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cooperation



empowerment
and leadership

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It is necessary to view the attainment of the objectives related to equality between men and women as a global challenge. Inequalities and gender discrimination persist throughout the world, infringing the rights of women and hindering their participation in economic and social growth and development. This fact, which remains true in developed countries, has profound and frequently dramatic consequences in the lives of women in emerging and less developed countries.

International development policies realised this fact a number of years ago. Particularly since the late nineties, proposals have been made about the need of including women and equality as a crucial factor in the economic and social development of countries. This principle has been included in many international declarations related to human development. In fact, on many occasions the international arena has supported the promotion of policies promoting the equality of opportunities between women and men. In addition, the commitments formalised by governments have facilitated multiple opportunities for additional development of national policies.

The inequality between women and men and the discrimination of women share common origins all over the world. It is true that there are many differences between women in Western countries and those in Africa or Central and South America. These differences become obvious at the time of assessing the consequences of inequality and discrimination on our lives, our health and our freedom. But it is also true that we have all followed, or are following, a common path to obtain access to the basic citizenship rights in what concerns equality of opportunity.



Francisco de Rojas 2, 1º Izda.
28010 Madrid
Télf.: 91 591 24 20
Fax: 91 447 24 61
mujeres@fundacionmujeres.es
www.fundacionmujeres.es

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EDITED BY:
FUNDACIÓN MUJERES
DIRECTED BY:
MARISA SOLETO ÁVILA
GRAPHIC DESIGN:
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In this political and social context, it is crucial for women organisations to become involved in cooperation for development policies and to participate actively and make proposals about the best options for integrating equality and the gender perspective in international co-operation interventions and policies. With this conviction, Fundación Mujeres has always maintained its interest on international co-operation topics. We maintain international relationships with a good number of organisations, particularly in Latin America and more recently in Africa. We have always participated in cooperation projects and networks.

Our activity in this area is focused on equality and particularly on the development of proposals and strategies for setting up networks to facilitate women's organisations easier access to the funding opportunities provided by Spanish and European co-operation funds and to establish co-operation and exchange mechanisms for ensuring the inclusion of the gender perspective and equal opportunities in the core objectives of development policies and projects.

Obviously, Fundación Mujeres is not an organisation that will undertake large scale cooperation projects focused on humanitarian action. However, we believe that, as is the case in our country, it is necessary for women

organisations to participate actively in the design and execution of the quality objectives in development policies. Only the presence of women through their organised movement can ensure the inclusion of said objectives. But we are also aware that this presence can only be achieved with adequate actions and promotions.

The existence of exchanges between co-operation organisations and those specialised in the promotion of equality and the defence of the rights of women is crucial. It is essential to establish direct relationships between women and feminist organisations of the recipient countries and the developed countries. Only in this way we will learn together and make sure that the gender priorities and strategies we propose for our development cooperation policies and initiatives will be adequate.

This monographic document describes the initiatives currently being developed and supported by Fundación Mujeres within the above-mentioned criteria. These projects and initiatives are a test of our commitment to the women of recipient countries but also of our efforts to ensure that policies in general and particularly cooperation for development policies adequately fulfil their commitment for improving the social status and the quality of life of women all over the world.

THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, A KEY FACTOR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

“Strategies and Best Practices for the Empowerment of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa”

In October 2008, Fundación Mujeres organised a seminar titled “Strategies and Best Practices for the Empowerment of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa” with the co-operation of Africa House and a subsidy of the State Secretariat for International Cooperation. The seminar was held in Las Palmas, Canary Islands.

One of the purposes of the seminar was to create a space of discussion and exchange of experiences between organisations directly related to the economic empowerment of women in Sub-Saharan Africa and Spain in order to reinforce strategies supporting the creation and consolidation of enterprises led by women as agents for change and development.

The approach of the seminar was derived from the joint recognition of the role women play in less developed economies for the subsistence of the population by means of informal entrepreneurial initiatives which represent economic agents of change in territories. This recognition must be included in the design and development of strategic development policies.

To this end, the business status of women must be reinforced by means of formalising and strengthening their enterprises, assisting them in achieving growth and sustainability and enhancing their visibility and participation in economic decision-making processes.

Accordingly, it becomes necessary to approach economic empowerment processes for women in the framework of territorial development strategies grouped around three main pillars:

- **Personal Empowerment**, which allows women to become the owners of their own businesses and thus take mana-

gement decisions as well as recognizing and defending their property and become professional.

- **Business Empowerment**, which allows women to focus their business activities towards growth and sustainability, going beyond the subsistence economy.
- **Political Empowerment**, allowing women to occupy spaces in participation and decision making circles in the business fabric of the territory.

On the basis of this approach, the meeting initiated its deliberations and exchange of experiences between African businesswomen, leaders of African businesswomen organisations and NGOs promoting the economic empowerment of women in Spain and Africa. The result was a strategic document¹ with the objective of serving as a reference for the development of economic empowerment initiatives of women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The seminar was attended by two representatives of the project counterpart titled “**Thinking in Serrer: Tourism for Growth**” (“Pensando en Serrer. Turismo para crecer”), an economic empowerment project being developed under the same principles by Fundación Mujeres in Senegal. This project was initiated after an assessment of the needs and the joint work being carried out by women organisations of the territory and the tourism promotion office of the region.



1. See page 15

“Thinking in Serrer. Tourism for Growth”. An initiative in Senegal



The project “Thinking in Serrer. Tourism for Growth”, promoted by Fundación Mujeres and jointly funded by AECID in the framework of the 2008 open call, is executed on the island of Mar Lothie, in the Fatick department of Senegal. It has two local women associations as counterparties, Mbogua Yiif and Pass-pass, in addition to the co-operation of the *Limboko Social – Cultural Centre*.

The project arose from the need of promoting the local economy on the basis of the rich environment by means of developing entrepreneurial and commercial activities led by women which strengthen tourism in the area.

On the basis of this need, which was also identified by their counterparts, it was decided to set up an economic empowerment project having as **main objective** the promotion of the participation of women in the productive and economic activities of the area together with the strengthening of their business associations in the context of the potential productive sectors for improving the development of the Mar Lothie island.

To this end, a comprehensive intervention was developed on the basis of the three pillars of **economic empowerment**: The personal pillar, by means of **business management and technical-productive training**; the collective pillar, with actions involving all the businesswomen as well as the two associations to set up a joint **strategy for economic positioning in the region**; and the political pillar, by means of **training actions for empowerment and leadership of the two associations** of women in order to position them as influential business groups in the territory.

In this way, a **group of leaders** has been constituted made up by eight businesswomen from the two associations. Their role is to promote and ensure the participation of all the business women in their own economic empowerment process. In addition, they have the task of jointly defining actions for encouraging and supporting the rest of entrepreneurs members of the associations and support their participation as well as leading the creation of enterprises to be established in the framework of the project development.

To date, this group of leaders have identified the needs and interests of the entrepreneurial women in the framework of a common goal, that is diversifying economy activities on the basis of the resources in the territory. They have mobilised the rest of women members for defining and taking actions in the **five sectors of diversification of business activities (fruits and vegetables, oysters, honey, textiles and bird farming)**. At present, the members are receiving training in business management for establishing five Economic Interest Groups (EIGs),¹ for each sector, that will formalise the business activity of the 67 members of the two associations of women in the area.

Said training, comprising 156 hours of totally practical information, is adapted to the five sectors so that the women will have a feasibility plan as well as a marketing and production plan. At the end of the training, they will be ready to formalise said 5 EIGs.

Together with the business management training for the women leaders, the technical-productive training is held for the five sectors attended by 67 women members distributed in five sectors. The training involves “hands on” actions to reinforce the learning. At the end of the 146-hour training the women will have **basic knowledge of production, packaging and distribution of their products** in accordance with the regulations of each sector and quality assurance procedures.



Upon completion of said training, the entrepreneurial women will have **dual support for establishing the 5 EIGs**, one linked to the establishment of the enterprises as well as the first steps in their management, which will be **reinforced with a functional literacy process** which began in the previous training process. The second type of support will be linked to the production in each sector with the aim of reinforcing the training process.

In the course of the training process, **fund raising activities will be initiated** to support the establishment and development of the business activities. In addition, **marketing opportunities** will be researched to allow the establishment of the new companies in the regional markets as well as the productive revitalisation of the region by means of a more efficient use of its natural resources. In addition, **the creation of a co-operation network of Spanish and Senegalese women will be promoted**.

NETWORK OF WOMEN FOR A BETTER WORLD



In March 2006 and by initiative of the governments of Mozambique and Spain, the first meeting of the **Network of African and Spanish Women for a Better World** was held in Maputo (Mozambique). This meeting marked the beginning of the network's activities and brought together over 200 women from 19 African countries and Spain.

The network was established with the purpose of strengthening ties between African and Spanish women to improve the rights and opportunities of women in the awareness of the need of fighting against poverty, violence and war and to promote sustainable economic development based on the respect of natural resources. The network is based on the international commitments² entered by governments in relation to the consolidation of women's rights and the inclusion of the gender approach in all policies.

The participants, representing a variety of areas such as public administrations, business, education, legal, public health, Parliaments and the media, agreed to set up a common strategic platform with the purpose of ensuring that the rights of women become part of the political agendas and the development programmes of national governments and supra-national institutions.

In order to implement a common agenda for development and gender in Sub-Saharan Africa, the network was constituted as an efficient instrument in the service of said agenda that must be transferred and assumed by all key sectors for the development of society: Governments, public and private institutions, the civil society and economic and social agents.

In this regard, the strategy of the network is based on the exchange of information and knowledge arising from cooperation

and networking between organisations of women, institutions and organisations. This exchange of information and co-operation, together with the commitment by the network to supervise the fulfilment of agreements signed by governments in relation to equality, development and gender, constitute the main pillars of the different lines of activity initiated by the Network of Women for a Better World.

