

Chapter

4

Ground floor: Lobbying and advocacy at national level



Gender activists strategise in Zambia.

PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

This chapter explores the critical link between the regional and national level advocacy and lobbying efforts for the Protocol and provides insights on how national government officials were approached and the use of media at national level to give visibility to the Protocol and gender equality issues. The chapter reflects the critical importance of working on the ground floor, right down to village level in the case of Mauritius, in mobilising the necessary buy-in at regional level. It shows how lobbying host governments like South Africa, where the Protocol was finally adopted in August 2008, is critical to the success of regional processes.

Shared strategies and national action

From the beginning, the SADC Gender Protocol campaign realised that regional and national strategies must work in tandem. Linking the national to the regional, and vice versa, was one of the key implementing strategies of the campaign to achieve its goal – the adoption of the Protocol by SADC member states.

In practice, this translated into the Alliance's regional strategies and positions influencing the national agenda, and vice versa. For example, if a regional decision was made to influence the SADC Gender Ministers meetings, this would be supported by actions focused at the national machineries at national level. Another example is adopted positions on issues at the regional level would be followed through at national level through targeted lobbying and advocacy strategies. To effectively do this, a focal point for action, a person or organisation responsible for spearheading the campaign nationally, was selected. There are focal points for the Alliance's work in 14 of the 15 SADC countries; an Angolan focal point is still to be identified.

The Alliance also works to solidify the links between national and regional activism for the Protocol in several other ways. A standard agenda item of every Alliance meeting is feedback on actions taken at country level (accompanied by a tracking tool), which forms the basis for discussions on implications of country experiences for regional and national action going forward. Another standard lobbying tool that the Alliance has developed for

"The Alliance further noted that the new draft Gender Protocol, with few exceptions, effectively compromises previous SADC governments' national, regional and international commitments. In particular:

- The text creates loopholes to the adherence by governments to time bound targets, in line with commitments already made in global development blue prints such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Words like "ensure" are changed to "endeavour".
- The commitment to ensuring that where there is a contradiction between customary law and Constitutional provisions for gender equality the latter takes precedence have been removed. This leaves wide open the dual legal system that daily undermines the rights of women in the region, especially poor women in rural areas.
- Key sections on HIV and AIDS, health and education, the media, information and communication, have been completely removed and cross referenced with existing SADC Protocols that make no mention of gender disparities.
- The section on institutional mechanisms and some progress indicators, for example, with regard to addressing gender based violence (GBV), have also been removed. This renders the binding nature of the proposed Gender Protocol largely ineffective.

In light of this, Alliance members have resolved to engage with Ministers of Gender, Foreign Affairs and Justice, as well as parliamentarians, amongst others, in the 14 SADC countries". *Extract from Press Release Johannesburg 13 November 2007 "Southern African NGOs Condemn Backtracking on Gender Protocol".*

regional and national action is position papers.

Each Alliance meeting also maps a way forward, which guides national focal points and defines the mandate of the overall coordinating NGO. After the 2007 SADC Summit, for example, there was disappointment that the Protocol had been deferred. The Alliance needed to regroup and develop a new road map. Therefore at its first meeting after the 2007 summit in November, the Alliance decided to take a stronger political stance in its lobbying efforts, particularly at national level.

Alliance members had the task of engaging a wide range of stakeholders.

The extract from the Alliance 2007 press release outlining key areas of concerns to be taken forward at national level illustrates the importance of local level action:

At another strategy workshop (28-31 January 2008) in Johannesburg, South Africa, post the meeting of SADC Senior Officials Responsible for Gender Meeting held in December 2007, in Zambia, the Alliance further determined national level actions to be undertaken. This was a multilayered approach, with an emphasis on engaging governments, and also mobilising peers, linking with SADC National Focal Points, engaging media, conducting outreach work and mobilising resources. Below is an extract from the roadmap:

| Excerpt: Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance Consolidated Action Plan January – August 2008 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--|--|--|--|
| Benchmark | Time Frame | Action Country Level | Action Regional Level | Materials | Media |
| Alliance Strategy Workshop | Jan - Feb 08 | | | Position paper | Press release Opinions and commentaries |
| National consultations | Feb – April 08 | National Consultative workshops (link to government consultations) Engage SADC National Focal Points (Min. Foreign Affairs) and SADC National Committees (SNCs) | Support country level actions Information sharing | 2 page summary on Protocol (for outreach) Pamphlets | Press conferences Opinions and commentaries |

On three different occasions GL as coordinating NGO mobilised seed funds for national level activities: once from the Southern African Trust and twice from Norwegian Church Aid. GL then served as administrator of these small grants which made it possible to hold caucus meetings

at national level. Following the adoption of the Protocol, GL mobilised funds through DFID for developing pamphlets in 25 indigenous languages on the provisions of the Protocol. National focal points organised meetings around the creation of these pamphlets.

Alliance members strategic positioning at national level

Members have worked in different ways at national level to implement the overall regional strategy. In some cases, the approach at national level has worked well, in others it has not. One of the frustrations for GL as coordinator had to do with late reports and the difficulty of getting adequate financial accounting for local level activities in some instances. This added to the administrative burden, and led to the coordinating agency feeling it should withdraw from mobilising funds at the local level, and concentrate on regional level activities. On the other hand, in many countries (and initiatives described in this chapter) these small catalytic grants helped to ignite key local level actions.

The success of the national processes has largely depended on the ability of the national focal point to create a structured way of working, and to create linkages with highly visible initiatives in order to mainstream the Protocol; for example, International Women's Day celebrations, the Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, or other national days (for example Women's Month in August in South Africa).

The Alliance's impact at the national level has also depended on the political influence of the focal point, and their tactical ability to use formal and informal networks to access the right people at the right time. A number of Alliance members are strategically positioned in the gender/women's movement, or have the ability to coordinate gender activities in a way that ensures that the key actors are on board and can influence the agenda. Some of the members have managed to mainstream the Protocol work in their existing advocacy or lobbying programmes, thus maximising on already existing opportunities to link with their peers.

Where this worked well, Alliance activities gave gender and women's rights groups new impetus to coalesce on

issues that had otherwise lost momentum at national level. Some Alliance members had more success than others in creating strong links with governments on the Protocol. Others already had a well established track record of working with national gender machineries and were well placed to influence the direction of the Protocol agenda, particularly at the time when decisive steps were required for the Protocol to be adopted.

As Elsie Alexander from Botswana reflects: "The strategy to form a SADC Protocol Alliance in 2005 was effective as it led to a consultative process at the national level. The process facilitated coalition building at the national level, as consensus building and advocacy at this level was critical to feed into the regional process. The protocol process was also a stimulant to reinvigorating the collective/consensus approach as in some countries, such as, Botswana, gender coalitions/ coordinating machineries that were established were no longer as effective as before. The SADC Gender Protocol provided space and opportunity for bringing together the gender/women's organisations to collectively advocate for the adoption of the protocol by governments. The collective process at the national level strongly contributed to a level of ownership and collective negotiation for governments to listen".

There are many examples that can be cited where Alliance members brought key players together to define a national agenda, using the Protocol as the point of reference.

SAfAIDS, originally the focal point in Zimbabwe on the Protocol¹ successfully used the Protocol



process to keep gender issues on the radar of government at a very difficult



Elsie Alexander and Judith Mtsewu at a Botswana Alliance strategy meeting. PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

time in the political and economic history of the country. The process ensured that other players that would not otherwise have engaged with government at the time, had a window to put their issues on the table, using the Protocol as the entry point. Zimbabwe was one of the countries that signed the Protocol in August 2008, in spite of initial misgivings and concerns on some issues (marital rape, protection of the rights of vulnerable groups). Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) has taken advantage of the Protocol process to influence the constitutional review process in Zambia, in the face of difficulties encountered by gender activists as regards the content and consultations on the process.

