

AFRICA YOUNG WOMEN B+25 MANIFESTO



FEM - FOSTER. ENABLE. MOBILIZE

**This Feminist Manifesto sets out demands
For Generation Equality Forums**

November 2020



INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). Before that, the 1st United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, during the UN International Women's Year. This Conference was the first of its nature to focus solely on women's issues and marked a turning point in policy development.

The UN declared 1976 -1985 as a Decade for Women during which the 2nd World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980 and mainly focused on strengthening women's networks. The 3rd Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 closing the UN Decade for Women, assessing progress and adopting the "Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women". This Conference served as a base for the discussions at the 4th World Conference on Women hosted in Beijing and adopted a blueprint on women's empowerment and gender equality.

2020 also marks the 20th anniversary of the Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security, reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Despite progress made, unfortunately, no country has been able to achieve gender equality. Taking this into account, civil society organizations together with the UN Women launched the campaign: "Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future", aiming to bring together generations of women's rights activists to tackle the unfinished business of empowering women.

The launch of this campaign led to the establishment of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) which will be a global gathering for gender equality, convened by the UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico, in partnership with civil society.





**WE DON'T RECOMMEND
WE DEMAND**

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the GEF has been postponed to 2021. The implementation framework for the GEF promised to be founded on the principles of inclusivity and a bottom-up approach, designed into Action Coalitions, as global, multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at mobilizing governments, civil society, international organizations and the private sector.

Within Africa's continental level; at the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs in Maseru, Lesotho in December 2008, the African Union (AU) Ministers for Gender and Women's Affairs called on the AU to declare 2010-2020 as African Women's Decade adopted by Assembly Dec. 487 (XIX) under the Theme: Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. This remarkable effort has been translated into the declaration of the new Decade (2020-2030) of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion, by African leaders in February 2020.

This declaration is the result of African leaders' commitment to scale up actions for the progressive gender inclusion towards sustainable development at the national, regional and continental levels. 2020 also marks the AU the theme for the year "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development" decided by the Executive Council during the AU Coordination Summit in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019 and adopted during the 33rd AU Ordinary Summit in Addis Ababa in February 2020.

While leveraging on these milestones, youth frameworks are key to advancing youth rights including but not limited to, "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth", 2017 AU theme of the year, 2020 Youth Silencing the Guns Campaign, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, and African Youth Declaration on Silencing the Guns.



Article 23 of the African Youth Charter, specifically addresses Girls and Young Women, by calling for the protection of girls and young women from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous, takes them away from education or that is harmful to their mental or physical health. The AU **Sauti صوتي** publication further unpacks these challenges from economic, cultural and political spheres to the exclusion of young women from both youth and women policies, spaces and frameworks, leaving their specific challenges unaddressed. The current COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges faced by young women; from economic hardships to school disruption and abuse during lockdowns as outlined in the Africa Youth Lead policy paper "Facts & Figures of Africa Youth Agency Challenges and Recovery Roadmap on COVID-19".

Therefore, the Africa Young Women's Manifesto is a political document that sets out critical issues of concern for young women of Africa and makes demands for addressing them. The Manifesto is the result of five Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Regional Barazas that convened over 1500 participants and over 30 partners with the objectives of **FEM**:

FOSTER

Intergenerational co-leadership and dialogues among young women, African Union and United Nations Stakeholders.

ENABLE

Young women in the different regions to share their initiatives and engagement at grassroots, national, regional and continental level.

MOBILIZE

For the African Young Women Manifesto with 10 practical demands.

The Manifesto therefore provides a platform of a common set of demands for the achievement of gender equality and equity as well as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. It allows young women to articulate their concerns and secure a clear and unreserved commitment by the Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalitions Leadership, which blueprint will inform policies, institutional processes and intersectional programmes and measures. These demands will ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours.

The process of developing and promoting the Manifesto also built upon the experiences of young women which ensures the manifesto is owned by a broad constituency. Young women are thereby empowered to use their voices to bring more youth into this movement. Participants of the five regional consultations came from across 45 countries, namely **Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte D'Ivoire, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Morocco, Mauritania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.**

ECONOMIC JUSTICE DEMAND

We, Africa Young Women, demand

- Equality in employment, jobs with dignity, paid work, paid internships and equal remuneration for hourly wage of part-time and full-time work, under equal conditions. Why do we have to try twice as hard to prove we're good enough. Paying young women less implies we are 'worth less'
- Enforcement of the rights and dignity for young women in vulnerable sectors such as care work, cleaning work, the service and hospitality industry, emotional and domestic labour
- Acknowledgement of the contribution of young women in its entirety, within the workplace and within policy development, based on our skills and talents and not based on our gender, age or marital status. We are competent and capable by virtue of our hard work, merit, emotional intelligence and female leadership
- Guarantee of the right for young women to paid maternity leave without discrimination, sanctions or termination of employment
- A critical appraisal of the impact of temporary or insecure housing, insufficient government benefits or fleeing violence, on young women's ability to find and stay in work with concrete steps to promote gainful and dignified employment for young women



Enough is enough!

