

USING THE MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO IMPLEMENT THE AFRICAN UNION'S WOMEN'S RIGHT PROTOCOL



IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

Taaka Awori

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On Behalf of



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FOREWARD

Using the multi-sectoral Approach to implement the African Union's Women's Rights Protocol is a product of Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) and Equality Now's efforts at promoting the human rights of women in Africa. This solidarity journey commenced in July 2002 and was formalized under the pan African network 'SOAWR' in September 2004. Since then the SOAWR coalition generated various knowledge sharing products to aid the campaign to breathe life into the Women's Rights Protocol. These are available at www.soawr.org

Experience has taught us that rights are not enjoyed unless claimed and this has been the motivation driving us to lobby countries to demonstrate leadership backed with action in honoring their commitments and obligations under the African Women's Protocol, which is an additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. So, commitment on paper only is not enough and countries are urged to deliver on their obligations.

It is 13 years since the Protocol was adopted by the African Union (AU) Assembly and 11 years since it entered into force. Thirty-seven (37)¹ of the 54 AU member states have ratified it and are state parties to the treaty. This tool was prepared for these countries to utilize as they work on delivering on their obligations and thereby ensure women are enjoying their human rights. The SOAWR coalition will track progress made by these countries while also seeking to collaborate and lend support to countries that welcome such collaboration.

We hope this will be a very useful tool and we welcome feedback from member states as well as civil society organizations.

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¹Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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Appreciation also goes to all the African Union member states who believe in the value of this approach by honoring their commitments under the African Women's Rights Protocol. Feedback on your experience with the application of this tool will be of tremendous value in further refining it to be a useful tool.

We also appreciate the efforts of all civil society organizations, using the approach and promoting its application by their governments. It is truly through joint hands and one voice that we can deliver comprehensively on the enjoyment of all the rights provided for in the African Protocol on the Rights of Women.

Finally thanks to all the staff at Equality Now (Flavia Mwangovya, Judy Kosgei, Nyambura Thanji and Mary Ciugu) who invested a lot of time dealing with the logistics associated with this publication.

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The Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition, a pan African network of 50 member organizations spread out in 25 African countries has embraced the Multi-sectoral Approach as the most effective way of engaging all relevant stakeholders including various sectors of government to fulfill state obligations specified in the African Protocol on the Rights of Women. The commitment and dedication of the SOAWR members in advocating for the utilization of this approach by all African Union member states is inspirational.

²For a copy of the Manual see <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/6/manual-multi-sectoral-approach-to-women-s-rights-in-africa>



SOLIDARITY FOR
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS
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MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ
POUR LES DROITS
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES
Une force pour la liberté

USING THE MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO IMPLEMENT THE AFRICAN UNION'S WOMEN'S RIGHT PROTOCOL

A TOOL TO ENHANCE IMPLEMENTATION

1. Introduction and Background

On 11th July 2003, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ('The Protocol'). The Protocol is a legally binding instrument with the most comprehensive articulation of women's rights issues relevant to the lived realities of girls and women in Africa. Of the 54 AU member states, 49 have signed and 37 have ratified the Protocol. Implementation of the instrument is the responsibility of the whole of Government not just the Ministry responsible for Gender. In addition, strategic partnerships with non-state actors are key as they complement state efforts. In that regard, the multi-sectoral approach (MSA) provides a framework for convening different sectors within Government and actors outside of Government in a joint effort to implement women's rights as provided for in the Protocol.

Since 2012, Equality Now and SOAWR have conducted 11 national and regional trainings with both State and Non State Actors on using the MSA to implement the Protocol. *The Trainings used the Manual for the Multi-Sectoral Approach to Women's Rights in Africa* developed by Florence Butegwa and Taaka Awori in 2010 as the primary resource material. Participants, however, expressed a need to have further practical guidance to support them in the application of the approach. The following Tool has been developed in response to that request.

It should be noted that each context is unique so implementation of the MSA may look different in diverse countries. As a result, this Tool avoids providing detailed prescriptions to

be followed in each instance. Instead, the Tool uses a coaching approach and provides a set of questions to help determine the most appropriate action to take in that unique context.

