



Summary WILPF DRC event at CSW54 2010

Event Type: Panel

Event Title: The political implication of Congolese women for change and in the promotion of good governance of the DR Congo “L’implication Politique de la femme congolaise dans le changement et dans la promotion de la bonne gouvernance en RDC”.

Date/Venue and time: March 10th. 11th Floor room at the CCUN. 2pm to 3:30pm

Event Topics: Three objectives of the BPfA were simultaneously addressed (No 4: Violence against women, No5: women and armed conflict, No7: women and power/decision making).

Organised by:The Women's International League for Peace Freedom, D.R.Congo group. This was a very special event hosted by WILPF international as it was the first ever parallel side event in the history of the CSW independently initiated and organized by Congolese women, with a panelist of key speakers representing Congolese civil society, politics and diaspora; raising the voices of grassroots Congolese women in synergy

Event panelist speakers: All WILPF members. Ms Jeanine Gabrielle Ngungu (Human rights activist) and Honorable Senator Eve Baziaba (Politicians) both women specially came from the DRC for this special event. Bibiane Aningina Tshetu (consultant and member of WILPF base in New York) stepped in for Annie Matundu the chair of WILPF DRC group who was denied a US visa regardless of meeting all required criteria for her US entry visa application and despite numerous interventions. The event was chaired by Anjanette Rosga, WILPF UN Office Director.

Special feature: The panel discussion was introduced by a short documentary called “*Women’s war*” that shows an exchange initiated by Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation between women human rights activists from the Balkans and the DR Congo in 2009. Approximately 20 000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina in the early 1990s, in the DR Congo it is estimated that around 500 000 women and children have been raped during the 14 years long war. Swedish WILPF is one of the founding organizations of Kvinna till Kvinna and the organizations cooperate in Sweden.

Background about the DRC and summary of the three presentation

Congolese women are survivors amidst insurmountable odds in the D.R.Congo where for 50 years, they have been collectively demonstrating their resilience to overcome violence against women, regressive patriarchal traditions, poor monolithic governance, bad political and economic choices, repetitive armed conflicts that has ravaged the Great Lakes region of Africa since 1994 and left more than 6 Millions dead, human insecurity and bad governance. However, in their diversity and differences, Congolese women have been collectively rising to give themselves and their children a chance of survival as well as a better future to new generations in the D.R.Congo.

First speaker was Ms Jeanine Gabrielle Ngungu who talked about the problematic of Violence Against Women, (objectives of 4 of the BPfA) which is a question of human insecurity for women and an obstacle to development. She presented the impact of VAW on women advancement and participation in development or decision making. Violence against women in all its forms and failure of the application of the law addressing this issue remain the main obstacle to the protection of women; advancement of women and the effective participation of women as citizen in the good governance of the DRC. She talked about the increased rate of sexual violence and mutilation of Congolese women which is proportionally link to the war in the DRC. She stressed that Sexual violence is a consequence of war.

She presented past but more importantly recently collected national data on various forms of VAW in the DRC, which demonstrate how VAW strongly correlates with under-development (human, economy, social and infrastructures). These statistics show how vulnerable women are, and they illustrate the numerous abuses committed by men against women because of the dominant position confers to men by the society and the inferior status of women.

She emphasized the role of local community in this change. She called on women's autonomy, empowerment or emancipation. However, the principal solution remains the education for all, women and men, for change in the practices and mentalities within local communities and individual as presented in the "Nous Pouvons" campaign. She talked about the role of the international community in addressing the routes causes of VAW in a coordinated manner involving Congolese women's NGOs. She stressed about the lack of impact at the grassroots, rgardles of the Millions put in ending VAW. She called on the international community to not only emphasize on humanitarian support hence victimizing the women but put more effort in local community involvement in awareness raising, civic education and to boost collective conscientiousness in order to link political power and promotion of rights and a sense of the community's destiny that human rights of women is human right for all. Achieving gender equality and empowering women in politics; are imperative for good governance, lasting peace and sustainable development in the DRC.

The second speaker was Ms Bibiane Aningina Tshetu, who was replacing Annie Matundu. She talked about women and armed conflicts, which is objective 5 of the BPfA. "The role and the implication of the Congolese women in the peace process in Democratic Republic of Congo". She mentioned the complexity of the conflict in Great

lakes Region of Africa from 1991-now. The negative impact of armed conflict on the life of Congolese women as well as the various conferred responsibilities to women, the commitment of women to peace and actions as well as relentless efforts of Congolese women in peace process, naming all the various steps undertaken locally, regionally and internationally by Congolese women (either independently or with support).

She stressed the fact that regardless of the numerous legal frameworks signed by the DRC and the UN on women protection and participation in conflict prevention as well as peace building, up to this day Congolese women are still under represented at negotiation table for peace, dialogue and in conflict prevention. She called on the NAP for the implementation of 1325, 1820 , 1888 and 1889 as well for grassroots Congolese women to be internationally and locally recognized as actors and negotiators of peace and participate in all processes of prevention, management and peaceful resolution of conflicts and reconstruction of their country.

She further raised the important message of Congolese women to the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council to demonstrate political will to support human security, human development and democracy in the Great Lakes region of Africa, particularly in the DRC. She call on the UN to demonstrate their commitment to peace by de-legitimizing armed violence by calling the governments of the Great Lakes regions of Africa to resolve conflicts through genuine dialogue involving women in accordance with UN SC Resolution 1325 and the Solemn Declaration of Heads of African State.

Third speaker was Honorable Senator Eve Bazaiba whowrapped up quickly by talking about women and power/decision making, objectives of 7 of the BPfA. She presented the demographical power of Congolese women, addressing how gender mainstreaming as well as women's need was lacking in policy as well as development programs formulated by the DRC government as well as the weakness of international Aid from various donors to address this issue. She emphasized on ethics, rigors and the meaning of good governance, hence implying an end to corruption, clientelism, distributive justice and transparency in the management of natural resources ect... She then talked about the role and capacity of women to manage public affairs in order to generate "the qualitative change" expected. She called on women to use their demographic majority and their inner capacities to ensure family survival to positively change the governance of national public affairs.

She called on women to develop skills for "effective political and participative leadership", by supporting those who are already committed in this way and give rise to more ambitions for those who have latent talents. She stated that to be true agents of change and properly play this role, women need to reinforce their capacities proportionally to the responsibility ranging at all the levels. A role that could be supported by donors communities.

She recommended that the UN CSW committee must propose the vote of resolutions with coercive measures constraining the UN Security Council to sanction Members States and Governments that do not implement engagements taken for the promotion of

women's rights. They also have to increase their participation in national decision-making at all political levels. She concluded by saying that the integration of a gender approach is not only about increasing the participation of the women at all decision-making levels, but it is also about taking into account the specific needs of men and women in this management.

Acknowledgement: WILPF DRC group, Congolese women in the Diaspora, WILPF UK, WILPF Sweden, Kvinna Till Kvinna, Genre en Action, The Global Fund for Women, The Friends of the Congo. WILPF UN Office staff and all the interns. The CSWNGO committee.

NB: Printing materials were distributed and contact details of participants were collected to send further documents or keep in WILPF data base.