



COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER- 03/22

**EU-CORD: WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A GENDER-EQUAL
WORLD**



1 - Sean Hawkey, all rights reserved

Young women hold hands during a team-building exercise in a health training centre, Pondicherry.

“A society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world.” Tian Wei

Hello all, and welcome back from the summer break!

I hope you feel refreshed and ready to take on the last stretch of the year.

Things got quite busy in the Secretariat just before the summer break with some meetings focusing on our DEVE Education project launched post the Advocacy forum. We have initiated contact with the staff of the DEVE Secretariat while also collaborating with other like-minded NGOs to monitor the EU Parliament and Commission's commitments toward education.

While the summer period was quieter in the network, we have several events that we will participate in both internally and externally as a network. From September 21st, we hosted the first of three webinars on the "Triple Nexus and Peace: experiences from faith-based organisations". The Learning Space also hosts its series in September before the Advocacy Hub hosts four parliamentary learning sessions in October. In November, the General Assembly will take place in the beautiful Canterbury, in conjunction with the Faith in Action Forum before the Partnership and Fundraising Forum in late November. We will hold the Advocacy Forum (the last of this year's forums) online to have more local partners across the globe to participate.

Externally the Secretariat will participate in the CONCORD Autumn meetings of working groups focused on Financing and Funding for Sustainable Development, Inequalities and Sustainable Economies, Regional Alliances and the Gender Reference Group. We will also be participating in meetings organised by PaRd, IDDC, the Brussels Faith Based Group and other strategic partners.

On a sad note, Eleonora will leave us after nine months as our Advocacy and Communication intern. She will be sorely missed for her worth ethic, dedication, and enthusiasm, and we wish her well in her new endeavors.

Finally, gender is on this month's newsletter agenda. Whether it be protracted global crises, the climate crisis, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), famines, or poverty - women and girls bear the brunt of these and other numerous global crises. This reality was also addressed during the Transforming Education Summit, which took place in New York on 16-19 September during the UN General Assembly. As panelists such as Malala Yousafzai pointed out during a spotlight session dedicated to advancing gender equality in education, girls are the most impacted by crises and natural disasters, further jeopardising access to education. Thus, a comprehensive approach is needed to ensure that education acts as an empowering tool for women and girls and that marginalisation in education is tackled. This newsletter showcases the fantastic work our members are engaged in for the ultimate goal of creating a gender-equal world.

Happy reading.

Tabeth Masengu

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) III - A Cross-Cutting Priority of EU External Action

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) III¹, adopted by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 25 November 2020, promotes gender equality and women's empowerment throughout all external action of the EU. The GAP III adopts a policy framework based on five pillars of action²:

1. **Making the promotion of gender equality a priority:** 85% of all new actions throughout external relations will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2025. All external assistance across all sectors should integrate a gender perspective and support gender equality.
2. **Offering a roadmap for working together with stakeholders at national, regional and multilateral levels:** GAP III makes the case for careful gender analysis and close consultation with Member States, civil society organisations, women's rights activists, and the youth, will provide a firm foundation for actions on the ground.
3. **Stepping up action in strategic thematic areas:** GAP III calls for accelerating progress, focusing on the key thematic areas of engagement, including fighting against gender-based violence and promoting the economic, social and political empowerment of women and girls. It puts a renewed emphasis on universal access to healthcare, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality in education, as well as on promoting equal participation and leadership.
4. **Leading by example:** the action plan calls for the European Union to lead by example, including by establishing gender-responsive and gender-balanced leadership at top political and management levels.
5. **Ensuring the transparency of the results:** GAP III adopts a new approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning. The EU will set up a quantitative, qualitative and inclusive monitoring system to increase public accountability, ensure transparency and access to information on its assistance to gender equality worldwide. The Commission, in cooperation with the EEAS, will monitor progress each year on the implementation of GAP III.

CONCORD, of which EU-CORD is a member, has been often engaged in the discussion around the GAP III implementation, for example by publishing in January 2021 an analysis³ of the action plan. The analysis welcome the new plan, but it also highlights a series of complementary steps needed for its success in terms of implementation, funding and the inclusion of civil society.

