

Working Document/ Concept Paper
On the establishment of a

**Women's Research and Documentation Center
Great Lakes Region, Africa**

Introduction

1. The current document outlines the context within which the project to establish a Regional Gender and Women's Research and Documentation Center in the Great Lakes Region is being launched, the foreseeable consequences of the creation of the Center with special regard to the benefits that it will bring to Member States and its relevance to UNESCO's programs, and essential elements of the proposed Center.

Regional and international framework

2. During the 32nd General Conference (October 2003), UNESCO was called upon to strengthen its actions in favor of women and children living in conflict zones. Further to this call and in pursuance of the objectives of facilitating social transformations based on the universal values of justice, freedom and human dignity, the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS) organized a consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 30 May – 1 June 2005 to explore how best it may promote the rights of women living in post conflict areas. The meeting brought together policy and decision makers, academics and other specialists on women and gender issues, and representatives of women's NGOs from the Great Lakes Region to discuss their priorities and needs in the social and human sciences. Specific recommendations made included the establishment of a Regional Women Research and Documentation Center in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo along with women's studies programs at several universities in the Region.

3. The current proposal also responds to needs expressed in regional instruments such as the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region (2004), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2005) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (entered into force October 21, 1986).

4. The Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes, adopted by the Heads of State and Governments of the Region, recognizes the important role of women in promoting peace, development and democracy. It calls for the adoption of "*deliberate policies and mechanisms for promoting gender equality at all levels and in all sectors, at the national and regional levels, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on Human and*

Peoples' Rights, additional protocols on the rights of Women in Africa, the Beijing Plan of Action and the African Union's Declaration on Gender" (Decl. art. 31).

5. The project is also developed within the context of a number of international Human Rights instruments including:

- a. The Charter of United Nations.¹
- b. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, which enshrines the principles of equality between men and women and prohibits discrimination against women.
- c. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1954).
- d. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1967).
- e. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (adopted in 1993) which affirmed that the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights.
- f. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1981), and its Optional Protocol (2000).
- g. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) which established that gender equality is central to progress in development and democracy and identified twelve critical areas of concern for strategic action in promoting the advancement of women and achieving gender equality.
- h. The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, the third of which is to "promote gender equality and empower women", including the elimination of gender disparities in education.
- i. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (31 October 2000) reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflict.

Relationship between the Center and UNESCO's objectives and programs

6. UNESCO's Constitution requires the Organization to contribute to peace and security through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of race or sex. In keeping with this, the proposed Center will promote the Organization's purpose by contributing to the development of policy oriented research and research based policies and programs to increase women's participation and roles in reconstruction and development processes. The

¹ The Charter reaffirming "faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women" was the first international instrument to define equal rights for men and women in precise terms.

establishment of the Center is recognized as a priority action under the Major Program for the Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO, as adopted by the 34th General Conference in 2007.

7. The proposed institution will also contribute to the promotion of the human rights of women, gender equal opportunities and the equal participation of women in all spheres as is called for in the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights.

WOMEN'S STATUS IN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

8. Women have paid a heavy price in the long and violent conflicts that ravaged the region. They have continued to endure unprecedented levels of sexual violence and assault, along with related HIV infection, pregnancies and health complications that can result from rape. As a result of violence and conflicts many women have been forced to flee from their homes as refugees or internally displaced persons. Often their male family members have gone off to participate in the conflicts or have been maimed or killed, leaving women headed households to fend for themselves. Women refugees experience increased insecurity that comes from not having their traditional support systems on hand. They suffer food insecurity that comes from not having an adequate means of livelihood and from culturally prescribed, and in some cases, legal prohibition on owning land. Women and girls live in fear of being abducted and used as sex slaves or as domestic servants. Additionally, they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological consequences of conflict.

9. Living in highly patriarchal societies in which men control decision making positions and processes in the public and private spheres, social institutions and cultural practices such as laws, norms, traditions and codes of conduct have contributed, along with a situation of violence, to perpetuate discrimination against women in education, and have placed major obstacles to the enjoyment of their political, social, economic and cultural rights.

Education

10. Education facilitates access to a life of dignity and the human right of all persons to education is explicitly set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education is considered by the Universal Declaration not only as a right in itself but also as a means of promoting peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms generally. An important role devolves upon UNESCO in this regard, as one of the main missions of the Organization is to promote education as a fundamental right, to improve the quality of education and stimulate experimentation, innovation and policy dialogue.

