

**SOLIDARITY FOR
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

A force for freedom



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

Une force pour la liberté

SOAWR Engagement with the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union



“Boosting Intra-African Trade”

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

January 2012

Prepared by: African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
Equality Now and Fahamu

Acronyms

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AWD	African Women's Decade
COCAFEM-GL	Consultative Umbrella of Women Associations in the Great Lakes region
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EAC	East African Community
EAWC	East African Women Chamber of Commerce
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
FAS	Femmes Africa Solidarité
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
FEWA	Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations
GIMAC	Gender is My Agenda Campaign
ILO	International Labor Organization
PAP	Pan African Parliament
PRC	Permanent Representatives Committee
Protocol	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
SOTU	State of the Union Coalition
TA	Trade Arrangements
UN	United Nations



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
1.0 Launch of FEMNET’s multi-country research and documentary:	4
2.0 Meetings with Pan African Parliament.....	7
3.0 Lobby Visits to Addis-based Embassies on Ratification of the Protocol.....	8
4.0 Participation in the GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultation Meeting	9
5.0 Participation in Inter-agency Press Conference	10
6.0 Advocacy during the 18 th Ordinary Session of the AU Summit.....	11
7.0 Conclusions	11
Annex 1: Press Release: Cote D’Ivoire Ratifies AU Protocol.....	13



Introduction

In January 2012, African governments met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the 20th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU), under the theme “*Boosting Intra-African Trade*”.

Prior to and during the Summit, SOAWR members implemented the following activities:

1. Launch of FEMNET’s multi-country research and documentary on gender-responsive trade agreements
2. Meeting with Pan African Parliament
3. Lobby Visits to Addis-based Embassies on Ratification of the Protocol on the rights of women
4. Participation in the 19th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultation Meeting
5. Participation in Inter-agency Press Conference
6. Advocacy during the 18th Ordinary Session of the AU Summit

These activities were undertaken by SOAWR members African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Equality Now, Oxfam and Fahamu. This report provides a summary of SOAWR activities and a reflection on the successes, challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities for future engagement.

1.0 Launch of FEMNET’s multi-country research and documentary:

Promoting women’s economic empowerment through gender responsive trade agreements

Introduction

In January 2012 in Addis Ababa, FEMNET hosted the launch of a multi-country research report and documentary on promoting women’s economic empowerment through gender responsive trade agreements. The report was produced as part FEMNET’s Economic Governance project.

Under this project which is supported by Trust Africa, a multi-country study was undertaken in five countries namely; **Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia** to assess trade arrangements at the regional level between the European Union and Africa, and their impact on women’s economic rights.

The study was prompted by the fact that a majority of African women still have relatively limited access to material assets, low incomes and very limited opportunities to engage in regional and foreign trade.

The overall objective of the Economic Governance Project was to mainstream gender in trade arrangements in Africa

Specific Objectives

- ☞ Promote women’s economic rights and empowerment through gender-responsive trade arrangements between Africa and Europe;

- ☞ Build capacities of national gender lobbies to effectively engage in trade negotiations, implementation and monitoring arrangements;
- ☞ Develop women's economic planning leadership and influence in new trade negotiations;
- ☞ Ensure that labour standards that support women's economic rights are included in bilateral and regional trade agreements;
- ☞ Develop innovative strategies and partnerships at the regional and national levels with gender lobby groups and other social movements, to support women's economic empowerment through equitable trade arrangements;
- ☞ Support national gender lobby groups to advocate for adoption of policies and laws that ensure equal access, benefit and opportunities for women and men in trade and entrepreneurship, taking into account the huge contribution of women in the formal and informal sectors; and
- ☞ Advocate for measures that ensure women benefit equally from economic opportunities presented by trade arrangements between Africa and Europe and between countries within the EAC and SADC region.

Activities Undertaken In This Project

Conducted an assessment on the impact of the Africa – EU Partnership Strategy and trade arrangements on women's economic rights and empowerment – particularly in the area of trade, regional integration and infrastructural development in the five countries. The launch of the findings entitled “Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment Through Gender Responsive Trade Agreements” took place in the margins of the January 2012 AU Summit in Addis Ababa.

