

The African Plan of Action

INTRODUCTION

The African Plan of Action was formulated within the framework of the mid-decade review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action (PFA). That review was conducted through the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, held from 22 to 26 November 1999 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The review was conducted in the form of national progress reports that were prepared by the Governments of most African countries, with inputs from all the actors involved in implementing the action plans. Evaluation reports were also prepared by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Africa Development Bank (ADB), non-governmental organisations (NGO), ECA and the United Nations specialised agencies. The reports demonstrated great commitment to implementing the action plans that came out of the Dakar and Beijing conferences.

Most countries have allocated both financial and human resources to implementing national plans of action. They have registered success in the past four to five years in such areas as increased school enrolment of girls, wider areas of coverage of health services, creation of women's groups for solidarity and collaboration, wider coverage of awareness-raising campaigns and programmes with regard to women's human rights, establishment of micro-credit schemes, and expansion of adult literacy programmes. At least 15 of the reporting countries had formulated comprehensive national gender policies to guide other sectors in incorporating gender concerns in their policies, plans, and programmes. For the most part, the national plans of action included activities beyond the mid-decade review.

The evaluation reports were also explicit about the problems encountered in the implementation process. In some cases, they suggested ways of confronting these problems during the next phase. The African plan of Action that follows addresses the most frequently raised problems with a view to providing a framework within which the problems can be resolved.

Conceptual overview

It is now five years since the Dakar PFA was adopted. In the intervening period, since the Beijing Conference, there have been a number of new developments and commitments made, which provide a new context for formulation of the African Plan of Action for the next five years. Some of these developments include the many and relevant recommendations emanating from the World Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II, Istanbul, 1996), and more recently (June 1999), the conclusions and recommendations of the third meeting of the Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the DND and the ICDP-POA adopted by UNGASS in June 1999.

The combined impact of past macro-economic policies and globalisation has resulted in a number of adverse consequences. These include overall social dislocation and increased numbers of people living below the poverty line. In many African countries, women continue to carry increasingly large burdens of responsibility for the poor, aged, orphaned children and the sick. Poor women and orphaned children head many households. The family is ordinarily the primary source of economic and social protection for those who cannot support themselves because of disability, illness, old age, inflation, low wages, unemployment, or displacement. Unfortunately, urbanisation and its accompanying lifestyles, coupled with the poverty that has resulted from the poor performance of most African economies, have left the traditional African social welfare

system weakened and ineffective. The burden therefore falls disproportionately on women, who have to assume greater responsibility for the care of the poor and the helpless, in addition to other productive and reproductive roles.

These experiences require policy shifts from a single-factor approach to a more comprehensive, multisectoral approach to people's wellbeing and security. Governments should consider, as a matter of priority, innovative actions to respond to this growing problem. In view of the urgency of this matter, governments should consider setting up new mechanisms where they do not exist and strengthening existing ones. Some countries have made a start in this direction.

Such measures are strongly recommended to run parallel to poverty alleviation programmes, in order to lighten the heavy responsibilities that women carry to maintain those unable to care for themselves.

It is against the background of these major structural shifts, which offer opportunities and challenges, that this plan should be interpreted.

Statement of mission

The African Plan of Action is proposed to help implement the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action through national, subregional and African plans of action. It is a synthesis of strategies and mechanisms proposed to address and resolve a number of issues that, in the past five years, have been identified as posing serious constraints to implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

The issues fall in six categories:

While most countries had drawn comprehensive national plans of action for implementing the platforms, few had defined concrete strategies for co-ordinating the activities that were actually implemented by a range of actors in a variety of sectors. Duplication of effort and consequent waste of precious resources at the expense of the targeted beneficiaries was a major concern in most countries. Although there was an attempt to assign the co-ordinating role to a particular structure in some countries, these structures, for the most part, lacked the necessary mandate or the accompanying tools and resources to carry out their role effectively.

Yet another weakness that was linked to the national plans of action was that they omitted well-defined mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process, which should be predicated on a clearly formulated set of indicators. In the absence of such a mechanism, it was impossible to gauge accurately the level of progress made and thus correct the process as necessary.

Practically all countries were silent on the issue of accountability. While commitment to implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms was explicit, as demonstrated by declarations and resolutions the Governments adopted, the national reports were silent on the issue of accountability to the people who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the Platforms. Silence in this sense leads to negligence and lip service, which safeguard the status quo at the expense of the advancement of women, gender equality, and sustainable development.

