

Consultation Report

**Empowering Women in the Great
Lakes Region:
Violence, Peace and Women's
Leadership**

*30 May – 1 June, 2005
United Nations Conference Center
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia*

Background

During the 32nd General Conference, UNESCO was called upon to strengthen its actions in favor of women and children living in conflict zones. Further to this request 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) initiated a programme of action to promote the human rights and status of women living in the Great Lakes region in Africa.

Building on work carried out by UNESCO in previous years as well as on the recently developed SHS strategy for the promotion of women's empowerment, the Gender Equality and Development Section (SHS/HRS/GED) is pursuing policy-oriented research, consultations, networking, and capacity building. A central objective is to assist in women's participation in post-conflict resolution, democratization, and governance, as called for in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, First Summit of Heads of State and Government, 20 November 2004.

The SHS/HRS/GED strategy was also inspired by the United Nations Security Council S/RES/1325 which reaffirms 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 protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts. In light of the SHS mandate in UNESCO, particular attention was given to the need to

- Increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels
- Support women's grassroots organizations in their peace initiatives, and
- Ensure protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls

In that context, a consultation was organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 30 May – 1 June 2005. The purpose of this meeting was to bring 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 and to agree on the main lines of a plan of action for gender equality and development. The Agenda and Timetable of the consultation is attached in Annex I (page 9).

Participants

The consultation was attended by over 45 persons. Principal invitees were the Ministries of Women and Gender Affairs from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as representatives of the women's academic and research community and non-governmental organizations. Selected gender experts on the Great Lakes Region from other countries were also invited, along with relevant UN agencies and international NGO working on women's issues in the region. A complete list of participants is attached in Annex II (page 13).

Opening Ceremony

Social Affairs Commissioner of the African Union (AU), Ms Bience Gawanas opened the consultation reminding participants of the important role of women in peace building and preventing violence on the continent. She informed participants that for its part the AU was not only assuming a prominent role through the creation of policy frameworks to protect vulnerable women, but also going beyond to ensure that resolutions adopted are vital and effective in promoting gender equality.

H.E. Ms Gifti Abasiya, the Ethiopian Minister with responsibility for Women's Affairs noted in her opening address that development is not possible without democracy, human rights and environmental protection. She noted that although women were often excluded because of harmful customs and practices, their inclusion at every level of governance is central. Further, gender sensitive and gender responsive policies are essential to achieve all UN and AU declarations for women's equality. She expressed her confidence that the meeting would contribute to moving along further the agenda for gender equality and development and thanked UNESCO for its initiative in organizing the consultation.

Addressing participants on behalf of UNESCO, Mr. Pierre Sané, Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences (ADG/SHS), expressed his gratitude to participants for their support in helping to give direction to the social science programme for women in the Great Lakes region. The ADG/SHS provided a brief overview of the work of the various sectors of UNESCO, noting that addressing women's rights were a priority of the organization. He referred to the three priority areas of the SHS programme for promoting women's human rights and gender equality: globalization and women's rights; cultures and gender

equality; and the gender dynamics of peace building and post conflict reconstruction. He noted that the consultation should provide answers to issues such as: how can UNESCO help move forward the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, in concert with the rest of UN system and what can the Organization bring to the Great Lakes Region to ensure that post-conflict reconstruction safeguards women's human rights. Participants were also provided with an overview of the work that the SHS is undertaking in various regions of the world to promote women's human rights and gender equality and was informed that the work the sector was informed by a methodology that favors linkages between research and policy. Mr. Sané reminded the meeting that policy must be informed by sound social science research, and research priorities must also take into account needs and priorities of all concerned including those of decision-makers. Further it is essential to develop networks between the various constituencies to facilitate the multi-directional transfer of information.

The Dar es Salaam Declaration

Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region set the tone of the meeting in his address on the "Dar es Salaam Declaration on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes Region: the role of women". He remarked that the Declaration, adopted by the Heads of States and Governments in November 2004, recognizes the important role of women in promoting peace, development and democracy. He affirmed that women's equal participation can only come through their empowerment, and noted that the marginalization of women and gender inequality can be caused by and exacerbated during a period of armed conflict.