What is significant about strategic positioning of the Alliance process at national level has been the potential it has to stimulate movement building and to bring SADC to the gender activists, other players, and citizens at national level. Resources were mobilised and members motivated to access funding to hold in country consultations, where some stakeholders who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to engage SADC processes, were involved.

1. Zimbabwe Women Lawyers was identified as the new focal point from August 2008

Engaging government at national level in Malawi



Malawi's government realises the need to address gender disparities through broad-based partnerships, committed leadership, multi-sectoral strategies, and strong involvement of stakeholders at every level in our society so that they share what they have learned through many decades of support and policy advocacy. This broad consultative approach enabled gender activists in Malawi to actively participate in all the processes to craft the SADC Gender Protocol at national level; and, this approach also gave a chance to most Malawians to understand the Protocol well before its adoption.

Although the ministry responsible for gender was not represented at the 2005 Gaborone SADC Summit, CSOs from Malawi attending the parallel SADC NGOs meeting had an opportunity to lobby the Malawian ministers present to support the 50/50 target of women in decision-making adopted by the Heads of State and Government during the Summit. This marked the start of my personal involvement in the SADC Protocol processes.

My involvement at the Gaborone meeting gave me strength to start advocating for the 50/50 target at the national level, long before our gender machinery made their official statement. The ministry officials waited for the official communications from the SADC Secretariat before taking action, while I began to mobilise my fellow Network members to join me in this initiative. My involvement in the Alliance also gave me so much information to share at the national level, even though was in its early stages of the (Protocol) campaign in 2005.



Strategising: Pat Made and Emma Kaliya. PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

Through my leadership, the NGOGCN and the Ministry of Women and Child Development jointly organised the first National Consultative workshop, with financial support from the SADC Alliance. The aim was to give Malawians a chance to discuss and comment on the (earlier) draft Protocol. The national machinery did not have resources to finance this kind of workshop, and solely depended on the financial support that the NGOGCN secured from the Alliance.

At this point, government recognised the substantive contributions from the NGOGCN around the Protocol, and the government included me on their delegation to the subsequent SADC Protocol meetings. They knew that I would make meaningful contributions to the process, because of the vast ideas that I had from the Alliance.

The NGOGCN was a valuable resource to the government in this process. This was proven when they technically supported our second National Consultative meeting in preparation for the SADC Senior Officials meeting in Namibia (2008). The government was quite aware that I had an institutional memory of all the processes, because my representation at national and regional level meetings remained consistent, while government kept changing its officials. I soon had dual representation – in the Alliance and government forums.

The mutual understanding, as well as the trust, that developed between the NGOGCN and government enabled our relationship to remain intact throughout the process. Due to this relationship, we again agreed to jointly design and implement a National 50/50 Programme around the 2009 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, even before the Protocol was adopted. This joint initiative further illustrates the honest relationship that prevails between us. The government continues to rely on my technical advice on issues regarding the Protocol, and there are times when the ministry officials engage us to lobby on sensitive issues with other high level authorities.

This helped us a lot, because they gave us some insights on the processes and how we could avoid touching on some sensitive areas. We got the blessing of most departments and they did assure us of their support at the (2008) Summit in South Africa.

The lessons learned in this process included:

- The good rapport established with the National Gender Machinery helped the process to be smoother at national level.
- The professionalism demonstrated earned me very high respect from Government.
- Remaining focussed on the agenda created a lot of trust.
- Involving others in lobbying process was an added value to the process because it was seen as a national agenda unlike individual business.
- The unity between the NGOs and government should be documented as good practice.

Emma Kaliya, Malawi NGO Gender Coordinating Network

(Editors note: At the time of writing, Malawi was one of three SADC countries, along with Botswana and Mauritius, that had not yet signed the Protocol but appears to be on the verge of doing so, thanks in large measure to the tireless efforts of the Malawi NGO Gender Coordinating Network).