11. Despite international and local efforts, women and girls in the Great Lakes Region continue to face discrimination with regards to access to school, and gender disparities in

education remains extremely elevated. In Uganda for instance, due to reservations about the economic viability of girls' education, sexual harassment in schools, and early pregnancies, the drop-out rates for girls remains high, with a gross enrollment rate of only 9 percent in secondary education².

12. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the percentage of women's literacy in the countries of the Great Lakes Region is remarkably low, as illustrated in the following table.

N.	Country	Men	Women
1	Angola ³	82.9 %	54.2 %
2	Burundi ⁴	67.3 %	52.2 %
3	Central African Republic ⁵	64.8 %	33.5 %
4	Congo ⁶	90.5 %	79.0 %
5	Democratic Republic of Congo ⁷	80.9 %	54.1 %
6	Kenya ⁸	77.7 %	70.2 %
7	Rwanda ⁹	71.4 %	59.8 %
8	Sudan ¹⁰	71.1 %	51.8 %
9	Tanzania ¹¹	77.5 %	62.2 %
10	Uganda ¹²	76.8 %	57.7 %
11	Zambia ¹³	76.3 %	59.8 %

Political participation and access to making-decision positions

13. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women recognizes that “everyone has the rights to take part in the government of his country directly or indirectly”¹⁴. Articles I through III of the said Convention states that women shall be entitled to vote in all elections, shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, and hold public office, exercise all public functions on equal terms with men, without any discrimination. Article III of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also states the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights.

2 Source Human Rights Watch http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/4.htm#_Toc47260351
3 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=240
4 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=1080
5 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=1400
6 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=1780
7 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=8920
8 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=4040
9 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=6460
10 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=7360
11 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=7620
12 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=8000
13 Source http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=8940
14 Symonides, Janusz, and Volodin, Vladimir; Human Rights of Women: A Collection of International and Regional Normative Instruments; 1999, UNESCO, Paris

14. In the Great Lakes Region women in most countries have had the right to vote and run for elected positions, beginning with Tanzania in 1959 and extending to the Central African Republic in 1986¹⁵. Yet with regard to women's political participation and access to decision making positions, many of the problems that confront women political aspirants have to do with cultural perceptions about the role of women in society. Culturally, politics has for a long time been viewed as a male domain. From the very start of their political campaigns to the time they enter in Parliament, women politicians may face physical violence and verbal abuse such as was the case in Kenya, where, during the 2002 elections, several women politicians were subjected to electoral violence and it was not uncommon for rumors to circulate that women politicians were morally loose¹⁶.

15. In the case of Burundi, the constraints on women's participation have had to do with cultural perceptions of women's roles and the household division of labor that put undue responsibilities on women. The small number of educated women at the secondary and tertiary levels also poses a constraint on women's potential for political leadership. Although women had the right to vote and stand for election since 1961, it was not until 1982 that for the first time, women ran for the legislature. In 1985 women occupied 9 percent of the seats in Parliament and 12 percent in 1995. The new Constitution (2004) stipulates that women should hold 30 percent of parliamentary, senatorial, and ministerial positions, but other government institutions are excluded from this requirement including local government. With regards to party listing, a proportional representation system has also been instituted. Currently there are 36 women in the 118-seats Lower House and 17 women in the 47-seats Senate¹⁷.

16. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the percentage of women in decision-making positions remains low. There are two female government Ministers as compared to 35 male Ministers; the National Assembly includes 60 women and 500 men; the Senate is composed of three women and 60 men; and only five percent of executive positions are held by women working in public administration. A similar case exists as well in Angola, where in 2006, 35 women held seats in the 220-seats Parliament and 10 women in the 41-members Cabinet, including two ministers and eight vice ministers¹⁸. In the Central African Republic 10 women held seats in the 105-seat National Assembly, and there were three women in the President's Cabinet¹⁹. In Uganda the 1995 Constitution states that one third of the membership of each local government council shall be reserved for women²⁰. Today 99 seats in the Parliament (out of a total of 332) are held by women, a large increase from the one seat that was held in

¹⁵ Source <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>; A complete list of Women's right to vote and run for elected positions is included in Annex.

