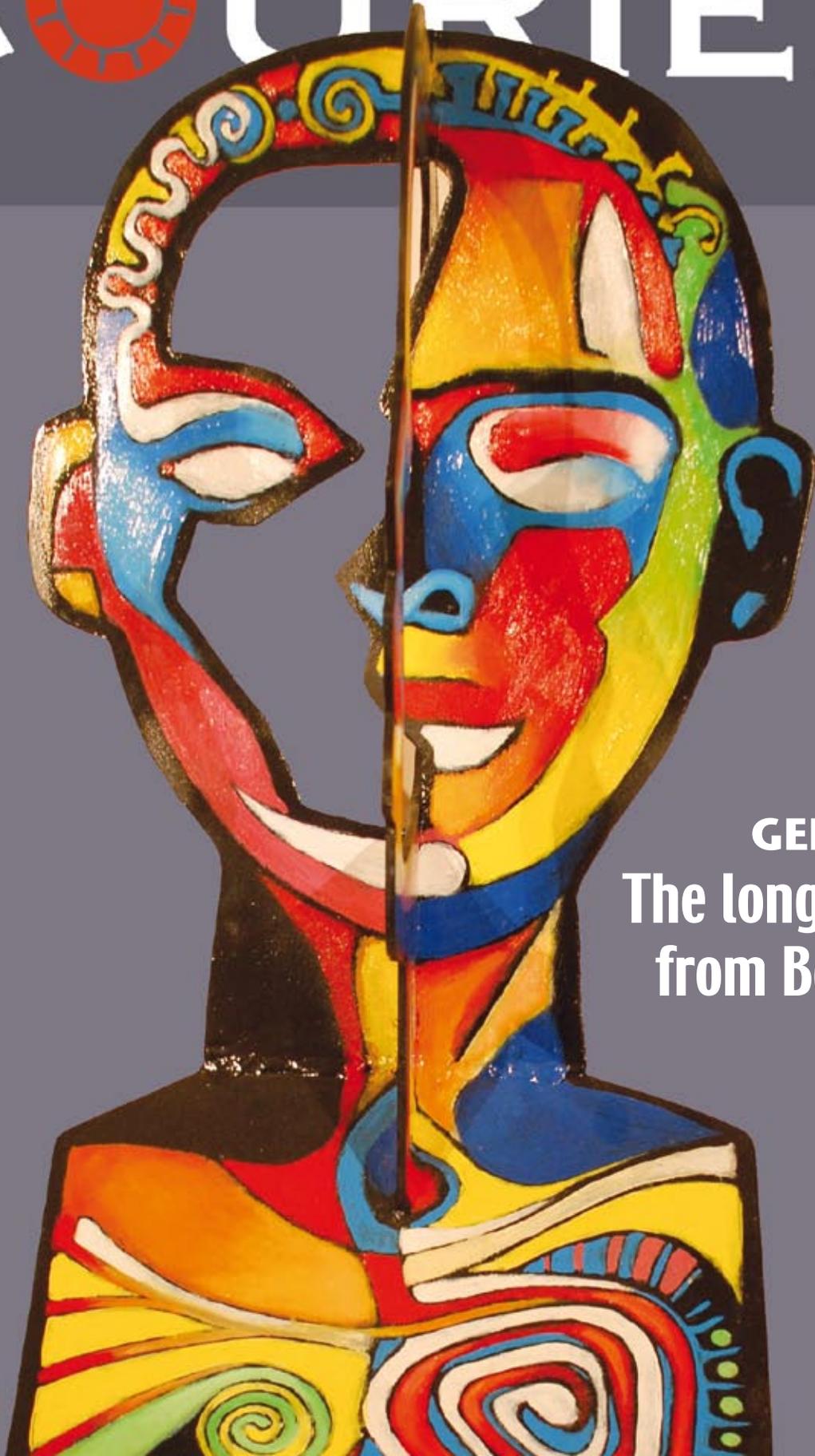


THE **SPECIAL ISSUE**
COURIER



GENDER.
**The long road
from Beijing**

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"Mechanisms put in place in Africa concerning gender equality
are in urgent need of overhaul". © REA/Reporters

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Gender. How to speak of men?



This special issue of *The Courier*, 'Genders' contains no articles that make specific reference to the noun 'man' in their title. Nevertheless, man, the male of the species, is the principal subject. When we speak of the injustices condemned in Beijing in 1995 at the United Nations World Conference on Women – injustices that are continuing – man is there. When we stress the progress achieved in terms of national and international laws, education, the combating of misogyny and iniquities against women, he is also there. Laws to promote equal opportunities between the genders could not have been approved in the parliaments of the world without the support of the men who make up the majority of the law-makers who sit in them.

Women and men – whether champions of equal rights between the genders, or chauvinists – are engaged in a permanent dialectic. When one is in the light, the other is in the shadows and the light is only perceived because there are shadows. When one speaks of injustice against women, from rape to the pre-empting of important political posts, one also speaks of the perpetrators. The perpetrator or the subject, the one who “does commit the act”. While women are conquering certain male bastions, such as high-level posts in the US black community or academic success at Jamaica's universities, we also see the emergence of complexes among men that translate into reactions that are chauvinist, suicidal or self-deprecating. The film by the director Denys Arcand, *The Decline of the American Empire*, which takes place in Quebec, illustrates the fact that disarray among males is not limited to certain societies.

When we speak of women, man is also present. Elisabeth Badinter, in *X Y. De l'identité masculine*,

remarked that the male will proclaim successively in the course of his life that he is not his mother's boy, that he is not a girl and that he is not gay. She concludes that “being a man is said more often in the imperative than in the indicative... it implies a labour, an effort that does not seem to be demanded in the same way of women... as if femininity were natural and masculinity had to be acquired at great cost*.” She adopts the words of Pierre Bourdieu**:

“To praise a man it is enough to tell him that he is a man.” She then concludes that “contrary to patriarchal belief, it is not men who are the first referents of humanity but women. It is in relation to women and in opposition to women that men have been defined... Until now.”

Until now. Because men are changing. A new masculine identity that seeks similarities with women, rather than dissimilarities and oppositions, is in the making. We must no longer ignore the violence and the strength of women considered as the eternal “victims of masculine oppression, of the other, of the all-powerful torturers”*** in a humanity that is divided into two.

Failure to combat misogyny in the name of misandry. That is a way of speaking of men.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-chief

* *L'Un est l'Autre*, Éditions Odile Jacob, 1986, p. 249

** *La domination masculine*, Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, no 84, Sept. 1990, p 21.

*** *Fausse route*, Éditions Odile Jacob, 2003, p. 113.

Hegel Goutier



An election campaign billboard of Pakistan's slain former opposition leader, assassinated 27 December 2007, two weeks before the scheduled Pakistani general election of 2008. © Reporters/AP

Gender Progress or setbacks. Difficult to measure

Reading the studies by institutions and experts on the development of the situation of women since the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, it is difficult to detect any clear trend. At the public level, in both the legislative and employment fields, women's rights have progressed in nearly all regions of the world and the same is true in the fields of education and political representation. However, at the private level, injustice in its most brutal form, namely physical violence, remains an issue and has even been on the increase. Moreover, there is the further problem of the reliability of data.

