



AWID Follow Up Meeting Report

Date: 15th January 2009

Venue: CIFOR YAOUNDE

1.0 Introduction

The follow up meeting of the Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management (WOCAN) to the AWID meeting which held in South Africa in November 2008 took place on Thursday, 15th January, 2009 at the premises of the CIFOR Conference Hall in Yaoundé. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce WOCAN to partners in the field, mainly rural women whose livelihood is agriculture and natural resource managers and other community leaders interested in gender issues and women's advancement, to share the knowledge and information gathered at the AWID Forum in Pretoria, which hopefully would help to strengthen the capacities of the Community Based Organizations.

2.0 Attendance

There were a total of 22(twenty-two) women from Yaoundé and its environs, all potential partners of WOCAN from Common Initiative Groups (CIGs), Community- Based Self- Help groups, collaborators of Heifer International Cameroon and (EFOKHOYU- Manyu Women's Network) (See Appendix 1 for the list of Participants).

3.0 Opening

The meeting started at 10.15 a.m. with a prayer, after which Danielle Lema Ngono, former Coordinator for West and Central Africa Regional hub of the WOCAN Office, and the main organizer of the meeting, welcomed participants, and thanked them for honoring the invitation though at short notice. She invited participants to introduce themselves, beginning with herself, followed by Jane Tarh Takang, her replacement.

4.0. Presentations

4.1. WOCAN: What it is:

The meeting started with Danielle's presentation of WOCAN and what it is and stands for, its vision and mission, goals, membership of the organization, the programmes and activities and the scope of operation which is at the local, national, regional and international levels. Though a women-led global network, WOCAN is a network for both professional women and men who are engaged in agriculture and natural resource management and are committed to environmentally sustainable development and organizational change for gender equality. WOCAN has 489 members in 79 countries worldwide. She reminded the participants that though WOCAN looks very great today they have come a long way. It started with 10 women in 1993 and existed as a think tank groups for almost 10 years before being legalized.

This should serve as inspiration for most of our Community Based organizations which are facing challenges of functioning and sometimes want to give up. It takes time and commitment for an organization to grow and it also needs sacrifice and the commitment of members as well as their leaders.

4.2. The AWID Forum:

The second presentation was on the 11th International Forum of the Association of Women's Rights and Development (AWID) which took place in Cape Town, South Africa from 14-17, November, 2008. There were 1900 delegates from over 144 countries globally. The Association has now transformed from a women's organization to a women's rights' organization. From the foundational membership of 25, the association now has a membership spanning the globe and meets every 3 years. This year's meeting attracted more than 40 percent of participation from Sub-Saharan Africa and a fifth of all delegates were young women under 30 years.

Under the theme, “The Power of Movements”, the Forum aimed at advancing movements to strengthen gender equality and promote women’s rights for peace. The presentation also focused on the issues discussed and raised such as power of movements. Giving instances of the power of movements, Danielle said women in South Africa got the government to legalize abortion through pressure from women’s movements. But for these movements to succeed they need to be strong, their objectives need to be clear and their leaders need to be committed to the cause of the movement and must have the confidence and support of the rest of the group to motivate them. Finally, for movements to be strong they need to be apolitical. If they are politically inclined the leaders, once in power, will try to defend their political agenda and not that of the entire group, thus bringing about frustration for the rest of the group. The idea that ‘women in decision making has not made a difference’, was portrayed through drama. Through popular support and false campaign promises, the women politicians gain prominence. But once in power the women political leaders, remind the masses who voted for them that they, the political leaders, represent the entire community and not a particular pressure or interest group.

Worth noting, and on a conclusive note, is the fact that women cannot do it all by themselves; they need the support of men and youths if they must succeed. To conclude this discussion Danielle reminded the participants of the fact that every woman counts and the sharing of knowledge is the way forward through the use of the community radio, for example. She emphasized that movement building was a race in which one should give attention to continuity and empowerment. Older women could work with the young ones and learn from each other.

4.3. Implications of Climate Change on Agricultural Production Systems: Getting Communication Strategies Right

The second part of the experience sharing was from CTA Ouagadougou seminar on *“Implications of Climate Change on Agriculture and Sustainable Agricultural Production Systems: Getting Communications Strategies Right”*

4.3.1 What is Climate Change? According to the presentations and subsequent group discussions, climate change is can be summarized thus:

- A considerable reduction in rainy seasons and prolonged dry seasons;
- Unpredictability of rainfall (onset, end quantity and precipitation etc);
- Hotter dry seasons and colder rainy seasons (extreme temperatures)
- Flooding of the coastal areas due to the effects of global warming.
- Strong winds and storms in coastal areas

4.3.2. Causes of Climate Change

- Uncontrolled logging in the Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Over-industrialization in the western countries thus releasing high levels of carbon gases;
- Loss of forests to absorb excess carbon and nitrogen compounds,
- Increased temperatures due to uncontrolled greenhouse gases

4.3.3. General Effects and Implications

- Due to the unpredictability of rainfall (onset, end quantity and precipitation within a rain fed system of agriculture in developing countries the cropping system has been affected;
- Crop pests and diseases are on the increase, necessitating high inputs in pesticides;
- Changes in pastoral activities as animal breeders have to look for pasture and water;

- Change in cultural practices;
- Traditional farmers will be attracted to the market incentives for biofuels and abandon food crop production, thereby losing farmlands.

4.3.4. Impact on Agriculture

- It reduces soil fertility, resulting in reduced crop yields
- It limits crop varieties, and encourages the use of improved varieties that require high inputs, knowledge and skills to manage them without any guarantee for increased yields.
- Increase dependence on food importation
- Threat of extinction of some plants varieties
- Threat to livelihood/income and food sovereignty

4.3.5. Impact on Pastoralism

- Reduction in grazing land
- Increased mortality of livestock
- Diminishing water points
- Reduces diversity of livestock
- Increase livestock and human diseases
- Socio-economic and political conflict

4.3.6. Recommendations

- Push/advocate the polluter principle
- Promotion and practice of eco agriculture and practice
- Conservation of biodiversity
- Train and encourage farmers to plant high value tree species for carbon sequestration, intercropped with food crops
- Capacity building for farmers and pastoralists on how to start adapting to the changes in climate
- Lobbying and advocating for environmental friendly policy.
- There should be flow of information from one category to the other (researchers, policy makers, funding organizations and rural populations).
- Information should be designed to meet the needs of the rural communities (content and form).
- Funding organizations should allocate a budget for information and communication.

5.0 . Discussion and Interaction

In general the participants were overwhelmed by the quantity and quality of information and knowledge they have gained, given that most of them are members and or leaders of groups/movements. This knowledge will be shared in their groups and this will go a long way to improve on the functioning of their groups and or even daily activities as farmers or natural resources managers. They hoped that this partnership would continue and will be mutually beneficial to both the Community-Based Organizations and WOCAN. Most of the members of Groups partnering with Heifer International Cameroon were happy that the collaboration has been able to open other avenues for them and they will encourage other groups in their communities not to relent their efforts at working hard, because their seriousness and commitment is beginning to pay-off.

Relating to the example used in South Africa by women to legalize abortion the women felt it was not very positive a move. But Jane reassured them that it was just one example and within the context of their society with many cases

of rape and HIV/AIDS, Domestic violence and homelessness and resulting unwanted pregnancies, the women found it necessary to demand for that as a right, We could contextualize our problems and stand up and demand for laws in our favor as women.

Asked of what benefit WOCAN is to its members, they were reminded that they could benefit knowledge and information like the meeting that just took place, but that they could also be called upon to represent WOCAN at local or international forums. But it is always a duty to share any knowledge or information gained through such forums with others whenever that happens.

6.0 Membership

At this point, Danielle briefed participants who were interested in becoming members of WOCAN on the registration procedures. This involves logging onto the association's website, www.wocan.org, from where you click on 'members', and then click on 'membership application', fill and send electronically. Those rural women present who were not computer literate expressed the worry of being left out. They were advised to use the services of their nearest Cyber café when they are in town and also use their children to help them, or use the attendants at the Cyber Café. Danielle explained that through WOCAN members could benefit from other associations. Concerns about dues to be paid were expressed, and it was explained that WOCAN membership was free for those in developing countries.

7.0 Any Other Business

A vote of thanks was given by Prof. Martha Ayuk, President of EFOKHOYU network and commended the initiative by WOCAN to share information, knowledge and skills with other less privileged women. She said it is only by so doing that women can improve on their capacity to help themselves. She said that in about 3hours they had gained so much In terms of information that will go a long way to help her network.

In return Danielle thanked participants for their attendance. She hoped that members would still find time to attend subsequent meetings and also keep in touch with WOCAN. They were encouraged to use the WOCAN West/Central Africa website to keep in touch and share some of their problems and aspirations. This hopefully, will promote collaboration between the professional and rural women, to assist women in the rural areas who are into agriculture and natural resource management and to contribute toward poverty alleviation and bring about women's development. Most of the members present promised to register with WOCAN.

7.1 Acknowledgement/ Closing

It is worth noting that Heifer International Cameroon- Equatorial rainforest Region based in Yaoundé was happy to support WOCAN once more, and contributed immensely to the success of the meeting by facilitating the identification of some rural women in their areas of intervention, contacting them by phone and finally distributing the invitation letters. They also helped to convey the participants from their office location to the CIFOR premises where the meeting was to hold. We hope that this collaboration will continue and will go a long way to foster the existing partnership between WOCAN and Heifer.

The meeting came to an end at 1.45 p.m., to enable participants from out of Yaoundé to travel home on time.

Appendices

Appendix1: Names of Participants at the AWID Follow up meeting of January 15th, 2009.

S/N	NAMES OF Participants	GROUP	Sub- Division
1	Eyebe Marguerite	GIC FAE	Obala
2	Messina Sophie	GIC PRODEAFEM	Obala
3	Tassi Clotilde	Mva'a	Lekie
4	Onguene Marie	Ebougsi	Lekie
5	Nkoti Amana Christine	PROCONCOUMA	Ombessa
6	Oyeng Pelagie	JEAK	Konyambetta
7	Abeteli Marguerite	CROCUMA	Bokito
8	Kenebeni Nathalie	Kane Guiolo	Ombessa
9	Aliga Marie Bodiong	GIC JAAS	Bokito
10	Ambassa Etingué Estelle	GICAET	Bokito
11	Mary Tambe Enow	Manyu Women's Social group	Yaoundé
12	Lucy Nso	Awanchi-Bitieku Women's Group	Yaoundé
15	Besem Vivian E. Agbor	Ossing women group	Yaoundé
16	Diana Ncha	Akwaya women' Group	Yaoundé
17	Sophie Agbor	Mpokofu women's group	Yaoundé
18	Rebecca Agbor Ebai	Yang Chi Eyeh Women's group	Yaoundé
19	Ebot Glory	Muo Nye Ne ye Women's group	Yaoundé
20	Prof. Martha Ayuk	President of EFOKHOU Network	Yaounde
21	Enoh Margaret	Ekeb ka Mbenghe Women's group	Yaoundé
22	Philomena Enonchong	Ejagham Njemaya women's group	Yaoundé

Appendix 2: Programme

1. Opening (Danielle)
2. Introduction of Participants
3. Introduction of the new WOCAN West and Central Africa Coordinator (Danielle)
4. Presentation on WOCAN (Danielle)
4. Presentation on AWID Forum (Danielle)
5. Lessons from Ouagadougou (Implications of Climate Change for Sustainable agricultural Production Systems: Getting Communication Strategies Right (Jane Tarh Takang)
6. Discussion and Interaction
7. Membership
8. Any Other Business
9. Closing / LUNCH