



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
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# **HOW DOES THE WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE OF THE AFRICAN UNION PROMOTE ITS GENDER AGENDA?**

By  
**Ashleigh Rumbidzai Tesa Shangare**

A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
degree

**MASTER OF DIPLOMATIC STUDIES**

Department of Political Sciences,  
**Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria**

Supervisor:  
**Dr. John Kotsopoulos**

September 2017

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this mini-dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Diplomatic Studies at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted for any degree at another university. All the information which was utilised has been acknowledged.

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to thank my Lord and personal saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ for His grace upon my life. The strength of the Lord kept me going and pushed me to achieve the completion of this dissertation. I dedicate this dissertation to you Lord. Secondly, I would like to thank my spiritual parents who adopted me as their own, Dr. Prophet Blessing Chiza and Prophetess Tatianah Chiza for their continued support, encouragement and love. For the reason that you believed I could, I believed I could. Thank you for believing in me. Thirdly, I would like to thank my granny, who would do anything to help me achieve my dreams. Your support will forever be engraved in my heart.

Fourthly, I would like to thank and appreciate my supervisor, Dr John Kotsopoulos. Your patience and guidance was invaluable. The completion of this dissertation was possible because you pushed me beyond my limits. I thank you for allowing me to explore my strengths throughout this research in addition to the gracious pointing out of my weaknesses that you provided in order for me to produce a great work. With your supervision, I have learnt a great deal. Forever grateful. Thank you Dr. Kotsopoulos. Lastly, I honour Professor Siphamandla Zondi, your repeated motivation and check-ups kept me on my toes, as you continuously told me “I can achieve anything I set my mind to achieve”.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate how the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promotes its Gender Agenda. This dissertation is contributing to a niche as gender and the African Union is an underexplored area. The Gender Policy in pursuit of the Gender Agenda of the African Union is evaluated through the tenants of Stiwanism, an African Feminism by Ogundipe-Leslie, in order to uncover the root causes of gender disparities and hindrances to women's empowerment in the African context. The qualitative research method of a 'single case study' design and secondary analysis of pre-existing data is used to evaluate the promotion of the Gender Agenda. The findings of this dissertation are that women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented despite their inclusion and involvement within political institutions. Thus, institutions in Africa increasingly need to reflect and promote the interests of both men and women whereby their diverse objectives are equally represented in order to achieve gender mainstreaming. For the reason that African feminists contend, institutions which are not representative of gender compositions and interests have shortcomings in the promotion of gender in high politics. Last but not least, the dissertation concludes with the argument that the African Union Gender Policy is a well thought out policy and framework for gender mainstreaming as the AU seeks to deal with a complex contemporary phenomenon and challenge, which is gender.

**Key Words:** African Feminism, African Union, Gender Agenda, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Policy, Pan-Africanism, Stiwanism, Transformation, Women's Empowerment.

## **List of Abbreviations**

ACHPR- African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights

AfCHPR- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

AF-African Feminism

AU-African Union

AUC-African Union Commission

AUO- African Union Organs

CA- Constitutive Act

CSO- Civil Society Organisations

ECOSOC- Economic, Social and Cultural Council

GA-Gender Agenda

GAMD-Gender Analysis, Monitoring and Development.

GM- Gender Mainstreaming

GMS- Gender Management systems

GP-Gender Policy

HR-Human Rights

JHRI- Judicial and Human Rights Institutions

MDG-Millennium Development Goals

PAP- Pan-African Parliament

POW- Panel of the Wise

PRC- Permanent Representatives Committee

PSC- Peace and Security Council

SDGEA-The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa

STC- Specialised Technical Committees

UN- United Nations

CEDAW-UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

WE- Women's Empowerment

WF-Western Feminism

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1. Introduction

Gender disparities are prevalent in international organisations. This issue is essential for recognising the impact of patriarchal structures within key institutions that endeavour to deal with the gender problem, such as the African Union (AU). This dissertation seeks to answer the question “How does the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promote its Gender Agenda?”

The gender issue poses a multifaceted challenge in Africa and the absence of women in African international relations is resultant from socially constructed and embedded norms (Whitworth 1994: 65). The absence of women, being a low presence of women, within institutions of influence (European Union 2012). Therefore, if more women participate within the public sphere their status can be advanced (Steans *et al* 2010: 157). Steady (2004: 47) depicts that in Africa; ‘power’ is not only political or in the public sphere but is influenced by culture and tradition, which are the structural compositions of various African gender roles. These structures either prohibit or facilitate women’s emancipation and competency towards becoming influential in decision making and affecting the implementation of policies within international organisations (Wrigley 2010: 254). International organisations (IOs) are formed by structures and these structures reconstruct the meaning of gender in addition to how the struggle to change these meanings can best be overcome (Whitworth 1994: 67).

The African Union Commission (AUC) is divided into various sub-departments and directorates. These departments have specific roles and responsibilities so that the functions of the AUC are achieved. The AUC is the secretariat of the AU which carries out the day-to-day functions of the organisation, by ensuring that all the organs of the AU are functioning effectively and accordingly (African Union Handbook 2014: 46). One of the key functions of the AUC through the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) is the promotion of GM in all AU programmes and activities (African Union Handbook 2014: 46). According to Martin (2013: 17) the AUC has put in



place the WGDD, a structure that encourages women's empowerment (WE) and has a mandate for ensuring that all AU organs (AUO) have the capacity to implement the GP objectives.

The GA of the AU is supported by Gender Policy Commitments aimed at transformation within the AU, the continent of Africa and the international community (African Union Gender Policy 2008 & 2009). The Constitutive Act (CA) of the AU, Article 4(L) stipulates that the AU will function in accordance with the promotion of gender equality and the purpose of these commitments is to eliminate gender barriers (Constitutive Act of the African Union 2001: 7). The responsibility of gender mainstreaming (GM) in the AU has been placed on the WGDD which are supported by Gender Policy Commitments as explained above such as the creation of the Fund for Women which raises funds for GM initiatives (African Union 2010). However, there are grave challenges of funding as well as capacity. After fifteen years, since 2002, the AU still lacks capacity towards GM in some respects because the very organs of the AU are not entirely representative of GE. Thus this research is important because it will contribute to the study of GM within intergovernmental organisations. By evaluating the promotion of the GA by the WGDD of the AU, scholars and practitioners can seek to understand what influences policies and the relevant changes needed for awareness and promotion of the GA.

The idea of Pan-Africanism, "African solutions for African problems" is imbedded within the AU and through AF, this dissertation will evaluate if this is reflected within the Gender Architecture of the AU. The Gender Architecture of the AU are the instruments, policies and mechanisms that the AU uses to achieve GM and these will be appraised in this dissertation. When existing techniques are appraised, the capacity of those techniques can be evaluated for the purpose of ensuring that desired outcomes are actualised. Gender analysis in Africa and the AU is limited; hence this dissertation will be contributing to an underexplored area which makes this an interesting study.

## 2. Overview of Literature

This section clarifies different themes in the literature which will be used, such as gender and the interpretation of the AU. As this dissertation seeks to give an understanding of GM by evaluating the GA of the AU. According to the World Health Organisation, gender is a socially constructed norm of how men and women are expected to behave or perform roles in society. These norms vary based on societal and cultural expectations. The AU makes collective decisions on behalf of its members which become policies that provide the organs of the AU with authority to carry out mandated objectives (Hague and Harrop 2010: 4). The AU GP explains how the AU seeks to create opportunities and services for women in Africa through its Gender Policy (GP) and the obligations of the initiatives have been placed on both men and women. The AU GA is guided by its GP which stipulates that the GP will act as the guiding document for gender initiatives as specified by the AU Constitutive Act (African Union Gender Policy 2008: 2). The main purpose is to “achieve gender equality and equity as well as women empowerment in Africa” (African Union Gender Policy 2008: 2). According to the GP, the AU aims to ensure gender equality within its organs, systems and procedures, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and GM within the AU (African Union Gender Policy 2008: 12). These four areas are crucial for evaluating the promotion of the AU GA.

According to Pigman (2010: 23) new issues such as gender are rising up and being deliberated upon in international relations as more women seek political freedom and political access. Therefore, the types of gender policies and methods of gender policy initiatives need to be evaluated in order to ensure effectiveness in their promotion. The recognition of women’s rights is met with a challenge because governments and political institutions commit to gender policies but these commitments are hindered by lack of interest and lack of progress towards implementation (Steans 2006: 109-110). As explained by Olu-Pearce (2000: 3-4) an emphasis has been placed on ensuring the inclusion of women into politics as development, equality and economic growth cannot be actualized when women are not included within institutions of decision-making

power. In Africa, the spirit of pan-Africanism guides the trajectory of continental goals politically, economically and socially.

Women's participation *has* increased but the biggest challenges and 'gaps' are found in top leadership positions (European Union 2012). One of the major challenges is "applying feminist concepts to express and analyse African realities" (Oyewumi 2004: 7) as feminism and women's advocacy is largely a western construct. Western constructs of male/female, man/woman are not similar to African ones thus analysing Africa from a Western perspective tends to create distortions of African realities (Oyewumi 2004: 7). Thus, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how women have been underrepresented in international relations, through the tenants of African Feminism (AF), as culture has defined women's roles, away from politics (Whitworth 1994). Hence, "women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented in formal and semi-formal mediation, negotiation and dialogue processes" (European Union 2012). These are some of the challenges which the GA of the AU through its GP endeavours to address. A key question is, has the GP of the AU promoted or hindered women in diplomacy and international relations? Consequently there is the struggle to quantify the role and advancement of women, thus the need to evaluate the promotion of the GA, especially in Africa.

The sociology of gender inequality has been deeply institutionalised thus the difficulty of reducing gender inequality embedded within institutions cannot be ignored and at multilevel institutions the challenges are greater (Wharton 2005: 225). By examining the connection between the policy maker (AU), the policy (AU GP) and the gender structures (AU Organs) through which the policy is initiated, this dissertation will evaluate the promotion of the GA of the AU. Martin (2013: 24) argues that the problem is that 70% of member states have gender policies but the policies have not been implemented. Additionally, Martin (2013: 25) explains how the influence of the AU to member states is slow and this is problematic because it delays the whole process of GM. Successful policy implementation should be determined by the impact it has on

grassroots through its members, hence if there is little to no impact then there are gaps between policy objectives and policy outcomes (Jordan 1999: 69).

The African Union Compendium (2012: 51) explains how the AUC through its directorates is responsible for policy proposals submitted by member states or non-state representatives and final recommendations are presented before the AU assembly. Decisions on policies are authenticated by the signatures of the AU chairperson and these policies become binding on all AU member states, organs of the Union and Regional Economic Communities (African Union Compendium 2012: 54). Moreover, the African Union Compendium (2012: 54) explains how failure by member states to comply can result in sanctions which are either economic or political. There are penalties when member states do not comply with the policies being implemented by the AU and this dissertation will evaluate the effectiveness of these penalties and initiatives. The purpose of a policy maker (AU) is to spread a key message (Gender Agenda) towards a particular audience (members of the AU), and policy makers may be required to go beyond simply researching and deliberating on issues; to ensure that the expectations placed on members are translated into reality.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Problem and Research Objectives**

This dissertation seeks to answer the research question, “How does the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promote its Gender Agenda”. The effectiveness of the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) is based on its relevance within the African context, in order to provide a working framework for achieving Gender Mainstreaming (GM) on the African continent. An evaluative framework will be used, to evaluate if the GP is reflective of African women’s experiences (empirical consequences), if it deals with contemporary gender challenges in Africa (practical situation) and broadly if the GP is relevant towards the AU GA (conceptualisation). The evaluation will be done through the use of African Feminism theory, specifically

Stiwanism, which is Social Transformation in Africa Including Women. Lack of structural GM within the AU itself might be undermining its policy diffusion with its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and members. The lack of empiricism and contextualisation in the AU's execution of its GP could result in its failure. Therefore Stiwanism provides the tenants through which the GP will be evaluated in order to test if the GP is relevant towards achieving the interests of African women.

