

# WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsle

Women in Law & Development in Africa

N°01 January 2000

## HAPPY NEW YEAR 2000 A NEW APPROACH TO MAKE OUR BULLETIN A GENUINE FRAME FOR TRANS-BORDER EXCHANGES

At the beginning of this year 2000, the sub-regional bureau is happy to present its best wishes to you personally and for the success of our common vision for women advancement in Africa.

We also take this opportunity to launch the first electronic issue of WILDAF WEST AFRICA NEWSLETTER. This was made possible thanks to the financial support of the European Union through the capacity building project for national women rights networks which work towards the implementation of women human rights.

Taking advantage of the progress in communication, the new approach has the advantage to be faster and more economic. It also allows a wider spread of information, not only within our network but also at a world level. However, it requires that national networks leaders take appropriate measures to insure that the information really reaches individuals and organisational members grassroots.

The late commencement in respect to the initial programme is due to material difficulties experienced in implementation and to the fact that 1999 has been for our network a very active year.

In fact, apart from the numerous workshops organised as part of our efforts to establish or strengthen many of our national networks for the purposes of efficiency, WILDAF Statutory General Assembly held in July in Accra was an important event which mobilised energies within the network at continental level.

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Consult

**WILDAF WEST AFRICA  
Newsletter**

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## OUR NATIONAL NETWORKS ARE WORKING TOWARDS A BETTER EFFICIENCY.

In 1999, four new national networks organised strategic planning workshops to assess their countries needs and also to plan activities for the next three years. The workshop also included training on networking and project proposal writing.

The activities were undertaken as part of the capacity building programmes of national networks of Women Rights, a programme supported by the European Union.

The strategic planning exercise enabled each of the networks to give itself an identity shown through its specific mission and vision.

### **A COMMON VISION FOR WOMEN IN AFRICA**

It is worth noting that the networks almost share the same vision: that of a society where all women enjoy the rights and actively participate in their own development as well as that of their countries.

It is clear that in the four countries WILDAF members attach the same importance to civil, political, socio-economic rights which for them are universal inalienable, indivisible

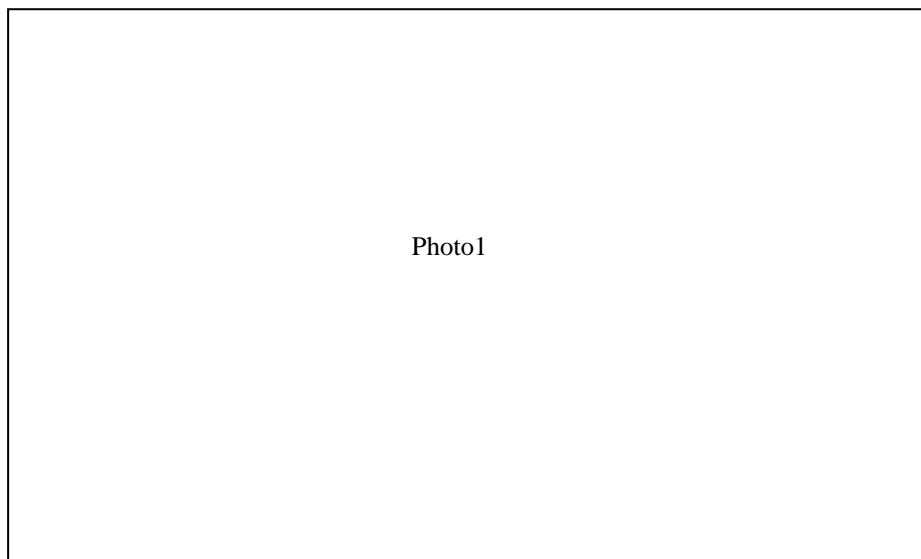
and inter-dependent.

For WILDAF Benin, the development of women implies solidarity among women of all conditions on the one hand, and between men and women on the other.

locally and nationally

Establish and promote communication among members, between WILDAF members and its different organisations.

Increase and develop the skills and capacities of the networks' members and or-



### **A STRATEGIC PLAN**

Based on this common vision, the networks defined the objectives of their strategic plan as well as their implementation strategies.

These are five or four in numbers depending on whether the countries make communication a separate objective from that of networking.

organisations so as to implement effective programmes focussing on women rights.

Create leadership in women rights advocacy at regional and international levels

Establish and increase an efficient early response mechanism to the violation of women rights in Benin and elsewhere.