¹<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0017&from=EN>

²https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184

³<https://concordeurope.org/resource/gender-action-plan-iii/>

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Ending violence against women: IJM's political reception provides decisive approaches to action



2 - Picture provided by IJM Germany



3 - Picture provided by IJM Germany

International Justice Mission (IJM) Deutschland e. V. is the German branch of the global human rights organization, which works with governments and local authorities to improve legal systems to combat violence against people in poverty and guarantee their protection. On 9 May 2022, IJM hosted a political reception in Berlin aimed at discussing risks and solutions to the endemic problem of sexual and domestic violence faced by women worldwide. The participating representatives from federal politics and civil society included Dr Bärbel Kofler, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, who made the opening address. Kofler advocated putting women at the centre of development policy solution processes against gender-based violence, adding that "sustainable development cooperation is only possible if we do not ignore 50 per cent of the population".

At the same event, Alice Muhairwe, head of IJM's casework on violence against women in Uganda, explained that development cooperation has so far failed to take a concrete account of women's incomplete access to legal systems. "Women in Uganda are insufficiently protected by current law, while society widely accepts violence against women. She argued that there is a structural gap that needs to be filled.

The need for reform is not only external but internal too. Christa Stolle, Federal Managing Director of TERRE DES FEMMES e.V., described crucial gaps that endanger the protection of women in Germany. For example, women's shelters have been understaffed and underfunded for many years. IJM CEO Dietmar Roller discussed other solutions in Germany and world wide with the members of the Bundestag, as well as UN Women Germany and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. They agreed that effective protection of women requires reforms in legal systems, social and educational measures, and the participation of actors at all levels of society.

Tunadobees' and Woord en Daad's Busy Bees programme



4 - Picture provided by Woord en Daad ("Jennifer reaps honey and respect")

Entrepreneurship, protection, connection. These three words signify Tunadobees', and Woord en Daad's Busy Bees programme-Bees connect.

Investing in Uganda's inclusive honey value chain has increased from 5% women apiary entrepreneurs in 2015 to 41% in 2021. An apiary is a location where beehives of honey bees are kept. This increase in entrepreneurs is a massive achievement since beekeeping is not only profitable for women but can be combined with other roles and family responsibilities. Gender and inclusion are in sector organization Tunadobees' DNA, with gender and inclusion champions in the organization and Gender Action Learning system as a standard approach to guide inclusive monitoring and planning. After having successfully integrated women, they have been intentional about opening up the honey value chain to people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities, and refugees.

Take Jennifer, living as a mother with a visual impairment, whose first honey harvest made all the difference. She shares: "It changed my life. First of all, I received respect from the community. People even ask me for advice on beekeeping. Secondly, I can earn a living. I can help my children, take them to school and pay the school fees. I can pay the doctor's bills. And I have changed myself." Currently, 1,650 women and young people (75% women) are learning the art of beekeeping with the prospect of a good income. The tuition fees and starting capital for the apiary are loans, which the women pay back (partly) with the honey's profits. As a result, the young people and women develop into professional, entrepreneurial beekeepers with an eye for nature conservation.

Stromme: Changing girl's lives in Tanzania and Bangladesh



5 - Picture provided by Stromme ("Bonga Footballing Queens")



6 - Picture provided by Stromme ("Edna")

The Bonga Project and a Girls Football Team in Tanzania

In Tanzania, Dar-es-Salaam district, Stromme Foundation works with the locale partner OCODE. They have activities for children and youth through supporting schools and the BONGA program. Bonga, which means "let's talk", is a dialogue process to build confidence among the out-of-school illiterate adolescent girls (13- 19 years) and to develop their analytical capacity through life skills and vocational skills.

The program gives the girls empowerment, restores self-esteem and dignity, and gives a second chance to those that had lost hope.

In 2017, a football program was connected to the project focused on girls. As a result, sports and games have now been part of the BONGA projects. Football sessions are typically conducted four days a week, and the training starts in the evening hours after girls have attended the life skill session in the morning.

Amongst others, the football project's objectives are to promote sports and talents among pupils in SF-supported schools in communities where Bonga is implemented. This has been life-changing for girls like Edna, who explains:

It was not easy in the beginning when I joined football; I joined the team just for fun without knowing that I have a talent for it which I am currently proud of. I am really enjoying what I am doing because it has become part of me, and I have realized that my body is stronger and fit now. In addition, football has enabled me to network with different people, increased my self-esteem, and enhanced my understanding of various issues such as Poverty, Sexual Reproductive health, Hygiene and Sanitation.

