

# A Toolkit on Meaningful Involvement and Engagement of Girls and Young Women in African Union processes and platforms



With support from

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ACERWC - African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- ACHPR - African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- AU - African Union
- AUC- African Union Commission
- CBO - Community-Based Organizations
- CSO - Civil Society Organizations
- EAC - East African Community
- ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States
- GYW - Girls and Young Women
- GIMAC - Gender is My Agenda Campaign
- GYWN - GIMAC Young Women Network
- KSAs - Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes
- NEET - Neither employed nor in Education or Training
- RECs - Regional Economic Communities
- AUC WGYD – African Union Commission Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate

# Foreword

The relaunch of the African Union in 1999 re-envisioned the need for the continent to strive towards growth and economic development through cooperation and integration of African states. To achieve this, the Agenda 2063 of Africa by the African Union was developed as a blueprint to achieve social economic development within 50 years while promoting inclusivity and sustainability.



Towards the accomplishment of social economic development, the African Union recognizes the importance of the African youth that constitutes about seventy percent of Africa's. It is estimated that the numbers will double by 2050, therefore there is a need for innovative and sustainable ways to engage and involve the youth. With this exponential growth, young people are Africa's greatest asset in increasing productivity and diverse economic growth. Nevertheless, although Africa has the largest growing population, approximately 156 million youth in developing countries live in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are girls and young women.

The African Union has provided processes and instruments aimed at increasing the sustained influence of girls and young women (GYW) on decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions. This included the agenda 2063 and African Union 1 Million by 2021 Initiative that provided mechanisms for African Union organs including but not limited to the African Union Youth Division, The Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate (WGYD), Office of the Youth Special Envoy to lead in the involvement and engagement of GYW with the AU policy spaces and forums.

The recently launched 1 million Next Level Initiative aims at reaching over 300 million African youth with opportunities along 5 priority areas namely/: Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement, and Health and Well-being (4Es and H). In line with the above, the She Leads Program brings together a consortium of Child rights and Girl's rights organizations, feminist/women's rights organizations, and Youth-led organizations/ groups to increase the sustained influence of girls and young women (GYW) in decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions. The consortium works through three interrelated domains central to the She Leads programme: The enhancement of collective action of girls and young women in a gender-responsive civil society (civil society domain), Increasing acceptance of positive social gender norms (socio-cultural domain), and enabling meaningful participation of girls and young women in decision-making by political institutions (institutional domain)

This toolkit aims to shed light on what meaningful engagement of girls and young women means and what it takes to create an enabling environment in various African Union policy spaces. The GIMAC Young Women Network hopes that the understanding of meaningful engagement and participation for GYW and the proposed implementation activities for ensuring an enabling environment in the various AU policy spaces as outlined in this Toolkit will assist in ensuring GYW engagement and involvement and will also contribute to the attainment of sustainable development goal five on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. I wish to appreciate the contributions and efforts of SLs consortium organizations, Plan International, TDH Netherlands, FEMNET, ECPAT and DCI and all all individuals, organizations, and stakeholders who gave their valuable time, input, and feedback during this all-inclusive development process that resulted in the Toolkit.

**Helen Kezie-Nwoha**  
**GIMAC Network Chairperson**

# Preface and Acknowledgement

The She Leads Pan African Regional Programme would like to acknowledge all stakeholders, individuals, and organizations that have contributed to the development of this toolkit.

Ms. Karen Ondwasi, Chairperson of the GIMAC Young Women Network, and Ms. Elisah Mbiza of the GIMAC Network Secretariat provided overall leadership during the development process. The She Leads Implementation Partners encompassed Plan International African Union Liaison Office, Defence for Children International (DCI), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Terre des Hommes the Netherlands (TdH-NL), and The Horn of Africa Youth Network (HoAYN); as well as the AUC Department of Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate, AU Office of the Youth Envoy, for providing stakeholders consultations and oversight throughout.

We express our gratitude to the consultant Ms. Rebecca Njuki for leading the development of this toolkit and her Research Assistant Patricia Muema.



# Introduction

This toolkit provides the step-by-step- processes that can be followed to successfully engage and ensure the effective participation of GYW in AU policy spaces. It further discusses the resources required to support the implementation process and provides useful resources. The toolkit is based on a systematic review of documents and a situational analysis of GYW participation engagement in Africa. For more information regarding African Union Youth, Girls, and Young Women policies, strategies, and instruments visit:

- One Million Next Level Initiative
- African Union Commission (AUC, 2020). Continental Framework for Youth, Peace, and Security.
- African Union Development Agency- NEPAD 2022. Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063. Continental Progress Report.
- The Women, Gender, Development, and Youth Directorate (WGYD)
- African Union Commission (AUC, 2006). African Youth Charter (pp. 1-22)
- African Union Youth Division
- African Union Office of the Youth Envoy
- AU Accountability Framework on the Elimination of Harmful Practices
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- The Saleema Initiative
- The Youth Cafe
- End Child Marriage campaign for the African Union
- The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)
- African Union Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment



# Background

The global agenda for sustainable development, goal five, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the most important undertakings, yet the world still seems far from achieving the targets. This includes ensuring that women and men are equally represented in decision-making in political and public life including the national political leadership and with effective participation.

The existence of gender inequality in political, social, technological, and economic spheres of life has increased the burden on women. The number of young women and girls that are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) is higher with 30 percent of unemployed constituting young women and 13 percent young men.

Young people who are neither educated nor employed are at a higher risk of being socially excluded thus limiting their civic participation in political and economic decisions within a society. Civic participation and involvement have advanced greatly in Africa with the use of technology in processes such as voting (electoral participation) and civic education through the use of various communication media in the continent. The disparity between men and women in pursuing training in technology-related courses creates a huge inequality gap in the number of women participating in technology advancement in Africa. Digital technology, on the other hand, has advanced businesses, becoming a pivotal success tool for the groups to access it.





The African youth bulge places the region at a perceptible loom of economic crises if not addressed. The African Union, through the agenda 2063, provided a platform for inclusivity through the Declaration of Gender Equality 2004, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and The Gender Parity Principle (Constitutive Act of the AU). Further fewer women compared to men use enabling technology in particular information and communication technology to promote empowerment.



The agenda 2063 aspiration 6, goal 1, includes achieving full gender equality in all spheres of life. Though there has been significant progress, we are far from the finish line. This has been attributed to a differential perception of the development indicators which have diverse definitions and interpretations which then leads to processes and structures characterised by uncertain and shifting priorities, and unexpected outcomes. One of the important elements in gender equality and women empowerment is ensuring the bottom-up trajectory, meaning, development should be informed by local resources, conditions, and aspirations.

The African Union (AU) has continued to put in place regional and intercontinental policy spaces and strategies aimed at achieving sustainable, inclusive, and diverse development within diverse spheres of development.



The AU policy spaces advocate for African leaders to actively create a positive culture for the youth, ensure collective action for GYW in regional spaces is nurtured, enhanced, and that intergovernmental pan-African institutions adopt concrete measures to increase the meaningful participation of GYW and improve member states' accountability towards GYW rights and ensure awareness of AU processes. However, the practice of ensuring meaningful participation of GYW in decision-making processes and contribution in the spaces is lacking. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding of what constitutes meaningful engagement of girls and young women and the facilitating factors for creating an enabling environment to enable GYW in Africa to take part and engage in various African Union policy spaces.

# What is the purpose?

There has been a growing programmatic need to increase the sustained influence of girls and young women (GYW) in decision-making and to transform gender norms in formal and informal institutions. The greater focus has been on enabling meaningful participation of girls and young women in decision-making at an institutional level which includes the African Union. The main objectives of this toolkit are:

1

To provide a guide on what meaningful engagement and participation of girls and young women mean.

2

To provide a guide on the mechanism for meaningfully engaging girls and young women in the African Union spaces

3

To provide a guide on creating awareness for Girls and Young Women from both rural and urban areas on the African Union processes.

# Intended users of the toolkit

Gender equality and empowerment implementing partners.



African Girls and Young Women



Formal and informal youth networks



Civil Society Organizations



African Union



Policy Makers



Funding Partners/Donors



Private sector



# What do Girls and Young Women (GYW) define as meaningful participation and engagement?



Situation analysis to inform the toolkit demonstrated a lack of a single agreed definition of meaningful participation and engagement. However, key expressions that define meaningful participation for GYW within the AU are noted below;

- To be leaders in planning and convening meetings: GYW should be the main conveners of the conferences, workshops, and meetings regarding Women and Girls' empowerment issues. These include involving them as key partners, moderators, speakers, and facilitators not just as mere observers.
- To be in active leadership roles: GYW are bearers of information about their needs and solutions, and therefore, they want to be empowered to be key contributors in policy spaces. They want to play an active role in their leadership of the community and leverage other capacities.
- Active engagement and roles in GYW-focused board rooms with spaces for GYW in the board constitution. The measure of success should be the number of GYWs active in board rooms.

- To be recognized as a diverse and intersectional group. GYW programmes should take into consideration age-specific differences, social class, and linguistics. GYW are not a homogenous group clustered in Africa, but rather individuals with different needs, demands, interests, and contexts. The AU definition of 18-35 Years, the wide age bracket means that the needs, abilities, and career development paths differ and impact their ability to engage and get involved with the AU departments.
- To access and benefit from the availability of information from Governments and the African Union. The need to create information-sharing platforms that are easy to access and are safe spaces for further dialogues with feedback mechanisms.
- To have a deliberate process that improves the ability of GYW to enhance or develop new knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSAs), systems, and structures to create awareness and involvement with the AU policy spaces while ensuring sustainability.
- To have a truly inclusive engagement and participation in public policy, a fair process that ensures all have an equal opportunity to engage and participate for all without discrimination that is streamlined across all walks of life including rural and urban areas, across all development sectors and interest groups.
- To be acknowledged and recognized for their contributions. Their efforts in their public policy should be acknowledged but not concealed as an institutional contribution. This includes published documents, programmes, innovations, and research projects to which they have contributed.
- To be permitted to have alternative feedback, allow criticism of the status quo of GWY programming, and ensure the creation of an environment to present empirical data as an alternative.





# Elements of GYW meaningful engagement and participation

## Introduction

Based on the consultations with GYW and key stakeholders representing the civil society and African Union, the scope of the definition of the term meaningful engagement for GYW differs from participation. Furthermore, it is paramount to take notice of the difference between the two terms participation and engagement with further references from the situational analysis.

Engagement involves the process, media, channel, source of information, or facilities/tools within the AU spaces that are available, accessible, useable, and reliable to the local GYW and the ease of utilization of these mechanics.

On the other hand, participation involves direct interaction including but not limited to activities and outputs of interventions that deploy these mechanisms within the AU and GYW. This is after a recommendable understanding of intentional facilitation and involvement within all the AU spaces on the role of GYW towards implementing policies. It involves the process of translating the existing policies into workable actions easily understood by GYW and broken down in a context that local and regional communities can actively implement. For example, the translation of the African Women Decade Report: Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) in countries such as Rwanda advanced the understanding of the works of the AU with women in the region thus creating and opening up a clear pathway and platform for the locals to engage with the policy and participate in activities that implement the policy.



Here are some more key elements of GYW meaningful engagement and participation according to Girls and Young Women;

**1. Inclusion and Representation:** GYW want to see themselves represented in decision-making processes within the AU. They believe that their diverse experiences and perspectives should be reflected in policies, programs, and initiatives.

**2. Accessible and Safe Spaces:** Creating safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces is crucial for meaningful participation. GYW want to feel comfortable expressing their views, knowing that they will be respected and protected from any form of discrimination, harassment

**3. Empowerment and Skills Development:** Meaningful participation requires equipping GYW with the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to actively engage in the AU spaces. This includes providing training, mentorship, and capacity-building opportunities to enhance their leadership abilities and advocacy skills.

**4. Collaboration and Partnerships:** GYW value collaboration and partnerships within the AU and with other stakeholders. They seek opportunities to work alongside policymakers, civil society organisations, and other youth groups to collectively address issues that affect their lives and communities.





**5. Influence and Impact:** GYW want their participation to have a tangible impact on decision-making processes and policies, and programs that address their specific needs and priorities.

**6. Intersectionality and Gender Equality:** GYW recognise the importance of intersectionality and gender equality in meaningful participation. They emphasise the need for inclusive approaches that consider the diverse experiences and identities of all GYW, including those from marginalised backgrounds and from rural areas.



### **Provision of friendly communication and awareness platforms**

GYW have their preferred ways of communication and platforms for information sharing. The preference will differ due to the intersectionality and diverse nature; thus, the communication and awareness platform should consider the unique platforms and preferences of the distinct groups. However, from our study findings, GYW receive communication from their social networks, mainstream media, and social media. It is important to meet GYW in spaces they are likely to be familiar with and thus easy to engage. Simple information such as the National level liaison AU office contact and location should be provided to GYW.

## Information-sharing platforms organised by the AU include.

1. The African Governance Architecture (AGA)
2. Boma of Africa
3. The Digital Green Corridor
4. The African Economic Platform
5. The African Union Organs including the Pan African Parliament and the Specialised technical committees.

## Resources and capacity gaps

Meaningful engagement and participation as defined by GYW is resource intensive and also requires specific minimum capacities built. There is a need to allocate a specific budget for GWY AU policy space awareness outreach as well as the implementation of activities such as travel and other incidental expenses, and capacity-building initiatives relevant to GYW. Furthermore, assigning GYW roles that constitute decision-making, policy and strategy development, and agenda-setting at the National/County - level demonstrates a commitment to meaningful engagement and participation of GYW in AU policies.



# Engagement in cross-cutting and diverse sectors

GYW want to be involved in important global and continental discussions. They have their needs and interests in these discussions. The engagement of GYW should therefore expand to cater for the different sectors.

Inclusive representation includes ensuring diverse representation of GYW across sectors and active participation from GYW from different backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, and geographic locations to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive representation. These sectors include education, human rights, health, economic empowerment, governance, peace and security, and environmental sustainability among others. GYW want to be included in discussions such as the African Union Agenda 2063 with focus on the social policy pillars, i.e., family policy, gender equality, access to social protection, universal access to societal services, quality, and inclusive education, good health and wellness, sufficient and nutritious food, access to formal markets and entrepreneurship and access to the informal and rural economies.

Furthermore, the African Union 1 Million Next Level Initiative aims at creating 300 million new opportunities for Young Africans by building their capacities in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and engagement and Health and Well-being (4Es and H) across the continent and in the diaspora. The strategies adopted for implementation included facilitating GYW-focused forums, leadership, and exchange programs to support African Young persons' direct involvement in helping us to build the Africa they want. GYW should be engaged in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of such continental activities.

# Adaptive programming

There is a need to understand the agencies that young people want to champion including participation in political spaces and adapt the programming to include the GYW's perceived needs. The needs of the GYW keep changing depending on the prevailing global, continental, and county-level issues. The programming of such GYW activities should be designed to adapt to the changing needs which include developing a project timeline that allows for monitoring and evaluation re-designing such programmes.



## Building new GYW networks and strengthening connections with the existing ones.

Being a member of a network is key to ensuring sustained relations and continuous information sharing including emerging opportunities. GYW networks differ based on diversity and intersectionality. However, national-level networks for GYW that provide information and opportunities for AU instruments, policies, and strategies are key to reducing the marginalisation of certain groups of GYW. This can be done by inviting GYW to the relevant events, and resources through social media platforms, webpage and dashboards that allow the GYW to subscribe to receive information. Further, existing local government networks at the different community levels should provide opportunities for continuous information and their agents such as Community-based organisations.

# Role of Civil Society Organisations and change agents.

Civil society organizations play a significant role in advocating for increased GYW participation in all decision-making organs, women's representation in parliament, and active participation in politics in Africa. In the study that informed the toolkit, the intermediary role of CSOs and the AU was a key success factor for the active participation of the GYW. GYW reports that CSO plays a key role in information sharing, dissemination, and networking. CSOs provide capacity-building programs and training to equip GYW with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage in decision-making processes.



This includes leadership development, policy analysis, and advocacy training. CSOs also advocate for implementation of instruments developed to champion for GYW rights such as Maputo Protocol. However, the role of the CSO in defining the needs and influencing agenda development processes for the GYW is perceived as an intrusive role by GYW. While the CSO facilitate the active participation of the GYW, they push to control the issue framing, agenda-setting, and policy formulation processes with minimal involvement of the GYW. The GYWs are involved as research participants and conference participants.

# Role Of African Union Office Of The Youth Envoy



The African Union (AU) Office of the Youth Envoy plays a crucial role in advocating for and promoting the interests of young people within the African Union Commission. The Youth Envoy serves as a representative and voice for African Youth, ensuring

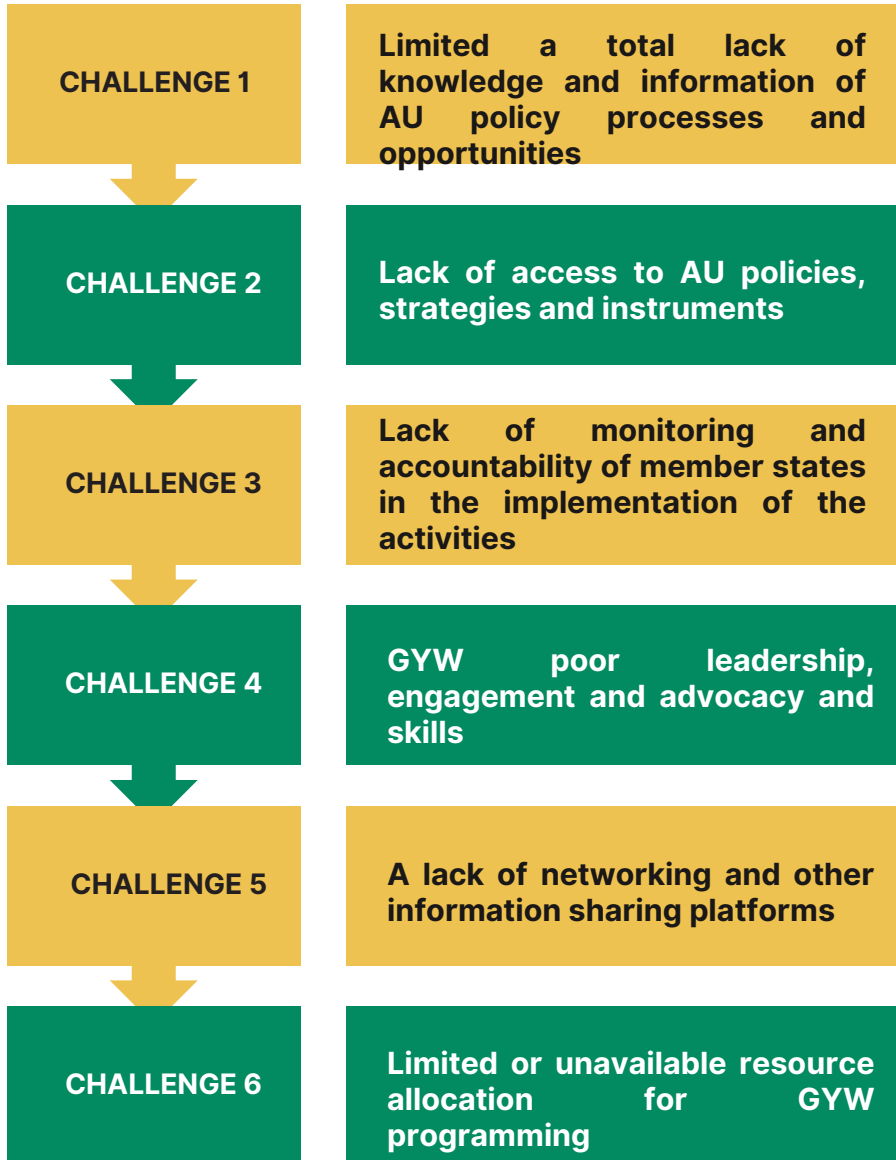
their concerns, perspectives, and aspirations are considered in the AU's policies, programs, and decision-making processes. The Office of the Youth Envoy works to enhance youth engagement and participation in AU activities. This includes promoting youth involvement in decision-making processes, providing platforms for youth-led initiatives, and facilitating youth consultations and dialogues.

The Youth Envoy provides policy advice and inputs on youth-related matters to the AU Commission, Member States, and other stakeholders. They contribute to the development of policies, strategies, and programs that address the needs and aspirations of African Youth.

While AU has developed policies, strategies, and policy instruments for different sector engagements for Girls and Young Women, the information needs to be more easily available and accessible to GYW with different backgrounds and abilities. There also needs to be an improvement in the online platforms to facilitate easy retrieval of information on the different policy spaces and information sharing by GYW. There is a need for the AU Youth Envoy office to provide continuous awareness of those existing policy spaces and opportunities and the working mechanisms for AU. A strong office of the Youth Envoy promotes easy accessibility to the AU by GYW.

# Barriers to GYW engagement

## Challenges to meaningful engagement and involvement



# Mechanisms to meaningfully engage and involve GYW in AU policy spaces

## 1. Access to information, communication, and technology for AU policy spaces information sharing

**Information sharing:** Information sharing on the AU processes including opportunities for GYW should be made easy to access and available. This can be implemented using technology and non-technology-based platforms.

Develop and create awareness for information-sharing platforms: The selection of the information-sharing platforms should be guided by the diversity of GYW.

- Technology-based platforms for GYW include AU and Member states Ministerial websites and platforms such as website and dashboards, google play store applications, and social media platforms.
- Non-technology-based platforms include consultation forums for GYW at continental, national, and community levels.





**Use of media:** Media is at times an overlooked stakeholder that can help create great results in GYW empowerment to engage and participate in AU processes. The use of both mainstream and new media should therefore be taken up by GYW through their various networks, implementing partners, and stakeholders especially the use of radio, television, newspaper, social media platforms, podcasts etc.

**Information sharing via newspapers:** Opportunities for engagement and participation in AU policy spaces should be published. Details should include the office and location in each member state to receive more information, contact or liaison person, and the due deadline application dates.

**Information sharing via television and radio:** Regional and local TV and Radio stations like community radios are an effective way of information sharing. Information shared should include opportunities available with the AU policy spaces for each member states, eligibility criteria, qualifications, and in-county application procedures.

In the new era of social media, this is another platform that can be tapped into to promote access to information. GYW with access to mobile phones and internet spend a large percentage of their time on social media. As a result, the AU can continue to leverage on this avenue to share as much information as possible.



## 2. Exploring facilitating factors for GYW-Led Engagement Initiatives

- Working with GYW to identify resources, social and professional networks, coping strategies, and support to facilitate their active engagement and participation in the AU policy spaces for all sectors while taking into consideration the intersectionality and diverse nature.
- Mapping local networks for GYW and providing the subreption requirements
- Providing information about the organisation and planning in the different existing networks
- Support the registration of GYW in networking platforms or organizations to increase their policy discussion and opportunities for information sharing.
- Ensure the younger girls and young women are not overshadowed by the older ones, as their agendas may defer according to age.
- Work with GYW to continuously find creative ways of ensuring their participation and engagement in a fast-changing world and find ways of building on their existing strengths. This includes running surveys working with GYW.
- Support GYW in mobilizing resources to initiate own-led programmes and manage the funds. This includes building their capacity for resource mobilization and fund management.
- Ensuring inclusivity of groups at risk of marginalization such as persons with a disability, refugees, and residents of conflict areas.



### 3. Ensuring meaningful leadership experience/engagement

Provision of opportunities for GYW to utilize their skills and capacities as participants and leaders in the community. Further, Identifying the roles GYW would like to play in the programmes/community and together identifying capacity building needs and providing opportunities to engage with key stakeholders.

### 4. Co-creation of programmes and implementation with the GYW

- **Listen to the GYW from the different age groups:** Listening to GYW help identify their needs including how they can organize themselves to engage in the AU policy spaces.
- **Engagement with different levels of government:** GYW consultation forums that allow them to debate and questions their felt needs should be held at the different government level in member countries. This includes national, regional, and community-level forums that ensure engagement with different levels of government and stakeholders. The engagement forums should focus on informing, consulting, influencing, partnering, and empowering GYW.
- **Provide a feedback mechanism:** Create feedback mechanisms with GYW at all government levels to let them know how their input was incorporated, and how government policies will impact them.
- **Capacity development** of GYW to enable them to engage in development centred conversations at all levels and make their voice heard.
- **Allocation of resources:** Implementation of GYW programmes will be difficult without financial and human resources. For the implementation of governmental GYW programmes, the government should put a mechanism for funding. Funding opportunities should be availed to CSOs who support GYW activities implementation.



- **Bottom-up approaches to GYW engagement and participation:** Building ownership of the GYW groups, ensuring the constitution of the group, the leadership, and the agenda are championed by the GYW. GYWs in the groups identify their needs and champion the discussion with the government and local stakeholders and partners at the community level. CSOs can play a big role in supporting the existence of the groups.

## **5. Participation and engagement in the policy formulation and development processes.**

A meaningful engagement and participation of GYW is through the process of issue framing, agenda setting, policy formation, and advocacy & policy dialogue across all the development sectors within the AU policy spaces. GYW representation in the entire policy development for AU should be brought to the table by ensuring their active role in the processes.

### **How do issues become part of the agenda?**

Issues can become part of the agenda through a multi-faceted process. Firstly, information and evidence derived from evaluations and existing programs play a pivotal role, providing data that highlights the severity and magnitude of a situation, indicating the need for attention. Empowering various stakeholders, including the affected groups, in the design and execution of data collection and analysis is essential in this regard. Additionally, the collective action of interest groups and social movements can thrust specific issues into the spotlight, ensuring they gain prominence in public discourse. Furthermore, engagement with the media significantly contributes to issue recognition and prioritization.

## Why do some advocacy issues not make it to the agenda?

GYW may present a number of advocacy issues to the table, however, not all issues manage to secure a place on the agenda. Some factors hindering their inclusion include poorly defined problems, inadequate indicators and misaligned values, issues getting overshadowed by more pressing concerns, a lack of recognition as relevant issues, and not being deemed legitimate state concerns. As a result, it's important that GYW are given proper guidance on how to raise and frame their issues in a manner that will call for action.

## What are the steps in engaging and participating in policy development?

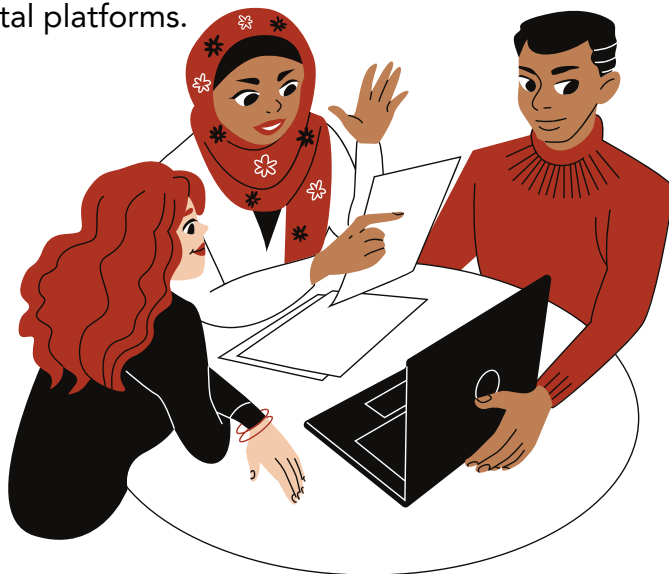
- **Build knowledge and understanding:** GYW should start by building knowledge and understanding of the policy issues that are relevant to their interests and concerns. They should do the necessary research and familiarise themselves with the policies, laws, and frameworks that govern those areas.
- **Identify Relevant Platforms and Opportunities:** GYW should seek to identify platforms and opportunities where policy development discussions and engagements take place. This could include government consultations, civil society initiatives, youth consultations, or online platforms. GYW needs to stay updated on upcoming events, workshops and consultations related to policy development.
- **Issue framing:** The way a problem is stated or the issue is framed influences the types of solutions that are proposed. Policy stakeholders often take different sides of an issue. For instance, regarding the role of GYW in AU policy spaces, some policy stakeholders perceive it should be addressed by the individuals themselves while others see the need to mainstream the role of GYW in the government ministerial processes.

Some might argue this is not a problem, while Sometimes stakeholders take the same position on an issue, but for very different reasons. Issue framing influences stakeholders' ability to get the issue on the policymakers' agenda so that a problem is recognized, and policy response is debated. Issue framing often sets the terms for policy debate. "The eventual fate of a policy proposal is also a function of how it is formulated in the first place—how it defines the problems to be attacked and what it offers in the way of policy solutions" (Porter, 1995: 15)



- **Agenda setting:** Agenda setting refers to getting the "problem" on the formal policy agenda of issues to be addressed by presidents, cabinet members, Parliament, Congress, or ministers of health, finance, education, or other relevant ministries. Stakeholders outside the government such as GYW and CSOs can suggest issues to be addressed by the policymakers, however for a problem to be addressed through a policy, the government policymakers must become engaged in the process. At this stage, all the agenda brought to the government policymakers pass through a competitive process, and not all problems will be addressed. However, if the problem continues to be a prominent issue, and individuals or groups act, the legislators place the problem on the policy agenda.

- **Policy formulation:** This is the process by which the proposed actions are articulated, debated, and drafted. The process includes setting the goals and objectives and the outcomes of the policy. GYW should actively engage and contribute to the processes such as policy dialogues, research, evaluation, and data analysis of the evidence related to the problem. GYW should further prepare clear and concise messages and recommendations on the policy issues they want to address. They should back their statements with evidence, examples, and data to strengthen their arguments. Focus on the specific changes or improvements you would like to see in the policies.
- **Advocacy and policy dialogue:** This involves the ability to work with a range of stakeholders to convince policymakers to address a certain issue. It involves the ability to set up networks to organize advocacy campaigns aimed at highlighting the issues to be addressed. Both advocacy and policy dialogue is an important aspect of policy development that GYW should engage in within the AU policy spaces. The involvement of GYW on such issues starts from different levels such as the community level to continental platforms.



## 6. Mainstreaming and integrating systematic GYW engagement and participation in the programming cycle for all sectors within the AU policy spaces



### **Establish results-oriented programming**

Involve GYW in conducting assessments such as baseline and monitoring data for benchmarking within their field/sector.

Collaborate and actively involve GYW in research, analysis, and data interpretation. This includes discussions on the implications of the data to programmes with the AU policy spaces.

Involve GYW in program development and re-design after the evaluation and monitoring.

Collaborate with GYW in designing and conducting awareness campaigns.

Collaborate with GYW in the documentation of processes, impacts, and effects of the sectors. This involves ensuring they earn a place in authorship when they participate and are acknowledged as contributors.



## Measuring GYW engagement and participation

Develop tools and methods for measuring the extent to which GYW are getting involved in AU policy spaces within the member states.

Develop continental agreed-upon indicators and a shared dashboard for uploading the data that will ensure measuring GYW engagement and participation in AU place spaces to be adopted by all member states.

Integrate the measurement of GYW engagement with member states' ministerial departments in charge of gender mainstreaming.

Develop a checklist and standard operating procedures for conducting the measurement of engagement that allows prevalence estimates.

Establish platforms for dissemination of the findings and the impact to stakeholders and the community at large.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of GYW engagement and participation strategies. Regularly review progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.

By implementing these strategies, the AU can ensure that GYW engagement and participation become integral components of the programming cycle across all sectors. This will promote gender equality, amplify GYW voices, and contribute to more inclusive and effective policies and programs throughout the continent



# Information links

[1 Million by 2021 initiative.](#)

[Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security | African Union  
Second Continental Report on The Implementation of Agenda 2063 |  
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[AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment](#)

[Strategic Plans | ACERWC - African Committee of Experts on the  
Rights and Welfare of the Child](#)

[CAMPAIGN TO END CHILD MARRIAGE IN AFRICA CALL FOR  
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[GUIDED by the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the States  
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