

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



WINNINGS FOR GIRLS

STORIES OF CHANGE FROM THE GIRLS ADVOCACY
ALLIANCE PROGRAM IN AFRICA

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This publication was made possible with financial assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands through the Girls Advocacy Alliance Regional Africa Programme.



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ABBREVIATIONS

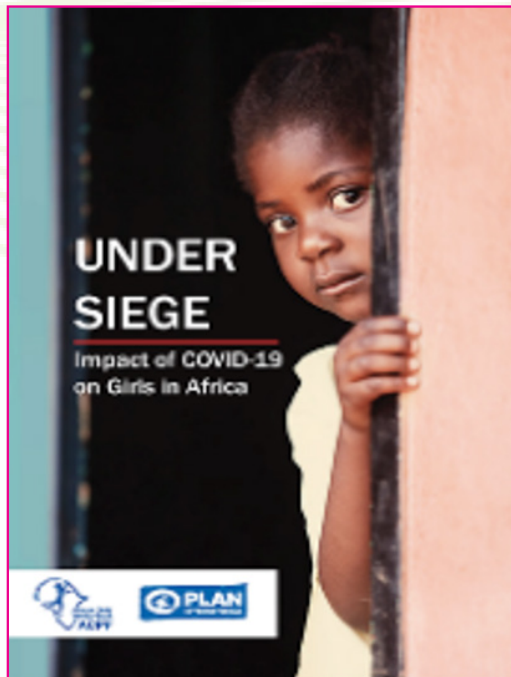
ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	EACRN	Eastern Africa Child Rights Network
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
APC	Alliance Programme Committee	EAPPCO	Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation
APT	Alliance Programme Team	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
AU	African Union	EE	Economic exclusion
AUC	African Union Commission	FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
AULO	Plan African Union Liaison Office	FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
AYF	African Youth Front	FTE	Final Term Evaluation
BOD	Board of Directors	GAA	Girls Advocacy Alliance
CBOs	Community-based organisations	GBV	Gender-Based Violence
CCC	Community Care Coalition	GenCED	Gender Centre for Empowering Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	GIMAC	Gender Is My Agenda Campaign
CL	Child labour	GYW	Girls and Young Women
CM	Child marriage	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
CSEC	Commercial sexual exploitation of children	MEMPROW	Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CT	Child trafficking	MRU	Mano River Union
DAC	Day of the African Child	MTR	Mid Term Review
DCI	Defence for Children International	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
EAC	East African Community	PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

REC Regional Economic Communities
SGBV Sexual Gender-Based Violence
STTK Stop the Traffik - Kenya

UPR Universal Periodic Review
YNSD Youth Network for Sustainable Development

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

SPEARHEADING CONTINENTAL DISCOURSE ON COVID-19 IMPACT ON GIRLS



Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) has been leading the discourse on the impact of Covid-19 on girls by building the evidence base.

Plan International and African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) partnered to produce a major study report titled "Under Siege: The Impact of Covid-19 on Girls in Africa". The organisations launched the report on August 19, 2020, coinciding with International Humanitarian Day.

More than 250 participants from diverse stakeholder groups attended the launch. The attendees included AU Member States, policymakers, academics, children, and girls' rights practitioners and advocates in Africa. Donors and multilateral and bilateral organisations were also present.

The report, which covered the AU Member States, captures the voices of girls and their lived realities under the pandemic. The findings of the report indicate that girls have been proportionately affected by Covid-19.

In situations where millions of African families live under extreme poverty and where adequate social protection and community safety nets are nearly absent, girls are the first to suffer from hunger, malnutrition, and ill health.

The widespread closure of schools and childcare centres has excluded girls from poor backgrounds from accessing basic services that those facilities provided. Schools also serve as centres for girls to access sexual and reproductive health services, information, and sanitary materials. Some rely on school meals for food. The closure of schools has disrupted all these protective mechanisms and services, further exposing girls to multiple vulnerabilities.

Further, stay-home measures have brought girls in close and routine proximity with potential perpetrators of sexual abuse. There are disturbing reports of girls being sexually abused by close family members. There is also a sharp rise in the number of cases of child abandonment, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage. The report revealed that among the millions of girls negatively affected by the pandemic, those with disabilities, those living and/or working on the streets, girls from poor backgrounds, girls living in crowded urban slums, and girls in institutions and refugee camps are affected more.

The pandemic has raised major concerns about the potential reversal of the strides achieved over the years towards gender equality and human development in Africa and could

potentially derail the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063 if it continues.

The report makes specific recommendations to governments, the African Union, and other stakeholders. They include adopting a rights and gender-responsive approach to Covid-19 response measures. To recognise girls' voice and agency in all responses, to provide economic support and social protection for families, to protect girls from abuse and gender-based violence through community protection mechanisms, and to ensure access to basic and sexual and reproductive health services (including menstrual hygiene). The report also suggests that the groups consider online educational portals.

These findings and recommendations will drive a continental discourse among the AU Member States, development agencies, and donors on their Covid-19 response. It will also serve as an important document for evidence-based program design and advocacy. The report has already been presented (upon their request) to the Dutch Parliament and The UK government, and Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (formerly DFID).



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

CONTINENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL SCORECARD AND INDEX: COVID-19 RECOVERY AND LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING TOOL



Plan AULO collaborated with AU Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), and Africa Leadership Forum to develop a Continental Framework for the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index: Covid-19 Recovery and Long-term Implementation and Monitoring Tool.

The Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI) was validated on June 23, 2020, in the presence of key representatives from the AUC, ECOWAS, SADC, UN agencies, GIMAC secretariat, key CSO representatives, and member states from around the continent.

Plan WACA RD, Acting Director of AU WGDD, CEO and Executive Director of ALF, and Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa were the key discussants. AULO GAA Project Manager moderated the validation.

The MPSI provides a framework for Covid-19 response and recovery plans by Member States. The framework will hold Member States accountable for the implementation of measures that safeguard and guarantee women and girls access to their sexual reproductive and health rights as guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

It emphasises the need to uphold women's rights obligations encapsulated in the Protocol during the Covid-19 crisis to mitigate the harsh impact of the pandemic on women. This is important as women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and responses that exclude gender equality and women's concerns might have a long-term negative impact on women.

Once adopted, the scorecard and index will compel Member States to resource, protect and report on efforts they are making to guarantee gender equality and will also provide a framework for CSOs to hold their governments accountable.





COMMUNICATION IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Much of the world is in lockdown or practising social distancing due to Covid-19. In GAA's endeavour to combat Covid-19 while advocating for the rights of women, the alliance organised virtual forums.

GAA, through FAWE and PLAN AULO, coordinated a girls' webinar on June 15, 2020, entitled "Access to Child-Friendly Justice: A Girl's Lens", in collaboration with Mtoto News and RMT. The vibrant forum engaged 16 girls as both moderator and discussants from around the continent and a total of 504 people from across Africa joined the webinar via Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook.

The forum explored access to child-friendly justice from the girls' perspective. The recommendations from this forum were included in the CSO Forum Outcome Statement that was presented to the ACERWC. GAA has lobbied the Secretariat of the ACERWC to develop an accountability mechanism to help track the implementation of the recommendations from the webinar.

FAWE participated in a series of webinars in a bid to raise awareness of the problems girls and women are facing during the pandemic. FAWE's executive director was a panellist during the AfDB-ECOSOC webinar on Promoting the Resilience of education Systems in Africa During the Covid-19 Pandemic Period .

The executive director highlighted some of the dire needs of children, particularly girls, who are out of school. This includes the need for remote learning for those who do not have access to technology and the need to reintegrate girls who fall pregnant during the stay at home period back to school, among others.

FAWE's Advocacy Officer participated in a webinar on Access to SRHR Services During the Covid-19 Period organised by Graca Machel Trust and graced by SADC representative, SRHR

Trust Africa, among others. The advocacy officer highlighted issues young women are facing such as lack of access to prenatal and postnatal care due to government movement restrictions, reducing the chances of child marriage through online and remote learning sessions.

Further, FAWE partnered with Girls Not Brides, Plan International, Global Partnership for Education, and the African Union Goodwill Ambassador in writing a solidarity letter to the AU HRST Commissioner on the impact of Covid-19 on girls.

The letter includes immediate and long-term measures, such as including women in the decision-making teams, removal of fees for vulnerable girls, and school re-entry of teenage and pregnant girls.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

GETTING GIRLS EQUAL

The African Report on Girls and the Law



GETTING GIRLS EQUAL: AFRICAN REPORT ON GIRLS AND THE LAW

Millions of African girls face exclusion and exploitation because the law discriminates against them. Many laws perpetuate deeply ingrained political, social, and cultural beliefs and practices designed to subjugate girls, according to a new report by AULO and African Child Policy Forum (ACPF).

The report titled, "Getting Girls Equal: The African Report on Girls and the Law" is the first report of its kind to undertake a thorough review of the laws and policies of states and their impact on the rights of girls.