► The hundred flowers since Beijing

Already by 1995 in Beijing, a great deal of progress was claimed in areas like women's participation in the political process. On the stage in Beijing stood symbolic figures such as Benazir Bhutto, at the time Prime Minister of Pakistan, who gave a reading from the Koran that combined a defence of Islamic values with a rejection of fundamentalism. Later, then U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, attacked the delegation of conservative representatives from her own country's Senate. But the final declaration of the meeting was positive, laying down in international legislation principles that countries were bound to respect. These principles included the right of women to decide freely their own sexuality as well as the classification of rape as a crime, or even (in the case of war or other conflict) as an

act of genocide for which the warring parties, even if victorious, could one day be held responsible before a court of law. Another obligation was to facilitate the access to credit for women, with a view to improving their independent financial status.

In all, representatives of 184 nations put their signatures to the final document, although around 50 of them added a number of caveats. *The Courier*, present in Beijing*, raised the question of whether the pledges given would be respected given these reservations from some of the delegates.

► Despite everything, major progress

In areas such as politics, the economy and education progress has clearly been made since the Beijing declarations and there are

several examples to illustrate this. Literacy has increased sharply almost everywhere in the world. Indeed in three developing countries, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Uruguay, literacy among women is now higher than among men. In four other countries – including Cuba – there is now total gender equality. Elsewhere, women fill 58 per cent of the decision-making positions in the Philippines, ahead of Tanzania with 49 per cent. These two are followed by Barbados (with 43 per cent), another ACP country. The United States ranks fourth**.

In the employment sector, the numbers of women in the workforce have increased continuously in most parts of the globe since 1989, falling only in Eastern and Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, where it still remains below the global average of 40 per cent***.



Women's shelter for victims of sexual abuse in Goma, DRC, 2009. © UN/Marie Frechon

► The many facets of continuing injustices

All the same, real progress often suffers setbacks. This is the case with a similar increase in recent years in both the rate of paid employment among women and the rate of unemployment among women. Also, in education, two-thirds of the illiterate continue to be women. This can be at least partly explained by the progress in literacy rates among men.

There are only five countries where men and women are represented equally in the ranks of government: Spain, Iceland, Sweden, Austria and Denmark. However, today, a total of 15 countries have gender parity in their parliaments, with Rwanda leading the world and South Africa also ranking highly. Three ACP countries, Botswana, Tanzania and Eritrea, draw a third of their parliamentary law-makers from women.

But the overall picture is far from perfect and, despite the provisions laid down in national and international legislation stating that discrimination or violence against women are crimes that carry an appropriate punishment, those guilty of such violations often continue to escape justice. Sexual slavery, for example, is on the increase, including in European countries.

Today, the ineffectiveness of the justice

system, in certain cases, is in itself criminal. Consider this: one woman in four is the victim of serious violence in the home****. Rape by armed men is widespread and has become a national disaster in both the Congo and Darfur. In Mexico, which has ample police and legal means at its disposal, 305 bodies of raped and murdered women have been found and not a single suspect arrested*****.

► Which way is the balance tipping?

The data for assessing serious gender imbalance or discrimination lacks precision and the institutions that use this information often regard it as less than accurate. This is even true of the most well-known data: indicators on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the Gender-related Development Index (GDI); and the UN Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Now, however, a growing number of studies are seeking to develop indicators that reflect the true gender dimension and can measure change with greater accuracy. A study published by the UNDP in 2007, entitled *Gender and Indicators – Overview* considers that a start should be made by “measuring the difficulty of measuring.” The gender dimension or women’s emancipation, for

example, are realities for which it is difficult to set parameters. Equally, a study on women’s poverty should include so-called “time poverty”, to quantify the unremunerated work of women.

Neither is the data supplied by individual countries always reliable and there are situations where studies and data are spoiled due to negligence during the research process. Then again, a result can be more about the mathematics than a real social switch. For example, a reduction in the number of male students at universities in Jamaica and other countries has the automatic effect of boosting the figures for women. But is the result a mere statistic or a true measure of gender change?

* *The Courier*, Issue 154, November-December 1995.

** UNDP, 2006 report.

*** 2006 report by the UN Commission on the Status of Women on the economic promotion of women).

**** According to the UNDP 2007 report.

***** French movement for family planning.

Keywords

Women; UN Conference on Women in Beijing; Benazir Bhutto; Hillary Rodham Clinton; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); Gender-related Development Index (GDI); UN Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).



Debra Percival

New EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation

An EU 'action plan' is expected to be launched at the beginning of 2010 to further place gender at the centre of the EU's development policy, involving more coordination with the European Union's 27 member states, says Victoria Correa, in charge of gender issues at the EC's Directorate-General for Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States.

Drawn up by the EC's Directorate General for Development, in tandem with the External Relations Directorate, and with the help of EU Member States, the action plan will aim at further translating the existing policy into practice, explains Victoria Correa. The EC's gender equality policy for developing countries is already laid down in the 'EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation', but Victoria Correa says that the new action plan establishes concrete steps for the European Commission and EU Member States to further jointly deliver on their gender equality commitments and have more of an impact on the ground.

Still on the drawing board when *the Courier* went to press, the 'action plan' will propose a three-pronged approach involving further political and policy dialogue with developing country partners on gender issues, the mainstreaming of gender this means ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated into all policy areas, programmes, strategies and interventions from road building to rural development for instance and specific actions to address situations that require targeted support. Building on existing EU and EC resources, instruments and mechanisms, the action plan will put forward a series of activities and performance indicators to be carried out jointly during the period 2010-2015.

Between 2000-2007, a 'mainstreaming' approach to projects was adopted as opposed to specific gender projects but the '2007 Communication on gender equality and empowerment' also recommended specific actions as a complement to gender mainstreaming in order

to achieve targeted results and foster women's empowerment in developing countries.

> 2007 Communication

The EC's 2007 Communication refers to the Millennium Development Goals (see previous article) and goes beyond them, highlighting some of the critical areas that are not addressed in the MDGs, and in particular in MDG 3 (promote gender equality and women empowerment) and MDG 5 (improve maternal health). For instance, the Communication lays emphasis on addressing issues such as female genital mutilation (see separate article); gender-based violence in all its manifestations, and trafficking in women.

Daniela Rofi, Gender Desk Officer at the

Female genital mutilation

A four million EC project co-financed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) started up in December 2007 to work for the abandonment of female genital mutilation practices. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, since it deals with a traditional practice, the project is based on the development of a social convention model which brings the issue out in the open. Within communities, religious leaders speak out against the myth that the practices are tied to religion. Parents' concerns and the harmful effects of the practice are addressed. The abandoning of practices thus becomes a collective decision of the community and there is no fear of retribution and isolation of individuals. The project is being run in three ACP states; Senegal, Sudan and Eritrea.

EC's EuropeAid Co-operation Office, explains that the EC provides assistance to advance the gender equality agenda in the partner countries through the European Development Fund and the EC Thematic Programmes. The European Development Fund (EDF) assists ACP countries in their structural reforms of the education, health

and justice sectors to make them accessible to both boys and girls, women and men. The EDF is also instrumental in building the national capacity to design and implement gender policies. Through the Thematic Programmes, especially "Investing in people 2007-2013, which contains a budget for 'sexual and reproductive health and rights"

and 'gender equality and women's rights', the EC supports civil society organisations active in the field of gender equality and women's rights. Also the EC cooperates with the United Nations (see below).