*Organise and reinforce networking between WILDAF Benin members*

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## **ADOPTION OF AN ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON WOMEN RIGHTS WILDAF TO MOBILISE !!**

The need for an instrument that would specifically protect women's rights in Africa was first expressed in March 1995 during a workshop organised by WILDAF in Togo on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Women Rights. Thanks to the lobbying and advocacy work conducted by WILDAF in collaboration with other institutions notably the International Commission of Jurists, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights accepted this recommendation and initiated the drafting of an additional protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to women's rights. At least, three drafts have been submitted since 1997 for consideration by the Commission and civil society organisations have contributed to enrich the last version. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted during its last session held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1999 the last version of the draft protocol which will now be forwarded to the OAU Secretariat for consideration and adoption by the Heads of State.

Within this context, WILDAF organised in Addis Ababa, during the African regional conference, on Beijing + 5, an advocacy workshop on the additional protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The objective was to agree with the members present and the representatives of other organisations of civil society on an

advocacy plan for the adoption of the draft protocol by the OAU members states. The participants have agreed that action should be carried out at the national level within the various countries as well as at the regional level.

### **ENSURE ADOPTION OF THE PROTOCOL BY JUNE, 2001**

At country level, the Ministries likely to be involved in the consideration and adoption of the protocol are those responsible for women affairs, Justice and Foreign Affairs. Actions identified at this level shall consist in influencing the appointment of the national experts who will be empowered to consider and approve the draft protocol before it is submitted for adoption by Heads of States. These experts will certainly be drawn from these ministries. Another action shall consist in creating an alliance with the Ministry of Women Affairs with the task of defending the draft protocol and making sure that the national authorities in general are receptive to it. The lobbying must be pursued and intensified in order for the protocol to be adopted by the Heads of States in July, 2001 by the latest once experts' work is completed.

### **SEEK THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE PROTOCOL BY DECEMBER 2001**

The adopted Protocol should be ratified so as to be enforced. At this stage the advocacy exercise should still be undertaken particularly towards members of

Parliament and the government for its approval so that the fifteen (15) necessary ratification be attained for the enforcement of the Protocol by December, 2001.

### **DISSEMINATE THE TEXT WITHIN THE POPULATIONS SO THAT THEY APPROPRIATE IT**

Still at national level, it should be necessary to widely disseminate the draft Protocol within the civil society and populations through all meetings in which we may participate; it should also be necessary to organise work shops for extension and make use media in order to reach a greater number of women and men. Thus, the civil society could appropriate the instrument and influence the behaviour of incumbent authorities vis-à-vis the Protocol and the behaviour of those seeking eventually their vote. The same dissemination process should be conducted after the adoption of the Protocol in order to facilitate its ratification by States.

### **ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE OAU SYSTEM**

At regional level, the advocacy programme intends to approach African ambassadors accredited to OAU and based in Addis Ababa, and other African ambassadors in the various countries in order that they speed up the processing of the dossier within OAU.

*Kafui ADJAMAGBO-JOHNSON*

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## CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS TO THE DRAFTING OF THE ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS

WILDAF has coordinated a sub-regional mobilisation project for women and human rights organisations in West Africa in order to assist in the drafting of an Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on women rights. A series of activities were held between August and November 1999 and involved beneficiaries and stakeholders of civil society organisations from 9 French-speaking countries selected as a result of the keen interest of the financial partner the CECI. These were Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Togo. Three other networks notably the Union Interafricaine des Droits de l'Homme, the Réseau Interafricain de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes, the Conseil Sous Régional de Lutte Contre les Pratiques Traditionnelles Néfastes à la Santé de la Mère



Photo 2

et de l'Enfant also participated in the project. The prime objective of the project was to enable civil society to contribute to the drafting process of the additional protocol.

National workshops were organised to consider the draft-protocol. Two hundred and sixty (260) women and human rights' organisations, two thousand and five hundred (2500) peoples were consulted. Amendments were made at the grass-

root level by the organisations and associations of the various countries. These national amendments were later on harmonised during a

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### **HAPPY NEW YEAR 2000 A NEW APPROACH TO MAKE OUR BULLETIN A GENUINE FRAME FOR TRANS-BORDER EXCHANGES**

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Just after the General Assembly, we had to initiate a major undertaking for the promotion of women's rights in Africa namely the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to women's rights. As the second Annual Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was scheduled for October or November, we had to make sure that the draft that the Commission was to first approve prior to its submission to the OAU for adoption by Head of States, really meets women's concerns in Africa. A mobilisation project for organisations of women and human rights meant to enable them contribute to the drafting of the protocol document was therefore implemented as from August.

Respecting the commitment which made us to stand as the focal point for all issues relating to women rights in Africa during the Beijing conference in 1995, WILDAF had once again to be seriously involved in the preparation of the Addis Ababa African regional conference on the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action adopted in 1995.

This first issue of our bulletin available on internet gives us the opportunity to provide information on this major milestone in women struggle in Africa and in the entire world.

Enjoy this reading.

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# ADDIS-ABEBA CONFERENCE : THE POINT ON THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

The Six African Regional conference on women on held in ADDIS from 22-26 November 1999.

The main objectives was to review the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing plat forms for action in preparation for the global Beijing + 5 conference schedule for Jun 2000.

WILDAF was part of the technical preparatory committee for this conference. In this quality, our network had a leading role in the NGO consultation which took place on the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1999 prior to this conference.

Participants from 40 African countries tool part in the consultations. It is important to note that this was not an NGO forum similar to the one preceding the fifth Regional Conference on Women. It is a consultation because a decision was taken to have NGOs as equal participants in what otherwise is an inter-governmental conference. The aim was to facilitate meaningful dialogue and joint discussions of critical of critical issues and to avoid having parallel meeting which might lead to NGO and Governments talking at each other instead of to each other.

In order to strengthen and coordinate the NGO participation in this conference, the consultation was organise with the following objectives :

- To assess NGO achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Dakar platform for action.
- To facilitate and strengthen the contribution of African NGOs to the global shadow Report.
- To agree on the report of NGOs on the implementation of Dakar and Beijing platform for action.
- To develop new strategies, benchmarks and standards for implementation of the platforms for Action in the new millennium.
- To enhance strategic networking and information sharing and the advancement and empowerment of women.

The consultations examined the twelve critical areas of concern the platform to assess the achievements and challenges as well as mapping innovative ways forward into the next millennium.

### ***MODERATE RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION SINCE DAKAR AND BEIJING***

**In the last five years there has been some progress made on the implementation of the strategic objective of the African and Global Platforms for Action in certain areas, while at the same time there has been considerable deterioration in the situation of women.**

For example, there has been wholesale ratification of CEDAW. Of the 53 countries in Africa, 46 have ratified of CEDAW, but some have also entered a number of reservations which strike at the heart the Convention. Most reservations are made on cultural grounds and usually exclude obligations in one the most crucial spheres for women - the family.

There has also been progress in implementation of the Beijing platform for Action by member states of the OAU. By 1998 forty countries of Africa had a national plan of action or a draft plan to guide the implementation of the PFA.

**In three major areas of concern, i.e, women, culture the family and socialisation women, politics and Decision making, women's legal and human Rights.**

The trends noticed shaves that more efforts have to be make both by NGOs and state parties, as well as other development partners.

**Women continue to be disadvantaged by discriminatory cultural practices.** Patriarchy is still deeply entrenched in all African societies. Several strategies have been used to bring about change. These

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## ADDIS-ABEBA CONFERENCE : THE POINT ON THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

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include awareness raising, and conscientization campaigns. NGOs have been quite active in sensitisation and advocacy campaigns against cultural practices that hinder the advancement of women.

Although the rate of participation still remains low, there has been an increase in the number of women in decision making. As a result of more awareness and

increasing profile of African women in politic life, there are now some African women who are ready and willing to seek the highest decision-making positions in their country i.e Liberia and Kenya.

Affirmative action programs have helped many women get into positions of decision-making in those countries implementing the programs. For example 41% of

women in Namibia got into local government. Decentralisation programs have also enable more women at grassroots level enter into decision-making.

There is some demonstrable political will support women in decision-making especially in country such as South Africa, Uganda and Mozambique. Several national and NGOs have also

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### OUR NATIONAL NETWORKS ARE WORKING TOWARDS A BETTER EFFICIENCY.

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The strategic plan was developed into a one-year or more operational plan of action.

#### **A PLAN OF ACTION**

To strengthen networking and enhance communication among members, activities such as creation of a directory of members and a newsletter, training on networking, establishment of focal points in the regions of countries, implementation of common activities including campaign on violence against women are planned in those different countries.

The capacity building of members with a view to running effectively

women's rights programmes will be conducted in Benin and Burkina through training in project writing and fund-raising, advocacy and lobbying, management of NGOs, communication, etc. Workshops for sharing experiences will also be organised.

In order to fulfil the objective of leadership in advocacy for women's rights, WILDAF-Togo plans to have working sessions with the decision-making bodies and provide support to advocacy activities of members, advocacy actions at national level, commemoration of national and international days devoted to women, organisation of conferences, debates, marches and programmes on media.

WILDAF-Benin, for their part, envisage in this area to work relentlessly towards the adoption of the individuals and family law and women's participation in decision making and local elections.

Finally, the emergency response to violation of women's rights will occur in these various countries through investigation into violations reported to the network, information of members, response to the relevant authorities and to the perpetrator. In Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina, a booklet on the emergency response system to be used by members will be published for the use of members.

***Améhia TSAKADI***

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## ADDIS-ABEBA CONFERENCE : THE POINT ON THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

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following the trends, which affect women and politics and decision-making. They conduct research and provide support for women in the planning stages of political campaigns, give them information, provide analysis of complex issues and also run leadership development programs.

Despite African governments commitments, women's human rights violation is the reality. In many African countries, women are still regarded as second class citizens, minors, junior males and / or property of their husbands even in countries where there are progressive legislation, the Executive and/ or Judiciary sustain actions and rulings, which discriminate against women. In instances where laws and constitutions are progressive, societal attitudes and behaviours remain the same.

**Six African countries have not ratified the CESAWE as of 1999, 46 have ratified, one has signed and 7 have ratified with reservations. These reservations all relate to the basic principles of the Convention such as non-discrimination against women. There have been positive developments such as the optional protocol to CEDAW which for example now allows groups of people to lodge complaints.**

**There is also the additional Protocol on women's rights to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which is a progressive, far-reaching document. The Draft has been accepted and will be passed on the OAU for adoption.**

**Violence against women in**

**Africa is on the increase.** Femicides, acid attacks, ritual murders, gang rapes, abduction, girl slavery, ritual rapes, military sexual slavery, cultism in tertiary institutions, trafficking in women and girls, are all new and old trends. Women in Africa still remain vulnerable to harmful traditional practices and traditions, many of which expose them to risk of HIV and AIDS which has been devastating the continent. There are now universal standards which provide a framework for human rights, liberty and freedom, which African governments have made commitments to in many international conventions and agreements. There is therefore no excuse for the continued discrimination against women and violation of their human rights.

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### CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS TO THE DRAFTING OF THE ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE RIGHTS

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sub-regional workshop held in Abidjan. In spite of their differences of opinion, the participants were able to adopt common positions which undoubtedly represent a real breakthrough for women's rights in Africa. Delegates to the workshop and members of the steering committee led by WILDAF presented on behalf of the seven countries the

common amendments during the last session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held in Kigali - Rwanda- from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 1999 .

This contribution of NGOs was highly welcomed by the working group set up by the African Commission to draft the document. Most amendments were

incorporated in the last version of the pre-draft protocol finalised two days before the meeting of the African Commission and approved by the same. The document as approved shall be forwarded very soon to the OAU secretariat for submission to and adoption by the Heads of States.

**Kafui KUWONU**

# ADDIS-ABEBA CONFERENCE : THE POINT ON THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

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## **CONCRETE RECOMMENDATION FOR AN EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLATFORMS OF ACTIONS.**

The NGOs made some concrete recommendations which have been taken in account by the conference.

To counter the influence of customary laws and traditional practices are repugnant to natural justice, and which are incompatible with the objectives of the African and Global platforms for Action, as well as international human rights instruments, the main recommendation was that African governments should legislate against those customs and practices.

Given that legislation only will have enough to resolve the problem, it was also recommended that governments provide an enabling environment for NGOs that are involved in programmes to sensitise both women and men on the negative effects of discriminatory cultural practices and socialisation process that are incompatible with the

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NGO in Special  
consultative status  
with the Economic  
and Social Council of  
the United Nations**

expectations of the platforms for action.

With regard to women's legal and human rights, the NGOs urged, all governments should harmonise national laws and constitution in line with regional and international commitments and standards, there should be no inconsistencies. All discriminatory laws and practices against women should be eradicated.

It was also requested that, all six African countries that have not ratified must be encouraged to do so by June 2000. Those who have ratified must show evidence of concrete steps towards implementation. All CEDAW reservations should be withdrawn, and the optional protocol to CEDAW should be ratified when it becomes open in December 1999.

African countries should also adopt the Additional Protocol on the rights of Women to the African Charter by the year 2001.

In the area of women in politics and Decision-making, participants called for the need to increase women participation of women in key decision-making position at national and regional level including their participation in conflicts resolutions at very senior and strategic levels on peace missions and negotiations.

To enable the representation of women all African constitutions should have no discriminatory clauses, including affirmative ac-

tion where necessary, to enable the representation of women. Of women affirmative action quotas should be raised to 50% to reflect the true situation in our continent.

At least twenty WILDAF members from various countries were able to participate to this conference including as part of the national delegations.

Once again, our network advocacy and lobbying action were rise full as we succeeded to influence the adopted platform. The next step will be in June 2000 at the global Beijing + 5 conference.

**Kafui ADJAMAGBO-JOHNSON**  
*(From the Report of NGOs  
Preliminary Consultation)*

## **WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter**

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