general assault against abusers; however, many women fear that filing a complaint against their husband could give him grounds for divorce and leave them without any financial support³⁰⁶⁸.

1 in 10 women have been subjected to sexual violence at some point in their lives³⁰⁶⁹. Although rape is a criminal offence, punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment, the law is not effectively enforced, and cases are rarely brought to court. Marital rape is not specifically addressed by law³⁰⁷⁰. Many victims of rape are reluctant to file charges due to societal taboos, particularly as perpetrators are often close relatives. Police will stop investigating a rape case if an agreement between both parties is reached before the case goes to trial³⁰⁷¹.

Despite having ratified the Maputo Protocol, which outlaws all forms of FGM/C, Mali has failed to adopt any legislation banning the practice³⁰⁷². It is, however, illegal to perform the procedure in government-run health centres³⁰⁷³. In an action plan set out in 2014, the Government committed to a number of goals on the reduction of FGM/C, including the adoption of a law prohibiting the practice by 2018. Despite this, many of the target dates have been pushed back multiple times, and the Government has showed no strong political will to act on its plan in an effective way³⁰⁷⁴.

The prevalence of FGM/C in Mali has not decreased in the past 20 years. 91.4% of women are estimated to have undergone the practice according to the latest DHS, compared to 92% in 2006 (this percentage was adjusted for direct comparison, as the 2013 survey did not include data from three northern regions)³⁰⁷⁵. Prevalence varies only marginally between rural (91.8%) and urban populations (90.5%). There is some differentiation according to religion, as FGM/C is more commonly practiced among Muslims (92.8%) than Christians (65.2%). 60% of those surveyed saw FGM/C as a religious requirement³⁰⁷⁶.

In the latest survey indicates more men and women are in favour of the practice continuing, 71.9% of women and 78.9% of men (once again it should be taken into account that this data did not include northern regions where incidence of FGM/C is traditionally lower) compared to the 2006 DHS where 69.5% of men and 76% of women were in favour³⁰⁷⁷. There is also concerning evidence that 57% of daughters whose mothers did not undergo FGM/C were subjected to the procedure themselves, with 38% of these experiencing infibulation, one of the most extreme variations³⁰⁷⁸. There is also a trend towards girls being cut at increasingly younger ages. In 1995, 41% of women were cut by the age of 4, while that number had risen to 73% in 2013³⁰⁷⁹.

Government information campaigns have been conducted throughout the country to raise awareness of the dangers of the practice³⁰⁸⁰. A number of national and international NGOs are active in campaigning against FGM/C through the media, community-based interventions and working with traditional practitioners, political leaders and religious authorities to publically condemn the practice³⁰⁸¹. The incidence of FGM/C has reduced in at least one region and among daughters of more educated parents, according to reports by human rights organisations³⁰⁸².

The legal age of marriage is 18 for men and 16 for women; although girls aged 15 may marry with the consent of their parents and the approval of a judge³⁰⁸³. It is reportedly common for officials to accept falsified birth certificates and documents showing that girls under age 15 are old enough to marry³⁰⁸⁴. Early marriage is commonly practiced, with some girls being married off as young as age 10³⁰⁸⁵. 55% of women aged 24-29 were married before age 18 and 15% were married before the age of 15, according to the 2013 DHS survey, although this is an

improvement from 2006, when 66% of adult women reported having been married by 18, and 23% by the age of 15³⁰⁸⁶.

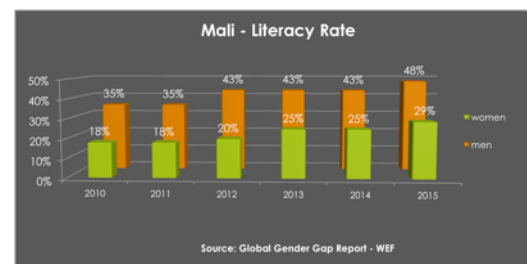
Mali adopted a comprehensive anti-trafficking law in 2012. However, there is a lack of awareness of the law among judicial officials, and the Government has not made significant efforts to increase law enforcement to tackle trafficking³⁰⁸⁷. 13 cases of trafficking were investigated in 2013, and the Government referred 79 victims to NGO services as well as rehabilitating 25 child soldiers, but ultimately, no prosecutions were made against offenders³⁰⁸⁸.

Education

The Constitution states that education should be universal and free, and the law provides for compulsory schooling between the ages of 7 and 16. However, multiple barriers prevent many children, particularly girls, from accessing education. These include; the prohibitive cost of school fees, uniforms and school supplies; distance to the nearest school; lack of transportation; early marriage and the prevalence of sexual harassment in schools³⁰⁸⁹. Around 369,000 girls of primary age are estimated to be out of school³⁰⁹⁰.

Conflict in the north of Mali resulted in the closure of schools and subsequent disruption of education for children in the areas affected. Only 74% of schools reopened for the 2014-2015 academic year in October³⁰⁹¹.

Mali has an overall adult literacy rate of 33.6%. There is a disparity in literacy between men and women, at 48% and 29% respectively in 2015³⁰⁹². The youth literacy rate is slightly higher, at 56.3% for men and 39% for women³⁰⁹³. The primary school enrolment rate in 2014 was 64% for girls and 73% for boys, while secondary enrolment rates were 28% and 40% respectively³⁰⁹⁴. 61.1% of girls aged 15-19 had never attended school; as opposed to 49.1% of boys³⁰⁹⁵.



Political Participation

Currently, 13 out of 147 parliamentary seats are held by women (8.8%)³⁰⁹⁶. This represents a decrease from 2007, when women held 15 out of 132 seats, or 10.2%³⁰⁹⁷. 13.7% of candidates for the National Assembly in 2013 were women³⁰⁹⁸, compared to 16% in 2007³⁰⁹⁹.

There is no legal quota regarding the minimum representation of women in the National Assembly or other decision-making bodies³¹⁰⁰. Although a 30% quota for party lists was proposed in 2006, it was met with heated opposition and ultimately scrapped³¹⁰¹. One political party, Alliance for Democracy in Mali, has adopted a 30% quota³¹⁰².

Women have registered to vote at a slightly higher rate than men (50.1%). Voter registration campaigns, led by the Minister for Women, Children and the Family, were particularly targeted at women during the 2013 election³¹⁰³. The next elections are due to be held in 2018³¹⁰⁴.

Economic Empowerment

Female labour force participation is 51%, having risen from 41% in 2006. This can be compared to an 82% participation rate for men³¹⁰⁵. Gender-based discrimination in hiring is prohibited by law, and the Labour Code mandates equal pay for men and women for labour of equal value. Yet, in practice, the largest proportion (48.4%) of Malian women are employed in the informal agricultural sector, and are therefore not covered by the law³¹⁰⁶. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2014, the wage equality ratio for similar work (female to male) was 0.6³¹⁰⁷.

Under the law, men and women have equal rights to land ownership, and the Agricultural Law of 2006 promotes the rights of women and vulnerable groups to establish themselves as farmers. However, the law is not strongly enforced, and few women are aware of their rights. Most women access land through their husband or their husband's family, as a woman is unable to retain land inherited from her birth family upon marriage³¹⁰⁸. Women have equal rights to non-land assets, and the 2011 Family Code establishes separation of marital property as the norm, allowing women to retain legal administration rights over assets that they originally owned upon entering into marriage. Once again, there is a widespread lack of awareness of these formal rights in practice³¹⁰⁹.

Women's access to financial services is not restricted by law, but women are often prevented from accessing large loans due to their comparatively low incomes and inability to raise sufficient collateral. Only 16% of creditors in the country are women, though government micro-credit schemes have helped women to access loans for agriculture and small-scale enterprise³¹¹⁰.

Women, Peace and Security

The security situation in northern Mali remains fragile, despite a peace deal signed by the Government and Tuareg separatists in June 2015³¹¹¹. Ongoing violence by pro- and anti-government armed groups has exacerbated poor governance, poverty and corruption in the northern states³¹¹². Accounts of sexual violence carried out by armed individuals on both sides of the conflict are rife. The United Nations recorded 90 allegations of conflict-related sexual violence in 2014. Allegations increased following the deployment of the Groupe Tactique Inter Armé 'Débo', a contingent of the armed forces, in Timbuktu in late 2014. Women who have been displaced by the violence remain particularly vulnerable, due to the disruption of community networks and the proximity of armed elements to population centres³¹¹³.

