

PN ACG-349

The Role of Women's Political Participation in Economic Reform

November 1995

U S Agency for International Development

Paper Prepared for the Meeting of the Special Program of Assistance for Africa
Working Group on Economic Reform in the Context of Political Liberalization
November 10-11, 1995
Paris, France

A

This paper was prepared by Aili Mari Tripp, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison (U S A), and Georgina Waylen, Lecturer in Politics, University of Sheffield (U K) Editorial and other assistance was provided by Dr Stephen R Weissman, Senior Governance Advisor, Associates in Rural Development, Inc

In the first half of the 1990s, women in Africa began to adopt strategies to take advantage of democratic political reforms and improve their legal, economic and political status at the national level. In addition, local women's organizations continued to pursue collective self-help strategies launched during the 1980s to respond to economic crisis, state decline and some of the harsher effects of donor-supported structural adjustment programs. Finally, national and regional women's movements began to challenge certain adjustment policies that appeared to have a differential and negative impact upon women.

This paper examines African women's new political drive. It presents growing empirical evidence that women's political participation is powering new demands for efficient and equitable economic reform that are beginning to result in new government policies. Thus responsiveness to gender issues is becoming an element of politically sustainable reform. The paper suggests how SPA donors can support this trend by advancing women's participation in economic policymaking through policy dialogue and other tools of policy reform. Finally, it recommends that the donors change some of their own internal procedures in order to better contribute to gender-integrated reform.

Women's Political Participation and Economic Reform

Women's movements in Africa today are pushing for more than a change of guard, i.e., changes that go beyond a reshuffling of those holding the reins of power. They are seeking basic transformations in the way resources are distributed throughout society. As Ama Biney argues, "We should be clear that the Great Debate on democracy should not just be about the restoration of democratic rights (i.e., the freedom of speech, press freedom, the separation of the state and party, the unbanning of political parties, etc.) The struggle to secure such rights is one aspect of the democratic struggle to empower popular forces to organize themselves to take control of their local resources." She goes on to argue that African women need to broaden the quest for democratization to "seek to gain control over the daily organization of their local communities and local resources."¹

Furthermore, there is a growing realization that thoroughgoing economic reform is not possible without women's full participation in political and economic decision making that affects their access to resources. Women play a central role in most parts of Africa as agricultural producers, as providers of social and public services in the community, as the ones who bear the primary burden of childcare, care for the sick and elderly, as managers of the household, as individuals responsible for the provision of water, fuel and food in the household, and increasingly as providers of cash income from self-employment. However, without access to and control over land, credit and other resources, women's contributions to economic well-being are limited. For example, because land is frequently controlled by men, women are constrained in expanding their production of cash crops and therefore they are unable to take advantage of price incentives aimed at increasing production of cash crops. If surplus food is produced by women, it is often sold by husbands, who keep the proceeds, leaving women with little incentive to increase the household's marketable surplus. Moreover, women have less access to inputs, technology and training than men. These kinds of constraints speak to the need to identify the gender consequences of economic reforms and find ways to improve women's access to and control of resources.

¹ Ama Biney "Multipartyism" & the African Woman *African Woman* (Autumn 1991) 29-30

Women's groups increasingly recognize that political participation is a prerequisite for responsive economic reform. Thus, the 1993 East African Women's Conference voted to set as the top three priorities for women's movements: 1) access to political power and decision-making in government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and at the household level, 2) participation in decision-making processes relating to structural adjustment policies, and 3) the creation of equal opportunities for ownership and control of resources. The Tanzanian and Ugandan delegates devised strategies to enable women's groups to hold policy makers accountable for the use of public funds and to improve women's economic literacy and awareness of the implications of reform policies. The Kenyan delegation emphasized the need to create a political will to bring back efficient management of the economy through fiscal and monetary discipline, accountability and transparency, while monitoring and reversing the negative effects of structural adjustment programs on women.

Women's political activism is a new and slowly growing phenomenon, one developing unevenly across the continent. Therefore, it is too early to fully assess its impact. Nevertheless, there are strong indications that it is likely to produce significant changes in economic policy.

Changing Women's Legal Status

One of the main political fronts on which the fight for access to resources is being fought is that of legal reform. Women's organizations have sought changes in the law to give women greater access to property, land and financial resources. Just this year, Malawian women politicians and women's NGOs successfully lobbied to insert into the new constitution provisions to assure women property and other economic rights. And in Zambia, women's organizations were instrumental in the achievement of a draft constitution which includes a section on women's rights with provisions for equal rights in marriage, rights to property and inheritance, paid maternity leave, and freedom from discrimination under traditional practices. In Uganda, where liberalization has proceeded within the single party framework, women delegates to the constituent assembly have succeeded in obtaining constitutional clauses that guarantee equal treatment of men and women under the law and prohibit laws, cultures, and customs that undermine women's well-being and dignity. The women's movement has also pushed for passage of a Domestic Relations Bill that would abolish customary laws governing divorce settlements, inheritance practices and property rights in marriage. In Mali, women's NGOs are similarly trying to bring about changes in property law, marital law and the tax code to eliminate discrimination against women.