The Malawi example reflects the tensions that existed within some governments who wanted to find ways to avoid engaging with civil society. One of the critically important strategies that the SADC GU deployed to open the space for civil society engagement was to ensure that every invitation to a technical meeting to review the draft Protocol required that government delegations include a civil society representative. This became a trump card that the Alliance could use for members to find their way into government delegations. This was also a strategy to influence the process from within; central to achieving much of the gains the Alliance made in successive drafts of the Protocol.

In essence there were two ways in which the Alliance directly influenced the government agenda on the Protocol at national level. First was direct engagement with senior government officials, in particular in the ministries of gender, foreign affairs and justice. One of

the strategies used was to create templates of communications the Alliance would send to respective ministries, clearly articulating the Alliance's position on matters of concern. The level at which the communications were pitched, and the concise articulation of Alliance concerns often open doors at very senior levels; the informal relationship with some of the senior officials also assisted in creating opportunities to discuss issues in concrete ways.

It is also worth noting that whilst some of the action was at national level, Alliance members also shared intelligence on who would participate at strategic SADC meetings (Council of Ministers, Senior Officials, SADC Summit), so that we could also lobby them in the corridors where possible.

Participating in government delegations: What Alliance members say



How does one get on a delegation? *Ialfine Tracoulat of the FPFE Madagascar and Alliance Focal Point*, knew of the Senior Officials meeting taking place in Zambia in December 2007 and that civil society would be represented on the government delegation:

“My strategy was to approach a key person in the Ministry for Health and Family Planning of my country, because this Ministry deals with Women in Madagascar, in order to confirm this information initially. But, I was very amazed when my interlocutress announced to me that they received the invitation on behalf of the focal point of the SADC in Madagascar, ... and that the civil society was not invited. With this information, I contacted the SADC focal point which recommended that I speak with the Ministry in charge of women. Correspondence amongst Alliance members was exchanged at the same time, and they confirmed that the delegation was to include one representative of the civil society.

“I came back my interlocutor at the Ministry but she told me that the appointment of the members of the delegation was made, the letter of official nomination was signed by the Minister and that the members of the delegation were the three people of the Ministry, resulting in civil society not being represented. In addition, the Ministry told me that the letter did not mention that civil society was to be member of the delegation. Later it was discovered that the contents of the original letter on behalf of the office of the SADC was changed due to translation error. Taking into account all these efforts, the Ministry assured me that from now onwards, they will take into account civil society in general, and members of the Alliance in particular, for other actions concerning this Protocol”.



Lorato Sakufiwa, former Director of the Kagisano Society Women's Shelter Project and the Gender and Development Sector of BOCONGO, relates her experience:

"In April 2007, the SADC Senior Officials Meeting was held in Gaborone, Botswana and there were four of us representing civil society. Our input at this meeting was limited, because the government team did not seem keen to provide space for our views. This was the first SADC meeting I had attended and there had not been any briefing on the process, so I did not know how to deal with the fact that we could not express our views. My comfort was that the input from the National Consultative Meeting was captured in the document.

"The SADC Ministers of Women's/Gender Affairs followed in June 2007 and was held in Maputo, Mozambique. There were two civil society representatives in the Botswana delegation that consisted of the Assistant Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, and the Senior Gender Officer, Women's Affairs Department (WAD). On arrival, a meeting was held by the delegation to agree on issues to be presented. Occasionally, during the first two days (Senior Officials meeting), we were given an opportunity to speak on issues the team felt we articulated better. This was appreciated as a sign that civil society's opinion was respected. When the Minister arrived, there was a briefing session by the delegation with our equal participation.

