

**Workshop on The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and  
People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Africa Women's Protocol)  
10 and 11 November 2008**

**Workshop outline**

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1. Introduction of The Africa Women's Protocol
2. Discussion of the challenges to ratification and implementation of the protocol and recommendations for improvements
3. Discussion of the way in which Northern CSOs can support African CSOs in pushing for the ratification and implementation of the protocol

**1. Introduction**

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- ✓ Full name: The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In short: The Africa Women's Protocol
- ✓ Adopted by the heads of state in July 2003 at the Maputo Summit in Mozambique
- ✓ Includes all measures including legislative and institutional measures for women to be able to enjoy their rights
- ✓ Entered into force on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005
- ✓ Since 2003 few countries have ratified, fewer even are implementing

The why and what of The Protocol

- ✓ African instrument that legitimizes struggle for gender equality
- ✓ Outlaws harmful traditional practices
- ✓ Enshrines right to positive cultural context
- ✓ Addresses areas hitherto omitted by other instruments
- ✓ Reinforces existing instruments
- ✓ Commits states to budgetary resources
- ✓ Provides for remedies

Key issues in the Protocol on women and SRHR

- ✓ Health and reproductive rights: abortion, FGM
- ✓ Protection of vulnerable groups: widows, elderly, distressed, nursing women
- ✓ Sexual violence (trafficking, rape, sexual slavery)
- ✓ Outlaws harmful traditional practices: FGM, child marriages, widow inheritance
- ✓ Promotes equal decision making in marriage
- ✓ Participation of women in cultural activities

Case study: Oxfam GB and the Women's Protocol

- ✓ Oxfam GB works in six countries in Southern Africa
- ✓ Work is informed by the Rights Based Approach
- ✓ Supportive of National Coalitions and collaborates with the Pan African Parliament, the AU Commission & the Office of the UN Special rapporteur on Women, and key stakeholders at the national level
- ✓ Develops and strengthens (other) regional partnerships on women rights
- ✓ Tries to strengthen policy and practice in its programs
- ✓ Programs address chronic livelihoods in the midst of HIV/AIDS, from the starting point that women and girls have been affected more with HIV/AIDS
- ✓ Conducted research in relation to the Protocol in Southern Africa
- ✓ For more information on the work of Oxfam Great Britain, also in relation to The Protocol, see <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/>.

## **2. Challenges and recommendations related to ratification and implementation of the Protocol**

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Challenges in ratification and implementation as identified by workshop participants:

- ✓ Fear of culture
- ✓ Inadequate resource mobilization
- ✓ Lack of awareness at various levels
- ✓ Inability to link SRHR to broader human rights
- ✓ Growing cultural and religious conservatism
- ✓ Opposition to SRHR mainly from the US
- ✓ Lack of political will
- ✓ Lack of accountability and the inability of citizens to demand that their governments honour commitments
- ✓ Lack of prioritization by Western countries
- ✓ Lack of innovative approaches
- ✓ Lack of reporting

Recommendations for ratification and (better) implementation as identified by workshop participants:

- ✓ Link women's rights to broader socio-economic and political development
- ✓ Highlighting the costs of non-response
- ✓ Education and awareness of both women citizens and leaders
- ✓ Demand creation
- ✓ Politicising
- ✓ Create awareness through a bottom up approach
- ✓ Review mechanism and put pressure at different levels within donor countries
- ✓ Strengthening enforcement mechanisms
- ✓ Increase resources for advocacy to support implementation

## **3. Role of Northern CSOs in supporting African CSOs in advocating for ratification and implementation**

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- ✓ Raising the issues and asking about progress --- CSOs and activists in the North raising awareness among their leaders
- ✓ Lobby Northern governments to put pressure on African governments
- ✓ Disseminating the protocol
- ✓ Networking for advocacy --- Northern and Southern CSOs supporting Southern CSOs
- ✓ Litigation --- Pursue litigation strategies to force implementation
- ✓ Resource mobilization by Northern CSOs
- ✓ Exchange experiences around peer review mechanism – e.g. the APRM and how it links with international efforts