

AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20523  
**BIBLIOGRAPHIC INPUT SHEET**

FOR AID USE ONLY  
*Batch 72*

1. SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION	A. PRIMARY Food production and nutrition	AE30-0000-G100
	B. SECONDARY Development--Africa	

A. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  
 African women in rural development, research trends and priorities

3. AUTHOR(S)  
 Pala, A.O.

4. DOCUMENT DATE 1976	5. NUMBER OF PAGES 44p.	6. ARC NUMBER ARC
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7. REFERENCE ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS  
 OLC

8. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES (Sponsoring Organization, Publishers, Availability)  
 (In OLC paper no.12)

9. ABSTRACT  
 Proposes that rural development theorists have not put forward explicit ideas on the role of women in agricultural production, and that extension services tend to exclude women or teach them things that do not enhance their agricultural skills. A rationale for the role of women in rural development is presented to highlight the serious loss of potential brought about by neglecting the role of women in agriculture and food production. An historical analysis of existing literature is made to point out the evolving role of women in rural economies of Africa and to indicate existing gaps in knowledge. Three levels of research concerning women's roles in rural Africa are described: the training of African women and men in techniques of data collection and analyses to reflect the differential roles of men and women in society; the assembly and synthesis of published and unpublished sources concerning African women in the rural economies; and the establishment of research priorities in accordance with each country's resource capabilities, focusing on key issues of primary significance for women and their nations. These research areas are proposed which have a general application to African rural development and which can be redefined on a comparative basis to suit individual countries: access to land, labor allocation, time budgeting, decision making in the household, male outmigration, agricultural training, participation of women in marketing and cooperative societies, women's self-help and work groups, women in pastoral societies and marginal areas, and nutrition, family planning and community health.

10. CONTROL NUMBER <b>PN-AAE-750</b>	11. PRICE OF DOCUMENT
12. DESCRIPTORS Africa Application Females Research	13. PROJECT NUMBER
	14. CONTRACT NUMBER <b>AID/afr-635 GTS</b>
	15. TYPE OF DOCUMENT



# **African Women in Rural Development: Research Trends and Priorities**

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OLC Paper No. 12  
December 1976

Overseas Liaison Committee  
American Council on Education

## Preface

The past several years have witnessed a heightened awareness and acknowledgement of the critical input of women into the development process. It is only recently, however, that development planners and practitioners have intensified their efforts to devise, formally and methodically, programs which actually increase women's opportunities to make their work more productive.

In April 1976 the OLC invited three researchers from Africa -- Dunstan Spencer, Emmy Simmons and Achola Pala -- to present their research findings at a Seminar on "Women in Rural Development in Africa: Implications for Donor Organizations," and to examine the roles of rural women in selected African countries and to identify components of successful research programs as well as the constraints facing researchers in the field. Dunstan Spencer's paper, "African Women in Agricultural Development: A Case Study in Sierra Leone" was published as OLC Paper No. 9 (June 1976) and Emmy Simmons study, "Economic Research on Women in Rural Development in Northern Nigeria", as OLC Paper No. 10 (September 1976).

In this final paper, Achola Pala reviews some of the current problems related to incorporating research findings into development plans and policies.

The Overseas Liaison Committee will continue, from time to time, to highlight research which will, hopefully, stimulate action towards providing rural people better access to the tools of development.

Charles H. Lyons,  
Executive Director  
Overseas Liaison Committee  
American Council on Education

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my colleagues Shem E. Migot-Adholla, W.H.O. Okoth-Ogendo and Carolyn Barnes for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Special thanks go also to Louise Segal for her efficient and skillful typing as well as to Georgetta Baker and Joyce Mortimer for their valuable editorial assistance.

## ABSTRACT\*

Throughout the history of their societies, African women have made important contributions to rural economies in agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. They have also been active in trade, especially in the distribution of agricultural produce and industrial goods in rural marketing centers. Though their contributions are often accorded public acclaim, serious efforts to officially incorporate such claims in rural development policy and practice remain very limited. Exhortations by politicians and women's organizations urging women to "play their part in national development" are rarely accompanied by specific strategies and sustained efforts to accomplish this goal. There is a need to identify more productive roles for women, who, for several decades to come, will continue to form the majority of people who must live and draw their livelihood from the rural areas.

Further, a number of researchers continue to draw an artificial distinction between data collection and "political action" which is viewed as "social engineering." Thus, research findings concerning conditions of women in rural Africa have remained at the level of academic exercises, bringing little to bear on existing socio-legal and political structures.

Apart from the dearth of 'good' data concerning women's roles in rural Africa, the inaccessibility of the existing data is, from an African perspective, an additional constraint in planning for rural change. The discrepancy between the public acclaim of women's important role in rural economies and relatively defective planning and implementation of policy to enhance their role is partially explainable by two related factors.

First, with few exceptions in West Africa, women have historically been confined to small-scale food production and distribution primarily for rural domestic group consumption. In the colonial era for example, settlement colonies such as Algeria, Kenya, Rhodesia and South Africa used women's labor in the 'reserves' or 'homelands' to subsidize the extractive colonial economy. Research and investment priorities were large-scale export-oriented farms/mines. If the present economies of these countries continue to pursue this developmental pattern, the position of women will remain substantially unchanged.

Second, the colonial and neo-colonial context in which research on African women is being formulated, funded and conducted, presents a major constraint to African women at the levels of scholarship and implementation. The claim that the formulation of the research problem is foreign and does not reflect the aspirations and development practices of African people discourages African planners from duly considering women's role. Additionally, when research is conducted, it usually remains within the academic purview. This is so for several reasons. Generally, researchers have little time to spend and no legitimate structural position in the countries in which they conduct research to enable them to pursue their findings

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\*Sections of this paper are based on data collected for an earlier work, "The Role of African Women in Rural Development: Research Priorities," Discussion Paper No. 203, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, June 1974.

and the implications for change. Further, some African researchers do not depart significantly from their Euro-American training which often offers privilege and power and an inability to relate to the peasants for whom they plan and seek to influence. Thus, research findings remain peripheral to planning and strategies for rural change.

In this paper a rationale for the role of women in rural development is presented to highlight the serious loss of potential brought about by neglecting their role in agriculture and food production. An historical analysis of existing literature is made to point out the evolving role of women in rural economies of Africa and to indicate existing gaps in knowledge. Essentially, an adequate conception of African development must recognize the role of women as an integral part of rural change -- complementary yet equal to that of men.

Further, research concerning women's roles in rural Africa is best seen at three levels: (1) the training of African women and men in the techniques of data collection and analyses to reflect the differential roles of men and women in our societies; and (2) the assembly and synthesis of published and unpublished sources concerning African women in the rural economies; and (3) the establishment of research priorities in accordance with each African country's resource capabilities, focusing on key issues of primary significance for women and their nations.

I consider research priorities proposed at this paper's conclusion to be priority research topics on African women. They are inspired by a growing, albeit slow, recognition among some African governments, planners and researchers that strategies for developing and rural areas will succeed only if women participate fully and equitably in their design and execution.

## 1. RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTS AND GOALS

All independent African states face the challenge of developing their rural areas. It is estimated that between 70 and 90 percent of African people will continue to live and to work in these areas for several decades to come. Though each state defines rural development on the bases of its human and natural resources, technical capabilities and political ethos; all share the problem of inadequate agricultural production techniques. This inadequacy inhibits internal exchange distribution and preservation of food for the rising populations. Further, contribution to the national (exchange) economy is reduced. <sup>1/</sup>

Rural development policy makers, planners and researchers perceive their task as evolving a set of related development programs which aim at providing skills and capital to improve material and social conditions. By raising the per capita output of rural farm families through improved agricultural, pastoral and managerial techniques, employment opportunities at the local level would be stimulated and expanded. A desired effect of rural development strategy then, is to create a reasonable balance between

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<sup>1/</sup>Yudelman, reviewing the economic conditions and prospects for African agricultural development in southern, central and East Africa, estimated that 95 percent of the crops and 60 percent of the livestock produced by Africans in South Africa did not enter the market; more than 85 percent of the values of African produce in Malawi, Zambia and Rhodesia (then the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) was for subsistence; and at least 80 percent of the values of African production in East Africa did not enter the exchange economy (1964, pp. 8-9). Though traditional African economies were, with the exception of West Africa, geared toward consumption by domestic groups, it is possible that the figures provided by Yudelman are skewed by the additional factor that in south, east and central Africa the pattern of colonial occupation (the settlement colony) deterred Africans from participating equally in the exchange economy; and that the figures are therefore indicative of African resistance to a discriminatory market system. This point is supported by the figures on cash incomes earned by Africans which was \$30 per person per year for Uganda, where African peasant farmers were to some extent encouraged by government policy to produce and sell, and only \$15 per person per year for Rhodesia.

outward migration to urban centers and agriculturally-based rural employment.

Additionally, some researchers contend that rural development is a social as well as a technical or economic process. It is constrained by considerations for human welfare in areas such as nutrition, public health, the family setting, community involvement, etc. (see Mbithi 1971, p.2) as well as by technical operations like rural access roads, credit, tractors, plows, etc. Mbithi further argues that great emphasis on a technological conception of rural development reinforces inequality among farmers and may have the tendency to alienate individual peasants from effective participation in programs designed to help them improve their level of living.

McLaughlin stresses the importance of research for those attempting to organize rural transformation. His major contention is that rural development should be viewed as a problem-solving strategy, with improved technology but one aspect of that strategy. "Development," he writes, "is the integration of new technology into an already on-going socio-cultural process." (1970, p. 12). In this respect, he reinforces Mbithi's call for 'a social definition' of rural development.

## 2. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN

The central aims of rural development are summarized as follows:

- (a) to increase per capita output and market orientation among the rural population;
- (b) to increase food production commensurate with the rapid population growth;
- (c) to insure equitable redistribution of aggregate income;
- (d) to reduce regional inequalities in per capita income;
- (e) to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration; and
- (f) to gain a precise and scientific understanding of the social and ecological environment in which rural change is to occur.

It would seem that this last aim regarding the role of women in rural economies remains unfulfilled. The need to develop an integrated approach in assessing needed technical skills, the specific social structure of rural households and domestic groups, as well as its significance in household tasks allocations among its members must be emphasized. Rural development strategies (i.e., the provision of credit, introduction of a plow or a tractor, etc.), do have differential impact on members of the farm family. Realization that social transformation implies social cost is essential. From my research in Kenya as well as from my visits to other African countries, I am skeptical of the view expressed by many researchers, planners and various casual observers that the directing of services to the rural farm family, however defined, will guarantee equal benefits among all family members. An obvious refutation of this assumption occurs when Kenyan land adjudication officers are asked why they normally register land in men's names. They respond, "It is customary that men hold land in our societies; therefore, it stands to reason that they should hold land titles as well." The assumption here is that there is some expectation that men holding private land titles will necessarily behave toward those who depend on that land (i.e., their wives and other relatives) according to custom. In fact, they may or may not. A new form of uncertainty now exists which the traditional land tenure system precluded through explicit usufructuary rights enforced by the domestic group to protect individual rights.

With respect to issues in social development and the role of women, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in reviewing the employment situation in Kenya, stressed the important role of women in rural development.

The mission to Kenya stated:

The specific problems of integration of women in the economy and in society seem important enough from all standpoints to warrant special and sustained attention (1972, p. 299).

Furthermore, the United National Children's Fund (UNICEF) convened a conference in Lomé Togo, in November 1972 under the direction of Sheikh Hamidou Kane to examine the role of women and children in African societies and the implications for development policy. This conference was attended by ministers from Cameroun, Gabon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Togo, and observers from the People's Republic of Congo (now Zaire), Dahomey (now Benin), Senegal and Upper Volta -- all of which were formerly under the French colonial development policy.

The Lomé Conference, as it came to be known, emphasized outstanding deficiencies and omissions in national development plans inimical to women and children. It underlined the lack of scientific data as well as the remedy of social difficulties which affect women, children and youth. It noted for instance, that in all the 8 countries represented, the problem of malnutrition in pregnant women, mothers and children was widespread and undernourishment was frequent. The most common causes for malnutrition and undernourishment were an uncertain food supply, especially in dryland areas (e.g., the Sahel) particularly at the end of the dry season when supplies ran out; inadequate national food crop programs; lack of money to buy food; and the customary dietary habits of some women.

An adequate conception of rural development in Africa today must consider that rural farm families -- men, women and children -- do not experience rural change in a uniform manner. Development programs must reflect this awareness and gauge how development is affecting farm families on the ground.

### 3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

A number of sources document the contention that African women have been the principal producers of food crops in their respective societies. We shall examine some of the sources highlighting the role of women in agricultural as well as in pastoral production and trade. Anthropological studies represent some of the earliest attempts by colonial governments and research institutes to understand, scientifically, the structure and content of African societies. Much of the data was collected in the early stages of colonial contact, while some sources have utilized oral tradition to reconstruct historical background. They present a reasonable indication of the nature of African societies prior to establishment of colonial administrations. Some of them also address the question of socio-economic change and its impact on women.

### 4. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Baumann (1928) conducted an extensive survey of the division of labor by sex in African hoe culture. Hoe culture refers to farming systems in which the hoe constitutes the major technology used on the farm. This includes eastern, central and southern Africa.

Baumann observed that in such a system of subsistence agriculture, men's labor input on the farms consisted of clearing bush before the land was dug. It was confined to a short period whereas work done by women continued throughout the agricultural year. He noted that women were in charge of growing the oldest root crops, kitchen vegetables and spices. They also tended to introduce new food crops. He cited one instance which indicated that division of labor in the farm and household made men largely dependent on women as providers of food. Among the Konde<sup>2/</sup> for example, if a man had no female relatives,

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<sup>2/</sup> The Konde people originally occupied the northern part of Mozambique and southern Tanzania but now live in different parts of Tanzania as far as Dar es Salaam. Today they are better known as artists of the world famous Makonde carvings. A dominant feature of their carving is the embodiment of folk religion

he could not grow essential vegetables (e.g., beans, peas or maize) and had to forego eating them (1928, p. 305). Men cultivated fruit trees and perennial crops such as banana, cacao or cloas. Baumann further observed that where slavery existed the sex of the slave was generally irrelevant in work allocation.