The report documents the challenges that girls face as female and as children. It reveals several areas in which girls' marginalisation is most evident. This includes education, harmful cultural practices, and the denial of rights in relation to inheritance and social protection. It shows a lopsided pendulum in the legal protection of children, tipped in favour of boys. It indicates that gender discrimination is still found in the laws of many African countries, which in turn perpetuate traditional views that girls are subordinate to boys.

"African girls face double discrimination as both children and female," said the report author, Dr Violet Odala, Programme Manager at ACPF. "Girls fall between the cracks of most laws and policies, which in most

cases either address women as a group or children as a group, without specific regard to the special situation of girls. The invisibility of girls in laws and policies has subsequently resulted in a lopsided legal pendulum tipped in favour of boys”.

“African girls are valued and respected far less than boys. Exclusion, exploitation, deprivation and subjugation are the norm for the overwhelming majority,” added Dr Assefa Bequele, Executive Director of the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF). “Gender discrimination is still embedded in the laws of many African countries, even those which are signatories to international agreements. Even where laws and policies aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of girls do exist, they are frequently poorly implemented or even ignored. This is unacceptable and must stop.”

AULO successfully launched the report on November 15, 2019. The event was attended by close to 200 participants from the AU, Ethiopian government, development partners and UN agencies, NGOs, higher education institutions, academia, girls and young women.

The launch of the report was accompanied by a vibrant panel discussion, which involved Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen-Plan International CEO, ACPF Executive Director, Netherlands Embassy Deputy Head of Mission, A Laurate Disability Rights Activist, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission Commissioner. There has been extensive media presence and coverage of the study globally, regionally and in Ethiopia, including on The Guardian.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

LEADING A CONTINENTAL STUDY OF AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA



Children in Africa actively participate in informal cross-border trade. Children are lured by different factors to join cross border trade—these range from the influence of their parents to early exposure to “easy money”.

For family businesses, children may be required to run the family enterprise as the parents ferry goods across the border. Child participation in running the family enterprises may expose the child to money, even when unpaid.

Beyond the family business, border crossings are characterized by several activities, including money changers who may display a considerable amount of cash to vulnerable children. Exposure to the border community can serve as a pull factor for children out of school and into trading activities.

Once exposed to cross-border trade, children are more likely than not to drop out of school. Children exposed to both “easy money” and various routes for conducting cross-border business are unlikely to value the importance of continuing school.

GAA led a continental study on the “The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement: Analysing the Implications on Cross Border Issues Affecting

Children”. The report was aimed at influencing the continental agenda on free trade from a child rights and gender equality perspective.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) entered into force on May 30, 2019 and since its creation, 52 of the 55 African members have signed the agreement. Following Gambia’s ratification, 22 countries have submitted instruments of ratification and many more countries are expected to do so in order to successfully implement the agreement. According to a report by the United Nation Economic Commission for Africa, the AfCFTA is considered to be the world’s largest free trade area covering more than 1.2 billion people and a combined GDP of 2.5 trillion. However, the agreement tends to overshadow those at the bottom of the economic ladder who are particularly women and children as well as informal traders.

The major objective of this study is to provide child rights and gender equality perspective of the AfCFTA, particularly analyzing the implications of AfCFTA on cross-border issues affecting children, focusing on child marriage, commercial sexual exploitation of children, child trafficking and migration in Africa, with case studies in selected countries. It is also expected to provide a gender

analysis of the AfCFTA particularly on its potential implications for protection of girls and young women. The study is expected to inform the AU, Governments, policymakers, researchers, advocates, CSOs, private sector and other stakeholders on critical child rights and gender considerations to harness the potential of the AfCFTA. AULO has lobbied the preliminary discussions and briefing to be held with ACERWC upcoming session.

The findings of the report indicated that women continue to dominate cross-border trade but remain highly informal and operate on a small scale. Various constraints, including economic reasons—mainly the lack of access to affordable financial services—but also lack of networks and connectivity, affect the growth of women-led trade enterprises. As a result, women face higher trade costs as they are forced to rely on middle-men and go-betweens to ferry goods across borders.

Sexual harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and other forms of exploitations are routinely experienced by female cross-border traders. Women face sexual harassment from both customs officials and security agencies in exchange for trade and border crossing services. Harassment has continued over the years and worsened under the Covid-19 pandemic.

Women often fear to engage the exploiters and sometimes choose to use unofficial border-crossings when faced with repeated threats of exploitation. Furthermore, due to limited childcare opportunities, some young women have to go to work with their children who are in turn (especially young girls) exposed to exploitation and sexual overtones.

There is no uniform or strict enforcement of legislations regarding travelling with children across borders, and this can increase the threat of child trafficking. Furthermore, it is not easy to confirm the relationship of the adult with the child due to the absence of easily verifiable official documentation, e.g. national ID, passports and birth certificates.

However, some countries like Rwanda strictly enforce legislations regarding travelling with children across the border; without the acceptable documentation, a mother or a caretaker cannot travel across any Rwandese border with a child.

Despite the operation of the simplified trade regime (STRs) in some regional economic communities (RECs), which set the thresholds below which goods are not taxable—border procedures are not correctly understood and not appreciated by women informal cross-border traders. Poor comprehension of border procedures leaves women vulnerable to exploitation as they pay for tax-free goods. It also compels women traders to use unofficial or unpatrolled border crossing—partly as a means of avoiding interfacing with unfamiliar border procedures.

The report gave different recommendations for action. These include establishing an AfCFTA sub-committee on human right, ensuring that labour standards are part of future protocols of AfCFTA, and collecting gender-disaggregated data on informal cross-border trade. Others are developing an AfCFTA gender policy, harmonising existing trade agreements with AfCFTA, implementing the simplified trade regime and establishing infrastructure at border-crossing appropriate for women.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

ENOUGH WITH THE SILENCE!(SECOND AFRICAN GIRLS SUMMIT)

Plan African Union Liaison Office (AULO) was one of the leading co-organisers of the Second African Girls' Summit. Plan actively engaged in the planning of the 2nd Girls Summit that took place on November 23-24 2018, preceded by a Youth Pre-Summit from November 21-22, 2018; where child marriage and SRHR were the main themes.

The event, which was held in Ghana, was attended by over 1,000 delegates from across 30 countries. They included ministers of state responsible for social development, gender and children, First Ladies from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Niger and

Liberia, religious and community leaders, victims and survivors of Child Marriage, and youth advocates. The AGS also attracted representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs), media, development partners, UN Agencies as well as bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies.

The summit provided an opportunity for various stakeholders to review their roles in the Campaign to End Child Marriages and renew their commitment to it. Delegates used the opportunity to network and share their experiences on best practices and challenges on ending child marriage at the national, regional and international levels.

H.E. Rebecca Akufo - Addo, the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana, said in her opening statement "It is my wish that these fruitful deliberations and meaningful commitments will heighten our efforts and responsibility to accelerate our engagement to end the practice of child marriage and contribute to the prosperity of Africa."

"Ending child marriage is prioritized under Aspiration number 6 of the Agenda 2063 framework and the article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which call for an end to all harmful social practices like child marriages and female genital mutilation on which we just launched a new AU led campaign in Burkina Faso," H.E. Dr. Amira El Fadil AU



Commissioner for Social Affairs in noted in her speech. “ I hope this summit will address the core need of investing in adolescent education, specifically access to services such as sexual health care, sexuality education and rights protection.”

AULO properly positioned Plan International to engage in one of Africa’s highest girls’ gathering and was the only NGO whose logos were mounted on the grand summit banner prepared by the Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

AULO, mainly through GAA, was also the leading NGO in mobilizing a critical number of girls and youth to actively engage on the 2nd African Girls’ Summit with an objective of taking exemplary action to enhance the voice of girls and youth in regional and sub-regional policy dialogue spaces on ending child marriage. It was planning on opening the space to enable girls and youth self-represent, lead and shape the agenda for their present and future, affirming their potential, agency and creating opportunities for personal and collective growth. Accordingly, AULO in collaboration with Plan International Ghana and ROs as well as COs in WARO and RESA was able to mobilize and support 48 girls and youth (38F and 10M) where 28 are from out of Ghana and the remaining 20 are from Ghana.

A high-level side meeting on the theme ‘Empower a Girl, Secure

the Future of Africa’ was held with First Ladies, resulting in a communique presented by H.E. Fatima Maada Bio, the First Lady of Sierra Leone. The First Ladies agreed to advocate for the reform of legislation regarding child marriage in their respective countries. They pledged their commitment to advocate for the translation of regional and national level laws and policies into concrete changes at the grassroots.

The First Ladies called on Member States to enact legislations that explicitly prohibit harmful practices and ensure 18 years is the minimum age for marriage. They also suggested that states remove all legal loopholes regarding full and free consent and other issues that allow for exceptions. Further, they wanted states to guarantee the full and free consent of marrying parties and that the legal age of marriage applies to all marriages, including customary and religious marriages.