Created and coordinated an action agenda that targets the top level leadership in each of the five countries urging them to prioritize gender mainstreaming in trade arrangements between Africa and the EU. This involved lobbying and advocacy activities in each country using the findings of the assessment to advocate for the review of national trade policies, laws and regulations in order to secure women's economic rights. National gender lobby groups were formed and have continuously been engaged.

1. FEMNET has worked with the gender lobby groups to **develop key messages** that support the advocacy initiatives. The materials developed include an issue paper and a documentary that captures the best practices that gender lobby groups at regional and national levels are using to successfully mainstream gender in trade arrangements between the EU and Africa.
2. FEMNET has worked closely with media in the five countries to **facilitate wide circulation** of the findings of the research to key stakeholders.

Official Launch



The launch was held on January 19th, 2012 at Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was attended by over sixty guests including members of the Pan African Parliament from Rwanda, Botswana, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Other guests represented various CSOs, both local and international, the AUC, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), private sector and the media.

The National gender lobby group leaders from Rwanda (Kabutare Claude of The Consultative Umbrella of Women Associations in the Great Lakes region-COCAFEM-GL), Kenya (Nancy Gitonga of Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations-FEWA), Uganda (Carol Idembe of East African Women Chamber of Commerce-EAWC) and Zambia (Sylvia B. Mwansa of Professional Business Women Zambia) gave short remarks on the trade issues and lobbying experiences in their respective countries.

The report was officially launched by Francois Noel, the Acting Director of Trade at the African Union Commission (AUC) who lauded FEMNET for launching this report at such an opportune time to coincide with the AU summit whose theme was “*Boosting Intra African Trade*”. He said that the report would provide useful input to African governments and other stakeholders as they discussed issues of trade. He commended FEMNET for publishing the report which would be a resource for creating more awareness on the need to engender trade in Africa.



He launched the report with the hope that it would influence policy change in order to make trade easier for women in Africa.

Guests were welcomed to watch the documentary which focused on women in trade in the 5 countries. The following are the key findings in the research:

Key Findings

- ☞ Trade Arrangements (TA) in Africa and with its partners in other regions of the world has had different impacts on women and men.
- ☞ Most often than not they affect women more negatively in their position as entrepreneurs, workers, consumers, producers, and care givers within the public and domestic spheres.
- ☞ Even among women, trade arrangements affect urban dwellers differently compared to the rural dwellers and younger women differently than older women.
- ☞ Each of the 5 EAC countries has different labour conditions and free movement of labour within the EAC is still limited. In these circumstances, adoption of the core International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, including work place discrimination, maternity, compensation and other aspects, has to be considered.

- ☞ In all the 5 countries, many stakeholders across the public and private sectors are unaware of or do not have access to sufficient information on TA processes.
- ☞ There is limited dialogue around TA negotiation and implementation processes. There appears to be a general perception among some government and most civil society stakeholders that public policy formulation, including international relations like trade agreements, are a matter for the Government, hence limited involvement of the civic population.
- ☞ The Trade Secretariats do not have a clear communication mechanism or help desk specifically to provide information on international trade arrangements. There has not been any effort to simplify the complex legal text for various stakeholders.

2.0 Meetings with Pan African Parliament

As a lead up to the summit, FEMNET produced an **issue paper** containing key findings of the research that was undertaken as part of an Economic Governance project to assess how trade arrangements at the regional level between the European Union and Africa have impacted on women's economic rights. The issue paper was used as a reference point when meeting members of the Pan African Parliament who were attending the 6th Ordinary Session of the PAP in Addis prior to the AU Summit. The gender lobby groups met with the following at different times during the Summit.



a) Members of Parliament from the five focus countries of the research, namely: Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria and Kenya

b) Members of the Nigerian, Namibian, and South Africa delegation as well as the Vice President, Clerk of Pan African Parliament and the Acting Director of Trade at the African Union Commission.

The gender lobby group made proposals to the members of Parliament on how to make trade agreements beneficial for women in Africa.

The following were the key recommendations proposed (as contained in the Issue Paper)

1. Build women's capacity in financial literacy as well as negotiation and communication skills
2. Consult and engage women when developing policies on women and empowerment
3. Reduce the cost of doing business for women
4. Assist women to patent their goods as well as understand intellectual property rights
5. Simplify and disseminate trade agreements specifically in local languages for majority of women to understand and benefit from them
6. Enhance or provide opportunities for trade for rural women by creating value added chains
7. Re-visit trade agreements and assess how women have benefitted from them
8. Empower and enhance the skills of women who are already in business so they can mentor grass roots women
9. Harmonise tax systems to make it easier for women in business

10. Harmonise social security frameworks
11. Develop databases and directories of women in business
12. Sensitise women on international standards for export goods
13. Improve accessibility of loans by women in business
14. Work with media to promote trade issues

All the parliamentarians received a copy of the report and the Issue Paper which contained a summary of the key findings of the research. After receiving the documents, the Vice President of the Pan African Parliament Hon. Bethel Nnaemeka Amadi informed the group that based on the research findings of the report conducted by FEMNET, he will propose to the Pan African Parliament to make Economic Empowerment of Women as the main theme for the Africa Day which falls on 25th May.

3.0 Lobby Visits to Addis-based Embassies on Ratification of the Protocol

These visits were conducted by SOAWR members from over 13 countries attending the 2012 Annual Meeting in Addis Ababa (See separate report on *SOAWR Coalition Review and Agenda Setting Meeting, January 18-20, 2012*). Before the lobby visits, participants were given tips by Yemisrach Kebede of Oxfam, on how to prepare and conduct the lobbying visits. Participants were urged to be clear and concise and give pertinent information so as to leave the person being engaged with sufficient information on the Protocol and why it is necessary for their country to ratify it. Participants were encouraged to create an environment conducive for dialogue on the issues at hand. In addition, they were persuaded to build relationships so as to make it easier for follow up visits and to enable them to further their cause in the future. The embassies visited were those of Egypt, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia to the African Union. Each Embassy received the following:

- ☞ Letter to the Foreign Minister from SOAWR encouraging him/her to ensure the ratification of the Protocol, particularly in the context of the African Women's Decade
- ☞ AU list of countries which have signed, ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- ☞ SOAWR simplified version of the AU Protocol
- ☞ SOAWR leaflet "Campaigning for the African Union (AU) Protocol on the Rights of Women
- ☞ FEMNET poster of the (AU) Protocol on the Rights of Women

Sierra Leone

The visit to the Sierra Leone embassy was productive. SOAWR members were met by the First Secretary and the Deputy Ambassador. They were both eager to hear about the Protocol and were surprised that their country had not ratified it. The Deputy Ambassador shared that he would send the letter on the Protocol to their Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was going to have a meeting with the Minister of Justice, who is also the Attorney General of the country and persuade him to have Sierra Leone ratify the Protocol. The First Secretary also said she would influence the ratification of the Protocol. The Deputy Ambassador, who used to be a human rights activist, seemed eager to have the Protocol ratified. He said he would communicate the outcome of their meeting to the ambassador as well.

Mauritius



The delegation of participants was met by the Embassy Secretary. The delegation explained to him the contents of the letter and the need for his country to ratify the Protocol. He explained to them that ratification was a lengthy process in his country whereby technocrats would first have to review the Protocol and how it relates to their laws. He stated that his country has many instruments that need to be ratified and was sure that the Protocol was amongst them. One of the conditions for ratification in their country is that they

have to make sure that they have resources to implement the instrument once it is ratified. He said that he would find out the status of the Protocol and give feedback. He said that he would give feedback of the meeting to the Ambassador and would also relay the information to the delegation that was coming to the Summit from Mauritius.

Tunisia

The Ambassador cancelled the appointment at the last minute when the team had already departed for the mission. A Tunisian official from the Embassy later found the SOAWR team at the hotel and advised the delegation to write a letter to the Ambassador detailing their concerns about the ratification status of the Protocol in Tunisia. The representative was informative and gave his contact information. The delegation asked the SOAWR team that will stay during the Summit to follow up with the Embassy and the representative as well as he seemed to be a vital resource.



Egypt

A four member delegation met with H.E Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Eddress and his third secretary Mr Sherief Sharly on Thursday the 20th of January 2012. The Ambassador highly appreciated the opportunity to discuss the status of ratification of the Protocol and to hear about the work of SOAWR. He was also interested in knowing what organizations SOAWR has been working with from Egypt and recommended that the Coalition also contact the government for partnership/collaboration. The Ambassador also took time to explain to the group the political situation in Egypt and further indicated that despite the above circumstances, he has plans and committed to follow up on the ratification of the Protocol after Egypt's upcoming General Elections in June 2012.

4.0 Participation in the GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultation Meeting

From the 24th-26th January 2012, SOAWR members attended the above meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia whose objective was to discuss the Gender is



SOAWR Engagement with 18th AU Summit

My Agenda Campaign's (GIMAC) strategies for the coming years, especially in terms of ensuring the African Union had sufficiently mainstreamed gender. The Consultative meeting also discussed the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), and further reflected on the AU Summit theme "*Boosting Intra- Africa Trade*" and linking it with "*Climate Change and Climate Justice*".

The meeting was attended by experts in climate change, trade and gender issues, who shared their knowledge and gave insights on the issues clearly linked to the theme of the 18th Summit of the African Union Heads of State. Also invited were women candidates aspiring for senior official positions within the African Union Commission.

Some of the issues discussed included women's integration in the economy so as to enhance intra-African trade, the African women's agenda on climate change, and the response to the three F crisis: Finance, Fuel and Food.

While reviewing GIMAC's previous work, it was pointed out that there is need to reignite efforts so as to build on the various achievements from the campaign which included developments in the implementation of the SDGEA and gender mainstreaming within the African Union. Challenges identified included reporting on the progress of implementation of the SDGEA especially in post - conflict countries.

The GIMAC pre-Summit was concluded with a set of recommendations for Heads of State, the AU and the GIMAC member organizations. Most interesting were the goals that the Coalition members set for themselves in order to realize gains in the ratification of the Protocol and SDGEA. These included the need for optimizing the potential of the Protocol and the advancement of gender mainstreaming at all levels of life through lobbying, advocacy, communication and implementation.

5.0 Participation in Inter-agency Press Conference

On 25 January, SOAWR took part in a CSO inter-agency press conference on the AU Summit that was jointly organised by Oxfam, FIDH, Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, Darfur Consortium and the State of the Union (SOTU) Coalition among others. Equality Now and FEMNET represented the SOAWR coalition. The remarks by Alexandria Muhanji who represented Equality Now focused on the successes and challenges of the SOAWR campaign since it began in 2004. Muhanji added that though the Coalition was encouraged by the 31 ratifications of the Protocol, it would continue pushing for its universal ratification and implementation.



The Executive Director of FEMNET, Dinah Musindarwezo, highlighted the major findings of the research paper on Women and Trade that was conducted in five countries namely Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. The research found out that many women are unaware of trade agreements that are entered into by African leaders whereas women were the ones mostly affected by them in their cross border trade. Musindarwezo added that the SOAWR Coalition would use the opportunity of the theme of the AU summit (Intra-African Trade) to make sure that women's needs and rights are considered in developing trade agreements between Africa states.

6.0 Advocacy during the 18th Ordinary Session of the AU Summit

Ratification of the Protocol

SOAWR Coalition, represented by FEMNET, Equality Now, and Fahamu, was able to meet in the corridors with a number of delegates whose states had not ratified the Protocol. The delegations lobbied Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ambassadors from: Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Somalia and Sudan. The delegates were provided with advocacy packets which included:

- ☞ Letter to the Foreign Minister from SOAWR encouraging him/her to ensure the ratification of the Protocol, particularly in the context of the African Women's Decade
- ☞ AU list of countries which have signed, ratified/acceded to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- ☞ SOAWR simplified version of the AU Protocol
- ☞ SOAWR leaflet "Campaigning for the African Union (AU) Protocol on the Rights of Women
- ☞ FEMNET poster of the (AU) Protocol on the Rights of Women



The delegates assured the team that their countries will ratify the Protocol, while the delegate from Cameroon did indicate that the instrument of ratification was ready and was to be deposited during the Summit.

7.0 Conclusions

Successes

As a direct outcome of SOAWR's lobbying efforts in the margins of the 18th AU Summit, there is sustained attention and pressure on countries that have not ratified the Protocol to do so.

Cote D'Ivoire ratified the Protocol in March 2012, making it the 32nd member state to do so.

Launching FEMNET's research on gender responsive trade agreements was very strategic due to the tie-in with the theme of the Summit and presence of relevant policy makers. Having members of the PAP at the launch enabled us to reach key policy makers with the messages on gender and trade.

Developing a relationship with key members of the Pan African Parliament will facilitate new avenues for engagement on the Protocol and issues of women's rights and gender equality at the regional and national levels.

Challenges

One major challenge faced by the team who lobbied at the Summit was the limited access to the meeting halls due to the type of accreditation that was available to the team, which limited the lobbying efforts and access to more high profile individuals.

Next Steps

There is a need to follow up with all of the embassies that were visited and the country delegates lobbied during the Summit, to ensure that the pressure on them to ratify is sustained. The members of parliament who were present during the FEMNET launch (representing Rwanda, Botswana, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia) should also be followed up on.

Cameroon has ratified the Protocol but has not deposited it to date. SOAWR should intensify the pressure on the Cameroonian government to deposit the instrument of ratification and proceed to domestication.

There is an opportunity to request for space within the corridors of the AU to set up a display table and banner, which would greatly enhance SOAWR's advocacy efforts. This space would give the coalition and its objectives more visibility and enable information on the Protocol to be displayed as well as show which countries have or have not signed, ratified and domesticated the Protocol as a means to 'name and shame'.

The Map of Ratifications needs to be updated to reflect the most recent ratification, namely that of Cote D'Ivoire. (*See Annex 1*)

Annex 1: Press Release: Cote D'Ivoire Ratifies AU Protocol



Press Release

For Immediate Release

March 23rd, 2012

Cote D'Ivoire Ratifies the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya. The Solidarity for African Women's Rights coalition (SOAWR) – www.soawr.org - congratulates the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire on its ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Protocol). The instrument of ratification was deposited with the African Union Commission on March 9th 2012.

The Protocol was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the 2nd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Maputo on July 11, 2003, and came into force in November 2005 after ratification by 15 member states. Cote D'Ivoire's ratification of the Protocol brings the total number of ratifications to 32 (thirty two).

“We welcome Cote D'Ivoire to the group of countries that have ratified the Protocol, and we are especially encouraged considering that Cote D'Ivoire is a post-conflict state,” said Naisola Likimani, Head of Advocacy at FEMNET. SOAWR calls upon the government of Cote D'Ivoire to popularize the Protocol and to establish a process to ensure that the provisions of the Protocol are realized through laws, policies, practices and services promoting and protecting women's rights in Cote D'Ivoire.

SOAWR urges other African states to follow suit and ensure that African women make gains through the provisions outlined in the Protocol. Faiza Mohamed, Director of Equality Now emphasized, “This ratification is a step in the right direction. The goal is for the Protocol to be universally ratified, domesticated and implemented in Africa.”

For more information on the Protocol and the work being done to make it a reality, please contact:

Alexandriah Muhanji, Program Officer, Equality Now (SOAWR Secretariat)

amuhanji@equalitynow.org

Tel. +254-20-2719832/2719913, Fax: +254-20-2719868,

www.equalitynow.org, www.soawr.org

P.O. Box 2018-00202, Nairobi Kenya

Coalition Members

Action for Development (ACFODE), African Centre for Democracy And Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), Alliance for Africa, Akina Mama wa Afrika, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Association des Juristes Maliennes, Baobab for Women's Human Rights, Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants, Centre for Justice Studies and Innovations (CJSI), Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), Collectif des Associations et ONGS Féminines de Burundi (CAFOB), Equality Now, East Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative (EASSI), Fahamu for Social Justice, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya), Forum Mulher, Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), Inter-African Network For Women, Media, Gender and Development (FAMEDEV), Girl Child Network (GCN), Inter-African Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (IAC), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGOGCN), Oxfam GB, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (RHRA), Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa Women (SIHA), Sister Namibia, Tomorrow's Child Initiative (TCI), Ugandan Women Network (UWONET), Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti (UNFD), University of Pretoria Center for Human Rights, Voix de Femmes, Women Direct, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternatives (WRAPA), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET), Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL)