



UNIFEM NEWS

ANGLOPHONE WEST AFRICA OFFICE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

JUNE 15TH, 2006

Johnson-Sirleaf Receives UNIFEM Global Leadership Award

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2007 Nigerian elections 2

DCGG Website 2

Partners meeting 3

Women's economic empowerment 3

Gender sensitive legislation in Sierra Leone 4

Female candidate wins by-election 5

PLWHA resource centre 6

CONTACT US @

UNIFEM
UN House
Plot 617/618 Diplomatic Drive
Central Business District, P.M.B 2851
Garki Abuja -Nigeria

E-mail:
lkechukwu.atah@unifem.org
Phone: 09-4616309
Fax: +234-9-4618579

From Cabinet Minister to senior United Nations administrator and now the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's career has never stood still.

In recognition of her efforts to advance women's rights and her new role as the first democratically elected female head of state in Africa, UNIFEM awarded Johnson-Sirleaf with the first Global Leadership Award, marking the 30th anniversary of the Fund and all it has accomplished.

President Johnson Sirleaf has worked with UNIFEM over many years. As an independent expert she visited conflict-affected countries to listen to women and co-authored a path-breaking UNIFEM study on women, war and peace, published in 2002.

UNIFEM continues to support women in Liberia and recently pledged \$500,000 to ensure women's votes count and that

their dreams become reality.

Although Johnson Sirleaf was not present at the 30th Anniver-



Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female head of state in Africa

sary Gala Dinner on May 13th, she did send a video message. "UNIFEM is a long-standing and

trusted friend. The organization stood with Liberia's women in the lead-up to the election, supporting, contributing, encouraging. The help it gave to Liberia testifies to the importance of a strong women's fund at the United Nations. I occupy my current position because women successfully mobilized to support my candidacy, and I thank UNIFEM for being a partner in this effort... The women of Liberia and the women of Africa from all walks of life share their trust and confidence in our ability to succeed. I know that UNIFEM will be there for the long journey," she said.

UNIFEM is proud to celebrate the partnerships, leadership and vision of scores of individuals, groups and governments that have made UNIFEM a strong and effective women's fund.

Mainstreaming Gender into States' Economic Empowerment Strategy

UNIFEM West Africa is proud to announce the launch of "Mainstreaming Gender into States' Economic Empowerment Strategy (SEEDS)," a practical guide to mainstreaming gender into Nigeria's national reform processes.

On May 9th, government, NGOs and civil society came together to celebrate the fruits of UNIFEM's labour; a manual almost two years in the making and the collaborative work of NISER, NPC with the generous support from of CIDA.

Among the attendees were

Dr. Osita Ogbu, Economic Adviser to the President and Chief Executive of the National Planning Commission, Nenadi Usman, Minister of State for the Federal Ministry of Finance, CIDA country representative, Andrew Spezowka, Peter Hawkins, DFID country director and Dr. Otive Igbuzor, Actionaid International Nigeria country director.

SEEDS is the byproduct of NEEDS, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, a comprehensive development framework for Nigeria which sets out pri-



Florence Butegwa, Regional Programme Director, speaks at SEEDS manual launch

orities and strategies to reduce poverty. The National Planning Commission was charged with

continued on page 2

UNIFEM Nigeria gears up for the 2007 Elections

As part of the Millennium Development Goal initiative to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, UNIFEM is playing a key role in supporting women's participation in the 2007 Nigerian elections. The goal is to increase the numbers of women at local, state and national levels and encourage female citizens to take part in politics.

The two pronged approach will focus on assisting the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in building its technical capacity to main-

stream gender as well as supporting civil society initiatives that campaign for the participation of women.

The nation wide project was born as a result of the assessments carried out after the 2003 elections showing women fared badly, both in terms of the number of candidates and those who were elected. At the present time, only 4 out of 109 Senators are women. In the House of Representatives, although the number has increased from 13 in 360 in 2003 to 22, it is still a long way off

from equal representation. It was noted that women make a good showing in campaigns, but their numbers dwindle by the preliminaries.

UNIFEM's strategies entail lobbying INEC for affirmative action laws in the hopes that it will impose quotas on a minimum number of women in political parties at the same time as working with them to take concrete steps in support of women candidates. Activities revolve around targeting the negative practices associated with traditional and reli-

continued on page 3

DCGG Launches Gender Nigeria Website

On March 9th, the Donor Coordination Group on Gender (DCGG) for Nigeria officially launched its website, Gender Nigeria. The DCGG, which came into existence in June of 2004, aims to enhance coordination efforts on among those partners working for gender equality and promote a better understanding of gender equality mainstreaming approaches among key actors.