Official reporting has been severely limited by continuing insecurity and fear of reprisals, in the absence of any rule of law or protection for victims. Increased attacks on humanitarian workers in the region have further affected the ability of organisations to assist and advocate for victims³¹¹⁴. In November 2014, NGOs filed 104 criminal complaints against various armed groups for conflict-related sexual assaults, classing them as war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to the United Nations, 25 children were born as a result of conflict-related rapes that took place in 2012 and 2013. Victims are often stigmatised and thrown out by their families, while their children face abandonment and death. Access to justice has been hampered by death threats to local monitors and the limited capabilities of the national justice system³¹¹⁵.

The agreement on peace and reconciliation in Mali does mention conflict-related sexual violence, but fails to tackle the issue in a comprehensive way. Negotiations leading to the preliminary peace agreement resulted in the release of several individuals linked to human rights violations, including sexual violence³¹¹⁶. However, the Government, in conjunction with the United Nations, has taken some action towards prevention and providing services for victims. Training programmes on conflict-related sexual violence have been implemented by the UN and the Government with the army, police and

gendarmierie. The police have set up a national hotline, and 'safe spaces' have been created for women in urban centres, including those displaced by fighting in the north. Public awareness has also been raised through radio broadcasts across the country. The UN has supported healthcare providers to meet the needs of victims and strengthened prevention strategies by adapting international early warning indicators to the

local context³¹¹⁷.

Mali adopted a National Action UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2012³¹¹⁸. The plan sets out objectives on preventing gender-based violence in conflict, rehabilitating victims and enhancing women's representation in peace-building and decision-making processes, and is fully budgeted³¹¹⁹.

NIGER

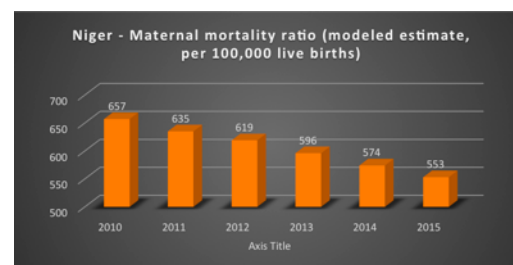
Niger ratified the Convention on the Elimination on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1999 and the Optional Protocol on Violence against Women in 2004. It has signed the Maputo Protocol, but has not ratified it³¹²⁰.

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Women are entitled to equal rights with men under the Constitution of Niger, which also provides for the separation of state and religion. However in practice, matters of marriage, inheritance and child custody continue to be administered by religious and customary law, which often discriminates against women³¹²¹. The law does not recognise women as heads of household, although in cases of polygamy, a man's additional wives may be effectively considered the heads of their own households. In order to initiate a divorce, a woman is required to return the marriage payment (mahr) to their husband, a sum that she may not have access to as it is in the control of her father or another male relative. However, men are able to divorce their wives unilaterally through the practice of repudiation. Under customary law, women are generally granted custody of children up until the age of puberty³¹²².

Since 1998, Niger has had a Ministry of Social Development, Population, Advancement of Women and Protection of Children³¹²³. The Government has launched multiple initiatives aimed at improving gender equality, including a women's leadership programme, a National Strategy to combat gender-based violence, and capacity-building programmes. The Ministry's strategic plan for 2012-2015 featured objectives for strengthening infrastructure, improving women's access to resources and the incorporation of gender into the development plans of 39 communes. In 2014, 170 female council members received training in the National Gender Policy, and 200 women were trained in entrepreneurship³¹²⁴.

Total fertility rates remain very high at 7.6 children per woman, having decreased only slightly from 7.8 in 1990³¹²⁵. The adolescent fertility rate (the number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19) has decreased from 210.4 in 2010 to 203.6 in 2014³¹²⁶. Contraceptive use is low, with just 13.9% of married women aged 15-49 using any form of contraception, though this is an increase on the prevalence rate of 11.2% in 2006³¹²⁷. The unmet need for family planning is estimated at 16%, indicating that there may be a low demand for reduced fertility³¹²⁸. There remains a lack of education about contraception, and many women are prevented from accessing it through the inadequate provision of services, the need to travel long distances to health centres, and lack of autonomy within the home. 76.3% of women reported that their husbands were the primary decision-makers regarding their health³¹²⁹. The Ministry of Public Health adopted a Health Development Plan for the period 2011 to 2015, which aimed to increase health spending, train health personnel and create and equip health centres to improve access to reproductive health services. This plan was also committed to providing free maternal and child healthcare, including obstetric complications management and family planning³¹³⁰. The maternal mortality rate per 100,000 was 657 in 2010 down to 553 in 2015³¹³¹.



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Niger has some of the worst maternal health indicators in the world. It was ranked 175 out of 179 countries in Save the Children's Mothers' Index 2015, with a 1 in 20 lifetime risk of maternal death³¹³². The maternal mortality rate has decreased, however, from 690 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 630 in 2013³¹³³. Only 29.3% of births are attended by skilled health professionals, but this has increased from 17.7% in 2006. The number of women receiving antenatal care (at least one visit) also rose significantly from 46.1% in 2006 to 82.8% in 2012³¹³⁴.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is relatively low in Niger, at 0.5% for the entire adult population³¹³⁵. Only 0.2% of women aged 15-24 are living with HIV³¹³⁶, though the proportion of women having the disease has risen from 55% in 2011 to 57% in 2014³¹³⁷. Although Niger succeeded in lowering the rate of new infections by almost 30% from 2001 to 2011, there remain several key areas needing resolution. Only 40% of people in need of antiretroviral have access to them, and only 30% of pregnant women with HIV have access to treatment preventing mother-to-child transmission³¹³⁸.

Abortion is prohibited under the Nigerien Penal Code, except to save the life of the mother. Anyone performing or attempting to perform an abortion is subject to one to five years in prison and a fine³¹³⁹.

Violence against Women

There is no specific legislation in place to address domestic violence. Women can bring charges against abusers under laws against battery, or report violence to customary or religious authorities, but few do, due to fear of social stigma, reprisal, or loss of economic support³¹⁴⁰. According to government statistics, 43.2% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives, while 28.3% have experienced sexual abuse³¹⁴¹. The 2012 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 59.6% of women believed that it was acceptable for a man to beat his wife in certain circumstances. This indicates that domestic violence is still widely tolerated, although the proportion of women expressing this opinion has decreased by more than 10% compared to the 2006 DHS (70%)³¹⁴². There was no equivalent research available on male attitudes.

Rape is a criminal offence, although there is no specific law against spousal rape, and no legally defined minimum age for consensual sex³¹⁴³. There are no data available on the prevalence of rape, but

prosecutions are rare. Only a handful of cases were tried during the year 2014. The vast majority of rapes go unreported as victims fear retribution or exclusion from their families and communities³¹⁴⁴. NGOs and women's organisations have conducted campaigns raising awareness of gender-based violence and the legal recourse available to women³¹⁴⁵.

Sexual harassment is reportedly common. In 2003, Niger introduced a law against sexual harassment, which is punishable to 3 to 6 months' imprisonment. This is increased in cases where the perpetrator abused a position of authority³¹⁴⁶. Though only a small number of cases are reported, the courts generally enforce the applicable laws³¹⁴⁷.

Female genital mutilation/mutilation (FGM/C) was outlawed in 2003³¹⁴⁸. FGM/C is only practiced by a few ethnic groups in Niger, so it has a comparatively low prevalence rate within the West Africa region at 2.0%³¹⁴⁹. This is a reduction from the rate of 2.2% recorded in 2006³¹⁵⁰. However, in some localities, as many as 65% of girls have been subjected to the practice. The Government has worked with NGOs to lead campaigns raising awareness of the dangers of FGM/C, and many communities have publicly declared their abandonment of the practice³¹⁵¹.

Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world. 76% of girls are married prior to their 18th birthday, and 28% are married by age 15³¹⁵². The legal age of marriage is 15, and while a law has been proposed raise this to 18, it has yet to be adopted³¹⁵³. In rural areas, it is not uncommon for girls as young as 12 to live with their husband's family under the supervision of their mother-in-law³¹⁵⁴. The prevalence of early marriage is partly driven by high poverty rates and the desire of families to better their economic situation through marriage, as well as to prevent the social stigma of pregnancy outside marriage³¹⁵⁵. The Government is working, in conjunction with NGOs and UNFPA, to educate traditional authorities about the problems of underage marriage, particularly heightened maternal mortality and morbidity³¹⁵⁶.

The traditional practice of taking a 'wahaya', or fifth wife, further increases violence against young girls. As they do not have the same rights and protection as the four wives that a man is permitted to marry under Nigerien law, these girls can effectively be treated as domestic and sexual slaves. A survey by Anti-Slavery International found that 83% of 'wahaya' had been sold to their husbands before they were 15 years

old³¹⁵⁷. Awareness of laws against slavery has caused some men to abandon this practice, however, for many women the only alternative is still just 'legitimate' marriage at an extremely young age³¹⁵⁸.

In 2010, Niger adopted a comprehensive law against trafficking, slavery, and practices similar to slavery. It prescribed a punishment of five to ten years in prison for trafficking offences, and up to 30 years imprisonment for slavery³¹⁵⁹. Efforts have been made to enforce this law, for example, in 2014, 17 people including senior politicians were arrested on suspicion of involvement in a baby-trafficking network³¹⁶⁰.

Niger is part of a corridor used by human traffickers transporting migrants through the Sahara, and in 2015 the country adopted a law allowing the country to prosecute those profiting from people-smuggling³¹⁶¹. In May, Nigerien authorities rescued 39 adults and 57 children who had been abandoned by traffickers in the desert and provided assistance to the children and breast-feeding mothers³¹⁶².

Education

The Government has made notable efforts toward improving schooling, spending 4.5% of GDP on education in 2012³¹⁶³, more than the average of 3.4% in the West African region³¹⁶⁴. However, poverty, a lack of infrastructure, and the pressures of a very young population (50% under the age of 15) mean that Niger continues to have extremely low levels of education³¹⁶⁵.

The current total adult literacy rate is 15.5%, and has not greatly improved since 2001, when it was 14.4%. Only 8.9% of women are literate, as opposed to 23.2% of men. The female literacy rate was slightly higher in 2001 when the figure stood at 9.4%³¹⁶⁶. The literacy rate is higher amongst female youth (aged 15-24) at 15.1%, having risen from 14.2% in 2001. However, the gender gap is also slightly more pronounced in this cohort, in which 34.5% of men were literate³¹⁶⁷.

In 2013, 57.9% of girls of primary school age were enrolled in school, versus 69.1% of boys. In 2010, the respective figures were 50.6% and 63%³¹⁶⁸. The disparity persists at the secondary level, where 8.9% of girls graduated from high school, compared to 13.1% of boys. However, the completion rate had improved significantly from 2009, when only 2.9% of girls graduated³¹⁶⁹.

In 2015, in partnership with UNESCO, the Government launched a project aimed at retaining girls within the education system by building the capacities of institutions and teachers and promoting awareness of the advantages of girls' education. It is expected that findings from targeted pilot schemes will develop policy and strategy at the national level³¹⁷⁰.

Political Representation

There are currently 15 female representatives in the National Assembly, making up 13.27% of 113 total members³¹⁷¹. Prior to the 2011 elections, only 10% of parliamentary seats were held by women³¹⁷². There is a 10% quota for women in candidate lists, and a 25% quota for positions in public administration. In 2015, the Government raised the candidate quota to 15% for the upcoming 2016 elections³¹⁷³. However, women face multiple social and cultural barriers to representation in the public sphere, not least poor literacy rates and the opposition of conservative religious groups³¹⁷⁴.

Economic Empowerment

Around 40% of women aged 15-64 participate in the labour market³¹⁷⁵, compared to 91% of men³¹⁷⁶. Under the Commercial Code, women are permitted to engage in independent financial activities (such as setting up a small business) without their husband's consent³¹⁷⁷. Despite this, social norms regarding gender roles act as a barrier to employment. Women often have difficulty in obtaining loans, largely because they cannot provide collateral. Married women may only open a bank account once their husband has been notified. Although this is not a legal requirement for women with jobs, many banks follow the same procedure for all married women regardless of employment status³¹⁷⁸.

Women's access to resources is largely determined by customary law, which varies between different ethnic groups, and Sharia law. Although the Constitution stipulates that all citizens have equal rights to land ownership, in practice most land is passed through inheritance, and women rarely inherit land under customary laws³¹⁷⁹. Women are entitled to inherit property under Sharia law, but their share is less than that afforded to male relatives. Most women only have access to the land they work through family relationships³¹⁸⁰. The Government and NGOs have created schemes to improve women's access to credit,

and to support women entrepreneurs through microcredit programmes³¹⁸¹.

Women, Peace and Security

On-going insecurity in neighbouring Mali and northern Nigeria has resulted in a large influx of refugees into Niger since 2012³¹⁸². The country is currently host to around 37,000 Malian refugees, stretching limited resources in a nation already affected by poverty and food insecurity³¹⁸³. The regional situation also threatens Niger's internal

security. In October 2015, Niger imposed a state of emergency in the southern state of Diffa due to cross-border attacks by the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram³¹⁸⁴. International observers fear that Niger's increased focus on security against external threats could exacerbate internal tensions caused by socio-economic inequality and ethnic divisions³¹⁸⁵.

The country has yet to adopt a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325³¹⁸⁶

NIGERIA

Nigeria signed CEDAW on April 23, 1984, and ratified it on June 13, 1985.³¹⁸⁷ It signed the CEDAW Optional Protocol on September 8, 2000, and ratified it on November 22, 2004.³¹⁸⁸

Nigeria signed the Maputo Protocol on December 16, 2003, ratified it on December 16, 2004³¹⁸⁹, and deposited it on February 18, 2005.³¹⁹⁰ The Nigerian Government launched a Plan of Action for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in August 2013.³¹⁹¹

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Nigeria was ranked 142 out of 169 countries on the UNDP Human Development Index in 2010,³¹⁹² and 152 of 187 in 2014.

Women rank lower than men on all development indicators.³¹⁹³ While they are constitutionally guaranteed equality, in practice women are systematically relegated to inferior positions.³¹⁹⁴ Nigeria is a culturally diverse country, and cultural practices are not uniform. A person's ethnic group and religious affinity often determine which laws apply to them. As such, in many parts of the country, women cannot own or inherit property, and are sometimes considered to be property themselves.³¹⁹⁵ One major example of discrimination is the requirement that women present a written letter of consent from their husbands to Embassies and High Commissions in order to be allowed to travel.³¹⁹⁶

Poverty is a hindrance to the right to dignity, food security and adequate housing for all Nigerians, particularly women³¹⁹⁷ There is no social security net in Nigeria, leaving people to fend for themselves, and leaving women in particular vulnerable to the sex trade and destitution.³¹⁹⁸

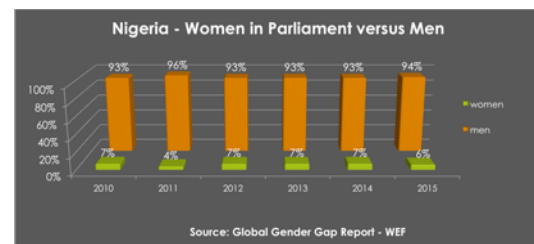
As a result of the recent Boko Haram insurgency and the resulting turmoil in the country, there has been mass displacement and a dramatic increase in violence.³¹⁹⁹ Freedom House notes that civil liberties are experiencing significant deterioration as a result³²⁰⁰.

