

**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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ENGLISH EDITION



A speaker shares on the Protocol at the RHV sensitisation workshop organized by BAOBAB Women's Human Rights & WRAPA

**RAISING HER
VOICE**

Raising Her Voice (RHV) promotes the rights and capacity of poor women to engage effectively in governance at all levels through increased voice and influence and more effective institutional accountability. The programme uses strategies such as media and communications work, networking, lobbying and advocacy, working with public institutions and decision-making forums and empowering and building capacity of civil society organisations.

**BAOBAB AND WRAPA:
RAISING HER VOICE
IN NIGERIA.**

On March 1, 2010 BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights in collaboration with Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) held a one day sensitisation workshop and sticker campaign rally on the Protocol. Bringing together members of staff, BAOBAB's Lagos volunteer outreach team and representatives from the media, the workshop looked into the history and justification of the adoption of the Protocol, the Protocol's legal framework and the special/unique features of the Protocol. Some notable comments by participants were on the patriarchal nature of most African countries, and how this contributes to a delay in the domestication of the AU Protocol; the reluctance of African governments to implement international documents that they have ratified; and the low level of awareness of most law makers on the importance and the provisions of the Protocol. The important role played by CSOs in sharing knowledge on the Protocol with law makers was stressed. The workshop ended with a sticker campaign rally at "Binukonu" market in Lagos State. Each sticker highlighted

issues relating to the Protocol, and educated and sensitised the market men and women on the rights of women and girls such as reproductive health rights and the importance of education for girls. The rally generated various reactions. Whilst there was strong opposition to women having equal rights with men, as it is expected in any patriarchal society, some women were glad to know that they have the right to raise their voice, with some elderly women composing songs emphasising the need to educate girls.



Above: Display of some of the stickers that were distributed by BAOBAB Women's Human Rights and WRAPA. Below: The sticker campaign rally was held at Binukonu Market, Ojota, Ojota in Lagos State.

**TANZANIAN PARTNERS
RAISING HER VOICE
AGAINST FGM**

In Tanzania, regular meetings were organised to raise awareness on the Protocol amongst the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) coalition members. Ten members of civil society and nine members of anti-FGM coalition members taking the lead in the campaign for domestication and popularisation of the Protocol in Tanzania were targeted. Training of trainers (ToT) workshops were held for the human rights monitors and paralegals in 3 regions. As a result, they have recognised the Protocol as an important instrument for the eradication of FGM in Tanzania. In addition, the Raising Her Voice partners worked closely with the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children to plan and prepare the *Zero Tolerance on FGM* Day events. Consequently, the Women and Gender Development Policy has been reviewed to analyse the gaps in the local policy vis-à-vis the Protocol. The engagement resulted in increased recognition in the Ministry for the need to domesticate the Protocol and recognition of inconsistency between the Protocol provisions and local laws, especially with regard to protection of women against Female Genital mutilation (FGM).

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

- * CSO Experts Consultation on Maternal, Infant and Child Health: Review of the Maputo Plan of Action (MPoA) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, 17th – 18th April, 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- * African Union Conference on Maternal, Infant and Child Health: Review of the Maputo Plan of Action (MPoA) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 19th - 20th April, 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Kindly see <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/index/index.htm>
- * 47th Ordinary Session of The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, 12 - 26 May 2010, Banjul, The Gambia. Visit http://www.achpr.org/english/info/news_en.html
- * Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector, in preparation for the Millennium Summit. 14-15 June 2010, United Nations, New York. Kindly visit for more information http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=amdq10&id_article=2263
- * Summit of the African Union, 19 to 27 July 2010, Kampala, Uganda. Themed: "Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa". For more information please visit www.africa-union.org

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POPULARISING THE PROTOCOL: THE UGANDAN NATIONAL TASKFORCE MAKING GREAT STRIDES

Keen to see an increased commitment towards the ratification of the Protocol from important stakeholders, the National Taskforce on the Maputo Protocol, under the auspices of Raising Her Voice (RHV) project, continued their popularization and lobbying efforts.

Two key meetings were held in February to lobby the support of political party leaders to campaign for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol, particularly in the wake of the upcoming multiparty elections. On 11th February 2010 and on 24th February 2010 Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) met with officials from Uganda People's Congress (UPC), and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) respectively. The parties pledged to support the Protocol, with UPC promising to popularise it as they carry out nationwide electoral campaigns. Both parties also offered to mainstream the Protocol into their campaign manifesto.

A sensitization meeting to popularise and mobilise grassroots support for the Protocol was held in Northern Uganda, in Gulu municipality on 26th February 2010. Convened

by the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU), the meeting was instrumental in highlighting the importance of the document in championing African women's rights. The articles on widows' rights and women's security in peace and conflict were particularly appreciated. There was, however, a lot of contention around firstly, the importance of preserving culture even as efforts to advance the rights of women are heightened, and secondly the article on abortion.

On 24th February 2010 a lobby meeting was convened by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) for cabinet ministers and government officials. The meeting sought to first, determine the steps that have been taken by relevant ministries towards ratifying the Protocol and secondly enhance the relationship and co-ordination efforts between the Government and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the ratification process. Although the invited Government officials did not attend the meeting, with the exception of a representative of the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the dialogue outlined several strategies that could be employed

towards making certain that the "power holders" or key decision makers in cabinet ratify the Protocol. The National Taskforce resolved to:

1. Organize a meeting with cabinet ministers.
2. Pursue, at the very minimum, a government ratification of the Protocol with reservations.
3. Strengthen the campaign at a grass root level, and in so doing build bottom-up pressure demanding ratification.
4. Lobby key parliamentary committees that would inform the ratification process such as the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
5. Lobby MPs from East African Community member states that have ratified the Protocol to put pressure on Uganda to do the same.
6. Lobby support from the shadow ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Gender to persistently apply pressure.
7. Take advantage of the upcoming African Union (AU) summit in July 2010 to urge the Government to live up to its commitments.
8. Make use of International Women's Day to send a message to the Government to urgently ratify the Protocol.

SOAWR AT THE 54TH SESSION OF CSW



L-R: Séraphine Nisabwe (Burundi), Luciana Kuboma (Malawi), Christine Butegwa (Uganda), Mary Wandia (Kenya)

On behalf of SOAWR, Equality Now working with other SOAWR members - AMWA, Le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB), Fahamu Networks for Social Justice, NGO Gender Coordination Network - (NGOGCN) and Oxfam GB organized and convened two events during the recently concluded 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of

Women in New York, United States. The first event was held on 5th March at the Church Center, and the second, jointly organized with the UNDP Women's Bureau, was held on 9 March at the United Nations. Over 130 people from different organisations and countries across the globe, with a majority from Africa, were in attendance. The side events were used as platforms to share areas of priorities for African women, successful campaigning around the African women's rights Protocol; new approaches being employed to hold member states accountable; and the various opportunities being exploited to optimize on gains made.



L: Mama Koite Doumbia at the SOAWR meeting at Church Centre.
R: Participants follow proceedings at the same meeting

RAISING HER VOICE WITH KEY STAKE- HOLDERS IN UGANDA

Representatives from the National Taskforce met with the Chief Justice of Uganda, Benjamin Odoki on 22nd February 2010. The Chief Justice promised to officially write a letter to the Ministry of Justice, declaring his support of the ratification of the Protocol. • Bahai Faith met with The Director of Gender at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development regarding ratification. Bahai Faith will continue to follow up on this. • A sensitisation-lobbying meeting with inter-religious leaders was held in February 2010. In spite of increased awareness on the Protocol, the group continued to express its reservations on abortion. • On 26th March 2010 a meeting with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) National Governing Council (NGC) chairperson was convened by AMWA to gain their support for the ratification

of the Protocol and to establish a joint partnership between the NGC and the Raising Her Voice National Taskforce. The NGC will have the Maputo Protocol as the theme of its next National Governance Forum in May 2010. It will also take the lead in lobbying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs on the urgency of ratification before the July 2010 AU Summit. • The training of grassroots communities and local leaders in Eastern Uganda was undertaken by Uganda Muslim Women Association for Daawa and Development (UMWADD) and Bahai Faith from 15th-16th January 2010.



A Training session on the Protocol in Eastern Uganda (Jinja) by Taskforce members Bahai Faith and UMWADD

RAISING HER VOICE

BUILDING CONSENSUS: WOLPNET MEETS TRADITIONAL COUNCIL LEADERS ON THE PROTOCOL

Appreciating the importance of educating and collaborating with the “custodians” of culture and traditions to promote the Protocol, the Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET) continued its efforts to popularize the Protocol by convening a two-day advocacy meeting in February in Sinkor Montserrado County in Liberia. The meeting, which brought together 30 stakeholders from the Traditional Council of Liberia, including the head of the Traditional Council, sought to impart the importance for all stakeholders to recognise first, the legality of the instrument even within a cultural context; and



The Traditional Council of Liberia offices

secondly, the importance of the instrument in ensuring that the rights within it are implemented, protected and enjoyed to particularly end harmful cultural practices; and third, to engage the Council and maintain dialogue on provision 5 of the Protocol on the elimination of harmful practices. At the conclusion of the meeting the traditional leaders made firm commitments to join efforts in promoting women’s rights with the Protocol as the requisite tool, and to establish a women rights desk at the Council’s office. The meeting helped cultivate a better understanding of the Protocol and brought to the fore the importance of the Traditional Council in working alongside others towards ensuring that the provisions of the Protocol are withheld and respected.

WOLPNET also held a seminar on March 8th and 9th to develop advocacy strategies that will enhance the visibility of the Protocol and the implementation of its provisions. The meeting that brought together 35 representatives from women and community based organizations concluded with the development of an advocacy strategy document and the formation of an interim committee to begin the process of constituting a coalition of women’s civil society organisations for collective actions on the Protocol.

BAOBAB HOLDS IN-HOUSE TRAINING SEMINAR

On 25th February, 2010 BAOBAB organised an in-house staff seminar on the Maputo Protocol as part of its capacity building initiative to enhance and improve the knowledge of its staff on women’s human rights and other related issues. The trainer shared the gains of advocacy initiatives including those that have led to an increase in the number of women elected into public office. Advocacy strategies identified as useful in carrying out work on the Protocol include simplifying it; continuously presenting it to different stakeholders and organising different fora to sensitise the public on its provisions.



BAOBAB Staff at the in-house training seminar

WRAPA MEETS LEGISLATORS

WRAPA partook in legislative advocacy to raise awareness of the RHV project among legislators. One of the key outcomes was in the form of securing support and commitment to push the Violence Against Women Prohibition Bill before the National Assembly. The RHV project in Nigeria also secured support to demand for the domestication of the AU Protocol. A six month strategy document and a working team have been set up to deal with Gender Based Violence in Nigeria with the ultimate aim of ensuring that legislation that addresses GBV is passed. It is appreciated that a thematic core group on GBV law is deemed not only imperative but relevant to the passage of an integral law on Violence Against Women (VAW) in Nigeria.

- IN THE MEDIA -

Mozambique - A nationwide Maputo Protocol media campaign was kick-started with the signing of contracts with media consultants. The campaign will involve the popularization of the Protocol in the media, the development of IEC materials, the forging of partnerships with local musicians, and the convening of meetings with media editors. The 3-month campaign will run while plans for a longer-term media campaign are underway. It is hoped the campaign will greatly increase publicity for the Protocol.

Uganda - 500 copies of the AMWA Documentary on the Protocol were reproduced in February 2010 for distribution and use as an advocacy tool. Writing on the documentary, the partners in Uganda noted: “[there is] now increased awareness on the Protocol...as the documentary links the daily concerns of women to the Protocol, hence encouraging support for its ratification”. The documentary has been used at public dialogues, sensitization meetings, and the distribution of copies is continuous.

Kenya - FIDA-Kenya participated, both in New York and in Nairobi, in the launch of “In Harms way” a new video and campaign about Kenya’s restrictive abortion law. The video will not only educate the public and media on abortion laws in Kenya, but will also provide an opportunity to provide education on the provisions of the protocol in this matter. The launch was instrumental in providing a platform for heightened constitutional debate on the right to life provision espoused within the draft constitution.

Liberia - In collaboration with the radio station, *Love FM*, Una Kumba Thompson of Wolpnet participated in a prime time 1 hour 45 minutes morning show that reached an audience of about ten thousand people in 7 counties in Liberia. Reflecting on the theme of International Women’s Day “Equal Opportunities, Gender Equality and Accountability”, the Protocol was presented as a key legal framework which ensures the enjoyment of women’s rights within states.

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Status of the Protocol	At March 2009	At March 2010
Total Signatures	45	46
Total Ratifications	27	27

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

AFRICAN COMMISSION ADOPTS REPORTING GUIDELINES

During the 46th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in The Gambia, the Commission adopted state reporting guidelines for the Protocol. Developed with support from the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) at the University of Pretoria, the guidelines were adopted to assist states in reporting on the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures taken towards ensuring the full realisation of the rights and freedoms of women. State parties are required to report every two years to the African Commission.

CAFOB ENGAGES WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN BURUNDI

Appreciating the need to raise the support of all stakeholders in the continued efforts towards the ratification of the Protocol, Le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB) convened a meeting with Christian and Muslim religious leaders. The meeting was key in providing an opportunity to answer several questions that the leaders had on the ratification process, such as the difference between ratification and signing. In addition, the meeting educated the leaders on the Protocol, and was particularly instrumental in providing a platform for discussion on the provisions of article 14 on abortion and article 21 on equal inheritance rights for women.

On 18th March 2010 CAFOB also held an advocacy and popularization workshop in the western region of the country. The meeting sensitized the communities on the Protocol and called on them to engage in the campaign for its ratification. The participants made a commitment to take action. CAFOB distributed Protocol booklets written in Kirundi that were well received by the rural communities.



MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ POUR LES DROITS DES FEMMES AFRICAINES

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Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) is a coalition of 36 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

African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA), Alliance for Africa, Association des Juristes Maliennes (AJM), BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights Le Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines de Burundi (CAFOB), Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelles Affectant la Santé des Femmes et des Enfants (CPTAFE), Centre for Justice Studies and Innovation (CJSI), Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Eastern Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative (EASSI), Equality Now, Fahamu Networks for Social Justice, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya, Forum Mulher, Girl Child Network, Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), NGO Gender Coordination Network, Oxfam GB, People Opposing Women's Abuse (POWA), Sister Namibia, Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), The Inter-African Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (IAC), The Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV), Tomorrow's Child Initiative, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti (UNFD), University of Pretoria Centre for Human Rights, Voix de Femmes, Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Women Direct, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA).

SOAWR MEMBERS IN KENYA PUSH FOR RATIFICATION

On February 23rd 2010 SOAWR members based in Nairobi including the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), FIDA - Kenya, FEMNET, Equality Now and Oxfam GB held a meeting with Hon. Esther Mathenge, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Development. The meeting which lobbied for Kenya's support for the creation at the UN Human Rights Council of a Special Rapporteur on Ending Sex Discriminatory Laws also sought to ascertain how far Kenya has gone in ratifying the Protocol. The Minister made a commitment to work towards ratification and asked SOAWR members for assistance. It was agreed that COVAW would take the lead in working with the ministry and a subsequent meeting would be held to further discuss the same. The meeting with the Minister offered an opportunity to develop relationship with her office and to work closely on ongoing discussion on a draft constitution to ensure equality principles and human rights of women are progressively addressed in line with the provisions of the Protocol.

FIDA - KENYA ON THE PROTOCOL AT CSW

Fida- K held a side event themed "Post Conflict Peace Building and Constitution Making in Kenya" during this year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. The event called upon the government of Kenya to ratify the Protocol which contains provisions on peace and security for the protection of the lives of Kenyan women.



Claris Ogangah-Onyango speaking at the FIDA panel in New York.

The Senior Program Officer at Fida Kenya delivered a lecture on reproductive rights at St Paul's University to Masters students. The lecture educated the students on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, discussing more specifically the provisions of reproductive health as espoused within the Protocol.