

AFRICAN WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE GRASSROOTS - THEIR SAY ON THEIR WORLD POST 2015



Women's voices from citizen-driven
workshops on the post-2015 framework
held in 13 African Countries

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	— Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FGM	— Female genital mutilation
HIV	— Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
ICCPR	— International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	— International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IPV	— Intimate partner violence
MDGs	— Millennium Development Goals
SGBV	— Sexual and gender-based violence

INTRODUCTION

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) come to an end and negotiations for a new development framework progress, a firm shift in development models is needed. This must go beyond thinking of women's vulnerability and instead focus on women's contribution to African economic and social transformation. ACORD's vision for social justice and ending poverty has at its heart the understanding that people are the primary actors in their own survival and development, and that we must work alongside communities. We focus on strengthening people's capacity to participate and exert influence over governance and decision-making processes to address the root causes of exclusion and injustice.

When it comes to influencing policy, we place a strong emphasis on facilitating the participation of grassroots groups, community-based organisations and citizens in decision-making processes. Through participatory processes and consultation, we also frame our own inputs into decision-making based on the perspectives and views of the communities we work with.

Our engagement in the post-2015 process has been governed by this ethic. For ACORD it is vital that any framework which speaks on issues of poverty and sustainable development must be informed by those who experience poverty and inequality on a daily basis and have locally owned solutions to overcoming it. This is particularly true of the communities we work with, who are predominantly rural and politically, economically, socially and geographically marginalised and amongst the poorest in their respective countries. These are exactly the groups that are the most excluded from policy processes. Among these groups, women represent one of the most vulnerable, because of their position in society. Gender equality is an important dimension of the advocacy work of ACORD, and the voices of women form a crucial part of the voices that ACORD wants to bring to the international arena.

In 2013, ACORD held 45 citizen-driven workshops in 13 different countries across the continent, in six of these countries ACORD held workshops specifically targeting women's issues and concerns. The idea was to harness the power of the African citizen – to privilege their position as agents in their own development. The workshops triggered debate and discussion in some of the most remote and marginalised communities in Africa today, with citizens reflecting on the challenges they faced, and their ideas for how they want to see change take place. The findings of the consultations have been captured in a flagship report of the post 2015 process, entitled 'The Africa we want: Responsive states, empowered citizens'¹. 'African Women and Girls at the Grassroots – Their say on their world post-2015' is an accompaniment to this report, which expands on and deepens the analysis of gender and women's rights issues emanating from the workshops.

"Africa women and girls at the Grassroots – their say on their world post-2015" is a representation of African women's voices from the grassroots. While ACORD has represented these voices faithfully, it is recognised that Africa is not homogenous and these voices do not represent the entirety of African Women's voices or indeed the entirety of the interviewed women's views and perspectives on gender equality. In the discussions with women, they consistently recognised that achievements and advancements had been

¹ To be released in April, 2014

INTRODUCTION

made towards gender equality and empowerment over the past 15 years. In particular, they highlighted the great strides made in women's participation in leadership and in the legal and policy arenas in favour of gender equality and women's empowerment across the continent. This report has attempted to give voice to grassroots women in the complex political and consensus building process that will result in the post-2015 development framework. In doing this ACORD aims to ensure that women's contributions form the basis of the recommendations and resolutions that will be adopted on gender equality and women's empowerment. While a number of the grassroots voices portray women as victims, other voices captured herein espouse women's agency. For ACORD, this balance is very important in the debate on women's empowerment. The reality of many grassroots women is indeed that of inhibited freedoms. Conceptually, our argument is that women's demonstrated capacities to lead and make decisions is the basis on which they should be supported as power-dispensers and decision makers at all levels.

The findings discussed here have been summarised from both the general citizen workshops as well as the women specific workshops. In analysing women's voices ACORD identified issues in five key thematic areas:

- Violence against women and girls
- Access to and control over resources, including land, credit, energy and information technology
- Women's citizenship and leadership
- Access to basic services with an emphasis on reproductive and sexual health services
- Recognition, redistribution and remuneration of women's unpaid care work

The report situates its analysis in the experiences and perspectives of African women and girls, using their own words to illustrate the issues that a new development framework must confront.



"Women's needs and aspirations differ depending on their geographical locations, cultural backgrounds, educational levels, status in society and self-drive. Their voices at times sound apprehensive and portray them as victims. However, this is the reality in the grassroots"

Salina Sanou,
Head of Policy and Advocacy, ACORD.

ENDING ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) deprives women and girls of their most basic fundamental rights of physical integrity, keeps them from attaining their fullest in social, economic and political spheres and causes widespread mental abuse and trauma. In Africa, SGBV is a widespread and complex phenomenon due to the unequal power relations found in all communities on the continent, and all countries with both conflict and post conflict fragility. Statistics on sexual violence are very hard to come by because of under-reporting, but many workshop participants shared their experiences and views on sexual violence. Women in the workshops talked about several forms of sexual violence. In Kenya a participant linked sexual harassment to the denial of rights:

“Women are constantly violently harassed by men and denied their rights and freedom of expression.” (Participant in Kenya)

Rape was an issue raised across the women-focused workshops. Participants discussed their experiences of rape, and the fact that the constant threat of rape was a lived reality for many. In Mozambique a young participant shared a harrowing experience of rape:

“Going to school one bright afternoon, I met three men who pushed me into the bush and raped me in turns. I went through the agonising pain as they took turns to rape me. Later they threatened me not to tell anyone or risk being beaten each time I meet them. I went to the victim support unit of Metangula police where I was helped. The perpetrators were apprehended and that’s the time I learnt that they were soldiers from the nearby Naval base” (21 year old participant in Mozambique)

