SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE BRIEFING PAPER
Rights of Women and Children

Empowering women is key to the economic development of Africa, and according to the African Gender Equality Index, the continent still has a long way to go before it reaches gender parity. Improving women's access to education, family planning, maternal health, and financial services can dramatically help a country both socially and economically. In fact, a recent study by McKinsey shows that Sub-Saharan Africa can add 12% to its annual GDP in 2025 if it closes its gender gap.[1] Empowering African youth is similarly important for the development of the continent. Africa is the "youngest continent in the world," with 60% of the population under the age of 25.[2] However, there needs to be significant improvement in providing young Africans with equal access to education and employment in order for continental development to reach its potential.

The Specialized Technical Committee on the **Rights of Women and Children** works to build and implement policies that empower women and children to reach their full socio-economic potential. It designs programs such as the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Project in post-conflict countries, and enforce African obligations and commitments made under international, continental, and regional human rights law. The STC fulfills keys aspects of Agenda 2063, which mandates "full gender equality in all spheres of life" and "engaged and empowered youth and children."

Task

You are attending a yearly meeting of the Committee on Rights of Women and Children within the African Union. The meeting will take place under the backdrop of increased interest from the international community, and potentially an influx of development money meant to support the goals of the Committee and Agenda 2063 at large. Your task is twofold: **(1)** Identify a minimum of five areas of substantial need on the continent that are connected to the issues of gender and the rights of women and children; and **(2)** develop two to three short and long term strategies to meet the needs previously identified.

The challenge for this committee group is to assess the needs of different peoples across the continent, and develop strategies and solutions to meet these needs on a continental scale. This committee touches on perhaps the most important global issue, human rights, and therefore should seek solutions on a local, regional and continental scale.

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[1] "Closing the gender gap and empowering women for development in Sub-Saharan Africa" – The African Institute for Development Policy (2016)

[2] "The World's Youngest Continent" – Bill Gates (2018)

Key questions to consider from the perspective of your assigned country and region

1. Does your assigned country prioritize rights of women and children? If so, how? If not, what are some of the reasons why and what are the challenges with this?
2. What countries and/or regions are succeeding and which are failing in promoting the rights of women and children?
3. What programs, institutions, or policies are already in effect on the continent to protect and empower women and children socio-economically?
4. How do educational outcomes differ between boys and girls on the continent and why do educational outcomes matter in terms of someone's ability to rise out of poverty?
5. How can development money best be used to protect the rights of women and children? What policies can be enacted to ensure that women and children benefit from development projects?
6. How do your proposals affect the rights of women and children in the short-term? How about long-term goals toward equality (achieving Agenda 2063)?
7. Are there any other committees with which it might make sense to collaborate on proposals (i.e. Trade and Industry, Social Development and Labor, Agriculture and Environment, Monetary and Financial Affairs, Infrastructure and Transportation or Defense and Security)? In what way?

Resources

Women & Gender:

- African Union: Country Profiles
- World Bank, Gender differences in employment and why they matter"
- UN, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa"
- Africa Development Bank Group, "Empowering African Women; An Agenda for Action" (2015)
- OECD, "The Social Institutions and Gender Index Regional Report"

Children:

- International Labour Organization: Child Labour in Africa
- UN: "The role of education in promoting the rights of children in Africa" (2017)
- Human Rights Watch: "Africa: Make Girls' Access to Education a Reality" (2017)
- Save the Children: "Protecting Children's Rights in Conflicts and Crisis in Africa" (2016)