Peter Raphael Chawala; the Ward Executive officer of Kibamba ward also noted that:

The football program has really helped to change the mindset of the community. I can hear from the stories in the community meetings how they have started believing in the capacities that girls hold and how the football program is paving the way for the girls to achieve their dreams.

Adolescents as a change agent to ensure women's rights and gender equality in rural Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, 51% of girls are married by age eighteen, and 5 in 10 child brides give birth before age eighteen (UNICEF, 2020). Adolescent girls in rural areas are generally at substantial risk of early marriage, marginalization, exclusion from education, and vulnerability to violence and sexual abuse. In the above context, Strømme Foundation, in collaboration with the community, has developed an education programme called SHONGLAP to empower adolescent girls and help them address these enormous challenges. SHONGLAP is a one-year education programme targeted at unmarried adolescent girls (11-19 years). Usually, a group of twenty-five adolescent girls from a village participate in the programme. After completion of the initial year, the girls join the SHONGLAP Network and Follow-up Forums.

During the one-year education programme, a SHONGLAP group is facilitated by an Animator who is usually a girl from the same village with good educational background and interest in community work. The Animators receive extensive training before being asked to teach a SHONGLAP group. In addition, a SHONGLAP Support Team assists each group, consisting of village leaders, guardians, and other external stakeholders who oversee and provide the necessary support.

In SF working areas in Bangladesh, 129,557 adolescent girls have completed the one-year SHONGLAP course. The programme reported impacts such as adolescent girls protecting themselves against violence and early marriage even after a short period of participation in SHONGLAP. In addition, recent evidence has shown that effectively addressing harmful social practices such as child marriage strengthens adolescent girls' ability to make decisions for themselves, improves their position within their families, and brings girls back to formal education in 2021 and 2022. Adolescent girls in the programme also stopped 104 early marriages through the involvement of a Support group, animators, and local administration.



7 - Picture provided by Stromme ("SHONGLAP girls")

Tearfund Netherlands: Working with Religious Actors and taking a Faith-based approach to Addressing harmful Gender norms



8 - Picture provided by Tearfund Netherlands ("EKHCDC Training on Gender-Based Violence")



9 - Picture provided by Tearfund Netherlands ("EKHCDC Non-violent communication, Women's position in Christianity & leadership training")

Tearfund is part of the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA), working within religious communities to tackle discrimination and extremism and build bridges between religious communities. The JISRA program pays special attention to gender equality, women's rights, and increasing the role of women in setting the vision and solutions to advancing ForB 'for all, which doesn't violate other human rights'. JISRA also focuses on promoting the participation of women in decision-making fora. In addition, partners work with religious communities to challenge harmful gender norms through safe place consultations and public campaigns.

For example, in Ethiopia, Tearfund's partners are working to create a conducive and enabling environment where women are considered equal and essential community members. As a result, there has been an increase in the participation of women within the Church leadership, the board of the Ethiopian Kaleheywet Church Development Commission (EKHCDC), and the management committees of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC).

Tearfund has also initiated a gender-transformative approach for faith communities called Transforming Masculinities (TM). TM seeks to promote positive masculinities and gender equality to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Two critical change agents in Transforming Masculinities activities have been identified: Faith leaders and Gender Champions. Tearfund accompanies Faith leaders on their transformation journey, supporting them in addressing the unequal balance of power in communities. They also equip Gender Champions to facilitate dialogues with local church members. For more information, see <https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/changing-gender-norms-transforming-masculinities>.

Fida: Collaborating in East Africa to Effectively Fight Sexual and Gender-Based Violence



10 - Picture provided by Fida ("Amudat (Uganda) SGBV groups")



11 - Picture provided by Fida ("Amudat (Uganda) SGBV groups")

The number of reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has risen sharply in Eastern Africa during and after the spread of the Covid-19 virus and related lockdown measures.

Cases vary from harassment to abuse and rape, FGM and teenage pregnancies. Fida Country Programs are responding to the situation. Here are some examples of responses made.