Other recommendations were for states to allocate financial resources and put in place institutional bodies and mechanisms for implementation, including the monitoring of progress. To ensure access of girls and young women to education, comprehensive SRHR services and comprehensive information and education on SRHR, harmful practices, sexuality and rights. And to strengthen youth and especially girls and young women’s leadership and participation on human rights and in ending of Child Marriage



GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGENCY: YOUTH, GIRLS, AND YOUNG WOMEN DRIVING CHANGE

By 2025, a quarter of all young people under 25 in the world will be African. But youth, girls, and young women are not included in decision-making in Africa.

Since their voice has been absent in policymaking, the impact of policy in their lives is not discussed in decision-making forums. Hence, their interests are overlooked in policymaking in favour of powerful groups.

To encourage the inclusion of women and youth in East Africa, GAA supported the high-level EAC Youth Ambassadors Dialogue on Regional Integration 2018, "Harnessing Young People's Participation in the Political Process". The event was held at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania from November 5-6, 2018.

The youth ambassadors who attended the event urged for the establishment of the EAC Youth Council comprising of Youth Ambassadors and a task force team. The team will represent the youth at the EAC Heads of state meetings and East Africa Legislative Assembly sessions.

The inclusion of the voices of youth, girls, and young women will lead to better decisions. Many challenges disproportionately affect women and youth, such as poverty,

illiteracy, and labour discriminative practices.

Since women and youth have experienced these issues first-hand, they can share views from their experience. This will help create an entry point on policy change and monitor the progress of different regional and sub-regional human rights mechanisms.



Youth ambassadors from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Uganda discussing the regional landscape for youth participation in decision making in EAC.

Further, GAA has played an important role in opening up spaces for girls during key continental influencing spaces, including the AU Pre-Summit GIMAC engagements as well as the AU Gender Pre-Summit meetings (a platform for African

Gender Ministers where GIMAC participants also take part and present recommendations).

When GAA started, attendance at many African Union (AU) meetings that focused on the rights of girls and young women, or any that discussed issues to do with girls and young women had one thing in common: nearly most of the attendees were older persons.

During the 28th GIMAC, madam Zuma, the then AUC Chairperson alluded to the fact that the median age of participants at the GIMAC was about 40 and it should change. Simply put, there was a significant lack of representation of girls or young women at meetings convened to discuss their issues.

A Pre-GIMAC youth advocacy training was designed in January 2017 to encourage and equip girls and young women to participate in discussions about issues that affect them. Outcomes of the youth discussions and recommendations were presented at the opening of GIMAC in January 2017.

The recommendations of the youth were included in the GIMAC outcome documents, which were eventually presented to the AU Gender Pre-Summit meetings (AU Gender Ministers meeting). In January 2017, GIMAC outcomes were presented to the Gender Ministers by a GAA delegate. It was a silent campaign that gradually ensured more girls were attending AU convened events, and that they spoke at these events.



Between 2016-2018 lobbied partners, such as Rozaria Memorial Trust, WYMCA, WREPA, and FEMENT worked together to convene Pre-GIMAC young women workshops. The workshops were intended to enhance young women and girls' knowledge of the African Union and AU processes to increase their participation in holding their governments accountable on the issues that affect them.

In these workshops, the young women and girls would devise recommendations to the proposed GIMAC themes and discussions. The issues included access, retention, and completion in education for girls, as well as training opportunities for young women, and economic empowerment for young women and youth. Another issue was access to sexual reproductive health rights. These issues were largely anchored on the communicated African Union themes.

The young women were also given an opportunity to join panel discussions and contribute freely in the audience space. With time, girls and young women started sharing podiums with government ministers, AU commissioners, and other policymakers as panellists in their own right.

Further, Plan AULO, FAWE, and Partners facilitated one-on-one meetings between the girls and key African Union Commission representatives, such as the AU Special Envoy on Peace and Security, AUC Chairperson, as well as UN Women Executive Director.

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION AND POPULARIZATION OF THE ACHPR AND
ACERWC JOINT GENERAL COMMENT ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE



Plan AULO, through GAA, supported the publication, adoption and popularization of ACHPR and ACERWC Joint General Comments (JGC) on Ending Child Marriage (ECM) in Africa.

The Joint General Comment on ECM was officially launched in April 2018, in Bamako and Mauritania during the 31st session of the ACERWC and 62nd session of the ACmHPR respectively. GAA, represented by Plan International, delivered a statement at both events as a key partner (only NGO) in the development and popularization of the JGC.

Moreover, Plan AULO, in partnership with the Centre for Human Rights, Equality Now, Girls Not Brides and Human Rights Watch, also hosted a panel discussion on the side-lines of the NGO Forum to the ACommHPR on the ECM JGC.

Plan AULO in collaboration with FAWE organised an evening function as part of the 12th CSO Forum focusing on the status of girls' rights in Africa on the theme: "Leave No Girl Behind: Generating Synergies among African CSOs for Ending Child

Marriage in Africa". The outcome of the side-event fed into the recommendations of the CSO Forum to the ACERWC.

Plan AULO also delivered a statement at the opening of the 31st and 62nd session of the ACERWC and ACommHPR respectively. AULO called upon the two mechanisms to continue providing guidance to their Member States towards ending child marriage.

GAA facilitated the process, leading to the adoption of Joint General Comments (JGCs)¹ to end CM in Africa² by ACHPR and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)³ with connected states' obligations on the MP and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). During the launch, the Chairperson of the ACHPR spoke of the transformative value of the Joint General Comment, in that it goes beyond providing states with guidance on how to comply with treaty obligations and that it is also relevant to stakeholders in holding States accountable for failure to implement their treaty obligations and the⁴ AU Special Rapporteur on Ending CM⁵.

²https://www.acerwc.africa/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Website_Joint_GC_ACERWC-ACHPR_Ending_Child_Marriage_20_January_2018.pdf

³<https://www.acerwc.africa/%20News/acerwc-and-achpr-adopt-their-first-ever-joint-general-comment/>

⁴<https://www.acerwc.africa/sessions/-/JGC-launch-report-included-in-the-31st-ACERWC-Session-Report>

⁵https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-law/news/post_2675386-official-launch-of-the-joint-general-comment-on-ending-child-marriage-and-the-report-on-child-marriage-in-africa



GAA SUPPORTS THE AFRICAN UNION ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE CAMPAIGN

Every year, 12 million girls are married before they turn 18. That is, 23 girls are married every minute, putting their personal development and well-being at risk¹. Child brides are isolated and have limited freedom, and are not physically and emotionally ready to become mothers. Further, they face more risks during childbirth and are more likely to contract HIV and suffer from violence.

GAA, through Plan AULO, as core member of the African Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage Technical Working Group, has played a key role in supporting the “End Child Marriage Campaign (ECM)”. The campaign works towards building on existing activities of governments and partners in ending child marriage and is based on

advocacy, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as well as the facilitation of technical assistance and capacity building.

GAA has supported country ECM campaign launches and capacity building to regional media and law makers. It has also played a key role in providing inputs to the AU ECM campaign 5-year strategy, as well as facilitating stakeholders’ inception meeting on the new strategy by August 2019. It has supported the validation consultation of the AU ECM strategy 2019-2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa and provided substantive inputs through inviting GAA colleagues and religious and traditional leaders from Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia.

AULO also engaged in the strategy development, review of the accountability mechanism, as well as action plan development of the African Union Saleema Initiative to eliminate FGM. The engagement in the development of the AU ECM campaign 5-year strategy has been instrumental in forging a successful roadmap to take the campaign to the next level.

GAA has also taken part in several engagements to support the African Union Ending Child Marriage Campaign. For example, participating in organising workshops, including, “A Workshop to Evaluate Progress of the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage: Reflecting on Country Initiatives to End Child Marriages.” This workshop was conducted from 10-12 October 2016 in Lusaka, Zambia.

As an active member of the technical working group of the AU Campaign on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, GAA participated in drafting the concept note and program of the workshop. GAA was also



¹Girls Not Brides

involved in the overall coordination and developing of talking points and advocacy tasks. This has been very important in strengthening accountabilities between the African Union and Member States in implementing and monitoring program to end child marriage.

GAA has also been instrumental in technically supporting and participating in the Report on Status of Child Marriage in Africa and evaluation of Campaign to End Child Marriage leading Plan International's feedback to the Non-State Actors Assessment which provided critical inputs and recommendations for the campaign. The report was adopted by the Ministerial meeting of the STC in Algiers, starting 24 April and the report with recommendations from the STC has been presented by H.E President Lungu, President of Zambia at the July 2017 Heads of States Summit.

GAA also participated in organising the Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Increased Advocacy to Ending Child Marriage through Engagement of the Media – Eastern, Western and Southern African Stream, which was conducted in November 2016, February and March 2017 respectively. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of the media to better investigate and report on child marriage in Africa with a focus on addressing the root causes and the different facets of the issue and challenging all stakeholders towards ending the practice.

The workshop brought together about 150 journalists and communication experts across the regions. GAA-PAO played a key role in the development of the concept note, program, as well as delivering sessions such as “Gender and the Media”, “identifying ways by which the media can engage different actors working against Child Marriage”, “Enhancing M&E of ECM initiatives” and movie screening as well as overall coordination and the drafting of the Media Action Plan and monitoring framework on Ending Child Marriage in Africa.

AULO supported high-level advocacy and mobilization. For instance, AULO engaged in the Regional High-Level Conference on Eliminating Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation held from June 19-20, 2019 in Cairo, Egypt. Plan was a key influencer and very visible during the conference and was acclaimed by senior government ministers and development partners for its role in ending child marriage and FGM in the continent.

The conference provided an opportunity to highlight and build on the results of both the 2nd African Girls Summit (Ghana, 2018) and the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation (Burkina Faso, 2018). Furthermore, it also provided an opportunity to highlight the urgent need to take action that accelerates the elimination of these harmful practices. Both Champions on Ending Child Marriage (President of Zambia) and Eliminating FGM (President of Burkina Faso) will report on the themes at the 2020 Heads of State and Government Summit. We have contributed to a well drafted Cairo Call to Action which was presented at Ministers meeting (STC) as well as incorporated into Head of States ECM and FGM champions reports.

The other influencing success around this is Plan International as a core member of the Technical Working Group of the AU ECM campaign. Plan International has advocated for recognition around child marriage in humanitarian context to ensure Member States take all feasible measures to ensure the special protection and care of children affected by conflict and mitigate the effects of conflict on girls, noting that situations of unrest and armed conflict exacerbate the potential for child marriage. To this effect, the African Union Peace and Security Council held its first open session on 13 June 2017 on ending child marriage entitled “Protecting ‘the forgotten children’ of conflict against child marriages” chaired by the Ambassador of Zambia.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

GAA SUPPORTED THE CONSULTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE AU SOCIAL AGENDA FOR AGENDA 2063 AND SOCIAL PROTECTION AGENDA BY THE STC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT IN OCTOBER AND DEC 2019



The January 2015 African Union Summit adopted Agenda 2063 – “The Africa We Want” – as Africa’s blueprint and master plan for sustainable development and economic growth of the continent. It is an affirmation by African Heads of State and Government of their commitment to transform Africa into the global powerhouse.

GAA supported the consultation and adoption of the AU Social Agenda 2063.

At the request of the AU Executive Council, AU Commission developed two documents to enhance social development and well-being of people on the continent. These include an additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security. The second is a Social Agenda for the AU Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the Commission elaborated a draft Ten Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery (2020-2030).

The Draft Protocol, the draft Social Agenda 2063, and the draft ten-year Action plan were submitted to the second ordinary session of the specialised technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment during its second ordinary session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from April 1, 2019.

The Ministers requested the African Union Commission Secretariat to organise a continental validation workshop; and to organise an extraordinary session in Abidjan in December 2019, before the African Regional Meeting of the ILO, in order to consider the Draft Protocol; Draft AU Social Agenda 2063; and the Draft Ten Year Action Plan.

The primary aim of the validation workshop was to engage with Member States Experts' participants to consider the Draft Protocol and Draft AU Social Agenda 2063 and the Draft Ten Year Action Plan before being submitted to the Extra Ordinary Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment in December 2019. Regional Economic Communities and selected AU Organs will be associated.

The objectives were to facilitate collection of views and contributions from Member States, selected AU Policy Organs, such as Pan African Parliament and ECOSOCC, ACERW, Regional Economic Communities and other concerned stakeholders. They also sought to improve the two policy frameworks and the draft legal instrument for the Extraordinary Session in Abidjan in December 2019.

The workshop brought together member states experts, REC's experts from selected AU organs (ECOSOCC, ACERWC, and PAP). The department of Social Affairs, AU Commission, Experts on Social Protection, two members of the working group on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security of the African Commission on Human Rights, trade departments of the commission and AU Legal Counsel.

The result of the workshop was to develop a validated Draft Protocol, Draft AU Social Agenda 2063 and Draft Ten Year Action Plan.



GAA HAS SUPPORTED ACERWC CONSULTATION WITH RECS ON AGENDA 2040 AND CROSS-BORDER ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN



The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2015 developed Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, known as Agenda 2040. The Agenda was developed during the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which aimed at assessing the situation of children's rights in Africa in the 25 years following the adoption of the Charter with a view of 'looking behind to look forward'.

Based on the findings of the assessment during the conference, Agenda 2040 was developed to set aspirations for African countries which will be implemented and achieved in the next 25 years of the Charter. The Agenda sets 10 main aspirations in the area of effective continental framework, child-friendly legal and institutional system, birth registration, survival and health, education, access to basic necessities, violence against children, the child-sensitive justice system, armed conflict, and child participation.

A two-day workshop was organised by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and hosted by the East African Community (EAC) in Arusha, Tanzania on October 23-24, 2018. The workshop was part of a series of workshops planned to take place in all the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Participants of this workshop included representatives of the Partner States, representatives from the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare (ACERWC). Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the EAC and other stakeholders in the sub-region were also in attendance. The aim of the workshop was popularize Agenda 2040 and identify main priorities, challenges, and possible strategies on the implementation of the Agenda. It also aimed at identifying cross-border issues in the EAC in relation to children's rights and the aspirations of the Agenda.

The workshop was opened by Dr. Clement Mashamba who is a member of ACERWC and Solicitor General in the United Republic of Tanzania. In his opening remarks, Dr. Mashamba briefly shared the background of how Agenda 2040 came to be and its purpose. He noted that while progress has

been made towards the fulfillment of children's rights, there are still serious violations taking place on the Continent. Common violations include violence against children, child marriage, and several cross-border issues that affect specific groups of children, such as refugee children.

From the workshop, it emerged there is no clean consensus on what cross-border issues are. In addition, no research has been conducted in this area. It is, therefore, important to study what the actual issues are and address these problems based on actual data.

Further, participants of the workshops recognised that many governments have made good progress in enacting laws and policies to protect children, but implementation remains a challenge. A number of reasons were shared for this, including poor resourcing of children's rights, the "lumping" of children's issues in ministries with many other mandates, lack of capacity and awareness in the sector on the laws and good practice, lack of will, lack of effective coordination, and lack of enforcement. The participants of the workshop also felt that CSOs and governments work in silos and do not always address issues holistically.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

GAA HAS SUPPORTED LIBERIA AND ETHIOPIA ACERWC COUNTRY MISSIONS, AND SIERRA LEONE STATE PARTY REPORT, GHANA AND KENYA ACERWC C&O REPORT



The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) undertook a country mission to Liberia to monitor the level of implementation that ACERWC issued to the Government of Liberia in 2013.

ACERWC sent a delegation to Liberia, consisting of Hon. Marie-Christine Bocoum, First Vice-Chairperson of the ACERWC and Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Harmful Practices; Hon Aver Gavar, Member of the ACERWC and Special Rapporteur on Violence against Children; Ms. Catherine Maina, Senior Social worker, Mr. Ayalew Getachew Assefa, Senior Child Protection Officer; Ms. Samrawit Getaneh Damtew, Legal Researcher; and Mr. Solomon Samson, Communication Assistant.

The delegation undertook constructive dialogue with representatives of the Government of Liberia to learn about the progress achieved, challenges faced, and opportunities in the implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations.

They also brought together stakeholders to boost collaboration between the Government, UN agencies, CSOs, and other stakeholders. Moreover, the committee sought to enhance and accelerate the implementation of its recommendations.

The committee made several observations. For example, they noted that the provision of the Penal code providing for death penalty and life imprisonment for children aged 16 and 17 is still not repealed. But they noted there was progress in 2014, when the Ministry of Justice initiated a bill to abolish the death penalty and life imprisonment for juvenile offenders.

The delegation also noted the existence of Children's Forum and Children's Clubs to enhance child participation. However, there is no budgetary allocation for Children's Forum, hindering their effectiveness.

In regard to Civil Rights and Freedoms, the committee observed that only 25 percent of children under the age of 5 have birth certificates. However, progress has been achieved by the Government in increasing the rate of birth registration and certification in collaboration with UNICEF and World Bank, by enhancing accessibility of birth registration centres.

The Committee observed that the Constitution provides that Liberian nationality can only be given to people with Negro descent, leaving many non-Negros who have settled in the country at risk of statelessness.

The Committee further notes that in addition to discrimination based on race in acquisition of nationality, transfer of citizenship from mother to child raises an issue of gender-based discrimination. If a Liberian woman has a child with a foreigner she cannot transfer her citizenship to her child, but this doesn't apply to men. A Liberian man who has a child with a foreigner can transfer his citizenship to his child.

Some of the recommendations included harmonizing customary and statutory marriage laws with the Charter. Repeal provisions of the penal code imposing death penalty and life imprisonment on children. Ban corporal punishment in all settings and undertake awareness creation activities to introduce positive disciplining. Amend the constitution to ensure that children are not discriminated based on their or their parent's race, gender or any other prohibited ground in the Charter, in acquisition of nationality and ensure that nationality laws do not render any child stateless or at risk of statelessness

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACEREC) undertook a similar mission to Ethiopia. Their goal was to assess the implementation of its concluding observations and recommendations on the initial report, which was forwarded to the Government of Ethiopia.

