



# HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE TO MEET THE CONTINENT'S GROWING DEMAND FOR FOOD

Accelerating gender outcomes in the Maputo Protocol, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme framework, and the Generation Equality Forum

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While there have been some efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – these efforts have fallen short of the targets. The Covid-19 pandemic and increased conflict in Africa and Ukraine have further hindered progress, particularly on the African continent. Due to these and other current events, we have observed an upsurge in challenges for women’s equality, namely issues related to job creation, sexual and reproductive health, and the unpaid care workload, as well as an increase in direct violence against women. To achieve SDG 5 and other SDGs, we must start addressing these challenges immediately and effectively.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

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# SUMMARY

## **THE WORLD IS FAR FROM TARGET IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Of the 18 indicators set for Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on Gender Equality, there's only one that is close to target.<sup>1</sup> It has been estimated that without radical reform it would take up to 286 years to achieve some of the objectives of SDG 5.<sup>2</sup> Women continue to face systemic and structural gendered barriers engrained in unfavourable patriarchal and chauvinistic norms. This inequality has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising level of conflicts (in Africa as well as in Ukraine, for example<sup>3</sup>).

In 2022, the latest edition of Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot<sup>4</sup> unequivocally highlighted the disproportionate impacts that the pandemic has had on women and girls. It noted an upsurge in challenges in job creation and livelihood sustenance, sexual and reproductive health, and growth of the unpaid care workload. Conspicuously, the pandemic has intensified the occurrence of direct violence on women, with domestic and intimate partner violence particularly magnified.<sup>5</sup>

## **THE STRAIN OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES THREATENS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PAN-AFRICAN GENDER OUTCOMES**

Agriculture is the most important sector of the African economy, accounting for about 35% of the continent's gross domestic product and providing the livelihood of more than 50% of the continent's population.<sup>6</sup> The world is off track in achieving the SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, and the distance to reaching the target is growing wider each year as global hunger increases.<sup>7</sup> The current geopolitical landscape and climatic events are gravely impacting African continent's food system. Women engaged in agriculture have particularly borne the brunt of systemic challenges postulated by an unfavourable care economy. This is largely through the provision of direct care support to dependents; characterized by a surge of common domestic tasks as well as tasks driven by rural placement and firewood and water collection.<sup>8</sup> The care workload currently borne disproportionately by women must be recognized, redistributed, and reduced. Otherwise, the agriculture sector, which is heavily dependent on women small-scale farmers, is at risk.

An estimated 62% of women in Africa operate in agriculture value chains.<sup>9</sup> As of 2021, Africa exported to the world upwards of US\$40bn worth of food,<sup>10</sup> including nuts, fruits and vegetables to Asia, North America, Europe, and the Middle East. Africa is the leading supplier of cocoa; Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana account for more than two-thirds of the world's supply of cocoa beans.<sup>11</sup> This places African women farmers and agricultural workers at the frontline in these value chains, underscoring the need for deliberate and strategic investment in them.

On 11 July 2023, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa<sup>12</sup> (the Maputo Protocol), marked its 20th anniversary. Under Article 13, the Protocol envisions that African women's economic and social rights shall be protected legislatively.<sup>13</sup> This is through

(among others) gendered investments in livelihoods, social protection measures and fair tax systems. Article 15 of the Protocol further envisions that African women shall have access to nutritious and adequate food, access to clean drinking water and fuel sources, and an adequacy of storage and supply systems for food security.<sup>14</sup> Considering the socio-political challenges in the world, largely marked by the unpredictability of COVID-19 and the Ukraine crisis, this vision is at risk, and Africa suffers from direct and indirect impacts on trade and food systems. The direct impacts are characterized by spikes in food and fuel prices, and increased insecurity and macroeconomic instability. Indirectly, the continent has experienced challenges with imported inflation and strenuous energy transition.<sup>15</sup>

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) serves as a policy framework that guides African countries in developing their agricultural strategies and investment plans, with a focus on national ownership and tailoring approaches to specific needs and priorities.

Commitment 4 of CAADP aims at poverty reduction through agriculture and envisions the provision of preferential entry and participation in agribusiness for women and youth as a concrete strategy.<sup>16</sup> One of the challenges that African women face in value chain access and advancement is access to productive assets; this is further compounded by inadequate access to finance and credit. Comparatively, these two challenges postulate a big hurdle for the achievement of CAADP's objectives.

## **AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST COMMIT TO SOLVING NEW AGE THEMATIC CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAINS**

In comparison to their global counterparts, women in Africa have little control over societal norms that govern resource use.<sup>17</sup> This results in restrictive practices and laws that determine which crops are suitable for women and which jobs are appropriate for women. Consequently, their earning potential within agricultural value chains, the labour market and enterprise is curtailed.

