

# Advocacy Toolkit

for young women and girls engagement in intergovernmental processes



**ROZARIA**  
MEMORIAL TRUST  
*Creating Opportunities: Unleashing Potential*



## **FOREWORD**

Rozaria Memorial Trust as a community rooted organisation impacting lives of women, girls and young people strives to bring the authentic voice and self-representation of these communities into policy spaces at regional and continental levels. This self-representation translates the statistics and documented innovations from women and girls to directly impact the relevance and quality of policies and strategies adopted by governments in the multilateral spaces.

RMT' approach recognizes that young women and girls are leaders today and beyond and must therefore be equipped with relevant knowledge and skills to enable them to be influential and effective in their communities and in intergovernmental spaces. This manual therefore provides that grounded understanding of processes and systems.

Lastly, the experiential approach is embedded in the work of the Trust. The manual will be used as young women and girls engage with policy makers in their Nhangas at various levels, it will be used as a tool during the, GIMAC skills building session as well as with other regional civil society parts such as through the Breakfree Consortium. It will also be applied as these young leaders directly seek and or participate in the intergovernmental meetings and processes.

As RMT, we are grateful to the funding partners who made this possible Break Free and IM as well as our strategic institutional support with Elma. We value the advice and support from friends enabling my work as AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage. We hope and encourage use of this important resource as we advance women's rights and empowerment of girls.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda  
Founder/Executive Director  
Rozaria Memorial Trust

## About Rozaria Memoria Trust (RMT)

Rozaria Memorial Trust was founded by Dr Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda in the year 2007. It is a non-profit making organisation based in Zimbabwe. We support girls' and women living in rural communities through innovative initiatives that promote education, health, and entrepreneurship. RMT work focuses on interventions in communities that seek to influence, national, regional and global policies affecting women and young people especially girl.

[www.rozaria.org](http://www.rozaria.org)



Basilia Munemo speaking up on the abolishment of FGM during the Africa Girls Summit 2021.

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## List of Acronyms

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| AU      | African Union  |
| AUC     | African Union Commission                                     |
| CBO     | Community Based Organisations                                |
| CEDAW   | Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women |
| CEN-SAD | Community of Sahel-Saharan States                            |
| COMESA  | Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa                |
| CSW     | Commission on the Status of Women                            |
| CRC     | Committee on the Rights of the Child                         |
| EAC     | East African Community                                       |
| ECCAS   | Economic Community of Central African States                 |
| ECOWAS  | Economic Community of West African States                    |
| FOCAC   | Forum on China-Africa Cooperation                            |
| GEWE    | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment                      |
| HRC     | Human Rights Commission                                      |
| IGAD    | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                   |
| MoU     | Memorandum of Understanding                                  |
| NGOs    | Non-Governmental Organisations                               |
| OATUU   | Organisation of African Trade Unity                          |
| RECs    | Regional Economic Commissions                                |
| SADC    | Southern African Development Community                       |
| SDGEA   | The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa          |
| STC     | Specialized Technical Committee                              |
| UMA     | Arab Maghreb Union   |
| UN      | United Nations   |
| UPR     | Universal Periodic Review                                    |
| WGYD    | Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate                         |

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# 1. Advocacy in intergovernmental spaces

## Scope of this guide

This guide is a tool to assist young women and girls to understand the different intergovernmental spaces and processes, clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of the institutions. It provides practical guidelines for young women and girls on how to do simple advocacy both at continental and community level and bridge the gap on international level to advance their rights, agency, and voice.

## What is Advocacy

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people in society can have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. It also seeks to protect and promote individual and/or collective rights. Effective advocacy seeks to ensure that individuals/groups have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives or circumstances.

Young women and girls' voice and agency is important in advocacy. Intergovernmental spaces provide an opportunity for young women and girls to influence decisions that will improve their lives and the lives of others. However, this space is difficult to navigate. This guide explains the different structures and processes, at the same time exploring areas of possible engagement.

## Types of advocacy

There are different types of advocacy:

- **Self-advocacy** refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights (VanReusen et al., 1994). In this type of advocacy, an individual speaks for herself or himself.
- **Individual advocacy** involves supporting people to exercise their rights by providing assistance to voice concerns, access information, resolve issues or to identify available support options. In this type of advocacy, an individual speaks on behalf of other individuals who have a concern.
- **Group advocacy** tries to influence public opinion and ultimately policy. It involves several people advocating together for a common goal.
- **Systems advocacy** highlights a systems gap that may be applicable to a broader cohort and that would benefit from systems change. It relates to broader systems and social policy change. It seeks to influence positive long-term changes to systems that support and respond to the needs of the community, including: the legislative, policy and practice environments.

Advocacy can be done in multiple ways. It can be a physical or virtual activity. It can include written papers or publications all in an effort to influence public policy, laws, and budgets by using facts, relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public. It can also use social media to influence. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organisation undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning, and publishing research.

## Advocacy Processes

Advocacy is a process that tries to support and enable people to express their views, thoughts and concerns, access information, advice and guidance and explore choices and options for services and care.

Illustration: Simply put, *“Being an advocate is about using your voice to demand change.”*

## 2. Understanding Intergovernmental processes

### Treaties, Policies and Mechanisms at the African Union

The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 member states located on the continent of Africa. It is an assembly of Heads of State and Government serving as the AU's supreme policy and decision-making organ. The Assembly determines the AU's policies, establishes its priorities, adopts its annual programme, and monitors the implementation of its policies and decisions.