Meek (1931) studied the Jukun-speaking people of Nigeria, and his findings concerning the division of labor between men and women agreed with Baumann's. He found that the heavy work of clearing bush and felling trees was done by men. Though women's work was lighter, it continued year round. Women participated in planting, collecting and harvesting crops, in addition to transporting them home. They also helped men to clear grass, weeds and scaring birds from millet crops. If the husband had to be away for an extended period, women cultivated their own small millet fields, to be used for additional food (1931, p. 408). Women were responsible for threshing and winnowing the millet as well. Only women cultivated potatoes, kokoyams, coleus dysenterias tubers and groundnuts. Though they could independently dispose of them, these crops constituted the reserve food supply during scarcity.

Edel's study of the Chiga of Western Uganda (1957) was conducted in 1932-33. Her findings appear to corroborate Baumann's observations. At the time of her study the Chiga practiced a mixed economy of animal husbandry and agriculture -- slash and burn. They grew pears, beans, maize and small millet (elusine). The division of labor among the Chiga suggested that the entire responsibility of agricultural production rested mostly with women who turned the soil, sowed, weeded and harvested. Men cleared the land, but

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(contd)<sup>2/</sup>and beliefs and distortions of the physical form. Often the eye or ear is placed in unnatural positions. This type of art, which challenges fixed notions of symmetry and perceptions of congruity, apparently served as an inspirational source for Picasso's paintings.

that was all. Their main task consisted of tending cattle and doctoring animals. They also built storage bins and houses, tanned hides and specialized in iron working or carpentry. Men worked with their sons, herding and milking the animals, while women worked with their daughters or son's wife (wives), in different but complementary fields. Women were also responsible for domestic work. During the busy season women worked in the field from day-break to late afternoon. Drying and storing the food crops, brewing beer and weaving mats were additional tasks performed by women.

Driberg's article (1932) had two aims: (1) to dismiss the then current assumption among European observers that African women were subservient to their men; and (2) to call for more systematic research emphasizing the sexual division of labor in African societies. Most of his field work was done among the Lango of Uganda and is probably more representative of age-group systems of northeastern Uganda, southern Sudan and Northern Kenya.

Driberg was greatly impressed by the complementarity of productive work in these societies. Men's work included herding, hunting and military operation and invariably necessitated being away from the homestead for the greater part of the day or for several consecutive days. Women's work on the other hand, included hoeing, weeding, tending vegetables and food preparation. Their work involved long hours on protracted and rather monotonous tasks. Driberg's comment that the introduction of cash crops (crops grown for sale) in these areas upset the complementarity of male and female labor input reinforced his earlier contention that men and women appeared equal in their daily work and economic activities. In relation to most agricultural societies of East Africa, Driberg's observations, Edel's findings and Baumann's analysis were reasonably accurate. Differences did exist in the structure of access to the means of

production of acephalous (non-centralized) and centralized political systems.

Similarly, research findings from West Africa underline the role of women as food producers and provide further evidence to support the general principles of the division of labor in African hoe culture presented by Baumann. Studies on the Jukun-speaking peoples of Nigeria (Meek 1931), the Bamenda of Cameroon (Kaberry 1952), the Ibo of eastern Nigeria (Leith-Ross 1939; Ottenberg 1959) as well as other Ibo groups (Harris 1943) all document the important role of women in agricultural production. When Kaberry was commissioned by the British government in 1944 to analyze the Bamenda 'reluctance' to adopt new crops, she soon discovered that women had traditionally been in charge of food production processing and marketing. Her analysis of the Bamenda situation probably summarizes women's agricultural position in the majority of African societies.

Kaberry writes:

Women as wives, mothers and daughters, produce most of the food and spend the greater part of the day on the farm. In this sphere of activity they enjoy considerable independence and have well defined rights... Christian women, not to forget the pagans, still accept in principle the division of labour between the sexes. The placing of agriculture in the foreground for detailed analysis reflects then its importance in the life of women (1952, p. viii).

Kaberry demonstrates that within the limits of shifting cultivation, Bamenda women played a crucial role in production. They were responsible for hoeing, weeding, harvesting and transporting crops home from the fields. They were also in charge of preparing food for their families. Men in their turn were responsible for seasonal heavy bush clearing. Women worked in groups normally consisting of a woman and her married sisters and/or daughters or adolescent daughters. Marketing was limited to barter and gift-giving was a common form of exchange. A woman was free to dispose of crops from her fields as gifts to

her friends and family without having to consult her husband. However, a man in his turn had to consult his wife before he could make offers or gifts of produce from the family crops to his relatives or friends.

Two studies, one conducted by Dora Earthy on Lenge women of Mozambique (1968) and the other by Monica Hunter on Ama Pondo women of South Africa (1933) provide further comparative data on African women's position in pre-colonial production.

Earthy's discussions on women's agricultural activities and related ritual prohibitions are especially revealing. Among the Lenge, women were in charge of food production and preparation. This included planting, weeding and harvesting as well as disposing of crops by home consumption, exchange and gift giving. One type of ritual prohibition concerning pregnancy is important to note here. A pregnant woman had to prevent injury to her unborn baby and to crops. She was required, therefore, when working in the field to tie her cloth not above the breasts as usual, but rather at the waist. If she tied the cloth above the breasts, it was believed that pumpkins, mealies and groundnuts would rot and die. If she roasted maize in the field, the maize crops would die. If she should poke a fire in the field with a burning stick, it was believed that fire insects would eat the young shoots of the crops. Before sowing seeds she had to perform the khualaha rite which involved taking earth in her right hand, putting some of it in her left hand and pressing it on either side of her abdomen. If she failed to do this before sowing, the seeds would perish.

Earthy noted, that in a patrilineal society as the Lenge, women did not have formal power. Yet there were women called vanyamusoro who were feared because they were believed to have the power to call out, i.e., exorcise demons. Unfortunately, Earthy made no attempt to relate in a dynamic sense,

the ritual prohibitions described in detail, to other aspects of society. Apparently, in societies where men hold formal political authority and the right to dispose of land, women tend to be assigned an oblique contravening power such as that of the vanyamusoro. It is contradictory for the Lenge to accord pregnant women with the power to cause crops to wilt and die, and yet the same women are fully in charge of food production. It would be reasonable to infer from such taboos that women played a leading part in 'production' and reproduction of immediate life. They produced children and staple food supplies to ensure the society's continuity. By prevailing rules of marriage, women were chosen from outside their husband's group. This 'alien' origin combined with their monopoly of food production and preparation aroused ambivalent feelings toward women. We contend that this ambivalence manifests itself in the form of ritual prohibitions which essentially held women responsible for crop failure and food shortage. Of course, more cases need to be examined to prove this hypothesis, and that is beyond the scope of this study.

One of the earliest examples of analysis of the changing position of African women is Monica Hunter's (Monica Wilson) study of the Ama Pondo of South Africa (1933). This particular paper was a component of wider research on the impact of colonization on the Pondo society (see Hunter 1936). The study aimed to show how 'civilization' (read: colonization) had affected the Pondo women.

Hunter contrasted the position of women in Pondoland before and after colonization. In the latter section of the paper, she observed that prior to colonization, Pondo women were responsible for growing the staple grains -- maize and millet. Their agricultural tasks included hoeing, planting, weeding

granaries. They were also in charge of all household activities, i.e., cooking, water portage, gathering wild plants for food and child care. In addition to these tasks they took charge of maintenance work such as thatching, mudding and repairing houses and specialized in pottery and basket work. In contrast, men had the responsibility of clearing land in the pre-planting period -- the men felling trees and women cutting shrub; other tasks included defense, raiding, cattle care, hunting, constructing frames for houses, kraals, granaries, and specializing in leather-work, iron-smelting and some basket-work (1933, pp. 260-261). In terms of time-allocation to economic and non-economic work, Hunter reported that although the division of labor was fairly equal between the sexes, women's work was 'more continuous and more monotonous.' However, she stressed that women were an economic asset in their communities and were 'economically self-supporting' (p. 261).

Land was communally owned and each member of the umzi (patrilineal kinship group) had access to land by virtue of membership to an umzi. Unmarried women did not have the right to major decisions regarding land but at marriage a woman acquired fields which were known by her name. She cultivated these fields and the yields belonged to her indlu. Eventually, the yields were inherited by the youngest son as were the animals. To dispose of grain, women had to consult their husbands.

Bride-wealth (ikazi) was given by the man's family to the family of the woman. To give bride-wealth to the woman's family (ukulobla) was to give stability and security to the woman. If the marriage was unsuccessful, the woman could return to her family and expect to be treated with respect because the family had received her ikazi. We can conclude from Hunter's assessment of Ama Pondo socio-economic life that pre-colonial Pondo women had a strong social and economic position deriving their central role in

food production, child bearing and marriage. While wife beating was not uncommon, women would return to their natal homes to escape this type of male reprisal. A corollary of this, however, was that a man with a run-away wife lost his station in his umzi. Other women refused to provide domestic/uxorial services for him and people said, "he is living alone just like a wild animal; cooking for himself." (1933, p. 266).

Interestingly enough, Pondo women were assigned benevolent as well as malevolent powers. They could kill or cure. When an umzi was perishing, it was often assumed that one of the wives had summoned an evil spirit. Conversely, old women became amatongo (ancestral spirits and ritual officiants to save the sick). Though a woman could be made sick by her paternal aunts or husband's sister, and a child by its dead mother, women still became a magqira (doctor/diviner in communication with ancestral spirits), a herbalist or even a rain doctor (1933, pp. 266-268).

As noted with the Lenge of Mozambique, social organizations that invested men with political power and basic production means and women with central economic and ritualistic (religious) capabilities, often ambiguously perceived women and assigned them adverse power. Possibly, the males in such a situation resented their dependence upon women as producers and reproducers of immediate life. Obviously, the production of children and staple foods constituted the life and continuity of the formal system, the basis of male authority.<sup>3/</sup>

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<sup>3/</sup>See also Marwick (1966), on women's role in Swazi agriculture and Yudelman's observations (1964), on women's agricultural chores in southern Africa.

Recent research in East Africa indicates the importance of women in local economies and confirms findings from other parts of the continent. The work of Gunter Wagner on the Luyia (1939) and Peristiany on the Kipsigis (1939) are examples of ethnographic analysis which were sponsored both in field research and in publication by the International African Institute in London.

Wagner argued that economic cooperation among family members in the Kitosh and Maragoli communities of the Baluyia was important. It was encouraged by the insignificant exchange value and short-lived utility of goods, resulting from low level technology and a general undifferentiated economy with little exchange of goods. Although cattle were kept in substantial numbers by different families, the cattle did not change the economy from subsistence to exchange because few things could be acquired with cattle only. Men and boys generally tended goat and cattle herds with men being responsible for trading cattle with kinsman and maintaining the home, i.e., thatching the roof and erecting poles. Women and girls were responsible for the bulk of agricultural work, especially hoeing. At fourteen, a girl was given her own garden; her crops were stored in a separate granary to be opened ceremonially at her marriage. In addition to hoeing, women cooked, carried water and wood, gathered wild roots and vegetables and ground sorghum. Both men and women joined in planting, weeding and harvesting. Consequently, the family was a self-sufficient economic unit with its members working in a complementary fashion.

Among the Kipsigis, Peristiany observed that the village community or kokwet operated as a cooperative economic unit. According to Kipsigis myths, when cattle were dying of thirst during a drought, the women found grains of elusine growing in elephant dung. Tasting and finding it to be sweet, they planted the grain. From that moment the Kipsigis were stronger than their neighbors.

Within the kokwet family, agricultural work was clearly divided between men and women, both in terms of labour and decision-making regarding disposal of crops. There were three distinct types of fields:

(a) Kabungut, was a small vegetable garden planted and cultivated exclusively by a woman and her daughter. They grew vegetables which formed part of the food cooked with blood and meat.

(b) Imbaret a' mossop (field of the house) was owned by each married woman. In other words, each household had its own field. Work on this plot was done mainly by women. However, relatives and members of the kokwet including husbands erected fences and sowed crops. Grain from this field was stored in a separate granary and the husband had no authority to take beer supplies for his friends and sweethearts. Crops from the imbaret a' mossop fed the household -- usually an independent polygynous unit -- or guests at family events such as children's initiations.

(c) Imbaret ab soi or kapande was the man's field. Before the introduction of maize it was sown with peek and millet, but by 1938 maize had preponderated so that kapande became synonymous with 'husband's maize fields.' These crops were mainly used to entertain men friends and more recently to trade with Indian stores in the vicinity. They were cultivated by the field owner and hired laborers and stored separately.

Labour (1956?) conducted a detailed study of the Agikuyu production system from 1950 to 1952. Although she only worked in Kiambu and Fort Hall Districts (the latter now Muranga) she claimed that her findings could be applied to other Agikuyu communities. She further claimed that this was the first study in East Africa focusing entirely on women.

Among the Agikuyu she found that women's work included collecting garden rubbish into heaps; breaking up clods; beating earth out of weeds; planting cereals, legumes, cassava, colocasia, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and castor;

weeding, scaring birds; digging up colocasia and sweet potatoes; harvesting; storing crops; thatching granaries and repairing thatch. Men were responsible for clearing virgin forest (formerly); felling trees; clearing bush; hoeing; planting yams, bananas, plantains, sugar cane, cassava, gourds, sweet potatoes and tobacco; weeding; propping up bananas and plantains; training yams; cutting irrigation channels; digging up yams; cutting sugar cane; fencing; setting traps; and constructing and repairing framework for roofs and platforms of granaries (156 p. 264). The work was equally distributed between men and women, continuing throughout the year.

Although sources heretofore reviewed concur that women were major food producers in traditional precolonial economies, they do not explain the work linkages performed by men and women within specific crop cycles.<sup>4/</sup> It would have been particularly useful to know, for instance, that in the yam cycle, only men do farm work; or in the millet cycle, men do tasks A and women do tasks B. To focus on crop cycles rather than on the performance of men and women would have enabled us to identify the degree to which the cash economy of the modern era impinges on farm families. We would determine with some precision how the withdrawal of males to work in urban mining and other employment centers affects the task allocation of the remaining family members.

#### Women in Pastoral Production

In traditional precolonial African economies, livestock -- especially cattle, camels and goats -- was economically and socially significant. Nearly all economies combined pastoral with agricultural production, though not always to the same extent. Three types of predominately pastoral economies are herewith identified.

The first one consists of a permanent homestead and a complementary dry season camp. Women, children and older men compose the former and it is here

<sup>4/</sup>The work of Gunter Wagner published posthumously (1956) on the Bantu groups of Nyanza is probably a rare exception in this regard. Maillaiseux's work reviewed by Terray (1972) also offers some insights into how men and women allocate their labor in the cycle of a particular crop.

that light agriculture is generally practiced by women. The latter provides temporary shelter for herdsmen seeking water and pasture. The Masai of Kenya, the Jie-Karamajong cluster in Uganda and the Nuer and Shilluk of Sudan represent this pattern.

The second pattern of pastoral production occurs when meager grazing and browsing facilities determine livestock movement. The Turkana of Kenya and probably the Hima of Ankole, Uganda, illustrate this type.

The third form of pastoralism is reflected in a society like the Pakot of Kenya. Here, society developed two wings: one specializing in agriculture and living on highland areas, while the other occupies the lowland areas and keeps cattle. Goods are interchanged between the two groups.

Whether a 'purely' pastoral or a mixed economy, it is interesting to note that the role of women is similar in the allocation of livestock and rights. Describing Pondo proprietary rights, Hunter (1933) observed that women owned and transmitted property though they neither inherited nor bequeathed it. Women could acquire stock from their fathers, on or after marriage; by practicing as doctors; or from the marriage of daughters. As owners, women maintained sole responsibility for disposal of their animals. Further, at marriage, a polygamously married man allocated stock to each household (indlu) essentially headed by a wife. To dispose of animals from her indlu, the husband had to consult the wife.

Wagner (1956) equates women's land rights with their cattle rights. Both were usufructuary. Wagner surveyed the Abahyia of Tiriki, Maragoli, Bunyole and Kitosh and observed that men owned cattle and land which they apportioned to their wives at marriage to use for agriculture and dairy needs.

Among the Fulani, Jie, Turkana and Nuer, a woman was allocated cattle when she came to live with her husband's kin and/or acquired the status of a

full wife.<sup>5/</sup> At this point, a yard was built to contain all of her possessions, including her granaries and stores. This was the place where she cooked, ate with her children and slept -- her private domain.

Among the Jie, the word ekal referred to the physical yard or its social content. Ekal also meant 'house' whose distinctiveness was determined by descent through a woman. 'House' in this sense additionally connoted a set of full brothers, their wives and their children.

A wife's allocation was made primarily on the basis of her children's milk needs. Among the Jie, a woman received her milk allocation in sheep, goats, a donkey (for transportation), and an ox. The brothers jointly retained the remaining livestock until a new wife arrived. The herds initially allocated would be redistributed according to changing household milk needs. Another means by which cattle could be acquired by a woman was through the marriage of her daughter or a girl in the family ('house'). Her father, brother, sister's husband or daughter's husband could also make her a gift of an animal. A woman could in turn make an allocation to her unmarried daughter with children to provide them with milk. When a mother died, her eldest unmarried daughter kept the herds in trust for her brothers as long as she remained in her mother's yard. A son's wife also received an allocation from the 'house' herds. A woman's cattle rights were usufructuary and therefore limited to consumption; she had the right to the skin and meat of a dead animal that had been part of her yard herds. She made clothing, bags, thonging, covers and sandals from

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<sup>5/</sup>Among the Jie and Turkana, marrying was a process that lasted from 3-5 years. A woman who entered into a marriage relationship with a man would normally live with her own family until she had one or two children. During this period, she would be called 'bride-wife.' After one or two children were reared, she would go to her husband's home where she would acquire her own yard and be allocated stock by her husband. According to Elain (1973), Hima women do not enjoy the independent status of house-head accorded Turkana, Jie, Nuer and Fulani women. This is attributable to the manner in which herds are dispersed in the houseline in these societies.

the skin. Meat was presented as gifts to her women friends and other neighborhood wives.

The Turkana made allocations similar to those of the Jie, Nuer and Karamajong with one exception: the chief wife received an allocation in excess of her needs. However, she was expected to hold the surplus in trust for her husband for subsequent reallocations as needed. The Turkana family head had two homesteads, one for cattle and one for goats. This was a significant factor, affecting allocation of cattle to wives -- those who lived in the goat homestead could be many miles from the cattle homestead. Milk from cattle belonging to wives who might be staying at the goat homestead was shared by their adult daughters and sons and other wives in the cattle homestead. Turkana wives also received camels which were very valuable because their long lactation period provided milk for children when cow's milk was in short supply. Consequently, women took camels with them wherever they went. When the father died, the brothers divided up the herds from their mother's house. Each yard then became an independent unit.

The position of women in the domestic economy of pastoral societies varied somewhat between nomadic and transhumant types. In the transhumant system, women controlled agricultural production and disposal of garden produce. Rada and Neville Dyson-Hudson (1970) noted that farming among the Karamajong of Uganda was and still is primarily the responsibility of women. They grew sorghum as the main grain staple. Sorghum was well adapted to conditions of low rainfall. Older women appeared to show great skill in agriculture and often harvested good crops almost every year. Women used a short-handled hoe for ground cultivation, for planting and for weeding. Women had the job of scaring birds from the crop as well as harvesting and storing the crop. They

practiced inter-cropping, planting pumpkins, cucumbers, squashes, and gourds between sorghum. This formed the second important crop. Elusine was also planted in swamps and was particularly esteemed for its sweet flavor. Among the Luo, Luyia, Gusii and Kipsigis, elusine flour was reserved for making gruel and a delicacy of slick mushed meal made with sour milk. Elusine required much weeding and harvesting and was not grown in great quantities. Sorghum and millet varieties formed the staple grains.

Gulliver (1955) states with great certainty that Jie women as wives, mothers and daughters were equal to men in the household economy because of their significance in agriculture. The garden was the woman's livestock. She cultivated and owned 9/10 of the garden lands. A woman's economic responsibilities in her yard consisted of preparing milk products, performing the domestic chores related to feeding the family and rearing the children. Jie and Nuer women milked cattle as well. Among the Luo, however, it was taboo for a woman to milk cattle, for it was said that her husband would become impotent. Also, if a menstruating woman approached a cow, its milk would presumably spoil. This represents diverging ideological manifestations of women's production role within primarily pastoral conditions.

Women's cattle rights appear to have been well recognized. Though women had cattle consumption rights and could obtain animals for ritual purification or protection against witchcraft, they did not have disposal rights. Apparently women did not inherit cattle. Luo and Pokot women appear to have owned goats and sheep but not cattle. Among the Luo, Nuer and Jie, a man could take an animal (usually cattle) which the wife had acquired and barter it or dispose of it without necessarily consulting her; a woman could not reciprocate. Essentially, men controlled cattle in pastoral communities. I am inclined to think

that in a nomadic pastoral community such as the Turkana or Masai, a woman's position was rather peripheral. She neither owned nor inherited cattle and agricultural land and produce were not at her disposal. Gulliver found that women among the Jie had absolute ownership of land and agricultural produce and could engage in land transactions with other women outside the family.

Generally, in pre-colonial pastoral or agricultural economies, women were well protected economically because usufructuary rights in land and cattle were well defined and were then more effective than individual ownership. Because of the basic orientation toward subsistence requirements, it was beneficial to the family and village community for women to realize their land and livestock rights. Though family wealth in cattle varied, practically all families possessed some cows. Because labor demands in grazing cattle often necessitated inter-family cooperation and milk sharing, woman's usufructuary rights in livestock were extended beyond her immediate family. This practice contributed to her economic security and stability. Equity with respect to livestock, water and pasture land in pastoral communities seems to be supported by the fact that in the majority of cases no state machinery was evolved that could be used by a few people to control herds.

To summarize, our reinterpretation of available sources leads us to conclude that women's rights in production derived from specific characteristics of the traditional pre-colonial economy. First, the normative emphasis on usufructuary rights to land, livestock and natural resources (e.g., fish, game, salt licks, water herbs, vegetables, fruits, fuel, clay and thatch), favored the individual economic rights of women, men, children, aged and physically handicapped persons. Second, labor in productive work held precedence over absolute ownership and ensured that as long as an individual worked to his capacity, he would be guaranteed access to products of land and livestock.

Third, the biological role of child-bearing, comprising 9 months gestation and possibly 3 years lactation, gave women the unique social responsibility of feeding and rearing children. Moreover, the uniqueness of this reproductive situation probably gave impetus to an ideology which accorded women power to procreate as well as to determine the sex of the child. The importance of this ideology lies in its social meaning rather than in its truth value (i.e., scientific accuracy), for it attests to women's socio-economic significance in food production and reproduction -- the community's mainstay.

In my view, the wider social implication of any ideology embodying contradictory tendencies for women is reflected in the vesting of women with symbolic power to manipulate a whole range of ritual impurities and anomalies recognized and feared by all members of the society including women themselves. While these symbolic indicators may underline the community's fear of an oblique power by women they concurrently provide real power leverages for women to utilize in asserting their autonomy and humanity. The existence of symbolic power and its actual or potential use served to counteract the tendency of male domination articulated in genealogies, myths of creation, and formal political and economic institutions. Some anthropologists have assumed these manifestations to be the only model of society.

Fourth, the flexible character of kinship ideology enabled an individual to redefine kinship to suit his purpose. The case of woman marriage is a pertinent example.<sup>6/</sup>

Fifth, the legal and moral obligations governing the institution of marriage had the major objective of creating marital stability to ratify economic arrangements in the society. Though women married into 'stranger' lineages

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<sup>6/</sup>See Herskovits (1938) Peristiany (1939), Uchendu (1965) for discussion on woman-marriage among the Dahomey, Kipsigis and Igbo, respectively.

their official relations were obligated to make the marriage a stable and successful one. Finally, the important socio-economic function of the 'house' in a polygynous marriage would suggest that women in indigenous pre-colonial societies had a strong position by virtue of their position as de facto head of house. The house was important both in its social, economic and legal implications.

##### 5. IMPACT OF THE COLONIAL (CASH) ECONOMY ON WOMEN

A number of authors writing on women's role in African economies have indicated that the colonial economy adversely affected female autonomy and currently disrupted the traditional patterns of task allocation on the farm.

As early as 1932, Driberg noted that the introduction of cash crops upset the division of labor between men and women as well as their pre-colonial economic complementariness. In 1938, Peristiany (1939) observed that the imbaret ab soi or kapande, the man's field among the Kipsigis of Kenya, was being more rapidly commercialized than the imbaret a mossop, the field of the house owned by each married woman. With the Kipsigis, the man's field was being planted with maize and ploughed rather than hand dug. The maize harvested from it was being sold and the money used to pay taxes. In this way the man's field was being rapidly mechanized and directly linked to the colonial economy while the field of the house continued to be hand dug by women and the produce used to feed the domestic group.

Fisher, who had undertaken a study of the Agikuyu of Kenya, could discern by 1950-52 changes in the balance of work among Agikuyu men and women. More and more women could be found doing what was traditionally men's work. She explains this change with two factors: wage employment was drawing more men away from work on their own fields; and European education had the effect of changing men's attitudes about agriculture: they considered it women's

work. A third and very important factor for this imbalance was the arrest of large numbers of men in connection with the 'Mau Mau' revolt. Already by 1950, there was a great deal of political unrest in Kikuyuland due to the increased political consciousness of the masses brought about by close and protracted contacts with the settlers and colonial administrators. When men were forcibly removed from their localities and unable to contribute to production, women had to assume their jobs to maintain community continuity. This situation probably forced many Kikuyu women to be more independent than other female compatriots.

Jane Wills in a 1967 study of the Embu of Kenya noted the disruption of the pre-colonial division of labor between the sexes in Embu society, resulting mainly from the high male absenteeism from the countryside. Consequently, women had to perform men's work. That the reverse is uncommon implies that women increasingly made more production and marketing decisions and contributed more physical labor.

In a pioneering study on social change in Africa (1945), the Wilsons document the exploitation of rural African families -- especially women -- in Malawi and Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). In Zambia and Malawi for instance, 30-50 percent of able-bodied men worked outside their home area. In 1940, it was found that in Kabwe (formerly Broken Hill), Zambia, 69.9 percent of the African labor force (6,460 men) had spent two-thirds of their time in town since leaving their homes and that only 17.7 percent of their salaries ever went to their home area in the countryside. Further, after deducting transport costs and other expenses incurred by the wage earners on their home visits, the amounts of money sent to the countryside amounted to just 10.5 percent per person per year.

In Kabwe, the African male population of 7,500 had with it a total female population of 3,500 and 4,000 children. For every dependent present, three remained in the rural areas. However, urban dwellers consumed nine-tenths of their cash wages in town including in-kind remuneration. Thus, the countryside was clearly exploited by the towns. Furthermore, most of the men in town were young (average age in Kabwe was 24 years and 7 months), often having left the countryside at the age of just under 16 years. Though it was not possible for the men to raise enough income to feed themselves and their families in the urban industrial work situations, they were also permanently withdrawn from the rural areas and unable to contribute to agricultural and related economic activities. Wives, fiancées and old relatives of urban workers were left with deteriorating food and nutrition facilities and a lack of group support necessary to operate efficiently. The majority of able bodied labor left in the rural areas were women and they had to do most of the work. Obviously, deteriorating conditions of nutrition and health led to serious nutritional deficiencies in children and mothers.

Monica Hunter (later Wilson) observed even earlier that the contact period (read: colonial period), would precipitate economic disparity between men and women on the land. Based on her Pondo study (1933) reviewed earlier, she observed that one source of this disparity was the mining industry's demand for male labor. Men moved to labor centers where they could spend the greater part of their time and labor. They used new technological importations such as ploughing with oxen and carting grain with sledges, while women began to make clothes (formerly a male occupation). Women also began to earn small amounts of cash from beer brewing and from operating grocery stalls, cafes, and hotels. For young women, the marriage age ascended while ikazi became more commercialized. Because men were the wage earners, they assumed

control of money expenditures. Wives became dependent on them for food and household supplies. Marital difficulties arose among urban couples since the wives lost their economic productive role and began to be confined to dependent domestic and child-rearing roles. A shrinking land base in the countryside and land tenure changes, i.e., registering land in men's names, made the position of women (especially divorced ones), more insecure. Though the impact of the cash economy on the situation of rural women is clearly negative, the same system provides more girls than boys with school education, access to wages and greater consciousness and self-reliance.<sup>7/</sup>

Boserup summarizes the results of colonial agricultural policies and biases as follows:

As a result of the attitudes of the extension service, the gap between the labour productivity of men and women thus continues to widen. Men are taught to apply modern methods in the cultivation of a given crop, while women continue to use traditional methods in the cultivation of the same crop, thus getting much less out of their efforts than men. The inevitable result is that women are discouraged from participating in agriculture and are glad to abandon cultivation whenever their husband's income makes it possible. (1970, pp. 55-56).

We have reviewed a number of ethnographic sources to reconstruct the nature of production and division of labor in different African societies immediately preceding their incorporation into the world capitalist system. Some conclusions can be drawn: (1) Women were predominantly responsible for agricultural production. In most subsistence economies in African societies, the hoe was the tool of agriculture. Women had a monopoly of agricultural skills, and men had a complementary monopoly of skills in animal husbandry, fishing and hunting. (2) There is evidence that women had been the primary decision-makers in matters of crop production, although the sources reviewed do not clearly indicate the structure of decision-making in the family and community as a

<sup>7/</sup>A recent book which reviews the changing position of women, particularly with respect to the law in South Africa, is Simons, H. J. African Women: Their Legal Status in South Africa, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

whole. For instance, among the Bamenda, Kipsigis and Valenge, a man needed his wife's consent to dispose of crops. (3) However, it appears that colonial consolidation precipitated a rapid entry and integration of men into the colonial economy; led them to acquire certain skills, such as the use of the plough; and oriented them in the colonial market. Conversely, the sector in which most women possessed skill and decision-making power was neglected and as a result stagnated. Thus, women continue to use backward techniques of cultivation which become less and less productive. At the same time there is growing population pressure on the land as commercial agriculture competes with production.

## 6. CONCLUSION

We have devoted a substantial portion of this paper to the proposition that: (1) the rural development theorists have not put forward many explicit ideas on the role of women in agricultural production, and (2) extension services have tended to exclude women or teach them things that do not enhance their skills in agriculture. It is important to clarify here that we are not interested in the role of women in rural development simply because they are women. The important point is the serious loss of potential brought about by neglecting the role of women in agriculture and food production.

We have reached the following conclusions:

- (1) An adequate conception of rural development must include a historical perspective. In this way it is possible to assess the different effects of colonial economic demands on men and women and on this basis offer some prescriptions.
- (2) Policy recommendations must utilize theoretical and practical considerations to narrow the gap in the labor productivity of men and women. The allocation of research personnel and resources

to study the economic position of women in different societies is necessary. Concurrently, practical measures must be implemented, i.e., providing marketing facilities for women -- especially through cooperative societies for food crops.

- (3) The ultimate constraints on development occurs at the national level. The political and economic ideology of development pursued by any one country essentially encourages differentiation and inequalities or reduces them. Any recommendations for rural change must be made with awareness of the real political and economic constraints in a given country.<sup>8/</sup>

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<sup>8/</sup>It seems to me as an academic observer that one of the major challenges for scholars of rural development -- particularly African scholars in this era of independent states -- is the degree of the academic's commitment in devising and implementing strategies for rural development which will bring about a measure of equity between social groups and between the sexes.

Already, I sense increased activity and academic 'talk' concerning the role of African women and their deteriorating position in the countryside. I am not too pessimistic regarding possible achievements by those who advocate positive change. I am pessimistic, however, about a final revelation that academics have found yet another 'fundable' and 'researchable' field possibly generative of quick academic rewards. There are already indications that some academics see 'women's studies' as a new imperial device with which to once more partition all of the world except the highly industrialized western countries.

African states can avoid this eventuality if they continue to: 1) define their research priorities and determine their relation to development priorities; and 2) develop a framework within which local research institutions and local people control the research design, program data collection and intra-country data dissemination. A national awareness concerning research and its politics is paramount in this era and in the future of African development.

## 7. SOME RESEARCH PRIORITIES

In considering research priorities in the study of women in rural Africa it seems important to bear in mind several related factors. There is the question of the origin of research problems. Do they come from local or overseas research institutions? Do they reflect the needs and priorities of the people of the country or are they simply 'fundable' projects? Stated another way, by what process does a particular country devise research programs and what is their relevance to long-term development goals?

There is a need to pull together existing data on women and their role in rural development in order to identify what is known and what needs to be known. It is desirable that this exercise be performed in different African countries and possibly initiated on the basis of comparability of data. A number of countries have already responded to the United Nations Rabat Conference recommendation that national machineries be established for coordinating research and development policy and programs affecting women. Such national machineries (or women's bureaux as they are now called) should initiate and press for scientific appraisals of the position of women in individual countries. Where possible, persons or small groups should be identified and charged with this task.

Principal development programs in each country should be evaluated: (1) to assess the impact of development programs on the rural farm household in its global capacity as a unit of production and consumption and in its human capacity as a unit of men, women and children<sup>9/</sup>; and (2) to evolve quick and fairly accurate evaluative techniques for other, similar programs. This process could lead to the development of a methodology suited to each country's social structure and research on women in development.

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<sup>9/</sup>Here I would like to thank Dunstan S.C. Spencer for drawing my attention to the analytical significance of treating the rural household as a unit and then breaking it down in terms of task allocation to different members of the household. (See his paper African Women in Agricultural Development: A Case Study in Sierra Leone, OLC Paper No. 9, June 1976).

While it is impossible for one individual to set research priorities concerning rural African women, we do propose some basic research areas which have a general application to African rural development and which can be redefined on a comparative basis to suit individual countries.

## I. ACCESS TO LAND

Given a particular level of agricultural technology and a land tenure system, the landlessness of women or an increased uncertainty regarding their land rights can affect the organization of labor, types of crops produced and food availability. Traditionally, women in most African countries do not have the final right of land disposition. Although they have always used land for crop production by virtue of being a sister, daughter or wife of a particular man, different patterns may now be emerging. Research in land tenure changes and women's rights is important and could be profitable. The following questions might be considered:

- (a) What is the impact of land privatization or nationalization on women?
- (b) What is the relationship between allocation of land for export crops and food crops?
- (c) How does socio-economic differentiation relate to land holding or ownership by different families?
- (d) In connection with (b), what are the trends in the sale of labor? Which members of the rural household sell their labor for all or part of the agricultural year and what is the impact of observed trends on productivity?
- (e) In relation to (a), does ownership of land (i.e., statutory rights in land) enable women to apply their land titles to the acquisition of industrial or commercial loans where land ownership is private; and, does state ownership of land encourage women to participate more fully in national agricultural development programs?

## II. LABOR ALLOCATION

- (a) How do rural farm households allocate their labor to different crops and with what amount of variability?

- (b) What factors have shaped and continue to determine certain patterns of labor allocation to crops and non-farm activities?
- (c) What is the relationship between work done by women on the farm and household (domestic) work? Here, it is important to develop a measure of 'responsibility' or category of obligation where two tasks are performed simultaneously or in close proximity with each other. For instance, if a woman takes the baby on her back when she weeds rice or fetches water in a pot she brought to the field with her, what impact does this double responsibility have on her work, her health, her child's health, etc?
- (d) What impact does technological innovation have on the traditional patterns of labor allocation?
- (e) In the context of wage labor on the farm, how is labor rated and remunerated? Are men acquiring better paying jobs than women or vice versa; and what factors account for such a discrepancy if it exists?

### III. TIME BUDGETING

- (a) How do women, men and children in rural farm families spend their time?
- (b) What are constraints on women's time?
- (c) What do women wish to see done to eliminate these constraints?
- (d) Do women want labor-saving technology?
- (e) What do women do with time released through such devices? This sort of study could be conducted as an experiment with a water system, flour milling plant or with smaller devices, such as maize shellers, coconut graters, etc.

### IV. DECISION-MAKING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

- (a) What decisions do women make regarding work on the land and work-sequence priority? What factors are involved?
- (b) What mechanisms do women use to influence decisions on expenditure of cash and goods in the household?
- (c) What is the relative influence of a woman in household/farm decisions in the context of polygyny?
- (d) Does extended absence of the husband enlarge or narrow the decision-making scope of the wife?

- (e) To what extent does the socio-economic status of the family determine the scope of a woman's decision-making on the farm?

#### V. MALE OUTMIGRATION

- (a) What are the factors in the outmigration of males which most affect the position of women left behind? For instance, what is the frequency of communication between the labor migrant and his wife left behind on the farm? Does he send money back for specific tasks? Does he still manage to execute his 'male' responsibilities defined by what the culture expects a man to do? How does his performance in this way affect the family? In other words, the question for research here is the extent to which a rural farm family continues to function effectively when the able-bodied men are away most of the year.

#### VI. AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

- (a) What types of agricultural training are available for women and at what levels?
- (b) What is the relevance of such training?
- (c) What are the ratios of women to men who successfully complete the training?
- (d) What are the potentials of a group extension approach which involves both male and female trained personnel and selected members of the community?
- (e) What are rural people's attitude toward government agricultural training? Do they see any use in it or do they consider it useless and what alternatives do they propose?
- (f) What is the general information level of women concerning new agricultural methods? What is being done to improve the information flow? Do women seek information from government sources? If not, why?

#### VII. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MARKETING AND IN COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The following questions might be suggested here:

- (1) To what extent do women in a given area engage in trade or sale of goods, local or long distance?

- (2) What types of cooperative societies are present in any one area, and what is the involvement of women in these societies in the structure of decision-making and in the sale of crops? What are these crops? Evidence exists to show that most cooperative societies are based on cash crops which are primarily grown by men, and that even though women are legally entitled to become members, in practice many of them do not join. Could there be other constraints preventing them from becoming cooperative members? If so, what are these constraints?
- (3) Are there any food cooperatives, and could they provide an avenue for women to market their produce? Here we are assuming an increased production of food crops so that a surplus could be sold. Food cooperatives would also provide a market in which women could buy a variety of food crops which they themselves might not produce. This would diversify the foods available at reasonable prices for home consumption (and this is badly needed in many areas of the country). In this context, transportation of foods and storage at the cooperative premises must be investigated.

#### VIII. WOMEN'S SELF-HELP AND WORK GROUPS

This area is especially important in considering viable forms of cooperation, leadership and incentives among women. The following questions could be raised:

- (1) What is the structure and size of indigenous forms of cooperation for work and relief of distress, e.g., death and sickness, etc?
- (2) Do these groups still operate and have they changed?
- (3) What new groups exist, and what is the relationship, if any, between the new and old forms of cooperation?
- (4) How do the groups relate to the wider socio-political framework of the country? Do the local people see them as a threat or an advantage in the area where they operate.
- (5) What is the influence of these groups in regard to implementing new ideas?

It should not be taken for granted that groups that label themselves women's groups or organizations are necessarily committed to bettering the conditions of all women. Quite often they are infiltrated and used by a political candidate for getting votes or implementing some ideas that are to his or her

advantage. In addition, they largely represent sectarian interests of a few elite women. A local-level study rather than an urban one will reveal the nature and interests of these groups. This does not mean that genuine self-held groups do not exist, only that they must be accurately identified, and their interests seen in proper perspective.

#### IX. WOMEN IN PASTORAL SOCIETIES AND MARGINAL AREAS

A number of pastoral societies still exist in Africa -- though often in marginal areas where they have been pushed by sedentary agricultural societies. Since they will probably continue as they are, it seems important to gather data on the conditions of pastoral societies and women's roles within them. Furthermore, given the difficult ecological zones in which pastoral and some agricultural communities live, it is important to assess how they are adapting to dry conditions and what can be done to reduce soil deterioration in those areas. All of the research topics mentioned above should be administered to pastoral and fishing as well as to hunting and gathering communities. Another major area of research is the role of women in resource management under conditions of protracted food scarcity, famine and drought.

#### X. NUTRITION, FAMILY PLANNING AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

A major research consideration in this area should be undertaken jointly by persons with training in public health, nutrition, demography, economics and sociology. It should focus on the interrelationship between family size, mortality rates, food availability and the distribution of health delivery services to rural families within each country.

### 8. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the preceding section, we reviewed research needs to provide proper understanding of women's role in rural development. This section briefly suggests methodological approaches that would yield the necessary data.

#### (1) Participant Observation

This would require the researcher to reside in a par-

ticular area for an extended period of time and to record activities of women in farm and non-farm work.

(2) Life Histories

A collection of life histories of women in a given area should reveal many changes in women's lives from childhood to adulthood. This has two advantages: it gives the women a chance to tell their own life stories, to emphasize what they consider important in their lives; and it provides insights into the women's own awareness and perception of their position in society and points to their aspiration and strategies (or lack of them) for changing unfavourable conditions.

This type of data requires more time for analysis than standardized questionnaires, but it is a useful way to get women to talk about themselves without the inevitable constraints of standardized questions. In situations where the literacy rate is low, such life histories might yield more accurate and complete information than structured questions. Though it is perhaps not always recognized, it is certainly true that any change which would produce better conditions for women would in the final analysis be most effective if the women themselves showed awareness and expressed a positive desire for such change.

(3) Discussion Groups

This is a very good way to get women to talk about their conditions in an atmosphere of exchange with other women in the local area. Women tend to discuss their problems or

ideas with one or two other women whom they trust, but this is usually limited to personal problems and advice. More generalized discussions focused on such topics as agriculture, nutrition or health could make women more aware of the similarity of their social position as well as possible solutions to their common problems.

(4) Labor Allocation

Dunstan Spencer's work on Sierra Leone referred to above, is of particular interest and utility because of the methodology he adopts in reckoning labor allocation by women. The methodology involves reckoning the total family allocation over time -- female labor being just one of the labor inputs required on the farm. In this way, the bias of treating female labor as a special case is avoided. The superiority of this method for determining exactly specific labor inputs for men and women for specific crops during particular times of year cannot be overstressed. It is expensive, however, requiring adequate planning and pretesting. Researchers are encouraged to pool their resources to offset costs.



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