

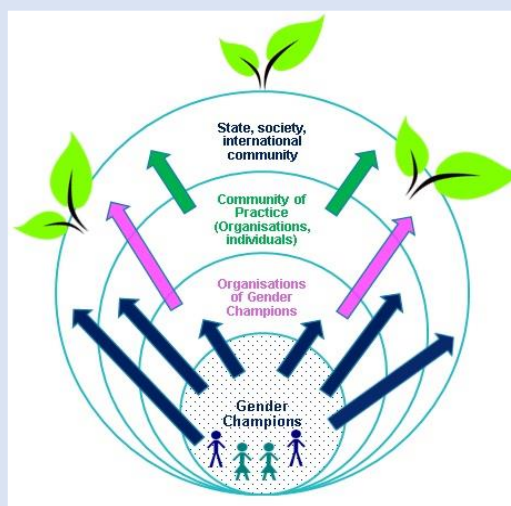
## Working Together for Better Results

### Gender Champions model: Case Study 2

**This pamphlet is the second in our Case Study series documenting the work of the Gender Champions.** It highlights the way in which social capital – in the form of the Gender Champions network – can be harnessed to bring about change and initiate new ways of working. Bringing in the right expertise, at the right time, to the right forum is the first step in achieving a significant shift in attitudes and approaches. This is not an over-night transformation: achieving institutional change requires perseverance and time. Nevertheless, the bedrock of development is founded upon small and manageable adaptations, which is where this story begins.

#### Who are the Gender Champions?

**The Gender Champions are a group of well-respected, well-connected thought leaders in the area of gender in DRC.** They have been selected to represent a diverse range of expertise and profiles. All of them have deep knowledge of local dynamics; the socio-cultural environment; gender programming; and girls' and women's empowerment in the DRC. Influential within their organisations, these women and men come from within the civil society sector, public and private sector, and are interested to collaborate and to network.



**The Gender Champions work to build capacity within the GoDRC and civil society.** By identifying opportunities for change in key sectors and at different levels, they *work together* to implement strategic approaches through *complementary* activities. They might focus on their own organisations; organisations in the wider community of practice around adolescent girls and young women (AGYW); and other state/ society/ international entities beyond.

#### Background note on context and methodology

This case study centres on the annual reporting by the Government of DRC specified by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, ratified by 189 states, including DRC. The Convention obliges States to submit regular reports on implementation of the Convention to the Secretary-General. Civil society may submit a 'shadow' report.

This case study is based on interviews with four key informants: two Gender Champions and a Mentor at La Pépinière involved in organising and/ or delivering training on CEDAW reporting; and the Permanent Secretary of the Human Rights Interministry Committee. The case study is also informed by a review of relevant policies and reports, and feedback from participants in the training and validation workshop on the country report.

### A Gender Champion with a lot on her plate...

**Annie Kenda is an expert within the Ministry of Gender, and one of La Pépinière's Gender Champions.** She is part of Le Comité Interministériel de Droits de l'Homme (a Human Rights Committee under the Ministry of Justice consisting of experts from different ministries), tasked with drafting and monitoring the implementation of the official human rights reports to international committees. This includes reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

**The Interministry Committee faced a number of significant challenges.** These included a lack of budget over the last two years to conduct data collection or organise broader consultations, and high staff turnover. The Interministry Committee experts lacked knowledge about CEDAW and its reporting processes, and their gender expertise was very limited. In 2013, the CEDAW Committee noted some of these issues and recommended that DRC reinforce its reporting quality.<sup>1</sup>

### ...reaches out to her network for help.

**Annie Kenda acknowledged the importance of consulting with civil society, but recognised that she was not able to push through this process by herself.** She realised that the additional support and knowledge within the Gender Champion network might hold the key to helping solve some of these problems. Scanning the resources available, Annie identified and reached out to trainers with the knowledge and skillset required to help address some of the challenges in the Interministry Committee, and in addition increase collaboration with civil society.



**For government to reach out to civil society experts in this way represents a break-through.** Although government is obliged to consult with civil society as part of the process of drafting the CEDAW report, anecdotal reports suggest that in the past the committee did not invite 'real' civil society engagement. Rather, they fell back on consulting their own personal contacts or reaching out to one or two 'token' actors, because of a lack of resources.

**The Gender Champions network was there to help.** Annie Kenda identified two expert trainers. *Francoise Mukuku, Gender Champion*, is a civil society expert on youth and AGYW, an activist and executive director of a young women's organisation. *Astrid Tambwe, Mentor at La Pépinière*, was formerly trained by International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) on CEDAW reporting and has a long background in women's rights and human rights organisations, including in drafting parallel reports from civil society. She has previously trained civil society organisations in CEDAW reporting.

**Timing was critical to get the momentum and the inputs needed.** Although a validation workshop and engagement with civil society are required steps in developing the country report, time was running out and there was a lack of resources and lack of impetus for this to occur. Feedback from interviewees stated that it was unlikely to have happened, until the engagement between the Gender Champions. La Pépinière was able to further step in and support this process by providing meeting room space within the physical hub. Feedback forms from the participants in the workshop highlight that these additional resources - free use of meeting rooms, good internet connection, hard copies of the GLRU research and evidence - were very valuable in making the process and the outcome fruitful.

### And together, they begin to address gaps in understanding...

**The collaboration between a Gender Champion in government and other Gender Champions/civil society actors in La Pépinière began to take shape.** The first step was a capacity building session for the government experts. This focused on the reporting procedure for CEDAW, providing insight into CEDAW

and gender, the principles of drafting the CEDAW report, and obligations of the state, amongst other areas. Feedback from participants stressed the practical benefits of understanding institutional responsibilities which were not previously clear to them (a crucial aspect of accountability) – for example, feedback shows that the members of the Interministry Committee, many of whom were relatively new to the role, appreciated the explanation and clarifications about the role of the interdepartmental committee of CEDAW in the country report and the difference between the shadow report and the country report. As knowledge about CEDAW and the reporting processes had previously been highlighted as particular weaknesses, increased engagement on these questions was critical – although clearly just the beginning of a longer process of changing practice.

**Understanding and appreciation of gender issues was central to the training.** Feedback reflects the value the participants found in a presentation given by Francoise on the meaning of gender, with a number of feedback forms highlighting key points that will be useful for their work such as “notions of gender in the face of cultural values”. Francoise reported that that prior to the exchange the Committee members mostly regarded women and girls as a homogenous group, and the reports did not reflect the particular concerns and needs of adolescent girls and young women. She found that the discussions, drawing on the research of La Pépinière, and the opportunity for the Committee to engage with civil society actors working directly with young women, began to “deepen the understanding of intersectionality between age and gender or status to better understand the difference and make the report more inclusive of young women and young people.”

[... and to challenge old ways of working.](#)

**The next step was to bring the Committee members together with civil society organisations.** This consultation provided an opportunity for interaction among a variety of stakeholders and an opportunity for lesson sharing on the CEDAW process. Francoise facilitated an exercise to analyse the real changes that had occurred in country, supporting the Interministry Committee to identify where they believed gaps existed. According to feedback from participants, whereas in the past the reporting process was narrowly focused on the CEDAW Committee’s recommendations, this new approach was more in-depth and included a holistic consideration of progress in addition.

**Astrid, who has previously worked on the civil society side, describes how there has always been a ‘conflict’ between government and civil society in the reporting processes.** This training-and-consultation approach constituted an important opportunity for building bridges, beginning to shift ways of working and engagement. Whilst the training deepened an understanding of the need for the two reports (government and civil society), the participatory approach enabled a discussion of how government and civil society can work together, and what best practice might look like.



Astrid Tambwe, Mentor at La Pépinière

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*“The training was a reconciliation and a very constructive engagement... This is a great change. They understand now, they invite us.”*

*Astrid, Civil Society Gender Champion*

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**The result? Increasing space for continued collaboration in a range of areas.**

**The response from those involved was very positive, yielding opportunities for further engagement.** All feedback forms received from participants rated the session 4 or 5 out of 5 for the relevance of the support provided to their work. Pleased with the training, consultations and discussions, the Permanent

Secretary of the Interministry Committee from the Ministry of Justice invited Astrid and other activists to support consultations with civil society during the drafting of the Convention Against Torture (CAT) report – the first time civil society has been invited to validate the CAT report. The training and support of Gender Champions in organising a thorough consultation with civil society on the CEDAW report offers an important entry point to improve ways of working, representing a real shift in engagement.

**The government report has now been sent to the CEDAW committee and members of the Interministry Committee reported back that their increased understanding of CEDAW has improved the quality of the report.** The Permanent Secretary of the Interministry Committee believes that the training and the collaboration between civil society and government is responsible for this improvement, noting that before the training few participants knew about CEDAW and the greater understanding has led to the difference between the former and current report.<sup>ii</sup> Better reports underpin a better understanding of the issues – fundamental to improved policies and programmes to uphold the rights of women and girls.

### Conclusion: building bridges to bring about change.

**The Gender Champion network offers a great opportunity to build bridges between key stakeholders, and to tap into expert resources.** The capacity building session and civil society consultation made possible through the Gender Champion's network constituted a significant shift in the relationship between government and civil society in CEDAW reporting. The momentum and resources within the GC network turned a potentially tokenistic consultation into something much more meaningful and impactful. The varied collective capacities of the Gender Champion network allowed the Gender Champion in the Interministry Committee to access the correct skills and knowledge to help address challenges. La Pépinière was further able to provide physical space and resources to catalyse the process.

**New ways of working can help deliver better outcomes for women and girls in DRC.** The consultations strengthened the accountability of the report through 'real' civil society involvement, challenging old ways of working and moving away from the tendency for minimal engagement with known actors. The training also responded to CEDAW Committee recommendations on increased capacity of the Interministry Committee as well as consultations with civil society during the drafting process. What began with a Gender Champion in government collaborating with Gender Champions in civil society, has opened up greater opportunities for complementarity and innovation and a platform for dialogue. It has also helped to increase the accountability of CEDAW reporting and other international human rights law processes in DRC.

**But this story has only just begun.** Evidence tells us that to bring about sustainable and institutional change, engagement needs to be repeated, and one-off capacity building events have limited value. For Annie, Astrid and their colleagues, maintaining and nurturing these first steps is essential, expanding and deepening the numbers of people across government and civil society who are willing and able to bridge the 'divide' and work together to bring about change.



<sup>i</sup> Article 49, Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, CEDAW, CEDAW/C/COD/CO/6-7

<sup>ii</sup> Report will be available in July.