For many, sex and gender-based violence was closely tied to social norms and attitudes, traditional gender roles, and how power is distributed at household level. As much as awareness was raised as an issue, participants also focused on how legal institutions are able to enforce laws against SGBV, noting that even if they are reported there are few convictions. Customary and community-based institutions were often regarded as incapable of confronting this issue. In Tanzania, a participant shared the challenges that certain traditional practises posed for women and urged that laws be implemented to address gender based violence:

“GBV is a problem and mainly attributed to the patriarchal Maasai culture and traditions where men have a higher position in society and in the family. There are various forms of SGBV including but not limited to physical beating, psychological abuse, forced marriage, polygamy without consent from wife, misuse of matrimonial assets to remarry, which is considered as economic

ENDING ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

violence and the customary behaviour of “Mkuki mlangoni”. These cases of SGBV are aggravated by challenges including low reporting of cases, low collaboration with the witnesses and over use of customary laws to resolve the cases. Yet the state law is very clear on SGBV as it states that any oppressive practice or law should not be entertained” (Participant in Ngorongoro, Tanzania)

The last fifteen years have seen a lot of publicity around the legislation to prevent and manage SGBV. Despite that very few countries have actually passed effective legislation to effectively address SGBV, and participants noted that local decision making structures need better representation from women if they are to adequately address the issue:

“When there are cases reported community leaders converge and take a decision on the matter. Most of the cases are decided in favour of the men as the committee is principally composed of men.” (Community development officer, Ngorongoro, Tanzania)

Participants from fragile and post-conflict states talked about their experiences with conflict and sexual violence in conflict. The experiences recounted demonstrate the ongoing issue on the continent of SGBV in conflict-affected societies. In Burundi participants discussed how a girl who has been raped, who joined armed movements by choice or by force, or who is a child mother from SGBV in conflict, is subject to stereotyping and prejudice. Girls who have suffered violence in war have their legitimacy in society questioned amongst their peers, within their families, in their communities, and in the eyes of official institutions. As a consequence they are both socially and economically vulnerable.

“Lots of girls suffered violence during the war. Apart from the rebels, people from the neighbourhood did harm to girls and women. Most often, it was sexual violence and stripping them of possessions. If a girl or a woman tried to denounce the man who raped her, the latter could kill her because it was a war situation.” (Participant in South Sudan)

Women in the workshops recommended concerted efforts by all in the community, especially in war affected areas to ensure that there is adequate awareness-raising on violence against girls.

“To ensure that girls affected by war and victims of violence are rehabilitated, NGOs and other groups must collaborate with the local administrators to ensure that people receive more intensified information, so that they respect the rights of young girls who are victims of violence, because they are not responsible for the consequences of the violence they have suffered.” (Participant in Burundi)

ENDING ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Intimate partner (Domestic Violence)

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women, occurring most commonly amongst married couples. Participants observed that in most countries IPV is largely still hidden, accepted as a cultural norm and is condoned even by politicians and other prominent personalities. Participants observed that communities continue to justify IPV as a form of discipline and as a private matter that families should handle. Women in the workshops abhorred the violence and dominance experienced at home, but some men also highlighted how traditional gender roles are directly linked to violence:

“Women and girls need equality instead of dominance and suppression. They want to exercise their rights without any domination. The problem they face is traditional influence. Their husbands prevent them from going to market. There is household violence. Husbands want to be asked for permission. They cannot go to school without a husband’s permission. In our society women are treated as children. They can’t go far unless accompanied by an elder. They are not allowed to attend meetings.” (Pastoralist participant in Borana, Ethiopia, father of one son and one daughter)

In many parts of postcolonial Africa, legal responses to violence within the family differed from responses to other kinds of violence. Violence that was understood as domestic was often punished less harshly if at all². The workshops illustrated how this division between domestic and other forms of violence lingers today. Women in the workshops described how prosecution of partner violence was seriously lacking. A participant from Kenya cited corruption as one of the problems.

“Corruption is a key factor in violence against women. Perpetrators pay bribes to parents and courts to cover evidence against them.” (Participant in Kenya)

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another very common form of violence against women and girls discussed in the workshops. The WHO estimates that up to 90 million women in Africa have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). At least 28 countries in Africa still practise FGM, the percentages range from as low as 5% in Uganda to over 90% in Somalia³. FGM has long term physical and psychological effects and as the practise is often undertaken by poorly trained practitioners in

² Domestic Violence and the Law in Africa, Emily Burrill, Richard Roberts, and Elizabeth Thornberry www.ohioswallow.com/extras

³ WHO factsheet no. 241 updated October 2013

ENDING ALL FORMS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

unsanitary conditions, it also increases the immediate health risks to women and girls undergoing the procedure.

In societies where FGM prevalence is high, the perception is that women and girls who have undergone FGM are more feminine and clean, thereby increasing the stigma of girls who have not undergone the ritual. In discussions over how violence affects their lives, some participants explicitly referred to FGM. This is despite the stigma that still abounds in African communities concerning the issue, underlining its importance to those who spoke out. Although legal provisions and enforcement are important, participants strongly argued that awareness and social attitudes are the key factors undermining efforts to address the problem.

