

**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

**EQUATORIAL
GUINEA RATIFIES
THE PROTOCOL
DURING THE AU
SUMMIT!**

SOAWR members viewed their presence in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, during the African Union Summit as an opportunity to advocate strongly for Equatorial Guinea to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Summit was held in Malabo from June 26 to July 1st under the theme, “Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”. Representatives of Equality Now and the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), first engaged the Equatorial Guinean Deputy Minister for Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women, at the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit on June 27th. In response to their query about the status of Equatorial Guinea’s ratification of the Protocol, the Deputy Minister informed SOAWR members, Brenda Kombo (Equality Now) and Naisola Likimani (FEMNET) that the country had in fact ratified the Protocol in 2009. SOAWR members shared with the Deputy

Minister the AU Protocol ratification status list showing that Equatorial Guinea had not yet deposited its instrument. The SOAWR team urged her to take advantage of the convening of the AU Summit in Malabo to deposit their instrument. The Deputy Minister promised to discuss this with her Minister. On June 29th, Ms. Sylvie Ndongmo (FEMNET) and Ms Likimani met with Minister Eulalia Envo Bela at the Minister’s offices, to follow up on this discussion. The Minister shared a copy of the instrument of ratification, dated October 27, 2009, and indicated that they had sent the instrument to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for deposit in April 2010. The Minister sought FEMNET’s technical support on the next steps, at which point FEMNET advised that the Legal Counsel of the AU Commission was presently in Malabo and the original instrument could be deposited that very day. Hon. Bela gave immediate instructions for the original instrument to be located. Also during the meeting with the Minister, FEMNET representatives shared the work of the SOAWR coalition, and discussed with her issues of reporting on the Protocol, as well as the need for

popularization of the Protocol and a multi-sectoral approach to implementation. The Minister sought support on the issue of a pending Domestic Violence Bill, which has been debated four times since January 2009 but never passed. FEMNET shared examples from the Sexual Violence Act in Kenya and a similar legislation in Cameroon. Hon. Bela requested support from the SOAWR coalition in their Equatorial Guinea process, considering that civil society in the country is weak and media is limited. Following this discussion, FEMNET representatives accompanied Hon. Bela to the Sipopo Resort where the AU Summit was taking place. Hon. Bela ultimately deposited Equatorial Guinea’s instrument of ratification to H.E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in the presence of Ms. Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Director, AU Women, Gender and Development and a representative of the AU Commission Legal Office. Hon. Bela expressed heartfelt gratitude to SOAWR for facilitating her deposit of the instrument and move to the next phase of implementing the Protocol. Equatorial Guinea has become the 31st AU member state to ratify the Protocol.



Left: Minister Eulalia Envo Bela deposits Equatorial Guinea’s instrument of ratification to Dr. Jean Ping, the AU Chairperson, while (on the right) Litha Musyimi-Ogana (AU Gender Directorate), Sylvie Ndongmo (FEMNET) and Naisola Likimani (FEMNET) look on
Center: Ms. Musyimi-Ogana, Dr Ping and Hon. Bela
Right: Ms. Musyimi-Ogana, Hon. Bela, Dr Ping, Ms. Ndongmo, and Ms Likimani at the Sipopo Resort

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

- * 2nd Raising Her Voice Africa Projects Review, Learning and Planning Meeting, Nairobi, 12-14 July
- * 49th session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 11-29 July. Reports from Djibouti, Ethiopia and Zambia, among others, will be considered.
- * International Youth Day, 12 August
- * International Day of Peace, 4 September
- * Pan-African Parliament Women’s Conference with the theme “Women, Peace and Security in Africa”, Midrand, South Africa; 29-30 September
- * 12th AWID International Forum with the theme “Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women’s Rights and Justice”, Istanbul, Turkey; 19-22 April 2012

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SOAWR CO-CONVENES 2ND STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING ON DOMESTICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL

UN Women, Oxfam International and the SOAWR coalition, in partnership with the AU Commission, Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AUWGDD) organized a second



Hon. Sophia M. Simba, Minister of Community Development, Gender & Children of Tanzania, makes opening remarks

stakeholders' meeting on domestication and implementation of the Protocol in Nairobi, Kenya, on 5-7 April 2011. This meeting followed the 1st stakeholders' meeting held in Kigali in July 2009. Participants

included senior government officials and civil society organizations from sixteen AU member states that have ratified the Protocol, namely, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Meeting participants reviewed progress made in implementing the Protocol, the tools used, and the challenges that member states are facing; agreed on concrete actions to effectively domesticate and implement the Protocol; identified strategies to strengthen reporting to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the implementation of the Protocol under the African Charter as required in initial and periodic reporting and to the AU Commission and in the annual reporting on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; explored the contributions of civil society organizations and opportunities for partnership with government and the AU in promoting women's rights in Africa; and began to identify technical support needed to realize the domestication and implementation of the Protocol.

Speaking on behalf of Litha Musyimi-Ogana, the Director of the AUWGDD, Simone Ouattara highlighted progress made. She, nevertheless, urged CSOs to include men in the promotion of women's rights and urged member states to strengthen their collaboration with the AUC, the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights and CSOs on advancing the Protocol.

Florence Butegwa, the UN Women Representative to the AU and UNECA, shared the multi-sectoral framework for implementation of the Protocol, a tool which was developed by UN Women to assist AU member states in fast tracking implementation of women's rights commitments. Given that obligations under human rights instruments are binding on governments, their implementation and monitoring cannot only be left to gender machineries. Thus, the multi-sectoral framework is critical to the realization of these commitments.

Participants highlighted some of the potential challenges faced in the utilization of the multi-sectoral framework including limited resources for its implementation, lack of coordination and political will, high staff turnover, and weak institutional mechanisms. However, they recognized the value of the framework and drafted national action plans for its use. UN Women, Oxfam and Equality Now committed to provide technical support to governments interested in piloting the approach and plan to hold a training of trainers before the end of 2011.

FEMNET AND SISTER NAMIBIA REPRESENT SOAWR AT AU MINISTERS OF HEALTH EXPERTS MEETING IN NAMIBIA

From April 17-20, FEMNET and Sister Namibia attended the 5th Session of the Conference of AU Ministers of Health (CAMH5) Experts Meeting in Windhoek, Namibia. The SOAWR members sought to advocate for consideration of specific sexual and reproductive health issues following SOAWR's engagement in the AU Summit process in 2010 on maternal and child health. They successfully disseminated messages to government experts and the Ministers of Health on gender equality and the right to sexual and reproductive health using the photo exhibition from the East African Caravan on Maternal Health photographs and materials on the right to sexual and reproductive health. Several recommendations on gender equality issues including violence against women and girls were integrated into the Africa Common Position to UNGASS. A key recommendation on linking the African Women's Decade and the Ministries of Gender to the Campaign on the Reduction of Maternal Mortality was adopted by the experts and Ministers.



Above: 2nd Stakeholders' meeting participants
Below: (from left to right) Hon. Simba; Hon. Athanus Keya, Assistant Minister for Gender, Children and Social Development of Kenya; Simone Ouattara (AU Gender Directorate) and Florence Butegwa (UN Women).



Left: Irungu Houghton (Oxfam) makes opening remarks
Right: Hon. Keya

- IN THE MEDIA -

Nigeria – An op-ed entitled “Tolerance for Gender Based Violence Must Abate” by Alliances for Africa was published in Nigeria's *ThisDay* newspaper. The piece comments on the reports of the assault by the Nigerian diplomat, Dr Chijioko Wigwe against his wife in Nairobi, highlighting the need for Nigeria to pass the proposed Violence Against Persons Bill, implement the Protocol, and, more broadly, adopt a zero-tolerance stance on gender based violence.

Uganda – In April, Akina Mama wa Afrika printed copies of posters and flyers on three thematic areas, namely, reproductive health, women's economic empowerment and women in conflict resolution. The posters are meant to compliment messages that had been produced for electronic media television spots under the same three thematic areas prior to the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections held in February 2011.

RAISING HER VOICE

EQUALITY NOW HOSTS LAWYERS' TRAINING ON USING THE PROTOCOL FOR LEGAL ACTION

Equality Now in partnership with Oxfam and the SOAWR coalition, hosted a lawyers' training on June 13-14, 2011, to promote the use of the Protocol. The training was based on the recently finalized *Guide to Using the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa for Legal Action*. The training targeted lawyers, women's rights activists and law associations from English-speaking west and southern Africa and specifically countries that have ratified the Protocol. It brought together 15 such individuals from 12 countries, namely, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Lawyers were trained on using the Protocol in cases brought before national courts, and bringing complaints of violations of the Protocol to regional mechanisms such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples'

Rights. The training provided an analysis of certain violations of the Protocol to assist practitioners in drafting complaints on these issues. Lawyers were also given information on



Caroline Muthoni Muriithi (Equality Now) provides an overview of the African human rights system

Protocol. It is not just a piece of paper. Once you see the provisions, there is nothing barring you from using the Protocol." Additionally, the training provided a unique venue for the participants to share their experiences incorporating the Protocol into litigation efforts. Consequently, it emphasized how lawyers and activists can use these judgments from other countries to pressure their own governments and domestic courts to observe the tenants of the Protocol. Equality Now has committed to translate (into French, Arabic and Portuguese) and widely disseminate the guide and to facilitate additional training sessions for lawyers and women's rights activists in various parts of the continent. As Faiza Mohamed, the Director of the Equality Now Nairobi office stated in concluding remarks, "This initiative is part of the aims of the SOAWR campaign—'breathing life into the Protocol' so that it becomes a tool in advancing women's rights."

key cases relevant to women's rights decided by the African Commission and from other regional human rights systems and international treaty bodies in order to give practitioners a sense of the current jurisprudence on women's rights. The training session provided participants with tools, delineated in the *Guide to Using the Protocol*, that they can use to enforce the Protocol through judicial mechanisms and ensure implementation of the rights protected in the Protocol. As one participant noted, "This training has given flesh to the Charter and its

Protocol. It is not just a piece of paper. Once you see the provisions, there is nothing barring you from using the Protocol." Additionally, the training provided a unique venue for the participants to share their experiences incorporating the Protocol into litigation efforts. Consequently, it emphasized how lawyers and activists can use these judgments from other countries to pressure their own governments and domestic courts to observe the tenants of the Protocol. Equality Now has committed to translate (into French, Arabic and Portuguese) and widely disseminate the guide and to facilitate additional training sessions for lawyers and women's rights activists in various parts of the continent. As Faiza Mohamed, the Director of the Equality Now Nairobi office stated in concluding remarks, "This initiative is part of the aims of the SOAWR campaign—'breathing life into the Protocol' so that it becomes a tool in advancing women's rights."

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Left: Trainer, George Mukundi, leads a session. Right: Group photo of training participants.

AMWA HOLDS SENSITIZATION MEETING FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTION LEADERS

Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) held a sensitization meeting for leaders of tertiary institutions in collaboration with the Mentorship and Empowerment Program for Young Women (MEMPROW). The objective of the meeting was to sensitize leaders of tertiary institutions on the Protocol and on its relevance in achieving sexual and reproductive health.

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY NOW CO-ORGANIZE TRAINING ON REPORTING FOR AU MEMBER STATES IN BANJUL

On April 28th, the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria partnered with Equality Now and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa in organizing training on "Using the Protocol Reporting Guidelines" for AU member states during the 49th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, the Gambia. The training was conducted by Karen Stefiszyn from the Centre and Caroline Muriithi from Equality Now. During the training session, delegations from several countries present received a copy of the guide-

lines and training on how to incorporate reporting on the Protocol together with their periodic reporting to the African Commission. They also benefited from a presentation on the multi-sectoral framework developed by UN Women to assist member states implementation of women's rights provisions in their countries in a coordinated and effective manner. The Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights, Commissioner Soyata Maïga, urged member states to adhere to the reporting requirements of the African Commission specified in the African Charter and the Protocol on the Rights of Women, she further encouraged states to work closely with her to monitor the situation of women's rights and work together to find solutions to the implementation of the Protocol as well as the commitments under the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

RAISING HER VOICE *continued...*

EQUALITY NOW, WOLPNET & WONGOSOL REINVIGORATE WOMEN'S ACTION CAMPAIGN ON FGM IN LIBERIA

In March 2011, Equality Now issued a Women's Action on female genital mutilation (FGM) in Liberia. Although Liberia is a state party to the Protocol, over 58 percent of Liberian women have undergone FGM. The practice is carried out through a politically influential female secret society known as the Sande society as part of an initiation rite into womanhood by the Kpelle, Bassa, Vai, Dan (Gio), Mano, Dei and Gola ethnic groups. Women from non-FGM practicing communities in Liberia may also be subjected to FGM either through marriage into practicing groups or by force as was the case with Ruth Berry Peal, who was kidnapped and taken to the 'bush' where she was genitally mutilated in an initiation ritual and was forced to take an oath of secrecy at the threat of death. She was kept in the 'bush' for one month and developed health complications, which required three months of treatment following her release. Ruth filed a lawsuit against the two women who forcibly mutilated her and Equality Now, together with partners Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET) and Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia

(WONGOSOL) are supporting her, calling on the government to: enact and enforce a law prohibiting FGM; immediately cease the practice of issuing permits to FGM practitioners; institute other protective mechanisms that will guarantee protection to all women and girls in Liberia from undergoing FGM; and ensure that Ruth obtains justice. Hundreds of letters were generated from around the world directed at the President of Liberia and three ministers (Justice, Internal Affairs and Gender and Development).

In June, Equality Now's Nairobi Director, Faiza Mohamed, teamed up WOLPNET and WONGOSOL to reinvigorate the campaign. They paid advocacy visits to ministers on delivering campaign action points; met with the public prosecutor handling Ruth's case to explore ways they can support her; and met with Ruth to determine the kind of support she has received from the authorities and what additional support she may need. The SOAWR members also met to jointly strategize on different roles they can play to realize the campaign objectives. The

mission was largely

successful. The Minister of Internal Affairs committed to issue an order to suspend issuance of permits so that FGM is not conducted between now and December 2011. He also indicated that after December, he hopes that the Ministry will be able to completely stop issuing permits. Equality Now, WOLPNET and WONGOSOL will follow up and continue to explore various avenues for maintaining pressure on the government. Equality Now has since provided a copy of the newly generated manual, *A Guide to Using the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa for Legal Action*, to the prosecutor handling Ruth Berry's case who had, upon learning about the Protocol, requested copies of legal text of regional and international human rights instruments to which Liberia is a party.

UPDATE: Following a month of deliberation, a guilty verdict was announced on July 8, 2011, by the jury in Ruth's case on charges of kidnapping, felonious restraint and theft. In closing, the judge made references to the Liberian Constitution and Article 4(1) of the Protocol. The perpetrators were sentenced to three years imprisonment, which they have appealed.



Left to right: Deputy Minister for Administration, Hon. Soko V. Sackor; Faiza Mohamed (Equality Now); Internal Affairs Minister, Hon. Harrison S. Karnwea, Sr.; Marpue Speare (WONGOSOL); and Una Thompson (WOLPNET)

SOAWR MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN BRIDGE TRAINING ON GENDER AND ELECTIONS

International IDEA invited and sponsored Equality Now to participate in a Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) training on "Gender and Elections" in Pretoria, South Africa, from May 16-20. Equality Now, in turn, facilitated the participation of People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). Nonhlanhla Sibanda (POWA), Kodwa Tyiso (POWA) and Brenda Kombo (Equality Now) participated in the five-day training which brought together 22 participants from different parts of the continent and different professional backgrounds. The ideas shared and contacts

made will be beneficial as Equality Now and POWA continue to work towards women's increased participation in decision-making processes.

(A brief report on the training is available at: <http://bridge-project.org/news/africa/918-bridge-gender-and-elections-module-in-pretoria-south-africa-16-20-may-2011>)

AMWA AND LEGAL CIRCLE ADVOCATE FOR DOMESTICATION IN UGANDA

This quarter, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) hosted a team of lawyers associated with Oxfam known as the "Legal Circle". Together with the law-

yers, AMWA staff visited a range of stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in charge of regional protocols, the Assistant Commissioner of the Ministry of Health in charge of reproductive health, and the Law Reform Commission. Meetings were also held with the Gender Specialist in charge of budgeting at the Ministry of Finance, with Ministry of Gender personnel and with women parliamentarians. During the meetings, AMWA and Legal Circle members sought to identify challenges and opportunities in achieving women's rights through the domestication of the Protocol in Uganda.

The Legal Circle shared some findings from this mission, including that there was a need for better coordination between government and the Uganda coalition and a need to map out the programmatic themes under which different CSOs are working in order to avoid duplication. They also suggested a need for the establishment of a resource center that can inform the campaign on relevant gender equality research studies.

SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS COALITION NEWSLETTER

EXCERPTS FROM YOUTH ESSAY COMPETITION FINALIST ESSAYS

The theme of the June AU Summit held in Malabo was "Youth empowerment for sustainable development". As such, Equality Now and other SOAWR members invited youth (between 18 and 25 years old) to reflect on the importance of the Protocol through an essay competition in which contestants were asked to respond to the question, "Why is the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa important to you?" in an essay of a maximum of 2000 words in either English or French. The judging panel was made up of Saran Keita (Association des Juristes Maliennes), Osai Ojigbo (AfA), Amie Joof (Réseau Inter Africain pour les Femmes, Médias, Genre et Développement-FAMEDEV), Médoune Seck (FAMEDEV), Dr Morissanda Kouyaté (Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children), Nonhlanhla Sibanda (People Opposing Women Abuse), in addition to Pambazuka editors and Equality Now. They selected six (three English and three French) winning essays which were published on *Pambazuka News*. The four top essayists (two English-speaking and two French-speaking) received copies of *African Women Writing Resistance: An Anthology of Contemporary Voices*. Although Equality Now had planned to support, through the RHV program and additional support from Oxfam, the participation of the four top essayists in the AU Summit in Malabo, this was unfortunately not possible. Below are brief excerpts from the three prize-winning essays in English. The complete essays are available at <http://www.pambazuka.org>

THE PROTOCOL ON RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA: MY PERSPECTIVE

by Itodo Samuel Anthony

... Women in our societies are subjected to several forms of discrimination that impinge on their fundamental rights as human beings. Many cultures seek to perennially place the woman beneath the man. So issues surrounding gender inequality, discrimination against women, violence suffered by women and several other vulnerabilities are rather primordial in Africa and not concepts that could easily be wished away. Why a woman cannot have a say in certain things pertaining to her personal wellbeing, beats my mind

and should beat any sane mind. Why can't a woman decide who, when and how to get married? Why cannot a woman inherit property from her parents? Why cannot a woman demand a limitation of the number of children she wants to have without receiving an instant slap? Why cannot a widow remain in her deceased husband's house and take care of her children? Why do women have to compulsorily pass through the gruesome and unhealthy procedure of genital mutilation in the name of tradition or a rite of passage to womanhood without having to say if they want it or not? Why can a man beat up his wife and send her packing to her father's house with everybody looking on at it as 'normal'? The questions in my head are endless. They are not merely my reflections on the discriminations, denials and violence women are unfairly subjected to in our society everyday but also a clear indication of the varied forms of this discrimination...

HEEDING THE PROTOCOL

by Nonyelum Umeasiegbu

... And so today, hovering over all African women, from the woman hawking food on the dark streets of Yendi, to the woman washing clothes with a child strapped to her back on the windswept banks of Lake Togo, to the woman in a power suit striding purposefully through the bustling city of Lagos, to the woman in a remote village toiling on her farm in the sun while her husband sits in the shade, to the woman who has just birthed in primitive conditions and is dying but worries that her daughters will meet the same fate. In me and in these places and over all of these women, a small solitary dot, now an ever increasing dot, looms closer over us, slowly but surely; a dot called 'RIGHTS'.

It is taking Africa forever to commence the implementation and domestication of the protocol on national levels and in various countries. If the charter had been implemented even a year after its declaration, I would not have lost my friend to child birth. The medical complications that were discovered early enough into the pregnancy may have given rise to the legal decision to abort.

And so today, implementation of the protocol means to me that women will be empowered to decisions that could save their lives, figuratively and literally. It would also mean that my community will eradicate the culture of having a woman shave her hair when her husband dies, and of making her drink the water used in bathing the corpse. I find it even more painful that it is fellow women that ensure these barbaric practices are carried out. A woman should be left to mourn in peace, she has committed no crime...

WHY IS THE PROTOCOL ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA IMPORTANT TO YOU?

by Eunice Kilonzo

... As a youth, I feel there is a lack of connection in my country between the ministries of justice, finance, of foreign affairs and the ministries of gender/women. This will mean that even with the Protocol in place, the lack of cohesion will lead to gaps in implementation and monitoring and in turn the success of a good cause geared at development of the continent obsolete. The Protocol addresses this concern by elaborating that the States that are signatory to this Protocol are expected to implement and monitor the actualization of the rights provided in the Protocol and, in particu-

lar, provide budgetary and other resources for the full and effective implementation of the rights recognized in the Protocol. They are also expected to report on progress in their periodic reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. I share the sentiments of Ugandan activist Sarah Mukasa who noted, there is often a "disconnection between the pronouncements made at regional level and the action taken nationally and locally...domestication and implementation is riddled with challenges that will have to be overcome if the Protocol is to benefit the women it seeks to protect". She goes on to identify three major obstacles in most countries namely; weak public appreciation of the centrality of constitutionalism and the rule of law, inadequately resourced national gender machinery and lastly, the precedence of entering reservations on progressive clauses...



AN INTERVIEW WITH AFA AT MARGINS OF LAWYERS' TRAINING ON USING THE PROTOCOL

Interview with Osai Ojigbo

Conducted by Santana Monda, Intern,
Equality Now

1. What is the name of your organization?

The organization that I work with is the 'Alliances for Africa'. I am the programmes officer at the organization in Lagos, Nigeria.



2. What is the background of your organization and what kind of work do you carry out?

Alliances for Africa was started in the United Kingdom in 1995 but it was officially registered in January 1996. It was started by a group of people who, after the Vienna conference in 1993, wanted to do more human rights related work in Africa. Our Africa office is in Lagos, Nigeria while the Head-quarters is in Brighton, UK. The UK office mostly deals with co-ordination and governance of the activities that we carry out. These activities are divided into four main categories:

Training and capacity building: This involves training lawyers on various human rights issues and public interest litigation strategies. We also carry out workshops to help inform lawyers on how they can bring a matter before the African Commission.

Peace and security in Africa: We carry out peace building activities in countries in Africa that are affected by civil unrest. For instance we have and continue doing work in Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Women and development: We promote women in governance and decision making processes in various countries. We have programmes such as the African Feminist Programme that promotes women's rights, particularly the economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in the various international treaties. For instance, we promote women's right to work, access to adequate standard of health, protection from violence, HIV, maternal mortality to name a few.

Coalition building: Alliances for Africa is part of the Coalition for an African Court. It has observer status in the African Commission. Alliances for Africa was the first secretariat of the Coalition and I (Osai) represented the first committee. We are also working on encouraging countries to domesticate international treaties such as the Maputo Protocol and educating judges and other members of the coalition on the relationship of the African Commission with other courts such as the ECOWAS court.

3. How long has Alliance for Africa been members of SOAWR?

(Smiling) Alliances for Africa is actually one of the newest members of SOAWR. We joined in 2009 so approximately 2 years.

4. What are some of the Challenges that the organization is facing?

I would say that the main challenge is that we are overwhelmed with the amount of work that we have. This is exacerbated by the fact that our funding and workforce are limited.

We also have other challenges which I believe are ubiquitous among fellow non-governmental organizations involved in public interest litigation such as lack of commitment from clients who wish to drop cases while it is still in the court process. These are just some of the challenges we go through.

To try and overcome some of these challenges we came up with the 'Gender Justice Initiative' that I co-ordinate that gets different lawyers interested in public interest litigation to volunteer with us and offer our clients free litigation services.

5. What advice can you give other organizations?

Maybe all I can say is that we need to work together and participate in more networks so as to ensure a more effective organization and learn from each other's experiences as

were able to facilitate and coordinate SOAWR presentations to the Caucus at its meeting. Karen Stefiszyn from the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria made a presentation on the guidelines for reporting on the Protocol. This was followed by a presentation by Deborah Walter from Community Media for Development (CMFDD), who spoke about the use of media to create awareness, highlighting the success of the *Crossroads* radio drama (produced by CMFD for the SOAWR coalition) in popularizing the Protocol. Finally, Sixolile Ngcobo from the Oxfam South Africa Country Programme made a presentation on behalf of People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) on the role of the PAP in promoting and protecting women's rights.

The press release for this session indicates: "The women's Caucus meeting emphasized the need for ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa. A concern was raised that since the Charter's entry into force, no state party has submitted a report in accordance with article 26 of the Charter. Countries which had ratified the protocol were requested to submit their country reports on the legislative or other measures taken with a view to giving effect to the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed by the present Charter. Botswana is amongst countries which had not yet ratified the [Protocol] and the members from Botswana took into consideration that it was time the Government of Botswana ratified the protocol [to] the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa."

The MPs in attendance were given the assignment of consulting with their governments in order to determine their key priorities on ratification and/or domestication/implementation of the Protocol. As such, it is important that SOAWR members continue to engage the MPs in their respective countries in order to support this identification of priorities.

The next PAP Women's Conference will be held in Midrand from September 29-30th under the theme "Women, Peace and Security in Africa". The objectives (as outlined in the concept note) are to: "share experiences of progress made, good practices and challenges in promoting peace and security particularly for women and children in Africa; draw lessons from other countries in addressing gender-based violence in conflict situations; empower women to address the root causes of conflict in Africa; and recommend the way forward." Oxfam and Equality Now have begun to plan for SOAWR's participation in this next session.

SOAWR MEMBERS ENGAGE PAP WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The Fourth Ordinary Session of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) was held from May 9th to 20th in Midrand, South Africa. SOAWR members continued their engagement with the Women's Caucus and, despite several cancellations and postponements, Oxfam and Equality Now

SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS COALITION NEWSLETTER

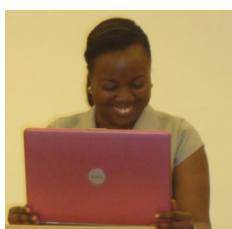
AN INTERVIEW WITH FIDA GHANA AT MARGINS OF LAWYERS' TRAINING ON USING THE PROTOCOL

Interview with Afua Brown-Eyeson, Vice President

Conducted by Michaela Wallin, Intern, Equality Now

Background of the organization:

FIDA Ghana has been operating for almost 40 years in Ghana, following precepts of the UN Declaration on Human Rights and



other covenants regarding women. FIDA Ghana established Ghana's first legal aid office in 1985 and began advocating for changing archaic, customary laws that

are harmful to women's human rights.

Once there are beneficial laws in place, FIDA Ghana simplifies these laws in manuals and booklets in a number of languages in order to make them user-friendly and accessible for the ordinary woman. Their legal aid program holds clinics to mediate family related issues such as inheritance, property rights, child maintenance, and custody. FIDA Ghana also has mobile literacy programs in many towns, through which they create awareness about new laws and how women can use them to protect themselves.

How has FIDA Ghana linked its work to the Women's Rights Protocol?

While FIDA Ghana has not yet used the Protocol as an advocacy tool in litigation, it incorporates the Protocol into research and training initiatives. FIDA Ghana primarily uses the Protocol to show how ideas about women's rights, which are often unfamiliar in rural areas, are not simply FIDA Ghana's claims but are internationally respected and something that Ghana itself has endorsed by ratifying the protocol. The protocol is particularly helpful when discussing rights that have not been directly incorporated into other Ghanaian laws.

There are definitely opportunities to increase FIDA Ghana's use of the Protocol in these kinds of education and training efforts. While FIDA frequently uses CEDAW in these trainings, the Protocol could be just as or even more effective as it is specifically African and close to home. It

is important to use the Protocol to make international links and raise awareness of how the Protocol and other UN conventions have pushed Ghana where it is today in terms of its laws.

What are some of the challenges FIDA Ghana faces in their work that is related to the Protocol?

One of the most pressing needs regarding the Protocol is simply increasing awareness that there is another option for redress of women's rights cases even if a Ghanaian court does not decide in a party's favor. To achieve this end, FIDA Ghana will need to simplify the protocol, translate it, and conduct outreach activities. Fund-raising challenges make this difficult.

Law faculties and schools also fail to incorporate international instruments into their curriculums. Consequently, many lawyers may know the issue of discrimination but they think opportunities to address it end with the Supreme Court. It is also difficult to get judges to appreciate the importance of the Protocol because they were not taught it in school and it is not publicized in the media. A major first step in improving this situation would be to increase the visibility of the Protocol in law schools, which will in turn effect the knowledge of future lawyers and judges.

Going Forward:

The Protocol is a great tool that FIDA Ghana could use for their Women in Politics Initiatives in which they pressure the government to include more women in political office and to have the same numbers of women and men in the voting lists. In the past election FIDA Ghana held a program called "We Know Politics" in which they interviewed the vice presidential candidates and asked them what they would do for women. This led the government to pledge that 40% of appointments would be given to women. However the current percentage is only 22-25%. Since the reality of the political situation doesn't reflect the politicians' initial promises there is clearly more work to do. The Protocol's mandate of ensuring equal participation of women in decision-making would be a useful way to increase pressure on the government to come through with their promises and expand women's political participation and representation.

(Although FIDA Ghana is not currently a SOAWR member, they have expressed interest in joining the coalition.)

FEMNET CONDUCTS RATIFICATION ADVOCACY IN CAMEROON

In early June 2011, the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) coordinated a mission to Cameroon, with support from Equality Now, on behalf of SOAWR. The goal was to mobilize various stakeholders towards ratification and implementation of the Protocol. FEMNET sought to bring regional support to national civil society organizations and the Cameroonian government to complete the ratification process.

Although the Protocol has been ratified at the national level as per Decree 2009/143 of May 28, 2009, the instrument of ratification is yet to be deposited. This delay is largely due to contention over some of the Protocol's provisions primarily emerging within religious groups. During the last annual meeting in November 2010, SOAWR identified Cameroon as one of the coalition's priority countries for ratification.

During the mission, FEMNET was able to successfully mobilize Cameroonian CSOs around the Protocol. FEMNET facilitated a successful strategy meeting with CSOs and the UN Women country office. Nine CSO representatives met with Marie Goretti Nduwayo, UN Women representative to Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad, at the UN Women/UNDP offices in Yaoundé. CSOs represented included FEMNET, Association des Femmes Juristes, Ligue des Femmes pour l'Education, Liberty and Human Rights League, and Institut pour la Formation, la Cooperation et Developpement. Although FIDA Cameroon and the Cameroon representative of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the health of Women and Children (IAC) were unable to attend the meeting, they met separately with Ms Likimani, who updated them on the discussions and received their input.

The meeting led to the development of an action plan, with the UN Women office taking the lead to follow up with the ministries of gender and justice on the issue of depositing the instrument. The UN Women Liaison Office to the AU and ECA has also committed to coordinate, in collaboration with SOAWR, a high-level mission to Cameroon involving the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, high-level AU actors, and others, if this is deemed necessary to facilitate the deposit of the ratification instrument.

**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 Secretariat
c/o Equality Now
P.O. Box 2018-00200
Nairobi, Kenya

Phone: +254-20-2719832
Fax: +254-20-2719868

E-mail: info@soawr.org; www.soawr.org

Status of the Protocol	In June 2010	In April 2011
Total Signatures	46	46
Total Ratifications	27	31

State Parties to the Protocol

Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Comoros, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

AFA READS STATEMENT AT 49TH SESSION OF ACHPR

Alliances for Africa (AfA) read a statement at the 49th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Banjul during the "State of Human Rights Situation in Africa" session. AfA highlighted the alarming impunity for gender-based human rights violations and rape in Africa. The statement sought to raise awareness particularly on the human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire as a result of the political stalemate between December 2010 and March 2011 and urged the ACHPR to call on the government of Côte d'Ivoire to investigate human rights violations and ratify the Protocol. The statement also drew attention to the alarmingly high number of rapes occurring in Nigeria. It made reference to the violence that broke out in Nigeria after the Presidential elections on April 16, 2011. This has led to a large number of internally displaced persons. As such, AfA called upon the government of Nigeria to domesticate the Protocol by passing the Violence Against Persons Bill before the National Assembly.

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)

SOAWR MEMBERS LOBBY HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AT THE AU SUMMIT

During the opening of the 19th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the AU on June 26th in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, SOAWR member Equality Now sought out the delegations of countries that have not ratified the Protocol in order to advocate for its immediate ratification and implementation. FEMNET continued this advocacy on June 28th. SOAWR members spoke to Foreign Ministers, Ambassadors and other members of national delegations from Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia about the need for member state commitment towards women's rights as a shared value, and provided them with packets containing a letter to the Foreign Minister from SOAWR encouraging him/her to ensure the ratification of the Protocol with an attached AU List of countries which have signed, ratified/acceded to the Protocol.

AMWA DEVELOPS 2-YEAR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In June, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) developed a two-year communication strategy for the Protocol campaign. During the process, in drafting the strategy, AMWA analyzed communication needs and gaps of key audiences and stakeholders within and outside the coalition and has made recommendations on how to address the gaps using the most appropriate channels.

COVAW LOBBIES FOR KENYA TO REMOVE RESERVATIONS

The Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) participated in a Gender Justice Law and Order Sector meeting in Kenya on June 13. The sector is a platform to ensure the prioritization of the enactment of the International Treaties Bill. At the meeting, COVAW lobbied the government to lift reservations placed on articles 14(2)(c) and 10(3) of the Protocol.