Theme: "Adding value to local products: a strategic lever for the economic empowerment of women in Africa".

Date & Time: Friday 8 March 2024
at 10:00 UTC+1 (Local time in Rabat) / 09:00 UTC

Webinar link: ZOOM
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83001089437?pwd=bGJqZnZTQ2J6d2xtWS9wNXVNYmVIQT09

Meeting ID: 830 0108 9437
Secret code: 464007

Context

In line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which came into force on 3 January 1976 and was ratified by the majority of African states following their accession to independence, recognises that: "The ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights".

By acceding to it, States have an obligation to guarantee their people all their rights, including their economic rights. However, it has to be said that economic rights are not innate rights, so their exercise is left to the goodwill of each States, depending on their economic capacity. This explains the disparities in the effectiveness of these economic rights, and the fact that they differ from one country to another.

In 2015, the International Community adopted the 2030 Agenda for The World We Want, through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", which sets as targets in particular:

« 5.5. Participation and access to management positions: To guarantee the full and effective participation of women and their equal access to leadership positions at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life."
5.a. Rights and access to resources: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control of land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with domestic law.

Providing women with more equitable access to resources and services, such as land, water, technology, innovation, credit, banking and financial services, will strengthen their rights, fight poverty, increase productivity in agriculture and services, reduce hunger and improve economic growth.

These seven (7) aspirations of the African Agenda 2063 for The Africa We Want, reflect the desire for shared prosperity and well-being, unity and integration, a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the potential of women and young people is fully exploited, and freed from fear, disease and desire.

Aspiration 6 of African Agenda 2063: An Africa whose development is people-centred, which builds on the potential of its people, especially women and young people, and which cares about the well-being of children. All African citizens will be actively involved in all aspects of decision-making. Africa will be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man is left behind or excluded on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnicity, locality, age or any other factor:

- Full equality between men and women in all areas of life:
  To strengthen the role of African women by guaranteeing equality and parity between men and women in all areas of life (political, economic and social); to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Nevertheless, when it comes to exercising economic rights, women remain the most marginalised on the continent, where men run the society under the influence of culture, beliefs, traditions and stereotypes. And yet, women have already proven their capability to participate in the development process of our continent and our countries.

On the economic front, according to the World Bank, women’s small businesses account for 30-50% of GDP in some African countries, or 65% of the continent's wealth (WIA Philanthropy). As for food production, women produce almost 70% of the food in Africa (WIA Philanthropy).

Despite this, the African market is still flooded with imported products to the detriment of local production. For this reason, many women are still living in a precarious financial situation. This is due to the fact that their local production and their local trade are not valued, which represents a major loss of earnings for the local economy and for local economic development, in terms of promoting local products.

Local products: Traditional products are normally defined as those linked to local know-how and socio-cultural identity, produced in a defined and identified geographical area that is in principle linked to the origin of the product. It is an agricultural or craft product, whether processed or not, linked geographically, agronomically and climatically to a country, or territory. Production is made from the generational know-how; traditions of its population on how to grow, raise, create, manufacture, and process the items to its finishing touch in readiness for the market.
So we ask ourselves:

- **As active players in local economic development, what role do women play today in promoting and enhancing local produce?**

- **How can women contribute to the development of local products?**

- **What reforms are needed to create a favourable environment for women involved in promoting local produce?**

- **Is there any good practice in the Oriental Region that could inspire other Moroccan regions and African local authorities?**

It is to answer these questions and many others, and with the aim of making its contribution to improving the situation of women on the Continent, that United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA Africa), through its REFELA Network, has launched its African Cities Campaign for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls.

As part of the ongoing implementation of this Campaign and in line with the 2024 International Women’s Day theme calling for "Investing in Women", the General Secretariat of UCLG Africa, the REFELA Network, REFELA-Morocco Chapter, in partnership with the Oriental Regional Council, the Oriental Development Agency and the Belgian NGO Echos-Communication, are organising a Webinar on: "Adding value to local products: A strategic lever for the economic empowerment of women in Africa".

**Objectif general:**

The general aim of this meeting is to enable local elected women to have an exchange with women entrepreneurs, in order to see to what extent local elected women can accompany and support women entrepreneurs in developing their products and strengthening their economic autonomy, through reforms and appropriate tools for promoting local products.

**Target audience:**

- Women Presidents of Local Authorities and local elected representatives;
- Women entrepreneurs and heads of women’s cooperatives;
- The various components of civil society;
- The various players and stakeholders concerned with the issue of gender equality.

**Date:** Friday 8 March 2024 at 9:00 (UTC) - 10:00 (UTC+1, Local Time in Morocco)

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## PROGRAMME

**Moderator: Mr Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General of UCLG Africa.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08h30</td>
<td>Welcoming participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h00</td>
<td>Opening and Welcome speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h15</td>
<td>Hon. Representative of the Oriental Regional Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hon. Representative of the Oriental Development Agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hon. Mrs Rohey Malick LOWE, Mayor of Banjul, President of REFELA.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h15</td>
<td>&quot;The need to create an African Women’s Network to promote local products&quot;, By <strong>Hon. Mrs Fatna EL KHIEL</strong>, President of the Arbaoua Communal Council, President of REFELA-Morocco and Vice-President of REFELA-North Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h25</td>
<td>&quot;The challenges and difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in developing and marketing their products. By <strong>Mrs. Assetou DIARRA</strong>, Treasurer of the Association &quot;AN KA DOKE&quot; (Let’s do something) of Pelingana, Mali.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h30</td>
<td>What do you think of the creation of this Network? How will it be useful to you? How do you intend to contribute to its continued existence? by <strong>Mrs. AYépse NKAMGNA Monique</strong>, National President of the Social and Solidarity Economy, Mayor of Dzeng, Cameroon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h35</td>
<td>&quot;How can local elected representatives support women entrepreneurs in the process of processing and marketing local produce? How can the local administration support women entrepreneurs in developing local products? By <strong>Hon. Mrs Marie Angel MEYANGA</strong>, REFELA- Cameroon, Vice-President of REFELA for the Central Africa Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h40</td>
<td>&quot;How is the process of labelling and certifying local products according to international standards used to enhance their value and market them? By <strong>Mrs Hamida EL KHOUCHE</strong>, Expert in Territorial Coaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h50</td>
<td>&quot;How can REFELA make this initiative its own and what added value will it bring to the local economic development of African territories? By <strong>Mr Jean Pierre ELONG MBASSI</strong>, Secretary General of UCLG Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h00</td>
<td>Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h15</td>
<td>Summary and recommendations, By <strong>Hon. Mrs Fatna EL KHIEL</strong>, President of the Arbaoua Communal Council, President of REFELA-Morocco, Vice-President of REFELA-North Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h25</td>
<td>Closing remarks, By <strong>Hon. Mrs Roheyatou LOWE</strong>, Président de REFELA.</td>
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