In preparation of the second conference of Heads of States and Governments to be held in Nairobi in November 2005 and to which a plan of action for the implementation of the Declaration is to be submitted, a gender thematic group is working to ensure that gender issues are transversal and incorporated. Mr. Fall noted that at present 62 projects are being formulated and it is expected that the Addis Ababa gender consultation could help strengthen preparations for the November meeting by incorporating gender perspectives on peace, security, democracy and governance, economic development, regional integration, and social issues. He also expressed his hope for strengthened cooperation between UNESCO and his Office.

Women's Leadership

The principal discussion among participants at the consultation focused on the role and impact that women members of parliament, women academics and women's non-governmental organizations could play in promoting gender equality and women's rights in the Great Lakes Region. At least three participants representing different national experiences were asked to make short exposés on each topic.

The role and impact of women members of parliament

In general, the representation of women in parliaments has grown over the years due mostly to pressure exerted by parliamentarians and civil society organizations. In Burundi for example, much effort has been placed on involving women in political activity and this has translated into increased female membership of political parties. This drive to involve more women in decision-making positions has resulted in the engagement of the President of the Republic of Burundi to include at least one woman to every three candidates short listed for senior governmental positions. With increased numbers of women parliamentarians, sensitization and information projects on the rights of women have been undertaken; parliament is more openly and publicly informed of the problems of violence against women; reform of legislations are more responsive to the needs and concerns of women as these women parliamentarians can initiate or propose amendments to laws and statutes. Examples of this exist both in the DRC and Burundi where women parliamentarians working through parliamentary commissions have undertaken efforts to promote equality between women and men; amend laws governing succession rights; and revise the penal code to criminalize rape as a war crime. Parliament has also provided a forum for women to influence government action and public enterprise.

The role and impact of women academics

In presentations on this topic it was noted that a key role of intellectuals was to interpret the events and in so doing contribute to positive social transformations and change. Women academics therefore need to acquire and generate context specific knowledge that can inform gender responsive policy formulation, legal and cultural reform and enhance monitoring of progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. This might entail moving into the local communities and sustained involvement in national machineries and institutional frameworks to learn and record their beliefs, values, attitudes, policies and practices. At the university level women and gender studies departments, programs and courses can foster debates on relevant

gender issues, provide technical advice, research and documentation, gender analysis, identification of gender gaps and advocacy for engendering strategic documents and informing policy. Women academics may also participate in critical commissions to ensure gender mainstreaming, document exemplary practices, develop tools and guidelines for monitoring progress towards gender equality.

The role and impact of women NGOs

Women's NGO have been active in bringing gender and human rights issues to the political, social, and economic development agenda. For example in Uganda they have lobbied for constitutional reform and provided civic education classes on the electoral process, as well as engendered debate on topics such as violence against women, polygamy, marital rape, succession rights, HIV/AIDS, FGM, and transfer of nationality. The impact of women NGOs has been an increase in women's involvement in political leadership at national and local government levels, some constitutional reforms and debates taking into account women's needs and concerns, issues of women human rights and empowerment being placed on relevant agendas, and more male acceptance of women in positions of responsibility. Faced with external and internal challenges such as armed conflict, lack of sustained commitment and political will, and limited funding, NGOs have experienced many problems such as weak institutional development, insufficient strategic planning, poor accountability and corruption. Despite these setbacks, the NGO sector has played an important role in promoting women's rights and gender equality and UNESCO was called upon to continue its support for NGOs working on these issues.

Culture and women's rights

It was noted during this session that although some of the challenges facing the Great Lakes Region are a consequence of globalization and unequal trade relations, other factors such as colonial subjugation and ethnicity, negative cultural practices and socio cultural institutions are also responsible in part for the continued problems of gender inequality and disrespect for the human rights of women. It was equally recognized that while there are numerous cultural practices that require immediate eradication, there are still many others that are useful, either potentially or in reality. Culture plays a fundamental role in that it shapes the framework and influences the understanding of a society. Therefore, one danger with the uncritical reading of one's culture is its valorization and the assumption that it is not answerable to views expressed by the rest of the world. It was also noted that the

socialization processes carried out in educational institutions, the family and other socio-cultural institutions which permit the transfer of culture from one generation to another and which conditions and stereotypes expectations and behavior could easily be manipulated to question the capability of girls and women to perform certain tasks. Repeated regularly, this questioning undermines confidence and solidifies over time, becoming difficult to uproot from the mental frames of people. The meeting agreed that further in-depth sociological and anthropological research was need on culture because of the critical role it plays in framing and understanding the constructs and relations that underlie a society and as it is an important concern in the process of social transformation.