On the other hand, to fulfil its objectives the network develops its activities in the framework of annual action programmes drawn up following the guidelines and agreements reached at the annual meeting.

In said meetings, listed below, the participants prepared joint statements describing specific agreements for initiating actions in the field of education, health, employment, empowerment and the recognition of the rights of women.

- Maputo (Mozambique), March 7 and 8, 2006
- Madrid (Spain), March 7 and 8, 2007
- Niamey ((Niger), May 12 and 13, 2008
- Monrovia (Liberia), March 8, 2009

In the latest meeting held this year in Monrovia it was agreed to hold the fifth meeting in Valencia and the sixth one in Windhoek (Namibia).

The full texts of the declarations drawn up at each meeting are in the following website:

<http://www.mujeresporunmundomejor.org/>

In addition, this page includes all the information about the network in what concerns its procedures and activities.

2. CEDAW Declaration; Beijing Action Platform; UN Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security; Statement of the Commission on the Statutes for Women in its 49th period of sessions; Millennium Development Goals; African Union Protocol on Rights of Women; African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equity

MEETING OF YOUNG WOMEN FROM AFRICA AND SPAIN: EMPOWERMENT AND NEW CHALLENGES

Background

In February 2008, UNIFEM, together with the Institute of Women, the Africa House and AECID organised the “Course on Leadership and Empowerment of Young Women” as one of the activities of the **Network of Women for a Better World**. The network committee selected the young African and Spanish women to participate in this course on the basis of their involvement in the work of women and organisations and/or development Corporation NGOs with specific gender projects.

The course, given by experts of the Tomorrow’s Children Initiative organisation of Kenya, was an innovative experience and a basis on which participants created a space for exchanging information about the social realities of their countries and first approach to the role that today, as young women, can play to produce changes in said realities.

After the course, the participants expressed the desire to continue meeting in order to forge closer ties between the young women of Africa and Spain. With this purpose in mind, Fundación Mujeres opened the **Blog of Young Women for a Better World** as “...a space for sharing experiences, information, resources, and maintaining action and communication”.³

This set a cornerstone for establishing in the framework of the **Network of Women** for a Better World a Network of Young Women to focus on topics of interest for young African and Spanish women with the aim of emphasising the recognition and the role of young women as key agents for the empowerment of women and social change.

Accordingly, the fledgling *Network of Young Women for a Better World* was established in the conviction that, even though their members lived in different social realities, they shared common goals. More specifically, in gender issues they share challenges which can be addressed jointly because young women are potential agents for change both in African societies and in Spain.

The following step for consolidating this network required a meeting to define and share common interests and empowerment

experiences in development in the various countries of the network members, and also to identify the priority topics for designing joint projects promoting the empowerment of young women.

Fundación Mujeres took note of this interest and undertook to organise the “**Meeting of Young Women from Africa and Spain: Empowerment and New Challenges**” to initiate the recognition of young women as analysts of their own realities and promoters of a relevant and leading position for changing them through action.

Said meeting included in its agenda a second section directly related to the 2008 Niamey Meeting Declaration of the Network of Women for a Better World which expresses the commitment to develop an action plan including, among other initiatives, training trainers on citizenship, peace and gender. In this context, the network prepared a “Manual for Trainers in Gender, Citizenship and Peace” to be reviewed and supplemented with proposals regarding the content and methodology.

This second section provided the Young Women’s Network the possibility of participating in the review of the manual and contribute their outlook to the way empowerment is to be approached.

Thus, the Young Women’s Network has taken a further step towards consolidation.



3. <http://fundacionmujeres.net/youngwomennetwork/>

Meeting of young women of Africa and Spain: Empowerment and new challenges

With the collaboration of the Federation of Young Women and the funding of AECID, Fundación Mujeres organised this meeting which was held in Madrid on February 24 - 25, 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to provide **cohesion** to the fledgling **Network of Young Women for a Better World** on the basis of sharing the social realities of different countries and specifying strategies and priority actions to address the empowerment of young women.

Accordingly, this first meeting was focused on achieving common ground, becoming acquainted with each other and learn in greater detail about the situation of young women from Africa and Spain in what concerns promoting the empowerment of women and becoming agents for change through the organisations in which they carry out their work.

The meeting addressed the need of sharing, participating and deciding the way in which to obtain recognition as agents for change and promote the interests and needs of young women.

To facilitate this space of exchange and dialogue, the first day of the meeting was open to the general public. To encourage participation, a keynote speech opened the meeting followed by roundtables for sharing experiences being carried out in different countries to promote the empowerment of women and obtain a first impression about the type of actions being developed as well as for sharing with the public an analysis of different social realities, the action capacity that young women can develop as agents for change and possible intervention strategies.

The second day of the meeting was for the members of the Young Women's Network who gathered in workshops to encourage debate, obtain in -depth information about the social realities they experience in the work and the impact that these realities have on the possibilities of promoting the empowerment of young women.