The research problem is the promotion of a GA through the AU GP. Firstly, this dissertation seeks to evaluate the promotion of the GA by the WGDD for the purpose of achieving the AU GP objectives. Secondly, this dissertation will evaluate how “women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented” in formal and semi-formal processes of international political engagement. Yin (2014: 31) describes the “unit of analysis” as the fundamental problem that seeks to be explained and the unit of analysis is the major entity that is being analysed; it is the ‘what’ of the research study which requires investigation (Mouton 2001: 51). For this dissertation, the AU GP is the unit of analysis.

Policy uptake by AU members does not ensure successful policy implementation. Consequently, due to the self-seeking nature of states, member states of the AU may need an example to follow from the policy maker. Meaning the policy maker will need to make the necessary gender change within, so as to encourage members towards GM. In most cases, the member states are charged with the failure to implement policies made by the institution as the obligation has been placed on them. However, the policy maker (the AU) is rarely to blame when policy implementation fails. By evaluating the promotion of the GA of the AU, some of the shortcomings can shed light on how to better implement and promote the GA of the AU. The consequences of the findings will provide an understanding of what hinders or propels the GA of the AU internally and externally continentally, regionally and nationally.

### 3.2 Theoretical Component

This dissertation will be grounded in African Feminism (AF), with particular reference to Stiwanism. AF is theorised based on indigenous experiences of African women and the tenants of this theory stem from African cultural and epistemological experiences as a means to empower women while enlightening men (Nkealah 2016: 63). Kisiang'ani (2000:9-11) emphasises how there is no 'one' AF as this would lead to a misrepresentation of the diversity of African cultures. AF is different to Western feminism (WF) because AF has been constructed with African women in mind, in order to deal with the specific challenges that African women face in Africa (Nkealah 2016: 64). In this contemporary era, institutions need to be gender sensitive, aiming to achieve GM within institutional structures. Resultantly, AF has made contributions towards knowledge creation on African phenomena for advancing gender and women's studies in Africa (Ahikire 2014: 10). Kanjere and Rachidi (2014: 1433) explain how women in male dominated areas face challenges of lack of structural support within institutions, lack of policies which integrate women and certain organisational practices uphold gender discrimination. Thus, AF challenges issues of development, inequality, inadequate GM and how these issues tie to "particular challenges and predicaments faced by women on the African continent" (Ahikire 2014: 11-12).

AF is instrumental in challenging and fostering awareness within the political, social and economic struggles in Africa in order to advance Human Rights (HR) issues on the African continent (Gaidzwana n.d: 10). One of the concepts of AF is Stiwanism (Social Transformation in Africa Including Women) which argues that "it is firmly rooted in the experiences and realities of women in Africa (as opposed to African women in the diaspora)" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 207). Furthermore, AF seeks to deal with the exclusion of African women in institutions of power and influence (Ifechelobi 2014: 18). Power is gender related because men and women have different access to resources which are linked to power as those with resources tend to exercise the decision making power (Squires 1999:39). With its multifaceted nature, AF seeks to advocate for and foster the agenda of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) with specific concern towards

Women's Empowerment (WE) (Gaidzwana n.d: 10). Historical research and analysis has argued that women have been secondary to men and feminists seek to critically assess the strides that the AU has made in respect to achieving gender equality on the continent (Mama and Abbas 2014: 2).

African feminists argue that the liberation from colonialism for African states should extend to the liberation and emancipation of African women on the continent. Therefore Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues for the transformation of gender politics and society so that there can be a recreation of women's identities by evaluating and restricting existing institutional structures so that the emancipation of women can be actualised. However, the challenge with AF is that unlike Western feminist thought, it cannot be defined by a specific wave or movement thus African feminist movements are different regionally across Africa (Goredema 2010: 34-35). This diversity is the crucial reason why AF is the theoretical framework through which this dissertation will evaluate the Gender Policy of the African Union towards achieving its Gender Agenda, as African Feminism has the foundation of African epistemologies. These epistemologies depict the reality and gender norms that African women have been socialised into.

### 3.3 Methodology (Case Study Method)

To ensure that the research objectives are achieved, this dissertation will be carried out using a qualitative research method. Qualitative research aids in understanding how the social world we live in can be best explained (Hancock *et al* 2009: 7). It helps to understand "how and why cultures and practices have developed in the way they have" (Hancock *et al* 2009: 7). This method creates a pool of data linking to one case, uniquely characterised to answer a particular phenomenon. For this dissertation, the single case study method will be used to evaluate how the Women Gender and Development Directorate of the AU promotes its Gender Agenda as stipulated by its GP.

The case study method is useful in this instance for various reasons. Firstly, it provides conceptual validity. Meaning the researcher can consider contextual factors which may be statistically difficult to do, such as trying to measure gender, in respect to particular phenomena (George and Bennett 2005: 19). Secondly, case studies are a means to derive new hypothesis, thus when evaluation of the data is being conducted, new answers or meanings about the outcome of particular events can be discovered (George and Bennett 2005: 20). Thirdly, case studies can explore causal mechanisms beyond the independent variable (WGDD) and the dependent variable (GA of the AU), such as intervening variables (tradition and culture in Africa) (George and Bennett 2005: 21). Lastly, case studies make it possible to reach a conclusion through analysing various issues such as different gender processes, gender policies and gender initiatives. The difficulty is that the study will be narrow and may not have generalizable results (George and Bennett 2005: 22).

Due to the constraints of time and access, a secondary analysis will be used. Secondary analysis is the use of pre-existing data for the purpose of conducting research (Heaton 2008: 34). Secondary sources are data sources which are readily available. Yin (2014: 118-119) explains that this method allows researchers to choose sources they are familiar with and further presents new sources (not familiar to the researcher) which can help answer the research question. Secondary analysis of data can investigate research questions or verify new findings (Heaton 2008: 35). Kumar (2014: 196-197) explains that the problem with secondary sources is that validity and reliability of data may be different based on the sources. It is crucial that when using secondary sources, the researcher avoids only using articles which bias towards a specific outcome.

#### **4. Preliminary Framework/Structure of the Research**

##### Chapter One

The first chapter will comprise of the introduction, literature review and research methodology. This chapter will introduce key arguments of the dissertation.



## Chapter Two

The second chapter will provide the theoretical framework of African feminism, Stiwanism and GM.

## Chapter Three

The third chapter will evaluate the GP of the AU by assessing the GP commitments, the mandate of the GP and the GP framework through the lenses of Stiwanism.

## Chapter Four

The fourth chapter will assess the AU Organs and provide an analysis of the internal structure of the AU towards achieving its GA.

## Chapter Five

The fifth chapter, will be the conclusion of the dissertation. This chapter will summarise the research conducted in the dissertation and will provide the findings of the evaluation of the AU GP as well as areas for further study.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has explained how this dissertation endeavours to answer the following question “How does the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promote its Gender Agenda”? The research will be grounded in Stiwanism which argues that the interests of women on the African continent need to be realised, pursued and achieved. Thus, the framework for gender mainstreaming needs to be contextual and practical taking into consideration the influence of culture and tradition. Additionally, women have been under-represented or misrepresented in government institutions and policies thus an evaluation of the African Union Gender Policy through the tenants of Stiwanism will provide an understanding of how the failure to contextualise gender issues and solutions can render gender policies and gender mainstreaming initiatives ineffective. Government institutions are plagued with patriarchy and this hinders and thwarts the actualisation of women’s interests. The

tenants of Stiwanism offer a lens to evaluate the African Union Gender Policy and the importance of portraying the realities and experiences (gender epistemologies) of African women. Lastly, this dissertation will emphasise the need for the collective effort of AU member's as well as individual government efforts to implement the African Union Gender Policy initiatives in order to achieve social transformation, which is gender sensitive, on the African continent.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

As gender issues have increased globally, it is imperative that more literature tackle the phenomenon as it cuts across political, economic, social and cultural lines. Theories have within them concepts and principles that propose to explain or debunk a particular phenomenon. Thus, the GP needs to be contextualised within the discipline of International Relations as a means to try and explain human behaviour while seeking to ensure that the research is relevant within literature. The tenets of African Feminism (AF) are a tool through which the interests of women can be advanced on the continent of Africa. Stiwanism, coined by Ogundipe-Leslie, will provide the framework for evaluation, as to whether the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) is reflective of the experiences of African women or not. The AU is an international organisation with various members from governmental and non-governmental representatives and organisations. These different members have a specific way in which they interact with one another in addition to how they respond to policy formulation and implementation. Consequently, the AU objectives cut across regional boundaries, they strive to deal with issues broadly at a continental level and various interests are at stake. AF is Pan-Africanist in nature because it seeks to provide “African solutions to African problems”. Therefore, this chapter will deconstruct the theoretical framework which will be used to evaluate how the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) of the African Union (AU) promotes its Gender Agenda (GA).

### 2.2 African Feminism

AF seeks to disclose the experiences of African women through African epistemologies. Epistemologies are experiences and knowledge which lead to the formation of opinions, values and beliefs (Goredema 2014: 34). African women’s epistemologies, with respect to gender related concerns, have led to what is known as an African feminist theory that epitomises an African reality. Moreover, AF expands to include African women in the

diaspora and not just women geographically in Africa (Goredema 2010: 34). Unlike WF which has first, second and third wave feminism, AF cannot be explained in particular waves of development because AF has been shaped by phases which are the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. (Goredema 2010: 34-35). These phases in Africa cannot be ignored as they are part of the foundation of AF. Where WF waves claim a universal formation of feminist movements, in Africa, diverse political phases have occurred differently across the African continent, influenced and still influenced by the formation of AF. These different political phases have shaped and reconstructed the meaning of gender. Gendering, is not static, it is a phenomenon that continues to adjust and evolve over time, as varying gender issues continue to emerge. Personal experiences in daily livelihoods and activities of African women influence how personal spaces, traditions, identities and institutions have been 'gendered' (Oyewumi 2011: 7).

To contextualise AF within this dissertation, it is important to define gender as it is a recurring phenomenon embedded within the literature. Firstly, gender is "a system of social practices and this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it organises relations of inequality on the basis of [these distinctions]" (Wharton 2005: 7). Gender is a social construct which has determined access to resources and opportunities and there are three crucial aspects of gender which explain its multilevel nature. As gender is produced and reproduced, occurs at various levels within social structures and produces inequality in society (Wharton 2005: 7). Feminism in general intends to deal with gender and how gender has regulated the way in which roles of individuals and norms are understood in society. "Gender is not a variable, it is *central* to understanding basic power dynamics" (Squires 1999: 17-18), as there is a paradox between politics and gender. Likewise, Oyewumi (2004: 3) explains gender as a socially constructed phenomenon which replicates the subjugation of women as women's issues are founded on the gender inequality of social structures.

