

**Women, Gender
and Development**



Lucy Muyoyeta

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Additional copies of this publication can be obtained from:

80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World,
St Cronan's BNS,
Vevay Road, Bray,
Co. Wicklow,
Ireland.
Tel: 00 353 286 0487
email: info@8020.ie

Women for Change,
PO Box 33102,
Lusaka,
Zambia
Tel: 00 260 1 224309
email: wfc@zamnet.zm

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Lucy Muyoyeta

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1. STARTING POINTS

1.1.

Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to outline the thinking, ideas and international agreements reached on women's development. This paper is for the use by development educators in their education work. It also provides concise descriptions of the issues to guide thinking on women's development. The paper seeks to bridge the gap between the

theoretical 'models' of women's development and the reality of women's lives in Zambia and other African countries.

The paper looks at the differences between the terms 'women' and 'gender' and their meaning for women's development.

1.2.

Definitions and terms used

In this paper and in development generally some terms are used of which it is assumed there is a common understanding. Such terms used in this paper are here defined to give a context to their use:

Community work -

Refers to those activities carried out in the Community, such as organising church activities, participating in self-help activities such as building of clinics, water wells or participation in the local school Parent-Teacher Association.

Customary law -

Laws based on the traditions and the governing behaviour of a particular society.

Development -

A term around which there has been much debate. It used to be equated with economic development but more recently, has become synonymous with

human development. Perhaps the most useful short-hand definition is that development

"...aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their free, meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from" (UN Declaration on the Right to Development, December 1956)

Empowerment -

The process of gaining access to resources and developing people's capacities in order to actively participate in shaping one's own life and community in economic, social and political terms.

Gender -

A way of looking at society which focuses on women's

roles and responsibilities in relation to those of men.

Gender roles -

Functional responsibilities that are given to men and women by society and are influenced by the cultural, political, economical, religious and social situation.

Gender equality -

Where women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights and potential to contribute to and benefit from development. Thus taking into account their similarities, differences and the various roles they play.

Gender imbalances -

Inequalities that exist between men and women and are not related to their biological roles.

Productive role -

Tasks that produce goods or services with a monetary value

attached, including trading, farming and formal employment.

Reproductive role -

Tasks related to child bearing, rearing and general well-being of the family.

Structural Adjustment

Programme -

The process of "adjusting" the economies of developing countries as a result of the debt crisis

Sub-Saharan Africa -

Those African countries situated to the South of the Sahara desert.

Triple roles -

Describes three types of work that people do to maintain households and communities. The three categories of work are productive, reproductive and community work.

2. THEORIES OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT

The question has been asked whether the issue of women's development is an issue separate from that of broader development. Research and practical experience has, in general, taught us the following:

- Women have not benefited from development processes, programmes and projects to the same extent as men
- Women are very often not included in the planning or implementation of development
- Development can undermine the role, status and position of women in society

- Development affects women and men differently, often with a negative impact on women

The debates about women and to what extent they benefit or do not benefit from development have led to the emergence of three distinctive models. These models seek to explain how development affects women and why women and men are affected by development differently. These models are discussed in some detail below.

2.1.

Women in Development (WID)

By the 1970s it had become very clear that women were being left out of development. They were not benefiting significantly from it and in some instances their existing status and position in society was actually being made worse by development.

The WID approach saw the problem as the exclusion of women from development programmes and approaches. As a result, the solution was seen as integrating women into such programmes. WID saw women as a group being treated as lacking opportunity to participate in

development. The main task, therefore, was to improve women's access to resources and their participation in development

The WID approach argued for the integration of women into development programmes and planning. This, it was argued, was the best way to improve women's position in society. There was, for instance, a major emphasis on income-generating projects for women as a means of integration. Welfare oriented projects dealing with small income-generating projects and activities mostly aimed

at women's reproductive role, where nutrition education and family planning were a main feature.

The WID approach, although it had limitations, increased the visibility of women in development issues. WID was successful in helping secure a prominent place for women's issues at the United Nations (UN) and other international development agencies. The UN declared 1975 to 1985 the Decade for Women. One of the major achievements of the decade was the establishment of women in development structures or machineries. In Zambia, for instance, it was during this time that the Women's League of the then ruling political party United National Independence Party (UNIP) was formed as the national machinery to address women's development issues. The Women's League developed a programme of action and a campaign to promote the integration of women in the development process at every level.

