

Call for a strong statement on stoning of girl

By Joyce Chimbi



From left; Professor Mazahir Osman, Aisha Koghali. Photo: Joyce Chimbi

The stoning of 13 year old Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow that sent shockwaves around the world last month formed a somber backdrop to yesterday's meeting, with delegates calling for a strong statement of condemnation from ADF VI.

For the 400 delegates from around Africa meeting in the Ethiopian capital, next door to Somalia, the brutal stoning under sharia law (see accompanying story) brought home the cruel realities of

papers, facts and figures on culture, religion and gender violence.

"We are meeting here talking about issues of gender based violence and all morning, no one has said anything regarding the Somali girl. I think it's important to note, at this forum, that something needs to change," said Mbuyiselo Botha who works for Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa.

In an interview shortly after the plenary session in which he raised the issue, Botha said that it is in forums such as this that religious and traditional leaders as well as politicians should be held accountable for such flagrant violations of human rights. "Traditional leaders are custodians of morals, who else and where else are these harmful practices better raised?"

Botha was not satisfied with a promise by the

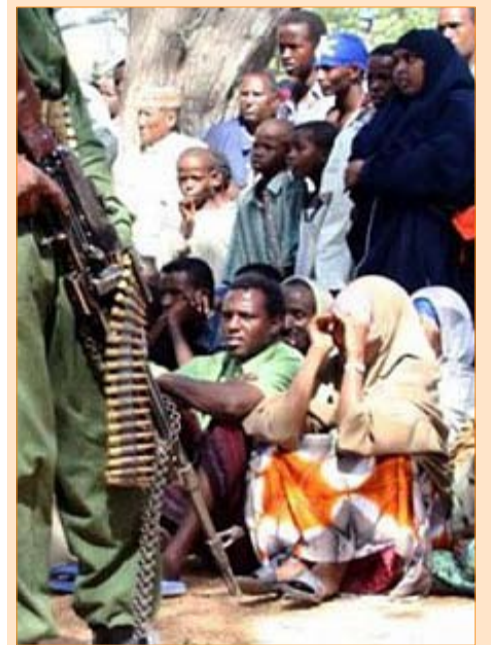
chair that the matter be discussed later in the day during a breakaway session. "I don't think it was well handled because it goes to the nerve of this forum, therefore warranting special attention. It deserved more unprovoked acknowledgement," Botha said.

Most of the delegates interviewed expressed high expectations that ADF VI would come out with a strong statement on this and other incidents of gender violence. "It's significant that (the issue) be given life at this conference, otherwise it will be a long time before we can celebrate this year's theme," emphasised a delegate who declined to be named.

"I think there is a discrepancy between what people think about Islam, what some practice and the real Islam because I can tell you that Islam is one of the religions that truly empowers its women," said Professor Mazahir Osman, the Secretary General of The International Muslim Women's Union in Sudan.

Ihasan Koghali, who has served twice as the Minister for Health and Internal Affairs in Sudan, added "Islam doesn't perpetuate violence against women...of course there are isolated cases of violence, but it shouldn't be generalised."

Botha stressed, however, that conferences such as this should not mince their words about the flagrant violations of women's rights that continue to occur under their very noses. "It's only when we have liberated women from all forms of violation that we can speak of true liberation," Botha said.



"Don't kill me!"

A girl of 13 begged for mercy moments before a mob buried her up to her shoulders and stoned her to death. The Somali youngster is said to have pleaded "Don't kill me, don't kill me," before her horrific execution in front of a 1,000-strong crowd.

A boy is thought to have been shot dead amid the appalling scenes inside a football stadium in Kismayu, a rebel-held port. According to Amnesty International, the girl was 13 and had been raped by three men. Officials say she was 23 and had confessed adultery before an Islamic court. The stoning, which took place on October 28, is the first public killing in war-torn Somalia for two years.

Convicting a girl of 13 for adultery would be illegal under sharia law but the authorities said she had lied about her age. Print and radio journalists who were allowed to attend the execution put her age at 23. Amnesty and Unicef, the UN children's agency, said that the girl, identified as Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow, was raped while travelling to see a relative in Mogadishu, the Somali capital.

Her family is said to have tried to report the crime to the militia who control Kismayu, only for Aisha to be arrested and accused of adultery. None of the men she accused of rape was detained.

David Copeman, Amnesty's Somalia campaigner, said: "This was not justice, nor was it an execution. This child suffered an horrendous death at the behest of the armed opposition groups who currently control Kismayu. This killing is yet another human rights abuse committed by the combatants in Somalia and again demonstrates the importance of international action to investigate and document such abuses, through an international commission of inquiry."

Amnesty said partway through the stoning nurses checked whether Aisha was still alive. They pulled her body out of the ground to ascertain she was still breathing before the stoning continued.

A Unicef statement said: "She sought protection from the authorities, who then accused her of adultery and sentenced her to death. A child was victimised twice - first by the perpetrators of the rape and then by those responsible for administering justice." The agency said the incident highlighted the vulnerability of girls and women in Somalia, which has suffered civil conflict for the past 17 years.

Source of story and photo: Mail Online

Failure not an option

By Rosemary Okello

The Sixth African Development Forum (ADF) opened at the UN-Economic Commission of Africa headquarters in Addis Ababa yesterday with a plea for countries to walk the talk and prioritise financing for gender equality.

