

AMWA NEWS

AKINA MAMA wa AFRIKA - Bi-Annual Newsletter - Issue 1, NO.2 - July - December 2007



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HERE COMES THE DOCUMENTRY ON THE AU PROTOCOL ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Hon. Rt. Deputy Speaker of Uganda's Parliament **Hon. Rebecca Kadaga.**



August 6, 2007 was a memorable day for the women fraternity in Uganda & in Africa. It was the day, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) unveiled a documentary on the African Union Protocol on Human and People's Rights on the Right of Women in Africa

dubbed **"As Time Ticks"**.

To grace the occasion during a cocktail as members of feminist and women's movement in Uganda and Africa, members of civil society fraternity, media wined and dined was the Hon. Rt. Deputy Speaker of Uganda's Parliament Hon. Rebecca Kadaga.

Ms. Kadaga hailed Akina Mama for undertaking the documentary saying women's rights are an important issue that must be recognized everywhere. She hoped that the Government can this time around ratify the protocol. Already 22 countries have ratified the protocol and they include; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Libya, Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Seychelles, Togo, Zambia, Tanzania and Ghana.

The guest of honour, Ms. Kadaga said the documentary will go a long way

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Alumni,

As the year comes to end, we are happy to share with you the end of 2007 edition of AMwA News. We are grateful to all those who have stood with us and supported us in one way or another.

In this issue, we have highlighted some of AMwA's outstanding activities for the year 2007; they are women's rights issues and the Leadership training Institute for young women.

The launching of the documentary 'As Time Ticks' of the AU Women's Rights protocol came as a major highlight for AMwA in 2007. "The documentary brings the reality so much nearer to the lives and situations of Uganda women hence necessitating the government to prioritize its ratification" Ms. Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe Executive Director AMwA informed participants.

We hope that you will very much enjoy reading the AMwA News. We thank our donors, Hivos Ford foundation for the support and sustaining the production of the newsletter. Hope you will enjoy reading the news. We wish you a blessed Christmas Season and a prosperous New Year.

Solome Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe
Director AMwA



Guests watching the new documentary about the AU Protocol on Women's Rights

to educate people about women's rights and African Governments must ratify the protocol. The documentary highlights activities of several organizations including AMWA in promoting women's rights. It also depicts situations Uganda women go through especially those at the grassroots

"Apart from educating and sensitising the communities about the protocol, the documentary will also be an effective lobbying tool..."

whose voices may not be heard. The documentary is part of AMWA's efforts to advocate for the protocol and sensitizing Ugandans about the noble cause.

Since the adoption of the protocol, AMWA together with other regional and national women's organizations in an Africa-Wide Coalition-Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) has been exerting pressure on the various African Governments to ratify, domesticate and implement the protocol.

Speaking at the launch, Mrs. Solome Nakaweesi Kimbugwe, Executive Director AMWA informed participants the importance of the protocol:

- It adds considerable weight to our collective efforts at local, national and regional levels to protect the gains that we have made as women on the African continent;
- It provides a platform to advocate for those rights that still elude us;

- It is an advocacy tool for advancing women's human rights.
- It is a significant milestone in the attempts to advance the rights of women in Africa;
- The protocol addresses the context specific violations of human rights abuse inflicted on African women;
- It is also an important tool for strengthening national and regional efforts to protect the right of African women.

"Apart from educating and sensitising the communities about the protocol, the documentary will also be an effective lobbying tool. It seeks to provoke strong civic response and stimulate debate on this issue so that the charter can be ratified in Uganda," Ms. Kimbugwe said. The documentary will not only be an advocacy tool in Uganda but all African countries.

AMWA's Executive Director thanked a number of people who took part in the shooting of the documentary especially that most of them accepted to be interviewed and share their real life experiences sometimes disheartening experience that make the articles of the protocol come to life.

