

The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya)

February 2013

International Women's Day 2013: Is the Gender Agenda a promise in East Africa?



Girls travel long distances in search for water. Photo: UCSD

The United Nations declared the International Women's Day theme for 2013 as **“A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women”**. Among others, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* and *Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3* attest to this promise. Also, in July 2009 the UN voted to create a single UN body tasked with accelerating progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment: the *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, also known as *UN Women*.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, affirmed her commitment to gender equality in her Mission Statement entitled *UNESCO in a Globalised World: New Humanism for the 21st Century* as, "I consider gender equality to be one of the most important goals, both political and humanistic, of our times. I am strongly motivated to make UNESCO invest more efforts in attaining this objective."

To commemorate International Women's day, in Kenya at Kitengela Township, a non-profit network Coexist Initiative for men and boys working in the area of sexual and gender based violence and HIV prevention in Kenya will have an event named "Men and Boys coming out". A marathon to raise funds for a maternity ward in Hoima –Uganda will be held, while in Rwanda the event will be a publication of a Gender Based Violence family magazine. Relating to MDG 7 that ensures environmental sustainability, women who are the custodians of biodiversity, water resources and agriculture need more support and protection if the world is to keep its promise. Sub-Saharan Africa may not meet the safe drinking water target if women and children are still left to carry water for long distances and may be even longer distances today with the declining water tables, as a result of prolonged droughts due to climate change effects. The drudgery routine takes off more productive time from women thus increasing their vulnerability to violence, coupled with poor sanitation facilities.

Following the International Women's Day, is the World Water Day (22nd March 2013) under the theme; 'International Water Cooperation'. Water cooperation focuses on raising awareness on importance, benefits and challenges of water and enhancing knowledge and building capacity for water cooperation thereby creating innovative actions, encouraging partnerships and dialogue around water cooperation.

In the meantime, the post 2015 development framework and the post Rio+20 discussions are underway globally to assess, plan and implement the MDGs yet to be achieved by 2015 (about 1000 days remaining), to consider how to scale up sustainable development initiatives and innovations, and crafting a successor to the MDGs. In all these deliberations, women are central and therefore the unfinished agenda related to women issues in the MDGs should be of global concern.

The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya)

Despite the above ‘development processes’, MDG 3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women is on check with up to 60% of un paid family workers being women – an indicator of failing the promise (World Development Report, 2012). Similarly, MDG 5 on improving maternal health, maternal mortality rates in Sub-Saharan Africa remain high with more than half a million of women dying each year from preventable diseases and complications of pregnancy and child birth. Global percentages of people most affected by HIV /AIDS are women and girls, 60% of persons living with HIV/AIDS are women yet only 11% of pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS receive services to prevent HIV transmission to their unborn children (World Development Report, 2012). Air pollutant ‘particulate matter’ is a threat to women in poor rural areas, where little access to cleaner stoves and fuels causes significant health impacts through indoor pollution. Air pollution throughout Africa can be up to 30 times higher than World Health Organization limits (African Environment Outlook-3).

In view of the above, how can gender equality and other promises be met in East Africa, if the agenda for girls and women is to spend up to 9 hours of the day, throughout the year in search of fuel, food and water?

UNEP’s Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum highlights a way forward after Rio



The United Nations Environment Programme’s fourteenth Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF.14) was held from 16th to 17th February 2012 in Nairobi. The GMGSF.14 was in preparation for the twenty seventh session of the Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) of the UNEP to be from 18th to 22nd February 2013.

The GMGSF.14 aimed to create a platform for Major Groups and Stakeholders and Governments to exchange views on their respective positions and perspectives regarding implementing Rio+20. With the dust from Rio+20 now settled, the time for implementation had now begun. While not everyone was pleased with the results in Rio in June 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development did agree to potentially far-reaching actions to strengthen the environmental agenda, among them a commitment to strengthen UNEP as the leading global environmental authority. This year’s GMGSF.14 and the Governing Council meeting marked the first test of the international community’s resolve to follow through on this commitment. Organized around the theme: “Rio+20: From Outcome to Implementation”, the meeting highlighted opportunities for civil society to engage in implementation of the Rio + 20 Outcome Document: *The Future We Want*, as well as linking sustainable development to the ongoing Post 2015 development planning.

Opportunity: Para 88 of the Rio + 20 outcome document

Tomoko Nishimoto (UNEP Director, Division of Regional Cooperation) in her opening remarks noted that Para 88 of the Rio + 20 outcome document (The Future We Want) that commits Partners to ‘...strengthen the role of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global agenda and promoting coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN....’, was a historical moment.

The LVEMP II Civil Society Watch E-bulletin

A Monthly from the **East African Sustainability Watch Network** comprising: Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya)

She added that the expeditious resolution by the UN General Assembly (New York, December 2012) to implement this shows the level of commitment by the international community towards global environmental management. She noted that this commitment implies universal membership of the Governing Council of Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Hence the GMGSF.14 was the last one in its present form, as future ones will have universal membership (no limit to geographical boundaries).

Post 2015 Development planning: How far and fair is the process?

Amina J. Mohammed, Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning, briefed the GMGSF.14 participants on the UN work streams towards post-2015. She emphasized the importance of civil society engagement in the post-2015 processes under eleven consultations around themes ranging from health and education to equality, governance, energy, environment, and conflict and security as well as ongoing conferences on inequalities, migration, biodiversity, trade and other issues.

In the ensuing discussion, participants raised: the possibility of a treaty on human rights and the environment; complementarity of post-2015 processes with national sustainable development strategies; and translating the multilateral process to be relevant for grassroots communities. Despite the national level dialogues already scheduled or held in 74 countries, the thematic consultations and an online global conversation through social media, that is supposed to reach very large audiences, the post 2015 Development planning process has not been felt at the sub national levels (for example local authorities) where its ownership is paramount ahead of implementation of the final outcome. The relevance of this is the lesson learnt in implementing the MDGs, where a lot of time was spent in the initial years after adoption to raise awareness (in East Africa) instead of right away getting to implementation.

Five ongoing processes after the Rio + 20 Conference

A number of processes have been launched after Rio that should be of interest to EA SusWatch members and partners, depending on their expertise and interest. These include: the [10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns \(10YFP\)](#) as contained in the [A/CONF.216/5](#) document... "(paragraph 226, "[The Future we Want](#)" - Rio+20 Outcome Document) | The 10YFP is a very concrete and operational outcome of Rio+20: <http://bit.ly/YkxKFM> | *Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (para 56 -74, [The Future we Want](#)" - Rio+20 Outcome Document)*. A new partnership on this has been launched: [Partnership for Action on Green Economy, or PAGE](#), is a response to the [Rio + 20 outcome document](#) PAGE will support 30 countries over the next seven years in building national green economy strategies that will generate new jobs and skills, promote clean technologies, and reduce environmental risks and poverty | Sustainable Development Goals and linkage to the post 2015 development framework with the [Open Working Group on the UN general Assembly now constituted](#) and has started work | [Campaign for People's Goals for Sustainable Development Statement](#) that is seeking sign ups from more CSOs across the world | and implementation of [The People's Summit outcomes](#). [Read the Presentations made at the GMGSF-14 Presentations February 16 – 17, 2013 from: <http://tinyurl.com/cjx2lmf>](#)

East African Sustainability Watch Network online

Visit the East African SusWatch Network website: <http://www.easuswatch.org/> through social media.