

WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

Women in Law & Development in Africa

N°16 - April 2003

EDITORIAL

I am inviting you to read carefully this special edition on Nigeria and its WiLDAF chapter which work on a daily basis to defend and promote women's rights. You will also be able to get WiLDAF points of view on Amina Lawal from Nigeria who got acquitted from the adultery accusation that were held against her. The article Thanks God! Amina Lawal was acquitted but on what grounds written by Mrs Olabisi Olateru-Olagbegi, the coordinator of WiLDAF Nigeria, explain that we still have to fight so that men and women can be equal before the law and give some direction of how to achieve this objective.

You will also be able to check out your regular sections. The good websites section is providing you with the coordinates of the newly designed web site address of Women living under muslim law, a portal which you can use to publish your organization's profile and a collaborative project on defining terminology related to the information society. News from the network gives you some informations on activities held in the Nigeria and Burkina Faso WiLDAF/FeDDAF chapters and a follow-up on the UE 2 project.

Section Did you know that? give you some hints on how to use more effectively you Outlook Express. And you can read some short news from Africa and around the world.

WiLDAF wants you to remember that this newsletter is yours. It is up to you to do what you want about it. Tell us what you like, what themes you want us to deal with and what other types of informations you would like to receive. Don't hesitate to call us to give us some suggestions or to send us written propositions by e-mail (wildaf@cafe.tg).

Have a nice reading!

Colette LELIÈVRE
Communication Officer

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The Wildaf West Africa Newsletter is available on our website:

www.wildaf-ao.org

E-mail: wildaf@cafe.tg

The WiLDAF Nigeria chapter: a daily commitment for the women's rights

The Nigerian chapter is a branch of the regional network of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), a pan african non governmental (NGO) and non-profit organization with about 120 individuals and 70 NGO members. The chapter was inaugurated in Ibadan in 1991 shortly after the formation of the regional body in 1990.

The major objective is to promote respect for women in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The law is one of many tools used to accomplish this objective. WiLDAF Nigeria has engaged in a series of training, enlightenment programmes and workshops on women's rights issues aimed at target groups directly involves in women's empowerment activities. It also establishes and facilitates communication amongst network members and it does advocacy at local, national, regional and international levels. It offers free legal services to women whose rights are violated. Other activities include the "Rally In Protest Against Violence Against Women", the annual "16-days Campaign On Gender Violence" which hold from November 25th to December 10th each year, emergency response activities, capacity building workshops, a national workshop on "Silent Victims of Violence Against Women in Tertiary Institutions" held in Owerri aimed at enlightening the society, especially the youths.

WiLDAF Nigeria held in 1999 a tribunal tagged "The Court of Women" where testimonies on violence against women were given by witnesses after which recommendations were made to the appropriate authority. From January 2002 to July 2004, it carries out, alongside the six other country networks in the sub-region, the "Sensitization and capacity building of judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for

the effective implementation of the rights of women" sponsored by the European Union. The project is carried out through a series of workshops targeting specific stakeholders whose by their roles are relevant to the implementation of the rights of women. (read the article of Erica Williams, A great way to end sexism, for more information on workshop page 3)

The result of the sensitisation workshops has been positive, especially for the police, doctors, judges, magistrates and lawyers. For example, one of the police participants, Sgt. Adonu Godwin, narrated the case of battery brought to the police station where he was working. He noted that although he was not directly involved in the case, he was able to help the victim by informing the officer in charge about the rights of women and detailing the laws under which the offender could be punished. He emphasized that she had rights even though the victim is a married woman and that the existing laws prohibit assaults including wives being beaten by their husbands. The husband was not prosecuted because the wife decided to forgive and withdraw her complaint but he had to write an undertaking to never beat her again.

Outcomes of the project

As a result of this project, the Ogun State Police Command has introduced a Gender Desk in each of the thirty divisions in the State to

respond appropriately to cases of violence against women. Indeed, this is an innovation from this group of policemen and policewomen. It is hoped that other similar initiatives pioneered by police divisions will multiply all over the country.

Another noteworthy outcome of the project is the inclusion of a «One-day workshop on the rights of women» for newly recruited police personnel in their module of training by the Ogun State Police Command. WiLDAF Nigeria has received a request to facilitate these workshops. We look forward in repeating this activity all over the country.

One of the traditional rulers, Chief Olaleye, reported that following the workshop, he made a point of duty to watch out for violation of the rights of women. He mentioned a case of wife battery which was promptly reported to police by him. After this incident, people of its area have become very cautious dealings with women. He observed that men now report to him provocations done by their wives instead of beating them. WiLDAF has also received report of a rape case from a lawyer who participated in a workshop, Mr. Chike Ekwueme. The case involved a lady aged 23 years well known to him who was raped by a cousin aged 35 years. The matter was still unresolved after it has been over for a year. Prior to the workshop, he did not bother to help her but he sees things from a different perspective now. He encouraged the girl to prosecute the abuser against the family wish. The victim has admitted that his support has strengthened her will to pursue the case and obtain justice.