"At the Senior Officials Meeting convened in Livingstone, Zambia in December 2007, the Deputy Director, WAD, the Permanent Secretary, Labour and Home Affairs and I constituted the delegation. We followed the same process of having a meeting as the Botswana delegation to agree on what would be presented at the larger meeting. The challenge here was that the position of government had changed and the Permanent Secretary as Head of Delegation, represented that position. The good thing was that he was willing to discuss and was flexible to adopt some of the issues raised. At this meeting the voice of civil society was clearly heard. Members of the Alliance met on the arrival night, discussed and had consensus on the issues of concern. Gender Links as part of the South African delegation presented the input of the Alliance members. Senior Officials reinstated important text that was removed after the 2007 Summit.

"At the Ministers Meeting held in Windhoek, Namibia in April 2008, things got tighter. Civil Society was represented and I was allowed to participate in all the discussions. However, there was no longer flexibility in terms of hearing out what we had to say. Government's voice was loud and 'final'."



Sarry Xoagus-Eises, Alliance Focal Point, Namibia reflects: "On a number of occasions, I personally travelled with the Namibian government delegation to various destinations to protect civil society interests in the document. Let me share some of my findings with you. It was not easy to be part of the government delegation, as you travel as one team to conferences. It depends on your group's leader, which in this case is a senior

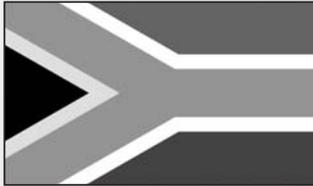
government official, to allow you to contribute to any of the debates. These heads of delegation are always very careful not to allow civic groups to overtake these debates. Furthermore, things are done on consensus and civil society is aware of these limitations. But at the end of the day, both civil society and government reached consensus for the benefit of all the women in the region. Namibia was no exception."

South Africa 2008 – the final push

Following the blow of the Protocol not being adopted at the Lusaka Heads of State summit in 2007, the Alliance grasped quickly the political importance

of going for broke at the SADC 2008 summit scheduled to take place in South Africa, as described in the reflections below.

Home ground



The then President Thabo Mbeki was under political pressure at home. He had always been more of a foreign than a domestic president. And gender equality had a highly visible place in his vision of an African Renaissance. Activists realised that if they failed to get the Protocol adopted while South Africa held the rotating chair and in Mbeki's last year of a two year presidential term the dream might be deferred for very many years to come.

We knew we had to get in on the ground floor. As GL we had cultivated good relations with the Office on the Status of Women in the president's office; with the then Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka (who featured prominently in our book: *Ringing up the Changes: Gender and Politics in Southern Africa*) and with the first lady, Zanele Mbeki. I sat on the President's Advisory Group on Women and used these quarterly meetings as an avenue to distribute information on the Protocol as well as conduct lobbying.

At a time when relations between the SADC Secretariat and civil society were strained to the point that the Task Team had virtually ceased meeting, as GL we got back into the process by being invited onto the South African delegation. This proved especially important at the December 2007 Livingstone strategy meeting for senior officials responsible for gender and women's affairs where we literally had to rescue the Protocol that had been hugely watered down by officials who met behind closed doors at the August summit in Lusaka.

The SADC Gender Unit had cleverly and strategically suggested that all government delegations have at least one civil society representative. They privately advised all of us to get onto our government delegations. At least five key alliance members came to the Livingstone meeting this way. We caucused in the evenings and strategised about who would say what. Mostly, we got our governments to say what we wanted to say, providing wording and arguments where these were required.

The tension that ensued was thus between governments, rather than between governments and civil society. There was a clear divide between the more progressive and conservative governments with South Africa at one extreme, Lesotho and Botswana at the other, and Namibia usually in between.

At these meetings we were exposed to some of the patriarchal attitudes still prevalent in our societies, even among senior bureaucrats and even among women. During the Livingstone meeting, a woman minister argued that women should not seek to retain their surnames, as this is against religion. Male officials questioned why the Protocol sought to restrict how many women they could marry (the debates on customary law versus Constitutional provisions). Delegates seemed to sniff sexual orientation in every clause, including references to marginalised groups, of whom there are so many, starting with poor women, disabled women etc.