New women's organizations in many parts of Africa conduct workshops, hold legal aid clinics for poor women, and use the media to educate women about how to use existing law to their advantage. One such organization, the Uganda chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), holds legal aid clinics providing free legal services to women and children. It also translates laws into local languages, and educates women through rural workshops, radio programs, and plays.

FIDA also acts as a pressure group for legal and constitutional reform. During the 1995 Constituent Assembly proceedings for example, it successfully assisted the Assembly's Women's Caucus on constitutional matters, many of which related to property issues and land rights.

Changing Women's Economic Status

Women's political efforts to improve their economic status, particularly as producers, are closely connected to the struggle over women's improved legal standing. Thus the Uganda Women's Finance and Credit Trust (UWFCT) has joined forces with FIDA in an integrated project on Credit and Law. Beyond legal struggles, many women have joined organizations which are voicing demands for basic change in economic policy. New organizations like the Kenya Women Finance Trust and the UWFCT have sought to strengthen women-run micro, small and medium scale enterprises that have arisen to fill gaps created by the decline of larger enterprises. Furthermore, in countries where women find it hard to own property and hence come up with the necessary collateral to obtain bank loans, associating with other women in savings clubs, cooperatives and self-help groups has become critical to obtaining credit. In both Uganda and Kenya, women's groups are moving credit facilities from urban centers to the rural areas where they are closer to the beneficiaries and where they can be of greater assistance.

Women leaders like Rita Riria-Ouko, managing director of the Kenya Women Finance Trust, are arguing that not only business associations and non-governmental organizations, but also public agencies should better serve micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs through savings schemes, capital-raising mechanisms, provision of information on markets and new technologies, improved coordination of marketing, production, and overlapping services, development of appropriate technology and training.

In general, women's business associations in many African countries are calling on governments to create an economic environment more conducive to entrepreneurial activities through the provision of necessary infrastructural, educational, credit, extension and other such facilities that address the needs of women in particular. Rural women are especially hurt by the following constraints: difficult access to cheap wholesale inputs for micro-businesses, cumbersome licensing procedures that are easily susceptible to corruption, arbitrary and high taxes that overburden women microentrepreneurs who are already contributing more than their share in the way of household, poor social service and community service provisioning, and the harassment of women petty traders on a regular basis for the sole purpose of obtaining bribes.

Other women's organizations, like the National Committee on the Status of Women in Kenya, have identified the main constraints in the rural areas as being the lack of credit, land, extension services, technology, water and fuel supplies, as well as the need for better preservation, production and storage of seeds. Rural women also need better access to food processing technologies to dry fruit, make juices and jams, grind maize, and extract oils. Alternative energy sources to wood fuel need to be developed and promoted (e.g., heat storing solar or photovoltaic household cooking stoves).

Moreover, women have unequal access to inputs, including fertilizer, animal feeds, animal vaccines, herbicides and farm equipment

Changing Women's Overall Political Status

In the 1990s, women have sought independent political access and influence more than at any time in the post-independence period. This transformation involves changes in both the quantity and quality of women's political engagement. Women have been active participants in movements pushing for political reform throughout Africa. These movements have demanded that multiparty systems replace single party systems and that military regimes become civilian regimes. They have also sought greater freedom of speech and association, limits on executive powers, and the repeal of repressive legislation, e.g., preventive detention laws. Many of these movements have also sought to limit corruption by demanding greater accountability and transparency on the part of the government with respect to use of public funds.

In Nigeria, for example, women joined men in the streets to call for the end to military rule when Gen Sani Abacha failed to release election results in June 1993 and were shot at harassed in the following period. In Mali, Kenya, Guinea, Mauritania and Zaire, women have been at the forefront of militant action opposing repressive regimes and protesting human rights abuses.

With the advance of democracy, women in Zambia, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania have become increasingly active in building non-partisan associations to carry out civic education, promote women candidates, undertake leadership training and lobby political parties to put more women on their tickets. Women have even taken unprecedented steps to run for presidential office (e.g., Tanzania, Central African Republic, Nigeria), and start political parties (e.g., Zambia and Lesotho). In Uganda, pressure from the women's movement has resulted in women holding top political positions, with Specioza Wandera Kazibwe becoming Vice President in 1994. Since 1986, women in Uganda have come to hold key posts as cabinet members, ministers, permanent secretaries, and district administrators. In 1980 there was only one female out of 143 members of parliament. By 1986, women held 14 percent of all parliamentary seats, and the new 1995 Constitution provides for a minimum of one third female representation. Women have also used the new political space to attempt to influence the economic reform process by pursuing administrative positions.