Recommendations

Three sets of recommendations were made for UNESCO activity within the region, and the participants were keen to sustain the network and cooperate with SHS in implementing the proposed activities. These recommendations involved capacity-building of existing or new networks and women's studies centers, including research on key issues such as culture and women's rights; information dissemination and management; and policy-oriented research on gender dynamics and implications for women of negotiations, peace-keeping, and security sector reform. The Communications and Information Sector at UNESCO (CI) expressed their willingness to collaborate with SHS in setting up a portal for the posting and dissemination of information to the Great Lakes network and beyond.

Specific recommendations included the establishment of a women's research and documentation center in Kinshasa, DRC, along with women's studies programs at the major universities in Burundi and Rwanda. (There exist women's studies programs at the University of Kenya in Nairobi, and Makerere University in Uganda.) Prior to the close of the consultation, the relevant participants were asked to prepare proposals for the women's studies programs and to send them directly to SHS/HRS/GED. Extra-budgetary funding will be sought for these institution building activities.

As part of the follow-up to the consultation, SHS/HRS/GED will finalize the short papers presented during the meeting, and will compile them into a document that will form a background study to be submitted to the second summit of the Dar es Salaam Declaration process, scheduled to take place in Nairobi in November. A LISTSERV will be

prepared so that the network can remain in touch, and, as mentioned above, a special portal also will be set up.

In summary the recommendations were of the Consultation were:

1. Capacity-building and institution-building (and advocacy)
 - a. capacity-building of existing or new networks (academics/NGOs/MPs; Great Lakes/peace; women academics; Ministries of Women's Affairs)
 - b. establishment of (or support for) women's studies departments/programs at universities, especially in the Francophone GL countries
 - c. establishment of a women's Research and Documentation Center in Kinshasa, DRC (with a regional remit)
 - d. advocacy for gender budgets and adequate resources (working with UNIFEM)
 - e. support for affirmative action advocacy at universities
 - f. funding or facilitating research activities/projects (e.g., on culture, laws, quotas)

2. Information-distribution and management (website and hard copy)
 - a. of relevant international agreements/documents (e.g., Dar es Salaam Declaration; AU Charter; SCR 1325) and women's human rights instruments (links to UNIFEM, Int'l Alert, peacewomen.org, Atlantis, etc.)
 - b. of existing networks, regional and transnational (e.g., CODESRIA; FAS; TFNs; professional associations such as IFUW/AAUW)
 - c. of best practices of women in different sectors in the GLR
 - d. creation of a databank on women academics in the region, their expertise, etc., for use by NGOs; and distribution/posting of research products
 - e. creation of databank on relevant women's NGOs (professional associations, advocacy groups such as Rwandan Women's Network, etc.)
 - f. posting of fellowships, scholarships, and job vacancies
 - g. links to ECA, AU websites (e.g., information on AGDI)
 - h. establishment of virtual resource center/portal, LISTSERV, e-alert, e-journal

3. Research/policy and advocacy on negotiations, peace-keeping/peace-building and women
 - a. engendering DDR (e.g., women ex-combatants as peacekeepers) and security sector reform in the GLR
 - b. research on obstacles to implementation of SCR 1325, gaps, and the way forward

- c. research on post-conflict trauma and needs; issues of gender justice
- d. coordinating with office of Mr. Ibrahima Fall, other relevant UN agencies

Closing

UNESCO thanked participants for their frank and informed interventions which resulted in an interesting, intellectual debate, and permitted the Organization to attain its objective of identifying with women from the Great Lakes Region elements for a social and human sciences program of action to be implemented in the region. Based on the participation of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region and the discussion that was held, it was agreed that UNESCO would prepare a project proposal that is based on the recommendations. This proposal is to be included in the overall UN project document to be submitted to the follow-up meeting of Heads of States and Governments in Nairobi, November 2005. It was also agreed that the participants will form a network of decision-makers, academics and Non-governmental organizations working on women's rights and gender equality in the Great Lakes Region. Closing remarks were made by Mr. Awad Elhassan, UNESCO Representative and Director of the Addis Ababa Office and the Vote of Thanks on behalf of the participants was made by Ms Mary Balikungeri of the Rwanda Women's Network.