I felt proud of my government delegation. They stood steadfast on all the hard issues: like custom, culture and sexual orientation. By taking a progressive stance, South Africa helped to ensure that the middle ground was not too far to the right.

The positions taken in December 2007 also sent the clear signal that Mbeki's government would pull out all the stops to get the Protocol adopted in August 2008. As the Alliance we knew this was our best chance and we had to hang on to it. At country level, we attended meetings of the National Gender Machinery and made sure all stakeholders remained agitated and on board. We invited the then minister responsible for gender, Essop Pahad, to address the parallel meeting of the Alliance at the 2008 Heads of State Summit. When he obliged, we knew that our quest might finally be coming to fruition."

*Colleen Lowe Morna
Executive Director, GL*

Mobilisation

The Media Watch Organisation (MWO)-GESMSA campaign in Mauritius to take the protocol to villages is a good example of what can be achieved with a few resources and a clear road map to elevate a campaign at national level. MWO took on the challenge of going beyond consulting key political figures to consulting communities.

They not only simplified the Protocol and identified the key issues for Mauritius activism, but used that as the reference to discuss gender and governance issues in Mauritius, amongst others, with various communities nation wide (see below).



Taking the Protocol to the Villages in Mauritius



Councillors, NGOs and gender activists were invited to four villages in the North of Mauritius - Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, Baie du Tombeau and Calebasse - to educate and inform women and men in these communities on issues and articles in the SADC Protocol on Gender.

The village workshops included discussions on the barriers to women entering politics at national and local levels in the country, and possible solutions; and, also discussions on gender concepts which were not clear to the participants. These included terms such as: Gender, gender based violence, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender stereotypes, gender sensitive, multiple roles, sexual harassment, sexual and reproduction rights, PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) and female condom. Participants expressed interest in the following articles of the Protocol:



Mary Cooper, Susan Tolmay and Shamila Ramdoyal before a village workshop.
PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

- Articles 6, 23 and 25 - **Domestic Legislation, Gender based violence and Sexual Harassment** – Most participants were not aware of legislations like the Sex Discrimination Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Child Protection Act, Protection of Elderly persons Act and the HIV and AIDS Act that protect them and provides them with the recourse to justice with free legal services. MWO-GEMSA agreed to contact the Ministry of Women and the Sex Discrimination Division to organise workshops on gender laws in these regions.
- Articles 12 and 13 - **The Girl Child and the Boy Child** – Participants gained an understanding of how discrimination against girls begins when parents bring up their boys and girls with a different set of values.
- Article 14 - **Governance (Representation)** – There are only 17% women in Parliament and 6.4% as village councillors. There are 36 villages in the North with 432 councillors and only 19 of them are women making a percentage of 4.4%. Participants took the commitment of making sure that at the 2010 village elections there will be over 50% women candidates elected in these three villages.
- Article 15 - **Governance (Participation)** – Building the capacity of women – the Steering Committee in charge of the Action Plan for the North will organise regular workshops for women. A specific need raised was for women to be empowered to speak in public.
- Article 16 - **Gender equality in education** – Although girls and boys have equal access to education, the question of gender stereotypes in educational materials was raised.
- Articles 17 and 19 - **Economic policies and Economic Empowerment** – Although women and men have equal access to loans and to set up their own businesses,

women still lag behind and need proper guidance to get loans and advice on how to start their own businesses.

- Article 33 – **Media, information and Communication** – Sexist advertisement to be banned and women should participate in media literacy course.

At these meetings we succeeded in securing a commitment in principle to transforming the current state of affairs regarding women at local government level (6.4 percent), so that in the 2010 village elections there will be over 50% women candidates contesting from these villages.

I hasten to add that Mauritius is one of the three countries that, at the time of writing, had not yet signed the Protocol. The main reservation concerns provisions on affirmative action that are contrary to the Mauritius Constitution. But the pressure now mounting from the grassroots gives us hope that Mauritius will find a way of signing the Protocol. This is a good example of why we not only need to work at national level but also to mobilise. If democracy is government for and by the people – women and men – then their voices must be heard; they must determine policy.