Women's Political Participation

The general elections of April 2007 marked the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power in the country's history, and the elections of 2011 were generally internationally regarded as credible.³²⁰¹

In 2010, women represent only 7% in the parliament down to 4% in 2011 and up to 6% in 2015 compare to 94% for men in the same year.³²⁰²

Women face severe discrimination in Nigeria, where a patriarchal society attempts to relegate them to the private sphere.³²⁰³ Female candidates often experience threats, harassment and physical attacks.³²⁰⁴



In the 2011 elections, 98 women were elected out of 1,533 positions, making up roughly 6% of elected representatives.³²⁰⁵ The Senate saw the election of women to 9 out of 109 seats, but just 24 women were elected to the 352-seat House of Representatives.³²⁰⁶ From 1999-2007 there were small but steady increases in political participation of women through election and appointment. At each election during that period, women gained roughly 2% more seats than before.³²⁰⁷ However, in the 2011 election women gained no more seats than they had in 2007.³²⁰⁸

The 2015 elections in March did not offer much indication of an improvement in female

representation. 20 women were elected to the House of Representatives and 7 to the Senate (two less than in 2011).³²⁰⁹ There are 54 million women in Nigeria, represented by only 27 women at the elected level.³²¹⁰

While President Goodluck Jonathan did follow through on a promise to appoint 35% women to his Cabinet, many argue this is not real progress as it is not an official quota.³²¹¹

Only 55% of women are registered to vote in Nigeria; only one woman ran for President in 2015; women make up just 5.6% of the House and 6.5% of the Senate.³²¹²

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In Nigeria, abortion is only legal when the life of the woman is at risk.³²¹³ This is causing significant problems as many former Boko Haram captives have returned to their families pregnant after having been raped during captivity.³²¹⁴ The use of contraceptives has actually decreased, from 15% in 2008, to 18% in 2011, then back to 15% in 2013.³²¹⁵

In 2010, the maternal mortality rate was 630, decreasing to 560 per 100,000 births in 2013.³²¹⁶ The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics reports that the maternal mortality rate has fallen by 20% since 2010.³²¹⁷ Pregnant women in Nigeria have the right to free medical attention, however, healthcare services are lacking and less than 20% of women have access emergency obstetric care.³²¹⁸ Nigeria continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with UNICEF estimating that the country loses around 145 women of childbearing age every single day.³²¹⁹ In 2015, Nigerian women have a 1 in 13 chance of dying as a result of pregnancy or childbirth.³²²⁰

The HIV prevalence rate in Nigeria is 3.2%, an increase from 3.1% in 2012.³²²¹ 54% of those living with HIV are women.³²²² Prevalence of HIV among women has decreased from 1.4% in 2010 to 1.3% in 2013.³²²³

Violence Against Women

With the mass kidnappings of girls and women by Boko Haram in October of 2014, violence against women in Nigeria has become increasingly visible on the international stage. Amnesty International reports that violence against women pervades every level of society, with rape and other forms of sexual violence widely perpetrated by state officials as well as private individuals.³²²⁴ Authorities rarely prosecute or attempt to prevent sexual violence.³²²⁵

Human trafficking has become a very important issue in Nigeria, and an area where women are at particular risk. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that West African trafficking victims, many of whom are Nigerian, make up about 10% of forced sex

workers in Western Europe.³²²⁶ In Benin City, in the south of Nigeria, traffickers scout for girls and entice them with promises of work and education.³²²⁷

Child marriage is a significant problem in many parts of Nigeria, with figures as high as 76% of girls under 18 getting married in the North West region.³²²⁸ According to UNICEF, 17% of girls are married by the age of 15, and 43% are married by 18.³²²⁹

As in many societies where patriarchy is deeply entrenched, there is wide support for the practice of wife beating. Approximately 41% of adolescent girls surveyed in 2012 supported wife beating, and 90% supported violent discipline from husbands.³²³⁰

Female genital mutilation/cutting has decreased, with 27% of mothers having experienced the practice compared to only 14% of daughters.³²³¹

Women, Peace and Security

As a result of the current tumultuous situation in Nigeria, women are being subjected to horrific crimes against their human rights, dignity and security. Women and girls are key targets for Boko Haram.³²³² When the extremist group captures a village, women are rounded up and taken captive to be subjected to brutal rape and sexual violence.³²³³ The accounts of returned captives, who are often pregnant as a result of their ordeal, indicate that Boko Haram is using rape as a weapon of war, to demoralise communities and to biologically transmit radicalisation by producing the next generation of fighters.³²³⁴ The conflict in northern Nigeria has resulted in extensive displacement as whole regional populations attempt to flee the invasion of Boko Haram militants.³²³⁵ Thousands of refugees are filling camps across the country.³²³⁶

Nigeria deploys the second greatest number of female peacekeepers in the world.³²³⁷ In 2015, there were 233 women out of 2,961 peacekeepers, a 1% increase from 2010.³²³⁸

Education

Only around half of all primary school-aged children actually attend school.³²³⁹ In total, 10.5 million children are not in school, the highest number in any country in the world.³²⁴⁰ Approximately 29% of boys of primary school age are out of school, compared to 35% of girls the same age.³²⁴¹

The majority of non-attendees to school are girls, mainly in the majority-Muslim north.³²⁴² Less than two thirds of girls who do attend primary school finish, and even fewer finish secondary school.³²⁴³ Nigeria spends just 1.5% of its GDP and 6% of its budget on schooling, according to UNESCO, Nigeria can do much more in order more to achieve good practice in education outcomes.³²⁴⁴

Enrolment in school continues to drop, partly due to the pressures of an increasingly young population, but also out of fear.³²⁴⁵ With girls being attacked on their way to school and kidnapped by Boko Haram, more people are choosing to keep their girls at home.³²⁴⁶

The World Bank reports that adult literacy among women was 41% in 2008, while it was 61% for men.³²⁴⁷ In 2014, 76% of male youth were literate, compared to 58% of females in the same cohort.³²⁴⁸

Economic Empowerment

There remains a significant wage and labour force participation gender gap in Nigeria.³²⁴⁹ Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 countries on the Gender Equality Index, but 23rd of all 52 African countries. The majority of women work in casual, poorly remunerated and low-skilled employment, generating incomes less than half of men's wages³²⁵⁰. Women make up 49% of the labour force, a number that has improved from a stagnant 42% between 1990 and 2010.³²⁵¹

Like many West African countries, Nigeria has a large number of female entrepreneurs who contribute

significantly to the growth and development of the economy.³²⁵² Women are business owners in the agricultural, textile and information technology sectors, among others.³²⁵³ According to the latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor annual survey, women run 41% of early-stage businesses in Nigeria.³²⁵⁴ As in neighbouring countries, Nigerian female entrepreneurs are starting businesses to provide extra income to support their families and communities.³²⁵⁵

In 2003, Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development established the Business Development Fund for Women.³²⁵⁶ This fund consists of \$1.5 million to provide individual women entrepreneurs with low-interest loans, technical support and capacity building training to expand their businesses.³²⁵⁷ Between 2011 and 2013, 56 female entrepreneurs received a total of approximately \$500,000 from this loan scheme. The Central Bank of Nigeria has also formulated a policy target to increase women's access to financial services by 15% annually by setting up microcredit loans for female entrepreneurs.³²⁵⁸

SENEGAL

Senegal ratified CEDAW in 1985 and the Optional Protocol in 2000³²⁵⁹. In 2015, Senegal made its first report to the CEDAW Committee since 1994³²⁶⁰. The country ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2005³²⁶¹, and adopted a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2011

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Article 7 of the Constitution guarantees equal rights for both men and women³²⁶². Yet the Family Code contains elements that are discriminatory against women, including a lower legal age of marriage of 16, as opposed to 18 for men. The law also grants sole parental authority to the father and defines men as the head of the household³²⁶³. Customary and religious personal laws are not recognised as legitimate by the Constitution; however, they commonly govern matters of marriage and family life in rural areas. Many marriages are customary or religious and thus are not registered³²⁶⁴. While the practice of repudiation, which allows a man to divorce his wife at will and without warning, is banned by national law, it is permitted by Islamic law and is commonly used to initiate divorce proceedings in religious marriages³²⁶⁵.