"This documentary brings the reality so much nearer to the lives and situations of Uganda women hence necessitating the government to prioritize its ratification," Ms. Kimbugwe explained.

AMWA's President Ms. Stella Mukasa and AMWA board member Zeedah Mangeli Meierhofer attended. ➡



Participants of the recent AWLI pause for a group photo with their certificates

4TH EASTERN AFRICA SUB REGIONAL AFRICAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

This year again, Akina Mama wa Afrika organized another AWLI for 25 young women from 12 African countries. The countries are Burundi, Benin, Ghana, Eriteria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somali, Somaliland, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. The training under the theme "Women's Right to Health: Contemplating Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights" took place from August 5th-18th, 2007 in Entebbe, Uganda.

AWLI aims to strengthen the personal and organizational capacities of young African women to influence policy and decision making through training and networking. It also serves as a networking, training and information dissemination forum for young women aged between 25-40 working on gender issues. So far the Eastern African AWLI has trained over 92 young African women.

The participants were trained in the following:

- New directions on Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights in Africa
- Rights and International Treaties by
- Funding for Women's Sexual, Health and Reproductive Rights
- Women's Sexual Rights and Fundamentalisms
- Conceptualizing Women's Human Rights
- Intergenerational Dialogue
- Feminist Theory and Practice
- Personal Empowerment
- Sexual Health and Well Being
- Transformational Leadership

- Health Rights, International Treaties and Conventions on Women's sexual rights
- Gender Analytical Frameworks
- Resource Mobilization
- Strategic Planning and Thinking

This being a very competitive training, not all applicants are taken on for the training. For details about the eligibility, please check the AWLI brochure.

WHAT SOME OF THE 2007 PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE TRAINING INSTITUTE



Ms. Toni Shechambo Mbilinyi - Resident Magistrate in Tanzania and member of Tanzania Women Lawyers (TAWLA)

She said the training was powerful. "When I applied for it, I didn't know it would be this helpful. It has helped me understand who I am; a gender feminist," Mbilinyi said. She said she now understands better issues to do with sexual reproductive health and sexual rights. Through the training, she is able to imagine and see a clear picture of what women go through. She vowed to impart the skills

to her fellow women in Tanzania. "We must instill these skills in our fellow women wherever we are and help them understand their rights," she explained. According to her, the trainers were excellent and they made the concepts clear and understandable. To her, the training was like a home because it comprised of several women from different areas who were freely sharing and talking about their experiences. The training has helped the participants develop a sense of one and working together.



Nehal Mohammed Ibn Idris
from Zenab for Women in
Development in Sudan

It was an exciting opportunity for her to take part in the training because they tackled critical issues that take place in her country. She said in Sudan, the issues discussed at the training are never tackled in detailed as the training has done. "I have got a lot of information and networks from my fellow women with whom we share the same cause," Idris said.

She explained that it is important to be committed to women's issues and fighting for women's rights in all countries. The training created team work among the women. She vowed to impart the skills to her fellow Sudanese women and also see that the materials and information provided at the training is translated into Arabic for the benefit of her fellow women and the community. "I have learnt a lot from the training and am sure this will help me transform my life and the way I advocate for women's issues," Idris said.



**Rissi Assani-Alabi - African
Development Fund (AWDF) -
Benin, Ghana**

The training was very empowering for Assani-Alabi as it has been an eye opener. She said she has been able to re-position herself as a feminist. "Its an opportunity for young women to acquire transformation skills because the young women are the future leaders of our nations," Assani Alabi explained. She said the AWLI created space for the women and they have learnt to be more confident.



**Rahel Zewdu - The
Ethiopian Media Women
Association**

Before her participation in the AWLI, she had heard a lot about it from two of the association's members that have participated in previous institutes had always wanted to be a participant. When she came for the training, Zewdu thought it was going to mainly focus on leadership training. But when the training started, she was amazed. "We have learnt a variety of issues like team building, sexual reproductive health, and women's rights. The trainers have talked about the real issues that happen in our country. But for us there are issues we can not talk about in public because of the strong cultures. For instance talking about our sexual organs publicly is out of order," she explained. She said from the training, she is now confident to talk about those issues and explain them to fellow Ethiopian women so that they can understand them. She said in Ethiopia, they talk about reproductive health but not in detail as it was at the training. Zewdu also committed to train her fellow women and instill in them the skills and knowledge she has acquired.



**Regina Bafaki -
Action for Development
(ACFODE), Uganda**

Bafaki said the training opened her eyes and deepened her understanding of things that she was taking for granted like personal development and gender feminism. She added that the training has enabled her understand the gender issues much better and her perception about sexuality has also changed. She said there are things she wasn't comfortable with. Bafaki said she is very much energized now and she hoped to cause at the different levels in her life, her job and her family. "I am proclaiming myself as a feminist. I am going to use the values learnt and share the skills and knowledge with others. I have been able to reflect on my past, current and future," she further said.

About the trainers, Bafaki said they were motivators in that each trainer was unique in their own way and they knew their subjects. She said the trainers had a unique character of sharing their experiences with the trainees. Through the training, Bafaki was able to expand her networks.



**Rediet Mesfin -
United Nations Population
Fund (UNFPA), Addis Ababa
- Ethiopia**

The training was shocking to her at the beginning in that even though she was for UNFPA, they don't go into details

when discussing issues of reproductive health. She said the training was detailed and that women were able to freely share their experiences and they have gained a lot. Mesfin said the training met her expectations and it has equipped her with more knowledge about what women go through. She added that the trainers were friendly and well knowledgeable about their subjects. "They were excellent. They knew their stuff," Mesfin concluded. She however noted that the schedule for the training was tight in that they had to train in the night as well.



Brenda Nabatanzi Mpanga - Federation of Women Lawyers Uganda (FIDA), Uganda

Mpanga said the training was very inspiring in that she needs to be a change wherever she will be through her actions. She noted that the training was very detailed and that the facilitators are strong women who knew

their areas very well. She said her expectations of the training were met and also vowed to train other women in the same skills but most importantly to use the skills to improve herself.

Anne Mubanga, a trainer in the UK found the training interesting.

Anne who is a Zambian by nationality but a resident in the UK thanked AMwA for selecting her to take part in the prestigious training. It was a big opportunity for her to also come to Uganda, a country she had always longed to visit. "Meeting the women from the region is energizing, empowering and it humbles me. I have learnt a lot from the women because each of them has a lot of experiences," she said.

Ms. Mubanga revealed that the training will boost her self development and improve her networks. "As an old woman, it has been great to interact with the young women. It is really a privilege to be here," she added. She said the topics and content for the training were superb and that the trainers were excellent. ➡➡

THE NORTH SOUTH PROGRAMME

The Leadership Development Project for women councilors continues to build the leadership capacity of women and men councilors at sub country level in seven districts of south western Uganda. The programme is implemented between AMwA and North-South Project Austria. Its overall objective is to contribute to sustainable gender-responsive development in rural areas through increased and deepened participation of women in political decision making at sub country and parish level. The districts in which the project operates in include: Kasese, Kamwenge, Kibale, Kyenjojo, Kisoro, Kabale and Kanungu. ➡➡



A training session at the recent AWLI which took place between August 5th-18th, 2007 in Entebbe.

AMWA IN AN INFORMATION SHARING PARTNERSHIP

Civil Society Organisations in Uganda are engaged in a number of activities which generate a lot of information. In most cases, Ugandans hardly know what particular CSOs are engaged in. Yet sharing knowledge and experiences is vital for any project or programme to be a success. In some cases, members in the CSO fraternity may not know what their counterparts are engaged. However this problem will soon be no more, thanks to the project called Knowledge Infrastructure with and Between Counterparts (KIC), piloted by Uganda Women's Network.

The project which started in March 2007 is coordinated by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) while Akina Mama wa Afrika is a partner. According to UWONET's Acting Coordinator Anne Daisy Namono, the project was established to bring up all NGOs in Uganda to share their experiences since each organization handles a different area yet all the work they do feeds into bigger social development and gender equality mandate also bridging mainstream Human Rights work with women's rights work at national, regional and international level through information sharing.

Under the project, thematic forums are held by specific organizations partnering in the project. The thematic forums enable debate on experiences/practices of women's organization; the state of human and women's rights in the country. Some of the thematic forums held since the project kicked off include; The Land Policy and Land Act Forum hosted by the Uganda Land Alliance, Regulatory Framework forum hosted by the NGO Forum, Domestic Relations Bill Forum hosted by FIDA -U, Gender Based Violence Forum hosted by The Centre for Domestic Violence (CEDOVIP), East African Federation (focusing

“the project was established to bring up all NGOs to share their experience since each organization handles a different area.”

on CSO engagement) hosted by DENIVA, The African Union Forum/AU women's protocol forum and a forum on Women in Politics and Decision-Making.

As part of the KIC project, exchange visits were also conducted between CSOs to facilitate cross-organizational learning which is shared amongst themselves and replicated in Uganda. Partners learnt the following from each other;

- Bridging policy advocacy at national level and policy implementation at grassroots levels.
- Mobilizing popular support for advocacy issues.
- Successful advocacy at national and lower levels.
- Gender mainstreaming in policy, programmes and administrative structures of organizations.
- Bridging national, regional and international advocacy work.

Akina Mama wa Afrika hosted the forum on the African Union and the focus was on the Protocol to the Rights of Women in Africa.

It is envisaged that KIC will go along way to stream line communication, strengthen information and knowledge sharing within the CSO community. ➡

25 young women from 10 African countries pause for a group picture in the hotel gardens between sessions.



THE SPOTLIGHT : PROGRESS ON THE AWLI

ALUMNI



Beatrice Akello, Uganda 2006

Beatrice Trained in 2006. The African Women Leadership Institute (AWLI) helped her to be more assertive than she was before. She did also acquire skills that enabled her to advocate for women's rights. As a result of the

training she shared the skills acquired by training other women in Rukungiri and Soroti districts of Uganda.

Akello also organized women in groups so as to benefit from prosperity for all scheme (Bonna Bagagawale) of which she is certain that many women will benefit a lot by increasing their incomes. She is now able to command respect from male counterparts unlike before.



Seble Bekele, Ethiopia 2006.

The two-week training has truly enhanced my understanding and knowledge on contemporary women's rights issues. "It has been very inspirational and empowering that it has equipped me with the tools that are helpful in

dealing with issues in my private and public life".

According to her, the issues were presented in a manner that was very unique and practical. "The exercises we did were very creative, engaging, and fascinating. After attending the training, I have been encouraged to explore more on the issues raised and discussed during the training sessions". She adds.

The reading materials have provided me with valuable

resources. I use them in my professional work and I have been sharing them with colleagues and friends who also have found them to be very resourceful.

I appreciate the various trainers of the training who represent for me great excellence and the possibility of true independence in thinking and living. I am truly honored to have known and shared experience with them. I also appreciate all participants of the training. The sharing of ideas, opinions and knowledge through the group discussions, the intergenerational dialogue, and presentations were extremely wonderful. I have also enjoyed the fun we had together outside the sessions.

The whole experience of attending such carefully thought and well organized training has been very empowering for me. I truly treasure the experience.

I have been studying for my masters' degree in journalism and communication and after completing my study last year in August I have been working with women's organizations as a media and communications person. Currently I am working on a book that documents the experience and achievements of Ethiopian women from different background and area of specialization. One of the many core issues I had come to consciously look at during the training was the missing of women's views and voices in the making of knowledge and in the making of history. As a media person this constitutes one of my concerns and since then I have been consciously engaged in doing something about it on my part.

