



# POLICY BRIEF/ POSITION PAPER

**BPfA+30: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures –  
Unfinished Business in Women’s Rights and the  
Urgency for Transformative Change in Africa**

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# Summary:

**This policy brief/position paper is attributed to Urgent Action Fund (UAF) Africa** for their generous financial support, which made the production of this important work possible. It captures a summary of the CSO shadow report on the Beijing +30 review of progress made under the Beijing Platform for action. It provides **alternative voices of 33 civil society organizations, including** Coalition for Sustainable Development (SDGs Kenya Forum), Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA Kenya), United Nations Children's Fund Kenya (UNICEF Kenya), Hummingbird Grassroots Centre, Polycom Development Project (Polycom Girls), My Body My Body, United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK), Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood Kenya (GROOTS Kenya), Women's Empowerment Link (WEL), Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Wangu Kanja Foundation, Kenya Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities, Superb CBO, Zamara Foundation, CRAWN Trust, Youth Alive Kenya, IIN, Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals, and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA), Wounded Healers Foundation, Generation Guiders, Hami Imani Africa, and We Defenders.

Kenya and, by extension, Africa, have made significant strides in advancing gender equality, with increased political representation, improved legal frameworks, and growing financial inclusion initiatives for women. National and regional policies have contributed to narrowing gender gaps, particularly in education and leadership. Women increasingly engage in entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and climate resilience efforts. However, despite these achievements, persistent challenges continue to undermine full gender parity as envisioned thirty years ago at the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)-1995 and review the Nairobi forward looking strategy of 1985-what is the progress 40 years.

Significant gaps remain in addressing gender-based violence, economic empowerment and security, political participation, and digital inclusion. This policy brief, informed by feedback from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), it outlines the challenges, emerging issues, and policy recommendations necessary to accelerate gender equality in line with the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which emphasize the importance of gender inclusivity in achieving long-term stability and prosperity.

# Recommendations:

## 1. Revolutionize legal frameworks and accountability measures

- Develop and enact a comprehensive cybercrime policy to specifically address online gender-based violence/technology-facilitated violence.
- Implement AI-driven legal monitoring systems to track GBV case progress and ensure timely justice.
- Establish mobile legal clinics to reach rural and marginalized communities, providing immediate legal support to survivors.
- Create regional task forces within the AU to audit and enforce gender-responsive laws across member states.

## 2. Transform economic empowerment and financial inclusion

- Develop gender-smart investment funds that prioritize and subsidize women-owned enterprises, ensuring access to startup capital.
- Launch blockchain-based land ownership verification systems to protect women's property rights and eliminate bureaucratic discrimination.
- Establish 'Women First' procurement policies and intentionally enforce the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) requiring governments to source a percentage of goods and services from female entrepreneurs.

## 3. Radically boost women's leadership and political representation

- Implement 50% gender parity mandates in all AU and national government leadership structures by 2030.
- Establish a Women's Political Acceleration Fund to finance and mentor female candidates in elections.
- Develop gender-focused AI tools to track media bias against women in politics and influence fair reporting.



#### 4. Close the gender digital divide with high-tech solutions

- Roll out nationwide digital literacy boot camps for women and girls, focusing on cybersecurity, AI, and fintech skills.
- Partner with tech giants to provide subsidized internet access and smart devices for marginalized women and communities/geographies.
- Mandate gender-inclusive tech policies requiring corporations to achieve 40% female workforce representation in STEM fields.

#### 5. Revolutionize women's role in climate action and governance

- Establish gender-inclusive climate councils with policymaking authority at the AU and national levels.
- Provide climate adaptation grants exclusively for female-led sustainability initiatives.
- Develop a Women's Green Workforce Program to train and employ women in renewable energy, conservation, and eco-entrepreneurship.

#### 6. Innovate mental health and well-being strategies

- Integrate teletherapy services in public health systems, offering remote mental health support tailored to women's needs.
- Fund trauma-informed recovery centers specifically for survivors of GBV, providing holistic rehabilitation services.
- Include mental health awareness in school curriculums, empowering young women to prioritize emotional resilience and self-care.

