

PN-AMX-039

W-49977

BUREAUCRACY AND RURAL WOMEN:
ILLUSTRATIONS FROM MALAWI

by

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Working Paper #71
November 1984

Abstract: Many Malawian civil servants will readily admit that women in many cases are responsible for most work related to food production and that they are vital to the rural economy. Yet by the time government programs emerge, and are executed, they generally reflect a far more limited evaluation of the role of women, as homemakers. This paper provides documentary evidence of the restrictive nature of these policies, and then sets out to suggest explanations for this, giving primary attention to bureaucratic attitudes and perceptions. It notes, for example, the paucity of women in policy-making positions, "patriarchal" attitudes (and some of the ways they are justified) among male civil servants, and the effects on rural women of negative official attitudes towards "non-progressive" peasant farmers in general.

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During the course of a series of interviews with Malawian civil servants about government policies towards women,¹ I made an appointment to see a Senior Credit Officer in one of the Agricultural Development Divisions. When I arrived, he looked at me quizzically and said that he could not see what agricultural credit had to do with women. "Why have you come to see me?" he asked, "I am sure that it is the Home Economics Officer you are looking for." This response--both parts of it--says much about the official view of rural women in Malawi and about the problems of integrating rural women advantageously into Government programmes.

It would be an error for an outsider to suggest that his own assessment of the role of women in a particular society is more accurate or valid than those of members of that particular society itself. And that is not the intention of this paper. Yet there does appear to be a disconnection between the perceptions of many men, as members of society, and the programmes they decide upon and implement as civil servants. Many Malawian men are more than ready to explain how much they appreciate the role of women in agricultural production; they will acknowledge that women are in many cases responsible for most work related to food production and that they are vital to the rural economy. In their view of "social reality," they appear to see women as fully participative, essential to both home and farm, to reproduction and production. Yet by the time programmes emerge and are executed, they generally reflect a far more limited evaluation of the role of women, as homemakers, seeming to ignore their productive contribution to the economy. (Systems analysts would no doubt observe a serious dislocation in the transformation of inputs into outputs.) This paper is an attempt to provide some insight into this phenomenon.

The first part will furnish some evidence indicating the nature of the Malawi government's policies towards women. The second, and major, part will suggest explanations. Quotes from civil servants are used extensively in order to give a more immediate sense of their feelings. And the conclusion will locate the focus on bureaucracy inside a broader framework of issues relating to the subordination of rural women in Africa. Appendix A includes recommendations made in my report to the United Nations Economic Commission on Africa (see note 1).

Malawi, unlike most African governments, has not resorted to the production of medium-term development plans. Instead it relies on three-year rolling public investment programmes. These are the principal planning documents. They deal in summary form with all Government projects intended for implementation during the three year period covered. Other policy and planning documents of importance include the National Rural Development Programme, the National Health Plan, the Statement of Development Policies and the Ministry of Community Development Five Year Development Plan. In all, ten documents were used in this study. It is very clear that women as a special category of the population have received precious little attention in these formal planning documents. The few references there are to women are limited entirely to the spheres of health, education and home economics. In the

health sphere, women receive attention as a vulnerable group during pregnancy and soon after giving birth, and as the people most immediately responsible for bringing young children to clinics. As a Senior Medical Administrator explained, "This is not a women's issue? We aim at the most vulnerable group a that just happens to be women who are pregnant or who have just given h--plus children under five. This is a biological vulnerability, nothing e. This is where most deaths take place." Education policy is trying to encourage more girls to go to, and stay at, school, and it aims to protect girls' educational opportunities by reserving one-third of places at secondary schools for girls.

For the rest, the Malawi Government is carrying on a well-established colonial legacy² in which women are perceived as "homemakers." While almost everyone interviewed agreed that women are important to agriculture, there is hardly a mention of them in the entire National Rural Development Programme. Similarly, women's contribution to community life and self help projects is widely acknowledged; yet the Ministry of Community Development (as it was known at the time) Statement on Development Policies and Objectives limits its mention of women to home economics. A quote from the document illustrates this:

The Ministry realizes that individual families form the basis of the nation's socio-economic structure and that therefore women have a prime responsibility in national development..... The programme involves the teaching of women throughout the country in organized groups. Subjects that are taught in this programme include: Food and Nutrition, Child Care, Housing and Home Improvement, Village Health and Sanitation, Textiles and Clothing, Poultry Keeping and Vegetable Growing.

The very restricted assessment this implies of the role of women in community development is reinforced by the type of training programme offered to women farmers (often referred to as "farmers' wives") by the Ministry of Agriculture. Women, with few exceptions, receive a "Home Economics" course, while men take a course in "General Agriculture." These courses include the following subjects (as given at a Day Training Centre):

<u>General Agriculture</u>	<u>(hours)</u>	<u>Home Economics</u>	<u>(hours)</u>
Crop husbandry	17	Nutrition and cookery	18
Animal husbandry	9	Home improvement	16
Horticulture	15.5	Laundry	8
Land husbandry	9	Child care	7
Farm management	9	Family health education	7
Family health education	8	Needlework and handicraft	24
		Horticulture	14
		Poultry keeping	7
		Crop storage	6
		Total	107
Total	67.5		

This neglect of women would emerge far more poignantly were one to emphasize all the relevant areas in which they are ignored: in agricultural project after agricultural project; in research and evaluation on agriculture; in water supply projects; in small scale commerce and industry; and so on.

As a first step toward explaining dominant attitudes in the Malawi Civil Service, it is necessary to note the paucity of women in planning and policy-making positions. In 1981 there were no professional women employed in the Government's formal planning machinery, neither in the central planning agencies of the Office of the President and Cabinet (namely the Economic Planning Division, the Development Division, and the Rural Development Division) nor in any of the Ministerial Planning Units. (The exception was one expatriate woman in Education on a short term contract. One Malawian woman had previously served in Agriculture, and another was abroad on a training course.) All Principal and Deputy Secretaries were men. (The Vice-Chairman of the Public Service Commission--equivalent to a Deputy Secretary--was a woman. This is a strategic post, but does not relate to Governmental programmes). There were also no professional women in two closely related agencies, the Treasury, which bears the major responsibility for negotiating projects-to-be-aided with donors, and the National Statistics Office, which generates the data on which planners rely. The latter office employed one expatriate woman on a short-term contract toward the end of the period under study. In formal terms therefore women were effectively excluded from the planning machinery. Furthermore, there was no section in any of these planning agencies set up or given the task of preparing projects on women or of evaluating projects or programmes in terms of their impact on women.

The most senior women in a position to influence policy in a direct way were all in the "traditional" women's spheres of Community Development, Social Welfare, and Health--the "soft" Ministries as some officials referred to them. These were all small Ministries with very modest-sized budgets; the first two were recently reduced in status and merged. In the Ministries of Agriculture and Education there were a few women who were beginning to exercise some influence at a middle-to-senior level; procedures for their inclusion in the decision-making process were not institutionalized and their influence was in no sense securely established. In all, it would be fair to say that about 8 to 10 women had some say in bureaucratic policy-making.

Although the number of women holding positions increases from the middle level of the civil service downwards, male dominance remains very strong in both numbers and influence. For example, female Professional and Technical Officers in the Ministry of Agriculture find themselves in a weak position in dealing with their male colleagues. The superior attitude that many men assume is intensified as the women feel that their own influence is reduced because they are so numerically in the minority and because most of them are younger, more junior and less experienced. These factors are significant in a civil service in which hierarchy is taken extremely seriously.³

It is abundantly clear then that it is the perceptions and concerns of men that determine the overall approach of the Civil Service to women's issues. By tradition, culture, and habit, men generally regard themselves as superior to women; this affects the way they perceive women both in the bureaucracy and in the rural areas. The following are extracts from explanations given by three senior men:

Our custom is that women should be subordinate to men. This is how it always has been and it won't change easily. We always have been a male dominated society. Men were hunters, but made most of the important decisions. Then they became migrant workers and brought home money. Ask any woman about decisions. They will talk but in the end they will say: you must ask the man. So this is a cultural thing.

In this country men are always above women. These women who are struggling to get on top of men are fighting against their own consciousness. They know and are brought up to know that men are above them.

Men's superiority here is customary--also it's Christian--it's in the Bible. We expect our wives to respect us and despite the talk of equality, we must lead--we can compromise a bit, but we must lead.

Female civil servants confirmed that this was the feeling among most men and acknowledged that most women found themselves accepting or having to accept a position of inferiority.

Men are responsible for destroying women's minds. Men decide for women on all things...who always has to drop out of a job? My career is not considered....we were given no place in the cash economy and in migrant labour....We are slotted into a role right from the start. The home role is exclusive to women. She is completely tied to it. Right from the start boys are treated differently. In the family fathers have the final word. Wives just listen even if they know he is wrong.

We ourselves are not well developed. We still stick to jobs which have a close relationship to our domestic affairs. We are not confident we can compete with men. Men's attitudes are that women are not as good as men. That is why some of us are scared of establishing a separate department for women's affairs--it may easily fail--and men will scorn us if it does.

These quotes illustrate another significant element in understanding the assumptions on which policies are based; namely, the interconnection between the private and the public domains on this topic. While official policy on women is a public issue, it relates closely to very private questions of attitudes and values, of families and of individuals. The possibility of

women participating more fully in public decision-making at whatever level and of taking advantage of available economic opportunities relates directly to husband-wife and male-female relationships. A number of civil servants commented on this link and expressed concern that changes in public policy and public life would disturb established patterns of behaviour in the private sphere, which was something they did not want. A sense of this kind of fear is unlikely to surface in open negotiation and evaluation of programmes, but is likely to lead to more subtle types of resistance to change. In interviews, a number of women themselves acknowledged that they transferred their domestic sense of subordination to the civil service. At home it was not done for a women to argue with men. At school girls found it difficult to compete openly with boys. And in public "women never complain--that is the culture." This last comment is an overstatement. There were a number of women ready and able to "complain." It does however reflect a commonly felt sense of reticence among them.

Terms and phrases such as "customary," "how it always has been," "(women's) own consciousness," "cultural" and, less often, "Christian" are regularly used to support men's views on the division of responsibility and labour between the sexes. The terms "natural" and "naturally" cropped up even more frequently and in a wide variety of contexts: "Naturally, women become nurses/secretaries and men become doctors/bosses." "Naturally, men take decisions and women follow them." "Naturally girls don't want to be plumbers." "Naturally, women's fingers are much more flexible than men's; that is why they are much better tea-pickers than men." "Naturally more women than men are illiterate." "It is a natural tendency for girls to see themselves as not as good as boys." Of course "natural" means many things. It means biologically natural, for example, when referring to the fact that women give birth to babies, and breast feed. But it also means traditional, cultural, accepted, habitual and convenient; and traditional/cultural may refer to African or western traditions or some combination.

A possibility that is never mentioned either in the realm of policy or of family is that of men taking more domestic responsibility. The furthest anyone would go was to suggest that men should receive more home economics and health training in their agricultural courses in order to be able to understand what their wives have been taught and thus be more willing to give the women moral and financial support. There is no hint of a suggestion that the pattern of domestic responsibility might be altered. Yet this is a fairly basic question in rural women's lives. Such innovations as mudstoves and groundnut shellers, even where they are available, affordable and practical, will not reduce the workload of women very markedly. Men go to some trouble in this regard to stress, and even glorify, the role of the women in the home. A District Commissioner explained:

Traditionally the woman must do the garden. She must produce food and look after children. Men will only marry a woman who is a hardworker. Even if she has been to school they will look at her output not her education. The family is the hub of the nation. If the family is poor the nation is poor.

Along the same lines a Senior Economist added:

If you educate a woman you educate the nation because women impart knowledge to the children and the husband is rarely at home.

For a number of men there really was no issue. Some had simply not given the question of "women and development" any thought. Others had thought about it a bit but felt there was nothing to it. Others again thought it might be an issue worth attending to but they wanted concrete evidence and reliable data to prove the assumptions being made about women. There were a variety of approaches along these lines. According to one official with a background in rural development:

Farming is a joint venture. Men and women go to the field together. Men always report new knowledge (received from an Agricultural Extension Officer) to their wives. There are no such things as women farmers in Malawi. Farming is not a profession that you can segregate into men and women. Marriage is a partnership and they work jointly and what is good for one is good for another.

A planner commented:

You have noted the absence of "women" in the planning documents. This is because we don't have sex discrimination. We believe in human beings and we expect women to play as good a part as men.

Another type of argument said that to the extent that women were at a disadvantage it was largely their own fault and it was up to them to do something about it.

Avenues are open and the sky is the limit. They want a woman in the planning process without getting the necessary qualifications for planning. Ask them: do you know any women who are qualified to join the Economic Planning Division? They'll say no. Girls with economics prefer the private sector. They are more interested in money than in positions of influence and job satisfaction.

One senior administrator felt that "it is up to women to complain. Men would have complained a long time ago?" His view was that women should not be "protected," but "they should fight and find their own way."

A number of civil servants felt that insofar as the position of women had become an issue this was a consequence of external influence from either foreigners or Malawi women who "picked up" these ideas at international conferences or while training abroad. The following sorts of remarks about what was referred to as "this tiresome- fashionable issue" were made by a number of officials: "This is not our problem but yours; and you are trying to foist it on us." "You want to make all societies the same." "Western

culture confuses this. Women now want to go too fast. Loyalty is needed. Emancipation must come slowly and carefully or else there will be confusion." A Senior Medical Officer expanded on this:

It is just a fashionable western issue. The west got where it did without bothering about the exploitation and subordination of women. Now that the dust has settled, and they are developed, now they are saying to developing countries--where it is still very dusty--that they must turn their attention to women. Here there are still too many problems to worry about women too much. It is an evolutionary process and as we develop so women will find their places in society.⁴

Another variation on this theme related to the policies of Malawi's President, Kamuzu Banda, who had repeatedly stressed that the status of "his" (that is, Malawi's) women must be raised. Since what the President says is treated as law, there was therefore no reason to do anything further about women. A high level official in the Ministry of Labour observed: "His Excellency, the Life President, says we must assist women. So this is what is being done. It does not need written policy statements."

In trying to explain the bases of official policy relating to women, I have dealt so far with some of the perceptions male civil servants have of women. These perceptions partially explain projects dealing with rural women. Rural women are also affected by the attitudes of the bureaucracy, reinforced by the policies they pursue, towards poorer categories of peasant farmers. In common with many other governments, the Malawi government gives prime attention to cash crop producers, particularly those cultivating the crops which it requires, using the techniques it recommends, and accepting the credit package, comprising seeds and fertilizer, it offers. The civil servants, on the basis of this approach, prescribe neat formulae for production, categorize farmers, and give attention accordingly. Agricultural Extension Officers operate within this framework, excluding from their sphere of responsibility farmers who do not conform to official requirements. This affects in particular the poorer farmer who does not take credit and grow "government" crops. Farmers have many good reasons for not complying; some genuinely fear that they will be unable to repay the credit at the end of the season because of crop failure, lack of rain, insects, army worm, or other problems. Others argue that their fields are too small to be able to farm in the way required; for example, they believe that it is essential to their survival that they intercrop rather than engage in the pure crop cultivation that the Agricultural Extension Officers propagate. Bureaucrats see it very differently:

There is no reason why poor farmers cannot benefit from credit. With one acre of maize, using the credit package, they will get at least 18 bags. They can sell 8 bags for 35 Kwacha to repay the credit, and be left with 10. Without credit they will get 5 bags only.

This increase is, apparently, possible if everything goes according to plan. But it takes a confident farmer with sufficient land and resources to fall back on if things go wrong--and they often do. Civil servants have a number of terms they employ when referring to farmers who do not cooperate with the official extension advice; these include "laggards," "lazy," "conservative," "scared," "unreceptive," "unresponsive," and "inactive."

Look, the farmer has to show a bit of initiative. Those who just sit back and wait won't get assistance and advice. He might not benefit anyway because of lack of initiative. You must be realistic. There are very few Agricultural Extension Officers and they have very little transport. He wants to get results. So who should he spend time on? The unresponsive or the responsive farmer? If you don't get a response why go back? He will deal with early innovators first.

What is overlooked is that it is the bureaucracy that has determined in advance what exactly the farmers should be responsive to or be active about, what kinds of results are of relevance, and what sorts of agricultural problems are worthy of official attention. The impact on rural women is apparent.⁵ They are affected as members of households falling into this group of poorer farmers, and households headed by women (and this may be as much as 25% of all rural households in Malawi) are more likely to fall into this category. In addition, these policies reinforce long established pressures to upgrade the social status of cash cropping (perceived mainly as men's work) and downgrade that of food production (women's work).⁶

Figures, used selectively, help to make bureaucrats more secure in the knowledge that their policies are working. For example, one bureaucrat interviewed asserted that women were getting their fair share of agricultural training. "In 1966, only 33 women received training. In 1975, 6200 women did." When pressed for further information, the officer said that in 1975, 33,000 men had been trained and that the vast majority of the women had been trained in Home Economics and not Agriculture. The ratio of men to women receiving Agricultural training was probably about 30:1. Another example: "Women are sharing pretty fully in credit now. For example, the Lilongwe Land Development Programme gets about 50% of all credit in this country and women are involved in credit there. Some women are very able and are successful farmers in their own right." On request the officer concerned was good enough to have credit figures compiled that distinguished between men and women. It turned out that out of 52,810 farmers who received credit, 4,120 (+7%) were women. Since women make up more than 50% of operating farmers in this area and about 25% of household heads, it is obvious that their access to credit is very different from that of men.

The absence of figures is also used to demonstrate that there is no problem, or to explain that there is no reliable basis for policy-making about women. The Ministry of Labour, for example, kept no statistics and did no research on women in the private sector. They were therefore in a

position to argue that there were no issues of concern that they were aware of. Similarly, credit officers did not break their figures down according to gender; they too were unaware of whether women were getting a fair deal or not. An Evaluation Officer in one of the Agricultural Development Divisions commented that it would be quite easy for his office to gather information on women but that there was not much interest in doing this. A related case that is made is that if women are in the predicament they claim to be, are as productive as they say they are, etc., then those who make these claims must produce hard facts to convince policy-makers. In the final analysis, of course, it requires a policy-decision to elicit the information on which to base informed policy-making.

A further complication for the official mind is that the whole "woman's issue" is a bureaucratically untidy one. No one Ministry is responsible for women and most Ministries have (or could have) some responsibility, for example, Agriculture, Labour, Community Development, Social Welfare, Justice, and Trade and Industry. It is also still unclear what the new emphasis on women means or demands, and in what direction it is moving. Is it a change of attitude, a new programme, a series of new projects, additional segments added to old projects, different things in different Ministries, a totally new Department (even Ministry), a liaison committee, new employment conditions, new agricultural approaches, or some or all of these? In Malawi, those concerned with creating a women's programme were still uncertain and had not clarified their intentions. It was also unclear whether they wanted segregation or integration. The continued stress on women implies some kind of segregation; yet at the same time the call is for the integration of women in development.

It is characteristic of bureaucratic behaviour when faced by a wide array of demands on its services, often in circumstances of financial and manpower constraints, to tend to reduce uncertainties, be wary of innovation, and classify new proposals and ideas into already established categories. This is where "Home Economics" comes in because it has long been closely linked to women in the mind of the civil servant. In addition, by squeezing women's issues into this area of governmental responsibility, the bureaucracy reinforces at every turn the domestic role of women and reduces the more threatening aspects of the proposals. This directly affects policy on rural women. In Malawi, four Ministries give attention to home economics for women. Local Councils (which fall under the Ministry of Local Government) employ Homecraft Workers to teach to women in their respective areas; Community Development employs female Community Development Assistants who teach home management courses to a relatively better-off category of women and supervise Homecraft Workers. The Ministry of Health employs Mother and Child Health Assistants who have similar training and who, in addition to providing health advice, teach homecraft related topics to women. Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture relies on four categories of female officers for this purpose: Farm Home Assistants who receive a year's training at an Agricultural Training Institute, roughly one-third of their training being in Agriculture and two-thirds in Home Economics; Technical Assistants who do a two-year course at an Agricultural College, about

two-thirds Agriculture and one-third Home Economics; Technical Officers who undergo a three-year diploma programme at the University, primarily in Agriculture, and Professional Officers who take a four-year degree programme also at the University and also primarily in Agriculture. With very few exceptions, these officers are attached to Training Centres where they invariably end up teaching Home Economics. They are not used as extension officers and they rarely teach Agriculture.

There appear to be very strong arguments why a Ministry of Agriculture in a country like Malawi should give its full attention to the increased production of crops, rather than to homecraft, and why these women should therefore be used for agricultural training and for extension work. One of these is that they will probably be more willing and able than their male colleagues to communicate agricultural advice to women farmers. But in the Ministry the arguments against this remained strong; for example:

It is pointless to put women into Agricultural posts until the Ministry has filled all the Home Economics positions. Extension work involves irregular and long hours, uncomfortable trips, frequent absence from home which many women are not prepared to take. Male farmers would resent advice given them by women and the effect would therefore be reduced. Because of the problems caused by marriage (women leaving the service, or having to transfer to follow their husbands), and pregnancies, it is wasteful to rely too much on women.

There are solutions to some of these problems, but for the civil servant operating within the prevailing circumstances, it is simpler to use men for Agricultural Extension and women for Home Economics.

This paper has a specific focus; yet some broad assumptions are built into it. The first of these is that capitalist-mixed economic systems operating in Africa invariably depend on drawing men away from food production on their own farms. Second, and, necessary to the effectiveness of the first, women are required to remain behind to carry out the social and biological reproductive role essential to the maintenance of the society. Third, the same mechanisms set up to remove men from their land usually ensure that the task assigned to rural women becomes in time both more marginal and more difficult. Fourth, since the demand for cheap labour continues, these assumptions are as valid in the post-colonial as they were in the colonial period.⁷ Fifth, and also relevant to both periods, western commercial practices, economic analyses, and social assumptions have combined to diminish the status of women.⁸ Sixth, however determined the efforts to localize control of the economy, most African governments are responding to a pattern of pressures that leads them to retain this system of exploitation. Finally, the bureaucracy, as chief state functionary and most immediate state beneficiary, will find itself assisting in these processes. Overall, Malawi fits comfortably into this model.

These points are familiar ones. Also familiar is the observation that the colonial authorities handed over the machinery of state to a privileged elite or emerging petty-bourgeoisie which has used its advantaged position to retain its privileges. What is not often mentioned, and it is so obvious a point that the oversight is understandable, is that the colonials handed the machinery of state over to men. Patriarchy was thus extended from the family and village to central government and, later, to the decentralized agencies of government. It has also been asserted that the bureaucracy, as a very important segment of the beneficiary class, will tend to resist reforms that it sees as threatening its class interests; hence, its conservatism. It is less often suggested that bureaucrats, as men, may have an inherent resistance to reforms that enhance the status and role of women and thereby jeopardize the privileges they enjoy by virtue of being men.

There are powerful economic and political forces, domestic, regional and international, that in the final analysis determine government policies towards rural women. These will tend to pull the civil servant along with them. There is, however, a limited area of responsibility in which the bureaucracy has some leeway and could, if it determined to do so, alter or reduce--if only modestly--the impact of these pressures. The bureaucracy does have leeway, for example, in the detailed formulation of project documents, the evaluation of project implementation, the type of statistics collected and analyzed, the delivery of extension service, even the details of extension reporting procedures. It is at this level that a small group in the Malawi Civil Service is attempting to introduce changes. This group has succeeded in a few Ministries in initiating a fairly lively debate about policies towards women. It may yet have an impact.⁹ But patriarchy, private insecurity, bureaucratic caution about change, notably in gender roles, and an unhelpful view of peasant farmers in general are still proving too formidable a combination for it. And so, for the time being at least, bureaucratic perceptions mesh with and reinforce the broader pattern of pressures that have an impact on Malawi's rural women.¹⁰

NOTES

1. In 1981 I undertook a study for the African Training and Research Centre for Women of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on Government policies and plans as they related to, and were influenced by, women in Malawi. The report entitled Women, Planning and Policy in Malawi has been published by the ECA in Addis Ababa. For purposes of the study, I interviewed over ninety senior and middle-to-senior level civil servants. The material in this paper, notably the numerous quotations included, is drawn from the research undertaken.
2. For example in 1929 the Jeanes Training Centre was established at Domasi (near Zomba, the colonial capital) to provide courses for married school teachers and their wives, the wives receiving training in hygiene, home economics and child care. The training of both the Jeanes Centre and the Domasi Community Development Scheme which succeeded it in the early fifties, ignored the fact that women in the area were the main agricultural producers. "Despite the fact that around 30% of the able-bodied men were absent, agricultural advice and policies on landholding were aimed very consciously at the men." See Megan Vaughan, "Better, Happier and Healthier Citizens": The Domasi Community Development Scheme, 1949-1954, Zomba: Chancellor College History Seminars 1982/3, Paper No. 4, 1983, p. 16. The male orientation in agricultural strategy emerges clearly too in the Colonial Film Unit production, Nyasaland Master Farmer.
3. Barbara Rogers, The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies, London: Tavistock, 1980, p. 53, talks of a "critical mass" of women necessary to counteract the sense of isolation felt by one or two women in a Department. Individual token women, she notes, are not a good idea; they are conspicuous particularly in their mistakes, and "they face pressure to side with the majority group against their own kind, as a price of membership."
4. Kathleen A. Staudt (Bureaucratic Resistance to Women's Programs: The Case of Women in Development. In Ellen Boneparth (ed.) Women, Power and Policy. New York: Pergamon, 1982, p. 270) records a similar type of response in the United States Aid for International Development: "the widespread reaction to WID [Women in Development] is not a recognition of expertise but rather an ideological association with some of the more uncomplimentary perceptions of late 1960s feminism. Agency personnel frequently complain that WID is a 'woman's lib' issue being used to export American ideas, rather than an issue grounded in development and/or equity justifications."
5. For a more detailed discussion of extension policies and female farmers in one district of Malawi see David Hirschmann and Megan Vaughan, Food Production and Women Farmers in the Zomba District of Malawi, Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, forthcoming, Chapter 8.

6. Stephanie Urdang (Fighting Two Colonialisms: The Women's Struggle in Guinea-Bissau. In D.L. Cohen and J. Daniel (eds.) Political Economy of Africa, Selected Readings. Harlow: Longmans, 1981, pp. 213-220) among others, has dealt with this phenomenon. On page 215 she notes how an attempt is being made in Guinea-Bissau to raise the status of food production, and therefore of women's work, by designating it a "political task."
7. A number of writers have analyzed the impact of capitalist penetration on rural women, for example, Carmen Diana Deere, Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery. In R. Cohen, R.C.W. Gutkind and P. Brazier (eds.), Peasants and Proletarians. The Struggle of Third World Workers. London: Hutchinson, 1979, pp. 133-148. On pages 133-4 she writes: "My principal hypothesis is that family structure and the attendant division of labor by sex are key to the extraction of surplus from the noncapitalist modes of production. In particular, the division of labor by sex characterized by female production of subsistence foodstuffs and male semi-proletarianization allows the payment by capital of a male wage rate insufficient for familial maintenance and reproduction." See also Claire Robertson, Women in African Agriculture: Is Southern Africa a Model for the Future? Paper presented to the African Studies Association Conference, December 1983. Note particularly pages 2 and 20-21.
8. The assumptions about rural women implied in "western" economic analyses and techniques of measurements, and the influence of "western middle-class male values" on project design have been observed by many writers, for example Nici Nelson, Why has Development Neglected Rural Women? A Review of South Asian Literature. Oxford: Pergamon, 1979, especially pages 10-13. On page 10 she writes: "Women have been seen as the dependents of males, and their proper place has been in the calculation of dependency ratios. The fact that many of the planners, funding agency officials and development "experts" have also been middle-class western men with particular views on the proper place of women (privatised in male 'breadwinner's' homes) can have only contributed to this perception of women's proper place in the development process."
9. There are men--still a minority--who are sympathetic and willing to make some changes. For a more detailed discussion of the debate in the various ministries see my ECA report, referred to in note 1, and Vaughan's and my study, referred to in note 5, particularly Chapter 11.
10. The most immediately relevant foreign institutions with which the bureaucracy relates are aid agencies. Instructive in regard to male perceptions of and attitudes towards women and women's programmes in these agencies are Staudt (on USAID) and Rogers (on UNDP and UNFAO) referred to in notes 5 and 3 respectively.

APPENDIX A

Note: This appendix appears as Chapter 4 in: David Hirshmann, Women, Planning, and Policy in Malawi. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 1983.

The recommendations that are set out below are made in the full realisation that those to whom they are directed are very busy people, some of whom have given thought to these issues, and all of whom are far more acutely aware of the capacities and potentialities of their Departments than any outsider can ever be. Nevertheless I hope that they will be seriously considered. In broad terms their aim is to heighten consciousness about women throughout Government, broaden and strengthen the informal base on which policies towards women can be determined, increase women's participation at all levels of policy-making and planning, expand the rather narrow perspective many officials still have of the role of women in society, increase sensitivity towards women at the level of contact between Government and the public, and create structures and procedures which will eventually ensure that women and women's issues become more fully and advantageously integrated into the planning process.

The recommendations are intended to be:

- (i) incremental, i.e., they take matters from where they are (and this varies from Ministry to Ministry) and try to improve on them, rather than suggest dramatic new structures and reforms;
- (ii) realistic, i.e., feasible and practical responses to problems identified and new directions anticipated;
- (iii) inexpensive, i.e., it is assumed that at the moment neither Central Government nor Local Councils would be willing to make large-scale investments in new programmes and new Departments;
- (iv) partial, i.e., they do not provide a grand plan, nor are they comprehensive--many more suggestions could be made;
- (v) participative, i.e., in the sense that they result from my own participation in on-going discussions on these issues and in the hope that they will become part of those on-going discussions;
- (vi) of a relatively short time perspective, i.e., they will need to be observed, adapted and updated in a continuing process.

4.1 Agriculture

(For background discussion see paras. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.2.1.1-3.2.1.7.)

4.1.1 Extension to 'non-progressive' farmers

Farmers who do not take credit or and who are not farming hybrid maize purestand or/are not predominantly cash crop oriented are not necessarily 'lazy' or 'laggards' or 'backward' as they are often seen in official quarters. Very often they are hard working and have plenty of initiative and wisdom. Lack of resources or an understandable caution may prevent them

from moving in directions which the Ministry requires. These farmers must surely be the most important source of food for the people of the country. A very high proportion of women farmers--household heads and those who in effect are farming on their own--would fall into this category. Given that the commitment of the Ministry to cash crop production is strong, it is therefore suggested that there be some modest change of emphasis in extension strategy, one which requires extension officers to give some set portion of their time each month to the service of this type of farmer. The overt aim should not be to press these farmers to increase production, or grow cash crops or take credit. It should be aimed--more simply and more gently--at solving their problems and answering their questions: e.g. why do beans fail, can anything be done about Newcastle disease, when should fertiliser be applied and which kind, etc. It would require advance publicity, a gradual building up of confidence and a new style of extension.

4.1.2 Increased extension to women farmers

The extent to which women contribute to agricultural production is well established and acknowledged by all. The Ministry's extension strategy should respond to this reality and direct field officers to make increasing contact with women farmers: commercially oriented women farmers, women household heads, and wives of commercially and non-commercially oriented male farmers. In the latter two cases contact may be jointly with husband and wife, paying all the necessary respect to the husband, but ensuring that the wife is involved and understands fully the advice and encouragement being given. In addition to visits to individual farms, extension officers should encourage women to join farm clubs, mixed or separate, pay special attention to women at larger meetings and demonstrations, provide a regular input to Homecraft Worker classes, etc.

4.1.3. Alterations to the extension officers' report forms

To ensure that the officers make the above changes, small alterations in their regular report forms will need to be made. Numbers filled in (e.g. attending a meeting) should always be divided into men and women. There should be a section added on the sort of small non-commercially oriented farmer referred to above; the problems raised, and the location and sex of the farmer raising them, the answers given, and the problems which were not solved should all be reported on. Working effectively, this system will provide Research and Evaluation Divisions with useful insights into the problems experienced by small farmers, men and women. It would also assist in creating an 'early warning system' on future food shortages. Extension officers should also be requested to report on successful undertakings or experiments carried out by these farmers which might be advantageously applied elsewhere.

4.1.4 Training of women farmers in agriculture

Training policy is still based on a perception of rural women as housewives. In keeping with their full participation in agricultural production, General Agriculture should be taught to women in far greater numbers than at present. Women should be encouraged to take an interest in those courses, and husbands to permit their wives to attend. It should be

left to the Divisions to decide whether women should attend mixed or separate courses. The Women's Programme policy paper refers to an initial aim of 30% of participants being women. In the medium term that is a fairly reasonable target, but once reached it should be reconsidered. For training must be seen not merely as a mechanical transfer of knowledge. Training shows an acknowledgement of people's contribution, an interest in them and a realisation that they have the potential to do better. So it is both incentive and reward and, if well handled, the learning process itself should be both useful and encouraging.

4.1.5 Changing the role of women field officers

This change, suggested in the Women's Programme Policy, should be strongly supported. Women in rural areas do have very important responsibilities in caring for the home and family. But their needs in this respect are being attended to by the Ministries of Community Development, Local Government and Health, and various private organisations. It seems inappropriate for the Ministry of Agriculture to add on another 4 categories of trained women to the same end. Rather their primary emphasis should be on agriculture, and at least some of their time should be spent in the field away from training Centres. There are many reasons for this: amongst others, they are qualified for this and this was the object of their training; there is a shortage of qualified men extension officers; it may help overcome some of the blocks to communicating with women farmers; it would be advantageous to the officers' own career prospects.

There is a need for caution as regards farm Home Assistants however. Some of these women do not have adequate training or have long forgotten what they learnt and are not in a position to provide helpful advice to farmers. These women will need to be individually assessed and only those who are ready should be encouraged to move into agricultural training and extension. The others will require thorough refresher courses.

4.1.6 Income-generating and other group activities

Although the emphasis here must be more clearly on food production activities, this topic will be dealt with under Community Development, and the reader is referred to para. 4.4.6 below.

4.1.7 Reorientation and refresher courses for men and women extension officers

The recommendations made so far will require some new methods, new expertise and an alteration in approach. It is important that courses be held to explain these innovations to extension workers, to discuss them fully, and to encourage a positive attitude towards them.

4.1.8 Speeding up recruitment to Agricultural Colleges

The number of women entering and completing courses at Thuchila and Colby Colleges is minimal. One reason for this is the long delay before advertisements for the course go out and between advertisement and recruitment. During this period many women applicants--and certainly those with better school results and more initiative--take jobs elsewhere.

Programme Managers and Ministry officials need to meet with the Public Service Commission whose responsibility this is to work out ways to speed up the process.

4.1.9 'women' as a criterion in assessing and evaluating projects

The Ministry's Planning Division and the Evaluation Divisions of the Agricultural Development Divisions should include 'impact on women' as an important criterion to be applied in assessment of new project proposals and in the later monitoring and evaluation of project implementation. This involves asking different types of questions, altering the design of questionnaires and surveys and including new indicators for measuring the costs and benefits of projects. It may be that the Ministry--in cooperation with the National Statistics Office (see 4.10.2 below)--might wish to seek outside advice on this. Alternatively it may wish to do this internally with the Planning Division consulting with the Evaluation Division. Evaluation Officers I spoke to seemed interested and ready to try. The Ministry of Overseas Development in London has produced a checklist of questions which provides a useful basis on which to work. The checklist includes questions on the project's stated objectives in regard to women; involvement of women at various levels in project design and preparation; anticipated impact of the project (e.g. how will the project affect women's access to economic assets and cash incomes? How will the project affect women's allocation of time? How will it affect women's control over food supplies? Is the project likely to have any adverse consequences for women? etc.); and the provision being made to evaluate the impact of the project on women.

4.1.10 A woman planner in the Ministry

It seems essential that a Ministry which deals with so vital a part of the economy (a part in which women play so significant a role) should have at least one or two women in the Planning Division. These women should have not only the required post-graduate qualifications, but also be familiar with women's issues in agriculture and of methods of ensuring that in project formulation the actual impact on women is monitored. In the meanwhile one or two officers in the Division should be given responsibility for 'women's issues', and for beginning to take necessary steps to increase data, and focus attention, on women in agriculture.

4.1.11 A.D.D. Evaluation Units to commence collecting and analysing data on women

As a start these Units in the 8 Agricultural Development Divisions should be requested to seek out information on women in their areas which is available but is not being used, as well as from the results coming in from the National Sample Survey of Agriculture. Also they should be asked to consider and make recommendations about new questions for their regular surveys and, if they have time, undertake small scale special surveys of women. Based on in-depth interviews which take account of the special circumstances of women (for example the multiple tasks they perform) these may or may not generate data which would satisfy the statisticians--but they will provide very valuable information for the policy-maker.

4.1.12 Observe and support Phalombe experiment

The Phalombe Rural Development Project (in the South) has undertaken an interesting and valuable experiment. It has employed full time a woman agriculturalist to carry out directly practically-oriented research on women farmers in the project area. She has been given support in the way of personnel and the time to carry out intensive interviews, and based on her findings she is now beginning to try to find ways to enhance women's productivity. The manner in which the research has been conducted and the extent to which women farmers themselves have been involved are important, not just the findings. In addition to giving this exercise its support, and observing its effects, the Ministry and the Project should give it the time necessary for patient and careful trials.

4.1.13 Observe and support the Karonga experiment

A different kind of process has been set in motion by the Karonga Agricultural Development Division (in the North). At the Programme Manager's initiative a week-long Workshop on Women's Programmes was called. The Ministries of Agriculture, Community Development, and Health and Local Authorities were represented, and recommendations for improving the situation of women farmers were agreed to: these related to coordination and strengthening of existing programmes; increased agricultural extension and training for women; income generating activities for women's groups; evaluation and research into activities directed towards women; increased village level representation and participation by women; new ways of reaching women in remote areas; horticultural development; and development of local materials. The spirit of cooperation between different ministries and the interest shown were encouraging. There was also considerable enthusiasm for group income-generating activities. This should be supported, but very carefully controlled to avoid errors and consequent disappointments.

4.1.14 Check extension aids materials

Those in charge of producing and presenting visual aid material to farmers should be made aware of these new approaches to women. It is possible that the materials being used rigidify stereotypes which discourage the positive involvement of women in agriculture. When creating or purchasing new films, etc., this should be kept in mind.

4.2 Economic Planning Division, Development Division and Rural Development Division (For background discussion see paras. 2.1.2, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.9, 3.2.2.)

4.2.1. 'Women' as a criterion in assessing and evaluating projects and programmes

This is a similar point to the one made under Agriculture (see 4.1.9 above). All of these 3 agencies need to recognise that 'impact on women' must be a factor integral to the objectives of most (not all) projects. A directive to this effect needs to go out to the Ministries which will then be able to begin preparing projects with this in mind. The sort of checklist suggested for Agriculture can with adaptations serve as a useful guideline for other Ministries.

4.2.2 Responsibility for Women's Issues

One officer at least in either the Economic Planning or the Development Division should be given the task of establishing criteria for project evaluation, for advising Ministries on these, for ensuring that they are taken into account and for beginning to build up a monitoring system. This does not need to be a woman at first, but the aim should be over the next few years to bring in a well qualified woman to do this job.

4.2.3 Secretariat for the Women's Coordinating Committee

It will be suggested below that a Coordinating Committee on Women's Affairs should be established. A 'Women's Affairs Officer' inside the Economic Planning Division (most sensibly, this should be the same person as suggested in the previous paragraph) would be strategically placed to serve as secretariat and technical and economic adviser to such a Committee. This link would enhance the input by senior women into the planning process and also strengthen their deliberations with necessary planning and economic expertise.

4.3 Education

(For background discussion see 1.4, 2.1.4, 3.1.1.2, 3.1.6, 3.2.3.)

4.3.1 Realisation of the extent and nature of the problem

Next to what are referred to as 'cultural' or 'traditional' barriers and attitudes, one of the most basic constraints on women's progress is their lack of education. This is a fundamental block to the full involvement of women in productive activities of all kinds and the participation of women in decision-making at all levels. The Ministry, as a matter of policy, should acknowledge that this problem in its broadest terms is a key issue to which research and planning must give attention.

4.3.2 Retain bias in favour of girls at secondary schools

Given the problems girls face in successfully completing primary school, this bias makes sense. The one-third ratio would be maintained in the meanwhile, neither raised nor lowered. While this affirmative action is helpful, it does not of course get to the basics of the problem, and this is the purpose of the recommendations in the next 3 paragraphs.

4.3.3 Responsibility in the Planning Division

As a formal part of its terms of reference, the Ministry's Planning Division should be given responsibility for studying the predicament of girls and women in relation to the education system, analysing statistics that are available, and initiating research into the influence of the wider social environment on female education. Only on the basis of such findings can the Ministry begin to formulate policies aimed at solving some of these problems.

4.3.4 Research on 'drop-outs'

There is a good deal of conventional wisdom on this and the Ministry's planners have been preparing a questionnaire on it. Both in its design and its analysis this study should be given the attention it deserves. While the questionnaire is aimed at both boys and girls, it should throw a good

deal of light on the reasons for girls leaving school prematurely. It should also indicate where the Ministry itself and other Ministries and agencies, such as the Party, can assist.

4.3.5 Research on female 'resistance' to certain subjects

Research should also be conducted into the causes of girls' lack of interest or 'resistance' to certain school subjects such as mathematics and science. These are of course complicated issues involving parental and social expectations, peer group attitudes and the anticipated requirements of post-school 'masculine' and 'feminine' careers. Those obstacles for which the education system itself is responsible should be identified. For example the extent to which teachers' attitudes and preconceptions encourage or allow this to occur, even the extent to which teacher training may be responsible. The quality and content of girls' education is as important as the number who pass. Scientific expertise and quantitative techniques are increasingly required in today's world and the exclusion of girls from these basic courses will ensure their continued exclusion from many professionally and technically oriented careers. In other words it will rigidify the type of occupational division demonstrated in Chapter 1 (see 1.3).

4.3.6 Career guidance

The Ministry accepts this as one of its tasks, both in bringing outsiders to speak to girl pupils and by appointing teachers at schools to be responsible for this function. This should be built on and refined. The Ministry should set out to ensure that all able and talented young women know that their career choice is far more open than general social conventions lead them to assume. There is a question of whether this advice is being given at an early enough stage. It seems that at present it is given when the girls have selected subjects which means they are already restricted. It may also be worth investigating whether all the teachers who are responsible for giving advice have the time, the knowledge and the information to do this effectively.

4.3.7 Guard against 'hidden curriculum'

A considerable degree of stereotyping of sex roles can be found in school text books. The values and attitudes which pupils absorb from these reinforce the sorts of problems girls face in taking more effective advantage of their schooling, and later operating more competitively and equally with men in the economy. I am not suggesting a purge of old text books, rather than instructions go out to those deciding on new texts to select (where possible) books that are less full of such stereotypes.

4.3.8 Village level propaganda

The Party and other agencies have proved effective in encouraging parents to send girls to school. Discussion should be held with all such agencies and Government Departments which might be able to help, to devise a strategy to encourage parents to leave their daughters at school for as long as possible. For example, Homecraft Workers, Community Development Assistants, Agricultural Trainers, etc. could all be asked to devote a short talk every now and then to this topic.

4.3.9 National Workshop on women in education

There are enough issues of urgent importance in the field of women and education in its broadest terms to warrant a well planned National Workshop or Conference. This would include not only the Ministry of Education, but all other Ministries which have their own training institutions, such as Community Development, Health, Agriculture (e.g. of 500 graduates from Mikolongwe Veterinary School over the years there has not been one woman), Youth, etc., and it would not only look at schools, but also at those other institutions and at literary campaigns, etc., as well as the broader social factors affecting women's education.

4.4 Community Development

(For background discussion see 2.1.6, 3.1.5, 3.2.4, 3.2.5.)

4.4.1 Enhance effectiveness of Magomero Training College

While this institution has played a valuable role in the training of Community Development Assistants and Homecraft Workers, serious thought needs to be given to various aspects of its training programme. Questions such as recruitment procedures (in which the Public Service Commission should also be included--cf. para. 4.1.8 above on Agricultural Colleges), relevance of course content to new and changing needs (for example, of women), qualification for teaching of the training staff, length of courses, gaps between courses when facilities are not being used, etc. The Williams Report (see paras. 3.2.4 above) makes a number of suggestions which should be considered. And there have been reports before such as the Butler Report which also deserve attention. There are additional questions that need asking: if income generating activities are to become more important should not students get some introduction into marketing, accounting and business methods? If agricultural production is to be a more important component of courses given to rural women, shouldn't the students at Magomero get more agriculture? If there are new, broader approaches to nutrition education have these been included in the course content? If there is an objective of increasing meaningful participation by women on village level committees, are the students being coached (and sensitized) in techniques of encouraging this effectively?

4.4.2 Leadership Training Programmes for women

From responses to the questionnaires sent out to people at district level, leadership training for women at district, subdistrict and village level emerges as an essential requirement to improved participation by women. The Ministry does of course take responsibility for this type of training at various centres in the country. But if a really strong impact is going to be made in improving the abilities of women to contribute to public discussion, serious consideration has to be given to ways of rapidly expanding this programme. For example, it may be useful to let Community Development Assistants (male and female) contribute training sessions on leadership during courses for women organised by Agriculture and by Homecraft Workers. If increasing numbers of women are to be brought onto all Committees--as will be suggested--this demand will continue to grow.

4.4.3 More women on village level committees

There are numerous different kinds of committees at the village level and the scope of responsibilities, degree of permanence and patterns of participation vary widely: school committees, village self-help committees, literacy committees, Action Groups, health committees, committees specifically set up to combat a particular disease, etc. In oral and written responses I have had varied answers about women's representation on these committees, and clearly there are large differences between one area and another. I have spoken to people in districts where women are not represented at all on any of these committees. A policy decision should be taken at the highest level by all Ministries which help set up these committees that at least 2 or 3 women should serve on all committees. Until such time as they are elected, they should be appointed. The matters considered and decided upon by the committees are too important to the community for women's views to be overlooked. In addition the Ministries should direct their field staff to encourage and assist women to participate fully in these deliberations.

4.4.4 Improved supervision of Homecraft Workers

Transport is a major problem here. Again a policy decision should be taken at headquarters by those Ministries concerned directing their district level officers to find ways of cooperating in the use of vehicles. Community Development is severely limited by lack of funds for transport and needs the help of the other Ministries, particularly Agriculture. At the district level the practical mechanisms for putting this into practice could then be worked out. Such cooperation does take place already. But it needs a top-level directive and some carefully worked out district level procedures to make it operate better.

4.4.5 Alter emphasis of female CDA work

It seemed that women Community Development Assistants are too involved in Home Management Courses and supervision of Homecraft Workers and are therefore unable to devote much attention to community development. This homecraft role will be retained, but an effort should be made to involve these women to a greater extent than at present in the core work of community development; leadership, organization, construction, selfhelp, etc. This is important for a number of reasons: it sets a healthy example to women in the villages; the presence may assist and encourage village women to take on committee responsibilities; it will advance the officers' own career development as they will be engaged in a greater variety of tasks; and it will strengthen women's input into the Ministry's district and regional level annual planning process.

4.4.6 Income generating activities

The idea of encouraging women's groups to cooperatively pursue income generating activities is rapidly gaining ground in both Community Development and Agriculture. A few experiments are under way. I was informed of 4 groups (in baking, sewing, hybrid maize and vegetables) which appear to be succeeding under close supervision and under rather special

circumstances. This should be supported but carefully phased. First there should be a short course to explain the purpose, the techniques and the dangers. Then each farm Home Assistant or Homecraft Worker should be given a period to discuss the possibility with her groups and see if any activity can be identified. (They must not be put under pressure to come up with a proposal.) The proposals of those groups which do wish to try should then be carefully studied before the go-ahead is given, and their progress closely observed. Income-generation always depends on a reliable market, and therefore it must be appreciated that this sort of exercise will succeed in only a limited number of places. Food production projects (e.g. horticulture, poultry, food crops) should get priority in terms of national priorities and because these commodities have alternative uses if not sold. Credit should be available to aid the establishment of these group enterprises.

4.4.7 Women's component of the Functional Literacy Programme

It is clear from the response of women to this programme over the years (and also from discussions with women farmers near Zomba) that this is a popular need. The functional literacy concept (see paras. 3.1.6 and 3.2.5) is an advance on the old programme. Three points need to be made. Care should be taken to prevent these courses for women becoming yet another level of homecraft training. Since the functional literacy experiment will take some time before it begins to affect many women, the rest of the programme should not be ignored. The Ministry should look into the reasons why the small subvention to pay teachers was stopped, and see if it can recommence. A programme of this nature is unlikely to be a great success--even if the course content is better--if it is based entirely on voluntary efforts.

4.5 Local Government

(For background discussion see 2.1.9, 2.3.1-2.3.6.6, 3.2.4, 3.2.9.)

4.5.1 More women on Local Councils

There is strong support among Women Councillors and Council Clerks for an increase in the number of women on Councils. Before the next elections greater effort should be made to educate both men and women about the importance of electing women, and of identifying women who are able to stand for election. Should this not yield results Councils should be directed to coopt a few women onto Councils. There should be a minimum of 3 women on all Councils.

4.5.2 Participation by women teachers and other civil servants

Government employees are (I understand from written responses to my questions) prevented from serving on local Councils. The possibility of permitting them to stand for election should be studied since this would certainly increase the number of educated women available for Local Councils.

4.5.3 Coopt women onto Council Committees

In almost all cases women are underrepresented on Councils. Councils should therefore be encouraged to seek out and coopt able and appropriately qualified and experienced women onto Council Committees. This would provide

the Council with some ideas of women's views in various areas for which they bear responsibility, and give these women useful experience in local government.

4.5.4 Training of Women Councillors

Training was identified as one of the most important requirements for enhancing the contribution of those women who are elected to Councils. The Ministry should discuss with Community Development ways of improving the content of the course and increasing the number of women who are trained. (More suggestions about Councils are contained in Chapter 2).

4.5.5 Improving Homecraft Workers' Conditions

Although Local Councils are not in a position to increase expenditure on this programme, attention must be given to the following: (i) the content of the Homecraft Workers training at Magomero, especially since the course has been expanded from 3 to 6 months; (ii) creating a career structure, even a modest one, to provide some incentive for these women to remain on in their jobs and do well; (iii) giving them permanent terms with a pension at the end; (iv) Improving both their homes, and the venues they use for training, through self-help or Youth Week projects and with the support of District Development Committees; (v) providing them with materials and ingredients to use in their courses; and (vi) improving reporting and response procedures between Homecraft Workers and their supervisors.

4.5.6 Additional elements in Homecraft Courses

These courses are intended as home management courses, and this is what women participants expect them and want them to be. So while the basic thrust of these courses should remain, consideration should be given to adding a few new elements to these courses such as short lectures on leadership and community participation, new ideas on nutrition, agricultural production and possibilities for generating income through group activities. Some of these may be taught by the Homecraft Workers themselves--after refresher courses--others may be taught by field officers of other ministries assisting at occasional classes.

4.5.7 Monitoring the effects of the Programme

There is a clear need for the Ministry to find ways of evaluating this Programme. Some people argued that it was working and used attendance figures in support; others said it was failing because after years and years results were not apparent. Except for the numbers recorded as attending courses there appear to be no other indicators of effectiveness. The lasting or positive effect of these courses, or specific aspects of these courses; the reasons why women try some of the things they have learnt, and not others; the participants' own evaluation of the courses, etc., are not being evaluated. If Local Councils are to consider investing more of their limited funds in this Programme they need this kind of information.

4.6 Labour

(For further discussion see 1.2, 1.3, 2.1.5, 3.2.7.)

4.6.1 Recognition of 'women' as an issue for attention

It is suggested that this ministry seriously consider giving issues relating to women's employment in the private sector the attention they deserve. Experience in other countries has demonstrated that the sorts of assumptions made by the Ministry are often invalid. While legislation and official policy may try to ensure equality of opportunity and earnings for both sexes, invariably in practice this does not work out and women are discriminated against. The three suggestions below follow on this.

4.6.2 Collect data on women in the private sector

In order to get a better understanding of patterns and trends in women's employment the Ministry should strive to build up its data base on women. In submitting returns to the Ministry, employees should be required to supply information in a form which distinguishes men and women, and shows types and levels of employment and earnings. There is also a substantial amount of information on employment of men and women in the Population Censuses which may be advantageously analysed.

4.6.3 A more active research policy

Experience elsewhere has shown that frequently employers do not satisfy all the conditions of labour legislation and agreements; or that they use loopholes in such legislation in order to defeat its purpose. For example women doing the same job as men are placed in lower job categories and paid less. I understand that in Malawi after 5 years' service on some estates all employees are entitled to severance pay. This is equal in theory. But given that in a period of 5 years it is very likely that a woman will need to take leave for maternity reasons does this requirement remain equal in practice? These sorts of issues deserve attention. The Ministry should therefore take an active role in investigating conditions of women's employment in practice.

4.6.4 Involve women in negotiations

From the information given me there are no women involved in labour negotiations: not on behalf of particular groups of workers or employers, nor of the umbrella worker or employer organisation. The Ministry cannot be blamed for this, but it does represent a weakness in the negotiating process. The Ministry itself should appoint a woman representative to participate, and worker committees which represent both men and women should be required to include one or two women.

4.7 Justice

(For background discussion see 3.2.8)

4.7.1 Study relevant laws

All laws which may have an effect on the position of women such as those relating to marriage, contract, wills and property require thorough researching in order that the Department can reassure itself that there is no discrimination against women. The position of women in customary law too is worth attention.

4.7.2 Refer bills for comment by women

In the drafting of bills or amendments of concern to women, it should become procedure for these documents to be referred to competent women or a suitable women's agency. There are two qualified women lawyers in the country and they should be consulted. Further, once a coordinating committee on women is established, bills should be submitted to it for comment. One or both of these women lawyers can serve as advisers to the Committee on legal and legislative matters.

4.8 Youth (Malawi Young Pioneers) (For background discussion see 3.2.11.)

4.8.1 Evaluate effectiveness of the programme

The impact of a training programme of this size (34,000 people had been trained by 1980) should be evaluated more carefully than at present. It would be useful to know where course completers have gone, what work they are doing, what parts of the training have proved more useful to them than others, what suggestions they may have for improving the course, etc. A small sum in the recurrent budget should be allocated for evaluation.

4.8.2 Increase female intake

In terms of both the economic contribution which women make to the country, and the political role they are expected to play, it is advisable that more women should be included in the training programme. By 1980, women constituted about 12% of all completers. This should be raised substantially.

4.8.3 Employment of women completers by other Ministries

The fact that there are somewhere in the region of 4,000 women graduates of these courses, mostly located in the rural areas, is something of which the Ministries of Agriculture, Local Government and Community Development should take note. (In 13 years Magomero has trained just over 1,000 Homecraft Workers, of whom 440 are still in Government service, and in 15 years only 82 female Community Development Assistants of whom 52 are still with Government.) These M.Y.P. women, after a refresher course, may well be able to assist in the Homecraft programme or with the work of Farm Home Assistants.

4.8.4 M.Y.P. women on Settlement Schemes

A certain number of M.Y.P. graduates join Agricultural Settlement Schemes and receive assistance from the Organisation to do this. In the evaluation of the programme, the question of whether M.Y.P. women are joining these schemes should be asked. If they are not, the reasons for this should be determined.

4.9 National Statistics Office

4.9.1 Statistical base for policy-making on women

It is basic to the meaningful and effective integration of women's issues into policy making and development planning that the National Statistics Office begins to produce data on which such policy-making and planning can be based. If the suggestions concerning the appointment of 'Women's Affairs Officers' in Agriculture and in the Economic Planning Division are accepted, these two officers should consult closely with Statistics on the sorts of information they will be needing, while the latter can act as a link between Statistics and the Coordinating Committee on Women. If other Ministries begin to take more interest in women than they have previously, they too will be requiring information. Someone in the Statistics Office should be given responsibility for facilitating these contacts, and for initiating a study on the requirements and implications of generating more information on women.

4.9.2 Research/Consultancy concerning data on women

I found considerable interest in the Statistics Office in paying more attention in future to collecting and analysing information about women. Two steps need to be taken: to analyse the information that is already available (from Population Censuses, National Sample Surveys of Agriculture, etc.); and redesign on-going and special surveys to ensure that women are taken into account. The staffing position in the Office will determine whether this requires outside advice or not. It is an area where there is both experience and expertise in organisations like the International Labour Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization. But the Office may prefer to proceed on the basis of discussions held locally inside the Office and in consultation with interested Ministries.

4.10 District Development Committees

(For background discussion see 2.4.1-2.4.3.)

4.10.1 Increase number of women on Committees

There was strong agreement that this should occur. It would need to be done with care. Some Committees have a fairly good representation of women, e.g. Blantyre has 12, and some Committees are already very large, e.g. Kasungu has 63 members. There has also been an increase over the years with the League Of Malawi Women's representation being increased from one to 3, with the recent addition of women MPs, and with female Government employees finding their way onto these Committees. Committees should aim to include at least 6 women. In addition (for reasons explained in Chapter 2) they should include two senior women civil servants at district level.

4.10.2 Training for Women Members

It was agreed both by the women themselves, and by District Commissioners, that women's participation would be considerably aided by training courses directed towards them. The Rural Development Division in the Office of the President and Cabinet should consult with District Commissioners and the Ministry of Community Development to find ways of responding more effectively to this requirement.

4.11 A Coordinating Committee on Women's Affairs

A number of women suggested that there should be some agency responsible for looking after and into women's affairs. Some women expressed doubts as to the need for such an organization, especially if it were over-elaborate. At present an ad hoc committee has been established to look into this. It is my view that there most definitely should be such a Committee. There are more than enough issues of concern--very real ones and very important--to justify the establishment of such a Committee. It should be composed of representatives of those Departments and Ministries whose responsibilities are relevant, including: Agriculture, Education, Community Development, Local Government, Health, Social Welfare, Youth, Labour, Economic Planning Division, Rural Development Division, Development Division, Justice, as also prominent women inside and outside the Civil Service. Not all representatives need be women. These representatives can define the areas requiring attention within their Ministries, and then later commence reporting on problems, proposals and progress. None of the Ministries should be conceived as the women's ministry, and therefore the appointment of an executive should be based on personal leadership abilities and commitment, rather than on representation of some department or other. Possibly in the future such a Committee may require a more elaborate structure including administration and research sections, but in the meantime it is suggested that it be kept as a Committee with each member serving unofficially as the Committee's representative in their Ministries. Some degree of permanency and effective back-up is necessary and it is therefore suggested (see also 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 above) that there should be a qualified officer in the Economic Planning Division who should serve as permanent secretariat and economic adviser to the Committee. I hope that this study, and particularly the recommendations at the end, indicate the sorts of areas and types of issues such a Committee could attend to.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The Women in International Development Publication Series are partially funded by a Title XII Strengthening Grant.

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