

**AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND**



GENDER PROFILE OF THE UNION OF THE COMOROS

Summary

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB:	African Development Bank
AFD:	French Development Agency
AU:	African Union
BCC:	Central Bank of the Comoros
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGG:	General Commission for Solidarity and Gender Promotion
CGP:	General Planning Commission
CGP:	Country Gender Profile
CHS:	Comprehensive Household Survey
CNLS:	National HIV/AIDS and STI Control Committee
COMESA :	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSP:	Country Strategy Paper
DHS:	Demographic and Health Survey
EAP:	Environmental Action Plan
EDF:	European Development Fund
EU:	European Union
FADC:	Community Development Support Fund
FAO:	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FAWECOM :	Forum for African Women Educationalists – Comoros Section
FC or KMF:	Comorian Franc
FP:	family planning
GAR:	gross admission ratio
GDI:	Gender Development Index
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GER:	gross enrolment ratio
GPHC:	General Population and Housing Census
GPRS:	Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRGSP:	Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
HDI:	Human Development Index
HIPCI:	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
HIV/AIDS:	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICPD:	International Conference on Population and Development
ICTs:	information and communication technologies
IGA:	income-generating activities
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IOC:	Indian Ocean Commission
LI	labor-intensive
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MECK:	Mutual Savings and Credit ya Komori
MES:	Micro-Enterprise Support
MFI:	micro-financial institutions
MICS:	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

NACP:	National AIDS Control Programme
NAR:	net admission rate
NEP:	National Environment Programme
NER:	net enrolment rate
NGO:	non-governmental organization
NHDR:	National Human Development Report
NHP:	National Health Policy
NICT:	New Information and Communication Technologies
PANEF:	National Action Plan for the Education of Girls
PNA – EPT:	National Action Plan for Universal Education
PNEEG:	National Gender Equity and Equality Policy
PRGF:	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
RENAG:	National Network of Gender Advocates
RH/FP:	Reproductive Health/Family Planning
RNFD:	National Women and Development Network
STIs:	sexually transmitted infections
UE:	Universal Education
UNDAF:	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNO:	United Nations Organization
UNS:	United Nations System
WHO:	World Health Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Union of the Comoros is gradually coming out of a prolonged period of political and institutional instability (from 1997 to 2007) which notably resulted in the suspension of official development assistance. The political situation has stabilized and the crisis in Anjouan has been resolved thanks to support from the international community, in particular the African Union. Concerning the economy, macroeconomic indicators show bright prospects due to the economic reforms undertaken by the Government and the resumption of development partnerships. Accordingly, in September 2009, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) to enable the Comoros to benefit from external debt relief (70% of GDP) under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The Bank is also resuming its support activities in the country following the clearance of its arrears in December 2007.

1.2 Nevertheless, economic growth remains very slim and reflects the country's narrow productive base and dependence on a limited number of export crops. Today, however, the Comoros has more favorable social indicators than some sub-Saharan African countries. Within this specific context, it enjoys the support of the Fragile States Facility.

1.3 The Comorian Government recognizes the importance of gender mainstreaming and full participation of women in the development process as a means of reducing poverty and boosting the country's economic development. In the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRGSP) as updated in 2009, the Comorian Government affirms its determination to give women their rightful place in the decision-making and development process in the PRGSP. In addition, it is fostering a national debate to step up progress with regard to this key priority aspect as part of the national agenda, which is also at the centre of the international community's concerns¹.

1.4 One of the main constraints faced by the Government in development planning, monitoring and evaluation is the posed by the absence of updated gender-disaggregated data. The data and information collected are dispersed to various institutions and are not widely disseminated. The Country Gender Profile (CGP) seeks to help improve the knowledge and database on gender issues in the Comoros. The main conclusions and recommendations of the CGP will serve as a basis for discussions with the Government and other stakeholders on priority gender-specific activities in the country. Furthermore, at the level of the Bank, the CGP will be placed at the disposal of the operations staff, to provide them the basic knowledge to enable them incorporate the gender dimension in project analysis, design, supervision and evaluation.