“Genital mutilation is a problem. To stop this, the only solution is awareness and we need to be organised at district level and sub-district level to stop the action, save the children and give birth safely.” (Agro-pastoralist participant in Marsabit, Kenya, mother of five)

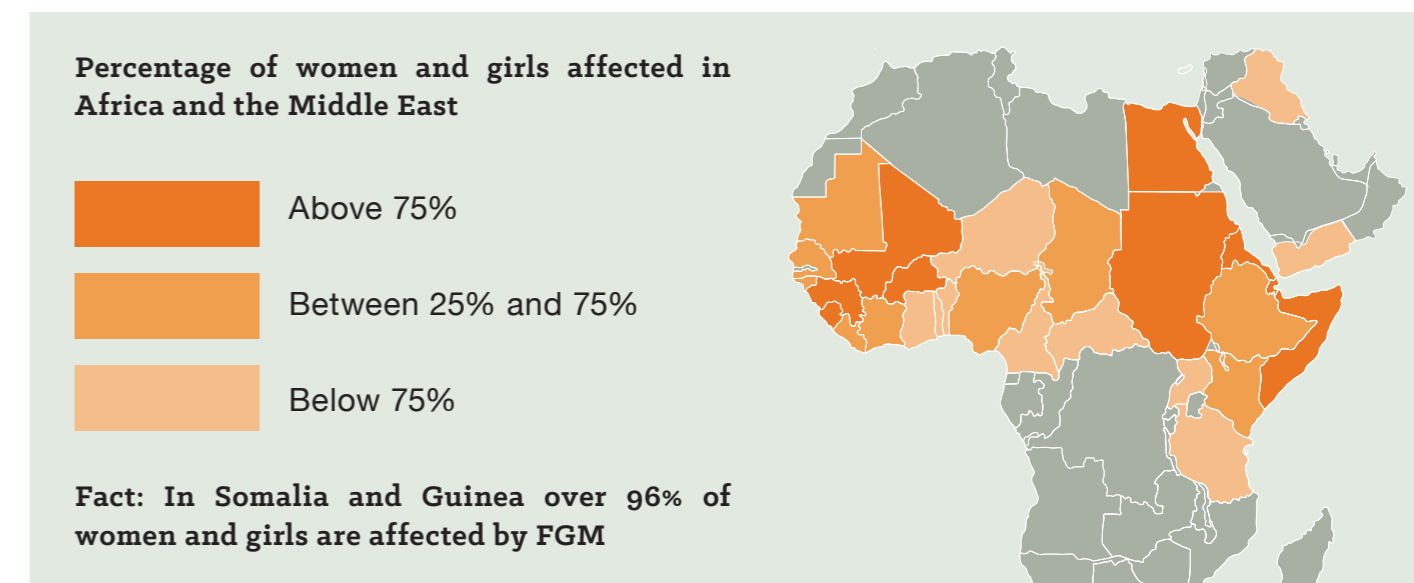


Diagram source: United Nations Development Programme

Women expressed concerns about both the immediate and long term effects of violence and had a clear understanding that the changes that were needed were far-reaching. These included working with communities and official institutions to sensitise them on the effects of violence, to addressing legal and structural barriers to justice, and for victims to receive adequate support and reparations.

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Land

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 80% of all the food produced is by small holders (small-scale farmers), of which 70% are women. However, women farmers have significantly less access to land and security of tenure. In the workshops access to land was a key issue consistently across countries. Women asserted that when they are able to access land adequately, and receive appropriate political support to do so, they are able to secure stable and prosperous livelihoods:

“Financial independence is very important for women as they need to be able to take care of their children without the help of the husband in times of death or divorce. I was divorced in 1988 but I have managed to take care of my children through farming. Of course I experienced problems at first because I had no land but with the help of the female chief I was able to acquire a piece of land, and seeds to start cultivating my own field. Now I am happy to say that I cultivate throughout the year through irrigation”

Land ownership for women in most African countries is estimated to be at 1% of all registered title and to not exceed 5% of shared titles⁴. Land insecurity leads to many other consequences including food insecurity, inability to invest, and denial of access to credit and additional financial resources. The legislative landscape has been changing gradually but a lot still remains to be done to ensure and protect women’s rights to land and property. For many women it is a lack of legal recognition and enforcement of land rights which directly leads to their poverty.

“Our women need to have proper access to land in order to work and do business, but it is very hard for them” (Male Participant in Medbougou, Mauritania)

“My land was illegally seized. My husband was in prison. Whenever I claimed this land, I was told that I would receive compensation as soon as my husband was released from prison. But after his release from prison, nothing has changed. They always impose new conditions that have nothing to do with the law. It is exhausting” (Female Participant, Bugesera, Rwanda)

⁴ www.fao.org/sd/fsdirect/fbdirect/fsp001.htm

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Accessing skills, tools and resources

The commercialisation of agriculture in Africa was raised by women in the workshops. Many women were not accessing the technology and skills required to benefit from increased commercialisation. Instead, as large-scale and export-oriented agriculture increases on the continent, women are seeing their role as farmers being eroded. Chief amongst the concerns raised was governments favouring investors over infrastructure and land for small holders:

“The land I’m cultivating on was given to me by my grandfather, but the government came and took away half of it and gave it to foreign investors.” (Participant in Lago District, Mozambique)

At the same time women in the workshops expressed a need to be able to access technologies that would reduce their labour in agriculture, and allow them more time for other livelihoods and family or community-based activities. Where women have been able to access labour-saving technologies, these have changed their lives.

