



WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

Women in Law and Development in Africa

Issue 43 July 2010

EDITORIAL

Is-it still possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by reducing poverty and hunger by 2015? Referring to the different reports on progress in Africa, is there any hope? We will try to answer these questions through the article on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in Africa: what has been achieved so far?

In the section "Network News" we will report WILDAF activities in the West Africa sub region including the implementation of its project "Using law for rural women's empowerment in five West-African countries".

In addition, you will learn about actions that WILDAF-Mali is currently conducting for the adoption of the Family Code in Mali. We recall that the code adopted in August 2009 has brought about tensions among the populations. We are however delighted by women's rights advancement in Senegal by the adoption in May 14, 2010 of the law establishing absolute parity between men and women.

Finally, as usual, our newsletter brings you all information regarding women's rights and development in the world.

Enjoy your reading!

Beatrice AJAVON
Communication officer

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"... Maternal health is the area that has lagged the furthest behind. "Yet if we can succeed here, we will touch off a virtuous 'ripple-effect' through all the Goals."

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

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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:

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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.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG) IN AFRICA :

What have been achieved so far ?

In September 2000, the international community came together to agreed on a 15 year effort to fighting poverty, hunger and disease. The (192) States (of the UN) committed themselves to implement, up to 2015, eight Millennium Development Goals, mainly:

- Eliminating extreme poverty and hunger;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Reducing child mortality rate among children less than 5 years old;
- Improve maternal health;
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Ensuring environment sustainability;
- Develop a global partnership for development.

In spite of the major achievements in many countries, it has been observed that, five years towards the date for achieving the MDGs, fields,, even the best governed countries on the continent, have not succeeded in progressing sufficiently as recognised by the ADB President that "the balance sheet is mitigated and very few African countries have the chance of carrying out the MDGs, if we do not double our efforts"

Studies have shown that the implementation of the MDGs in Africa is facing difficulties resulting from, among others, governance problems, conflicts, the still modest level of aid for public development and the difficulty in taking profit from globalisation.

The question to be asked is, where is Africa in the implementation of the MDGs?

What successful examples could we take and, in the end, what to do to ameliorate African countries' efforts in the implementation of MDGs?

I. A mitigated balance sheet

The fight against poverty and hunger: very insufficient achievements

The percentage of people living with one dollar or less a day has decreased from 45.9% to 41.1% since 1999, but the implementation of the MDG aiming at reducing poverty to a half before 2015 demands we double the present progress.



WILDAF-WA Picture / Women going to market with their agricultural products

In the same time, in spite of the high population growth rate of (2.3 % per year) at the regional level, the number of extremely poor people has stabilised, with a marginal growth of 296 million in 1999 and 298 million in 2004.

The progress in favour of children is very much slow considering the objective of reducing hunger by half, and the percentage of children under 5 suffering from malnutrition and underweight has diminished by a low rate of ten per cent, between 1999 (33 per cent) and 2005 (29 per cent).

30% of youth have no education despite the progress in primary education

It has been observed that in terms of universal primary education, access rate for has grown from 57 per cent in 1999 to 70 per cent in 2005. Nevertheless 30 per cent of youth are not literate while the number of children in school-going age increases every day.

The number of young Africans less than 14 years old has increased from 237 million in 1990 to 348 million in 2007. It is estimated that this number would reach 403 million in 2015.

Insufficient advances in gender equality

Even if the number of women parliamentarians had significantly increased from 7 per cent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2007, the proportion of women earning income outside agriculture did not surpass one third of the female population in 2005. According to a UN report in 2006 women's participation in paid non-agricultural employment has continued to increase, averaging nearly 40%, nevertheless in developing countries, especially in sub Saharan Africa, two third of women work in vulnerable jobs. This type of work accounts for more than 80% of all jobs of women. The labour market remains highly gender segregated, and female dominated positions tend to be characterised by inferior status, lower pay and poorer working conditions (Source:UNIFEM report entitled "Making the MDGs work better for Women").

In sub Saharan Africa, the ratio of girls to boys with secondary education dropped from 82% in 1999 to 79% in 2007. Out of the 171 countries which data are available for, only 53, that is 14 more than in 1999, have succeeded in instituting gender equality in primary and secondary education.

Everywhere in the world, violence remains a serious plague for humankind. Initiatives aiming at fighting violence against women have multiplied, but they are not widespread, not consistent and not coordinated.

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What have been achieved so far ?

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Despite progress, infant mortality represents twice high the rate of the whole developing world

The mortality rate of children less than five diminished from 185 for one thousand living births in 1990 to 166 for one thousand in 2005, which represents only a fraction of the target of a two third reduction in 2015. Moreover, this represents twice the rate of the whole developing world. Only encouraging remark: thanks to massive vaccination campaigns, measles and the deaths it causes have decreased by 75 per cent between 1999 and 2005 in the sub-Saharan African.

Maternal mortality, a scandal in sub Saharan Africa

Maternal health remains a huge problem in Africa. For a sub Saharan African woman, the risk of dying from complications relating to pregnancy or childbirth is 1 out of 16 while it is 1 out of 3,800 in developed countries. According to a survey published by the UN Information Department (March 2010), the use of contraceptives has nearly doubled in sub Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2005, but it is still lower than the 22% of all married women or those in free union. Even if the use of contraceptives has increased with married women or those in concubinage, one-eighth of maternal mortality was still due to non medical abortions in 2005 and to lack of contraceptives with 11% of women in developing countries (of whom 24% in sub Saharan Africa) wishing to space births or to have no more children. (From the UN Report "Keeping the Promise")

HIV/AIDS, a still disquieting pandemia

The number of people dying from AIDS has continued to increase, reaching two million in 2006. Even if the prevalence rate has stabilised, the number of new cases, in particular among women, as well as the number of people suffering from advanced HIV infections, has continued growing at such a speed that the healthcare services cannot follow the pace even if they work at a higher speed.

In relations to HIV infections there is no indication of an imminent stabilisation of the very important rate of new tuberculosis cases in sub Saharan Africa.

Environmental sustainability: we are far from the achieving the target set for 2015

According to the latest data in 2004, only 42 per cent of people living in rural areas have access to drinkable water, and. It is also clear that 63 per cent of the whole population have no access to basic sanitary facilities.

This is a slight regression compared to 1990 (68 per cent) which is far from the target of halving the percentage before 2015.

Climate change, the effects of which can already be felt, will also make the realisation of the MDGs more difficult on the continent. According to the projections of the intergovernmental experts' Group on climate change, 75 to 250 million people will be victims of an increasing hydric stress. Without an adequate preparation, the impact might be much more devastating on rural economies and on poor people's means of subsistence.

II. Reason for hoping: a few successful examples

All over Africa, some countries have shown that quick and large scale progress is possible for reaching the MDGs, when good policies and vigorous governmental impulsions are added to adequate financial and technical support from the international community.

In one year, the programmes of bonds for seeds and fertilizers in Malawi have made it possible to double agricultural production during the 2006/2007 season.

- Ghana has established a national school feeding programme cooked with local products
- Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and very recently Togo and many other countries have abolished school fees in primary schools, which has led to a spectacular increase in school attendance in just few years.
- In 2006, Zambia abolished basic health service fees in rural areas and Burundi instituted the gratuity of medical care for mothers and children
- With the support from the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, WHO, UNICEF and US Center for Disease Control, African countries such as Niger, Togo, and Zambia have successfully launched measles vaccination campaigns and the distribution of anti-malaria long lasting insecticide impregnated mosquito nets. These campaigns have each covered the whole nation in two weeks and have halved the incidence rate of malaria.

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- In Niger, hundreds of thousands of rural inhabitants have seen their livelihoods greatly increased and in the same time, their vulnerability due to the draught has diminished because of a large scale reforestation resulting from a national reform policy.
- Senegal is on the good path to reaching the objective relating to water and sanitation, thanks to a national investment programme with the support of donors.

On 14 May 2010, Senegal adopted a law on man/woman parity which will sensibly ameliorate women's participation in decision making.

- In 2008, Rwanda elected majority of women (56%) to the lower House of Parliament, which constitutes the highest level of women representation in politics all over the world.

With the support from donors, many African governments duplicate, at national level, the lessons of Millennium Villages; this means that small local impulse and series of interventions are possible to transforming poor communities in a short time. Taking advantage of available funding opportunities like the MDG3 Fund established by the Netherlands government, the civil society organizations (WILDAF, AWDF, Huairou Commission and Akina Mama Wa Africa) also put in place programs which show that it is possible to lift people, especially women out of poverty.



WILDAF-WA Picture / Training of Rural women on human rights in Benin

III. What to do?

Everybody knows that the African continent is the only region in the world where the number of extremely poor people has been on the increase for fifteen years, but very few people know that African countries experienced major enhancements in a series of fundamental development parameters.

Encouraging remarks

Thanks to better economic policies and increase raw material prices, the annual economic growth has been an average of 6 per cent per year during the last three years. This growth has touched various countries in nearly an equal way and the IMF is now envisaging a short term trend rate of around 7 per cent this year. The number of civil conflicts has diminished. The import revenues have ameliorated the trade balances in many countries and the recently granted debt relief has reduced macroeconomic imbalances in the poorest countries.

African enterprises register good accounts in terms of national investment and gains in productivity. Many governments in the region continue to be more transparent, more democratic and less corrupt. However, these advances remain fragile because they are caused, largely by the increase in the prices of raw materials.

African countries still depend on export of few raw materials and suffer from a lack of public investment in agriculture, health, education and infrastructures necessary for reinforcing capacities in production and commercial exchanges, for maintaining a high growth rate and creating employments. Hence, it is necessary to double our efforts if we want to ameliorate these countries' performances for them to reach the MDGs. What to do in that purpose?

As leaders, Public office holders, should first commit themselves

The fight against poverty calls for a global action, outgiving the Millennium Development Goals and which pushes to influencing the levers of the different social and economic sectors. It involves the public power holders, who have primary responsibilities for really ensuring economic and social progress. Political leaders must, more than ever, show their determination to finding progressive ways of and their illness to eliminate the daunting challenges of generalised poverty facing African countries. Development partners must also respect the leadership of Africa and any partnership agreement.

Donors must respect their commitments concerning global partnership for development

Most African countries are ready to replicate these successes in a large scale, but they need more importantly public development aid of a better quality so as to be able to invest in the MDGs. But, even if it went up in the first

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years of the Millennium, the aid to sub Saharan Africa has not nearly varied since 2004, if we exclude the debt relief and humanitarian aid. Donors must act quickly to increase their aid so that their promise, expressed in 2005, to double aid before 2010 remains credible. Furthermore, they have to publish a payment schedule detailing how they will increase aid country by country, so that African countries are able to plan essential investments and prepare macroeconomic frameworks

But even the LDCs of Africa have to face the difficulty of often unreasonable offers and rules of origin for their products. On a larger scale, the Doha negotiations aiming at creating a world commercial regime favourable to development have stopped and must resume.

Despite this little progress, MDGs are still remains a possible in most African countries. But time is beginning to lag for practical necessary investments.

The commitments taken and reiterated by the world leaders at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and at the World Summit in 2005 are sufficient for reaching the Goals. In conclusion, five years before the target date, States and their development partners have to commit themselves to achieving the MDGs. The civil society has to be more vigilant in its role of vigilance and intensify its efforts in order to reach the MDGs.

Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson
West Africa Coordinator

RESOURCES



Millennium Development Goals Report 2010: the news is not quite good

The UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon presented on 23rd June

during a press conference, the Millennium Development Goals Report 2010. This annual accounting report is dedicated to the analysis of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Based on the latest data and analysis of international and UN agencies around the world, the report's review is far from being good regarding the progress made by each region compared with each targeted goal set to be achieved by 2015.

For more information, download the report at www.wildaf-ao.org/eng

Key figures of equality between women and men in 2009

These statistics provide clear and detailed insight on the situation of women in society and include statistical data available in the five priority areas of government action, which are the parity and women's access responsibilities; Equal Opportunity between men and women, access to rights and respect for the dignity of the person; joint lifetimes, Europe and internationally.

<http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr/>

New global GEAR Campaign website

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform Campaign (GEAR) has launched its new official website. The GEAR Campaign invites civil society organizations and individuals from around the world to join the global campaign in order to create a strong new United Nations agency for women's rights.

Join at www.gearcampaign.org and make history by helping to build a United Nations that really works for all women!

NETWORK NEWS

Sub Regional Office

Rural women's empowerment: the paralegal farmers are more determined than ever to bring their contribution

WILDAF-WA had, from 7th to 9th June 2010, held its regional level exchange meeting with actors involved in the implementation project "using law for rural women's empowerment in West Africa".

Started in January 2009 for a period of 30 months, this project aims at enabling rural-farmer paralegals, members of farmer organisations and women from the rural areas of the beneficiary countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo to know their rights, to claim them so as to be able to enjoy them in the same way as men in their respective families, communities and professional lives and to have them enforced in favour of women at all levels.

The Lomé meeting should enable the nearly thirty participants involved in the implementation of field actions to exchange and discuss strategies, good practices, achieved results, difficulties, failures and prospects.



WILDAF-WA Picture / Opening ceremony of the meeting in Lomé

"Convinced that poverty has obvious links with women's right violations and that the knowledge and use of rights by women may be an efficient means of empowerment and of fighting poverty, we resolved together to face a certain number of challenges... One year before the end of our project, it is important for us to meet for exchanging and learning from our respective experiences so that we can maximise the chances of making our project successful" said Mrs Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson, WILDAF-WA sub regional coordinator in her opening speech.

Presiding over the opening ceremony, the new Minister of Women's Promotion, Mrs Henriette Kouevi-Amédjogbé promised all her support in order to reach the objectives of the project.

"I would like to assure you about my department's availability to accompany you in reaching results not only in Togo but also in the West African sub region".

The Minister also spoke to the Togolese women participants in the same terms *"I can reassure you that in this new department, I have the honour crest to lead ... will take the commitment, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Forum of Togolese Women that took place in December 2009, to advocate for the drafting of a land code which will take into account the women's right to access land"*

Mr Dindioque Kolani, representing the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock Production and Fishing, said that the project initiative and the meeting were welcome because the results will bring contributions to the thinking at the ministry's level for reforms.

The exchanges between the participants revealed that 250 women farmers benefited from the different paralegal trainings in the first year. They are daily trying to use the acquired knowledge for claiming the rights accorded to them to get out of the situations they are not satisfied with. In turn, they have succeeded in convincing both women and men, including some local authorities of their respective communities, to commit themselves to committees that fight against violence against women. Their common sensitisation activities through chat sessions, sketches, targeted meetings have touched more than 50,000 men and women in the five countries. Various themes were discussed during the sensitisation sessions. These themes range from economic rights to political ones through conjugal violence. Concretely, more than 600 cases of violation have been received and dealt with by the paralegal farmers.

Regarding women's access to land, studies carried out in the framework of the project have shown that, except in Togo, the legal framework, though perfectible, is favourable because there are no discriminatory provisions against women's access to land. *The difficulties for women to access land bear on the enforcement of the texts and on the populations' resilience to new practices.* Nevertheless, cultivable land have been negotiated and obtained in favour of women groups as donations, or long lease. In Burkina Faso for example, the paralegals' advocacy actions with the customary chiefs or landowners have resulted in the allocation of a total land surface of 45 hectares to fifteen women groups.

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NETWORK NEWS

In nearly all the five countries, the paralegals' interventions have helped women to recover their rights after many years of unlawful withdrawals and retentions. The procedure is on for securing all these lands.

Results of rural women's participation in decision making are not too encouraging, for, nevertheless, in nearly all the countries, paralegals are very active on the field in order to better organise the women for repositioning.

In Togo and Benin, for example, women demanded and obtained a 30% quota for women within the Boards of Directors of local farmer organisations. This opening offers them the opportunity to position themselves steadily at local, national and regional levels. The debates on concrete evidences from one another and the exchange of experiences on the good and less good practices enabled not only participants to mutually encourage each other but, it awakened the in them the consciousness of all the importance of their actions in their respective communities.

However, discussions revealed that everything did not move without difficulties. Different factors have been invoked: socio-cultural constraints, religious beliefs, social pressure on paralegals and victims of the violations of women's rights, dysfunctions and the lack of commitment to women's rights observed in both men and women who lead state institutions and services involved in the implementation of women's rights, the insufficiency of financial resources available for the paralegals and communities' actions. Some planned strategies have not worked on the field or have not resulted in the expected outcomes.

At the end of the proceedings, participants were, more than ever determined and committed to intensify their actions so that, at the end of the project, the expected results are fully attained. To that effect, they decided, among others things, to:

- multiply the number of sensitisations regarding the most recurrent violations in their communities;
- address the cases of violence against women with more legal rigour;
- intensify advocacy actions where it is necessary for reforms;
- initiate chat sessions that would exclusively target traditional authorities and landowners;
- to make information about procedures for obtaining title deeds available to rural populations, particularly to women groups;

- continue building the personal capacities of women farmers and key persons in the project

Let us indicate that prior to the sub regional meeting in Lomé, a series of 5 national exchange meetings were held in the five beneficiary countries and the outcomes of these meetings served as basis to the sub regional meeting.



WILDAF-WA Picture / a woman farmer presenting the synthesis of her group work during the meeting in Lomé

Consolidation workshops of rural women paralegals

Still in the framework of its project "Using law for rural women's empowerment in 5 West-African countries", the five national networks of WILDAF West Africa, beneficiaries of the project have strengthened the technical skills and knowledge of women farmers' paralegals in the areas of women basic human rights where deficiencies were identified during the follow-up mission.

These consolidation workshops lasted 5 days in each country, according to the calendar below:

Togo: 18 to 22 April 2010

Burkina Faso: April 27 to May 1

Benin: May 3 to 7

Côte d'Ivoire: May 10 to 14

Ghana: May 26 to 30

Let us recall that these paralegals have received a year ago their initial training and are mandated to disclose the law in their respective communities and help their counterparts to use the law to resolve the difficulties they face daily at all levels.

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NETWORK NEWS

National Networks

Togo

Capacity building of WILDAF-Togo's members

WILDAF-TOGO organized from 12 to 14 April 2010 a training session for its new members on "organizational development and networking." The training aims to strengthen the capacity of its members in order to make them more effective in their fieldwork.

A total of thirty participants from various associations have been trained on the themes "organizational development and networking, the project cycle and management of an organization".

At end of the workshop, the participants recognized the relevance of all topics. Let us recall that the holding of this workshop was made possible through the funding of the World Bank.

Mali

The new Family Code in Mali: WILDAF takes up actions to accelerate its adoption

From 9 to 17 May 2010, WILDAF/Mali conducted throughout the country a national information campaign for a deeper understanding of the contents of the new Family Code by the populations.

The new Code, which has been adopted by the National Assembly of Mali in April 2010, has been returned to the Parliament by the Head of state for a second review under the pressure of the High Islamic Council and some Islamic associations, which found some of the provisions not in compliance with traditional and religious values. Bad and unfounded rumours circulated against the code in order to make people who are illiterate in majority to reject it.

WILDAF-Mali, becoming aware of the lack of information about this law, which is very important for men and women in Mali, has with its partners' support (CAFO, GP / DCF, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Women's promotion, Children and Family) initiated an extensive campaign to inform people in the eight regional capitals of Mali on the contents of the new Code in order to facilitate its promulgation by the President of the Republic.

The objective of this campaign was:

- to organize and hold an information meeting for people on the contents of the draft new Family Code in every regional capital
- to put an end to misinformation and bad rumours about the Code

During the campaign, various delegations composed of representatives of women's rights organizations exchanged directly with people and have lifted the veil on all bad rumours and misinformation about the Code.

The picture below shows that both men and women participated in the discussions regarding the new draft code.



WILDAF-Mali Picture

Apart from these activities, WILDAF/Mali conducted a training for peer educators who will take over the work in the field.

Let us recall that the adoption of the new code had been welcomed by several women's rights organizations, which found that this code represents a historic achievement in this country with a high majority of Muslims and vested the same inheritance rights to both men and women.

Based on gender equality, the Family Code is the outcome of a long process which has begun since 1998, despite the opposition of some religious fundamentalists.

Gender parity bill approved in Senegal

The National assembly in Senegal has approved a bill requiring parity between men and women for lists of candidates for public office. This made Senegal the first African country to have taken this courageous action towards gender equality.

Introduced by the Head of State **Abdoulaye Wade**, the bill has been initially rejected before being voted finally in **May 14, 2010** after a long process supported by women's organizations gathered in the Senegalese Council of Women (COSEP).

The content of the bill is as follows:

- **Article 1:** The absolute parity between men and women is established in Senegal in all totally or partially elected institutions.
- **Article 2:** the lists of candidates are alternately composed of persons of both sexes. When the number of members is odd, parity refers to the number immediately below. The lists of candidates must comply with the above provisions to be accepted.
- **Article 3:** The conditions of application of this Act shall be defined and established by decree.
- **Article 4:** This law and its decrees will be inserted in the Electoral Code.

In approving this bill, Senegal plans to eliminate disparities between women and men, which constitute an impediment to development and has thus, contribute to the achievement of Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (gender equality and empowerment women).

But today, an important outreach enterprise is to be undertaken for the ownership of the law by women, its understanding by populations and mainly by men.

All the stakeholders have to increase their vigilance and ensure monitoring, but also see to it that the parity is included in appointments to decision-making positions at all central or local levels, as Heads of States committed themselves to in the Solemn Declaration on Men-Women Equality.

AFRICA: MPs push for continent-wide FGM/C ban

Parliamentarians from all over Africa are pushing for a continent-wide ban on female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and are calling on the UN to pass a General Assembly resolution appealing for a global FGM/C ban, as it violates human rights, they say.

Some 17 African states have banned FGM/C, among them Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal and Uganda. Members of parliament (MPs) from African nations met in Dakar 3-4 May to exchange lessons learned and actions to take to achieve the ban and resolution. While national human rights laws, and regional treaties such as the 2003 Africa Union Maputo Declaration refer directly or indirectly to FGM/C, separate laws must be passed to address it head-on, said delegates.

Morissanda Kouyaté, representative of the NGO Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, told delegates: "There is a lot of disparity here. Some countries have passed laws, others have none; and some have laws that are not applied."

Some governments are fully engaged and ready for change, but others, like Sierra Leone, which has high prevalence rates, will take years to shift, said Chris Baryomunsi, an MP from Kanungu in western Uganda.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89028>



Female genital mutilations are beyond their negative consequences on the health of victims of a violation of freedom to enjoy of her body, sexuality and the right to non discrimination.

AFRICA NEWS

UEMOA will launch a Regional Fund for Agricultural Development in 2010

UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union) based in Ouagadougou will launch this year a Regional Fund for Agricultural Development (RFAD).

"The main objective of this fund is to finance activities that are essential for the development and modernization of agricultural field, especially by contributing to the implementation of an efficient and appropriate agricultural credit system," declared Ismail Binguitcha -Fare, Commissioner for Rural Development, Natural Resources and Environment at UEMOA.

Mr. Binguitcha-Fare made this statement at a regional seminar on "Regional Integration and Strategies for Poverty Reduction", organized by UEMOA, in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Several researchers, policymakers, and journalists attended this meeting.

According to Mr. Binguitcha-Fare, the Fund will focus on the improvement of agricultural production and capacity building, land improvement, capacity building through farm mechanization and tractorization, and will increase food production and diversification as well as institutional investments.

He noted that the global financial crisis has exacerbated in West Africa the problems of energy supplies and food that have become chronic for decades while agriculture takes 30% of regional GDP and employs 70% of the population. But the farming population is the most vulnerable to these factors of poverty.

"The agricultural sector suffered badly from a lack of funding at regional level since the year 80s meanwhile the creation of RFAD," said Mr Binguitcha-Fare. He explained that agriculture in the West African Economic and Monetary Union zone is also marked by difficult access to financing. "The banks of Agriculture no longer play their roles or have virtually disappeared from the sub region," he added. According to him, the RFAD will meet a critical need for agricultural financing in the UEMOA zone. "The RFAD fund is expected to finance poor people in order to fight against poverty," he concluded.

<http://www.savoirnews.com>

PSC urges appointment of envoy on violence against women and children

African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) said it is urgent to ensure the appointment of women Gender Focal Points in each AU peacekeeping mission as well as special envoys on violence against women and children.

AU Commission Gender and Development Directorate presented its report at the AUPSC 122nd meeting in April under the theme « Mitigating Vulnerabilities of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts. » The Directorate said it is working towards mobilizing financial support for various programs and projects for women to fight poverty and close the gender gap and thereby halt Africa women's marginalization. According to the report thousands more children are subjects to a range of violations including forced prostitutions, gang rape, mutilation and economic exploitation. The report said only 27 AU members states had ratified the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People Rights on the Rights of women in Africa.

It further said other 21 member states have signed the protocol but have yet to ratify, but five countries have yet to sign. The protocol provides an explicit framework outlining the rights of women on the continent and specially calls for women's protection against all forms of violence including international crimes that occur during conflicts, it said. Concerning to the rights of children, the report recalled that the then OAU adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990. The Charter prohibits the recruitment of children by armed actors and specifically identifies the need to respect international humanitarian law regarding children during armed conflict. It also explicitly prohibit the sexual exploitation of children as for the protection of internally displaced and refugee children.

The report urged member state to endorse the charter and to domesticate and implement it with commitment. The report said the year 2010 heralds the African Women's decade (2010-20) which is intended to advance gender equality by accelerating implementation of various decisions, through dual top down and bottom up approach which inclusive of grassroots participation. The report said the AU and its member states have already demonstrated a firm commitment to address issues related to women and children in armed conflict through well-defined human rights mechanisms.

<http://www.ethiopian-news.com/au-ca...>

EVENTS



15th Ordinary session of the African Union : Maternal and child health in Africa

The 15th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) will be held from 19 to 27 July 2010 in Kampala (Uganda) under the theme "*Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa*".

Africa's maternal mortality rate remains the highest in the world according to UNICEF statistics, more than 500,000 women die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth each year, most of them in Africa. Meanwhile African Union heads of State agreed on the launching of the continental "Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality (CARMAA)" in May 2009.

Specific dates for the meetings of the different AU organs during the Summit will be as follows:

- 19 -20 July 2010: 20th Ordinary Session of the PRC
- 22 -23 July 2010: Ordinary Session of the Executive Council
- 25 -27 July 2010: 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly.

For more information, visit www.africa-union.org



High-Level Meeting on the evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals

A high-level meeting on the evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be held from 20 to 22 September in New York. This meeting is the outcome of the Millennium Summit in 2000 (during which the MDGs were adopted) and the World Summit in 2005 (when the progress in achieving them have been examined).

Occurring while progress is mixed and new crises threaten the global drive towards poverty reduction, "the Summit will provide a crucial opportunity to redouble our efforts in achieving the MDGs," said Ban Ki-Moon, referring to the goals adopted in 2000 by the Summit of the UN Millennium Report, which aims to eradicate poverty, hunger, disease, infant and maternal mortality by 2015.