This analysis was supplemented by discussions about the type of cooperation strategies that could be established among young women of Africa and Spain, identifying the intervention priorities for promoting the empowerment of women as well as drawing up guidelines for the adequate development of said interventions.

The end result of the meeting was summarised in a conclusions document⁴ published by Fundación Mujeres with the financial support of AECID.

4. See page 15

A G E N D A

February 23

17:00-17:30 Official opening.

Isabel Martínez, General Secretary of Equality Policies.

Marisa Soletto, President of Fundación Mujeres.

17:30-18:30 Keynote speech: *"Cooperation for development with Africa from the gender perspective"*.

Juana Bengoa, Gender Officer of the NGO-D Coordination body.

18:30-20:00 Roundtable: *"Experiences of African and Spanish organisations for promoting the empowerment of young women"*.

Moderator: **Mayka Cuadrado Zurinaga**, Federación Mujeres Jóvenes.

"Integrating Empowerment as a Factor for Women's Human Rights Advancement". **Mónica Voke-Ighorodje** (BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Lagos-Nigeria).

"Empowerment and Sexual and Reproductive Rights in the Context of the Fight against HIV in Africa". **Mayra Moro** (Aid in Action).

"L'empowerment des jeunes femmes comme facteur de changement social au Mali". **Diarra Maimouna Matel** (Réseau des Femmes Africaines Economistes, REFAE).

February 24

9:00- 9:30 Inauguration:

Inmaculada Reverte Fernández, Vicepresident and Chief Officer for Rights and Equal Opportunities, CJE (Council of Youth of Spain).

Aranzazu Pecharromán, Vice-president of the Federation of Young Women.

9:30-11:00 Round Table: *"Practical examples of promotion of gender equality developed by young women in Spanish and African organisations"*.

Moderator: **Beatriz Bonete Fernández**, Fundación Mujeres.

"Gender equality: a debate for the century in Africa". **Nanduja Nivatiti**, Project Officer: East African Gender Declaration EADGE, Uganda.

"Spain: building networks for lobbying on Beijing +15". **Silvia Altolaquirre**, National Coordinator of the campaign Move for Equality. It's Only Fair". Aid in Action Foundation. Spain.

"Presentation de l'Afao". (L'Association des Femmes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest). **Diarra Tall**, Chargée de Programme Jeunesse AFAO (l)- Sénégal.

"The Process of Strengthening the National Union of Saharai Women". **Lorena Fernández Vidal**, Association of Friends of RASD (Democratic Arab Saharai Republic). Spain.

11:00-11:30 Coffee break.

11:30-13:30 Workshop *"Keys for analysing the social realities of young women in Africa and Spain"*.

Moderators: **Yuri Nakanouchi** (Group1: French) and **Jimena Montes** (Group 2: English).

13:30 Lunch.

15:30-17:00 Workshop *"Cooperation Strategies between Young Women of Africa and Spain"*.

Moderators: **Yuri Nakanouchi** (Group1: French) and **Jimena Montes** (Group 2: English).

17:00-17:45 Plenary: Workshop Conclusions.

17:45-18:00 Debate and closure.

Working meeting on the “Manual for trainers on gender, citizenship and peace”; revision and proposals from the perspective of young women from Africa and Spain

Together with the Federation of Young Women and the joint funding of UNIFEM, Fundación Mujeres held the Working Meeting in Madrid on February 26, 2009. the meeting was attended by members of the fledgling **Network of Young Women for a Better World**.

The meeting was held in response to the call made by UNIFEM to complete the “Manual for trainers on gender, citizenship and peace” prepared by the Network of Women for a Better World in the framework of the commitments established in Niamey, where it was decided to implement a participational approach with the contribution of various African and Spanish organisations.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the usefulness and applicability of the manual and make proposals for improvement to facilitate its implementation.

To optimise the work of the meeting, one month before it was held a first phase of prior work was carried out, involving reading and discussing the manual with the coordination of Fundación Mujeres.

The meeting was developed in the form of breakout workshops to facilitate the exchange of viewpoints and the attainment of common conclusions on the revision of the document as well as to summarise proposals for the utilisation of the manual and the inclusion of additional good practices. In a first session, the methodology for the meeting was agreed and the manual was

set in context as a working instrument for organisations of women and development cooperation NGOs.

The end result of the meeting was summarised in a document of conclusions which was sent to the Secretariat and Coordinating Committee of the Network of Women for a Better World.

A G E N D A

9:30-10:00 Inauguration.

Amaia Pérez, UNIFEM

Cristina García Comas, asst. director of Fundación Mujeres.

10:00-10:30 Methodological context of the Manual for trainers on gender, citizenship and peace.

10:30-11:30 Working Groups.

Moderated by: Federation of Young Women.

11:30-12:00 Coffe Break.

12:00-14:00 Working groups (cont'd).

14:00-15:30 Lunch.

15:30-17:30 Plenario: Plenary: conclusions of the working groups.

17:30-18:00 Final debate and closure of the meeting.