The Tool begins with a summary of the key premises and pillars of the MSA as provided for in the Manual. It then provides questions to guide implementation, which can either be used during an MSA training workshop or can be worked on in-country with support of a coach or technical adviser. Either way, the questions are designed to enable stakeholders to analyze their situation and determine how best to apply the premise or pillar being discussed. Practical examples are also shared on how different countries have implemented each pillar of the MSA. Following on this, the Tool shares lessons emerging from implementation of the MSA since the Manual was developed and then concludes with references for further reading.

2. Using the Multi-Sectoral Approach to Advance Women's Rights

The Manual notes that the multi-sectoral approach to ensuring realization of women's rights is based on five key premises:

- Promoting women's rights and empowerment is a national priority and not just of importance to the women's machinery in Government.
- Each organ and department of government is responsible and accountable for women's rights falling within its mandate.
- Coordination is the key to successful multi-sectoral initiatives
- Technical expertise is necessary.
- Partnerships are critical for the success.

The Manual states, however, that for the approach to work successfully, a number of factors should be in place. The first is political will reflected in the commitment of key leaders and technocrats to deliver on women's rights. This is critical to ensure buy-in and participation of the different stakeholders.



The second factor is to put in place a coordination mechanism that operates at different levels. It may bring the different stakeholders together at a very high level or it may convene them at a more operational level.

Another factor that ensures success is a clear determination of each sector's responsibility with respect to women's rights. Different sectors may need specific technical support to fulfill this responsibility, which is why technical and advisory support is also an important factor for success.

To ensure that steady progress is being made by different sectors, another important ingredient for success is a monitoring and accountability framework. This should clearly identify the targets to be tracked and a process or mechanism for mutual accountability against those indicators.

3. The Pillars of the Multi-Sectoral Approach – Questions for Reflection

The following are the key pillars of the MSA, with some questions for key stakeholders to reflect on as they implement this approach:

Promote women's rights and empowerment as a national priority

The MSA is most effective when it is implemented in a context where women's rights are regarded as a national priority. This could be reflected in laws, policies, budgets or integration in the National Development Plan. Rather than prioritizing all rights of women, sometimes one may find that it is more strategic to focus on specific issues such as violence against women, maternal mortality or girl's education. This serves as an entry point to gain political momentum and traction on women's rights more generally. Whatever issue the state prioritises, it is important to identify which article of the Protocol is being addressed and to



Burkina Faso's First Lady, Her Excellency Madam Bella Sika Kabore together with Equality Now's End FGM programme Manager, Mary Wandia.

carefully identify what steps the state is required to take to fulfill its obligation as provided for in the selected article/issue.

Questions to guide implementation:

- o To what extent is women's rights a national priority in your country?
- o What are the critical issues concerning women's and girls' rights that your country could or should prioritise? How would these issues serve as an entry point to gain traction on women's rights more generally?
- o What are the specific actions required to raise the importance and priority of women's rights?
- o What is the level of political will with respect to women's rights?
- o What or who are the drivers of change in this respect? Is it the women's movement? Or specific actors within Government? The Executive?
- o How will you develop or strengthen political will on women's rights? See page 20 of the MSA Handbook on developing potential strategies to develop political will.
- o What are your next steps in this regard?



In March 2015, Equality Now and the SOAWR coalition, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of Senegal, held a training workshop on the MSA framework. At the workshop, countries present came up with specific issues that they felt were critical to promoting the human rights of women. Two to three countries, for example, decided to focus on economic empowerment. More specifically, they focused on the state's obligation under article 19 (c) of the Protocol which provides that the state will take appropriate measures to "promote women's access to credit, training, skills development and extension services at rural and urban levels in order to provide women with a higher quality of life and reduce the level of poverty among women." Other countries picked other issues.

For example, Article 5 of the Protocol which obligates state parties to “...take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate harmful practices... including female genital mutilation...” At this workshop therefore, participating countries recognized that rather than tackling all women’s rights, it would be more strategic to focus on specific rights guided by existing priorities.

Contribution of individual government departments to women’s rights

Sectors across all levels of government should be involved in implementing measures aimed at addressing discrimination against women and girls. Accordingly, the second pillar of the MSA is to identify which government sectors have a role to play in the realization of the rights provided for in the selected article or sub-article of the Protocol. In this respect, the MSA framework proposes division of roles amongst individual government departments where each leverages its comparative advantage.

