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Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender
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**Reports to the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender –
reporting and discussion: subprogramme 6 – gender equality and
women’s empowerment****Report on the activities of the Economic Commission
for Africa relating to subprogramme 6: gender equality
and women’s empowerment****I. Introduction**

1. The work of subprogramme 6, on gender equality and women’s empowerment, is undertaken by the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Section as part of international and regional commitments on gender equality. The commitments include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a special focus on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls); Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, with a special focus on aspiration 6 (on people-driven development for an Africa that relies on African people, especially women and young people, and protects children); and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

2. During the period from 2022 to 2023, subprogramme 6 was expected to enhance the capacity of members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): to estimate the financing needed to attain Goal 5; to integrate gender equality objectives into national planning processes and the budget; to use the African Gender and Development Index to design gender equality programmes and monitor and report on progress made on gender equality; to address gender inequality in economic and digital transformation; to harness the demographic dividend of gender equality; and to integrate gender perspectives into country-level sectoral policies. To ensure that these expected accomplishments were achieved, the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Section, in its work under the subprogramme, focused on conducting analytical and policy research while also providing technical advisory services to ECA members, engaging in policy dialogue, disseminating knowledge, developing capacity and forging strategic partnerships to deliver programmes of mutual interest.

3. The purpose of the present report is to highlight the key achievements of ECA through the subprogramme in 2022 and 2023. The challenges faced in implementing the work programme are also discussed, as are the lessons learned. Informed by the outcomes of previous sessions of the Committee on Social

* E/ECA/CSPPG/5/1.



Policy, Poverty and Gender and by lessons learned from the work implemented to date, the report also highlights the focus areas planned for 2024 and 2025.

II. Progress made in the implementation of activities

A. Costing of Sustainable Development Goal 5

4. The 2023 edition of *African Women's Report*, the focus of which is on the costing of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in Africa, has been finalized. The purpose of the report is to support ECA members by highlighting the financing required for measures to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, including by helping them to prioritize related budget allocations and fiscal policies. The report includes an analysis of how African countries estimate the financing needed to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5, with a focus on effective practices. The report also includes estimates of the financing needed between 2019 and 2030 for the five countries that are the focus of the report (Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa) to attain gender-related targets on education and on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights between 2019 and 2030. The report was reviewed by a group of experts at a meeting in June 2023.

5. The report is intended to build a strong case for ECA members to recommit and realign their development financing initiatives so that, in the context of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, they substantively address gender inequality. The countries in the report have explicitly indicated that they do not have the knowledge or technical capacity to undertake such an exercise. The experiences of the aforementioned five countries have shown the importance of integrating the Goals into national policies, laws and development plans and the need to have national and local institutions that plan, coordinate and monitor progress in implementing the Goals.

B. African Gender and Development Index

6. In response to the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, ECA finalized its revision of the African Gender and Development Index to align it with the gender-related indicators contained in the Sustainable Development Goals and with human rights principles. This involved the preparation of the 2021 technical note to assist ECA members with their national assessments. The technical note was reviewed at a meeting of representatives of ECA members in 2022 and at an expert group meeting in 2023.

7. The revised approach was implemented by Namibia and Seychelles in 2020 and is currently being implemented by Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe, with technical support from ECA. South Africa is adapting the tool to support the Commission for Gender Equality in monitoring the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide, 2020–2030. Lesotho and Zimbabwe are using a revised technical note on the African Gender and Development Index to ensure that they coordinate and implement the Index effectively. Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe will also receive support in using the Index as part of the 30-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which will be conducted in 2023 and 2024. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning is receiving support to include the Index in a module of its course on data analysis for social development.

C. Africa Gender Index

8. At a joint regional conference on gender statistics held in Nairobi in September 2022 (see section II.E), ECA launched the second Africa Gender Index in collaboration with the African Development Bank. The Index is a comprehensive comparative measure of gender inequality. One of its components indicates the progress that African countries have made in closing gender gaps based on social indicators, economic indicators and indicators on representation and empowerment. Data are also collected for indicators on the environment, climate change, information and communications technology, and areas specific to women. The draft index and report will be presented at the next regional conference, due to be held in Casablanca, Morocco, in November 2023. The final versions of the index and report are expected to be finalized by the end of 2023.

