



# WILDAF WEST AFRICA

## Newsletter

Women in Law and Development in Africa

Issue 41 January 2010

### EDITORIAL

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2010!

The editorial staff of WILDAF Newsletter and all the West Africa sub regional staff are happy to greet you and all the members of your family with their best wishes for health, happiness, peace and success mainly in your daily efforts for the welfare of mankind and of African populations. The African review of the implementation of the Beijing and Dakar platforms for action in November 2009 revealed that the progress achieved during the five last years regarding the recognition and exercise of women's rights is far behind expectation. We are sure that the different opportunities offered by the global evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (Beijing + 15) in March and the launching of the African women's decade in July by the African Union will lead to more targeted actions aiming at concrete advancements in fighting violence against women, to women's economic empowerment and to their participation in the management of peace and decision making.

Therefore, in this number, we reasonably want to share with you the results of the African review of November since the latter (results) will constitute the African contribution to the world review in March in New York. We also announce with pride the election of an African activist of women's rights as Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and we invite you to discover her through the interview she accepted to answer. In the section "Network News", we account for a few activities carried out during the three last months of the past year by the coordination and the national networks. You will also find your sections on "documentation and publications".

Enjoy your reading and once more our best wishes for the New Year 2010!

Beatrice K. AJAVON  
Communication officer



**In Africa, poverty affects almost all aspects of women's lives and their basic human rights.**

Beijing + 15 Synthesis Report  
1995-2009

**Also available on our website:**

[www.wildaf-ao.org/eng](http://www.wildaf-ao.org/eng)

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

WILDAF-West Africa newsletter is a quarterly publication of the WILDAF sub regional office. Send us your text (long or short, what counts is the content!) by e-mail to WILDAF West Africa. **The deadline for the reception of the texts is:**

**March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010**

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

[info@wildaf-ao.org](mailto:info@wildaf-ao.org)

## BEIJING + 15: WHAT REVIEW FOR AFRICA?



From 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010, governments from the whole world, in collaboration with UN agencies, gender experts, development organisations as well as civil society activists working on women's rights and development, will all meet in New York for celebrating the 15 year life of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The 54<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on Women's Condition will be completely devoted to that event. Beyond the celebration (Beijing + 15), the main focus will be on evaluating the way covered in the implementation of the Platform of action, analysing the progress made, insufficiencies, opportunities and challenges in order to reframe things or to define new courses of action and strategies to speed up progress.

At African regional level, the evaluation took place in November 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> in Banjul (Gambia). It occurred in two phases: first the gender experts' review which the Ministers then validated. The results of this meeting will constitute the African regional contribution to the world review. What is the result of this African review?

It is moderate. Regarding the issues of gender equality related to poverty, education and health care, violence against women, equal access to economic resources and to the power of decision making, the UN Undersecretary General, Dr. Adboulie Janneh declares **"Globally progress has been made, but we have not yet arrived"**. And though governments show a certain satisfaction, NGOs, on the contrary, have a more critical opinion about the results. According to them, the progress here and there does not match the resources invested; results remain unsatisfactory and have had no significant impact on African women's lives. One thing is certain; everybody agrees that the acquired results are not at the same level in the 12 critical domains. The objective of the gender equality is nearly reached in education, but the priorities related to improving maternal health and women's participation in economy are difficultly starting.

**1- Women and poverty:** nothing allows thinking that policies and strategies carried out until now have reduced the feminisation of poverty in Africa.

In 1999, the first evaluation of the Beijing Platform made the bitter remark that despite the priority given to the fight against poverty, there had not been any concrete result and that the number of people living in poverty had been increasing.

Women were the greatest victims of poverty because they were living under the poverty level. Unfortunately, 10 years later, the remark is still up to date. The synthesis report notes efforts from States. The policy of social protection and the availability of micro credits seem to be the best shared strategies by almost all states to reduce women's poverty. As an example, Burkina Faso has instituted many support funds for women's revenue generating activities. In Uganda, the local communities' Development Programme is the main financing organ of the development budget and organisations which are looking for funds from this programme must meet the basic conditions of integrating gender dimensions. But the synthesis report indicates that governments should do more to be able to reduce poverty. "Nothing indicates that policies and strategies carried out until now have reduced the feminisation of poverty in Africa." Gains from micro credits are very limited and do not substantially impact women's economic power.