Questions to guide implementation:

- o Have you clearly identified all the government sectors relevant to the specific women’s rights issue you have identified?
- o Have you determined their specific obligations with respect to the women’s rights issue given their sectoral mission and mandate?
- o To what extent have these sectors integrated gender into their medium-term sector plans?
- o Do they have a specific unit on a gender related issue in their sector e.g. Ministry of Education may have a unit on Girls Education.
- o What political incentives do they need to do this? For example, in Ghana, the Ministry of Finance and Planning requires all Sector Ministries to integrate gender within their annual sector plans and budgets. What incentives are there in your context?
- o Do the different sectors have the necessary capacity to integrate gender into their plans? What technical support or financial resources do they need to do this?





Kenya is one of the countries that benefited from the MSA training in 2013 and 2014. In 2015, the Anti-FGM Board, which has a mandate to coordinate government action to end female genital mutilation decided to utilize the MSA approach in realizing its mission. Equality Now supported the Anti-FGM Board to convene different sectors of government who had a role in ending FGM. Some examples of roles of those present were:

- *Ministry of Education* – This Ministry is involved because girls are taken out of school by their parents for FGM. It was determined that they have a role to play in developing policies that guide schools in addressing FGM and even teaching students about FGM.
- *Ministry of Health* – The Ministry of Health is an important stakeholder because Kenya has one of the highest rates of medicalization of FGM. It was thus determined that the Ministry has a role to play in ensuring medical staff are not performing FGM at hospitals and clinics and that there are policies and directives that guide hospitals and clinics in the prevention of FGM. Furthermore it was agreed that the Ministry has a role to play in the provision of medical support to victims of FGM
- *Police Commission* – has a mandate to enforce the law and address criminal actions. FGM is illegal in Kenya but there are times when police don't take action. Accordingly, the Police Commission has a role to play in ensuring that the Police are well informed about the law and are well resourced to take action when cases of FGM are reported.

At the end of the workshop, each sector developed an action plan to address the issues related to FGM within their mandate. Civil society organizations and UN agencies were also present and pledged to work with the different government agencies.

Coordination is key for successful multi-sectoral initiatives:

Another pillar of the MSA is effective coordination of the different actors and initiatives. It ensures that all activities are implemented under one coherent strategy. Ideally, the

APUTO PROTOCOL =
END TO FGM, CHILD,
EARLY & FORCED
MARRIAGE

LE PROTOCOLE DE
APUTO = FIN AUX MG
MARIAGES D'ENFANTS
RÉCOQUES ET FORCÉ

TIME TO AC
STOP FGM



Faiza Mohamed, Director Africa Office, Equality Now.

role should be assumed by an entity with gender and human rights technical expertise. They also should have sufficient convening power within government and command the necessary financial resources. The coordination body would have three core functions: (i) clarification of the roles and commitments of various sectors; (ii) monitoring of progress; and (iii) facilitation of information flow and learning between various sectors.

Questions to guide implementation:

- o It is always important to avoid a multiplicity of mechanisms. Accordingly, before establishing a new body, it would be good to ask: Is there an existing mechanism that could be used for an MSA to promote women's rights? In this case, the focus would be more on strengthening this mechanism to play this role. For example, there may already be a mechanism that the Women's Machinery uses to convene various actors around women's rights. If this is in place, could this be strengthened to include more active engagement from stakeholders from other sectors?
- o Leadership of the coordinating body is key. Accordingly, which Ministry or Agency has the strongest convening power on women's rights in your context? In this instance, convening power refers to the ability and influence to lead sector ministries in a coordinated effort to ensure the protection of women's rights. One cannot always assume that the Women's Machinery is best placed to do this. Therefore, conduct a political analysis of your context to determine who is best placed to lead the coordinating body.
- o Will you need a cabinet decision or policy to establish the coordinating body? This will depend on how high level the body is? A mechanism that convenes Political Heads (i.e. Ministers) or Permanent Secretaries/Chief Directors may require some level of cabinet approval. A mechanism that primarily convenes technical people from different sectors may not. One has to examine what is most appropriate in your context.



In Namibia, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare developed the National Gender Policy 2010 – 2020 and the National Gender Plan of Action. The Policy and Plan of Action were designed to improve the status of women in Namibia and fulfill Government’s obligations under international women’s rights instruments including the Protocol. Right from the beginning it was recognized that a multi-sectoral approach would be required for implementation of the Policy and Plan of Action. Accordingly, the Ministry developed a National Coordinating Mechanism that was approved by Cabinet for implementation. The mechanism consists of six (6) clusters made up of various key stakeholders including government, civil society organizations as well as private sector. The clusters are:

- Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Human Rights
- Health, HIV and AIDS
- Education and the Girl Child
- Poverty, Rural and Economic Development
- Governance, Peace and Security
- Media, Research, Information and Communication

These clusters are located at national, regional and local levels. The reports of all the clusters at the different levels are discussed at a National Permanent Task Force of senior civil servants (Permanent Secretaries from various ministries). They in turn report to Ministers (under the Chairpersonship of the Prime Minister), on the status of gender equality in the country. The Ministry is not expected to implement the policy but is expected to coordinate the implementation of the policy. In addition, the Ministry is expected to coordinate the provision of technical expertise to clusters when required. One of the advantages of the model of coordination used in Namibia is that it goes beyond the national level. This is in recognition of the fact that implementation of Government commitments on women’s rights often happens at the regional or district level. There is value, therefore, in creating a mechanism that coordinates different sectors at local level.



Technical expertise is necessary

Another pillar of the MSA is Technical expertise. Ministries may lack the technical capacity to integrate gender into their programmes or they may not know how to address the specific women's rights issue related to their sector. The Ministry of Gender can provide the requisite technical support in this respect. Alternatively, the technical expertise may lie within civil society or development partners. A key role of the Coordinating Body, therefore, is to determine who needs technical support and on what, and who can provide that support.

Questions to guide implementation:

- o What is the level of technical expertise on gender within the relevant sector ministries?
- o In which sectors and on what issues is technical support most needed?
- o Where have you usually turned to for additional technical support? Donors? Women's organisations?
- o What are ways you can strengthen this technical expertise?



Child marriage is violation of the rights of the girl child with a devastating impact on a girl's dignity and well-being. The Ministry of Gender alone in any country cannot effectively address the issue. Equally important are the Ministries of Education and Health, the Judiciary and Law Enforcement agencies. A multi-sectoral approach is, therefore, critical. In Ghana, the Ministry of Gender is developing a Strategic Framework to End Child Marriage to ensure coordinated actions by the different sectors. A Core Technical Group convened by the Ministry provided technical expertise for the development of this strategic framework. The Core Group comprised technical staff from various Ministries as well as representatives from CSOs and Donor agencies with intimate knowledge of child marriage issues. The Core group has reviewed drafts of the Strategic Framework and provided inputs to improve the quality of national response to child marriage. In this case, therefore, the Ministry of Gender has used its convening power to gather technical support from many different sources.

Partnerships are important for the success of multi-sectoral initiatives:

The final pillar in the MSA is around partnerships. Partnerships, particularly those with donors and civil society, enable Government to secure the financial and technical resources required to protect women's rights through a multi-sectoral approach. Experience has shown that Government leadership and ownership is important for such partnerships to be successful. In addition, there should be a clear articulation of: a) the purpose and objectives of the partnership; b) the expected roles or deliverables of each party; c) the values governing the behavior of each party.

Questions to guide implementation:

- o What are you trying to achieve with a partnership? To secure financial resources? To secure technical support? To strengthen political will?
- o Which donors are currently providing resources for women's rights in your country?
- o To what extent are they supportive of the MSA approach? How can you leverage their support?
- o How is the women's movement or civil society working on women's rights organized in your country? Are there networks or platforms that enable Government to engage with non-state actors in a coordinated manner?
- o How can you build on previous successful collaboration between Government and civil society?