Setting the tone, Ethiopian President Ato Girma Woldegiorgis reminded the delegates that "We need to produce achievable plans and real results. We are running out of time and we must now be practical. If this forum fails to agree on a workable and practical agenda with proper priorities, failure will stare us in the face."

Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ECA, said that despite legislation aimed at promoting gender equality and

women's empowerment, implementation is weak. "We must emphasise the adoption of an innovative and well thought out Action Plan that will ensure a transformational intervention in all our three sub-themes, namely action on gender equality, women empowerment and ending violence against women in Africa."

The African Union Chairperson Jean Ping cited provisions of the Constitutive Act, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights to the Rights of Women in African and the Solemn Declaration on Gender equality in Africa as examples of the AU's commitment to advancing women's rights. Currently 26 member states have either signed or ratified the Protocol on Women's Rights.

But he acknowledged that the new challenges of food insecurity, climate change, migration, and

water and energy shortages threaten the fragile gains made. "Although these issues affect both sexes, their impact on women and children are more catastrophic," said Ping.

Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank, the third partner in the conference, urged the delegates to speak loud and clear to the G20 who met last weekend at Washington to discuss the financial crisis: "This is a world crisis and they must open their doors to other countries to be part of the discussions and contribute because the majority of those who are currently affected by the crisis are poor women, the majority of whom are women in Africa."

Ulla Tornaes, Danish Minister of Development Cooperation urged delegates to take advantage of the up-coming Financing for Development meeting in Doha, Kuwait to press home financing concerns.

Financing for gender equality, Tornaes stressed, goes far beyond securing specific budget allocations for women ministries. Calling for a paradigm shift under which partner countries and donors collaborate to promote gender equality, she said that "The starting point is the implementation of the Paris Declaration principles on New Aid Modality to promote gender equality."

Much could be achieved, the minister added, if donors aligned and harmonised their and partner country objectives and strategies at national and sector level, for example conducting joint analysis based on sex-disaggregated data, developing indicators for achieving partner country objectives and building capacity of women ministries and that of the civil societies.

Gender equality, she said "is an effective means to reduce poverty, increase economic growth and accelerate the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals."



From left; Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of ECA, Jean Ping, Chairman of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank. Photo: Trevor Davies.

Make your voice heard!

ADF Today, a partnership between the ECA and Gender Links, will bring you in-depth coverage of all the above themes, starting with our centre-spread today on women's economic empowerment (page 4 and 5). To comment on any issue raised in this paper or in the conference please call ADF Today offices on extension 35175 or E-mail the editor on clmorna@mweb.co.za.



Men should go for fertility testing

By Arthur Okwemba

An infuriating, yet widespread, feature of our society is the way that blame is heaped on women whenever something goes wrong, especially in relationships. This is particularly painful when couples are unable to have a baby, with the blame always leveled against the woman. She is forced to go through a series of fertility tests and hop from one doctor to another, just to determine her ability to have a baby.

She has to contend with the flak from in-laws for her failure to give them a child. In other instances, the husband, under the insistence of his family or on his own volition, may decide to marry a second wife who can do what the first wife has failed to achieve.

However, as all this plays out, rarely are questions raised about the ability of the man to father a child, or to go for fertility tests as well. There is this misconception that fertility issues are women matters. Society believes that men are prolific, even when they have no sperm count at all or their sperms are deformed or immotile.

After several conversations with men on why they do not first go for fertility test before pressing their wives to do the same, it dawned to me that one thing a man dreads most is to have someone assess his fertility. Even if infertile, they always want it to be known otherwise.

Yet, in many cases, women go through harrowing and expensive experiences when the infertility problem lies with the man. Similarly, the cost of doing sperm analysis - the main test done to establish if a man is fertile or not costs under US\$20 in most public hospitals in Kenya and other African countries.

Conversely, a woman's hormonal analysis and tubal tests costs at least US\$250 in the cheapest private outlet. In view of the cost and the fact that close to 50% of contribution to infertility rests with the man, would it not be better and cheaper for the men to undertake fertility tests before requiring their wives or partners to do so.

But the big question is: why are men putting the burden of proof on women and not going for fertility tests when their investigation costs almost nothing? Troubled by this question, I decided to go for fertility testing just to understand what is involved and to use my experience to encourage other men to do the same.

When I arrived at one of the leading private hospitals in Nairobi and requested to undertake a semen analysis, the nurses at the reception looked at me with astonishment and asked a raft of questions: Has a doctor sent you? Are you having problems having children? Are you suspecting yourself? Is your wife fine? Are sure you want to do this? All these questions were intimidating to me, but I gathered the strength to go ahead.

One of the nurses cautioned me that issues of fertility are very depressing and I needed counseling first. This annoyed me, since health care professionals rarely raise the same concerns when a woman asks to do a fertility test. They receive nei-



Arthur Okwemba with his newborn baby. Photo: Rosemary Okello.

ther counseling nor preparation for the outcome of such tests, because the society thinks being infertile is part of a woman's reproductive health problem.

Back to the nurse. Not satisfied with my answer, she referred me to another man, who also being unsatisfied with why I wanted to do this test, referred me to yet another man, who finally allowed me to see the doctor.

The doctor too raised her questions, but eventually requested the laboratory to do the test. When I took the doctor's note to the laboratory technician, he looked at me with astonishment. And then whispered to me, "Your case is special, wait here for me as I prepare the room." At this moment, my nerves were at a breaking point.

