

UNIQUE WOMEN'S PEACE INITIATIVES IN AFRICA: (Launch of Video Documentary and Report)

The documentation of women's experiences and initiatives, especially in the areas of human rights and peace building, is an important aspect of the work of Isis-Women's International cross-cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE). Since the organisation's move to Africa in 1993, it has been organizing annual training institutes to build the skills of women to understand, analyze, and document the violations of women's human rights in situations of armed conflict. The participants of these institutes identified sustainable peace, based on the promotion, protection, and respect of the human rights of all without discrimination, as the initiative that would go a long way towards ensuring that the human rights of women were not violated at any time in their life cycle. As a result, Isis-WICCE has since 2001 organized annual training for selected women from 7 countries of the Great Lakes Region of Africa¹ to provide them with skills in peace building and conflict transformation within a human rights framework.

In 2003, Isis-WICCE embarked on coordinating the documenting of case studies of unique women's peace initiatives in Africa, in partnership with other peace building actors namely: Urgent Action Fund (Africa Office), the Centre for Conflict Resolution (Uganda), and Safer Africa (South Africa), and with support from the Ford Foundation's Special Initiative for Africa (SIA, now Trust Africa) and DANIDA. The documentation is part of SIA's objectives to understand, highlight, learn from, and build on initiatives that attempt to find homegrown solutions to Africa's diverse challenges. In addition, the project of documenting women's unique peace initiatives in selected regions of Africa aims to strengthen and increase women's participation in the formal peace processes on the continent, as well as advocate for the mainstreaming of such initiatives into the sub-regional and regional level mechanisms on peace and security.

The women's initiatives that were for documentation identified during a Consultative Meeting held in Kampala, Uganda in April 2003 are:

- ✍ The Association for the Promotion of Peace (ProPAZ), Mozambique (*Women ex-combatants promoting peace.*)

Female ex-combatants from FRELIMO & RENAMO, under ProPAZ are working together to advocate for peace in Mozambique.



¹ The countries involved in this training are: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. 4 women leaders are selected from each country.

- ✍ The Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Sierra Leone Chapter (*Women in high-level peace negotiations*)



MAWORPNET has been involved in high-level peace negotiations

- ✍ Women's Peace Center (WPC-SfCG), Burundi (*Building Relationships through positive solidarity*)



Some of the reconciliation processes by WPC-SfCG in Burundi. Sharing of traditional beer by the conflicting groups is symbolic of willingness to come together and renew relationships.

- ✍ Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET-WANEP) Liberia Chapter (*Women's Mass Actions for Peace*).



WIPNET/WANEP Liberia hosts peace vigils as mass action by women to pressurize the government towards sustainable peace in the country

A video documentary entitled “ The Custodians of Peace” has been developed and a report has been written by Isis-WICCE. These will be launched at a strategic planning

workshop in Kampala, Uganda, at the Grand Imperial Hotel, on September 13–14, 2005. This workshop has the following objectives:

- ✍ To develop strategies for increasing the visibility of women in the African Union’s Peace and Security Mechanisms, as well as those of sub-regional bodies.
- ✍ To develop strategies for increasing the participation of African women peace advocates and organizations in the formal peace processes on the continent.
- ✍ To develop plans for strengthening African women’s peace initiatives, and disseminating information on them among official regional bodies and the media.

Members of the documented peace initiatives have been invited to attend the Kampala meeting. In addition, Isis-WICCE has invited selected members of the SIA initiative, civil society organizations, key policy makers, media groups, and representatives of sub-regional (SADC, ECOWAS, EAC and IGAD), and regional (AU) organizations.

Ultimately, Isis-WICCE hopes that the “Documentation of Women’s Unique Peace Initiatives in Selected Regions of Africa” will bring African women’s concerns, voices, and efforts to the attention of policy makers and official sub-regional and regional mechanisms where decisions are made that have a direct bearing on the possibility of sustainable peace on the African Continent. To this end, it is hoped that the civil society and other organizations present will develop a strategy to constantly engage the major African sub-regional and regional peace and security mechanisms in a dialogue to integrate women’s initiatives and voices in their work to ensure sustainable peace on our conflict-weary continent.