

WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

Women in Law and Development in Africa

N° 34 - April 2008

EDITORIAL

This publication of WiLDAF West Africa Newsletter is the thirty fourth issue of April 2008. It offers you an article on the gender aspects of the programme of education on human rights developed by the African Union Commission within the framework of the world programme of education on human rights designed by the United Nations. The article is built on a paper presented by Suad Adbennebi-Abderrahim, Regional Advisor for women promotion, human and legal rights to the United Nations Commission for Africa, during a sub-regional workshop for West African countries held in Banjul (The Gambia) from 14 to 16 April, 2008.

This issue which is also a Special Benin provides you with an overview of the WiLDAF national network under the "Good governance and women's participation in seven West African countries" project.

In addition, we offer you an insert on the report of the WiLDAF West Africa participation in the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CCF/CSW) that was held from 25 February to 7 March, 2008 at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York where the network organised a panel on the topic: "Civil society stakeholders and government officials, dialogue and exchange of experiences on the financing of women's rights".

Furthermore, this issue will inform you about the other activities carried out by other partners and in which WiLDAF has participated.

Finally, your usual headings "honour to women", "news of the networks", documentation and new publications are scheduled.

We rather leave you to discover by yourselves.

Have a good reading!

Mathilde Rizalatou SANT-ANNA

Communication Officer, WiLDAF West Africa

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website:**

www.wildaf-ao.org/eng

Gender dimension in the African Union programme of education on human rights

The African Union Commission organised from 14 to 17 April, 2008 in Banjul, The Gambia, a sub-regional workshop for West Africa on the African Union programme of education on human rights. During the workshop, Mrs **Suad Adbennibi-Abderrahim**, Regional Advisor for women's promotion, human and legal rights to the United Nations Commission for Africa presented a paper on the gender dimension of the African Union programme of education on human rights.

In her presentation, she recalled the adoption in January 2005 of a world programme of education on human rights by the international community in order to provide all the stakeholders, at national, regional and international levels, with a platform of action. Based on this world programme, the African Union has developed a specific programme for Africa; this is the second plan of action 2005-2015 of the second decade of education of the African Union that was adopted in 2006 in Maputo by the AU Summit of Heads of State and government. This second plan of action that we will be informed of through this presentation of Mrs Suad Adbennibi-Abderrahim is the continuation of the first plan of action 1997-2006.

1. The situation of women's rights in Africa

With respect to women's rights in Africa, African women have recorded progress namely at the level of texts, since the support of their countries to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and human rights international instruments.

Progress has been made in the areas of right to education, health, family right, access to land, inheritance, prohibition of genital mutilations, general violence against women. But it should be noted that this is not the same for the application of the texts; the attitude of the general public with respect to gender equity and women empowerment have not evolved at the same rate as in the political, legal and institutional frameworks.

Women are encountering many difficulties in the effective enjoyment of their rights, because there are discriminatory social norms, cultural practices, traditions, customs and stereotypical roles of men and women that remain major obstacles to the exercise by women of their fundamental human rights in most of the African countries.

In some countries, discrimination in the legislative texts continues to deprive women from their fundamental rights in many areas. They continue to be victims of discrimination and are disadvantaged in the area of right to property and inheritance and access to economic resources and social services.

Many women are victims of various forms of violence: physical, psychological and sexual and are deprived from most of their civil and political rights. Furthermore, some judges interpret the texts in restrictive manner, namely in the area of family right.

The discriminatory social norms, cultural practices, customs and traditions, the often erroneous interpretation of religion, the stereotypical roles of women and men continue to be the major obstacles to the realisation of women's human and legal rights in most of the African countries.

A large number of strategies have been developed to combat resistances and reduce the gap between the *de jure* and *de facto* equality. The programme of education on human rights is one of these strategies.

2. The programme of education on human rights : a global consensus on education on human rights.

Through the adoption of this programme, the Heads of African states reached a global consensus on education on human rights to implement the instruments and programmes of action adopted during major conferences on development. These are: the Universal declaration on human rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. To this list we can add other instruments and programmes of actions such as: the International convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the Convention on Children's Rights, the Vienna Declaration and programme of action, and the Beijing Platform of Action which recommends that: "education on human rights is essential for the promotion of the understanding of women's human rights". This recommendation is in most of the 11 priority areas namely education, violence, women's fundamental rights, women and armed conflicts and young girls, etc.

Hence, the World Programme of Education in the area of human rights that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted in December 2004 recognises the major role of school that consists in inculcating competences and attitudes in the youth who are the future of each country.

Regarding the regional instruments and programmes of action on which this programme must be built, they are: the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Dakar Platform of action; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the African Union (AU) Protocol relating to women's rights in Africa.

The programme of education on women's rights uses strategies of mobilisation, recognises profits and difficulties.

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Gender dimension in the African Union programme of education on human rights

(Continued from page 2)

3. Education on women's rights: a strategy to transform women's lives

The education in the area of human rights is a strategy of mobilisation for change of particularly social attitude of the general public and traditional practices and behaviours that discriminate against women. The education in the area of human rights is also a process that facilitates awareness, which is determining factor for duties and obligations of citizens and build the capacity to enjoy these rights.