In the platforms for action, gender mainstreaming in policies, plans, and programmes in all sectors was accepted as the most effective strategy for achieving gender parity. This strategy places on all sectors the responsibility for implementing the platforms. Unfortunately, few countries to date have either formulated comprehensive national gender policies or drawn up gender-sensitive sectoral policies. At the same time, the presence of women in critical masses at decision-making levels continues to be elusive, thus pushing back even further the likelihood of a demand for accountability. It is imperative to ensure that those who attain decision-making positions have the necessary leadership skills and the capacity to analyse and evaluate policy and programmes from a gender perspective.

Countries implementing the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and their vision of equality, development, and peace, have encountered a preponderant shortage of resources due to lack of access and control of those resources at the individual, national, subregional, and regional levels. Existing legislation, economic liberalisation policies, privatisation, debt repayments, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and world trade terms respond unfavourably to the interests of the marginalized and the underprivileged in Africa, particularly women. Large and widening economic inequalities have resulted in insecurity, squalor, and inefficiencies, and they have undermined family systems, thus running the risk of institutionalising poverty. Recent reports show that the world's wealthiest 16 per cent uses 80 per cent of the world's natural resources. Yet, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights guarantees all people the right to "freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources . . . at their exclusive interest in no case shall a people be deprived of it" (article 21.1).

In the recent past, a number of emerging issues have become pervasive and life threatening to the entire African society. Governments and the entire population must address them directly and decisively. Two of the issues, HIV/AIDS and the problem of the needy and helpless, pose particular threats due to their magnitude and far-reaching effects. In most African countries, the level of poverty is growing annually as the number of people who are living below the poverty line increases by the millions. The strength of the extended family to take care of these people, a role that largely falls on women, has been eroded to bare bones as evidenced by the number of street children and beggars of all ages in the cities. The question of where the responsibility lies for helping the victims of HIV/AIDS and of poverty must be answered and acted upon as a matter of urgency, before the situation is accepted as a normal way of life and eventually becomes the demise of Africa.

The African Plan of Action examines the issues outlined above within the context of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and the priorities selected for focus by the different actors. It proposes a framework within which strategies and mechanisms for addressing them can be put in place and activated, nationally, subregionally, and regionally. The ultimate goal of the African Plan of Action is, therefore, to accelerate implementation of the Platforms for Action in the next five years, after which time, the accomplishments of the decade since the Beijing Conference will be evaluated.

I. COORDINATION MACHINERY AND STRATEGIES

Justification

Governments have committed themselves to implement the Dakar and Beijing Platforms. NGOs, United Nations specialised agencies and other structures are also contributing to the exercise locally, nationally, subregionally, regionally, and internationally. Since the Beijing Conference, many structures have been set up at every level to promote gender equality. Member States have made efforts to involve their institutions in formulating policies, programmes and plans with a view to translating the Dakar and Beijing Platforms into action. This poses a problem in eliciting the participation and co-operation of the myriad institutions of Government, civil society, the private sector, and NGOs. The national, subregional, and regional institutions suffer from ill-defined statutes and mandates, lack of skills in gender analysis, inadequate financing and equipment, centralised authority, poor capacity to mobilise, an unprofessional approach to the issue of gender, and lack of co-ordination.

The multiplicity of structures and actors, diversity of strategies pursued, and poor co-ordination of activities constitute obstacles to both harmonious implementation of national plans of action and realistic evaluation. Each of the countries has to develop strategies and machinery for co-ordinating gender activities, to promote smooth implementation, follow up, and evaluation but also remedial action and better planning. Indeed, the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms would be easier if all players established close links and shared information.

Vision

Each member State regularly attempts to co-ordinate, through appropriate machinery located either in the Office of the President or the Office of the Prime Minister or any other highest-level office, the different activities conducted to promote gender equality among the various actors under the 12 critical areas of concern. Co-ordination makes it possible to avoid duplication of effort, save time and resources, and maximise impact.

Strategic objectives

At the national level:

1. Establish a National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee at the highest-executive level of the State, which will decide the composition. Ministries and actors including the civil society would be represented on this committee, whose responsibility should be to design, co-ordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of official commitments. The committee would be vested with the authority to enforce compliance with all official commitments and ensure that they are implemented.
2. Build and enhance the capacity of the National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee for gender and development.
3. Circulate official policy, programme, and planning documents among the partners.
4. Build or enhance the capacity of the United Nations agencies in each country to interact with the NC-CC.

At the subregional level:

1. Create or strengthen a gender mechanism responsible for following up the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action in each intergovernmental organisation (IGO).

At the regional level:

2. Strengthen the capacity of the existing gender structures in the regional IGOs to facilitate their role in following up implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

Strategic actions

National level

1. Establish a National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee for promotion of gender equality.
2. Provide gender training for all national, bilateral and multilateral development partners.
3. Establish, under the leadership of the UN resident co-ordinator system, a consultative and co-ordinating mechanism for United Nations agencies to support the implementation of the Platform for Action. This mechanism will provide technical and financial support to the national follow-up teams responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Platforms.
4. Have United Nations agencies lead, in co-ordination with national, subregional and regional organisations, capacity building of gender analysis and related skills.

Subregional level:

1. Create or strengthen a gender mechanism responsible for overseeing follow - up of the Dakar and Beijing PFA in each subregional IGO. Such a mechanism should be placed at a sufficiently high level to influence decision-making directly and ensure adequate resource allocation to the programmes and activities.
2. Subregional IGOs should work closely with the ECA Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) to ensure complementary planning, programme delivery and co-ordination.

Regional level:

7. Strengthen the status and the human and financial resources of gender units in ADB, ECA, and OAU, to facilitate their role in co-ordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of the Platforms for Action.
8. Strategically locate the gender equality promotion mechanisms within OAU, ECA and ADB as close to the policy-making level as possible to enable them to influence policy directly.

9. Establish an institutional mechanism at ministerial level within the framework of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community to promote, monitor and evaluate gender equality.

10. Member States are responsible for providing resources for gender mainstreaming.

Actors

Members and officials of governmental, intergovernmental, United Nations agencies, NGOs, civil society, and private sector officials, by becoming effectively involved, have an important role to play in promoting gender equality.

Indicators

- ◆ Establishment and operation of National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committees for the promotion of gender equality.
- ◆ Number of people and structures trained in the gender approach.
- ◆ Number of people and structures receiving official documents.
- ◆ Existence and efficient operation of a gender mechanism in each subregional IGO.
- ◆ The number of programmes monitored and evaluated by the gender focal points of ADB, ECA and OAU.

Time frame

For the coming four years, each country should have an operational consultative and coordinating committee for the promotion of gender equality and a consultative and coordinating mechanism in United Nations country offices to support the implementation of national plans of action.

Resources

Member States, together with development partners including bilateral and multilateral cooperation, should take responsibility at the national, subregional and continental level to provide resources for gender mainstreaming projects.

II. STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

Justification

Through the Addis Ababa Declaration on the African Platform for Action on Women in June 1995, the African Heads of State and Government “declared their solemn commitment to the principles, objectives and priorities enshrined in the African Platform for Action”. They also reaffirmed that “the implementation of the African Platform for Action is the primary responsibility of African Governments and peoples”. In this connection, they asked ADB, ECA, and OAU to “closely monitor the implementation of the Platform and to submit periodic reports thereon to the Council of Ministers and to [their] Conference”. Similarly, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 committed themselves “to implement the [Beijing] Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes”. They also recognised that “it is essential to design, implement and monitor effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women”.

Unfortunately, although most countries have already formulated and started to implement their national action plans, they have not been as efficient in creating mechanisms to monitor how the implementation process evolves so that they can evaluate it periodically. The national action plans in most of the reporting countries lack indicators to measure movement towards the defined objectives, or at best, the indicators have been inconsistently defined. It therefore becomes impossible to estimate progress made towards the overall goal of mainstreaming gender as a strategy towards sustainable development, equality, and peace. For a comprehensive solution to this problem, each country needs to develop ways to monitor and evaluate how well the platforms for action are being implemented.

Vision

Each country monitors annually and every five years evaluates the implementation of the platforms for action through a clearly defined mechanism with concrete indicators for each of the 12 critical areas of concern.

Strategic objectives

At the national level

1. Constitute a national technical team of experts in each country, which will define clear indicators in the 12 critical areas of concern by which it will regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation progress.

At the subregional level

2. Ensure that the subregional IGOs develop appropriate tools with which to monitor and evaluate performance in gender mainstreaming.

At the regional level

3. Ensure that the regional institutions have monitoring and evaluation tools that they use regularly in following up their implementation performance.

Strategic actions

National level

1. Identify and, where possible, appoint staff specially in all the 12 sectors for the national technical team , trained in:
 - Formulating indicators for measuring progress made in the implementation process;
 - Analysing policies and programmes to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into monitoring and evaluation processes.
2. Formulate monitoring and evaluation tools.
3. Monitor annually the implementation process and mid-term and biennial evaluation of progress made in the implementation.

Subregional and regional levels

4. Monitor and evaluate teams within the IGOs and regional institutions selected and trained in:
 - Formulating indicators for measuring progress made in the implementation process;
 - Analysing policy and programme to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into monitoring and evaluation processes.
5. Formulate monitoring and evaluation tools.
6. Monitor annually the implementation process and biennial evaluation of progress made in gender mainstreaming.
7. The follow up mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the African Platform for Action should be accelerated by the formation of a joint secretariat comprising the OAU, ADB, ECA. The OAU shall have responsibility of chairing the secretariat which shall work out precise modalities of co-ordination among the three organisations

Actors

- ◆ Selected staff from sectors representing each of the 12 critical areas of concern appointed by the highest authority within Government ministries who come together to constitute one national technical team for monitoring and evaluating the implementation process. Evaluation and monitoring teams in IGOs and regional institutions (ADB and OAU).
- ◆ Trainers in formulation of indicators, policy analysis for gender audit, and monitoring and evaluation processes. ECA and the African Centre for Women (ACW) should train them in collaboration with OAU, ADB, other UN agencies, and subregional, regional, bilateral and multilateral training institutions.

Time frame

In the next four years, each country should have a trained national follow-up team that conducts monitoring and evaluation exercises for the national evaluation report due in 2004.

Resources

The cost should be shared among Governments, which should provide the team members, host the training workshops and carry out the monitoring and evaluation exercises. ECA should take a leading role among UN, bilateral and multilateral agencies and the subregional and regional training institutions, in formulating and implementing the training programme.

III. WOMEN AND DECISION-MAKING

Justification

Comprehensive development can happen only when women achieve better social, economic, and political status and take active part in the management of public affairs. In most countries, women are under-represented at every level of administration in the public or private sector. They account for less than 10 per cent of the legislature. Discriminatory attitudes and practices, family responsibilities, low income, little education, lack of self-confidence, the inability to control their sexuality and reproductive roles, and the non-competitiveness of women leaders all combine to prevent women from attaining positions of power. It is therefore the responsibility of each State to take the measures required to create an enabling environment that will allow women to participate more in development, enhance the capacities of women leaders and achieve social justice.

Vision

Each country is supposed to have concrete, timebound and effective institutional framework for promoting equal gender representation in decision-making bodies in the public and private sector, the legislature and political parties, and in international organisations.

Strategic objectives

1. Increase the number of women in political and decision-making positions.
2. Promote affirmative action to reduce gender disparities in decision-making organs.
3. Provide women with the opportunity to participate in decision-making.
4. Increase the capacity of women in decision-making.
5. Promote democratic values, liberty, gender equality and separation of powers.
6. Develop gender sensitivity in all decision-making processes and at all levels.

Strategic actions

National level

1. Ensure that there is an irreversible critical mass of women in decision-making positions.
2. Ensure that professional women from relevant fields constitute at least 33 per cent of the national delegations attending all statutory meetings, nationally and internationally.
3. Ensure that men at technical and decision-making level constitute at least 33 per cent of the national delegations for statutory meetings to discuss gender and women issues at national and international levels.
4. Train for capacity building in leadership skills.

Subregional level

1. Provide women with equal opportunities to head subregional IGOs. An effective search for candidates should be built into the normal recruitment process.

2. Ensure that, at all times, at least 50 per cent of the managers of the technical departments in the IGO are women.

Regional level

1. Make a concerted effort to ensure that women candidates are promoted to decision-making positions in OAU and women candidates are supported for the post of the Secretary-General of OAU.
2. Build into the recruitment policy an effective search for qualified female and male candidates for the posts of Secretary-General, assistant secretaries-general and technical directors.
3. When the Secretary-General is a man, ensure that 50 per cent of assistant secretaries-general are women, or vice versa.
4. In the soon-to-be-established African parliament, ensure that at least 33 per cent of the parliamentarians are women.
5. Ensure that women constitute at least 50 per cent of decision-makers in the soon-to-be-established African Monetary Fund, the African Court of Justice and the African Central Bank.

The Organisation of African Unity should in particular:

- (a) Devise mechanisms that facilitate and ensure women's participation in the electoral process of the Pan-African Parliament, or their appointment to these new structures (the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Union, the African Court of Justice) and other leadership areas.
- (b) Ensure equal access to and full participation of women in the preparation of the constitutional legal texts of the Union and all the related structures.
- (c) Ensure that women's interests are taken into account and their perspective incorporated in the constitutional legal texts of the Union and all the related structures.
- (d) OAU and ECA should strive to involve the African Women Committee on Peace and Development in implementation of the Sirte plan of action.

Actors

Governments bear responsibility for promoting women to decision-making positions.

Indicators

- ◆ The number of women in decision-making positions at national, subregional, and regional levels increased to at least 33 per cent;
 - ◆ Gender policies formulated;
 - ◆ Legislation put in place;
 - ◆ Gender-sensitive programmes designed;
 - ◆ Recruitment policies and effective mechanisms for women candidates put in place;
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- ◆ Training programmes instituted.