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In spite of these gains, there have been some setbacks since the return to democratic rule in 1999 with the introduction of the Sharia criminal law system in some Northern States of Nigeria. The application of the Sharia regime of criminal sanctions is discriminatory against women because it allows corporal punishment. For instance, in the cases of fornication and adultery, the penalties of canning and stoning have been readily ordered against the female while the male offenders are left unpunished because of evidentiary rules which favour them.

WILDAF, in collaboration with other Nigerian organizations, claimed that it is an injustice and organized campaigns denouncing this violation of human rights.

Finally, WILDAF Nigeria offered a number of capacity-building training workshops for NGO workers on management, leadership, strategic planning, fund-raising and proposal-writing to reinforce networking. It continues to provide avenue for information, communication and exchange of material between members. WILDAF Nigeria works on a daily basis towards building capacity of Nigerian women to assert and realize the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Judith Mbadiwe
Project Officer

OlaBisi Olateru-Olagbegi
National Coordinator of WILDAF
Nigeria

Women in law and development in Africa (WILDAF) Nigeria chapter was one of the seven country chapters of WILDAF that benefited in the European Union project 2 for the sensitization and capacity building of judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for the effective implementation of the rights of women in West Africa. The project targeted judges, magistrates, lawyers, police officers, medical doctors, traditional rulers and religious leaders.

I had the opportunity to witness the second phase of the project on sensitization conducted by WILDAF Nigeria for judges, magistrates, customary judges and lawyers which took place at the Mainland Hotel, Oyingbo Lagos, from June 23rd to 27th 2003. This was the second phase of the workshop which was first conducted between the 9th and the 13th of December 2002. The objective of the program was to sensitize these groups of individuals on ways for effective implementation, enforcement and protection of the rights of women in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

Mrs Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, as the national coordinator for WILDAF Nigeria, supported by Prof. Jadesola Akande and Magistrate Ugo Ezekwem organized and facilitated a week-long gender sensitization training for judges, lawyers, and magistrates from all over the country. The goal of the workshop was to build the target group's capacity to engage in "judicial activism" and effectively advocate for women's human rights. The program aims to educate the participants on women's rights issues, violence against women, and international instruments that guarantee women's human rights such as the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), etc.

The workshop was innovative and exceptional because it didn't fall into the usual trap of "preaching to the converted" by reaching out to people with an interest in women's rights issues. Rather, WILDAF hand-selected participants who were directors of organizations or leaders in their communities because of their ability to influence others with their newfound gender sensitivity. WILDAF gave the participants ten copies of training kit to distribute to their colleagues and required that they submit contact information of at least ten people to whom they would distribute the material.

The interactive structure of the workshop allowed for maximum participation. When discussing discrimination against women, Mrs. Olateru-Olagbegi allowed participants to call out their ideas. This was an excellent opportunity to hear what issues are facing Nigerian women. A few examples of discrimination that women in (some parts of) Nigeria faces include a lack of inheritance rights, oppressive widowhood practices, lack of access to political positions (less than 3% of political positions in Nigeria are occupied by women), and discrimination to find a work (women are sometimes required to get a letter of consent from their husband before getting a job). Another issue raised was female genital circumcision. It was stated that 60% of Nigerian women are circumcised. Some of the men said that this practice prevents promiscuity but Mrs. Olateru-

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A great way to end sexism!

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Olagbegi pointed out that three quarters of sex workers are circumcised. She also highlighted the effect of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) on women: "after SAPs were into effect, many men became bread-eaters while women were winning bread all over the place." The implementation of this policy resulted in massive unemployment. Men being mostly government workers lost their jobs and have to depend on women who are mostly self employed into small business. They are now able to support their family. Men find it very difficult to accept this situation and hence opposed and limited participation of women in all spheres of society.

Interesting discussion during workshop

Whenever the men were saying sexist things during the workshop, the women were quick to correct them. When talking about domestic violence, a few men said that women bring it upon themselves by nagging their husbands when they come home. In discussing rape, there was an argument about whether penetration was a necessary element of rape. According to the legal definition as being "unlawful carnal knowledge without consent," rape does not require penetration. Not satisfied with that conclusion, the men went on to point out how some women dress provocatively. Women immediately argued that they're still not asking to be raped and that men should be able to control themselves. Marital rape was another controversial topic. The speaker said that in Nigeria, their husbands rape three quarters of women the first time they have sexual intercourse. Many of the men refused to believe that marital rape exists. Instead, they argued that husbands gain unlimited

sexual access to their wives because of an "implied consent" upon marriage and because they no longer own their bodies.