On the one hand, to understand the political, one needs to understand the influence of gender as politics has been dominated by masculinity and the absence of women. On the other hand, gender has been excluded from politics as it has been downplayed to a

level of irrelevance within literature and practice (Squires 1999: 1-2). Hitherto, gender related issues have been the reason why feminists have advocated for the inclusion of women into politics in addition to transformation, which seeks to uncover the reproduction of patriarchal structures within systems of influence, power and decision making. In Africa, the quest for women's emancipation has been for the recognition of women as 'human' before the classifications of gender, race and class (Ifechelobi 2014: 18). Some women in Africa have little to no access to resources and they lack control over resources when there is some form of access and women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. African women have realised the need to be resourceful and "African women seek to sharpen the ingenuity further as a means to broaden their skills and tackle the resource problem" (Tamale 2005: 19).

The hindrances to access to resources affects development and AF addresses the development problem through dealing with male bias towards achieving development on the continent. Development has been described as a right for men and not so much a right for women and AF challenges this (Ahikire 2014: 12). Thus AF provides a basis for this dissertation to explain how patriarchy is rooted within political institutions and in what manner this influences gender policies and GM objectives. The African society is a patriarchal one, clad with variations of male and female, and with the latter dominated by the former. AF challenges this dominance to ensure emancipation for African women and the "self-actualization of women so that they will believe in themselves, actualize their dreams and live fulfilled lives" (Ifechelobi 2014: 19). Additionally, AF challenges patriarchal orthodoxies (as a form of activism) and over time has gained momentum towards its objective for gender mainstreaming (GM).

AF and activism led to the establishment of the African Union (AU) protocol on the rights of women in Africa which addresses gender inequality, political access for women and rights and access to resources (Ahikire 2014: 11-12). Therefore, the patriarchal structures of men making decisions on behalf of women, while excluding women need to be addressed and "the analysis of structures, networks and processes must take into account men's relationship to each other and not just their interaction with women" (Olu-

Pearce 2000: 16). As a result, AF provides a point of departure to evaluate the degree to which gender policies in Africa and African institutions are representative of African women's issues or agendas. Although some institutions have failed to apply and implement gender policy commitments, strides such as the creation of the AU GP have been made towards GM through AF initiatives (Ahikire 2014: 12).

AF restructures African cultures which denigrate women as it is sensitive to the nature in which patriarchy, colonialism, neo-colonialism and contextual experiences have perpetuated women's subjection to a lower standard and level in society (Nkealah 2016: 62-63). One of the hindrances that women have had to face is the limitations of culture. Culture has played a crucial role in ensuring that women are not given equal footing to men towards their individual development. Culture has not only suppressed women but it has hidden the women who made history. According to the African Partnership Forum (2007: 8) the gender gap in Africa is cultivated by cultural norms, values and practices which inadvertently encourage discrimination, segregation and inequality. "Women in Africa are still vastly under-represented in many occupations, especially in the scientific and technological fields" (African Partnership Forum 2007: 9). Goredema (2010: 36) explains how one of the fundamental aims of AF is to explain the position that African women in Africa hold, in past and present Africa because within different phases of African history, women did hold power and have access to resources. For example, Zulu royal women did espouse a form of power and were well respected in society yet these women are told of as a myth or an unimaginable expectation which cannot be achieved in present day Africa.

Powerful women or the idea of a powerful woman is shunned. Yet, during liberation struggles, war heroines were created and these women portrayed a selflessness in that as they sought an empowered position and as these women fought in the liberation struggles, it was selfless and portrayed a strong black selfless African woman (Goredema 2010: 36-38). Therefore, AF fights to ensure that historical women of power do not die as a myth but that contemporary African women can embody what African women did in the past. Nevertheless culture and politics have suppressed the agenda of

AF which is to empower the contemporary African Woman. Abbas and Mama (2014: 2) state “feminists have a responsibility to critically appraise just what half a century of African liberation from colonialism and institutionalised pan-Africanism has delivered to women.” Does the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) empower the contemporary African woman? This dissertation will answer these questions, taking into account the tenets of AF, such as the fight to ensure that the contribution of women in Africa does not die as a myth.

In the midst of the AU seeking a pan-Africanism, “African solutions for African problems”, has this AU pan-Africanist initiative recognised the plight of African women on the continent? Therefore the AU GP will be evaluated to assess if the plight of women is being recognised. It is critical to note that “feminist movements on the African continent are shaped by pan-Africanist visions, thus they pursue a critical engagement both with the bureaucratic and political structures of the African Union, and with the broad range of political and civil society formations, calling them to account in numerous ways” (Abba and Mama 2014: 6). Pan-Africanism is driven by the AU. The AU is an institution that seeks to build Africa up, using African methods and African initiatives. Thus African Feminism challenges the African Union and seeks to engage with the African Union to ensure that the African Feminism agenda of empowering African women is achieved on the continent. Since the AU stems from a pan-Africanist foundation, the GP will be evaluated to assess if it is reflective of this.

### **2.3 Stiwanism**

Transformation is a loaded word often accompanied by great expectation from different individuals and groups. Transformation is “a thorough or dramatic change in something, either its form or character” (South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary 2000: 1030). What Ogunjipe-Leslie proposes in her writing is a transformation of gender, politics and society. This transformation is aimed at not only the African Woman but the African continent as a whole. One of the major challenges in Africa is that people are known by their gender and not by their profession. African women *and* men are understood not

based on skills but based on gender roles and expectations (Kisiang'ani 2004: 23). As a result of this, there is a need for transformation. Gender studies in Africa need to ensure a fundamental change within institutional structures, GM objectives and the focus needs to be based on African experiences and knowledge (Kisiang'ani 2004: 23). There needs to be a recreation of the African woman's identity by evaluating existing structures and institutional strategies to ensure that they are representative of African experiences (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 1). These experiences do not have much recognition not only on the African content but on a global scale as well. The AU GP is a framework for GM in the AU and the evaluation of structures (AU Organs) will determine the degree to which transformation is needed so that these structures may be representative of women.

African epistemologies create the subjective reality of African women and one of the essential reasons why AF is key to understanding African women's challenges is because it is contextual to African women (Kisiang'ani 2004: 24). Based solely on a non-Western understanding, thus the initiatives of the AU GP will be evaluated to assess if they represent an African reality or Western reality of women. A western solution is not appropriate towards an African Gender Agenda (GA) thus the promotion of the African Union Gender Agenda (AU GA) essentially should be reflective of African epistemologies, which are the truths, realities and experiences of African women. Therefore this dissertation will evaluate if this is actualised in the promotion of the GA of the AU through its GP. Stiwanism seeks the transformation of gender and this can be actualised by African Feminism and not a Western Feminism (WF).

Stiwanism was coined in 1994 by Ogundipe-Leslie, Stiwanism (Social Transformation in Africa Including Women) proposes that "it is firmly rooted in the experiences and realities of women in Africa (as opposed to African women in the diaspora)" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 207). Gender injustices on the African continent cannot be ignored should any form of transformation be achieved on the continent. One of the fundamental problems is that women have been excluded in transformation, including the transformation of gender and women's empowerment, and this has been problematic as



men decide how women's transformation should be conducted without input from women (Alkali *et al* 2013: 244). Consequently, Alkali *et al* (2013: 244) argues that one of the 'sad' limitations of Stiwanism is that its main focus is on the African continent and African experience. Yet, this is exactly what Ogundipe-Leslie is arguing for, Western literature has dominated the ontological and epistemological literature on feminism, and what is needed now is a feminism that deals directly with African experiences and problems. WF dealt largely with Western experiences then filtered down those experiences and generalised them toward the periphery. Causing the periphery to become voiceless and now the periphery is speaking for the periphery.

Steady (2004: 46) discusses how in the 1980s and 1990s feminist scholars of 'colour' illuminated the relevance of acknowledging that the "social location of women is determined by race, ethnicity, class, status and access to privilege". Therefore social location is imperative when conducting research on feminism in Africa and it reinforces the argument for Stiwanism. African epistemologies must guide the formulation, representation and implementation of GM initiatives. This dissertation will evaluate this representation thereof. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 207) argues that when analysing African feminist discourse, it is so important to be aware of the Western dominance of what a woman is and how a woman should act. The African woman and the Western woman did not 'grow-up' in the same environments hence this hierarchical analysis cannot be generalised, social organisation in the West and social organisation in the African context are not similar hence one cannot be argued to be more superior than the other. Consequently, AF is the basis of evaluation for African women's experiences. Hence she calls for an African feminist lense which is aware of "differences in history, sociology and experience as different people" (Ogundipe-Leslie 2004: 208). The multiplicity of voices and the cultural specificity of gender call for the contextualisation of experiences in order to ensure a body of literature and ontologies which are relevant and reflective of women's experiences, experiences which are not universal (Bechler 2011: 14).

Olu-Pearce (2000: 11) notes that one of the major issues which need to be tackled by African governments, individually and multilaterally, is dealing with the vague concept of

representation. Women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. Representation has been understood as numbers, the idea of increasing the number of women in government institutions, yet women's socioeconomic status, in the form of literacy and education limits women from political participation (Ibid 2000: 14). Policies and affirmative programmes for women have been put in place but the wording of these very policies need to be analysed, because the number of women in government institutions may increase, but those very women may not necessarily represent the interests of the women they propose to be representative of (Ibid 2000: 15). Additionally gender differences of women, in respect of race, class and sexual orientation results in social differences and these differences need to be highlighted within gender policies and programmes; with solutions aimed at catering for intersectionality (Ibid 2000: 15). The problem of intersectionality and representation should not be ignored or it will render the solutions and GM initiatives as ineffective, lacking the necessary impact to solve gender issues on the continent.

These differences warrant for the recognising of diversity because it is important to ensure that gender policies and women empowerment strategies are relevant to the African context. The social environment that women are in determines the race, culture, ethnicity and gender expectations of women. Societal gender expectations determine the extent to which patriarchy and masculinity dominates the environment which is under study. Therefore social transformation is vital for ensuring a relevant and contextual GM initiative. The diversity of African cultures and norms calls for dynamic, multi-dimensional and heterogeneous approaches which are relevant to Afrocentric policy-formulation, social impact and knowledge creation (Sandy 2004: 49-50). Women empowerment or the progress of WE has been hindered by the perceptions that African men hold, pertaining to gender roles or gender importance.

African men, according to research, have no problem with women receiving equal pay, equal jobs and equal opportunities but, the idea of a male and a female being equal causes distress for African men, whether the particular African society is matrilineal or patrilineal (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 209-210). The re-examination of gender roles and

norms will provide an inexhaustible means through which patterns and themes will be extrapolated from the whole continent and relevant solutions can be applied (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 217). Both men and women have to advocate for the social transformation which is needed in order to ensure that GM and WE is achieved. If a policy only calls for GM through women excluding contribution from men, this may not be effective as both men and women carry out traditional gender roles.

Ideologies shape social perceptions and expectations, and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 222-223) explains how there is an AF because feminism deals with the woman (femina) and the ideologies that surround the existence of a woman. Thus there are ideologies about African women; therefore there is an AF. She further notes that the condition of African women, their status, and roles needs to be improved and these ideologies of women need to be changed or maintained in order to ensure that the condition of the African woman is improved and developed for the better. Gender inequality is reproduced through structures and institutions as they determine gender distinctions and attach gender norms to these distinctions. This is done at various social levels which have been legitimized through patterns of culture, race and class, strengthened by unquestioned ideologies that create the reproduction of gender inequality (Wharton 2005: 219-224). Additionally, social structures and patterns have contributed to the oppression and suppression of women hence these structures need to be reconstructed as a means to uproot the reproduction of oppression through these structures (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 229). Henceforth gender inequality and GM needs to be approached at these three levels by ensuring social transformation, as these three levels reproduce and legitimise gender ideologies at different capacities.

Stiwanism advocates for African women by promoting the social transformation of Africa which includes women (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 230). Both men and women need to ensure that the African society is a just society which guarantees the promotion and transformation for both men and women, not just men. "Reducing the importance of gender will contribute to a lessening of gender inequality" (Wharton 2005: 229). Women should have opportunities to advance themselves without being limited by their gender

and access to development alternatives must be possible for women beyond traditional norms (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 230). Men, not only women, should ensure that the feminist agenda on the African continent is achieved through African social transformation which includes women. Where women have been included they have been underrepresented and women remain systematically and very significantly underrepresented. In international relations, tenets of Stiwanism seek to incorporate women so they can speak for and advocate for their interests, as culture has defined women's roles, away from politics, economics, development and social transformation (Whitworth 1994 and Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). This dissertation evaluates the promotion of the GA of the AU through its WGDD to ascertain if women are incorporated to speak for and advocate for their interests.

## **2.4 African International Relations and Gender**

African governments operate through an African diplomacy when dealing with issues as individual states or collectively. African diplomacy has been inspired through Pan-Africanist objectives and interests which emanated from the creation of the OAU which later become the AU (Pierre 2013: 342). The AU agendas influence domestic and foreign policies of African states through an African diplomacy (Pierre 2013: 343). African diplomacy and international relations has been built on two schools of thought that influence policy making which are firstly, the 'Revolutionary school of African Unity'. This school of thought focuses on defending the interests of the African state. Through fostering the agenda for African Unity which seeks to assert the African personality and identity (Pierre 2013: 343-344). Thus one must question, does this African personality and identity cater for the advancement of women's emancipation and the establishment of gender equality?

The second school of thought is the "Reformist school of African Unity", which focuses on achieving African unity through economic and not political integration. As the continent grows, develops and advances through economic empowerment and not solely through political integration, reformation will be achieved. Thus, the focus is on

establishing an economic and political framework for all African states (Pierre 2013: 345). Accordingly, Stiwanism questions, does this reformation of economics provide room for women's access to resources and positions of influence in institutions of economic power? As women's participation towards the economy has increased in the informal sector but not as much in other sectors. Additionally, education is a key to empowerment, yet women are less educated, relative to men, which results in women being subject to the informal sector of the economy which does not receive much funding or assistance from governments as compared to the formal sector (African Partnership Forum 2007: 10). These two schools of thought have shaped and influenced the Pan-Africanism agenda as well as the manner in which states interact with one another. Inadvertently influencing the GA of the AU and its promotion thereof. This diplomacy is the way in which African states work together to deal with issues which affect the development of the continent. As well as the manner in which policies are developed on the continent by states to deal with issues on the continent, such as gender inequality and GM.

To understand how the AU works with its member states, multilateral diplomacy will be explained. Multilateral diplomacy is a diplomacy whereby multilateral institutions- regional bodies- such as AU work together for the purpose of achieving interdependent objectives (Pigman 2010: 50). At the political level, different African governments need to work together, through the AU in order to achieve the AU GA. "Gender operates at the individual, interactional and institutional levels" (Wharton 2005: 229) and the objective is to achieve Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment on the continent. At a collective level through the AU and individually through its members. It is not the norm in Africa that gender, politics and social transformation are mentioned in one sentence, as proposed by Stiwanism. Thus this irregularity will be considered when the GP of the AU is evaluated. Gender is perceived as a domestic and individual issue, not a political and public issue.

African feminist women have been termed as un-African, westernised or non-cultural when they demand the rights awarded to them through policy initiatives. However,

“laws, policies and constitutions have been developed to guarantee women their rights and ensure equality with men in nearly all African countries” (Olu-Pearce 2000: 16). To ensure GM, policy makers and researchers need to look beyond male to female relations but analyse male to male relations as well. How men make decisions on behalf of women while excluding women.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter sought to highlight the importance of contextualising the experiences of African women as well as their subjective realities of gender issues, norms and experiences. In the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era’s women played different roles and it is imperative to be cognisance of culture as it determines gender roles. Thus in the GM processes, these diverse roles cannot be ignored. The tenets of African Feminism and Stiwanism have been explained and one of the major components of Stiwanism is that African women’s experiences must be based on African epistemologies and the accurate representation of women is crucial toward achieving an African Union Gender Agenda. The African woman’s experiences cannot be ignored as they will determine the effectiveness of gender policies. Moreover, through pan-Africanist foundations, the African Union establishes agendas and this, as argued in the chapter, influences the international relations of African states which in turn influences interests. Likewise, the interests of women have been underrepresented and social transformation of the African continent needs to include women. Hence Stiwanism encourages transformation which recognises the diversity of women through dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous approaches to achieve women empowerment and gender equality. Lastly, gender was defined as a social construct which determines access to resources and those who wield positions of influence, decision making and power.

# CHAPTER THREE: AN EVALUATION OF THE GENDER POLICY OF THE AU

## 3.1 Introduction

Founded in 2001, after the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU), the African Union (AU) was established as an intergovernmental institution for African countries. The purpose of the AU is to ensure that an institution with structures which are capable of dealing with contemporary issues on the African continent is present. This institution fosters and is founded on the mantra 'African solutions to African problems' and the AU was launched through three summits which are the Lone Summit, Lusaka Summit and Durban Summit (African Union Handbook 2014). The AU is an embodiment of the "collective effort" of its member states which seek to collectively attain objectives stated in different policies and agendas made by the AUC which are signed by the heads of states of the different members. The organ of the AU with the responsibility of gender mainstreaming (GM) and women empowerment (WE) is the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD). Through the WGDD, the AU seeks to make certain that GM and WE is actualized on the African continent. Therefore, this chapter will provide the background and functions of the WGDD, explain the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) and finally provide an evaluation of the AU GP through the lenses of Stiwanism.

## 3.2 The African Union and the Women Gender and Development Directorate

The constitutive act (CA) of the AU, adopted in 2000, is a guiding document of the AU. This document aims to address social, economic and political challenges and changes on the African continent. Additionally, Article 4(L) places gender equality as one of the principles which guides policies, agendas and initiatives to be implemented by the AU (Constitutive Act of the African Union 2001: 7). In 2004, a Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in African (SDGEA) was signed and agreed upon by the member heads of state of the AU. This declaration set the momentum and direction in which the

AU currently deals with gender issues. Additionally, this declaration is influenced by the “implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000); UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)” (African Union 2004: 1). These international gender initiatives provided a driving force for Africa through the AU, to establish policies and structures for the purpose of handling gender issues on the African continent. GM was actualized after the transition from the OAU to the AU when the decision to include a Gender Directorate within the AUC was made. This directorate warrants the operationalization of GM within African Union Organs (AUO) as well as through AU members by means of initiatives, policies and agendas which would be made by the AU. The “UNECA’s African Centre for Gender and Development and the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) prepared recommendations” (Nzomo 2003: 3) for the gender directorate which has been established. What these resolutions have in common is that they are all guiding documents established with the intent and purpose of guiding gender mainstreaming. These documents are used on the premise that committees deliberated on the issues that women on the continent face and solutions were then brought forward, as a means to curb women’s inequality as well as the gender gap. The purpose of the AU adopting various gender policies is to ensure that all possible means for capacity building are utilised.

The WGDD was established in 2002 with an agenda towards Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and Women Empowerment (WE) within the African Union (AU). Additionally, the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) seeks to create capacity building strategies so that AUO, members and involved parties are equipped and knowledgeable about WE strategies and policy outcomes. Through the WGDD, gender equality is promoted on the continent and the WGDD has the crucial role of overseeing “the development and harmonisation of gender-related policies; the initiation of gender-mainstreaming strategies within the Commission and the reinforcement of these policies



for AU organs and Member States” (AU handbook 2014). Existing gender gaps and challenges on the continent are a contemporary issue and the goal is to close the gap as much as possible by 2020 (Martin 2013: 15). The establishment of the WGDD was created as a sign of commitment towards GM, WE and the closing of the ‘gap’ (AU Echo: 18). The AU also sought to be structurally reflective of its agendas and strategies internally in order to be exemplary to its members. Thus a gender audit strategy was initiated in 2006 for examining progress towards GM and WE (African Union Handbook 2014). This audit is the framework put in place by the WGDD for analysing progress and the advancement of the GA. The establishment of the WGDD reflects a commitment by the AU towards achieving gender mainstreaming, objectives which are within the Gender Policy of the institution.

There are three sections of the WGDD, which are Gender Analysis, Monitoring and Development (GAMD). Firstly, the purpose of GAMD is to evaluate the strides or setbacks towards GM as well as the pros and cons of the mainstreaming strategies. The second section focuses on Gender Coordination and Outreach, which tracks gender initiatives made by the AU along with its members for the purpose of ensuring co-ordination. The last section focuses on Women’s Rights, a section which ensures that the rights and needs of African women are met (African Union Handbook 2014: 51). These sections ensure division of labour within the director, a narrow focus on certain issues makes the WGDD intentional about that which they seek to achieve, gender mainstreaming objectives.

The directorate faces financial challenges despite funding requests to the assembly, nevertheless, amidst these challenges, the capacity of the WGDD through its various committees has increased through the channels of training (Martin 2013: 16). However, this lack of financial support sways the success or failures of the directorate and can result in the reduced capacity of the WGDD. As the programs may be inadequately funded (Nzomo 2003: 14). Thus financial incapacity hinders GM and GE initiatives within the AU.

For the purpose of guidance towards increasing their capacity, the WGDD established of the AU GP in 2009. The AU GP focuses on culture, diversity and tradition as a means of ensuring socio-economic development in Africa, with specific interest placed on women and girls on the continent (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii). Consequently, the launch of the African Women's decade in 2010 (2010-2020) through the idea of a women's decade first coined by the United Nations (UN) in 1975, lead to a commitment by the AU to ensure that in 2010-2020, women's issues would be a priority (African Union 2010). Additionally through Agenda 2063, which has seven aspirations meant to be achieved by year 2063, aspiration two and six stand out in pursuit of WE and gender equality. Aspiration two, "*an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law*" and aspiration six "*an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children*", encourages the respect for HR (with special reference to gender equality) and development fostered by and for women (an aspiration to ensure that African women will be empowered in all spheres) and youth (Agenda 2063 2015: 2). These policies are further explained in chapter four, as that chapter will elucidate how these various policies have defined the structural outcome of AUO.

### **3.3 The African Union Gender Policy**

The African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) is a policy that seeks to drive the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment, in the region and continent of Africa. The policy establishes gender mainstreaming (GM) within the organs of the AU through the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) which is directly under the African Union Commission (AUC). According to the AU GP, the African Union Organs (AUO) need to be reflective of GM initiatives proposed by the policy as well as establish gender mainstreaming systems. Thus influencing policy analysis within the AU, agenda setting within the AU and decision making within the AU. The AU GP is a guiding document (framework) and policy which caters for African gender initiatives, a policy for generating African solutions for gender problems in Africa, which is a Pan-Africanist agenda. Eventually this policy aspires to be an international document (beyond the

African region) which will coincide with international gender initiatives. Initiatives such as the then 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG), with reference to MDG 3 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii).