The Assembly:

- Elects the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), for 1-year renewable terms
- Appoints the AUC Commissioners and determines their functions and terms of office
- Admits new members to the AU
- Adopts the AU budget
- Takes decisions on important AU matters
- Amends the Constitutive Act in line with the laid down procedures
- Interprets the Constitutive Act
- Approves the structure, functions, and regulations of the AU Commission
- Determines the structure, functions, powers, composition, and organisation of the Executive Council.<sup>1</sup>

### Why are treaties important?

Treaties are agreements among and between nations. It is an international agreement concluded in written form between two or more States (or international organisations) and is governed by international law. A treaty gives rise to international legal rights and obligations. These agreements provide foundations for ongoing co-operation and partnership. Modern treaties establish clearly defined land ownership and jurisdiction, and foster a new relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and understanding.

### **The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)**

[The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights](#) takes into consideration the virtues of African tradition to inspire and characterize their reflection on the concept of Human and Peoples Rights. The AU created a Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and this Committee, at its Extra Ordinary Session in 2014, unanimously appointed Dr Fatima Delladj-Sebaa as the Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and the African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage.

### **The African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the child**

[The African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the child](#) ensures that the situation of most African children remains critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional, and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation, and hunger, and on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity he or she needs special safeguards and care. The Charter takes the "best interest of the child" principle' as a primary consideration and this

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<sup>1</sup> <https://au.int/en/assembly>



strengthens the African position on child protection law. Article 21 (2) provides that Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory. Therefore Article 21 protects children against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices and state parties are called on to take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices.

### **The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ on the Rights of Women in Africa**

[Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) (Maputo Protocol on Women’s Rights)’s main objective is to protect women and girls from all forms of abuse across the whole of the African continent. The Maputo protocol has impacted greatly on domestic laws of some countries in Africa in relation to women rights.

### **The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality**

[The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality](#) is the strategic framework for delivering on Africa's goal for inclusive and sustainable development. It calls for member states' continual action toward achieving gender equality and reinforcing their commitment to international and regional women's rights instruments. The commitment to the principle of gender equality is enshrined in Article 4 (I) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women’s rights.

### **Why are policies important?**

Policies provide guidance, consistency, accountability, efficiency, and clarity on how an organisation operates. Public policy is very important in how an organisation, government or our society is managed. Policies guide decisions and actions toward those that are most likely to achieve the desired outcome. The African Union also has important policies that are worth noting.

It is important to understand, the key AU policies for women, young women, and girls:

- [Agenda 2063](#)
- [AU’s Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment \(GEWE\)](#)
- [The African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa](#)

### **Engagement with the African Union**

#### **African Union Heads of State Summit**

The AU Constitutive Act provides for the Assembly to meet in ordinary sessions two times a year in: January and June/July. Two-thirds of AU members are required to form a quorum at any Assembly meeting. The Assembly can also hold extraordinary sessions on request by a Member State and approved by a two-thirds majority of Member States.

## The importance of the AU Heads of State Summit

The AU Heads of State Summit is important to ensure that African leaders commit to issues affecting young women and girls - bringing life, voice, and experience to different themes. It can provide a platform for national engagement and follow up to ensure the commitments made by the African leaders turn into action. The AU Heads of Summit is also an opportunity for Governments to engage young women and girls formally and meaningfully, free of interference or intimidation, in developing, implementing, and monitoring commitments.

## The African Union Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights

On the occasion of its 25th Ordinary Session held in Bujumbura, Burundi, from 26 April to 5 May 1999, the African Commission adopted resolution **ACHPR/res.38 (XXV) 99** on the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Resolution appointed the first Special Rapporteur in May 1999 retroactively as from October 1998.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa is provided as follows but not limited:

- To serve as a focal point for the promotion and protection of the rights of women in Africa amongst the 11 Members of the African Commission;
- To assist African governments in the development and implementation of their policies of promotion and protection of the rights of women in Africa, particularly in line with the domestication of the newly entered into force Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights, relative to the Rights of Women in Africa and the general harmonization of national legislation to the rights guaranteed in the Protocol;
- To undertake promotional and fact finding missions in African countries Members of the African Union, in order to disseminate the human rights instruments of the African Union and to investigate on the situation of women's rights in the countries visited;
- To follow up on the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol relative to the Rights of Women in Africa by State Parties, notably by preparing reports on the situation of women rights in Africa and propose recommendations to be adopted by the Commission;
- When appropriate, to draft Resolutions on the situation of women in the various African countries and propose them to the Members of the Commission for adoption.
- To carry a comparative study on the situation of the rights of women in various countries of Africa;
- To define guidelines for State reporting in order to bring Member States to address adequately women's rights issues in their periodic and/or initial reports submitted to the African Commission;
- To collaborate with relevant actors responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of women internationally, regionally and nationally, such as:

- National governmental departments responsible for gender issues is each African Union Member State;

### The Africa Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage

The African Union Commission appointed the Goodwill Ambassador for the Campaign in May 2014. This appointment was welcomed by Civil Society, Governments and Donors. This mandate engages closely with the AU coordination mechanisms reporting directly through the commissioner for social affairs and works with the director for social affairs towards the fulfilment of her mandate. The day-to-day work, however, is through the division for vulnerable groups. This mandate includes:

- Acting as a public advocate for Africa's effort to end child marriage
- Providing advice (to both governments and CSOs and other relevant stake holders working on child marriage) - sits in the STCs and the Ministerial meetings as well as chairing the CSO reference group on ending child marriage.
- Building partnerships for the work on ending child marriage
- Supporting outreach work of the campaign.
- Supporting and accompanying country initiatives

### Civil Society Engagement<sup>2</sup>

Civil Society plays a critical role at the AU. Civil society organisations or individuals can engage with the AU organs through the Civil Society Division. This is a space where young women and girls can engage. The Civil Society Division is made up of civil society organisations.

