

# REPORT

## **“The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) – Implications for women and poverty eradication”**

*Panel discussion and strategy session presented by Women in Law and Development (WiLDAF) during the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) United Nations, New York 4-15 March 2002*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The panel discussion took place on 5 March 2002 and covered the following topics:

- An introduction to NEPAD (Susan Nkomo, Acting CO: Office on the Status of Women, South Africa)
- A gender-critique of NEPAD (Muthoni Wanyeki : FEMNET)
- Women and HIV/AIDS – challenges for poverty eradication (Elize Delpont : WiLDAF)

In general, the meeting welcomed and applauded the NEPAD initiative. Those present expressed their willingness to engage with the NEPAD process and to contribute their efforts to ensure the success thereof. However, a number of concerns were identified. The meeting made recommendations to address these concerns and put forward a short-term plan of action.

### **AREAS OF CONCERN**

During the strategy session, the following areas of concern were raised:

- Although the NEPAD makes sporadic reference to women, there is little evidence of a comprehensive gendered approach to poverty eradication and development.
- It is unclear how the NEPAD relates to, or impacts on, the already-existing framework for the rights of women in Africa. This framework comprises instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Dakar Platform for Action; the Beijing Platform for Action and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In the near future, a Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa will

be added to this framework. Furthermore, sub-regional instruments such as the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development should also be taken into consideration.

- Many Africans do not have any knowledge of the NEPAD.
- The language of the NEPAD does not allow for easy dissemination and could inhibit popular participation and debate.
- Although the NEPAD makes reference to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there is no clear strategy for dealing with this issue from a poverty eradication or development perspective.
- The NEPAD does not contain indicators against which to measure implementation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general, it was agreed that there were two pre-requisites for the successful launch of the NEPAD:

*“Due recognition should be accorded to gender characteristics that are of direct relevance to the continent’s economic and social development, particularly the issue of the marginalisation of women in economic, social and political decision-making of the continent; and*

*Women’s issues and perspectives in the NEPAD initiative should not be seen or portrayed as an afterthought. Since the global consensus is to involve women in development initiatives, the NEPAD initiative should seek to promote the empowerment of women to be in tune with the proposals outlined in both the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action”. (MATCH International Centre’s Review of NEPAD pp2-3)*

During the strategy session, the following specific recommendations were put forward:

- A gender analysis of the NEPAD should be conducted. This analysis could build on already-existing initiatives and should inform the work of the NEPAD Steering and Implementation Committees.
- The framework of rights for women in Africa should be set out clearly. The role of NEPAD within this framework should be considered.
- The mainstreaming of women in development should be included in all the processes of the NEPAD framework.

- The NEPAD Implementation and Steering Committees should be requested to join forces with civil society in order to ensure the popular dissemination of the NEPAD.
- The NEPAD Implementation and Steering Committees should be requested to join forces with civil society in order to produce a simplified version of the NEPAD.
- The gender analysis of the NEPAD should be incorporated in all efforts to popularise the NEPAD.
- A strategy should be developed to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of HIV/AIDS on poverty reduction and development goals. In particular, the gender implications of the HIV/AIDS epidemic should be considered.
- Indicators should be developed to monitor implementation of the NEPAD. Such indicators should reflect gender considerations.
- The issue of culture should be given prominence to reflect the African Development Bank's gender policy which states that the cultural environment is among the factors that have influenced the participation rate of women and men in both the public and private sector. Culture has been invoked to legitimise differences in gender status, values and roles to justify unequal gender relations in a manner that, to a large extent, favours men and disadvantages women.

## **SHORT-TERM PLAN OF ACTION**

The meeting proposed that the following actions be initiated:

- Comprehensive research regarding the gender analysis/impact of the NEPAD should be conducted as a matter of urgency.
- Dissemination of information regarding the NEPAD should commence as soon as possible. In this regard, the meeting proposed that a workshop be held in May 2002 during which women of East and Southern Africa will have the opportunity to share information and recommendations regarding the NEPAD.
- The meeting proposed that members of the African Caucus at the CSW formally engage with, and put their concerns and recommendations to, the Steering and Implementation Committees of the NEPAD.

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