In another example from Ghana, the Government recognized that one of the factors affecting the protection of children was the uncoordinated and fragmented nature of interventions by different sectors and actors. Accordingly, in partnership with UNICEF, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection conducted an extensive consultation process that resulted in a Child and Family Welfare Policy that was approved by Cabinet. This was followed by the



development of a strategic framework that identified prioritized interventions in the medium-term and specified which institutions would lead on each intervention. Again, Government led this process but in partnership with UNICEF who provided both financial and technical support. The Policy and the Strategic Framework thus enabled more coordinated actions by the different sectors and less duplication. Finally, to ensure sustained coordination of the different actors both within and outside of Government, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Gender to establish a National Child Protection Committee. The Committee is a multi-sectoral coordinating structure at the national level consisting of senior members of relevant Ministries, CSOs and Development Partners. The Ministry's partnership with UNICEF has thus been invaluable in implementing an MSA with respect to child protection.

4. Lessons Emerging from Implementation of the Multi-Sectoral Approach

In the last decade, the MSA has increasingly been used to address issues that cut across one ministry, department or agency. For example, the MSA has been used to coordinate responses to child protection, social protection, nutrition and violence against women. What is emerging from these experiences is that coordination of different actors across different sectors continues to be a complex and challenging task. However, what is also evident is that without collaboration between the various sectors and agencies, there is significant duplication, wastage of resources and minimal impact. There is increasing interest, therefore, in learning how to make the MSA work in practice. This section of the tool shares what the recent experiences are teaching us about how to successfully implement the MSA.

One of the lessons emerging is that the premises and pillars identified in the Manual still hold true. For example, political will is still critical; without it, it is very difficult to ensure collaboration of actors with different agendas and interests to deliver commitments on women's rights. Experience is also revealing the importance of a good coordination mechanism to convene and hold together the different actors. The case studies also show that without financial and technical support, it is very difficult to bring different actors together and move in the right direction.



Another lesson emerging is the importance of strong leadership. This leadership can either be political or operational but it should sit within or lend itself to the coordinating body. In Ghana, the strong leadership came from the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, who showed a strong commitment to social protection to ensure Government delivered on its commitment on the issue. She also had sufficient political capital to convene powerful Ministries such as Local Government and Education to work collaboratively on social protection. In another case in Ghana, the strong leadership came from the Coordinator of a Unit within the Ministry established to bring together different sectors and actors to end Child Marriage. The strong leadership was evidenced in a participatory approach that regularly consulted different stakeholders but also a strong ability to influence them to move forward around a shared framework on Child Marriage.

Another lesson emerging is the importance of having a clear articulation of what the different actors are seeking to achieve, the different roles each of the key actors plays and the process or mechanism through which coordination will occur. In Namibia for example it is clearly spelled out in the National Gender Policy and Plan of Action. The specific document will depend on the context. However, what is important is that the document:



- Defines the **goals and targets** that the different stakeholders are seeking to achieve and sets clear targets for achieving this. This becomes vital to ensure prioritization, non-duplication and monitoring progress.
- Articulates **the different roles** that the various stakeholders will play. This affirms the importance of each of the different actors in achieving the specific goal and provides a mechanism for mutual accountability.
- Defines how **coordination, collaboration and learning and sharing** will occur.
- Is developed in a **participatory** manner in order to gain buy-in and ownership in its implementation from the various actors.
- Includes indicators and a framework for monitoring progress and **tracking results/outcomes**.

Another lesson is the importance of trust in enabling different actors to work together effectively. Without trust, it is very hard for stakeholders to move out of their institutional silos and work collaboratively across agencies and sectors. The lead agency, whether it is the Women's Machinery or another institution has an important role to play in this respect, which it can do by:

- Using a highly participatory approach to coordinate and convene the different stakeholders;
- Being transparent, sharing information and encouraging others to do the same;
- Being sensitive to and effectively managing power dynamics;
- Never taking credit for other agencies or sector's successes; giving credit where credit is due; and
- Delivering results and keeping commitments.

5. Conclusion

The Akan people in Ghana have a proverb that states “It is easier to break a single broomstick than a bunch of sticks.” The saying is based on the belief in the power of collective action to achieve a desired goal. Every one who has been involved in the struggle to improve the lives and rights enjoyed by women and girls in Africa are only too aware that change cannot be achieved through the actions of one Ministry, one agency or even Government alone. It requires coordinated, collaborative action across sectors, agencies and between state and non-state actors. The MSA provides a framework for bringing key stakeholders together. When done effectively, the rewards are immense because they include: a shift from promises to action and from action to positive changes in women’s lives.



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For additional reading on using the MSA approach please see:

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