#### Who are Civil Society Organisations?

- Social groups such as those representing women, children, the youth, the elderly and people with disability and special needs.
- Professional groups such as associations of artists, engineers, health practitioners, social workers, media, teachers, sport associations, legal professionals, social scientists, academia, business organisations, national chambers of commerce, workers, employers, industry, and agriculture as well as other private sector interest groups.
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and voluntary organisations.
- Cultural organisations including social and professional groups in the African Diaspora organisations in accordance with the definition approved by the Executive Council.
- Civil Society and Women's/gender network that engage with AU and globally with UN include GIMAC, FEMNET, SOAWR and Africa Women Leaders Network.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://au.int/en/civil-society-division>

## Core Responsibilities of the Civil Society Division

- Work with member states and partners to create and strengthen social integration systems by ensuring that the contributions of civil society are mainstreamed through all aspects of the AU principles, policies, and programs.
- Mapping civil society organisations in Africa and developing a database of African civil society organisations.
- The identification and utilisation of expertise within civil society organisations across the continent.
- Ensure effective participation of civil society in the activities of the African Union by organising relevant workshops on understanding the African Union.
- Encourage the support for inter-continental consultation partnership.

*The Civil Society Division can be reached through:*

*Website: [www.au.int/en/cido](http://www.au.int/en/cido)*

*Email: [cido@africa-union.org](mailto:cido@africa-union.org)*

*Facebook and Twitter: @AUC\_CIDO*

*Podcast: AU on the go*

## Young Women and Girls Engagement<sup>3</sup>

The AU has a Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate (WGYD) which is responsible for leading, guiding, defending, and coordinating the AU's efforts on gender equality, development and promoting women's and youth's empowerment through programs, projects and the development of gender and youth strategies policies. The WGYD ensures the implementation of the AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) including the coordination of youth policies and mainstreaming youth across the work of the AU. It also actively engages with youth, while supporting the work of the Youth Envoy as guided by the African Youth Charter<sup>4</sup>.

The WGYD has 3 Divisions:

1. Coordination and Outreach - coordinates the AU work on gender
2. Women and Gender Policy and Development - coordinates the development of policies for gender equality

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<sup>3</sup> <https://au.int/en/directorates/women-gender-and-development-wgdd>

<sup>4</sup> <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>

3. Youth Development and Engagement - coordinates policy development and mainstreaming of youth. Also supports the work of the Youth Envoy, and other programs that provide youth opportunities at the AU.

### The African Union Office of the Youth Envoy

The AU Office of the Youth Envoy is a Pan-African collaborative movement, supporting the work of the African Union and Departments on youth mainstreaming and advocacy for the implementation of progressive policies and impactful actions that promote youth participation, engagement, and leadership towards the realization of real transformation for youth in Africa. Under the guidance of the African Youth Charter, the office supports the protection of young people from discrimination, freedom of movement, speech, association, religion, property, and other human rights, while committing to promoting their participation in the society.

### African Committee Experts on the Welfare of the Rights of the Child<sup>5</sup>

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) established in 2001 with a mandate from the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It focuses on collecting information, interpreting provisions of the Charter, monitoring the implementation of the Charter, giving recommendations to governments for working with child rights organisations, considering individual complaints about violations of children's rights, and investigating measures adopted by Member States to implement the Charter.

Civil societies with official observer status or without can participate in the promotion of the rights of children through filing communications, preparing a civil society report regarding the status of rights in specific countries or help with investigative missions. Young women can mobilize and engage the committee through civil society.

### Gender Is My Agenda Campaign Network (GIMAC)<sup>6</sup>

GIMAC is a leading African women's civil society network made up of 55 national and international organisations. The aim of GIMAC is to create a space for civil society to monitor the implementation of the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the AU reporting mechanism for women's rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and other human rights instruments. It holds bi-annual Pre-Summit Consultative Meetings during the AU Assembly Heads of State and Government.

GIMAC is governed by a General Assembly and Board. It has 6 thematic focus areas:

1. Economic Empowerment
2. Education
3. Governance
4. Health
5. Human Rights

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<sup>5</sup> <https://au.int/en/sa/acerwc>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.genderismyagenda.org/thematic-focus/>