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF)<sup>18</sup> serves as the landmark effort for the world's achievement of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The GEF launched a globally accepted framework to advance gender equality and accelerate progress towards SDG 5 and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It outlines specific areas of focus and actions required to achieve gender equality and serves as a roadmap, guiding countries, organizations, and stakeholders in their efforts to address key gender equality issues and promote women's rights. The GEF promotes coherence in gender equality priorities by bringing together various actors and stakeholders to focus on specific areas of action. This collaboration facilitates the exchange of best practices, experiences, and joint initiatives, enhancing the effectiveness of gender equality efforts.

In part, the forum expounds on integral thematic issues to women in agriculture – climate justice, economic justice and rights and feminist movements, as well as technological innovation. Conspicuously, out of 55 African governments, only 16 of them have submitted commitments to the six action coalitions of the GEF.<sup>19</sup> This jeopardizes in-country strategy and external coordination geared at tackling new-age challenges for African women in different sectors. To ensure that women in agriculture benefit from the vision of the Maputo Protocol, the CAADP framework and the GEF Commitments submitted by 31 African countries, African governments must leverage opportunities postulated through development and climate finance mechanisms.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure gender equality and due support for women, this briefing paper makes the following recommendations:

1. African governments should leverage climate financing to achieve gender-responsive agricultural resilience.
2. African governments must invest in a coordinated push for feminist official development assistance (ODA) to align with their in-country gender priorities. This will benefit, among other integral sectors, agriculture.
3. African governments must enable women's rights organizations to be the catalysts and agents for localization support to achieve their pan-African gender priorities.



# 1. AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS SHOULD LEVERAGE CLIMATE FINANCING TO ACHIEVE GENDER-RESPONSIVE AGRICULTURAL RESILIENCE

African women bear the brunt of the climate crisis; their ability to appropriately prepare for and respond to the crisis has been curtailed. Africa is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods, and desertification. Communities largely depend on nature for their livelihoods. Many depend on farming or fishing – activities that are particularly vulnerable to more extreme and erratic weather. The extreme level of poverty in the region makes it difficult for communities and governments to respond to and overcome the climate crisis. With the frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards increasing, the ability of people living in poverty to withstand shocks is gradually being eroded. Each disaster is leading them in a downward spiral of deeper poverty, hunger, and displacement.

The impacts of climate-related disasters disproportionately affect women and girls. Cultural and social norms increase the vulnerability of women to climate shocks. Women in Africa make up over 40% of the agriculture labour force, but they do not have the same rights to land or access to credit, insurance or government support as men, making it harder to adapt or rebuild their lives and livelihoods after a disaster.<sup>20</sup> Notably, disaster risk and mitigation strategies tend to approach populations as a whole, leaving out the gendered differences and therefore impacts that may come of that disaster.<sup>21</sup>

During climate-fuelled extreme weather events, women and girls are at increased risk of gender-based violence and are less likely to receive food, goods, and relief services. They are more likely to experience a loss of livelihood compared with men. These events also contribute to higher rates of socio-economic insecurity, physical vulnerability and higher death rates for women and children. Yet, women remain excluded from essential decision-making that affects their livelihoods and are usually less likely to be involved in climate action planning, both for mitigation and adaptation. As a result, they are less likely to benefit, often to the detriment of the action's effectiveness.<sup>22</sup>

While Africa increasingly grows alive to the nexus between climate change and agriculture, there is a need to pay particular attention to the intersectional impacts of climate change and gender.<sup>23</sup> This challenge is characterized by gender-segregated labour markets; women occupying low-earning and often insecure livelihoods; and reliance on environmental resources and highly climate-sensitive livelihood sectors.

# THE CURRENT FLOW OF CLIMATE FINANCING TO AFRICA DOES NOT MEET ITS ADAPTIVE NEEDS, PARTICULARLY FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

According to the current accounting and reporting practices followed by climate finance contributors, the goal set by developed countries to deliver US\$100bn a year into climate finance for 2020 was not achieved. The total climate finance was reported as US\$83.3bn in 2020. Furthermore, only US\$68.3bn was captured as public finance; US\$1.9bn was captured as export credit finance, and US\$13.1bn was reported as mobilized private finance.<sup>24</sup> The large amount of the public climate finance is given out as loans, over 70%, and the non-concessional instruments should not even be counted towards UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate finance obligations. Oxfam estimates that the real value of climate finance provided to poor countries in 2020 to be at most US\$24.5bn, a third of what donor countries have said that they have contributed. Africa, for instance, requires US\$250bn per year between 2020 to 2030 to enact its Nationally Determined Contributions.<sup>25</sup> In 2020, only US\$30bn, 12% of the needed amount, flowed into Africa.<sup>26</sup> The limited availability of funding as well as the degree of non-concessional in accessing finance compete with other development priorities in African countries and thus pose barriers to scaling up climate action in Africa.