The objectives of the ACERWC in this mission was to undertake constructive dialogue with the Government of Ethiopia to learn about the progress achieved the challenges, and the opportunities that exist in the implementation of its concluding observation and recommendations.

On October 16, 2018, the committee held meetings with government officials, State Minister for children Affairs, within the Ministry of Women & Children Affairs, Government representatives from the federal court, the Attorney General, Ministry of Social Affairs. Others

meetings were held with UNICEF Ethiopia, Plan International, and Save the Children.

The findings of the mission indicate that in regards to civil rights and freedoms, the government has launched vital registration for refugee children. However, the committee noted that the birth registration of children under five years is less than 3 percent, the lowest in the world. It emerged that the government dealt with unaccompanied minors only through birth registration. But this did not solve the problems of being at the risk of statelessness.

In education and leisure, the committee noted that the access to education has improved. They, however, observed that, the quality of education is not up to standard and proper infrastructure are not set up in the Eastern and Northern State of the State Party.

The committee also made observations on children in conflict with the law, harmful traditional practices, children in the street, child labour, child trafficking, as well as abuse and exploitation of children.

The mission gave several recommendations to the Government of Ethiopia. These included fast-tracking the process of the adoption of a comprehensive child rights law, intensifying coordination on child rights efforts among various government ministries and agencies, and building the capacity of institutions and staff working on child rights and welfare issues.

Other recommendations were to revise the age of criminal responsibility to make it consistent with the law. Undertake extensive sensitisation on birth registration and make birth registration accessible in all parts of the State Party. Further, to upscale the quality of education and ensure that the efforts in increasing accessibility to education do not leave quality education behind.

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

LAUNCH OF THE SAUTI BLOG: GAA THROUGH THE LEADERSHIP OF FAWE AND IN COLLABORATION WITH PLAN AULO HAS SUPPORTED THE AFRICAN UNION YOUTH ENVOY TO RELAUNCH THE #SAUTI_يتوص BLOG.

African Union Youth Envoy

2020 | SILENCING THE GUNS: Empowering Young Women's Leadership for Africa's Development

● SAUTI صوتي

Untold and underrepresented stories of young women from across Africa and the diaspora showcasing their innovation and impact in the community.

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Launched on International Women's Day, the Young Feminist Blog features untold and underrepresented stories of young African women from across Africa and the diaspora, showcasing their innovation and impact in the community in fighting Covid-19.

Young women across the continent were invited to express themselves through writing, visual or audio/video (short documentary) or any other creative means and artistic expressions, to showcase the impact of young women and female-led actions to address Covid-19 as well as to showcase the daily struggles and challenges young women are facing in the evolving Covid-19 pandemic situation.

One of these stories is of 25-year-old Ruvimbo Musiyarira. Musiyarira shares her experiences with sexual abuse since the age of 5 and how the Covid-19 lockdown has forced her to confront those issues. "I was 5 the first time I felt a man's hand on my body," she says. "He was so tall. I was 5, but I knew he shouldn't be touching me."

"I was 22 when the caretaker of where I lived tried to come and sleep with me because he knew that I was alone, she continued. "I could hear his footsteps outside my door. I was scared to go and eat."

Musiyarira also writes about being sexually abused when she was 12 and 15, and having to deal with these issues at 25, when she was in lockdown during Covid-19. Other women have also used the platform to share how they are coping during the pandemic.

The Sauti Blog gives young African feminists a platform, which is a crucial part of the conversation. It particularly helps include young women who are not connected and are therefore missing out on the digital divide.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

TEJITU, 14, ESCAPES A FORCED MARRIAGE AND NOW HELPS OTHERS DO THE SAME

When Tejitu was 14, she overheard her family talking about a marriage proposal they had received from a man in his 20s. She could tell that they were going to marry her off. So, she called on her teachers and friends from her school's peer-to-peer group to help her. Having received training from the Girls Advocacy Alliance, the teachers reported the case to the local anti-child marriage task force, which was formed by Plan International in 2016. The taskforce visited Tejitu's parents and

persuaded them to change their mind.

"It wasn't easy, because child marriage is such a big tradition here, but in the end, my parents agreed to cancel the wedding," says Tejitu. "I was so relieved."

Many girls in Ethiopia are not as lucky as Tejitu. Studies show that 40 percent of girls are married before the age of 18. Child marriage ends a girl's education and increases her risk of domestic violence. Girls who give birth under the age of 15 are also more likely to suffer from pregnancy-related injuries.

GAA- Plan International is working with schools to end child marriages. One of the ways they are engaging schools is by encouraging them to start peer-to-peer groups. In these groups, girls and boys discuss child marriages and female genital mutilation. The schools have also started girls' clubs, which help girls, escape early marriages and manage menstrual hygiene. These clubs report plans of early marriages to the teachers. The teachers then talk to parents and report to authorities if necessary.

In addition, Plan International has encouraged schools to set up a letterbox, which students could use to report child marriages. This makes it easier for shy children to report planned marriages to their teachers.



Tejitu did not want to get married at 14. She told her parents that she would die if she got pregnant because her body isn't developed enough.

Following interventions by Plan International, a school in Ethiopia stopped 30 weddings of underage girls. The school director, Daniel, said, “We’ve seen a real reduction in child marriages in this community in the past five years and it’s entirely down to Plan International’s hard work.” “They set up new community-based organisations, tasked with ending child marriage and help community members to work together. They also trained us (teachers) on how to take action against child marriage.”

The school stopped the marriage of a teenage girl called Yakaba. When Yakaba got wind that her parents were planning her marriage, she wrote a letter and put it in the letterbox in her school. The teachers retrieved it and approached her parents to stop them from marrying her off.

At a continental level, Plan AULO through GAA supported the publication, adoption and popularization of ACHPR and ACERWC Joint General Comments (JGC) on Ending Child Marriage (ECM) in Africa. The Joint General comment on ECM was officially launched in April 2018 in Bamako and Mauritania during the 31st session of the ACERWC and 62nd session of the ACommHPR respectively.

In addition, Plan AULO, in partnership with the Centre for Human Rights, Equality Now, Girls Not Brides and Human Rights Watch hosted a panel discussion on the side-lines of the NGO Forum to the ACommHPR on the ECM JGC.

⁸<https://www.acerwc.africa/sessions/>- JGC launch report included in the 31st ACERWC Session Report

Plan AULO in collaboration with FAWE organised an evening function as part of the 12th CSO Forum focusing on the status of girls’ rights in Africa on the theme: “Leave No Girl Behind: Generating Synergies among African CSOs for Ending Child Marriage in Africa”.

The outcome of the side-event fed into the recommendations of the CSO Forum to the ACERWC. Plan also delivered a statement at the opening of the 31st and 62nd session of the ACERWC and ACommHPR respectively where it called upon the two mechanisms to continue providing guidance to their Member States towards ending child marriage.

GAA facilitated the process, leading to the adoption of Joint General Comments (JGCs) to end CM in Africa by ACHPR and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) with connected states’ obligations on the MP and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

During the launch, the Chairperson of the ACHPR spoke of the transformative value of the Joint General Comment, in that it goes beyond providing states with guidance on how to comply with treaty obligations and that it is also relevant to stakeholders in holding States accountable for failure to implement their treaty obligations and the ⁹AU Special Rapporteur on Ending CM⁹.

⁹https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-law/news/post_2675386-official-launch-of-the-joint-general-comment-on-ending-child-marriage-and-the-report-on-child-marriage-in-africa



HAIMANOT, 15, ESCAPES CHILD MARRIAGE



Like many teenage girls in rural Ethiopia, 15-year-old Haimanot Azazi was terrified when she noticed a man in his late twenties frequenting her home. “A young man had been coming to our house and sitting with my father for a very long time,” she says. “I was so suspicious that they were discussing my marriage.”

To stop the worst from happening, Haimanot reported her suspicion to her teachers who then approached her father to talk him against marrying off her daughter. “They told him my dream of becoming a lawyer and my potential to make that dream come true,” she says, “but only if he can help me.” The teachers also warned Haimanot’s father that they would follow up and take him to court if he continued with the marriage plans.

Haimanot says that her father listened to her teachers and has never talked to her about marriage again. “There’s nothing that worries

me now," says Haimanot. She likes school very much and talks about it very passionately. She is now a happy grade 7 student and studies very hard to become a lawyer.

Haimanot is a member of the Girls' Club in her school. In this club, she learned about early marriage and its consequences even more. The girls in the club report planned early marriages of friends to the head and representative of our club and the school principal.

"As a member of the club, I myself have changed a lot because of the project. Now, I feel I can overcome any challenge to realize my dreams," says Haimanot. Haimanot and other club members are grateful. "Plan International Ethiopia has previously trained me on how to fight against harmful social and traditional practices including early marriage," she says. "I would have been married off by now and expecting a baby anytime soon had it not been for the training."



A HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR TELLS HER STORY

23-year-old Hidja Hassen was born in Makesnit, a small town in Ethiopia. Hidja's parents divorced and Hidja, her two sisters, and her brother moved in with their mother. Her mother's income was not enough to support the family. So, Hidja moved to Saudi Arabia, in 2015, to work as a housemaid. After three months of working, another employee began sexually harassing Hidja, forcing her to leave employment.

While Hidja was still in Saudi Arabia, she met another Ethiopian immigrant who impregnated her. She gave birth in 2016, but the man refused to support her and the baby. Hidja could not work, either, because she had no one to babysit. So, she returned to Makesnit where she lives with her mother and sister.

Hidja attended campaign and training sessions organised by GAA-Terre des Hommes. The organisation protects children and young people affected by migration, whether it's voluntary or forced. Terre des Hommes also raises awareness about the risks that are related to unsafe migration while taking into account opportunities that migration can offer children.



Following the training, Hidja is now a youth advocate who uses her personal experience to raise awareness about the negative effects of unsafe migration. In the beginning, her family members did not support her work. But gradually, Hidja won them over. Her mother now helps her raise awareness about trafficking and has convinced Hidja's sister who was working in Saudi Arabia to come back home.

Hidja says, "My life experience in Saudi Arabia, the campaigns, dialogues and training that I got from the project helped to get knowledge. Because of this, I am now teaching others." Hidja also says that she is happy because she can earn a living in her country and support her family.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

PLACING YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE CENTRE OF UGANDA'S AGENDA



In December 2019, New Vision, a Ugandan newspaper, wrote an investigative story about the trafficking of girls in Uganda. New Vision established that girls were being trafficked from Uganda to work in Eastleigh, Kenya. The girls worked under harsh conditions as house helps, sex workers, and barmaids. Others ended up in the hands of Al-Shabaab, a terror organisation in Somalia.

The investigative story revealed that trafficking agents had changed tact after interventions from the government and were no longer requiring victims from the market. Instead, they went to the villages and negotiated with the parents of the girls.

Their parents were likely to agree because there are high poverty levels in Karamojong. The Government of Uganda reported the trafficking of

218 people in 2018. Of the 218 victims, 149 adults and 27 children were victims of forced labour, while 18 children and 15 adults were victims of sex trafficking.

By highlighting stories of child trafficking, the media creates awareness, shapes people's attitudes, and puts child trafficking issues on the public agenda.

But the work of the media is not enough. Governments, NGOs, CSOs, and other organisations also need to work together to create change.

GAA contributed by helping civil society organisations train media stations on reporting child trafficking issues. As a result, a media house highlighted a case of 98 Karamoja girls who had been trafficked to Eastleigh Kenya, leading to their rescue. Journalists in the East African Community (EAC) also agreed to create a regional network to ensure victim

protection reporting for sustained results.

In addition to working with the media, GAA advocated for Uganda and Kenya to put in place laws to ensure that the countries work together to reduce human trafficking across their borders.

The work of GAA contributed to immigration officials in Kenya and Uganda signing a joint communique agreeing on what role each party will play to curb trafficking at the borders. This has resulted in the interceptions and return of trafficked girls to home countries without prosecution.

Regarding GAA's work with civil society organisations, in November 2019, 40 civil society organisations, developed and submitted their first constitution to the National NGO Board to register and validate the coalition as a network on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTIP) in Uganda.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE ALL GIRLS ACCESS QUALITY EDUCATION

Valeria Nassolo from Uganda submitted a 60-second video to a GAA film competition, advocating for social change. In that video, Valeria envisioned a world where girls have equal rights and opportunities. “Imagine a world that will empower a girl to access quality education for her to achieve an educational dream,” she said. Valeria also dreamt of a country where girls are empowered to equally participate in economic activities.

Sadly, like Valeria, equal rights are a dream for many girls in Uganda. Statistics show that more men (46 percent) in Uganda are in salaried employment compared to women (28 percent). Moreover, women in the country are disproportionately affected by illiteracy levels, HIV, and sexual violence.

To address the situation, The Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW) partnered with GAA-FAWE in 2017 to develop a national scorecard on the domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Uganda.

The purpose of the scorecard is to analyse articles on “Rights to life, integrity and security of a person,” “Elimination of harmful practices,” “Marriage,” “Right to education and training,” and “Economic and social welfare rights.” The scorecard will show the outcomes, gaps and provide areas that need strengthening.

The scorecard has shown that Uganda has achieved great progress in developing legislation and policies. However, most of these are not implemented.

For example, the review of Article 4 of the Maputo Protocol- “The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person,” shows that Uganda has introduced legislation and policies on the equality of men and women, girls and boys. But implementing these laws is a key challenge. Hopefully, this scorecard will help address these issues.



IF YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH ME, YOU WON'T GET YOUR SALARY



Restless Development, an organisation that GAA supports, collects data on issues affecting women in the workplace and uses that information to advocate for change.

One of the testimonies that Restless Development collected is that of a distressed woman who walked to their offices after being sexually harassed at work.

The victim reported her experience to her brother and together they went to different organisations looking for help. But help was not forthcoming. When they went to Restless Development, the organisation documented her story and used it to advocate for change.

“He wanted me to have sex with him,” She reported to Restless Development. “He told me “if you don’t want to have sex with me, then you won’t get your salary.”

Such testimonies have the power to persuade policymakers to take action. During advocacy training, Restless Development allowed women and girls to share their experiences in the workplace. And these stories helped convince policymakers why they should bring about change.

In further efforts of improving the labour conditions of women in Uganda, in 2019, GAA’S partners, Restless Development and the District Youth Advocacy Networks lobbied the district local governments for a budget to facilitate labour officers conducting workplace inspections.

As a result of these efforts, the Government of Uganda

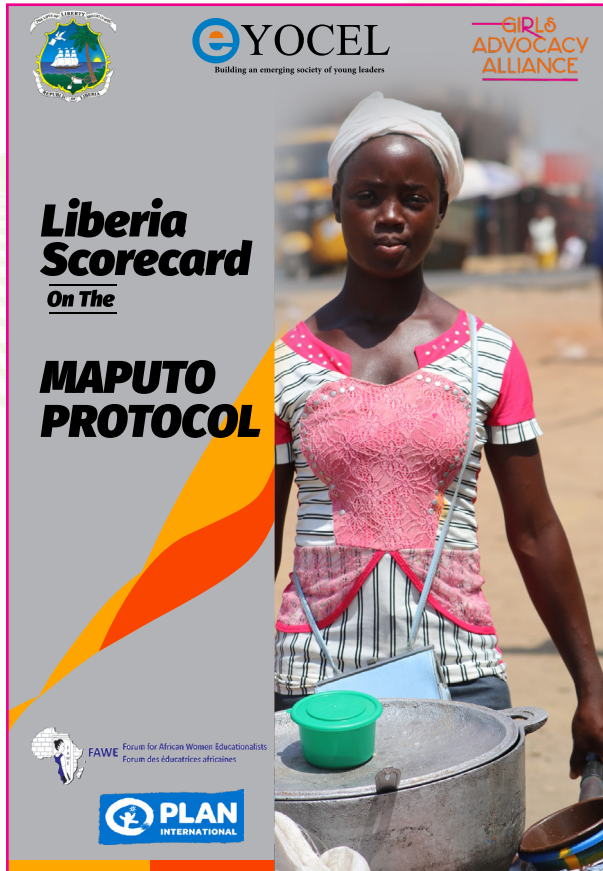
allocated funds for the Kamuli and Bukedea labour offices to employ more labour officers. The officers inspect workplaces to ensure that the employers uphold the rights of workers, including women. This was a big step, particularly for women who deal with sexual harassment and gender discrimination in their workplaces every day.

Further, GAA’s work with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) contributed to the Government of Uganda monitoring the gold mines in Bugiri. There was a budget increase for allocation of labour officers for the financial year 2018/2019 by 2 million Uganda shillings (105 percent increase), and appointing Labour officers of the MGLSD to conduct labour inspection in Bugiri mines. The government also introduced a mining and mineral Policy that criminalises the use of child labour.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

TURNING THE TIDE AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LIBERIA



More than half of the women and girls in 12 of the 15 counties in Liberia have undergone FGM. The immediate effects of FGM are haemorrhage, shock, and infections. FGM also increases childbirth complications and can lead to long-term health consequences, such as cysts, abscesses, infertility, and painful sexual intercourse.

Women and girls in Liberia are also commonly physically and sexually abused in the belief that this will cleanse them from evil spirits. Moreover, they do not fully enjoy their rights to marriage and education. While the Government of Liberia has made several milestones in legislation, the country still faces serious challenges in ensuring that the human rights of women are protected.

FAWE and Plan International, under the Girls Advocacy Alliance, provided technical and financial support to Youth for Coalition for Education in Liberia (YOCEL). This helped YOCEL monitor the progress of Liberia's implementation of the Maputo Protocol, using a scorecard. YOCEL is a youth empowerment organisation whose mission is to ensure youth, including young women and girls, have access to education and gain skills to end unemployment.