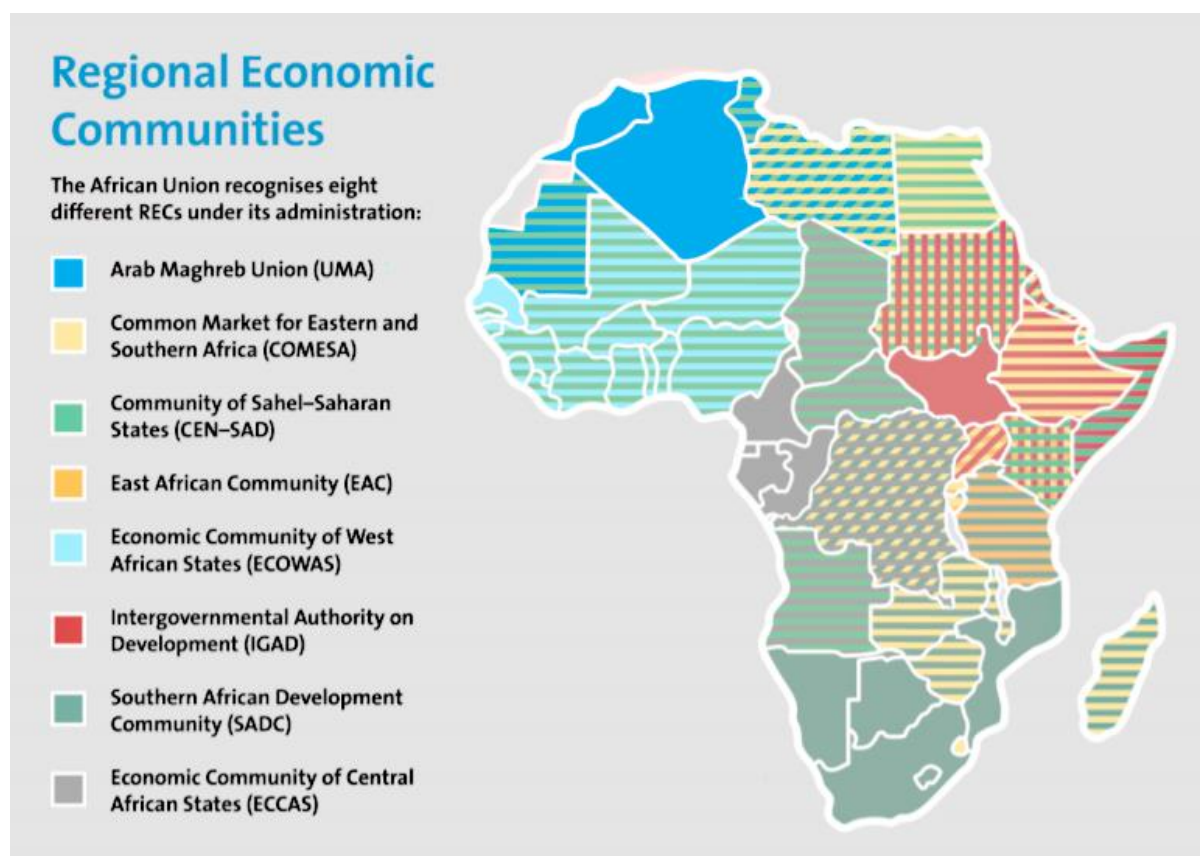
## 6. Peace and Security

### Engaging in GIMAC

Young women and girls can engage in GIMAC under a CSO or an individual. It is critical that young women and girls take part in the planning sessions. Prior to the GIMAC Summit, GIMAC often hosts 1 to 2 days of young women training on advocacy and leadership. Young women and girls can also play various roles like report writing, note taking, and being panelist during the conference. To engage with GIMAC please contact them through their website and share your experience promoting gender equality in the 6 thematic areas. [www.genderismyagenda.org](http://www.genderismyagenda.org)

## 3. The Regional Economic Bodies <sup>7</sup>

It is important to understand the regional groupings of African States when engaging in advocacy. These groupings are called Regional Economic Communities (RECs). RECs are also described as the building blocks of the AU. The RECS were developed in 1980 through the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa and the Abuja Treaty, to support regional and continental integration.



(Source : <https://www.pacci.org/regional-economic-communities/> )

<sup>7</sup> <https://au.int/en/organs/recs>



## Purposes

The purpose of the RECs is to facilitate regional economic integration between members of the individual regions and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC).

## Engagement modalities

RECs are closely integrated with the AU's work and serve as its building blocks. The relationship between the AU and the RECs is mandated by the Abuja Treaty and the AU Constitutive Act which is guided by:

- the 2008 Protocol on Relations between the RECs and the AU.
- and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU, RECs and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern and Northern Africa.

## 4. The RECs in Africa

### Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)

UMA is a regional organisation aiming to strengthen the ties of brotherhood between the member States and peoples to one another, achieve progress and prosperity of their societies and defending their rights, contribute to the preservation of peace based on justice and equity, pursue a common policy in different domain and work towards achieving free movement of persons and transfer of services, goods, and capital among the member states<sup>8</sup>. The Union consists of the following member states, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia<sup>9</sup>. Its headquarters is in Rabat, Morocco.

The Union has the following organs and institutions: the Presidential Council; the Council of Foreign Ministers; Specialised Ministerial Committees; the General Secretariat; the Consultative Council; the Judicial Organ<sup>10</sup> and the Maghreb Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade.

### Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

COMESA is a regional organisation aiming to attain sustainable growth of its Member States by development in all fields of economic activity, promotion of harmonious production and marketing structures and promotion of peace, security, and stability among the Member States to enhance economic development in the region<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Article 2, Treaty instituting the Arab Maghreb Union 1989

<sup>9</sup> Arab Maghreb Union, 'Member States' (UMA 2022)

<http://maghrebarabe.org/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B9%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%A1/>

<sup>10</sup> Article 4 - 13, Treaty instituting the Arab Maghreb Union 1989

<sup>11</sup> Article 3, Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

COMESA is composed of the following member states: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe<sup>12</sup>.

COMESA has the following main organs, the Authority; the Council; the Court of Justice; the Committee of Governors of Central Banks; the Intergovernmental Committee; the Technical Committees; the Secretariat; and the Consultative Committee<sup>13</sup>.

### Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD)

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States is a regional organisation focused on regional security and sustainable development of the Sahel Sahara region through the preservation and consolidation of peace, security and stability in the CEN-SAD zone, promotion of political dialogue and the fight against cross-border crime and its related scourges such as trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings, money-laundering and terrorism, combating desertification, drought and climate change through the preservation of natural resources and research in the field of renewable energies, infrastructure development and economic, commercial, scientific and socio-cultural cooperation<sup>14</sup>.

CEN-SAD is composed of the following member states, Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo, and Tunisia. Its headquarters is in Tripoli, Libya.

CEN-SAD has the following organs and institutions: the Conference of Heads of State and/or Government; the Executive Council; the Permanent Peace and Security Council; the Permanent Council for Sustainable Development; the Committee of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives; the Executive Secretariat; the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the Sahel-Saharan Bank for Investment and Trade<sup>15</sup>.