9. Through joint online regional workshops on the Africa Gender Index and the development of a central data repository, data improvement strategies and plans were developed to address gender gaps. Feedback from Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, among other countries, showed that additional capacity-building and support was needed to generate data for indicators not included in the data that were normally collected. The intercountry data validation that occurred on 23 and 24 February 2023 was attended by 88 participants.

D. Strengthening national gender monitoring and reporting systems

10. Since 2022, collaboration has taken place in the implementation of subprogramme 6 and subprogramme 4 (on data and statistics) to roll out a project to build capacity relating to gender statistics and monitoring systems in Burundi, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The project is being funded by the African Development Bank. The focus for subprogramme 6 is on supporting the four countries in designing and implementing participatory national gender monitoring and reporting systems to enable them to monitor their progress in achieving gender equality, integrate gender into their national development planning and meet their reporting obligations on gender equality commitments.

11. In each country, the project involves: an assessment of existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms for gender indicators to measure progress towards gender equality; the integration of gender into national development planning; the meeting of reporting obligations under global and regional human rights treaties; the set-up of a national coordinating mechanism formed of national stakeholders; the development of a national gender monitoring and reporting system; and the production of gender fact sheets and a gender status report. In Mozambique, the project contributed to the establishment of a gender statistics task force, co-chaired by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action and the National Institute of Statistics, with United Nations agencies and development partners steering the production of high-quality gender statistics in general and the monitoring and reporting of the progress made by Mozambique in meeting its gender equality commitments.

E. Africa regional gender statistics programme

12. Collaboration continues with subprogramme 4 (on data and statistics) and other international and regional organizations within the framework of the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics. As part of the programme, a joint conference on gender statistics in Africa was held in Nairobi from 26 to 30 September 2022.

The conference involved the African Development Bank, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The theme of the conference was “gender statistics imperatives for Africa”. It was attended by almost 120 policy analysts and gender statistics experts from line ministries, national statistical offices and civil society organizations in 40 African countries.

13. The conference provided a platform for a number of measures, including: to share the findings from the evaluation carried out during the second phase of the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics (2018–2021); to launch the second Africa Gender Index; to present the third phase (2022–2026), which was subsequently endorsed by the Statistical Commission for Africa at its meeting in Addis Ababa in October 2022; and to reconstitute the Africa Group on Gender Statistics. Other topics discussed included: progress towards attaining gender-related targets in the 2030 Agenda and gender-related goals in Agenda 2063; assessments of gender statistics systems across Africa for the period 2019–2022; global guidance to strengthen capacity in collecting, analysing and using data on violence against women and girls, including gender-related killing of women and girls; and initiatives around citizen-generated data. There was also a training session on the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators for Africa, an initiative that provides guidance on the prioritization of gender indicators to be collected in Africa.

F. Integrating gender into economic and digital transformation

14. Work is being carried out to address the gender digital divide and gender and development challenges by increasing the use of information and communications technology and digital technologies among women and by developing and producing digital content. A regional brief has been developed on leveraging digitalization to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment across Africa and was discussed at an expert group meeting held from 19 to 21 December 2022 in Addis Ababa. Participants also discussed opportunities to build a critical mass of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the associated challenges, with a particular focus on enhancing digital skills to address gender and development challenges.

15. A regional capacity development programme has been developed that is focused on enhancing digital skills among women and girls in such areas as cybersecurity; online safety and netiquette; digital content creation for women in arts and culture; digital marketing; online outreach and advocacy; e-commerce, trade and digital finance; and space science and remote sensing. Based upon requests from ECA members, technical assistance missions were undertaken in Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Tunisia to enhance their capacity to address the gender-related digital divide and positively reimagine a gender perspective in the economic and digital transformation of African countries as part of the regional capacity development programme. The technical assistance provided a model for national curricula on digital technical and vocational education and training programmes for women, girls and young people. It also strengthened coordination among ministries responsible for gender, science, technology and innovation, and education and training, and it established national networks of women and young people in digital technical and vocational education and training to strengthen organization, mobilization and resourcing in the five countries.