It targets all the members of the society, namely men and boys to play a role in the promotion of gender equity. It has three aspects that are: information on the laws and the related instruments on human rights; promotion of human rights culture through the development of values, beliefs and attitudes, advocacy in order to encourage to the defence and protection of human rights.

One of the originalities of this programme is the fact it integrates gender approach.

The education in the area of human rights in the sense of gender approach is a strategy for transforming women's lives. Hence, why talking of the role of men and boys? Does not women's capacity building amount to the promotion of gender equity?

Very often, gender equity is considered as an issue that first concerns women. In the seventies, emphasis was laid only on women and it was the time of the programme of promotion of women's role in the development through the promotion of human rights culture by customs, beliefs, values and attitudes, the advocacy to encourage to the defence and prevention of human rights. In the eighties we shifted to the "gender and development" approach which is a new perspective on the relationships between the sexes and allowed for further thinking about men and boys in order to question and modify the relations of unbalanced powers.

Learning and respecting women's rights at early age will allow for reinforcing the consciousness of human rights from early childhood, developing attitudes that question the traditional and cultural beliefs that increases the status of inferiority and subordination of women, ensuring that teachers who are the main trainers at school are also aware of human rights, in order to easily exercise and influence on the community in which they are living and combat sex-related violence. In fact, school is the principal setting for socialisation where the youth's attitudes and behaviours are inculcated and modified in the modern society.

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WOMEN OF HONOR



Mrs Inés Alberdi

A new Executive Director at the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

The new Executive Director of UNIFEM is **Mrs Inés Alberdi**, a Spanish national.

Mrs Inés Alberdi who succeeds Noeleen Heyzer has been selected by the UNDP Administration in consultation with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon and the Advisory Committee of UNIFEM. Spanish scholar specialist of issues relating to women, aged about 60, Mrs Inés Alberdi is author of many books on issues relating to family and women. During her long career, she worked on issues relating to gender equity, development and policies. From 2003 to 2007 she was elected Member of Parliament in Madrid, and before that, she worked as expert for Unity Equal Opportunities of the European Commission, the Spanish Sociology Centre for Research and the Inter-American Bank for Development.

She also worked as lecturer in sociology at the University Complutense of Madrid since 1993 and published many books on the social status of women. She has been appointed Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) aimed at promoting women's participation in the economic and political life of developing countries and improving women's conditions worldwide. UNIFEM provides financial and technical assistance to innovating programmes aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender equity.

UNIFEM International

UNIFEM was created in 1976 in accordance with a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly at the request of the first world conference on women in Mexico City organised by the United Nations. In 2006, after 30 years of claims and changes, UNIFEM is known all over the world and is active in over 100 countries.

UNIFEM supports those activities that empower women while considering regional and national specificities. UNIFEM acts as intermediary and ensures that women participate in activities as quickly as possible.

UNIFEM plays an innovating role and acts as relay between the United Nations and the various development agencies.

WiLDAF-Benin: The challenge to increase the mobilisation role of organisations for the promotion and defence of women's rights in Benin

WiLDAF/Benin: The challenge to increase the mobilisation role of organisations for the promotion and defence of women's rights in Benin

The "Good governance and women's participation in decision-making in seven African countries" project falls in line with the general framework of the involvement of gender in decision-making bodies and the effective consideration of women's needs in budgets at national and local levels.

Within the framework of this project implementation, with the financial support of the European Union, WiLDAF/Benin established three coalitions each bringing together NGOs defending human rights. The Cotonou coalition for the South of the country, the Coalition of Zou for the centre, and the Coalition of the North that covers the upper North of Benin.

All these three coalitions carried out each in its intervention area activities in order to create a favourable context for the respect of women's rights in view of better participation in decision-making.

It was to sound these various actions out that an exchange workshop between the coalitions and the WiLDAF/Benin network was held from 26 to 27 November 2007 at the network Center for Women Rights and Development (CWRD). Each of the representative spokesmen presented a paper on the activities of his/her coalition, allowing for assessing the content of actions carried out, drawing lessons and perspectives and above all, adopting « Good Practices » for the consideration of women's needs in budget at national and local levels.

All presenters emphasized the need to continue and follow-up advocacy with the decision-makers in order that the commitments they made do not go unheeded. For indeed, from Parakou to Cotonou, through the main centre, leaders showed their obvious willingness to work closely with women's rights advocates to successfully complete the project because what is at stake in the cause that is now perceived at three levels of democracy, development and good governance is obvious. That is the reason why the Cotonou coalition launched a two-week promotion campaign called « two-week promotion for a better representativeness of women », and during which it set the main objective of sensitising a specific target group, notably journalists and political leaders, in view of the role of the former in the training and information of the public opinion, and the influence of the latter in the training and positioning of candidates.