### East African Community (EAC)

EAC is a regional intergovernmental organisation that aims to develop policies and programmes to enhance cooperation among the Partner States in political, economic, social, and cultural fields, research and technology, defense, security, and legal and judicial affairs, for their mutual benefit<sup>16</sup>.

The East African Community is made up of seven partner States including the Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of

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<sup>12</sup> Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, 'Member States' (COMESA 2022)  
<https://www.comesa.int/members/>

<sup>13</sup> Article 7, Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

<sup>14</sup> Article 3, Community of Sahel-Saharan States Revised Treaty

<sup>15</sup> Article 9, Community of Sahel-Saharan States Revised Treaty

<sup>16</sup> Article 5, Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community 1999

Uganda<sup>17</sup> and the Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>18</sup>. Its headquarters is in Arusha, Tanzania. The EAC aims to establish a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union, including a Political Federation, that strengthens and regulates the industrial, commercial, infrastructural, cultural, social, political of the Partner States<sup>19</sup>.

The main organs of the EAC include: the Summit; the Council of Ministers; the Co-ordination Committee; the Sectoral Committee; the East African Court of Justice; the East African Legislative Assembly; and the Secretariat<sup>20</sup>.

### Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

ECCAS is a regional organisation that seeks to promote and strengthen harmonious cooperation and balanced and self-sustained development in all fields of economic and social activity to achieve collective self-reliance, raise the standard of living of its peoples, increase and maintain economic stability, foster close and peaceful relations between Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent<sup>21</sup>.

ECCAS includes the following member states: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe<sup>22</sup>. ECCAS has its headquarters in Libreville, Gabon.

The main organs of the Community are: The Conference of Heads of State and Government; the Council of Ministers; the Court of Justice; the General Secretariat and the Consultative Commission<sup>23</sup>.

### Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS is a regional organisation aiming to promote cooperation and integration and establish an economic union in West Africa to raise the living standards of its peoples, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> East African Community, 'About EAC' (EAC 2022) <https://www.eac.int/overview-of-eac>

<sup>18</sup> East African Community, 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo joins EAC as its 7th Member' (EAC 2022) <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/2402-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-joins-eac-as-its-7th-member>

<sup>19</sup> Article 5, Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community 1999

<sup>20</sup> Article 9, Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community 1999

<sup>21</sup> Article 4, Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States (E.C.C.A.S)

<sup>22</sup> Economic Community of Central African States, 'Member Countries' (ECCAS 2022) <https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/#structure>

<sup>23</sup> Article 7, Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States (E.C.C.A.S)

<sup>24</sup> Article 3, Revised Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 1993

ECOWAS is composed of the following member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo<sup>25</sup>. ECOWAS has its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria.

The main institutions of ECOWAS are the Authority of Heads of State and Government; the Council of Ministers; the Community Parliament; the Economic and Social Council; the Community Court of Justice; the Executive Secretariat; the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development; Specialised Technical Commissions<sup>26</sup> and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)<sup>27</sup>

### Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)<sup>2</sup>

IGAD is a regional intergovernmental organisation established to aid member states to achieve food security and environmental protection; promotion and maintenance of peace and security and humanitarian affairs; and economic cooperation and integration.<sup>28</sup>

IGAD's member states include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Uganda with its headquarters based in Djibouti, Djibouti.<sup>29</sup>

IGAD is comprised of the following organs: the Assembly of Heads of State and Government; the Council of Ministers; the Committee of Ambassadors; and the Secretariat.<sup>30</sup>

### Southern African Development Community (SADC)

SADC is a regional organisation created to enhance regional Integration and poverty eradication within Southern Africa through economic development and ensuring peace and security.<sup>31</sup> Its member states include, Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.<sup>32</sup> SADC has its headquarters is in Gaborone, Botswana.

The main organs of SADC include: the Summit of Heads of State and Government; the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Co-operation; the Council of Ministers; Sectoral/Cluster

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<sup>25</sup> Economic Community of West African States, 'Member States' (ECOWAS 2022) <https://ecowas.int/member-states/>

<sup>26</sup> Article 6, Revised Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 1993

<sup>27</sup> Economic Community of West African States, 'Basic Information' (ECOWAS 2022) <https://ecowas.int/about-ecowas/basic-information/>

<sup>28</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 'About Us' (IGAD 2022) <https://igad.int/about-us>

<sup>29</sup> Article 2, Agreement Establishing the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 1996

<sup>30</sup> Article 8, Agreement Establishing the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 1996

<sup>31</sup> Southern African Development Community, 'SADC Overview' (SADC 2022) <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/>

<sup>32</sup> Southern African Development Community, 'SADC Overview' (SADC 2022) <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/>

Ministerial Committees; the Secretariat; the Standing Committee of Officials; the Tribunal and the SADC National Committees.<sup>33</sup>

## 5. Why are RECs important for my advocacy?

The AU realises that Africa's integration is no longer a matter of choice. Political and economic priorities continue to change and thus harness the current momentum of regional integration. To date, the RECs have made slow but steady progress on Africa's integration, particularly in infrastructure (SADC, EAC), trade liberalisation and facilitation (West Africa economic and monetary Union, COMESA), free movement of people (ECOWAS), and peace and security (ECOWAS and SADC)<sup>34</sup>. Integration has considerable potential not only for promoting robust and equitable economic growth through markets, but also for reducing conflict and enhancing trade liberalisation. It is important to note that integration must be people-centered, with stronger citizens' partnerships, especially among Africa's growing youth population, private sector, and civil society, to ensure sustainable development. That is why it is important for civil society, young people to understand the importance of RECs and engage in strong advocacy.

### Examples of advocacy within the RECs

#### a) SADC child marriage model law

When the African Union set the Common Africa Position on Child Marriage in 2015, it set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years<sup>35</sup>. The data showed high rates of child marriage in Southern Africa. Civil societies working with women and girls lobbied with the Plenary Assembly of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) to adopt a model law<sup>36</sup> setting the minimum child marriage age at 18 years. On the 3rd of June 2016, the model law was adopted. The impact of it is that all the 16 countries which are part of SADC are required to formulate national laws to end child marriage.

#### b) ECOWAS Child Policy 2019-2030

ECOWAS adopted a child policy<sup>37</sup> which seeks to end child marriage in the region which has very high rates of child marriage. This has been championed by the first ladies of the ECOWAS region through their commitment through "The Niamey

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<sup>33</sup> Article 9, The Consolidated Text of the Treaty of the Southern African Development Community

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/importance-of-regional-and-continental-integration-for-africas-development-18773>

<sup>35</sup> [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31010-doc-cap\\_on\\_ending\\_child\\_marriage\\_-english\\_0.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31010-doc-cap_on_ending_child_marriage_-english_0.pdf)

<sup>36</sup>

[https://www.sadcpf.org/index.php/en/component/k2/download/4\\_03fc9d5b6e8879934f4b94959afd595f](https://www.sadcpf.org/index.php/en/component/k2/download/4_03fc9d5b6e8879934f4b94959afd595f)

<sup>37</sup> <https://ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ECOWAS-CHILD-POLICY-ENG-CON-Printed.pdf>

Declaration of ECOWAS First Ladies: Call to End Child Marriage and to promote the Education and empowerment of Girls”<sup>38</sup>.

### **c) East African Community Gender Policy**

On the 17th of September 2018 the EAC adopted a Gender Policy<sup>39</sup> which provides guidance on institutionalizing gender strategies ensuring the rights of women and men, boys and girls are promoted, protected on an equal basis. one of the areas it addresses is the gender income inequality.

## **6. Bridging the Gap - Links with International Processes**

The African continent and its RECs do not exist in a vacuum. They are linked to other global advocacy platforms that are critical to civil society participation, promoting safe civic space and protecting civil society actors at risk. Meaningful participation<sup>40</sup> of civil society in international processes and bodies, including in the United Nations, relies on free and vibrant democratic spaces with effective participation channels for diverse groups at the national level. This, in turn, requires respect for freedom of expression and access to information online and offline, freedom of association and physical security for those who speak up and assemble peacefully. It is important to link community, regional and global advocacy.

### **The UN Human Rights Council**

The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States and elected by the UN General Assembly. It is responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe. The HRC can discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets in Geneva at least 10 weeks per year during regular sessions that take place in March, June, and September. The Council can also convene urgent meetings on short notice to respond to emerging human rights crises.

#### **Accessing the Human Rights Council**

You can attend regular and special sessions. To attend sessions of the Human Rights Council, you need ECOSOC accreditation.

*[in a text box] If your organisation does not have ECOSOC accreditation, you can contact a partner organisation that does. They may be able to give you accreditation as a representative of their NGO.*

#### **Registering to deliver an oral statement**

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<sup>38</sup> <https://ecowas.int/the-niamey-declaration-of-ecowas-first-ladies/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/146-gender,-community-development-civil-society/1217-eac-launches-gender-policy>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/3Ps\\_civic\\_space.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/3Ps_civic_space.pdf)



If you are delivering an oral statement at the Council on behalf of your NGO, you must first register under a specific agenda item (registering for a ‘speaking slot’) usually one week in advance of the Council session.

*[Text box] Only organisations with ECOSOC accreditation can register.*

### **Delivering an oral statement**

To deliver an oral statement at the Council, you need ECOSOC accreditation.

*[Text box] If your organisation does not have ECOSOC accreditation, you should contact a partner organisation that does. They may be able to deliver the statement for you or give you accreditation as a representative of their NGO.*

### **Participating in a side event**

To attend a side event at the Council, you do not need ECOSOC accreditation, but you need to have access to the UN.

*[Text box] You may be able to watch side events from home if they are live streamed. Side events are only live streamed if the sponsors of the side event organize it themselves. If you are a panelist at a side event, you can either participate in person if you have access to the UN, or you can speak on the panel using a video-conferencing system (e.g., Skype).*

### **Meeting with governments**

To meet with governments, you do not need ECOSOC accreditation.

*[Text box] However, if you are trying to meet with governments during a session of the Human Rights Council, they will most likely only be able to meet at the UN, and so you will need to have access to the UN*

### **Influencing Government statements**

To lobby governments to make statements, you do not need ECOSOC accreditation.

### **Negotiating resolutions (participating in ‘informals’)**

To participate in an informal, you do not need ECOSOC accreditation, but you do need to have access to the UN.

## **The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)<sup>41</sup>**

CSW is the main global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women’s rights, documenting the reality of women’s lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. During the Commission’s annual two-week session, held in March, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organisations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York to

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

discuss progress in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Actions and SDG 5.

UN Women supports all aspects of the Commission's work. We also facilitate the participation of civil society representatives. The global and African NGO CSW network is critical to coordinating civil society engagement at CSW. Civil Society can participate as part of government delegations, in the annual youth forum, can host parallel events or as CSO observers.

### *Illustration: How can I be engaged?*

**Ministerial segment** that reaffirms and strengthens political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

This is where ministers engage in high-level interactive dialogues to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and good practices. You can follow the discussion through UN Web TV

**General discussion** on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made, and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges. Subject to time availability, oral statements may be delivered during the general discussion by a limited number of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC.

*Only organisations with ECOSOC accreditation can register.*

**Interactive expert panel** discussions and other interactive dialogues on steps and initiatives to accelerate implementation and measures to build capacities for mainstreaming gender equality across policies and programmes. A limited number of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC will be able to make oral interventions during the interactive panels, subject to time availability.