G. Demographic dividend and gender

16. In collaboration with subprogramme 9 (on social development) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, ECA finalized the implementation of a project under the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account on the gender dimension of the demographic dividend and entry points for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific region. The aim of the project was to improve the capacity of countries to develop policies that will better harness demographic dynamics to improve health care, education and job creation outcomes, with a focus on gender equality. This was achieved through the development of various knowledge products, including: situation analysis reports that highlighted issues and policy gaps in gender mainstreaming efforts carried out as part of country-level interventions to harness the demographic dividend through education, health, employment and governance; two operational manuals that provided guidelines and support for efforts to integrate the demographic dividend and gender equality into country-level plans and sectoral policies; and the populating of a gender demographic dividend index, with indicators to measure, monitor and report on progress made in the gender dimension of harnessing the demographic dividend.

17. A total of 156 policymakers attended national training workshops in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia on how to understand demographic dynamics, how to harness its dividends and how to measure gender and demographic dynamics using the index.

18. The interventions have led to the following improvements:

(a) South Africa has populated the index twice and Nigeria once, providing a baseline for measuring the gender and demographic dividend situation in the two countries;

(b) Nigeria has revised its population policy, which has a specific focus on gender perspectives, education and skills development;

(c) Zambia has established a steering committee that has integrated gender and demographic dividend-related considerations into the country's Eighth National Development Plan: 2022–2026;

(d) Ghana has decided to hand over coordination of demographic dividend-related activities to its National Population Council and its National Development Planning Commission to centralize related efforts and establish a national index;

(e) Uganda has set up a steering committee that is carrying out a harmonization exercise to evaluate the various demographic dividend tools to ensure that gender perspectives have been considered.

H. Women's participation in political and public life

19. A report issued on women's leadership contains a discussion of the power of women's leadership in Africa, with emphasis on the opportunities and challenges in relation to transformative leadership and the political context. The systemic, emerging and ongoing challenges faced by women are presented in the report, and it is noted that the challenges are structural, which contributes to ongoing organizational and institutional inequality. It is also noted that intertwined social and cultural barriers, including stereotypes, the gender division of labour and socialization in the private and public sector, prevent women from being proportionately represented in significant leadership positions in the social, economic and political sectors, which limits women's rights, voice,

agency and substantive influence and power, thus constraining the opportunities of women to take on transformative leadership roles. Effective mechanisms for creating opportunities and enabling an environment for women's access and participation in leadership and decision-making are presented. The mechanisms include laws, regulations, policy tools, educational attainment, role modelling, networking and the acquisition of skills for private and public sector leadership.

I. Gender and migration

20. Implementation of the project “International migration in Africa: shaping a positive narrative and removing barriers to mobility” began in 2023 and will end in September 2024. Financed by the Government of Italy, the project is being implemented in collaboration with subprogramme 9 (on social development) and the African Union Commission.

21. For result area 1, on promoting the economic empowerment of migrant women by identifying and supporting their economic activities, migrant women are supported in three countries: Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The work is enhancing the capacity of women to address human rights-related violations as a result of migration and internal displacement issues affecting their lives. The main activities under result area 1 are: studies to determine the number of domestic workers who are returning, especially from the Arab States, and their economic and business needs; developing the capacity of former domestic workers to run businesses and enterprises; schemes to help migrant women to work together and strengthen their entrepreneurial and business skills; and the development of a programme to provide returning migrant women with seed money to support their business ideas.

J. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work programme of the Economic Commission for Africa

22. A core focus of the subprogramme is to mainstream a gender perspective in the work of ECA, which also facilitates the mainstreaming of a gender dimension in other ECA subprogrammes by providing support to gender focal persons in divisions and subregional offices and at the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning. In line with the Commission's draft gender policy for the period 2022–2026, an accompanying strategic plan spells out clear roles and responsibilities and establishes targets and timelines for the implementation of key aspects of the policy.

23. Performance review reports are produced annually for the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to highlight the performance of ECA on gender equality. The reports provide a synthesis of how planning, policy initiatives and financial arrangements have been aligned with targets under Goal 5 to improve results on gender equality and women's empowerment.

K. Pre-session consultations of the Commission on the Status of Women with African countries

24. Under the leadership of the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate of the African Union Commission and in partnership with UN-Women, ECA convened the expert and ministerial segments of the consultations held with African countries prior to the sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in February and November 2022, respectively. The theme of the sixty-sixth session was “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change,

environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”. The African common position adopted by the ministerial segment called upon country-level, regional and global stakeholders to adopt a number of measures, including: to strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and government institutions to collect, analyse, disseminate and use disaggregated data to conduct gender analysis on climate change, environmental risk reduction and disaster risk reduction; to provide capacity and technical support at the regional and country levels to ensure that action plans on climate change and disaster risk reduction were gender-responsive and transformative; and to strengthen intergovernmental coordination mechanisms to foster joint strategies by gender machineries and environment ministries.

25. The theme of the sixty-seventh session was “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. The African common position adopted as part of the outcome contained recommendations on access to digital tools, the Internet, and content that was relevant to women and girls; the availability of data to support gender-responsive innovation; human and institutional capacity to support technological and innovation for women and girls; digital safety for women and children; and regional digital cooperation. The regional brief prepared under subprogramme 6 (see section II.F) informed the proceedings and the outcome statement.

III. Partnerships

26. Several partnerships have been established with United Nations agencies and regional institutions.

A. African Union Commission

27. ECA has cooperated closely with the African Union Commission and supported it through two African Union divisions: the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate and the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. Of particular note is the partnership of ECA with UN-Women in organizing consultations with African countries as part of preparations for the sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2022 and 2023. Also in partnership with UN-Women, ECA supports the Commission in producing the African Union Gender Scorecard.

B. United Nations

1. United Nations Population Fund

28. ECA partnered with the United Nations Population Fund to convene national workshops in Ghana as part of a project under the eleventh tranche of the United Nations Development Account. It also provided support to the African regional programme of the Spotlight Initiative, working closely with UN-Women, with a view to eliminating violence against women and girls.

2. United Nations Children’s Fund

29. ECA partnered with the United Nations Children’s Fund on the topic of the demographic dividend to convene national workshops in Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia as part of the United Nations Development Account project mentioned above.

3. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

30. ECA partnered with UN-Women for the meetings of African ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs that were held in preparation for the sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and to coordinate and support the regional 30-year review process of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. ECA also works closely with UN-Women in the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics, along with the African Development Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century.

4. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

31. Under subprogrammes 6 and 9, ECA worked with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to jointly deliver a project to harness demographic dividends for gender equality and women's empowerment (see section II.G). The project is implemented in certain ECA countries and directly targets the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, 8 and 10.

C. African Development Bank

32. ECA is partnering with the African Development Bank to produce the second Africa Gender Index, which is scheduled to be launched by the end of 2023. The role of ECA is to support the Bank on a capacity-building project for gender statistics and monitoring systems and the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics.

IV. Challenges and lessons learned

A. Challenges

1. Unavailability of accurate and timely data

33. The paucity of data remains a challenge. More data are required for deeper analysis and insights into pertinent issues on gender equality in Africa. The partnership with the African Centre for Statistics has therefore been strengthened to help ensure the timely provision of data.

2. Delayed feedback from members

34. Ongoing delays in obtaining timely responses from ECA members remain a challenge, and staff shortages at ECA make it difficult to follow-up effectively in that regard. Processes like the regional reviews under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are constantly being delayed because ECA members' responses and action, which are critical to the processes, are too slow.