The average annual projected cost for adaptation in the five topmost priority sectors in Africa up to 2020 were as follows: US\$0.4bn for agriculture, US\$0.3bn for water, US\$0.2bn for health, US\$0.2bn for energy, and US\$0.2bn for biodiversity and ecosystems. The average annual cost of adaptation in these priority sectors will need to increase by six to ten times by 2030 and twelve to twenty-two times by 2050 to fill existing gaps.<sup>27</sup>

## TO ACHIEVE GENDER-RESPONSIVE AGRICULTURAL RESILIENCE, AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST LEVERAGE THE ADAPTATION FUND AND THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUITY

The Adaptation Fund<sup>28</sup> finances developing countries to respond to climate change. These initiatives are based on the country's needs, priorities, and views. In cognizance of the role that gender equality plays in equitable adaptation, the fund has committed to promote equitable actions and policies.<sup>29</sup> In 2022, ahead of the International Women's Day, the Fund released a study called Intersectional Approaches to Gender-Mainstreaming in Adaptation-Relevant Interventions.<sup>30</sup> The study explored the applicability of intersectionality as an analytical tool aimed at understanding nuanced vulnerability from intersectional challenges and further, the development of more responsive intervention models.

Analysis shows that the amount of adaptation financing flowing into Africa remains insufficient to meet its adaptation needs. A conservative estimate shows that the continent needs at the minimum US\$60bn a year, but as of 2020 only 18% of the need was met through international climate finance.<sup>31</sup> Comparatively, women, particularly women in agriculture, who are in dire need of adaptation support,

will continue to shoulder sectoral challenges because of inadequate funding.<sup>32</sup> This, in part, impacts the pathway to the achievement of the outcomes of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol). The crisis particularly poses a significant threat to the achievement of the Protocol's Economic and Social Welfare Rights pillar.

The Adaptation Fund has made strides to increase gender response in adaptation funding. In 2016, the Fund adopted a gender policy and action plan building on requisitions for mandatory gender considerations in adaptation funding.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, its board requires proposals to demonstrate how these gender considerations are included in project planning and stakeholder considerations.<sup>34</sup> While the Fund applies gender assessment and integration vulnerability profiling in projects at their onset, this process is not systematically employed throughout a project's lifeline. This limits tactful application of gender-responsive approaches to various groups and demographics.<sup>35</sup>

In cognizance of the varying adaptation constraints that women farmers face in Africa, governments must invest in gender-sensitive vulnerability assessment in the agricultural sector. This would allow for better understanding of challenges postulated by limited access to productive natural resources and financial sources, and by systemic exclusion from policy environments.<sup>36</sup>

While international and continental policy processes are crucial for aligning core development objectives and goals, there is often a disconnect between the levels of commitment and implementation at national or local levels. Governments inevitably have many concurrent and often conflicting commitments.<sup>37</sup> African governments can leverage the available resources under the Adaptation Fund to align with the goals of CAADP. Specifically, African governments can focus on the achievement of the indicators under Level 2 of the CAADP Results Framework,<sup>38</sup> which emphasize agricultural transformation and sustained inclusive growth, to ensure that access to adaptation goods and services is enhanced by domestic trade policy. This is through the streamlining of policy instruments such as subsidies and tariffs to climate-resilient seeds for ease of availability and accessibility. While this would benefit all players in the agriculture value chain, it would particularly benefit small-scale women farmers who struggle with access to financing.

Additionally, African governments must recognize the role that systemic and institutionally imposed inequality plays in jeopardizing continental and in-country gender outcomes envisioned in the Maputo Protocol. Article 2 of the Protocol notes that "States Parties shall combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures."<sup>39</sup> Institutions such as banks, pension funds, international financial institutions and national development banks are the housing mechanisms for adaptation financing. In this regard, governments must entrench a commitment from these institutions to adopt gender-lens investments. This would result in increased flow of adaptation financing to women-owned and women-led institutions, uptake of gender-credit scoring models and application of an intersectional gender lens to climate financing models.