The 2010 Summit on the MDGs will enable world leaders to meet in order to discuss measures to be taken in achieving all the eight goals.

Prior to the summit, the UN General Assembly convened interactive hearings with representatives of NGOs, civil society and the private sector from 14-15 June 2010. The outcomes of these hearings will provide an input to the preparatory process for the Summit and be issued as an Assembly document.

For more information, visit <http://www.un.org/fr/millenniumgoals/newsroom.shtml>



World March of Women 2010

After 2000 and 2005, the third edition of World March of Women will soon take place. It began on March 8, International Women's Day and will end on October 17, 2010 by an international mobilisation in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Under the motto "We will be on march until all women are free", the World March of Women's aims not only to mobilize women around the world (Africa, Americas, Asia-Oceania, Europe) with one common goal to say NO to inequalities and discrimination they face in their daily life, but also their struggles and resistance and their demands for a world based on peace, justice, equality, freedom and solidarity.

This third edition will focus on 4 themes namely women's access to natural resources and public services, economic empowerment of women, peace and demilitarization and violence against women.

http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/index_html/en?set_language=en&cl=en

WORLD NEWS

International conference on maternal health: MPs call for better-managed fund for women

Parliamentarians attending the conference Women Deliver 2010 (7-9 June 2010 in Washington) called for a better allocation and a more efficient monitoring of funds allocated to family planning.

"We are convinced that implementing the commitment made by our governments in the major United Nations conferences and summits, will end the preventable high maternal deaths and disability that constitute the greatest moral, human rights and development challenge of our time". This was contained in a communiqué issued at the Parliamentarians Forum during the close of a three-day world conference on "Women Deliver 2010," which highlighted the achievements in reducing maternal mortality, breakthroughs in reproductive technology, the role of women's health in development and the remaining obstacles to improving maternal health around the world.

The parliamentarians expressed their determination by creating laws and policies with and for women and girls, giving them their fair share of funding, budget and oversight responsibilities, advocate for a women's and girls' agenda everywhere to advance MDG "5", locally, nationally, regionally and globally as well as speaking out on women and girls to create awareness and knowledge building. They agree, moreover, to build alliances and coalitions among their fellow parliamentarians, women's groups, organizations of civil society members and government officials so that governments should review the laws and other practices that restrict the access to sexual health services and reproductive health.

<http://allafrica.com/>

Kuwait urged to appoint women to judiciary

Activists stress neither Islam nor Kuwait's law bar women from being appointed in judiciary. Kuwaiti activists and their supporters on 17th May 2010 called for the appointment of women to the Gulf state's judiciary, from which they are still barred despite winning political rights.

"There is no legal barrier in Kuwait's law and constitution that prevents women from becoming judges," Omar al-Issa, head of the Kuwait Bar Association, told a symposium on women's rights. The symposium was jointly organised by the Kuwait Bar Association and the American Bar Association, and was attended by women judges and attorneys from Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands and the United States. It coincides with the one-year anniversary of four Kuwaiti women winning parliamentary seats for the first time in the small Gulf state.

Based on the latest available official data, Kuwaiti women employees accounted for 44.9 percent of the total national workforce. They made up 44.1 percent of Kuwaitis employed in government. There is only one female minister in the 16-member Kuwaiti cabinet.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=39035>

Domestic Violence Law Passed in Timor-Leste

The National Parliament in Timor-Leste passed a long-awaited law on domestic violence on 3rd May 2010. UNIFEM provided support to the Government in drafting the legislation and worked with Parliament to sensitize legislators on the issue. Domestic violence is prevalent in Timor-Leste, and the most common form of gender-based violence reported to the police. Over 400 cases of domestic violence were registered in 2008, but as in many other countries, the majority of cases go unreported. A baseline study in two Timorese districts, supported by UNIFEM and published in 2009, found that domestic violence was a 'normal' occurrence for many Timorese women. <http://www.unifem.org>

WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter

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