



American Model United Nations

Economic Commission for Africa

**Report to the Economic Commission for Africa
on Women's economic empowerment: boosting
women's entrepreneurship in Africa**

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1 Executive Summary

2 At its 13th session, held on 23 November through 26 November, the Economic Commission for Africa
3 considered women's economic empowerment and boosting women's entrepreneurship in Africa as a priority for the
4 2019 review cycle, and the review of the United Nations plans and programs of action pertaining to the economic
5 situation of women in Africa.

6 The Commission initially separated into three committees and each planned to elaborate on a specific
7 subtopic. The committees focused on education, economic opportunities and rights and finances as they relate to
8 women's economic empowerment. Not long after formation, the finances committee dissolved and its members joined
9 one of the two remaining committees which proceeded to discuss education and economic opportunities and rights.

10 The first chapter of this report submits several recommendations to the Economic and Social Council. They
11 include strategies for improving women's education, providing economic opportunities and protecting human rights
12 while respecting state sovereignty.

13 The second chapter details the deliberations of the entire Commission on the economic situations of women
14 in African countries as well as those of the two committees on education and economic opportunities and rights. The
15 committees discussed problems, implications, and solutions relating to women's economic empowerment.

16 2 Matters calling for action

17 2.1 Other considerations for action

18 The role of international sovereignty does not prevent the United Nations from protecting human rights.
19 However, it is important to understand that promoting human rights in Africa requires the consideration of cultural,
20 social, and religious aspects that are unique to the continent, and could be further divided into the cultures of
21 each country. The commission asks the Economic and Social Council to establish research mechanisms, specifically
22 research-based reports and the bodies required to create such, designed for the purpose of establishing cultural
23 competency within the council.

24 The council should recommend Member States to form ministries or governmental bodies charged with
25 dealing with the issues of women of all abilities, as well as recommend to United Nations for Women, the United
26 Nations Development Programme, and other relevant United Nations bodies to be open to helping countries within
27 Africa to establish those governmental bodies.

28 The Economic and Social Council should request United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations
29 specifically concerned with the protection of women of all abilities to expand and enhance those bodies to protect
30 women within the workplace from gender-based discrimination, including forms of harassment.

31 The Economic and Social Council should further recommend to non-governmental organizations focused on
32 financially backing women to work more vigorously toward the entrepreneurship of women of all abilities within
33 Africa.

34 The Economic and Social Council should dedicate academic and financial resources to the investigation of
35 public-private partnerships as a source of support for the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

36 The Economic and Social Council should recommend to the appropriate body a compilation of the resources
37 based within Africa that facilitate the financial aid of women entrepreneurial projects over that of universally-based
38 financial aid and microfinance organizations.

39 The Economic and Social Council should encourage to African countries to incorporate women into talks
40 concerning post-conflict development to properly assess the nuances of gender-based governmental and social infras-
41 tructure.

42 The Economic Commission for Africa stresses that the Member States and governments will economically
43 benefit by implementing educational programs, specifically, those targeted towards increasing the literacy rate and
44 access to vocational skills and training in young girls and women of all abilities.

45 Due to the importance of education in boosting women's economic empowerment, the Economic Commission
46 for Africa encourages the Economic and Social Council to consider the importance of increasing the literacy rate
47 amongst Member State populations and improving access to primary education for women and children. While also
48 maintaining respect toward cultural values and upholding national sovereignty, the Economic and Social Council must
49 continue to support governments and their efforts of aiding girls and young mothers to complete their education for
50 both the betterment of their personal economic empowerment, as well as the enhancement of domestic economies. It
51 is also vital to implement an intersectional framework in school curricula to further support women across ethnicity,
52 ability and socioeconomic status.

53 Based on the fact that women are more likely to participate in the labor force if they are in good health,
54 the Economic Commission for Africa proposes to the Economic and Social Council to encourage Member States
55 to strengthen national health systems, implement comprehensive education on sexuality and relationships in and
56 out of schools, while also providing affordable and safe contraceptive method to tackle the root causes of economic
57 inequalities within the continent. By enabling women to maintain their health and increase their ability to make safe
58 choices, it is possible to facilitate women's economic empowerment and contribution to their respective workforce.

59 The Economic Commission for Africa further encourages the Economic and Social Council to connect African
60 Member States with international organizations in order to increase awareness and build programs pertaining to
61 educational issues regarding women empowerment within each country. It is vital to give women the access and choice
62 to educational programs through partnerships, while also seeking to maintain cultural and national sovereignty. Thus,
63 the Economic Commission for Africa encourages partnerships with non-governmental and international organizations
64 including, but not limited to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational,

65 Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Women to Women, Planned Parenthood and World Vision, to
66 promote vocational training, agricultural education and health education.

67 3 Consideration of the status

68 3.1 Deliberations

69 The Commission began the discussion on topic one, Women's economic empowerment: boosting women's
70 entrepreneurship in Africa. This was done through a suspension of the meeting on the second day of committee
71 meetings. The commission determined that they should focus on the three specific issues of education, economic
72 opportunity and rights and finances. After the body divided into three subcommittees, the finances sub-committee
73 dissolved into the other groups in order to discuss access to finances through education. Representatives from
74 Sudan, Togo, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Mozambique, Madagascar, Algeria and
75 Eritrea worked towards recommendations on education. The representatives from Equatorial Guinea, South Africa,
76 Kenya, Libya, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Morocco and Cote D'Ivoire worked towards
77 recommendations on economic opportunity and rights. Through multiple consultative sessions and suspensions of
78 the meeting the commission developed their deliberations and recommendations for the report.

79 The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) discussed a wide range of issues relating to the economic
80 situation of women in Africa. Throughout Africa, there is a massive disparity in the status of men and women. This
81 pervasive inequality leads to violence, poverty, and generalized human suffering.

82 The Economic Commission for Africa has identified a clear connection between finances and education. The
83 importance of financial education must be acutely considered when discussing the economic empowerment of women
84 entrepreneurs.

85 Women's physical safety is a key tenant of ensuring their economic empowerment. Many African countries
86 experience high rates of violence against women. About a third of women in Africa have experienced domestic violence
87 according to the World Bank. Fear of violence while traveling keeps many women from pursuing or expanding their
88 economic opportunities.

89 Additionally, worker's rights in Africa impact women's ability to work. In certain areas, rights like parental
90 leave and healthcare aid women in their transitions to the paid workforce. However, as subsistence agriculture and
91 the informal sector of urban work constitute a large portion of women's employment opportunities, legal rights for
92 workers may not impact them. Thus, legislation and recommendations seeking to protect women at work should
93 consider these sectors as well.

94 The ECA recognizes that the formation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be beneficial for some
95 African countries. South Africa, for example, has benefited well from the formation of PPPs. Their economy has
96 increased and since then and has become a self-sufficient country. This also creates an increase in work opportunities
97 for the people of Africa, specifically an increase in work opportunities for women. Although there are developmental
98 and economic benefits, some of the countries in Africa fear the thought of Western countries coming in and disrupting
99 their historical and cultural traditions.

100 This commission emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereignty of individual countries in regards
101 to cultural norms around women. While it is important to advance the economic role of women in Africa, it is also
102 important to recognize the cultural context surrounding this issue. Women play different roles within the variety of
103 cultures that exist in Africa, and it is understood by this commission that these roles are important to the function
104 of many African cultures. However, these considerations should not impede the economic progress of women.

105 A representative of Madagascar, a woman entrepreneur, spoke to the struggles of women within Madagascar
106 and throughout all of Africa. Her words were powerful and straightforward, as she spoke to the gender gaps enforced
107 by the governmental and social infrastructure within the state. She mentioned several governmental and intergov-
108 ernmental programmes that have assisted her throughout her journey, but pointed out that more work needs to be
109 done, and that this committee should take a leadership role in this topic.

110 The established laws in African countries regarding women's rights are recognized by the Economic Com-
111 mission for Africa to be different from the reality of the present situation in Africa. The institutions which enforce
112 and uphold the laws of the African countries fail to do so with respect to women's rights, which contributes to the
113 existing inequality between men and women.

114 The Economic Commission of Africa realizes that many Member States do not have the proper resources to
115 fund these women empowerment projects. Besides from internal help of African countries donating to other members

116 and the formation of public-private partnerships with Western companies; Africa can seek financial help through
117 charitable organizations committed to helping the continent. The money that they offer to African nations can be
118 used to fund some educational programs for women. By doing this this body would hope to minimize the overall
119 economic loss for countries.

120 In the interests of promoting Pan-African unity, information on the role of women should not be used to
121 establish hierarchies of African countries. The many diverse peoples of Africa have always held different beliefs about
122 the role of women and they should not be forced to conform to Euro-American expectations. However, in regard to
123 human rights abuses, especially violence against women, historic norms do not necessarily justify current and future
124 practices.

125 Furthermore, many representatives noted that the importance of Islamic, Christian, and other religious
126 beliefs and their impacts on women's economic empowerment should not be disregarded. African member states
127 should resist neo-colonial encroachment on national values and recognize the positive influence of religion in women's
128 lives.

129 Another consideration raised by the Commission is the potentially harmful effect of foreign funding on
130 domestic politics throughout Africa. Even if the funding is coming from private corporations or non-profits not
131 associated with the government, an influx of foreign aid can sometimes be perceived as wealthy countries wielding
132 their economic might to influence a nation's domestic policy stances. To avoid counterproductive backlash to this
133 foreign aid, this commission believes a more grassroots approach would be effective. This would involve these foreign
134 charitable organizations working more directly with local community leaders to better understand the needs of those
135 specific communities.

136 A number of representatives spoke about the existing support network provided by the family and its of high
137 importance in regards to the empowerment of women and the success of their endeavors in entrepreneurship. The
138 Economic Commission of Africa recognizes the established cultural norms surrounding women and wants to preserve
139 the norms which promote women's safety.

140 The Economic Commission for Africa recognizes the work done by the United Nations Women and the
141 United Nations Development Programme for the empowerment of women. Both organizations advocate for women's
142 rights and have programs that support gender equality. Representatives have discussed increased involvement by
143 both organizations in African countries.

144 Representatives noted the importance of forming post-conflict policies supporting the economic empowerment
145 of women. Women should be a central part of the rebuilding of secure countries and enhancing economic development
146 in post-conflict areas. Some representatives expressed support for greater enforcement and promotion of ethics and
147 human rights in these areas due to the potential violence.

148 Following the dissolution of the third subcommittee into two, representatives from Sudan, Togo, South
149 Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Mozambique, Algeria and Eritrea began to work on the
150 promotion of education programs, financial education, health education, economic benefits and partnerships with
151 inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. While keeping in mind the preservation of
152 national sovereignty and differing cultural values among the African continent, the education subcommittee set out
153 with the goal of promoting women's economic empowerment.

154 The committee agrees the promotion of economic empowerment of women is of particular importance in
155 regions and countries experiencing or recovering from conflict, where women often become the main economic actor
156 within the family. As such, the promotion of skills valued and required in the formal sector is of paramount
157 importance.

158 The committee on education further agrees that the Economic and Social Council must implement and
159 develop existing programs in which women are able to build skill sets to help support their families and grow
160 financially. Building these capabilities would supply women with the knowledge to be both a mother and entrepreneur,
161 if they so choose. This may include vocational training in fields such as agriculture to better implement the use of
162 the land that is available.

163 Furthermore, the education committee deliberated reducing poverty rates as well as sexually transmitted
164 diseases in rural areas of Africa while supporting African countries with the financial burdens they might have when
165 trying to get these services. The lack of feminine hygiene products impedes a woman's ability to work for an average
166 of at least five days out of every month. Additionally, reducing the rate of pregnancy will lessen the household
167 burdens that will enable women to enter the workforce. Moreover, the high rate of HIV and AIDS can hamper a

168 woman's ability to gain an education. Granting access to such health information allows young women and girls to
169 engage in economic affairs and the community without the obstacles posed by ailment.

170 It is worth mentioning that the education committee took differing cultural norms and national sovereignty
171 into consideration, as brought up by Democratic Republic of the Congo, Algeria and Eritrea, in their proposals to
172 the Economic and Social Council.

173 The committee decided to recommend four general goals that the Economic and Social Council should work
174 up to: stressing the economic benefits of women's empowerment to member states, increasing access to primary
175 education and increasing the literacy rate, improving health education and vocational training, as well as partnering
176 with international and non-governmental organizations.

177 **3.2 Actions taken by the commission**

178 The commission decided to write recommendations instead of resolutions because they found it to be faster
179 and to the point. The commission had a few concerns that by creating resolutions it could encourage domestic policy
180 changes that could affect cultural norms set within each country.

181 The recommendations were written within each sub-committee. During the deliberation period in suspen-
182 sions of the meeting each committee phrased the recommendations as solutions to continent wide problems for
183 women.

184 In the education sub-committee there were a few concerns about higher education and cultural norms, so
185 the sub-committee decided to steer away from any wholly controversial issues.

186 In the economic opportunity and rights sub-committee, the commission believed human rights abuses to be
187 an important topic, and therefore progressed with that as the main forthought with recommendations.

188 Through another consultative session the commission discussed and unofficially passed the recommendations
189 and sent them for approval.

190 **4 Adoption of the report**

191 At its meeting on 26 November 2019, the draft report of the commission was made available for consideration.
192 The commission considered the report, and with no amendments, adopted the report by consensus with one abstention
193 from Somalia.

Passed by consensus, with 1 abstentions