

High-Level Interministerial Dialogue on Gender-Responsive Budgeting, and mobilizing Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

co-hosted by the Government of South Sudan

Solutions Session at the Second World Summit for Social Development

6 November 2025

Virtual

Introduction

African member States have reaffirmed their commitment to placing gender equality and women's empowerment at the core of development financing frameworks, programmes, and policies, as articulated in the Seville Commitment (2025) and the Outcome of the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development. A key pillar of this commitment is the promotion of gender equality through domestic public resources, especially by implementing gender-responsive budgeting.

Since 2015, notable progress has been achieved in integrating gender considerations into fiscal policies. Countries such as South Africa have emerged as early adopters, setting regional standards in gender budgeting within public finance. Other member States, such as Rwanda, demonstrate how political will and sustained institutional reforms drive advancements in gender equality. However, the ability of developing countries to make further progress is hampered by constrained fiscal space—debt servicing obligations, civil conflicts and climate change. Poorly managed debt compounds challenges, increasing unpaid care burdens on women and restricting their formal employment opportunities. Furthermore, declining Official Development Assistance from OECD countries makes the efficient use of scarce national, bilateral, and multilateral fiscal resources more critical than ever.

Background

South Sudan has continually affirmed its commitment to gender equality through foundational frameworks such as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R- ARCSS 2018); the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS) 2011 as amended; the Revitalised National Development Strategy (R- NDS) 2021- 2024, the National Gender Policy (NGP) 2012 and the second National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, 2124- 2027. To further safeguard these rights the National Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) has developed key Bills that are at various stages of approval processes. These Bills include Gender Empowerment; Gender Equality Authority; Women's Enterprise; Anti- Gender Based Violence and Family Law among others. These instruments express a national vision for a just society free from discrimination, where women, men, and children equally enjoy their rights and participate in all spheres of development. This commitment extends to aligning government, private sector, and civil society efforts to mainstream gender equality into all policies and activities.

On the international level, South Sudan is party to key normative standards, most notably the Beijing Platform for Action, Maputo Protocol and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Building on this foundation, the 2021 Committee on Ending Discrimination Against Women recommended South Sudan to Intensify efforts to fully implement the existing laws and regulations on equal rights of women and men to, and in, employment and reduce unemployment

among women by promoting their access to formal employment, including improving access to all vocational training opportunities; establish measures to achieve the 35 per cent gender quotas for women's representation and employment in government institutions and public sector; and adopt gender-responsive budgeting across government departments, alongside earmarking revenues from natural resource to support women and girls' empowerment programmes.

Yet the country faces profound socioeconomic and fiscal challenges. There is deteriorating economic conditions, weakened social cohesion, and rising humanitarian needs are compounded by an extreme dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods (which account for 95% of the population) and oil revenues (which comprise over 84% of public revenues), both of which have declined sharply in recent years (World Bank 2024). Furthermore, the unemployment rate for women remains high, women's domestic and care work remain unvalued and the gender wage gap remains wide. Consequently, South Sudan's fiscal space is significantly restricted, limiting the reach of gender-focused policies and programmes, most of which are apparently supported by donor funding.

Despite these constraints, expanding the fiscal space available for gender equality—both in South Sudan and across Africa—is essential for translating national gender goals into impactful policies. Key strategies include increasing investments to reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, which disproportionately affects women, and leveraging the public resources of multilateral and local development banks to earmark financing for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Women remain the backbone of Africa's economic transformation—small and medium enterprises (SMEs) led by women account for up to 80% of employment and drive growth, new demand, and structural change. Africa is unique in having more women entrepreneurs than men. Development finance institutions, particularly multilateral development banks (MDBs) and local development banks (LDBs), play a pivotal role in expanding women's financing options. Their efforts should include reforming lending products to better suit the needs of women and youth, developing innovative financial instruments, and adopting alternative risk assessment frameworks tailored to informal businesses. Ultimately, empowering women and youth to sustain and grow their businesses is crucial for leveraging increased access to financing and capitalising on new opportunities, including those presented by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

Event Description

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has the potential to transform national commitments to gender equality into concrete fiscal policies and development programs. However, the implementation of GRB is often constrained by limited fiscal space in many Member States. This high-level side event will provide an in-depth exploration of how countries—especially those facing significant resource constraints—are advancing gender-responsive budgeting and leveraging it to achieve their development goals.

Through a combination of panel discussions and interactive sessions, the event will examine:

- Practical approaches to gender-responsive budgeting within the context of fiscal constraints,
- Actions taken and results achieved by countries in strengthening gender policies,
- The challenges and policy implications of GRB, with a focus on unique contexts such as South Sudan.

The dialogue will further explore alternative options for expanding fiscal space, including the role of multilateral and local development banks, local philanthropy, and innovative investments aimed at reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.

Overall Objective

To provide a dynamic platform for reaffirming commitments to closing gender gaps and identifying new sources of development financing to achieve national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Specific Objectives

- Raise awareness of the value and mechanics of gender-responsive macroeconomic planning and budget reforms, emphasizing their power to address both macro- and micro-level factors that reinforce gender inequalities.
- Disseminate and build capacity of officials on mobilising resources for oversight mechanisms for accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovations in mobilizing financing for gender equality, particularly through Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and National Development Banks (NDBs), in alignment with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.
- Provide a platform for interactive sessions focusing on (i) the relationship between fiscal space and gender-responsive budgeting, (ii) how gender strategies can be integrated at both national and sectoral levels, (iii) the importance of robust gender statistics for informed policymaking, and (iv) the development and effectiveness of gender budget statements in promoting accountability and impact.

Format and Structure

The virtual event will bring together representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Planning and the Ministries of Gender from African countries, alongside senior technical experts from relevant ministries, agencies, and gender-related programs, as well as multilateral and national development financing institutions. The event will feature opening remarks by key ministers and high-level representatives, followed by interactive panels comprising government, MDBs, and local banking leaders. The moderator will guide panellists through key questions, drawing on their firsthand experiences and expertise.

Expected Outcomes

- One of the main outcomes will be a high-level commitment to advancing gender-responsive budgeting and financing in South Sudan and participating African countries.
- Concrete policy recommendations and action points for expanding fiscal space for gender priorities.
- Enhanced peer learning through shared best practices. Multilateral and national development financing institutions will play an active role, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices to inform future strategies among member States.

Content focus

The side event will focus on strategic issues, including:

- The importance of GRB for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.
- How gender-responsive budgeting can be scaled up despite fiscal constraints,
- Approaches and lessons learned in the practical application of gender-responsive budgeting,
- The current and potential roles of multilateral and national development banks in mobilizing financing for gender equality, in alignment with commitments from the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development.

High Level dialogue of gender responsive budgeting & mobilizing financing for gender co-hosted by the Government of South Sudan	
8:45 – 09:25 am	Opening Remarks • Minister of Finance Republic of South Sudan • Minister of Gender, child Social Affairs • Senior Official from the ECA • Senior officials from UN Women • Keynote address
9:25 – 10:20	• Country experiences on public financing efforts (South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Togo, the Gambia) • Commitments in the FFD4 and the Urgency for sustained financing for Gender Equality • How are we mobilising resources for gender equality and women's empowerment? the role of multilateral and national development Banks Panelists: Ministers of Finance and Planning and Gender, Child and Social Welfare Undersecretaries of the Ministries of Finance and Gender, Child and Social Welfare Representative from Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Committee Representatives of MDBs African Development Bank (AfDB) and World Bank Project on Women's Economic Empowerment Representatives of Local Development Banks – Bank of South Sudan; Cooperative Bank and other Microfinance Institutions South Sudan Women's Union and Think Tank (Transformational Leadership Institute) Representatives of UN agencies- UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP
	Closing Session