

**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

**UGANDA RATIFIES
THE PROTOCOL!**

On July 22, 2010, Uganda became the 28th African Union (AU) Member State to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. SOAWR members from Oxfam GB and Equality Now were excited to be present during this historic moment as the Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Rossette Nyirikindi, handed over the ratification instrument to Ben Kioko, the Legal Counsel of the AU. This moment was particularly celebratory for SOAWR members because it followed months of intensified lobbying. In February, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) had convened a meeting with cabinet ministers and government officials, using this opportunity to outline strategies for the established National Taskforce on the Maputo Protocol. In March,

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) organized a similar meeting with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) National Governing Council. Then, in May, Equality Now facilitated and coordinated a visit to Uganda by African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Oxfam GB, Women of Liberia Peace Network



(From left to right) Ambassador Rossette Nyirikindi (Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Uganda) handing Uganda's ratification instrument to Ben Kioko (Legal Counsel of the AU), as Mary Wandia (Oxfam GB) looks on.

(WOLPNET), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Oxfam GB and Equality Now. During the visit, SOAWR members, led by AMwA, other members of the Ugandan Coalition on Women's Rights, and the National APRM office met with senior officials from the Ministries of Justice, Women's Affairs and Foreign Affairs. Finally, leading up to and during the 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in Kampala (19th to 27th July) AMwA also held one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders. These lobbying efforts paid off with Uganda's ratification. However, the government included two reservations on Articles 14:1c and 14:2c on the grounds that "the right to control fertility is an issue of both parties that is, the man and the woman" and with the assertion that the abortion provisions were contrary to the Constitution and the Penal Code.

**SOAWR CONVENES
RURAL WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE**



Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe (AMwA) makes opening remarks at the Rural Women's Conference.

Fahamu and AMwA organized the SOAWR Rural Women's Conference with support from Equality Now, FEMNET and Oxfam GB. The conference was

held at Imperial Botanical Beach Resort, Entebbe, from 21-22 July, with the goals of: popularizing the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa among rural women; amplifying marginalized African women's voices at the AU; supporting the effective and consistent participation of African women living and working in rural areas in the processes of the AU; developing a long-term strategy for effective advocacy of African women living and working in rural areas. The conference drew over 50 women leaders from 16 countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda,

Sudan, Senegal and Uganda). The conference was centered on one of the AU Summit themes, namely, that of maternal health, and participants were provided with space to share their testimonies and their concerns. Honourable Rukia Nakadama



From left to right: Mama Koite (FEMNET), Honourable Rukia Nakadama Isanga (Minister of State for Gender and Culture Affairs), Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe.

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

- * International Conference on "Africa and the future of International criminal Justice" 14-16 July 2010, Johannesburg, South Africa
- * Continental Launch of the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) with the theme: "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment". 10-15 October. For more information please visit: <http://www.africanwomendecade.org>
- * World Rural Women's Day, 15 October
- * Seminar on "Recent Developments at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (Adoption of ACHPR Res 163 [XLVIII] 2010 and the Adoption and launch of the Guidelines for State Reporting under the Protocol)", Johannesburg, 19 October
- * 5th Anniversary of the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa's entry into force, 25 November
- * SOAWR Coalition Review and Agenda Setting Workshop with the theme "Commemorating 5 Years of the AU Protocol on Women's Rights Coming into Force", 24-25 November
- * World AIDS Day, 1st December, Theme is "Universal Access and

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SOAWR CONVENES RURAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE (CONTINUED)

Isanga, the Minister of State for Gender and Culture Affairs for Uganda opened the conference alluding, in her speech, to the worrying statistics on maternal health in sub-Saharan Africa. In a testimony on the opening day, one of the Ugandan participants, Beatrice Akello, spoke about the difficulties pregnant women face when trying to access health centers, the lack of sufficient drugs (even for those living with HIV), the complications arising from home deliveries, and the inadequacy of medical staff. She recommended that governments: (1) establish health facilities; (2) supply drugs; (3) employ sufficient staff and train them, ensuring that language barriers are not a problem; (4) provide adequate health facilities for mothers with disabilities; and (5) facilitate women's performance of income-generating activities so that women

can afford medical treatment. Other cross-cutting issues discussed included high incidences of sexual and gender-based violence, high illiteracy among women, feminization of poverty, low levels of women's participation in decision-making, and non-implementation of laws and policies to address gender discrimination. The participants also shared national policies that have advanced the status of women in their respective countries, including laws that have promoted gender equality in property ownership, inclusion of parity in the bill of rights in several constitutions, introduction of domestic violence support units, and provision of free prenatal care in countries like Burundi and Rwanda. Mary Wandia (Oxfam GB) spoke to participants about the workings of the AU system and Faiza Mohamed (Equality Now) discussed the work of the SOAWR coalition in promoting the Protocol. Following all the presentations and discussions, the women developed Action Plans for promoting the Protocol, and using it for their situation in the case where their country is a party to the Protocol.



Above: Group photo, Rural Women's Conference with Honourable Rukia Nakadama, Entebbe, Kampala

Below: Participants at the Rural Women's Conference; (Right)



- IN THE MEDIA -

Uganda - At the arrival of the East African Caravan on Maternal Health in Kampala on July 14th, SOAWR coalition members and other co-organizers held a press conference which was attended by over 40 members of the media and adolescent students from Mengo Primary School. Dr. Angelina Dawa (ABANTU), Norah Matovu Winyi (FEMNET) and Christine Butegwa (AMwA) provided information on the Caravan and the importance of the theme of the AU Summit. They also availed information packets to the media on maternal, sexual and reproductive health. More information is available at: <http://eacaravan2010.wordpress.com/>

Uganda - The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC) broadcast a series of radio programmes in 11 Districts of Kapchorwa Region. The main objective was to sensitise communities on the new Anti-FGM law that came into force on April 2010 and to link it to the Protocol. A survey showed that about 278,000 persons out of the 8.9 million people in the district received the radio broadcast. The FGM practicing communities in the 11 districts have a total population of 658,000.

Senegal - FAMEDEV supported the World Association for Christian Communication in organizing a press conference to present the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP 2010), a project, which involves monitoring medias using a gender perspective. FAMEDEV was charged with monitoring the role of women in the media in West and Central Africa. The results provide statistics, which vary between 17 and 22%, on the different roles played by women in the media.

EAST AFRICAN CARAVAN ON MATERNAL HEALTH ARRIVES IN



Left: the Caravan arrives in Kampala
Right: Christine Butegwa (AMwA) sits with onlookers at the Caravan rally.



The Caravan was organized by ABANTU for Development, UN Millenium Campaign-Africa Region, FEMNET, AMwA and the SOAWR Coalition, with support from various implementing partners at the national level.

The caravan departed from Nairobi on 3 July 2010 and stopped in Arusha, Mwanza, Kigali, Katuna, Kabale, Mbarara, and Masaka before arriving in Kampala on 14 July. At each stop, the Caravan held public rallies, visited health facilities, provided medical services, and shared information on the right to sexual and reproductive health. The Caravan also collected signatures on two large petitions, urging Heads of State attending the 15th AU Summit in Kampala to *Act Now* to prioritize women's health and save women's lives. Hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected.

After the arrival of the Caravan in Kampala, the images, stories and petitions from the Caravan were taken into different spaces during the pre-Summit meetings to share with state actors the voices from the ground, testimonies, successes, and tragedies.

RAISING HER VOICE

WRAPA HOLDS RHV PARTNERS MID TERM REVIEW/PLANNING MEETING

Forty participants attended the WRAPA RHV Partners Mid-Term Review/Planning Meeting held in Abuja on 5 August 2010. The participants comprised of 32 partners (CSOs, including Equality Now-SOAWR Secretariat, and the



Above: Soudatu Mahdi (WRAPA) speaks to participants at the RHV Meeting.

media) and 8 stakeholders (Government Ministries/Parastatals, Working Committee of National Assembly and Development partner agencies). The objectives of the meeting were to: review the RHV project activities from 2008 to date and to plan for Year 3 as well as to promote shared learning and best practices among partners and stakeholders. Participants observed that the RHV platform is expanding, and that there is a growing intolerance for Gender Based Violence in Nigeria with wide condemnation of perpetrators. It was also pointed out that although WRAPA is the only partner signed on to the RHV project in Nigeria, implementation of the programme has been facilitated by the formation of a consortium of 17 leading gender organizations spread across the regions of Nigeria.

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.

POWA DEVELOPS TRAINING PROGRAMME

This quarter, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) developed a training programme for organisations working within the three sectors of gender-based violence, HIV and poverty. The aim of the training is to strengthen interventions that are women-centred and rights based, and respond to the intersections of GBV, HIV and poverty from a systematic and consistent approach. Material for this training has already been developed. The Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa will also be used as a potential basis for advocating for rights that seek to address the impact of the intersections on women. POWA plans to implement the first phase of the training from 5–7 October 2010.

SOAWR HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE ON MATERNAL HEALTH HELD IN KAMPALA

FEMNET, on behalf of SOAWR and in conjunction with IPPF-ARO, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), and Oxfam GB, convened a High-Level Policy Dialogue to facilitate the exchange of ideas between African women, policy makers, and leaders including members of parliament, Ministers and First Ladies who are champions for maternal health and involved with the CARMMA campaign. The aim of the dialogue was to assess key strategies to reduce maternal mortality in Africa, focusing on six areas—family planning, financing for maternal health, comprehensive adolescent sexual and reproductive health, safe abortion, human rights in health and strengthening health systems—and to outline concrete recommendations.

The dialogue was attended by over 100 participants from Africa and the Diaspora, from rural and urban areas, from government and civil society, national parliaments and the Pan African Parliament, faith-based organizations and the private sector. Representatives of the media were also in attendance. Organizers had also confirmed that at least five First Ladies including the First Lady of Uganda would be in attendance, as well as the Minister of Health and several Ugandan parliamentarians. Though the first ladies and the Ugandan government were unable to attend, the Dialogue proceeded as planned, with a panel consisting



Top and bottom: participants and panelists at the Dialogue. Bottom right: Exhibit of images from the Caravan displayed at the Dialogue.



of Hon. Marie Rose Nguini Effa, MP of Cameroon and member of the Pan-African Parliament, Dr. Sarah Onyango, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Ms. Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Executive Director of AWDF, Ms. Kavinya Makau, Programme Officer at Urgent Action Fund-Africa, and Ms. Jeanne Nsamba, a representative of the rural women from DRC, who presented the statement from the women from the Rural Women's Conference. The Dialogue was moderated by Dr. Uwemedimo Esiet of Action Health

Incorporated Nigeria. After brief remarks from Norah Matovu Winyi of FEMNET and IPPF Regional Director Tewodros Melesse, participants watched a short video on the East African Caravan's activities in Uganda. The panel then discussed what was observed in the video in the context of the themes of the Dialogue, followed by interventions from the floor. Highlights of the discussion include: the need for a fund for maternal health; the need to publicize success stories in decreasing maternal mortality and build on achievements; the concern that several invited policy makers and leaders did not prioritise the Dialogue, is a clear indication of the lack of anger at the state of maternal health in Africa; the need to address abortion; tell the real stories from the ground; and to go away with the slogan "Don't agonize, organize!" often used by the late Dr. Tajudeen Abdirahim. The Dialogue ended with the agreement that civil society must organize in different ways to tackle this issue.



SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS COALITION NEWSLETTER

IAC USES THE PROTOCOL TO ADDRESS FGM ISSUES

In June and July 2010, the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC) conducted training sessions in Niani District, Central River Region, the Gambia, for communities to discuss the effects of FGM and early marriage on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. The participants were informed of the existing international and national instruments, such as the Protocol. They were encouraged to open the debates on hitherto sensitive issues in the districts among the participating clusters under the project, using the rights-based approach. The training sessions facilitated the empowerment of women and men as well as youth. Some reflected on the damage done on women's bodies, while others called for a law to protect the next generation from FGM.

On 8-12 July, 2010, in Freetown, IAC Sierra Leone National Committee held a

seminar for 25 parliamentarians on FGM and other harmful traditional practices using the Protocol as an advocacy tool. The main objective of the seminar was to examine the damage that harmful traditional practices have caused in the socio-economic development of women; consider the problems affecting victims of sexual and domestic violence; and to discuss the legal perspective. Participants were happy with the seminar but noted that cases involving FGM and early marriage are rarely prosecuted due to lack of resources and political will. It was reported that police often cannot follow up on cases because they have inadequate funding and because parents will compromise the case by no longer coming to court. Participants identified the challenge of addressing the psychological, social and cultural norms that reinforce FGM. One approach suggested was to use trained community members as change agents to advocate against FGM and other harmful practices in their community.

SIHA HOLDS WORKSHOP ON PROPOSAL AND REPORT WRITING

On 26-30 September, Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Network and East Sudan organization for Women Development organized a five-day training workshop on proposal and report writing, in Port Sudan City. The main objective was to enhance and build the capacity of women and their grassroots organizations in the Red Sea region, in order to increase their abilities and skills in advocating for their rights. By the end of the workshop, three proposals had been prepared by the participants on the subject "Raising the awareness of the local authorities on women issues in the Red Sea". This was intended mainly for the women to understand as well as to have practice in proposal writing. The training workshop was covered in a Red Sea Radio broadcast and the local weekly newspaper "Port Sudan Our City".



Left: SIHA workshop participants look over proposals.

SOAWR WELCOMES WONGOSOL AS NEWEST MEMBER



The SOAWR Coalition has approved the Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL)'s application for membership. The Coalition has previously partnered with WONGOSOL in advocating for a multi-sectoral approach to the implementation of the Protocol in Liberia.

WONGOSOL is a women's network organization established in 1998 which now has 60 plus members. WONGOSOL's mission is to create a vibrant Liberian society by developing and strengthening the role of Women organizations and groups, and enhancing their effectiveness through proper coordination and security, women's development, gender equality and women's human rights.

CAFOB ADDRESSES WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO LAND

(Translated excerpts from an article submitted by CAFOB)

The Burundian population is 85% agrarian and agricultural activities are most practiced by women who ensure their families' survival. The Burundian woman does not have right to inherit land because the patriarchal system that governs Burundese society does not recognize land inheritance rights for the Burundese woman. Only male descendants have rights to inherit land. The Burundese woman is, through the agriculture that she practices, the pillar of the country's development. However, she does not ensure her own development because not only does she not have access to land, which is an essential resource for production, but the fruit of her efforts are managed by someone else.

Through association, women are able to realize



their rights and duties in relation to access to land, inheritance rights, discrimination and other forms of violence against women. It is in this context that the Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB) organizes training seminars to help women to understand and adopt their rights. Women's land inheritance rights are the subject of controversial debates and the problem is currently aggravated by the shortage of land. CAFOB has worked with diverse institutions and organizations so that the succession law is adopted. Since the Burundese constitution espouses equality, this should be realized in fact. *(The government of Burundi has*



signed, but not yet ratified the Protocol, another legal instrument that would facilitate gender equality and women's rights.)

CAFOB organizes meetings for women around the question of female inheritance. The bill on "matrimonial regimes, succession and largesse" has been lagging for the last decade. Culture and resistance to change constitute a blockage to the adoption of this law, but Burundese women continue to hope that one day discrimination against them will end.

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Status of the Protocol	In September 2009	In September 2010
Total Signatures	45	46
Total Ratifications	27	28

State Parties to 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, **Uganda**, Zambia, Zimbabwe

**SOAWR MEMBERS IN KENYA
PUSH FOR RATIFICATION**

As SOAWR members in Kenya assisted the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development in planning for the Launch of the African Women's Decade in Nairobi on 10-15 October, they continued to lobby for Kenya to ratify the Protocol prior to this historic event. In September FIDA-Kenya paid a courtesy call to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs together with the newly established national human rights institution under the new constitution and other civil society organizations in order to call for ratification of the Protocol and other instruments. Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Equality Now, and FEMNET closely followed up with the Gender Ministry on the status of ratification. They met with the Ministry's Legal Officer as well as with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry to discuss this issue. Furthermore, COVAW, Equality Now and FIDA participated in a breakfast meeting organized by ICJ to discuss strategies for ratification. The SOAWR members emphasized the necessity of Kenya's ratification prior to the Launch and shared various SOAWR strategies with other attendees.

Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) is a coalition of 37 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 NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)

**SISTER NAMIBIA PUBLISHES LATEST EDITION OF
MAGAZINE**

This quarter, Sister Namibia finalized the latest edition of *Sister Namibia Magazine*. In addition to articles on women's activism, women's health, an interview with Namibia's Minister of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture, and others, the issue explores diverse women's views of the Protocol. Discussions with many women and women's groups in both urban and rural areas brought to the organisation's attention that to many of these women, the actual potency and use of the Protocol was seen as very abstract, and difficult to relate to their lived realities. Through the stories reflected in the magazine, Sister Namibia hopes to deconstruct the language of the Protocol into actual events and stories that women can relate to. Sister Namibia then ties in the relevance and importance of international legal instruments to the stories told in the magazine. This way, on an individual level, women can relate to the stories and also see the relevance of the Protocol in their lives. This issue includes a diverse array of stories that, amongst others, deal with issues of access to rights (employment, education, leisure, recreation, livelihood, information, health services etc).

**VOIX DE FEMMES
SENSITIZATION
PROGRAMMES**

Between July and August 2010, with support from UNIFEM, Voix de Femmes carried out a range of activities on FGM and women's rights in Ougadougou and its periphery. The activities included putting into place 120 focal points and providing training on FGM to 40 of them. Voix de Femmes also carried out four theater forums on the topic.

**FIDA-KENYA LOBBIES FOR
PROPOSED CONSTITUTION**

In July and August, FIDA-Kenya used the media to lobby and educate the Kenyan population on the contents of the proposed constitution as regards women's gains. FIDA participated in public debates and assisted in demystifying Article 26 on the right to life and to help in better understanding when legal abortion is permitted. The constitution was passed without amendments to this clause, which resembles the provisions on abortion in the Protocol.