Specifically, with focus on Results Area 2.4<sup>40</sup> of CAADP, which measures increased resilience of livelihoods and improved management of risks in the agriculture sector, African governments can utilize the Adaptation Fund to implement projects and initiatives that enhance the resilience of agricultural livelihoods and improve risk management in the agriculture sector. The Fund should also ensure direct access and management of climate finance by local communities, especially women organizations, including those representing the interests of smallholder farmers. The Fund can also help to improve management of natural resources for sustainable agriculture, as highlighted by Results Area 2.5.<sup>41</sup> Cultural norms dictating the interaction and ownership of women to natural resources in African communities limit their ability to meet their full production potential.



Governments can enhance the sustainability and long-term productivity of their agricultural systems through funding projects and programmes that promote gender outcomes in sustainable land and water management practices, conservation agriculture, agroforestry and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. African governments could finance adaptation and their associated technologies, such as solar-powered water supply to agricultural investments, building dams for rainwater harvesting, tree planting and biogas production.

The Green Climate Fund is mandated with the financing of low-carbon, climate-resilient developing pathways in developing countries.<sup>42</sup> The Fund, through its Gender Policy Action Plan of 2015, aims to (among others), ensure equal contribution and benefit from the Fund's resources for women and men and assess, mitigate and address risks postulated to women and men by mitigation and adaptation activities.<sup>43</sup> If Africa is going to meet the internal and external growing demand for food, the full potential of Africa women in agriculture must be harnessed. To achieve the Malabo commitments upon which the CAADP is anchored, addressing issues that affect production for women farmers such as reliance on rain-fed agriculture and lack of decision-making control over productive assets is integral.

## **AFRICAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE REQUIRE SUPPORT BEYOND ADAPTATION: AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST LEVERAGE THE LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND TO STRENGTHEN GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES**

As representatives from 24 countries across the world work to get the Loss and Damage Fund off the ground,<sup>44</sup> Africa must plead its case for its demographics who are growing increasingly vulnerable to the climate crisis. With the existent gaps in adaptation financing, the Loss and Damage Fund presents an additional prospect to address the widening magnitude of loss and damage. The Fund must leverage lessons from the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund to cover existent financing gaps; this includes gaps in applying gender-responsive approaches to the crisis.

Noting the postulations of Article 19 of the Protocol that call for the protection and promotion of sustainable development for African women and girls, Article 19 further prescribes that national development encompass gender perspectives for the achievement of sustainability.<sup>45</sup> The occurrence of climate-related disasters exacerbates and threatens to erode progress made on gender equity.<sup>46</sup> For instance, the occurrence of a disaster curtails women's access to land and other assets.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, systemic exclusion from financial support schemes results in exacerbation of discriminatory practices as well as increased indebtedness.

To leverage the efficacy of the Loss and Damage Fund in meeting the vision of sustainable development as enshrined in the Protocol, African governments must intensify collection of gender-disaggregated data in climate efforts. It is especially integral that, in a bid to ensure that African women benefit from the fund, loss and damage-related data accurately capture the magnitude of damage that plagues this demographic across sectors. Further, countries must ensure that

national-level systems are gender responsive in their distribution of loss and damage financing. This will ensure that women, particularly those in agriculture, are prioritized.

## **2. AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST INVEST IN A COORDINATED PUSH FOR FEMINIST OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) TO ALIGN WITH THEIR IN-COUNTRY GENDER PRIORITIES. THIS WILL BENEFIT, AMONG OTHER INTEGRAL SECTORS, AGRICULTURE**

### **INVESTMENT CUTS TO THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR HAVE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED WOMEN**

In 2003, African governments made a political commitment to allocate at least 10% of their national budget to food and agriculture, under the CAADP. Two decades later, very few countries have achieved the target. Five countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali and Niger) have consistently achieved the target from 1980 to 2020, while Benin, Mozambique, Senegal and Sierra Leone have achieved the target after the pledge was made. Nevertheless, the share of agriculture to total government expenditure for the continent has persistently declined over time, from about 7% per year on average in the 1980s to less than 3% per year on average in the last decade.<sup>48</sup> Expenditure has further declined during the COVID-19 pandemic as many African governments have redirected their resources and budgets towards addressing the immediate health and economic impacts of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has also aggravated Africa's performance against key indicators in the CAADP, further threatening progress towards meeting the commitments made in the Malabo Declaration.<sup>49</sup>

Despite bearing a heavier responsibility in the sector, women and girls have disproportionately been affected by reduced investments to the consistently underfunded agriculture sector in Africa. This reduction in investment has exacerbated challenges with lack of access to resources, modern farming and agricultural technologies; reduced training and capacity-building opportunities; and limited social protection and safety net programmes.<sup>50</sup> This ultimately has spin-off effects on their violence risk and access to markets and value chains, and further increases their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, setting back progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the agricultural sector. Applying a feminist lens to investment in the sector is

essential to accurately identify and address the strategic needs of women and girls by providing gender-smart solutions that consider their specific needs, rights and interests.<sup>51</sup> Particularly, ODA resources and programmes can be targeted to facilitate a significant investment in agriculture that ensures gender equality and women empowerment in the sector.