The scorecard provides the country's assessment scores, outcomes and the challenges that the country faces. YOCEL then provides recommendations on areas that the Government of Liberia needs to strengthen. This process ensures that the government complies with Article 5: "The Elimination of Harmful Practices", Article 6: "Rights to Marriage", and Article 12 "Right to Education and Training" of the Maputo Protocol.

Before Covid-19, YOCEL gathered information from key stakeholders in the public and private sector through face to face interaction and mini focus groups. After Covid-19, they began engaging in conversations with stakeholders on emails, micro team meetings, Zoom, Skype and WhatsApp.

The outcome shows that people in Liberia are more aware of the rights of women. The government has also trained the police officers and established specialized courts to trail perpetrators of sexual abuse. However, Liberia has 15 counties and there are only three specialised courts and SGBV crimes unit situated in Montserrado, Nimba and Grand Bassa County. The government, therefore, needs to increase the number of courts.

The Government of Liberia also needs to put in place laws that prohibit FGM, as well as provide more facilities, human resources, and equipment for gathering and preserving evidence in cases of sexual violence. Liberia needs to further focus on forced teenage marriages, girls' education, and implementation of gender parity.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

GIRLS
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ALLIANCE

Gen CED
Gender Center for Empowering Development

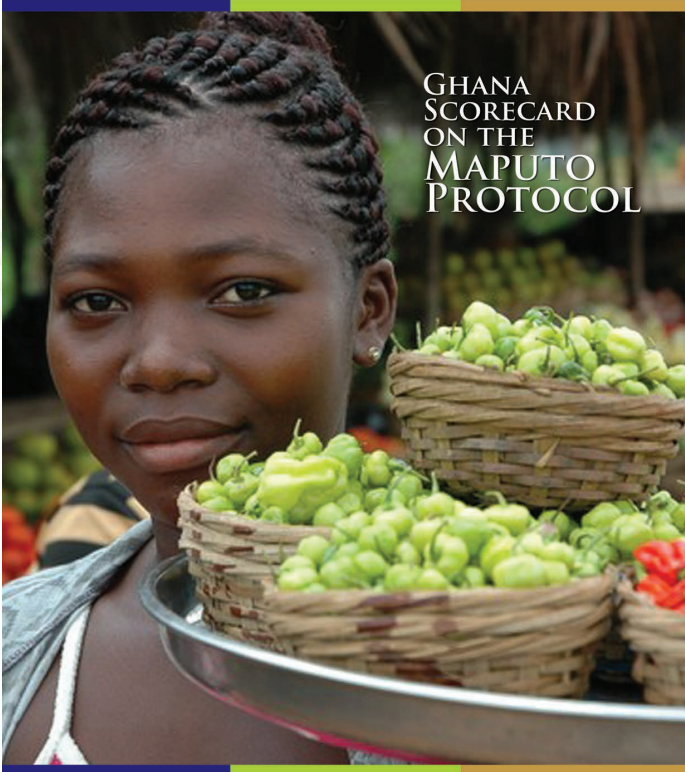
THE DEVELOPMENT AND LAUNCH OF THE FIRST EVER C&S MAPUTO PROTOCOL SCORECARD IN GHANA

Ghana is home to over 2 million child brides. One in five women were married or in union before their 18th birthday. The practice robs millions of girls of their childhood, rights and dignity.

Jessica Wrenkyiwa Amukubia was a former child bride from Akuwapem North, Eastern Region of Ghana. Jessica faced a lot of difficulty in her marriage. "When I am back from school I am supposed to go and sell so that I can cater for the child because the father was not working. The father was also schooling."

Sometimes her in-laws mistreated her. "Go to your mother. Go to your mother. And it was insults and lots of stuff," she remembers. GAA worked with local champions of change to rescue her from the marriage.

To end child marriages and other gender inequalities, AULO also supported the development of Maputo Protocol Scorecard for Ghana. The scorecard was launched in Accra in January 2019, in the presence of the Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, civil society organisations and private sector representatives. This is significant as the production of the report card helps identify the gaps in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol and put in place action plans and follow up mechanisms.



The target audience for this report card is the government, regional economic communities and AU as there are clear recommendations on what needs to be done in addressing gender-based violence and economic exclusion issues in specific articles of the Maputo Protocol. The scorecard will also serve as a key advocacy and accountability tool for CSOs engaged in girls' rights and gender equality.

Following the launch, AULO held a successful side event on "Enhancing African CSOs Capacity to Monitor the Status Reporting and Implementation of The Maputo Protocol among AU Members states"- this was aimed at training CSOs

on the production of Maputo Protocol reporting cards on gender-based violence and economic exclusion of women and girls and benchmark CSOs to capacities to use regional monitoring and accountability mechanisms to hold their governments accountable.

More than 90 African civil society leaders, government representatives, GIMAC steering committee and youth participated in this event. GIMAC Secretariat appreciated the initiative as the first CSO scorecard on Maputo Protocol and requested Plan and partners to take the good practice forward with other countries.



ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE: IF I HAD GONE TO SCHOOL, I WOULD NOT BE IN THIS SITUATION



Asia Mohammed, was a happy-go- lucky girl living with her grandmother. One day, her grandmother informed her that she had a suitor for her. But Asia did not want to get married. Her grandmother warned her that she would be disowned by her family if she did not agree to the marriage. Seeing that no one in her family was on her side, she accepted.

Asia now lives in a thatched roofed house in a small village in a rural area in Ghana. "If I had gone to school or if they had allowed me to choose the man that I wanted, I would not have been in this situation," Asia says while holding her baby and fanning a fire.

This situation is not unique to Asia. In Ghana, 1 out of 5 women aged 20-24 are married before their 18th birthday, according to UNICEF. Early marriages cut short the education of girls. Early marriages also lead to health complications, such as cervical cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, obstetric fistula and death during childbirth.

To champion the rights of women, GAA was a key partner in organised the "Youth Pre-Summit- African Girls Summit", November, in Accra, Ghana. The Summit brought together

high-level personalities from AU member states, high-level AU and UN dignitaries, Embassies, including the Embassy of Netherlands in Ghana, women and girls, NGO's, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. Princess Mable of Orange-Nassau, the Netherlands was also among the dignitaries' present.

GAA's key messages at the African Girls Summit were calling on Member States to ratify, implement and report on the Maputo Protocol and African Children's Charter, harmonization of national laws in line with the children's charter and allocation of funds to implement the campaign on ending child marriage.

During the AGS, Plan AULO in partnership with UN Women and the AU organised a side event to launch a compendium of laws on child marriage across 55 African Member States.

The compendium is a tool to inform different stakeholders on countries marriage laws, track child marriage reforms, and enable targeted advocacy in the countries that require review and reform in their marriage legislation and practice.



Participants of the Youth Pre-summit – African Summit Girls



ENDING CHILD TRAFFICKING

Children residing in the border areas of Sierra Leone routinely help their parents undertake informal trade. They are used to carry goods, especially for traders using informal border crossing and for short distances.

Also, during the weekly “Luma” market days, they help their parents to sell merchandise. In some cases, border communities may use other relatives’ children to help them undertake informal trade.

While the Government of Sierra Leone has put in place a compulsory education policy, child labour and child marriages are common along the border areas.

GAA Alliance Partners, Defense for Children International (DCI) Terre des Hommes (TdH), and ECPAT International are working to reduce the sexual exploitation of children. In 2018, they made several contributions in this regard. This includes developing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to curb Cross-border trafficking of children:

In June 2018, the Mano River Union States developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide in cross-border movement of people across these countries’ borders. The aim

of the SOPs is to make it easy for border control officials to detect and deal with cross-border trafficking of children.

DCI Sierra Leone, an Alliance partner of the GAA programme, financially and technically supported several training events for community leaders, security officials, and CSOs of Guinea and Sierra Leone on international and national laws on child trafficking. In the course of these training sessions, the trainees recommended that to be effective in implementing these laws, there was a need for the development of a bilateral cooperation agreement, which led to the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

When drafting the Standard Operating procedures, the GAA supported and facilitated consultative meetings involving officials from both countries and actually drafted the SOPs that were later validated in another meeting. Guinea and Sierra Leone have signed the SOPs, and Liberia will soon be signing.

Following the training and development of the SOPs, several

events have taken place. For example, police officers on the Sierra Leone side of the border arrested a woman suspected to be trafficking six children from Sierra Leone to Liberia for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. The victims were taken to a shelter in Freetown whilst the alleged perpetrator was detained and investigated by the police. This was the first time that someone was arrested as an alleged trafficker at the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Additionally, the Government of Sierra Leone collaborated with that of Liberia, convicted and imprisoned two Sierra Leonean citizens who had trafficked children from Sierra Leone to Liberia for sale. Community members living between Sierra Leone and Liberia identified the perpetrators and reported them to the police. This was a significant milestone. It attests to the effectiveness of collaboration between the community and government institutions to arrest and prosecute a trafficking case. Moreover, it is also evidence of bilateral cooperation between the two countries to prosecute a trafficking case.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

STRENGTHENING AFRICAN UNION MECHANISMS TO ADDRESS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND SEX TOURISM OF GIRLS AND BOYS



There is a high prevalence of both child sex tourism and trafficking in children for sexual purposes in Africa. In Kenya's coastal areas of Malindi and Mombasa, it is common to see tourists in their 70s and 80s with teenagers or girls in their 20s.