I noticed however that towards the end of the workshop, the men were beginning to see their position from a different perspective. One of the male magistrate asserted that he will not allow its daughters to be discriminated in favour of the boys. The only difference between a man and a woman is that one is more empowered to face challenges while the other is not. This situation is not a natural act but a societal construct which can be modify.

Society is slowly changing

Another participant said that the society is actually changing its attitude toward women. But we should not expect an instant revolution or change in attitude. This way of thinking has been developed through various agents of socialization and orientation since the creation of humanity. To express his view, he gave the example of twin children which were seen as taboo in some part of Nigeria some years ago. Because of education, this is no longer the case. Finally, the workshop taught me that sexism is hard to unlearn. At least people are trying. With consistent effort from enlightened people and organizations such as WILDAF, positive results are inevitable.

Erica Williams

Intern with Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), a member organization of WILDAF (Nigeria)

To contact WOCON:

Web site: www.wocononline.org

E-Mail: wocon95@yahoo.com

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The official reports on the implementation of the CEDAW in Kenya and Congo has been studied at the 28th session in last January and in Morocco at the 29th session in July. Nigeria should provide his national report at the 30th session which should be held in January 2004. Sao-Tomé and Principe has ratified the convention last June. Ninety eight countries signed the conventions and 174 have ratified it.

A impact study from the International Women's Rights Projects (IWRP) has shown that even though CEDAW is under-used, the convention is more and more known as a tool for protection and lobby by women's groups.

CEDAW:www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw

Study by IWRP :
www.iwrp.org/CEDAW_Impact_Study.htm

PUBLICATION

The 'Human Development Report 2003' from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is now available in PDF format in English, French, Spanish and several other languages.

Table of content: www.undp.org/hdr2003/index.html

THANK GOD! AMINA LAWAL HAS BEEN ACQUITTED! BUT ON WHAT GROUNDS?

Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF Nigeria Chapter) joins others in the human rights community for the victory of Amina Lawal.

The whole world must have heaved a sigh of relief that Amina Lawal was discharged and acquitted, by the Katsina State Sharia Court of Appeal on 25 September 2003, of her first conviction and death sentence on 22 March, 2002. Great! We, in the human rights community, are happy that Amina is at last free of the heavy burden of facing a horrific death by stoning and of anxiety over the fate of her innocent baby if the Sharia Court sentence would have been executed.

For the benefit of those of our friends and colleagues in Africa and worldwide who are not aware of the facts, here is a brief synopsis of events relating to the recent introduction in Nigeria of the Sharia Penal System to criminal proceedings.

Since the Civil Democratic Rule, which came into effect in 1999, some States in the Northern part of Nigeria decided to introduce Sharia Penal Law System into civil proceedings relating to the personal law of Muslims in those States.

Following this introduction there had been, and still are, many cases of sentences to death by stoning, public flogging and cutting of limbs for various offences. The commonest of these corporal sentences and / or punishments are usually meted on the women even where the offences are such that they cannot be committed alone, for example adultery or having children out of wedlock. The male conspirators are usually left unpunished on grounds of "lack of evidence." This recent practice by the Sharia courts obviously shows discrimination against women and a lack of conformity with human rights standards covenanted to by the community of nations, including Nigeria. Public outcry, nationally and internationally, usually follows

these Sharia sentences, which are novel even in Nigeria's history.

Amina Lawal's case received international attention as it came shortly after Safiya Hussein who was also sentenced to death by stoning and was acquitted after a lot of pressure and outrage from different quarters, including Islamic scholars.

WiLDAF and many other organizations, felt that Safiya's acquittal would put a stop to these death sentences by stoning. But it appears many more are yet to come. The Amina Lawal's case was an eloquent testimony. Like Safiya, Amina's sentence also went through another cycle of appeals, protests, and national and international campaigns calling on Nigeria to honour her commitments for the protection of **ALL** her citizens regardless of their religious affiliations or gender.

On what grounds are they released?

What we find is the use of enormous material and human resources towards the defence and campaigns for the acquittal of these victims of Sharia sentences. Eventually they are released, discharged and acquitted but on what grounds?

The acquittals are merely based on technical grounds, such as the commission of the act constituting the alleged offence, taking place before the introduction of the Sharia Penal Laws in the States in question. How long are we going to continue with this cycle of Sharia Penal sentences and international negative spotlights?

As WiLDAF stated in its release and petitions titled "*Amina Lawal Enough is enough*" in October 2002, these death sentences by stoning, cutting of limbs, and public flogging must stop in these modern times and in the interest of humanity.

The Nigeria constitution allows the operation of Sharia law in civil proceedings relating to the personal law of Muslims only. Now the introduction of Sharia penal system by these northern states means the application of Sharia to criminal cases. In order, to put a final stop to this, we suggest to create a uniform standard applicable to all citizens on issues relating to criminal proceedings while the civil proceedings would take cognizance of the freedom of associations.