After a few minutes, the man came back, beckoned me from other patients in manner that suggested something was wrong with me. I followed him into a room in the hospital's basement. Here, we met three women who were having tea. Without uttering a word, he gestured to them to leave the room immediately. I was then ushered in yet another small cubicle within this room that had a bed. It is at this point the laboratory technician removed a small bottle from his pocket.

"This is where you are expected to place your semen after masturbation," he said, speaking in very low tones. He gave me the option to do it in this small cubicle or a place near the hospital, since the semen is usually expected in the laboratory within 30 minutes from the time the ejaculate is collected. I opted to do it outside the hospital.

However, the whole process I had gone through and the secrecy behind the test confirmed many things. It was abundantly clear that health providers are part of those perpetuating this myth that fertility

issues are only a woman's issue.

They are also to blame for the intense stigma and fear around male fertility testing or semen analysis. I wondered if this is the treatment I had to go through, would any other man have the nerves to do it.

Similarly, what I went through was the complete opposite of treatment a woman receives in the same hospital. When she walks into the hospice and requests for hormonal or tubal test, no one raises eyebrows. The only question she is asked is if she has the money for the tests? For women, being infertile is seen as very normal and acceptable thing. For a man, it is out of place and improper.

These perceptions and attitudes have seen many women subjected to physical, emotional, and verbal violence by their husbands and in-laws if they cannot conceive. When in reality, the problem lies with the man, usually glorified as prolific and a hero who has to put-up with a barren woman.

This state-of-affairs needs urgent attention by men and women who believe in gender equality and women's human rights. A robust campaign enlightening the public, men in particular, of the man's contribution to infertility, and why he should undertake semen analysis, needs to commence immediately.

Until we project issues of infertility as both a man and woman's problem and why men should shoulder part of the burden, then women will remain victims of this unfair societal treatment.

Arthur Okwemba is a Kenyan journalist with the African Woman and Child Feature Service. This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service that provides fresh views on everyday news.

Let the sisters speak for themselves!

Is it really nit picking when we point out that of the five speakers at the opening ceremony of the ADF VI only one was a woman? She was the Honourable Ulla Tornaes, the Danish Minister of Development Co-operation, a special guest, from overseas. Not a single African woman spoke at the event!

It seems ironic that a forum whose theme is gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women in Africa, should choose so many men and one European woman to set the pitch for such a historical meeting.

While the men who spoke are without doubt "eminent" - coming from the United Nations, the African Development Bank, the African Union and the President of Ethiopia, would it not have given greater value to the meeting to have African women, perhaps from the same institutions, saying it for themselves?

Of course, it is important to have the support of eminent and ordinary men. There is no doubt that having high level men articulate gender concerns is a powerful force for change. Having UNECA Executive Secretary Abdoulie Janneh who talked of finding solutions to gender based violence, or Donald Kaberuka of the ADB who discussed women's empowerment carries a great deal of weight.

We are not disputing that gender equality is about both men and women. But it is equally important to give women equal representation at any forum, especially on issues that directly concern women and girls. How can we talk about empowerment of women when even at forums such as this we have men talk on our behalf?

As gender and media activists, we criticise the media for the gross under-representation of women in the news. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted by Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2003 showed that women in the sub-region constitute a mere 17 percent of news sources.

What do we say to the media when even at events about gender male speakers outnumber women speakers by four to one? Are we to blame them if only 20 percent of the sources in stories about the opening ceremony are male?

Opening ceremonies are not the full conference, but they are about setting the scene. They are deeply symbolic. The images that emerge from this occasion will yet again be images of powerful male decision-makers speaking on behalf of women.

They hand over to two very able women co-chairs: AU Commissioner Bience Gawanas and ECA Deputy Executive Secretary Laila Ben Barka. Clearly in the long term the answer to the dilemmas faced by organisers of such events is to have women such as this in the top rather than in supportive positions. Then their place at the head table would be without question.

Until women are equally represented at all levels of decision-making, and gender balance at opening ceremonies is something we don't even need to think about, let us at least ensure that women are present at the head tables where their concerns are being discussed. Nothing for us without us!



Switch on for gender justice

Delegates to ADF VI can participate in the first Sixteen Day Cyber dialogue on Funding to End Gender Violence by logging onto www.genderlinks.org.za on Thursday 20 November at 13.00 Ethiopian time. If you click on the chat facility of the website you will find instructions on how to join the chat with citizens and experts from around Africa on this key discussion. Alternatively, come to Caucus Room 10 on the second floor of the ECA conference venue where staff of *ADF Today* will set you up at a computer and help you join the chat.



What do you think of this advert? Gender and media activists will be debating if the media is more a part of the problem than of the solution to gender violence.

ADF Today is a partnership between the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Gender Links and the African Woman and Child feature Service (AWCFS).

Managing Editor: Colleen Lowe Morna – Gender Links, South Africa; **English Editor:** Rosemary Okello-Orlale – African Woman and Child Feature Service, Kenya; **French Editor:** Marie Annick Savripene – Gender Links, Mauritius; **Photographers:** Trevor Davies – African Fathers, Zimbabwe and Antonio Fiorente; **Special correspondent:** Mercedes Sayagues – Freelance journalist, South Africa; **Reporters:** Deepa Bhokhun – Freelance journalist, Mauritius; Joyce Chimbi – African Woman and Child Feature Service, Kenya; Zarina Geloo – Freelance journalist, Zambia; Nelly Bazikamwe – Contact FM, Rwanda; **Editorial assistant/IT Support:** Lydia Byarugaba – Gender Links, South Africa; **Design, layout and printing:** Publications and Conference Management Section – UNECA.



