Governance And Gender Discrimination in Africa:

Presentation On Contributions to Panels On Governance And Democratisation; And Gender Discrimination

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Setting The Context: Governance

▶ As simplistic as this may sound, it is important to begin by defining governance and the context within which it is used here:

▶ So, what is governance? Put simply, Governance is a process through which an entity [including processes and elements within the entity], ranging from an organisation to society is organised, structured, managed, and administered in order to ensue the survival, growth and sustainability of the entity.

▶ This process includes all the mechanisms for decision making, implementation and enforcement in the entity.

Governance Continued:

- In this sense we can speak of Societal [Country, unit of a country] and or organisational [associational] governance; as well as governance of specific processes of human activity in the society, such as corporate governance, trade union governance, workplace and world of work governance, Natural Resource Governance, Environmental Governance, among others.

- Governance is participatory, when it is inclusive and representative, and enables and enhances citizens participation in the running of the affairs of society or members participation in the running of the affairs of the membership association.

- It is Transformative when it is not only inclusive and representative, but also responsive and sensitive to the varying needs of citizens [and or members], as well as enabling and promoting fairness, equity, social justice and equality.

Setting The Context: Gender Discrimination

- Gender discrimination is a process of social interactions and social relationships in which people are treated unequally, and in a manner that is disadvantageous on the basis of, or as a result of their gender.

- The end result and outcome of gender discrimination is gender inequality.

- The fact that even now in the 21st century gender discrimination persists and remains embedded in society, is manifested in the lingering gender gaps and persistence of gender inequality in society.

- What is important to note however, and what is significant for our conversation, is that gender discrimination and gender inequality are products of social processes, the dynamics of interactions within social relations, and as such they are socially contructed.

Gender Discrimination Continued ……

▶ It follows that if gender discrimination and gender inequality are the outcomes of specific social relations, then decisively altering the nature and character of social relations should lead to different outcome.

▶ Therefore, if gender discrimination and gender inequality are socially constructed phenomena, then they can be socially deconstructed and reconstructed, by ensuring social relations that are more inclusive, representative, fair, just, equitable and equal; and as such fundamentally altering the nature of existing social relations in society

Work And The World Of Work:

- We must begin from the understanding that work [that is the deliberate and conscious actions that we undertake in order to produce what we require to sustain our existence] is the central defining character, propeller and driver of Human Civilisation; as such, the world of work is basic and key to the course of human development.

- In this context the world of work is all encompassing, and involves the conditions of work and of the worker in the place of work, in the home - that is in the family, as well as in the community and the wider society – encompassing all the three dimensions of the existence of the worker.

Work And The World Of Work Continued ….

- In order for humanity and human civilisation to evolve and develop in the interests, and responsive to the aspirations and concerns of all of humanity, then this world of work, and the conditions of this world of work must include and involve in equal measure women, and not just men, and must be safe for women, and not just for men.

- It follows thus, that if we are to fundamentally transform the nature of social relations that give rise to gender discrimination and gender inequality, then we must transform, the nature of work, and the world of work.

Setting The Context: Decent Work:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity".

- In general, work is considered as decent when: it pays a fair income. it guarantees a secure form of employment and safe working conditions.

- Promoting jobs and enterprise, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection and promoting social dialogue are the four pillars of the ILO Decent Work Agenda, with gender as a cross-cutting theme.

- These fall within the context of the 4 ILO Principles. These categories are: a) Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; b) The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; c) The effective abolition of child labour; and d) The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Decent Work; The Ten Labour Principles Of The Global UN Global Compact

▶ Principles 1-2 Human Rights Principles Principle 1 Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights. Principle 2 Businesses should ensure that their own operations are not complicit in human rights abuses.

▶ Principles 3-6 Labour Principles Principle 3 Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Principle 4 Businesses should uphold the elimination of forced or compulsory labour. Principle 5 Businesses should uphold the effective abolition of child labour. Principle 6 Businesses should uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Decent Work; The Ten Labour Principles Of The Global UN Global Compact Continued …

▶ Principles 7-9

▶ Environment Principles Principle 7 Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges. Principle 8 Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility. Principle 9 Businesses should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

▶ Principle 10 Anti-Corruption Principle 10 Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

ILO R205 And C190 & R206:

- R205 - Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205): This Recommendation provides guidance to Members on the measures to be taken to generate employment and decent work for the purposes of prevention, recovery, peace and resilience with respect to crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters.

- Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No.206:

- In June 2019, at the Centenary Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206) were adopted. The global community has made it clear that violence and harassment in the world of work will not be tolerated and must end.

- Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 are the first international labour standards to provide a common framework to prevent, remedy and eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Convention includes the specific recognition, for the first time in international law, of the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, and sets out the obligation to respect, promote and realize this right (Art. 4(1)).

The Nexus Between Governance, Decent Work And Gender Discrimination:

▸ If Governance is the arena of processes, social interactions and social relations relating to the organisation, management, administration, and running of society, encompassing decision making, decision implementation, and decision enforcement; then governance can be enabler of gender discrimination and inequality, and a constraint to Social Transformation; or it can become the instrument for enabling their deconstruction and reconstruction, and as such, an instrument of achieving decent work, gender justice, and gender equality, and hence Social transformation.

▸ This will only be possible through the undertaking of deliberate and intentional governance actions and processes.

▸ This in turn will be dependent on, or will be the outcome of the balance of power between contending social forces in society.

▸ Governance, and the nature of character of governance across the spectrum in society, and in particular, political governance, is thus very central to how we achieve the enabling, enhancement and sustainability of a more inclusive, equitable, equal, just, fair and representative world of work, embracing gender justice and decent work.

Women Participation In Political Governance In Africa:

- If we are going to transform gender relations in the governance of society and of the world of work, then women's' inclusion, involvement and participation in political governance must become more equal, more equitable, more just, more fair.

- The current situation speaks for itself.

- Women Political Participation: Afrobarometer 2021 Report:

- African countries are still far from achieving women's equal and effective participation in political decision-making.

- Women constitute only 24 per cent of the 12,113 parliamentarians in Africa, 25 per cent in the lower houses, and 20 per cent in the upper houses of parliament. While local government is often hailed as a training ground for women in politics, women constitute a mere 21 per cent of councilors in the 19 countries for which complete data could be obtained.

- The Barometer is a key resource of the consortium Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa (WPP) which aims to provide legislators and policymakers with data to assess progress in women's political participation over time.

Women Political Participation In Governance Continued ….

▶ Furthermore, the percentage of women in Political Party Leadership across Africa is: 12%; In Election Monitoring Bodies is: 28%; in Top Executive positions is: 7%; and of women in cabinet is; 22%.

▶ While on the other hand, the percentage of women as Speakers of Parliaments is; 21%; of women as Mayors of Capital Cities is: 19%, of women in lower parliaments is: 25%, of women in upper parliaments is: 20%, and of women in local governments is: 21%.

▶ These percentages vary between the regions of Africa.

▶ And while there have been progress over the past 20 years, for instance the overall percentage of women in Parliament in Africa, has risen from 9% in 2000, through 17% in 2010, to 25% in 2020; the progress has been slow, and uneven across the continent.

- The most marked increase has been in the post conflict Horn of Africa countries (from 8% to 33%) and in East Africa (where Rwanda is located) from 10% to 32%. Southern Africa is third in line. Here the increase has been more measured over time, rising from 18% to 28%. Women's representation in the lower houses is lowest, and increases have been slowest in central and west Africa.

- Here we can see conflict, and post conflict transition acting as catalyst for change and transformation, through the deliberate and intentional uptake and implementation of policy, legislative, institutional and constitutional reforms to promote and enhance the political participation of women, in particular through the use of a variety of affirmative action mechanisms.

Systemic Barriers To Women Political Participation:

▶ The 2021 Women Political Participation Afrobarometer Report, identified the following sets of systemic barriers:

▶ Informal Factors; - (i) Custom, Culture, and Tradition; (ii) Socialisation, attitudes, and Stereotypes; (iii) Violence Against Women [in politics];And

▶ Formal Factors; - (a) The Media; (b) Finances and resources; and (c) Electoral systems and management.

▶ It can be argued that these are essentially the same systemic barriers to the advancement of women in the society in general, and the promotion, perpetration and perpetuation of gender discrimination and the resulting gender inequality in society.

Women In The Trade Unions:

▶ In the trade union context, women face multiple barriers that resonate with the barriers facing aspiring women leaders in other organizational contexts, including the gendered division of domestic work; the organization and nature of women's work; the organization and nature of trade union work and the masculine character of trade union politics and organising.

▶ One of the biggest barriers for women seeking leadership roles is the persistent gender bias that exists in many organizations. Research has shown that men are often seen as more competent and capable of leadership than women, even when they have the same qualifications.13 Mar 2023 [Forbes.com]

Women's Participation In Other Spheres Of Governance:

▶ Here it is sufficient for us to raise some questions, the corresponding responses to which should point us in the direction to head:

▶ What is the percentage representation of women in the workforce, in both formal and informal sectors?

▶ What is the corresponding percentage representation of women as members of trade unions and workers organisations in both the formal and informal sectors?

▶ And what is the corresponding percentage representation of women in the leadership, and at the head of these trade unions and workers organisations in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy?

Women's Participation In Business ownership and business governance:

- ▶ What is the percentage representation of businesses and corporations of various sizes owned by women?

- ▶ What is the percentage representation of women in top management of big business, and as such in corporate governance at various levels?

- ▶ What is the percentage representation of women in the top echelons of business federations and other employer federations?

The Impact Of Violence And Conflict:

- According to the region's most recent economic update, growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to slow to 2.5% in 2023, from 3.6% in 2022. Rising conflict and violence across the region exerts a dampening effect on economic activity, with climate shocks poised to exacerbate this fragility. About 462 million people in the region are still living in extreme poverty in 2023. [The World Bank].