Senegal has a dedicated Ministry for Women, Family and Children, as well as a Gender Policy Cell within the Ministry of Justice, which is designed to enable easier access to justice for women³²⁶⁶. A National Strategy on Gender Equality and Equity was adopted to run from 2005 to 2015³²⁶⁷. This plan committed the country to a comprehensive vision for gender equality and provides an operational framework for

heightening visibility of women's issues at the national level. However, women's rights activists have argued that it does not go far enough toward mainstreaming gender into policy-making in areas such as health, sanitation and agriculture³²⁶⁸. Based on the progress of this plan, a new National Strategy will be developed for the period 2015 to 2025³²⁶⁹.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The total fertility rate for 2010-2015 was 5.0 children per woman, and has decreased little during the previous 5-year period³²⁷⁰. However, the adolescent fertility rate has reduced significantly from 90 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 2010 to 80 in 2014³²⁷¹. 87% of all health centres offer at least one form of modern contraception³²⁷², yet advertised services are not always available³²⁷³, and access to reproductive health services is particularly poor in rural areas³²⁷⁴. 22% of married women used some form of contraception in 2014³²⁷⁵, compared to 13.1% in 2011³²⁷⁶. Unmet need for family planning remained at around 30% between 2011 and 2013³²⁷⁷. The cultural and religious stigma attached to premarital sex prevents many young unmarried women from seeking reproductive and sexual health services³²⁷⁸.

Between 2010 and 2013, the maternal mortality rate decreased from 360 to 320 deaths per 100,000 live

births³²⁷⁹. The lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 60³²⁸⁰. The percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel was recorded as 59.1% in the 2014 Continuous Demographic and Health Survey, having fallen from 65.1% in 2011³²⁸¹. At the same time, the proportion of women attending at least one antenatal care appointment has risen from 93.3% in 2011 to 96.2% in 2014³²⁸².

The Criminal Code prohibits abortion under any circumstances, although the Code of Medical Ethics allows a pregnancy to be terminated if three doctors testify that this is necessary in order to save the woman's life³²⁸³.

The National AIDS Council has been successful in scaling up prevention and treatment services, ensuring that HIV prevalence remains relatively low³²⁸⁴. 0.5% of the total population were HIV-positive in 2014, the rate having reduced by 0.2% since 2010³²⁸⁵. The proportion of women in this group rose from 35% to 43% from 2010 to 2014³²⁸⁶. However, the percentage of young women living with HIV fell from 0.3% to 0.1% between 2011 and 2014³²⁸⁷.

Violence against Women

Rape was criminalised in 1999, though spousal rape is not recognised by law³²⁸⁸. The offence is punishable by only 5 to 10 years in prison³²⁸⁹. Few rape cases are taken to court, and those that are rarely result in conviction. According to Ministry of Justice estimates, 47% of accused rapists went unpunished and were released without facing trial. This is largely due to social taboos surrounding the subject and the practice of settling cases out of court³²⁹⁰. In addition, the law allows for a woman's sexual history to be used against her in defence of an accused rapist³²⁹¹.

Domestic violence is punishable by 5 years in prison and a fine, or up to 20 years if the assault results in lasting injury³²⁹². However, incidents are usually resolved within the family, and even where victims seek help from the authorities, the law is rarely enforced³²⁹³. Local NGOs have criticised judges who claim lack of evidence as a reason for passing down lenient sentences on perpetrators³²⁹⁴. Reported attitudes to domestic violence vary greatly between the sexes. 60% of women believe that wife-beating is justified in at least once circumstance, compared to 24.7% of men³²⁹⁵.

25.7% of Senegalese women have undergone FGM/C³²⁹⁶. The practice is more common among certain ethnic and religious groups than others, and is often considered essential for girls' marriageability and acceptance in the community³²⁹⁷. 16% of women and 13% of men believe that FGM/C is a religious requirement³²⁹⁸. In the Fouta region, FGM/C is near-universal, while 60-70% of girls in the south and southeastern regions had been subjected to the practice³²⁹⁹. FGM/C has been banned since 1999. The Government has shown the political will to reduce prevalence by working with NGOs to educate people

on the dangers of the practice. As a result of an on-going community-empowerment programme, 760 villages have publically vowed to abandon FGM/C³³⁰⁰. Data from the most recent DHS show that 81% of women and 79% of men are in favour of ending the practice³³⁰¹.

Reportedly, sexual harassment is common, with 18% of women declaring that they have been asked for sexual favours in order to secure a job or promotion. Girls are also at risk of harassment from school staff³³⁰². The revised Penal Code includes a clause on sexual harassment, providing for punishment of up to 3 years in prison and a fine³³⁰³. However, women's groups report that victims often find it difficult to obtain sufficient evidence to secure a conviction, and the law is not commonly enforced³³⁰⁴.

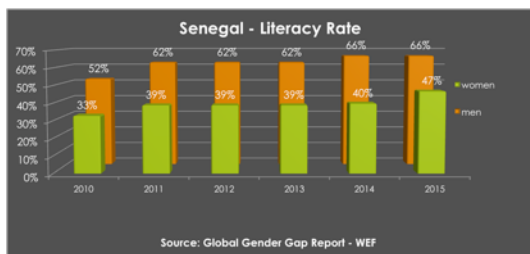
The minimum age of marriage is 16 for women and 18 for men, though exceptions may be granted for 'serious reasons' by the President of the regional court³³⁰⁵. Forced marriage is outlawed, as is sexual intercourse with a girl aged 13 or under. In practice, most marriages are arranged, and early marriage is common, especially in rural areas. 16% of women aged 25-49 were married by age 15, and 40% were married by age 18³³⁰⁶. Widespread poverty means that marrying girls off at a young age is often an economic necessity, as parents cannot afford education for all their children³³⁰⁷. The Ministry of Women, Family, Social Development and Women's Entrepreneurship, in conjunction with civil society groups, has undertaken educational programmes to discourage child marriage³³⁰⁸.

Senegal is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Women and girls are increasingly being exploited as prostitutes in the southeastern gold-mining region of Kedougou³³⁰⁹. The Government has increased funding to the National Taskforce against Trafficking and conducted awareness campaigns in the national media, as well as providing services to child victims of trafficking³³¹⁰. The government-run Ginddi shelter provides assistance to women and girls who are victims of trafficking, early marriage and gender-based violence³³¹¹.

Education

The adult literacy rate is 52.1%, which can be broken down into 66.3% for men and 40.4% for women in 2014³³¹². Female literacy has increased by over 10% in the past 10 years³³¹³. Girls had a slightly higher primary enrolment rate than boys in 2012, at 82.3% compared to 75.6%. These rates rose from 77.8% and 73.9% respectively in 2010³³¹⁴. 63.7% of enrolled girls completed primary school, compared to 59% of boys³³¹⁵. However, at secondary level, the numbers tend to favour boys, with 42.1% enrolled compared to 39.1% of girls³³¹⁶. While the law provides for free, compulsory education between the ages of six and sixteen, many children do not attend school due to

lack of access and resources. When faced with economic difficulties, most families choose to continue the education of sons over daughters. Early pregnancy also causes girls to drop out of school³³¹⁷.



Economic Empowerment

66% of women participate in the labour force³³¹⁸, as opposed to 90% of men³³¹⁹. 27% of women are employed in the non-agricultural sector³³²⁰. Over 80% of women in employment work in the informal sector and thus do not profit from basic benefits. Many work in substandard and even dangerous conditions³³²¹.

Inheritance is governed by two types of law, and a person must decide which system they prefer. Under the civil code, widows and daughters are granted equal inheritance rights with sons. However, according to Sharia law, daughters are only entitled to half of what sons receive, and widows receive a quarter of their husband's property, or an eighth if there are children³³²².

Women have the same rights to land ownership as men under the law, and are entitled to acquire and own property independently of their male relatives. The Family Code provides for separation of property during marriage, however, where the dowry system applies, a man has the right to administer any assets brought by his wife into the household³³²³. Land use is allocated by local committees but do not officially recognise land sales or bequests. Women were not permitted to be members of these committees until 2010, and as such their access to land was restricted. As a result of discriminatory administrative and

customary practices, only around 4% of women are in possession of any land to pass on to their heirs after their death³³²⁴. This is despite women predominating in agricultural production³³²⁵.

According to the law, men and women have equal access to financial services. However, women face obstacles in accessing bank accounts and loans, including a lack of assets to provide collateral, and low levels of literacy in French, the official administrative language³³²⁶. Some farming cooperatives prevent women from accessing credit, as they do not recognise them as agricultural producers in their own right. In response to this, the Government has set up a microfinance initiative targeting rural women³³²⁷.

Political Participation

Senegal is recognised for its progress in the political representation of women, where the 2010 Gender Parity Law, requires parties to ensure that at least half of their candidates are women in both local and national elections³³²⁸. In the 2012 elections, female candidates won 64 out of 150 parliamentary seats, raising the proportion of women from 18% to 42.7%³³²⁹. This means that the country is now ranked 7th in the world for female political representation. However, women have not fared so well at the local level, with only 13 female mayors in a total of 557 municipalities³³³⁰.

Women, Peace and Security

Within the region, Senegal stands out as a relatively stable democracy, and transfers of power have largely been peaceful, except in the Casamance region, where there is an ongoing, low-level war between separatist rebels and government forces. However violence has decreased since the 2012 election, and a unilateral ceasefire was declared in 2014³³³¹.

Senegal launched a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2011 for an unspecified period. The plan clearly defines its stakeholders, indicators, and actions, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes³³³².

SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone signed CEDAW on 21st September 1988, and ratified it on 11th November 1988.³³³³ It signed the Optional Protocol on 8th September 2000, but has not yet ratified it.³³³⁴ Sierra Leone signed the Maputo Protocol on 9th December 2003, and ratified it on 2nd July 2015.³³³⁵ The country launched a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in March 2010.³³³⁶

Human Rights of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

Attempts by the Government to promote gender equality have been undermined by the precedence of customary law, under which women have the status of minors.³³³⁷ Furthermore, there has been little effort on the part of the Government to enact effective

mechanisms to enforce equality, and Sierra Leone has not adopted any measures to implement its National Gender Plan or National Action Plan.³³³⁸ Significant threats to the human rights of women include intimidation and threats of violence from government officials and business leaders towards women human rights defenders and women's rights organizations.³³³⁹

Women's land rights are complicated by the existence of multiple customary law systems in different parts of the country, as well as remnants of colonial law.³³⁴⁰ In 2007, the Government passed the Devolution of State Act, which criminalises preventing a woman from inheriting her husband's property.³³⁴¹ This law also imposes penalties for evicting a spouse or child from the marital home, and rules that inheritances should be shared among surviving family members, with 35% going to the spouse.³³⁴² However, the Act only recognizes an individual's right to land, not a family's. As many women live under traditional land tenure structures that do not recognise a woman's right to own property, women are still not permitted to inherit from their husbands.³³⁴³ Customary law applies in 12 of Sierra Leone's 14 districts, where men head the ruling families, govern the provinces, and are considered "custodians of the land".³³⁴⁴ This lack of access to land means that women are impoverished when their husband dies, and so are forced to marry one of their husband's male relatives in order to survive.³³⁴⁵ In 2012, UNDP led a national conference on women's land rights in Sierra Leone, in an attempt to spark discussion and activism on the topic.³³⁴⁶

Women's Political Participation

Sierra Leone's civil war ended in 2002, and held its first post-conflict national elections that same year.³³⁴⁷ 18 (14.5%) of the 124 MPs elected were women, however in the next election in 2007 that number dropped to 16 (12.9%).³³⁴⁸ In 2004, local governments were re-established, and women won 56 (18.8%) out of the total 456 district council seats across the country.³³⁴⁹ In 2008, that number increased to 86 (12.2%) out of 456.³³⁵⁰ The representation of women on district councils varies significantly across the country; however, at the Ward level it is mandatory to have 50% female members, making this the only gender-balanced level of government in Sierra Leone.³³⁵¹ However, this is not necessarily a significant gain for women, as the areas that Ward Councils cover are generally small and carry little power.³³⁵²

There are several barriers to women's free and equal participation in politics in Sierra Leone. A discriminatory clause in the Constitution makes it impossible for women in the North to stand for election as paramount chiefs.³³⁵³ Elsewhere, few women can afford to run for Parliament because men are the political gatekeepers of the processes, and most women are not in control of their own finances.³³⁵⁴ Women face extensive discrimination, and have reported experiencing harassment, threats, violence and defamation from men in their community and local leaders who see their participation as a threat to their power.³³⁵⁵

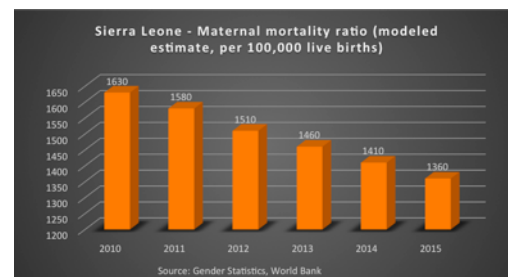
In 2011, the Government in conjunction with the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office, drafted a Gender Equality Bill as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.³³⁵⁶ If passed, it would be

mandated by law that a minimum of 30% of parliamentary seats and one ward per local council are held by women.³³⁵⁷ This Bill has faced significant opposition, and has not yet been passed.³³⁵⁸ Although widely debated, is presently seen as too great a threat to male power.³³⁵⁹ The All Political Parties Youth Association and the Women's Association play active roles in promoting peaceful elections in Sierra Leone,³³⁶⁰ while the 50/50 Group works for female representation in Sierra Leone politics.³³⁶¹ They provide capacity building to women who want to stand as candidates for parliament, district council of chiefdom positions.³³⁶²

During Sierra Leone's 2012 election, only 38 women ran for parliament, whereas there were 538 male candidates.³³⁶³ Today women make up just 13% of MPs, with 15 seats out of 121, and 19% of local councillors in Sierra Leone.³³⁶⁴

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

The maternal mortality rate in Sierra Leone was 1630 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010³³⁶⁵, to 1360 in 2015. The country continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.³³⁶⁶ Teenage pregnancy is a significant issue in Sierra Leone, where 36% of all pregnancies occur among adolescent girls, and teenagers account for 40% of maternal deaths.³³⁶⁷ This has come into the global spotlight recently as Sierra Leone tried to ban "visibly pregnant" girls from taking their exams in primary and secondary school.³³⁶⁸



There are 54,000 people living with HIV in Sierra Leone, with a prevalence rate of about 1.4% among adults.³³⁶⁹ Of this population, 53% (29,000) are women.³³⁷⁰ Activists argue that women do not receive proper treatment for HIV/AIDS and are at greater risk of the disease developing further.³³⁷¹ Men frequently divorce women who test HIV positive, leaving these women with no financial support or means of treatment.³³⁷² Moreover, up until 2011 it was a criminal offence for a woman to have a baby when she was infected with HIV.³³⁷³ The Government has since conducted an aggressive campaign on HIV prevention, with the goal of reducing maternal mortality rates as well as increasing family planning and the prevention and treatment of pregnancy related complications.³³⁷⁴

Contraceptive use has improved, from 11% in 2008-2011 to 16.6% in 2009-2013.³³⁷⁵

Violence Against Women

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is commonly practiced, though chiefs have been pressured not to subject girls under the age of 18 to the procedure.³³⁷⁶ They recently backed an international treaty on the rights of women in Africa, which could lead to a national ban on the practice.³³⁷⁷ Sierra Leone signed the Maputo Protocol in July this year (one of the last West African countries to do so, raising hopes that it may take steps to ban FGM/C entirely. Currently, 9 in 10 girls have been cut.³³⁷⁸ The widespread practice of FGM/C exacerbated the risk of spreading Ebola, which seriously affected Sierra Leone in 2014.³³⁷⁹ The Government imposed restrictions on travel, in the hopes of preventing communities from gathering for festivals and cutting ceremonies.³³⁸⁰ However, the practice is often promoted and carried out by secret women's societies, making it more difficult to eliminate.³³⁸¹