For the online version of the newspaper go to www.uneca.org/adf or www.genderlinks.org.za

OUT AND ABOUT IN ADDIS

Wake up and smell the coffee

By Mercedes Sayagues

For the last 60 years, Tomoca has been roasting, blending and serving Ethiopia's finest gourmet coffee.

Established by an Italian and now run by Ethiopians, the coffee house is a small museum of local coffee history. It boasts the original trimmings imported from Italy: bronze Art Deco scales, thick wooden counters, and a blackened roasting machine from Torino. Assorted paraphernalia, from maps to bibelots and folk paintings, tell a history of devotion to brewing the finest coffee. And the colours – deep reds, ochre and browns – make you feel as warm as the welcome from patrons and staff alike.

Owner Wobayhu Woube runs Tomoca, as her father did. From supervising the roasting to advising customers on the best roast for their taste, she keeps an eye on every aspect of the business.

Tomoca is near the Old Post Office in Piazza. The Ethiopian barista will brew the blend of your liking: Bar, heavy-bodied and earthy; Turco, a medium roast; Swedish, a light aromatic roast, and the lightest of all, USA.

The coffee is so delicious you will want to take some home. One kg of beans or ground, cost Br80. Local chamomile and ginger tea, and ginger to flavour the coffee are other tempting options.

Outside, on the street, you can buy a *jebena*, the handsome Ethiopian coffee clay pots with a narrow spout for Birr 25, and *cini*, six tiny cups and saucers for Birr 100.

Equipped with coffee beans and coffee pots, your dedicated reporters explored the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony.



Photo: Antonio Fiorente.

The beans are roasted on a charcoal brazier, pounded with mortar and pestle, ground and put into the *jebena* filled with boiling water. Tradition calls for burning incense in a small



At Tomoca: from the coffee farm to your espresso. Photo: Antonio Fiorente.

mortar when pouring the first cup, and having three servings, each with its own name: *abol*, *huletegna* and *bereka*.

Try to attend a coffee ceremony. Yod Abyssinia, near the hotel Desalegn, features it, although the place is posh and touristy. For a simpler experience, try Yeshi Buna or Yohemia Kitfu restaurants, both on Mickey Leland St.

After all, we are in the birthplace of coffee. Experts say the only native coffee trees in the world are here. Coffee beans derive their name from the Kaffa forests where it first grew wild, and the Ethiopian word for it, *buna*.

Coffee was part of traditional ceremonies in Africa and Yemen. Today, it fuels the art of friendship and conversation – as well as countless late-night conference sessions. Enjoy!

BEAN COUNTING

- 331,000 peasant farms and 19,000 state farms grow coffee in Ethiopia.
- 12 million coffee workers.
- 200,000 tons annual production.
- 5th world producer.
- 1511: Authorities in Mecca debated on whether or not to ban coffee. They didn't.
- 1683: First coffee house opens in Europe, in Venice.
- One-third of tap water in Europe and USA is used to make a nice cup of coffee.

Religion does not condone violence, leaders insist

By Zarina Geloo



Sister Ponga. Photo: Trevor Davies.

There is nothing in culture or religion that condones or advocates the subjugation of women, let alone violence against them, Catholic nun Auxillia Ponga and Muslim Imam Handemine Ould Salek have said.

In an interview with the *ADF Today*, Ponga, Gender Advisor at the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Salek, who heads a network of Imams for the rights of women in Mauritania, said violence is prohibited in all the holy books.

The two were speaking ahead of a plenary meeting to discuss how culture has fuelled gender based violence.

"There is no religion or culture that would perpetuate bad things. All the holy books have one thing in common they talk about being morally upright and doing good to each other," said Ponga.

She said if women were literate and had more self esteem they would be able to read religious books and analyse the texts for themselves. They would discover that their religion does not condone violence or women's subservient to men.

"Men like to quote the verse, about women submitting to their husbands, without referring to the next quote that tells them to love their wives as they love themselves," she said.

Ponga, who once headed Zambia's gender division in government, said it is not logical for a person to say they are religious and then harm another in the name of culture. "If you are religious and believe in God, then you will adhere to the tenets of what is written in your holy book; that is that you will love your wife as you love yourself and do no harm to your neighbour. What could be simpler?"

Salek, on the other hand, is exasperated that Islam is once again being pointed out as the religion that fuels gender based violence. "Islam protects women, the holy Quran exhorts men to cherish their wives and daughters," he said.

Referring to the recent stoning of thirteen year old Somali girl Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow for alleged adultery, Salek said some countries that institute Sharia law do it out of a point of ignorance.

While saying Sharia law is Islamic, Salek said that it cannot be applied in the piecemeal fashion that it is happening now, where it is being used to harm or punish women or forcing them into harmful traditional practices like genital mutilation.

"There are stringent conditions that have to be met before Sharia laws can be instituted; you need to have properly versed adjudicators or magistrates, the country must totally adhere to the tenets of Islam, which is not the case in many cases where there is Sharia."

His network will use the ADF IV forum to teach people that Islam is not about terrorism, it does not condone any kind of violence against women and children.

More importantly, Salek says people must know the differences between religion and culture. If people were as religious as they claim, they would not engage or promote any kind of violence against women and girls.

"If societies have cultures that promote gender based violence, then those must be dealt with separately and not confused with religion because religion is clear, it says no to any form of violence."



Imam Handemine Ould Salek. Photo: Trevor Davies.