Moreover, we have found in various writings by great Islamic scholars that there is no agreement that the Holy Quran supports the stoning to death of only women convicted of adultery. In the circumstances therefore, WiLDAF reiterates its position detailed in its previous petition and call on the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to institute legal proceedings at the Supreme Court to determine the constitutionality and legality

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AMINA ACQUITTED! BUT ON WHAT GROUNDS?

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of these new Sharia Penal sentences.

It is only then that Nigeria and, indeed the whole world, will be saved from the incessant grants of corporal punishment, unnecessary human and material expense and retrogressive posture of the Nigerian Legal System.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! DEATH SENTENCES BY STONING MUST STOP!

Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi
National Coordinator
WiLDAF (Nigeria)

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Small grants from African Women's Development Fund

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) will be providing small grants to African women's organisations working to eliminate violence against women during this year's 16 days of activism campaign against gender violence from November 25th to December 10th 2003.

AWDF is inviting proposals with a budget not exceeding \$1000. The proposal should include how you intend to spend the funds during the 16 days and what you wish to achieve. Activities that can be support include printing posters or t-shirts, organising radio shows, one day seminars, marches, etc.

Deadlines: October 31st 2003

Proposals must be sent to:
The African Women's Development Fund

Aviation House, Aviation Road
PMB CT 89, Cantonments
Accra, Ghana

Telephone: +233 21 780476/7

Telephone/Fax : +233 21 782 502

E-mail : grants@awdf.org

Site : www.awdf.org

GOOD WEBSITES

Subject: **Women living under muslim law (WLUML)** has a new web site where you can find news, information on campaigns, publications and an index by themes and countries.

Languages : English, French and Arab

Website : www.wluml.org/english

Subject : **Idealist.org** is a portal for everyone interested in nonprofit organizations and issues, nonprofit careers, and volunteering.

Idealist is maintained by Action Without Borders an international coalition composed of organizations and people which want to connect people, organizations and resources to help build a world where all people can live free and dignified lives.

Languages : English, French and Spanish

Website : www.idealiste.org

Subject : The **Information Society Dictionary** is a collaborative attempt to create a dictionary of terminology related to the information society, for use by diplomats and other involved in international relations, including information technology specialists involved in creating Internet policy. As the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, 2003) approaches, the need for clear definitions of terms now in common use is becoming more apparent and urgent.

You are invited to be a part of this project. Please suggest terms related to the information society and define them based on your experience or research.

Languages : English

Website: www.diplomacy.edu/is/dictionary

Source : Toile d'Elles, August 2003

Next edition will focus on Mali. Don't hesitate to send us information concerning that special edition!

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

Send us your text (Long or short, what counts is the content!) by e-mail to WiLDAF West Africa to the following address: wildaf@cafe.tg.

The deadline for the reception of the texts are: November 17th 2003 (for January 2004 issue), February 23rd 2003 (for Avril 2004 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 Europe and America.

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

After the departure of Suzanne OUELLET six months ago, welcome to Colette LELIEVRE

The WILDAF sub-regional office is delighted to welcome Colette Lelièvre, CUSO co-operant who arrived in Togo on 4th September 2003 with her husband and two children to WILDAF.

Colette will be the Communication Officer replacing Suzanne OUELLET who left us in March 2003.

Colette has worked with enthusiasm over at least the past ten years in the area of social and citizen communication and acquired a vast experience in networking which has become «a second nature to her, especially with the means of communication». She was able to use her expertise to give a greater visibility to women and issues concerning them in Canada and at the international level. While coming to WILDAF, Colette was guided by the « wish to share her experience in communication with other women in order that they occupy an increasingly important place in the media, in cyberspace and mainly within the society ».

On behalf of the members of WILDAF West Africa, I wish her success in the accomplishment of her mandate. As far as we are concerned, we should make use of the vast experiences she has acquired in order to make others progress in the internal and external communication of WILDAF.

Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson
West Africa Sub-regional
coordinator

Network News

«Sensitisation and capacity building of judicial and extra-judicial stakeholders for the implementation of women's rights in West Africa» project

WHAT'S NEW IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The implementation of the «Sensitisation and capacity building of judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for the implementation of women's rights in West Africa» project enters the last but one stage. This stage consists of the search and collection of data on the implementation of women's rights by the target groups sensitised and trained by the project. This activity started in September 2003 with an active participation of the members of the national networks and the trained concerned target groups and sensitised on women's rights.

Resource persons; trained lawyers with the relevant experience in women's rights, research and collection of field data are required to carry out this work.

The process started in Togo on the 1st September 2003 with two weeks of preparations which consisted of checking the relevance of the methodology and the tools for the data analysis proposed by the coordination of the project on the field. A pre-test was therefore conducted with a cross-section comprising ten persons, two per each target group (magistrates, lawyers, police officers, doctors, traditional and religious leaders). At the end of the pre-test, the consultant appointed to conduct the activity, together with the Chairperson of the national network and project coordination, went on to finalise the data collection tools.