ANNEX I



Agenda and Timetable

Empowering Women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, Peace and Women's Leadership

*30 May – 1 June, 2005
United Nations Conference Center
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia*

Monday 30 May 2005

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Opening Ceremony

Welcoming remarks by:

- Ms Bience Gawanas, Social Affairs Commissioner, Africa Union
- H.E Mrs. Gifti Abasiya, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Ethiopia
- Mr. Pierre Sané, Assistant Director-General, Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Coffee Break

10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Session 1 – Dar es Salaam Declaration on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes Region: the role of women

Moderator: Pierre Sané

Rapporteur: Vanessa Farr

- Guest speaker: Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes
- Women’s experiences in light of Dar es Salaam (4 countries @10 minutes each)
 - Barbara Ndimurukundo-Kururu, Burundi
 - Mabiala Mantuba-Ngoma, DRC
 - Jeanne Izabiliza, Rwanda
- Recommendations for the way forward with UNESCO

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

2:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Session 2a – Women’s leadership

Moderator: Spés-Cartas Barankariza

Rapporteur: Ndeye Sow

- The “Role and impact of women members of parliament in promoting gender equality and women’s human rights in the Great Lakes Region” (10 minutes each)
 - Sabine Sabimbona, Burundi
 - Jeanne Ebamba Boboto, DRC
 - Irene Oloo, Kenya
 - Venantie Mukankusi, Rwanda

3:45 – 4:15 p.m.

Coffee Break

4:15 – 5:30 p.m.

- Discussion
- Recommendations for the way forward with UNESCO

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Welcome Cocktail (at Hilton Hotel)

Tuesday 31 May 2005

9:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Session 2b – Women’s leadership

Moderator: Peterlis Nyatuga

Rapporteur: Bea Gallimore-Rangira

- The “Role and impact of women academics in promoting gender equality and women’s human rights in the Great Lakes Region” (10 minutes each)
Alice Rwamo, Burundi
Jacqueline Adhiambo-Oduol, Kenya
Jolly Rubagiza, Rwanda
- Discussion

10:45 – 11:15 a.m.

Coffee Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Session 2c – Women’s leadership

Moderator: Vanessa Farr

Rapporteur: Ndeye Sow

- The “Role and impact of women NGOs in promoting gender equality and women’s human rights in the Great Lakes Region” (10 minutes each)
Mireille Niyonzima, Burundi
Immacule Birhaheka, DRC
Margaret Mungherera, Uganda
- Discussion

12:30 – 1:00 p.m.

- Recommendations for the way forward with UNESCO

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

2:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Session 3 – Culture and women’s rights

Moderator: Baudouine Kamatari

Rapporteur: Paule Bouvier

- “How can culture contribute to women’s empowerment?” (20 minutes each)
Rosalie Muswamba, DRC
Elizabeth Orchardson -Mazrui, Kenya
Catherine Jendia, Uganda

3:45 – 4:15 p.m.

Coffee Break

4:15 – 5:30 p.m.

- Discussion
- Recommendations for the way forward with UNESCO

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Meeting of Rapporteurs of Sessions 1, 2 & 3

Wednesday 1 June 2005 **Session 4 – Defining a Great Lakes women’s agenda**

9:30– 10:45 a.m.

Moderator: Pierre Sané
Rapporteur: Valentine Moghadam

- Presentation by Rapporteurs of recommendations for the way forward with UNESCO (10 minutes each)
- Discussion

10:45 – 11:15 a.m.

Coffee Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

- Discussion continues
- Conclusions

12:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Closing Session

Chairperson: Valentine Moghadam

- Vote of Thanks, Ms Mary Balikungeri
- Closing Remarks, Awad Elhassan, Director, UNESCO Addis Ababa

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

END

ANNEX II

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