

Global Insight covers areas of topical interest and is meant to provide the reader with an initiation to the subject and its policy implications. The analysis is meant to be simple yet elegant, and without sacrificing depth, useful to a broad policy community. We welcome and encourage comments and suggestions.

Issue No 49, May 2005

Women's empowerment in Africa: Still mired in discriminatory laws

by

Christi van der Westhuizen

Introduction

Ten years after the Beijing Conference on Women and 30 years after the first United Nations Conference on Women the situation of women in Africa has not improved. This also holds true for all other regions of the world, as governments admitted at the Beijing+10 meeting in New York in March 2005. Progress has been sluggish in enacting the Beijing Platforms aimed at eradicating gender discrimination -- despite the supposed impetus of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, which includes the achievement of equality between women and men as a distinct goal.

In the past decade, African governments have crafted numerous multilateral declarations and instruments to address gender inequality. These include the Dakar Declaration of 1994; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003 (AU Women's protocol); the African Heads of States' Declaration on Gender Rights (2004) and the Southern African Development Community Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) with its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children (1998). However, ratification of the AU Women's Protocol has been slow, with only 11 of the 53 states having taken the step two years after the adoption of the protocol.

This policy brief provides an overview of the instruments pertaining to gender empowerment in Africa, before briefly examining areas where progress has been expected in terms of the 1995 world meeting in Beijing, China.

Institute for Global Dialogue

Block 12, Thornhill Office Park,

Bekker Street, Vorna Valley

Midrand, South Africa

P O Box 32571, Braamfontein 2017

Tel +(11) 315-1299

Fax +(11) 315-2149

e-mail: info@igd.org.za

www.igd.org.za

ISSN: 1607 - 2375

©Institute for Global Dialogue

All rights reserved. The material in this publication may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted without the prior permission of the copyright holder. Short extracts may be quoted, provided the source is fully acknowledged.