On the 15th September 2003, when the collection itself took off in Togo, Nigeria in turn embarked on one-week preparation process. With regards to Mali and Senegal they are embarking on the preparation of the activity from 29th September to 3rd October 2003. They will be followed by Benin and Burkina Faso from 13th to 17th October 2003. Ghana will be the last to embark on the process in the week beginning the 27th October 2003. It should be noted that each country involved in the implementation of the project starts the data collection activity the week after its preparation week.

The reports on these surveys are expected from all the countries latest the end of January 2004.

«««««

Training for para legals in national language for an intensification of actions in favour of women in Burkina Faso.

From 8th to 12th September, 2003, WILDAF/Burkina, with the support of UNICEF, organised a training seminar for para legals in national language

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EVENT

The right to education : what effectiveness in the South and in the North ?

The colloquium has two objectives: to identify and describe the socio-economic mechanisms intervening into the access to school and the right to education and to question the conceptualization of indicators ensuring the effectiveness of the right to education. The reflection aims to look differently at obstacles which countries from the South come up against, at similarities and differences that has faced the North.

Location: Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso

Beginning of inscription : October 15th 2003-09-18

Date: March 8th to 12th 2004

Colloquium : afecinfo.free.fr/ouaga (French only)

Information:

Yacobay Yaro: yacobay@yahoo.com

Marc Pilon: marc.pilon@ird.bf

Alain Carry:
carry.alain@paris4.sorbonne.fr

**Violence
against
women is
violence
against
society**

Network News

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Training in national language in Burkina Faso

Mooré in Ouagadougou. About thirty participants from WiLDAF/Burkina network member associations as well as representatives of Ministries of Women Promotion and Social Action and National Solidarity took part in the training. By initiating this activity, WiLDAF/Burkina wished to further build the capacities of participants in order that they be more efficient in their intervention on the field. Inter alia, the training of trainers enabled them to acquire legal knowledge and to grasp the various forms of violence and repression perpetrated against women. The activity enabled them to get familiarised with the legal mechanisms at their disposal and to develop practical capacities to better play their role of para legals. Five main topics related to family law, violence against women, the judicial system of Burkina Faso, the rights of children, methods and techniques of communication and animation in legal education were developed during this training. We appreciate this initiative of WiLDAF/Burkina which is sparing no effort to take the law to the grassroots so that it can be accessible to all.

**Évariste Ouedraogo
Programme Officer
WiLDAF Burkina Faso**

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Case report from participant in Nigeria after the workshop

SERGEANT ADONU GODWIN, 'C' DEPARTMENT (STORE) NIGERIA POLICE FORCE, STATE HEADQUARTERS ELEWERRAN ABEOKUTA OGUN-STATE

CASE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The ugly incident took place at Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. I witnessed it on the 19th April, 2003 where we went to perform election duty.

While we were in the Police Station at about 1pm, a female victim, Mrs. Fakorede Adebesein, reported a case of wife battery. She had bruises on her face. According to the victim, the trouble started when her husband came home at about 9.30pm of 19th April 2003 with a strange woman. He asked for food, that his wife refused to give him.

Although I was not an employee of that Police station, I showed interest in the case. I volunteered to follow other police men who invited the husband to come at the police station. The victim was taken to a nearby maternity home for medical treatment.

The husband, Bamidele Adebesein, accepted to go to the Police station. The police officer (CRO) obtained his statement. According to the husband, he did hit his wife because she was nagging him.

I personally took time to sensitize Mr. Adebesein on the issues of women's rights. Before I left the station on 20th April 2003, I called the CRO and other members of the personnel involved in the case to ensure that the course of Justice was never perverted.

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**2003-2004 Research
Competition, gender section
from IDRC**

***Decentralization and Women's
Rights in Sub Saharan Africa***

The competition is to support empirical research that will document and analyze specific state decentralization reforms that have worked to promote women's rights, and/or reforms that have created barriers to the protection and realization of these rights. The competition is aimed at experienced researchers, who may choose to work in teams with women's rights organizations and/or with less experienced colleagues.

Up to five (5) grants will be awarded, each with a value of a maximum of \$100,000 CAD (one hundred thousand Canadian dollars) for projects of 18 months to 2 years. Awardees will be announced in March 2004. It is expected that projects will start between June and September 2004. Fewer than five grants may be awarded subject to the quality of proposals received.

**The deadline for submissions is:
DECEMBER 5, 2003.**

Applications may be submitted in English or French and are available on-line at:
www.idrc.ca/gender

For information please contact the competition coordinator at:

**Gender Unit
International Development
Research Centre**

250 Albert Street, P.O. Box 8500
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3H9

gsd@idrc.ca

Tel: 1-613-236-6163 ext. 2263

Fax: 1-613-567-7748

Network News

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Case report from Nigerian participant Sergeant Godwin

CASE OF WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES

«Mrs. Chinyere Ugwueze started to have problem when she lost her husband, Mr. Hyacinth Ugwueze.

He died on 5th January, 2003 and was buried on 9th January 2003 in his home town Enugu-Ezike, Enugu State. According to the tradition in Igbo land, a widow is expected to "Shave her hair" after some stipulated days as a sign of respect to her late husband. When Mrs. Ugwueze refused to comply with the traditional norms based on her Christian faith, she was visited numerous times by the Umuadas (the daughters of the deceased husband's family). There was a lot of accusations and counter accusation levelled against her.

My effort to protect this woman was to provide some explanation to the family. They did not agreed. With the assistance of her pastor, Rev. Ezechi Nwodo, I succeeded in taking Mrs. Ugwueze out of the family house and sent her to another neighbourhood.

The Enugu State edict on widowhood practices, as enacted by the Administration of Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, was presented to the Umuadas by the elder in the community council and myself. The edict played a crucial role in resolving the matter.»

INSPECTOR PATRICK UJANG , ROBBERY SECTION, CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT, THE NIGERIA POLICE STATE HEADQUARTERS ELEWERRAN ABEOKUTA OGUN-STATE

CASE OF LOCAL TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

«The incident took place at Sagamu when police carried out a raid at the outskirts of the town.

They discovered a house full of young girls and boys that were recruited and transported from Egede, Benue State. During the raid, the victims were unable to give accurate account of what they were doing in that house so they were arrested. The police at Sagamu later transferred the case to the state C.I.D Abeokuta for further investigation.

I played an advisory role in the case because it did not fall directly under my jurisdiction. I met with the female suspects/victims and their sponsors. I tried to inform them about discrimination against women and issues concerning protection of women and women's rights. I did this for three days.»

««««

Adolescent marriage is a fact of life for girls in Senegal

Women's median age of marriage hovers around 20, which means that half of all women marry by their 20th birthday. Over a third marry by age 18. Despite this reality, little has been documented about the lives of married adolescent girls.

Background

The Population Council conducted a qualitative research study in two regions of Senegal: Saint Louis and Louga. Council researchers wanted to understand, from the girls' perspective, the extent to which their lives changed when they got married. The research also sought to capture a sense of the knowledge and opportunities girls would like to have available to them in terms of livelihoods and literacy—including reproductive health literacy. This summary presents highlights from that research. The full report provides a detailed analysis of the girls' perception of marriage, including the marriage process; their experience of married life; their educational and economic opportunities; and their experiences with reproductive health matters, including pregnancy.

Findings

The transition to marriage is difficult for girls. More than half of the girls reported that their marriages were arranged by their parents. In some cases, they learned about the marriage at the last minute. Girls reported two main reasons why their families married them off: economic considerations, and the fear that an unwed girl would become promiscuous and end up pregnant. Married adolescent girls explained that since marriage, they had given up or significantly altered the friendships they had nurtured when they lived in their natal home. They reported that they are often prohibited from leaving their home without their husband or another

member of their marital family. The girls find this lack of mobility confining, in part because it relegates them almost exclusively to domestic tasks. Married adolescent girls described how the authority and proscriptions of their husbands are more burdensome than what they experienced from their parents. They reported having little, if any, room for negotiation or power to make decisions within their household. Their lack of education and limited life experience compounds this situation, and they were unable to articulate changes that could improve their welfare.

Married adolescent girls are financially dependent. Nearly all respondents described total economic dependence on their husband and/or in-laws. Most are uneducated and do not work for pay. The few that do have a livelihood do not earn enough to feel secure.

Married adolescent girls faced physical and psychological trauma when giving birth. Respondents reported difficult pregnancy and trauma during delivery. In most cases girls would like to delay the first pregnancy until they gain more maturity, confidence and information.

Married adolescent girls lack both health information and access to services. Respondents lamented how little they knew about their bodies, sex, and reproductive health before they were married. Even after marriage, they want—and need—good information. Nearby health services are available to these young women in theory, but in practice married

adolescent girls' lack the resources to use them. They also reported feeling shy and embarrassed about using health services.

Recommendations

The situation of married adolescents is different from that of their unmarried counterparts. Reaching married adolescents with information and interventions will therefore require different strategies.

Current popular programs targeting adolescents writ large will fail to reach married adolescents. Alternative approaches are urgently needed. These could include:

- * An information campaign that aims to decrease the incidence of early marriage. While some of the causes of early marriage are structural (poverty, few alternatives), the fact remains that it is a human rights violation and parents and communities need to be better aware of this;
- * Flexible school programs that make it easier for the married adolescent girl to continue her education;
- * Functional literacy programs that integrate an holistic approach (including RH) ; Married adolescent girl peer educators of reproductive health;
- * Creation of associations (such as livelihoods groups) that help alleviate married girls' financial dependence while simultaneously providing a space for sharing, listening, counseling, support, and material and emotional growth.

