

**WORKING FOR
WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT
AND GENDER
EQUALITY**

United Nations Development Fund for Women



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UNIFEM ORGANISED WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE SUMMIT IN NIGERIA

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"I must confess that Nigerian women have the capacity of putting the best of contribution in resolving the development problems which beset our great nation today. We therefore need to provide them with all the encouragement and support to enable them make their maximum contribution to national development".

It was with the above statement that President of the Federal republic of Nigeria (GCFR), Umaru Musa Yar'Adua declared open the Nigerian Women in Governance Summit organised by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The President, who spoke through the Minister for Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, Prince Kayode Adetokunbo, also applauded the feat recorded by women at the last elections whereby 5 deputy Governor Governors, 54 members of state house of Assembly, 27 members of the House of Representatives and 9 Senators were elected. According to him, despite the fact that these figures represented a mere 2% improvement on the number of positions won by women in 2003 elections, he asserted that "this achievement is worthy of celebration because it is a product of the indefatigable spirit of Nigerian women to succeed in all fields of human endeavour including politics".

Pledging his administration's commitment to the realisation of the MDGs by 2015, the President also emphasised his administration's resolve to always promote policies that will enhance the advancement of women and the attainment of gender equality. He

will enable the country to maximise the potentials of women in governance, who according to him, are a "unique breed who if allowed to express themselves, can contribute immensely to the development of society". The governor was represented by his deputy, Mr. Effioh Cobham.



Hon. Min. of Women Affairs Hajija Bungudu in the middle with other Participant at the Women in Governance Summit

In her remarks, the chairperson of the occasion and Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajija Saudatu Usman Bungudu decried the situation where despite Nigeria's ratification of several relevant international instruments, treaties and conventions, "traditions, customs, sexual stereotyping of social roles and cultural prejudice, continue to militate against enjoyment of rights and full participation of women on equal basis with men in national development".

Hajija Bungudu who expressed the hope that the summit will be a springboard for more proactive action by all stakeholders "to scale up the participation of women in politics and governance that will help to place the course of Nigerian women at heart of the national development agenda.

then called on the National Assembly to ensure the speedy passage of the Executive Bill submitted by the past administration to domesticate the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in order to provide an adequate framework for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in Nigeria.

Also in an address, the Governor of Cross River state, Senator Liyel Imoke commended the organisers for such initiative that

Speaking earlier, the Regional Programme Director (RPD) of UNIFEM Anglophone West Africa, Florence Butegwa stated that the summit was

A WOMAN TAKES THE CREDIT IN SIERRA LEONE ELECTIONS 2007

The August 2007 Sierra Leone presidential and parliamentary elections have been the most peaceful since the country gained independence in 1964. This can be attributed to the persistent campaign of the women of Sierra Leone and the professionalism of Dr Christiana Thorpe, head of the National Electoral Commission—the 1st woman to hold the post in the country

UNIFEM initiated and supported a peaceful elections campaign in partnership with the Salone Women Peacekeepers and local women's groups in Bo on July 11, 2007. Addressing the women during the campaign, Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM's Programme Manager emphasised the importance of the Campaign for women in Sierra Leone. She assured that, "UNIFEM has the opportunity to contribute significantly to the progress of gender equality, democratic values and fair representation in Sierra Leone's political life. Through this campaign we will ensure that women's needs in peace building will be given prominence in the 2007 general elections"

The non-partisan mass action campaign was launched with a peaceful march through Bo Town, and for the next month the partici-



Sierra Leone Women Peacekeepers Campaign for 2007 Election

pants worked in their communities to spread the violence-free elections message and encouraged women to vote. The campaign was launched by Shirley Gbujama, the then Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Issues, and was attended by the mayor of Bo, the local police, a representative from the district's paramount chief, and many community members.

In addition the inspiration, integrity and leadership displayed by Dr Christiana Thorpe enhanced the success of a peaceful electoral process. In the past, Sierra Leone elections have been marred by fraud and violence, leading to women not participat-

ing in the electoral process. Christiana Thorpe assured Sierra Leoneans of a transparent electoral process in her final press briefing at the British Council. She said "There is no longer a place for fraud and malpractice in Sierra Leone electoral system.

UNIFEM has always emphasized its drive to promote women in decision-making processes. This gained momentum when Christiana Thorpe led a peaceful and transparent, presidential and parliamentary election held on August 11 with a presidential run-off on the 8th September 2007.

Women gained 16 out of 112 seats. It is disappointing however, that they lost 2 of the 18 seats gained in the 2002 elections.

UNIFEM's gender and elections specialist is now charged with the responsibility of working closely with a women's caucus, to train, empower and prepare women for greater involvement in future electoral processes, including the local government elections planned for 2008.

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Access to Justice for the victims Of Human Trafficking: Consultations in Nigeria

In Partnership with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women Foundation (GAATW) and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related Matters (NAPTIP), UNIFEM organised a three day Consultative Workshop on Access to Justice for the victims of Human Trafficking in Nigeria. UNIFEM sees its strategic position in providing a link between all the different stakeholders to ensure that alongside successful prosecution of traffickers, victims of human trafficking are equally given the highest standard of protection and rights within the justice system.



Ms. Victoria Nwogu of UNIFEM answering questions during the workshop

The Workshop which was held at the UN House Abuja Nigeria, from 15 – 17 March 2007, gave all stake-

holders the opportunity to deliberate, consult and share their experiences on the main challenges that arise when going through the legal process and trying to provide assistance for

the survivors of Human Trafficking. Participants at the workshop comprised a selection of government officials from National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related Matters (NAPTIP) and the Ministry of Justice as well as the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and the Ministry of Labour. Also at the consultative workshop were Prosecutors and Judges private law firms, survivors of Human Trafficking and NGOs working in the field such as The Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), The Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), the Wellbeing Foundation and Idia Renaissance.

Mrs. Victoria Nwogu, of UNIFEM, explained that although the engagement for combating human trafficking in Nigeria has increased, "governments and advocates

UNIFEM Mobilizes Women for Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) formulation Process in Liberia

UNIFEM as a key partner to the Ministry of Gender as well as the Chair of the UN Gender Theme Group is providing support to government institutions as well as women's civil society representatives, and women at community level to engage with various national processes including the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) formulation process to advance women's human rights.

Government of Liberia is under immense pressure to deliver on commitments made to the people of Liberia on a peace dividend. Liberia's first PRS formulation process has begun. While this has presented a challenge to programme delivery, it also opens up an immense opportunity for engaging in national policy, programming and policy process to influence the prioritization of prevention of sexual violence against

women as well as investing in women's capacities to participate in governance processes and the revitalization of the economy. In this light, UNIFEM is supporting the mobilization of women through women's organizations and groups, and the Ministry of Gender and Development throughout the country to participate in the ongoing district and county consultations to inform the process.

UNIFEM PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The UNIFEM's Regional Programme Director (RPD), Mrs. Florence Butegwa on August 7, 2007 paid a courtesy visit to the newly appointed Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajija Saudatu Usman Bungudu, at the Ministry's Conference Room in the Federal Secretariat, Abuja Nigeria.

In her welcome address, the Director of the Women Affairs department of the Ministry, Mrs. Maimunat Ajanah, stated that the ministry has found UNIFEM to be a most reliable partner in fulfilling its mandate of articulating policies that will uplift the women of Nigeria, she expressed the hope that during the new Minister's tenure, the partnership will be further strengthened.

While congratulating the Minister on her appointment, the UNIFEM's RPD presented the Minister with copies of several UNIFEM publications as well as the concept note for the upcoming Women in Governance Summit billed for Obudu in Cross River state. She however assured the Minister that UNIFEM as a friend of the ministry will always be there for her by providing a pool of expertise on which the minister can draw.

The RPD briefed the Minister about UNIFEM's work in Nigeria including supporting the Ministry and NACA in ensuring that gender equality informs the national response to HIV/AIDS. She further highlighted areas of partnership with the Ministry such as domestication of CEDAW, development of the national pol-



the Hon. Minister, Hajija Saudatu Usman Bungudu and the UNIFEM Regional Programme Director Mrs. Florence Butegwa

icy on gender, as well as supporting the National Planning Commission to mainstream gender into NEEDS and SEEDS. Stressing that UNIFEM has had an excellent working relationship with the ministry, the RPD particularly commended the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Safiya Mohammed whom she described as a real solid asset of the ministry in the way that she has been guiding UNIFEM and other UN agencies on strategies for supporting women empowerment in Nigeria.

Speaking further on the upcoming Women in Governance Summit, Mrs. Victoria Nwogu of UNIFEM explained that the idea for the summit was hinged on fact that given the low number of elected women at the last general elections across the country, there is the need to build their capacity and equip them with skills that will assist them to perform well in government. She stressed that it was important to engage with the women that

have been elected for two major reasons. Firstly, they dispel the wrong notion that a woman is not good enough for an elected position; and secondly, when elected women do well in government, they open doors for more women to be elected in future.

Victoria also stated that the action plan from the summit will enable UNIFEM and partners identify the areas they can provide critical support for the elected women. She added that the summit would also help the elected women to build a strong network across party, religious and ethnic lines that will be of great benefit to the struggle for increasing women's participation in governance.

While expressing her gratitude for the visit, the Hon. Minister, Hajija Saudatu Usman Bungudu, stated that she had been well briefed about the activities of UNIFEM and was very pleased to learn that every aspect of its work is dedicated to promoting women's rights especially as it concerns the socio – economic and political empowerment of Nigerian women. She declared that the work of UNIFEM must be appreciated against the background that there is still a lot more to be done towards empowering women to play more prominent and active roles in the political governance of Nigeria.

The Minister equally lauded the idea of the summit and pledged her full support even as she promised to act on the request to invite Mr. President to the summit.

Access to Justice Continued from page 2

have kept the emphasis on the importance of prosecutions as both deterrence and a show of strength. Little attention had been given to the experiences and circumstances of the victims that have been trafficked.” Investigations and criminal trials can be enormously strenuous for survivors of human trafficking and affect their physical and psychological wellbeing and deny them enjoyment of rights in a very strong way. There seems to be little avenue for survivors to seek redress for the violations of rights during and after the trafficking. It is therefore particularly important to start invigorating access to justice for the survivors of human trafficking as a means to empower them and help them with an appropriate re-integration into society”.

Two survivors shared their experience and their anxieties thereby providing an invaluable chance for all the participants to understand



Participants at the workshop

the specific issues and challenges deriving from the legal process when seen through the eyes of the victim.

One of the existing gaps identified was the situation in which survivors of human trafficking become traffickers themselves. This phenomenon is common and has not been addressed by current legislation. Consensus emerged that there was a serious lack of good laws concerning the compensation of victims as well as the regula-

tions and restrictions of potential migrants. Since the traffickers are making a lot of money out of the victims, it was recommended that they should be the ones paying for the restitution to the survivors. The definite need for the government to provide more detailed information and assistance for potential migrants was identified, so as to protect them from the risks of smuggling and human trafficking, and facilitate lawful travel and migration. NGO’s should partner with the National Assembly to amend the existing laws. Recommendations were made to strengthen the capacity through training of staff, communication, coordination and cooperation.

UNIFEM and GAATW were requested to work with all stakeholders and help to provide expertise in developing tools for better protection of the human rights of survivors of trafficking in persons.

Women Summit from pg. 1

an event to celebrate women and also take stock of what women achieved at the last elections. While congratulating the elected women, she stressed that the challenge is to “make people see the difference in the way women lead through a people-focused agenda, so that at the end of your term, the people can say if not for this woman, this positive change would not have happened to us”. Reiterating that the summit is aimed at facilitating a partnership to develop strategies for helping women in governance succeed in their work, she urged participants to take advantage of UNIFEM and its partners as vital resources that they can utilise at any time of need. Remarks and goodwill messages were also delivered by representatives of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Development programme (UNDP).

Participants for the summit were made up of female federal and state legislators, deputy governors and ministers as well as the female commissioners from Cross River state.



Group Picture of the Women in Governance Summit

Two key outcomes of the summit are the establishment of a network of women in Governance that cuts across party lines and parliamentary and executive positions at both federal and state levels, and an 18 points declarations of commitments by the women. The Summit also provided opportunity to form synergies between the elected women and women civil society leaders to collaborate in the area of advocacy for women and children’s interest and provide a strong social support system for women in governance.

The event which held from 2 – 6 October 2007 was organised in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, National Democratic Institute (NDI), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was supported by the government of Cross River state, the Joint Donor Basket Funds (JDBF) established by EU, DFID, CIDA and USAID.

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Hon. Ukachi sharing her experience as a Woman Politician



National Women Coalition on HIV/AIDS (NAWOCA) Inaugurated in Nigeria

UNIFEM's advocacy for increased commitment to addressing the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS in Nigeria yielded positive result with the inauguration of a National Women Coalition on AIDS in Nigeria on Wednesday, August 22, 2007.

UNIFEM developed a concept paper on the need to increase women's visibility and voice in the national response to HIV and AIDS. The aim of the Coalition is to bridge the disconnect between women's rights movement and advocates of the rights of women in the context of HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Coalition established a women constituency to support the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) in addressing the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection and supporting their enjoyment of rights.

The Coalition emerged out of a two-day Participatory Technical Working Committee Meeting attended by rep-

resentatives of women living with HIV, women's groups, CSOs, SACAs and development partners that held between August 20—21, 2007 to develop a women rights' agenda for action on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. At the meeting women from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria shared experiences and identified challenges - pressing and urgent issues for the coalition of women to rally around and advocate for in the context of women's rights and HIV/AIDS.

The UN system in Nigeria through UNIFEM, UNAIDS and UNDP provided technical support during the 2 days to facilitate the emergence of a National Women Coalition on AIDS. Members of the Gender Technical Committee, a standing committee of NACA formed the Steering Committee/ Local Organising Committee that facilitated the process which led to the emergence of NAWOCA. At

the end of the 2 days the coalition identified three areas of priority of focus as:

- Access to Information and education on Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for HIV/AIDS and other Reproductive Health Services
- Addressing women's issues around poverty

Promoting access to education for the girl child

There was the formal inauguration of the coalition (NAWOCA) on the third day of the program (22nd August 2007) by the wife of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Hajia Turai Umar Yar'adua. The Coalition will be headed by the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria at the national level and by the wives of the Governors of the 36 States and Federal Capital Territory at state level.

Appointment of Ms Signe Allimadi-Oloya

UNIFEM Anglophone West-Africa is delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Signe Allimadi-Oloya as the country programme manager UNIFEM Liberia. Signe joins the UNIFEM Anglophone West-Africa region from the East and Horn of Africa, where she was the country programme manager for UNIFEM in Uganda for 2 years. During her work as the manager of the Uganda programme, Signe supported development of UNIFEM country presence in Uganda and the UNIFEM gender justice work in the region. The latter was particularly in relation to implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325, on women, peace and security in South Sudan, Northern Uganda, and Somalia. Before joining the UN, Signe

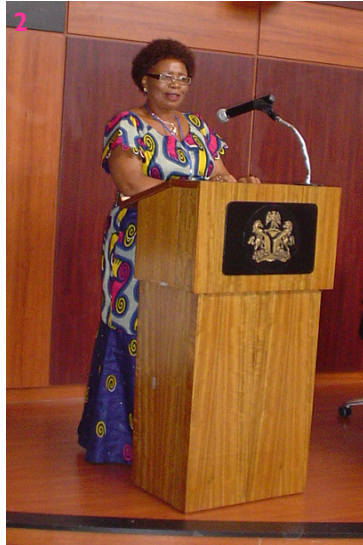


worked for 5 years for the Danish Agency for International Development

(DANIDA) in their Good Governance and Human Rights programme in Uganda, first as the programme coordinator for the political-civil rights programme, guiding Danida support to government institutions, constitutionally enacted commissions (such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission), as well as to

civil society. Thereafter, Signe took up the position of programme coordination for the Danida conflict resolution and peace building programme, focusing on integrating conflict sensitivity into the Danida sector program support to Uganda, representing Danida in donor coordination group on peace and security in Northern Uganda, and, guiding Danida support to Government (including conflict sensitivity into the Poverty Reduction Strategy), constitutionally enacted commissions (such as the Amnesty Commission on DDR and RRR) as well as civil society and faith based organisations in conflict resolution and peace building in Northern Uganda.

WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE SUMMIT IN NIGERIA (PHOTO PAGE)



- 1. His Excellency Mr. Effiok Cobham Deputy Governor Cross River State
- 2. Her Excellency Dame Virgy Etiaba Deputy Governor Anambra
- 3. His Excellency Lady Adaokwuonu Deputy Governor Imo State
- 4. L-R; Esther Eghobamien (CIDA), Deputy Govs. of Anambra and Imo State Dame virgy Etiaba and Lady Adaokwuonu ; Chief Joy Ezeilo (WACOL) Hajia



- 5. Bungudu Hon. Min. of Women Affairs, Mrs. Lydia Umar (GAT), Hon. Bridget Chukwuka (Anambra State House of Assembly
- 6. Participant at the Summit Mrs. Florence Butegwa the UNIFEM Regional Programme Director Anglophone West-Africa making welcoming the women to the Summit.



Sierra Leone Enacts Legislation on Women's Rights

The Sierra Leone Parliament passed three "Gender" Bills under a Certificate of Urgency from the President just a month before its dissolution and the general election.

The three new Acts, Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act 2007, Domestic Violence Act 2007 and Devolution of Estates Act, 2007 address some of the age old discriminations faced by women in the areas of marriage, devolution of property and violence enshrined in the Constitution of Sierra Leone and upheld by Customary Laws.

The Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act, 2007 introduces a minimum age of 18 years for customary marriages and the consent of the parties to the marriage. Customary marriages and divorce will now be registered and parties issued with a Certificate of Marriage or Divorce as the case may be. The Act precludes parties to a customary marriage from contracting another form of marriage, i.e. Christian, Muslim or Civil Marriage, during the existence of the customary marriage except it is to the same person. The effect of the latter is to render the customary marriage dissolved. Where the personal law of co-habiting partners is customary law, the Act recognizes them as married if they have been co-habiting for at least five years and are 18 years of age.

The Domestic Violence Act 2007, recognizes domestic violence as a criminal offence and provides protection for victims, especially women and children. The defi-

inition of the offence is broad and includes physical or sexual abuse, economic abuse, emotional, verbal or psychological abuse, harassment, conduct that harms, endangers the safety, health or wellbeing of another person or undermines the privacy and dignity of another person.

The Devolution of Estates Act 2007 provides for spouses, children, parents and other dependants of testate and intestate persons. This includes women and children under customary law who had hitherto not enjoyed the right to inheritance. The ACT also recognizes the right of co-habiting partners to take out letters of administration and to benefit from the estates of the partner.

The above laws have been widely celebrated by women in Sierra Leone who turned out in their numbers at Parliament from all over the country to demonstrate their support for the Bills.

The enactment of the Bills were the subject of discussion for International Women's Day 2007, when the women of Sierra Leone honoured the outgoing President Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who will end his final term of office in August 2007, with a citation that hailed him as the first President of Sierra Leone to have given great visibility to women. 12% of President Kabbah's ministers are female. Women also head important national institutions such as the National Electoral Commission and the Immigration. The Government is likely to achieve the MDG 2 target of universal primary education by 2015 and has an affirmative action policy for increasing access to education for girls through free

education (tuition, uniforms and core text books) for girls in junior secondary schools in the Northern and Eastern Provinces where disparity is greatest. The President promised that as a parting gift he would ensure the enactment of the three Bills that would guarantee women their human rights in line with international Conventions, such as CEDAW.

The Bills have been the subject of discussions and constant revision since 2004 and their enactment were seen as a commitment to the recognition of women's human rights. The enactment of the Bills coincides with the presentation of Sierra Leone's first CEDAW Report which was a combined Initial to 5th Report and the launching of the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission. The CEDAW Report indicated Government's intention to revise its laws in line with the requirements of the Convention, especially in the area of condemning discrimination by removing discriminatory provisions from its Constitution. The Human Rights Commission has as one of its cardinal mandates the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The enactment of the above Acts were strongly recommended by the Commission.

UNIFEM supported the Law Reform Commission to develop the Bill on Domestic Violence and rural women through the Council of Women Councilors to mobilize and advocate for the passage of the Bills, including their representation in Parliament to support the passage of the Bills.

UNIFEM is Implementing a Results Based Initiative (RBI) Project in Liberia

In partnership with the World Bank, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Ministry of Gender and Development, UNIFEM is implementing a value-added cassava enterprise project in Liberia for a women group of 526 members. The RBI project is a two year project and one of six RBI projects being implemented under joint partnership agreement. The cassava project will address women's access to production inputs, training, cassava processing and commercialization. The Liberia RBI focuses on supporting women's

economic empowerment through strengthening their role in producing, processing and marketing of cassava produces. The overarching development objective of the RBI initiative in Liberia is to contribute to the Liberian national strategic objectives of reducing poverty and increasing women's economic empowerment. To ensure national ownership and sustainability, two project steering committees, (national and county) have been established with ministerial and heads of donors representations



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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.

UNIFEM's Consultative Workshop on SEEDS Integration Project in Akwa Ibom and Enugu State.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) with support from Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) organised a consultative workshops in Akwa Ibom at Agatha Gardens Hotel on Tuesday July 10, 2007 and Enugu at Dannic Hotel on Thursday July 12, 2007. These workshops marked the commencement of an integrated empowerment project for women in Akwa Ibom and Enugu states. The objectives of the OSIWA/UNIFEM Integrated empowerment project is to empower women and women's groups to engage in transforming State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) for wealth creation and the eradication of feminized poverty.

Both workshops were very useful in generating feedback from participants on how UNIFEM and stakeholders can engage in SEEDS processes in both states. The involvement of key government partners such as Bureau of Statistics, SEEDS desk officer, State Secretary of Government, Ministries of Women Affairs, Finance and Education and their contributions and willingness for Civil Society Participation indicated openness for



Mr. Martin Ilo SSG Enugu State making a presentation on Enugu SEEDS at Enugu Workshop
As the UNIFEM Programme Specialist Ms. Tolupe Lewis Tamoka listens.

civil society participation on gender and women's rights.

In Akwa Ibom, the Community Partners for Development (CPD) Executive Director, Nse Udoh, maintained that there was a need to ensure local ownership in policy formulation. She also pointed out that women in Akwa Ibom had outgrown micro credit programmes and were very interested in more upscale support programmes.

In Enugu, the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) Enugu State and the former Head SEEDS Committee, Mr. Martin Ilo, said that, in order to reduce proportion of people living below the poverty line and meet other MDG goals, Enugu State has commenced the development of 4-Point Agenda: Physical Infrastructure; Economic Expansion and Employment; Rural Development; Service Delivery and Good Governance, as a means to achieving sustainable poverty reduction by the enhancement of human capabilities and livelihoods through broad-based wealth creation and employment generation. In addition, the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) Executive Director Mrs. Oby Nwankwo also noted that there is need for joint Government/CSO consultative forums in order to build confidence of government on the importance of partnering with CSOs for effective implementation of SEEDS.

Participants at the workshops noted and agreed that NGOs can use SEEDS as an entry point to advocate for gender equality and elimination of violence against women as the SEEDS document stated categorically that "government will seek partnership with civil society organizations in its delivery and management of social services".

EVERY WOMAN HAS A RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHICH NAME SHE WANTS TO USE (By Alliances for Africa)

In a recent suit (FHC/OW/CS/15/2007 at the Federal High Court Owerri, Imo State of Nigeria, Mrs. Ukachi Nonyerem Ekenulo, a People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for the Owerri West State Constituency, was taken to court by her estranged Lagos based husband Nze Godwin Ebubeagu Ekenulo declaring that his wife, Ukachi, should be stopped from contesting the office of the Imo State House of Assembly for Owerri West State Constituency either as a PDP candidate or as a candidate of any other political party for making false declaration about her name.

The suit followed Mrs. Ekenulo's refusal to drop her interest in politics. Her rivals for the seat had enlisted her husband's help in neutralising her candidature. Ukachi dropped the surname (Ekenulo) and adopted her maiden name Amaechi, which she used when she first contested for the House of Assembly election in 2003. Her husband then demanded that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should disqualify her from contesting in the April 2007 polls on the basis that she made a false declaration of her name. The court de-

ecided that the dropping of ones name does not violate the law as provided in section 106 and 107 of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution, which deals qualification and disqualification of candidates standing elections. The court cited Article 7, of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states that "State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms with men..."