¹⁶ See E. Orchardson-Marzrui "The impact of Cultural Perceptions on Gender issues" in Gender inequalities in Kenya, UNESCO 2006.

¹⁷ Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif311007.htm>

¹⁸ Source: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78718.htm>

¹⁹ Source <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61560.htm>

²⁰ Source: <http://www.quotaproject.org/displayCountry.cfm?CountryCode=UG>

1980²¹. In Rwanda, the number of female legislators jumped from 26 percent in 1994 to 49 percent after the 2003 elections and the adoption of a new constitution that called for a minimum of one-third women in all decision-making positions, and set aside 30 percent of all seats for women in legislative elections in the lower house. (Women also have 30 percent of all seats in local government)²².

Women's socio-economic conditions

17. Article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reaffirms the principle of equality between women and men as regards human rights²³. To realize this principle, the International Bill of Human Rights, which includes the Convention, recognizes the right to own property, to an adequate standard of living, to equal protection of the law without discrimination, to the enjoyment of just and favorable conditions of work, and fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work²⁴. These rights are also protected under other international instruments such as the CEDAW and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

18. Yet despite acceding to these international covenants, countries in the Great Lakes Region continue to harbor inadequate and discriminatory labor and land laws that contribute to women's economic subordination. For example in Uganda, women are more often employed in the informal sector and are restricted to low paying, labor intensive occupations such as domestic work. As a result, their labor rights are not legally regulated, leaving them with little protection²⁵. In the DRC, women experience economic discrimination as the law forbids women from working at night or accepting employment without their husband's consent.

19. Women also face discrimination on the right to own or inherit property. Single, widowed and divorced women are especially vulnerable to problems associated with lack of access to land. As in many developing countries, land in Uganda is the most important factor of production and Ugandan women play a central role in agricultural output²⁶. Women provide

21 Source : <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

22 Source <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

In the Constitution the Article 9 (4) states: "The State of Rwanda commits itself to ensuring that women are granted at least 30 percent of posts in decision making organs". Article 82: "The Senate shall be composed of 26 members of whom 30 percent are women".

²³ Symonides, J. and Volodin, V. A Guide to Human Rights: Instruments, Standards, Procedures. Paris, UNESCO, 2001

24 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 7.

25 Source http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/4.htm#_Toc47260351

26 The land management hierarchy includes the Uganda Land Commission, which is responsible for all government land, district land boards, and land committees in each parish, urban areas or division in the case of Kampala that function as advisory bodies to the District Land Boards. Under the 1998 Land Act, jurisdiction over customary land cases passed from local council and

more than 70 percent of labor in agricultural production and over 80 percent in food crop production and processing. Yet only 7 percent of Ugandan women own land²⁷.

20. Many customary and statutory laws discriminate against women in the area of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. In Zambia, customary law and practice also place women in a subordinate status with respect to property, inheritance, and marriage, despite constitutional and legal protections. Under the law a deceased man's children equally share 50 percent of his estate; the widow receives 20 percent, which must be divided with other wives, mistresses and concubines; the man's parents receive 20 percent; and other relatives receive 10 percent. However, under traditional customs prevalent among most ethnic groups, all rights to inherit property rest with the deceased man's family and property grabbing remains widespread, although increased training of local court officials may have resulted in a slight decrease in the practice. Also, many widows are ignorant of the law, and as a result receive little or nothing from the estate²⁸.

21. In Kenya, though Section 1(1) of the Married Women's Property Act of Kenya provides that a married women has the right to acquire, hold and dispose of real and personal property, in reality it is often difficult for her to do so as Section 17 of the Act stipulates that in case of a dispute, a woman must provide evidence that she contributed to the purchase of real property.

22. The Matrimonial Regimes, Liberties and Succession Law of 2000 allows Rwandan women and girls to inherit land and own property, and granted equal inheritance rights to male and female children of civil marriages. It also allows women to become heads of family²⁹. Nevertheless, discrimination and abuse persist, and women and girls are denied equal rights to land under strongly rooted Rwandan customary laws, which privilege the male head of household³⁰. Significant textual gaps and obstacles to implementation have diminished the positive impact of this legislation³¹.