Ten to fifteen thousand girls living in the coastal areas of Kenya are estimated to be involved in child sex tourism, according to UNICEF's report, "Extent and Effect of Sex Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Kenyan Coast".

Children are forced into sex tourism because they have to contribute to the family's income and care for their siblings and other family members. A study by ECPAT suggested that orphanhood due to HIV/AIDS is likely to lead a child into commercial sex within two to three years of his/her parents' death. These children can easily become victims of child sex tourism and trafficking for sexual purposes. Child sex tourism is also prevalent in Ghana and Morocco.

To combat sexual exploitation of children, ECPAT conducted missions to ECOWAS and EAC to share the declaration adopted by the ACERWC on CSEC/OCSEA during the Day of General

Discussion and the General Comment on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse under Article 27 of the ACERWC.

ECPAT has been successful in ensuring the 55-member states adopt the Declaration on SEC and the draft general comment on CSEC is also expected to be adopted, ensuring the strengthening of the monitoring and accountability of CSEC issues beyond GAA. Several engagements at ECOWAS, EAC, and IGAD level are also aimed at ensuring sustainability beyond GAA.

In order to strengthen ECPAT African Members' skills in reporting to AU and UN human rights mechanisms, a training workshop on capacity building and skills preparation for writing reports to UN and AU human rights mechanisms was organised in Nairobi in April 2018.

As an immediate result of the training - ECPAT International in collaboration with its members in Benin, Nigeria, Zambia, and South Africa successfully addressed the issues of sexual exploitation of children by submitting -for the first time- briefing papers to the Committee on the sexual exploitation of children in these 4 selected countries. The successful submission of these reports ensured the visibility of issues related to SEC in Africa on the regional agenda.

Following this success, ECPAT International and its members in West and East Africa proposed and successfully obtained a general day of discussion on SEC to be organised in March 2019 during the upcoming 33rd ACERWC session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This was the first time the AU was dedicating a full day of general discussion on SEC.

Advocacy initiated by ECPAT International during the 2018 UNWTO CAF Meeting organised in Abuja, Nigeria in June 2018 contributed to the discussion aimed at pushing for specific child protection indicators to be included in the Statistical Framework for Sustainable Tourism, which is currently being developed by UNWTO.

During the meeting, child protection was highlighted as one of the key issues when developing indicators for the Tourism Statistical Framework. Straightening partnership with UNWTO remains at the core of EI's engagement with a vision to have SECTT included in the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on the UN Sustainable Development Goals targets that address the sexual exploitation of children, i.e. Targets 5.2, 8.7, and 16.2 (as per recommendations of the Global Study).



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



FIGHTING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KENYA

Gender-based violence is commonplace and a socially accepted human rights violation in Kenya . Around 39 percent of girls and women in Kenya aged 15 and over have been victims of gender-based violence . This includes battery, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, economic deprivation, psychological harm, harmful traditional practices, and restriction of movement.

The situation is worse in poor counties, such as Kwale. In Kwale, 2 out of 10 girls aged 15-19 are pregnant or have a child. Most girls in Kwale suffer from sexual exploitation, commonly engaging in sex with older men to receive food clothing and gifts . Other reasons for early child pregnancies in the country are expectations that girls give birth once they reach puberty and lack of education on sexuality and family planning. While Kenya has put in place some laws to protect women, they are hardly implemented.

TDG and Plan International has formed strong partnerships with civil society organisations and NGOs, such as Women´s Empowerment Link, Coalition on Violence Against Women and Nyanza Initiative for Girls´ Education and Empowerment. These

partnerships have resulted in a coordinated approach in fighting gender-based violence.

GAA has trained the civil society organisations in Kwale in lobbying and advocacy. Upon gaining these skills, the organisations influenced the county governments. For example, during a public participation process on the Annual Development Plan County Budget, the CSOs lobbied the county government to allocate funds for the construction of a safe house and to support the victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

After training by GAA, the Kwale Civil Society Organisations

Network also identified gender gaps in the county budgeting process. The network then lobbied for the review of the County Integrated Development Plan to enhance gender mainstreaming in the county planning and budgeting in 2019.

Further, Members of Kwale Child Rights Network and Kwale Gender Technical Working Group formed a neutral committee of six in October 2019 and followed up on the stalemate on the Kwale SGBV bill. As a result, the county established a rescue centre for survivors of GBV in one part of the county.



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THE JOURNEY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FULL NATIONAL SCORECARD ON MAPUTO PROTOCOL (KENYA)

Kenya has made great strides in its commitment to achieving women rights. This includes introducing laws on gender-based violence and inclusion of women in leadership. However, women in Kenya still do not fully enjoy their rights.

For example, women in the country provide 80 percent of farm labour yet own 1 percent of agricultural land. Also, 38 percent of girls and women in Kenya aged 15 and over have experienced physical violence from their husbands, compared with 9 percent of men aged 15- 49. Women in the country are also disproportionately affected by illiteracy, early marriage, exclusion from inheritance and lack of health and reproductive rights.

To promote the rights of women and girls in Africa, the African Union adopted the Maputo Protocol in July 2003. Kenya ratified the protocol in 2010 and has taken action to address gender inequality. However, more needs to be done to bridge the gender gap in the country. One of the ways of bridging the gap is developing a scorecard to track progress of implementation of the protocols.

As part of its mission, FAWE trained the East African Civil Society Organisation's Forum (EACSOF) Kenya on the development of a Maputo Protocol scorecard in January 2018. After the training, EACSOF Kenya produced a draft scorecard on articles 4 and 13. During a workshop to validate the draft scorecard, the National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC) expressed interest in producing a full scorecard. NGEC is a constitutionally established body that monitors the progress of gender equality in Kenya, including monitoring the implementation of ACPHR and the Maputo Protocol.

NGEC used material from the draft scorecard that EACSOF produced to develop a full national scorecard on Maputo Protocol. In October 2019, NGEC in collaboration with Kenyan CSOs, state and non-state actors validated the full protocol scorecard. The scorecard will help assess the progress on implementation of Maputo protocols. GAA made financial and technical contributions to the validation workshop and draft document.



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THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA) HAS FINALLY PASSED THE EAST AFRICAN GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

East African States recognize the importance of gender equality and have developed programmes and enacted legislation in this pursuit. However, these efforts are at different levels and contain differences specific to each member state. Thus, gender initiatives affect women, men and children differently across the East African Community.

For example, Rwanda is the only African country ranked top 10, in the global gender report produced by the World Economic Forum, among countries that have closed the gender gap. In Rwanda, women make up 61 percent of members of parliament. Ethiopia's cabinet also has 50 percent of women. Other neighbouring countries, such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, have made strides in closing the gender gap, but men still dominate leadership positions.

To advance gender equality in all East African Countries, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) introduced the East African Community (EAC) Gender Equality and Development bill in 2008. EALA passed the bill into law on International Women's

Day, March 8, 2017, in Kigali, Rwanda. The purpose of Act is to advance gender equality across the five EAC Partner states in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. This will benefit women and men by harmonizing national laws of the EAC Member States with the regional and international standards of protection and advancement of gender equality and human rights.

The Act will ensure that all men and women are protected across the East African region and accorded the same opportunities and rights to education, labour, fair wages and employment, right to protection as they carry out cross-border trade. This will strengthen regional integration and sustainable development of the EAC. The Act also sets ground for sub regional CSOs (EAC) to push for the development and implementation of programmes and policies that would curb cross-border practices of gender-based violence, such as female genital mutilation, in a bid to eradicate the practice.

GAA contributed in the mapping and analysis of key AU, EAC, ECOWAS policies, laws and protocols on GBV and EE.



GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



DECLARATION OF THE HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS DECADE IN AFRICA

The African Union Assembly, held in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2016, declared the next 10 years “the Human and People’s Rights Decade in Africa”. The assembly consequently called upon the African Union Commission and AU organs with human rights mandate to develop a “Ten Year Action and Implementation Plan for the promotion and protection of human rights.”

In this regard, the AU Commission, the African Court on Human and People’s Rights (ACtHPR), the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACoMHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

have begun developing the draft ten-year Action and Implementation Plan on the promotion and protection of human and people's rights in Africa." The plan is an important step in creating an action plan to protect human rights.

GAA participated in discussions and provided expert inputs in developing the African Union "Ten Year Action and Implementation Plan for the promotion and protection of human rights. GAA will ensure children's, girls and young women are prioritized in the 10 Year Action and Implementation plan. This will allow women and girls to exercise their rights to education, skills and employment.

In addition, there will be more freedom and health outcomes will improve not just for women, but the whole society as well. GAA will also advocate for renewed commitment of state and non-state actors to implement recommendations, decisions and judgments of human rights treaty bodies, and to comply with their treaty obligations. This will also ensure that the rights of women and girls are realized.





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Girls first



Development Cooperation
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