More information, contact Mrs Nafissatou J. Diop at pcdakar@pcdakar.org.

Summary from « Exploratory Study on life of married adolescent girls » written by Nafissatou J. Diop and Jacqueline Cabral N'Dione (November 2001) (in French).

Gender, Family and Development Program and Reproductive Health Frontier Program/ Population Council: www.popcouncil.org

EVENT

First World Forum on Communication Rights

The Forum will be held alongside the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), next December. The Forum is coordinated by the CRIS campaign and welcomes participation in the event from intergovernmental and other agencies, governments and private sector.

The goal of this first Forum is to portray and document in concrete terms how communication rights are experienced by people in an emerging information society, and to generate practical cooperation to promote the concept and reality of such rights. The Forum wish to fulfill what is lacking in regard of human rights in the process of the WSIS. The panoply of international human rights agreements offer, in principle, a great many rights that relate to communication. What is needed is an exploration of what they mean, a process by which civil society can recognise them as their own and act to turn them into reality.

The specific outcomes of the Forum will be threefold: launch of a 'Manifesto/Declaration on communication rights', a documentary portrayal of communication rights globally and converging agendas and actions.

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Date: December 11th 2003

Information:

Seàn Ó Siochrú: sean@nexus.ie

Myriam Horngren: mh@wacc.org.uk

Forum : www.communicationrights.org

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

Do you know that you can improve the filing of your e-mail in Outlook Express to enable you to quickly retrieve the messages you need and to free space on your hard disk?

You can achieve this by proceeding as follows:

1. Select the **'Folders'** section by clicking on an already created folder such as Local Folders.
2. In the **'File'** menu, select **'Folder'** and then **'New'**.
3. Give a meaningful name and click **'OK'**.
4. You can create as many folders as you want. If you want to create subfolders, proceed as described above but don't forget to select the folder in which you want to insert it.

You can also compress your folders.

An e-mail itself, be it in text format or html does not weigh much, at the most about ten Kb. But as time goes on and after having kept about hundred mails, Outlook Express can be transformed into a fearsome disk space 'eater'. Through the folder compression function integrated to the hardware, you can gain some Mb, even some hundreds of Mb for the great and wise mail users who keep track of any mail exchanged. Proceed this way:

1. In the **'File'** menu, select **'Folder'**
2. In the submenu, select **'Compact'** to compress the content of the Inbox, including sub-directories, or the **'Compress all folders'** command to extend the manipulation to all your various directories.

The mail compression should start immediately, a bar showing the task's progression, generally in a few seconds, but it can also be quite longer if your mail box is really full. Let's finally point out that if the data compression frees space on the disk, its action is imperceptible in Outlook Express and does not hinder at all the checking of messages.

A little trick: give the same folder names as those you have already created on your hard disk and in paper format.

In Tricks, advice... The Outlook Express practical encyclo: thot.cursus.edu/rubrique.asp?no=19113

To read the full article on the Forum, consult :

www.globalcn.org/fr/article.ntd?id=1468&sort=1

Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is a campaign launch in November 2001 to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society and to the upcoming WSIS. The campaign is sponsored and supported by the Platform for Communication Rights, a group of NGOs involved in media and communication around the world.

PUBLICATION

Panos Institute published a report on sexual violence in the education sector: sexual, physical and psychological violence causes as much of a burden of ill health and death among women aged 15 to 44 as cancer – and more than malaria and traffic accidents combined. PDF version only.

Report: www.panos.org.uk/PDF/reports/Beyond%20Victims.pdf

NEWS FLASH- NEWS FLASH - NEWS FLASH

Eight African Women are rewarded:

For the 10th consecutive year, Women's World Summit Foundation is rewarding 33 women in giving a prize of creativity for rural women which 8 of them comes from Africa on October 15th, 2003. Themes are: Good products at low prices (Bénin), Defending Pygmies' rights (Cameroon), Don't kill the "mother of trees and Standing up for girls' schooling (Niger), Micro-credit for rural women (Nigeria), Fighting unauthorized tourism development (Senegal), Helping handicapped rural people (Togo), Brooding eggs in dung (Tunisia) and The village of Hope (Zimbabwe).

Fondation:www.woman.ch

Source : Toile D'Elles, August 03

As the world marks World Population Day (WPD) on July 11th, the **International Community of Women living with HIV/AIDS** commemorates the loss of over 1 million women around the world, who died with AIDS during this last year.

WPD:www.icw.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=23

Source : Toile D'Elles, August 03

Urge the Nigerian government to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court:

Help encourage Kenya to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Law as soon as possible. Please send appeals by mail or fax to President Mwai Kibaki, the Minister of Justice Kiraitu Murungi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kolonzo Musyoka, urging Kenya to join the international justice system by ratifying and implementing the Rome Statute.