“We women, our tasks have been reduced: we used to produce the millet flour using the traditional wheel but now there is the mill, the majority of us now transport water and bundles on the back of a donkey, when before we used on our shoulders” (Female participant in Chad)

Information and technology hold the key to development for women in Africa, but the information gap is a reality for most women, where many face hurdles in accessing and properly utilising technology. Participants underlined that technology and access to training can help women shape the agricultural landscape, participate in financial markets and even break down social barriers. Some participants noted how training and technology in agriculture has improved their lives:

“I have shared my training with forum members through field demonstrations in multiplication techniques. I have also distributed bananas to members wishing to plant. After a journey of education and practical training in banana farming techniques I have greatly strengthened my commitment to this activity. I manage to easily pay school fees for my three children. The People’s Bank and microfinance institutions have confidence in me and unlike in the past, I can access credit when needed” (Participant in Rwanda)

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

The key challenges for women in access to technology are common across the continent. Lack of the requisite skills, poverty, and access are primary among those.

They also stressed the need for support in moving towards more commercial farming, but support is needed from governments to ensure they receive technology, inputs and skills appropriate to this transition.

“I feel that time has come for us to move from small scale farming to mechanised farming. We have 10 hectares of land which cannot be cultivated manually. The provision of a tractor could help us graduate as commercial farmers.” (Female participant and small-scale farmer in Lago, Mozambique)

Women also noted that in order to build sustainable and prosperous livelihoods in small-scale food production they must overcome significant barriers in accessing markets and that currently they lack the information and legal protection to guarantee a fair share of the value of their products. At the same time they need infrastructure and skills:

“We need infrastructure and training in preserving and processing farm produce and marketing skills. I sell my onion harvest immediately because I have no other option. I am the main bread winner in my household, my husband is a paraplegic. After a while the trader sells the same produce for more than five times what he paid me. He takes all the profit while it is me who does all the work.” (Female participant in Niono, Mali)

Agricultural policies at local, national and regional level were heavily criticised for not prioritising small scale food production and not protecting markets for local consumption in the communities themselves. Pastoralist women in Burkina Faso discussed how they need government support in inputs and extension services to build sustainable livelihoods:

“I am raising livestock for 30 years. I have met a lot of difficulties due to insufficient milk production. My main wish is to have good cows which can produce more milk. It is true that the government has begun to provide more services for pastoralists but it is not enough. I have to grow forage crops to feed my cows. If I could have access to forage through my activities led in Yagma I could avoid time spent running here and there. Buying in bulk is always better.” (Participant in Burkina Faso)

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Credit

Over the last 30 years, great strides have been made by women in increasing access to savings and credit. There has been a proliferation of village savings and loans schemes and rural community banking in many of the countries in focus. Micro credit has been recognised as a big factor in ending poverty. However, full financial inclusion (defined here as access to a full suite of financial services including most fundamentally credit, insurance and the ability to make sophisticated transactions like lines of credit and pension schemes) still eludes many women. For participants in the workshops, the ability of women to access credit was linked to not just their ability to grow their income, but their financial independence within households and their ability to meet the needs of their communities:

“Here in Niono, women in general and especially the displaced have very limited access to land and credit to conduct agriculture. With land, we either rent or husbands rent it for us. In addition to that, it takes money to pay rent and buy labour and inputs, so that the need for financing structures for us becomes very crucial because we are always the first to be requested by the family, our children and even the community for any need whatsoever.” (Female participant in Niono, Mali)

Women’s access to credit is constrained both on the demand and on the supply side. Long distances and lack of proper locally available information may often restrict women from making the trip to the provider and limited control over family property and dominance of husbands were both identified as key constraints by participants in the workshops. On the supply side, the strict requirements of finance institutions and the limited variety of products targeting women are the key areas of concern. Formal credit provider requirements are prohibitive and make many women ineligible for the full suite of financial resources that are needed to move women out of poverty.

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Access to natural resources

Women expressed concerns about exploitation of natural resources at the expense of small holder farmers and specifically women. Women in the workshops outlined the fact that it is them more than men who often play the role of conserving and managing the natural resources on which their communities depend. It is women who often restore woodland, collect products from forests, and manage water supplies. As they have less access to financial resources and land, they are also more dependent on these resources. But as resource depletion begins to be felt in communities, women are asking for support in accessing and maintaining these vital resources:

“Natural resources, such as pasture, water and different trees were managed thoroughly in the past through the community, especially by us women. Now, because of the past years of drought, resources are being destroyed more rapidly, for example trees were cut to make charcoal for sale. So we need to protect and manage our resources, but it is hard. Recently, we have guards to protect the trees. If someone cuts one tree, it is considered as if he destroyed the whole population because trees attract rain. Lands will be destroyed because of erosion and degraded soil.” (Female pastoralist, Borana, Ethiopia)

ACCESS TO, CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES INCLUDING LAND, CREDIT, NATURAL RESOURCES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Some participants also pointed out that for them natural resources such as forests retain important cultural significance, and that they must be protected to ensure this is preserved:

“We used to have thick indigenous forests where we used to offer sacrifices in times of calamities like drought or illnesses now when such befall on us we have no option but just to make do with them” (Female participant, Sanga district, Mozambique)

Climate change too was seen as a factor affecting women’s ability to produce food in a sustainable manner. As the majority of the world’s poor, and with their increased dependence on natural resources, women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Support for building adaptable and resilient livelihoods is needed by women. In 10 out of 11 countries rainfall irregularity, attributed to climate change, was raised as a serious issue in need of attention.