1.5 The main objective of the CGP is to identify, for the short, medium and long terms, gender issues that are relevant to poverty reduction and that must be addressed and included in the operations of the Bank Group and other partners. Specifically, the aim of the Comoros CGP is to present and analyze gender issues that impact the country's economic and social development. It seeks to: (i) analyze gender through its different aspects and in the country's priority development sectors; (ii) identify gender policies and measures that are relevant and important for poverty reduction, economic growth, human welfare and sustainable development; (iii) incorporate the said policies and actions in the dialogue and programme of assistance to the country.

¹ National Human Development Report (NHDR) – Gender and Human Development, UNDP, 2006.

1.6 This Report comprises seven chapters, including introduction (I). Chapter II presents the national context of the Union of the Comoros, including general data, the economy of the Union of the Comoros, the historical evolution of gender, gender and the socio-cultural profile, and gender and the poverty profile in the Comoros. Chapter III focuses on current gender institutional, policy and legal frameworks in the Union of the Comoros. Chapter IV deals with gender analysis by sector whereas Chapter V presents gender and cross-cutting themes. Lastly, Chapters VI and VII present the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

II. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 *Historical Evolution of Gender Issues*

2.1.1 Traditions and religion are closely knit in the Archipelago, as affirmed by the description “The Comoros, a country of religion and tradition”, found in a report dating back to 1950, and still relevant today:² This reference reflects the history of a country at the crossroads of the Arab World, Africa and Asia, a venue for the intermixing of peoples. Gender issues in the Comoros can therefore not be dissociated from traditions, customs and religion, which govern most aspects of the day-to-day life, anchored by a common value which is the sense of honor, and which strongly influence the behavior of Comorians and gender relations.

2.1.2 Some documents state that the Comorian society is matriarchal, a view shared by most of the resource persons met during the study. This system is thought to have been inherited from ancient times before the introduction of Islam and advent of colonization. However, considering the definition of the term “matriarchy”³, current realities do not seem to truly reflect the authority that the Comorian woman would be expected to wield in the household, community, or political domain. Although according to custom, women generally inherit land and houses, they do not always have usufruct rights, which tend to go to their husbands, maternal uncles or failing that, their brothers. Even after a formal wedding, the Comorian woman is seldom consulted for community or village projects. She does not have access to village or community decision-making roles. Decisions relating to community life are taken by male notables at the village square or in mosques. The female minority currently active in politics just suffices as a token to lighten this image of Comorian society.

2.2 *Gender and Poverty Profile*

2.2.1 The population of the Union of the Comoros is characterized by a large proportion of “non-active persons” comprising children under 10 years of age (29.1%), adolescents between 10 and 14 (13.6%) and people aged 65 and above (5%)⁴. The proportion of these persons not in the labor force against the adult population aged between 15 and 64 (52.2%)⁵, considered as the “active population”, gives a high dependency rate (198.5%), which is a pointer to the poverty level in the Comoros: with a marked difference between urban

² Union of the Comoros – NHDR /UNDP.

³ Larousse 2009 defines “matriarchy” as a social, political and legal system in which women are thought to wield predominant authority within the family and perform political functions.

⁴ Corresponding gender-disaggregated data are not available.

⁵ GPHC.

(169.3%) and rural (210.6%) areas. These figures are still very high, considering the low labour force participation rate of the Comorian population, estimated at 25.3%⁶.

2.2.2 The dependency rate of women, who make up 50.4% of the total population is higher than that of men; the female participation rate is 17.9% compared to 32.8% for men, whereas a female household head supports 3.9 persons (“non-active”), against 3.4 for a man⁷. This shows some contradiction between the limited resources of Comorian women and their heavy burden compared to that of men. The average household size is 5.9, with 6.1 for rural areas as against 5.4 for urban areas. Female- single-parent headed households represent 40.2% of the total number of households, as against 2.8% for male- single-parent headed households. The rate of female- single-parent headed households, which is very high, is even higher in Anjouan (51.8%)⁸. This underscores the gravity of gender issues and their interrelation with poverty in the Comoros, despite the visible advantages enjoyed by female household heads, such as the reduced incidence of poverty or remittances from their relatives.

2.2.3 The Union of the Comoros was ranked 139th out of 182 countries in respect of the Human Development Index (HDI)⁹. The country has made efforts to improve the social sectors - education and health – hence its ranking which is higher than that of other sub-Saharan African countries. The Gender Development Index (GDI) shows the respective shares of men and women with regard to the indicators of education, health and income, and the in 2007, this index was 0.571 and comparison with the HDI of 0.576 shows that there is no major gap between Comorian men and women regarding human development¹⁰.

2.2.4 Concerning Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 which seeks to “*promote gender equality and empower women*”, and particularly its target which aims to “*eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015*”, the following elements are of note¹¹: (i) the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school is 0.96¹² while the target value for 2015 is 1; (ii) the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in secondary school is 0.89¹³ while the target value for 2015 is 1; (iii) the ratio of the female to male population that can read and write (as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 24) is 0.87¹⁴, while the target value for 2015 is 1.

⁶ PRGSP – 2009.

⁷ GPHC.

⁸ “Poverty, Inequality and Labour Market” CGP/UNDP in 2005.

⁹ World Human Development Report – UNDP 2009

¹⁰ idem

¹¹ United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – 2008-2012

¹² CHS 2004

¹³ idem

¹⁴ idem

2.2.5 The incidence of poverty¹⁵ concerns 36.9% of households, representing 44.8% of the population; that is one out of every two persons. In terms of monetary poverty, in 2004, Comorian men living below the poverty line represented 38.6% of the total population, while Comorian women represented only 30.4%. The share of the Comorian household budget used for food is 64.2%, while that for health care (illnesses, immunization, pre- and post-natal care) is only 0.8%¹⁶.

2.2.6 Comorian women appear better off than men in terms of the incidence of poverty. This situation is largely explained by remittances from Comorians living abroad or assistance by families, more of which goes to women than men, since because there are more women “household heads” owing to divorce or repudiation. Paradoxically, these households enjoy better living conditions. In fact, from the standpoint of health/longevity and education, Comorian women managing households alone devote the bulk of their household budget to the wellbeing of the household members whereas men are less inclined to do so¹⁷. Statistics show that these women devote 42.8% of their resources to household consumption (food and non-food items) against 37% for men¹⁸.

2.2.7 This situation, seemingly favorable to women, conceals a double dependence: Firstly financial dependence, given that their incomes are not improved in the process and that they depend on the family members from whom they receive remittances; also economic dependence, since a large portion of their budget is devoted to the household’s basic needs at the expense of improvement of their economic situation, although their potential is positively impacted in the long term (health and education).

III. GENDER INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 State Institutional Framework

3.1.1 The government entity in charge of gender is currently the General Commission for Solidarity and Gender Promotion (CGG) housed in the Ministry of Health, Solidarity and Gender. Its organization chart is not yet fully operational and a national action plan or work program for decentralized local structures in each island does not yet exist. In addition to the CGG, there is a Department of Female Entrepreneurship and, recently, Gender Focal Points (GFP) in each Ministry. The CGG has decentralized departments at the local level, but their appellation (commission or ministry) is not yet uniform and their internal organization is yet to be harmonized. In practice, there is no clear distribution of duties between the national and insular levels and no joint planning of work at the national level or programming of activities by insular structure. At present, the operations of the CGG and its decentralized units are carried out independently and at irregular intervals. Furthermore, the CGG lacks qualified and sufficient staff to perform the duties assigned to it. These numerous difficulties faced by the CGG are linked to the current greatly-changing political and institutional climate of the Union of the Comoros.

¹⁵ Poverty, Inequality and Labour Market, CGP/UNDP in 2005

¹⁶ Poverty, Inequality and Labour Market, CGP/UNDP in 2005

¹⁷ NHRD

¹⁸ Poverty, Inequality and Labour Market, CGP/UNDP in 2005

3.1.2 The Government of the Comoros has just adopted a measure to set up Gender Focal Points (GFP) in each ministry. The role of the GFPs will be to ensure gender mainstreaming in their respective ministries. This measure is expected to help ensure sectoral gender mainstreaming. The risk is that if GFPs are not set up at appropriate decision-making levels and with adequate resources, they will not make enough of an impact on gender issues in the sector concerned.

3.1.3 Civil society organizations at the national or local level are also involved in gender institutionalization in the Comoros, in conjunction with many development partners.

3.2 *Gender Policy and Legal Frameworks*

3.2.1 The gender policy framework in the Union of the Comoros is mainly defined by the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRGSP) updated in September 2009, the National Gender Equity and Equality Policy (PNEEG) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2008-2012 (UNDAF-Comoros).

3.2.2 From the legal standpoint, customary rules, Islamic law and modern law are applied in parallel in Comorian society, thus rendering the Comorian legal system complex. The fundamental gender equality provisions enshrined in modern law are not adequate to successfully reduce the gender disparity embodied in customary practices and Islamic law.

IV. GENDER ANALYSIS BY SECTOR

4.1 *Gender, Employment and Economic Activities*

4.1.1 The labor market in the Comoros is characterized by the feminization of precarious employment and informal activities, and unemployment: the agricultural sector employs the largest number of women (66.9%) while the civil service employs only 30% of women most of whom occupy low-level jobs. There are more self-employed women (56.1%) than men (47.5%) while 47% of the unemployed in the Comoros are women. In the non-agricultural informal sector (traders, small entrepreneurs and the self-employed), women occupy 19.5% of jobs. There are more self-employed¹⁹ women (56.1%) than men (47.5%). Female employment in the Comoros remains low with only 13.7% women in the wage-earning group, including 69.2% in “unsheltered employment”. Considering the value targeted by MDG 3, which is 50% female wage-earners by 2015, considerable efforts are needed to improve the employment situation of the Comorian woman. This situation is largely due to the low educational level and illiteracy of women.

¹⁹ The self-employed are persons working on their own account, without employing paid workers.

4.1.2 In the Comoros, there are more unemployed women than men. Out of 17 618 jobless in the Comoros, 47% are women²⁰. This high female unemployment rate explains the limited resources of Comorian women in general. For the purposes of the GPHC framework, persons who do work or are not actively seeking employment are considered as “economically inactive”. These are mainly housewives, and there is a large number (more than half) of Comorian women among the economically inactive population, mainly because many of them categorize themselves as housewives²¹. This analysis indicates how little importance is attached to the female reproductive role. In actual fact, the low level of employment of Comorian women conceals a high female participation rate. However, this relates to non-market activities that are not included in national income accounting.

4.1.3 Access to conventional bank credit is very limited for women entrepreneurs because they are unable to comply with loan requirements. To remedy this situation, MFIs offer specific financial products for women and adopt more flexible measures for granting them loans, with the result that more than 50% of MFI customers are women. Thus, in the Comoros, MFIs are among the institutions that implement concrete actions to promote gender equality.

4.2 *Gender in the Agricultural and Food Security Sectors*

4.2.1 In the agricultural sector, women are mainly involved in food and market garden production, and poultry farming. They also undertake cash crop production with less involvement in the marketing aspects, unlike in fishing where they are responsible for the sale of fish.

4.2.2 In the Comoros, access to land is by inheritance or acquisition. Regarding succession, customary law grants privileges to girls in general and to the eldest girl in particular in Grande Comoro, where farmland and built-up areas are owned by women as private property. However, this matrilineal rule does not really bar male successors from gaining access to land because in Anjouan and Moheli, boys, just like girls, are entitled to a share of inheritance, and throughout the archipelago, they may even obtain 2/3 of family inheritance, in keeping with Islamic law. Problems pertaining to land are largely due to the absence of a land registry, poor land registration and the matrilineal system which affirms the indivisibility and inalienability of land, thus making it impossible for the woman, although customarily the owner, to use land for example, in securing a bank loan.

4.3 *Gender in the Education Sector*

4.3.1 In the education sector, gender issues are expressed in terms limited access of girls to education and high repeater and dropout rates in primary and secondary schools. However, the gap between girls and boys narrows at the secondary school and higher education level, unlike in technical and vocational education where girl enrolment remains very low. In the Comoros, there are more illiterate women than men (57.8%).

The current situation regarding access by girls and boys to education is as follows:

²⁰ GPHC

²¹ Economic Activities in the Comoros – GPHC Data Analysis – CGP (September 2005).

Rate (2007-2008 school year)	Girls	Boys
Gross admission ratio (GAR)	77.4	81.7
Net admission rate (NAR)	34.1%	35%
Gross enrolment ratio (GER)	91.8%	107.8%
Net enrolment rate (NER)	72.3%	79.8%

Source: Ministry of National Education / National Planning Department

4.4 Gender in the Health Sector

The health system in the Union of the Comoros is characterized by limited access to health centers, insufficient resources with frequent drug shortages, shortage of skilled staff, inadequate staff training opportunities and weaknesses in the health data collection, analysis and processing system. In 2003, the maternal mortality ratio was 381 per 100 000 live births, that is 17 times higher than in Mauritius, but roughly equal to that of Botswana²². The rate of home-delivery attained 65% in 2005. The fertility rate is 5.3 children, the rate of contraceptive use was only 19.4% in 2000, and clandestine abortion is said to be widespread.

4.5 Gender in the Infrastructure Sector

4.5.1 Comorian farmers (men and women) are penalized by the absence or poor state of roads in that they cannot market their produce due to lack of corridors and means of transport. Maritime transport should be strengthened through the construction of small fishing ports and NICTs could be a growth leading sub-sector for development, and unemployment reduction in the near future.

4.5.2 The 2009 PRSP envisages a program to build small fishing ports equipped with minimum storage equipment and cold chain facilities. It will help reduce transport costs from fishing zones to urban centers, and therefore consumer prices, and initiate the restructuring of the fish trade. Although women are not the prime actors in fishing and port activities, the improvement of marine traffic and corresponding costs would without doubt be beneficial to them as traders, importers/exporters, or consumers.

4.6 Gender in the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector²³

4.6.1 The rate of access to “safe” drinking water is estimated to be only 10%. In addition, access to sanitation infrastructure (toilets) is low and household and hospital waste is not managed, resulting in a very unhealthy environment in the Comoros which is the cause of the high prevalence of diarrhea, malaria and cholera and typhoid epidemics. Women’s traditional role of fetching water and caring for the sick makes them the main victims of this situation. Water supply problems (rationing, irregular supply, insufficient flow) cause women and girls to devote up to two hours thirty minutes each day to fetching water, to the detriment of their productive activities and or education.

²² NHDR 2007-2008

²³ Appraisal report on Comoros DWSS Project– ADB Appraisal Team (August 2009)

4.6.2 Approximately 66.2% of the total population of the Union of the Comoros lacks access to adequate human waste management infrastructure²⁴. The absence of latrines in homes also poses a security risk to women and girls who must cover long distances to these facilities at night. The absence of household and even hospital waste management in all localities (even in the capital, Moroni) further worsens the insalubrity of the environment in the Comoros. Besides contaminating drinking water, it leads to proliferation of disease vectors (flies and mosquitoes) and favors the prevalence of malaria, cholera epidemics and typhoid, and various water-borne diseases. Again, Comorian women are the main victims because of their exclusive responsibility for fetching water, sanitation situation and their role of caring for the sick. This considerably reduces the time available to them to undertake productive activities and increases household expenses.

V. GENDER AND CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

5.1 *Gender in the Decision-making Process*

In view of the dynamism of female associations and actions to build the women's leadership capacities and self-confidence, women are increasingly playing an active role in politics and decision-making bodies. The *de facto* absence of Comorian women in decision-making circles is becoming a trait of the past. However, female representation at the political level remains a key challenge for gender equality in the Comoros, although the 2009 legislative and municipal elections witnessed the participation of 50 female candidates, 2 of whom were elected municipal councilors.

5.2 *Gender-based Violence (GBV)*

5.2.1 Gender-based violence is a reality in the Comoros, but concrete actions to combat this plague are still limited. According to a qualitative study on gender-based violence carried out at the national level in 2006, women suffer material and financial violence after divorce, and physical and psychological violence (insults, verbal abuse) from their own family members (husbands, fathers, uncles, brothers, fiancés) or in-laws. Since repudiation and divorce are regarded as dishonor to the woman and her family, the blame is almost always put on the woman. Some statistical data²⁵ gives an idea of the situation:

- 2006-2009: 135 alimony application files;
- 2008: 115 files concerning family neglect;
- 2009: 40 files concerning family neglect.

5.2.2 Children (both girls and boys) of all social categories and ages also suffer physical, sexual and psychological maltreatment. More than 700 cases of violence against minors have been reported in counseling services in the three islands since their establishment in 2004²⁶. Girls are more affected by this phenomenon than boys. The "law of silence" or "taboo phenomenon" seems to be observed by the victims themselves as well as their families, Comorian authorities, development partners and civil society organizations.

²⁴ Poverty, Inequality and Labour Market in the Union of the Comoros – CGP/UNDP (December 2005)

²⁵ Source: Office of the Juvenile Court Judge, October 2009

²⁶ Data from the Counselling Service of Grande Comore, 2009

5.2.3 Statistical data on child victims are only “the tip of the iceberg” considering that denunciations are rare and the use of counseling services in the islands is not systematic. In general, cases of rape are settled amicably. Some parents of victims who dread exposing their child to the public resort to family settlement, or accept penal mediation by the Public Prosecutor. In both cases, the problem is resolved through the payment of an amount of money as damages. The tendency of recourse to such procedures limits the availability of statistical data on this type of violation²⁷. It appears that the fight against gender-based violence is not yet considered as a priority in the struggle for gender equality in the Comoros.

5.3 *Gender, the Environment and Climate Change*

5.3.1 The Archipelago is prone to climate change whose consequences include declining agricultural and fishery production, displacement of the coastal population, contamination of coastal aquifers by sea water and an increase in malaria cases with negative impacts, particularly on children and women²⁸.

5.3.2 Climate change could further increase the workload of women and girls and oblige young girls to give up schooling in order to perform household tasks. Considering that rural women and girls are generally responsible for fetching firewood, more time will probably be required to fetch firewood as the forest resources become depleted. This will reduce the time available for food production as well as income-generating activities, and could affect household food security and the nutritional well-being of the family. Moreover, more women than men work in the informal sector and in small enterprises which are less easily able to recover from the effects of disasters, given their lack of capital and limited access to credit.

5.4 *Gender and HIV/AIDS Control*

The Union of the Comoros still has a low HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, but it has taken institutional measures to respond to the epidemic. In fact, the Union of the Comoros succeeded in maintaining HIV prevalence rate at less than 1% as at December 2007²⁹. However, an outbreak of the disease is to be feared owing to the low level of condom use, increase in prostitution and high STI-prevalence. In addition, young Comorians, who represent more than 50% of the population, constitute the main HIV/AIDS risk-group depending on their sexual behavior.

²⁷ CEDAW Report.

²⁸ Information collected from interview conducted at the Environment Service.

²⁹ Report on National Situation for the intention of UNGASS, Comoros, December 2007.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *For the Comorian Government:*

6.1.1 To institutionalize gender mainstreaming, the Government should focus its efforts on asserting its leadership in the steering, coordination and effective support of this process. To that end, it should:

- Set up an independent body responsible for gender issues and endowed with necessary empowerment and resources to effectively steer gender issues in the Comoros;
- Adopt appropriate instruments to specify the assignment of roles and responsibilities between the national structure and its decentralized bodies at the insular level and to support their interaction and synergy: adopt the organization chart at the national and insular levels, with the corresponding terms of reference for each body and position, and their hierarchical and functional relationships;
- Support the setting up and operationalization of Gender Focal Points by appointing them from the decision- making levels within their ministries and placing the necessary resources at their disposal to enable them to successfully perform their duties. “Formalize” gender mainstreaming in the ministry through various internal measures (training of staff in gender issues, development of sectoral gender mainstreaming tools, setting up a gender unit in the ministry, etc.);
- Provide human, material and financial resources to the Department of Female Entrepreneurship;
- Implement the commitments made in the updated PRGSP and in the PNEEG (see §3.3) by mobilizing the necessary resources for their operationalization: action plan, resources quantified and made available, monitoring and evaluation system.

6.1.2 Regarding the gender legal framework, the problems raised by the coexistence of three legal systems in Comorian society can only be overcome in the long term, with the evolution of the society itself. However, for the moment, the Comorian Government could:

- Adopt and enact decrees to implement certain articles of the Family Code, at least to preserve achievements in the area of gender equality;
- Prepare an action plan charting the implementation of the PNEEG, particularly to operationalize the strategy for “Promotion of Female Health and Reproductive Rights”.

- Carry out a study to identify the different impediments and constraints in the enforcement of court judgments (case of violence against women and children) and appropriate solutions;
- Organize and carry out gender education/outreach activities and training on combating violence against women and children for Members of Parliament, legal officers (magistrates and judiciary police), cadis and notables, civil society organizations;
- Adopt and apply legal instruments to harmonize the legal framework as a whole and ensure its compliance with the international conventions ratified by the Comoros, as well as effective application of the general gender equality principle.

6.1.3 Concerning female representation in decision-making bodies, the Comorian Government should adopt a legal instrument to establish a quota system for the appointment of women to key positions in order to reverse, as soon as possible, the current trend of quasi-absence of women in decision-making positions.

6.2 *For the African Development Bank:*

6.2.1 At the institutional level, the Bank could support:

- Advocacy for the setting up of an independent body responsible for gender issues endowed with adequate empowerment and financial resources;
- The conduct of an institutional and organizational audit to redefine the appropriate profiles and skills for the body in charge of gender issues;
- The Government, through technical assistance to the body responsible for gender issues (perhaps assigning to the task a Comorian resource person from the country's diaspora);
- The preparation of steering and management tools for the Union and islands: vision and strategic planning, moving forward on PNEEG through formulation of gender action plans and work programme, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, gender-sensitive budget, etc.;
- Capacity building of not only the staff of State institutions, but also national resource persons in gender issues, gender planning, monitoring and evaluation, budgeting, management and leadership;
- The strengthening of the Department of Statistics of the General Planning Commission in order to put in place and operationalize a system for collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data at the national and insular level in the different sectors of development.

6.2.2 At the sector level, the Bank should focus its support on the promotion of gender equality in priority sectors. Gender mainstreaming in the different sectors can be in the form of a single strategic thrust, namely strengthening the economic power of women.

6.2.3 In the infrastructure sector, the Bank's operations will be very beneficial to women and children in the Comoros because they will improve their access to health services, schools, markets and also services like communication and opportunities such as new outlets, micro-credit, training, etc. It is necessary to implement support actions to enable women to take full advantage of such operations. As pointed out by the study³⁰ carried out by the Bank in September, if tourism and NICTs are retained as growth sectors or sub-sectors in the Comoros, the need for skills in tourism, hotel industry and data processing is expected to increase in the near future. Support to strengthen (higher and vocational) training opportunities and to foster the access of Comorian youth, particularly girls, to such training will in turn support the promotion of gender equality and reduction of youth unemployment.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The foregoing analysis has highlighted the factors that promote as well as hinder gender development in the Union of the Comoros.

7.2 The enabling factors include the political will expressed by the Comorian Government to mainstream gender issues and promote the full participation of women in the country's development process, poverty reduction strategy and economic development. The State's determination to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the Comoros is attested by the setting up of a government body responsible for gender issues, the updating the PRGSP to reflect gender aspects, formulating the PNEEG and the Family Code testify to

7.3 However, there are many obstacles impeding the smooth implementation of this process which are mainly due to unfavorable socio-cultural aspects that limit gender equality and that are deeply rooted in gender relations in marriage, family and community life. However, the negative impact of the current political and institutional context on efforts to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the Comoros cannot be minimized. The persistent climate of uncertainty in the country does not help ensure the sustainability or desired efficiency of such efforts.

7.4 Nonetheless, a major achievement is the resumption of partnerships with international institutions. In fact, after about fifteen years of suspension of technical and financial assistance, development projects and programmes are once more being launched in the country. The design, programming and implementation of such development projects and programmes are opportunities that the Comorian Government as well as civil society must seize to "boost" the institutionalization of gender-related efforts in the Comoros. Whether through cross-cutting gender mainstreaming in all development operations or specific gender measures, the promoters of gender equality in the Comoros are witnessing exceptional "gender entry points" that should be capitalized.

³⁰ Study on sources of growth - Union of the Comoros, CGP/African Development Bank (September 2009)

7.5 To that end, orientations have been charted out, for example, in the PRGSP 2009 and PNEEG, and recommendations and priority gender-specific actions proposed in this CGP. However, the scope of gender equality-oriented operations in the Comoros remains very broad. It is therefore necessary to at least try to narrow the gender disparity noted in the various development sectors examined in this report. The needs of Comorian women and gender issues in the Comoros necessitate the implementation of various initiatives and call for creativity and innovation. They justify the pooling of the efforts of development stakeholders and it is the responsibility of each and every one to give the Comorian woman her rightful place in society and in the country's decision-making and development process.