Participating organisations

Both meetings were attended by 29 women from the following organisations:

Country	Organisation
Sénegal	AFAO / WAWA ; Expert Freelance Cres-Ucad (Consortium pour la Recherche Economique et Social)
Costa de Marfil	Association des Femmes Juristes de Côte d'Ivoire
Mali	REFAE
Uganda	EASSI
Gambia	Network of Youth
Gambia	Gambia Television
Kenya	T.C.I. (Tomorrow's Child Initiative)
Liberia	Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy

Country	Organisation
Gambia	Child Protection Alliance
Mozambique	Fórum Mulher
Tanzania	East Africa Law Society (EALS)
Nigeria	BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
Spain	Instituto Canario de la Mujer
Spain	Asociación de Amig@s de la RASD
Spain	Campaña Muévete por la Igualdad. Es de Justicia
Spain	Área de la Mujer de Radio Vallekas
Spain	Fundación Mujeres
Spain	Federación Mujeres Jóvenes

Conclusions of the meetings

“And why not a better world...”

A principle that was agreed by all is the **relationship between development and social change**. This change necessarily involves the empowerment of women at the personal, collective, economic and political level as well as the **recognition of the role that women play as agents for change and social development**.

Empowerment was identified as one of the most effective strategies for overcoming gender differences, which are exacerbated in developing countries. However, approaching any empowerment strategy requires a dynamic and changing attitude, understanding empowerment as a process, as a succession of stages based on the social context in which the strategy is carried out and on the way in which this context plays out the unequal relationships between women and men.

In addition, **the integration of the gender perspective in this type of strategies** is essential because it recognizes the role of women as agents for change and development and also takes into account the way in which gender relationships and roles influence the social, economic and cultural variables in the context of the area of intervention.

The integration of the gender perspective allows for an adequate approach of the starting point in said area of intervention. Accordingly, the development of co-operation projects must consider the above approach if the purpose is to achieve sustainable changes.

However, the empowerment of women as a strategy for change must be addressed from two supplementary domains, i.e., **the individual and collective domain**. The former involves the personal acknowledgement of the abilities and capacities of women as well as their social position, interests and needs.

In other words, self esteem must be exercised to enhance the capacity of intervention and change in the personal area of women's lives. In turn, collective empowerment involves a transfer of the personal acknowledgement of each woman to a joint and shared recognition of women's demands as a group. This enhances the possibility of carrying out action at the social level to reach defined objectives and above all to make them visible within the political and social agendas. The establishment of networks between women and their organisations has been identified as the best strategy to address this issue.

Therefore, it is necessary to promote projects comprising empowerment processes to modify the power relationships between women and men as well as to recognize and enhance the role that women play as potential social development agents. Said projects must consider the social, political, cultural and economic empowerment of women for them to become active players in social change as well as to lead said changes as women and citizens. Because the main objective is to change the social reality of women and, “*pourquoi pas, le monde entier*”⁵.

5. Literal quote from Diarra Maimouna Matel, participant from Mali, in her presentation: “*L'empowerment des jeunes femmes comme facteur de changement social au Mali*”



“Committed to create ... in networking”

Empowerment strategies, particularly collective strategies, require collective work, aggregating efforts, sharing and moving forward with common criteria and proposals in a networking environment. The Niamey Declaration of the Network of Women for a Better World expresses its support for the networks of women and organisations by stating that they are “*decided to create and promote new opportunities for collaboration, networking and exchanging information through the current and future initiatives of Africa and Spain*”.

The construction of networks involve an expansion of the area of action and intervention of projects as well as exchanges of information, working experiences, methodologies and good practices between members, either organisations or individuals. Networking facilitates the social impact of projects and allows for a multiplying effect in other networks and organisations carrying out similar projects.

However, the creation and sustainability of networks requires the enhancement of the individual and collective empowerment of women on the basis of common principles and utilising existing resources at the territorial, national or international level. It is best to build upon existing bases that can facilitate the work of the agents involved in these processes and to do it together.

The “**Manual for Trainers on Gender, Citizenship and Peace**” has been designed with the above goals in mind by a number of organisations from Africa and Spain that utilise the empowerment of women linked to the development of territories. With the input provided by the Network of Young Women for a Better World at its Madrid meeting, the manual aims at becoming a reference for approaching women empowerment strategies.

This tool, which has been developed collectively, has given a voice to the women who participated in its development to express their views on how to approach women empowerment strategies and defining the requirements for doing so.

Networking for making decisions, networking for lobbying, networking for creating and for building.

FROM SUB SAHARAN AFRICA ON EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG WOMEN

Monica Ighorodje
BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
Nigeria

Women's empowerment is an overarching concept which deals with a woman's definition of self worth, ability to make a choice, equal opportunities and resources as well as the capacity to influence the direction of social change at all levels. The term empowerment is a feeling of an opportunity to operate on equal terms with men without the influences of cultural, patriarchal and gender biases.