Time frame

In the coming four years, Governments should take adequate institutional measures to promote the advancement of women into decision-making positions.

Resources

The necessary resources for establishing and operating these structures should come from governments, NGOs, civil society organisations and bilateral and multilateral development partners.

IV. MOBILISING RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PLATFORMS FOR ACTION

Justification

Insufficient resources continue to present an important constraint in implementing the platforms. Practically all the reporting countries cited this as a critical obstacle; similarly, it has been declared responsible for the low implementation rate of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies. Yet it is also a fact that there are enormous quantities of national resources, a great deal of which nationals take out of the continent for external spending or banking. Conversely, large quantities of financial resources enter the continent in different ways and for various purposes without seeming to make much difference to the perpetual cry of shortage. The issue of access and control of both external and internal resources therefore needs to be examined in depth in light of its crucial position in successfully implementing the Platforms for Action.

The high debt burden coupled with structural reforms in most African countries has affected the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action. In most African countries, civil service reforms, and cutbacks in social sector budgets have led to decline in the resources allocated to the implementation of the Platforms for Actions. Consequently, these problems have had devastating multiplier effects, especially on programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, since most countries have to give more priority to debt servicing.

Yet, States are entitled to “undertake to eliminate all forms of foreign economic exploitation, particularly that practised by international monopolies so as to enable their peoples to fully benefit from the advantages derived from their national resources” (article 21.5).

The problem of access to and control of resources applies equally to resources that originate from external sources such as loans or grants. Their distribution and utilisation is often perceived as neither transparent nor equitable. Moreover, women benefit least from them, due to their absence in positions of decision-making and their limited access to and control of credit and productive resources due to socio-cultural causes.

African governments have the moral responsibility and the protective role to eliminate the current situation of large inequalities and the human misery aggravated by poverty because people have lost their access to and control of their national resources. They have the responsibility to create political, economic, and social stability by facilitating the exploitation of available national resources to shape the future of the nations for the benefit of the people. They need to formulate policies that will reconcile the imperatives of global markets with the national needs of the people, their welfare, cohesion, and the assurance of increased participation of women in decision-making at all levels.

Vision

In the planning period, to attain an increase in the rate of national wealth creation, while preserving national resources and equitable distribution of the benefits of economic and social growth and development. This will forestall further impoverishment of the poor and the powerless, particularly women.

Strategic objectives

At national level

1. Engender budgeting and macro-economic planning processes to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to accelerate implementation of the African and Global PFAs.
2. Reinforce the capacity to absorb and manage the resources allocated to implementation of the Beijing and Dakar Platforms for Action.

At the regional level

1. Mobilise external resources from bilateral and international partners for successful implementation of the PFA, including resources from debt cancellation and conversion.
2. Advocate for the strengthening of funding agencies such as UNIFEM that are mandated to support women and gender programmes.

Strategic actions

To achieve the above objectives, governments should:

1. Ensure that privatisation increases the number of national stakeholders and owners in the national economy through empowerment and fair competition in wealth creation for the nations. To this end, governments should find a way to retain enterprises that are fully or partially privatised, until a critical mass of nationals, including women, are financially in a position to purchase and run them profitably. Governments should ensure that women have access to ownership and management of businesses, within the context of privatisation. This was successfully done in Malaysia and in the Association of South East Asian Nations (SEAN) countries that have indigenized privatisation.
2. Link negotiations for terms of debt repayment, including debt relief, with resources for implementation of the Platforms for Action, in order to recycle debt relief for gender mainstreaming.
3. Develop and strengthen gender budgeting and macroeconomic planning mechanisms to ensure funding for activities carried out to implement the PFAs.
4. Where there is no specific target and/or less than one per cent is currently being allocated, intergovernmental, subregional and regional economic structures and civil society organisations should alleviate at least 1 per cent of their total annual budget for women- and gender-related activities. UN agencies that have set targets for resource allocation for gender mainstreaming and advancement of women should set a time frame and undertake to implement their commitments in this regard.

Actors

The actors are the governments, the national committees, the NGOs, the civil society and other collaborating institutions at national and international levels.

Indicators

Indicators include the level of budget allocation for Platform for Action implementation.

Time frame

In the next two years each country should have developed and strengthened its gender budget and macro-economic planning mechanisms, and in the next four years each country should have developed and strengthened other resource mobilisation mechanisms.

Mechanisms and structures

The national co-ordination committee should be responsible for promoting and monitoring mobilisation of resources from the sources stipulated above. The committee should also determine the financial needs for implementation of the Platforms for Action in different sectors.

V. STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS FOR ACCELERATING THE INTEGRATION OF A GENDER APPROACH IN POLICIES, PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

Justification

Gender is a social construct linked to the norms of a given society. It constitutes a variable for differentiating, organising, and structuring social roles and relationships. In describing such societal roles and responsibilities, gender analysis facilitates taking into account the economic and social roles of women and men and effectively integrates their specific constraints and strengths in development activities. Using a gender approach, a community can conduct activities that promote equal participation of men and women in its development at the same time as it achieves an equitable sharing of resources. For Africa to develop sustainably, its men and women must participate equally, but lopsided appropriation of resources and prevailing social norms do not allow women to play their role in development fully or to reap the benefits for their own wellbeing.

In adopting the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, member States committed themselves to working for gender equality. They should therefore effectively integrate the gender approach in national policies, planning, programming, and evaluation with a view to achieving the set objectives. Five years since the adoption of the regional platform, however, there is still a long way to go to integrate the gender approach systematically in national policies, planning, programming, and project evaluation. This weakness is evident both in the state structures and in the civil society, private sector, and non-governmental organisations. Some subregional organisations have also taken steps to institutionalise and mainstream gender into their policies, programmes and activities, while others are in the process of doing so. These efforts need to be encouraged and strengthened.

Vision

The public and private sectors and civil society responsible in each country for implementing the national plan of action should understand and use the gender approach in programme formulation and implementation.

Strategic objectives

At national level

1. Promote capacity building for members of the National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee for the promotion of gender equality, the national technical team members of all sectoral committees or commissions responsible for implementing national plans of action, and all development partners.
2. Integrate national plans of action in all projects implemented by national and international partners.
3. Promote a system for collecting gender-disaggregated data and building related databanks in every ministerial department and structure responsible for national statistics, planning, and programming.

At subregional and regional level

1. Promote the mainstreaming of gender concerns, and capacity building in the policies and programme activities of all subregional and regional organisations.

Strategic actions

At national level

1. Institutionalise systems for collecting gender-disaggregated data.
2. Establish gender-disaggregated databanks in the relevant structures.
3. Provide initial and regular gender training for policy makers, legislators, planners and programme implementors as well as development partners.
4. Develop of gender mainstreaming guidelines adapted to national realities.

At subregional and regional level

5. Develop and strengthen mechanisms for mainstreaming of gender concerns, and capacity building in the policies, programmes and activities of all subregional and regional organisations.

Indicators

- ◆ Engendered national plans of action;
- ◆ Availability of sex-disaggregated data;
- ◆ Resources for data collection and analysis;
- ◆ Number of policy makers, parliamentarians, legislators and programme implementors trained;
- ◆ Number of training sessions.

Time frame

Over the coming four years, each State should systematically use the gender approach in all official documents and monitor their implementation. The National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee for the promotion of gender equality is appropriate for implementing the various measures, with the assistance of national, bilateral and multilateral development partners and the national technical team members of sectoral committees or commissions responsible for implementing national plans of action.

Resources

Implementation of this programme will require a close working relationship among States, NGOs, civil society organisations and bilateral and multilateral partners.

VI. HIV/AIDS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Justification

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is progressively wiping out the post-colonial gains of public health and economic development efforts of the last 30 years in Africa. It is ruthlessly killing young people in the prime of their productive life. Nearly 11 million Africans have died of AIDS alone, at an average rate of 2 million per year, and nearly 6000 per day, at a cost of up to \$US1000 per funeral. Infections gallop at the daily rate of 10,000 adults between 15 to 49 years, mainly women, and 2000 children under 15 years, mainly girls. In this regard, it is noted that the incubation period in Africa is generally much shorter than the 20 years so far experienced elsewhere. The birth rate, the only means of replacing the dead and dying, is only 72,000 per day, and it is declining.

The prevailing neglect, mystery, myths, stigma, prejudice, and intolerance for a primarily public health concern continue to fuel the spread of a deadly disease that is contracted primarily through sexual intercourse, an act central to male and female relationships. Yet, once again, females find themselves disadvantaged due to social and economic dependence, and physical and physiological differences that expose them, more than their male partners, to infections. Young girls are at greater risk due to some traditional practices, sexual abuse, forced marriage, prostitution, and myths that infected men can be cured by having sexual relations with a virgin, thus exposing the girl to tearing of the genitals, which accelerates infections. Women with disabilities also are at a greater risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS infection arising out of their double marginalization as women and as disabled. Elderly relatives, with little means or support particularly carry the burden of orphans. The breadwinners die, families disintegrate, and poverty and despondency reign.

Although infection rates vary between African countries and subregions, high mobility within the continent means that no country will remain unaffected by HIV/AIDS. Prevention is the key to slowing the spread of AIDS in Africa and curtailing its ultimate impact - devastation of African populations. Prevention strategies must address the structures that place the woman in a disadvantaged position in society and instead empower her to protect herself and her children. Local resources must be mobilised to prevent infections and manage health care, not only to bury the dead.

Vision

The vision of the Plan of Action is to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS infections by 50 per cent by 2004 by creating awareness and reducing the socio-economic devastation of HIV/AIDS.

Strategic objectives

- ◆ Increasing resources to fight the disease and its effects;
- ◆ Empowering women socially and economically; and
- ◆ Demystifying or removing fear and the sense of mystery about HIV/AIDS, through realistic information, education and communication (IEC) programmes in the community.

Strategic actions

To demystify HIV/AIDS and reduce the spread of infection, central governments have the responsibility to take the following strategic actions:

1. Formulate or review HIV/AIDS policy to check spread of the infection and then to eradicate it through non-discrimination, demystification of the disease, and protection of both the infected and the uninfected.
2. Set up or strengthen national HIV/AIDS committees or their equivalents, to develop national HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes.
3. Legislate against all discriminatory practices that have implications on HIV/AIDS, including promoting/regulating the age of consent and controlling and prohibiting deliberate contamination of the uninfected by the infected.
4. Promote community-based health care (for example, as in Zambia), which encourages the infected to live positively within the community. The approach enhances information, education, and communication to reduce myths and subsequent isolation. It also empowers, involves, and protects the woman and caters for the orphans.
5. Prevent transmission through transfusion of infected blood, use of contaminated needles, syringes, surgical and dental equipment, and breast-feeding by infected mothers. To do this, governments in close collaboration with NGOs, women's groups, the private sector, and international agencies, should design and implement programmes and projects for:
 - ◆ Sensitisation, training and inspections;
 - ◆ HIV screening and contact tracing to protect public health, particularly of the high-risk groups, to be determined at the national level;
 - ◆ Conducting family life and sex education on the dangers of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, targeting the youth;
 - ◆ Building community associations through age groups and professional, religious, or other clubs, to facilitate information interchange and networking and to promote community feeling and concern for one another. Through these, transmission will be reduced and the care of those already infected will be intensified and made more effective;
 - ◆ Setting up homes and centres (for example, as in Zimbabwe) to rescue orphans, particularly girls, from defilement, violence, neglect, or abandonment, and build or reassign hospitals, health centres, and clinics, under professional and skilled personnel, to provide health services, including counselling, to the communities;
 - ◆ Enable countries to investigate and negotiate for a supply of available testing kits and medicines at a reasonable cost;
 - ◆ Safeguard all nationals against unethical practices, such as drug-testing studies conducted without informed consent. Women need to be educated, trained, and empowered socially and economically, with their human rights protected from violation by one in any way;
 - ◆ Enable the national HIV/AIDS committee, national women's groups and organisations, and the civil society to ensure political will and commitment, such as through lobbying;
 - ◆ Support applied research by compatriots in Africa using indigenous or modern methods;
 - ◆ Conduct educational programmes and sensitisation campaigns, including counselling for the women and youth on illicit drug-related issues.

Subregional level

1. Set up or strengthen subregional mechanisms for collective negotiations for bulk purchase of HIV/AIDS drugs at reduced costs.

Actors

Actors include individuals, both infected and uninfected; the community; governments; NGOs; collaborating national, subregional, regional, and international institutions.

Indicators

Indicators include:

- ◆ Number of communities organised and functioning in the control of HIV/AIDS;
- ◆ Number of information, education and communication groups and clubs;
- ◆ Number of health centres, clinics, homes, and hospitals responding to community health-care and social needs;
- ◆ Number of people seeking assistance at these centres;
- ◆ Rate of new HIV/AIDS infections;
- ◆ Rate of sexually transmitted disease infections;
- ◆ Death rates;
- ◆ Birth rates;
- ◆ Fertility rates and population growth rates;
- ◆ Rate of condom use;
- ◆ Number of HIV/AIDS rape cases and subsequent convictions;
- ◆ Regular monitoring and evaluation of PFA implementation to eradicate the HIV/AIDS threat by the national multisectoral teams, which will involve experts in this field.

Resources

Governments have the moral obligation to allocate sufficient resources to control the pandemic as a matter of priority. Resources for the community-based approach should be mobilised internally as well. However, access to available tests and medicines should be negotiated externally without the conditionalities that distract nations from their priorities or which encourage external dependence.

Mechanisms and structures

National governments should set up national HIV/AIDS committees or their equivalents comprising representatives from sectoral ministries, particularly health, social services, education, finance, and law enforcement agencies. These committees will include representation from women's groups, the private sector, and the civil society. The national committees will form subregional and regional committees in which they will involve related subregional and regional organisations to facilitate exchange of information and monitoring of the cross-border interactions that could influence control of the spread of the epidemic. National multisectoral monitoring and evaluation teams should carry out monitoring and evaluation, and report to the national coordinating and consultative committees with mandate, status and power for effective coordination.

VII. ACCESS TO AND CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE PROVISION OF BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES BY THE WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN SOCIETY

Justification

Poverty and lack of control of resources are the main causes of inequality in African societies where women suffer the most. With the breakdown of traditional African family support and increasing poverty, the woman, while still without means, is overloaded with care of the poor and the needy, besides her other productive and reproductive responsibilities. The Platform for Action rightly recognises the multidimensional problem of poverty with its origins in national and international domains, continued decline of employment at a faster rate for women than for men, unsustainable economic growth and deepening interdependence among nations due to globalisation.

Women have stressed the need for African countries to create national, subregional and regional markets for national, subregional and regional products. They have re-affirmed the need for their workload and the family burdens they carry to be lightened and to be included in national accounts at macro and micro levels. The African society must assist them to do so. African governments have the moral responsibility to lighten women's workload, add value to their activities, acknowledge women's role in national development and make their contribution visible. In support, the PFAs restate the need to empower women to utilise national and other resources sustainably, with adequate institutional and financial frameworks and support at all levels.

Vision

National manufacturing, including women's contribution, is directed towards production and provision of essential goods and services for African communities through small and medium industrial enterprises that will provide labour remuneration and subsequent capital earnings for women. This will be achieved through total commitment by governments, their partners and civil societies in the setting up and running of basic industrial income earning enterprises. New and extended manufacturing programmes will be up and running in two years. Reduction in poverty among the women by a minimum of 1 per cent will be achieved at the end of five years.

Strategic objectives

National governments should aim to:

1. Raise the purchasing power of the communities and that of women in particular, by creating employment.
2. Industrialise entrepreneurial activities.
3. Achieve self-reliance in the production and provision of utility goods.
4. Allocate adequate financial and human resources for establishing indigenous small and medium industrial enterprises.
5. Reduce women's domestic workload.

6. Encourage the private sector to set up small and medium industrial enterprises in an enabling, protective and supportive environment.

Strategic actions

At national level

To develop small and medium enterprises that will provide paid employment for women, governments in collaboration with partners in development should:

1. Formulate policies that will enhance women's participation in national development and their access to and use of national resources.
2. Repeal all laws and amend all regulations prohibiting access to and use by women of national resources for national development.
3. Build capacity for setting up and running small and medium enterprises, ensuring training in technology, management, marketing and networking.
4. Provide access to capital and assets for setting up and running industrial plants that will lighten women's workload and technologically produce articles required and marketed in African communities. Funds and credit guarantee schemes should be established to facilitate this endeavour.
5. Encourage franchises for enterprise development.

At subregional and regional levels

6. Facilitate the establishment of small and medium industries for the production and provision of utility items in the country, the subregion and the region.
7. Promote intra-African trade at the subregional and regional levels within the African Economic community, guiding the location of different types of enterprises and avoiding duplication and undue saturation of sections of the markets.

Mechanisms and structures

The National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee should ensure that the National Machinery and the Ministry of Industry facilitate policy formulation, programmes and project design as well as the development of indigenous small and medium industries which add value to women's participation in national development.

Actors

The main actors are:

- The national government;
- The private sector, NGOs and IGOs as government partners;

- The civil society;
- The National Consultative and Co-ordinating Committee;
- The National Women's Machinery;
- Women as groups and as individuals;
- International partners.

Monitoring and evaluation

The indicators should include:

- ◆ Number and distribution nationally and regionally of industrial enterprises set up in the planning period;
- ◆ Gender-disaggregated data on number of people employed in new enterprises;
- ◆ Gender-disaggregated data on the number of people in industrial-related, decision-making positions;
- ◆ Per capita income by gender;
- ◆ Gross national product per year.

Resources

Governments will allocate resources from the national budget. Governments may seek assistance from partners sympathising with the principle of empowering women for self-determination in economic affairs; distinct inputs from UNIDO and ILO are anticipated. The private sector will be encouraged to set up franchises in small and medium enterprises that will employ women in various parts of the country. Women should also be encouraged to use savings and credit facilities among themselves and in financial institutions to expand their entrepreneurial activities. Other sources are national women's banks where they exist and specialised funds created for reducing poverty among women.