Over time, it was felt women's integration into development was not taking place due to the lack of an established structure within government to plan, coordinate and

monitor the implementation of policy to integrate women. A WID Unit was established in 1986 at the National Commission for Development Planning, the central planning and coordinating body of government. The WID unit was later elevated to a full department. Its focus was the integration of women in development and to ensure that ministries and other implementing bodies worked towards the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of women as the way to ensure their total integration in development.

Although the WID approach made demands for women's inclusion in development, it did not call for changes in the overall social structure or economic system in which women were to be included. As such, WID concentrated narrowly on the inequalities between men and women and ignored the social, cultural, legal and economic factors that give rise to those inequalities in society. WID tended to focus on women almost exclusively and assumed that women were outside the mainstream of development.

2.2.

Women and Development (WAD)

As a result of criticisms of the WID approach, the Women and Development (WAD) approach arose in the latter part of the 1970s. Adopting a Marxist feminist approach, the main argument of WAD was that women had always been part of the development processes. WAD asserts that women have always been important economic actors. The work they do

both inside and outside the household is critical to the maintenance of society. However, this integration has only served to sustain global inequalities. Therefore the WID approach that placed emphasis on integrating women into development was not correct.

The main focus of WAD is on the interaction between women and

development processes rather than purely on strategies to integrate women into development.

WAD saw both women and men as not benefiting from the global economic structures because of disadvantages due to class and the way wealth is distributed. WAD therefore argued that the integration of women into development was to their disadvantage and only made their inequality worse. WAD saw global inequalities as the main problem facing poor countries and, therefore, the citizens of those countries.

WAD was very persuasive in raising the debate that women have a role not only in reproduction but in production as well. For development to be meaningful for women both these roles have to be acknowledged.

WAD has been criticised for assuming that the position of women will improve if and when international structures become more equitable. In so doing, it sees women's positions as primarily within the structure of international and class inequalities. It therefore underplays the role of patriarchy in undermining women's development and does not adequately address the question of social relations between men and women and their impact on development.

It has been argued that, although at a theoretical level WAD recognises and focuses strongly on class, in practical project design and implementation, it tends like WID to group women together irrespective of other considerations such as class divisions.

2.3.

Gender and Development (GAD)

In the 1980s further reflections on the development experiences of women gave rise to Gender and Development (GAD). GAD represented a coming together of many feminist ideas. It sought to bring together both the lessons learned from, and the limitations of, the WID and WAD approaches.

GAD looks at the impact of development on both women and men. It seeks to ensure that both women and men participate in and benefit equally from development and so emphasises equality of benefit and control. It recognises that women may be involved in development, but not necessarily benefit from it. GAD is not concerned with women exclusively,

but with the way in which gender relations allot specific roles, responsibilities and expectations between men and women, often to the detriment of women.

Development, therefore, is about deep and important changes to relations dealing with gender inequality within society. This approach also pays particular attention to the oppression of women in the family or the 'private sphere' of women's lives. As a result, we have seen projects develop addressing issues such as violence against women.

GAD focuses on the social or gender relations (i.e. the division of labour) between men and women in society

and seeks to address issues of access and control over resources and power. The GAD approach has also helped us understand that the gender division of labour gives "triple roles" to women in society. The gender division of labour operates differently from one society and culture to another and it is also dynamic. The way these roles are analysed and valued affects the way development projects will make certain things a priority or not. Provision for child-care for instance is not likely to be a priority among men planning for development but it is a crucial factor in ensuring women may take advantage of development opportunities for their benefit.

GAD goes further than the other approaches in emphasising both the reproductive and productive role of women and argues that it is the state's responsibility to support the social reproduction role mostly played by women of caring and nurturing of children. As such, it treats development as a complex process that is influenced by political, social and economic factors rather than as a state or stage of development. It therefore goes beyond seeing development as mainly economic well-being but also that the social and mental well-being of a person is important.

Arising from the GAD analysis is the need for women to organise themselves into a more effective political voice in order to strengthen their legal rights and increase the number of women in decision-making.

In Zambia, the response of government in 1996 to these changes in approach was to elevate the WID department to the Gender in Development Division (GIDD) at Cabinet Office, under the Office of the President. These changes put GIDD in a stronger position as it was given its own vote in the national budget and a better position from which to influence policy.

Development theory has also changed from a focus on needs to support for rights. Basic rights are those rights which flow from people's basic needs such as water, food and housing. This is in recognition of the fact that WID interventions which focused on meeting the practical needs of women have not been successful. This is because they did not challenge fundamentally the structures that come in the way of women's participation in society on an equal basis with men.

3. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN

The debate on women and men has not just been about the theories on the role of women but also on the practical approaches adopted to secure women's development. In general, women's needs have been divided into two categories: practical and strategic needs. As the term suggests, practical needs are those dealing with matters of a practical nature such as health, water and education. Strategic needs, on the other hand, are those that deal with changing the status of women and include policy and legal measures to deal with issues such as

the gender division of labour, domestic violence, and increased women's participation in decision-making.

Over the years, the practical approaches to the developmental challenges relating to women have developed and changed in response to criticisms and the growth of better understanding of the dynamics relating to women's development.

These approaches are briefly discussed below:

3.1. The Welfare Approach

Until the early 1970s, development programmes addressed the needs of women almost entirely within the context of their reproductive roles. The focus was on mother and child health, child-care and nutrition. Population control - or family planning as it later came to be known - was a major focus as well due to the link made between population growth and poverty. The focus was clearly on meeting practical needs. It was also assumed that broad economic strategies oriented towards modernisation and growth would trickle down to the

poor and that poor women would benefit as the general economic situation improved.

But the assumptions that women's position would improve together with general improvements in the economy, or with the economic positions of their husbands, began to be challenged as it became clear that women were in fact losing out. Women, as a result, were being increasingly associated with backwardness and the traditional while men were increasingly identified with the modern and

progressive. Men were assisted in this with economic development projects, such as the introduction of

cash crops, and new agricultural technologies that excluded women.

3.2.

The Equity Approach

Feminist calls for gender equality were important in bringing about this approach, the main aim of which was to eliminate discrimination. It emphasised the re-valuing of women's contribution and share of benefits from development. The equity approach also dealt with both the productive and reproductive roles as a

responsibility of government. The emphasis on revaluing women's contribution and share of benefits meant that the approach dealt with issues of policy and legal measures as a means of bringing about equity. The equity approach, in contrast to the welfare approach, saw women as active participants organising to bring about necessary changes.

3.3.

The Anti-Poverty Approach

This approach focuses on both the productive and reproductive role of women with an emphasis on satisfaction of basic needs and the productivity of women. A key operational strategy required access

to income generation and waged employment. The tendency with this approach was to reinforce the basic needs and ignore the strategic needs of women.

3.4.

The Efficiency Approach

The efficiency approach targets women as workers and is a product of the 1980s' economic reforms known as the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the International Monetary fund and the World Bank. Its aim has been increased production and economic growth with an emphasis on full use of human resources. Education and training are therefore key strategies. Advocates of this approach argue that gender analysis makes good economic sense. This is because understanding men's and women's

roles and responsibilities as part of the planning of development activities helps improve effectiveness and ensures that women, as well as men, can play their part in national development.

The efficiency approach succeeded in bringing the concerns about women and gender into the mainstream of development. However, this was done with a focus on what women could do for development, rather than on what development could do for women.

But the economic reforms in effect undervalue paid work as they seek to restrict trade union activity and freeze wages of workers. They also burden women due to restrictions on social spending in areas such as health and education. Women are

therefore spending much more time in caring for the ill. In so burdening women the reforms hinder progress towards meeting women's strategic needs.

3.5.

The Empowerment Approach

This is an approach closely associated with third world feminist and grassroots organisations. The aim of the empowerment approach is to increase the self-reliance of women and to influence change at the policy, legislative, societal, economic and other levels to their advantage. Its main point of reference is the "triple roles" of women and it emphasises women's access to decision-making. Its main strategy is awareness-raising and situates women firmly as active participants in ensuring change takes place. Building organisational

skills and self-esteem is an important aspect of the empowerment approach.

The empowerment approach has been instrumental in ensuring that opportunities are opened for women to determine their own needs. However, empowerment has often been misunderstood to be an end rather than a means. This has resulted in poor women becoming very knowledgeable about issues while realising little change to their material situation, which is often dire.

4. MEASURING HOW WOMEN FARE

Until the 1990's the measurements used to assess progress in a country were largely the Gross National Product (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income. The GDP and GNP measurements reflected the performance of the economy, while per capita income looked at income distribution within economies.

There was a realisation that these measurements did not go far enough in showing the well-being of the people living in these economies, as a high GDP or GNP

does not necessarily mean adequate health, education or clean water for the people. On the other hand, an economically poorer country might provide reasonably for its people in terms of human development.

New measures have been developed to look at progress in terms of human development. These are mainly the Human Development Index (HDI), Gender-related Human Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

4.1.

Human Development Index

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) constructed the HDI. HDI focuses on three key indicators:

- Health – In this measurement, life expectancy is valued.
- Knowledge – Literacy is measured.
- Wealth – The Index looks primarily at GDP, adjusts and relates to the purchasing power in a country.

The combination of these three indicators to form the HDI is a useful step towards comparing poverty, deprivation and development in different parts of the world.

In the countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the country which ranks highest in terms of HDI is the Seychelles and it is the only country in the high human development category: the Seychelles is followed by Mauritius while South Africa, the country with the largest economy, comes in third. The bottom three countries are Angola, Malawi and Mozambique in that order.

4.2.

Gender-related Development Index

The differences between women and men in relation to the different dimensions of human poverty are measured through the use of a gender-related development index

(GDI) and gender empowerment measure (GEM). In using these measures the UNDP attempts to adjust the human development index for gender inequality.

4.3.

Gender Empowerment Measure

The GEM measures gender inequality in the key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making. It therefore differs from the GDI, which serves as an indicator of gender inequality in the basic indicators.

It is interesting to note that although Mozambique is at the bottom of the HDI when it comes to the gender

measurements, (particularly to GDI), it is among the high performers in the region. This is due to the policies it has adopted that favour women, in particular its electoral system that ensures a high number of women are represented in parliament and other organs of government. South Africa has the highest GEM in the region.

Gender Disparity Table of selected SADC Countries

Country	Global GEM Value 1995	Global GDI Value 1995	Global HDI Value 1995
Angola	No figures available	0.331	0.344
Botswana	0.418	0.657	0.678
Lesotho	0.389	0.457	0.469
Malawi	0.206	0.325	0.334
Mozambique	0.334	0.624	0.281
Namibia	No figures available	0.620	0.644
Swaziland	0.347	0.573	0.597
Zambia	0.236	0.372	0.378
Zimbabwe	0.352	0.497	0.507

Source: SADC Human Regional Development Report 2000

5. WHERE WOMEN ARE AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING

Present estimates are that women made up 51% of Africa's total population of 861 people in mid-2003. Women are found in all areas of human activity in Africa.

However, the distribution of political and decision-making power between men and women is heavily in favour of men. Women have virtually no formal power in state structures since too few women are located in the political arena and top-level public administration. But some commitments have been made. For instance, the SADC (1997) Heads of State Declaration on Gender and Development commits SADC countries to:

"Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision-making of member states and SADC

structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least 30% of women in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005."

Although individual countries like Mozambique and South Africa are doing well in terms of women's representation in parliament, the SADC regional average is 17%. South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles are among the top ten countries in the world in terms of representation of women in parliament. In comparison with the rest of the world, Southern Africa is not doing too badly. The average for sub-Saharan Africa is 9%, for the entire African continent it is 11%, for the Americas and Europe 15%, and the global average is 13.4 %.

5.1.

Description of the situation of women

Women and men are affected differently by the political, economic, social, constitutional, legal and technological situations in different parts of the world. Women are more often negatively affected than men. However, a number of common themes and trends can be seen across Africa.

Women almost always face worse constraints and more difficult choices in the use of their time than men. This difference is made worse

by the harsh and changing economic climate. Throughout the continent, with a few exceptions, the economic recession has reduced employment opportunities for both women and men. But women are further disadvantaged as gender relations, family demands and power relations within the family negatively affect their access to the job market. The following figures are illustrative of women's share of the adult labour force:

Women's Share of the Adult Labour Force in Selected SADC Countries

Country	Share (%)
Botswana	35%
Lesotho	43%
Mozambique	47%
Swaziland	41%
Zambia	30%
Zimbabwe	33%

Source: SADC: Meeting the Challenge of Rural Poverty in SADC countries; Policy Issues and Options for SADC Decision-Makers, 1996 vol. 2

Access to resources, such as land, credit and other productive resources by women is characterised by lack of rights and control such as lack of security of land. Most people in Africa live in communal or tribal lands as peasants or smallholder farmers. Customary law governs this land. The practice in customary law is for traditional authorities to give rights of use of land to adult males. Women's rights to land are therefore often indirect i.e. through their male relatives. They obtain their land rights through their roles as daughters, sisters or wives. This does not give as much control over land as is given to men, which works to the advantage of men and disadvantage of women.

Credit or loan giving institutions tend to be male oriented and to discriminate against women. Historically women have been constrained in their ability to function as entrepreneurs and members of the workforce because the colonial authorities relegated them to the role of housewives.

Legal discrimination also limits women's access, control and use of productive resources. This includes marriage systems in countries such

as Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho that deprive wives of their right to enter into contract in their own names. In other countries inheritance laws and practices dispossess widows of their marital property.