- In many African states, politics is marred by violence, persecution, intimidation and torture. While both genders are victims of this, political violence presents particular barriers to women's engagement and political participation.

- According to the Afro Barometer Survey, women feel "a sense of vulnerability to political intimidation and violence."

Impact Of Conflict on the world of work:

▶ Conflict can hinder economic development by damaging physical infrastructure, disrupting trade, and causing population displacement. It can also have long-lasting effects on human capital development, as conflict can lead to increased poverty rates and decreased access to education and healthcare.

▶ While the intensity of conflicts in recent years is lower than that observed in the 1990s, the region remains prone to conflicts, with around 30 percent of the countries affected in 2019.[IMF 2020]

▶ In addition to immeasurable human suffering, conflicts impose large economic costs. On average, annual growth in countries in intense conflicts is about 2.5 percentage points lower, and the cumulative impact on per capita GDP increases over time.[IMF 2020]

▶ Furthermore, conflicts pose significant strains on countries' public finances, lowering revenue, raising military spending, and shifting resources away from development and social spending [IMF 2020].

Conflict and the world of work:

▶ Following two weeks of deliberations, the 106th International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted a new international labour standard, the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205).

▶ The new standard updates an earlier ILO Recommendation from 1944 to provide responses to contemporary crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters. It also widens the focus of the guidance on reconstruction and recovery to include prevention and preparedness.

▶ The new Recommendation on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience provides a unique normative framework focusing on world of work related measures to prevent and respond to the devastating effects of conflicts and disasters on economies and societies, paying special attention to vulnerable population groups, such as children, young people, women and displaced people.

Gender equality, Violence And Conflict:

▶ The effects of war continue for years after the fighting ends. While entire communities suffer the impact of armed conflict, women and girls are often the first to lose their rights to education, to political participation and to livelihoods, among other rights being bluntly violated. [WPP Afro Barometer 2021]

▶ Violence against women is used as a targeted and destructive tool in various ways throughout the electoral cycle to dissuade women from participating as election administrators, voters, and candidates.

▶ In addition to physical harm, much of this violence in verbal and psychological. Political violence, social stigma and the notion that politics is a "dirty game" are major disincentives to women entering politics.

Tying Everything Together:

▶ Transformative Governance [by which we mean governance that is inclusive, representative and participatory; that is based on and driven by the commitment to achieving social justice, equity, fairness and equity; and that is responsive to the basic needs and aspirations of every member of society, across the full spectrum of its diversity], is key and central to promoting and achieving Decent work as a human right and gender equality and soc ial justice as human rights.

▶ This Transformative governance as a prerequisite for Social Transformation, is required in the governance of society and its diverse processes and subunits, as well as in the governance of organisations and entities within society, and in particular, the organisations of workers, and organisations in the world of work.

Tying Everything Together ….

▶ Workers and their organisations will need to build strategic alliances, and fight alongside, non workplace organisations and movements of workers, including the Women's and Youth Movements, The Environmental justice movement, Movements for the promotion of the rights of minorities and the excluded, and citizens and community movements active in the communities where workers live, and where the workplaces of workers are located.

▶ Workers political participation in the governance of society has become an existential necessity, as a platform for workers to ensure the guarantee of workers rights.

Recommendations:

- There is a need for trade unions and workers organisations to be deliberate and intentional about organising women and young workers, engaging women workers and young workers in the life and activities of the unions, and in promoting and putting in place mechanism for assuring the inclusion and active participation of women and young workers in trade union leadership and governance across the board; including in various organs, committees, commissions of the union, as well as in collective bargaining councils, teams, and processes.

- Such will require effective deployment and utilisation of affirmative action for women, for young workers and for other excluded groups.

- Unions should consider the promotion and implementation of a policy of ensuring that in union governance, in the governance of businesses, and in the governance of society; and across elected and appointive positions, that no gender should have less than 40% or more than 60% representation in governance institutions [political, trade union, business federation, corporate management, etc].

- Such should also apply to young workers, ensuring that no less than 30% of such leadership positions are occupied by young workers, with the gender rule, equally applying.

Recommendations Continued ….

▶ Trade unions should undertake an urgent, and subsequently periodic audit, of the status of adoption, incorporation into national laws, and implementation of all relevant ILO Conventions And Recommendations on Decent Work, and on gender equality, women and youth, and workers rights as human rights; with a view to developing a broad based campaign, in alliance with other citizens organisations and [social] movements to ensure implementation, and periodically track progress.

▶ Women workers and young workers must play the lead and central role in the mobilisation of women and young workers, into the union and within the union towards achieving the inclusion of women and young workers in union leadership, the prevention and mitigation of gender discrimination, and gender equality, and the attainment and sustenance of a more equal, more equitable, more just, more inclusive, more representative, and fairer world of work.

THE END
THANK YOU