# Introduction:

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted in 1995, remains a cornerstone for global gender equality. Thirty years later, BPfA+30 presents a critical moment to assess progress, address gaps, and accelerate action on its 12 priority areas.

Kenya's government has reviewed its achievements since 1995, citing legal, policy, and institutional reforms. However, civil society organizations (CSOs) provide an independent lens, identifying persistent gaps and urging bolder action. CSOs play a vital role in holding the government accountable, amplifying marginalized voices, and driving grassroots change.

This policy brief consolidates CSO perspectives on Kenya's BPfA+30 review, emphasizing the need for stronger government-CSO collaboration to combat gender-based violence, enhance women's economic and political participation, and bridge digital and climate justice gaps.

Achieving gender equality is essential for Kenya and, by extension, Africa's sustainable development, as outlined in Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. However, policy gaps, cultural biases, and funding constraints slow progress. This brief highlights key challenges and offers actionable recommendations to fast-track gender equality across the continent.

## KEY CHALLENGES AND GAPS

### 1. Gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide

- Gender-based violence remains a pervasive and significant issue in Kenya, with high rates of domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and femicide. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2024), 41% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence. The 2024 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) further indicates that intimate partner violence accounts for 75% of reported GBV cases (KNBS, 2024). This aligns with global trends, as UN Women (2024) reports that 45% of African women experience some form of GBV, with rates exceeding 60% in some regions.

- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including cyber harassment, online stalking, and digital discrimination is a major concern. Digital/online GBV is also on the rise, with the Communications Authority of Kenya reporting a 28% increase in cyber-harassment cases targeting women over the past year (CAK, 2024).
- Similarly, ITU (2024) has documented a 30% rise in online gender-based violence across Africa, underscoring the urgent need for policy interventions at both national and regional levels.
- Many survivors of GBV face barriers in accessing justice due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, stigma, and economic dependence on perpetrators. Limited availability of specialized GBV courts further exacerbates delays in legal proceedings, discouraging victims from seeking justice. The Kenya Judiciary Annual Report (2024) indicates that only 35% of GBV cases reported to the police result in a conviction, highlighting systemic weaknesses in legal enforcement mechanisms (Judiciary of Kenya, 2024).
- The World Bank (2024) notes similar challenges across sub-Saharan Africa, where inadequate resources and gender biases in judicial systems contribute to impunity for perpetrators.

## 2. Women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion

- Women's access to financial resources in Kenya remains limited. The inadequate and or lack of financial literacy and limited access to credit facilities hinder women's ability to establish and scale enterprises. The Kenya Economic Survey (2024) reports that only 39% of women have access to formal credit facilities, compared to 60% of men (KNBS, 2024). At the continental level, the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2024) states that only 34% of African women have formal financial access, with similar disparities observed across employment sectors.
- Women in Kenya continue to face significant barriers to economic participation, with many confined to low-paying informal sector jobs. Despite women constituting 47% of Kenya's workforce, they remain underrepresented in high-paying sectors such as technology and finance, where they account for only 21% of employees (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2024). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) reports that women in Africa earn 30% less than men on average, further exacerbating financial inequalities.
- Government interventions such as the Women Enterprise Fund and Uwezo Fund have been instrumental in supporting female entrepreneurs, yet their reach remains limited. The Ministry of Gender (2024) notes that bureaucratic barriers and limited awareness among rural women have hindered uptake. The World Bank (2024) echoes this concern, citing that less than 20% of women-led businesses in Kenya receive adequate financing.

### 3. Underrepresentation in political and decision-making spaces

- Women hold only 23% of parliamentary seats in Kenya, falling short of the constitutional two-thirds gender rule (Parliament of Kenya, 2024). According to the African Union (2024), this is consistent with broader regional trends, where only 24% of African parliamentary seats are occupied by women.
- The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC, 2024) reports that women remain underrepresented in key executive and administrative roles, comprising only 19% of county governors and 16% of senior public service positions. Similarly, UN Women (2024) highlights those structural barriers, including limited campaign financing and patriarchal cultural norms, continue to impede women's full participation in leadership.
- A lack of financial support discourages women from contesting political positions. The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP, 2024) reveals that women candidates in Kenya receive 38% less funding from political parties than their male counterparts. UNDP (2024) has identified similar trends across Africa, where women-led political campaigns receive significantly less financial backing.

### 4. Digital and economic inclusion

- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the digital divide, with lower access to internet connectivity, digital devices, and digital literacy training. The Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK, 2024) reports that only 37% of women have reliable internet access, compared to 55% of men. This mirrors findings by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2024), which states that only 35% of African women use the internet regularly, compared to 54% of men.
- Women's participation in STEM-related fields remains low. The Ministry of ICT (2024) reports that only 22% of ICT professionals in Kenya are women. Globally, UNESCO (2024) highlights that women's representation in STEM fields remains below 20% in many African nations, limiting their opportunities in high-growth digital industries.
- Despite Kenya's advancements in digital finance, only 30% of women actively use mobile banking services beyond money transfers, compared to 50% of men (Central Bank of Kenya, 2024). The rapid transition to digital economies has created new economic opportunities, but without targeted interventions, women risk being left behind due to a lack of training and access to online financial tools. The World Bank (2024) emphasizes that while digital financial services have expanded access to banking, gender disparities persist due to lower digital literacy levels among women.



## 5. Women and climate change adaptation

- Women in Kenya are disproportionately affected by climate change, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions where they rely on agriculture and natural resources for livelihood (sustenance and income). The Kenya Climate Change Action Plan (2024) highlights that 70% of small-scale farmers affected by climate-related shocks are women (Ministry of Environment, 2024). At the continental level, UNDP (2024) estimates that 80% of displaced populations due to climate change in Africa are women.
- Funding for women-led climate initiatives remains insufficient, limiting their ability to contribute to climate resilience strategies. Women-led climate initiatives receive a paltry 6% of Kenya's climate adaptation funds (Treasury of Kenya, 2024).
- The World Bank (2024) similarly reports that only 5% of African climate adaptation funds are directly allocated to female-led projects.
- Despite their active roles in environmental conservation, women are underrepresented in climate governance structures. Only 15% of climate decision-making bodies have included women at leadership levels (Ministry of Environment, 2024). The African Union (2024) urges the inclusion of gender-responsive policies in climate action frameworks to ensure women's voices are adequately represented.

## Policy Implications:

- Strengthening gender policies and enforcement mechanisms and transforming social norms, attitudes, and practices will significantly reduce gender-based violence and improve legal protection for women and girls.
- Expanding financial access, inclusion, and training programs will promote women's economic opportunities, security, and independence and increase their participation in productive economic activities.



- Investing in leadership mentorship and quota systems will enhance women's representation in governance and decision-making roles.
- Bridging the gender digital divide through targeted interventions will ensure equitable access for women to technology and digital financial services.
- Enhancing climate adaptation initiatives with a gender-responsive approach will ensure women contribute to and benefit from climate resilience efforts.
- Targeted policies and investments that address mental health needs will improve overall gender equality outcomes and contribute to a healthier, more resilient society.

## Conclusion:

While significant progress has been made in advancing women's rights—particularly in political representation, education, and human rights advocacy—critical gaps persist in addressing violence against women, economic empowerment, and gender inclusion in climate and digital governance. Emerging challenges, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence and mental health concerns, demand urgent and targeted interventions. Achieving gender parity and economic inclusion requires a multifaceted approach that integrates policy reforms, financial accessibility, and sociocultural shifts.

The evidence presented underscores persistent disparities while also highlighting the transformative potential of well-structured interventions. Policymakers, institutions, and development partners must move beyond rhetoric to implement actionable and innovative strategies that dismantle systemic barriers and foster sustainable, inclusive growth. The intersection of gender, technology, finance, and governance necessitates urgent, data-driven responses that are both transformative and scalable. Without deliberate commitment and accountability, progress will remain incremental at best. Investing in women and girls is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for sustainable development and economic prosperity. The time for passive observation is over—decisive action must define the path forward.

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