

AFRICAN YOUNG WOMEN & GIRLS STATEMENT

OUR RIGHTS, OUR FUTURE

A Shared Responsibility



**THE 9TH
BEIJING
+20 AFRICA**

CSOs REGIONAL REVIEW

PREAMBLE:

As young women and girls, some of us were not yet born or too young to attend the 1995 conference. We appreciate that even twenty years ago, Africa led the advocacy to include the Girl Child as a critical area of focus. The aspirations you had for Africa's young women and girls then for education, opportunities, dignity and a bright future, are as valid today as they were at that time.

We young women and girls from across Africa attending the Beijing+20 Africa Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) regional review meeting, held on the 14th-16th November 2014 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia;

Acknowledge that much has been achieved in the last twenty years towards the achievement of the commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that protect women rights and advance the wellbeing of young women and girls. However we sadly observe that inclusion, empowerment and development of young women has been unacceptably slow, despite the strong focus on girls education

Recognize that young women and girls aged 15-35 make up over 40 per cent of the continent's population and that the right investments in our education, health will position Africa to reap the demographic dividend. The economic, social, political, cultural and technological empowerment of young women and girls is central to the full development of our communities, nations, our continent and the world at large.

Value and recognize regional and international frameworks such as the African Women's Charter and its decade Plan of Action; the Malabo Declaration on Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development; the African Union Youth and Women Employment Pact; the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development Beyond 2014 in Africa; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the African Youth Charter, the Common Africa Position, the youth consultations for Agenda 2063, the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as national policies which address youth empowerment and development;

Despite these baskets of policies, we deeply saddened by the fact that the future of many girls and young women in Africa is bleak. Young women and girls are the majority dying and highest at risk of preventable diseases including HIV, child birth complications and now even in cases of Ebola.

While many girls have access to basic primary education, there are many barriers and problems impacting on completion, transition to secondary, tertiary and vocational education. We often leave school without any skills for jobs or to run our own business. Young women and girls continue to experience all kind of violence on our bodies and in our lives. Violations and abuse is justified in the name of culture or tradition such as in instances of child, early and forced "marriage" or female genital mutilation (FGM/C). While we embrace technology, there continues to be an age and digital divide, with the emerging cybercrimes placing us at further risk such as cyber stalking, bullying and trafficking.

We strongly condemn the continued violence targeting young women and girls such as the abduction of more than 200 Chibok girls in Nigeria and the recent stripping and beating of young women in Kenya and Tanzania for allegedly dressing indecently.

We are mindful of our responsibilities to ourselves, our families and communities, as we come together in our diversities, as young women and girls in and out of school; single, married and widowed; living in the streets; slums, urban and rural communities; coming from stable communities, in conflict, and displaced.

We come as leaders, innovators and knowledge providers, willing, ready and committed to claim our rights and build the future we want. We do this not only for our own individual empowerment but for development of our communities as we strive for gender equality.



We therefore make the following recommendations to our governments, the African Union, United Nations and others:

1. To scale up opportunities that provide young women and girls with access to means of productions including land, property, technology, capital among others.
2. To ensure increased access to relevant and quality education, that matches the labor market needs and support technical and vocational trainings with a particular focus on increased investment capacity building for teachers both in the formal and informal education sectors. This will ensure that young women and girls have the relevant skills to match developmental needs in Africa.
3. Invest in the education of girls particularly in science, technology engineering and mathematics. Provide secure and safe spaces of learning for girls and implement international human rights commitments on protection and legal redress on the issue of violence against young women and girls including kidnaping and sexual violence.
4. Fulfill and be accountable to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
5. Support research towards generating target specific indicators and disaggregated data for accountability and evidence based planning and programming for young women and girls.
6. To ensure universal access to health for young women and girls including Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), information, access to safe and legal abortion and care and services within youth friendly environments.
7. Provide special services and opportunities for particular special groups of young women and girls especially young women living with disability; young women living with HIV; young widows and adolescent and young girls in marriage and those living in the streets and displaced communities.

8. Take concrete measures to address link between Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and SRHR, HIV/AIDS and the link to VAWG; ending VAWG related stigma and discrimination among young women and girls including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, disabilities and gender.
9. Provide evidence based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) that is linked to relevant services for young women and girls both in and out of school.
10. Take action to end violations against young women and girls, and reject the discriminatory social norms and harmful traditional practices especially female genital mutilation, early, child and forced marriages, through full support to the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage that undermine the rights and ability of young girls and women to control and establishing a legal minimum age of marriage of 18 years, criminalize all forms of FGM and disallow judicial consent to marriage in sexual violence cases.
11. Ensure the inclusion of gender equality goal and youth specific targets in the proposed post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals with a clear funding and resourcing framework and specific indicators for monitoring progress on youth with a focus on young women and girls.
12. Lastly we call on UN agencies, AU and the Governments to provide financial support for young women's organizations and programs and create spaces for the engagement, participation of young women and girls in design, delivery and evaluation of programs and services targeting girls and implementation of these recommendations.

Adopted on 17th of November, 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Presented to Governments, African Union, UNECA and UN Women as well as CSOs at Africa Beijing Plus 20 Review held on 17-19 November 2014



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