



# UN WOMEN

# Changing Lives in Africa 2012



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We've had a year of significant growth and change. While we face a lot of hard work ahead, as we come to the end of 2012, it's time for us to take a look back and reflect on our key achievements of the year. I wish we could tell every story, visit every country, meet every woman whose life UN Women has changed, and talk about all the programs in Africa, but we don't have the space. In this first series, UN Women Changing Lives in Africa, we share fourteen inspiring stories from across the continent. Our focus here is the women and the communities whose lives have been positively impacted by our work. UN Women's aim is to empower women and girls so that they are independent, gain equality and can strive for better lives for themselves and their families. These stories show how our work can transform lives and touch so many. Well done Africa team and thank you so much to all who contributed to this series of very moving and candid stories.

Happy reading,

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# 450 Women Dairy Farmers and Milk Producers in Burkina Faso Gain Economic Independence



PHOTO: UNDP COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, BURKINA FASO

WOMEN AT THE DIARY UNIT OF MADAME GARIKO'S FARM AT SADIPENGA.

**M**adame Gariko has a telephone line at her rural farm just outside the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. Her son is now entering university, something she once thought was impossible.

*"This would not have been possible if I did not fight for what rightly belonged to me. We cannot look at relatives to feed us. I advise other women to be enterprising because the benefits are many, and with the coming of UN Women's support the future is bright,"* says Gariko.

Gariko's life, until lately, sounded like many across Africa. After her husband's death in the mid-1990's, Gariko struggled but managed to keep all of her 7 children in school. Her own education stopped at sec-

ondary school, as like in most families, it was not a priority to educate girls. She was married as soon as her husband asked permission from her parents.

She negotiated with male relatives for the right to inheritance after her husband's death. She lost most of their family assets, save for 4 cows. She used cheap construction material to build a simple wooden structure and fence at the back of her house to keep the 4 cows. This number has grown to 35. She is now producing dairy products from the cows.

As she began farming she learned that there were many other women in similar difficult circumstances. In some cases they owned the cows but were exploited by middlemen who were involved in making yoghurt

and marketing. They were also constantly faced with small markets and price fluctuations. Gariko says she lacks adequate storage facilities for her perishable products, so often she is forced to sell them at below cost. Some women too face inadequate transportation. There are no accessible roads to their farms, making it costly and almost impossible to hire a truck to transport dairy produce.

In 1998 she formed a women's group known as Tal Djama, to enable women in milk production to collectively tackle problems related to discrimination in accessing markets







and land. Tal Djama now has 51 members. In 2007, Madame Gariko approached UNIFEM (now UN Women) to support enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of women involved in milk production through her association.

As a result of a national study on women in milk production in 13 regions a programme to support women who manage mini-dairy units was developed. 450 women dairy farmers and milk producers in Burkina Faso are now benefitting from financing from the program which will increase their entrepreneurial capacities and improve their working conditions.

Close collaboration between different UN Women entities (including the UN Women Sub-Regional Office, the headquarters Resource Mobilization and Partnership Unit and the Africa Section) resulted in funding of up to 50,000 Euros for the pilot phase of the project being secured from the Fondation L'OCCITANE. The grant will be used to improve working conditions of women entrepreneurs in the dairy industry ultimately leading to increased productivity and better income. The beneficiary organisation: Union des mini-laiteries et des producteurs de lait local du Burkina Faso (UMPL) brings together the 450 women dairy farmers and milk producers.

UN Women also forged strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Gender and civil society organizations in Burkina Faso. As part of its normal briefing with civil society and other partners, UN Women met in Dakar with the Association de Cooperation et de Recherche pour le Développement (ACORD) Burkina Faso. Following this meeting, a mission was conducted to Burkina Faso where UN Women consulted with ACORD and women entrepreneurs in the dairy industry. The ability to reach out to a variety of traditional and nontraditional implementing partners allows UN Women to draw in and add value to untapped economic potential for women.

ACORD and the Fondation L'OCCITANE were closely involved in the formulation and resource mobilization process. The current partnership between UN Women,



PHOTO: UNDP COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, BURKINA FASO

MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT VILLAGE.

ACORD and the Fondation L'OCCITANE will significantly impact the lives of women dairy farmers in Burkina Faso.

The involvement with women in the dairy industry is the result of baseline studies conducted by UN Women which enabled the identification of the dairy industry as having potential to economically transform the lives of women. This direct initiative with women in the dairy industry has the potential to propel ongoing work on women in agriculture and to provide a new dimension on the multiple avenues for reinforcing women's economic security.

Madame Gariko is very optimistic that with the launch of this project the quality and quantity of milk produced by women in her women group will improve with training in marketing and other entrepreneurship skills. With the construction of the central water supply centre for women in Tal Djama, each woman will be able to produce a minimum of 20 litres of milk per day fetching her approximately US\$400 dollars a month, enough to comfortably take care of their personal and family needs.

*"Thank you UN Women, we have waited long but we are now hopeful,"* Gariko says.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN Women does not have physical presence in Burkina Faso, but it provides programming and technical support through its Sub-Regional Office in Dakar Senegal. UN Women's engagement with women in dairy farming dates back to 2009, when the former UNIFEM conducted a baseline survey of rural women and identified women in dairy farming as a potential group for enhancing economic empowerment. Extensive consultations with various stakeholders including Private Foundations, CSOs and the government have finally resulted in concrete support to the women in dairy farming - with the potential to reach an even larger group of women.



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



# Exploited Domestic Workers Organize Themselves to Defend their Rights in Cameroon



PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

PARTICIPANTS OF A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC WORK IN CAMEROON HELD AT THE CENTRE JEAN XXIII MVOLYÉ IN YAOUNDÉ.

**A**bused and exploited by her employers right from the beginning of her work-life, 50-year-old Félicité Mbida, a domestic worker for more than twenty years, fights to promote the rights of workers in Cameroon as part of the National Association Supporting Domestic Workers (RENATRAD in French).

As is the case for a number of young girls from Cameroon, Félicité started working as a domestic worker and planned that she would do this type of work only for a short time. But with a lack of other options, she was forced to continue in order to provide for her two children.

*"I worked with seven different families over a period of ten years due to irregular and poor working conditions and pay," she said.*

When she started working in 1996, Félicité was often subjected to sexual as well as psychological violence from her employers. She worked without a contract or social security and had no clearly defined working hours. Exhausted and fed up with such abuse, in 2004 she decided to set up an association for domestic workers in order to promote solidarity amongst professionals in this field.

The Association for Housewives and Cooperating Partners of Yaoundé (AMCY in French) was born and rapidly grew to in-

clude 50 members in its fold. Encouraged by its success, the initiative was integrated into RENATRAD, a network bringing together 65 associations with an average of 20 to 50 members.

Supported by the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality, RENATRAD organizes training sessions on labour legislation, the drafting of work contracts, as well as professional ethics. With this training, domestic workers







PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

SIGNING OF THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN HORIZONS WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE FAMILY AND THE PRESIDENT OF HORIZONS WOMEN.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:

UN women in Cameroon focuses on the following key intervention areas: women's increased leadership through direct support to Civil society, political parties and technical and financial support to the national electoral commission to mainstream gender in the electoral processes; increased economic empowerment of women, through support to women's entrepreneurs as well as those involved in informal cross border trade; prevent violence against women and girls and expand access to victims through direct support to the VAW campaign, law enforcement and direct support to victims through centers for women and engendering national planning and budgeting .



PHOTO: HORIZONS FEMMES

A WALK TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND WIDEN ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS LINKED TO DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT, ORGANIZED IN BUÉA IN THE SOUTHWEST AND IN OTHER REGIONS OF CAMEROON.

have been able to defend their social status and better defend their rights.

*"We have received lots of training on our rights, salaries, contracts, and, above all, on social security; this is because many of us will soon retire,"* stressed Félicité, adding that she now knows the national minimum wage for Cameroon, which is currently 28 216 CFA francs – the equivalent of US\$55 per month. She has therefore been able to negotiate her work contract with her employers, modify her working hours and benefit from social security through joining the National Social Security Service (CNPS in French).

*"The programme has really changed a lot of things for us and domestic work is no longer what it was two years ago,"* says Félicité.

The large-scale mobilization of these women can be explained notably by their status in Cameroonian society. It is estimated that domestic workers represent 3 per cent of all workers in Cameroon of which 80 per cent are women.

*"Today, we can also say that we are workers just like anyone else; what we say is taken a little more seriously now; and the number of cases of violence and abuse at work have fallen,"* she confirmed.

A die-hard activist, in 2011 Félicité was elected President of RENATRAD. Included in her accomplishments is her contribution to the implementation of a national network on domestic employment regulated by the Programme's Technical Monitoring Commit-

tee (CTS in French), as well as the preparation of draft legislation on domestic employment that is now with the government.

As a result of such advocacy efforts, Félicité hopes Cameroon will soon ratify Convention 189 (Decent work for Domestic Workers) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).





## Radio Broadcasters Send Messages of Peace in Darfur – Intisar’s Women and Society Programme



PHOTO: MOHAMMED DUBA, UN WOMEN

PARTICIPANTS TRAIN TOGETHER TO SEND MESSAGES OF PEACE IN SUDAN.

For Intisar Ginded, a mother of one, peace in Darfur means everything to her and her community. Darfur has known only conflict and tragedy for years. Sounds of gunfire and heavy shelling fill the air in what is another flare up in Africa, with both sides killing and displacing many thousands including the most vulnerable women and children.

Armed with a media degree and a passion to find lasting solutions for her community, Intisar joined the state-owned Elfasher Radio and Television Station.

“As a young girl, I had a burning ambition to work as a broadcaster. I knew that it was the only profession that would allow me to directly talk to my community. It would allow me to exchange information and ideas. Nothing was going to stop me from realizing my dream,” said Intisar.

For Intisar, whose name in Arabic means triumph, working as a broadcaster would help her illuminate the issues that affect Darfurians, especially women and children, who bear the brunt of the perennial conflicts.

Intisar graduated from the University of Koran in Khartoum with a Bachelor’s Degree in Media in 2004. She also holds a diploma in media with a specialty in TV and Radio programming. She is currently pursuing a Master’s degree at the National Ribat University.

The dedicated broadcast journalist pioneered a radio and TV programme, called Women and Society, which runs on Darfur state media every morning and evening.

“Women are always isolated from the national development agenda, yet they are the majority of the population and contribute immensely to our economy. When war

breaks out, they are the most affected, often fleeing to far-flung areas in search of peace and stability. I initiated this programme to cater for their needs. We share information with them regarding various issues. During conflict, we share messages of peace and hope over mayhem and fear,” said Intisar.

Intisar was part of a 20-strong group of media practitioners and UN Women implementing partners who attended a two-day Strategic Communications training in Khartoum on October 10 and 11, 2012. The participants, drawn from print and electronic media and UN Women partners, were trained on how to engage the public effectively, me

dia and gender mainstreaming, how to use new media, blogging, preparing media advisories, op-ed writing, press releases, effective story writing, photography and management of press conferences.

*“Media is an important player in the field of development and cannot be ignored. Media can be an important actor in the promotion of gender equality. If misused, it can also relay negative messages,”* UN Women Sudan Country Director Ms. Jebbeh Forster told the participants.

*“I recall such a case during the Northern Uganda peace talks when women were for the first time allowed to participate. It just took an open disagreement between the women representatives for some section of the media to publish screaming headlines of the incidents obviously taking away the real message from the talks,”* she said.

According to UNESCO, radio can be found in the homes of 75 percent of the world population. For billions of people living in rural areas, or as urban poor, access to information is limited. Disconnected from the information gateway due to poverty, low literacy, limited electricity connections and access to communication technologies such as computers and internet, radio is often the only medium available. Run on batteries, lightweight, mobile and inexpensive, the

popularity of the radio medium remains high, amongst the six billion people who have access to it worldwide.

Community radio uses the power of the medium, but redefines it to give a voice to the most marginalized communities. It creates a non-commercial platform, where ordinary people in rural communities, often the women of the community, own and produce the content they hear on the radio.

To expand the dialogue on women’s rights and to ensure that the voices of rural women are heard at the international level, UN Women is expanding its advocacy efforts through community radio. This will include innovative radio partnerships such as with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, the leading international network of over 4000 community radio organizations. Providing glimpses into economic empowerment, leadership, and sustainable development efforts, this new communications partnership will explore issues that define the lives of rural women and their communities, and how they are creating change worldwide.

For Intisar, working for women is a calling. *“There is an Arabic saying which states that women are half of the population in the society. However for me, women are not only half of the population just in numbers. Their*

*involvement in development issues also counts. We are not just figures!”* said Intisar, who added she was proud of what her programme accomplished.

Intisar described how women and children have suffered greatly during conflicts as they are always forced to flee their homes and move to unstable environments. In doing so they leave crops untended and this has a huge effect on food security. In Darfur, she said, women are the agriculture laborers, even though they receive fewer benefits. Intisar said her programme provides women with factual information on the stability of Darfur. *“We spread the messages of peace and hope in the refugee camps,”* she said.

## UN WOMEN IN DAFUR

The overarching goal of UN Women’s strategy in Darfur is: “to ensure sustained engagement by women in the Darfur peace process in order to actualise gender equality and the rights of women in the Darfur peace agreement and in durable solutions for sustainable peace.” In 2012, prevention, protection, participation and gender sensitive humanitarian response and strategy shapes the priority areas for the UN Women and its national counterparts in Darfur in line with the Security Council Resolutions 1325 on Women Peace and Security, and its consequent resolutions of 1820, 1888, 1889, as well as the set of indicators endorsed by Secretary General.



MOHAMMED DUBA, UN WOMEN

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