23. Women's lack of access to land in the GLR has a negative impact on their access to credit facilities. Even women who want to get into business need land as collateral to obtain bank loans and some financial institutions have been known to refuse women loans without

magistrates' courts to district and sub-county land tribunals. One or both parties may still invite traditional authorities to hear their matter. Land Act, 1998, sec. 89. Section 81(2) of the Land Act provides that at least one of the members of the Land Tribunals at the sub-county level must be a woman. However, there is no such stipulation for District Land Tribunals. See http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/4.htm#_Toc47260351.

27 MGLSD, "Third Country Status Report," p. 44. See http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/4.htm#_Toc47260351.

28 <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78764.htm>

29 Warah, Rasna. "Rwanda Women to Inherit Property" *The East African*, 10-16 April 2000.

30 Jennie E. Burnet and Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development (RISD), *Culture, Practice, and Law: Women's Access to Land in Rwanda* (Kigali: 2001), pp. 8-11. See also Human Rights Watch, *Uprooting the Rural Poor in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001).

31 The law's protections for the property rights of women in marriage and female heirs apply only to civil marriage, whereas religious or customary unions are the prevailing practice among Rwandans. See <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/rwanda0904/4.htm>

the co-signature of their husbands or male relatives. Since women are almost completely dependent on men in order to gain access to land, women who are childless, single, widowed, disabled, separated/divorced or with only girl children often have little or no recourse because they may have no access to land through a male relative³².

Violence against women

24. Violence against women is a widespread and pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality. Its consequences are destructive, multiple and far reaching for the victims and society in which they live. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." It encompasses, *inter alia*, physical, sexual and psychological violence as well as violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution.

25. The situation with regards to violence against women in countries of the Great Lakes Region is serious. In Uganda for instance, there are no specific laws that provide women with any meaningful protection from domestic violence. Since the early 1990s, local NGOs have unsuccessfully lobbied the government to pass domestic violence legislation and legislation addressing domestic relations. According to women's rights activists, in many Ugandan communities, wife battery that does not result in serious injury is tolerated and is considered a normal part of marriage³³. As a result of the underreporting of domestic violence and the paucity of official statistics, domestic violence rates are difficult to measure with absolute accuracy. However, it is generally agreed that domestic violence rates are high in Uganda. According to U.N. statistics, in 2000, 41 percent of Ugandan women had suffered domestic violence³⁴.

26. The United Nations Secretary-General's "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" (A/61/122/Add.1) of July, 2006, states that during armed conflict, women experience all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated by both State and non-State actors. It also notes that the incidence of violence against women during

32 Tripp, Aili Mari. "Women's Movements, Customary Law, and Land Rights in Africa: The Case of Uganda," *African Studies Quarterly*. 7 (4): 2004. <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i4a1.htm>

33 See Law & Advocacy for Women – Uganda, "Project Report on the Domestic Violence Study," second Edition,(Kampala: LAW-U, 2001), p. 59.

34 See Innocenti Research Centre, *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls*, June 2000, Innocenti Digest no. 6, (Italy: UNICEF,2000), p. 5.

armed conflict, particularly sexual violence, including rape, has been increasingly acknowledged and documented, including in Great Lakes countries such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Uganda. Rape during armed conflict is also used as a weapon, to terrorize and degrade a particular community and to achieve political ends. Amnesty International has observed that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, over 40,000 women and girls are believed to have been raped by soldiers during the recent conflict (1998-2003). Further, women and girls have been kidnapped for months at a time to serve as sex slaves, porters, cooks and cleaners³⁵.

27. Judges often tend to display a discriminatory attitude towards the complaints of women victims of rape. The justice situation is further compromised by the fact that for cultural reasons women abstain from complaining, or they submit a complaint some time after the fact, rendering it difficult for forensic doctors to collect evidence of the offence. The right of women to submit a complaint for acts of torture or ill-treatment or any other offence is subject to the prior authorization of their husband (in cases involving married women). Indeed, article 448 of the Family Code expressly provides that “a woman must obtain the authorization of her husband to effect all legal acts for which she must present herself in person”. However, when the perpetrator of violence is her husband, the woman is not obliged to seek his permission to take legal action (Article 451 of the Family Code)³⁶.

