

# FOCUS ON RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTES PLEINS FEUX SUR LES INSTITUTS DE RECHERCHE ET DE FORMATION

---

## THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN WOMEN FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (AAWORD).

### History of AAWORD

Political independence in most African countries did not result in autonomous universities and research institutions. Until the 1970s, most African research institutes focused not only on received topics and disciplines from abroad, but continued to be funded in the form of research personnel and their research expenses. It is only in the mid-1970s that a stable core of local researchers focusing on topics deemed internally relevant have begun to work in these research institutes. The direct link of these universities and institutes to Europe and the United States meant that there was no communication among African scholars within the continent.

In recent years, more attempts at pan-African communications and regional research institutes, regionally published journals and conferences have made it possible for African scholars to meet and exchange problems of mutual concern. One example is the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa and its quarterly journal, *Africa Development*. However, studies on African women and the recruitment of women researchers are not the priorities of these research institutes. Here and there, one finds African women as staff members in these institutions. Not all work on issues concerning women, however, and when they do, it is often related to either «population studies» or nutrition. It is important to note that while these two topics are solicited and supported by a steady supply of external funding, neither topic, particularly the former, is considered a priority locally.

It was a combination of all these factors that accentuated the need for creating an organization. This Wellesley event and other frustrations experienced by African women scholars gave birth to the idea of having an African-wide organization of women, who are committed to a type study and a new methodology that would lead to the amelioration and transformation of the lives of African women and that of the continent as a whole. Discussions between African women following Wellesley revealed that many African scholars have in recent years become increasingly aware of the need to articulate their own reality, particularly women scholars who in the past have been left out of the traditional avenues of research. Further discussions between individual researchers and research groups and deliberations at national, regional and international conferences identified concerns and culminated in a concrete research proposal. This proposal was presented to the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC) in August 1976 for funds for a consultative meeting. The meeting was held in Lusaka, Zambia in December 1976.

### **Institutional framework of AAWORD**

The Association is made up of (a) the General Assembly, (b) the Bureau and (c) the Editing Committee.

The General Assembly is the central organ of the Association. Its membership is open to indigenous African women researchers who adhere to its objectives. Currently all its members are subdivided into four working groups. Each working group has a convener and a co-convener.

The Bureau is made up of the President, Secretary-General, and the Treasurer, and is in charge of the administrative duties of the Association. The Editing Committee is made up of an editor and co-editor, who are responsible for editing publications. The headquarters of the Association will be in the country where the President resides, presently Senegal.

### **Objectives of the Association**

The general objective of the Association is to promote multidimensional development, i.e., development in the service of political awareness, as well as the economic social, cultural and psychological fulfilment of the African people, and to make Governments, public authorities and research centres sensitive to the need for decolonizing research.

#### *The specific objectives are:*

(a) To create and develop, on the one hand, lines of communication between the women researchers themselves, and, on the other hand, between the women researchers and others concerned with problems of development in Africa;

(b) To promote research oriented towards action which calls for crucial and conscious participation of the population in the formulation, realization and evaluation of development projects which concern them;

(c) To evaluate and re-examine the methodology and research priorities, the application of which is in the service of the African populations;

(d) To undertake and develop publishing activities. The Association is a non-governmental organization.

#### *The functions of the Association are:*

(a) To identify resources and accord its members facilities to permit them to put the above objectives into practice;

(b) To encourage the formation of national research groups in conjunction with the National Research Centers to facilitate the attaining of these objectives;

(c) To maintain contact with research groups in other developing countries, who are working towards similar objectives;

(d) To create a magazine and bulletin to end the present isolation of African researchers, to establish a permanent communication network among them and publish the results of their research.