Welcome to our August – September 2007 Edition!

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Alliance is a loose network of seven organizations – Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD), AMANI Parliamentary Forum, CARE, Fellowship of Christian Councils in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), International Alert, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Oxfam- GB. This interagency group was formalized in February 2007 to coordinate advocacy work around the Protocol on the Prevention and suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children, which is included in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development signed by the Heads of States and Governments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) on 15th December 2006, in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim of the SGBV Alliance is to propose advocacy interventions to be implemented in concert with ongoing coordination and strategic planning amongst like-minded partners to support initiatives on the above protocol and to expand into related areas in the future as deemed appropriate. The work of the Alliance in the Great Lakes Region will initially start in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda (Northern part in particular). These countries were selected because all members are programming in the three countries and post-conflict countries have a critical need for effective legislation around SGBV.

Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD): Uganda Week of Action 21-25 May 2007

ACORD, working with the Mother Daughter Project, carried out a week of action against impunity for sexual violence in Uganda from 21-25 May 2007. During this week, the issue of sexual violence, its impact and consequences was highlighted, with a call to end impunity for sexual crimes committed against women and girls especially in Northern Uganda.

The ACORD team held meetings with the Uganda Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon. Syda Bbumba, Women Parliamentarians and NGOs working on women’s rights in Uganda, Representatives of UNICEF and UNIFEM Uganda, ISISWICCI and Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Uganda), aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing stakeholders to be engaged on the issue of challenging impunity for sexual violence. They also held a one-day seminar on Challenging Impunity for Sexual Violence in Times of Conflict with Policy makers, Government officials, activists among others to develop strategies to challenge impunity for sexual violence and another one in Gulu which focused on Impact of War on young girls. They also held a march in the streets of the town centre in Gulu to raise public awareness and protest against impunity for sexual violence.

AMANI Forum – THE GREAT LAKES PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON PEACE

AMANI Forum’s strategic niche in addressing issues of SGBV is raising pertinent issues as regards to impact of conflict on women and using the role of Parliamentarians to lobby for appropriate legislation. In the past, through Uganda Chapter, the AMANI Forum has organised forums where women organizations working in Northern have had opportunities to share their experiences with Parliamentarians with a view to raising awareness on issues affecting women in war zones. Most recently, AMANI Uganda undertook a mission to Northern Uganda to assess the implementation of post-conflict resettlement programme. Part of the mandate of the mission was to assess how the resettlement program will redress the health related issues arising out of the impact of the war as well as examining how the resettlement program is addressing gender disparities in post conflict reconstruction. In the context of the ICGLR Protocol, AMANI Forum will hold a regional workshop (at a date to be confirmed latter) covering all the seven National Chapters. The
workshop aims at strengthening the capacity of women Parliamentarians in addressing issues of Conflict and SGBV, particularly in initiation and/or harmonization of legislation across the Great Lakes region.

CARE

All four countries engaged in the Great Lakes Advocacy Group (GLAG) – Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda aim to meet in September to plan for the next phase of the GLAG, which commences in March 2008. The meeting will include staff working on the ground as well as CARE International members. In the coming month, the GLAG will also recruit a Great Lakes Advocacy Coordinator who will be based in one of the four country offices. Finally, the training manual on gender-based violence is due for completion this quarter together with training of field staff in Uganda, Burundi and DRC.

FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN COUNCILS AND CHURCHES IN THE GREAT LAKES AND HORN OF AFRICA (FECCCLAHA)

FECCCLAHA is developing a three-year pilot project toward the operationalisation of the two IC/GLR Protocols on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls and the Protocol on the property rights of returning persons as a bid to consolidate peacebuilding in post-peace settlement Burundi.

Implementation will begin in August 2007. They also plan to hold a workshop, likely in September 2007, on the IC/GLR process with members from Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Uganda in Kinshasa, DRC. The workshop is aimed at raising awareness on the IC/GLR process, encourage and equip members to lobby for the ratification of the Pact in their respective countries, as well as help them identify entry points for their involvement in the Implementation Phase of the process.

FECCCLAHA members in Uganda have been involved in the Juba Peace Talks, through facilitating a workshop to equip the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) delegation to handle Agenda Item number three on Reconciliation and Accountability. Their member in DRC, Church of Christ in Congo (ECC), has initiated a project towards the disarming and repatriation of all armed groups and refugees in Eastern DRC. They, in collaboration with FECCCLAHA Secretariat, held a Conference in Bukavu, DRC on 4-6 June 2007 which provided them an opportunity to highlight SGBV as a grave consequence of the intermittent conflict in Eastern DRC and they also made a solidarity visit to Panzi Hospital, which treats survivors of SGBV.

INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION – Africa Regional Office (IPPFARO)

IPPFARO has developed and circulated a Gender and Rights Technical update to Member Associations (MAs). The first issue introduces the seven components of the new Gender and Rights strategic direction, the various regional rights instruments related to Gender Based Violence, including the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, and the linkages with the Millennium Development Goals. IPPFARO and its affiliate in Kenya, Family Health Options, attended the recently held International Women’s Summit organized by YWCA, the International Community of Women and other international organizations.

In August 2007, IPPFARO will provide technical assistance to its affiliate in São-Tomé on GBV programming and also assist in linking up with other NGOs working on GBV in São-Tomé. The following was reported during Annual Regional Council meeting held in June 2007; the Uganda MA, FPAU, had participated in the 2006 victory regarding gender equality and the fight against discrimination in Uganda, including the revoking of the national divorce law, which had been discriminative to women. In addition, there is now the reconsideration of the definition of adultery in order to reflect gender equality. They also announced plans to contribute to the fight for a law banning FGM in Uganda. The Cote d’Ivoire MA’s concern was on the lack of measures to enforce the national FGM ban in the field. They also emphasized on the need for correction of the accreditation document regarding their work. The Rwanda MA reported that there are efforts being made against gender-based violence. They emphasized on the need to consider women as decision-makers in order to improve on the violence situation.
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