

*Admission*

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WOMEN MIGRANTS, URBANIZATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE:

AN AFRICAN CASE

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by

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While all the cities of Africa are growing at rapid rates, capital cities tend to outpace them all. Among these, Gaborone, the capital of Botswana in Southern Africa, is no exception. A city which was not a city at all at the point of Independence (1966), Gaborone was planted, took root, and has grown steadily since that time. In 1971, there were only 17,000 people in Gaborone; by 1975, there were 34,000; and in 1976, the year in which the research for this study was conducted, the city grew approximately 16 percent. Since then Gaborone's growth has slowed down, but most estimates are that within the next five years its population will double.

Observing this growth, the Statistics Department at the University of Botswana, and Swaziland undertook a survey research project on rural to urban migration. The findings of surveys made in December 1975<sup>1</sup> June 1976, and December 1976 are discussed elsewhere. It was as a result of findings made in the December 1975 survey that a decision was made to focus on a subgroup of the original sample; namely, Gaborone's women migrants. It was out of that decision that this study grew.

Specifically, the December 1975 survey revealed that women migrants predominated over male migrants by a margin of 56.5 percent to 43.5 percent. Since it is unusual for more women to migrate than men - the reverse is the normal case - a research project on women migrants seemed in order.\* Funded by AID

\*I am indebted to the Department of Statistics of the University of Botswana, and to Dr. Helen Young and Betsy Stephens who directed the December Survey. I am also grateful to the Agency for International Development for its support of the Women's Survey. Currently National Survey is being planned by Professor Harris of Boston University with funding from A.I.D..

and conducted concurrently with the June 1976 survey, this study involved follow-up, in-depth interviewing of thirty-five women in low income housing strata in order to ascertain some of the underlying causes for their migration, their adjustment problems, and whether or not there was any potential for back migration.\*\* This paper will summarize the findings of that research.

The thirty-five women interviewed were selected from among low income housing strata in the original stratified survey. The assumption was that the adjustment problems were likely to be greater for these women than for middle or upper class women. Hence the women interviewed lived in site and service housing, self-help housing, traditional squatter housing, servants quarters or public housing (called "unit" housing in Botswana). As this subgroup cannot be taken as a sample, we are unable to generalize to the female population at large; but a detailed profile of these women does provide a more complete understanding of the dilemmas and problems confronted by the female migrant. It is hoped that such an understanding will lead not only to policies more responsive to the needs and concerns of women migrants, but to further research on those women who come to live in the growing cities of the developing world.

\*\*Acknowledgements are also due to Tebago Botlhole and Margaret Moolwa, both at UBLS, without whose able assistance this study would not have been possible. They worked long and skillfully as interviewers in this project.

### Why They Migrated

There is a common assumption among some social scientists that male migration is for predominantly economic reasons while female migration is not. Marc Howard Ross has written that "A man goes to the city to make money; a woman goes if she no longer fits into the social structure of rural society." <sup>2</sup> Kenneth Little has said that for women "...migration is more of an end in itself." <sup>3</sup>

The words of Seipei Mmothaná, a migrant of Botswana, tell another story - one of unemployment, lack of draught animals, and lack of paternal support for children - that is not unlike the stories of so many women coming into urban areas in other countries and entering Gaborone right now:

"Back home there was no one to help me, say if I wanted to plough, or rear cattle. I couldn't get anyone honest enough to help. As I am unmarried and have three children to support, I came looking for a job."

We can account for female migration on the basis of those factors which prompt male migration, not least of which is the income increase perceived to be gained as a result of migration. <sup>4</sup> In the December interviewing 41 percent of the women said that they had come to Gaborone to find a job while 50 percent said they had come to join a relative. Yet in the June women's survey, 51 percent of the women said that they had come to find a job while only 37 percent said that they had come to join a relative. This difference could be due to a real difference in the samples or it could be due to differences in the interviewing situation. In

December, women were interviewed in a household interview and were most often responding to a male interviewer in front of the entire household; whereas in June, only women were interviewing women. It may be that women were more straightforward and candid about their job aspirations when there was likely to be less cultural stigma attached to their saying that they had come in order to find a job. Recalling Caldwell's findings, this could well be the case: "There is very definitely stronger emotional pressure exerted on girls to stay in the villages than there is on boys. The exception is when the former are joining husbands or going to form a marriage with a specific person, or when older women are extending their trading activities." <sup>5</sup>

Since there are stereotypes about female migrants, women might be reluctant to say to a young male interviewer that they had come to Gaborone looking for work. Nevertheless, our data indicates that women migrate for economic reasons as often as it might be argued that men do. They do have one additional factor which, in this instance, exacerbates their economic and social needs. Many women tell a story that involves their situation as a result of the pull to the South African mines of their mates. Left alone in rural areas with children to support and only subsistence technology, she is often left with migration as a most rational alternative. If, as in this case, there is simultaneously an increased demand for domestic service in the towns because of a civil service pay increase, her move is a response to both push and pull factors. Little argues that female migration takes place for more subtle

and diffuse reasons -- quest for status, more independence, and more freedom -- while the stories told to us indicate that women's needs for economic resources are more compelling than currently realized and their situation reflects the structural problems endemic to the whole region.<sup>6</sup> The female's powerlessness within that system means that hers is a story that goes untold as well as unheard.

Human behavior and motivation are so deeply rooted in the whole fabric of one's cultural and institutional system that to extrapolate generally one aspect of that behavior can be misleading. There is no single nor simple explanation of why women migrated in greater numbers recently in Botswana. Rather, there are several interrelated factors, which have less to do with greater status than with survival.

Not only are there large numbers of women in Botswana forced to support themselves, but there are large numbers of unmarried women with dependents to support. In our subsample of women only, 60 percent were single, widowed, or separated, and of these 90 percent had children to support; it is not uncommon for such women to have from two to six children. Rather than being treated nationally as an emotional or moral issue, this situation, as Lucy Syson has noted, is so frequent that it is virtually ignored<sup>7</sup> even as an issue which might warrant policy consideration.

Three major factors have contributed to the numbers of unmarried women with dependents: the larger numbers of women over men nationally, the impact of mining, and the collapse of polygamy.

Figure 1 illustrates that nationally women are a majority in any age groupings; this is true for Gaborone as well. Figure 1 shows also that between the ages of 20 and 39 from 1/3 to 1/4 of the male population will be away at the mines; indeed, the large-scale male migration to South Africa has left many women trying to manage survival without much assistance.

(Figure 1 about here.)

Moreover, there has evolved over a long period of time the tradition of one pregnancy before marriage. In his classic study, Married Life in an African Tribe, Issac Schapera had begun to observe the extent to which mining - in addition to the activities of missionaries - led to the collapse of polygamy.<sup>8</sup> Given the demise of an indigenous, polygamous society, the tradition of one child previous to marriage appears to serve a perfectly rational function; in the words of one Botswana student, "If I am only entitled to one wife, I want to be very sure of that woman's fertility." The problem is that a woman's proven fertility is no guarantee of marriage or paternal support; as one of our respondents put it, "Women bear children with irresponsible fathers which means they have to maintain these children themselves." While there is a procedure for paternity cases, it does require that the man be in the country and present in the Kgotla; if he is away at the mines -<sup>9</sup> as he is likely to be - the woman has little recourse.

Lacking paternal support and unable or unwilling to depend upon an extended family system to assist her, a woman is left to shift for herself and her children. But as one respondent said of life in her home village, "Women back home can only earn their living through ploughing which demands a lot and is unreliable."

And so, they come to Gaborone. And yet, among the worst problems in Gaborone is that "women have to maintain their children. They have to see to all those problems concerning bringing up fatherless children." <sup>10</sup> There were two different occasions in the interviewing when women mentioned problems of child support. The first was when they were asked what they thought to be the worst problems confronting women in Gaborone. This question was asked in a free choice manner so that any response that came to mind could be mentioned. We later coded two responses. Twenty-three women mentioned jobs as their worst problem and the next most frequent response was housing to which we will turn later. Six women of the thirty-five directly cited supporting children as one of their responses without any prompting. On the other hand, there were many women who, when asked what about life in Gaborone was better, said, "I am working so with the income I earn I can maintain my children."

### Adjustment to Town Life

Adjustment to town life has stimulated a great deal of social research, but little of that research has focused on what might be the nature of that experience for women, and how

it might differ from the experience of males. What then of these women once they were in town? What was the nature of their adjustment to urban life; and what sorts of difficulties did they encounter?

First, we found no indication to justify the frequent assertion that the female migrant goes into prostitution, a myth that is far more entrenched in the social sciences than its companion - that all migrants are potential radical dissidents.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, imbalances in the male-female sex ratio have led to the hypothesis that some portion of the migrants are sojourners. While this may be the case (there are problems with testing this hypothesis), many more men than women in the December round of interviewing expressed an intention to migrate back to home areas; further, in the June women's survey 34.3 percent of the women expressed no intention of returning to their home areas, and 14.3 percent stated that they would return only if a job were available; all of which suggests that women tend to perceive that back migration is not an answer to their problems. Moreover, 66 percent of all women answered "yes" to the query of whether women had more opportunities in Gaborone; and of those in Gaborone more than six years, 69 percent said overwhelmingly that life provided more opportunities in the city than in their home villages. There is, however, a difference between 'intention' and 'behavior' concerning back migration: Sherry MacLiver found in the June 1976 follow-up survey that "10.6 percent of the females enumerated in December had returned while only 5 percent of the males moved back home."<sup>12</sup>

Broadly speaking, our data can be grouped into three different sorts of adjustment stories. There were the "I wish I'd not come" stories of those women who regretted deeply having come to Gaborone. There were also the "moderately good adjustment stories" of those women for whom urban life was less than what they had expected, but just as good as rural life. And there was a group of women, far and away the largest group of women who, feeling they had improved their lives by coming to the city (and, by many criteria they had done so), constitute the "success stories" of our study.

"I Wish I'd Not Come" - Mmatebele Khumalo lives in a traditional style roundavel in Old Naledi, a squatter settlement just on the edges of Gaborone, which has recently been put within the city limits. This particular roundavel is actually part of a cluster of huts and is surrounded by an earth wall. The roundavel and the other round-avels in the same cluster appear to be in good repair and provide some degree of privacy. The roof in this case is of thatch. Mmatebele had been interviewed in December and she remembers this and consents readily to talking with our team again. She makes clay pots which are sold at a craft shop in town; lately the relationship with her man (who is not her husband) has not been good. When we approached, we saw a girl with a child lying on some blankets within the compound area. It turned out, as we found in the subsequent interview, that the girl had come to live with Mmatebele and her husband, for the husband was her father although Mmatebele is not her own mother. Old Naledi has been going through a period of uncertainty

there is much discussion about the fact that the Ministry is considering an upgrading plan which may involve the relocation of many squatters. Mmatebele refers to this rumor and says that although they have wanted to add onto the house, and make some improvements, they have not done anything for they are afraid they might be among those relocated by the plan. They first came to Gaborone in 1971. Mmatebele says that she has had more significant problems recently than initially. As the discussion evolved, the nature of the problem unfolded into a more complex and subtle version of a modernization syndrome which could have been found anywhere. That is to say, the strain in this case does not come from Mmatebele's own adjustment but from the relationship with the man who feels, as far as we can discern in interviewing the wife, a kind of a growing anxiety because his work - as a traditional medicine man - is no longer thriving. He feels the stress of outdated skills, and knows, painfully, that he is no longer as widely respected among his peers as he was at one time. Knowing he will not get tomorrow's jobs with yesterday's skills, he feels anxious about the future. She, too, feels a great deal of the strain, with the result that she now feels ready to leave the man and return to her home village as soon as she can earn enough money to do so with her pots.

Moderately Good Adjustment Stories - Lena David lives fairly near Mmatebele in two small square pressed earth houses with a tiny garden in front. She loves flowers and has marigolds, Star of Bethlehem and Morning Glories growing on the space between her house and the pathway. Usually the earth in Old Naledi is as dry as dust, clouds of it swirl about your ankles with every step. There are only two water standpipes servicing Old Naledi, and they are approximately two miles away from Lena's home. In spite of this distance she carries water from the standpipes in buckets on her head for her cherished garden. Unlike her neighbors, she does not grow European vegetables - potatoes, tomatoes, onions - but prefers her flowers, knitting and handiwork. She was most anxious to talk with our interviewers as to where she might market her crafts. It appears that Lena was in a teacher training program but was dropped from it when she became pregnant. Since she anticipated that there would be future pregnancies, she gave up hopes of teaching. The result, by the way is that she has more education than many of the people who live in that particular area. She has lived with the same man for many years, although they are not married. Lena feels quite comfortable about her life. She enjoys her gardens; she cherishes her family; she feels a sense of fulfillment in all of the creative things that she makes, which were lovely and carefully done. And under no circumstances is Lena interested in returning to a rural area. Yet it must be noted that circumstances

have worked against Lena's being able to maximize either her skills or training. Outdated regulations in the teacher training program and the absence of marketing facilities for her crafts constrain her future to life in a squatter settlement.

Success Stories - Insofar as her adjustment to urban life is concerned, Seipei Mmothana's story has a happy ending. Seipei, who came to Gaborone looking for a job, is self-supporting and feels justifiably proud of that. Seipei, who does not look her 45 years, lives in a section of Gaborone called Bontleng in a modest but adequate house, the original or which she built herself on this same site, building subsequently a simple dwelling at the back which she rented. With the rent money she built another, and yet another, improving her own shelter, as resources permitted. Now her house has regular windows, and three rooms. Her small living room has a table, chairs, and a plastic covered settee. It's a tidy room and has even got that coveted item - a ceiling underneath the tin roof. Seipei lives by her wits, her incredible courage, and real entrepreneurial skills.

Behind Seipei's house there are rental sleeping areas in a long, low subdivided shelter. At the time of the interview Seipei was earning a significant income of over R200 a month (R1 - \$1.15) which in fact makes her a wealthy woman although she lives in a low income area. She has borne six children with four still alive, three of whom are living with her. Yet she still goes back to plough her fields, and returns with grain to add to their provisions in town.

She says that her house is adequate for her needs, although she would like to see it completed; she would like to add plumbing and electricity, but there is not space for a bathroom. Sharing the single pit latrine with her boarders and children is one of her real sources of complaint; and one we heard repeatedly throughout our interviewing.

Lilian Moloi's is also a success story. She is a good looking woman of 24 years who migrated to Gaborone in 1974. She stayed with friends and did not find work right away. When she was interviewed in December, 1975 she was unemployed. By June, 1976, we found her employed at the local Holiday Inn. She had moved in with her married sister when she first came to Gaborone and that is where she is still living. She has a baby, but has left the baby in the village. Her sister says that under no circumstances would she (the sister) leave Gaborone, nor would Lilian. This house is very different from those in Old Naledi; it is not a roundavel but a more standard square cinder block house. This area was a site and service area a few years back and it is now fully occupied. The house in which Lilian lives has three rooms, glass windows, and regular ceilings. There is a water standpipe at the end of the street and those who wish, and can afford it, can hook up to electricity.

Flora Modise, on the other hands, lives with her mother in a very small unit-housing house. She works as a postal assistant and her mother does domestic work. Pooling resources they are able to support four children, two of whom are Flora's. Flora's mother had left their home village before and had tried to get work as far

away as Johannesburg. Flora came instead to Gaborone in 1972. Her mother returned from Johannesburg and moved in with her. They got onto the waiting list for the publicly provided unit housing and moved into their house two years later in 1974. When interviewed in December, Flora said her major reason for migrating was boredom with village life and in June she confirms this reason. The unit housing, however, is very small and crowded. In Flora's case it is a single unit. That is to say, there are not two families living within a block that would be some 32 feet long, but the Modise family have a 10X16 ft. single unit. Nevertheless, Flora is not happy with her housing, feeling the lack of privacy and the crowding. On the other hand, Flora is deeply grateful for her good job as a postal assistant and for her ability to support and maintain her children, without the strain and stress of trying to do that in the rural areas.

Both Flora and Lilian are more recent migrants than either Lena or Mmatebele. It does seem possible to hazard the guess that the more recent female migrant who has somewhat more education is more able to find well-paying jobs than the older migrant. Yet as we will later see, women generally have more education than their male counterparts in Botswana (men go off to the mines young enough to interrupt schooling) but the highest paying jobs still go to men.

The women migrants can be divided between those who have been in Gaborone more than five years and those who have come within the last five years. Interestingly enough, there are few significant differences between these groups. Remembering the limitations of dealing with a very small number of interviews, we can only point to two or three differences and speculate about them:

1. More of the older women migrants are married or staying with the same man whom they joined initially or shortly after arrival.

2. The more recently arrived women, who are also younger, tend to be slightly more able to find wage employment.

3. More of the women who migrated more than five years ago appear to be increasingly disenchanted with their urban lives. Their predominance in the informal sector and their perception of little or no exit from that sector appear to account for their growing disenchantment.

4. The most financially successful women are most likely to be found among the more recent arrivals. This group is also, on the other hand, more likely to have had more primary schooling.

One of the most striking issues which surfaced as a result of the discussions with the women, and which was not anticipated originally as an issue, was the absence of any organizations, groups, or activities to which women turned for fun, support, or potential entrance into urban social structure. When asked about their uses of leisure time, or even specifically about church or womens' group

activities, almost nothing was brought to mind. The response invariably was that there were few such places to which she might go, and she did not know of others which, for one reason or another, she opted not to fraternize. When asked how women use their leisure time, only 13% of the women referred to organizations or churches in which they had membership. Moreover, 63% of our respondents - representing both recent arrivals and longer term residents - did not belong to any kind of organization.

In short, her absence of place in the urban social system is complete. Middle and upper class women have the Botswana Women's Council, but the lower class woman had no such counterpart. The gradual erosion of the traditional extended family had not yet met with its replacement in clubs, groups, gathering places, or points of contact where she might compare or swap stories with other women. Her isolation is complete. And, ironically, her employment pattern tends to reinforce this isolation, especially if she is a domestic servant or self-employed.

#### Female Urban Employment\*\*\*

The dominant characteristic of the present urban economy is that it tends to have a male-oriented employment structure.

\*\*\*For a careful comparison of the employment and income opportunities of women versus male migrants, I am indebted to Luann Martin, who compared the male and female responses from the December Survey, and also worked with the data in the June Women's Survey.

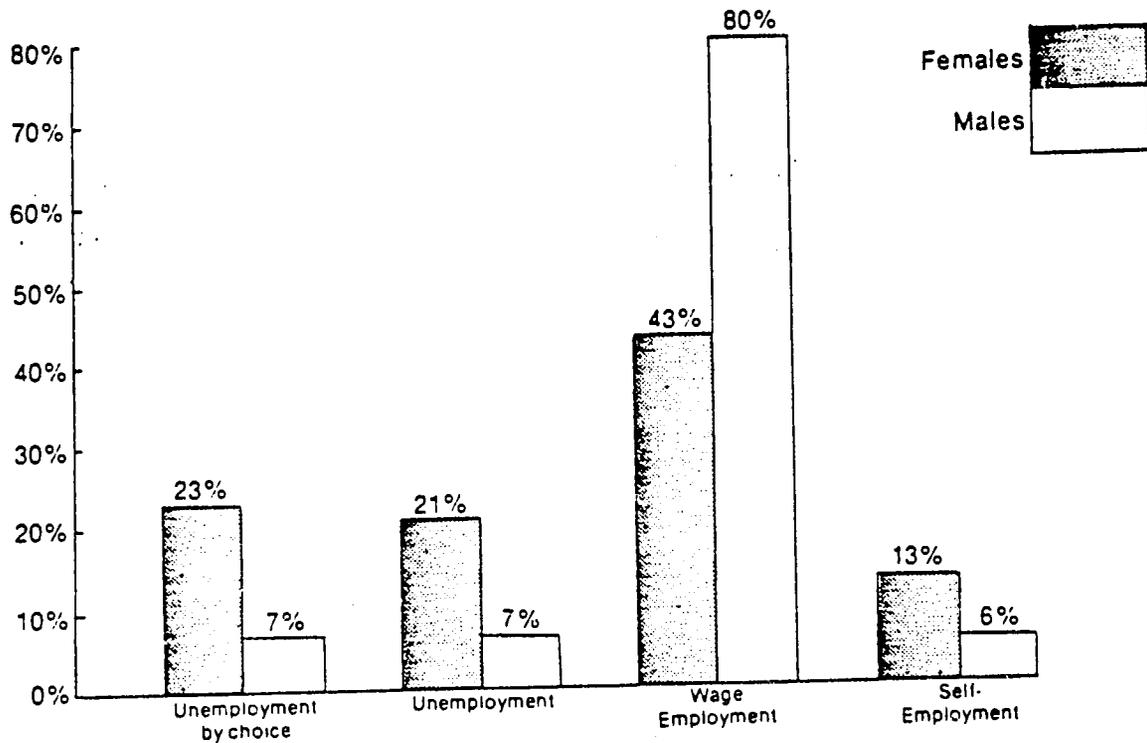
Figures 2, 3 and 4 illustrate the occupational status of both male and female migrants.

(Figures 2, 3, and 4 about here.)

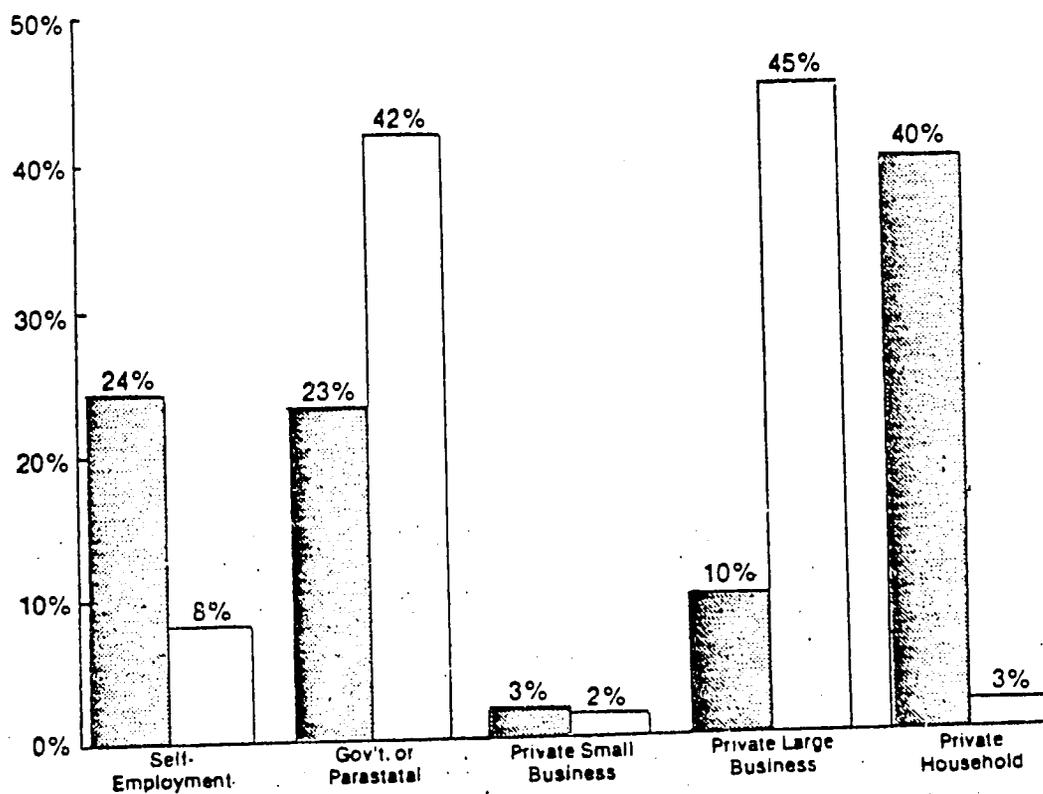
The main sources of employment for women as indicated are as domestic servants or within the informal sector; women who have not had much formal education are locked into informal sector work in the dual sector economy. <sup>13</sup> Additionally, modernization has often meant making activities illegal which women could, and traditionally did, undertake. Brewing beer is the most obvious example. <sup>14</sup> Figure 5 illustrates the impact on income of women's employment. As Martin notes, "the concentration of women in the informal sector is reflected in their earnings. One characteristic of this sector is the larger percentage of low income earners than in the formal sector." <sup>15</sup> The December survey defined employment as any activity for which an individual earned at least R5 per month. Among the employed, the median per capita income was approximately R49 per month, and the mean was R73.16 per month. Figure 5 indicates that 64 percent of the gainfully employed women and 28 percent of the employed men received incomes of less than R41 per month. Only 10.5 percent of the female population earned more than R100 per month.

The complicating factor for female employment has to do with women's differential access to education. Yet it must be remembered that female migrants generally may well have had more primary education than male migrants. In the December

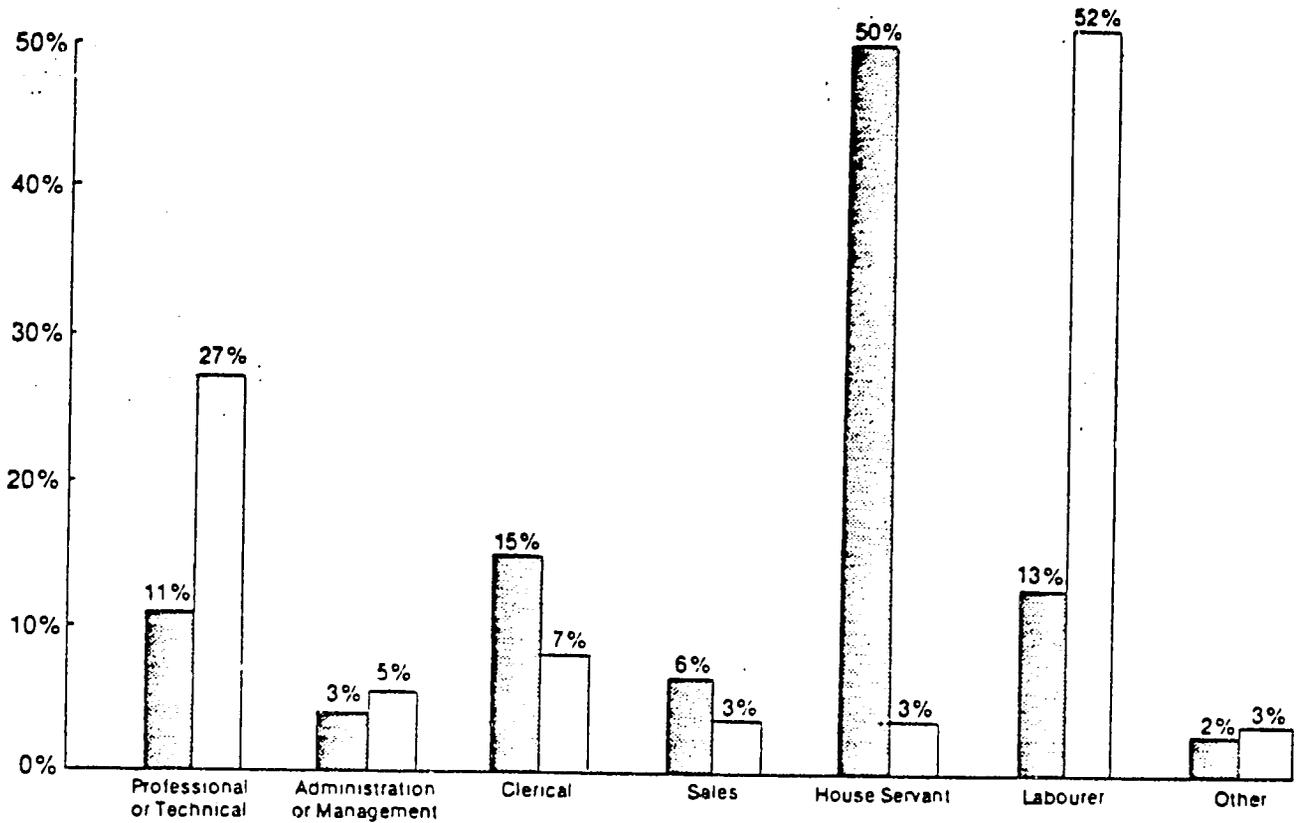
**Figure 2: Employment Status by Sex**



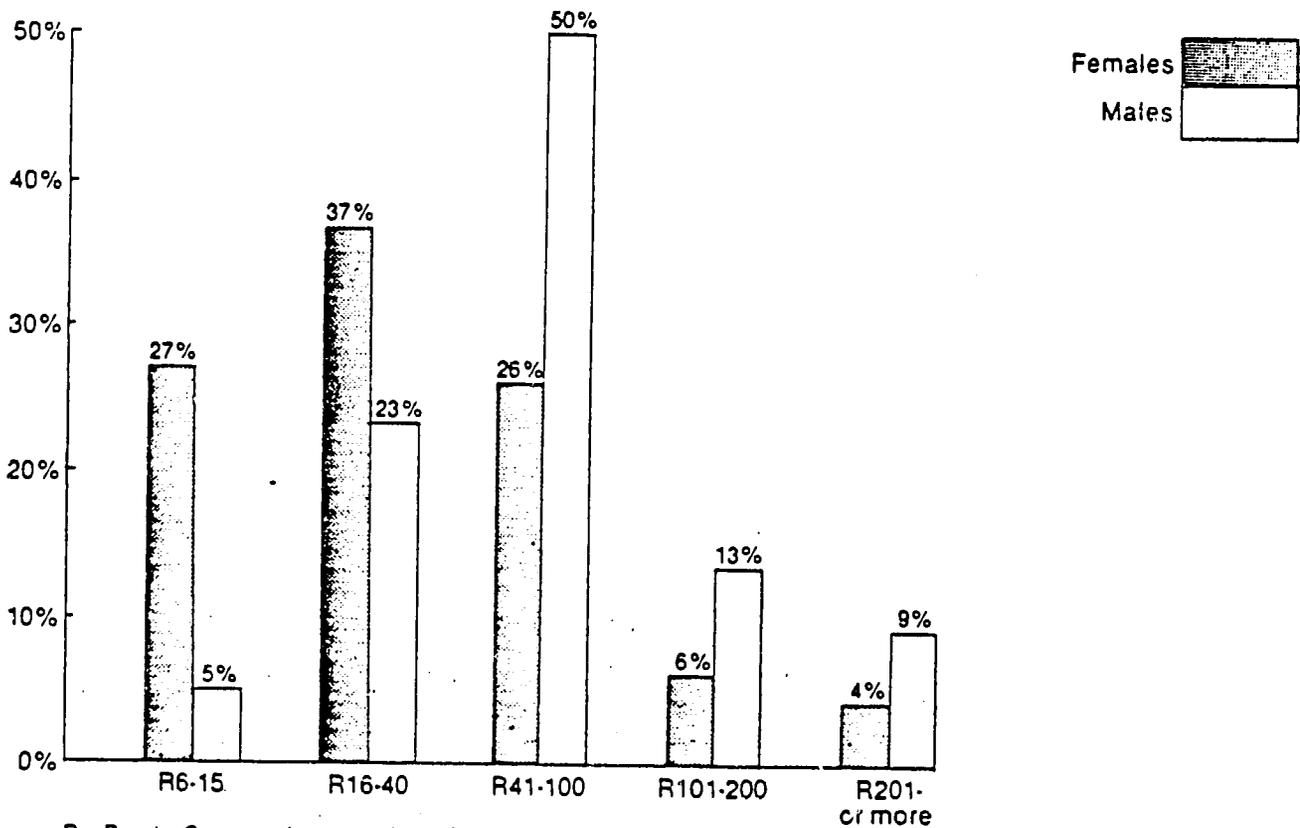
**Figure 3: Place of Employment by Sex**



**Figure 4: Occupation by Sex**



**Figure 5: Cash Income Per Month from Employment by Sex**



survey 57 percent of the women migrants had had some primary education compared with 42.7 percent of the men. More male migrants than female migrants have had no education. Yet, beyond the level of primary education, there is discrimination; few women have had secondary or university training. To the extent that high income earnings are very highly correlated with secondary and university training, one can probably best explain the lower income earnings of the women by their lack of access to secondary and university training.

### Housing, Shelter Issues

Housing issues tended to be second only to employment problems among the many issues that women cited as dominant problems they confront in adjusting to urban life; indeed, the particular circumstances of a woman's housing arrangements made a difference in her perception of her situation. There are, as we have noted, five housing strata in Gaborone: unit housing, site and service, self-help (Bontleng), traditional squatter housing (Old Naledi), and servant's quarters. When asked to rate the adequacy of their housing - from quite adequate to not-at-all adequate - 34 percent of the women cited their housing as quite adequate, 28.6 as moderately adequate, and 37 percent as not-at-all adequate. When we look at the responses of the women in our survey to the question of their housing satisfaction

by housing strata, a distinct pattern emerges.

(Figure 6 about here.)

Many of the women who rated their housing as moderately adequate were living in servant's quarters or in Bontleng (self-help) and hence the adequacy of housing was due to the merging of several factors. In the case of Bontleng, women found their housing adequate because it was near to a water standpipe, because there was security of tenure, and they could add to their houses without fear of relocation, or of an upgrading plan that was going to move them or adversely affect their security of tenure. The second large group of people who found their housing adequate were those living in servant's quarters. While this may seem an anomaly initially, it becomes understandable after a little reflection. Although living in servant's quarters meant living away from one's more natural community, the advantage of servant's quarters is that they tend to have somewhat better amenities in terms of sanitary facilities and distance from work. As regards distance from work, it must not be forgotten that women in Old Naledi or some of the unit housing sometimes have to walk miles in order to do their day's work; if they are maintaining a home and caring for children, walking two miles to work and back is no small issue.

The first large group of women who found their housing inadequate were to be found in unit housing. There were three serious problems. The first was that they were paying rent for housing that

**Figure 6: Adequacy of Housing by Housing Strata**

Type of Housing	Quite Adequate	Moderately Adequate	Not At All Adequate	Total*
Site and Service	25%	25%	50%	100%
Old Naledi	60%	40%	0%	100%
Bontleng	0%	38%	63%	100%
Unit	0%	43%	57%	100%
Servants Quarters	100%	0%	0%	100%

Source: Women's Survey Only  
(chi square sig. = .001)

\*Due to rounding, not all rows total 100%.

was severely deficient in terms of facilities. Often unit housing has two to four families with each family living in one or two rooms. While they do have some indoor rudimentary cooking facilities, many of the women do cook outside their units. If, in fact, there are four families housed together, in four adjoining units, there is little privacy for each of those families. Another and major problem with this housing is sanitary facilities. Even in Old Naledi, the squatter settlement, the privies or the latrines will be dug by the families themselves and usually be spaced some distance back of the roundavel with some shrubbery or mud wall. In the unit housing, the dehumanizing fact of sharing a single pit latrine or aqua privy in the back of the unit without any kind of wall or shrubbery is quite demeaning and is very frequently a cause of complaint. Adding to this, were the series of most unfortunate accidents in which some of the aqua privies collapsed last year.

There are, on the other hand, some enormous advantages to self-help housing in the new site and service area; but before turning to the new site and service housing areas, recall the advantages of self-help housing in the older housing area - Bontleng. The advantage in Bontleng was that there were very few specifications as to the use of the plot or site. Few regulations on plot use meant that women who wanted to put in a small vegetable garden or wanted to hawk the tomatoes or potatoes they grew at some sort of make-shift marketing facility on the front of the lot could do so. Regulations in newer site and service areas have strict standards about the use of the site, creating disadvantages for women, or anyone, who wants access to the informal sector.

In the newer site and service area there are lower densities, reflected in far greater spacing between the houses. Very few houses are built in the traditional style; there is, in fact, a kind of sterility to design in the area, and very few people seem to know one another. In this context, it is worth noting that Karen Hansen put forth a useful set of hypotheses after her study of women on a site and service area in Lusaka.<sup>16</sup> She pointed to the many different little ways in which the changes from rural to urban life weighed heavily on women. In the traditional setting, the women often were working relatively near their menfolk, and had occasions to visit with other women - at the drawing of water, etc.. In the urban setting, as the man is in wage employment, their work roles are far more differentiated, and she is less likely to know about the sorts of pressures and tensions he is encountering. Her life has changed too; there may well be less opportunity to gather and talk with other women with comparable problems. She may well feel more isolated and left to her own solutions. Our findings suggest that Hansen's hypotheses seem most plausible for women on site and service developments, and not necessarily as true for women in squatter settlements, single women, or women in more densely populated areas such as Bontleng. Among the women interviewed in June, the most frequent complaint of those in the site and service area was that they did not know one another, it was not yet a community, there were no organizations in which they could easily or readily participate, and hence no easy ways in which they would come to

know their neighbors. This feeling of isolation coupled with the strains of adjusting to an urban wage economy for their mates composed some very real adjustment issues. Women in the newer site and service areas therefore simply appeared to be more isolated, and more cut-off from the natural kinds of institutional networks existing in places such as Old Naledi.

### Concluding Comments

In many respects the most troubling irony about the position of the female migrant is that little about her needs is likely to be done because she is powerless. Her concerns about employment, housing, disruptive regulations, or her aspirations about education, urban services for her children, or opportunities for growth are without channels, clout, or institutional support. Indeed, one of the most discouraging aspects of her life is the absence of meaningful social networks or organizations to which she might turn in order to use collective action for her collective needs. While there are some organizations for women in Botswana - the BCW, the YWCA, and some church groups - they are apparently middle class organizations whose functions tend to be predominantly social, or in any case largely irrelevant to the perceived needs, aspirations, and interests of the women in our sample, all of whom were chosen from lower income housing strata.

Regardless of class, however, women have very little political influence, especially within political parties - this, in spite of

the fact that women not only outnumber men in Gaborone as well as nationally, they also outvote them. This lack of political influence is reflected in the very low rates of participation of women in the political system - with the one apparent anomaly that the current mayor of Gaborone is a woman. By contrast, in Francistown, women are active on the Francistown Town Council and in the Clerk's office as well as in the running of the World Bank-funded Self-Help Housing Agency. One explanation for the lack of female participation and influence is that there is generally in Gaborone little articulation of citizen needs or common participation between the local town council and the central Ministry of Local Government and Lands (even though these offices are less than two minutes apart), to the effect that in spite of being largely outside the system governing their lives, 40 percent of our respondents reported that they could and would approach the appropriate official when faced with a problem.

To the extent that the government of Gaborone is able to encourage the greater participation of its citizens, women too may find ways of appreciably increasing their influence within the system, and over their own lives. If and when that happens, there could be a real difference in the quality of those lives.

The issue, however, is not solely one of political representation, important as that is. If anything, such representation and the influence it augurs, are symptomatic of the much larger issue of development itself, and the role that women might play in it as participants and beneficiaries. If women are to be participants in and beneficiaries

of development, it will not be from lack of trying. Tough, resilient, resourceful, and hard working, the women of Gaborone were doing all that they could to determine their futures. That they have managed as well as they have - without much assistance - is remarkable, and yet, their potential impact on development has been largely ignored.

Irene Tinker has hypothesized that development has often had unfortunate consequences for women; that, in fact, "compared to<sup>17</sup> men, women almost universally have lost as development proceeded." While we would not argue that all of urbanization works against women, some of our findings do illustrate or confirm that hypothesis. Certainly in the areas of employment and education our data indicate that women have fared less well than men. But it is not just women who lose.

The United National Economic Commission for Africa has documented the contribution which women could make to development if only they had "access to the essential tools of development."<sup>18</sup> Sadly, such access has been limited. Moreover, the ECA has suggested that so long as women remain neglected partners in development "economic productivity is depressed, part of the coming generation is neglected, one-half of the labor force may be driven out of economic production, opportunities for development are missed, the rural-urban imbalance is exacerbated, and the social goals of<sup>19</sup> development may be retarded." Under such conditions, can we speak of development at all?

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Footnotes

1. Cf. Coralie Bryant, Betsy Stephens and Sherry MacLiver, "Rural and Urban Migration: Some Data From Botswana", African Studies Review, September, 1978 (forthcoming); Betsy Stephens, Gaborone Migration Survey: December 1975, Gaborone: Working Paper No. 6, National Institute for Research in Development and African Studies; Coralie Bryant, "Rural to Urban Migration in Botswana and its Policy Implications", Washington, D.C.: U.S. AID Contract No. AID/Afr-C-1229, January 1977.
2. Marc Howard Ross, Grass Roots in an African City (Cambridge University Press, Mass., 1975), p. 44.
3. Kenneth Little, "Women in African Towns South of the Sahara: The Urbanization Dilemma" in Tinker and Bramsen, Women and World Development (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1976), p. 78.
4. cf Lorene Yap, Internal Migration in Less Developed Countries, A Survey of the Literature, World Bank Staff Working Paper, No. 215 (September, 1975).
5. John Caldwell, African Rural-Urban Migration (New York, 1965), p. 103.
6. Kenneth Little, African Women in Towns, (London, 1973). A much more thoughtful book collecting much useful research on this topic is Nancy Hofkin and Edna Bay, (eds), Women in Africa (Stanford Univ. Press, 1976)
7. Lucy Syson, Unmarried Mothers: A Report on Clinic and Hospital Patients in Selected Centers in Southern Botswana (U.W.D.P. Project BOT/71/014, December, 1972)
8. Isaac Schapera, Married Life in an African Tribe (Penguin Books, London, 1971). In this book, for which the research was done from 1929 to 1935, Schapera discusses the beginning of the demise of polygamy.
9. I am indebted to Yvonne Merafe, a sociologist and social worker in Francistown who, in a long intensive interview, shared with me many of her insights concerning women, marriage, paternity cases, and child support in Botswana.
10. Interestingly enough, if women's economic opportunities increase, fertility rates almost invariably decline. For a thorough and systematic study, see Rae Lesser Blumberg, "Fairy Tales and Facts: Economy, Family, Fertility and the Female," in Tinker and Bramsen, Women and World Development, Overseas Development Council (Washington, D.C., 1976)

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11. Repeated assertions of the assumption that women migrants are prostitutes are usually scattered throughout the work of Ross and Caldwell, as well as alluded to by Little. On the other assertion - that migrants are potential radical dissidents - see Janice Perlman The Myth of Marginality who demonstrates the empirical flaws in that argument. (Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley, 1976)
  12. Sherry MacLiver, Gaborone Migration Survey Follow-Up - June 1976. Working Paper No. 9, Nat'l Institute for Research in Development and African Studies, Documentation Unit, Gaborone, Botswana, February, 1977.
  13. Luann Habegger Martin developed the figures used in this section. Her original paper, "The Women of Gaborone, Botswana" was undertaken in a course on urbanization, American University, December 1976.
  14. Cf. U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, "The Data Base for Discussion of the Interrelations between Integration of Women in Development, their Situation and Population Factors in Africa." U.N. Doc. E/CN14/SW/17 1974.
  15. Martin, op. cit., p. 13.
  16. Karen Tvanberg Hansen, "Married Women and Work: Explorations from an Urban Case Study," African Social Research, Vol. 20, December 1975.
  17. Irene Tinker, "The Adverse Impact of Development on Women," in Tinker and Bransen, Women and World Development, (Overseas Development Council, Washington, D.C., 1976).
  18. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "The New International Economic Order - What Roles for Women?", U.N. Document E/CN14/ATRCW/77/WD3 (August 1977), p. 3.
  19. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Women's Research and Training Centre, "Women and National Development in African Countries: Some Profound Contradictions," African Studies Review, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (December, 1975), p. 65.  
Cf. Also Adrienne Germain, "Poor Rural Women: A Policy Perspective" Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 30, No. 2 1976-77.