Worse, the report highlights concerns in front of the emergence of new challenges such as the global financial economic crisis, the climatic warming of the planet with its series of food crisis which may worsen the situation. "The global economic crisis will hit women on two fronts", the synthesis report indicates. "On one hand because it stops the accumulation of capital by women, and on the other hand because it is drastically reducing the individual incomes of African women as well as the budgets they manage for their households with particularly prejudicial consequences for little girls".

*Continued on page 3*

## BEIJING + 15: WHAT REVIEW FOR AFRICA?

*Continued from page 2*

**2- Women's education and training:** one of the domains in which Africa has made progress is education

Education has benefited from all the attention of African states because it is considered as the engine the progress of which would determine the realisation of most targeted priorities. The education of girls has consequently registered most progress. Thanks to targeted strategies and investments such as the gratuity of education and compulsory primary education, the universal access to primary education in Africa is on the good way with a rate of 74% in 2007 and gender equality in primary school is quite reached. About 70% of African countries have reached the objective of gender equality.

Despite this progress, shadow zones persist regarding upper and vocational education because the measures such as the positive discrimination adopted by most countries to eliminate gender discrepancies are deemed insufficient.

**3- Women and health:** In Africa the level of risk incurred by women to die, from avoidable complications or that can be cured, during pregnancy and childbirth, amounts to 1 over 22 while it is 1 over 7,300 in developed areas.

The review reveals that, in general, gender inequalities in the access to health care services are undeniable. Sure, states have taken measures and put resources in but these are inadequate and insufficient for producing significant results. Consequently, the maternal morbidity and mortality rate in Africa is the highest in the world. Women are also the most numerous HIV/AIDS victims.

Regarding HIV/AIDS, states have made efforts for controlling the propagation of the pandemic but the weakness of institutional provisions to meet it generally and the lack of specific measures to protect women make the latter more vulnerable. The rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence is higher for women than men everywhere in Africa.

**4- Violence against women:** it should be necessary to combat the culture of silence that surrounds it and involve boys and men much more in the struggle.

The ten year review identified violence against women as a very serious problem in most African countries. Since then, all the states have been making efforts for its elimination. Legal strategies and provisions as well as criminal penalties have been adopted. Many actions have been carried out regarding the fight against forced marriage and feminine genital mutilations. On the contrary, human being trafficking, mainly women trafficking, is taking disquieting proportions and is one of the domains in which few actions are undertaken.

The starting in November 2009 of the African regional campaign on eliminating violence against women, initially launched at global level, by the UN General Secretary, will certainly contribute to more substantial progress toward the eradication of the plague. But before all, it should be necessary to combat the culture of silence that surrounds the issue of violence against women.

**5- Women and armed conflicts:** the UN resolution 1325 (2000) of the Security Council is not well known enough in Africa.

The African regional evaluation has been very critical of the implementation of this priority in which Africa is really below expectations. The resolution 1325 reaffirms the importance of the role women play in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and in the consolidation of peace; it calls for women's participation, on an equal footing, in all efforts aiming at maintaining and promoting peace and security. The resolution suggests them to be fully involved and recommends making them participate more in decision making for the prevention and settlement of disputes. However, the evaluation highlighted the fact that African women are very little called upon in negotiations relating to maintaining and protecting peace and security.

Briefly, African countries difficultly accept to enforce the resolution 1325.

*Continued on page 4*

## BEIJING + 15: WHAT REVIEW FOR AFRICA?

*Continued from page 3*

**6-Women and economy:** despite their strong presence in the informal and agricultural sectors, women's access to the management of resources is very weak.

All the States have argued that the principle of equality set down in their constitutions and labour legislations must guarantee the equal access to employment opportunities and to providing social protection. Policies and specific laws have been adopted to facilitate women's access to economic opportunities. Trainings to develop the capacities of civil servants and members of Parliament have been offered in gender-friendly budgeting. All these measures have not been accompanied by adequate resources and by follow-up.

The remark is that progress at that level is insignificant. The estimated revenue with equal purchase power shows that women, in most countries, have half of men's revenues. Women's representation in economic decision making organs is quite nil or very weak.