Violence against women is widespread in Sierra Leone, and little has been done to reduce it.³³⁸² The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 is not comprehensive and neither is it widely enforced.³³⁸³ Only one case of domestic violence has ever been prosecuted under this law.³³⁸⁴ Family Support Units, of which there are only 44 in the whole country, do not receive adequate training or resources.³³⁸⁵ One barrier to enforcement is the fact that alleged perpetrators are often police. Victims also face problems in accessing transportation, accommodation and medical assistance.³³⁸⁶

60% of assault cases reported to the International Rescue Committee in 2012 were committed by a husband or intimate partner. Domestic violence is commonly considered acceptable in Sierra Leone, even as an inevitable part of a healthy marriage.³³⁸⁷ Entrenched social norms and gender inequalities, paired with weak law enforcement, result in a culture where violence against women is widespread and accepted.³³⁸⁸ "Rape" in many communities is only understood to mean the rape of a young girl by an older man. No other form of rape is necessarily considered criminal by society.³³⁸⁹ As a result, the vast majority (99%) of rapes are reported by girls between the ages of 6 and 20.³³⁹⁰ It is suspected that violence towards women increases when girls turn 18, however, it is significantly less reported.³³⁹¹

The US Department of State ranked Sierra Leone a Tier 2 country in their 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report.³³⁹² It is a source and destination country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.³³⁹³ Labour exploitation is particularly problematic in the fishing and agriculture sectors, while sex trafficking is enabled through forced marriages.³³⁹⁴ In 2014, the Government began plans to establish a "Freedom Line", a hotline specifically dedicated to the reporting of trafficking offences.

However, this has yet to be implemented.³³⁹⁵

Women, Peace and Security

On International Women's Day in 2010, then-President Koroma publicly apologised to the women of Sierra Leone for failing to protect them during the armed conflict and pledged to protect women's rights going forward.³³⁹⁶ In common with most armed conflicts, women experienced drastic violence and upheaval. Since conflict ended in Sierra Leone in 2002, women have played a vital role in peace building³³⁹⁷ and political action.³³⁹⁸ Women experienced significant violence during the war, which led to a greater demand for their rights post-conflict.³³⁹⁹ The displacement and social upheaval caused by the conflict created new roles for women, who became heads of households and became involved in local government in the absence of men.³⁴⁰⁰ Peace activism caused Sierra Leonean women to come together for political action, the first time they had taken a prominent role in public life.³⁴⁰¹ The conflict and its immediate aftermath saw the birth of the first women's organisations in Sierra Leone. Many of these still exist today, lobbying for women's rights and public space.³⁴⁰² Yet there is a general concern that women's empowerment has dropped off the agenda following the immediate post-conflict phase, and women's movements have stalled.³⁴⁰³

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended reparations that were comprehensive and had the potential to be transformative for women and children, such as free healthcare, including mental healthcare. It also recommended; education support to children of victims; skills training, micro-credit and micro-projects for individuals and collective groups of beneficiaries; community reparations; symbolic reparations; provision of housing and pensions. Urgent interim reparations for specific categories of individual beneficiaries, including amputees, war wounded, victims of sexual violence, war widows and children affected directly by the conflict were suggested.³⁴⁰⁴ The recommendations also included gender-specific legal and institutional reforms, including the repeal of all discriminatory legislation and the enactment of gender-progressive laws.³⁴⁰⁵

Since 2005, Sierra Leone has made significant efforts to promote women's participation in peacekeeping. In 2012, the country had 75 women (38.8%) and 118 men peacekeepers in Darfur, and 9 (23%) women out of 39 peacekeepers in Somalia.³⁴⁰⁶ This is an increase from 2010, 19% of all peacekeeping officers were women.³⁴⁰⁷

Education

More than half of Sierra Leonean women are illiterate.³⁴⁰⁸ This is low, however it is an improvement from the rate of 35% in 2013.³⁴⁰⁹ Despite the Education Act of 2004, girls' access to education continues to be hampered by early marriage,

school policies of expelling pregnant girls and cultural norms whereby girls stay at home to do farm work and chores.³⁴¹⁰ Fears of kidnapping and sexual violence also prevents girls from attending, while lack of access to water and sanitation can lead to girls dropping out after reaching puberty.³⁴¹¹

Economic Empowerment

The Sierra Leonean economy is dominated by agriculture, and 80% of agricultural workers are women.³⁴¹² Despite this, it is nearly impossible for women in rural areas to be landowners.³⁴¹³ During the civil war, two thirds of the population were displaced, and when they returned home in 2002, their farmland had largely been destroyed or occupied.³⁴¹⁴

The private sector in Sierra Leone is characterized by a large number of micro-enterprises.³⁴¹⁵ This is

because only an estimated 5% of the workforce is in the paid formal sector.³⁴¹⁶ It is estimated that as many as 70% of households in the country rely on micro and small businesses operating within the informal sector.³⁴¹⁷ Approximately 84% of rural women and 63% of urban women run micro-enterprises.³⁴¹⁸ Women small business owners often have difficulty accessing loans from commercial banks because they lack capital.³⁴¹⁹ Women face a discriminatory business environment, and barriers disproportionate to those faced by their male counterparts.³⁴²⁰ There are no government institutions or programmes set up to support female entrepreneurs or help them grow their businesses.³⁴²¹

TOGO

A narrow strip of land located between Benin and Ghana on the Gulf of Guinea, Togo was colonised successively by Germany, France and Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In recent years, the country has experienced political turmoil and unrest following the death of its long-time leader in 2005. Togo ratified CEDAW on 26 September 1983, without reservations³⁴²². It has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, though the process is underway³⁴²³. Togo ratified the Maputo Protocol in November 2005³⁴²⁴. The country has not yet put in place a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325³⁴²⁵.

Human Rights Of Women (Gender Policy Formation)

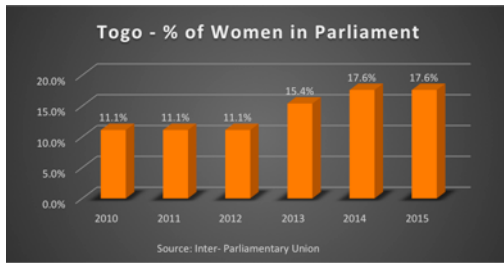
Article 2 of the 1992 Constitution provides for the equality of sexes in Togo³⁴²⁶. A General Directorate for the Advancement of Women has existed since the 1970s, and a Ministry for the Promotion of Women was created in 2010³⁴²⁷. Further to this, a National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity was adopted in 2011³⁴²⁸. However, women are still largely excluded from decision-making positions, economic spheres and social structures, largely due to cultural concepts about gender roles. The Persons and Family Code of 2012 contains multiple discriminatory elements. Although it states that parents should share parental authority equally, the husband is still considered to be the head of the household. The law also upholds equal inheritance rights for male and female relatives, yet custom is allowed to prevail if the individuals involved choose this option³⁴²⁹. While formal law officially supersedes traditional customary law, it is 'slow, distant and expensive to access'³⁴³⁰. As a result, family and personal matters, especially in rural areas, are effectively governed by customary law, which frequently discriminates against women.³⁴³¹ For example, marriages under customary law require a husband to be the legal administrator³⁴³², and do not entitle women to any maintenance or child support in the event of divorce or separation³⁴³³. Women are not guaranteed to inherit, and husbands are permitted to

restrict their wives' freedom to work and control their earnings³⁴³⁴.

Women's Political Participation

In April 2015, President Faure Gnassingbe was re-elected to a third term. Although UN observers pronounced the election free and transparent, there were widespread protests as the opposition alleged that the results were fraudulent and criticised the extension of the Gnassingbe dynasty's five-decade stranglehold on power³⁴³⁵.

Women's involvement in political life remains low, though representation in government has grown significantly compared to previous levels. In 2006, the proportion of women in Togo's lower house stood at 6%, but this increased to 11.1% in 2010, 15.4% in 2013, and 18% in 2014 and 2015³⁴³⁶. During the most recent national parliamentary election, in 2013, women made up 159 out of 1015 total candidates (13.5%)³⁴³⁷. Underrepresentation of women also persists at the lower, grassroots levels of government, such as village development committees³⁴³⁸.



