

WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

Women in Law & Development in Africa

N°10 April 2002

EDITORIAL

A new lease of life for WiLDAF/FeDDAF West Africa

For some time now, the (new) West African head office of WiLDAF/FeDDAF has been bubbling more than ever with energy and enthusiasm. In fact, a new lease of life has been injected into the network through several new commitments, including the 30-month project financed by the European Union and which covered 7 countries namely "Sensitisation and capacity building of the judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for the effective implementation of women's rights in West Africa".

The network has thus been provided with fresh human resources. We wish therefore to welcome KUWONU Afiwa Kafui, Programme Officer for the sub-region and ODAH Denise K. Idjessi, Secretary, both of whom now form part of the sub-regional office team. Furthermore, new programme officers were recruited in the following countries: in Mali: BOUARE Bintou SAMAKE, in Togo SANT'ANNA Rizalatou, in Senegal: Oulèye DEMBA DEME, in Nigeria: IZUAKO Nonye and in Ghana: ESSEL Patricia.

Since all these women have invaluable knowledge for the network, they were able to meet with some of the pillars of WiLDAF/FeDDAF during the sub-regional EU Project appropriation workshop which took place in Lome from 18-20 March and in respect of which we provide you with a brief report in this edition.

The network also diversified its activities with a project concerning women in conflict situations in Sierra Leone and Guinea. The project "Training of trainers for the education in law and legal assistance to women" will be implemented in coming months with the assistance of the HCR (High Commissioner for Refugees).

These forthcoming projects do not modify in any way the commitments which WiLDAF/FeDDAF have made with the other network members of the Regional Committee on the Protocol, to West African women to ensure that their rights are effectively taken into account in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights relating to Women's Rights in Africa. This explains why representatives of the civil society will be attending, through the support of CECI/DCF, CIDA, the Second Meeting of Experts and the 31st Session of the ACHPR.

Mention should also be made of the participation of the network in the discussion concerning the New Partnership For Africa's Development (NPAD), which we shall be discussing with you in our next pages.

All these activities accompany and strengthen the actions initiated by the national networks themselves, some of which are mentioned here such as the action of WiLDAF-Nigeria in favour of Safyata whose story the entire world knows now and the action of WiLDAF-Benin against sexual harassment.

The strength of a network such as WiLDAF/FeDDAF lies not only in the diversity of the resources of its members but also in its capacity to join forces with stakeholders outside the network, including the Commissioner Mrs MELO Angela, the new Special Rapporteur for ACHPR, who accepted to grant us an interview.

Enjoy your reading and once again welcome, all of you!

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The Wildaf West Africa
Newsletter is also available on
our website

WARNING

Our website address is changed.
It is now: www.wildaf-ao.org

E-mail address: wildaf@cafe.tg

“SAFIYA MUST NOT DIE” CAMPAIGN - A CASE OF INJUSTICE TO WOMEN UNDER THE GUISE OF RELIGION

BACKGROUND

On the 10th of October, 2001, the Upper Sharia court in Gwadabawa Sokoto State in Nigeria sentenced 30 year old expectant mother, Safiya Hussein Tungartudu to death by stoning for alleged adultery. The presiding judge ruled that the sentence be carried out after she weaned her baby while the man she allegedly had sex with was set free on the ground that under the Sharia law, four witnesses must testify that they actually saw the man and the woman having sex. This requirement was not met coupled with the fact that Safiya admitted being pregnant outside wedlock.

The sentence on Safiya generated a lot of controversies within and outside the country. In particular the stoning for adultery generated a lot of outrage by many human rights activists both locally in Nigeria and internationally. So much so that an Italian football match that both teams wore TEE-SHIRTS boldly campaigning against the sentence against Safiya.

Many organisations and Federal Government represented by the Federal Ministry of women affairs encouraged Safiya to appeal against the decision to the Sharia court of Appeal, Sokoto district. While awaiting the Decision of the Sharia Court of Appeal non-governmental organizations (NGOs) immediately rose to the challenge condemning the sentence in strongest terms possible.

The Safiya must not die campaign was then initiated and sponsored by Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC), a member of WILDAF. The campaign is a coalition of over thirty Non Governmental Organizations in Nigeria with the aims of.

- Constructively agitating for the abrogation of death penalty in Nigeria.
- Accessing the extent of the protection of women's rights under Sharia law.
- Engaging in research and advocacy work towards the protection of women's right against religious, customary and statutory discrimination.

The campaign activities were initiated to look beyond Safiya's case and abrogate any laws be it religious, customary or statutory that inhibits the enjoyment of women's fundamental human rights.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CAMPAIGN

PUBLIC LECTURES

A public lecture was organized on the 7th of November, 2002 titled **“An Assessment of Women's Rights under Sharia Law – Safiya Tugartudu Hussein as a case study”**. The guest speaker was Dr. M. T. Ladan of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, an Islamic Scholar who specializes in Common Law and Jurisprudence. Dr. Ladan's lecture highlighted five issues, which are that :

- Sharia recognizes fundamental human rights
- Sharia law recognizes the special rights of women
- The sentence against Safiya is a misapplication of Sharia Law.
- The constitution is supreme over any other Law.
- The sentence against Safiya is a violation of her fundamental human rights guaranteed in the constitutions and international documents.

LEGAL SUPPORT FOR SAFIYAS LAWYER

On the 30th of November, WARDC delegated a lawyer to go to Sokoto on behalf of the campaign team to

file an amicus curiae brief. Being a customary court, such procedures were not recognized but the lawyer continued to appear with Safiya's lawyer till judgement was delivered.

INTERNATIONAL ALERT

The campaign sent a letter of protest against the sentence to the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria urging the Federal Government to intervene. Letters were also sent to the international community alerting them of the gross abuse of Safiya's fundamental human rights. WILDAF Nigeria under its emergency Response System initiated a protest letter forwarded to its Network members locally and in the WILDAF sub-Region.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Over twenty-five press men and women attended a press conference on the 30th of October, 2001 which was organized by the campaign. Members of the campaign team turned out in a large number to buttress the importance of the campaign. The press conference made headlines for weeks in the national newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations.

A WALK FOR SAFIYA

The members of the campaign staged a five miles walk for Safiya in commemoration of Women's Day on 8th of March, 2002. The walk was used to enlighten the public while urging them to oppose the death sentence on Safiya. The walk took the members who wore T-shirts with inscriptions **“Stop the killing! Safiya has a right to Life”** to market places and other strategic parts of Lagos.

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“SAFIYA MUST NOT DIE” CAMPAIGN - A CASE OF INJUSTICE TO WOMEN UNDER THE GUISE OF RELIGION

Continued page 2

WILDAF Nigeria also organised a parade wearing specially designed scarfs with the inscription “**Safiya Must Not Die**”. The parade was held at the Women’s Development centre where the celebration of the International women’s Day took place.

The National Coordinator of WILDAF Nigeria, Mrs. Bisi Olateni Olagebgi granted interviews to the Television and radio stations and to some journalists, stating the stand of WILDAF i.e. to fight for the enforcement of Safiya’s fundamental human rights.

The event was covered extensively by the Television Houses. WILDAF Nigeria in addition issued a statement condemning Safiyas sentence .

THE JUDGMENT

On the 18th of March, 2002 the day initially set aside for the ruling of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Sokpoto, six lawyers represented the campaign and 20 lawyers represented the Federal Government attended the court.

Those members who could not attend the Court showed solidarity by wearing the campaign scarfs and displaying the banner for the Safiya must not die campaign.

Representatives of WILDAF west Africa sub-region also converged in Togo during a familiarisation workshop for European Union Project, and took time to show solidarity and support for the Safiya must not die campaign by wearing the campaign scarfs. Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi Wildaf Nigeria coordinator had interviews on the subject with international media organisations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the German Radio (Deutsche Welle)

Unfortunately the ruling by the Sharia Court of Appeal was adjourned to the 25th of March, 2002.

On 25th March, 2002 lawyers also attended on behalf of the campaign and the Federal government while those who could not attend in Lagos wore the campaign Tee-Shirts and scarfs. Some matched to the Sokoto State liason office and delivered a protest statement.

