

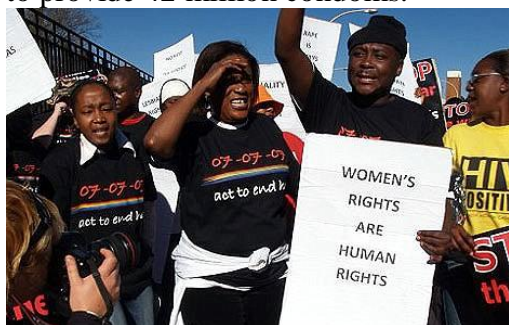
## UAF- AFRICA REGIONAL WATCH



### Southern Africa Region

#### South Africa

The World Cup tournament will be held in South Africa from 10<sup>th</sup> June – 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010. Sex trafficking is already a problem, no doubt with unforeseen consequences for a country with some of the highest HIV rates in the world. South Africa's president, Jacob Zuma, in his latest trip to the United Kingdom requested 1 billion condoms to cater for the projected increase in sexual activities during the month long event. Britain has pledged to provide 42 million condoms.



[www.thebsreport.wordpress.com/...](http://www.thebsreport.wordpress.com/.../)

The proposal to legalize sex work albeit temporarily (as Germany did in 2006) sparked a heated debate with stiff opposition from various interest and church groups. While this would have introduced some regulations into

the sex work industry as well as giving sex workers more agency, it would have also posed a new logistical nightmare for the South African government, which would need to put infrastructure in place to licence, regulate and tax the industry. Further, such a radical step would necessitate discussions with sex workers and other interested parties, perhaps not feasible given the time constraint. The government has since made a decision not to legalize sex work; nonetheless a large influx of sex workers into the country is expected. Encouraging, however, is the heightened political will in South Africa to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS and manage treatment, especially for pregnant women and children.

### East Africa and the Horn

#### Sudan

The April 2010 general elections in Sudan were a major milestone for a country that has not held a general election in 24 years. This was especially so for Sudanese women in the North and the South who not only got to vote for the first time but also to contest for elective office. With some encouragement from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which guarantees a 25% appropriation for women and 15% for political parties, women are bound to perform well in the elections despite huge odds such as voter illiteracy, economic and cultural barriers.

In July 2009 Sudanese women held a conference in Juba to come up with a common women's Agenda for the elections. With advice from their counterparts from Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya, they came up with recommendations for the National Electoral Commission, Political Parties and the media. They called for the

effective participation of women in political parties, specifically through provision of financial support to women's groups by donors and government, development of gender sensitive manifestos addressing issues such as gender violence and education for women, prevention of election violence and capacity building for female candidates among others.



[www.globalgiving.org/.../updates](http://www.globalgiving.org/.../updates)

While the elections had massive logistical problems, there were claims of fraud from various quarters, and observers agree they did not meet 'international standards'. Nonetheless, the entire process was seen as a big step towards satisfying the conditions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and in preparation for the more important step- the 2011 referendum that will determine whether the North and South split into two countries or remain unified as one nation. Whatever the outcome of both, Sudanese women are determined to emerge from the sidelines and put women's issues on the national agenda.

## North Africa

### Egypt

Women in Egypt recorded a significant victory after the Supreme Judicial Council overruled an administrative court's judgment that had barred

women from serving in judicial positions.

On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010 administrative court judges voted by a huge majority against the appointment of women judges in the administrative court, despite the Egyptian constitution clearly stating that 'all citizens are equal', and despite continued calls for more independence in the judiciary. The ruling sparked protests from human rights activists across the globe and the Supreme Court overturned the decision a week later, terming it 'unconstitutional'. Women judges in Egypt are however still barred from serving in the criminal courts.

As at 2003, there was only one female judge in Egypt, appointed by presidential decree. In 2007, 31 women were appointed as judges to family courts despite heavy opposition. Egypt is signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). With the country going to the polls in November 2010, it is hoped that more women will make political headway. A law passed in 2009 requires women to hold 12% of seats in the lower house of parliament.



[www.crs.org/egypt/women-democracy](http://www.crs.org/egypt/women-democracy)

## **Tunisia**

Tunisia's ruling party changed the tables drastically for women when it announced that women would hold 30% of all electoral slots in the upcoming municipal elections in May. Predictably, all other political parties followed suit with various quota proposals. Women have welcomed this move as it will go a long way in boosting their numbers and voice in public office.

## **Algeria**

Algeria is contemplating mandatory quotas to boost the number of women in politics ahead of the 2010 elections. With 30 parliamentarians elected in 2007 however, Algeria is ahead of other Muslim countries and the quota is expected to take women even further in the male dominated political arena.

## **West Africa**

### **Ivory Coast**

Members of 25 women organizations came together in January 2010 to give their recommendations for the promotion of women's issues in the upcoming elections. In league with the office of the UN operation in Ivory Coast (the UN Operation in Ivory Coast is mandated to facilitate the implementation of the Ivorian Peace Agreement). In a three-day workshop titled "Gender, Media and Elections" held in Ivory Coast, the women highlighted as a major concern the sexist and patriarchal practices in the media and in political parties. The women vowed to work with the media and take a more proactive stance in the electoral process.

The UN office also held a 'civic education and sensitization of women' campaign on 20<sup>th</sup> March. Women were trained on their rights and roles in promoting a peaceful election. The women were upbeat about forming a coalition to have discussions with the local authorities and politicians on having a peaceful electoral process.

General elections in Ivory Coast have been postponed several times since a peace deal was brokered in 2007, bringing the rebel controlled north and government controlled south together. Previously slated for March 2010, the elections have been pushed yet again to May owing to gross inconsistencies in the voter register. The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the peacekeeping force to May in the hope that the elections will be held then.

## **Ghana**

The UN Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has lauded Ghana for deploying women peacekeepers to forward positions in the Liberia mission. Already with some of the highest numbers of women peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping missions worldwide, Ghana is portraying a good example of letting more women into the security sector, thereby promoting UN Resolution 1325.



[www.un.org/090224-Rivercess-20-jpg.shtml](http://www.un.org/090224-Rivercess-20-jpg.shtml)

## **Liberia**

Liberia is expected to hold general elections in 2011. President Ellen Johnson, the first democratically

elected female head of state in Africa will be vying for a second term in office. This is in spite of a recommendation by the Liberian Truth and Justice Commission (TJC) that she be barred from holding political office for the next 30 years after her term expires in 2011.



[www.afww.wordpress.com/.../](http://www.afww.wordpress.com/.../)

The TJC report, based on four years of post conflict hearings, faulted the president for financing Charles Taylor, who is on trial at the International Criminal Court at The Hague for war crimes committed in Sierra Leone. With her political opponents already gearing up for the elections, it is left to be seen whether the TJC finding will factor in during the campaigns. Nevertheless, her challengers are preparing for a tough election given her immense popularity.

## Kenya

Kenya has been on the search for a new constitution for close to two decades. A referendum on the draft constitution (so called Wako draft) was held in November 2005, but was voted down by Kenyans despite having the president's support. Some of the contentious issues surrounding that draft included the powers vested on the presidency and land reforms. The draft went back to the drawing board and was released anew as the harmonized

draft constitution in November 2009 for public scrutiny. It was presented to the parliamentary committee in January 2010 and sent to parliament in February. The proposed amendments did not pass and MP's approved the draft unanimously in April 2010. The document is now with the Attorney General and will be the subject of a referendum in August.



[www.nation.co.ke/1cgo4wz/-/index.html](http://www.nation.co.ke/1cgo4wz/-/index.html)

The proposed draft constitution has sparked heated debate with the contentious issues including the clause on abortion, Kadhi courts and to some extent the clause on land. The No campaign led by the church insists that the abortion and Kadhi court clauses must be amended, or deleted before they can support the constitution. The government supports the draft in its current form and has ruled out any amendments before the referendum. A recent survey indicated that a majority of Kenyans support the draft, despite its short comings.

## On the ICC

The 2007 post election violence in Kenya left over 1300 people dead and thousands others displaced from their homes. International Criminal Court (ICC) chief prosecutor Louis Moreno-Ocampo acting on his own initiative has opened investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice. At the end of March 2010 the Pre- trial chamber of ICC judges gave the prosecutor the needed go ahead to open an investigation into Kenya's post

election violence. With the displaced still living in camps, perhaps this is good news. Given that the ICC will only probe a few senior personalities it is imperative that the Kenyan government form a national tribunal to seek justice for the victims, and also erase the image of impunity. Another source of concern is the alleged intimidation of witnesses. Moreno-Ocampo has called on the government to step up the protection of witnesses.

## Nigeria

Nigeria's President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's three month absence from the country created political uncertainty and his health raised questions about his ability to lead the most populous country in Africa. With no news of his state or when he would be back, demonstrations rocked the country with many calling for his resignation. Further tension was created by the fact that Yar'Adua is a Muslim from the North, while his possible successor, vice president Jonathan Goodluck is a Christian from the South. In Nigeria, tension between Christians and Muslims is never far away and being in power usually means careful regional balancing.

The Nigerian Constitution directs that a sitting president must state in writing that he is on vacation, or is unable to serve, and thus transfer power to his vice president. To close the power gap, parliament installed the vice president as acting president on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. Nigeria will go to the polls to elect a new president in 2011. Some of the issues that require immediate handling in Nigeria include violence in the Oil rich Delta region and between Muslims and Christians in the Jos area of plateau state. In January, and then again in March, violence rocked Jos, leaving

several hundred people dead, including many women and children. A combination of factors such as tribal and religious conflicts coupled with poor economic policies has reinforced women's vulnerability in Nigeria.



[www.flickr.com/photos/robhoey/1640390453/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/robhoey/1640390453/)

While the 1999 constitution calls for freedom for all, detrimental laws such as those that allow husbands to use physical force against their wives still exist in some states. Many girls are forced to marry early, and in the event of a violent conflict they are also widowed early. In most cases unfair laws prevent them from inheriting their husband's property, leaving them without any economic support and thus further perpetuation poverty.

## Cameroon

A civil society organization, 'More Women in Politics' took advantage of the International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2010 to address the issue of electoral apathy in women. Although women make up 52% of the population in Cameroon, these numbers are rarely reflected in the election registers. Many women opt to stay out of the electoral process due to cultural and religious constraints, family obligations and general political apathy.

The organization also noted other reasons for poor participation by women include lack of official documents such as ID cards, poor understanding of instruments that promote gender equality such as the constitution and none implementation of gender parity in political parties. Political parties in Cameroon have voluntary quotas set for women, but these are only on paper and rarely ever implemented. The Social Democratic Front Party (SDF) is the only party with a high ranking woman as its secretary general. Transferring to national politics, women constitute of only 14% of the 180 member parliament.



[www.sgi.org/events070308](http://www.sgi.org/events070308)

In order to further opportunities for women, the national assembly held a workshop in 2009 for its members to train them on integrating the interests of women in all legislative acts to ensure their participation in development. The SDF party also held a workshop for women on social democracy and obstacles encountered by women in politics. Women were encouraged to get into mainstream politics in order to help shape government policies. As Cameroon goes to the polls in 2011 it remains to be seen whether the current awareness strategies will bear fruit, but a lot more needs to be done to widen political space for women's participation.