Even though women are becoming involved in politics to an unprecedented degree, they have still been generally left out of leadership positions. By 1994-1995, women in Sub-Saharan Africa held an average of 8.5 percent of all parliamentary seats in their respective countries,² while the world average was 10 percent and that of least developed countries was 6 percent. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa held 6 percent of ministerial posts, while for the least developed countries the figure was 5 percent and for all developing countries it was 5 percent. While these figures indicate that Africa has

² The average for Africa is approximately 8.5 percent if Uganda's and Mozambique's 1995 figures are incorporated.

better representation at the parliamentary and ministerial levels than many parts of the developing world, the rate of increase has been minimal. Parliamentary representation increased from 7.65 to 7.77 per cent between 1984 and 1994, according to the Economic Commission on Africa study of 26 African countries.

Women have been critical of the new opposition parties and their lack of incorporation of female leadership and demands in their platforms. Zambia's 1991 multiparty elections are a case in point. The 1991 presidential and parliamentary elections were initially upheld as models for political transition from a one party to a multiparty regime. In these elections, the opposition Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MDM) claimed 125 out of 150 Parliamentary seats and the MDM leader, Frederick Chiluba, won the presidency, ending the 27-year rule of Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party. In spite of active campaigning by the National Women's Lobby and the YWCA to promote women candidates, the Lobby was disappointed by the outcome of the 1992 elections in which women gained only seven seats in parliament and only two women were subsequently appointed to the Cabinet. Women's disaffection with the political process and its disregard for women's issues by both MMD and UNIP was reflected in a 1993 study in George, an urban community in Lusaka. The study found that the 1991 elections changed little for the women in that area. Women were critical of the MMD for not addressing women's issues and for not providing institutional mechanisms to address women's concerns.

However, women have responded to such exclusion by political parties in a number of ways. They have, for example, begun to leave ruling party "women's wings" and other institutions of patronage politics to create and participate in new, autonomous national associations. After independence, these women's wings--run by wives and other relatives of male leaders--were kept apolitical in terms of autonomous action, yet were used by the dominant party to mobilize votes, host official celebrations, and guide women's actions in line with party or government interests. One classic example of a party-sponsored women's organization is the League of Malawi Women, affiliated with the Malawi Congress Party. The former president, Hastings Banda, formed the women's organization and insisted that women from the League attend all public functions to sing and dance in his honor. He would select women, some of whom were appointed to parliament, to accompany him on trips abroad and to political meetings.

Such satellite organizations, like the Union of Tanzanian Women, Maendeleo ya Wanawake in Kenya and the National Council of Women's Societies in Nigeria began, losing ground in the 1990s as women began to join other autonomous associations. For example, in the 1980s the Zambian Women's League diminished in size, and studies in urban Zambia showed that by the early 1990s the organization's membership was aging with no new recruitment and no new types of activities. The ruling United National Independence Party had insisted that the League focus on abolishing the "immorality of women" and promote women as obedient mothers and wives. Such a focus only served to discredit the organization, especially in the eyes of the new women's organizations that had more far reaching agendas.

The new autonomous organizations call for fundamental changes in the position of women, beginning with their political status. In Kenya, 2,000 delegates representing major women's associations held a National Women's Convention in Nairobi in 1992 to adopt a strategy to bring women into political power. Eddah Gachukia addressed the conference, explaining how the situation in the 1990s differed from that of the 1980s. "I remember once in the 1980s when women demanded a bigger representation in (Kenyan) parliament they were said to be out to hijack national leadership. But the time is now ripe. What we couldn't talk then for fear of being called names and fearing reprisals, we can now say without fear."³ Maria Nzomo, chair of the National Committee on the Status of Women, which organized the conference, emphasized that "Women must now participate as policy makers in politics and public life in large enough numbers so that we can make an impact in changing our subordinate status."⁴ Partly as a result of the conference, over 250 women stood for civic and parliamentary seats, with 45 women winning civic positions while six women were elected to Parliament. In Zambia, the decline of party women's wings has helped pave the way for a new, though small, group of women office-holders who represent more diverse interests, benefit from the support of new associations, and who regard it as their responsibility to represent women's concerns in public debate and policy formation.

Similarly, in Tanzania, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), has brought together women's associations to develop joint strategies around structural adjustment, work for desired legislation, educate women on their legal rights, raise issues of violence against women, and so on, in ways that go far beyond what was possible when the Union of Tanzanian Women, the mass association of the ruling party, was the main women's association.

This new found autonomy of women's organizations and their general lack of ties to pre-existing patronage networks also makes them a force for changing and challenging neopatrimonial rule and clientelistic systems, and strengthening government accountability and transparency. In general, they have more at stake and less to lose by pushing for a break with such old institutions.

Community Self-help Strategies

Although women have sought influence in the formal political arena and in some cases have been able to make gains, the fact that they continue to face exclusionary practices has forced them to channel much of their collective action into self-help community organizations in order to gain access to economic and other resources. A 1992-1995 study of urban Ugandan women's associations concluded that women, more often than men, commonly conceived of political activity as involvement in concrete action with tangible results rather than simply conducting electoral campaigns or engaging in other more explicitly political activities.

³ International Press Service 9 March 1992

⁴ Kenya Sunday Nation 23 February 1992

Similar patterns have been found in rural Uganda, and attributed to the limits imposed by male authorities on women's mobilization within the local government structures. One study found 59 women's clubs in Pallisa district, with approximately two clubs in each sub county, involving about 9,600 women. The groups were involved in horticulture, vegetable growing, food and cash crop farming, brick making, handicrafts, music, dance, drama and other such activities. Like the urban women, the main aim of groups in Pallisa was to improve living standards, gain access to credit and property, pay school and health fees, market their produce, learn better farming methods and acquire new skills in cooking, handicrafts and tailoring. The groups however were also fora for expressing opposition to various forms of gender discrimination. Women's groups appealed to policy makers through dance, drama, and poetry, especially around issues of land ownership. They used these cultural forms also to raise public awareness of problems of inheritance and widows' lack of rights to keep their children.

Throughout Africa, many women's organizations emerged -- or evolved -- in the 1980s to cope with the consequences of economic crisis and reform. As the political situation loosened up in many countries, associations found they could thrive in the emerging political space, even though women's full participation in the formal political arena was still limited. Organizations also formed in response to state decline, as governments gradually relinquished their roles in the provisioning of public services. Finally, new donor strategies that shifted resources to non-governmental organizations also led to the formation of these associations.

Nigeria, for example, has a rich history of associational activity that includes social clubs, savings groups, and community self-help associations. During the economic crisis, new intermediary NGOs formed to address women's economic concerns. Pressure groups of market women and educated women formed to improve women's conditions (e.g., All Nigerian Women Association) were created. The Country Women Association of Nigeria, founded in Ondo state in 1982, is an intermediary multipurpose association that helps women diversify their economic activities in rural areas by promoting the processing of agricultural produce, creating jobs for artisans, developing rural based technologies, training women in management and job skills and generally promoting strategies to increase women's earning power in the rural areas.

Community and self-help associations have increasingly raised funds to build roads, wells, bridges, schools, and clinics. Moreover, much of the actual labor for these projects has been provided by women. Women's associations identify community problems that need attention and mobilize themselves to take action. This direct and collective approach to community difficulties arises in part out of the view that one's individual survival is contingent on the survival of the community.

One woman activist in Moshi Rural district of Tanzania explained how women in her area saw that the Kimeni-Mwika road needed repairs and knew it would take years before the government would fix it. The women divided the road up and gave groups of women, youth and men different portions of the road to repair. In the same district, women have built wells, worked on community water projects and participated in primary health care initiatives. As she put it "Women have been in the frontline, leading. If the project lagged, women showed the way. They contributed money to the

projects, not just manual labor " She also added that because women were oppressed at home, they especially treasured justice and were responsible in their work "

Ms Mshana belonged to numerous women's associations, most of which had changed dramatically since the late 1980s These changes were indicative of some of the broader changes in women's associations and economic life throughout Tanzania Ms Mshana's Lutheran Parish women's group had originally been a Bible study group, but by the mid-1990s it was sponsoring presentations by people talking about how to start an income generating project, discussions by lawyers about women's rights, and lectures on fathers' responsibilities toward their children Since more women had begun to pursue income generating projects, members of the women's group had greater financial resources and were now taking weekend tourist trips to Tanga, Nairobi, Zanzibar and other such places ⁵

Similar changes in local opportunity structures for women are evident in other parts of Africa In Ghana, for example, one group of 95 women in Ayirebi responded to economic crisis and structural adjustment in the 1980s by forming a cultivating group They were able to pool resources to buy land and sell crops, enabling them to purchase more land for individual and collective farming ventures They also used a portion of their resources for community development The women attributed their success over the years to their ability to rebuild and maintain strong social relations, to find alternative sources of income for the household, and to rely on local resources to meet the demands of local markets Part of their success was also due to their capacity to define their own needs and come up with their own strategies to respond to national economic contraction They conceived of economic opportunity in terms of mutual benefit rather than the individual benefit of one individual Their economic successes and contributions to community welfare eventually brought them political recognition and a greater voice in household and community concerns

Much of the analysis of structural adjustment programs to date has been focused in a general way on the aggregate impact of economic reform, with little attention to people's own creativity and ingenuity in dealing with international and national economic processes Responses to the local effects of national and international processes as shown in the Ayirebi case study suggests that more attention needs to be paid to local understandings of problems, local resources, local markets, and local solutions

More fundamentally, this local knowledge and experience, acquired through quasi-political collective action, is a potential resource in economic policy making And as women's political role expands, these local groups with their public-spiritness and participatory culture, are likely to become more involved in changing state policies

Thus far, however, women's collective strategies to cope with new economic stresses have served as a safety valve, taking pressure off the state Realizing there is little to be gained by waiting for state intervention or even by making demands on the state, women have focused their energies on self-help

⁵ Interview by author with M Mshana 5 March 1994 Moshi Tanzania

strategies that will bring about concrete and immediate improvements in their communities. These strategies have served to divert demands that otherwise might have a destabilizing affect on regimes undergoing political and economic reform.

At the same time the increased burden on women's time due to pressures to make ends meet often leaves little time for conventional, state-oriented political activity and leadership, which is key to fundamental changes in resource distribution. Another negative consequence of increased reliance on community self-help efforts is the disproportionate burden on women engaged in these activities. Women are often the main ones contributing labor to community development projects, with male contributions almost negligible by comparison. For example, in Mwanga in northeastern Tanzania, women members of the district-wide umbrella organization of small entrepreneurs (Umoja wa Wanauchumi Wadogowadogo wa Mwanga) reported that whenever community projects were initiated it was not uncommon for the majority of labor to be provided by women. If a couple of men did show up, they did not stay long to help. This raises deeper problems of gendered responses to economic hardship and suggests that careful consideration should be given to policies that rely on voluntary community contributions. Frequently we find that where women have attempted to respond to difficulties through collective strategies, men in the community have tended to withdraw, placing even greater burdens on women's time and energies.

Similarly, concerns have been raised that too much is being expected of women's organizations in the same way that the government was expected to solve all problems in the past. Demands by non-governmental organizations are placed on women over and above their existing household and income generating responsibilities, with the danger that women may be put in a position of exploiting themselves.

Challenges to Structural Adjustment from Women's Movements

Women's movements in countries like Tanzania have acknowledged that women have taken advantage of economic reforms to expand their income generating opportunities. With greater financial resources at their disposal, women have also experienced greater individual empowerment, increased decision making leverage within the household and more collective empowerment through networking and associational activity. Economic liberalization has resulted in the greater availability of consumer goods and inputs, both of which have stimulated the expansion of income-generating projects especially among women. Moreover, liberalization has also meant a greater diversification of income-generating projects in both rural and urban contexts.

Even though organizations like TGNP recognize many of the benefits of structural adjustment, they are also critical of some of the gender-neutral dimensions of these policies. Many of the demands of women's movements in the political reform context have arisen out of frustration over growing economic difficulties brought on by both economic crisis and austerity measures tied to structural adjustment programs. There is a growing consensus among women's movements that the effective implementation of structural adjustment programs has been impeded by gender bias. Moreover, women's movements have identified specific policies that they believe undermine the position of

women and thus in the long run, affect the welfare of society as a whole. Donors and African governments have begun to respond to many of these challenges from critics within the women's movements

In particular, women's movements have targeted the widespread decline in access to social services, resulting in rising maternal mortality rates and dropping quality of education. Medical care expenses have increased in part due to cost sharing measures which have affected women disproportionately. Female attendance in schools is dropping in some parts of Africa due to increased school costs and the need for girls to engage in new sources of income generation to sustain the household. Reductions in real wages due to wage freezes and the inflationary effects of devaluation have meant that urban women have had to increase their involvement in informal economic activities, placing further burdens on their time and energies.⁶

Women's movements have also argued that while trade liberalization has helped supply inputs for informal sector activities, it has brought in goods that pose stiff competition to many local products in the informal sector. For example, cheap and popular imported second hand clothes are said to have placed enormous burdens on seamstresses.

Furthermore, because of preexisting discrimination in women's access to credit, inputs and land, market liberalization may not always be as beneficial to women as it is to men. Women are relatively more involved in food than other agricultural production, yet currency devaluation, pricing incentives and cheaper inputs directed at the export sector do not assist women in the subsistence sector. Moreover, even though the emphasis on export cash crops has pushed more women into this sector, existing gender imbalances and male control of marketing mean that the income obtained from these crops does not benefit women in typical non-pooling households. Women may work in export crops but find that their husbands control the income from these crops.

Many of these concerns were addressed by the fifth regional Conference on African Women, held in Dakar November 16-23, 1994, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in September 1995. The conference adopted a Platform of Action, strongly influenced by 100 NGOs, urging that Africa's international debt be turned into resources to finance projects to improve African women's economic position. Significantly, the platform also calls for strengthening women's political participation at all levels and stresses female access to education.

⁶May Sengendo and Rose Kigundu "Effects of Structural Adjustment Policies on Women in the Agriculture, Health and Education Sectors: A Case Study of the Arua District, Uganda." Kampala: Makerere University, n.d., p. 7. Takyiwaa Manuh "Ghana: Women in the Public and Informal Sectors under the Economic Recovery Programme." In *Mortgaging Women's Lives*, ed. Pamela Sparr, London: Zed Books, 1994, pp. 61-77. See also C. Mark Blackden and Elizabeth Morris-Hughes "Paradigm Postpones: Gender and Economic Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa." Africa Region Technical Department, World Bank, August, 1993.

The Implications of Women's Political Participation for Their Role in the Donor-Assisted Policy Reform Process

We have examined the upsurge of women's political participation that has occurred as part of the recent political liberalization in much of Africa. We have shown that issues of economic reform and structural adjustment are now at the forefront of women's political agenda. And we have presented evidence that women's political participation can play an important part in enhancing the efficiency, equity and political sustainability of economic reform. Achieving the necessary change however will necessitate a revised approach by both African governments and donors to gender issues in economic reform one which sees women as principals who are active in economic and political processes rather than one which focuses on how these processes impact upon women and implicitly sees women as passive recipients

At all levels of the policymaking process - local, national and international - it is crucial to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated into economic analysis. Furthermore, it is essential that gendered analysis influence all stages of the policy process---especially the assessment, planning and implementation phases -- and not, as so often happens, just the stage of monitoring the impact of different policies on different groups of women. In order for this to occur, donors should, through policy dialogue, strongly encourage and assist host governments in the following actions

1) Gender-disaggregated data have to be collected and utilized. For example, macroeconomies need to be seen as gendered structures. Steps need to be taken to recognize the contribution of the reproductive economy to national output, making much of women's work which hitherto has been invisible, visible. And household needs should be disaggregated in all studies in order to provide gender sensitive data about intrahousehold relationships between male and female members. It cannot be assumed that households are simply pooling income, or that men and women are affected by economic change in the same ways.

2) There is a need for much greater involvement by women in policy making processes, and for this involvement to be institutionalized.

a) Women should be incorporated as policy makers at all levels of state decisionmaking. Gender typing in public service employment must be challenged. There need to be more women working in finance and economic departments as well as social ones within the civil service. Equal opportunity policies should help ensure that women are represented at all levels. Such measures can be included as part of civil service reform programs that aim to enhance administrative capacities for implementation of economic reform.

b) There should be liaison and consultation in the policymaking process between women's ministries and Women in Development (WID) offices and other government departments. It is also helpful to ensure that WID units have links with women's NGOs outside the state. Cross training should take place. training in economics should be provided for staff in women's ministries and WID offices to

enable them to participate more fully in economic policymaking, and gender awareness training should be provided for officials in other state agencies

c) Women should play a larger role as service providers at the policy implementation level, for example as agricultural extension workers. There is evidence that service providers often pay less attention to women or ignore their needs, as a result, women do not receive the same level of benefits from those services as men. Gender-awareness training should also be made available to service-providers

d) Women in civil society should be key participants in the consultation processes and policy dialogues which donors like the World Bank are increasingly advocating as ways of getting greater country understanding and ownership of reform policies. As we have seen, women's organizations themselves are strongly expressing this demand

Achieving Representation of Women's Groups in Reform Programs

Women's NGOs and advocacy groups should be involved at all the levels in which elements of civil society are consulted about reform policies. Consultations at the grassroots and community levels should involve local women's associations. National consultations, including those sponsored by international donors, should include women's organizations and umbrella groups which reflect the diversity of women's interests

A number of different mechanisms can be used to achieve meaningful consultation. For example, representatives from women's groups and gender experts should be involved in assessment exercises that lay the basis for economic reforms. Women's NGOs could hold workshops at local and national levels to formulate ideas for, and responses to, planned reforms. Women's policy forums could take place between policymakers and representatives of women's organizations to facilitate dialogue and feed into the national/international policymaking process

An important consideration involves who to consult. Clearly, the array of women's organizations and movements involved in economic and political reform has expanded dramatically since the early 1980s. Because many of the organizations are new and in the process of consolidation, it is difficult to assess the viability of various forces. Amidst the competition for scarce resources and new leadership, African governments and external donors need to be careful to identify those forces that have proven themselves best able to play a unifying role

The newly emerging autonomous national associations are an important source of such leaders. Intermediary organizations, like businesswomen's associations, women lawyers' associations, and women's lending institutions are increasingly in a position to aggregate interests and identify key problems affecting various sectors. Independent umbrella and networking associations have recently begun to form, linking groups and developing programs of action. The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, for example, has developed jointly with hundreds of other organizations agendas for political action in specific fields (education, legal reform, health). It has also established divisions of

labor and strategies for reaching various goals. The process of mobilizing for the Beijing Women's Conference has sped up the process of such collaborative agenda-setting in many African countries. The existence of intermediary organizations and networks goes a long way to simplifying the daunting task that governments and donors face of identifying non-governmental participants to foster country-wide "ownership" of economic reform.

Nevertheless, given the newness of many women's organizations, one should be aware that many opportunistic "briefcase associations" have emerged in the NGO sector. And it is not always easy to distinguish them from other newly emerging organizations that have a genuine base or constituency without talking directly to their membership. Another problem of newness is the reality that some individuals have left public sector jobs to work with NGOs, bringing with them the same kinds of authoritarian modes of organization and practices of patronage that have plagued the state sector. Problems of lack of accountability and transparency that have eroded the government have become all too common in NGOs.

Some argue that to avoid such problems, more attention should be paid to existing community-based associations that have proven themselves to be viable, credible and accountable. For example, in Nigeria, Women's Councils, which have origins in pre-colonial Africa, continue to be important institutions governing the social, political, economic and spiritual affairs of women. Their flexibility and capacity to respond to changing situations accounts for their durability. The Ibo Women's Councils, for example, intervene in matters that concern the market, ensure moral behavior, sanction men who violate women's rights in the community, govern multiple smaller organizations, lobby for women's interests at the national level. Nevertheless, according to Nkiru Nzegwu, organizations like these have been consistently overlooked and dismissed by development agencies because of preconceived notions of women's roles, a bias in favor of elevating literate people in leadership roles, and the misguided notion that men are the only experts when it comes to water supply systems, food production, mechanized farming, business investment. Yet as Nzegwu has forcefully argued, these activities are mostly the prerogative of women in Nigeria. Moreover, local community organizations like the Women's Councils have a "strong community base," "extensive knowledge of community's values and needs," and the necessary legitimacy to "effectively mobilize women and guarantee women's participation in programs."⁷ Their extensive vertical linkages, that extend from the poorest of women to highly educated professional women and to Ibo women in cities around the world, give them an enormous network of financial, legal, informational resources on which to draw. The community sanctioning of behavior serves to promote accountability and deters corruption since one's individual identity is tied so closely to social validation of this kind. The bottom line is that these kinds of organizations are viable and have enormous potential that has yet to be tapped by national governments and the development community because the organizational structures do not fit the NGO patterns they are more accustomed to.

⁷Nkiru Nzegwu "Recovering Igbo Traditions: A Case for Indigenous Women's Organization in Development" 1993

Finally, to maximize the reach of consultative mechanisms, it is important for African governments and donors to ensure that efforts to increase economic and legal literacy in society as a whole fully encompass women, and that women receive adequate information about economic reform policies. Media coverage should be accessible to women in terms of its content and the types of media used. For example, information disseminated using radio will reach far more women, particularly poor women, than newspaper coverage because of women's lower levels of literacy and higher levels of poverty and rural residence.

In a related vein, it is likely that broader women's participation in economic reform will be facilitated by the increasing, donor-encouraged trend towards decentralization. Partly because of their heavy workloads, it is easier for women to become involved at local levels which operate closer to their homes. It will be necessary, however, to ensure that opportunities for participation in local political institutions are genuinely open to women, for example that meetings take place at times and in locations where women can attend them.

Donor Policy Tools for Promoting Gender-Integrated Economic Reform

Beyond policy dialogue encouraging gender analysis and women's participation in policy making, international donors can use specific economic policy tools to advance gender-integrated reform. In doing so, they will find greater scope to incorporate gender issues into longer-term economic restructuring efforts than into shorter-term stabilization measures dealing with budgetary and balance of payment deficits. In employing these tools, donors should adopt meaningful benchmarks for assessing country performance, while avoiding overly detailed and inflexible indicators.

1) Assessment, Strategy, Monitoring and Evaluation

Gender issues need to be taken up in all sections of assessment and strategy documents produced by the donors, such as Country Assistance Strategies (CASs), Policy Framework Papers (PFPs), and Poverty Assessment Strategies (PASs). Incorporation of gender concerns needs to occur not just in the parts focussing on the social sectors but throughout the sections on the economy as a whole. In addition, policies must be monitored and evaluated for their gender impact. In their recent DAC/OECD report, Diane Elson and Rosemary McGee have provided some guidelines on how to achieve these objectives. For example they outline eleven gender-sensitive categories which can form an appropriate format for country strategy papers.⁸

The possibilities for direct donor consultation of women's groups vary. Participatory poverty and other assessments represent important channels for incorporating poor women and their interests. On the other hand, there appears to be little opportunity presently for direct involvement of civil society groups in the elaboration of PFPs by international financial institutions.

⁸Diane Elson and Rosemary McGee DAC/WID Guidelines in Relation to Program Assistance Policy and Procedures of DAC Members, Report for DAC/OECD WID Expert Group December 1994

2) Conditionality

In the context of widespread disillusionment at the ways in which conditionality has worked up to now, donors are now discussing a more flexible concept of conditionality. They are increasingly looking toward a Government's broad "commitment" to reform, which entails a reduction in the number and complexity of conditions imposed in return for aid.

In order to measure a country's commitment to and ownership of reform, donors should certainly consider evidence of effective performance in pursuing gender-integrated reform. For example, the incorporation of gender interests in legal and financial sector reform, and women's involvement in country consultation processes could be included in the new conditionality. While a consensus on ways of measuring government commitment to economic reform does not seem to have emerged yet, it is critically important that gender issues be at the forefront of donor discussions on this subject.

3) Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs)

Gender issues should be integrated into the analysis of public expenditure policy at all levels—macro, sectoral and intersectoral, particularly when PERs are used to assess impact of fiscal policies on the poor. This can be done first in terms of a quantification of the net transfer of public funds to women, and secondly, in terms of a qualitative assessment of whether spending priorities satisfy the different needs women may have compared to men across a range of sectors. It is necessary to quantify the amount of spending which reaches women—through expenditure incidence analysis—in terms of the allocation of government spending within sectors and the use of services by individuals and within households. It is also necessary to consider, through beneficiary analysis, the relevance of certain forms of public investment to women-specific needs.

Thus in the agricultural sector, efforts need to be made to ensure that public spending mechanisms are enabling women as well as men to improve supply-side responses, by improving women's access to marketing, infrastructure and agricultural services. And investments in physical infrastructure, such as roads and transportation, should be guided by information on women producers' access to factor markets (e.g., land, labor, credit) that enable them to use that infrastructure.

In the social services area, the types of services provided need to be carefully assessed for gender-relevance. For example, does the health care provided respond to the particular needs of poor women and do services actually reach them? Any bias in health-care delivery systems towards urban hospital-based rather than rural-based primary care is especially disadvantageous to poor women. In addition, there is evidence that user costs for social services appear to be borne disproportionately by women, sometimes as a result of poor transmission of government social sector policy (Researchers found in Ghana and Zambia that women were paying for prenatal care which was officially exempt from fees). Any decisions about cost recovery for public services should therefore be informed by data on whether men or women bear primary responsibility for paying these fees.

As donors increasingly recognize the importance of civil society consultation, they are beginning to contemplate involving local people in public dialogue concerning PERs (e.g. through publicizing them to media and legislatures) Women's groups should be strongly represented in such dialogue

4) Sector Reform and Sector Investment Programs

It is necessary to ensure that, after a country process involving consultation with women's advocates and gender experts, gender considerations are incorporated into all sector programs, particularly those which affect women as economic agents such as agriculture and manufacturing, and not simply those concerned with social services provision which have traditionally been viewed as more pertinent to gender concerns. Different policy priorities will manifest themselves when gender issues in women's productive and reproductive roles are taken into account

5) Donor Internal Practices

To advance efficient, gender-integrated economic reform, donors should ensure that their own personnel at all levels are trained in gender awareness and that equal opportunity policies operate to ensure that there are greater numbers of women working at all levels and sectors of donor organizations

However, more women employees and more gender awareness training need to be supplemented by a significant and public commitment to gender issues at the highest level of donor organizations. This commitment can be demonstrated by the introduction of both incentives to implement gender-sensitive practice and evaluation of that practice within donor organizations, so that top-level commitment is translated into action at the lower levels

Conclusion

Women, the majority of the population in Africa, have an important role to play in the enhancement, amelioration and sustenance of economic reform. Working in the favorable context of political liberalization, donors can support gender-integrated reform by enlisting women's participation, adapting specific policy tools, and revising internal practices. In adopting this approach, the donors would only reinforce demands women's groups are already making of their own governments. They would thereby contribute to women's full participation in both economic and political reform