Loga Virahsawmy

President, Media Watch Organisation (MWO) GEMSA

This “Taking the Protocol to the villages” model has inspired other members to consider this wide-scale outreach. Gender Links, for example, has secured resources to undertake 100 village level meetings a year in the 15 SADC countries for the next 5 years and is doing so in tandem with its gender and local government project.

What the Alliance did to strengthen national activism

In summary, the Alliance and its members took the following steps to strengthen national activism:

- Developed a clear regional strategy that informed national level action.
- Developed some tools to utilise at internally to articulate positions and create a shared understanding amongst the members, and deployed these tools in national lobbying and advocacy (for example position papers).
- Identified opportunities at national level to mainstream Protocol campaign activities in ongoing processes.
- Gathered intelligence on government actions and used the information to directly engage government officials, as well as participate in official

delegations.

- Engaged peers, politicians and took the message and information to communities, in order to influence the agenda ‘from below’.
- Worked closely with the SADC Gender Unit, to ensure that Alliance action was in tandem with the government roadmap (for example the Alliance roadmap towards the adoption of the Protocol, which was developed in January 2008, was in direct response to the official government roadmap developed by Senior Officials in December 2007).
- Developed key strategic relations with government delegations.
- Mobilised stakeholders in-country, including at the local level.
- Developed a strong information and communication strategy, including a carefully managed media strategy, which involved building a relationship with media leaders (editors), and also training of Alliance members on how to engage the media in an informed way.
- Maintained a consistent message on the Protocol content and process at regional and national levels; thereby ensuring that visibility of the campaign was underpinned by coordinated and focused action.

Lessons learned



Lesson learned in this process include:

- Whilst cross border activism implies focusing on a regional strategy to support trans-border campaigning, it will not take root unless there is a clear process of translating this into a national strategy, supported by well defined, country specific and flexible structures.
- One size does not fit all; allow for different operational models at national level, provided they stay true to the vision and mission of the campaign.
- Map out points of entry at national level, and promote the 'value add' of bringing the region to the national to influence transformation where it matters the most.
- Mobilising and outreach in a clear targeted manner, with a consistent message and an agenda to support women's empowerment, using the Protocol as the frame of reference works well; it is has to be supported by a tactical and astute organisation or collective.
- A mix of technical skills and political savvy is essential to engage with the state and influence agenda setting; for Alliance members that have made significant inroads at national level, this is what distinguished their lobbying and strategy efforts.
- Engaging governments requires a very good understanding of bureaucracy and deploying both formal and informal networks to gauge the level and manner of engagement.
- Gathering the right intelligence, knowing when and what to negotiate and remaining consistent even in the face of stiff resistance to transformation is critical; in the absence of this approach the campaign can fall apart and the agenda distorted.
- Visibility at national level of the issues and the campaign itself is a priority. This should be supported by a clear information and communication strategy, which involves targeted media involvement, including close liaison with editors and other decision makers in media.

Checklist



- ✓ What strategy is being deployed at regional level to support a campaign and how is this replicated at national level?
- ✓ Has there been a careful mapping of national processes, and how is the campaign going to be mainstreamed and form a reference point for these processes?
- ✓ What are the key entry points at national level, and what tools are being deployed to engage meaningfully?
- ✓ What mechanisms are in place to develop a shared consensus on issues, and how is this going to feed back to the regional process?
- ✓ Has a clear information and communication strategy been developed? Does it address media engagement? How?
- ✓ What space is there for shifting strategy at national level to take into account changes and developments? How does this feed into the regional processes?
- ✓ Is the outreach work well structured? What linkages have been developed with community based initiatives, traditional leaders/structures, and women in respective communities in terms of taking leadership and owning the process?
- ✓ Have all IEC materials been developed in a targeted way and link regional developments to national concerns and issues (regional in dimension but country specific?)



Loga Virahsawmy. PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA