

**SOLIDARITY FOR
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

A force for freedom



**MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ
POUR LES DROITS
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES**

Une force pour la liberté

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TAKING LESSONS FROM THE AFRICAN CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: PROMOTING THE PROTOCOL ACROSS MEDIUMS

On May 9th-11th, 2009 the **African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ACDHRS)** held a forum on the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations during the 45th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights to advocate the sharing of ideas and experiences through dialogue of probable resolutions to the Africa Commission.

A powerful statement drafted during the forum was read to the Commission calling on governments to incorporate human rights education into school curriculums, facilitate a clear understanding on issues

pertaining to women's rights in national discourse and encouraging men to participate in debates related to matters of gender based violence.

People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), a *Raising Her Voice Project* participant, was actively involved in the 45th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights where they held a preparatory meeting with other women's organizations and sensitized them on the importance of the Protocol and lobbied Commissioners to promote the Protocol.

Using its observer status **POWA** issued a statement

to the African Commission urging the Commission to call on state parties to ratify, domesticate and implement the *AU Protocol on the Rights of Women*.



New Members!

The **SOAWR** Coalition is pleased to welcome our two new members: **Tomorrow's Child Initiative** based in Kenya and **Alliance for Africa** based in Nigeria.

**STAKEHOLDER'S MEETING ON DOMESTICATION & IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA
15-19TH JULY, 2009, KIGALI, RWANADA**

The **African Union Women, Gender and Development Directorate**, in collaboration with **Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition** and the **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)** are organizing a stakeholder's meeting on domestication and

implementation of the Protocol. Participants will include senior government officials and civil society organizations from **African Union** Member States that have ratified the Protocol.

The meeting will consider progress made in implementing the Protocol, the tools used

and the challenges member states are facing.

The meeting will also explore the contributions of civil society organizations and partnership with government and the **African Union** in promoting women's rights in Africa.

**UPCOMING FORUMS,
WORKSHOPS &
CLASSES**

- *Raising Her Voice Africa Meeting, July 19th-20th in Kigali, Rwanda.*
- *International Conference on Education, Gender and Sustainable Development in the Age of Globalization, August 3rd-8th in Abuja, Nigeria*
- *6th Annual Conference on Prostitution, Sex Work and Human Trafficking, October 1st-2nd in Toledo, Ohio.*
- *Invitation - Coordination of Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Settings, International Training Course, Ghent, Belgium. 2nd-13th November, 2009. For more information contact: nankoe@unfpa.org and Ellen.taets@ugemt.be*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WOMEN & GIRLS AS DISSEMINATORS: LESSONS FROM ZIMBABWE	2
PROMOTING THE PROTOCOL IN UGANDA: A REPORT ON PROGRESS	2
IN SENEGAL: FORGING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING	2
CALLING ON THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT TO RATIFY THE PROTOCOL	3
WORKING TO BUILD AWARENESS AND CAPACITIES IN TANZANIA	3
KEEPING GIRLS SAFE IN ZAMBIAN SCHOOLS	3
RAISING HER VOICE ACROSS AFRICA	4



WOMEN & GIRLS AS DISSEMINATORS: LESSONS FROM ZIMBABWE

The **Girl Child Network (GCN)** distributed simplified versions of the *Protocol* in March 2009 to boost the involvement of women and girls in the domestication process. The action reached 3,000 girls in rural Seke, Mutasa and Rusape Districts, following the exercise many women have embraced the *Protocol* reporting that they understand and appreciate its content.

In April GCN trained girls in 23 clubs in Chitunwiza on the *Protocol* and strategized on how the girls could educate their mothers on the content of the *Protocol* thereby making them active disseminators in the process. Nearly 75% of the girls reported back that they had shared the information with their mothers, many of whom are illiterate and unable to access the information themselves.

selves.

GCN also held a workshop for Magistrates, drawing a number of senior government prosecutors from the newly created Ministry of Policy Reform to promote harmonization of the *Protocol* with domestic laws. It came out during the workshop that many of the Magistrates were not aware that Zimbabwe had ratified the *Protocol*. At the workshop GCN emphasized the importance of referring to the *Protocol* especially when dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, and it was also agreed that harmful cultural practices should be dealt with as crimes. GCN notes that after the workshop there is an improved attitude among the court in dealing with cases regarding the defilement of girls and sentencing of

perpetrators.

GCN held a training on monitoring and evaluation of area coordinators with respect to participatory evaluation methods and monitoring impacts of the *Protocol* in their target communities. GCN is also involved in the Zimbabwe constitutional review process to ensure the *Protocol* and other international treaties are applicable in domestic courts.

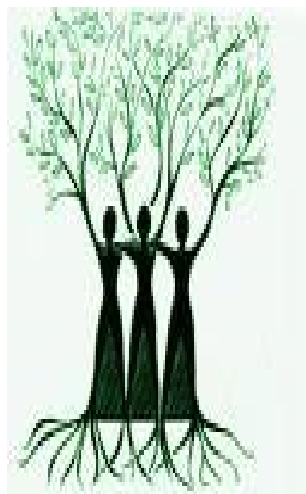
Status of Protocol	At June 2008	At June 2009
Total Signatures	45	45
Total Ratifications	23	27

Brief from the Sudan

SIHA organized an African Protocol Forum, covered by the *Ajras Alhoreya* newspaper in Khartoum and also published a brief on the *AU Protocol* in two local newspapers.

SIHA also participated in a number of interviews to discuss the *Protocol* that were aired on Radio Bakhiata (in Juba), the UN radio in Khartoum and Juba as well as Radio Omdurman. SIHA also distributed copies of the *AU Protocol* to policy makers and members of political parties urging them to support ratification of the *Protocol* by Sudan.

Countries that have ratified the protocol: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Comoros, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe



IN SENEGAL: FORGING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

In a push to utilize media and the arts to promote education on the *Protocol* and gender-based violence the **Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)** had a hand in a variety of forums and events over the last quarter.

On March 26th, 2009 FAMEDEV held a one day sensitization workshop with community based women's groups, community media and journalists in Dakar. The work-

shop aimed to build a common understanding of the importance of the *AU Protocol on the Rights of Women* and issues related to gender based violence and how these can be addressed at the community level.

FAMEDEV signed an agreement for programme and exchange broadcast airtime with two radio stations who committed to increase coverage on the *Protocol* and gender-based violence.

Hosted by FAMEDEV, Senegalese artist Fatou Guewel Diouf performed at the Daniel Sorano Theatre in Dakar to raise awareness about gender based violence on March 28th, 2009.

Also in Senegal, Fahamu signed a contract with Union de Radio Senegal for 12 radio stations to air the *Crossroads* radio drama which has been translated into French and Wolof.

Promoting the Protocol in Uganda: Report on Efforts

On May 27th, 2009 **Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA)**, **Uganda Women's (UWONET)** and the **Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Uganda** held a meeting with the Minister of State for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Mr. Fredrick Ruhindi, to discuss the status of violence against women in Uganda, inquire into the government of Uganda's policy on legal aid and receive and update on the progress of ratification of the *Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa* and the *Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill*.

The Minister informed the coalition that Uganda did not have a policy on legal aid and recommended that civil society organizations lobby for a comprehensive strategy to enhance legal enforcement rather than a provision for legal aid services.

Minister Ruhindi promised to follow-up within his home Ministry regarding the status of the *Protocol* and advised the taskforce to work closely with the Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development to further the issue.



“CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD LOBBY FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO ENHANCE LEGAL ENFORCEMENT”

2nd Gender Pre-Summit to the African Union Summit

Equality Now and **FEMNET** participated in the 2nd Gender Pre-Summit, to the AU Summit, on 'Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security' from a gender and HIV/AIDS perspective.

Hosted by the [African Union Commission Women, Gender and Development Directorate](#) in Addis Ababa on June 18th & 19th the Pre-Summit aimed to develop concrete recommendations to be presented to Heads of State and Governments at the African Union Summit in Sirte, Libya.

SOAWR read a statement that included recommendations to be given to the Heads of State and Government that largely addressed concerns of the rural women.

Equality Now and **FEMNET** also facilitated the participation of 8 rural women from Burundi, Burkina Faso, Mali and Malawi, who are in the picture below, and **SOAWR** representatives from the same countries.

SOAWR members handed out information on the coalition to the panelists and representatives.



FAMEDEV in South Africa

At Rhodes University in South Africa **FAMEDEV** participated in a workshop from May 27th-31st, 2009 for journalists and media advocates to develop a training and advocacy toolkit that will be used across the continent.

The toolkit is currently being piloted in five countries and will formally be launched in September 2009 after feedback from the pilot is incorporated. The toolkit is available in English, French & Portuguese.

ONE VOICE IN KENYA CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT TO RATIFY THE *PROTOCOL*

From 3rd-5th June, 2009 in Nairobi the **Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya**, with others, organized the [1st Gender Festival](#), an open forum providing an opportunity for the feminist community, gender-focused groups, civil society organizations/institutions and activists to come together, discuss gains made in their respective struggles and identify areas for further action.

The festival highlighted gender issues in Kenya related to the post-election violence, and provided the opportunity for women and men to dialogue together on how to promote male involvement in the promotion of women's rights.

On the first day of the festival **COVAW-K** held a satellite session discussing the surviving cycle of violence in the nation and called on the government to ratify the *Protocol*. The session involved a drama titled '[Ruptured](#)' that depicted the violence experienced by women, called for ratification of the *Protocol* to be used as a tool to address gender-based violence and highlighted the need to have effective laws that address and protect women from violence in the home.

On the last day, **FEMNET** hosted a session attended by **Oxfam GB** and **Equality Now** that urged participants to lobby the government to

ratify the *Protocol* and incorporate its provisions into the new constitution currently under draft in Kenya.

The festival was successful in facilitating a space for deliberation on women's rights and discourse on pressing issues within the nation.

Over 700 people drawn from all the eight provinces of Kenya attended representing grassroots organizations; government institutions and the corporate industry.

The festival promoted the women's rights community in Kenya to speak in one voice towards achieving increased gender equality.

KEEPING GIRLS SAFE IN ZAMBIAN SCHOOLS

Through the [Adolescent Girls Legal Defense Fund](#), **Equality Now** continues to support a coalition of Zambian organizations working towards reforms that ensure girls are safe in school. Caroline Muthoni, **Equality Now** Programme Officer, travelled to Zambia during May 4th-7th, 2009 to assist the coalition to set up an organizational structure using the **SOAWR** coalition as a model for the Zambian organizations.

An official from the Ministry of Education made contact with **Equality Now** and coalition mem-

bers seeking recommendations on setting up protective mechanisms in schools to ensure girls are safe. This was in response to an International Women's Action campaign that **Equality Now** launched, in collaboration with the Zambian coalition. The campaigning for an end to sexual violence against girls, targeting the ministries of Education, Justice and the Head of the Public Prosecution office and urging them to take action on recommendations made by Judge Phillip Musonda of the Zambia High Court in a landmark judgment concerning a teacher

rape case. The team met with him, provided suggestions and offered to support the Ministry of Education in any capacity requested of them.

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A FORCE FOR FREEDOM

Preparing A United Front for the Summit

In June 2009, **Fahamu** participated in the 5th continental conference organized by the **Centre for Citizen's Participation in the African Union (CCP-AU)** where civil society organizations gave recommendations including a call for speedy ratification of the *Protocol* to be presented to the Heads of State and Government at the African Union Summit in Sirte, Libya.

Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) is a coalition of 33 civil society organizations across the continent working to ensure that the *Protocol* to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa remains on the agenda of policy makers and to urge all African leaders to safeguard the rights of women through ratification and implementation of the *Protocol*.