## THE COMMITMENT OF DONORS TO AFRICA FOR GENDER EQUALITY IS NOT ACHIEVING INTENDED OUTCOMES

In recent years, development donors have been strengthening their commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment: 55% of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members have gender strategies in place.<sup>52</sup> These strategies focus on integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of development cooperation, recognizing that gender equality is crucial for achieving sustainable development. In addition, countries like Sweden, Canada, France, Spain, Luxembourg and Germany have further adopted feminist foreign policies (FFP) and/or feminist development policies.<sup>53</sup> As of 2022, countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia had made strides towards constituting such a policy.<sup>54</sup> However, whereas several OECD countries have adopted such policies, in 2021, only 44% of ODA flows was focused on gender equality. The share of total bilateral aid funds principally earmarked for gender equality in the year was only 4%.<sup>55</sup> To put it into perspective, Germany and France, the two top donors by volume among countries with a FFP, have very low shares of commitments marked as principal and aid commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions.<sup>56</sup> According to a recent FAO study, it is projects that focus on the empowerment of women (stand-alone gender justice) that have the most positive development impacts, as opposed to projects that focus on gender mainstreaming.<sup>57</sup>

Africa has been reported to receive close to a third of the total ODA towards gender equality, with the funding towards gender equality and women's empowerment as the principal objective amounting to US\$2.3bn on average per year in the period 2020–21. This amount is more than what any other region receives and represents 13% of total ODA for gender equality in the region – exceeding the global average of 4%.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, the continent still lags behind other regions on progress towards gender equality in society.<sup>59</sup> Deep-rooted structural gender barriers continue to prevail because of fragmented and incoherent approaches by donor partners such as the project approach for agriculture.<sup>60</sup>

DAC members have also committed some of their ODA to support women's rights organizations and movements, recognizing such organizations to be essential development actors for gender equality. Yet, out of the US\$57.4bn provided in 2020–21 in ODA, only US\$665m was allocated to them, representing less than 2% of total ODA allocations.<sup>61</sup> And while it was reported that the main receiving partners for ODA to support women's rights organizations and movements were all African countries: Morocco (US\$32m on average per year), Ethiopia (US\$26m) and Rwanda (US\$16m), the lack of adequate resources directed to these organizations does not reflect the DAC members' stated commitment to gender equality.<sup>62</sup>

A further review of ODA allocations to agriculture reported that funding to the agricultural sector totalled US\$9.9bn, with Germany and France being the largest donors in absolute terms. However, an analysis of how much of this allocation goes towards gender equality and women's empowerment showed that only US\$0.3bn was allocated to the agriculture and rural development sector with the

principal focus on gender equality and women economic empowerment.<sup>63</sup> These countries still have a long way to go to truly ensure that their political commitment to integrate feminist approaches across all elements of their work is accompanied by an increase in the allocation of resources to support organizations and programmes that advance gender equality.

If this kind of divergence persists, it could hinder progress in achieving the pan-Africa gender outcome as envisioned in the Maputo Protocol and the commitments made at the Generation Equality Forum. It could further reverse efforts made towards addressing structural inequalities, particularly in the context of gender-responsive agricultural development. It is important for African governments to actively engage in dialogue, advocacy and collaboration with donor countries and other stakeholders to push for stronger alignment of feminist ODA. African countries must ensure that their gender equality priorities have coherence by ensuring that the vision of the Protocol, the GEF and the gendered prescriptions of the CAADP are integrated into national-level gender plans. Additionally, the African Union must call for increased ratification of the Protocol by the 12 member states who have not ratified.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the continent's gender priorities would be solidified by an increased commitment to the GEF, the voice of 24 African countries, which is conspicuously missing.<sup>65</sup>

## **ALIGNING FEMINIST ODA TO THE GENDER-SMART SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICA ENVISIONED IN THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL, THE CAADP FRAMEWORK AND THE GENERATION EQUALITY ACTION AGENDA**

It is worth noting that African countries and organizations have made significant commitments to the GEF. Out of the 2,868 commitments made in the GEF, 838 commitments have been by commitment makers in sub-Saharan Africa. Among the six action coalitions under the GEF,<sup>66</sup> these commitment makers prioritised gender-based violence (GBV) and economic justice and rights, with 292 and 162 commitments being made respectively.<sup>67</sup> African countries should champion the GEF and encourage development donors to strengthen their commitment to gender equality, particularly in Africa. Having development donors integrate commitments made by African countries in the GEF into their policies and frameworks reinforces gender-responsive budgeting practices in donor countries and helps ensure that budget decisions and resource allocations are guided by a gender perspective and have a measurable impact on the lives of women and girls.

Most commitments made by African governments under GEF are towards addressing GBV, with 60 government commitments out of a total 111 government commitments being made towards GBV. The federal government of Nigeria made the highest number of commitments by an African government towards GBV, with 19 commitments out of a total 60 government commitments.<sup>68</sup> This is reflective of the fact that GBV remains a significant barrier to affirming women's and girls' rights. The impact of GBV is exacerbated particularly in the agricultural sector and for women living in rural areas, as food insecurity has been associated with violence against women and girls. Contrariwise, the experience of GBV can also heighten food insecurity.<sup>69</sup> Notably, the Maputo Protocol, under Article 4, encourages the adoption of socio-economic, legislative and administrative actions to prevent and address the incident of GBV.<sup>70</sup> To facilitate targeted interventions that address this specific challenge faced by women in agriculture, African governments need to make efforts towards in-country policy action at the nexus of GBV and agricultural enterprises.

## **IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S VOICES IN DECISION-MAKING**

Notably, Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol calls for the participation of women in political and decision-making processes, while Article 13 calls for advancing the economic empowerment and welfare rights of women.<sup>71</sup> As of 2022, an analysis of women's participation and inclusion in local government indicated that Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 25% of women's participation within local deliberative bodies.<sup>72</sup> This is the second-lowest figure; with Western Asia and Northern Africa accounting for a combined 18%.<sup>73</sup> Ensuring that women's voices are heard in political processes and decision-making spaces is crucial for women's economic empowerment, and in particular agriculture. It shapes resource-allocation decisions to enhance women's access to productive assets and financial resources. For instance, agriculture uses up to 80% of the continent's water resources. Sound resource management is crucial. Women have a unique position to influence successful water resource management given that it has major implications on their paid and unpaid care work.<sup>74</sup> This case shows that there is a nexus between having women's voice in political and decision-making spaces and sustainable development. This confers an urgent need to advance women's participation to better understand the social dimensions that affect the resource management practices in Africa. In cognisance of the role that women's political participation at all levels of government plays in their agricultural advancement, African countries must call for increased funding to this dimension.

In the same breath, the CAADP, which serves as a policy framework that guides countries in developing their agricultural strategies and investment plans, should leverage this nexus in the process of developing national agricultural priorities, plans and budgets. It should explicitly break down the gender issues related to agriculture as outlined above, including GBV, women economic empowerment and advancing women voices in political and decision-making processes. Incorporating these gender issues into the CAADP process could greatly enhance governments' efforts towards the achievement of Indicator 2.3, which focuses on expanding local agro-industry and value chain development through including women and youth. African countries should also reinforce gender-responsive budgeting in the development of their agriculture national plans and budgets to ensure a comprehensive approach to agricultural development.

## **ENHANCING AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL FORUMS**

Ultimately, African governments should also leverage the opportunities provided by international spaces and forums such as the European Union–African Union Summit and the World Economic Forum. These forums serve as platforms for dialogue, collaboration and resource mobilization, enabling African countries to advocate for their development priorities and foster partnerships with donor partners. Through enhanced engagement in these forums, African governments would be able to promote comprehensive approaches that prioritize gender-smart solutions across sectors. African governments should coordinate their efforts across all sectors in order to define coherent goals, objectives and strategies. This approach ensures the integration of gender considerations in policies, programmes and investments, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes for gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **Advancing gender-responsive agricultural investment beyond CAADP.**

A review of the CAADP policy framework reveals that it does not analyse the specific needs of women smallholders. Conspicuously, it is also missing gender considerations related to climate change and agricultural development. With the CAADP phasing out in 2025, the development of the future African agricultural framework should take on a women's rights analysis for the development of agricultural development plans. This will contribute to the actualization of gender outcomes in the agricultural sector that promote women's access to resources, capacity and technologies. This will also allow for a more concerted push on gender-responsive agricultural funding from feminist ODA. The next framework should:

- Integrate and reinforce Indicator 2.3, which focuses on expanding local agro-industry and value chain development inclusive of women and youth. This indicator has proven effective in promoting women's access to resources, participation in decision-making and economic rights within the agricultural sector. By strengthening and expanding this indicator, the next framework can continue to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture. In turn, Africa will reap from the localization agenda equitable investment in local small and micro enterprises in the agri-value chain.
- To draw clarity upon the need for investment into the nexus of gender, climate and agriculture, African governments must set targets that explicitly integrate the gender and climate nexus. This should recognize the differential impacts of climate change on women farmers and ensure that climate change policies and interventions address their specific needs and vulnerabilities. These include promoting women's access to climate-resilient technologies, training and financial resources, and strengthening their active participation in climate change decision-making processes.
- Foster partnerships and collaborations between governments, civil society organizations, research institutions, private sector actors and development partners to leverage resources, expertise and networks for gender-responsive agricultural development and climate change adaptation. In doing so, it must provide a framework for coordinated monitoring of development finance and ODA efforts into agriculture – particularly gender-responsive efforts.



### **3. AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST ENABLE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS TO BE THE CATALYSTS AND AGENTS FOR LOCALIZATION SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE THEIR PAN-AFRICAN GENDER PRIORITIES**

#### **THE LACK OF GUIDELINES ON THE ROLE THAT WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS PLAY IN LOCALIZATION SUPPORT PREDISPOSES THEM TO EXCLUSION IN THE FINANCIAL ECOSYSTEM**

Women's rights organizations (WROs) are grassroots, sub-national and national entities whose primary objective is the achievement of gender equality and women empowerment outcomes. They provide the unique value of first response, community-based advocacy and activism for gender equality. To optimize their unique value, WROs would benefit from deliberate recognition and guidelines from the localization agenda. Currently, the Charter for Change and Grand Bargain, which serve as the primary instruments for localization of humanitarian action, do not provide specific guidelines on the optimization of WROs as catalysts for change in localization support. WROs in the Global South continue to face multi-faceted challenges, largely characterized by deficiencies in funding.

#### **AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST LEVERAGE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO INCREASE FUNDING TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN AGRICULTURE TO ACHIEVE PAN-AFRICAN GENDER OUTCOMES**

Oxfam builds the capacities of governments in gender-responsive budgeting, collaborating with policymakers in Ethiopia, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Nigeria to ensure that there is gender-equitable resource distribution in agricultural policy. In doing so, Oxfam works with Sustainable Environment and Development Action (SEDA), the Women's College of the Peasant Confederation of Faso and Small-scale Women Farmers Association in Nigeria (SWOFON), respectively, to ensure grassroots

women participate in the process. Beyond the in-country scope, gender-neutral financing is a challenge that plagues the global development financing ecosystem. African WROs have the unique foresight to catalyse inclusivity in the development finance and climate finance ecosystems – providing an accelerator for the achievement of pan-African gender outcomes.

According to OECD data, in 2020–21, US\$574m of bilateral ODA was committed to WROs and movements; a decrease from the previous year.<sup>75</sup> As OECD countries step up efforts to address gender equality, it's worth noting that sustainable progress can only be achieved through increased investment in the transformation of social norms, attitudes, and practice. Owing to their proximity to the realities of the challenges faced by women, WROs serve as an accelerator in this much-needed transformation.

In the wake of its 20th year, the acceleration of the pillars of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) is a priority for African governments. The protocol, ratified by 43 out of 55 African Union member states,<sup>76</sup> envisions the achievement of gender equality for the benefit of African women and girls. In part, Article 2 of the protocol envisions that state parties commit themselves to modifying the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men. As the bridge between grassroots activism and policy, African WROs formulate the space for collective action to trigger a change in sociocultural patterns. To scale up grassroots advocacy to reflect policy change at the continental level, as envisioned by the protocol, their inclusion in the financing ecosystem must be deliberate. This would entail addressing challenges postulated by the misalignment of feminist development financing with national gender and feminist priorities, ease of accessibility of development financing to local WROs, and lack of inclusion of local WROs in discourse on development finance and cooperation.

This would serve to strengthen Article 9 of the Charter, which outlines the essentialism for political inclusion and inclusive decision-making for African women. Globally, the representation of women in parliaments currently stands at 26.5%; a marginal 0.4% increase from 2022.<sup>77</sup> In a report released in 2019, 13 countries in Africa had achieved the milestone set for women's parliamentary representation at 30%.<sup>78</sup> The lowest pool accounts for 16.3%; this statistic is in part attributed to North Africa. Additionally, there are six countries that have achieved gender parity globally; Rwanda is the only African country. The challenge of women's political representation impairs the achievement of Article 9 of the Protocol. This points to the much-needed support that African WROs can offer in fulfilling the Protocol. For this to come into effect, African governments would need to institute parameters to increase the participation of WROs in in-country and continental policy processes. Action Coalition 6 of Generation Equality's Global Acceleration Plan sets global targets for feminist movements and leadership. It envisions increased financing to feminist movements, the adoption of feminist funding in resource mobilization and increased transparency for feminist leadership.<sup>79</sup> Conspicuously, of the 522 commitments made under that action coalition, there are no commitments from African governments.<sup>80</sup> This is indicative that while governments have made notable commitment towards increasing representation for women in parliamentary positions, there is lack of clarity on the essential role that feminist movements play in achieving that and other pillars of the protocol.

# **AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS MUST LEVERAGE CLIMATE FINANCE TO INCREASE FUNDING TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN AGRICULTURE TO ACHIEVE PAN-AFRICAN GENDER OUTCOMES**

The Protocol remains Africa's most comprehensive blueprint on gender equality outcomes. The contextualized effects of the climate crisis threaten the achievement of certain pillars of the Protocol: economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based and intimate partner violence, harmful cultural practices, and representation in the political process. Consequently, in safeguarding the Protocol, it's integral that Africa leverages climate financing to safeguard its gendered interests.

The lack of inclusivity for WROs in resource mobilization is mirrored in climate financing mechanisms. In 2022, ahead of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women, African countries adopted a common position on the integration of Gender Equality in Climate Response.<sup>81</sup> The position recognized a need to include gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data systems as prerequisites of response to the crisis for improved gender outcomes. In accordance with their gender objectives, WROs routinely gather sex-disaggregated data for stand-alone gender justice or gender mainstreaming purposes. Additionally, in accordance with their thematic focus, they have knowledge on gender indicators necessary in assessing the crisis across various sub-thematic areas. This database, while useful for climate policy design, could equally inform the structure of climate financing mechanisms.

In key message 1, this paper discusses the differential impacts of the crisis on women and men, making a call for climate financing to recognize these differential impacts. African women farmers stand on the frontline of this crisis, exhibiting remarkable resilience through agricultural innovation.<sup>82</sup> However, the limited access to information about the climate crisis and the applicable solutions limits their ability to respond appropriately. Through working with WROs, governments can accelerate knowledge to women farmers on responding to the crisis. This would address challenges postulated by unpaid care work, insufficient agricultural technologies and lack of knowledge on the application of agroecological practices.

The CAADP commitments encompass Africa's targeted strategy of enhancing agricultural development. Commitment 6 of the Framework looks to increase resilience to climate vulnerability through, among other strategies, enhancing investment geared at resilience initiatives.<sup>83</sup> Leveraging climate financing to address the challenges of women farmers is crucial to this effort and requires operationalizing climate finance to recognize intersectional differences, enhance awareness on its accessibility protocols and ensure alignment with African feminist solutions. To inform this, governments should leverage the geographical and socio-political advantage that WROs bring to research and policy, serving as the integral mobilization and organization tool for grassroots women farmers.

With the Generation Equality Forum as the last-mile effort towards the achievement of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Platform is cognisant of contextual thematic challenges that plague the achievement of gender equality outcomes. Action Coalition 4 of the agenda calls for feminist action for climate justice.<sup>84</sup> For women to fairly benefit from climate financing and contribute to the advancement of the gender outcomes as envisioned by the Protocol and the GEF, WROs and the

feminist movement must be involved in decision-making on the parameters that operationalize climate finance. African countries must safeguard gains achieved through the Protocol and envisioned in the GEF by leveraging a gender approach to the operationalization of the Adaptation Fund and the Loss and Damage Fund. WROs present the counteragent for structural mechanisms geared at eroding these achievements. To do so, climate and development financing must offer sustainable funding solutions to WROs. This would allow them to innovate, plan accordingly, develop institutional systems and fundraise for scale-up.

## CONCLUSION

As the Protocol turns 20, this paper calls for African governments to leverage the grassroots feminist movement in Africa to accelerate the Protocol's vision. This is accompanied by a need to reevaluate feminist policies and priorities at the national level in the context of the CAADP and the Generation Equality Framework (for African commitment makers). African WROs are the catalyst for localization support to tackle the effects of the climate crisis and to ensure alignment of feminist ODA in-country priorities, among them addressing the gendered effects of climate justice. This would increase outcomes in gender-responsive climate action, result in an increase in the structural presentation of gendered climate knowledge and increase accuracy in the portrayal of differential gender realities of the climate crisis and structural and timely gender support in response to the crisis.

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