Harriet Nakandi, Uganda 2006

The AWLI training was an eye opener for Harriet. She did acquire managerial skills both private and public. She also managed to discover her interests and potentials. Because of the training, she learnt to appreciate people's ideas and the inferior complex in her was driven out.

Since the training, she has made friends for life that give her guidelines through the exchange of emails.



Cynthia Mugo, Kenya 2006

After her training, Cynthia did organize an Abortion Mock Tribunal to publicize the negative consequences of criminalizing abortion in Kenya. "The training from AMWA was very useful for it provided the requisite

background information necessary to conceptualize and organize such an event", she explains.

She further said that through organising this event, it became quite apparent to her that women's rights will not be won until women take control of their reproductive and sexual rights.

The tribunal was interrupted by "pro-life" supporters (mostly men) who chose our forum to demonstrate against what they were calling western infiltration and the killing of babies. At one point, the event had to stop to deal with the men who went to the podium to forcefully eject the presenters and stop the tribunal from proceeding. "I could not believe that men were at the podium fighting for the control of my (women's) reproductive organs.

All in all, it was a very informative event and we have a series of follow-up activities where we plan to continue pressing for the need for decriminalizing abortion," Mugo said.

She appealed to AMWA have an AWLI session on reproductive and sexual rights in future. Lucky enough, the theme for the 2006 AWLI centered on reproductive health and sexual rights. Mugo says

reproductive health and sexual rights is an area most human rights and women's organisations are still silent on; abortion is not a popular topic in these organisations which she considers quite sad.

"I have more self-confidence, outgoing, very positive in everything and have been able to influence others positively."

Florence Mwova , Kenya 2005

She is in the process of registering a NGO to deal with of children and women on poverty eradication. The skills she attained from the training will help her mobilise children and women to act in bid to eradicate school drop outs, enhance girl child retention in school, provide better community health services and water accessservices.

Jane Wambui Thuo, Kenya 2005

Jane an alumni of the AWLI trainings in 2005 says since the training, her life's outlook took a turn and changed for the better. "I have more self-confidence, outgoing, very positive in everything and have been able to influence others positively." She adds that during the training they went through a session on self esteem and leadership and these have guided her.

"I was promoted from a Programmes Officer to a Programmes Manager and I work with a team of 7 colleagues in addition to my organization's 250 plus membership," Thuo talks about her appointment as a result of the training which equipped her with skills that enhanced her lead and potential .

In addition, she was also appointed to represent her organisation to various meetings and task forces at national and international levels and this is a demonstration of her organisation's confidence in her leadership qualities which I have honed over the period.

Thuo is also a gender feminist - activist and strongly advocates for the rights of women through all our programmes. This means that every proposal sent must integrate gender concerns in the proposed programmes. She has also undertaken gender trainings and also involved in advocacy and lobbying for various gender issues. These include increased representation of women in leadership positions and campaigns against gender based violence. She concludes by saying that the training was an all rounder.

Rebecca Kaziba, Uganda 1998

Rebecca is a Development practitioner and an entrepreneur. She started out as a high school teacher but because she was yearning to know more about development issues, she joined Action for Development (ACFODE). Her first days at AWLI were full of shock. Ms. Kaziba told participants of the 2007 AWLI that the topic 'feminism' was a shock to her and many of her colleagues during the 1998 training. After the AWLI training, Ms. Kaziba pursued further studies to expand

“In Arua - Uganda, people think a woman is not a person. People had several beliefs about women. That is when I had to use my AWLI skills to change certain things and the way people think”

her horizon and also learn more about feminism. When AMwA opened a sub-regional office for East and Horn of Africa in Kampala, Uganda, she applied to work in it. She was one of the pioneer employees of the AWLI Uganda Chapter. She later moved on to work for a Government/Save the Children Nutrition project in Arua. “In Arua, people think a woman is not a person. People had several beliefs about women. That is when I had to use my AWLI skills to change certain things and the way people think,” Ms. Kaziba said. She added that currently, she is able to identify herself as a woman, thanks to the AWLI training.

She further told participants that the AWLI training has empowered her personally and professionally. Kaziba was able to discover that she is a feminist and the training did make her appreciate what women go through and be forced to take action against forms of torture, discrimination especially in women. “I also learnt to stop feeling guilty that I am spending on myself amidst endless needs of other people around me. The training ignited an endless seeking of knowledge,” She explained.

Kaziba has been able to constantly assess her self and she re-visited her career choices to unfolding opportunities. Through the training, she learnt to take difficult decisions especially in spaces that work against her self esteem and personal being. She has been able to develop social support networks and nurture mentoring relationships. “I am now able to create a realistic balance between the public and private life. I constantly re-package myself, evaluate and assess my career advancement and networking,” she concluded.

five years. And here she is now! Her involvement in the women’s fraternity is not a surprise since she used to fight for space during her childhood days.

Ms.Nakaweesi- Kimbugwe while sharing her experiences with AWLI 2007 participants said her childhood experience ignited the need to fight for women’s rights and protect the vulnerable. After her training, her life changed for the better both professionally and personally. “I learnt to be an unapologetic feminist who is guided by feminist principles and ethos. I also learnt the power to say No when I can’t do something and not feel guilty about it. I also learnt the power to delegate as a leader. This has enabled me mentor, empower others and work as a team,” Ms.Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe explained. Above all, the AWLI opened for me a whole new network of women feminists who have mentored, supported me and enabled me grow personally and professionally.

AWLI imparted in her the fundamental principles, values and ethos of human rights and feminist advocacy. It reminded her, her identity as an African woman and appreciated who she is. Ms.Nkaweesi-Kimbugwe learnt to appreciate other women in terms of what they are, their unique experiences and the challenges they face. She can now also appreciate unity in diversity. She has been able to build her career, set specific targets, short and long term and working on them as she monitors progress. Most of all, she learnt to love and appreciate herself as a woman! ▶▶



**Solome Nakaweesi-
Kimbugwe,
Uganda 2003**

Solome is now the Director of AMwA, something she hoped to achieve after her AWLI, one of her goals was to head an international women’s organization within

UK / EUROPE REGIONAL NEWS



Afua Twu-Danso
UK/Europe Regional Coordinator



Kék éli Kpognon
Capacity Building & Fundraising Officer



Molara Farombi
Finance & Administrative Officer

AFRICAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (AWLI) IN THE UK

“Strengthening the Capacity of African Women to Influence Policy on Gender-Based Violence”

Aims of the Workshop

Akina Mama wa Afrika UK organized a two-day African Women's Leadership Institute from 22nd- 23rd August 2007. The theme of the workshop was, “Strengthening the Capacity of African Women to Influence Policy on Gender-Based Violence”

It was attended by 12 women from all walks of life and was a resounding success. The aims of the workshop were as follows:

1. Provide a space for African women to share their knowledge and learning on issues surrounding gender-based violence within African communities in the UK;
2. Enable African women and their organizations to develop a deeper understanding of policy and decision-making at local and central government levels;
3. Strengthen the capacity of African women and their organizations to gain access to, and engage with, policy-

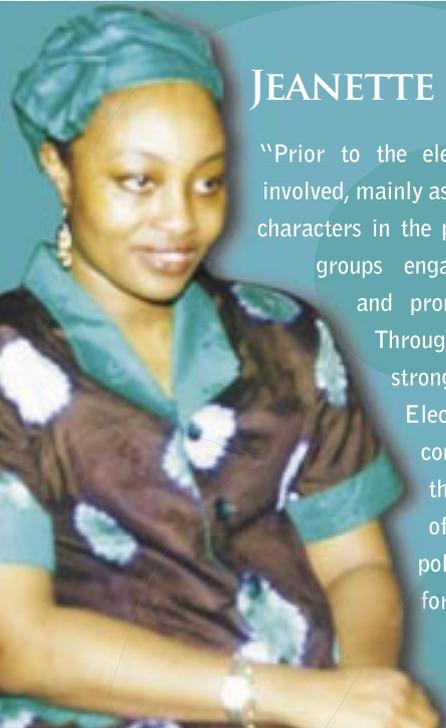
making circles at the local and central government levels, especially on issues relating to gender-based violence;

4. Draw linkages between transformational leadership within African women's organizations and its importance for effective policy-influencing and lobbying.

The Outline

It was a mini AWLI, the sessions focused predominately on the organizational and personal empowerment components of the POT framework. However, the training relating to personal empowerment was mainly based on personal empowerment as it pertains in particular to transformational leadership. The format of the AWLI was comprised of a mixture of drama performances highlighting key issues as they pertain to African women's experiences of gender-based violence, presentations and group activities. ➡

JEANETTE ENO, AMWA BOARD MEMBER, FROM SIERRA LEONE.



“Prior to the elections in Sierra Leone, I got involved, mainly as a mediator between the principal characters in the political parties and civil society groups engaged in sustaining the peace and promoting violence free elections. Through ENCISS, I also supported a strong Women's Coalition - Women's Elections Watch plus which committed to mobilizing women for the elections, pushing for inclusion of the Women's Manifesto on political platforms and campaigning for a 30% minimum quota for

women in public office to be included in our Constitution which is currently under review. Approximately 3 weeks, after the elections results, I was appointed as a Technical Coordinator to the Presidential Transition Team at the Office of the President charged with the responsibility of reviewing the work of the ministries under the previous administration and producing a status report to form part of the briefing for new ministers taking up their appointments. I do think of you all particularly during moments like these and even though you don't hear from me often, rest assured that the support I've got from you my sisters has kept me going and will continue to do so for a long, long time. Stay well my friends and all the best, ➡



Q & A

WITH FORMER AMWA PROGRAMMES
MANAGER MS. SARAH MUKASA

Ms. Mukasa is now the Director of Programmes, The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) in Accra, Ghana.

Q: When did you join AMWA?

A: I have been involved with Akina Mama wa Afrika first in voluntary capacity in 1995 then I became an employee of the London office in 1998. I was then transferred to Uganda in 2002 as Eastern Africa Programme Manager.

Q: What are some of the programmes you spearheaded during your tenure at AMWA?

A: When I came to AMWA in Uganda, there was no staff; we had 1 volunteer, a driver and office assistant. We had to start from scratch. At that time, there was a leadership programme in 1998 and some other programmes had come to a halt. We were approached by an Austrian Non-Governmental Organisation-North-South Project to do some leadership programmes in Western Uganda.

The Uganda office was serving the Eastern Africa Region so we had to create programmes that are suitable for the region. In 2003, we started the Eastern Africa Women's leadership programme. At that time, what was facing the women movement in Africa was a strong back clash from region, culture and political sentiments. The politics at that time was not friendly to women. There was at some point hostility. We thought the leadership programme should address the qualitative leadership which meant we needed a network with women's organisation to think about the kind of leadership we need as women. The programme focused on conflict and how it was affecting women.

We linked up with organizations working on the African Union protocol on the rights of women. We were part of the campaign to see that African countries ratify it and strengthen the articles that come with the protocol. AMWA took the lead to inform and sensitise Ugandans about the protocol.

The other program was the Vagina-Monologues, a V-Day campaign which came from AMWA. I had watched a similar campaign in Kenya so I thought we should bring it in Uganda. I approached several women's organizations which could work with AMWA on the programme. Only ISIS-WICCE, Action Aid and UWONET responded to my request. I did also approach donors some of whom partnered with us.

We also worked on the AU Gender Main streaming to strengthen strategic partnership for AMWA and putting women's rights back to the development agenda. We were also concerned about levels of funding for women. AMWA embarked on a process to look for funds through donors so that they can re-focus their funding to women issues.

There other aspect was strengthening the capacity of AMWA office by building it through strengthened communication and networking, staff development, technological communication, fundraising and installing solar power for the office.

Q: What are some of the achievements you can talk about?

A: I got this organisation out of scratch and made it become a viable organisation that played a key leadership role in the women's movement in Eastern Africa. We have built strong and solid partnership that has helped the organisation further its programmes.

Through the V-Day Campaign, I grew as a person and a feminist activist. Because the campaign raised money to support women in Northern Uganda even though the play was banned from screening. We became a stronger women's organisation that looked at the issues that violated women's rights. I am happy that I was moving forward a cause that many women had started way back before me.

Q: How effective has AMWA been in creating space for African women?

A: AMwA has been extremely successful to cover the space where young women can come and do some internal reflection at a person level and also develop skills beyond what they learnt through formal education. With space for reflection, it is easy to grow in a constructive way. That has been AMwA's contribution to the women's movement. It is the indicative of what young women have set up in their countries after the women's training. We have worked hard to be a space in which our bottom line is the women's rights.

We have tried to create a space in which women are able to come together and reflect on how to support one another and how to give one another solidarity. We are a space that is against the violation against women of any kind. Now that minority women are able to seek refugee within AMwA space is a testimony of our dynamism and ability to protect women's rights in their diversity.

Q: What major challenges did you face while running the AMwA office in Uganda?

A: Huge back clash against women's movement which also encroached into the women's movement when many activists adopted very orthodox and conservative religious doctrines. Trying to run an organisation and balance it with my responsibility of motherhood was not easy. Trying to keep an organization well resourced and functioning was also not easy. Managing tensions and different opinions on women's rights within the movement. My views were often considered extreme. ➡

UP COMING EVENTS

- **AMwA will be holding the sixth Eastern African Women's Leadership Institute Workshop (AWLI) from 3rd – 17th February 2008 in Mombasa, Kenya.** The AWLI aims to strengthen the personal and organizational capacities of young African women to influence policy and decision making through training and networking. The countries from which young women will be selected to participate in the Eastern Africa AWLI are: Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.
- **The UK AWLI will also take place in march/April 2008. The Eastern Africa Sub –Regional AWLI for Women in politics.**
AMwA is planning hold an Eastern African Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI) targeting women in politics in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The women will be MPs and those at higher Local Government Levels or those holding positions in their political parties. Each country will be allocated a maximum of 7 (Seven) participants. We plan to do the AWLI in Zanzibar, Tanzania around mid- March 2008.
- **Commission on the Status of women-Fifty-second session 26 February- 7 March 2008**
The fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place from 25 February to 7 March 2008. The review theme at this session will be "Women's participation in conflict prevention, management, conflict resolution and in post-conflict –peace building".

For details please visit; www.un.org.

AMWA WELCOMES NEW STAFF:-

- **Ms. Kékéli Kpognon** the Capacity Building & Fundraising Officer in the UK/Europe regional office joined early this year. She is primarily responsible for coordinating AMwA's capacity building programme and identifying and chasing new sources of funding.
- **Ms. Helen Awidi** is the new Finance and Administration Manager at AMwA Head Office Kampala, Uganda. Helen joined the team this year November 2007 and she is responsible for preparing and producing the statutory accounts of the organization in accordance with relevant Charity / NGO law. **Welcome on Board**



An international non-governmental organisation for African women

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AMWA is registered as:

An International NGO in Uganda by the NGO Registration Board. Registered as a Charity by the Charities Commission in the UK & as a company limited by guarantee. AMWA is an NGO is special consultative status with the UN ECOSOC.