B. Lessons learned

35. The following lessons have been learned:

(a) The use of tools and knowledge products of the subprogramme is essential to inform hands-on, in-country capacity-building and tailored advisory services for ECA members so that policies produce transformative results;

(b) Strategic partnerships with clear roles for each partner are important to leverage delivery of the work carried out through the subprogramme;

(c) Judicious use of online delivery approaches is important to expand the reach of subprogrammes and make the support that they provide to ECA members more effective;

(d) Continued investment is needed in country- and local-level data collection to generate timely, well-disaggregated data, including data collected through the capacity-building project for gender statistics and monitoring systems and the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics.

V. Activities planned for 2024 and 2025

36. In 2024 and 2025, the work carried out under the subprogramme will improve gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa by accelerating the pace at which ECA members implement and report on their global and regional gender-related commitments. It will also enhance the implementation of policies and programmes for the empowerment of women and girls by members. The steps that will be taken will include policy research and technical advisory services and the convening of policymakers and experts to increase knowledge, develop capacity and stimulate discussion on the mainstreaming of gender in development policies and programmes. The work will help ECA members to make progress towards achieving Goal 5. The work is also expected to have a positive impact, both directly and indirectly, on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13 and 16.

A. Mainstreaming gender into sectoral policies

37. As part of the ongoing work to assist ECA members in mainstreaming gender into their sectoral policies, in line with the mandate of the subprogramme, a Commission-wide gender mainstreaming report will be prepared on the work by ECA to support gender-sensitive sectoral policies. Support will also be provided to mainstream gender in the deliverables of the other ECA subprogrammes, in line with the gender strategy of ECA. Policy research, technical advisory services and other services recommended by the Committee at its fifth session will be carried out in selected areas, including the effects of extreme weather patterns and natural disasters on women and girls, to inform gender-sensitive policy interventions and financing for climate resilience that considers the needs of women and girls.

B. Monitoring global and regional commitments on gender equality

38. As requested at the most recent meeting of the Committee, and building on the results of the African Gender and Development Index, ECA members will continue to receive technical support with measuring their progress and reporting on the status of their national programmes and policies related to their global and regional commitments. Furthermore, the African Gender and Development Index will be rolled out in the countries that have not yet implemented it, with the aim of institutionalizing the African Gender and Development Index in national statistical systems. In collaboration with the African Development Bank, ECA will finalize and disseminate the results of the second Africa Gender Index, which will provide a good indication of the extent to which the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic reversed the gender equality gains achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Building on the results of the exercise that began in 2021 to assess the financing needed to achieve Goal 5, ECA will carry out further analysis to support its members' efforts to better finance gender equality and to strengthen planning and monitoring processes to improve their performance in achieving gender equality. ECA will also coordinate the 30-year review process of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as part of this workstream.

C. Integrating gender into economic and digital transformation

39. Through the subprogramme, ECA members will continue to receive technical assistance in building capacity to craft policies and programmes on innovation and technological change in the digital age that are designed to narrow the gender digital divide. In addition, support will be provided to members in the roll-out of a regional programme to improve the skills of women and girls in cybersecurity; online safety and netiquette; digital content creation; digital marketing; online outreach and advocacy; e-commerce, trade and digital finance; and space science and remote sensing.

VI. Conclusion

40. In line with the current strategic orientation of the Commission, the work carried out under subprogramme 6 will focus on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa and on supporting ECA members. The work is part of international and regional commitments on gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the continent-wide initiative on gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2024 and 2025, ECA will build on previous focus areas, supporting its members with integrating gender into sectoral policies and monitoring global and regional commitments on gender equality. Special emphasis will be placed on helping members to identify bottlenecks that are causing gender gaps to persist, to prioritize policy interventions to close the gaps, and to integrate gender into national planning and public-finance processes through more effective use of the African Gender and Development Index. Emphasis will also be placed on digital transformation under the African Union strategy on digital transformation.
