



## EDITORIAL

The 31<sup>st</sup> of July marked the 49<sup>th</sup> celebration of African Women's Day. For that occasion, MEWC, published an article on our website analyzing some of the major advancement and set-backs that women have faced throughout Africa.

It became clear that although progress has been made, it is not enough. Several states have made major advancements in promoting women's rights, but still fall short of protecting women. Startlingly, very little progress has been made in several countries.

Thirty years after the adoption of CEDAW, many women and girls still do not have equal opportunities to realize rights recognized by law. In some countries, women are denied the right to own property or inherit land. They face social exclusion, "honor killings", FGM, trafficking, restricted mobility and early marriage, among others.

In conflict riddled areas like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Ivory Coast, Darfur region in Sudan, women are raped as a weapon of war with no impunity.

The lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, including access to family planning, pre and post-natal care, emergency obstetric services and access to information are among the biggest challenges that women face in Africa. Pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death for women in Africa. It is unacceptable in the 21st century for a woman to die while giving birth. Society needs to be fixed so that girls and women can have equal access to health information and services, education, employment and political positions.

These short-comings make us look forward to what the next 9 years will bring under the African Women's Decade. Will we see countries strive to improve their women's rights record? Will we see the change we have been hoping for? Our answer is YES!

If we come together, continue to publicize the African Women Decade and lobby governments to make changes, we will see our hopes and dreams come true.

## INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

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### [AFRICA: OUR INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH KHADIGA HUSSEIN](#)

[Khadiga Hussein](#) is a 71 year old Sudanese -women's rights and community development activist, having entered the humanitarian field in 1960. Khadiga is the founder of [Sudanese Mothers for Peace](#), a women's organisation that works for peace in Sudan. In her early career Khadiga travelled to Egypt to undertake research at a UNESCO centre. She graduated as a specialist in community development as well as producing research on FGM, which was subsequently published in three different languages. In 1984 Khadiga Hussein took up the post as state Minister for Peace. In 1988 the military coup by the National Congress Party (NCP) and led by Omar Al Bashir took power of Sudan. The NCP quickly dissolved all civil society organisations as well as the Ministry for Peace. After the military coup, Khadiga continued her work for the advancement of peace and community development. One of her many initiatives was working with displaced peoples in and around the capital Khartoum. In 1992, whilst Khadiga was attending to her community initiatives, she was arrested by the state and held in a female only prison.

While she was in prison, Khadiga took the opportunity to ask women the reason of their imprisonment. She learnt that most of them were either from Southern Sudan or the Nuba Mountains. They said that they had been imprisoned because they had been caught brewing and selling alcohol in Khartoum. Khadiga as well as the imprisoned women could not see the sense in this, as these women were not Muslim and therefore Sharia law should not have been made applicable to them. Khadiga raised the issue of Sharia law upon her release to the Sudanese Government and this proved to ultimately be a defining moment in the attainment of certain legal rights for non Muslims in the Sudan. Khadiga continues to work as a women's rights activist with Sudanese Mothers for Peace, as well as UK WILPF's Voices of African Women campaign (VoAW). Khadiga has received awards such as the one of 100 women who did great deeds for Sudan in the last century and the extraordinary award as a community champion in peace building, as well as an Award as an Ambassador for Peace with WANGO organisation associated with the UN.

### **On Sunday 31st of July, we celebrate the African Women's Day, what do you think has been achieved in Africa in regards to gender issues?**

The most important achievement with regards to African women's rights is that the voices of African women are heard all over the world. For a time, we were marginalised due to tradition, national and customary law. We are told that as women we should not raise our voice, and that our place is to stay at home and care for the family. Women in Africa are told that they need to keep quiet, just eat and drink and care for the family. They were not allowed to be independent financially. I believe that it is important for a woman to be independent and I think to be independent financially, women need to be educated. This is why I always say education is the most important thing we need in Africa with regard to women's empowerment. If the woman is educated she knows her rights and she will be able to raise her voice and combine it with other women voices around the world. I think that the breakthrough of technology is one of the advantages women have as a tool to claim their rights. Technology plays an important role in the struggle of women rights. Thanks to

technology, women have the capacity to make themselves heard and to work with other women's organisations around the world to discuss their experiences. Now, women are talking loudly, which was not allowed in the past. Now for the first time in Africa, we have a woman who is a leader in her country. In many other countries in Africa, women are taking on top jobs.

***In October 2010, the AU launched the African Women's Decade, what do you think this decade represents to African women?***

This decade is very important for African women. For the first time, the African governments have come together to dedicate a decade to African women that puts women at the centre of every initiative that African countries will undertake over the next 10 years. I think if we could achieve by 2020 the 50/50 quota it would be a great success. I noticed that many women in different African countries are working hard to achieve that. Especially when I see young women like you, in a foreign country working to promote women's empowerment in Africa. We need to work together, all African women and the Diaspora, to make this decade a success so that when we look back after 10 years, we feel proud for what we have achieved.

***In 2003, the African Union adopted the Maputo protocol but so far, only 31 countries have ratified the protocol. Why do you think it is taking so long for African countries to ratify the Maputo Protocol?***

I think that the reason behind this is that most African Governments are not very much to uphold women's rights and of course we have the problem of the governance. Most African Governments, or those who are on top, do not believe in democracy or human rights. So it is not easy to make them understand why they need to promote women's empowerment and rights. We are human and this is our right, but the change happening at the moment in the Arab world and in North Africa will bring change to women's rights in Africa in the very near future. I don't know how long it will take but one day, it will come through. I think, For two things, first, a government that doesn't believe in democracy and human rights will be removed from power by their own population. Secondly, women, not only in Africa, but all over the world are now awakening and they are fighting for their rights. The outcome is that one-day women will enjoy their full rights as human being.

***What are the most pressing issues for women in Africa and what are the primary actions to take in response to these issues?***

To answer this question, I would like to mention an example from a research I carried out in the Nuba Mountains in Sudan. I found out that there is a large difference in education between men and women. Men outnumber women at school because most parents prefer investing in boys' education rather than girls. In order for women to take their right place in the society, we need to educate the younger generation who are going to be the future agents of change. Education is the most important thing African women need. We need to educate and raise awareness of women's rights in our community. Without education, we will not win the battle of gender equality in Africa.

***How can we make sure young women have their place in the women's rights movements in Africa?***

Thanks god that now the world has become a small village. When you find women who have the same thoughts, they will help. African women who are working in the fields of women's rights, they should make sure that the younger generation is part of their work. They need to train those who will be the future leaders of tomorrow. Without the participation of young women, our fight is bound to fail. Younger women are our future. We need to make sure that they receive adequate training, tools and resources to empower themselves. We need to support young women in their efforts to achieve women's rights and tackle global challenges

***Why do you think Africa countries are lagging behind on upholding women's rights?***

In the past, men used to take up the tough job. They used to go hunting and bring food for his family. They were the bread-winners. Women, on the other hand, have to prepare and take care of the house. However, things have changed today. Women are doing the same jobs as men, which is making them financially independent. Men often feel threatened when women compete with them. They want women to stay at home and to look after the children. But today, women are standing up for their rights and fighting to be treated as equals.

***What is your message to African women?***

All I would tell to African women is to be proud of themselves. I have been to many countries and I have met many women, but I have never seen women who are dedicated to their cause like the African women. I would tell to all African women to never lose hope. We need to work together to bring peace to Africa.



Khadiga Hussein

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**HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH**

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**[AFRICA: OUR HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH WITH NJOMBA USAWA WOMEN ASSOCIATION](#)**

Njombe Usawa Women Association (NUWA) is a women's organisation working in rural Njombe region in Tanzania, aiming to build women's capacity by raising HIV/AIDS awareness, providing care and treatment for HIV victims, and offering assistance for human and legal rights. NUWA mission is to empower rural women and local institutions by building their capacity to work effectively together to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS spreading and to promote women's rights to property ownership and inheritance.

NUWA was established in the year 2010 as a group of few women who saw the threat of women in Njombe of getting even more marginalized due to national and customary issues concerning the position of women in the society.

The vision of NUWA is seeing a free society where women have free and equal opportunities in participating to enhance social welfare.

NUWA recognizes that, women, youth and children as the most vulnerable victims of conflict, disaster and underdevelopment. Therefore, their primary focus is the woman, youth and the child. All their work is designed to bring hope and a future to the women, youth and children of Tanzania. [read more](#)



Njombe Usawa Women Association (NUWA)

## TOP WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY NEWS

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### [WEST AFRICA: WEST AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS TRAIN IN PEACEBUILDING AND MEDIATION](#)

*Source: UN WOMEN*

This week UN Women and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) are training women leaders to strengthen their mediation capacities in peacebuilding processes to prioritize women's specific needs.

### [GAMBIA: GAT SENSITISES NBR WOMEN](#)

*Source: Congolese Women's Group*

The North Bank Regional Gender Action Team (GAT) recently held series of sensitisation meetings in cluster villages of Ngain Sanjal, Kataba, Illiassa, Dasilami, Prince and Pakau Njogu.

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## TOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NEWS

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### [UGANDA: POST WAR RECONSTRUCTION IGNORES VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE](#)

*Source: IPS*

Ester Abeja has experienced both physical and emotional atrocities. She was captured by Uganda's feared rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and was forced to join them.

### [KENYA: SOMALI WOMEN RAPED ENROUTE TO KENYA](#)

*Source: Captial FM News*

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Director for Africa Bunmi Makinwa has expressed concern that women and young girls are being subjected to rape and other forms of sexual harassment when fleeing from Somalia to camps in Kenya.

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## TOP POLITICAL PARTICIPATION NEWS

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### [ZAMBIA: WOMEN'S POLL PARTICIPATION IN LUANGWA CHEERS LOBBY GROUP](#)

*Source: All Africa*

The women's lobby in Luangwa District has expressed happiness at the higher participation of women in this year's elections in Feira Constituency. Luangwa District women's lobby coordinator, Naomi Namula her organisation was impressed become more women had stepped forward to contest the elections.

### [SIERRA LEONE: WOMEN MOVING FORWARD IN POLITICS](#)

*Source: All Africa*

When Marie Jalloh first ran for office in 2007, resistance to women in politics in Sierra Leone was so strong she faced harassment and intimidation from local authorities. Now, not only is she a member of parliament; she and other women, along with local NGOs, have brought the country closer to a legal quota for women in decision-making posts.

## TOP ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT NEWS

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### [SOUTH AFRICA: WOMEN WANT ECONOMIC SAY](#)

*Source: The New Age*

Throng of women who attended the annual women's parliament in Mafikeng on Friday called for economic engagement by women in order to mainstream their voice.

### [RWANDA: DISTRICT URGED TO ADOPT GENDER RESPONSIVE PLANNING](#)

*Source: All Africa*

The deputy Chief Gender Monitor, Ramazani Barengayabo, has petitioned districts to support policies aimed at economically empowering women.

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## TOP HIV/AIDS & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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### [UGANDA: PROMOTING MATERNAL HEALTH SHOULD BE A PRIORITY](#)

*Source: All Africa*

For a woman who lives in the urban centre, has education, a job and a gainfully employed spouse- living on two incomes guarantees a sense of safety. For the rural woman, who performs unpaid household chores, has no education or any steady income or nutritious meal, and a spousal relation with a man of no means- life is a risk each and every hour.

### [TANZANIA: GENDER VIOLENCE FUELS HIV/AIDS INFECTIONS](#)

*Source: All Africa*

ANY person who intentionally transmits HIV to another person commits an offence and on conviction the culprit shall be liable to life imprisonment. This amounts to gender violence and is partially what the HIV and AIDS Prevention Control Act (2007) seeks to curb.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

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### [ZIMBABWE: ZIM ACTIVIST DEFENDS HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

*Source: The Zimbabwean*

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, a Zimbabwean human rights activist who grew up in Murewa, is the General Secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association and is the recent recipient of the Women's Human Rights Defenders Award. She spoke to Grace Chirumanzu from her base in Geneva, Switzerland.

### [GHANA: LET'S PROMOTE EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT - MOWAC](#)

*Source: Ghana News Agency*

Ms. Faustina Otobil, Deputy Western Regional Director of the Department of Women and Children, said on Thursday that there was the need for equity and empowerment of women to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on women by 2015. To achieve that, she said, the government is implementing a comprehensive policy framework for mainstreaming gender in Ghana's socio-economic development agenda.



## **FEATURED RESOURCES**

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### **[DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN LAW](#)**

**Source:** *EQUALITY NOW*

This report draws from the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Since 2005, this committee has referenced discrimination against women in law in 137 countries. Where countries submitted two reports in that period, Equality Now has focused on the later submission as being more current. It is noteworthy that the CEDAW Committee had cause to repeat its observation on several occasions, lamenting the slow pace of change. It is hoped that the Working Group can complement the role of the CEDAW Committee by assisting governments to find ways to address this persisting discrimination.

### **[ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY: VIGNETTES FROM ASIA AND AFRICA](#)**

**Source:** *UNFPA*

This report generates specific, detailed lessons for successful implementation of initiatives that engage men and boys in advancing gender equality and reproductive health. Four case studies from Bangladesh, Philippines, Cambodia and Uganda are presented followed by lessons learnt and recommendations for supporting work in the field of male engagement. The report also presents a summary of other programmes that engage men and boys within the two regions. This resource is part of UNFPA's efforts to document knowledge and evidence that supports the constructive engagement of men and boys within the ICPD Programme of Action.

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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### **[GENDER FESTIVAL 2011: GENDER, DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT](#)**

**Source:** *Tanzania Gender Networking Programme*

**Date:** *13 September 2011*

**Location:** *Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) and Feminist Activist Coalition (FemAct) are pleased to announce the 10th Gender Festival (Tamasha la Jinsia) which will focus on *Land, Labour and Livelihoods* within the broad theme of *Gender, Democracy and Development*. The Festival will take place from the 13th - 16th September. The present theme - 'Land, Labour and Livelihoods' - builds on the themes that have guided earlier Festivals, while retaining the broad emphasis on Economic Justice.

### **[THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN HORN OF AFRICA](#)**

**Source:** *Somalia International Rehabilitation Centre*

**Date:** *23 September 2011*

**Location:** *Lund, Sweden*

The Horn of African conferences have since its inception focused on issues related to peace, security and development. So far, none of the conferences has yet had an explicit focus on the linkages between gender, peace and development. This time the focus of the conference is set on these linkages. We know that the violence has had disproportionate effects on the lives of women. Often as targets of extreme forms of violence, women in the Horn of Africa experience



the full impact of violent conflict in the region as civilians and combatants, but are generally excluded from the decision-making processes that ignite wars or put an end to hostilities.