Keywords

Gender; Victoria Correa; Daniela Rofi; CEDAW; MDGs; Female Genital Mutilation; Swaziland; Ethiopia.

Mapping gender equality in budget aid

The 'EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Peace and Development' came out of the 2005 EC conference with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) where the shift in aid to new aid modalities such as budget support was discussed. The project focuses on 12 pilot countries: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Honduras, Nicaragua and Surinam. All results can be found on a website (www.gendermatters.eu). The Partnership has enabled capacity building and knowledge on how to make aid more gender sensitive and is helping to build gender equality best practice in all EC programmes.

For more information see:
www.gendermatters.eu

Swaziland – furthering women's rights

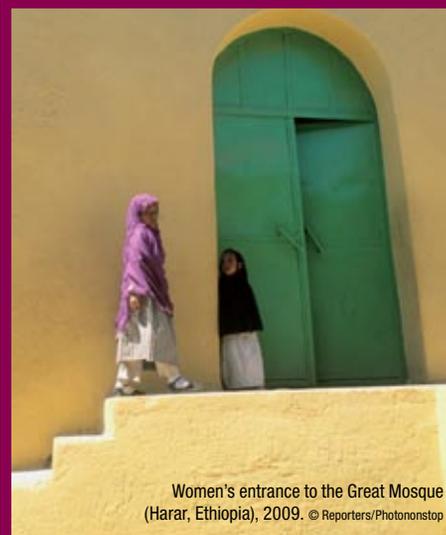
Swaziland ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in March 2004. A 42-month programme co-financed by the EC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is aimed at enabling government and non-government organisations build their capacity as state actors to undertake the necessary legislative and policy changes under CEDAW. It is raising awareness and sensitising and providing technical assistance to policy makers, civil society and traditional authorities. It includes an audit of legislation for gender sensitivity and compliance with CEDAW, support to the drafters of new legislation to ensure compliance with CEDAW and development of a national gender advocacy programme.

Ethiopia: harnessing women's potential

A €3.64M project for Ethiopia under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) for 'Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality through Institutional Capacity Building and Entrepreneurship' is expected to be launched in Spring 2010. Gender inequality is one of the root causes of poverty. To halve extreme poverty by 2015, Ethiopia must harness the full potential of both men and women. The programme will support the Ethiopian government's national Action Plan for gender equality in strengthening the institutional capacity on the one hand and, on the other, in equipping women with entrepreneurship skills to improve their livelihoods. Selected target groups are men and women working in the Women's Affairs Structure for the capacity building component and women working in the informal sector, in particular those who are literate and living in an urban setting, for the empowerment component (this component will be piloted in certain areas of the country).



She is a hero, sprayed on canvas, Rini Hartman, 2008. This painting is part of a project, "8 Visions of Hope", dedicated to the eight UN Millennium Development Goals. Websites: <http://8visionsofhope.com/> and <http://www.rinihartman.nl/>



Women's entrance to the Great Mosque (Harar, Ethiopia), 2009. © Reporters/Photononstop



Applying good intentions

A body of international legislation recognises gender equality as a fundamental right and of importance in combating poverty - although implementation has often fallen short of targets, notably the Millennium Development Goal (MDG 5) on improving maternal health. Progress often depends on individuals taking up the mantle such as Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, who has put women's participation in peace and security talks on the agenda of the Swedish Presidency of the EU. President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is also leading by example in having organised a women's international leadership conference in Monrovia in March 2009.

The development community's approach to gender empowerment has evolved since the 1970s when the United Nations' International Year of Women in 1975 and international women's decade (1976-85) saw the formation of a rash of women's ministries and the adoption of 'Women in Development' policies by governments and non-governmental bodies, although such projects had limited success since they did not include issues of land ownership and access to markets, credit and information.

The mid-1970s brought in a move towards a more strategic approach to empowering women, encompassing legislative change.

The 30 articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, was based on the principles of equality, non discrimination and state obligation. CEDAW's obligations are binding although reservations (meaning non-compliance) are permitted on individual articles. One hundred and eighty five states are currently party to the Convention.

The Beijing Action Plan, put in place following the Fourth United Nations' Conference on Women in 1995, confirmed the move from projects under the banner of women in development to mainstreaming of gender empowerment policies. It highlighted the inequalities

where action was required across all branches of governments who signed up to the plan from unequal access to health care and related services to the effects of armed conflict on women.

› "Best practices"

But as President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, said at European Development Days in Stockholm, Sweden, national plans post-Beijing have "fallen below expectations". In Stockholm, she made an appeal to look at "best practices". She told the conference she had placed women in strategic cabinet positions such as Justice, Finance (traditional male preserves) and put the girl child at the

< A refugee-camp area de-forested by Sudanese refugees in Chad. Women have to trek far from the camp to find fire wood, increasing their risk of being attacked 2009. © Reporters

> Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf at European Development Days (EDD) Stockholm, Sweden, 22 October 2009. © Reporters/Scanpix

centre of her strategy which had included bringing in a tough rape law to stamp out the violence against women which was rife when she became Head of State, post-conflict, in 2006

Progress lags on the attainment of some of the specific United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by governments at the turn of the century relating to women, highlights the United Nations' own 2009 Millennium Goals Report, notably MDG 5 on improving maternal health. The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births has hardly fallen in sub-Saharan Africa declining from just 920 in 1990 to 900 in 2005, and half of all maternal deaths (265,000) annually occur in sub-Saharan Africa, says the report. Progress on MDG 3 - the promotion of gender equality and female empowerment - meant to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, and in all levels of education not later than 2015 is also wanting. "In the developing regions as a whole, 95 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2007, compared to 91 in 1999. However, the target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and



secondary education by 2005 was missed. Ensuring the opportunity is not lost again in 2015 will require renewed urgency and commitment", says the report.

The same report contains rosier figures for the proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa which stands at 18 per cent, compared with 9 per cent in 2000 and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 22 per cent, the highest regional average recorded. "Sub-Saharan Africa continues to make strides, with Rwanda out

in front: it made history in September 2008 when its lower chamber elected a majority (56 per cent) of women members, reads the report. But nine chambers - mainly in the Pacific islands and Arab Gulf States - have no women members of parliament at all. The report also says that the 2008 global financial crisis has created new hurdles to women's employment. **D.P.**

Keywords

Gender; women; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); Sweden; Minister for International Development Cooperation; Gunilla Carlsson; Liberia; Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf; European Development Days; Stockholm; CEDAW; United Nations.

Peace and security – a woman's affair

All eleven of the EU's Special Representatives (Foreign Affairs) are men, fewer than 10 per cent of international peace negotiators are women and out of 300 peace agreements, only 10 mention sexual violence. The statistics were given by Margot Wallström, the Swedish EU Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategies during the European Development Days event in Stockholm, Sweden, 22-24 October.

The Swedish government draws attention to the fact that governments are trailing in the implementation of United Nations resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, which deals with the impact of war on women and foresees women's central contribution to conflict resolution and achieving sustainable peace. Sweden has its own action plan and wants other EU countries to follow suit (only 8 out of 27 member states currently

have similar plans).

The EU's own European Development Report on 'Overcoming Fragility in Africa' highlights the case of the indiscriminate use of rape as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Between 1998 and 2003, 51,000 cases of rape were reported in the provinces of South Kivu and Kalemie.

The EU's current Swedish presidency is seeking the participation of a higher proportion of women in international peace and security building operations and for the protection of women and girls in conflict situations to be strengthened and to ensure that women participate fully and on equal terms with men at all levels in mechanisms and institutions for conflict prevention. All EU representatives must have knowledge of resolution 1325, says Gunilla Carlsson. Visits to conflict areas must include meet-



Swedish Development and Cooperation Minister, Gunilla Carlsson, at the EDD, Stockholm, 2009.
© Hegel Goutier

ings with national and local women's organisations. The Swedish government suggests that development cooperation funds be used to strengthen women's participation in post-conflict situations and that women benefit from loans, credit and other financial services for education and vocational training in post-conflict situations.

Women on Top... Educate a woman and you educate a nation

Batswana women have higher levels of education now than when the nation of Botswana first attained independence from Britain in 1966. Dr. Maude Dikobe, Chairperson of the Gender Policy Committee in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana, says there is some way to go to bring about gender equality in top jobs.

As in most African cultures, it was traditionally felt that the boy child should be given a chance to venture into higher education, while the girl child was only expected to go as far as primary school. Boys were given priority of access to education and the girl child was groomed for marriage.

Today, Botswana has a higher proportion of females in higher education (see box). Botswana is unique among many African countries in that as far as higher education is concerned, the gender gap is narrowing. Student enrolment might create the impression that there will be equality once these students graduate and enter the job market. This is not the case, especially if you look at the University of Botswana's top management. The absence of women in senior management positions raises a lot of questions. The Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor, and the two Deputy Vice Chancellor positions are all occupied by males except for Deputy Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs. Tilting the lens to the academic section, 93 per cent of professors are male and about seven per cent female.

In her paper, 'Gender Audit at the University of Botswana: The Case of the Faculty of Humanities', Rosaline Nhlekisana says that most positions are occupied by males



University of Botswana. © Flickr.com

"The gender ratio over the past six years has been stable at close to 1:1. On average, more females were enrolled in the university. More males than females were enrolled in the Faculties of Engineering & Technology and Science over the past planning period. More females than males were enrolled in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The male student enrolment has been decreasing from 7,886 (2003/2004); a decrease of 3.5 per cent, while female enrolment increased by 12 per cent from 2003/2004 to 2006/07. Both female and male enrolment dropped by 8.7 and 14.0 per cent from 2006/2007 to 2008/09. **University of Botswana Annual Report 2009 (21).**

because of the institution's "patriarchal culture" which is not unique to the university and is rampant in some of the organisations outside the academy, where the employer is constantly faced with the challenge to prove that, perhaps, "the best man for the job is a woman".

Progress on gender equality in traditionally male posts has been slow although Botswana women are breaking through with such as the appointment of Dr. Attaliah Molokomme as Attorney General. The Botswana Defence Force is also now welcoming women into the army.

But the giant leaps women are making into careers traditionally reserved for men do not

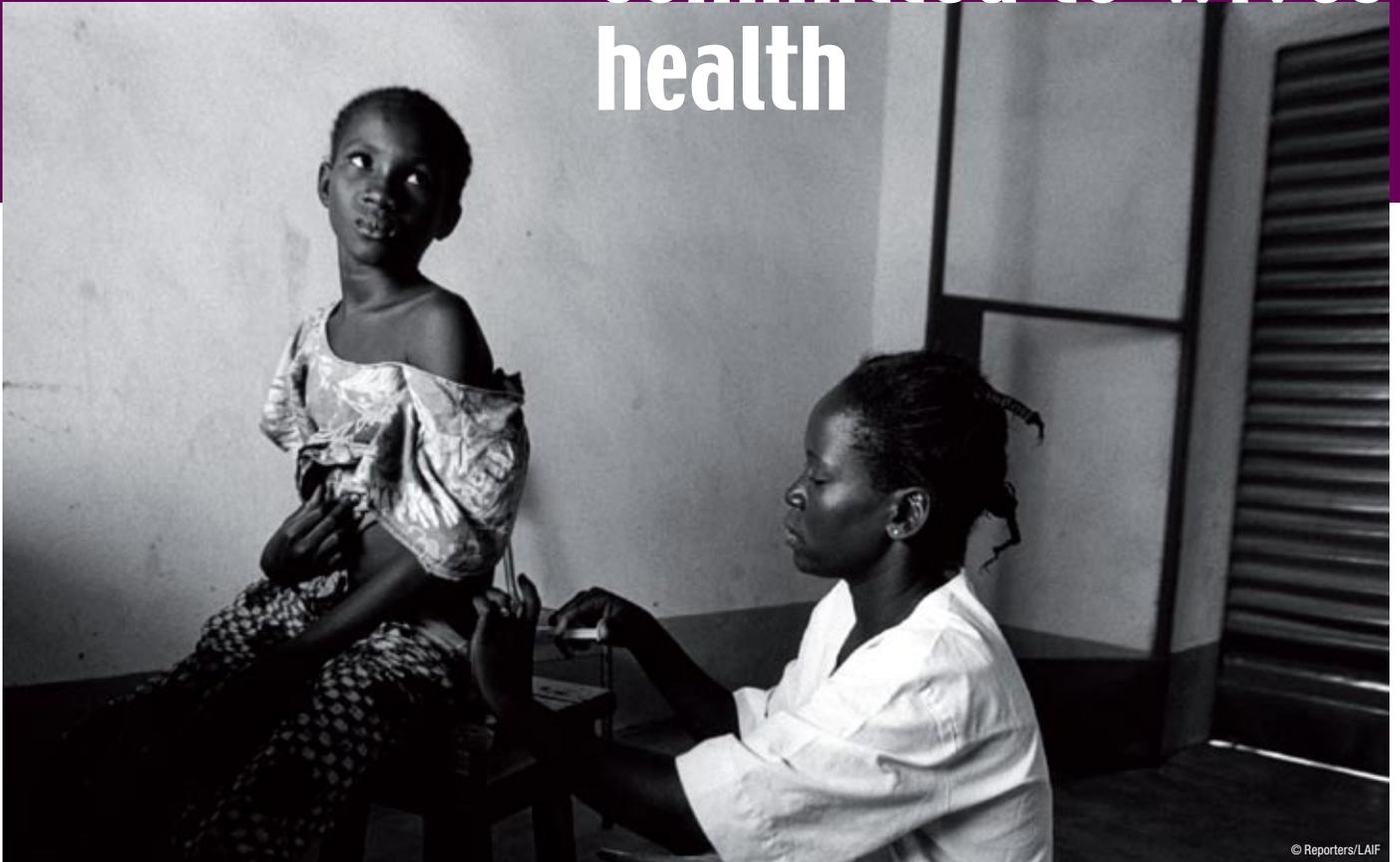
sit well with some males. Some detractors feel that Botswana women have sufficient opportunities and no longer need affirmative action policies. There is hence a lot of backlash with the need to curtail women's efforts for equality if they get too powerful and oust men from their privileged positions. Access to education is one thing, gender equality another. We need measures to improve equality within managerial positions, boardrooms, parliament etc. This calls for a change of mind-set.

Keywords

Dr. Attaliah Molokomme; University of Botswana; gender equality.

Married men committed to wives' health

Souleymane Saddy Maâzou



© Reporters/LAIF

In Niger, men are taking action to improve the health of women and children by engaging in awareness-raising campaigns initiated by women's groups and associations.

A mere decade ago, men were openly hostile to any issue pertaining to sexual health. Even now, a considerable number still prevent their wives from visiting family health centres. “When chatting, I make my friends aware of the benefits of pre- and postnatal consultation”, explain a shopkeeper in Niamey, and someone who knows a lot about maternal and child health. Most often, awareness-raising events take place in the public square or during local festivities.

The work, carried out by men, leads to impressive results. “Women are now visiting family health centres more and more. At the slightest worry regarding their health, they go to their nearest centre”, recalls Aichatou, a midwife at Niamey. “Results are even more striking in the many villages where the men themselves drive their wives to their appointments, which was unheard of only a few years ago”, adds a colleague.

➤ Broken taboos

Without inhibition, men now allow their wives to make use of contraception. “This is all thanks to the emancipation of the woman in Niger. Our associations have made great strides. It’s taken a long time, but the effort has been worth it”, rejoices a militant advocate of women’s rights.

Views have changed regarding contraception. In the past, opposition was widespread in both rural and urban areas. “My husband forbade me to take any medication to space out the births. Even so, I still used it all the time. Now, though, we both decide on whether to use it”, explains a 33 year old mother of four. Many women like her took contraception without their husbands knowing. But a large number now do so with the approval of their spouses, who are better informed on the subject.

“In the past, I thought this kind of idea was a very Western one. But since meeting with the group of men who have agreed to change their relationship to family planning, I have quite a different take. Now I discuss this type of question with my wife”, confides a 47 year old man.

The media have made a considerable contribution alongside women’s organisations to convince men of the arguments in favour of changing their attitudes towards reproduction. These efforts have met with considerable resistance, however, on the part of the marabouts (Islamic leaders and teachers). But as times change, the latter have started preaching on the subject in their sermons. Since then, the prevailing climate has changed appreciably. “Limiting births is prohibited in Islam, but not their deferral.”

Keywords

Niger; Health; men; women; civil society.

Marie-Martine Buckens

Need for social movements capable of impacting policy

Mechanisms put in place in Africa concerning gender equality are in urgent need of overhaul, according to Fatou Sarr. Sociologist and director of the gender laboratory and of scientific research at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, as well as an international consultant, she suggests potential remedies, all of which depend on support being lent to various social movements.



It was in the aftermath of the World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 that the majority of African countries began to take measures to instigate gender equality. There was one notable exception, Rwanda, which from 1965 onwards already had a system in place, but one which still has little substance, as Fatou Sarr explains in a report drawn up in 2008. Nonetheless, remarks the expert, the ministry for gender and women's promotion (referred to as Migeprofe), set up in Rwanda in 1999, is a model of its type in as far as its role has been clearly defined, namely that of promoting gender fairness and equality within the development process and leading the shift from a 'vertical' approach to a 'horizontal' one.

This is not the case in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Senegal, Gabon or Togo. "Very often", she explains, "these countries have confined themselves to action plans containing eclectic, *ad hoc* programmes which correspond to the particular needs of the development stakeholders."

Since the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, various 'national women's councils' have been set up in the majority of these countries. As advisory bodies to governments, their main activity is the organising of special events. A further innovation are the 'gender focus points'. Unfortunately, adds the sociologist, these lack the necessary skills and expertise, meaning they exert little influence, owing (with the exception of Rwanda) to their lack of strategic positioning. Moreover, they sorely lack the financial means they seek from their national ministries (often less than 1 per cent of the national budget, as in Togo (0.29 per cent), the DRC (0.042 per cent) or Senegal (0.2 per cent).

The solution? According to Fatou Sarr, measures need to focus on heads of state – "in Africa, the social structure is still very stratified" – to encourage them to raise the budget allocated to the issue, reinforcing this social movement and thus giving it the necessary clout to have a decisive impact on policy.

Keywords

Fatou Sarr; gender equality; Africa; parliament.

Good progress, considering...

"In spite of frustrations, gains have been made", acknowledges Fatou Sarr. The aid project for young mothers in Gabon which has allowed eleven crèches to be constructed and which pays for the retraining of these young women, allowing them back onto the jobs market, is a notable example. On a political level, the five countries cited by the sociologist have no cause to be embarrassed as far as

representation of women in their parliaments is concerned. According to 2006-2007 figures, this stands at 11 per cent in Togo, 16.7 per cent in Gabon, 22 per cent in Senegal, 8.4 per cent in the DRC and 48.8 per cent in Rwanda, something of an unprecedented figure worldwide. In Canada, one of the leading lights in this regard, female representation in parliament stands at 21.3 per cent, as against 18.2 per cent in France, 16.8 per cent in the US and 9.4 per cent in Japan.

Newly-elected Member of the Rwandese Parliament swear in at the opening ceremony of the new National Assembly, 10 October 2003, before Rwanda's President, Paul Kagame. © AFP

Nikolaj Nielsen*



Striving to apply the law against Female Genital Mutilation

Bassilla Renju-Urasa, executive coordinator of Tanzania's Network of Women Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM) says that although Tanzania outlawed Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)/circumcision in 1998, the practice continues. "We exist because the law is not applied", she says.

Some of the women who work with NAFGEM have themselves suffered through the procedure as girls. The body disseminates information and documents cases to try to change attitudes to some deep-rooted customs. Education, according to NAFGEM, is essential to combating FGM. A lot of women live in remote rural areas and find it difficult to bring forward a case.

NAFGEM's little office on the third floor of a side street in Moshi is the epicentre of a movement that has made a positive change in the Kilimanjaro Region. But among the Masai, says Mrs. Renju-Urasa, the practice of FGM stubbornly persists. "The Masai cannot imagine someone not circumcised. It is a must. And the uneducated...the women, accept it", she adds.

Just outside Chekimaji, a village nestled at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, a mother and

daughter from the Kamba tribe are standing ground. The girl's father, a school teacher, has recently passed away and now her uncle has taken over the household. He demands that her mother become his concubine. She refuses. Furious, the uncle says he will stop paying for Pascalini's secondary schooling in Dar-es-Salaam. The uncle wants to marry the girl off; circumcised. Circumcision entails serious psychological impacts and potentially life-threatening physical complications. According to NAFGEM, some girls can subsequently develop an abnormal growth that obstructs normal bodily functions. The most common mutilation procedure involves simply cutting off part of, or the entire clitoris. Tanzania's National Plan of Action to Combat FGM (2001-2015) attempts to address the issue but so far, with limited success. Penal Code 1930 was enacted to criminalise the practice of FGM but the passive nature of law enforcement means the practice is condoned.

The mother reported the uncle's intentions to the authorities but without results. Her daughter then threatened to kill herself rather than undergo the procedure. Frightened for her daughter's life and unable to rely on the local authorities, the mother sends someone from the village off to NAFGEM.

The next day I find mother and her daughter standing under the sparse shade of a tree Pascalini remains, for the most part silent, as her mother speaks on her behalf. "My daughters hate this hell", she says. She has seven children, four of whom are daughters. The family feels abandoned and is despised by everyone in the village, she says. "Most have turned their backs on us", she says. A letter, unsigned, was delivered to her doorstep. Threats were made against her children, she says. Back in Moshi, Mrs. Renju-Urasa listens to the report that the girl in question is facing the threat of FGM and notes that her fear is tangible. A proper investigation is required but only by those that understand the intimacy of the Kilimanjaro region: by someone from NAFGEM.

* Brussels-based journalist.

Keywords

NAFGEM; Female Genital Mutilation.

**Victoria Burbridge***

“Just start the engine and drive”

Two Jamaican businesswomen in the fashion industry recount how tough times have stoked greater ambition.

➤ From redundancy to a thriving business – The Jennifer Williams story

Forty-two year old Jennifer Williams was forced to become an entrepreneur after she was made redundant from a food and distribution company in Jamaica where she had worked for six years as a salesperson. She has never looked back. With a little

encouragement and not much money, she started her own fashion design business, *Akira Lyn*, focusing mostly on swimwear and leisure wear made from crochet material. “I used to make doilies”, she says of her early interest in sewing. “There was no challenge doing that. I then started creating and putting things together and it looked good.” Williams, whose business is home-based, was able to get wider publicity for her skills through her association with

“I don’t like the idea of working for people; I love being self-employed”

the Jamaica Fashion and Apparel Cluster group, established by the Jamaica Business Development Centre (JBDC), a government



agency which provides business and technical support services to small businesses. Her pieces were shown at the national level at House of Flava, an established fashion house in Jamaica, and at the international level when she was part of a delegation to Brussels last year.

She was also part of a team of local designers who prepared a 30-piece wardrobe for last year's 'Miss Jamaica World' pageant. "I am always happy and excited when I see people wearing my pieces", she says glowing with pride in being a part of that select group of designers. "When I see my work in the paper or at a photo shoot, it feels good." Williams, however, says there are challenges in keeping the business afloat, especially in marketing: "People will see your stuff and like it but may say it is too expensive."

> Economic downturn

Running a young business in the current economic downturn can be difficult, especially in getting start-up capital, but she has learnt from a difficult childhood always to look for the opportunities in difficult situations. "Recession prepares you for better things. You use every bad situation as a stepping stone and I am used to recession", she says. Growing up in Bull Bay, a poor community in the parish of St. Thomas, has been no barrier to her big dreams for the busi-

ness. "I hope to see myself up there going to China, Africa... the entire world", she says smiling. She eventually wants her granddaughter, Akira, after whom she named the business, to take it forward. "I am trying to pave the way so that she won't have to go through what I did while growing up", she says, fighting back the tears when recalling what seems to have been a tough childhood. While it is difficult to get a business going in these hard economic times, Williams believes that it is good to take risks. Her advice to other aspiring entrepreneurs? "Just start the engine and drive", she says, "you have to be a go-getter; you can't give up". When down to her last few coins, she says she would use what she had to buy material to make one of her pieces. "Don't be afraid to take chances", she says.

> Aspiring factory owner – Simone Garden

Simone Garden, a 36 year-old mother of three, aspires to one day opening a sewing factory where she can employ several persons in creating leisure wear clothing from crush cotton sheer and bright tie and dye colours. For now, Garden is carving out a niche market for herself in Jamaica's fledging fashion industry. She owns a small fashion boutique in Spanish Town, St. Catherine, where she sells her own garments. Garden, who opened her boutique doors just three

years ago, says she has been sewing since the age of eight. "I started sewing for friends not collecting any money, just sewing because I love it. I love seeing people in my pieces", she says, recounting the first time she cut a piece of material freehand. With no formal training, Garden says she learnt her skill at the knees of her mother who was a dressmaker and whose mother was a dressmaker and father a tailor.

"I grew up seeing my mother, grandmother and grandfather busy with their own little business", she says. "I don't like the idea of working for people; I love being self-employed." Although she completed secondary education, she says she was motivated to start her own business. She got help from her mother with buying a sewing machine but as the business got bigger she decided to rent a shop in one of the plazas located outside Spanish Town, the capital of St. Catherine, the largest parish in Jamaica.

> Unique designs

She says business on the plaza has been slow, especially since the economic downturn, but she finds ways of getting around this by going where the customers are. "I try very hard to be creative. So (customers) even if they don't want to buy are forced to when they look at the designs. The designs are unusual and have a unique finish." Garden says most of her clients are persons in the entertainment industry – especially those who wear Dancehall outfits. She however produces for a diverse market including casual, resort and children's wear. Despite the challenges, it's her love for her work that keeps her going. She would like to open a factory where she can create jobs for others. "I would love to one day have some good dedicated workers to help me in creating my designs", she says of her future plans. Garden also got local exposure when she participated in the Caribbean Fashion Week, a popular Caribbean fashion show organised each year in Jamaica which showcases pieces from several Caribbean designers. Meanwhile, her work was also highlighted overseas when she was also asked to create one of the pieces for the wardrobe of last year's 'Ms. Jamaica World'.

* Jamaican journalist.

Keywords

Jennifer Williams; Simone Garden; Jamaica; Jamaica Business Development Centre; Caribbean Fashion Week.

34
Million
Friends of
UNFPA



Anne-Marie Mouradian

Stepping up the fight against maternal mortality

An international workshop, organised by the European Commission (EC) and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, was held 14-15 October in Brussels on the Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme financed by the EU implemented by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

The programme benefited 22 ACP* countries between January 2003 and October 2008. It was launched by the EC to relieve the dramatic impact on poor countries in the wake of the former administration of United States President George Bush to cut off the US contribution to international family planning programmes. In 2002, the UNFPA estimated that if US financing had continued, it would have made it possible to avoid two million unwanted pregnancies, meaning 800,000 fewer abortions, as well as more than 77,000 deaths of infants and children.

The joint EC/ACP/IPPF/UNFPA programme has enabled over 1.6 million people to benefit from sexual and reproductive health services and has trained thousands of professionals, while at the same time helping ACP governments to draw up and implement policies in the sector.

In Rwanda, for example, more than 150,000 people attended awareness sessions on HIV/AIDS prevention and family planning. Almost 10,000 young Rwandans underwent voluntary testing for HIV, while 1,500 people who tested HIV-positive were assisted by health insurance funds in gaining access to treatment. About 100 peer educators were trained and almost 40,000 people benefited from family planning and reduced risk maternity services. The IPPF representative in Rwanda also drew attention to Kigali's

‘MDG five on maternal health has seen the least progress,’

adoption of a law punishing rapists with 25 years in prison, or even life imprisonment for transmitting fatal diseases.

There is no avoiding the fact, however, that the international community is still a long way from meeting Goal five of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aims to reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015. Currently falling at the rate of scarcely one per cent per year, of all the MDGs, this is without doubt the one that has seen the least progress.

Conference participants therefore stressed the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of healthcare professionals in ACP countries and to encourage governments to make reproductive health a priority in their strategic documents to reduce poverty. In future, it is important for health ministers to have an input in such documents. And despite the financial crisis, donors must pledge to step up universal access to reproductive health and achieve the 2010 milestone of 35 million more births attended by trained medical staff each year. The EU is to invest €86M up to 2015 with a special focus on involving civil society in ACP countries and helping the most vulnerable and unders-

erved young people, among whom unwanted pregnancies are most prevalent.

President Obama's decision to resume US contributions to the UNFPA and the IPPF, confirmed by the US representative to the conference, was welcomed with relief by the event participants.

* Financing: €32M. Countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Jamaica, Niger, Rwanda, Suriname, Tanzania, Congo, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Haiti, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tuvalu, Zambia.

Keywords

Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme; HIV; ACP; EC; UNFPA; IPPF.

Harnessing the role of African women in the Diaspora

The African Diaspora are increasingly recognised as significant development actors, providing remittances, Foreign Direct Investment, technology and knowledge transfers and positive political contributions to their countries of origin. African women in the Diaspora are coming to the fore. But as Stéphanie Mbanzndore, Chairperson of Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD) notes, better targeted policies are needed.

A member of the Diaspora herself and chairing the Diaspora-led BWPD in the Netherlands, Mbanzndore is an empowering voice for her counterparts. There is no denying the role that women in the Diaspora have played in developing the continent, she says, “particularly in the fields of intellectual cooperation, technology transfer, education and healthcare and the fight for peace and development in Africa”.

In the EU and Africa, opportunities are opening up for women to establish contact with decision-makers and express their views through regular conferences and seminars. These include BWPD seminars on fostering unity, youth and development and AIDS prevention.

But with opportunities come challenges. “The same women who lobby are never taken seriously when it comes to implementing projects for their countries”, she says. Accessing EU funds for some Diaspora-led projects can be “very difficult” and “more complicated than in bilateral cooperation”, she adds.

> Global presence, local impact

Living abroad, the Diaspora run the risk of being disconnected from realities on the ground. This is where Diaspora organisations can play a major role, says Mbanzndore, providing the missing link between stakeholders in African countries and the rest of the world.

Through “cooperative relationships with organisations on the ground”, African Diaspora organisations are constantly kept informed, she says. This is essential for

BWPD which is implementing various Diaspora-led projects in Burundi, including ‘Social Harmony’, which has established ‘peace committees’ for conflict resolution in local communities and has organised local visits for former refugees. In the Burundian province of Kirundo, they have organised and participated in advocacy campaigns encouraging women to vote and stand for elections, provided mills to groups of women and trained local teachers. The crown jewel of their efforts can now be found in a new multi-purpose centre in Kirundo city with conference, library and cinema facilities which serve as meeting points for people from the provinces in the north of Burundi.

BWDP is just one of various examples of female-led Diaspora organisations making a difference in their local communities. How can development cooperation ensure that there will be many more examples to come?

“We would like to see the expertise of emigrants taken seriously and made better use of”, says Mbanzndore. “We would like funders and decision-makers to consult us for advice because a lot of donations are being used in the wrong places. This is why development aid has still not been able to improve living conditions in Africa, and has in fact had the opposite effect.”

Amidst the complex environment of international development aid, it is sometimes the small-scale Diaspora-led projects that have the greatest, most visible and most direct impact on the lives of the poor, says Mbanzndore.

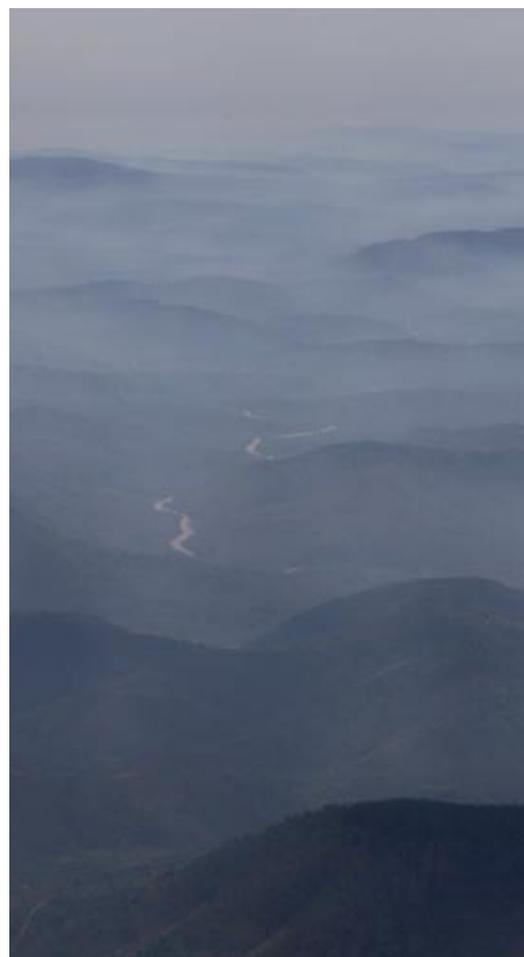
This is why existing funding systems

“urgently need to be reviewed and why such projects should be accommodated if the financial organisations really want to improve the lives of Africans”, she adds.

For more information, see: www.burundesevrouwenvoorvrede.nl (in Dutch)

Keywords

Stéphanie Mbanzndore; African women; Diaspora; Burundi; Burundian Women for Peace and Development.



Gender difference in African Art

In gender studies, the term gender is used to refer to the social and cultural construction, representation and behavioural motivation that give rise to the masculine and feminine states. Gender identities and differences go beyond differences in sex. They are built and affected by different aspects of the cultural lives of populations. Women need to be more aware of the cultural nature of this difference both for their future personal development and that of societies.



Sculpture dege dyeing of the «couple of primordial twins». Wood, metal, pigments, height: 66 cm, Musée Dapper, Paris, Inv. no 2617. © Musée Dapper/photo Hughes Dubois



Mask of belly. Wood, pearls, pigments, height : 58cm, Musée Dapper, Paris, Inv. No 0717. © Musée Dapper/photo Hughes Dubois

The study of traditional African art shows how this difference affects the artistic creation of societies. The Musée Dapper* recently hosted two exhibitions on this very theme: *Women in the Art of Africa* (October 2008-July 2009) and *The Art of Being a Man – Africa, Oceania* (15 October 2009-11 July 2010). Art collector, Fabrizio Corsi, also put together educational exhibitions on the topic.

As well as being key figures in African societies, women play an important role in cultural legends. The male conveys this in his representations of the female in art; the male has control over religion, and has the power to create related images (statues and masks). Sexual attributes are enhanced, indicating the natural inclination of the ancestors of a community to procreate. One such example is found in extraordinary wooden body masks. The stomach of a pregnant woman is celebrated by a number of ethnic groups, such as Baulé, Yoruba and Makonde. When a human being does not reproduce, the entire life cycle of his existence becomes futile, and for this reason infertility is considered the worst possible disgrace.

A common theme in the great diversity of artistic forms and traditions in the African continent is the celebration of the various cycles and stages in life. The woman's role as wife and mother is the most exalted aspect, as well as elements of beauty and sensuality such as ritual sacrifice, sophisticated hairstyles, folds of fat in the neck and small mouths etc. The relationship between couples is also revered, with the woman

often shown as the opposite of the male.

However, due account must be taken of art created by women, even though this is confined to the so-called 'applied arts', which is unfortunately defined as a less important art form by eighteenth century art criticism. The woman creates art mainly in the following areas: internal and external wall painting; terracotta containers; pokerwork on calabashes and fabric painting.

In all cases, the work is carried out jointly with men or in partnership with other women. Even in this field, the co-operative spirit characterising the African woman, who has a propensity to create harmonious human relationships in every manifestation of life, is expressed. The art of the female, which is identifiable through its use of linear and geometric forms, is also important in terms of its influence on the upbringing of the young and on the visual language of the ethnic group to which they belong.

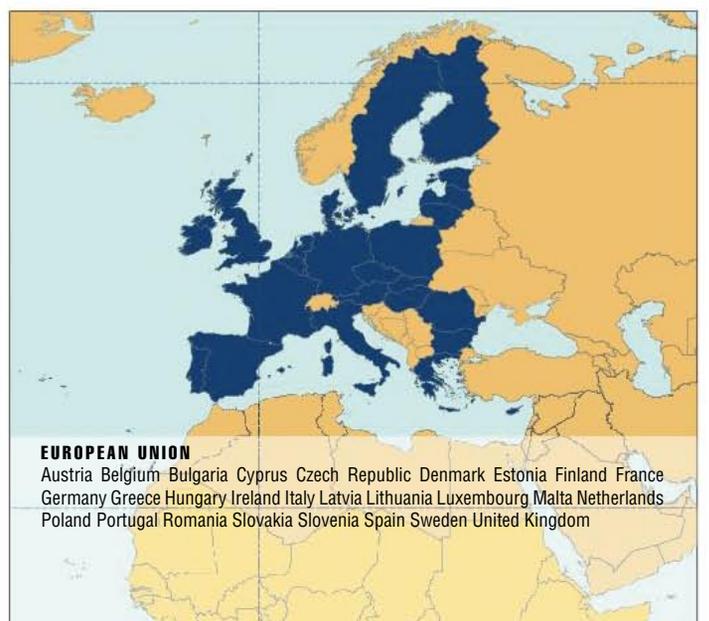
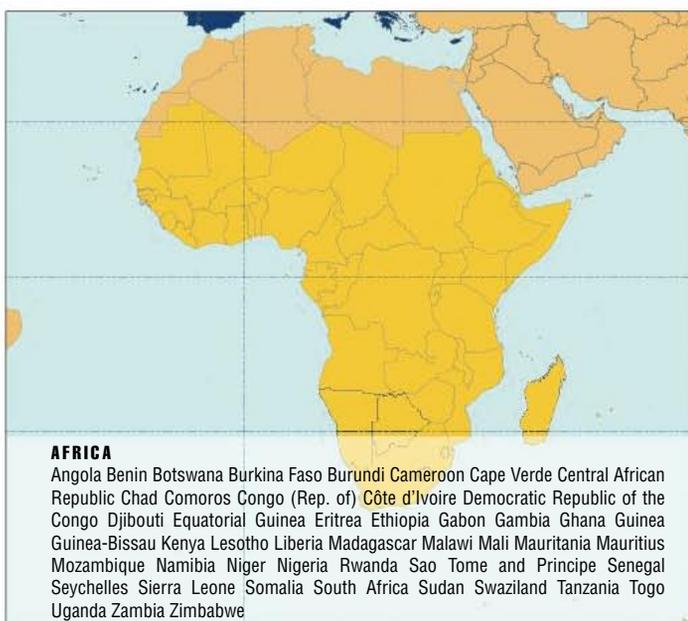
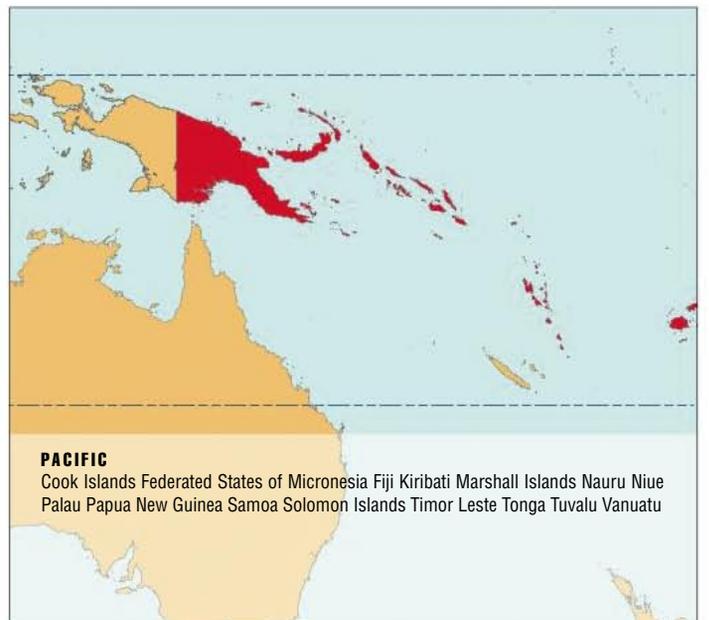
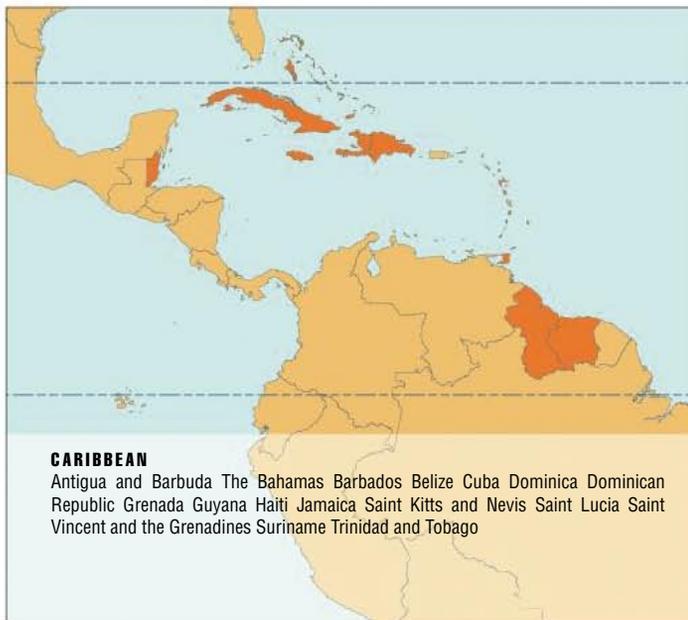
While the male being uses hard materials such as wood, stone, ivory and metal, and his art *par excellence* is sculpture, the woman decorates the communal spaces of the village and the home. This is therefore a form of public art, which exclusively uses soft and fluid materials, such as earth, pigments, water and plant fibres.

* The Musée Dapper is located in Paris (France). Website: www.dapper.com

Keywords

Gender; Africa; art; woman; Musée Dapper; woman's role; difference

Africa – Caribbean – Pacific and European Union countries



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