The establishment of an AU GP in 2009 stipulates that the AU has to conduct an internal gender audit of the AUC, as the AUC is mandated to carry out the day to day functions of the AU. Consequently audits of the other AUO and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are scheduled with the intent of evaluating progress towards achieving gender mainstream systems. Hence the AU GP objectives are not simply for the AU externally. The institution spearheading this policy has to be reflective internally of what it desires to do externally on the African continent. There is a statement in the AU GP which summarises what the policy and gender agenda is all about. "With this Gender Policy and its Action Plan in place, the Commission, other AU Organs, RECs and Member States will be able to ensure gender equality, human dignity and peace for all and thereby fulfil the vision of AU" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii). The vision of the AU is backed up by the desire to fulfil gender equality and WE of the African continent, yet gender inequality is still rampant with only three years left till the women's decade, year 2020, is reached. The AU GP seeks to destroy barriers to gender equality and to be a point of reference for future gender initiatives.

The AU GP is meant to serve as "a point of reference in Policy making and provide overarching leadership in Gender Equality to the Commission and other AU Organs, RECs and Member States" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii). Therefore, the AU GP can serve as a point of reference and guidance towards GE and GM because of strategies it is preceded by which have already been explained such as, "the Declaration on promotion of gender equality as a major goal of the AU", secondly, "the location of the gender machinery in the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission", thirdly, "the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (ACHPR)", and lastly SDGEA" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 1). The CA of the AU, article 4(L) declares the promotion of GE and article 12(3) states

that an office to deal with gender issues, the WGDD, is to be established under the commission as gender issues are cross-cutting. This has been achieved by the AU.

UN frameworks aimed at gender equality (GE) and Women's Empowerment (WE) of the African continent have influenced the establishment of the AU GP in 2009. The 1948 UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human rights, the 1946 UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the UN Resolution 1325 (2000) which legitimized women's role in peace, security and mediation, the AU's commitment to the UN Convention for the elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1993 UN World Conference which emphasized the importance of GE towards socio-economic development, the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference of women, the UN MDG 3 on GE and WE and the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 3-4). There are other decisions and declarations which have been made by the AU and the UN which foster for the advancement of GE and GM, hence these decisions and declarations seek to answer "how" the AU aims to achieve its GA on the African Continent.

As reflected above, the African Union Gender Policy is inspired by other policies as a means to foster best practice and it covers a range of issues. However, the covering of a range of issues does not guarantee that when a policy is being implemented, it will achieve its desired or intended outcome. The gender policies before the 2009 Gender Policy of the African Union provide a benchmark to which the AU GP developed itself.

### **3.4 Stiwanism and the Gender Policy**

Stiwanism is "Social Transformation in Africa Including Women" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). The AU GP rational is based on the reality that both men and women have fought for the liberation of Africa and both men and women must reap the benefits of such a liberation. Social, economic and political liberation leads to an "actualization of human dignity" hence the increased need to ensure that GE is achieved in the African continent (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 11). Despite the agenda to ensure that all

women are liberated and reaping the benefits of liberation, the reality is that women are oppressed through ideologies, institutions and socio-cultural attitudes (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 27). Women have been excluded from public relations and these roles have been set aside for men as women are not seen as capable of holding political positions in modern Africa (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 30). Women had various roles, based on history and tradition, during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras, and these eras all determined what role women carried out. The colonial era reinforced patriarchal systems and the subservient background role that a woman should carry out (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 30-32). The challenge is that policies have been put into place (for example the AU GP) but they do not directly address the predicament of women's issues on the continent and countries claim to be dealing with gender issues but there is insignificant data to back these claims (Omotosho 2015: 100).

Key Points posed through Stiwanism:

- Policies with the intent of fostering women's empowerment (specifically African women) need to be contextual and there is a need for transformation of gender, politics and society in Africa
- The recreation of women's identity will be actualised through evaluating existing structures of society as it is imperative that both men and women need to be cognisance of the influence of culture as these determine gender norms and women's identities. Moreover, structures in Africa are heavily founded and reliant on socialisation agents which reproduce gender norms through patriarchy.
- There is the issue of representation as women's issues are not always adequately represented because of diversity and women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented.
- Diversity calls for dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous approaches which are relevant to the African context because existing ideologies about African women cannot be ignored as they determine the condition of African women.

- African women themselves need to re-examine gender norms and transformation can only be achieved when both men and women work together to put an end to barriers of development and change.
- Lastly, the complexities of the term 'African context' cannot be disregarded as this cuts across the board of diverse religion, geographical location and space, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and political affiliations. Therefore only patterns and themes can be identified which can be used to extrapolate to the whole continent.

(Ogundipe Leslie 1994)

The first AU GP commitment is “to create an enabling and stable political environment” through the Gender Party Principle, which seeks to ensure 50/50 GE of both men and women” (African Union Gender Policy 2009:14). This is a noble commitment, however, the challenge is that the gender status quo in Africa is in favour of the patriarchal system as women are still “under-represented in national politics and public life” (Biegon 2016: 2). In addition to this, this status quo determines access to resources as well as those who will wield decision making power (Irwin 2003: 54) as women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. The greatest challenge for the AU GP lies with top levels of government as they need to be the initiators of gender policies, including both men and women, so that there can be a trickledown effect towards other levels and spheres of society and institutions (Kanjere and Rachidi 2014: 1435). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 248) argues that there is a need for reconsideration and reorganizing gender where women are not included in policies made for them, men resent women who do obtain political authority and women with access to resources are vilified. The reality is that politically, in Africa, women have been excluded despite the fact that the AU seeks to create opportunities and services for women in Africa through its GP and the obligations of the initiatives which have been placed on both men and women, at political and grassroots levels.

Politically, women in Africa are challenged by representation and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) states that the issue of representation is crucial towards achieving GE and WE.

The AU GP does seek to increase the representation of women at top levels of government as well as grassroots levels. However the AUOs are not always representative of women, either through numbers or positions held of influence, power and decision making within the AU. This is further elucidated in chapter four. Women's participation has increased but the biggest challenges and 'gaps' are found in top influential positions as women are hindered towards obtaining those positions (European Union 2012). "The global proportion of women in national parliaments has doubled in the last two decades, from 11.3% in 1995 to 22% in 2015. Similarly, between 1999 and 2010, the number of women holding cabinet positions worldwide increased from 9% to 17%" (Biegon 2016: 1). Yet these increases are not representative of a 50/50 Gender Parity Principle.

The AU GP is a transversal theme that intersects a system of lines which passes through all the AU mission statements (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 7). Policies with the intent of fostering women's empowerment (specifically African women) need to be contextual and there is a need for transformation of gender, politics and society in Africa (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). Since the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) cuts across the AU mission statements, there needs to be collective effort in order to ensure social transformation which results in Gender Equality (GE) and Gender Main Streaming (GM). Collective consciousness is an idea that both men and women (from various African regions and institutions) need to be involved in the process of GM. When women are excluded, this reinforces patriarchy because the idea of exclusion will still be problematic. If men are the only decision makers, excluding women, then the policy will not be efficient. Consequently, if the policy seeks to involve women only towards a transformation that will result in GE, then the gender policy will not be effective. There needs to be the collective effort of both men and women (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). As explained in chapter two, African epistemologies require that the recreation of women's identity can be achieved when African women's experiences guide the formulation, representation and implementation of GM initiatives.

The AU GP is commendable but GE and Women Empowerment (WE) will only be achieved when institutions become reflective of social transformation involving both men and women. A social transformation which will be representative at both top government levels and lower grass-root levels because increase in 'women' does not immediately translate to the increased representation of gender-issues at grass-root levels, better policies or women empowerment (Ojigbo 2016: 163). The AU GP aims to foster the women's "participation in public and economic life" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 8) but the concern is that the increase in the number of women may not necessarily reflect the 'quality' of their participation (Ojigbo 2006: 164). Quantity implies more women are increased and hold positions of influence within institutions but quality implies women's needs, concerns and issues are being achieved.

HR protection, in particular those of women and girls, have been elusive as a result of the lack of political will by member states since they are not binding but to be executed through good faith by member states (Wachira and Ayinla 2006: 470-471). The reality is the 70% of member states have gender policies but few have gone beyond the documentation process towards implementation (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 5-6). Implementation of the gender policy has faced challenges and despite this gender policy, women in member countries are still marginalized. This marginalization is a result of African leaders failing to integrate women within influential leadership positions. Consequently, WE is limited by little or poor quality education that women have access to as this directly affects the capacity, development and opportunities that women may try to seize (Omotosho 2015: 97/99).

One of the AU GP commitments is "building capacity for GM", while considering African values and experiences, through Pan-Africanist means for equality between men and women (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 18). Capacity is increased through training and the implementation of structures that support the Gender Agenda (GA). Additionally, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) advocates for institutional reform which will allow women to recreate themselves in modern Africa as institutions have been created on the backbone of patriarchy. The AU has reformed its structures internally although there



has not been much impact thereof. The recreation of women's identity will be actualised through evaluating existing structures of society as it is imperative that both men and women need to be cognisance of the influence of structure as these determine gender norms and women's identities. Moreover, structures in Africa are heavily founded and reliant on socialisation agents which reproduce gender norms through patriarchy.

The institutional framework of the AU GP is based on ensuring that there are Gender Management Systems (GMS), in the form of "frameworks for analysis, gender training, monitoring and evaluation which will be enforced through political will, forging partnerships with stakeholders, governments, development partners, private sector, civil society, capacity building and sharing of good practices" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 22). The African Union Organs (AUO), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as AU members are expected to adhere to these GMS frameworks when making short and long term decisions, domestically and internationally. The Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) has an obligation to track that the above adhere to the GMS frameworks so as to achieve the goals set for the women's decade, Agenda 2063 and the AU GP objectives. The AU has declared the need for women's equality through policies, programs and creating gender sensitive institutions, yet the impending reality is that women are still unrepresented or underrepresented. There is a difference between diversity and inclusivity and what these GMS have managed to achieve is diversity, yet the inclusivity of women is still questionable (Stefiszyn 2005). Women are excluded in decision-making processes at local, regional and international levels despite the GMS. The main decision making organs of the AU, the Assembly, Executive Council and the Peace and Security Council lack women's representation thus affecting the representation of women despite the GMS.

The AUO are enshrined upon the tenants of patriarchy and the status quo is still in existence despite the establishment of institutional frameworks for advancing GM (Stefiszyn 2005). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 247) describes how women face a politics of exclusion, where by diversity is obtained and institutional structures have men and women but are still 'excluded' because women's ideas are not acknowledged or they

are appropriated by men as their own. Stiwanism provides a feminist reconstruction of gender in Africa, where by language, policies, initiatives and institutions which seek to advance GM and WE can be evaluated. Nzomo (2003: 9) argues that the gender agenda in Africa needs to be 'people centred' as this will encourage the inclusion of women and not just diversity. Moreover, collaboration, collective effort and intellectual effort which include both men and women in society will be vital for the individual, national and continental agenda towards Women's Empowerment on the continent.

Diversity calls for dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous approaches which are relevant to the African context because existing ideologies about African women cannot be ignored as they determine the condition of African women (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). Cultural gender norms in the different member states determine to what extent their governments and various stakeholders will be effective towards the implementation of the AU GP, which in turn affects the acceptance of diversity. Patriarchy has a stronghold on African politics hence the need for both men and women to formulate and implement the AU GP as well as domestic gender policies. The gap between the documentation of policy and the implementation of policy cannot be ignored because discriminating practices against women remain (Kanjere and Rachidi 2014: 1433). Ogundipe-Leslie through Stiwanism, explains how to ensure GE and mainstreaming, women must reconstruct themselves away from cultural and socialized structures because these structures have been limiting women from self-actualising and developing (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994). The reality is that "gender stereotypes, especially unequal power relations, often block the process of development" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 12).

