

**IAC's contribution to the report of the Chairperson of AU Commission
on progress made in the implementation of the
Solemn Declaration on gender equality**

The Inter-African Committee (IAC) is a non-governmental organization mandated by its members to work against harmful traditional practices while promoting those that are positive to the general well-being of women and girls.

Since its creation in 1984 it has put emphasis on the empowerment of women to make informed decision about their health and socio-economic status.

Programs are designed with a participatory approach taking into serious account the cultural contexts.

IAC has its National Committees in 28 African countries through which activities are carried out based on a Common Agenda for Action adopted in 2003 at the International Conference on Zero Tolerance to FGM.

Main areas of programs focus are;

- Training and Information Campaign (TIC)
- Health programs
- Alternative Employment Opportunities for ex-excisers (AEO)
- Youth programs
- Research
- Production of educational materials

Between 2004 up to 2006 IAC has implemented major activity at activity at the national, regional, and international levels in order to promote gender equality by fighting harmful traditional practices.

- 14 Training and Information Campaigns (TIC) to impact societal change of attitude in favour of gender equality have been implemented in ... African

countries

- 5 youth projects have been implemented in..... African countries;
- 25 AEO projects have been implemented in African countries;
- 2 symposia for religious leaders. This resulted in the open Declaration of Religious Leaders to campaign against harmful traditional practices such as FGM reaffirming their opposition to inhuman and degrading treatment that women are subjected to applying misconception of religion as justification.

The Declaration is attached.

At the regional level IAC promotes the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in collaboration with other non-governmental organizations. It is a member of NGO Networking to lobby for ratification and domestication of the Protocol. At the IAC General Assembly held in 2005 in Bamako, Mali, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa were presented as important instruments to ensure gender equality.

IAC representatives have used the observance of February 6th International Day on Zero Tolerance to FGM to popularize the Protocol as well as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

Special presentations have been made in Addis Ababa by the IAC/HQ. In Geneva IAC organized a special event on February 6th, 2006 in the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights inviting among other personalities, the AU Ambassador, and NGO representatives.

During the Sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary body the Sub-Commission IAC representatives make statements and lobby for policy to protect

women from traditionally condoned forms of violence In the statements reference is made to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa highlighting the importance of implementing these instruments.

Recently in September 2006 during the Second Session of the UN Council on Human Rights IAC together with 7 other organizations made a joint statement in which the two African instruments were referred to as protective measures.

IAC uses its presence at the national, regional and international levels to campaign for gender equality through education, information, lobbying and advocacy for the elimination of harmful traditional practices.