The Sharia Court of Appeal in Sokoto discharged and acquitted Safiyat Husseini Tungartudu. She was discharged on the ground that the death sentence passed on Safiyat by the Gwabadawa Upper Sharia Court was unconstitutional and that the court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the case. It was further held that the charge was retrospective because the alleged offence was committed at a time when Sokoto Sharia Law was not in existence.

Another interesting reason given by the Court for Safiya’s discharge was that Safiya defence of having a delayed foetus was upheld.

CONCLUSION

Although WILDAF joins the world in celebrating the discharge and acquittal of Safiyatu, we still have a lot of concern . The major reason for Safiya’s discharge decidendi is totally unacceptable as it does not address the main issue. The decision does not uphold the tenets of justice, equity and good conscience. Based on the judgment, certain questions readily come to mind:

- What if the Sharia Law was in existence as at the time of offence?

- What would be the fate of Safiya and her baby?

Till these questions are satisfactorily answered, the problem of discrimination of women by the State enforced Sharia Laws remain and WILDAF remains committed to demanding permanent solution that is the abolition of discriminatory and obnoxious practices against women and International Humanitarian Laws based on Religion and or customs..

Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi
Wildaf Nigeria coordinator

You are a member of the WILDAF/FeDDAF West Africa Network and wish your activities or your association to be promoted?

Send your text (short or long, it doesn’t matter. What is important? the content!) by e-mail to WILDAF West Africa to the following address: wildaf@cafe.tg . The due dates for the reception of the texts are: May 27th 2002 (July 2002 issue), August 26th 2002 (October 2002 issue), November 18th 2002 (January 2003 issue).

Who read the Newsletter? The Wildaf West Africa Newsletter is distributed to our members in 9 countries of the West African sub-region BUT ALSO to our partners in Europe and in America.

For any question or comment, don’t hesitate to contact us

BRIEFS - BRIEFS -BRIEFS - BRIEFS - BRIEFS -BRIEFS - BRIEFS - BRIEFS

On 4 and 5 May 2002 a conference organised by the CIDA will take place in Montreal Canada on the **New Partnership for Africa's Development (NPAD)**. The event will bring together representatives of African and Canadian civil society which will discuss the possible repercussions of NPAD on Canadian Development Assistance.

Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson, Wildaf/Feddaf sub-regional Coordinator was invited to attend the meeting and will, in that capacity, be the spokesperson for the entire Wildaf West Africa Network. She will articulate the possible impact of this new development instrument on women in the sub-region.

We are inviting you to communicate with the Wildaf/Feddaf Office in Lome in order to submit to us your opinion on the matter before Kafui's departure.

NEPAD (also called NOPADA) which was designed in Africa and is being defended by eminent African Leaders provides a comprehensive long term strategy aimed at assisting Africa to break out of poverty and conflicts. You will find the text in French and in PDF format on the following site:

<http://famafrigue.org/liens/Nopada.pdf>. For any further information, visit the official NPAD site at the following address:

<http://www.africainitiative.org>

As you know, a study on communications within WILDAF was conducted in recent months. This study made it possible for us to observe that the majority of network members receive the Newsletter by electronic mail and confirmed our strategic choices for the **format of the bulletin**. Since most members do not have access to the basic software, we will continue to

present the Newsletter in the present form namely in "Word" without software and with a minimum of graphics for ease of reception. Furthermore, in order to facilitate reproduction, we will continue to use the A4 format.

The **results of the study on communications** will soon be available on our Internet site.

AN ODYSSEY AGAINST SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

It all began with a drawing competition organised by the WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN, for Secondary School students in 12 districts in Benin. This competition, which was crowned with the award of prizes to the 36 winners, covered the most expressive drawing illustrating the multiple forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls as well as the other forms of discrimination to which they are subjected such as lack of access to education.

The WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN thus drew inspiration from this competition and decided to visit once again the school and especially the secondary schools from which the award winners emerged in order to talk about the sexual harassment of young girls in schools; the exercise was therefore going to involve an obvious but and an embarrassing issue.

The idea took shape one evening in November 2001 where nearly all the NGOs members of the WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN Network responded to the call. Eight (8) secondary schools were initially identified. This number however increased to 16.

The Odyssey began on 30 November 2001 when members of the Network visited not less than 8 Districts in Benin (Atlantique, Mono, Zou, Couffo, Plateau, Collines, Littoral...)

It was with great joy that all this was done. It is no longer a secret for anyone that sexual harassment constitutes an act which by itself is tantamount to moral and

physical violence; even if the criminal code, in its current state does not define it, it is obvious that this act can be reprimanded as indecent assault and offence against public decency. However, for the knowledgeable Legal Expert, it will be necessary to respect the rule of the strict interpretation of the criminal law.

Sexual harassment exists. It is a stubborn phenomenon, "**it should be combated**" were the words of an observer.

For 2001, WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN made a bold effort to tackle a TABOU issue, sh.....! a lot has been said about it but in low tones.

WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN therefore shook some people while making other uncomfortable, it ginged up those who were overwhelmed with fear. Carine for instance in Abomey spoke out to say that the teachers were harassing the girls.

Thus, what is sure is that, this action has shaken the guilty and instilled fear into them.

But above all, WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN realised that an advocacy was necessary so that the Honourable Members of Parliament adopted a law against sexual harassment. The criminal law is subject to strict interpretation, it was therefore necessary to act accordingly in order to provide sexual harassment with its constituent elements and its control framework.

WILDAF/FeDDAF/BENIN has pledged to exert pressure

WILDAF TO TAKE UP NEW CHALLENGES

A sub-regional meeting for the appropriation of the "Sensitisation and capacity-building of judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for the effective implementation of women's rights in West Africa" project, came off from the 18th to 20th March in Lome.

This new project funded by the European Union (*EU2 project*) is a real challenge that the West African network has decided to take on itself and which the representatives of the national networks have all accepted to take on with audacity, courage, and enthusiasm, characteristic of the WILDAF/FeDDAF members. The project aims at contributing to improve the effectiveness of women's rights in the seven West African countries by building the capacities of the critical masses of Judges, Lawyers, Police Officers, Doctors, Traditional and Religious Leaders for a better consideration of the rights of women.

The workshop aimed at enabling the beneficiary national networks of the project (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) to appropriate for themselves the content of the project, finalise the strategies for the implementation of the activities according to the context peculiar to each country and to validate the schedule planned for the activities at the level of each country.

The workshop took off with the official opening ceremony presided over by Her Excellency, the Togolese Minister of Social Affairs, Promotion of Women and Protection of the Child which was an opportunity for introducing the new project to the population through the work of numerous journalists who were present at the ceremony.

The real workshop then started with the presentation of the EU2 Project (objectives, activities, implementation strategies, expected results, follow-up

indicators). This stage of the workshop was followed by a very fruitful discussions, especially with respect to the strategies for the implementation of activities of the project that had to conform with the double challenge of being adapted to each of the national context by strictly complying with the basic rules of the project in order that the results may be assessed at the sub-regional level.

The discussions also allowed for going over the reasons for the choice of the stakeholders targeted by the project; **judges** are being called upon to better apply and interpret the texts of the law and other instruments containing the principles of right in order to render justice to all, including women. The **lawyers** are being called to better interpret and use the texts of the law and other instruments containing the principles of the right in order to defend the rights of their clients. **officers or agents of the judicial police** contribute to the upholding of the truth, receive complaints and throw light on the fact in certain cases of the violation of women's rights. The **traditional and religious leaders** are to protect the rights of the populations including women who have confidence in them by reporting conflicts in which they are involved to them (religious and traditional leaders). **doctors** are to receive and treat patients including women victims of violence and to sometimes play a decisive role in the establishment of the evidence necessary for the protection of their rights. All these stakeholders therefore play a predominant role in the effective implementation of the rights of women.

Apart from the sub-regional meeting, the project has five activities :

- Designing and production of literature on the rights of women, handling of the violation of these rights and a document for advocacy;
- Organisation of national information and sensitisation days for doctors and traditional and religious authorities, relays responsible for dissemination of the information among their peers;
- Organisation of training workshops for lawyers, judges, police officers, as well as the negotiation for the integration of modules designed by Wildaf into the training programme for stakeholders under training;
- Survey and data collection on the implementation of knowledge acquired by the trained and/or sensitised stakeholders as well as the lobbying activities related to the research findings and the collection of these information;
- Publishing and dissemination of a liaison bulletin.

Deliberations went on with the study of national implementation plans of the project and the validation of the global schedule of the sub-region. They ended with the presentation of the budget and the rules on administrative and financial procedures.

At the end of this meeting, three major results were identified: the appropriation of the EU2 Project (assessed with the assistance of an evaluation questionnaire filled out by the participants, the improvement of the implementation strategies of the project, thanks to the discussions and debates, the validation of the national and global plans for the implementation of the project.

Here, we are therefore at the beginning of an adventure in which the members of Wildaf will have to demonstrate all their knowledge and where they will show that a fruitful collaboration among the different professional bodies is one of the best ways of promoting the acknowledgement and a real implementation of the rights of women. Let us together take up this challenge.

***Based on the report of Kafui
Kuwonu***

INTERVIEW WITH Mrs ANGELA MELO, SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

WILDAF West Africa Newsletter (WWAN): Mrs Melo, could you describe your track record which brought you to the post of Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in Africa?

Angela Melo (AM): I was elected Commissioner in July 2001 during the 37th session of the Assembly of OAU Heads of State and Government (African Union) which took place in Lusaka, Zambia. Following my election, I participated for the first time as Commissioner to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in October 2001. During this session, it was necessary that the Commission designated a Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in order to follow-up to the work started by Mrs Ondziel.

With regard to my track record from 1994 up to February 2002, I was Vice President of an NGO called the Mozambican Association of Women Legal Practitioners, I was elected to two consecutive terms of Office.

During the period where being a private legal Practitioner (in the 1980s when women Legal Practitioners were very few) was prohibited by the law in my country, I was designated automatic defender at the tribunals where I worked considerably in the field of violence against women. I also contributed towards the deletion of articles from the criminal code which contained humiliating provisions in respect of women. I further instituted actions for divorce on the initiative of women. Such actions were, at the time, difficult to defend and win. Finally, still as the automatic defender, I worked and defended women in customary law.

As the Legal Advisor to the Minister of Justice on International Public and Private Law, I was responsible for human rights and women's rights. I participated in Ministerial Conferences on the adoption of policies on the defence and promotion of women's rights in the Southern African Region (SADC Countries). Finally, I participated in the promotion of the ratification of the conventions on Human Rights in Mozambique by

preparing the drafts of resolutions to the Council of Ministers of my country.

(WWAN): What is your vision of women's situation in Africa?

(AM): I think we have all agreed to affirm that women in general, in Africa in particular, constitute the largest segment of the population in Africa. Unfortunately, they are the most vulnerable population: poverty, famine, poor health, lack of education, difficult access to training, leisure, limited opportunities for jobs, business, power, full participation in political economic and social cultural, literary and scientific life.

It should however be acknowledged that some progress has been made with regard to women. Women themselves have been increasingly striving so that their rights are recognised and granted. Governments are today involved in women's emancipation process either by commitments made sometimes obligatory by regional or world events,

or because in their countries, they are subject to intense pressure from women, or because they are progressive Governments. They ratify international or regional conventions. They grant rights to women. It is a constant "battle" which should be waged the world over. In countries where from the outset, namely, their independence, the woman formed part of the governance philosophy, women's rights are better respected. This was the case in the former centralised economies as is the case in my country. In other countries where religion plays a very important role, women's rights are more mixed, even though there are some associations which fight for the recognition of women's rights. However, almost everywhere, there is a lack of strong commitment and clear strategies for the defence of women's rights including the fight against poverty, for increasing the level of education of women.

(WWAN): Is the mandate given you different from the one given to Mrs Gnelenga Ondziel? If yes, how and why?

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GOOD WEBSITES

DO YOU SURF ON INTERNET ? HERE ARE INTERESTING SITES

Subject : An educational website dedicated to human's rights in Africa. You will find: the principal reference texts related to human rights, the daily updating of the international legal instruments ratification related to human rights, some Internet links to the major international institutions...

Languages : English, French, Spanish

Address: www.afrdh.org

Subject : News on women in Africa. A frequent updating that gives you the insurance to be always well informed of the most recent event related to women in Africa. The news are coming from many news agencies and associations, like : The Daily Trust, The Post, Nation, Ghanaian Chronicle. Possibility to do research by country or sub-region.

Languages : English, French

Address : <http://allafrica.com/women/>

Subject : Mama Cash. Funder from the Netherlands for women in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, Caribbean and Middle-East. Financing from 500\$ to 5000\$ US. Fields of interest: Women's rights, Sexual rights, Communication and media, Networks establishment at the international level, cultural activities

Languages : English, French, Spanish, Dutch

Address : mamacash.org

If you know Internet sites which can help WILDAF members in their work, don't hesitate to share this information!

INTERVIEW WITH Mrs ANGELA MELO, SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

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(AM): The mandate per se for the Special Rapporteur, does not differ from that of Mrs Ondziel, because our mandate has a very broad scope. I have seen what Mrs Ondziel has done, I am going to complete what has not been completed by taking into account the duration of my term of office. As at now, I am in the process of preparing my programme of action for the duration of my term of office. Already, I find it short, I however hope to focus my activities on violence against women and map out strategies for each sub-subject. This is what Mrs Ondziel initiated. In addition, an action strategy should be designed so that in each mission, I work on the right to education, I am very concerned by that.

(WWAN): *How do you intend to serve this term of office?*

(AM): I intend to prosecute my programme from the support of the Commission's Secretariat, I will have a Legal Expert from the Secretariat attached to my functions, I shall have an Assistant who is the person who has worked with Mrs Ondziel. I am in the process of holding discussions with potential donors and partners, this can be your organisation, Unifem, the European Union, etc. For my work, I am counting on NGOs and the African Union. It is obvious that one has to work with the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations and Inter-America in order to ensure a harmonisation of action, ideas activities and results.

(WWAN): *In addition to this mandate, do you have personal objectives relating to the rights of African Women? What are the objectives?*

(AM): Personally, I have an objective namely, to succeed in heightening women's consciousness in their potentiality and capacity, through education, participation in political life and citizenry, and thereby become a more recognised advocate before the various Governments. Who knows, with increased power, one could change the world a bit...

(WWAN): *How do you see the role of the Special Rapporteur ?*

(AM): It is a very difficult role because one has to use a lot of energy, effort and demonstrate that we are capable of doing good work. The world is however still dominated by societies in which our rights cannot be recognised without a fight. In view of this, the role of the Special Rapporteur must be visible and supported by the Commission, the African Union and the NGOs. I count on you a lot. The work should have a positive impact on the life of poor women especially, and to this end, the work with the Governments and civil society must be done in close collaboration; the work involving the dissemination of information for women is capital.

(WWAN): *African women are looking forward to the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 2002. What do you intend to do in order to ensure that the Protocol is adopted, that the amendments proposed by civil society are incorporated into the final text and that an effective follow-up process is instituted and respected?*

(AM): According to the information which I had from Mrs Ondziel, the Commission's Secretariat and Women's NGOs, the amendments

have been incorporated. The final version of text of 13 September reflects this, all the Regional NGOs were invited to participate in the consultative meetings. This was formidable in my opinion.

The Expert's meeting can change slightly the wishes of the various parties concerned; however, so far, I am content with the results. The problem will still be the introduction of the Protocol, since the reports must be presented by the Member States to the African Commission.

For the effectiveness of the Protocol, I shall work with you and the Secretariat in order to establish a framework of actions for the implementation of the Protocol, by beginning with seminars to identify the process leading to the ratification of the Protocol, the administrative, legislative and other measures for the implementation of the Protocol.

I would also like to have a national **"focal point"** in each country of our continent for a communication link: information concerning the measures taken by the Protocol's Member States.

Thank you Mrs Melo and Good Luck!!

Network news

WiLDAF-Benin has recently undertaken a review of the programme **"Capacity-building of women's national networks in order to contribute towards the implementation of women's human rights"** financed by the European Union. This review exercise enabled us to observe that this national network has been full of life since its inception in June 1999.

WiLDAF-Benin is proud of its achievements so far, a brief overview of which is as follows: (1999, 2000, 2001) very energetic campaigns against violence perpetrated against women, propagation of the CEDAW for its NGO members (UNFPA), training of its members in Internet use (UNDP), organisation of a drawing competition on the theme of violence perpetrated against women and girls (Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives). Two projects are currently under implementation: the organisation of round tables on the evolution of family law in Benin (UNFPA) and the organisation of advocacy and lobbying activities for Parliamentarians for the voting of the Persons and Family Code (UNFPA).

This very dynamic network brings together members of its office 2 times in a month, its members once in a month and not less than four new projects are about to be launched.

WiLDAF-Senegal, having embarked on the same exercise, was able to demonstrate the extent of the power of this network to promote the cause of women. We wish to mention for instance that a project on the sensitisation on the violence perpetrated against women (VECO) is currently underway in partnership with the Union of Feminine Groupings of Pikine, located in the outskirts of Dakar. Other financings are expected from USAID, OSYWA, and OXFAM/GB. The national

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EVENTS

Second Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights relating to Women's Rights and the Ministerial Meeting.

These meetings (first of all scheduled for April 2002) will take place in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia from the 20th to the 23rd May 2002. These crucial meetings are the last but one official stage of a long process through which the draft protocol went before the submission of the final text to the OAU Council of Ministers (Ministers of Foreign Affairs) and to the African Heads of States Summit which will take place in June or July 2002. The members of the Regional Committee and the national follow-up Committees are already preparing towards it by informing and sensitising the Experts and Ministers who will be delegated to Addis Ababa. Likewise, a delegation composed of representatives of civil society will attend this meeting as observers in order to ensure that the Protocol is not voided of its substance and that it should be an effective Instrument responding to the needs of African women. It should be pointed out that the Experts meeting will take place on the 20-21 of May and that of the Ministers will follow on the 22-23 of May.

Reference : Regional Committee on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Coordination : WILDAF/FeDDAF West Africa) : wildaf@cafe.tg OR Germain Baricako, ACHPR Secretary, Tel : (220) 39 29 62/ 37 09 16 Fax : (220) 39 07 64 E-mail : secretary@achpr.gm OR gerbaricako@hotmail.com

***** **CEDAW, 27TH Session**

The next Session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women will be held from June 3 to 21 2002, in UNHQ, New York.

The countries reporting are: Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, Tunisia, Ukraine, Zambia

Reference: Women's Rights Unit, DAW, Room, DC-2-1226, UN, New York, NY, 10017, USA Fax: (212) 963-3463, E-mail: connorsj@un.org

***** **31ST ACHPR Session**

The 31st ACHPR (African Commission for Human and People's Rights) Ordinary Session will be held on May 2 to 16 2002 in Pretoria, South Africa. A civil society delegation representing the Regional Committee for the Protocol will be present, thanks to CECI-DCF and CIDA financial support.

Reference : Germain Baricako, ACHPR Secretary, Tel : (220) 39 29 62/ 37 09 16 Fax : (220) 39 07 64 E-mail : secretary@achpr.gm OR gerbaricako@hotmail.com

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Network news

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network of Senegal has distinguished itself by its constant involvement in dossiers relating to women's rights of this country, particularly in the activities undertaken by the Women's Consultative Committee headed by the Minister of Family Affairs and Childhood. Mention should also be made of the unfailing involvement of the Follow-up Committee to the Protocol relating to the African Charter headed by WILDAF/FeDDAF Senegal.

The office meets once in a month and the members once in two years in conformity with statutes.

We have recently received good news from **WILDAF-Mali**. It seems that the team spirit and ingenuity is a dominant trait of this network. In order to alleviate this excessive workload, the network's office recruits freely and on a temporary basis, trainees to assist the programme officer. We have also learnt that the national network of Mali has recently been provided with spacious premises including a documentary and legal research documentation centre (Canadian Embassy) and the same donor has financed the training of 8 legal women in Canada. Furthermore, WILDAF-Mali enlisted the support of CECI-DCF for the production and the dissemination of legal texts in a local languages. We should finally mention that the network has organised, with its own financing (contributions of members), a capacity-building workshop for 40 para legal Experts and that through the diversification of its resources of financing, numerous other activities were undertaken or envisaged. Bravo!