



# **EMPOWERING WOMEN: ERITREA'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES**

**SIDE EVENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 59<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF  
THE COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK, 16 MARCH 2015**

**BY**

**MS. TSEGGA GAIM**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**NATIONAL UNION OF ERITREAN WOMEN**

# INTRODUCTION

- Eritrea is traditionally a patriarchal society.
- Nevertheless during the armed struggle for independence 30% of the combatant were women.
- National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) in 1979.



# **NUEW FOCUS AREAS POST-INDEPENDENCE**

- **After independence, the NUEW has been studiously working to:**
  - 1. Ensure gender equality and women's right in political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.**
  - 2. Enhance societal awareness and knowledge on the equality and potential of women.**
  - 3. Strengthen the influence of women in all sectors of the society.**
  - 4. Contribute to regional peace and development.**
  - 5. Assist in implementing Eritrea's international commitment including CEDAW and Beijing Platform and Program of Action**

- 1. Economic Empowerment**
- 2. Ensuring Women's Health**
- 3. Ensuring Girls And Women Access To Education**
- 4. Eradication Of All Forms Of Violence Against Women**
- 5. Enhance Women's Participation In Decision-making**

## **1.1. LAND OWNERSHIP**

- Traditionally, women were not entitled to own or inherit land.**
- The Proclamation No.58/1994 has granted the women the right to own land and property.**
- NUEW has trained women legal officers to ensure that the land ownership proclamation is effectively implemented.**
- A place is secured for women in the local and regional land distribution committees.**
- In the distribution of the land for various purposes, 2009-2012, more than 32% was allocated for women headed families.**







## 1.2. ACCESS TO MICROCREDIT

- **Several Credit Program schemes are introduced and implemented.**
- **To date, over 50 thousand women benefited from this program, which has a revolving fund of about 28,466,660 USD.**
- **Indirect beneficiaries of this program are estimated to be around half a million.**



## 1.3. SKILLS TRAINING

- **NUEW supports skills development; such as, weaving, handicraft, auto-mechanic, computer skill, that has an impact in improving the living standard of the women and their families.**



**Sara Araya**  
Heavy Equipment Operator



## **1.4. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SAVING ENERGY**

- Traditional Eritrean stoves consume firewood and emit too much smoke making them hazardous to women's health as well as contribute to environmental degradation;**
- To mitigate these damages, fuel efficient, energy saving and smokeless stove locally known as 'adhanet' has been invented and widely distributed.**
- Several women are not only using the innovative stove, but they have also developed the skill to produce and earn additional income.**

## **... ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SAVING ENERGY**

- **The “Adhanet” stove is internationally patented and Eritrea has received the following awards:**
  - **2003 Ashdon Award, United Kingdom**
  - **2005 Japan Expo, Japan**
  - **2006 Tech-Museum Awards, United States**
  - **2007 Bill Gates Award, United States**
  - **2010 Green Apple Award, United States**

# ... Environmental Protection and Saving Energy

## ADHANET STOVE





## 2. ENSURING WOMEN'S HEALTH

- Eritrea is one of the few African countries to achieve the three (4, 5 and 6) health MDG's;
- The establishment of Peer Women Malaria, Peer Women HIV/AIDS Groups and the implementation of mother-child health programs have been useful in the implementation of the health MDGs 4,5 and 6.



## ...HEALTH

- **Waiting delivery homes are established in remote villages.**
- **Traditional Birth Assistants (TBA) are trained and equipped with appropriate medical instruments.**
- **High coverage of immunization is in place making Eritrea measles and polio free country.**



### 3. ENSURING GIRLS AND WOMEN ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- In Eritrea education is free from kindergarten to the tertiary levels.
- In rural areas, girl's opportunity to attend school is often impeded by the enormous domestic work, such as fetching of water and fire wood.





## **...education**

- **Innovative and incentive oriented projects and activities are introduced to retain girl's enrollment in school:**
  1. **Under the "Donkey and Canvas project", women in rural areas are provided with a donkey and canvas water tank. Over 13,000 families own donkeys, about 20,000 girls, were able to go to school. The project has contributed in changing gender roles as boys have started sharing the task of fetching water;**
  2. **Girls who commute long distance to school are given bicycles for free;**
  3. **Sanitary Pads are supplied free of charge to prevent school absenteeism;**
  4. **Special awards is given to outstanding girl students**
  5. **Boarding schools are established in remote areas and affirmative action at tertiary level is introduced by the government to ensure girls enrolment and retention.**







## **4. ERADICATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

- Underage marriage is legally banned.**
- In 2007, FGM was legally abolished and criminalized.**
- Under the leadership of NUEW, the law was broadly and extensively discussed by all sectors of the society before it was promulgated and is being implemented with public support.**
- Extensive media and community sensitization activity was carried.**



# ...ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Civil societies, village elders, community and religious leaders were involved from the start.
- Alternative sources of income for practitioners of FGM was put in place.
- The FGM that affected 95% of girls in 1995, today has dropped to 12% for ages 5 and under



## **5. ENHANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING**

- Ministers of Justice, Health and Tourism are women, this constitutes 18<sup>0</sup>% of the ministerial post. Out of six Governors one is woman.**
- Through affirmative action, in all community courts, at least one of the three judges is a woman.**
- 30<sup>0</sup>% of the national and local assemblies as well as administrative organs is allocated to women.**

## CHALLENGES

- **Like in many traditional societies, women in Eritrea face several challenges.**
  - **Discriminatory patriarchal attitudes and practices;**
  - **Limited number of professional women in all sectors;**
  - **The low level technological and infrastructural development of the country.**
  - **Limited financial resources to effectively and broadly implement all programs and projects.**



## **KEY EXPERIENCE**

- 1) A strong grassroots women organization. The Union has 300,444 members and offices in the six regions, 58 sub-regions, and village communities as well as in the Diaspora.**
- 2) Strong political commitment of the government and leadership**
- 3) Extensive involvement of the general population, including community elders and religious leaders,**
- 4) Effective coordination among NUEW, government and private institutions.**
- 5) Partnership with international institutions and civil society organizations on the bases of mutual respect and national ownership.**

**Thank You**