How much do you know?

The ECA has provided several background documents to the conference. This quiz will help you assess how much you know. Look out for the answers in the third and last issue of *ADF Today* on Friday!

- How many African countries have laws penalising female genital mutilation?
 - A. 11
 - B. 16
 - C. 21
- Which country in Southern Africa that has the highest percentage of women in Parliament – 37%?
 - A. Angola
 - B. Mozambique
 - C. South Africa
- Which African country that has no women in its Cabinet?
 - A. Central African Republic
 - B. Libya
 - C. Togo
- What is the average number of staff dealing with gender at the headquarters of the main donor agencies?
 - A. Fewer than 10
 - B. Fewer than 20
 - C. Fewer than 30
- How many key donor agencies include gender measures in most of their programmes and strategies?
 - A. 3
 - B. 9
 - C. 12

Chaque jour, nous vous proposons un quiz basé sur des informations qui se trouvent dans les Documents de Synthèse de la conférence.

- Nombre de pays africains qui disposent d'une législation pénale sur les mutilations génitales féminines
 - A. 11
 - B. 16
 - C. 21
- Risque que court une femme en Afrique sub-Saharienne de décéder à la suite de complications liées à la grossesse et l'accouchement
 - A. 1 sur 10
 - B. 1 sur 15
 - C. 1 sur 22
- Risque que court une femme en Europe de décéder à la suite de complications liées à la grossesse et l'accouchement.
 - A. 1 sur 530
 - B. 1 sur 3,300
 - C. 1 sur 7.300
- Pourcentage des femmes dans le chiffre total des personnes analphabètes âgées de plus de 15 ans en Afrique subsaharienne
 - A. 45%
 - B. 60%
 - C. 80%
- Nombre moyen du personnel s'occupant du genre dans le siège des plus grands bailleurs des fonds
 - A. Moins de 10
 - B. Moins de 20
 - C. Moins de 30

Réponses: Lisez-les demain, sur *ADF Today*.

L'autonomisation de la femme

Quelques points clés pour le renforcement des capacités des femmes

- 1. Autonomisation économique**
 - Réformer les institutions foncières.
- 2. Production agricole**
 - Renforcer les droits des femmes à la propriété
 - Renforcer leurs droits en matière de législations sur l'héritage, le divorce et la violence
 - Associer les femmes à la formulation de politiques alimentaires et agricoles
 - Former les femmes, en particulier les plus pauvres et les moins instruites
- 3. Emploi**
 - Appliquer des programmes de discrimination positive dans les domaines de la création d'activités indépendantes et de petites et moyennes entreprises
- 4. Commerce**
 - Faciliter l'accès des femmes au crédit
 - Faire une analyse quantitative de l'impact du commerce sur le genre pour mieux formuler des politiques
- 5. Autonomisation sociale**
 - Éliminer les frais de scolarité et verser des allocations directes aux ménages
 - Créer un environnement scolaire sûr pour les filles et les femmes
 - Accroître le nombre d'enseignantes pour qu'elles servent de modèles
 - Veiller à ce que les femmes acquièrent les compétences qu'exige le marché du travail grâce à des formations appropriées
- 6. VIH/SIDA**
 - Assurer un accès équitable du traitement antirétroviral aux hommes et aux femmes de tous âges.
 - Tenir compte des besoins en matière de soins dans les systèmes de protection sociale et dans les soins dispensés à domicile.
- 7. Santé**
 - Encourager l'allaitement et d'autres options alimentaires pour nourrissons
 - Mettre en place un système efficace de prise en charge des maladies sexuellement transmissibles (MST), notamment le VIH/SIDA
 - Fournir des services de santé gratuits ou subventionnés en matière de reproduction
 - Fournir des soins préventifs abordables aux populations rurales
 - Formuler des programmes ciblant les hommes pour qu'ils préviennent les grossesses non-désirées et les MST
 - Adopter une feuille de route pour réduire la mortalité maternelle et infantile
 - Appliquer des programmes de prévention de la transmission du virus de la mère à l'enfant
- 8. Eau**
 - Le recours aux techniques modernes de pompage
 - Investir dans l'amélioration de l'accès à l'eau
- 9. Gouvernance, paix et sécurité**
 - Favoriser l'élection des femmes aux municipalités et au parlement
 - Renforcer les programmes de formation aux différentes fonctions de responsabilité pour les femmes
 - Augmenter les investissements et appliquer des pratiques telles que la mise en place de systèmes de sélection transparents dans les partis politiques
 - L'accès au financement public
 - Sensibiliser les électeurs
 - Sensibiliser et informer l'opinion sur le rôle que jouent les femmes en période de conflit
 - Obtenir des statistiques fiables tenant compte de l'égalité homme-femme
- 10. Changement climatique**
 - Renforcer la participation des femmes à la prise de décisions
 - Encourager les gouvernements à intégrer la problématique homme-femme dans leurs politiques de développement durable et de changement climatique

Source: Document de synthèse du sixième forum pour le développement de l'Afrique (ADF VI)

Climate change taxes African women

By Dingaani Mithi

Rising food prices across the globe is a daily headache for many. Particularly in the most vulnerable societies, climate change is already taking a heavy toll, including threatening crops and increasing food insecurity. Finding long lasting and sustainable solutions to climate change is becoming a global emergency. The whole world is feeling the pinch, with the most impoverished, especially women and children, most affected.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are among the most climate-sensitive sectors. Changes in rainfall patterns contribute to severe water shortages or flooding, and rising temperatures cause shifts in crop growing seasons.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, such as Malawi, smallholder, rain-fed agriculture underpins most rural livelihoods and national economies. Research conducted by Action Aid found Malawi has experienced escalating weather related disasters since 1970, with a drought and subsequent flood in 2002 causing a landmark food crisis. Since then, the country has been undergoing food crises caused by erratic rains and regular floods.