28. In Rwanda, the United Nations Office of the High Commission on Human Rights estimates that between 250,000 and 500,000 Rwandan women were raped during the 1994 genocide. Of these a large number were infected with HIV/AIDS and many became pregnant. An estimated third of the women were gang-raped. Only about 100 of these cases have been brought before a court³⁷. In Sudan, the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women noted that during her visit to Darfur she received testimonies of women and girls who had suffered multiple forms of violence committed by government-backed militia and security forces, including rape, killings, the burning of homes and pillage of livestock. Displaced women and girls living in refugee camps have reported rapes, beatings and abductions that occur when they leave the camps for necessities. Victims of rape have faced numerous obstacles in accessing justice and health care, for instance, being accused of having made false accusations, having had consensual sex before marriage, or having committed adultery in violation of the Penal Code³⁸.

35 Human Rights Watch, *The War Within the War: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002.

36 Marie Mossi, Mariana Duarte *Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)* Alternative report prepared for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 36th session – 7-25 August 2006. See http://www.peacewomen.org/un/ecosoc/CEDAW/36th_session/DRC/NGO_report.pdf

37 Danks, Katherine. “Women and War Worldwide,” Press Association, December 8, 2004.

38 Yakin Ertürk. *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. Addendum. Visit to the Darfur region of the Sudan. E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.5. 23 December 2004.*

Rationale

29. Adherence to a number of international legal instruments has failed to translate into tangible results in the lives of women in the Great Lakes Region. Despite an increase in women in legislative bodies, generally women continue to be under-represented in most structures of power and decision making. Furthermore, the interests and needs of women and girls are hardly taken into account in post-conflict reconstruction. This fact has been recognized in the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes (November 2004) where Heads of State and Governments noted that massive violations of human rights, policies of exclusion and marginalisation, as well as the disparities between men and women are among the main factors of the deep and multidimensional conflicts and political instability that have spread in the Great Lakes region.

30. Women have an important role to play in bringing their resources, skills, knowledge, and agency to the peace table and development agenda. As noted in the UNESCO Statement on Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, and in the UN Security Council statement to the press on 8 March 2000, inextricable linkages exist between women, peace and development. While it is a matter of social justice that women participate in decision making structures, the challenge is to ensure that both women and men who enter into positions of power and decision making prioritize the need for gender sensitive policies and programs and use their positions to bring about gender equality and social justice in reconstruction and development processes.

31. To bring about change and sustainable social transformation requires increased capacities for action. Experience has shown that women's advancement, the development of gender equal societies and the promotion and protection of women's rights are much more favorable where the society is sufficiently aware of the issues that are at stake in employing only half of national and productive capacity in the growth and maintenance of countries. At present there are no research and documentation centers dedicated to advancing gender and women's issues operating at the regional level.

32. Universities and academic institutions present a remarkable potential to train the current and future generation of leaders of the Great Lakes Region in women's rights and for gender equality and can contribute in a structured manner to educating and moving forward the agenda for gender equality. At the university level women and gender studies departments, programs and courses may foster reflection and debates on relevant gender issues, provide technical advice, and contribute to research and documentation, gender analysis, identification of gender gaps and advocacy for engendering strategic documents and

informing policy. Although some women's studies programs exist in the Region, many seem to be weak, uncoordinated or non-institutionalized.

33. Consequently, UNESCO's SHS Sector will contribute to building capacity through the establishment of a Women's Research and Documentation Center that would promote women's studies and gender research in the Great Lakes Region, advocate for cultural reform that respects the human rights of women, as well as promote the development of gender policies based on evidence and specificities of the region. The Organization has chosen to facilitate the creation of conditions in the Great Lakes Region which will protect and promote women's human rights as stated in international, regional and national laws, legislation and instruments.

Overview of the proposal

Objectives

34. The project aims to promote protection and respect for the human rights of women and gender equality in the Great Lakes Region. This will be achieved through capacity building in women's studies and gender research, and reinforcing the linkages between research and policy formulation so as to ensure women's full participation and contribution to sustainable transformation and development in the context of the post conflict reconstruction.

35. Specifically the Center will:

a) Support the development of evidence based policies in favor of women's rights and gender equality. Academics and competent NGOs will undertake policy-oriented research in areas where there are proven gaps and provide information necessary for the development of gender responsive policies and programs, as well as advocacy campaigns. Issues to be addressed will be identified in consultation with relevant partners including government Ministries, women's NGOs and academics.

b) Contribute to building human and institutional capacity to engage in policy oriented research, formulation of evidence-based policies, awareness raising and advocacy regarding women's participation, rights and equality. Focus will be given to establishing or supporting women's studies and gender research programs at Universities in the Great Lakes Region.

c) Serve as an observatory and clearinghouse on information related to women's issues in the Great Lakes Region. The Center will collect, house, and disseminate various research data and documentation produced on the status and conditions of women in the region, as well as information on best practices. It will also create databanks of women academics, women and gender studies in the region, and relevant women's NGOs.

Strategy

36. In order to achieve its objectives, the Regional Gender and Women's Studies Research and Documentation Centre will undertake the following:

a. Evidence-based policy formulation

The Center will contribute to strengthening the linkages between policies and programs formulated to promote women's human rights and the *de facto* reality faced by women in post conflict situations. It will provide a regional mechanism linking research to policy formulation and bringing together knowledge and experiences from the various countries of the region so as to draw lessons and identify areas of common action and policy formulation.

b. Training and development

The Center will seek to promote and strengthen the intellectual and leadership capacity of those working towards gender equality in the region, especially in the areas of policy analysis and formulation, gender analysis, information technologies, advocacy, strategic and critical thinking; and to develop research capacity in gender and women's studies with the objective of promoting academic excellence at key universities in the Great Lakes Region.

c. Research

The Center will seek to investigate the historical, cultural, social and political status of women and gender relations, and seek to understand how the changes in gender roles have affected both women and men, and how they affect the empowerment of women. It will facilitate a critical analysis and monitoring of institutions both modern and traditional that hinder gender equality and perpetuate discrimination and inequalities.

d. Publication and e-documentation

An important function of the Center will be to promote, publish and ensure access to research based information and data that will help policy makers, advocates, and other key stakeholders in developing policies and programs that promote the rights and empowerment of women. The Centre will also provide students, young researchers and interested people in the region with access to contemporary theoretical discourse, methodological approaches in women and gender studies, and their application in the context of the Great Lakes Region.

e. Networking

The Centre will create a forum for the exchange and critical appraisal of contemporary, fundamental and applied research on women and gender studies, as well as a mechanism for policy makers and gender practitioners and activists to feed into and positively influence curriculum development at participating universities.

f. Partnership building

The Center will build partnerships with research institutions and networks in Africa, such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Association for African Women on Research and Development (AAWORD), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Gender and Development Centre, the African Union (AU) Gender Directorate and Women's and Development Committee, Networks of Women members of Parliament, Women Ministers, academics, women's NGOs etc, as well as with UN and other international agencies promoting respect for women's human rights and gender equality.

Target beneficiaries

37. The project will cover 11 countries of the Great Lakes Region, namely Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

38. The project will directly benefit government Ministries, notably those working for women's rights and justice, parliamentarians, other government institutions, women's and civil society organizations, university students and academic staff, gender researchers and scholars. The media will also be targeted to increase understanding on women's rights and gender equality and to assist in the dissemination of information and images that positively impact gender relations and respect for the human rights of women in the context of post conflict reconstruction, peace building, economic development and regional integration.

Legal status and functioning

39. Further to the undertaking of a feasibility study for the establishment of a Research and Documentation Center for Women and Gender in the Great Lakes Region in 2006, it was proposed that the Center will be an independent and autonomous body. It will enjoy the personality and legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, in particular the capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

40. The Center will be a Category II institution placed under the auspices of UNESCO; a status which will allow the Center to be associated with UNESCO through formal arrangements approved by the Organization's Governing Bodies, but the Organization will not be legally responsible for the Center.

41. The Center will contribute to realizing the ideals and mandate of UNESCO through the execution of its functions, notably through capacity-building, information exchange, research, training, and the promotion of cooperation among countries. Representatives of UNESCO will be included on the governing bodies of the Center and the Organization will provide technical and financial assistance to the Center, including experts in UNESCO's fields of competence, temporarily seconded staff as decided by the Director-General of UNESCO, or through the inclusion of the Center in the implementation of various programs of the Organization.

42. A Board of Directors, comprised of persons from countries in the Great Lakes Region, as well as a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO will govern the Center. The Board will design the policy of the Center, direct its activities, and assess their impact at national and regional levels in agreement with its objectives and in compliance with regional and international legal instruments and political commitments on women's human rights and gender equality. It will adopt the annual work program and budget, mobilise resources, and supervise its execution through committees.

43. A Director, appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO will direct and manage the Center and represent the Center in law and all civil acts. In carrying out these functions, the Director will recruit relevant technical and administrative staff to implement the approved work program.

Hosting

44. The Center will be hosted by the Democratic Republic of Congo and based in Kinshasa.

45. Smaller "antenna" Centers will be established as branches of the Kinshasa Center and holding the same legal status in the other ten countries of the Great Lakes Region, providing support and training for the development of policy-oriented research, research based policies for women's rights and gender equality, and will be connected in a network.

Financial matters, monitoring and control

46. Funding for the Center will come from development partners, including bilateral and multilateral partners such as UNESCO and other UN agencies, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and other funding institutions. UNESCO's contribution to the work of the Center will be linked to activities and projects implemented in line with the Organization's

approved Medium Term Strategy, and its Programme and Budget. Governments of beneficiary countries will also contribute resources to the Center.

47. The Center may also receive contributions from institutions of higher learning directly or through the Women's Studies and Gender Research programmes, from other institutions engaged in research, policy development and documentation, as well as from private institutions.

48. In addition to an internal supervision and monitoring mechanism, the Board of Directors will appoint an external monitoring and control body to audit the work and finances of the Center. The Board of Directors may at any time request the submission of management reports. Mid term reviews will be organized with key partners involved in project implementation and internal regulations will outline the relationships between management committees, the Director, technical staff and departments, as well as the operational structures of the networks facilitated by the Center.

Areas of cooperation with UNESCO

49. Co-operation provided by UNESCO to the proposed Center may also include:
- a. Advice and technical support for the formulation of the short-, medium-, and long-term vision and strategy of the centre;
 - b. Fostering of collaboration among intergovernmental, non-governmental and private sector entities, as well as Member States of UNESCO to provide financial and technical assistance, implementation of appropriate projects via the Center, and facilitating contacts with other international organizations relevant to the functions of the Center;
 - c. Relevant UNESCO publications and other pertinent materials, as well as dissemination of information on the activities of the Center via UNESCO's website, newsletters and other mechanisms at the Organization's disposal;
 - d. Participation, where appropriate, in the educational, scientific and training activities and meetings.

Regional and international impact of the Center

50. The Center will contribute to fostering intellectual collaboration among countries notably in the Great Lakes Region on women's rights and gender equality, as well as to developing institutional and human capacities to promote effective implementation of legal

instruments and political commitments with regard to women's rights and gender equality in the Great Lakes Region.

51. It will carry out its activities in the 11 countries of the Great Lakes Region in Africa. It may develop partnership with other countries based outside the Region that are willing to contribute to and benefit from the Center.

52. Impact indicators may include:

- a. Women's Studies and Gender Research programmes at the university level established and or strengthened in the Region.
- b. Cooperation established among key universities in the Great Lakes Region on Women's Studies and Gender Research
- c. Institutional capacities for research and documentation on women rights and gender equality strengthened or developed in the Great Lakes Region.
- d. Research based information and analysis of women and gender issues available to inform policy formulation, advocacy and implementation.
- e. Human capacity for implementing gender oriented programs and projects as well as gender mainstreaming developed and strengthened.
- f. Framework developed to monitor the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 (2000), the Dar es Salaam Declaration and other instruments promoting women's rights in the Great Lakes Region.
- g. Research based advocacy and awareness raising strategies developed and implemented.
- h. Media effectiveness increased in raising public awareness on the structural issues, beliefs and attitudes that impede the empowerment of women, and in promoting gender equality.

Time Line for implementation

- Meeting of UNESCO Ambassadors from the Great Lakes Region to discuss establishment of Category 2 Center, Paris, April 2008.
- Meeting of Ministers of Women's Affairs from the Great Lakes Region, Kinshasa, July 2008.
- Submission of proposal before the Executive Board of UNESCO requesting establishment of Category 2 Center, September 2008.

Annex

Women's rights to vote and to stand for election

1959	United Republic of Tanzania
1961	Burundi, Rwanda
1962	Zambia
1963	Congo, Kenya
1964	Sudan
1967	Democratic Republic of the Congo (to vote)
1970	Democratic Republic of the Congo (to stand for election)
1975	Angola
1986	Central African Republic