*Only organisations with ECOSOC accreditation can register to participate in the panel discussion.*

### **Written statements**

NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may submit written statements on the thematic issues considered by CSW. Submission of written statements usually opens in September. NGOs in consultative status may submit one individual statement per organisation and may sign on to multiple joint statements. NGOs are strongly encouraged to submit joint statements in collaboration with other NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC.

### **Side Events**

These are events that are convened by Member States physically on UN premises of UN Missions. To attend a side event during CSW, you do not need ECOSOC accreditation, but you need to have access to the UN. You can participate during side events virtually.

### **Parallel Events**

These are events that are organized by NGOs, and anyone can attend.

### **CSW Youth Forum**

UN Women holds a Youth Forum where young people develop recommendations that are linked to the priority theme for each year. This is a space for young women and girls to connect, collaborate, network, and engage with other advocates across the world.

### The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>42</sup>

CEDAW is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Adopted by the United Nations in 1979, CEDAW is the most important human rights treaty for women. The CEDAW Committee consists of 23 independent experts on women's rights from around the world.

The CEDAW treaty is a tool that helps women around the world to bring about change in their daily life. In countries that have ratified the treaty, CEDAW has proved invaluable in opposing the effects of discrimination, which include violence, poverty, and lack of legal protections, along with the denial of inheritance, property rights, and access to credit.

### The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>43</sup>

The CRC is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by its State parties. CRC monitors implementation of two optional protocols to the Convention, on involvement of children in armed conflict and on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. States must report initially two years after acceding to the Convention and then every five years. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

Both CEDAW and the CRC treaty bodies that need to be ratified by States. Find out if your country ratified CEDAW or CRC on the [UN Treaty Body Database](#)

### The HRC Universal Periodic Review (UPR)<sup>44</sup>

The UPR is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member States once every 4.5 years. The UPR is one of the most innovative and powerful achievements of the HRC and is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed. It provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/introduction-committee>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/HRC\\_booklet\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/HRC_booklet_EN.pdf)

and to fulfil their human rights obligations, as well as the challenges and constraints they are facing in fulfilling human rights obligations.

During UPR Working Group meetings that are held 3 times per year, UN member States spell out positive achievements, express concerns and ultimately pose recommendations to the States under review. Each year 42 States are reviewed, receiving an average of 180 recommendations each. Reviewed States are then expected to indicate which recommendations they support, and to report on measures and steps taken to implement them, which on average are 75% of all the recommendations made.

UPR also provides a space for States to request technical assistance from other States to enhance their capacity to deal effectively with challenges and for them to share best practices.

The aim of this process is to concretely improve the human rights situation in all countries with significant consequences for people around the globe and address human rights violations wherever they occur.

## 7. Coordination with other national actors

Given the different intergovernmental processes, young women and girls can find ways of engaging and participating in the different processes. One can join NGO coalitions which can be local, national, regional, or international. Different coalitions focus on different themes. Find the one that resonates with your advocacy. You can also cooperate other actors at the national level, not only in preparation for your country's periodic reviews, but also as part of the follow-up.

*[Text box] Some relevant actors you may want to reach out to in preparation for periodic reviews. National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow up (NMRFs), Trade union, Parliamentary committees, including those established on specific human rights topic, Representatives of the judiciary, UN agencies and country team, Diplomatic community, Specialized institutions (e.g., on disability, on children, etc.), National media*

### Young Women Human Rights Defenders

Across the world, young women human rights defenders (YWHRDs) play a vital role in the work to end all forms of discrimination, combat impunity and promote the full participation of young women and girls in public, digital, political, social, and civic spaces. YWHRDs have become subject to increasing levels of violence, harassment, and resistance for their human rights work. They face gender specific forms of violence and resistance from State actors including additional resistance from their communities, religious leaders, and families as their work is seen to challenge traditional notions of family and gender roles.

The UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on Civic Space Note to protecting civil society actors at risk, promoting free and open civic space that enables participation from a broad range of civil society actors both offline and online, and building more effective channels, allows for civil society's meaningful participation in decision making processes.

### Example of reporting reprisals using an inquiry

Inquiries are a powerful tool that can be used by human rights defenders (HRDs). HRDs can submit information to a Treaty Body and request that its members initiate an inquiry into well-founded allegations of “serious” human rights violations by a state party. It’s important to note that for you to be successful, working in coalitions and collaborating with other NGOs and relevant actors, such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) or UN country teams is vital for many human rights mechanisms.

*Anyone can submit information to a Treaty Body for consideration to commence an inquiry. There is no requirement that organisations have ECOSOC status (or be registered with the UN).*

## 8. Back to my community

*What are the principles of good advocacy*

*Clarity of purpose ,Safeguard, Confidentiality, Equality and diversity, Empowerment and putting people first.*

### Community Engagement and Advocacy

#### **Practical ways of doing your advocacy**

##### **Identify your advocacy issue**

There are a couple of things that are important to follow when you are doing advocacy. First, identify your advocacy issue. What is it that you are passionate about?

##### **Understanding cultural contexts**

Cultural context is very important. It is critical to identify cultural practices that contribute to the issue identified. Map out the progressive cultural or traditional leaders that you can work with to accelerate gender equality and be effective. Consider using communication styles that would be respectful while still addressing your issues. Consider what community avenues are available to initiate dialogue on the issues.

##### **Who is working in my area of advocacy?**

Find out who works in your area of advocacy. This could be an individual, an organisation, or a REC. For example, if your advocacy is on ending child marriage, at AU, the department that works with ending marriage is the harmful practice department.

##### **How do I contact the individual, an organisation, or a REC?**

There are multiple ways of making contact as listed below

- Email
- Use twitter
- Use Facebook
- Send a letter or note

If you decide to write a letter, these are some of the tips you can use

- Letters should be neat and readable.
- Letters should be clear and concise.
- If you have a personal story about the issue, share it.
- Always use a formal address that includes a formal title e.g. “The Honorable, Senator, Representative, Delegate).
- Write your name and address clearly on the letter.
- If you are writing in support/opposition to a campaign or law, include the name of the campaign or the law that you are advocating for.
- Always be courteous and respectful.
- Include only one issue per letter.

**If you are using an email:**

- It’s best to personalize it.
- Make sure that you have a clear subject line
- Address it to the appropriate person
- Write it in a manner that reflects your opinion.
- If it is urgent, make sure that you indicate the level of importance
- Make sure to include your full name and your home mailing address (as opposed to just your e-mail name and address) at the bottom of your email.
- You can use the same format for the letter that can be posted.

**If you decide to make a phone call:**

- Typically, you will speak with a receptionist first.
- Inform the receptionist why you are calling and that you would like to convey your feeling on an issue.
- Give basic information including your name, address, the issue about which you are calling and your opinion.
- Phone calls are viewed as a means of communicating a brief opinion. Therefore, make sure that you are brief and to the point. If you want to communicate more than that, consider writing a letter or scheduling a meeting.
- If you are asked a question you cannot answer, simply say “I do not know.” You might say that you will get back to them with the information.

**If you decide to have a meeting:**

- Schedule your meeting way in advance. Make sure that you indicate clearly why you want to have a meeting, the dates, and times you are available, the issues you want to discuss, and the names of others joining you on the visit.
- A day before your appointment/meeting , send a confirmation email or a call to confirm date, time, location, the issues you want to discuss, and any other people who will be coming with you.
- Preparing for your meeting:
- Be prepared. Bring any relevant materials or resources with you. If you visit in a group, have one person take the lead. He/She can introduce the group, make a brief statement about why you are there, and then call on various people in the group to talk about their concerns.



- If you are asked a question and do not know how to answer, explain that you do not have the answer but would be happy to do some research and send the information after the meeting in a timely manner.
- Write a thank you letter/email to all those you met with after the meeting. Reiterate your main position on the issues and include any additional information that might have been requested at the meeting.

## Social Media Advocacy

Social media advocacy means taking advantage of social networks to promote your cause and connect with supporters. Leveraging social platforms allows you to tap into different resources that include friends, colleagues, industry influencers, government officials and other stakeholders.

When used together with other advocacy efforts, social media can bolster outreach efforts by spreading information about a cause, reinforcing relationships among supporters, promoting participatory dialogue between different people who believe in the same cause, and strengthening collective action. Social media can be a powerful ally when it comes to engaging current supporters and reaching new ones.

Social media is a very important part of people's lives. It has evolved from being a handy means for keeping in touch with friends and family to being used in ways that have a real impact on society. The influence of social media is being used in ways that shape politics, business, world culture, education, careers, including innovation.

### Practical ways to use social media

#### 1. Develop a strong, passionate voice on social media

You may have shared, liked, and retweeted someone's tweet, but the secret to success as an advocate is to add your own original writing and thoughts to the conversation.

Your voice should be passionate about the issue you are advocating for. You must cultivate, build and optimize/maximize that personality for social media.

*Illustration: Who are you: Are you funny, serious, provocative? Do you have strong opinions about certain conversation, or are you more of a moderator who empowers others to share their opinions? Let your personality show in your tweets*

Once you develop your voice, you must stick to it – because the people who become your followers will be attracted to this personality and over time will identify you by it.

#### 2. Practice writing clearly and with sophistication

The type of the people you attract on social media will be those who understand your clarity that you bring to the social media content you share.

Ensure that your writing clear with no typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors as this will reflect poorly on the issue you're advocating for. The best way to learn to write effectively on social media is to follow those who advocate for the same issues and have built loyal followings by developing thoughtful, and provocative content.

#### 3. Become a thought leader around the issues you are passionate about

Advocates who become subject-matter experts within their issues not only gain a loyal following on social media but also can leverage that following to advocate more effectively for other issues.

To become a thought leader, you'll want to start by researching what other thought leaders are writing within your environment, and then build your writing around trying to fill the holes and deficiencies within the issues. When you read what others are saying, always think of ways to communicate your messages better and differently – and that will be the basis for how you'll set yourself apart as a thought leader.

#### **4. Promote social media activity among your peers, friends, and colleagues**

Social media is all about building connections, networking, leveraging those in your circle – and not just with an outside audience. You also want to build a strong social network with your peers, friends, and colleagues. By following each other on social media and interacting continuously with each other, you can share others' content, start conversations, steer, and shift into a more positive light for your advocacy issue.

#### **5. Understand the demographics of your target audience**

If you take the time to develop a solid understanding of what type of people your advocacy is trying to reach, you'll instinctively figure out how to communicate with them more effectively on social media. In fact, you'll find yourself adapting your content to appeal to their sensibilities. This will add tremendous value to your social advocacy efforts.

## **9. Conclusion**

Effective advocacy is possible within intergovernmental spaces. Young women and girls can make the difference, influencing decision makers and contributing to policy change. No effort is too small for change to take place. Young women and girls can shift between different policy-influencing instruments and approaches that include advocacy, lobbying, and activism to push for the implementation of existing legislation and policies on girls' and young women's rights. They can continue putting pressure on international and regional bodies to hold member states accountable.



*Young people during a dialogue with Zambia First Lady, H.E Lungu at the African Girls Education Conference.*