In Malawi's southern district of Phalombe, close to the Mozambican border, women walk long distances to access maize at the Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (ADMARC) depots. Olive Keyala, who has 7 children, acknowledges that unpredictable rainfall is causing hunger in her district.

She adds that it is difficult for the women to access water to embark on irrigation farming, as it is expensive. The dry season is dryer than in the past, and a dam built just a few months ago is already dry.

It is a similar story in Chiradzulu district, where food shortages mean women struggle to walk long distances to the commercial city of Blantyre, selling vegetables to earn a small income to buy maize.

Stelia Chimera has three children and walks for 6 hours with her baby on the back to sell vegetables in Blantyre. She gets k150 (about 1 US\$) which is far from enough to buy some maize husks for her three children to survive.

"I leave at 3 am with my child at the back, we arrive at 8 am in the morning, after selling the vegetables, I use the money to buy maize husks, maize is expensive," she says.

Miriam Sabola of the University of Malawi says climate change and rain variability are major challenges already facing agricultural productivity. She observes that rural people have developed traditional adaptive strategies to cope with effects of climate change on agricultural productivity, but need support to sustain these practices. "Most agricultural livelihood activities are linked to rainfall levels and frequencies which have been varying. The farmers have developed some adaptive strategies such as crop diversification, conservation agriculture and irrigation farming, but lack capacity for implementation," notes Sabola.

Senior research fellow at the Centre for Agriculture Research and Development (CARD) based at Bunda College of Agriculture, Charles Jumbo, says bio-fuel production offers opportunities for developing countries due to the availability of abundant land, and cheap labour force.

Jumbo also adds that higher agricultural demand can increase income for rural farmers, if bio-fuels can be utilised coupled with advancing technology,

which is now focusing on using crop residues such as grass and wood chips.

However, Jumbo also warns that unregulated development of bio-fuels can cause great damage to the environment and the diversion of scarce natural resources, such as land and water, all going to the production of bio-diesel.

Emile Van Zyl, head of microbiology and natural resources at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa observes that Africa has a high potential for bio-fuels as energy provides a key role to economic development.

He also downplays arguments that food price increases result from bio-fuel development. "We should have a sustainable way of bio-fuel production and hold hands to make bio-fuels work, let us understand our own crops and learn to manage them better," he stressed.

Dingaani Mithi is a Malawian journalist and writer. This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service that provides fresh views on everyday news.



Soaring food prices put pressure on women in Malawi. Photo: Gender Links

La femme dans les institutions rwandaises

Un sacré coup de pouce de la Constitution

Par Nelly Bazikamwe

Depuis plus d'une centaine d'années, la parité entre les hommes et les femmes n'a cessé de progresser.

Si la parité désigne une égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, elle prend un sens plus restreint au moment où elle n'est appliquée qu'à la seule vie politique.

Même si certaines femmes ont jusqu'à ce jour occupé des fonctions de choix dans l'histoire de certains pays, le rôle politique de la femme n'a pas été favorisé.

Cette supposée révolution n'a ainsi rien fait pour reconnaître, ni valoriser la place des femmes au-delà de leurs rôles traditionnels de mère et d'épouse.

L'Afrique en particulier, est encore à son stade préliminaire. Certains pays commencent à comprendre le rôle primordial que peut jouer la femme dans le développement durable d'un pays.

Au Rwanda par exemple, dans le but de favoriser l'unité et la réconciliation nationale dans un pays qui a été profondément meurtri par l'appartenance ethnique, problème qui s'était soldé par le génocide de 1994, la Constitution rwandaise, approuvée en 2003, garantit le principe de la démocratie de consensus dans le cadre duquel le parti au pouvoir peut présenter des candidates au poste de présidente de l'Assemblée nationale ou du Sénat.

Cette même loi suprême prévoit que sur les 80 élus constituant la Chambre des députés, 53 doivent être issus de partis politiques, 24 doivent être

des femmes suivant le quota obligatoire de 30%, en plus de la clause qui demande à chaque parti politique de présenter un tiers de femmes sur sa liste de candidats.

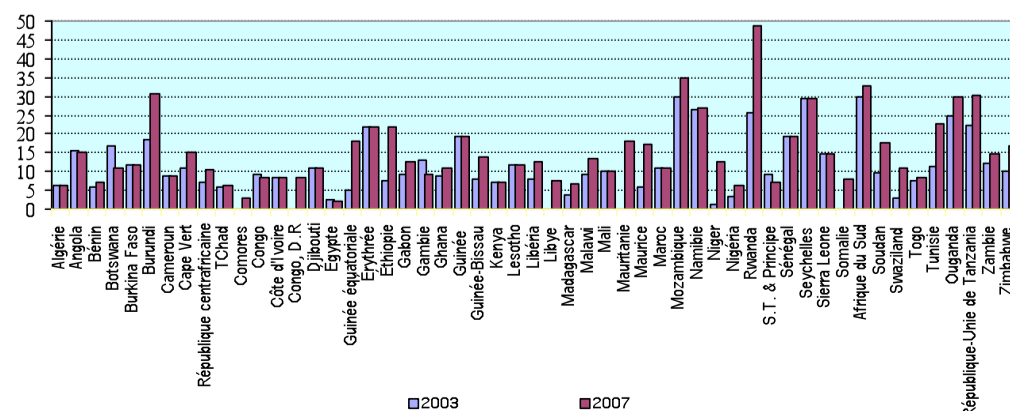
En sus des clauses prédéfinies dans la Constitution, le président rwandais, Paul Kagame, avait émis le souhait de voir le nombre de femmes parlementaires augmenter, c'est-à-dire dépasser les 48,8% qui existaient déjà au sein du premier Parlement de l'après guerre.