### **7-Women, power and decision making**

The progress made is very weak compared to the commitments. In July 2004, African States committed themselves through the Solemn Declaration on equality between men and women in Africa to promote and extend the principle of parity in the regional economic communities and at national and local levels. But once again, this commitment has not been translated into action. The different plans, programmes and measures adopted by States in favour of women's representation were not well targeted. The election of the first woman president in Africa in 2006 and the representation of more women (56%) than men in the Rwandan Parliament are spectacular and encouraging advancements for Africa but little significant in terms of statistics. Serious obstacles to reaching the objective of 50/50 still remain.

**8- Women's human rights:** Having the legislation respected is the most serious problem Africa has to solve

The entry into force in 2005 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to Women's Rights in Africa, the African Union's Solemn

Declaration on the equality between men and women in Africa as well as the ratification of the optional protocol to CEDAW by the majority of African countries constitute important steps showing the progress related to African women's human rights. But states have not taken all the required measures for harmonising the provisions of these instruments with national texts. Many law practitioners do not use these instruments because they ignore their existence. Most legislation in force on the rights of persons and families are discriminatory against women. Polygamy is still a legal regime; the right to succession is in favour of men. The few already existing provisions and the newly voted ones in favour of women are not applied. Consequently, women continue being victims of the violation of their most elementary rights.

**9- Women and the media:** the absence of women in the media is harmful to their activities

The synthesis report shows that priority n° 9 of the Beijing Platform of Action has registered no significant progress. The 2005 evaluation (Beijing + 10) recommended Africa to adopt and implement policies that take into account the gender dimension and encourage the use of the media and the new technologies of information and communication (NTIC) for promoting women's activities. On the contrary, very few countries show interest in it. Consequently, the media remain strongly dominated by men.

### **10- Women and environment**

It is one of the domains that has mobilised little attention from African States during the period considered by the evaluation. There exists no valid data that can make it possible to evaluate the impact of environment on women.

### **11- The little girl**

African States have made praiseworthy efforts to fill the gap between boys and girls in the domain of primary education.

*Continued on page 5*

## BEIJING + 15: WHAT REVIEW FOR AFRICA?

*Continued from page 4*

The synthesis report shows that actions have been undertaken regarding the fight against negative cultural and traditional practices. But these actions are not, for the moment, bringing effective changes. The States do not succeed in "making the communities actively participate in the implementation of different laws and rules promulgated to ameliorate girls' conditions", the synthesis report indicates.

Here, let us pay a tribute to various civil society organisations working on the promotion and protection of human beings and of women's rights in Africa. Under their impulse and pressure and thanks to their hard work, on all fronts, often with little resources, the progress accomplished has been possible. They contributed with States through advocacies for reforms, strategy formulations, trainings in favour of populations and civil servants, campaigns, offering food and clothes.

After this third five year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, African States have taken note of the little luminous progress for the continent. Confronted with the new challenges such as the climatic change and the degradation of environment, the food, energetic, financial and economic crises as well as the feminisation of human trafficking that can compromise the progress accomplished, the States have ascertained their determination to fully implement international and regional agreements and initiatives that have objectives in accordance with the Dakar and Beijing Platforms of action as well as with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They are resolved to renew and intensify their efforts in order to mobilise the necessary resources, improve national strategies and strengthen the available human and institutional resources, so as to speed up the realisation of the Dakar and Beijing platforms of action and the MDGs from now to 2015.

In order to maximise the chances of success for the coming five years, the African States have

committed themselves to focus their efforts on the following 7 strategic domains:

- 1- Economic empowerment of women by the reduction of poverty, the creation of employment, social protection and the use of technologies of information and communication.
- 2- Peace, security and development.
- 3- Violence against women.
- 4- Women's representation and participation at all levels of decision making.
- 5- Health related to sexuality, procreation and HIV/AIDS.
- 6- Climatic change and food security.
- 7- Financing gender equality.

Let us pledge that the meeting theme "from commitment to action" is a good omen for women's rights in Africa.

### DOCUMENTATION

#### UNFPA State of World Population 2009: Facing a changing world: women, population and climate

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been publishing annually since 1978, a report on changes that happened in the area of population.

The 2009 report under the theme "Facing a changing world: women, population and climate," was released on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.

The report stresses that poor populations, especially women who are the majority of farmers will be most affected by climate change despite their relatively insignificant contribution to the carbon emissions in the world. "Women living in poor countries will bear the disproportionate burden of climate change and the majority of 1.5 billion people living with \$ 1 or less per day are women," said the UNFPA report.