No more unpaid work and free services

**PAID
WORK**



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**NO! FORCED
MARRIAGE**

CRIMINALIZE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE **DEMAND**

We, Africa Young Women, demand

- Criminalization of the epidemic of Gender Based Violence in all its forms especially in conflict, displacement and humanitarian crisis settings including femicide, rape, harmful practices, Female Genital Mutilation, early and forced marriage, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, domestic and economic abuse, trafficking and all other forms of exploitation
- Enforcement of proactive policies to prevent sexual and domestic violence, as well as ensure that cases of exploitation, violence and abuse against young women are detected, investigated and perpetrators are prosecuted
- Provision of legal, physical and psychological support, shelters and specialist services to young women subjected to domestic abuse and other forms of violence
- Fund allocation in support of youth innovation and research to tackle Gender Based Violence



Enough is enough!

Society must be free from Gender Based Violence



END GENDER DISCRIMINATION DEMAND

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

■ Introduction of legislative measures that eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women based on their gender, marital status, skin colour, nationality and heritage, or age in order to ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms

■ Equitable and affordable access to goods, public services and opportunities for rural young women, young women with disabilities, young women seeking asylum, young women refugees and displaced and young women migrants. These services include access to social protection, drinking water, heritage rights, food and nutrition, housing, childcare among other rights and services

■ Elimination of all forms of discrimination against young women especially those affecting young women of low socioeconomic status and all those in vulnerable settings which result in their exclusion from decision-making

■ Equitable access to land ownership ensuring economic independence and personal empowerment. Young women make a stand against gender-discriminatory laws, customs and practices regulating inheritance and those which impede young women's fair access to ownership of land and natural resources

■ Provision of adequate sustainable financing for asylum seeking and refugee young women to ensure their sustainable livelihood and reintegration, as well as their safety and wellbeing



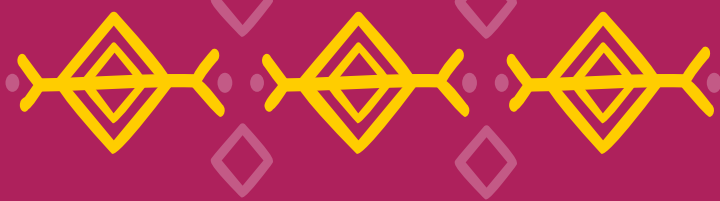
Enough is enough!

We must end gender discrimination



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ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROTECTION **DEMAND**

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

- Revision, amendment or repeal of legislations that discriminate against young women to ensure equality before the law and fair access to justice. This includes, but is not limited to the protection of young women rights especially in times of armed conflict, natural disasters and displacement. It is the responsibility of the international community to tackle the root causes of these conflicts that so gravely affect vulnerable young women
- Provision of information on the rights of young women and girls in accessible, transparent and understandable formats and language as well as clear and effective mechanisms and tools for claiming such rights in order to ensure they are fully exercised
- Education through training, awareness campaigns and programmes, for girls and boys, families, communities and the entire justice governance system on the rights of young women and girls
- Financial allocation to enhance the legal capability of young women through improved access to information and legal support regardless of their socio-economic circumstances and barriers



Enough is enough!

Equality & Justice before the Law



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS **DEMAND**

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

■ Provision of universal access to essential sexual and reproductive health rights and services particularly those in rural areas including counselling for young women on their sexual and reproductive freedom. Our reproductive health is not an embarrassment, a distraction, or a reason to discriminate.

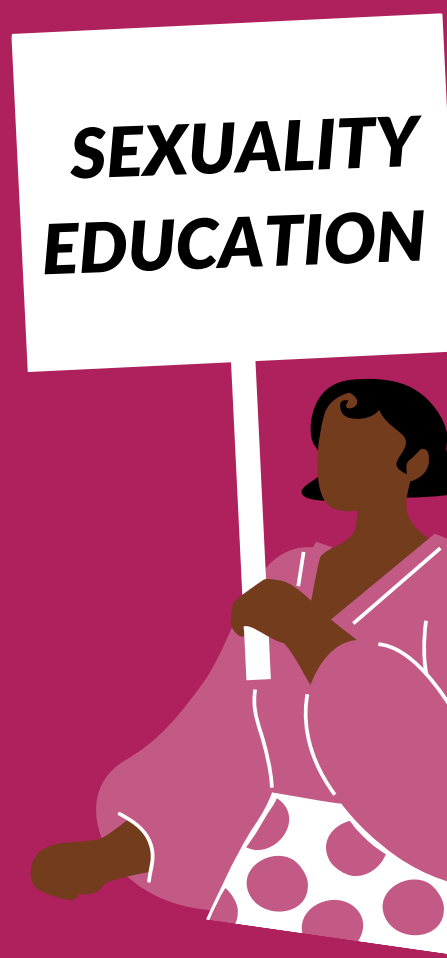
■ Introduction and implementation of effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education courses and programmes in schools to educate young women on their health and how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others. As young women, we have the rights over our own bodies to make decisions freely and responsibly on matters related to our sexuality free of coercion, discrimination and violence