Selon lui, cela encouragerait les autres femmes à briguer d'autres postes à différents niveaux et les femmes joueraient ainsi un grand rôle dans le développement de ce pays.

Ce qui explique qu'avec les élections législatives de septembre 2008, les femmes rwandaises ont été nombreuses à se faire inscrire sur les listes électorales pour pouvoir élire et se faire élire.

Actuellement, le Rwanda est devenu le premier pays au monde à avoir un plus grand nombre de femmes au sein de la Basse Chambre du parlement avec plus de 56% d'élues, détrônant du coup la Suède qui a longtemps été le pionnier en la matière.

Selon certains analystes sociaux, la nomination d'une femme au sein d'une institution contribue largement à forger la réputation d'une nation. De plus, elle est considérée comme un bastion de la responsabilisation des femmes sur un continent où les hommes ont toujours tendance à être en majorité dans les cercles de pouvoir.



me, c'est renforcer la nation

From political to economic empowerment

By Colleen Lowe Morna

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka walks into her third floor board room in downtown Johannesburg in a cool caftan and declares that she has “no regrets” over being the first woman deputy president of South Africa, as painful as her final days may have been.

Indeed, proclaiming that she “cannot imagine a government without women” her message to the women of Africa is that they need to seize the 50% target for women in decision-making set by the African Union and reflected in sub-regional instruments like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. “We need numbers, visibility and activism. The activism we had twenty years ago, we need it back,” she declared in an interview shortly before ADF VI.

Relaxed and reflective after the recent political crisis in South Africa that resulted in Thabo Mbeki being forced to resign as president by his party, the African National Congress (ANC), Mlambo-Ngcuka says that “you can’t be in the kitchen if you don’t like the heat. The rules of politics are very clear. Some of them are pleasant, some are not.”

Since she and several cabinet ministers resigned in sympathy with the former president in August, Mlambo-Ngcuka has turned her attention to her passion: women’s empowerment.

As minister of mines prior to her appointment as deputy president, Mlambo Ngcuka championed the Mining Charter that made sure that all new mining ventures in South Africa have at least a 26% black and 10% women ownership.

She recalls sitting in a board room with an investment banker who challenged her insistence on including women in every deal, saying that there were none to be found. “Now we are good friends. I was teasing him that you’ve made a lot of money from that thing you did not believe in,” she chuckles.

In between the simple pleasure of spending time with her son and two adopted daughters who

have formed a family band and made a DVD (“I never thought of myself as lead singer!”) the former deputy president is planning her next moves, including the possibility of a foundation for the girl child, where she believes empowerment must start.

Newly returned from Kerala, India, where she studied the informal sector, Mlambo-Ngcuka is a well-known advocate of breaking what she calls the “inter-generational cycle of poverty.”

“You and I are middle class because someone in our family tree broke the cycle and bequeathed us a better life. I’m convinced that it is not governments that will break the cycle of poverty, but rather households. And we know that the most reliable people to empower households, the ones who can break the cycle of poverty, are women.”

Critical that she did not use her space sufficiently as deputy president under a boss who appointed 42% women to his cabinet and “could be relied upon to take radical decisions where women were concerned” Mlambo-Ngcuka vowed to use

whatever influence she still has to advance women’s empowerment.

With 32% women in parliament and 40% in local government - well over the averages on the rest of the continent - South Africa is regarded as a model of women’s political em-

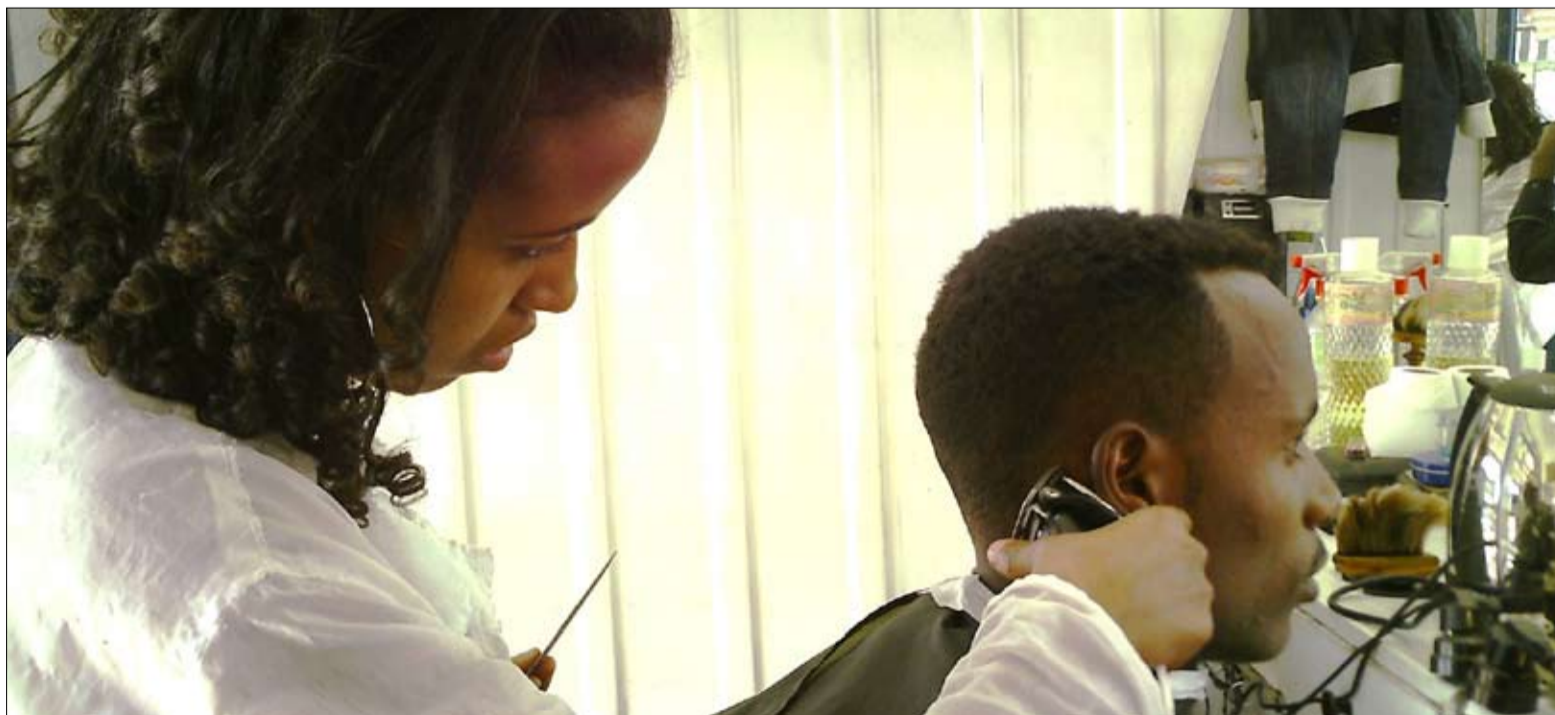
powerment in Africa. But the former deputy president says that numbers are not enough. “We have a critical mass but for it to have relevance it must change things. I could have done more with the space I had. Space is still there, and we have to use it.”



Flashback: As Minister of Mines, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka made it a point to empower women. Photo: Government of South Africa.

Can ADF VI empower the informal sector?

By Joyce Chimbi



Getting her head around the employment problem: a young woman barber in Addis Ababa. Photo: Joyce Chimbi.

Outside of the walls of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) conference centre where ADF VI is underway, the informal sector provides the main means of survival for Ethiopia’s millions of unemployed youth.

The UN complex is located in Kazanchiz, in the southern district of Addis Ababa.

For the young people in this town, it is the informal sector that puts food on the table. Jobs range from working in the transport industry, to construction sites and factories.

“You can’t be choosy otherwise you will go hungry, working at the construction site is hard work and the pay is not good but what is the alternative?” asks 23 year old Natan Tayou.

“In a day I am paid about 20 birr (about \$ 2) but I come here every morning and work. There are days when I go home and feel like I can’t do it anymore, but what will become of my mother, I am the man in the house.”

“Just as there is discrimination against women, there’s also discrimination against the youths,” says Zelaleme Tilahun. “Look at this taxi. It’s all young people hanging on or screaming to attract passengers, do you think it is by choice? “It’s an indication that the youth are neglected, we have all flooded the transport industry, all of us living from hand to mouth.”

Contrary to popular belief, working in the taxi industry is no longer a preserve of the men. Women

too have adapted to the harsh economic conditions. “Women have also taken to driving taxis, since they cannot work at the construction sites because the conditions are too harsh, the options for them are even more limited,” Zelaleme says.

And for those who thought that being a barber is a man’s job, a walk around this small town would be an eye opener. Young women have taken to shaving men’s heads and beards on the streets of Addis.

A young woman barber working near the ECA conference centre, who declined to be named, said that as she works around her clients’ heads, she hopes that one day she will get the opportunity for more intellectual growth.

Key facts

- No African country has reached gender parity in wage employment. Those that have come closest are South Africa (45.9%); Botswana (43%); Ethiopia (40.6%) and Namibia (48.8%).
- Women dominate the informal sector, and especially the survivalist sector of the informal sector.
- Women produce 60 to 70 percent of the food in Africa but only own a fraction of the land.
- Women bear the major responsibility for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security. Climate change exacerbates existing inequalities.
- While most African countries are likely to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of gender parity in primary education, only eight countries have achieved gender parity in secondary education.
- The percentage women living with HIV increased from 54% in 1990 to 59% in 2006. Women are more vulnerable to HIV for biological, social and economic reasons.
- At 900 per 100 000 births, maternal mortality in Africa is the highest in the world.
- Women’s representation in parliaments in Africa ranges from 2% in Egypt to 49% in Rwanda. With 42% women in cabinet South Africa has the highest level of women in cabinet. Libya, with no women at all in its cabinet, has the lowest level of women’s representation.
- Despite many years of public education, African countries continue to be beset by a range of harmful traditional practices, the most common being female genital mutilation (FGM), early/enforced marriages, child betrothal and polygamy (UNECA, forthcoming).

Source: *Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in Africa: Progress Report.*