Based on the AU GP, the definition that is used to define development is "a process with economic and social dimensions that entails quantitative changes in aggregates such as Gross National Product, as well as changes in institutional, social and administrative structures with the objective of effecting the material and social advancement of the population. It is also regarded as liberating people (Sen, in Saam, 2002)" (African Union Gender Policy 2009: 27). With this definition of development in the 2009 AU GP, development occurs when there are changes in institutional, social

and administrative structures (Todaro in African Union Gender Policy 2009). These changes need to advance all population yet, this is not the case. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 34) explains how development has from the colonial period to the post-colonial period led to social disabilities for women such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, ignorance and inability to comprehend science and nature.

The AU GP seeks development for all but Ogundipe-Leslies stresses the need to realize that men still dominate the private and public spheres, such that women who do obtain positions of authority are shunned upon or seen as unnatural. Additionally, women are still underpaid for doing the same work as men and these attitudes concerning to what extent women can become 'developed' stem from traditional socio-economic formations which have filtered into "law, politics, religion, education, philosophy of life and more" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 35). Therefore, when the AU through its GP seeks to attain development based on the definition within the AU GP. The factors illuminated by Ogundipe-Leslie need to be considered, especially within the African context. As these factors influence the promotion of the AU GA.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter evaluated the Gender Policy (GP) of the African Union (AU), what the GP aims to do and whether these aims are relevant within the African context. There is a difference between diversity and inclusivity and what these Gender Management Systems of the AU GP have managed to achieve is diversity, yet the inclusivity of women is still questionable. Based on the evaluation through the framework of Stiwanism, the GP must be commended as it endeavours to restructure the status quo founded on patriarchy, however the challenge is that patriarchy has a stronghold on African politics. Although women have been included by means of the GP (on paper), their quantity has increased but their quality (in respect to women's interests and agendas) is still hindered. This challenges social transformation as Ogundipe-Leslie has argued that African women's experiences need to be redefined. As cultural gender norms in the different member states have determined to what extent their governments

and various stakeholders will be effective towards the implementation of the AU GP. Since the AU GP cuts across the AU mission statements, there needs to be a collective effort for AU members towards Gender Mainstreaming so that a social transformation which results in Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming can be actualised. The promotion of the Gender Agenda in the AU is backed up by various women's conferences and gender management systems yet the issue of structural representation still threatens effectiveness and progress.

## CHAPTER FOUR: AN EVALUATION OF THE AU ORGANS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will evaluate the structure of the AUO as well as initiatives made by the African Unions (AU) to advance its Gender Agenda (GA) *internally*. In the previous chapter, the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) document was evaluated through the lenses of Stiwanism. Hence the practical steps the AU has taken internally to ensure that the GA is implemented within the institution will now be evaluated. The impact of patriarchal structures within key institutions that endeavour to deal with the gender problem, such as the AU cannot be ignored, especially since the GA of the AU is an important agenda, based on its Constitutive Act (CA). Empirically, the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) has designed policies and programmes to aid the implementation process and institutional reform which has been set to attain Gender Equality (GE) and Women's Empowerment (WE) in the AU and in the region of Africa. Furthermore the WGDD has implemented practical steps towards achieving the outcomes of the AU GP. Since the inception of the AU in 2002, more strategies have been put in place to ensure that the GA is actualized. Structure determines how individuals in society interact with one another therefore to analyse how the WGDD of the AU promotes its GA, the African Union Organs (AUO) will be evaluated based on the expected outcomes of the AU GP.

### 4.2 The Influence of International Organisation: A Pan-Africanist AU?

Key Points posed through Stiwanism:

- Policies with the intent of fostering women's empowerment (specifically African women) need to be contextual and there is a need for transformation of gender, politics and society in Africa
- The recreation of women's identity will be actualised through evaluating existing structures of society as it is imperative that both men and women need to be cognisance of the influence of culture as these determine gender norms and

women's identities. Moreover, structures in Africa are heavily founded and reliant on socialisation agents which reproduce gender norms through patriarchy.

- There is the issue of representation as women's issues are not always adequately represented because of diversity and women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented.
- Diversity calls for dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous approaches which are relevant to the African context because existing ideologies about African women cannot be ignored as they determine the condition of African women.
- African women themselves need to re-examine gender norms and transformation can only be achieved when both men and women work together to put an end to barriers of development and change.
- Lastly, the complexities of the term 'African context' cannot be disregarded as this cuts across the board of diverse religion, geographical location and space, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and political affiliations. Therefore only patterns and themes can be identified which can be used to extrapolate to the whole continent.

(Ogundipe Leslie 1994)

According to Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), policies must foster women empowerment and represent women's issues. These issues are embedded in policies formed by members of international organisations (IOs). IOs are formed by structures and these structures reconstruct the meaning of gender in addition to how the struggle to change these meanings can best be overcome (Whitworth 1994: 67). The AU functions on the basis of global governance, (within its regional context of Africa as well as internationally). Global governance is the collective effort of governments and non-governmental organisations which work together to deal with challenges which require collective efforts as a single state may not have the adequate resources to deal with a particular challenge unilaterally (Karns *et al* 2015: 1-2) The gender issue poses a multifaceted challenge in Africa and the absence of women in African international relations is resultant from socially constructed and embedded norms (Whitworth 1994: 65). These

structures either prohibit or facilitate women's emancipation and competency towards becoming influential in decision making and affecting the implementation of policies within international organisations (Wrigley 2010: 254).

Brown and Harman (2013: 5) explain how in Africa, the creation of the AU in 2002 meant a new African diplomacy whereby the management of African issues would be done so by Africans and there would be an extrapolation of an African Renaissance which seeks African solutions for African problems (Brown and Harman 2013: 6). The reality is that society is not a static entity but it is composed of systems and structure. Resultantly, "the structure determines the parts that are contained in it while the system determines how those parts interact with each other and law is social purpose actualizing itself" (Udombana 2002: 69). Socialisation agents such as tradition and ethnicity determine the roles of women in society and determine women's positions within political structures and organisations (Whitworth 1994: 13). Due to globalisation, increased interdependence and the rapid proliferation of issues, there is an increased need for global governance through IOs (Karns *et al* 2015: 5). Therefore the African Union Organs (AUO) determine the structure of the AU, while the system (AU policies, programs and agendas) determine how the parts interact with each other and law (AU judicial systems) is the actualising agent. Which makes sure the system is functioning according to its mandates.

The AU is an entity for collective decision making and implementation which is composed of structures and systems but the challenge is that the AU is not yet a supranational structure which represents *all* African beliefs and ideologies (Zondi 2013: 31). As such, it becomes a challenge to equally cater towards the actualisation of diverse interests. AU policies and decisions are enacted after months of research by the African Union Commission (AUC) after AUO proposals have been presented and debated by experts selected by their governments (OSISA and Oxfam 2010: 36). Within Africa, there are eight regional intergovernmental organisations which have their own demands and expectations for their members, which then hinders the collective effort of the AU (as a single entity) when dealing with international or African issues (Zondi 2013:

31). “The underlying purpose of the AU is to promote solidarity, cooperation and support among African countries and people” (Murithi 2007: 3). Thus the influence of the AU is achieved through dialogue and action which is sustained by a Pan-Africanism which realises that “development, peace and security, and democracy are intertwined and interdependent” (World Vision 2007: 4).

Pan-Africanism is a philosophical idea based on an Afrocentric agenda which aspires to create African solutions for African problems, in an effort to achieve political and economic unity on the African continent (Okhonmina 2009: 88). Additionally, Pan-Africanism is a means through which Africa can ‘develop’ itself, reduce the need for external assistance as well as repair the effects of exploitation that the continent has faced over the centuries (Murithi 2007: 2). The AU, through its Pan-Africanist agenda, is driven towards an Africa that will be self-sustainable in areas such as development, politics and socio-economic aspirations. Thus the structure of the AU needs to be reflective of what it seeks to achieve within the individual countries of the continent. Structure influences and shapes society, hence structure will influence and shape the success or failure of the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) in seeking to achieve an African Union Gender Agenda (AU GA) on the continent of Africa. As an IOs, the influence of the AU towards the promotion of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and Women’s Empowerment (WE) is imperative as the AU is the body mandated with unifying Africa and dealing with the contemporary challenges of the continent.

#### **4.3 Overview of Internal Strategies to mainstream the Gender Agenda**

Through the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), there is a ‘Gender Architecture’ which has been put in place to actualize GM within the AU. To guide the AUO, members and RECs. The 2000 CA of the AU, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), 2004 SDGEA, and the 2009 AU GP (African Union B 2017) have been explained in chapter three as policies which guide the GA of the AU. Additionally, there is the Women’s Decade (2010-2020), the 2015 theme for the AU which was the “Year of



Women Empowerment and Development”, the Fund for African Women and Africa’s Agenda 2063 (African Union B 2017). Thus the AU has put in place a WE and GE framework, a reporting framework, monitoring framework, implementation framework and financial framework towards achieving the AU GA. The question remains however, that, does this GA represent and promote the needs of African women as argued through the lenses of Stiwanism.

The Women’s Decade (2010-2020) of the AU is influenced by the 1975 women’s conference, 1980 Copenhagen women’s conference, 1985 Nairobi women’s conference and the 1992 Beijing women’s conference (African Union 2010: 1-3). Consequently, this decade is guided by the AU GP and has been split into two phases which are phase one, 2010-2015 and phase two 2015-2020. The purpose of the decade is to accelerate and encourage GM and WE through ten objectives, seven guiding principles, and committees at the national, regional and continental level (African Union 2010: 4-6). The 2015 Theme for the AU was the “Year of Women Empowerment and Development”. This theme was coined during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session in 2014 (Malabo, Equatorial Guinea) when research provided data which showed that women were facing challenges such as poverty and poor health based on their gender. This theme for the year 2015, was created so that AU members would be motivated to achieve GM on the continent as well as nationally. Moreover, the theme had six priorities, four specific objectives and five expected outcomes and was a foundation used to propel the Agenda 2063 which is a strategy for development. Plus, through this theme the AU sort to ensure women have an ‘equal’ opportunity as men to attain development (African Union 2015: 1-6). The Agenda 2063 is a Pan-Africanist Agenda that speaks on behalf of the African people concerning issues in Africa and is founded on seven aspirations (Agenda 2063: 1-2) The Agenda declares women as a driving force for change and aspiration six is dedicated to building and developing an Africa which is people-driven, especially for women, through removing the barriers that women have faced and are currently facing which hinder their progress (Agenda 2063: 8 & 12). The Fund for Women was created in 2010 with the intention of funding women’s economic participation and aspirations on

the continent. It is a financial framework which obliges AUO, members and RECs to fund women's policies and activities towards WE (African Union B 2017)

#### **4.4 Strategic Overview of the African Union Organs and the Gender Agenda**

According to the Constitutive Act (CA) of the African Union (AU), African Union Organs (AUO) will be guided by a vision of a strong and united Africa which acknowledges the urgency for solidarity. Additionally the AU is determined to promote HR on the continent and strengthen the necessary institutions which have been set to achieve these HR goals and objectives of the AU (Constitutive Act 2001: 3). Based on Udombana's (2002: 65) analysis, women need to be mainstreamed into the organizational structure of the AU when endorsing GE within AU institutions, while emphasizing the inclusion of women at all levels. Furthermore, Udombana (2002: 65) stresses that it is a challenge to actualise the inclusion of women and not just esteeming the idea of the inclusion of women. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) states that there is the issue of representation as women's issues are not always adequately represented because of diversity and women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. The number of women "present" within the AUO reflects the degree to which the AU is implementing its GP internally, as a means to encourage action externally, to Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and Civil Society.

Based on the African Union Commission (2015), there are mechanisms in place which can determine the rate at which GM is being achieved. There are eight indicators which are "employment, business, women in politics, access to credit, access to health, land, health and water and sanitation" (African Union Commission 2015: 17-23). Based on the indicator 'women in politics', the main objective was the increase in the number of women who hold seats and positions within institutions of government such as parliaments and other influential bodies of decision making and power (African Union Commission 2015: 18). Moreover, the gender scorecard provides statistics of women in politics and decision making of member countries based on a 2012-2015 survey and Rwanda had the highest score of an overall score of 12, with 18 women having seats in

parliament and six women with ministerial positions. While five countries had an overall score of one, having either one or two women with seats in parliament and one or two women with ministerial positions (African Union Commission 2015: 34-35). Western Sahara had no data available for scoring at the time the data was compiled.

Bureaucratic hierarchies determine how decision making is done in the AU and these hierarchies influence which issues are most important of least important. As already evaluated in chapter three, despite the agenda to ensure that all women are liberated and reaping the benefits of liberation, the reality is that women are oppressed through ideologies, institutions and socio-cultural attitudes. Women are excluded from political institutions, or when they do infiltrate these institutions, it is at lower levels while top levels are occupied by men. In some cases, men are at the helm of institutions meant to empower women. Indigenous history as well as agents of socialisation have placed women as second to men, subordinate and unequal. This is also reflected in modern institutions as ideology affects and regulates what women can and cannot do (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 30).

The AU GP seeks to create a stable and equal political environment for women and as Kanjere and Rachidi (2014: 1435) explain, the greatest challenges of implementing the AU GP towards the AU GA lies at the top, since women are consequently excluded or there is little to no-representation of women at high levels of decision making. In order for the AU to achieve its GA on the continent, regionally and nationally, it will need to be internally reflective of what it desires to achieve because Ogundipe Leslie (1994: 248) elucidates how Africa is extremely patriarchal and women are not included in policies made for them. Women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented and as already explained in chapter three, women's participation has increased but the biggest challenges and 'gaps' are found in top influential positions as women face challenges towards obtaining those positions (European Union 2012). Therefore, internally, is the AU reflective of its GA and how does it promote its GA within the different AUO? The reality is that the AU is an influential institution in Africa, and if it does not reflect what it promotes, members will be complacent towards implementing

policies enacted by the AU. The failure of a policy is usually placed on the members of an institution, yet the policy maker is seldom evaluated. The AU GP declares that it will engender its AUO in order to create an exemplary platform for its members. Since the 2000 CA and the 2009 AU GP, this dissertation will evaluate if after fifteen years, the AUO are reflecting what the institution desires for its members.

#### 4.4.1 The Assembly of the Union.

The AU Assembly is composed of the heads of states who represent governments of the member states. The chairperson of the AU Assembly is elected from amongst the heads of state and they hold the position of chairperson for a year (Constitutive Act 2001: 8). Since the inception of the AU in 2001, there have been fifteen chairpersons of the AU Assembly, all fifteen chairpersons have been male, chosen by members of the Assembly, who are Presidents of the member countries of the AU (African Union Handbook 2017: 19). The Assembly of the AU is the highest body of decision making within the institution, with the chairperson being the highest representative of the AU, and none of the chairpersons have been female. Based on the analysis provided in chapter three (African Union Gender Policy 2009: iii), the AU GP seeks to ensure GE within the AU, yet the highest body of decision making within the institution has not been reflective of this agenda.

#### 4.4.2 The Executive Council.

The Executive Council is composed of the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the governments of member states. The purpose of this council is to make decisions on policies which affect areas of interest for member states and is consequently responsible to the Assembly of the AU (Constitutive Act 2001: 11-12). The executive council chairpersons since 2002 have been fifteen and out of the fifteen, only two of the chairpersons have been female, while the rest have been male (African Union Handbook 2017: 27). The executive council is composed of representatives sent by member countries and majority of the representatives have been male.

#### 4.4.3 The Pan-African Parliament.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) is responsible for guaranteeing that the AU functions on the basis of the tenants of Pan-Africanism which strive for a unified and integrated Africa. Moreover, the purpose of this organ is for warranting that the African people can be part of development on the continent (Constitutive Act 2001: 13). The PAP has had four parliaments and presidents since 2004, with the current term ending in 2018; of these four presidents, three have been male and one female. The PAP has 250 members, 50 members of states from the five African regions. Five individuals have to be selected per member state, of which one of the five members must be a woman. This 'one' woman is meant to be reflective of the diversity of the member state, meaning of the 250 parliamentarians only 50 are women or the minimum number of women has to be 50 (African Union Handbook 2017: 96).

#### 4.4.4 The Judicial and Human Rights Institutions.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), adopted in 1981 and enforced in 1986 was established based on the charter of the OAU with the mandate to make certain that the legitimate aspirations of the African people are achieved through the actualisation of "freedom, equality, justice and dignity" (Organisation of African Unity 1981: 1). Article 18(3) pays particular attention towards the elimination of any forms of discrimination towards women while ensuring the protection and promotion of women's rights (Organisation of African Unity 1981: 6). In 1987, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) was formulated and based on the ACHPR charter, the Judicial and Human Rights Institutions (JHRI) were established within the AU (African Union Handbook 2017: 104).

The JHRI consists of eleven members and since 2005, there have been eleven commissioners, five men and six women (African Union Handbook 2017: 106). The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR) resides over all cases and the settlement of disputes based on the ACHPR and there are to be eleven judges (with a

president and vice amongst the eleven) (African Union Handbook 2017). Six of the judges are men and three are women with the president and vice both being male (African Union Handbook 2017 and African Union 2017). Furthermore, the AU has an AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL) which is composed of eleven members, eight male and three female. Additionally, there is the AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) which is composed of eleven members of which nine are male and two are female. Both the AUCIL and the AUABC are affiliated to and held accountable by the JHRI.

#### 4.4.5 The Commission.

The Commission functions as the secretariat of the AU, which is responsible for the day to day functions of the AU, as determined by the Assembly (Constitutive Act 2001: 14). The AUC chairperson is the legal representative of the AU and since the inception of the AU there have been five chairpersons of the AUC, four male and one female, over a period of fifteen years (African Union Handbook 2014: 47). The AUC has various directorates under its authority and the WGDD has been created to advance GM, GE and the GA of the AU. Based on the analysis provided in chapter three, the WGDD is a sign of the AU's commitment towards GM (AU Echo 2015). The AUC has eight commissioners, four women and four men, then the current AUC chairperson is male and the current deputy chairperson is male (African Union B 2017). There are three offices which fall under the office of AUC chairperson which are firstly, Office of the Legal Counsel, secondly the Women Gender and Development Directorate and thirdly the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate.

##### 4.4.5.1 The Women Gender and Development Directorate

The WGDD was established in accordance with Article 4(L) of the CA of the AU and it is the vehicle of GM in the AU. In addition, the WGDD has two approaches, firstly to remove the barriers which hinder women's development and advancement through programs which seek to raise women such as 'women and education' or women and

agriculture'. Secondly, to ensure women are included alongside men in the mainstreaming agenda by asserting that the AUC internal activities and objectives include women thereby affecting AU activities (Center for Citizens Participation on the African Union 2011: 8-9). The WGDD has funding challenges and presents yearly funding projects to the Assembly and as such, a workshop was organized in 2011 to encourage member states to report to SDGEA so that women's issues become a priority which in turn will increase funding. The WGDD has two divisions and several committees which receive and provide training for AU members/organs so that the capacity of the AU towards GM increases. Additionally, in 2003, the Africa Union Women's Committee (AUWC) (a division of the WGDD) was established as an advisory board to the AUC concerning gender issues. The second division of the WGDD is the Gender Policy and Development Division (Martin 2013: 17) which is responsible for the formulation of GM policies. Moreover, the mandate of the WGDD is to mainstream gender within the AU as well as externally. The director of the WGDD is a woman, Mrs Mahawa Kaba Wheeler and the head of the Gender and Outreach is a woman, Mrs Victoria Moloka (African Union 2016).

#### 4.4.6 The Permanent Representatives Committee.

This AUO "shall be composed of Permanent Representatives to the Union and other Plenipotentiaries of Member States" (Constitutive Act 2001: 14). The Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) is composed of twelve sub-committees, with two main bodies, the Office Holders and Regional Deans being the highest level of decision making within the PRC. The committees all have representatives from the five regions of Africa, so that every region is represented in the decision making process. The 2016-2017 Office Holders members were five and only one was a woman while the Regional Deans were composed of six members with one being a woman. The chairperson of the Office Holders as well as the Regional Deans Coordinator were male, these two positions, chairperson and dean are the highest level of decision making within the PRC (African Union Handbook 2017: 33-46).

#### 4.4.7 The Specialized Technical Committees.

These committees shall be structures of competence within the AU which function on specialization for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the AU CA (Constitutive Act 2001: 13). The Specialised Technical Committees (STC), which work closely with the AUC based on competence and specialisation are divided into fourteen STCs. These STC are chaired by Country representatives based on qualification and expertise (African Union Handbook 2017: 53). The STC on Gender and Women Empowerment was created in 2015 and the chairperson of this committee is a woman, H.E. Dr Jean Kalilani from Malawi, who will hold the position from 2016-2018 (African Union 2016). The STC meet at ministerial level and function in compliance with AUC objects while harmonizing regional blocs with the objects of the AU (African Union Handbook 2017: 48).

#### 4.4.8 The Peace & Security Council.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the judicial body which is the “decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts” (African Union Handbook 2017: 56). According to the PSC Protocol (2003: 2), the PSC is concerned about the vast number of refugees in Africa, particularly women and children resulting from armed conflicts on the continent. Additionally, the PSC Protocol (2003: 20, 22 & 26) stipulates that the AUC should provide HR training particularly emphasizing the rights of women and children, providing assistance to vulnerable groups such as women and engaging women’s organisations in society. The PSC has a Panel of the Wise (POW) which is an advisory board of the PSC composed of representatives of the five African regions, and the POW will be comprised of respectable persons who have contributed to peace and security in Africa (PSC Protocol 2003: 16). Since the inception of the PSC there have been three panels and of the fifteen members of the three panels, three have been women (African Union Handbook 2007: 62-63).



#### 4.4.9 The Economic, Social and Cultural Council

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC) is an advisory organ which is a platform for Civil Society Organisations, which operate at a member states level (with two Civil Society Organisations (CSO) regional level (with ten CSO), continental level (with eight CSO) and African diaspora level (with twenty CSO) (African Union Handbook 2017: 100). There is a stipulation that members of the CSO should comply with a fifty percent GE ratio and fifty percent demography of ages between eighteen and thirty-five (African Union Handbook 2017: 101). Additionally, the ECOSOC, is to be composed of different social and professional groups from civil society, ministers of member states and representatives of regional economic communities (Udombana 2002: 49-50). The current 2017 Presiding Officer is male and the previous presiding officer was male. Moreover, the current bureau is composed of three males and two females (Citizens and Diaspora Directorate 2017). There are ten Cluster Committees under the ECOSOC and they each have elected heads, the cluster committees are composed of nine males and one female of which the Women and Gender Cluster has an elected male head.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter evaluated the organisational structure of the African Union (AU) to ascertain if the organisation is reflective of the policies it expects its members to uphold externally, within Regional Economic Communities and member countries. The impact of patriarchy in the African Union Organs structures is evident based on the number of women within these organs. Efforts have been put into place to increase the number of women in the AU however since the inception of the AU, till now, fifteen years later; the representation of women in top positions is still ambiguous. Which supports the hypothesis that women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. The AU is imbedded on systems and structures which are non-representative of women in terms of quantity (numbers) and the Gender Architecture, currently, reproduces gender inequality. Therefore the needs of African women may not be represented adequately during agenda settings in the AU. Despite the agenda of the AU to become

gender inclusive, women are still excluded and when they are included, they are not entirely representative of all women (in terms of quantity and quality-interests) on the continent. Especially in Africa whereby women's issues and aspirations are diverse. However based on the AU gender score card, the number of women in parliaments who hold ministerial positions has increased notwithstanding the low numbers.

## CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Key Findings and Expectations

How does the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) of the African Union (AU) promote its Gender Agenda (GA)? Throughout this dissertation, the manner in which the WGDD of the AU promotes its GA was evaluated. The research problem of the dissertation was the promotion of the African Union Gender Agenda (AU GA) and the objective was to evaluate how the WGDD promotes this GA through an evaluative case study research method design. The unit of analysis of the study was the AU GA which uses the African Union Gender Policy (AU GP) as the framework which guides the AU, African Union Organs (AUOs), Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other stakeholders on how to implement Gender Mainstreaming (GM) as a means towards achieving Gender Equality (GE) and Women Empowerment (WE) on the continent of Africa.

It was crucial that the lens through which the study was analysed is Stiwanism, an African Feminism (AF). For the reason that, experiences of women in Africa may not collate with the experiences of women in the diaspora, outside of Africa. An AF was relevant in the study because it provided an evaluative lens that extrapolated the context of the challenges that the African woman faces in terms of self-actualisation and development. The system of patriarchy has deep embedded roots resultant from deep indigenous and socialisation agents which have formed the structures of society. Such that the modern African woman is still faced with the challenge of being second to or subservient to the African man and man in general, in society.

The expectation from the study was to understand whether or not the AU GP represents the specific and contextual challenges and prospects that the African woman faces, based on *how* the African Union through its gender directorate promotes its GA. How, the AU promotes its GA, based on the framework provided by its GP as well as other gender policy initiatives which have been formulated for this specific agenda.

Furthermore, research from this dissertation sought to understand the degree to which *how* intergovernmental organisations are reflective of what they promote internally (within their own structures), influences how members implement these policies within their own domestic contexts. The challenge for this dissertation was that not much research has been done as gender analysis in Africa and the AU is limited. Resultantly this is an underexplored area and this meant the dissertation is contributing towards a niche of knowledge.

However, some findings only partially support the hypothesis directing the study that “women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented”. The number of women within institutions has increased, as compared to the past when only men were recognised within public institutions. Despite the low levels of the number of women included, the fact is that more women have been included within governments, regional communities and the AU. As analysed in chapter four, the organs of the AU have made an effort to include women into their leadership structures and positions. This reflects that women are being included albeit the fact that the numbers may not be the same as that of men. However the efforts still need be recognised. As stated by Ogundipe-Leslie, The recreation of women’s identity will be actualised through evaluating existing structures of society as it is imperative that both men and women need to be cognisance of the influence of culture as these determine gender norms and women’s identities.

#### 5.1.1 Key arguments by Ogundipe-Leslie

Ogundipe-Leslie’s AF theory, Stiwanism, which means “Social Transformation in Africa Including Women” was the lens through which the AU GP was evaluated. She has key arguments as to how social transformation which is beneficial for all, specifically for women, can be achieved. The following of her key arguments where used as a basis of evaluation in this dissertation:

### Key Points posed through Stiwanism:

- Policies with the intent of fostering women's empowerment (specifically African women) need to be contextual and there is a need for transformation of gender, politics and society in Africa
- The recreation of women's identity will be actualised through evaluating existing structures of society as it is imperative that both men and women need to be cognisance of the influence of culture as these determine gender norms and women's identities. Moreover, structures in Africa are heavily founded and reliant on socialisation agents which reproduce gender norms through patriarchy.
- There is the issue of representation as women's issues are not always adequately represented because of diversity and women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented.
- Diversity calls for dynamic, multidimensional and heterogeneous approaches which are relevant to the African context because existing ideologies about African women cannot be ignored as they determine the condition of African women.
- African women themselves need to re-examine gender norms and transformation can only be achieved when both men and women work together to put an end to barriers of development and change.
- Lastly, the complexities of the term 'African context' cannot be disregarded as this cuts across the board of diverse religion, geographical location and space, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and political affiliations. Therefore only patterns and themes can be identified which can be used to extrapolate to the whole continent.

Based on the above, the research from this dissertation expected to see if the experiences (both challenges and prospects) of African women have been adequately represented or addressed by the AU GP. In addition to, if the AUO are reflective of what they seek to promote within Africa. One of the major problems that Stiwanism challenges is that of intersectionality, which gender mainstreaming initiatives need to be cognisance of as it will affect the necessary impact to solve gender issues on the

continent. Individual and collective ideologies shape social perceptions and Stiwanism calls for the dismantling of these, so that women's identities can be recreated. The reality is that the constraints of cultures and diversities of ethnicities on the African continent limits or slows down the rate at which change towards women's empowerment can occur. Constraints present themselves through patriarchal norms of gender roles as well as negative connotations attached to women's movements, feminists and the changes that they are advocating for.

## **5.2 Conclusions drawn from the Research**

Based on the research, the conclusions are as follows. The AU GP is a well thought out gender policy and is a good framework for GM for the AU, AUO, RECs and relevant stakeholders. The GP is relevant because it seeks to deal with gender issues and the reality is that challenges surrounding gender have increased globally and they cut across the lines of politics, economics, race, culture and society. Gender is a phenomenon founded through social ideologies which determine the organisation of roles to be carried out by both females and males in society. It is a social construct that determines access to resources and opportunities which influences how 'developed' one becomes in a particular time and society. Through socialisation agents gender is produced and reproduced in different structures of society and this creates inequalities intentionally or unintentionally. Hence the AU is dealing with a complex contemporary challenge.

According to African history and during liberation struggles, women did wield positions of power. However, this changed during the decolonisation process as women lost their place of significance and have been subjected to a level of subservience at both grass root levels and top position levels of institutions. After fifteen years, since 2002, the AU still lacks capacity towards Gender Mainstreaming (GM) in some respects because the very organs of the AU are not entirely representative of Gender Equality (GE). Most positions of influence and decision making are held by men, meaning when it comes to gender issues, men are representing the challenges of women. Yet men cannot fully

comprehend the challenges that women on the continent face. Therefore, the AUO need to be more reflective internally of what they seek to achieve on the continent and the collective effort of AU members will be needed to achieve this, as individual members do not have the sole capacity to actualise GM on the continent.

The Women Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promoted the African Union Gender Policy through the following policies. The Constitutive Act (2000), the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), 2004 SDGEA, and the 2009 AU GP. The 2010-2020 Woman's Decade, the 2015 theme Year of Women Empowerment and Development and Africa's Agenda 2063. This is important to note because these documents are the frameworks for reporting, monitoring, implementing and financing the AU GA. The reality is that the AU is an influential institution in Africa, and if it does not reflect what it promotes, members will be complacent towards implementing policies enacted by the AU. Thus the AU needs to be exemplary concerning what it seeks to promote.

Based on the evaluation provided in chapter three and four, the WGDD has made great strides towards the formulation of policies which provide frameworks of how to advance the AU GA. Policies guided by the AU CA as well as the AU GP. This is commendable as the frameworks have been put in place. However, the inclusion of women' still faces hindrances. Hindrances in form of *some* women *have* been included however they are not representative of the diversity of women in Africa. Some women (who have attained top leadership positions) still reproduce patriarchal systems as they have been socialised into these ideologies. Additionally, women have been included however their opinions, interests and mandates are treated as secondary compared to those of men. These challenges are embedded within these institutions of influence and decision making. Henceforth this challenge of structure, ideologies and the reproduction of inequality are still imbedded within the AU, its members and the continent as a whole.

However, the limitations (of being narrow) of the study may affect the validity or the generalizability of results. Due to the constraints of time and access, secondary sources of information were used and secondary sources warrant the use of pre-existing data. Pre-existing data may be inadequate, especially when conducting research for an underexplored area. Moreover, the difficulty is that the study was narrow meaning the findings may be applicable to the AU but not necessarily to a REC or intergovernmental institutions (such as the UN) outside of Africa. As diversity and context must be taken into account.

### **5.3 Recommendations for future Research**

This research was limited by time and access to resources. Thus, future areas of study were observed throughout the research which are as follows.

- Usually, the failure of a policy is placed on the members of an institution, yet the policy maker is seldom evaluated. Thus more research on how intergovernmental institutions impact the success of a policy is an area which needs to be explored in detail.
- The African Union (AU) was established as an intergovernmental institution for African countries. The purpose of the AU is to ensure that an institution with structures which are capable of dealing with contemporary issues on the African continent is present hence the impact of structure and gender mainstream needs to be researched
- Evaluation of gender and the AU is an underexplored area and more research is needed as this will contribute to the arguments of African Feminism. A feminism which seeks to understand African women's experiences based on African women's epistemologies.
- African diplomacy has been inspired through Pan-Africanist objectives and interests which emanated from the creation of the OAU which later became the AU. Further research needs to be done on the relevance of Pan-Africanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as globalisation is rapidly proliferating issues as there is increased



interdependence. Whether having different regions on the African continent produces a negative or positive impact towards achieving continental agendas.

- More literature on African epistemologies is needed which stem from the subaltern as it is imperative that more literature must tackle the phenomenon of gender as it cuts across political, economic, social and cultural lines.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this work answered the question “how does the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union promote its Gender Agenda. The main objective of this dissertation was to evaluate the promotion of the Gender Agenda of the African Union and the hypothesis which guided this dissertation was that women remain systematically and very significantly under-represented. This under-representation affects the quantity of women in institutions (which are the number of women included) as well as the quality of women (which are the diverse interests of women in Africa). The number of women within institutions has increased, as compared to the past when only men were recognised within public institutions. However, gender still determines who has access to resources and who will hold top positions of influence, power and decision making as depicted by the structures of the African Union Organs. African Feminism, in particular Stiwanism, emphasises the need for acknowledging and understanding African women’s epistemologies in the pursuit of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Africa. As African women are hindered by structures in Africa which are heavily founded and reliant on socialisation agents that reproduce gender norms through patriarchy.

Consequently, gender mainstreaming and the African Union is an underexplored area and the research was interesting because it tackled a complex contemporary challenge, gender. Gender is a phenomenon embedded in patterns and structures which are not easily changed due to socialisation agents such as culture which reproduce gendered norms. Gender equality and the empowerment of women cuts across political, economic, social and cultural lines. Therefore, gender cannot be evaluated in isolation

to context, in this case, the African context. The African Union seeks to create opportunities and services for women in Africa through its Gender Policy and the obligations of the initiatives have been placed on both men and women. For this reason, policy making and policy implementation towards achieving gender mainstreaming is complex. Therefore, the African Union promotes gender mainstreaming through its various policies such as the Constitutive Act, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in African, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Gender Policy, the Women's Decade (2010-2020) and Agenda 2063. These policies are the foundation of the Gender Architecture of the African Union for the promotion of its Gender Agenda.

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