The role of young women as agent of change is a remarkable opportunity for social transformation as women are endowed with the ability to influence their world amidst the patriarchal resistances and challenges faced in exercising her autonomy. Young women's empowerment is continuous processes of enabling young women have the access needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and control their own destinies.

In the course of my human rights work, I have discovered that meaningful empowerment will not take place without the channeling of resources towards the realization of young women empowerment in multiple dimensions whether political or otherwise. The necessity lies in the integration of empowerment components within functional structures and institutions to promote women's advancement within the purview of governmental operations, policies and development processes. The future of young women remains at stake without the concerted efforts of government and civil society(s) in investing in the future of the youths while engaging them in meaningful development processes to ensure sustainability and an informed succession.

The sincerity of purpose from African leaders embraced with altruism devoid of greed will not only create the requisite ambience for effective youth's leadership but will create a platform for equal contribution for a balanced national development. Women have an unexplored capacity and their empowerment is mandatory to bring about the needed paradigm shift. Young women as agent of social change possess the requisite capacity and innate capabilities to engender the impending societal changes for advancing justice for all yet all that is required are equal opportunities and level playing fields devoid of discrimination of any sort.



Diarra Maïmouna Matel
REFAE, Réseau des Femmes Africaines Economistes
Mali

To emphasise issues of empowerment and the role of women as an active agent for social change, it is crucial to improve the identification of the concept. In fact, we consider empowerment as the acquisition of the right to speak and to be recognized at the social level. Women are facing enormous difficulties as regards resources (lack of water, land and employment). Frequently, the simple fact of being a woman involves a systematic struggle against a variety of forms of discrimination, comprising sexual violence, exclusion from education, disproportionate vulnerability to HIV infection and the impossibility of accessing property or other rights.

The autonomy of young women is essential in order to generate social transformation now and in the future. In order to start this social change it is necessary to provide young women with the means for developing the skills that will allow them to become leaders in the issues that affect them. In my opinion, these means consist in carrying out attractive and dynamic activities to motivate young women and give them confidence in their abilities so as to initiate a change and in this way motivate more young women to do the same. In our view, a plan should be established comprising a number of issues : Human rights and rights of women, violence against women, self esteem and the development of leadership qualities.

Apart from said plan, to enhance efficiency it is also important for women to be aware of the power they have to drive social change. This awareness can only be done by means of awareness raising in primary and secondary schools and even in universities. For those who never had the chance to access education, this awareness raising should be channelled through associations, tontines (solidarity groups based on the principle of distribution of funds) and groups of women. The objective of this awareness raising is for women to understand that they are as intelligent as men, that they have skills and that they should not be afraid or ashamed to value and utilise them.

In addition, as empowerment is a concept that is deliberately non-globalizing, a precise meaning must be determined on the basis of the context in which it will be applied. Effectively, for empowerment to assist women in becoming key agents of social change, the objectives of the concept must be formulated on the basis of the aspirations of those women and also taking into account the political, social, cultural and economic context.

Finally, for a young woman to become an agent for social change, she must be allowed to go to school and complete her education. In addition, emphasis must be on the fight against all forms of violence against women and the elimination of all the traditions that go against the empowerment of women.

COMPREHENSIVE LOBBYING STRATEGY FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA. AN EXPERIENCE OF DECENTRALISED COOPERATION



With the support and funding of the **International Co-Operation for Development Agency of Extremadura**, Fundación Mujeres together with HUMANAS Corporation as a local counterpart in Colombia, has developed a project titled **"Comprehensive lobbying strategy for women victims of sexual violence in Colombia"**. This decentralised cooperation project complies with the priorities of gender equality promotion described in the General Cooperation Plan of Extremadura 2008-2011.

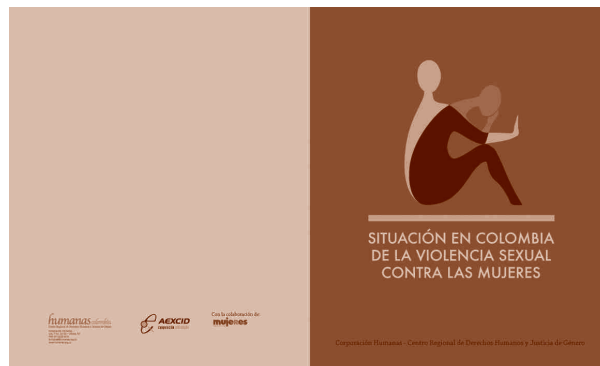
Said project is developed in Colombia, a country affected by an armed conflict in which women have faced sexual violence as the most extreme expression of gender violence by soldiers, paramilitary forces and.

In this context, the main objective of the project was to make visible and recognize violence against women as a continuum which takes place both in war and in peace, in order to contribute to guarantee the validity of the human rights of women in Colombia.

To this end, a number of actions have been implemented on the basis of a political lobbying strategy and legal demands for application of the laws against gender violence. This strategy, which includes legal, judicial and political actions, has the aim of obtaining reparation for the damages suffered by women and ensuring that such actions will never be repeated. The actions described below have been carried out in the Department of Bolívar, Antioquia and in the city of Bogotá.

1. Research and dissemination activities:

Research on the status of sexual violence against women in Colombia: a report has been drawn up and distributed describing the situation of violence against women in Colombia and the reparations strategies being implemented. This research has contributed to the awareness of the actors and to disseminate the multiple dimensions of the problems caused by sexual violence against women in Colombia.



With the same purpose, the project has disseminated information about the Violence Observatories maintained by Fundación MUJERES and Corporación HUMANAS through the following websites:

<http://www.observatorioviolencia.org>

<http://www.humanas.org.co>

2. Training Activities:

Training for legal operators. One of the project strategies involved lobbying regional and national decision makers in order to include in their decisions a violence approach based on international human rights laws. In this regard, training actions have been carried out for legal professionals in Colombia in order

to increase their levels of awareness about sexual violence against women. In addition, said professionals have been provided with technical and policy documents on violence against women (which have been broadly distributed) for the public agenda to include the issue of violence against women and the responsibility of the state and society.

Training for journalists and social communicators. Similarly, the initiative has provided training for media professionals to enhance their awareness about the problem of sexual violence against women both in times of peace and of war, as well as providing an adequate response by the political and legal actors involved.

3. Awareness raising and exchanges of experiences:

These actions mainly targeted political circles and other key agents to raise their awareness about the current situation being endured by women victims of violence and how to respond to the problem at the level of institutions from different countries.

Likewise, the awareness raising activities have targeted the media and the general population to promote an attitude of rejection of sexual violence against women and to demand improvements in the responses provided by public and private institutions.

The awareness raising at committees comprised three types of actions:

- **Awareness raising in the media and through communication products.** The media such as radio, press, television and Internet are very important channels to reach different types of audiences in a massive manner. A Media Plan was established to increase awareness among the general public about the sexual violence of which hundreds of women in the country have been victims, a fact which paradoxically nobody wants to talk about.
- **Preparation and publication of dissemination materials on the matter.** An awareness raising campaign has been designed and distributed among journalists and the media of Colombia. Said campaign has utilised a variety of materials including the following:

- Posters with the motto “Act now: Against Sexual Violence in Colombia”.
- Code for journalistic treatment of violence against women, aimed at journalists.
- Folders with information about sexual violence in Colombia.

- **International Seminar for Exchanging Experiences** about “Taking cases to court and reparation for women who have been victims of sexual violence offences in the framework of the armed conflict”.

This international seminar was held in the city of Bogota on February 4 - 5, 2009. it was attended by 90 participants comprising legal operators, representatives of human rights and women’s organisations, delegates of co-operation agencies and journalists. In addition, the seminar was attended by eight international experts from Chile, Peru, Guatemala, Spain and Colombia, who addressed the meeting in the course of the two days.

The content of the seminar focused around three main topics:

- Procedures for taking court action in the framework of the Colombian armed conflict.
- Reparation actions: analysis of different proposals by organisations of women.
- Actions for making visible the continuum of violence against women and defining strategies towards the media.



“Women and Development” PROGRAMME

Since 2006, Fundación Mujeres has been participating in this call and at present it is working on three projects, two of Colombian organisations and one of an Ecuadorean organisation. In addition, this continuity involves the fulfilment of one of the main challenges of the programme, i.e., to achieve the consolidation of the funded projects as well as the relationships between Latin American and Spanish organisations in order to develop additional joint actions.

“Media Observatory for visibilisation and adequate portrayal of gender violence in Colombia. Stage III: Consolidation and transfer of experiences to five south American countries”

This project has implemented a Media Observatory which follows up national newspapers to analyse the portrayal of women in the printed media. This analysis gives rise to comprehensive lobbying actions in the media to foster changes towards a non-discriminatory portrayal of women. To do this, the Observatory publicly reports the use of stereotypes and sexist practices and makes recommendations for changing said practices. In addition, the Observatory publishes weekly and monthly news bulletins, issues recommendations and works in the training of media students.

The project is now in its third stage, focused on the consolidation of the Observatory and the transfer of knowledge, technologies and experiences to five organisations of women from Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina.

Fundación Mujeres and Humanas have had the opportunity of participating throughout the three stages of this project by means of interventions and mechanisms to enhance the visibility and making public the violence suffered by women. The process of construction and consolidation of the media Observatory has been very fulfilling for both parties. In this final stage, the Observatory has the aim of establishing itself as a definitive point of reference for the media in Colombia.

<http://www.humanas.org.co/html/observatorio.html>

“Third stage of mediation and negotiation of the Colombian Caribbean process with the gender and human rights perspective”

The first stage of this project, the “Process for regionalisation and development of the Colombian Caribbean”, led by the Caribbean Women’s Network, focused on awareness raising work with the 144 organisations forming part of the network in order to promote their participation in the mediation and negotiation processes with politically relevant actors.

In the second stage the organisations focused on the process of reaching consensus for building the regionalisation agenda to establish a single agenda produced by this social movement.

The third and current stage of this project comprises the negotiation of the agreement with trade unions, business circles, academic sectors, religious organisations, provincial and local governments and political parties. The final objective is to set up a human development platform in the framework of the autonomic process of the Caribbean region.

The visits made to follow up the project in its different stages allowed Fundación Mujeres to add further depth to the political lobbying carried in the territory by APRODEFA and the Network of Women of the Colombian Caribbean region. The difficult political situation caused by the demobilisation of paramilitary arms groups emphasised the importance of the work being carried out in this project to enhance citizenship and strengthen the social fabric of the region.

<http://www.aprodefa.com>

“Training in communication and gender for women in social organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean (Stage II)”

This project comprises a training programme on communication and gender targeting women leaders, promoters and media professionals from 65 social organisations, mostly from rural environments. After the first stage, these organisations have set up regional social networks and a joint communication initiative titled “La Minga Informativa de Movimiento Sociales”.

The objective of the second stage is to enhance the scope of this training and delve deeper in the training of Communication and Gender trainers in order to increase the impact and the scope of action of the project.

ALAI and Fundación Mujeres share common strategic lines such as communication, the importance of networks, visibilisation and exchanges between women’s organisations. By means of the contacts and joint actions made possible by the “Women and Development” programme of the Institute of Women, both organisations were able to exchange detailed information about the importance of communication and training in the use of new technologies to facilitate closer ties and cooperation between women’s organisations.

<http://alainet.org/> <http://movimientos.org/>

WEB SITES AND MATERIALS

Empowerment and Leadership



www.mujereslideres.org

A website collecting the most recent information about the activities carried out by Fundación Mujeres in international cooperation for development based on the gender perspective.

In addition to information about projects and partner organisations, the web site includes links, documents and materials related to the promotion of the empowerment of women as well as the development of quality and the integration of the gender perspective in social, political and economic environments.

Young Women for a Better World



<http://fundacionmujeres.net/youngwomennetwork/>

The blog of Young Women for a Better World is a space for communication and exchange of information promoted by Fundación Mujeres. It was established in 2008 as part of the activities carried out by the Network of Women for a Better World. The blog was implemented and developed by the Network of Young Women for a Better World made up by young women involved in the work of organisations of women and/or cooperation for development with emphasis on specific gender projects. Its objective is to promote the recognition and role of young women as key agents for the empowerment of women and social change.

Strategies and best practices for the empowerment of women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Strategic Document



A strategic document summarising the conclusions of the seminar titled "Strategies and Best Practices for the Empowerment of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa", held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in October 2008 and organised by Fundación Mujeres together with Africa House. The meeting was subsidised by the State Secretariat of International Co-Operation.

This document includes the essential keys for promoting the economic empowerment of women as well as conclusions about the role and promotion of women as territorial development agents.

The full document can be accessed at the www.mujereslideres.org

Meeting of Young Women from Africa and Spain: Empowerment and New Challenges. Conclusions Document



This document summarises the conclusions of the "Meeting of Young Women from Africa and Spain: Empowerment and New Challenges", organised by Fundación Mujeres and funded by AECID. The meeting took place in Madrid on February 24 - 25, 2009.

The document includes the main conclusions and proposals for strategies for promoting the empowerment of women. One of the main objectives of the document is to become a reference for designing and executing projects targeting the empowerment of women.

The full document can be accessed at the www.mujereslideres.org



www.fundacionmujeres.es

BRANCHES

A CORUÑA

AVDA. MONELOS 121, 1º DCHA.
15009 A CORUÑA
TELF.: 981 29 40 97
galicia@fundacionmujeres.es

CÁCERES

AVDA. DE ALEMANIA 8, 1º DCHA.
10001 CÁCERES
TELF.: 927 62 91 94
FAX: 927 23 05 56
extremadura@fundacionmujeres.es

GUTIÉRREZ MELLADO 6, 1º B
10300 NAVALMORAL DE LA MATA
TELF.: 927 53 10 12
FAX: 927 53 10 12
navalmoral.ex@fundacionmujeres.es

CÓRDOBA

CLAUDIO MARCELO 15, 1º DCHA.
14002 CÓRDOBA
TELF.: 957 29 91 90
FAX: 957 42 03 26
cordoba@fundacionmujeres.es

OVIEDO

SABINO FERNÁNDEZ CAMPOS, 6 BAJO
33011 OVIEDO - ASTURIAS
TELF.: 985 20 33 57
FAX: 985 22 89 05
asturias@fundacionmujeres.es

GIJÓN

AVDA. DEL LLANO, 53 BAJO
33209 GIJÓN - ASTURIAS
TELF.: 985 09 00 02
FAX: 985 09 57 90
gijon@fundacionmujeres.es

REGISTERED OFFICE

MADRID

FRANCISCO DE ROJAS 2, 1º IZDA.
28010 MADRID
TELF.: 91 591 24 20
FAX: 91 447 24 61
mujeres@fundacionmujeres.es