■ Removal of taxation on menstrual products, enforcement of progressive period policies in all workplaces and provision of free sanitary pads and sanitation in all schools. It is unacceptable in 2020 to have girls dropout of school or lose their jobs because of their periods

■ Fund organisations that offer informative guidance and programs on comprehensive gender-sensitive, sexual and reproductive health education, and facilities for the well-being of young women



Enough is enough!
Our body, our choices



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MENTAL HEALTH FINANCING



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MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING **DEMAND**

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

- Provision of mental health services that understand the impact of daily sexism, misogyny and discrimination resulting in severe challenges affecting the mental health of young women
- Development and implementation of policies, services and practices addressing mental health challenges co-designed with young women lived experiences and tailored to their specific needs
- Implementation of systemic changes and restructuring to improve service delivery with regards to mental health support, counselling, trauma support by making use of an empathy oriented, gender sensitive, youth centred approach
- Elimination of any obstacles that may have negative implications for the full integration of mentally and physically challenged youth into society including the provision of appropriate infrastructure and services to facilitate integration and equitable access to opportunities, free from discrimination
- Equitable and sustainable mental health financing. Mental disorders account for a significant and growing proportion of the continent's burden of disease and yet remain a low priority for public financing in health systems



Enough is enough!

Mental health care must be
universally and safely available

INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION DEMAND

We, Africa Young Women, demand that:

■ Increase of national budget allocations for education (and decrease that of militarization) to accelerate the development of e-learning systems in delivering quality inclusive, equitable and free, pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education especially for young women and girls offline in remote areas

■ Removal of barriers to young women and girls' education including poverty, school fees, transport, distance and safety to school, early and forced marriage, early and unintended pregnancy, lack of sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities, gender bias and stereotypes in curricula, learning materials and teaching processes, bullying, abuse and violence in schools, colleges and universities

■ Institution of programmes for boys to respect girls and treat them as equals, while understanding the inherently patriarchal structures of unequal power relations and gender roles and stereotypes

■ Guarantee of universal and equal access to and completion of vocational, secondary and higher education in order to effectively address the existing imbalance between young men and women in certain professions

■ Empowerment of young women from vulnerable and marginalized communities, conflict and humanitarian settings, with equal chances to join top universities through offering targeted scholarships especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics



Enough is enough!

Education is a right not a privilege

**EDUCATION IS A
RIGHT NOT A
PRIVILEGE**



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DIGITAL JUSTICE DEMAND

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

- Acceleration of digital transformation particularly for rural and vulnerable young women including accessible, affordable and reliable broadband internet, as well as investment in digital infrastructures and technologies that facilitate the digital economy and opportunities for young women
- Criminalization of undue restrictions on internet freedom and internet shutdowns
- Democratization of the digital space to allow the contribution and equal participation as many young women are left out of the digital revolution
- Protection from cyberharassment, threats and sexist language occurring as an attempt to silence young women in expressing their views and denying their full right to nurture their digital identity, and participation in the social, cultural and political discourse



Enough is enough!

Respect our digital identity



SILENCING THE GUNS **DEMAND**

We, Africa Young Women, demand that:

- Protection of the rights of young women and accountability during armed conflict, occupation of territories, natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. We, as young women, do not produce, sell or buy guns, why do we have to pay the price of warlords?
- Protection of the rights of young women to peaceful protest, assembly and freedom of speech as well as enforcement of policies and mechanisms to investigate police violence and abuse against young women and other human rights violations during the pandemic and beyond
- Institutionalization of young women participation in peacebuilding efforts and processes, mediation and negotiations with documentation of their contribution
- Fund allocation and support for young women peacebuilders and organisations and specific young women programmes within the intersection between Youth, Peace and Security and Women peace and Security agendas



Enough is enough!

The Africa We Want is Conflict-Free



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INTERGENERATIONAL CO-LEADERSHIP DEMAND

We, Africa Young Women, demand:

- Institutionalization of co-leadership for young women's full and effective political participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in the political, social, cultural, economic and public dimensions of life, while strengthening young women's voices and creating spaces and resources for their agendas
- Enforcement of quotas for young women within women and youth quotas. We do not know where we belong in policy frameworks, the youth quotas and gender parity are unclear about young women's space, rights and involvement
- Appointment of young women technocrats and Special Advisors/Envoys and other positions across industry, institutions and at every level of national, regional and global governance
- Establishment of sustainable intergenerational dialogues platforms to strengthen Pan-African and inclusive networks of young and senior women for generational learning, sharing, mentoring, solidarity and empowerment



Enough is enough!
It's time to co-lead now

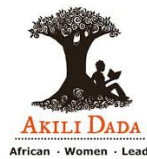


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