Togo has shown progress in instituting legal quotas for women. In 2013, the National Electoral Law was revised to require candidate lists to include equal number of male and female candidates. This Law is to be implemented in the 2018 elections. An additional law on political party funding requires that a percentage of the funding allocated to political parties be distributed in proportion to the number of women elected from that party in the legislative and local elections³⁴³⁹.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

In 2006, Togo passed a largely progressive reproductive health law providing for the widespread availability of maternal and neonatal health facilities, thus demonstrating the Government's political commitment in this area³⁴⁴⁰. However, access can be unsatisfactory, especially in rural areas³⁴⁴¹. The total fertility rate decreased marginally from 4.8 children per woman in 2010 to 4.6 in 2013³⁴⁴², while contraceptive prevalence among married women aged 15-49 rose from 15.2% in 2010 to 19.9% in 2014³⁴⁴³. The maternal mortality rate has fallen from 480 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 450 in 2013³⁴⁴⁴. The percentage of births attended by skilled health professionals remains around 60%, with little change since 2010³⁴⁴⁵.

In December 2014, Togo made a pledge to the Family Planning 2020 movement, which aims to expand access to reproductive healthcare and contraception to women and girls in the world's poorest countries. The country aims to increase contraceptive prevalence to 25% by 2017, through the dissemination and implementation of the existing Law on Reproductive Health, improving the quality of health services, developing partnerships with the private sector to distribute contraceptive supplies, and building on community health agents and informed 'push' models to bring family planning services to remote areas³⁴⁴⁶.

Abortion is legal in order to save the mother's life, in cases of rape and incest, and where the foetus is impaired³⁴⁴⁷.

HIV affects 2.4% of the total adult population, a reduction from 2.8% in 2010³⁴⁴⁸. However, women are disproportionately affected by the HIV burden, and their share of this population increased from 58% in 2010 to 59% in 2014³⁴⁴⁹.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women is reported to be widespread throughout Togo, though there were no data available on the prevalence of violent offences or their prosecution³⁴⁵⁰. The law defines rape as a criminal offence and provides for sentences of up to 20 years in prison. However, spousal rape is not specifically defined as a crime³⁴⁵¹. The authorities are diligent in investigating rape cases that are brought to them and prosecuting perpetrators, but many victims remain reluctant to report crimes due to fear of social stigma and reprisal³⁴⁵².

Togolese law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence³⁴⁵³. Women who experience violence from their intimate partners are often unaware of existing judicial recourse available to them. Moreover, violence in the home is usually considered to be a 'family matter', and police are unlikely to intervene³⁴⁵⁴. These factors combine to create a culture of silence and tacit acceptance around gender-based violence. According to the most recent data, from the 2010 MICS4, 43% of women believe that domestic violence is justified in some circumstances³⁴⁵⁵. The Government does not provide any official services to victims³⁴⁵⁶. However, some NGOs are active in educating women about their rights and engaging with men to challenge harmful gender stereotypes³⁴⁵⁷.

In 2012, the Government validated a draft of the revised Criminal Code, which would provide for domestic violence and rape, as well as sexual harassment, to be classified as separate offences. This reform has yet to be adopted. Currently, women are protected from harassment under articles of the Labour Code and the Reproductive Health Law, but few cases are brought to the attention of the courts³⁴⁵⁸.

The incidence of FGM/C is relatively low in Togo compared to the rest of the West African region. It mainly occurs among some Muslim and ethnic Peuhl communities. The practice was outlawed in 1998, and the percentage of women who have undergone it declined from 12% in 1996, to 3.9% in 2010, to 2% in 2012³⁴⁵⁹. The law imposes fines and prison sentences of up to 5 years on perpetrators of FGM/C, although the Government has had difficulty enforcing this in the remote areas where cutting commonly occurs³⁴⁶⁰. In partnership with local NGOs, the Government has run education campaigns to raise awareness of the harmful effects of the practice and promoted alternative sources of income for traditional practitioners³⁴⁶¹.

The minimum age of marriage is set at 18 for both sexes, or 16 with parental permission³⁴⁶². Yet most marriages are conducted under customary law, and early marriage remains common. According to the most recent available data, from 2010, 25.2% of women are married by age 18, and 5.8% are married by age 15³⁴⁶³. In 2014, the Ministries of Education,

Gender, and Health launched a National Programme against Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, which aims to improve enforcement of legislation and to empower girls and communities through education and advocacy³⁴⁶⁴.

The revised Persons and Family Code of 2012 outlaws levirate, sororate, and other harmful widowhood customs³⁴⁶⁵. However, women continue to be subjected to isolation, mistreatment and violence following the death of their husbands. For example, some endure physical abuse during rituals designed to determine whether they are guilty of their husband's death, or are pressured into having sexual intercourse with another man before they are allowed to re-marry³⁴⁶⁶.

Togolese women and children are trafficked for the purposes of forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation within Togo, and to a lesser extent in neighbouring countries. Togo is making significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking when it comes to child victims. According to government statistics, the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions for child trafficking offences increased in 2014 compared to the previous year. 711 victims of trafficking were identified in this period, an increase on the 580 identified in 2013. However it was not clear if the government provided any additional services to these children³⁴⁶⁷. The Government showed less success in tackling the trafficking of adults, failing to identify any victims, and has yet to adopt any legislation prohibiting this³⁴⁶⁸.

Women, Peace And Security

In 2007, the Togolese Parliament passed a law allowing women to join the army, air force, national navy, gendarmerie, military bands, or serve in the military health corps³⁴⁶⁹.

Security forces have regularly been accused of using excessive force and abusing human rights abuses against civilians, especially during outbreaks of violence and unrest surrounding elections. Impunity is endemic, as abuses by state actors are not sufficiently investigated or punished³⁴⁷⁰. Police are alleged to have committed acts of rape and sexual violence against female opposition activists during the pre-election period in 2012³⁴⁷¹.

Togo has not yet adopted a National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325³⁴⁷².

Education

Schooling is compulsory up to the age of 15, and the Government provides tuition-free, public education at the nursery and primary level. However, parents can find cost of uniforms, supplies, books and other expenses prohibitive³⁴⁷³.

Women's literacy still lags significantly behind that of men. The adult literacy rate for women increased from 38.5% to 48% between 1995 and 2012, while the rate for men rose from 68.7% to 74.1%³⁴⁷⁴. In 2008, primary net enrolment rates were recorded at 98.3% for boys and 87.3% for girls. 69.6% of boys remain enrolled until the final grade of primary school, compared to 64.2% of girls. The disparity grows starker at the secondary level, where only 30.4% of girls were enrolled in 2007 as opposed to 57.7% of boys³⁴⁷⁵. There is a lack of recent data available for comparison.

Economic Empowerment

Women play an important role in the Togolese economy as entrepreneurs. 83% of the population is self-employed or involved in small-scale enterprise³⁴⁷⁶. There is near parity in economic participation between the sexes. Between 2001 and 2012, women's labour force participation remained the same, at 81%³⁴⁷⁷, just a 1% difference from the male rate of 82%³⁴⁷⁸. According to the ILO (International Labour organisation), the unemployment rate for females is equal to that of males at 7%³⁴⁷⁹. The Government has partnered with international organisations and NGOs to provide funding and training to enable women to start their own businesses and achieve financial independence³⁴⁸⁰.

Women's access to land and other property is often determined by customary law. Under national law, spouses have the option to adhere to traditional inheritance norms that do not tend to favour women. Customary law does not recognise women as landowners, and only allows them to access land on a usufruct basis, with the permission of their husband or family. Under the Personal and Family Code, men are the administrators of a couple's property.

Though no legal restrictions exist on women's access to financial services, they often find it difficult to secure loans due to their comparatively low incomes and a resulting inability to provide adequate guarantees. Women more commonly access credit through rural tontine schemes. The Government has also developed several national microfinance initiatives³⁴⁸¹.

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