The report underlines also the need to break down gender inequality, particularly regarding access to education so that women may be better involved in debates on climate change.

For further information and to access the report, please visit: [http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN\\_SOWP09.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN_SOWP09.pdf)

## INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS



The African Commission of Human and People's Rights in Africa (ACHPR) elected during its 46<sup>th</sup> session held in Banjul from 11 to 25 November 2009, Mrs Reine ALAPINI-GANSOU as chairperson of this institution.

This seems to be an achievement regarding the African women's difficulties in acceding to decision making positions. Before heading to the ACHPR, Mrs ALAPINI-GANSOU was the Special Rapporteur on Human rights for the institution. She is also an active member of WILDAF-Benin. We suggest you to read this interview In order to know more about her.

**WILDAF-Newsletter:** Mrs ALAPINI-GANSOU, before all, allow us to congratulate you for this election and express our pride. But Madam, a woman at the head of the ACHPR seems a great achievement regarding difficulties African women have in acceding to decision making positions. How did your election take place?

**Mrs ALAPINI:** First of all, I would like to thank you for the honour you give me with your congratulations after my election at the head of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

I would also say that this election is a victory for all the militant women who have been fighting for the recognition of what African women have been doing; I know that within the ACHPR, women, who believe in what they have been doing, have battled for me. I also owe this victory to men who, within the ACHPR, can recognise the woman's merits and competence and have trusted me. Just to say that men supported me in this election.

For this election, we wanted to respect the gender approach, the geographic and linguistic distribution. In fact, our bylaws favour consensus in making decisions, and failing this consensus, we go to vote.

We chose the secret vote on colleagues' request in front of two candidates, another colleague who certainly had assets because he had friends and myself.

But right from the first round, I obtained more votes than him and he gave up.

**WN:** Mrs. Chair, during your term as Special Reporter you had to defend many files among which the inscription of the forced disappearances thematic on the traditional thematic list.

Has your work at that position been determining in your election?

**Mrs ALAPINI:** Since I took office in 2005 at the ACHPR, I was appointed Special Reporter on the rights of Human Right Advocates in Africa and, I must confess, I had no background to base my mission on. I referred to my books and my experience as a lawyer and human right militant. I set up an action plan (2005-2007) which included the principle of accountability from myself and related to our bylaws which demand members of ACHPR to account for their actions and activities in each session and at the end of their term in the framework of special mechanisms. I put my Special Reporter duty under the sign of synergy with all the actors (States, civil society and partners); among other objectives, I chose to build all stakeholders' capacities and to disseminate legal instruments that promote and protect the rights of human right advocates. I developed my work by looking for cooperation with my colleagues of the other systems and this brought us (the UN Special Reporter on the rights of human right advocates and myself) to pay a joint promoting visit to Togo in August 2008. In the framework of the rights of the human right advocates, I reproduced the UN system approach that consists in contacting the State Parties about the cases that I hear of. I suggest, in this field, to directly consult the site [www.srhrafrica.org](http://www.srhrafrica.org) for more information. In 2007, my term was renewed for two years.

At every session, I produce a report on what I have been doing. I can say, in that concern, that it was a double edged knife because it is an exercise in which you call on States to answer about proved or supposed cases of violation. People could like or dislike what I was doing, but I believed in what I was doing convinced that ACHPR is a human and peoples' right implementing organisation created

*Continued on page 7*

## INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

*Continued from page 6*

by the State Parties to the charter, by all African countries. Whether people like it or not, what we have been doing in the Commission is essential and should help to enhance the human right situation on the continent. The ACHPR members are personalities working in individual capacity and on the basis of their expertise in human rights. I should be judged on my work and not on political opinions and I believe that, in any case, the well done work has prevailed over any other possible considerations.

**WN :** The delegates to the Commission's last session that elected you recognised that, despite the progress accomplished, the human right situation in Africa remains disquieting? How do you explain this situation?

**Mrs ALAPINI :** The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has two ordinary sessions a year, that is one ordinary session every six months in May and November. It can also hold extraordinary sessions and I can tell you that, at every meeting, our observations on the human right situation are not very interesting. The NGO forum that always precedes our sessions greatly helps us with a complete overview of the situation. The causes of these numerous human right violations, just to mention a few, are related to the bad governance mainly the refusal of change of power, the change of unconstitutional powers, the deliberate changes of constitution, cultural factors, conflicts that spring up here and there on the continent and that, upstream and downstream, cause enormous sufferings to populations. Many things explain this situation and one of the solutions I envisage is that African leaders must accept to take their full responsibility in ratifying the African Charter on democracy, elections and good governance. But they mainly must implement it by all appropriate measures to use the words of the texts we manipulate.

This is a thought that does not exhaustively reflect all the thematic of human rights.

We should have, all generations together, a more comprehensive approach to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

**WN :** Among other missions, the Commission has to ensure the human and peoples' rights and to secure them. But the legal reference instruments related to African women's rights, particularly the Maputo Protocol that entered into force in 2005 are not yet ratified by all countries and their implementation is nowhere satisfactory. Which new approach are you planning to adopt for speeding the process?

Under Article 45 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Commission has four missions: to promote human rights, to protect human rights, if needed to interpret the Charter and to undertake any other task conferred on it by the conference of Heads of States. The African Commission should arrange for the rights ensured by the Charter to be effective.

This is what it has been working on since its setting up in 1987. To give effect to the provisions of the Charter and its bylaws, the Commission has taken into account some relevant thematic it set special procedures for, among which 5 special mechanisms and 6 working groups. Our colleague, Mrs. Soyata Maïga (also a WILDAF member from Mali), has been heading the special mechanism of the Special Reporter on women's rights in Africa that has been developing since 2001; since her appointment in 2007 after the creation of the mechanism, she has been working on the effective implementation of women's rights on our continent. Through its successive Special Reporters, our Commission has been instrumental in the adoption, the ratification and the entry into force of the Maputo Protocol. Under the provisions of article 62, the Commission is the excellent control organ of the States' implementation of the rights ensured by the Charter. Specifically, the Protocol stipulates in its article 26 that ACHPR should be the control organ of women's rights in Africa and hence, all State Parties are obliged to submit their reports on women's situation in the territories in the framework of their initial and periodic reports.

*Continued on page 8*

## INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

*Continued from page 7*

The special mechanism on women's rights in Africa has also been working on the extension of the Solemn Declaration on equality between women and men that envisages priority fields in which State Parties must work and set up programmes and policies for the effectiveness of women's rights on our continent.

The ACHPR took many resolutions to strengthen actions on the thematic of women's rights. As an example, during its 45<sup>th</sup> session, it took a resolution on maternal mortality in Africa. During its 46<sup>th</sup> session it adopted guidelines on drafting State reports on the enforcement and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. The greatest challenge today is the full ratification of the Protocol and in each session we question countries that have not yet ratified it. I would like to suggest the sensitisation campaigns and the lobbying to go on. The WILDAF network has become a master in the art.

**WN:** Mrs. Chair, Africa has decided the launching of its campaign "All united to put an end to violence against women" in the framework of the world campaign of the United Nations Secretary General. What will be the contribution of the Commission to that campaign?

**Mrs ALAPINI:** I already propose launching a petition to be signed by all actors if it is not yet done. The ACHPR sessions are opened to everyone and we can, in collaboration with the Special Reporter on women's rights, undertake sensitisation and extension activities in the framework of this campaign. In the past, WILDAF actively participated in the ACHPR sessions. It must do more with the Special Reporter on women's rights. ACHPR will be able to convince State Parties to vote legislations on violence against women. The ACHPR members will even begin this in the promotion activities they will undertake.

**WN:** What are the other priority files on which people will hear of you?

**Mrs ALAPINI :** I was elected on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and I have learnt how to conceive an action programme for everything I undertake regarding my mission. I am doing this now. I should work on a better access to our Commission by State Parties. In Africa, everything is a priority when we deal with human rights. But now, the ACHPR wants to involve itself in the Guinea and the Niger problems. I clearly said it in my speech at the end of the 46<sup>th</sup> session. Our Commission cannot black out cases of human right violations in countries in conflict. I find a priority in the efficiency of the Commission's mission of protecting human rights and I think we should finalise our bylaws so that we could complementarily ensure our collaboration with the African Court of human and peoples' rights and that we could begin seizing it under article 5 (a) of the Protocol bearing creation of the African Court of human and peoples' rights.

**WN :** Mrs. Chair, will NGOs and institutions promoting and protecting human rights, in particular, those defending women's rights; envisage a greater collaboration with the Commission during your term?