The Group's mission is to provide a forum whereby do-

nor and partners including foundations, bilateral and multilateral institutions, can share information and coordinate their actions to maximize resources and reduce duplication. The information sharing forum enables members to identify collaborative activities and objectives that seek to address among others: weak programme outcomes and results by gender, poor linkages between gender with other core sectors as agricul-

ture, water, transportation, inefficient and ineffective use of scarce resources, the promotion of the exchange of ideas, tools, models and best practices among partners. It seeks to accomplish this while reducing transaction costs in the delivery of gender initiatives and interventions and strengthening links and mechanisms for improved cooperation between government, civil society groups and other actors. Visit www.gendernigeria.org



Florence Butegwa,
UNIFEM Regional
Programme Director and former
minister of Federal
Capital Territory,
Engr. Abba Gana

continued from page 1

providing technical support to ensure states' formulated, implemented and monitored their SEEDS. As part of this process, UNIFEM developed tools to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender analysis and equality. At the request of the National Planning Commission and in conjunction with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), the present manual was created for policy makers and stake-

holders to integrate and apply the above principles throughout the SEEDS process.

Gender mainstreaming emphasizes political, economic and sociocultural equality and rests on the premise that these are prerequisites for social justice, economic equity and plan effectiveness.

The third UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to promote gender equality and empower women as they are disproportionately

affected by the burdens of poverty, lack of access to education and health services and few economic opportunities.

UNIFEM's hope is that this manual will facilitate states' task to actively mainstream gender equality and in the longer term, contribute towards a better understanding of the links between women's empowerment, poverty eradication and achieving the MDGs in Nigeria.

continued from page 2

gious institutions, building social support systems for those women who want to participate in the political process, as well practical training on how to succeed. The goal is to encourage women, both candidates and the electorate, to

take up a women centered agenda. An important component of UNIFEM's involvement is the young women's mentorship program for capacity building of 18-35 year olds which aims to engage young female Nigerians in the political process.

This project is part of a larger initiative overseen by UNDP which regroups donors such as the EU, CIDA and DFID who are all working towards supporting the 2007 electoral systems.

Abuja Office Hosts Yearly Partners Meeting

Last March 31 UNIFEM held its annual partners meeting at the UN house in Abuja, Nigeria. The forum provided an opportunity for both UNIFEM and its partners to build a common understanding of work in progress while discussing the various challenges, as well as time to share ideas and propose solutions on how to move forward.

Knowledge sharing was a major focus and all participants agreed that peer-review of projects is an invaluable asset, particularly in helping partners to realign their projects and activities in accordance with UNIFEM's global mission and strategies.

Representatives in attendance included AFRODEP, who spoke about the Women Economic Empowerment Project in Warri South West LG, Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) which is working on the implementation of existing laws, policies and plans of action to address violence against women, the National Centre for Economic Management and Administration (NCEMA) whose staff spoke about gender responsive budgeting, Positive Action for Treatment Access (PATA) who works on issues related to women and HIV/AIDS and Public Enlightenment Project (PEP), which presented their project on the promotion of socio-economic rights of women in Sharia states and Northern Nigeria.

PEP's project, Promoting the Socio-Economic Rights of Women in Northern Nigeria in the Sharia states of Katsina and Zamfara was of particular interest

as it aims to increase the economic power and popular participation of women by at least 45%

Although this project has not come without major challenges due to the location of the com-



Attendants of this year's meeting at the UN House in Abuja

by the end of next year. Entrenched poverty in these states caused by high unemployment and illiteracy levels, low economic growth, high birth rates combined with the demands of polygamous and extended families has disproportionately affected women's status and participation in society.

Their project revolves around increasing women's access to education, providing them with the means to control their own resources and properties, advocating for more gender sensitive policies and practices at local and state levels and engaging civil society in participating in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of government plans and budgets to ensure they are women friendly.

munities and cultural and religious customs, PEP staff has been successful at carrying out activities such as participatory assessments of women's socioeconomic status and opportunities, advocacy visits to key policy makers, traditional institutions and community leaders on the importance of women's socioeconomic empowerment and on fostering female role models. These activities have shown that the project's success greatly depends upon the involvement of community members, men and policy makers in empowerment activities.

We wish them success as they continue to work towards promoting the socioeconomic rights of women in Northern Nigeria.

“peer-review of projects is an invaluable asset, particularly in helping partners to realign their projects and activities with UNIFEM's global mission”

Women Parliamentarians and Ministers in Sierra Leone Get a Helping Hand

“Many discriminatory practices are entrenched in the constitution because it recognizes Customary law”

With the aim of empowering women parliamentarians to work towards gender responsive legislation in Sierra Leone, UNIFEM is partnering with the Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NEWMAP) to bring the country's laws in line with CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Currently Parliament and the Law Reform Commission are in the process of drafting bills that will address the endemic, wide ranging inequities faced by women. Although Sierra Leone ratified CEDAW in 1988, due to the civil war that ravaged the country, it was unable to make the required changes to its laws or enforce its principles. Many discriminatory practices are entrenched in the constitution because it recognizes Customary Law, which particularly disadvantages women. The process of legis-

lative reform, therefore, is imperative.

As all female ministers and parliamentarians are members of NEWMAP, the approach revolves around utilizing this existing framework to implement specific activities. The project has as its objectives to provide technical support to women Parliamentarians to enhance their understanding and analysis of bills and a forum for them to interact with their main constituents, to help them understand CEDAW and initiate discussions in Parliament for its implementation and to enable sensitizing Parliament on the main findings of Sierra Leone's combined initial report.

Three bills have been drafted so far. The Domestic Violence Act would see certain acts of violence criminalized including among others sexual abuse, harassment and female circumcision of a child. Another, the Registration of Customary Marriage

and Divorce Act seeks to provide a uniform response to issues that are treated very differently from one custom to another and to capture changes in customs and traditions that afford improved rights and protection to women. The third bill, entitled the Devolution of Estates Act, outlines nationwide inheritance laws applicable to all regardless of the personal type of marriage. This bill, when passed, will bring general, customary and Muslim law under one common body which will apply the law equally regardless of religion or type of marriage, therefore, ensuring women's rights.

This project follows research carried out last year under UNIFEM auspices which examined existing legislation from a gender perspective and proposed changes that would see gender equality and women's rights enshrined as basic principles.

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality with men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civic or any other field.”

Sierra Leone Drafts Preliminary Report on CEDAW

With UNIFEM's technical, financial and administrative support, the Government of Sierra Leone completed in April a draft report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs spearheaded the two year process for the preparation of the Initial 2nd- 5th country report in close partnership with the United Nations Country Team.

In 1988, Sierra Leone ratified CEDAW, but the Constitution requires International Conventions ratified by the President be passed by Parliament. As

this is not the case, CEDAW is not binding. Even though there are constitutional guarantees for most CEDAW articles, a few sections allow discrimination against women in adoption, marriage, divorce and devolution of property.

Although the report revealed such negative findings as gender gaps in access to education certain positive actions taken towards the recognition and protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Principles to ensure women enjoy the same rights as men were noted. For example, A separate Ministry for Gender Affairs was created in 1996 and in 2000, Parliament adopted the National Policy on

gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women. These policies to a large extent spell out the government's commitment towards gender parity.

The 2004 Education Act makes basic education compulsory and the re-introduction of the National Action Plan also provides counseling and family life education as a strategy for preventing early pregnancy. The enrolment rate for girls doubling in the five year period between 2000 and 2005.

Women all over the country now sit with their paramount chief and district counselors to deliberate on issues that affect their communities. The report process has created awareness about CEDAW

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Niger Delta Region

UNIFEM held a two day training workshop May 11th and 12th in Port Harcourt, Nigeria on strengthening the capacity of NGOs to implement the Women's Economic Empowerment project currently underway in three Niger Delta States. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme with support from the Japanese Government, this project was developed to support women businesses in communities in Akwa-Ibom, Delta and Rivers states.

The primary objective of this initiative is to empower women to fulfil their economic potential through enhanced access to information, learning technical and organisational skills and financial and

technological support. The hope this will help towards guaranteeing women's individual rights and security.

It is against this background that the workshop on building gender awareness and project management skills was organized. The two facilitators, Iheoma Obibi of Alliances for Africa and Tolu Lewis-Tamoka of UNIFEM, took participants through understanding the meaning of gender, stereotypes and related key concepts and how to mainstream practices. Participants also learned about effective listening and communication skills to help communicate information about their project in an efficient manner.

On day two implementing NGOs

worked through a step by step guide on project planning, implementation, monitoring performance, reporting and assessing successes and challenges.

The Workshop was attended by two representatives of each implementing organisation; Afro Centre for Development of Peace and Justice (AFRODEP), Development Alternatives (DEVIN), Community Partners for Development (CPD) and Youth for Technology Foundation (YTF) and two members each of Local Management Committee and one member of the Women Development Centre of each local government with a total of 18 people.



UNIFEM training workshop participants

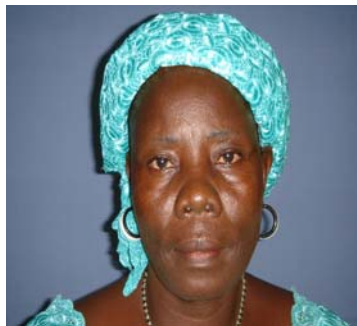
Female Candidate Wins in Liberian By-election

On May 30th, Unity Party candidate Mrs. Elizabeth Williams was declared the winning candidate in the by-election for Rivercess County for district number one, Liberia.

In the first round conducted on May 13, 2006, five candidates contested the position of Representative. Preliminary results for seven out of 9 precincts put Mrs. Williams in a comfortable lead with more than 700 votes (41%), the second place candidate following with 400 votes.

The runoff election held on May 30 pitted Mrs. Williams against her

contender from the New Deal Movement of Liberia. Williams was



Mrs. Elizabeth Williams, newly elected member of the Liberian government

declared the winner with more than 56% of the votes. The New Deal Movement has protested the results citing pre-polling irregularities, a claim the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said that it will investigate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Williams was one of the beneficiaries of the capacity-building workshop supported by UNIFEM for female aspirants during the 2005 electoral process. She becomes the 14th woman in the House of Legislature, and ninth in the House of Representative. We wish to congratulate Mrs. Williams on her wonderful achievement.

Commonwealth Business Women's Workshop held in Sierra Leone

On March 27th UNIFEM's Sierra Leone office took part in the Commonwealth Business Women's Network Workshop, "Women's Economic Empowerment and Peace" at the Sierra Leone Investment Forum.

The office's Programme Manager, Jebbeh Forster presented a paper entitled "Skills Development for Self-Employment" which highlighted that women's empowerment is being regarded as a *sine qua non* of progress for a country and

the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As Forster presented on the opening day of the Forum, she stated women would be disproportionately under represented throughout the event because very few have successfully entered the field of entrepreneurship. They face constraints such as limited access to market information, technology, finance and support services; unfavourable regulatory policies and deep rooted socio-cultural norms.

In many instances, women are unable to benefit from available services and must struggle to overcome or circumvent discrimination in business circles.

Recommendations included increased investment in women's economic empowerment by improving the quality of products, diversifying, providing women with information on markets, creating space and time for them, reduction in the domestic burden, basic literacy and numeric skills and access to finance.



Working for Women's
Empowerment and
Gender Equality

UN House
Plot 617/618 Diplomatic Drive
Central Business District,
Garki, Abuja P.M.B. 2851 Nigeria
Phone: +234-9-461-6309
Fax: Phone: +234-9-4616309
E-mail: ikechukwu.attah@unifem.org

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technological assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the center of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas:

- * Reducing feminized poverty
- * Ending violence against women
- * Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls
- * Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war

We're on the Web!
www.unifem.org

UNIFEM Welcomes its New Abuja Staff

Three new staff recently joined UNIFEM's Anglophone West Africa Office. Tolulope Lewis-Tamoka, National Programme Officer, joins us after six years working at the British Council where she specialized in governance and gender issues. Victoria Nwogu, Programme Specialist who is working on gender and elections comes to us from the International Labor Organization (ILO) where she worked on human trafficking. Candice Dandurand is an intern who will be with UNIFEM for four months on a variety of projects including a communications strategy for the sub-region (of which this revamped newsletter is a product)

Welcome!



Left: Tolulope Lewis-Tamoka and Candice Dandurand. Above: Victoria Nwogu,

Resource Centre for PLWHA Opens in Enugu

Three years of hard work culminated in the inauguration of the Resource Centre for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs), launched in Enugu, Nigeria on May 24th. In honor of this milestone, the centre received a T.V., DVD player, computer, UPS and printer as well as resources material on UNIFEM's behalf.

UNIFEM has been involved with the centre since 2003 when the Enugu State HIV/AIDS policy for health facilities was developed in collaboration with partners UNTH, NMA Enugu State Branch, UN-AIDS and WARO.

In line with this, Annunciation Specialist Hospital Emene - Enugu started a support group for people testing positive for HIV/AIDS. Women caregivers also benefited from counseling sessions on how to provide appropriate care for those living with HIV/AIDS and ensure personal protection. The aim was to establish links between home and hospital based care.



From left: Francisca Nwokalo, EN-SACA, Dr. Olasunbo Odebode, UNIFEM, Rev. Sr. Jane Frances Chioke, Annunciation Hospital, Humphrey Ubanyi, Otuifunaya leader, and two support groups members

In addition, a support group for people living with HIV/AIDS was formed called "Otuifunaya" (a group of people bound in love). Meeting once a month to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and provide home

based care for their members, their membership continues to increase.

Although these groups have been very active, the need for a resource centre for PLWHAs and their caregivers became evident. Upon the Hospital's request and with UNIFEM's support, plans began in 2005 to establish a location. This new space will allow groups to carry out their activities in a more professional manner and reach more people by providing access to information on HIV/AIDS prevention, care, support and nutrition. UNIFEM has also donated N640,000 for purchase of basic furniture.

Dr. Olasunbo Odebode, Gender & HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinator for UNIFEM, presented the equipment to the resource centre. Also in attendance were members of Otuifunaya, Annunciation Specialist Hospital and Enugu State Action Committee on AIDS (ENSACA) staff, Lady Nkechi Onah, Executive Director of Women Action Research Organisation (WARO), and the press.