What are the key human rights concerns of people of African descent in your country/region today and how do you work to address them?

In Mexico, according to official data, there are 1.4 million Afro-descendants. The main problems we face are racism, discrimination, historical invisibility and the lack of recognition in the Mexican Constitution.

The states with greater presence are Guerrero with 6.5% and Oaxaca with the 4.95%. These two states are part of the Costa Chica region where the majority of black communities live. Although we are separated by state borders, we are united by our ethnic and cultural origins. These communities belong to municipalities with high and very high levels of marginalization. In relation to the rest of the nation, they are left behind in terms of development, basic services, sources of employment, health, education and access to technology. These gaps affect women even more.

As part of Civil Society, we disseminate the cultural expressions of the Afromexican people and participate in different spaces of discussion with legislators and decision makers from local, state and federal governments. We do so in order to contribute to agreements and actions that result in the constitutional recognition and the design of the public policy necessary to reduce the development gaps we face. In the same way we work for the recognition of the contributions that Afromexican people have made to the historical development of the country.

In the same way, we work for the empowerment of the Afromexican woman, participating in diverse formative processes on identity, human rights, and the culture of non-discrimination. Women from various civil society organizations with the support of Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, formed the **"Cátedra Itinerante de Mujeres Afromexicanas" (CIMA)**. This is an ongoing and itinerant space for training, where Afro-Mexican women share experiences, community knowledge and acquire theoretical and practical knowledge as strategic tools for strengthening identity that will enable the empowerment of black women from their own worldview.

How can the WGEPAD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society for greater impact on the ground?

Creating channels of permanent and direct dialogue with the organizations in order to support projects and actions that have a direct impact on the development of communities and encourage the revival of their cultural expressions. In this way, we can create a common front to fight for and influence social policy.

Considering the educational gaps of Afromexican communities, these channel should consider communications in Spanish, avoiding to request them in English or French since this limits the participation of many organizations.

Which human rights concerns should the WGEPAD focus on in the next three years?

Undoubtedly, the working group should focus on processes of inequality generated by institutional forms of racism and racial discrimination that have placed people of African descent in a situation of vulnerability. This is particularly evident in relation to the right to health, education, food security and economic empowerment.

The working group should also promote gender and ethno-racial equality in political participation and representation, particularly implementing actions in favor of children, adolescents and Afrodescendent women. It is important to take into account the demands of the "*Plataforma Política de Lideresas Afrodescendientes ante el Decenio Internacional de los Afrodescendientes*" published by Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora.

Most importanlty, the working group should urge the Mexican State to take the necessary actions for the recognition of black peoples by defining them as subjects of collective rights, recognizing their cultural difference and the contributions that Afromexicans have made to the conformation of the Mexican nation.

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