

Dear Silvia,

African women's own energetic efforts to improve their human, social and economic situation and the one of their children and household and of the community in general are strengthening development prospects and society in Africa.

Unfortunately entrenched discrimination against women continues to provide a major impediment to Africa's progress. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 3) is central for this continent, where women are still bearing the brunt of all types of shortcomings, crises, wars and conflicts. If women are given the same opportunities as men in the social, economic and political sphere, it is society as a whole that wins.

It is important to raise awareness and take action in this field, especially since Women's earnings - in the formal and informal sectors - tend to be half of men's and they also suffer from limited access to land, credit and technology; Gender-aware policies are still largely lacking among political parties; Gender perspectives are also rarely integrated into conflict prevention and resolution; the inequalities that affect women and girls have also made them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and access to sexual and reproductive health care and family planning as well as pre and post-natal care is still insufficient.

I also forwarded your message to our DEVE unit for possible further consideration of your proposal.

With best wishes,

Martin Schulz