



UN WOMEN

Changing Lives in Africa 2012



UN WOMEN Changing Lives in Africa 2012

We've had a year of significant growth and change. While we face a lot of hard work ahead, as we come to the end of 2012, it's time for us to take a look back and reflect on our key achievements of the year. I wish we could tell every story, visit every country, meet every woman whose life UN Women has changed, and talk about all the programs in Africa, but we don't have the space. In this first series, UN Women Changing Lives in Africa, we share fourteen inspiring stories from across the continent. Our focus here is the women and the communities whose lives have been positively impacted by our work. UN Women's aim is to empower women and girls so that they are independent, gain equality and can strive for better lives for themselves and their families. These stories show how our work can transform lives and touch so many. Well done Africa team and thank you so much to all who contributed to this series of very moving and candid stories.

Happy reading,

Letty Chiwara

Chief of Africa

UN Women

New York

letty.chiwara@unwomen.org

- 3 BURKINA FASO:** Women running dairy farms
- 5 CAMEROON:** Domestic workers - their rights
- 7 DARFUR:** Women in broadcasting - messages of peace
- 9 ETHIOPIA:** Safe house - a place for girls to heal
- 11 GREAT LAKES REGION:** Cross border trade builds lives
- 13 LIBERIA:** Savings and loans - economic empowerment
- 15 MALI:** Helping women to heal from wartime atrocities
- 17 MOZAMBIQUE:** Girls know their rights - gender equality
- 19 NIGER:** Women in office - political participation
- 21 RWANDA:** Weaving baskets for peace and prosperity
- 23 SENEGAL:** Women make gains in political participation
- 25 TANZANIA:** Rural women's empowerment – “Barefoot Solar Engineers”
- 27 ZIMBABWE:** Blue berets police women – peace makers
- 29 ZIMBABWE:** Women fishing crews succeed

450 Women Dairy Farmers and Milk Producers in Burkina Faso Gain Economic Independence



PHOTO: UNDP COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, BURKINA FASO

WOMEN AT THE DIARY UNIT OF MADAME GARIKO'S FARM AT SADIPENGA.

Madame Gariko has a telephone line at her rural farm just outside the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. Her son is now entering university, something she once thought was impossible.

"This would not have been possible if I did not fight for what rightly belonged to me. We cannot look at relatives to feed us. I advise other women to be enterprising because the benefits are many, and with the coming of UN Women's support the future is bright," says Gariko.

Gariko's life, until lately, sounded like many across Africa. After her husband's death in the mid-1990's, Gariko struggled but managed to keep all of her 7 children in school. Her own education stopped at sec-

ondary school, as like in most families, it was not a priority to educate girls. She was married as soon as her husband asked permission from her parents.

She negotiated with male relatives for the right to inheritance after her husband's death. She lost most of their family assets, save for 4 cows. She used cheap construction material to build a simple wooden structure and fence at the back of her house to keep the 4 cows. This number has grown to 35. She is now producing dairy products from the cows.

As she began farming she learned that there were many other women in similar difficult circumstances. In some cases they owned the cows but were exploited by middlemen who were involved in making yoghurt

and marketing. They were also constantly faced with small markets and price fluctuations. Gariko says she lacks adequate storage facilities for her perishable products, so often she is forced to sell them at below cost. Some women too face inadequate transportation. There are no accessible roads to their farms, making it costly and almost impossible to hire a truck to transport dairy produce.

In 1998 she formed a women's group known as Tal Djama, to enable women in milk production to collectively tackle problems related to discrimination in accessing markets





and land. Tal Djama now has 51 members. In 2007, Madame Gariko approached UNIFEM (now UN Women) to support enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of women involved in milk production through her association.

As a result of a national study on women in milk production in 13 regions a programme to support women who manage mini-dairy units was developed. 450 women dairy farmers and milk producers in Burkina Faso are now benefitting from financing from the program which will increase their entrepreneurial capacities and improve their working conditions.

Close collaboration between different UN Women entities (including the UN Women Sub-Regional Office, the headquarters Resource Mobilization and Partnership Unit and the Africa Section) resulted in funding of up to 50,000 Euros for the pilot phase of the project being secured from the Fondation L'OCCITANE. The grant will be used to improve working conditions of women entrepreneurs in the dairy industry ultimately leading to increased productivity and better income. The beneficiary organisation: Union des mini-laiteries et des producteurs de lait local du Burkina Faso (UMPL) brings together the 450 women dairy farmers and milk producers.

UN Women also forged strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Gender and civil society organizations in Burkina Faso. As part of its normal briefing with civil society and other partners, UN Women met in Dakar with the Association de Cooperation et de Recherche pour le Développement (ACORD) Burkina Faso. Following this meeting, a mission was conducted to Burkina Faso where UN Women consulted with ACORD and women entrepreneurs in the dairy industry. The ability to reach out to a variety of traditional and nontraditional implementing partners allows UN Women to draw in and add value to untapped economic potential for women.

ACORD and the Fondation L'OCCITANE were closely involved in the formulation and resource mobilization process. The current partnership between UN Women,



PHOTO: UNDP COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, BURKINA FASO

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT VILLAGE.

ACORD and the Fondation L'OCCITANE will significantly impact the lives of women dairy farmers in Burkina Faso.

The involvement with women in the dairy industry is the result of baseline studies conducted by UN Women which enabled the identification of the dairy industry as having potential to economically transform the lives of women. This direct initiative with women in the dairy industry has the potential to propel ongoing work on women in agriculture and to provide a new dimension on the multiple avenues for reinforcing women's economic security.

Madame Gariko is very optimistic that with the launch of this project the quality and quantity of milk produced by women in her women group will improve with training in marketing and other entrepreneurship skills. With the construction of the central water supply centre for women in Tal Djama, each woman will be able to produce a minimum of 20 litres of milk per day fetching her approximately US\$400 dollars a month, enough to comfortably take care of their personal and family needs.

"Thank you UN Women, we have waited long but we are now hopeful," Gariko says.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women does not have physical presence in Burkina Faso, but it provides programming and technical support through its Sub-Regional Office in Dakar Senegal. UN Women's engagement with women in dairy farming dates back to 2009, when the former UNIFEM conducted a baseline survey of rural women and identified women in dairy farming as a potential group for enhancing economic empowerment. Extensive consultations with various stakeholders including Private Foundations, CSOs and the government have finally resulted in concrete support to the women in dairy farming - with the potential to reach an even larger group of women.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Exploited Domestic Workers Organize Themselves to Defend their Rights in Cameroon



PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

PARTICIPANTS OF A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC WORK IN CAMEROON HELD AT THE CENTRE JEAN XXIII MVOLYÉ IN YAOUNDÉ.

Abused and exploited by her employers right from the beginning of her work-life, 50-year-old Félicité Mbida, a domestic worker for more than twenty years, fights to promote the rights of workers in Cameroon as part of the National Association Supporting Domestic Workers (RENATRAD in French).

As is the case for a number of young girls from Cameroon, Félicité started working as a domestic worker and planned that she would do this type of work only for a short time. But with a lack of other options, she was forced to continue in order to provide for her two children.

"I worked with seven different families over a period of ten years due to irregular and poor working conditions and pay," she said.

When she started working in 1996, Félicité was often subjected to sexual as well as psychological violence from her employers. She worked without a contract or social security and had no clearly defined working hours. Exhausted and fed up with such abuse, in 2004 she decided to set up an association for domestic workers in order to promote solidarity amongst professionals in this field.

The Association for Housewives and Cooperating Partners of Yaoundé (AMCY in French) was born and rapidly grew to in-

clude 50 members in its fold. Encouraged by its success, the initiative was integrated into RENATRAD, a network bringing together 65 associations with an average of 20 to 50 members.

Supported by the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality, RENATRAD organizes training sessions on labour legislation, the drafting of work contracts, as well as professional ethics. With this training, domestic workers





PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN women in Cameroon focuses on the following key intervention areas: women's increased leadership through direct support to Civil society, political parties and technical and financial support to the national electoral commission to mainstream gender in the electoral processes; increased economic empowerment of women, through support to women's entrepreneurs as well as those involved in informal cross border trade; prevent violence against women and girls and expand access to victims through direct support to the VAW campaign, law enforcement and direct support to victims through centers for women and engendering national planning and budgeting .

SIGNING OF THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN HORIZONS WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE FAMILY AND THE PRESIDENT OF HORIZONS WOMEN.

have been able to defend their social status and better defend their rights.

"We have received lots of training on our rights, salaries, contracts, and, above all, on social security; this is because many of us will soon retire," stressed Félicité, adding that she now knows the national minimum wage for Cameroon, which is currently 28 216 CFA francs – the equivalent of US\$55 per month. She has therefore been able to negotiate her work contract with her employers, modify her working hours and benefit from social security through joining the National Social Security Service (CNPS in French).

"The programme has really changed a lot of things for us and domestic work is no longer what it was two years ago," says Félicité.

The large-scale mobilization of these women can be explained notably by their status in Cameroonian society. It is estimated that domestic workers represent 3 per cent of all workers in Cameroon of which 80 per cent are women.

"Today, we can also say that we are workers just like anyone else; what we say is taken a little more seriously now; and the number of cases of violence and abuse at work have fallen," she confirmed.

A die-hard activist, in 2011 Félicité was elected President of RENATRAD. Included in her accomplishments is her contribution to the implementation of a national network on domestic employment regulated by the Programme's Technical Monitoring Commit-



PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

A WALK TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND WIDEN ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS LINKED TO DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT, ORGANIZED IN BUÉA IN THE SOUTHWEST AND IN OTHER REGIONS OF CAMEROON.

tee (CTS in French), as well as the preparation of draft legislation on domestic employment that is now with the government.

As a result of such advocacy efforts, Félicité hopes Cameroon will soon ratify Convention 189 (Decent work for Domestic Workers) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Radio Broadcasters Send Messages of Peace in Darfur – Intisar’s Women and Society Programme



PHOTO: MOHAMMED DUBA, UN WOMEN

PARTICIPANTS TRAIN TOGETHER TO SEND MESSAGES OF PEACE IN SUDAN.

For Intisar Ginded, a mother of one, peace in Darfur means everything to her and her community. Darfur has known only conflict and tragedy for years. Sounds of gunfire and heavy shelling fill the air in what is another flare up in Africa, with both sides killing and displacing many thousands including the most vulnerable women and children.

Armed with a media degree and a passion to find lasting solutions for her community, Intisar joined the state-owned Elfasher Radio and Television Station.

“As a young girl, I had a burning ambition to work as a broadcaster. I knew that it was the only profession that would allow me to directly talk to my community. It would allow me to exchange information and ideas. Nothing was going to stop me from realizing my dream,” said Intisar.

For Intisar, whose name in Arabic means triumph, working as a broadcaster would help her illuminate the issues that affect Darfurians, especially women and children, who bear the brunt of the perennial conflicts.

Intisar graduated from the University of Koran in Khartoum with a Bachelor’s Degree in Media in 2004. She also holds a diploma in media with a specialty in TV and Radio programming. She is currently pursuing a Master’s degree at the National Ribat University.

The dedicated broadcast journalist pioneered a radio and TV programme, called Women and Society, which runs on Darfur state media every morning and evening.

“Women are always isolated from the national development agenda, yet they are the majority of the population and contribute immensely to our economy. When war

breaks out, they are the most affected, often fleeing to far-flung areas in search of peace and stability. I initiated this programme to cater for their needs. We share information with them regarding various issues. During conflict, we share messages of peace and hope over mayhem and fear,” said Intisar.

Intisar was part of a 20-strong group of media practitioners and UN Women implementing partners who attended a two-day Strategic Communications training in Khartoum on October 10 and 11, 2012. The participants, drawn from print and electronic media and UN Women partners, were trained on how to engage the public effectively, me

dia and gender mainstreaming, how to use new media, blogging, preparing media advisories, op-ed writing, press releases, effective story writing, photography and management of press conferences.

“Media is an important player in the field of development and cannot be ignored. Media can be an important actor in the promotion of gender equality. If misused, it can also relay negative messages,” UN Women Sudan Country Director Ms. Jebbeh Forster told the participants.

“I recall such a case during the Northern Uganda peace talks when women were for the first time allowed to participate. It just took an open disagreement between the women representatives for some section of the media to publish screaming headlines of the incidents obviously taking away the real message from the talks,” she said.

According to UNESCO, radio can be found in the homes of 75 percent of the world population. For billions of people living in rural areas, or as urban poor, access to information is limited. Disconnected from the information gateway due to poverty, low literacy, limited electricity connections and access to communication technologies such as computers and internet, radio is often the only medium available. Run on batteries, lightweight, mobile and inexpensive, the

popularity of the radio medium remains high, amongst the six billion people who have access to it worldwide.

Community radio uses the power of the medium, but redefines it to give a voice to the most marginalized communities. It creates a non-commercial platform, where ordinary people in rural communities, often the women of the community, own and produce the content they hear on the radio.

To expand the dialogue on women’s rights and to ensure that the voices of rural women are heard at the international level, UN Women is expanding its advocacy efforts through community radio. This will include innovative radio partnerships such as with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, the leading international network of over 4000 community radio organizations. Providing glimpses into economic empowerment, leadership, and sustainable development efforts, this new communications partnership will explore issues that define the lives of rural women and their communities, and how they are creating change worldwide.

For Intisar, working for women is a calling. *“There is an Arabic saying which states that women are half of the population in the society. However for me, women are not only half of the population just in numbers. Their*

involvement in development issues also counts. We are not just figures!” said Intisar, who added she was proud of what her programme accomplished.

Intisar described how women and children have suffered greatly during conflicts as they are always forced to flee their homes and move to unstable environments. In doing so they leave crops untended and this has a huge effect on food security. In Darfur, she said, women are the agriculture laborers, even though they receive fewer benefits. Intisar said her programme provides women with factual information on the stability of Darfur. *“We spread the messages of peace and hope in the refugee camps,”* she said.

UN WOMEN IN DAFUR

The overarching goal of UN Women’s strategy in Darfur is: “to ensure sustained engagement by women in the Darfur peace process in order to actualise gender equality and the rights of women in the Darfur peace agreement and in durable solutions for sustainable peace.” In 2012, prevention, protection, participation and gender sensitive humanitarian response and strategy shapes the priority areas for the UN Women and its national counterparts in Darfur in line with the Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women Peace and Security, and its consequent resolutions of 1820, 1888, 1889, as well as the set of indicators endorsed by Secretary General. Organizing women into groups in Internally Displaced (IDP) camps is not only an empowerment strategy, it provides social cohesion that helps women to respond to vulnerability and protect the livelihood and income of the individuals within the group.



PHOTO: MOHAMMED DUBA, UN WOMEN

INTISAR GINDED OF ELFASHER RADIO AND TV STATION (LEFT) WITH ANOTHER PARTICIPANT DURING THE TRAINING.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

A Safe House Providing Shelter and a Future for Girls Who Had Neither: Adama, Ethiopia



A BUSY MARKET STREET IN URBAN ETHIOPIA.

Down a dusty suburban street, behind high white washed walls, gates and razor wire sits a small brick house, just like countless others in the Ethiopian city of Adama. What's special about this particular address is that it contains a service funded entirely by UN Women that is creating a future for women and girls who have experienced unthinkable abuse.

Despite what one might expect, the Association for Women Sanctuary and Development (AWSO) Safe House is a bustling, cheerful place, filled with the sounds of children playing and the smell of injera (Ethiopian bread) being cooked.

"No one, not even the neighbours, knows what this house is. And not even the police know where it is," says the programme manager Tsegerida (not her real name). The 24-year old says she has witnessed a change in the attitude of police and legal services, even in the past few years. "My generation is more aware of our rights than previous generations, and as we work together with the police, their attitudes change too," she said.

The current 35 occupants include nine children, nineteen adults, and seven babies. A former government social worker, Tsegerida was inspired to take on this challenging role by, "knowing many people in my personal life, relatives and friends, who were abused." She said that they, like many women in Ethiopia, "don't know their rights, and don't know what they can do when they have been raped or subjected to violence."

Hana (not her real name) is 15. She was born in Gonder, 800 kilometers from Adama. Two years ago, her aunt convinced her parents to send her to Adama so she would have access to better education. Instead, she found herself working as a maid. After being raped by her cousin, Hana became pregnant and her aunt threw her out when she found out. Ashamed to return home, an elderly neighbour took her in, and when she gave birth, the aunt took her to the local police, who called the safe house.

Being such a young mother is difficult in any circumstance, but Hana says, "I've been taught how to feed, clean and change my son.

If it hadn't been for the safe house I would have had nowhere to go. I finished third grade at school, and I still want to go back one day. For now, I want to learn cooking skills so I can work to support myself and the baby."

Tsegerida isn't optimistic about Hana's prospects for obtaining justice, "The crime was obviously reported quite late. The police are working on it, but she can't afford to pay for the DNA test, so there is no evidence."

Another girl at the house with an equally tragic history, Rahima (not her real name) is 12 years old, and comes from a village not far from Addis Ababa. She giggled as she described how she preferred sitting on the swing to pushing her friends, but she did it anyway. "Every day I would gather the sheep, goats and cows before dinner," she said.

One day while she was on her way home from school two adult cousins, one from her mothers' and one from her fathers' side, held her down and raped her. She woke up from a week-long coma with a broken hip. One of her attackers is currently on trial, and the other has absconded. The safe house is paying for her to receive therapy so she has a hope of walking without crutches in the future. Rahima's parents brought her here as they cannot afford the treatment she needs. But she misses her family and her school.

Rahima's friend at the Safe House is 13-year-old Almaz (not her real name). She is bubbly, energetic, and gesticulates exuberantly when she speaks about playing house with friends back in Boroji town. Almaz cried continuously for a week when she arrived. "At first I was scared, but now I'm happy. I have friends here," she says. The eleventh of 12 children in her family, Almaz moved to her older sister's house in Adama for a chance at



PHOTO: DAWN McALLISTER

TUCKSHOPS LIKE THIS ONE ARE COMMONLY USED TO PURCHASE DAILY NEEDS IN ETHIOPIA.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Supported by UN Women Ethiopia under their strategy to End Violence Against Women the safe house has given shelter to 125 women for a minimum of three months each, and provided them with intensive counseling and medical care over the past 12 months. A key part of the centre's work is providing training in cooking, computer literacy, hairdressing, or sewing and embroidery to each woman or girl. The house contains a full-time clinic, training facility, kitchen, counseling services, a herb garden, living quarters, and an administration office. Embroidery is the most popular class, and at a sewing school in the busy centre of Adama, the mood among the dozen women in the class is ebullient. None of the women being trained had any sewing experience before they arrived. In class for two hours every day for four months, they have made samples and patterns from newspaper to design clothes before moving on to real fabric.

a better education. Her sister had different plans and wanted her to babysit and clean instead. Almaz was raped by her sister's husband. Pregnant when she arrived at the safe house, the law required she had an abortion.

The rapist confessed to the crime, pled guilty in court, and received a sentence of just seven years, which is currently under appeal by prosecutors. Despite this, her sister doesn't believe her, and she is worried that her parents won't accept her either.

"I want to go back to school, but I can't return to my parents' house," she said. Unfortunately though, there may be no other option. Tsegerida said that Almaz's 28-year-old brother, who took her to the police when he discovered she had been raped, works as a day labourer in Adama, earning 10-20 birr (US\$0.60-US\$1.15) per day, but only when there is work. This is barely enough to support himself, let alone Almaz.

Near the center of town, a cooperative of nine survivors trained in cooking by the safe house run a cafeteria, serving traditional Ethiopian food like injera, (bread) wat, a thick stew served on top of the bread, and of course, ceremonially prepared coffee. The aroma of coffee fills the courtyard all day long, as beans are ground and traditional sweet strong black coffee is served

throughout the day.

Zahara (not her real name), 30, manages the small cafeteria. She ran away from home when she was 10, and spent years living on the streets, finding work as a cleaner when she could. Zahara first came to the safe house homeless and unemployed, desperate and ready to abandon her two small children there.

"I thought I could give up my kids at the safe house," she said. "I was living on the street with two young children, all alone, with no one to help me." But when she arrived, she found a warm and welcoming environment. The safe house took her and the children in. Now Zahara and her children have a real future.

Zahara was emotional when she spoke about her feeling when the business began to make money, "At first, managing the business was a challenge, but when we started making profits, it is a very exciting feeling. I was so, so happy!"

While taking care of her kids is still challenge, the cooperative has established a system where staff take turns to babysit so that everyone can work. She designs the menu, and says it has evolved as she has become more familiar with customers' tastes. "Our best seller is our ferfer (chopped injera

bread with sauce). The police at the station next door love it." Zahara's plan is eventually to branch out on her own and become truly independent. "I hope one day to own my own cafeteria," she said.

Behind the gates and the razor wire, these women and children are safe, and the services provided here offer a chance at self-sufficiency. However, Tsegerida says that every day the police call with another woman who has been beaten or raped, and they can't always help. Shaking her head in disbelief, Hana said, "I didn't know there were places like this." For many, many more women and girls in Ethiopia and elsewhere, there aren't.



Selling Brooms and Food Builds Homes - Women Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

EVERY DAY IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN GATHER TO CROSS BORDERS AND SELL THEIR WARES. MORE THAN 45,000 WOMEN IN THIS AREA TRADE ON FOODSTUFFS AND HOUSEHOLD WARES.

Chipo (*not her real name*) is 47 and a cross-border trader. Like many women in her profession in Africa and around the world, she is not educated and has no other alternative employment. There are nights she stands in line for hours in the heat and dust, waiting to clear customs. Several years ago she was robbed of all of her cash and her passport, which caused great difficulty as it took time to replace the passport and she lost valuable income while she waited.

Selling brooms and mops has paid for an addition on her house and put food on her table to feed her three sons and retired husband. She would like to move into formal trade but admits she has no idea just how to do this. As a woman with no capital and with a family to feed, she is vulnerable and

often taken advantage of by others at border crossings.

Chipo's story is true for more than 45,000 women in the Great Lakes region who engage in informal cross border trade as a form of survival and employment. The Great Lakes Region has suffered from armed conflict for more than 3 decades. Cross-border trade provides visible proof of the economic interdependency that exists between the countries in this region. These links also show the closer ties between populations who are often divided due to mistrust from the violent conflicts which continue to plague these neighboring countries. In this context of conflict, formal employment opportunities are limited making cross border trade the only form of employment and survival for the many women who carry the burden

of providing livelihood for their families. Regrettably, women's informal trade remains under-estimated and neglected in trade policies and processes.

UN Women has been working on 'women in informal cross-border trade' since 2006, and the key areas of focus are to support coalitions and organizations of women informal cross-border traders to amplify their collective voice into national, sub-regional and regional trade groups and strengthen their advocacy platforms.. Feasibility studies on women in cross border trade have revealed that these women face a lot of challenges



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

SHOWING THEIR GOODS AT TRADE FAIRS, WOMEN ARE ABLE TO BETTER PROMOTE THEIR SKILLS AND JOIN A GROWING ECONOMY. WITH SUPPORT WOMEN LEARN TO MAKE A LIVING AND SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES.

and hurdles including: lack of access to credit, services, transport, goods storage and marketing information, exposure to abuses and insecurity at border crossings

The UN Women Central Africa Regional Office has engaged various stakeholders to change the plight of women cross border traders in Central Africa. Consultative meetings were held with municipal authorities

and women traders in Goma (DRC) and Rubavu (Rwanda). As a result of these sensitization sessions five cooperatives have been established allowing the women a greater voice to advocate for policy change and for their protection and security at border posts. In addition 120 women in informal cross-border trade were trained in entrepreneurship at Gatumba (Burundi) and Rubavu (Rwanda).



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

FOR THE FIRST TIME, WICBT FROM BURUNDI, RWANDA AND DRC PARTICIPATED IN THE REGIONAL MARKET OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN EAST AFRICA ON 10-11 NOVEMBER 2011 IN KIGALI. THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE WITH BUYERS OF FOOD, DISCOVERING NEW METHODS OF CULTIVATION AND THUS ACCESS TO FORMAL MARKETS

These courses have given them the tools to control the process of marketing their products and acquire managerial knowledge.

Another key policy change is that the Economic Commission for Central Africa has now started to construct warehouses in both Goma and Rubavu. The warehouses will provide shelter and security of both the women and their goods. This is real and sustainable change that will change the lives of these women who are contributing to the economic growth of their countries and the sustenance of their families.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women has been implementing an Africa wide programme aimed at creating wealth and reducing poverty and exclusion among women informal cross border traders (WICBT) in Africa. Phase I of the programme (2006-2009) focused on empirical baseline studies in the four sub-regions. The general objective of the baseline studies (conducted in the Great Lakes Region, Cameroun, Liberia, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and the studies covered border points in Senegal, Niger, Guinea, Togo) was to assess the overall political, economic, social, physical and institutional context within which women and men in informal cross border trade operate in these countries.

Phase II of the WICBT programme is being implemented in the Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Democratic Republic the Congo and Burundi), Nigeria, Liberia, Cameroun, Niger, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mali. In this phase UN Women provides the women traders with direct support, services, capacity building and advocates for gender sensitive policies at national and regional level.

Country by country, policy makers need to understand the hardships and risks which women like Chipo experience as they strive to provide a livelihood to their families. Governments need to establish well-targeted policies to facilitate these women's contribution to the economic growth of their countries.



Savings and Loans Provide Business Opportunities and Economic Empowerment to 34 Women in Liberia



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

WOMEN SAVINGS AND LOAN PARTICIPANTS WAITING OUTSIDE FOR THEIR MEETING IN SINJIE, LIBERIA.

Bendu Pepper Kamara is an entrepreneur and successful business-woman. Her achievements stem from belonging to a savings and loan club which has turned her life and the life of her family completely around. “We were 25 members for the first two years and because of our success other women wanted to join us. We empowered them to save money to buy shares and now our total is 34,” she says.

With her first loan she purchased goods which her husband sold in his shop, with her second loan she purchased a generator and freezer and now sells cold water and juice on her own. With a 10 per cent interest rate, Bendu states that the association loans are affordable for members while still enabling the women to turn over a profit on their shares.

Bendu’s group has also developed a social fund to support members in times of emergency, to celebrate birthdays and graduations, and to fund group projects. This past year (2012) the group planted a small cassava and ground pea farm and paid a brushing crew to keep up the land, demonstrating the diverse ways that the women are uniting to empower themselves as individuals and as a group.

The Central Bank of Liberia is taking increasing interest in the potential of women’s Saving and Loan Associations (SLAs) to extend financial services to rural areas, unreached by formal banking services. Starting this year, the central bank is loaning women-led SLAs money at a low interest rate of 3 per cent. In turn, the SLAs lend those funds on to their members.

Without such opportunities, women in

rural areas face economic uncertainty as they have little access to start-up capital if they want to begin a business or learn a trade. Helping these vulnerable women opens up opportunities for families and entire communities as economic independence breeds greater gender equality and more political and community participation.

Women’s SLAs are providing rural Liberian women with the opportunity to access sustainable micro-finance and savings opportunities. These financial services enhance their engagement in economic activities and increase their economic independence and security.





PHOTO: UN WOMEN

YELLOW T-SHIRTS HERE SAY "DEVELOPMENT IS OUR GOAL." TAKEN IN BONG, LIBERIA

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Savings and Loan Association Programme is supported by the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, led by UN Women. The Joint Programme is implemented within the framework of the Africa Regional Programme on Rural Women whose main goal is to secure rural women's rights and livelihoods in the context of the food crisis and climate change. The programme strategy emphasizes the crucial role of women in combating food insecurity and poverty, and the importance of women's access to sustainable energy and assets including credit. In implementing this programme, UN Women drives effective and efficient United Nations system coordination and strategic partnerships in support to rural women, and building institutional capacity in Government to better respond to rural women's needs and priorities.

More than 4,000 rural Liberian women have joined SLAs between 2010 and 2012.

In the first year, women saved an average of US\$169 annually and benefited from an average of US\$464 in loans per member. In the second year, without any further intervention or support, the average individual savings of the same beneficiaries jumped to US\$430 and loans received averaged US\$1,179.

The Savings and Loan Association Programme is supported by the UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, led by UN Women, through the Central Bank of Liberia, Ministry of Gender and Development, United Nations Capital Development Fund, and United Nations Development Programme. It is implemented with support from five implementing partners: Educare, Care International, Universal Empowerment Mission, We 4 Self, and Liberian Development Services.

In addition to leading the Joint Programme, UN Women has served as a voting member of the Central Bank chaired Investment Committee for Inclusive Finance. The Investment Committee supports decision making on programming and investment

for micro finance, including the beneficiaries under the Central Bank's Loan Extension and Availability Facility, which makes the lower interest loans to women-led SLAs. UN Women supported training of 10 NGOs and 35 rural women extension agents in SLA methodology and works alongside UNDP to co-fund and implement the expansion of the training to over 4,000 Liberian women.

The success of rural women like Benda in managing their savings and rotating credit has put their Savings and Loan Associations at the forefront of the Central Bank's efforts to increase access to capital for rural Liberians. In the past, many of these funds went to loan portfolios in banks or credit unions, which are more typically dominated by male managers and male clients.

UN Women Liberia will continue to support the rural women extension agents of SLAs to ensure sustainability at the local level. As many of the associations have larger investments, UN Women is working with IFC to look at linking the rural associations and the larger women owned businesses to facilitate access to more formal and larger banking institutions.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

A GROUP SITTING INSIDE FOR THEIR SAVINGS AND LOAN MEETING, SINJIE, LIBERIA



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



More than 1,000 Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls Receive Holistic Services in Mali



PHOTO: REPSFECO/MALI

SARAN KEÏTA DIAKITÉ, PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S PEACE AND SECURITY NETWORK REPSFECO/MALI, WAS AMONG THE 40 WOMEN LEADERS WHO PRESENTED THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESOLVING THE CONFLICT.



PHOTO: UN PHOTO/DEVRA BERKOWITZ

UN DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL JAN ELIASSON MET WITH APPROXIMATELY 40 WOMEN LEADERS TO HEAR THEIR PROPOSALS AND DEMANDS AIMED AT HELPING RESOLVE CONFLICT IN MALI.

Since March 2012, the Gao region of Mali has been a battleground with armed groups terrorizing the population and often violently abusing the most vulnerable – women and children.

Rape, sexual violence and forced marriages have tragically become commonplace. This has led to the displacement of vast numbers of people fleeing the conflict. This prompted UN Women to conduct a survey documenting the violence against women and girls revealing more than 50 cases of individual and collective rape. Very few of these survivors came forward to tell their stories due to the stigma attached to this form of violence.

“As the different shops are being looted, I went in to get a can of oil and a bag of rice. The rebels were just in the corner and watching me. So when I came out, they forced me in their vehicle and chained my two arms. They were four in the vehicle and they took me in a dark area. Three other girls were also there. They raped us during two nights and each time they came in groups of three, four and sometimes five,” said one girl who

refused to be identified.

Mali is facing a three-fold crisis, institutional, food-related, and security-related. This has led to significant numbers of displaced persons and refugees, especially women and children. In order to tackle this crisis, UN Women Mali has facilitated the swift denunciation of rapes committed in the North. UN Women has also been documenting cases of rape and identifying the needs of displaced women and girls; combining the efforts of four United Nations agencies (UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO) in a joint project; and partnering with the Malian Army.

Thanks to these diverse and rapid responses, UN Women has been able to contribute resources for the care of 51 rape survivors identified in the communes of Gao and Menaka. It has also raised awareness about various United Nations resolutions, especially on the culpability of those who commit rape. In addition, 207 displaced women and girls in refugee camps are receiving assistance in establishing income-generating programmes. These activities empower women and help to restore their dignity.

“These are just 51 women in a specific area who were able to come forward. Rape is something people don't talk about in this area,” said UN Women Country Programme Manager Rachele Djangone Mian. *“Imagine what the actual number of women and girls raped is.”*

Some 27 exchange spaces, known as “WOYE SIIFA,” have been set up in the two regions. These are for the psycho-social care of displaced women. A national pool of psychologists has been established comprising 40 people responsible for providing care. They are working in occupied areas, through medical convoys, and also in the areas where displaced people are. With financial support from the Netherlands, UN Women is supporting the Army General Staff in educating the defence and security forces about the protection of women and girls. Four United Nations agencies have been successfully associated with the initiative. They are UNI-



UNFPA, UNHCR and UNAIDS.

Above all, UN Women has been documenting cases of rape in all the regions under occupation, drawing attention to gender-based violence that women and girls in the occupied regions are suffering. UN Women is boosting the response by creating cohesion among all the United Nations agencies with responsibility for protection. It has also successfully developed a partnership with women's civil society organizations and with technical and financial partners.

In the field of promoting the rights of women and girls and protecting them against gender-based violence, the most important change has been a proactive approach and comprehensive nature of the response delivered in synergy with other actors. In terms of assisting survivors in the challenges of denunciation, all the services are brought together to provide victims with a holistic response. These services include the media, and psycho-social and legal support.

Responding to such a horrific situation, UN Women developed a partnership with two local NGO's to put in place a holistic approach to support rape victims through the establishment of a gender-based violence unit in the major hospital in the country. In each unit medical and psycho-social support is provided.

To date, out of the 10 planned units, four are fully functional (Gao, Mopti, Kati, Bamako) and more than 1,000 women and girls



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

WOMEN LEADERS MEET IN A WOYE SIIFA, DEBATING HOW TO TACKLE ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN MALI'S CONFLICT AREAS.

have benefited from psycho-social support. Fifty therapy groups have been established to provide space for women and girls to talk about their experiences. UN Women is part of the gender-based violence cluster lobbying the justice ministry to issue a memorandum to all levels of the justice system saying that adequate measures must be taken in order to handle gender-based violence cases as soon as they are submitted.

During this crisis, UN Women has been able to mobilize significant financial resources to support the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in conflict situations. The organization must have qualified personnel in key areas to ensure that implementation is effective. It is overall a strongly strategic approach that should be consolidated.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women has been operating in Mali since 2008 and the activities of UN Women have been intensified since 2010 with the opening of the country office. UN Women's goal is to ensure women's representation at all levels in electoral and designated positions in a violence free and secure environment where wealth is equally distributed to meet basic and strategic needs of men and women. To meet this goal, the actions are in 4 development strategic areas: Increased Women representation in parliament, Rural Women & Women in CBT Access Resources in formal economic, National Action Plan on VAW fully implemented, and the 2011-2013 National Gender P & Budgeting Strategy fully implemented.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

WOMEN MEET TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN MALI AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY AND ITS CITIZENS. THERE ARE 27 SPACES KNOWN AS WOYE SIIFA, WHERE WOMEN CAN SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT ISSUE LIKE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Uniting to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Mozambique: The Story of Chissomo



PHOTOS: UN WOMEN

CHISHOMO (ABOVE AND RIGHT) MAKING STATEMENT AT A MEETING AT THE SCHOOL.

For a 16 year-old, Chissomo Beny, is unusually and acutely aware of her future. She knows the key to her development and economic independence lies in staying away from early marriage and premature pregnancy. When UN Women arrived at her school in Quelimane, Mozambique and set up workshops and activities promoting gender equality, Chissomo was first in line to take part.

Chissomo said the program had a big impact on the students. *“Before, girls’ voices were never heard, but now we don’t feel scared to say that we have rights that must be observed. Even boys now say that there is no justification for violence against girls,”* she said.

A studious girl, she takes her classes seriously and also helps her mother look after her four younger siblings as her father is not

living with the family. Participating in the workshops was a rewarding experience that changed her outlook and relationships with others at school. She said she found a safe space to openly discuss things that are never talked about publicly, like a girl’s right to say no to any type of sexual behavior, even in intimate encounters with boyfriends.

But not all girls and women have the awareness that Chissomo now has. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Women and Social Action in Mozambique, 54 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 44 were found to have suffered from physical or sexual violence.

In a local survey, the National Institute for Statistics, found that 19 per cent of women from the ages of 15-49 said men have the right to hit their partners if their partner



to inform the man when leaving the house; 21 per cent reported that men have the right to hit their partners if their partners fail to pay attention to children; and 19 per cent said men have the right to hit their partners if their partners refuse to have sex with them.

It was statistics such as these that led to Mozambique's strong commitment to fighting violence against women and girls and embracing the UN Secretary-General's UNITE to End Violence against Women Campaign. The Campaign named UNIDOS in Mozambique focuses on getting messages out to secondary schools around the country as an ideal way to reach young people. In September 2012, UN Women Mozambique took UNIDOS to the Province of Zambezia for a three-day programme including debates with students and teachers and a baseline survey with more than 800 students to reveal their perceptions of violence against women.

UNIDOS aims to unmask and change the view that violence against women and girls can only be solved in the privacy of the home, and instead emphasizes that gender-based violence is an issue that should be addressed in public spaces as well. Four Celebrities, two men and two women, were selected to serve as the UNIDOS Champions of Change in Mozambique. These celebrities are well known in the country for their work in different areas such as music and journalism.

A special shooting of a TV Programme "Homen que e Homen" (A Man who is a Man) was completed, which featured among others the UN Women Country Representative, the Chief of Police and one of the Champions of Change, Valdemiro Jose, to deliver the UNIDOS messages to the public. This series aims at changing the way men view women and girls, and even the way girls perceive themselves.

Chissomo was appointed the female representative on the "A man who is a real man" show, which was recorded at her school and broadcast nationally on TV Mozambique. Now she says she feels more respected by her colleagues and her opinions are taken into consideration more seriously as many students see her as a role model.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

MEETING AT CHISHOMO'S SCHOOL

UNIDOS has partnered with Mozambican Female Basket Ball team "Desportivo." As ambassadors of the campaign, team members deliver the UNITE campaign's messages by printing them on T-Shirts, shorts and bags worn by the team in all matches. It was through this partnership that the campaign messages reached nearly 20,000 athletes and spectators during the 10th All Africa Games, which took place in Mozambique in 2010.

UNIDOS has targeted key change makers for social change and mobilization to achieve its objectives. Local community leaders, men, schools and sports organizations were approached as change makers. They will be the face of strategies used to raise awareness and demand action. Programmes include public debates, television programmes, nominating Champions of Change and the delivery of messages through flyers, T-shirts and other similar products.

Mozambique has passed laws and acts which penalize any actions of domestic violence including: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and psychological abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to property; any other controlling or abusive behavior that harms or may cause harm to a person. The penalties include: fines, community work, and imprisonment between 3 days to 8 years.

With laws in place, awareness raising workshops and the highest level of political commitment for action, Mozambique is moving forward to secure a brighter future for girls like Chissomo.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

The UNITE campaign in Mozambique was launched by President Armando Emilio Guebuza, on 2 November, 2010. The President also signed on to the SAY NO and AFRICA UNITE CAMPAIGN. The launch took place during the Second National Conference on Women and Gender bringing together participants from all walks of life – parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, public sector decision makers, and gender equality activists. Eleven Mozambican provinces simultaneously launched the campaign, giving it broad national coverage. The conducive legal framework including the National Action Plan for Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women (2008-2012) and the Act on Domestic Violence Perpetrated against Women took effect on 29 March, 2010 has contributed to the highest level of commitment for actions to end violence against women and girls in Mozambique.



Implementing the Quota Law – Women Move Forward as They Gain Support to Stand for Office in the 2015 Elections in Niger!

Habsou Issoufou is a candidate for the post of councilor of the rural area of Sae Saboua in the Maradi region of Niger. She is married and has four children. Unlike many in her area, she had the good fortune to have gone to school. And now she has been a recipient of UN Women training in governance and leadership, trying to put more women at decision making levels.

Habsou has been loyal to her political party and has worked hard for her committee. She is trying to climb up to the departmental committee. She ran for office in 2010 but lost. She says she will run again in the next polls in 2015 and not give up until her voice is heard.

“UN Women has given us more than money,” said Habsou. “Thanks to the (UN Women training) project we take our position in reclaiming our rights. Notably, we are now allowed to keep an eye on the numbers of voices and to make us equal and close to the leaders of our political parties. If this time my voice is not silent, and I am engaged and can defend myself, and if it pleases God, I will be a councilor in the next election.”



While she waits for the next election, Habsou takes part with other women mobilizing and preparing to train for leadership at the community level and move into the political scene.

Great strides have recently been made toward gender equality in leadership as the number of elected women has increased, especially as deputy mayors. In 2002 a quota law was adopted by the Government obliging all competing political parties to allot 10 percent of their elected positions to women.



WOMEN MAKING GRAIN FOR THEIR PORRIDGE. (LEFT)THE GRANARIES OF THE VILLAGE.

In the last parliamentary elections in 2010, 15 seats of 113 or 13 percent were held by women.

These women elected representatives were once quantified as being “elected by quota” and are now described simply as “elected.” Male elected representatives and the population in general, now see women

as equal representatives. This has huge implications for gender equity. Since Niger’s National Radio Television service reported on



PHOTOS: MAHAMAN BACHAR



PHOTO: MAHAMAN BACHAR

HABSOU, IN THE CENTER WITH THE BLUE SCARF, ACCEPTING GOATS HER GROUP HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO FATTEN UP.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women works to empower women in Niger and supports training for elected women officials. This has given women the confidence to speak up during council meetings and other political gatherings. Similarly, the UN Women project for the “promotion of gender equity and political participation of women in Niger” has also provided training for male elected public officials. Training has covered the gender approach, and gender-sensitive planning and budgeting. It has also contributed to improving men’s perception of women. Finally, practical financial support for conducting income-generating activities has won respect for these women elected as representatives.

“UN Women in the region of Tahoua,” mayors of numerous communes have contacted UN Women or partners and have said they would ‘give way’ to women in the next elections in 2015. With proper preparation between now and the elections, if the candidates are given appropriate training and support, the number of women elected representatives is likely to increase considerably.

This will increase the influence of women in positions to impact council programming decisions and lead to gender-sensitive planning and budgeting. Currently with only a 10 per cent presence of elected women officials at district administration level, they find it difficult to influence or participate in debates as they are outnumbered by men.

One of the fundamental traditional barriers to women’s political participation in Niger is their absence from decision-making positions. UN Women works to empower women in Niger and supports training for elected women officials. This has given women the confidence to speak up during council meetings and other political gatherings. Similarly, the UN Women project for the “promotion of gender equity and political participation of women in Niger” has also provided training for male elected public officials. Training has covered the gender approach, and gender-sensitive planning and budgeting. It has also contributed to improv-

ing men’s perception of women. Practical financial support for conducting income-generating activities has won respect for these women elected as representatives.

The pledge of support by male mayors will definitely bring about changes in the perception of women as credible leaders women as leaders and it will further boost their confidence. It will empower them to take part in community management. Also they will be examples to young girls and also women potential candidates, encouraging them to become more involved as role models.

This change has occurred since the implementation of a number of programmes including training for women, publicity about women’s involvement in local governance being aired on rural community radio stations, and regular debates being organized between male and female elected representatives. The most important factor in this change has been support for the gender aspect of the Community Development Plans in the communes or administrative districts. Thanks to the women and the programmes, communities have received support. This has won women the respect of everyone.

In Niger, one of Africa’s poorest countries, the women elected representatives of the current political term have been very seriously affected by the humanitarian emergency situation, food shortages, floods and

conflicts on its northern border with Libya and western border with Mali. Niger is still developing, and consistently ranks as one of the lowest ranks of the United Nations’ Human Development Index (HDI), 186th of 187 countries in 2011.

The traditional sources of support have been strained by the humanitarian situation. As a result, few communes have benefited from the interventions of technical and financial partners. All of this means that the training sessions and achievements have been particularly powerful and badly needed by its citizens.

For Habsou and her colleagues, UN Women’s training has provided a path to the future, which would otherwise be unobtainable. By supporting women to use their political voices and know their rights, gender equality is within reach.



Weaving for a Better Life – “Agaseke” Changes the Lives of 2,000 Women in Rwanda

“As a widow, I didn’t know what to do to raise my six children” said an Agaseke basket weaver at the Kabuga production site in Rwanda, “but now, I can pay school fees for my children and contribute to the mutual health insurance”.

Agaseke is a unique and highly valued traditional basket in the Rwandan culture. It is primarily woven by women and symbolizes the keeping of secrets of households. These baskets are used as gifts to girls getting married as a symbol of purity and virginity. The baskets are also used in households as food plates and containers for dry food products.



The Agaseke is a symbol of generosity, gratitude, and compassion. Whether transporting wedding gifts, offerings to the priests, or bringing food to a friend in need, the process of giving is always the common thread.

After the 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which some 800,000 people perished, Agaseke weaving was used as a symbol to promote peace, unity and love among women of different ethnic groups. As so many men were killed, many women were left as widows. Perpetrators were also in most of cases men and were sent to prison for their crimes after the genocide. As part of a healing process, women from the two groups (survivors and perpetrators) sat together in a common place to weave the Agaseke products and used the opportunity for healing and reconciliation.

In the ancient times, weaving was a hobby and done in the afternoons by mothers after field work. They also taught their daughters how to weave Agaseke products from an early age. Today, women are more engaged in other economic activities which don’t allow them additional time for the traditional weav-



PHOTOS: UN WOMEN

THESE BASKETS SIGNIFY HOPE AND BOUNTY FOR THE FUTURE. WOMEN WOULD WEAVE BASKETS AFTER COMPLETING THEIR WORK IN THE FIELDS.

ing. In addition young girls are more and more enrolling in formal education and this leaves the culture of weaving to the informal sector.

In order to strengthen the income of more than 2,000 poor and vulnerable women, the UN joint Agaseke programme was established in 2010, in collaboration with City of Kigali to support the socio-economic empowerment of women in the City of Ki-

gali through Agaseke basket weaving. As a joint programme the main partners of the initiative are UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, UNIDO, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, while UN Women plays the





role of lead agency.

The results of the joint programme are tangible. Today, 2,000 vulnerable and poor women of Kigali have their own bank accounts or have been organized into functional cooperatives to enhance access to financial services. They have also improved their marketing skills and now sell their products to local and international markets, including the USA and Japan. Furthermore, the women participate in international trade fairs and local study tours and therefore have greater exposure of their products in and outside of Rwanda.

Besides enhanced knowledge of beneficiaries in cooperative management, entrepreneurship, finance and saving schemes, participating women also improved their life skills, including kitchen gardening as well as knowledge on SGBV, HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health issues.

The next phase of the project will lay emphasis on improving production and diversification of products. Due to the programme's success the Agasekes were showcased at the annual conference on Delivering as One held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 8 to 10 November 2011.

Women in the informal sector will continue to value weaving in Rwanda as a means



PHOTOS: UN WOMEN

BASKETS ARE GIFTS GIVEN BEFORE A WEDDING AS A BLESSING AND BEST WISHES. RWANDAN BASKETS LIKE THESE ARE SEEN ALL OVER AFRICA AND IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD.

of creating wealth. The 'culture of weaving' is highly valued in Rwanda, these are reasons why there are plans to upscale the project to the districts. Even though older women were involved in weaving in the past, now a greater number of younger women are joining the weaving cooperatives.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women's goal is to support the socio-economic empowerment of women in the City of Kigali through basket weaving (Agaseke). In order to strengthen the income of more than 2,000 poor and vulnerable women, the UN joint programme "Agaseke" was initiated in 2010 by the UN in Rwanda in collaboration with City of Kigali. The main UN collaborating partners include; UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, UNIDO, ILO, FAO, UNESCO and UN Women (the lead agency. Other stakeholders for the Agaseke are Imbutu Foundation (First Lady's Office), Rwanda Development Board and the Ministry of Trade.



PHOTOS: UN WOMEN

WOMEN GATHER TO WEAVE IN THE TRADITIONAL RWANDAN METHOD. ONCE WEAVING WAS DONE BY ALL WOMEN BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED AND FEW WERE LEARNING THE CRAFT, UNTIL THIS PROGRAM REJUVENATED THE SKILL.



Following Elections, Proportion of Women in Parliament almost Doubles in Senegal



PRESIDENT MACKY SALL IN THE WOMEN'S SITUATION ROOM.

Senegal has made great strides in equal participation for women in politics. Now nearly 45 percent of the seats in parliament are occupied by women. There are a total of 150 seats and 64 are held by women. These impressive results are a result of a conducive legal framework coupled with multiple strategies for engaging women in elections.

A law was passed on May 28, 2010 calling for equal distribution of seats in parliament. This law on parity is seen as a major step forward in women's political participation in the country. This legislation is aimed at securing full equal representation in all elective and semi-elected bodies and at all levels, national, regional or local. The electoral law provides a mandatory requirement that all candidate lists for legislative, regional, municipal and rural elections be comprised of an equal number of male and female candidates, presented on the list in an alternating order.

This legislation is the result of a process

that dates to 2008 when UN Women supported the draft legislation committee, as well as the Senegalese Council of Women (COSEF), which is a coalition of women from the country's various political parties and women researchers advocating the law's passage. *"This is the end of a long and hard fight, taken up over several generations. The road has been long, the fight must continue and there is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed,"* said Fatou Sarr Sow, gender expert and President of Senegal's Caucus of Female Leaders, a women's organization established to push for the adoption of the law.

From 2009 to 2010, collaborating with COSEF and the ministry responsible for women's Affairs, UN Women supported a large-scale public awareness initiative to explain the parity law and get greater support. On 28 May, 2010, the day when the law was to be voted on in the National Assembly, women from all 14 regions of Senegal who had been mobilized through the campaign, dressed in white, and came to the National

PHOTO: UN WOMEN

Assembly to affirm their support for the law. The law was voted in on that day but then needed a decree to be put into force.

In June 2011, UN Women supported the Ministry of Gender to organize an international conference as part of the process towards ensuring that the law would enter into force before the elections of 2012. The then president Abdoulaye Wade issued a decree enforcing the parity law on 16 June, 2011, the day before the start of the conference.

In support of increased participation of women, UN Women provided technical and financial support to the new Ministry of Women's Affairs, Children and Women's Entrepreneurship to organize training for about 300 women on the electoral lists in preparation for the July 2012 parliamentary elections. This training was held in May-June 2012. The women were from all political parties. They in turn participated in the public awareness campaign run in fourteen regions in Senegal.

"It's a good idea to bolster female capacity-building before they go out in the field, and before they start the election campaign," explains Coura Ndiaye, a leading candidate for a political party for parliamentary elections in the Department of Thiès, who trained on the electoral process and campaign techniques. *"Women must be better equipped in order to acquire the skills to be able to represent their peers in the National Assembly."*

In March when the presidential elections were held, UN Women then supported the launching of a Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections, to advocate for peaceful and



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



PRESIDENT MACKY SALL WITH DR. JOSEPHINE ODERA (UN WOMEN REGIONAL PROGRAMME DIRECTOR W.A.)

other countries holding elections in the coming year. In Senegal, the Situation Room was coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité, and brought together national and international Non-Governmental Organizations focused on promoting women’s rights, peace building, and ending violence against women and girls.

Supported by UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme, and with the participation of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the Women’s Platform trained

PHOTO: UN WOMEN

transparent elections, mobilize women to vote and sensitize officials on participation of women in particular situations (pregnant women, women with children, handicapped women). Initiated by Liberian women in their elections of 2011 as a mechanism for conflict prevention and mediation, the platform has enabled female leaders to join and organize observer missions during the electoral process, using a gender-based approach. The platform is also known as the “**Situation Room**”. The Situation Room is now being duplicated in Sierra Leone where to date it has the greatest reach and buy in. The Situation Room is expected to be duplicated in

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

The Senegal Country Programme aims to support the consolidation of gender equality commitments at national and local levels through active support to government and civil society. The actions focus on 4 development strategic areas namely: support the implementation and awareness-raising of the parity law in Senegal; improving the working conditions of women in agriculture, fishing and food processing in Senegal; support awareness-raising and capacity among government, civil society and women on the need to reform the existing law on GBV and provide services to victims of GBV; and support the tracking of the implementation of the PRSPs and strengthen the capacity of the ministries and local communities to carry out GRB.

and deployed 50 women leaders from Senegal and neighboring countries to act as observers during the first and second rounds of the presidential elections, held on 26 February and 25 March. In accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325 and its related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, the Platform aims to ensure the active participation of women and girls in peaceful, democratic electoral processes.

Other women leaders from Senegal and across the continent who were part of the platform for peace, (Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso and more) expressed the hope that the new president would implement the parity law enacted in May 2011 and deals with gender inequalities legally and institutionally. In an ensuing lively debate, President Sall affirmed his commitment to the parity law. “I will not reverse the gains”, he assured.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN

PRESIDENT OBANSANJO AND BINTA DIOP OF FAS (WOMEN’S SITUATION ROOM) DURING SENEGALESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Rural Grandmothers Graduate as “Barefoot Solar Engineers” Transforming the Lives of Over 200 Households in Remote Tanzania



PHOTO: LESLEY READER

THE SIX TANZANIAN SOLAR ENGINEERS WITH THEIR CONSIGNMENT OF SOLAR EQUIPMENT. (FROM LEFT) ESHA MOHAMED MWANGA, SOFIA HAMISI MNANDI, AMINA HASSANI NACHINGULU, FATIMA MOHAMED MZUNGU, MARIAM ISSA LUWONGO AND ARAFA MWAMBA HALFANI.

Six women from three remote villages in Mtwara and Lindi districts in southern Tanzania have helped to change the lives of their communities after training as “barefoot solar engineers”.

Today, women in these remote villages can cook at night with the aide of solar lamp light while their children do homework in the evenings. Even safety has improved due to the work from this group of mothers and grandmothers.

The women were sent to the Barefoot College in Tilonia India, for training on solar electricity installation and maintenance as part of the UN Women-Barefoot College India “Rural Women Light up Africa” initiative. After six months, the trainees graduate as “Barefoot Solar Engineers”. They then return to their villages, electrify households with solar

lighting units and assume responsibility for repair and maintenance for a minimum of five years. The “Barefoot Solar Engineers” play a key role in sustaining and replicating solar technology in rural communities.

These women are role models for youth as well as the elderly. “My mother used to just be at home, now she has come back and is an engineer and a leader. She is on the Village Committee. When I grow up I will also be a leader. Maybe I will be President,” said a 10-year old girl from the Chekeleni village.

Despite being illiterate, of modest means and having never travelled outside Tanzania before, the first six engineers within weeks of returning home had managed to start setting up a solar electricity system for the three small villages of Chekeleni, Nitekela and Mkwajuni. Already, 69 households in Chekeleni

village are now illuminated by solar power. Villagers pay for their equipment in installments over five years and receive one 20 watt solar panel, one 12 volt battery, one charger and three nine watt lamps for each household. The women are now working to complete the electrification of the two other villages. They are paid a monthly stipend of 60,000 shillings for their work. The stipends and costs for maintenance are paid from a community savings scheme, whereby all the households which signed up to the initiative pay a total of 60,000 shillings per year.

Two women from Nitekela in Mtwara Dis

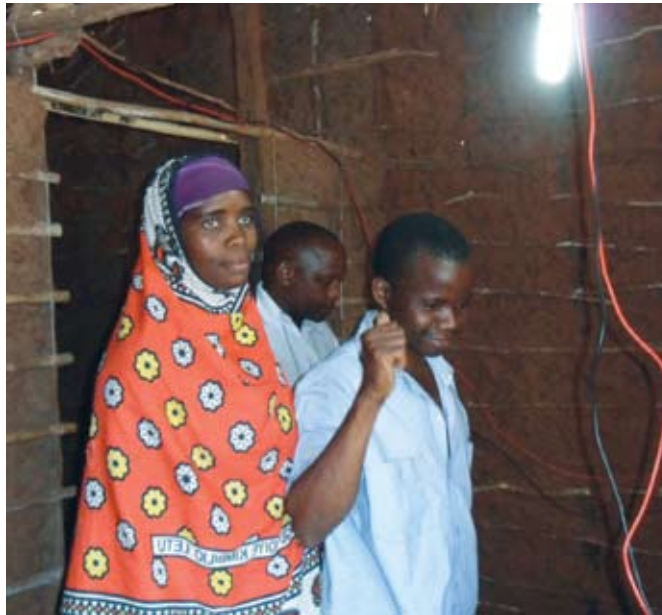
trict were sent for training. Now 56 out of 120 households have been equipped for solar power. The community is opening a bank account to keep dues collected so they can be used to purchase or replace spare parts for the solar system. In this community alone, women's voices have increased as three of the seven members of the Energy Committee are women and the committee chair is a woman.

"We would like to thank UN Women, the ministry and the government of India for their support and we hope this will be a challenge to other women who want changes and want to eradicate poverty," said Luwongo Dafa upon completion of her studies. Trainee Arafa Halfani, said they were happy with the new skills and they would use them to help communities around them.

Even skeptics have been won over. In one of the villages at an initial meeting when the idea of the solar engineers was introduced, one elder, a man, was vocal in his doubts that these women could do the job. Several months later, he sought out UN Women and said the women engineers had installed solar equipment in his house and they had even repaired a subsequent problem.

He was effusive in his support of UN Women and the programme in general. He said he was benefiting from a much better life through the training of these women.

SOLAR ENGINEER ARAFA MWAMBA HALFANI FROM CHEKELENI CHECKING ONE OF HER SOLAR INSTALLATIONS.



MEMBERS OF MJIMWEMA'S VILLAGE ENERGY COMMITTEE DEMONSTRATE THEIR RURAL WORKSHOP IS UP AND RUNNING.

PHOTO: LESLEY READER

There are tangible benefits of the solar programme to the community as a whole. There are savings from the cost of kerosene - 5,000 shillings on solar power compared to 6,000 shillings a month on kerosene; charging cell phones - 300 shillings per cell phone charge in the market compared to 200 shillings with solar power. Health and safety hazards are reduced because highly flammable kerosene is no longer needed.

Well-lit places provide extra security and most member households have a light bulb at their door, which serves as a street lamp for passersby and may help in the reduction of violence in general and violence against women and girls in particular.

The sustainability of the initiative is not in question either. The Folk-Development College in the nearby town of Mtwanya has now agreed to fund and set up a solar energy training center. The original six women trained at Barefoot College headquarters will train new students on the skills that they acquired in India. If successful, the establishment of this college will allow for the Ministry of Community Development to roll out this initiative in other regions of Tanzania.

Observers say this is a very popular initiative and many more people would like to

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

The Barefoot College of India (founded by Bunker Roy in 2004) has been training rural women, mainly grandmothers, from Africa to become "barefoot solar engineers". UN Women and Barefoot College of India entered into a partnership in 2011 to upscale and expand this initiative within the framework of the Africa Rural Women's Programme. As a result, 25 rural illiterate women from four countries namely, Liberia (8), South Sudan (9), Tanzania (6) and Uganda (2) went to India for a 6 month training in the installation and maintenance of solar panels and its systems to electrify their own homes and villages. The women went to India in September 2011 and returned to their countries in March 2012. The initiative is implemented with support from the Government of India and in close partnership and collaboration of the respective governments – particularly the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Ministries of Community Development and the Ministries of Energy. UN Women contributed a total of **US\$450,000.00** to this initiative.

sign up for the programme. Households are willing to pay membership fees as they have seen the results of the project and a change in their community for the better. For new "solar engineers" like Luwongo and Arafa who had nothing, solar power has provided a new beginning, a place in the community and a much brighter future.



Zimbabwean Women Police Make Strides as Members of the ‘Blue Berets’ – Bringing a New Culture of Leadership to Peace-Keeping Missions



PHOTO: PATRICIA MADE

(LEFT TO RIGHT): SUPERINTENDENT SITHULISIWE MTHIMKHULU, SUPERINTENDENT ROSINA MAMUTSE, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CHARITY CHARAMBA, SUPERINTENDENT JESSIE BANDA, SUPERINTENDENT KANI MOYO, ASSISTANT INSPECTOR MUCHANETA ISABELL NGWENYA.

When Superintendent Kani Moyo joined the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur, Sudan, her dream of one day putting on a blue beret came true. “I have been on the Zimbabwean Police Force for 31 years and I work in the Victim Friendly Unit as a gender trainer. I’ve always wanted to be one of the blue berets and my dream came true,” said Moyo who served for 15 months as a Gender Police Advisor and Officer in Charge of Training in Nyala with the African Union/United Nations Hybrid peacekeeping operation in Darfur known as UNAMID.

Zimbabwe is one of the few countries in Africa where the number of female peacekeepers from a police meets the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations recommendation of at least 10 per cent female representation. Eighteen per cent of

the peacekeepers from the Zimbabwe police are women.

Some of the most positive developments of the past 10 years include an increase in the number of women serving as UN Peacekeepers and in all-women police peacekeeping units, more training for soldiers on gender issues and sexual violence against women and increased numbers of women in national parliaments.

A total of 189 female police officers out of 1,063 officers from the Zimbabwe police have taken part in eight peacekeeping missions worldwide. The first woman went on mission to East Timor in 2000, seven years after the police began participating in peacekeeping.

“I look at the United Nations as an organization that unites people. I learned a lot from the police officers I worked with on missions and there has been a lot of cross-

cultural learning about policies and other issues,” said Superintendent Jessie Banda who served as a Communications Officer for a year in Kosovo and as a Community Policing Officer for 15 months in Darfur.

Assistant Police Commissioner Charity Charamba, who served for three years in Liberia, says working internationally gives the women blue berets the chance to see different types of police practice and to share experiences.

Charamba also recalled that being the third highest ranking official in the mission in Liberia had its gender challenges. “I had to assert myself, because at first the male

colleagues, both at the senior and lower ranks, treated me as if I did not know my duties and at times, did not acknowledge my presence,” she said. She told of one instance when she asked a lower ranking officer for information. Instead of the details being sent to her, they were sent to her superior. “Over time, as I carried out my duties, there was a gradual process of respect,” she said.

She noted in Zimbabwe women are encouraged to advance within the force, but this is often not the case in many of the countries where the blue berets serve.

“In Darfur, Sudan, before independence, the local people looked at you as if you were different, because you are a woman in uniform. Also, being a Muslim country, the local male police officers did not take it lightly receiving orders from a woman,” said Superintendent Sithulisiwe Mthimkhulu, who has been on peacekeeping missions in Sudan and Liberia.

A majority of the female police peacekeepers from around the world want to serve in major cities and rarely opt for postings in rural areas because they prefer a stable infrastructure to live in. Zimbabwean blue berets are different as they come from all over the countryside and are used to rural living, said Charamba.

UN Women in close partnership with the Department of Peace Keeping Opera-



SUPERINTENDENT KANI MOYO.

tions (DPKO) has been instrumental in providing training to the peace keepers prior to their deployment. These peacekeepers noted that their pre-deployment training prepared them well for their mission and included training and mentoring of local police officers, community and gender policy, criminal investigations advisers, investigating and providing counseling to rape survivors.

One area they said they need more training in is information and communications technology for preparing reports and power point presentations. Learning more about the laws, especially gender based violence laws, and cultures of the countries where they are sent would enhance their preparedness in the field.

But these peacekeepers are still wives and mothers and must find ways to balance their duties in the field on mission and their roles back at home. “You are still at home, even while on mission. The family responsibilities, funerals, it all follows you to the field. I was in a meeting once when I got the news of the death of a relative who was very close to me. I had to focus and continue with the meeting and cried alone later. It is not easy. Things happen and maintaining the balance is hard,” said Charamba.



ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CHARITY CHARAMBA.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women Zimbabwe in 2012 introduced the area of Gender and Peace as one of its strategic thematic areas of work. Building on existing initiatives and in collaboration with Zimbabwean institutions and organizations, UN Women’s aim is to encourage dialogue and to help foster gender equality, sustainable development and peace. UN Women’s key objectives in Zimbabwe are the prevention and adequate response to sexual and gender-based violence, female participation at all levels of decision-making, gender sensitive peace building and supporting non-discriminatory practices.

UN Women also supports the Group of 20 in Zimbabwe - well known women public figures forming a coalition looking at the draft new constitution and lobbying for gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the country. The group’s principles range from the need to better protect women’s socio-economic rights and right to security, to strengthening affirmative action. The principles also call for better access to resources through gender-sensitive public financing, and for a legislated quota of 50/50 representation of women in all decision-making.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Binga Women Venture into the Non-Traditional Fishing Industry – Thanks to the First Women’s Savings and Credit Union of Zimbabwe



PHOTO: UN WOMEN- PAT MADE

WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE KAPENTA FISHING RIG PRODUCTION UNIT - SOPHIE MWIINDE, CHAIR OF THE PRODUCTION UNIT FAR RIGHT - BRINGING A 30 KG BAG OF KAPENTA TO THE LAUNCH OF THE BANK TO FORMALLY THANK UN WOMEN FOR ITS INVESTMENTS IN WOMEN IN THE AREA.

Sofia Mwiinde, knows first-hand what it means to move from having almost no income to earning enough money to take care of her family’s basic needs. She is the chairperson of the production unit on the first all-female fishing rig in Binga, Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe.

In a little over a year’s time, the single mother of two has seen her income of almost nothing as a fish trader in the Siachilaba fish market increase to US\$100-US\$200 a month. She is one of the first 10 women on a kapenta (small fish) fishing rig provided with the support of UN Women.

“I have managed to pay school fees for my children; learned how to budget, something I knew nothing about; and I’ve learned

what it means to work as a team to produce something,” Mwiinde said.

Her next ambition is to learn how to drive, and as one of the newest shareholder members of the first Women’s Bank to open in Binga, Mwiinde has several business ideas bubbling. *“We are very grateful for what UN Women did in supporting the fishing rig and now the opening of a bank that provides loans for women in Binga,”* said Mwiinde who acquired micro-financing from the bank to operate a stall in a flea market to earn additional income. *“I feel important and successful.”*

With support from UN Women, the ZUBO/ Basilizwi Trust and the Women in Development Savings and Credit Union (WDSCU), opened the first bank for women in

Binga in mid-July 2012. It was officially inaugurated in October 2012. WDSCU has 14 banks across the country and while this is the second largest bank in Zimbabwe’s Matabeleland Province, it is the first in a rural area of the province. UN Women provided a grant for the start up of the bank in Binga.

The bank has provided 126 loans on average of about US\$250 since opening, and according to WDSCU’s director Sphiwe Gudza, the re-payment rate in Binga is 97 per cent. *“The women repay in three monthly instalments and we have had a big impact here.”*



have assisted women who had no capital for their projects, who have now managed to stock their small businesses, start poultry and goat projects and improve their fish trading,” Gudza said. The women on the kapenta fishing rig have a group account at the new bank, and they also access loans as individuals to supplement their income through individual projects.

There are 475 members of the bank and 371 are shareholders. Women become shareholders by paying US\$30 dollars more than the US\$10 joining fee. Since it started, the bank has built a financial base of US\$4625 from membership and shareholder fees.

“The bank is based on the cooperative-banking model, which serves only members and shareholders. Women who are shareholders own a stake of the cooperative and they can participate in decisions through the local board. If we have a surplus at the end of the year, then we share this among the shareholders,” Gudza explained.

In Binga, where 58 per cent of the households are female-headed, the bank is providing women with the means to take care of their families and make choices that will help them to become economically empowered. At the launch of the Women’s Bank in Binga in October 2012, women told how they struggled to find financing to start small business-



UN WOMEN’S SENIOR ADVISER FOR WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT RECEIVING THE 30KG BAG OF KAPENTA FROM ONE OF THE FISHING RIG MEMBERS DURING THE CEREMONY FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE WOMEN’S BANK.

PHOTO: UN WOMEN - PAT MADE

es. “I had few stocks in my shop, but now it is well stocked since I got a loan from the bank,” said Ezra Munkuli. “This bank can compete with the big banks and it will grow step-by-step.”

Jessie Mudimba, who dropped out of secondary school, said she has tried her hand at sewing and other ventures to make ends meet. She took a loan from the bank to open a small supermarket and says now, “Some men wish they could marry me because of what I own.”

The women, from the Tonga ethnic group, formally entered the male-dominated fishing industry in 2010 after being provided with the rig, equipment and skills training.

They have since been working to scale up the venture in Binga, one of the country’s least developed districts, so that it can sustain them and their families, as well as create opportunities for other women in the area.

This is the first time since the 1950s that women from their ethnic group have been able to fish at all. Although it was traditionally Tonga women who fished, using traditional Zubo baskets, aspects of their matrilineal culture changed when the group were displaced by the construction of the Kariba Dam during the colonial era. Their access to resources reduced, and their participation in community fishing ended.

The Zubo Basilizwi Trust, a women-focused development organization, secured the fishing rig for the women traders in Siachilaba, supported by UN Women. Designed with women in mind, it has toilets and showering facilities, includes special technology such as a fish locator, and is slightly larger than those on most other rigs to provide more stability on the river.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

Since 2009, UN Women has been the fund manager for the Gender Support Project (GSP), a multi-donor fund aimed at strengthening the coordination of approaches and efforts by women’s organizations to engage in national development policies and programs. Over the years, the GSP has directly funded over 100 civil society organizations working in rural and peri-urban areas to improve access to social services for survivors of violence, to enhance women’s economic empowerment and to strengthen women’s leadership skills.

PHOTO: UN WOMEN - PAT MADE



THE NEW BANK JUST BEFORE THE RIBBON WAS CUT ON OCT 11, 2012.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women