“When I was a young girl, you would know which month we would have rain, which month would be dry, so as a farmer you could prepare what you are going to plant. But things are different now, everything has changed. The rainy month turned to drought, the dry month turned rainy” (Female participant, Mwanza, Tanzania)

WOMEN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

The extent of women's participation in politics and women's access to decision-making can be seen as key indicators of gender equality. By 2014, Africa had three women heads of state and a country (Rwanda) with one of the highest representation of women in parliament. The average across the continent is 17% of women in parliaments, which is comparable with the global average but still not ideal. Progress has been made steadily since 2000 and a number of factors have contributed to the changing landscape of women in leadership. The primary one is the use of quotas; over 25 countries on the continent have some form of quota system. Women also acknowledged the progress that has been made in terms of active citizenship and participation of women in decision making processes.

“Today there are many women leaders. In the past, girls and mothers were highly suppressed” (Female participant from Borana, Ethiopia)

National legal frameworks and policies are increasingly open to promoting women's leadership both at national and sub-national levels but women's representation still falls below 30% in most countries and most institutions. Where institutions have taken the requisite steps to include women in leadership positions this has been positively welcomed by members of communities. As one participant notes:

“Despite the limited forums through which people can participate in the decisions of government, this current government has uplifted women in many ways. Women are given special considerations in all matters, for instance, there are special posts on different committees for women. At local council level I, there is a position for women, the same applies to local council level II and III. Even at parliament level, every constituency is expected to send a woman representative. This I feel has promoted their participation.” (Female participant in Uganda)

Amongst women, the opportunities for participation have not been equitable, young women, women from marginalized communities and poor women have not enjoyed the same opportunities when compared to the more educated women from mainstream communities. The majority of women in leadership are women from upper and middle classes. Young women especially have found it difficult to penetrate leadership and get their voices heard within the women's movement. For many participants in the workshops the poorest and most marginalised women struggle to fully participate in governance at community, local and national level.

“Women are not allowed to speak in public or attend meetings” (Participant from Borana, Ethiopia)

WOMEN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

“Women from Siribala have decided to throw off the yoke of men in order to challenge unjust laws. They came together in an association and chose their designated candidate. But the problem is that they lack confidence and capacity in the way they operate.” (Male participant in Mali)

Participants at ACORDs citizen workshops identified a number of reasons why women have not participated as effectively in decision making. Discrimination, economic dependency, gender-based violence, time spent on domestic labour and other factors prevent women from enjoying their rights and entering and effectively participating in decision-making processes. Women's leadership is still not universally accepted. Participants noted that there is a need to reform political and other institutions in order to accommodate women and to end male dominance and patriarchy to avoid it further marginalising women.

“Women in our community are facing many challenges. Decisions are made by men in most areas. Cultural influence has also contributed a lot to this situation. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations are trying to raise awareness on gender issues. But still there is a gap to be filled.” (Female, Vice-chairman of a women's saving and credit cooperative in Ethiopia)

Women also expressed the concern that being left out of the decision making processes affected them in other areas of development. A participant in the Mt Elgon region of Kenya expressed it this way:

“The reason that we lag behind in development is because most of us are not included in decision making”

Throughout the consultations women called for inclusive leadership. Capacities and skills in leadership for women go unnoticed and underutilised and the important role that women play in the community unrecognised.

“Women are the key actors to solve problems in the community. We have to get better support.” (Female participant in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia)

At the same time the workshops emphasised that in many areas women are actively engaging as citizens in order to represent their interests, and that that this must be built on and supported. Participants noted how the mobilisation and active participation of women has an effect on the political economy within their societies. Association and empowerment has led to recognition:

“Our association composed of 113 women is now being courted by politicians during this legislative campaign October 24, 13, because they know that we are now aware that our ballot is our weapon.” (Female Participant in Niono, Mali)

WOMEN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

Women's share of seats in national parliaments is a reliable measure because these bodies are relatively stable over time and the headcount is easily compared among countries. But there are spaces and opportunities for women at sub-national level that offer better opportunities for promoting younger and marginalised women's participation. In the workshops women consistently raised as an issue the importance of participating in local decision-making structures.

“The major solution I suggested to solve gender imbalance is to create favourable conditions in the community through facilitating dialogues and forums, to allow us to make decisions.” (Female, Vice-chairman of a women's saving and credit cooperative in Ethiopia)

Women participation at household level

For women, the importance of having a voice at the household level was as important as having a voice at community level. As noted in other sections above women identified oppression and dominance at home as a challenge to their overall empowerment, and their ability to make crucial decisions about their families.

“Economically speaking, the woman is sought in the home, and this is important for the well-being of the family. But women have no decision-making power and when the girl has made a mistake, she can simply be returned to her mother in the household “ (Participant in Mali)

Sometimes this also affected women's ability to get ahead in other areas of life. Participants underlined that their ability to access services can be restricted by their partners. In order to contribute to building sustainable livelihoods women argued that they must be allowed more power at household level to make economic decisions.

“Men have the right to decide on resource utilisation in the household. This situation will continue to lead to the ignorance of women. So more awareness is needed in the community on gender equality” (Female participant, Borana, Ethiopia)

WOMEN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

“In households of married couples old traditions and cultures and values predominate. It is men who make the decisions on income-generating activities, marketing production and even the allocation of revenue. They control everything! They don't even allow you to sell the flock without any prior consultation.” (Female participant in Rwanda)

A regular theme across the workshops was that women bore responsibility for well-being across their communities, more so than men. Women are expected to respond to the needs of a wide variety of dependents and community members. Participants noted that in this sense if women are empowered to be able to make financial decisions, it will have wider positive outcomes within their communities.

“When we empower women in the community it is very important because a woman will support her community. If she has some money she will spend wisely and the community will benefit from this. Women help children and more so the ones who cannot sustain themselves. Let's empower women to stand strong in the society.” (Female participant in Mount Elgon, Kenya)

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

The Maputo protocol recognises the importance of attaining women's sexual and reproductive rights as a basic requirement for attaining development. Despite the improvement seen with the MDGs; grim realities cannot be ignored. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over half of maternal deaths occurring globally each day. There are over 5 million unsafe abortions performed each year (25% of those on adolescent girls). Over 4 million youth in Africa are infected with Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV).⁵ Citizens see gender inequality linked to access and affordability of quality professional reproductive health services, as key contributors to high maternal mortality in their communities.

A clear trend that emerged in the workshops was that African women are still unable to make reproductive health choices due in part to lack of economic autonomy. Negative attitudes towards women and girls, sexual violence and negative traditional practises all have an impact on women and girls ability to choose. Violence against women accounts for an unacceptable percentage of complications related to labour.

“The practice of cutting young girls in our community is very dangerous; it causes death when they are delivering their babies because they lose a lot of blood.” (Traditional Birth attendant in Ngorongoro, Tanzania)

The dearth in services especially in poorer and marginal communities was of equal concern to both men and women:

“We are tired of watching our wives die because there is no hospital in Turbi where they can give birth” (Male participant in Turbi, Kenya)

“In our dispensaries we have one nurse who serves the whole community and because of fatigue she is not able to see all the clients” (Participant in Mount Elgon, Kenya)

Citizens from all the countries emphasised the concerns about distances from services, many shared cases of relatives who had died either on the way to get maternal health services, or at the clinic waiting for someone to come in and attend to their patients.

“Hospitals in this area are far from the people and hence most of the people die on their way to the hospitals. There are high maternal deaths in this area due to lack of better roads.” (Participant in Mount Elgon, Kenya)

⁵ www.icpdtaskforce.org/post-2015/ accessed 02/2014

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

“We, the mothers are suffering and dying due to poor health services, especially transport means to take women during labour pain to far distanced health centres. There is no ambulance and this is causing death of pregnant women here in Omot” (Participant in Northern Uganda)

Reproductive health responsibilities are still borne primarily by women, and women earn less and have less control over household savings. Women highlighted the link between gender inequality and specifically the limited decision making space that women have to the lack of basic services. A participant from Uganda expressed it this way:

“Some men hijack resources meant for the women, which affects their access to services. For instance, if you have your chicken, your husband may sell them and use the money to meet his own needs and not the needs of the entire household.” (Female Participant in Northern Uganda)

Over and over, citizens understood and expressed that these are preventable problems with cost-effective solutions. Solving them is a matter of political leadership, backed by resources. Addressing sexual and reproductive health concerns will go a long way towards unleashing the full energies and talents of our people, especially women and young people. Across the workshop women called for greater investment by governments in health services to ensure they are more physically accessible, and to reduce user costs so that they are more affordable. This was particularly in relation to maternal care.

“We have an ambulance service but only one for the district, it is not enough. When we make a phone call it may be in another district or health centre. Therefore the expectants may deliver at home. They ask us “Why do you let her to deliver at home?” As a solution at least they have to assign two ambulances to improve the situation. ” (Female Pastoralist in Borana, Ethiopia)

“Health policies are very clear, we ask all stakeholders to reduce the distance we walk especially our women who have lost life while giving birth for lack of access and quality services. Health is our right.” (Community activist and pastoralist in Kenya)

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Education

“The community needs to realise the role of a woman in facilitating its development, every family should make sure all their children get good education as this is the key for their life.” (Female participant, Mwanza, Tanzania)

Throughout the consultative process citizens underscored the importance of education to women’s empowerment, to development and in general to addressing Africa’s problems. Changes in national education policies to guarantee free education have had an impact in increasing the number of girls accessing primary education. Despite this, access to quality education continues to be a primary concern for women and girls in Africa.

“The Government has established a system of education for all. However, even if school fees are minimized, the children of the poor are still not up to par. Worse, the majority of those who fight and succeed in getting a degree in this level, languishing in unemployment and revert “illiterate” very similar to those who have never attended school. The girls eventually leave their villages and go to work as maids in the cities or engage in degrading practices such as prostitution.” (Female participant in Rwanda)

Whilst the rest of the world has narrowed the gender gap in education, in Africa, inequalities persist. This is especially true in higher education. Females constitute only about 25% of enrolment in tertiary education and girls are poorly represented in science, technology, engineering and maths. The impact is disparities in access to school all the way from enrolment, retention, completion, and performance rates. For participants across the workshops this gap in education was linked to increased poverty for women and their dependants.

Women across the workshops said that both their communities and their governments must prioritise women’s and girls’ access to education, and asserted that it holds the potential for women to realise improved well-being and livelihoods, as well as social independence.

“I urge my fellow women to embrace education, let us go back to school especially if you dropped out. We need to train and get skills that can help us engage in income generating skills- then will achieve some independence in supporting ourselves and families.” (Female participant in Kenya)

“Us women in pastoralist regions need education for a better life ... we see education as a source of change. Starting in 2011/12 we decided to send all girls of age 7 to school along with boys.” (Female agro-pastoralist in Marsabit, Kenya)

RECOGNITION, REDISTRIBUTION AND REMUNERATION FOR UNPAID CARE WORK FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Globally, women spend 200 million hours a day fetching water⁶. Unpaid care work underpins all societies, contributing to wellbeing, social development and economic growth. It involves domestic tasks and direct care of people within families and local communities. Globally this burden is unfairly carried out by women. In Africa, the erosion of public services has also further transferred the burden to women. Care work is essential to economies large and small but unless something is done to redistribute and remunerate the work done by women and girls, it will continue to be a key cause of women’s poverty and of gender inequality globally.

Participants in the workshops reflected this reality by sharing their experiences of how domestic labour restricts their ability to contribute to their families’ welfare. The expectation that they must provide domestic care work means they cannot adequately build their own livelihoods, which impacts on their own health and well-being.

“We as mothers we are very challenged because our husbands go to work and we are left at home. Taking care of the children is hard work and most of the men go for work and come home very late when the children are asleep often on an empty stomach. Sometimes you find you can be visited by friends, but now because you don’t have any other alternative you will have to stay hungry until the time he comes back home.” (Participant in Mount Elgon, Kenya)

Other participants outlined how the burden of domestic work means that they are unable to participate in decision-making processes, either because these processes are not designed to accommodate this reality, or because partners prevent them from attending so they can attend to household work.

“Women’s participation in some decisions is in most instances affected by the time factor. Some decision making events are organised at times when women have important domestic chores. Sometimes the spouse stops them participating because they want them to do their domestic chores.” (Female participant and businesswoman)

“Some men do not allow their spouses to work and to make matters worse the men do not meet all our financial needs. Some men have even taken over women’s properties.” (Female participant and fishmonger)

⁶ www.water.org

RECOGNITION, REDISTRIBUTION AND REMUNERATION FOR UNPAID CARE WORK FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Participants noted that the expectation by their partners that they must be responsible for domestic work and the fact that no services are in place to reduce this burden, restricts their ability to access services such as education:

“I am a grade 8 drop out and have a desire to go back to school but my husband does not support the idea.” (Female participant in Sanga, Mozambique)

With the strides made in economic growth and access to education for girls in Africa in the last two decades, women have become actively involved in the labour market both as skilled and unskilled workers and both in formal and informal sectors. However, as noted above, access to technology and other government support services can save women time doing domestic work, and allow them to build more prosperous and sustainable livelihoods. Participants from Burkina Faso discussed the how support is needed in order to access technology to improve livelihoods and decrease the burden of labour within the household.

“I am a widow for 35 years and I have been raising livestock and doing domestic work since my husband died. Currently I am part of an organisation, and this has allowed me to enjoy the support of NGOs. Each year for five years I have grown forage crops and it is only this year that the government has supported us with material and equipment. I haven’t got any donkey to help me gardening, this means that it has been very difficult, I have to put time into this and other domestic chores, I need to identify other income generating activities too so I am thinking of increasing my milk production.” (Participant in Burkina Faso)

Although women have moved gradually to productive work, this had not been matched by a similar shift in men entering the caring and unpaid care work fields. This has left women with what has been termed as the triple burden. Public perception in Africa is primarily that domestic work is women’s work and that dowry payments are meant to be adequate compensation for the time the women spend providing care for the family. Domestic work and domestic workers are still primarily women, and still primarily undervalued and underpaid. Participants noted that these values need to be addressed within communities, and that the effects can have significant impacts on overall well-being in communities:

RECOGNITION, REDISTRIBUTION AND REMUNERATION FOR UNPAID CARE WORK FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

“We used to get up at five am in the morning to go in search of firewood or roots in lean periods and we could meet any kind of unpleasant surprises, even snake bites and rapists. And if it happens that the poor woman died of snake bite, two or three months later, her husband remarries to another who will rise at the same time to fetch wood. But this year I can say that these events are rarely seen. Through sensitisation carried out by village chiefs under the palaver tree, as well as those made by religious leaders, people are learning. Sometimes we women accompanied one of these chiefs to share our own experiences with men. This allowed us to relax a little because this year, the men helped us with our vegetable gardens and they cleared and rehabilitated the wells. Many women of my association tell their husbands accompanied them to the fields or the woods, others say they were helped by their husbands in clearing their land. Few women are now up at five o’clock in the morning to fetch wood.” (Member of a women’s association, Mali)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GENDER RESPONSIVE AND GENDER SENSITIVE POST 2015 AGENDA

The citizen-driven workshops were designed to give women an opportunity to share their own experiences and outline their priorities for the future of sustainable development on the continent. The women we talked to address a wide range of issues, and spoke honestly about what determines change in their communities and what holds them back from achieving it. These testimonies underline the importance of women's rights and gender equality in any debate over the future of sustainable development today and do not in any way undermine the significant contributions women on the continent are already making to the development of their communities. The insights provided by the participants demonstrate that women face specific and clear challenges that require specific and clear commitments and actions.

The analysis and voices captured above have clear implications for the future development framework. The realisation of sustainable and gender-equitable development requires a shift towards a more holistic and all-encompassing development agenda. Whilst acknowledging the progress made by African governments in advancing gender equality and women rights, the workshops demonstrate that these issues remain a major concern on the continent. From this perspective it is vital that the framework has these issues at its heart. The experiences shared by women in the workshops reflect the reality that women face disproportionately high levels of poverty and discrimination, and these inequalities lead to further marginalisation and vulnerability.

The post-2015 framework is an opportunity to strongly prioritise gender equality and women's empowerment, rightly putting it at the centre of efforts to build a better world. There are two fundamental ways in which this can be achieved:

- A standalone transformational gender goal. This goal will clearly signal the political commitment to gender equality and women's rights, and generate the resources necessary to achieve it. The goal should at a minimum address the issues outlined in the report above: sexual and gender-based violence; access to land, natural resources, credit, information and technology; promote women's leadership and participation; guarantee access to basic services including sexual and reproductive health services; and address unpaid and unrecognised care work. It should also be grounded in existing and already agreed human rights frameworks, including The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GENDER RESPONSIVE AND GENDER SENSITIVE POST 2015 AGENDA

- Mainstream gender across all goals. Each goal within the framework must also include gender-sensitive targets that recognise the specific issues and constraints faced by women in that area. All indicators for all goals should also be disaggregated by sex, and where data does not exist to do so the necessary resources to provide it should be committed.

These two actions are essential to addressing the issues raised by women in the workshops. However, participants outlined specific areas which they see as vital to addressing gender equality in their lives. These issues have been highlighted by the women, and the following are recommendations for how they should be addressed in the framework:

Violence against women and girls

- The framework must have a comprehensive set of targets on ending sexual and gender-based violence against women
- This must include specific targets on the social norms, behaviours and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women, including FGM and all other harmful traditional practices
- It must include targets that address the fact that current mechanisms to provide justice and support to women are inadequate, with explicit recognition of and targets for both public and customary institutions, as well as indicators measuring access to justice and the effectiveness of justice institutions
- It must have explicit targets and indicators related to SGBV suffered in conflict-affected and post-conflict states, which include indicators related to legal provisions, access to justice, support services and reparations and women's involvement in peace building processes

Access to and control over resources, including land, credit, energy and information technology

- There should be a provision to increase land tenure security and the recognition of land rights, with specific targets for women
- Targets that address investments in inputs, infrastructure, research, extension services specific to the needs of small-scale food production, the nature of which should be appropriate to local and national realities and the stated needs of small-scale producers, with specific indicators on access for women
- Targets for the reach of pro-poor financial institutions and financial instruments, both of which must be strictly defined, amongst women

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- Built into the framework should be the existence of natural resource thresholds, including those critical to African women, for example biodiversity, water, forests, and with specific indicators measuring women's access and control over their management
- Targets that measure the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities to climate change, with specific targets on adaptation finance, disaggregated by sex

Women's citizenship and leadership

- The framework must have explicit targets for women's representation, in terms of numbers and in terms of capacity for participating effectively in public institutions at national, regional and local level, as well as customary and community-based structures
- Gender inequality affects both men and women; working with men as partners to promote women's active participation in politics should be a key strategy for promoting women in decision-making
- Commitment to and targets for citizen-led monitoring and regulation of policies is essential, and this should be disaggregated by sex
- The framework must include an agreed measure, with targets, of how accountable institutions (global, regional, national and local) are to citizens, disaggregated by sex
- There should be targets addressing decision-making power at household-level and community level with a set of indicators aimed at gauging women's attitudes to how this has improved
- Support and encourage initiatives creating examples of good practice in the various areas of the decision-making process at various levels
- Gender-balanced policies aimed at balancing the professional and private roles of women and men

Access to basic services with an emphasis on reproductive health services

- The framework must commit to universal access to healthcare, with specific targets on the leading barriers in access, including affordability and lack of infrastructure. Targets on women's health and particularly reproductive health rights must include:
- Indicators aimed at reducing maternal mortality
- Indicators that measure the geographical availability of maternal care, with particular emphasis on vulnerable and remote groups
- Indicators to measure the quality of maternal health facilities, including trained staff
- The framework should deliver a goal on universal access to primary and secondary

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- education recognising and legally entrenching citizens right to education, with targets specific to women and girls
- Targets and indicators must also focus on attendance and completion rate when measuring access, with disaggregated data for women and girls
- National policies and programmes must be designed to attract and cater to women's needs for tertiary education
- Targets and indicators must focus on measuring gender parity at tertiary level

The recognition, redistribution and remuneration of women's unpaid care work

- The framework must have a target for reducing women's time spent in unpaid domestic work, with significant resources committed to provide the data to measure this
- Targets for increasing affordable childcare and community-care for the elderly and other dependents, with indicators measuring access
- Targets aimed at increasing investment in and access to labour-saving technologies in small-scale food production, disaggregated by sex



Farmer in Burundi, Credit: ACORD

CONCLUSION

Underlying the process of the citizen-driven workshops has been an emphasis on the importance of allowing women themselves to set the agenda and propose solutions. This is based on the principle that people should be the agents in their own development, and should be allowed to use their knowledge of their own experiences to influence how solutions are devised. The framework must be rooted in national and local contexts. This means the framework must mandate and empower national and local application of goals and indicators. The framework should mandate the creation of multi-stakeholder, participatory, empowered and country-led bodies to translate global goals into appropriate country targets and indicators, review existing national and local plans for social and economic development, and plan on how the targets will be mainstreamed into them. These bodies should privilege the role and voices of citizens, and grant them institutional authority in the bodies' decision-making processes. These institutions must have clear targets for the participation of and leadership by women.

Accountable governance must also be at the heart of the framework, which should clearly outline systems of accountability and how they will be enforced. The post-2015 framework should have clearly defined responsibilities for a number of different institutions, at global, regional, national and local level, as well as the private sector and civil society. Defining the roles and duties of these institutions is vital, as is building, empowering and mandating strong accountability mechanisms to ensure these responsibilities are adhered to, with specific focus on ensuring equitable representation of women in these institutions.

“An Africa that is accountable upholds and respects the rights of people regardless of their background. A continent with less maternal and infant mortality, quality and free education and positive sustainable developments”
(Participant from Marsabit, Kenya)

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