



**Celebrating Courage**  
Overcoming Harmful Traditional Practices

**PAN- AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON CELEBRATING COURAGE AND OVERCOMING  
HARMFUL TRADITIONS**

**AUC CONFERENCE CENTRE, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**5-7 OCTOBER 2011**

**FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HARMFUL  
TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**

On 5-7 October 2011, the AU Commission, with support from GIZ, organized the Pan-African Conference on Celebrating Courage and Overcoming Harmful Traditions.

The purpose of the Conference was to acknowledge the efforts, share the experiences gained and celebrate the courage of many women, men and organizations that have been inspirational in the process of eliminating harmful traditional practices.

Participants at this Pan African Conference on Celebrating Courage and Overcoming Harmful Traditions noted and underscored the following priorities for action in combating Harmful Traditional Practices:

## **HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED STRATEGIES ON HTP**

- 1.) A multi-pronged holistic approach is needed where positive cultural values can be used to fight Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) and where education on HTP is linked to development and human rights, health education, and economics.
- 2.) Integrated health systems need to be developed in AU Member States that will incorporate universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

## **LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT**

- 3.) Governments play important roles in addressing HTPs through ratification of international and continental legal instruments, promulgation of national legislation, adoption of policies and programmes, and enforcement of the law.
- 4.) Legal strategies to combat HTPs should be accompanied by advocacy, education, medical assistance, sensitisation of the youth and older women and men on existing norms and laws, and involvement of religious and traditional leaders who could be lead change agents, and through involvement of civil society.

## **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

- 5.) Networks of Women's Rights Groups and their champions should be supported and empowered to address HTPs.
- 6.) The work of female lawyers and activists is to be applauded and female champions in communities identified to facilitate combating of HTP.
- 7.) Women should inform themselves about what is inherent in their laws so as to make use of them to bring about change. Information and education on HTP should target women and girls, especially those who are most vulnerable due to poverty, ignorance and disease. Special assistance should be extended to women and girls who are disabled and those in conflict and post-conflict situations (including refugees and IDPs).
- 8.) Programmes should also target economic activities which should empower women.
- 9.) The importance of educating the girl child and of availing life skills training to them should be emphasised in all programmes.

## **RESEARCH**

- 10.) Baseline studies should be conducted on the incidence and prevalence of HTP in communities, which will be essential for the policy and law formulation processes, including for advocacy purposes, and to create a better understanding of why such practices exist and what the dynamics behind them are.
- 11.) Operational research on HTP should be conducted to improve the effectiveness of intervention strategies.
- 12.) Strategies which have achieved positive results with regard to combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are to be documented and made available for application to combating other HTP.

## **ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS**

- 13.) There is the need to educate people, especially in rural areas, on how to create awareness on issues relating to HTP which can be conducted in schools, clinics, informal settings, community meetings, inter-community meetings, family dialogues, and inter-generational and cross-generational dialogues. Information, education, and communication (IEC) materials should be developed for specific target groups in local languages.
- 14.) Dialogues should start with the focus on positive values, traditional wisdom and positive traditional practices before introducing HTP.

## **MEDIA ADVOCACY**

- 15.) The mass media should be employed in advocacy and awareness raising efforts against HTP and in the promotion of positive traditional practices.
- 16.) Social media, men and the youth, including boys, can be powerful change agents in combating of HTP.

## **VOICES**

- 17.) The voice of the vulnerable needs to be heard in their own languages.
- 18.) Special efforts should be made to have messages and information against HTP translated in local languages.
- 19.) Cross-generational dialogues should include the youth as central to, and being torchbearers in the campaign against HTP.
- 20.) Religious leaders should preach against HTP as their silence perpetuates it, while traditional and community leaders should prohibit these practices.
- 21.) Children, especially those with disabilities, should be involved in the fight against HTP.

## **COOPERATION ON HTP**

- 22.) Synergies need to be created between activities and organisations at national, regional, continental and international levels to combat HTP through the development of networks at Government and Parliamentary levels, and through networks of traditional and religious leaders, CSOs, CBOs, women and the youth.
- 23.) Government stewardship and coordination of partnerships and programmes with and among Civil Society Organisations, is crucial in combating HTP.
- 24.) There should be effective coordination among individuals and organisations, including through development of joint/cross border projects and programmes to take advantage of expertise and resources.
- 25.) There is need for regional sharing of experiences regarding the combating of FGM in particular through the Islam Faith and Human Rights approaches.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS**

- 26.) The African Union should take the leadership role and hold governments accountable for the domestication of key legal documents which they have ratified with regard to combating HTP and promoting the human rights of women, and the AU should organize meetings to review progress periodically.

- 27.) In view of the important role that CSOs and NGOs play in advocacy and the delivery of services, their work should be reviewed and a framework developed for the evaluation of their performance and accountability.
- 28.) Governments should ensure that mechanisms are put in place at national level to monitor the continued prevalence of HTP and actions taken to combat them.

### **FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

- 29.) Publish and disseminate the Conference Report and Framework for Action and Recommendations on Harmful Traditional Practices.
- 30.) Organise a Workshop on refining recommendations for implementation and action.
- 31.) Organise inter- and cross generational dialogues on positive and harmful traditional practices.
- 32.) Propose an agenda item on HTP at the upcoming Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Culture in 2012.
- 33.) Develop harmonised tools and indicators for research on HTP.
- 34 ) Conduct baseline studies on HTP and identify 5 priority HTPs for concerted action over the next 5 years.