The GBV situation in Uganda worsened because of the lengthy lockdown, although the situation varies from area to area. Fida is working in Amudat, Yumbe, Masindi and Karamoja. The Country Program noticed the need to have religious leaders and community leaders on their side for the work to be successful. After the lockdown, Fida met communities face to face, especially in Yumbe. As a result, religious leaders in Yumbe committed themselves to fight teenage pregnancies and GBV. As a result, two communities started working against GBV by creating guidelines to prevent teenage pregnancies. In Masindi and Amudat, radio programs now sensitise people on GBV. Also, there has been collaboration with government officials in Masindi. In addition, GBV groups have been active in Karamoja. After the interventions, the GBV situation has improved but is still not good.

Lockdowns also caused a deterioration in the GBV situation in Kenya. Some families were separated, and family members couldn't travel to work or home. Families experienced a lot of stress because of income loss and confinement to homes. This resulted in high statistics of domestic violence. Fida responded with several actions. Radio programs on stress management and coping mechanisms have been broadcast, especially in slums (e.g. Nairobi). Fida posted information posters about Covid and GBV to raise awareness on coping with the situation. Recognising that domestic violence can be brought about if family income is low, one of the output areas is to build the economic capacity of beneficiaries by improving food security, income generation and stabilising families' economic status. In Narok, the Country Program is part of official working groups with the judiciary, health sector, and lawyers. As a result, a One Stop Approach, where victims can get help, has been developed. This model could be strengthened and taken to other areas. Another idea is to train people who can monitor GBV early warning and react to cases reported.

Fida Country Programs in Uganda, Kenya and Burundi have identified a need for a stronger focus on SGBV in program planning, theory of change, indicators and activities. As a result, indicators are being refined to make GBV more visible. In addition, the country programmes are currently brainstorming how they can make the response more effective.

LM International: Using the Maputo Protocol to Fight Gender Specific Harms



12 - Picture provided by LM International

Last year, LM initiated an advocacy project related to The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol. The advocacy focuses on universal ratification, domestication, and further implementation of the

Maputo Protocol. In January, LM organised an online event with around 150 participants representing numerous countries and some high-level policymakers. This four-country exchange (Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Sweden) brought together prominent voices on the rights of women and girls from the field of diplomacy, politics, and social movements. In February, on the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation, LM authored an article⁴ in the Swedish media highlighting the critical nature of and the powerful tool that is article 5 of the Protocol. Article 5 includes a total ban on female genital mutilation, legal support for victims, and strengthened protection for girls on the run.

LM is currently in dialogue with the Women, Gender & Development Directorate of the AU regarding potential collaboration on organisation of mutual events and ratification missions. These events and missions would highlight the importance of the Protocol as a central platform and tool for transformative change.

Finally, Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVIC) has received increased focus within the political discourse and international aid programming over the past years. The Maputo Protocol stands out as a principal guiding instrument for the protection of the rights of women and girls. Survivors of sexual violence are safeguarded in Articles 4 (Rights to Life, Integrity, and Security) and 19 (Protection of Women in Armed Conflicts). Hence, at the Swedish Forum for Human Rights in mid-November, LM will organise a panel focusing on survivors of sexual violence in conflict and the Maputo Protocol as the principal guiding instrument for the protection of women and girls. The panel will consider how protocols and resolutions similar to Maputo can be used more effectively as tools for transformative change and how can actors on different levels collaborate more coherently to apply these legal frameworks.

Pray



Please remember Pakistan in prayer. Torrential monsoon rains triggered the most severe flooding in Pakistan's recent history, washing away villages and leaving around 3.4 million children in need of assistance. Last month, Pakistan's minister of climate change⁵ said around "one-third" of the country was under water, affecting 33 million people with estimated losses worth US\$40 billion from the flooding. Unfortunately, this humanitarian crisis has been underreported, so let us pray for the nation and all others struggling with the effects of the climate crisis.

⁴<https://globalbar.se/2022/02/sverige-maste-agera-hardare-mot-kvinnlig-konsstympning/>

⁵[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Climate_Change_\(Pakistan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Climate_Change_(Pakistan))

I also encourage you to pray for world leaders, especially those in countries most responsible for carbon emissions; we need a softening of hearts and determined political will to prevent the loss of more lives by the devastating effects of the climate crisis. Finally, in the build-up to COP27, let us pray for a sincere negotiation breakthrough.