**Mrs ALAPINI :** I said it earlier, nothing can, at the present stage, account for insufficient collaboration between NGOs promoting and protecting human rights and the Commission during my term. The ACHPR is well represented in the NGO forum and its members actively participate in the different panels opened on the different thematics of the forum. It has just authorised a study on the freedom of association during its 46<sup>th</sup> session. During the same session, the ACHPR followed, in a parallel event, a workshop proposed by a NGO on reproductive health. I am still in contact with NGOs as a Special Reporter on the rights of human right advocates. I remain the human right militant I had been and would blame myself not to continue with my friends.

NGOs are unavoidable and nothing can be a success without them. States are aware of the situation. Regarding the collaboration with NGOs and institutions working on human rights,

*Continued on page 9*

## INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIRWOMAN OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

*Continued from page 8*

I trust my colleague, Mrs. SOYATA MAIGA, Special Reporter on women's rights in Africa, for her listening capacity, her dynamism and her capacity of serving. She proved it during the two past years she spent on this term and this is why a new term has just been given her.

**WN:** Your last words, please.

**Mrs ALAPINI:** A single lark does not make the spring and united, we become strong. I will need everybody's support for turning my term into a success. Your criticism will make me stronger. With you, I would hope to reach my objectives. I will be happier to have served African populations. I would like to feel the moral satisfaction to have been useful to something.

**WN:** Mrs. Chair, thank you and enjoy your work.

**Mrs ALAPINI:** Thanks also for wasting your precious time on me.

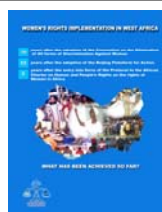
## NETWORK NEWS

**WILDAF-WA, member of the regional steering committee of the campaign: "Unite to end violence against women and girls".**

WILDAF-WA was co-opted as a member of the West African regional steering committee of the campaign "United to end violence against women and girls". We remember this world campaign was launched by the UN Secretary General on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The ultimate objective of this campaign is to put an end to impunity regarding violence against women. *"We must unite. No political leader, no government should tolerate violence against women in whatever form and whatever the context or circumstances in which it occurs."* These were the Secretary General's words during the launching of the campaign.

In Africa, the set up regional steering committee has the mission of giving orientations on the conduct of the African campaign. As a member, WILDAF-WA took part in the first meeting of the committee on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2009 in Banjul (Gambia) in the margin of the 8<sup>th</sup> African regional conference on women, and in the launching of the campaign in West Africa on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009 in Dakar – Senegal.

Other organisations of the civil society as FEMNET, Gender Links and the Arab Women Alliance are also members of the committee.



**Beijing + 15: Launching the West African civil society shadow report.**

The sub regional office published the West African civil society shadow report entitled: "Implementing women's rights in West Africa, 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women, 15 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, 5 years after the entry into force of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa: What has been achieved so far?". Launched in the framework of the third review (Beijing +15) of the implementation of the Beijing Platform, this report recapitulates the progress achieved by West African countries in the implementation of women's human rights since 2005 (Beijing + 10), and made proposals for actions to be carried out in the fields where efforts are still needed.

For Mrs. Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson, WILDAF-West Africa coordinator, this report *"is an advocacy tool that women intend to use so that at last, through the respect and the effective enjoyment of their rights,*

*Continued on page 10*

## NETWORK NEWS

*African women can fully participate in their countries' development, both as actors and beneficiaries." Let us deeply wish that its recommendations will nourish exchanges between the various development actors.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Participation of WILDAF-WA in the 8<sup>th</sup> African regional conference on women (Beijing +15)

A delegation led by the West African sub regional Office and composed of network members and women farmers from 5 countries among which *Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo* has taken part in the 8<sup>th</sup> African regional conference on women held in Banjul from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009.



*Mme Kafui ADJAMAGBO-JOHNSON presenting her communication during the panel*

The delegation successively participated in the expert meeting preceding the meeting of AU Ministers in charge of women and gender, in the meeting of the regional steering committee of the campaign "United to end violence against women" which the network is a member of, in the NGOs advisory meeting and in the regional conference on women. Furthermore, in the margin of these meetings, the network organised, in collaboration with the International Federation of Human Rights (IFHR), FAS and the Campaigns "Ratify and Respect: Africa for women's rights" and "Gender is my Agenda" (GIMAC) as well as the Women Lawyers Association of the Gambia (FLAG), a panel on "The implementation of women's rights in Africa: What has been achieved so far?".

The West African shadow report entitled "Women's rights implementation in West Africa, 30 years after the adoption of CEDAW, 15 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action, 5 years after the entry into force of the Protocol to the ACHPR related to women's rights in Africa: What has been achieved so far?"

served as a basis for WILDAF's actions in Banjul. In the NGO forum, WILDAF emphasised the recommendations contained in the report so that they could be taken into account by the final Declaration.

### WILDAF-Benin

From 20<sup>th</sup> October to 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009, WILDAF-Benin undertook a tour for training and establishing 25 community committees to fight violence against women in the Ouémé, Plateau, Atlantique and Zou departments. Composed of 7 members (men and women) among whom 2 paralegals, these committees have the task of intervening in the settlement of issues relating to gender violence. The two-day training aimed at enabling them to understand the questions of violence so that, in their actions, they can adopt a problem-solving approach that respects the law and women's rights. This activity is part of the project "Using law as for rural women's empowerment".

### WILDAF-BURKINA

The 10-year existence of the national WILDAF-Burkina network is celebrated

The network celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its existence. In that purpose, a number of activities were organised. A conference recapitulating the activities carried out during the 10 years and lecture forums on women's participation in the areas of decision making and on women's access to land were organised. Free legal counselling was offered in the town halls of the arrondissements of Bogodogo, Nogr'masson, and Baskuy. Moreover, there was a sensitisation on violence against women and children as well as on women's rights through television quiz games on the most listened to radio stations of the country and the exposition of publications by WILDAF and its member associations.

Actors of women's promotion and protection and administrative, customary and religious authorities participated in these various events.

**In Ghana:** WILDAF-Ghana organised a capacity building workshop for its first and new members on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009. The workshop enabled them to debate a number of challenges related to networking and to define common platforms of actions regarding advocacy and communication in order to increase the network's visibility. At the end of the training, all the 24 participating members expressed their satisfaction regarding the quality of discussions.

*Continued on page 11*

## NETWORK NEWS

Still in **Ghana**, the network member associations got together in the framework of the 16 days activism against violence to carry out, in the villages, information and sensitisation sessions on the content of the "Domestic Violence Act" and offered free legal counselling to women victims.

### **WILDAF-Mali:**

The representatives of WILDAF member organisations, the members of the different "Women and Good Governance" coalitions from Bamako, Sikasso, Kati and Gao participated in a national capacity building workshop on strategic planning held from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009. It also helped to define the network's objectives for the coming years. Four main objectives were chosen:

- training 2,500 women from now to 2015
- contributing to enhancing the revenues of 50 women associations from now to 2015
- achieving a 50% reduction of declared cases of violence against women
- reinforcing the advocacy/lobbying for the adoption of the people and family code.

**WILDAF-Senegal:** The Campaign of the 16 day activism related to violence against women was the opportunity for WILDAF-Senegal to organise sensitisation activities on themes reflecting specific realities of the country.

With the financial support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the network organised six panels: 2 (2) in Dakar (3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009), 2 (2) in Thiès (08<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009) and finally 2 (2) in Diourbel (09<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009) on different themes such as decent work, the worst forms of children's work, children's rights, rape, paedophilia, incest, violence in schools and women's socio economic rights.



The general objective of these panels is to contribute to the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence through the identification of efficacious and efficient strategies for effectively taking the victims in charge.

### **WILDAF-Togo**

WILDAF-Togo, just as the other countries of the project "Using law as a tool for the empowerment of rural women" undertook the establishment of committees for fighting violence against women in 24 villages in the country.

The training tour began on September 14<sup>th</sup> and came to an end on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009. At the end of each 2-day training session, the committee members were officially introduced to the community. The populations were also informed of the necessary setting up of these committees and the importance of their role in conflict management related to violence against women.

Moreover, this year, the members campaigned on the necessity of civil marriage and its importance in fighting violence against women. They deserve the merit of involving administrative and traditional authorities in this campaign.



## AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS



### **The Robert F. Kennedy won by militant women's rights in Zimbabwe**

U.S. President Barack Obama has delivered Monday the price of human rights Robert F. Kennedy Magodonga Mahlangu and his organization, WOZA, their commitment to nonviolence in favor of women's rights and against the regime of "dictator" of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe.

According to the Robert F. Kennedy for Human Rights, Ms Mahlangu belongs to an organization of tens of thousands of women who, despite repeated arrests and brutal repression, campaigned peacefully for freedom, protection of women against rape and domestic violence and the right to eat and educate.

"Each time you search his house, that the threat of death or being arrested - more than 30 times so far and it continues to appear in public and be a source of inspiration for Zimbabweans - the power of the state seems less absolute," Obama said at the ceremony at the White House.

*Continued on page 12*

## AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

"Each time she was released from prison after having been imprisoned in deplorable conditions and have been assaulted, and she returned to work, the prospect of being thrown in prison loses its deterrent force. By the example it gives Magodonga showed women of WOZA and to Zimbabweans that their power may undermine that of their oppressors, their force can undermine the dictator," he said.

Since its founding in December 2002, WOZA (for Women of Zimbabwe Arise, or Women of Zimbabwe rise again) has organized more than a hundred demonstrations for democracy and human rights of women in Zimbabwe, according to the Center Robert F. Kennedy.

<http://genderacrossborders.com/2009/12/04/women-of-zimbabwe-arise-awarded-the-robert-f-kennedy-human-rights-award/>

\*\*\*\*\*



**Raya al-Hassan ,  
the first woman to  
be appointed  
Minister of Finance  
in Lebanon**

In Lebanon where most politicians need nerves of steel when facing opponents, **Rayya Haffar-Hassan** ( mother of 3 children) was chosen to sit at the helm of the finance ministry. This is the first time a woman has ever held such a top job in this country. But there is another woman who entered the new government. **Mona Ofeich**, lawyer and activist civil society aged 67, was appointed minister of state without portfolio.

Many, including women activists and economists alike, welcomed Rayya's selection for such a key position. However Lebanon is still behind some of his more conservative neighbors, with only four women in Parliament (128 seats) and in the government, they are still underrepresented. The first woman to have been part of the government is the daughter of the Lebanese Prime Minister Riad Solh, Leila Solh Hamadeh, who was Minister of Industry from 2004 to 2005.

Rayya's appointment was announced on November 9, the same day the 30-member Lebanese national unity government was revealed. *"I have not felt it is a challenge I can't face,"* Rayya said. *"Thank God the political environment is suitable, there is an agreeable atmosphere among the government team, and the economic situation today is better than it was two or three years ago. Now, circumstances are suitable to do something and succeed."*

Despite being the first woman to hold such a prominent office in the modern Arab world, she does not see it as an obstacle. *"I don't believe that because I am a woman it will be more difficult,"* she told Gulf News from Beirut. *"I don't see any difference between myself and any other person with the same qualifications."*

<http://gulfnnews.com/business/features/an-iron-hand-with-a-tight-fist-rayya-haffar-hassan-1.532354>

### Spain Acts of Violence Against Women : "a TV Campaign isn't Enough"

A new law to fight violence against women will be introduced in parliament today (November 25th). The feminist activist Suzy Rojzman explains why legislating is a case of emergency.

A white paper penned by the left-wing parties has been gathering dust on the shelves of Parliament since 2007. Today, yet another paper will be put up for debate, this time by congressmen from both sides of the political spectrum. The main propositions are the creation of two new misdemeanors to condemn both "psychological harassment within the couple" and "forced marriage" (which would this time lead to victims being awarded a long-term visa to stay in the country). The writers also ask for a toughening of the dispositions to keep the abusive and violent spouse out of the family home.

Interview with Suzy Rojzman, spokesperson of the Collectif National pour le droit des femmes (national collective for women's rights)

<http://www.humaniteinenglish.com/spip.php?article1397>

## WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter

### Contributing authors for this edition:

**Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson (Coordinator)**  
**Beatrice AJAVON (Communication officer)**  
**Michelle LOCOH (Assistant communication officer)**

You are free to copy WILDAF West Africa's information on a not-for-profit basis in other formats, and use it in your interest, provided the WILDAF/FeDDAF West Africa is mentioned as source.

### You may obtain further information at:

WILDAF West Africa/Sub-regional office  
B.P. 7755 Lomé - Togo  
Phone: (228) 222-26-79  
Fax: (228) 222-73-90

Email: [info@wildaf-ao.org](mailto:info@wildaf-ao.org)

This newsletter is published

Thanks to the financial

support of MDG3 Fund "Investing

in equality".