To that effect, a press conference for journalists, a round table with political parties, radio programmes and a caravan were organised in Sakété for a better representation of women.

The coalition also conducted advocacy actions for the consideration of gender in the preparation of the district budgets of Tori Bossito, Ouidah, Kpomassè, Allada and Zè.

On its part, the Zou coalition focused its actions on the training of women in governance. 200 women were trained in good governance, 95 in political leadership, 25 women standing for the 2008 municipal elections were trained in electoral campaign preparation mechanisms and in advocacy for the consideration of women in the local government budget.

The North coalition coordinator talked about sensitisation conducted towards the population groups to bring them support women candidacies, and conferences for girls of secondary schools and colleges to sensitise them about their responsibilities as women leaders of tomorrow; and still advocacy for women in the preparation of local government budget.

This meeting of the Benin local coalitions enabled WILDAF/BENIN to assess what has been done at national level in order to define perspectives for achieving the results expected by the project.

Let us talk about the Persons and Family Code

Very recently, the Benin family law was governed by the French civil code of 1958 and by the Dahomey customary law which was nothing but a written compilation of the country's ways and customs. These obsolete texts contained discriminatory provisions against women and made unequal relations between spouses.

Thanks to the commitment of Benin in the democratisation process since 1990, many structures working for the rooting of democracy for the promotion of human rights have been established. It was under the influence of these organisations that in 2004, Benin adopted the Persons and Family Code.

This advent of this text gave rise to a reel craze among human rights champions among which WiLDAF/Benin which devoted its energy for its effective implementation. Thus, WILDAF/Benin initiated the « support to the Persons and Family Code popularisation » project, financed by the DANIDA Governance and Human Rights Programme (PGDP). The main activities carried out under this project are the following:

Harmonisation of the application procedures of the Code by law practitioners

Since the promulgation of the Persons and Family Code, its implementation is not really supported and followed by the public authorities. *(Continued on page 4)*

WILDAF-Benin: The challenge to increase the mobilisation role of organisations for the promotion and defence of women's rights in Benin

Let us talk about the Persons and Family Code

(Continued from page 3)

Despite the action of some non-governmental organisations towards the popularisation of its content, it should be mentioned that its implementation varies from one jurisdiction to another in the country. From Kandi to Cotonou via Natitingou, Parakou, Abomey, Porto-novo, Lokossa and Ouidah, legal responses to issues raised by the entry into force of the Persons and Family Code do not always seem to be consistent. When we consider for example the divorce litigation, protests against the settlement of inheritance, the establishment of out of wedlock filiations, national or international adoptions, the interpretation of the procedures to be implemented and the applicable rules are not issues unanimously shared.

This situation is source of insecurity for Benin population groups and for foreigners interacting with the country's legal system.

For that reason, WILDAF/Benin established training programmes aiming at harmonizing the understanding of the texts and their implementation in all jurisdictions of our country. To achieve this objective, WILDAF/Benin organised a training session for judges of the civil divisions, members of the prosecution, bailiffs and lawyers. The overall objective of this workshop was to build the knowledge of judges of the civil divisions in Benin tribunals and courts of appeal for a consistent implementation of the Persons and Family Code.

Outcomes

- The trained stakeholders acquired enough knowledge to harmonize their views on the provisions of the Persons and Family Code relating to divorce, inheritance and filiation, for a harmonious implementation of the Persons and Family Code.
- The draft forms of certificate to be used by magistrates are updated and

standardized in the field of filiation, divorce, and inheritance. Recommendations are made to public authorities, particularly the Ministry of Justice, for the promotion of the implementation of the Persons and Family Code.

Difficulties

The time given was short, but WILDAF/Benin was not able to mobilise all jurisdiction presidents and other judicial stakeholders for more than 4 days. The participants accepted to work late in night in order to be within the time given to the programme.

Prospects

WILDAF/Benin is seeking additional funding to follow-up the gains obtained through this training. Capacity building of journalists on the content of the Persons and Family Code. Two training workshops were initiated for 50 journalists on the content of the PFC. It should be noted that the journalists who play a decisive role in the training of the public had spread non truths on the code due to lack of information.

To compensate for all these, WILDAF/Benin deemed it necessary to build the capacity of journalists working in Benin on the content of the said code, so that they are able to better relay the information within the population.

Journalists are indeed quite effective channels of dissemination capable of influencing mentalities for a progressive change of behaviour.

After this training, they were put into network to popularise the content of the Persons and Family Code. This popularisation was conducted through 16 programmes on large audience radio stations. The programmes were presented in collaboration with resource persons and journalists already making up the network. WILDAF/Benin developed a guide for journalists to serve as aid for various organisations.

A partnership was concluded with trained journalists who organised quiz shows to promote songs composed on the Persons and Family Code

Training of traditional and religious leaders

The study conducted by WILDAF/Benin revealed that traditional leaders are often requested to settle family disputes in rural areas. This is also true for religious leaders, be they Christian, Muslim or voodoo priests, etc.

Due to their influence on the community, WILDAF/Benin deemed it appropriate to train them on the content of the Persons and Family Code, regarding particularly topics relating to civil status, marriage and inheritance, that are often the origin of family disputes. Forty-eight (48) traditional and religious leaders appropriated the content of the Persons and Family Code and are better prepared to settle disputes referred to them. (Continued on page 6)

You are member of WILDAF/FeDDAF West African Network and wish to publicize your activities? Your initiative? Your association?

Send us your text (long or short, what counts is the content!) by e-mail to WILDAF West Africa. **The deadline for the reception of the texts is: Mars 1st 2008 (for April 2008 issue).**

Who are the Newsletter readers? The WILDAF West Africa Newsletter is distributed to WILDAF West Africa members in nine countries of the sub-region BUT ALSO to our partners in Africa, Europe, Scandinavian countries and America.

info@wildaf-ao.org

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Let us talk about the Persons and Family Code

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Training of registrars

Since registrars are those dealing with the application of the Persons and Family Code, notably with respect to the issuance of birth, marriage or death certificates and solemnisation of marriages, 4 training workshops were organised for them so that they can appropriate the content of the Persons and Family Code to better apply it.

94 registrars were trained. They were supported in restoring the training received to their peers. WILDAF/Benin monitored these various restitutions. A registrar guide was developed to help them properly fulfil their duties. The restitution allow for reaching all registrars of Benin.

Proofreading of the Persons and Family Code

Three years after the promulgation of the Persons and Family Code, WILDAF/Benin conducted an in-depth reading of this important text, book after book, to check whether all the implementing orders were made, in order to make proposals if need be. This work allowed for conducting a cross-cutting reading of the assessment and leading to a consolidated report whose outcomes were validated by a group of resource persons working in the field. To this effect, WILDAF/Benin recruited two consultants whose tasks were to:

- Conduct a session for proofreading the Persons and Family Code, book after book to check whether all the implementing orders were made.
- Develop a directory of the implementing orders already made.
- Propose new draft orders based on the use of the survey reports and the proofreading of the code.
- Make concrete proposals likely to facilitate the effective application of the Persons and Family Code.

At the end of the validation workshop for this proofreading report, a paper was drafted and will be submitted to the government so that the application of the persons and family code is effective.

Evaluation of the implementation of the Persons and Family Code

This initiative is corroborating the training sessions whose objective was to inform stakeholders about the application of the Code (registrars and health workers) with respect to vital records. In order to assess the effectiveness of the code, the network cut across 48 communes throughout the territory and was able to list difficulties encountered in the application of the Code with respect to its vital records component.

Sensitisation is in progress at all levels to allow the popularisation of the code and its ownership by the population, because this law whose « gestation » was undoubtedly the longest and the most painful deserves to bear fruits for the happiness of the population groups and the relief of its originating « parents ». That is a personal challenge and which remains a topical issue for WILDAF/Benin

Municipal, communal and local elections in Benin

3 968 447 Benin nationals went to polls on 20 April, 2008 to elect communal and municipal councillors. At the same time, they also voted for village and city district councillors. A double poll ever organised in the history of the democratic process in Benin. The country has already organised several presidential, legislative and even communal and municipal elections successively with their difficulties.

The elections of 20 April, 2008 were completely new experience. The process was successful until then, despite many obstacles. Many stakeholders played their roles to successfully complete the process.

How did the pulling take place?

The voter goes to the secretary who checks whether there is mark of ink on his/her finger, he/she checks whether the voter is registered. Then, the voter takes the first ballot paper, moves towards the polling booth and makes his/her choice, he/she leaves the voting paper into the ballot box; resumes the same operation for the second vote with regard to local councillors.

Analysis of the situation

The population massively participated in this ballot. But, it was marred by some irregularities. One can deplore, inter alia, delay in the transportation of election materials in some localities; significant lack of certain materials such as inker, torches, envelopes, strings, cotton, solvent. The characteristic of this election was also an obstacle to its success. The electoral law authorising parties to be candidates at local level in the villages of their choices within the same district created a real problem, because one can be registered in the same district with different ballot papers. Since it was the first experience, the population could not understand anything and some refused categorically to vote because the logo of their candidate did not appear therein. All these difficulties resulted in significant delay in the start of the ballot in the polling stations. In some localities, citizens were not able to enjoy their rights to vote. Hence, in some areas, discontented population groups were opposed to the counting of the votes. The National Electoral Commission (CENA) had no alternative but to resume elections in these localities, particularly at Godomey, Ouidah, Pahou, Glazoué and Ayomi. It should be mentioned that the vote was resumed in these localities on 1 May, 2008. However, the people of Benin should be congratulated for its political maturity, for his sense of responsibility because they displayed great composure.

It is also worthy to congratulate political parties. For the first time, there were major groupings which competed. Among these we can mention *Cauris Force pour un Bénin Emergent (FCBE)*, the G13 and the G4. Two parties kept their autonomy; these are RB and PRD.

Currently, we are waiting for the final results to assess the work of the NGOs and to identify suitable strategies likely to enable women to be more involved.

Rwanda: Kagame Receives 2007 Africa Gender Award

President Paul Kagame received in December the 2007 African Gender Award, which he won in January, for the substantial gains made in advancing the cause of Rwandan women.

The Head of State, who received the biennial award from Dakar, Senegal, was selected for the prize by the Women Africa Solidarity (FAS) and the Committee of the African Women for Peace and Development (AWCPD). Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade handed him the prize.

The award-giving ceremony was the key highlight of the African Gender Forum held under the theme "African Women and Migration." "Since the 1994 Genocide, Rwanda has been distinguished for its integration of women in the reconstruction process and its fight against gender-based violence. Rwanda is the only country in the world that can count 48% of women MPs in their national Parliament," the organisation said.

The award is given at the government level to recognise African leaders who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in encouraging gender parity in politics, it added. Two other Rwandan women organisations were also recognised as is the norm to present two other awards to groups from the award-winning country.

Under the leadership of Kagame, Rwandans in 2003 voted a new Constitution which gave women a minimum of 30 percent seats at all decision-making levels. Other previous recipients of the award are Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Senegal's Wade, who both won it in 2005.

More: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200712130109.html>

3 million more girls are at risk each year of female genital mutilation

At the occasion of the International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, Executive Director called for stronger commitment to end female genital mutilation. We call on governments to protect the rights of women and girls.

"We call on leaders to take action to end female genital mutilation in line with the United Nations resolution adopted last year.

In the resolution, governments reiterated that female genital mutilation violates the rights of women and girls. Despite these findings, an estimated 100 million to 140 million women and girls worldwide have undergone the practice". said Thoraya **Ahmed Obaid**, **Executive Director, UNFPA**.

Consult: <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=1096&Language=1>

A conference on the effectiveness of Paris Declaration will be organised soon

The **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness** was adopted on 2 March, 2005 by the officials of bilateral and multilateral agencies, States and NGOs.

The Paris Declaration targets the effectiveness of aid through key principles that are: ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and accountability and development indicators agreed by the OCDE-DAC donor countries and developing countries.

An **international conference on the evaluation** of this declaration will be held in **Accra in September 2008**. The WILDAF network is very involved in the organisation of this meeting through WILDAF Ghana.

As a prelude to this meeting, we suggest to inform you about the entire document of the **Resolution of the Paris Declaration, the declaration of the signatories of the resolution** and an extract of the report of a study carried out by UNIFEM and the European Commission during an international meeting held in 2005 in Brussels, which was entitled **«Promoting gender equality in the new terms of assistance and new partnerships... »**

Download at: www.wildaf-ao.org

Turai Yar'Adua, wife of Nigeria's President Umaru Musa, was elected to head the MIPREDA organisation

"In a bid to support initiatives to restore and strengthen peace on the unrest-prone continent, wives of African heads of state or their representatives have formed a conflict-resolution group.

The African Network of Women Peace Negotiators was created on 15 February in the Congolese capital, Brazzaville, at the sixth conference of the African First Ladies Peace Mission, known by its French acronym MIPREDA, which was launched in 1997 in Nigeria to advocate for peace, stability and harmony in Africa.

"Brazzaville will be the starting point of action of women for peace on the continent," said the first lady of Chad, Hinda Déby Itno. The Chadian capital, N'djamena, came under heavy attack in early February by rebels bent on toppling the government of President Idriss Déby. "Unlike men, who are the first to set them off, we have the opportunity and means to extinguish all these hotbeds of tension and crisis in our country," she added.

"At the dawn of the third millennium, it is shocking to see that Africa remains the seat of most evils afflicting humanity. Foremost among these evils is the blind violence and impunity," said Antoine Sassou Nguesso, wife of Congo's President Denis Sassou Nguesso.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a message delivered to the first ladies by the UN Development Programme's Resident representative in Congo, Aurélien Agbenonci, said 65 percent of the UN's budget for maintaining peace went on Africa.

"Africa is one of the forgotten conflicts, the bloodiest the world has ever known since the Second World War," said Gisèle Mandaila, Belgium's secretary of state for family. "The figures speak for themselves; civilians, mostly women, pay a heavy price for these conflicts." (Africa is one of the forgotten conflicts she said... For the thousandth time, it's a continent, not a country Madam Secretary).

Source: <http://amayelsnotes.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/>

NETWORK NEWS

Echo of the 52nd session of the CSW

The 52nd session of the CSW that held from February 25 to March 07, 2008 has just ended. Some documents from meetings and the panel organized by WILDAF on the theme "**Civil Society Stakeholders and Government officials: dialogue and sharing of experience on the financing of women's rights**" are available on our site.

To download:

- Session conclusion (Final Draft Agreed Findings, March 8)
- Declaration of the Caucus of the Women Africans on the financing of the equality of the sexes and the backing of the capacities of the women
- Taken in account of the preoccupations of the women by the budget of the state - Experience of the state Beninese
- The mobilization of the coalitions Women and Good governance in Benin for the hold in account of the needs of the women in the budgets: strategies and results gotten

Download at: www.wildaf-ao.org

Participation of the WILDAF network in the seminar on the commemoration of the 14th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, on 4 and 5 April, 2008 in Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia)

The meeting was organised by the African Union, UNIFEM, UNECA, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Swedish Embassy in Addis-Ababa.

The seminar aimed at commemorating the 14th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, sharing experiences of the progress achieved, good practices and challenges encountered in the control of gender-based violence in African countries in conflict situation, drawing lessons not only from Rwanda but also other African countries (Rwanda, Liberia, and Democratic Republic of Congo) that experienced gender-base violence in conflict period and formulating recommendations for future.

The participants were from government institutions, civil society organisations, scholars, African Union institutions, ECA and parliaments.

Strategic Planning meeting of UNIFEM for West Africa, 17 to 19 March, 2008

This meeting brought together the staff of UNIFEM in the sub-region and a representative of the Head Office as well as some members of sub-regional and national NGOs.

The topics addressed were: Diagnosis, challenges, opportunities, priorities concerning women; UNIFEM's strategies for collaboration with the civil society, women's status in the various countries of the sub-region. Three priority topics were adopted for the sub-region: - Strengthening of women's security and economic power; -Reduction of the prevalence of violence against women and HIV/AIDS; - Promoting gender justice in democratic governance.

WILDAF-Togo: Celebration of the International Woman Day

Within the framework of the celebration of the International Woman Day, WILDAF-Togo organised a follow-up visit in Kpalimé with the decentralised coalition to inquire about the impacts of the advocacy actions of the « Women and Good Governance » coalition in the *Region des Plateaux*. The particularity of the visit was that members of WILDAF-WASRO, the delegation of the European Commission to Togo (including Chargé d'Affaires himself), and many journalists from private and public media (*including TVT, Radio Lomé, Togo - Presse, Forum de la Semaine, la Dépêche, le Canard Indépendant, Radio Nana FM and Radio Nostalgie, some local medias based in Kpalimé such as ATOP-Kpalimé, Radio Planète Plus and Radio Peace FM*) participated in it.

In attendance, were also in attendance the administrative authorities of the city of Kpalimé, including the Prefect and the Mayor.

We should recall that through their advocacy actions, women of the decentralised coalition of Kpalimé succeeded in settling some women's problems in the market such as the installation of a standpipe, improvement of the way to access to the market, construction of warehouses and sheds for the storage of goods.

During that visit, training manuals, the WILDAF newsletter and the brochure on good practices of the coalition were distributed to the journalists and the public.



Seminar on violence against women in conflict situation

African Union initiated, in collaboration with the **Swedish Embassy**, UN Agencies (**UNIFEM** and **UNECA**) and the **Institute for Security Studies** (ISS), a seminar on violence against women in conflict situation in Addis-Ababa on 4 and 5 April, 2008. During the seminar, there were presentations on **cases of violence against women during the conflict in those countries such as Rwanda, Sudan, Liberia and Democratic Republic of Congo.**

For further info refer to: www.wildaf-ao.org

African Union: New Leadership in the face of Growing Challenges

New blood has been injected into the African Union (AU) in the face of growing challenges for the continent. H. E Jakaya Kikwete President of the Republic of Tanzania is the new Chairperson of the African Union in replacement of Ghanaian leader John Kuffour.

Gabonese Foreign Affairs Minister, Jean Ping, has been elected as the new Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC). The election took place during the 10th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Seven (07) Commissioners out of the eight portfolios of the African Union Commission were elected today, Friday 2nd February 2008, within the framework of the 10th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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The new Commissioners of the African Union are:

Peace and Security Mr. Ramtane Lamamra (Algeria), Political Affairs, Mrs. Julia Dolly Joiner (Gambia), Infrastructure and Energy Mrs. Elham Mahmood Ahmed Ibrahim (Egypt), Social Affairs Advocate. Bience Philomina Gawanas (Namibia, Human Resources, Science and Technology, Mr. Jean Pierre Onvehoun Ezin (Benin), Trade and Industry, Mrs. Elizabeth Tankeu (Cameroon), Economic Affairs Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba (Malawi)

Regarding the post for the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture, the new Commissioner will be elected at an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers billed for Arusha, Tanzania, in the first week of April 2008.

The election was postponed to conform to the African Union rules in respect to regional and Gender balance. Of Africa's five regions, the eastern region did not have a female commissioner during the election. The post of Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture has therefore been reserved for a female candidate from the eastern region.

See: www.africa-union.org

Workshop on education on human rights for West Africa in Banjul (The Gambia), from 14 to 16 April, 2008

The workshop on the education on human rights for West Africa whose topic was « Realisation of Women's Rights through education on human rights » aimed at contributing to the implementation of the world programme for human rights in general and particularly the African Union programme of education on human rights.

The workshop also allowed for assessing the achievements of West African countries with respect to integration of women's rights, the control of violence against women, identifying the challenges and constraints to the integration of women's rights in the primary and secondary classic teaching curriculum and systems in West African countries.

In attendance were Representatives of member States, national Human rights institutions, United Nations agencies, organisations and African Union experts who conducted many debates to share experiences and good practices in education on women's rights in order to identify the needs with respect of the design of women's rights education curriculum for classic teaching systems.

For further info refer to: www.wildaf-ao.org



ECOWAS/WAELU/EU/Non government stakeholders' workshop on the reinforcement of regional integration in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) from 26 to 28 March, 2008

The meeting aimed at improving the integration process through the extension of dialogue to non government stakeholders, sharing with non government stakeholders the current vision of integration through strategic plans of ECOWAS and WAEMU; providing non government stakeholders with a platform of partnership through invitation for proposals and identifying the resources in the region meant for capacity building of non government stakeholders.

The topics addressed were on the vision of integration in West Africa, the Economic Partnership Agreements, the invitation for proposals extended to the civil society organisations. The meeting enabled the participants to get sensitised on the challenges of the regional integration and the economic partnership agreements and to get acquainted with of the invitation for proposals and the EU procedures.

The participants were mainly representatives of the civil society organisations (regional and national), representatives of the private sector and the ECOWAS staff.

News of the protocol (ACHPR)

The **Guinea-Bissau** Parliament unanimously passed the law authorising the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to women's rights on 19 February, 2008.

After this adoption, the officials should submit the ratification instruments with the African Union for the effective implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to women's rights in Guinea-Bissau.

Furthermore, the Guinea-Bissau parliament must also review very shortly a **law on the prohibition of female genital mutilations**. After the submission of the ratification instruments that will hopefully be done very soon, **Guinea-Bissau** will be the **11th West African country** and the **24th in Africa** that have ratified the instrument.

For further information, refer to: www.wildaf-ao.org

Some conditions are essential for the success of the programme; first of all, some prerequisites must be met; these are: the development of concrete policies for education in the area of human rights while taking into consideration the gender dimension, the establishment of an effective education programme in the area of human rights, the development of a planning and the assurance of adequate resources, the adaptation of school programmes for the daily life, the design of training tools updated and adapted to the needs, the training of trainers.

An interaction with the civil society, NGOs, that are working in the area of development in general and particularly those intervening for the promotion of girls and women's rights, should be considered as the key stakeholders due to their knowledge of the realities on the ground.

The constraints should also be pointed out; in fact, the achievement of women's fundamental rights through education in the areas of human rights at primary and secondary school can come up against many obstacles. Lack of appropriate teaching materials is one of the major obstacles when it comes to use primary and secondary school to promote women's fundamental rights.

Similarly, women's fundamental rights, as human rights, are often challenged in the name of traditional, cultural and religious beliefs. Difficulties can occur if the teaching materials used for the education in the area of women's fundamental rights are challenged by children's parents or by the community.

There is also a fear of a conspiracy of silence on the violation of women's fundamental rights. The review of these issues in classroom can conflict with a resistance and can be cumbersome, particularly for young girls who have experienced such violations. We should also point out that teachers and trainers' attitude towards women's fundamental rights can influence the quality of teaching.

There is obviously the need to show innovation in the processing of such delicate issues at school, the teachers being not all enthusiastic towards women's fundamental rights.

Conclusion

The integration of women's fundamental rights in the school curriculum is an inspiring action to which we must get down with the necessary preparation that takes into consideration all the prerequisites, obstacles and risks.

NEWS-NEWS-NEWS

52nd session of CSW

The 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was held at the headquarters of the UN in New York from 25 February to 7 March, 2008, with the topic « *Financing gender equity and women's empowerment* ».

The CSW reviewed the implementation of the concerted conclusions (recommendations) around the topic « Women's equal participation in the prevention, management, settlement of conflicts, and peace building after a conflict ».

For additional information and the programme of CSW, refer to: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm>.

Violence against women: Ban Ki-Moon launches a campaign by 2015

On the occasion of the celebration of the United Nations international day for the elimination of violence against women, the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has launched a campaign at the level of the UN system till 2015.

«This campaign will be conducted around three main aspects: sensitisation at global level, the exemplary impetus of the United Nations, and the reinforcement of partnerships at national and regional levels to support, namely, actions of governments, civil society and private sector », Ban Ki-moon stated in a message published on the occasion of the World Day, on 25 November, 2007.

The United Nations have already reinforced their activities at all levels in order to prevent this form of violence, declared the Secretary General, either through new initiatives from the regional commissions or through a better coordination and programming in the countries.

The Secretary General also proposed that the General Assembly devotes every year an item of its agenda to address the issue of violence against women, and he urged the Security Council to establish a monitoring mechanism under the resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Source : Carrefour AWID

Programme for the decrease by 40% of the female genital mutilation in 16 countries by 2015

A programme of \$ 44 million was launched in order to decrease by 40% female genital mutilation/excision (FGM/E) in 16 countries by 2015 and to put an end to this traditional practice harmful for a generation.

The initiative launched by the UNFPA, United Nations Fund for Population Activities and UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, will encourage communities to give up the FGM/E through information campaign and through the establishment of partnerships with governments, religious leaders, professionals of reproductive health, media and the society.

It will seek to influence laws and their implementation as well as to know and make known the rationales of the continuation of these negative norms and the way to make them change in order to improve women and girls' welfare. Many other partners will be associated.

The programme will also aim at intensifying the promising local and national efforts and establishing a common global framework for the gradual abandonment of the practice.

Every year, about two to three million women and young girls go through FGM/E, which consists in

removing part of or the entire external genital organs of girls or women for cultural reasons or others than therapeutic. The practice that involves 100 to 140 million women and girls in the world is violation of their right to health and their physical integrity.

Source : Carrefour AWID

CEDAW Committee election Process

Members of the CEDAW Committee are elected pursuant to article 17 of the CEDAW Convention by States parties from among nationals of that country. However, it is important to note that these members serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of that States party.

Members are elected for a term of four years. The next CEDAW Committee elections will take place in 2008.

At least three months before the date of each election, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. When electing new members, consideration is given to equitable geographical distribution and to ensure representation of different forms of civilisation and legal systems.

Source : <http://www.iwraw-ap.org/committee/election.htm>

The Global Campaign to *Stop Killing and Stoning Women!*

Women Living Under Muslim Laws is coordinating this Global Campaign to address the persistent misuse of religion and culture to justify killing women as punishment for violating the 'norms' of sexual behaviour as defined and imposed by vested interests.

Source : <http://www.wluml.org/english/index.shtml>

NEWS

8 MARCH, 2008: International Woman Day – A Circle of stories

Stories shared on the International Woman Day. Women, who have personally or from afar experienced violence, were invited to draft « a band of stories » on the International Woman Day, celebrated on 8 March, 2008. They had to create a circle of stories to be connected to the combat of violence against women.

A band of stories is a bracelet made up of any material: paper, cloth, band, cardboard, etc. likely to bear some inscriptions and to be worn on one's wrist.

Women were able to handcraft several bracelets to be transmitted. The phrase « ask me questions » should be mentioned on the band, inviting people that they were meeting to ask questions on their stories on the international woman day. Once they had shared their story, they were requested to give a band to their interlocutors and asked them to continue to tell and to listen to the stories with other people that they would meet.

Source: *Carrefour AWID*

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MEPs to discuss the plight of women in jail

With prison populations growing in many European countries, the specific plight of women in jail will be debated by MEPs on Wednesday. According to a report drafted by Greek MEP Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (EPP-ED), placing women behind bars can have a serious impact on children - especially if the mother is the sole carer. The report wants the laws of European Union states to take into account the rights of children when mothers are jailed as well as rehabilitation for offenders.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/014-22901-168-06-25-902-20080305STO22900-2008-16-06-2008/default_en.htm

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Defending women rights in the workplace in the Southern countries / By Vanessa Gautier, Peoples Solidaires

This feature made up of 16 notes shows the consequences of globalisation on Southern women's condition at workplace. It suggests analyses in terms of gender that represents a great interest for action. It contains studies, experiences of organisations for the defence of women workers. We can notice that the citizen interpellation campaigns, part of actions of international solidarity are indispensable to make these rights known and protected.

To access the notes, please refer to: <http://base.d-p-h.info/fr/dossiers/dossier-312.html>

Source: <http://www.genreenaction.net/spip.php?article6390>

Guide for gender integration in development projects / Association Tanmia.ma

The guide for "Integration of Gender approach in development projects" developed by the Association Tanmia.ma, will allow for applying this approach in your education projects, namely, those relating to literacy and the support to girls education. In its mission to build the capacities of development stakeholders in Morocco, the Association Tanmia.ma developed the guide on "the Integration of Gender approach in development projects" which is meant to be a simple and practical tool to help associations in the integration of the gender dimension in their organisation and their development projects.

The interactive version of the guide on the "Integration of gender approach in development projects" comprises "Gender...in theory" and "Gender ...in practice"

The PDF format of the guide "Gender in practice" can be downloaded from the site of the Réseau Genre en Action at: http://www.genreenaction.net/IMG/pdf/FAI_Tguide_genre_pratique.pdf

You could see the interactive version of the guide at: <http://www.tanmia.ma/guidegenre/>

WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

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An unfinished conquest: women's right to use their bodies/ By Valérie Haudiquet, Maya Surduts, Nora Tenenbaum (coord.) Publication: February 2008

Despite the obvious progress in women's condition, they still encounter some difficulties and hindrances to the implementation of acquired rights. Why? This book makes the assessment thereof and aims for giving elements of answer. As far as customs are concerned, the French society resists the questioning of social normative and «naturalised» relationships. Hence, the principles of freedom and equality enshrined by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic are not complied with. The situation concerning the place and women's rights is obviously contrasted. If women are henceforth massively present in the workforce, basic condition for the independence, they are however still massively lagging behind and subdued.

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