Information :

web.amnesty.org/pages/385-010903-action-eng

To take action :

web.amnesty.org/pages/385-010903-action-eng

Togo: Charismatic churches prey on vulnerable women:

Ayele Ajavon is a happy woman, so she believes. After she was divorced by her husband, she sought solace in the church. "I turned to the church and found a job and a new partner," says Ajavon, now a secretary in the capital Lome. But Ayele Ajavon cannot take any step or decision without consulting her pastor who also happens to be her "new partner". And she donates part of her salary to the church, as tithe.

Article:

www.ipsnews.net/africa/interna.asp?idnews=20124

Source: Pambazuka News, no 124:
www.pambazuka.org

Review of affirmative action in Uganda:

Implementation of affirmative action in political decision making in its present form in Uganda is closely associated with the coming to power of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government in 1986. From the initial steps taken to have special district seats for women in the NRC and mandatory positions for women at the different levels of the 9-member RCs, these provisions were consolidated in the 1995 Constitution. The Local Government Act (1997) has operationalized aspects of the provisions for affirmative action dealing with representation of marginalised groups in local government structures. Implementation of affirmative action has resulted in a marked increase in the number of marginalised groups (women, people with disabilities, youth, and workers) thereby changing the landscape of politics and decision making in Uganda.

Report:www.wougnet.org/documents.html#RAAU

(Full report available on WOUGnet web site in Word version)

Source: WOUGNET Update Newsletter - September 2003
www.wougnet.org

Education for everybody in Africa:

In Sub-Sahara Africa, four on ten children don't go to primary school, adult illiteracy is still pretty high but education is available to an increasing amount of people. Description of a patchwork.

See the August Special 2003 on Education:

www.penelopes.org/xarticle.php3?id_article=3724

Source : Les Penelopes

International: World Trade Organization talks collapse:

a victory for women: The major fault lines between rich and poor countries finally cracked open on Sunday as World Trade Organization talks collapsed in Cancun (Mexico). A newly formed group of developing countries, including China, India and Brazil, stuck together to resist new negotiations and trade rules they felt were stacked against the poor, including the slashing of farm subsidies. An organisation called The Women's Edge Coalition says the collapse is a victory for the world's poor, the majority of whom are women.

Article:

www.womensedge.org/page/s/newsandevents/news.jsp?id=152

Source: Pambazuka News, no 124:
www.pambazuka.org

EVENTS

Second East African Gender Budget Conference / 4TH - 6TH November 2003

The conference will be divided into four major themes: 1. Good governance, 2. Gender and trade, 3. Decentralization and 4. Gender and HIV/AIDS.

A session will be organized on how to carry out a gender budget analysis and a panel discussion on budgeting for domestic violence: cost and benefits will mark the end of the conference.

Participation can be in the following ways.

1. Preparing papers for presentation under the above sub themes
2. Mobilizing a group of people to attend this conference
3. Organizing and exhibition during the conference (in form of publication and artwork)
4. Financial contribution (sponsoring more participants). 20 participants from the region could be sponsored (those who are members of the EAGBN) and 20 local participants. Cost to the conference will include registration fee (\$100USD), travel, accommodation and meals. For more information contact:

The Conference Coordinator / FOWODE P.O. Box 7176, Kampala
Tel: 256-41-540241/540242 Fax: 256-41-540243

Email: fowode@utlonline.co.ug

Source : Resource Net Announcement no 180 d'AWID

First African Conference on the Digital Commons

The Free Software and Open Source Foundation for Africa (FOSSFA), the African Virtual Open Initiatives and Resources (AVOIR) project at the University of the Western Cape in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) organize the First African Conference on the Digital Commons. It will address the challenges and opportunities of the creation and use of free / open source software and open content and their development potential for Africa.

Location: Cap, South Africa
Date: June 12th to 16th 2004

Conference : idlelo.uwc.ac.za

Embracing the Earth: East-West/ North-South

The Worldwide Organization of Women's Studies (WW05) organize its 9th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women which will feature the theme, "Embracing the Earth: East-West/ North-South". The organizers hope to provoke discussion on how women's lives are interwoven, as well as kept separated, by the increasing economic disparity between the North and the South and the contesting values between the East and the West.

Deadline: December 31st, 2003 to send your proposition

Location: Seoul, Korea
Date: June 19 to 24th 2005

WW05: www.ww05.org
Women's Studies: www.fss.uu.nl/wows
(Flash animation)

Source : La Toile D'Elles, Août 2003

WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter

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PUBLICATION

Needs Assessment Report: Findings from Nine African Countries: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) partnered with EngenderHealth to conduct a ground-breaking study on the **occurrence of fistula** in nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Benin, Tchad, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia) and on the capacity of hospitals to treat it. Complete study and national report for each nine countries available in PDF format.

Report : www.unfpa.org/fistula/docs/
EngenderHealth : www.EngenderHealth.org