

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AFRICAN UNION AGENDA 2063



**11th JUNE 2015
PRETORIA**

Executive summary

Summary

On the occasion of the African Union summit being held under the theme "*Women Empowerment and Development towards African Union's Agenda 2063*", the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) hosted a networking cocktail on 11th June 2015. The master of ceremonies was *Ms Litlhare Rabele of SALO* and speakers included: *Ms. Hilda Phetoe* the Director of Food Gardens Foundation, *Prof Narnia Bohler-Muller* the Acting Director at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and *Ms Victoria Maloka* a Senior Associate at the Centre for Mediation in Africa (CMA) in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria. A special word was given by the Minister of Defence for the Central African Republic (CAR), *Her Excellency Mrs Marie-Noëlle Koyara*.

The cocktail was attended by among others; diplomats and civil society including the Somali women's network, the Minister Counsellor of CAR and the women leadership of Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League. The discussions emphasised the important role of socio- economic empowerment of women, the popularising African Union Maputo Protocol on the Rights of African women as well as highlighted the important role of women in mediation and the

peace processes. Further, it was recommended that South Africa has to develop a National Action Plan on implementing UNSCR 1325. The importance of popularising AU Agenda 2063 was emphasised, with particular focus on rural communities, for broader ownership. Women have to be trained and be deployed as mediators and facilitators in the peace processes across the continent.

Litlhare Rabele

Litlhare started the proceedings by stating that the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of African Women and importantly the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) talk about the role of women in peace processes:

- How they can participate
- How they can be protected
- The work done to prevent violence against women in conflict situations.

It is import to recognise achievements made by women on the continent, whether being Heads of State, Special Envoys and the current AU Chairperson, it took the AU fifty years to recognise a woman to be its Chairperson. Empowering women goes beyond the political field: it also considers economic and social aspects.



Her Excellency Marie-Noëlle Koyara



Her Excellency Koyara started by reminding the participants about the strong historical ties between the CAR and the Republic of South Africa (RSA). She congratulated the CAR's Transition President who is one of the very first African women leaders to preside over an African country; an African country in conflict, expressing that this illustrates how when times are hard and situations are complicated, the solutions come from women.

She stated that CAR has a population of roughly five million and women make up that 55%. 80% of the population lives off agriculture and women make up about 65% of this number. She indicated that women feed the CAR population whilst working under very harsh conditions:

- Many of the women still live in the bush, they have to hide.
- They still work with very rudimentary means.
- They hardly have access to new agricultural technology.

With security slowly coming back, agricultural activities will pick up, which will contribute to reducing food insecurity. If women are empowered; by helping them get access to those new technologies, it would solve the agricultural problems. If these women are supported, they will be able to transform whatever they produce and also increase their income.

She hailed the political sector of CAR, stating that 50% of Parliament is made up of women with more than eight women with quite important portfolios:

- The Minister of Trade and Industry
- The Minister of Tourism and Culture
- The Minister of Planning and International Cooperation
- The Minister of Gender and Humanitarian Action
- The Health Minister
- The Minister Counsellor
- The Vice-President of the Traditional National Parliament

Many women still work in the formal sector, particularly in the sector of services and restoration. She concluded by indicating that women have important position in the CAR Government and have contributed in making peace and will contribute further towards sustainable peace.

Professor Narnia Bohler-Muller

Prof Bohler-Muller indicated that Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted a research for the African Summit in 2014 and they went through a consultation with a number of stakeholder groups in South Africa to ask them how they feel about *Agenda 2063: The Next Fifty Years*. The stakeholders consulted included business people, the youth, Parliamentarians, women, women from business, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government. A women workshop was held at Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the purpose was to ask them *‘how they see the next fifty years of Africa going forward?’* and they had to comment on all seven aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063. Below are the comments made in the aspirations, the challenges and how they can be addressed:



What is necessary for Agenda 2063 to work?

- Ensure popular grassroots and broad-based ownership of the Agenda.
- There is a need for social mobilisation around the Agenda particularly in the rural areas.
- There needs to be an increase in self-belief, increase in skills development and training that will empower women and girls.
- African development should be strengthened by tapping into the indigenous and inclusive knowledge systems of the continent.

For Africa to become economically strong, there is need to overcome the following challenges:

- Gender inequality
- Lack of communication
- Improper policies
- Poor programme implementation
- Inadequate evaluation and monitoring of the results of policies
- Local and continental power struggles

- Poverty
- Weak accountability systems
- A lack of a holistic approach to tackling corruption

On Peace and Security, she stated that women representatives referred to UNSCR 1325, provides that the states have, as their *primary* role, the protection of citizens. ***The women identified the following as matters that require discussion and attention:***

- The provision of adequate humanitarian assistance for all in situations of need, including those in conflict situations.
- Adequate provision of resources, human and financial, for civil society engagement in the peace process.
- The political will to achieve and maintain peace throughout the continent.
- Institutional capacity building required to achieve and maintain peace and sustainable peace.
- Human rights education to be included in the school curriculum.
- The training and deployment of women in mediation and conflict resolution to achieve peace and security.

AU Agenda 2063 has been established as a continental avenue for reconciliation and unity within countries and across nations, by creating a common vision, a common understanding of identity and respect for diversity. ***To fully realise empowerment of women the following need to be considered:***

- Skills development
- Economic transformation
- Integration of cultural programs
- Recognition of different cultures
- Land-ownership; land-ownership by women could bring true liberation and development, and that colonialism will not have ended if the land ownership question is not posed and resolved.

She concluded by expressing that the women agreed that AU Agenda 2063 will emerge as a strong, resilient, peaceful and influential global plan, with a significant role in world affairs. *‘For women, solidarity will ensure that Africa will attain her rightful place in the world.’*

Ms Victoria Maloka

Ms Maloka spoke on *‘That they may live, African women arise!’*, which she borrowed from an article written in the context of the fight against colonialism and the call for international solidarity to support the fight of the African women by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who is a champion of women’s rights. She expressed that even though African women have been liberated from colonialism, apartheid and many kinds of ills, they still face a lot of challenges including on their role in peace and security; particularly in the area of mediation and negotiations. When the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now AU was founded the initial thought was to have an independent Africa that could run its own affairs; an Africa that is free, peaceful and prosperous that could feed itself from its vast agricultural and mineral resources.



She expressed that *'it is men who wage wars and it is women who bear the brunt of the devastating effects of wars'*. The impact of war on women is multi-faceted and touches all aspects of their lives; physically, emotionally and psychologically and leave many scars. In war situations women have to deal with sexual violence, rape and forced marriages which are used as a weapon of war. Women are not just victims of war, but they are also active agents of peace and should be involved in community peace-building processes.

She mentioned that efforts of women from African countries such as Angola, Nigeria, Burundi, Liberia, South Africa, Uganda and even in Southern Sudan who have mobilised communities, developed and implemented peace-building strategies, crafted reconciliations and led community mediation efforts to rebuild their war-torn countries remain unrecognised, unrewarded and largely undocumented and their voices remain unheard.

She then posed a challenge to the participants with the following views:

- There is not enough to advocate for the promulgation of laws, the international instruments responsible for the legal document:
 - It is important to support and revolutionise them to the next level and demand the implementation.
 - There should be a demand for equal, full and active participation of women at peace tables.
 - War has to be waged against the exclusion of women.
- There is need to take advantage of the empowerment opportunities that are there in Africa:
 - Women have to create opportunities to empower themselves.

She concluded by expressing that African women should arise and live to see the next generation of African leaders that will make an impact and end wars. In war situations it is vital to ensure that women are the ones dealing with those wars at the negotiation table.

Ms Hilda Phetoe

Ms Phetoe shared her insights on women in agriculture. She expressed that agriculture is a serious issue for women, especially that soil is available to everyone. With availability of land women can be able to take food security into her own hands and make sure there is some degree of agriculture and food production for families. She expressed her gratitude for the African leaders who sit and plan our future and food security; stating that no nation should neglect the conversation about what to do about the future of agriculture.

The high rate of unemployment in South Africa has resulted in poverty; not just the poverty of being hungry, but a poverty of hope, a poverty of being a difference and of thinking that someone cares. The agenda of change and plans on what agriculture can provide means nothing to a woman disempowered by policies that say she cannot own land.

She concluded by stating that instead of talking about agriculture, she will refer to it as *'sustainable food security for daily living'*. She indicated that she works in an environment where there are many women and teenagers who are HIV positive, which means that they are immune compromised and need food; they need improved nutrition and a balanced meal. She expressed the need to talk about *'culture'* in agriculture, which refers to a lifestyle that should encourage the use of land for sustenance. She mentioned that in her line of



work she has been able to help women to move forward from poverty to subsistence farming and on up to commercial farming.

Ms Marissa van Rensburg

Ms van Rensburg stated that youth make up a high number of the population, 60% of which is unemployed in Africa and should be given an opportunity to actively and constructively participate in politics and decision making. Young women are excluded from the economies and from society in many ways. This should be addressed to ensure empowerment of women and girls.



Conclusion

In order to attain social and economic transformation and development of women, strong political commitment as well as empowerment, development of African women is required. When women are empowered and are in power, they are likely to use this power for the good of humanity. With women in leadership ideas are likely not just end up in beautiful policies, will be lived. Considering climate change, every nation has to have a plan for the future if agriculture. African leaders need to make good decisions so that Africans do not have to wait until 2063 to see a peaceful and prosperous Africa that we all aspire to. Structural barriers to women's empowerment should be addressed, and these require concerted efforts, political will and commitment from governments, to ensure supportive legal frameworks and conducive political environment.

There are good policies in place with little implementation, which is hindered by among others: crime, poverty, conflict, xenophobia, lack of skills, education and various health risks. It is important to put efforts on improving governance, including women in decision-making processes. Civil society and women should be involved in processes from the onset. It is important to note that the role of youth in the future of Africa is critical, because of the AU Agenda 2063 which has long term aspirations. African unity and solidarity in driving Africa to being a major economic force in the world is also crucial. Partnering bi-laterally and multi-laterally within the UN to reform institutions such as the UN Security Council (UNSC) will help Africa achieve its goals including having a permanent seat in United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Dialogue Report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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