Coalition Members

Alliance for Africa, African Centre for Democracy And Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), Akina Mama wa Afrika, Association des Juristes Maliennes, Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants, BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Centre for Justice Studies and Innovations (CJSI), Coalition on Violence Against Women, Collectif des Associations et ONGS Féminines de Burundi (CAFOB), Eastern Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative (EASSI), Equality Now-Africa Regional Office, FAHAMU, FAMEDEV-Inter-African Network For Women, Media, Gender and Development, Girl Child Network (GCN), FEMNET - African Women's Development and Communication Network, Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA-Kenya), Forum Muhler, Inter-African Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (IAC), Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Oxfam GB, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), Sister Namibia, Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa (SIHA), Tomorrow's Child Initiative (TCI), Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti, Voix de Femmes, University of Pretoria Center for Human Rights, Women Direct, Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), and Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA)

RAISING HER VOICE ACROSS AFRICA

Supported in part by **UNDP**, **Oxfam GB** carried out a State Capacity Assessment to evaluate the readiness and ability of Liberia, Nigeria and Tanzania to implement the *Protocol* into the national legislative framework. The full report will be available at the end of June.

Oxfam GB, **Equality Now**, **UNIFEM** and **AU WGDD** have been actively planning for a Domestication Workshop for countries that have ratified the *AU Protocol on the Rights of Women* in East, West and Central Africa.

Oxfam GB together with **DFID** and **UNDP** held their global meeting in early June to reach agreement on the *Raising Her Voice* Program Activities.

In the Sudan, **Oxfam GB** has partnered with the **Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)** to implement the *Raising Her Voice Project*. Together **Oxfam GB** and **SIHA** will promote and support ongoing advocacy efforts for ratification of the *Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa* by the Sudanese government.

In the Gambia **Oxfam** has partnered with **ACDHRS** to support advocacy efforts for the domestication of the *Protocol* by the Gambian government.

An agreement on the *Raising her Voices* Project which adopts strategies for advocacy on the *AU Protocol* was signed between **Oxfam GB**, members of the National Taskforce and **AMWA**. **AMWA** will serve as the lead organisation to implement activities that will encourage the Ugandan government to ratify the *Protocol*.

The *Raising Her Voice Africa* group will hold a regional meeting July 19th-20th in Kigali, Rwanda to further generate discussion and set the agenda for action plans and initiatives across the continent.

The **Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa (SIHA)** formed an advisory committee for the ratification of the *AU Protocol* comprised of 7 members including 2 lawyers, 3 representatives from civil society and 3 representatives from the media.

On April 27th-29th, 2009 the **Legal Human Rights Centre (LHRC)** visited Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) coalition members throughout Dodoma, Moshi and Arusha to disseminate the *AU Protocol on the Rights of Women* and to enhance the promotion and protection of women's human rights.

These visits were aimed at enabling coalition members to carry out sensitization activities around the *Protocol*. Coalition members then led awareness campaigns about the *Protocol* in the communities where they operate.

The response received was extremely positive to the *Protocol* with all members committing to adopt it in their day-to-day activities and to use it in eradicating the harmful practice of FGM in Tanzania.

People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) conducted a baseline assessment on the existing legislative and policy framework that supports the domestication process in South Africa.

They discovered that there was very little work being done to push domestication of the *AU Protocol* in South Africa.

POWA has developed a conceptual framework on how to address this issue.

It outlines **POWA's** approach to information development and galvanizing women's rights organizations to lobby the government to domesticate the *Protocol* while at the same time providing information and knowledge to influence institutions

Fahamu: Promoting the Coalition

In June 2009, **Fahamu Networks for Social Justice** designed SOAWR t-shirts and postcards as part of the advocacy materials to be distributed to members for use in their campaign activities. Once these are ready they shall be distributed to members and used at the next African Union Summit to make the SOAWR campaign visible.