Customary laws and practices ensure that women's position remain subordinate. This is made worse by the existence of dual legal systems, both customary and statutory, that exist in most countries. Customary law for the most part favours men. It often applies to matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance and property ownership. On the whole, laws are very biased against women, reinforcing practices that continue to discriminate against them. Statutory law remains mostly biased against women as old laws inherited from colonial times remain on the statute books of most countries.

The gender nature of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has become clearer as the incidence and prevalence is higher among women than men. According to UNAIDS, in sub-Saharan Africa 58% of infected adults aged between 15-49 are women and the highest number of new cases are among girls aged between 15-19. In Southern Africa, the figures are even worse. At the SADC level at end 1999, it was estimated that a total of 11,950,000 adults and children were infected and of that number 11,430,000 were adults. The biological and physiological factors that increase the rate of infection for women are even more critical for young women. But socio-economic factors also play their part. For instance, the myth that male sex with a virgin cures AIDS plays an important role in the sexual abuse of girl children. Poverty too plays its

part as more and more young women resort to seeking economic relief through giving sexual favours to older men. Yet current responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic have not begun to address the gender nature of HIV/AIDS in a meaningful way.

In education, girls' progression rate is worse than boys because of high drop out rates due to pregnancies, lack of school fees, and family-related crises. The customary practices often determine that when family resources are limited and choices have to be made between sending girls or boys to school, the choice will often be in favour of boys. As the HIV/AIDS pandemic deepens, girls are being called upon to provide care to ill parents and their young, and subsequently orphaned, brothers and sisters.

Most countries with a few exceptions have ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, measures have not been put in place to ensure that CEDAW and other international conventions are domesticated and harmonised with national laws.

Women do not enjoy security and safety in either the public or private sphere. Violence against women continues to increase. Studies show rising incidents of rape, assault and killings of women. Child abuse too is on the increase, thus reflecting the depth of the problem at both the family and community level.

As in other fields of human development, women are marginalised and disadvantaged with respect not only to Information

Communication Technologies (ICTs) but other technologies as well. The level of general awareness about ICTs is still low and most countries lack the infrastructure to engage with the Information Society. This leads to what is now known as the digital divide among countries. The position of women in the digital divide is even more disadvantaged. Women face cultural, economic and social challenges that limit their access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs. Women's lower levels of literacy and education when compared to men means that women represent the majority of the poor and illiterate. The high cost of ICT training further aggravates the problem as few women can afford training in the new technologies. This contributes a lot to their being disadvantaged. Negative attitudes towards girls' achievement in science and mathematics contribute to the gender dimension of the digital divide.

Despite efforts to review ICT international regulations, African women's perspectives have not always been taken into consideration. The few complete ICT and telecommunications policies in the region are not gender-responsive. African women continue to be seen as passive receivers of information rather than actors able to contribute to decision and policy-making.

The use of the Internet to perpetuate violence against women is a concern. The role of the Internet in the proliferation of pornography is a case in point.

5.2.

The political, economic and social situation of women in Zambia and Africa

The population of Zambia is estimated at 10 million. Of this, 51% are women. Despite the higher numbers of women, gender imbalances that do not favour women exist in the socio-economic, political, cultural and political spheres. These imbalances have made it difficult for women to effectively contribute to, and benefit from, development. Socio-economic indicators show that women are poorer and experience more deplorable conditions than men. The death of women due to childbirth complications is very high. The present gender roles, combined with some traditional and cultural norms, worsen the position of women.

At independence from Britain in 1964, Zambia was an economically prosperous country with an economy almost exclusively dependent on copper exports. The rapid expansion of social and economic facilities led to increased access to waged employment, school enrolment, health facilities. In the mid 1970s, Zambia's economic situation had begun to deteriorate due to the unfavourable terms of trade, the oil price hikes, and the subsequent borrowing by the government to make up for its budget deficits. Today, the country is ranked among the poorest in the world, ranking 163rd of 175, according to the UNDP Human Development Report 2003.

In 2001, 72.6 per cent of the population lived on less than one US Dollar per day. Zambia's

external debt is high. It stands at USD 6.5 billion, which per capita is still among the highest in the world. Donor contributions continue to be a major component of the budget. Donors in 2003 were expected to contribute up to 43% of the total budget.

The socio-economic situation of most Zambians is very poor. Child poverty has increased significantly in the last ten years, mainly as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Close to 75,000 children have become street children and about 750,000 children are orphaned. Recent reports show that the number of child-headed households stands at 11,500. Children and youth between the ages of six and twenty-four survive under extremely harsh conditions, which include physical abuse, child labour, and prostitution.

In response to the economic decline, the country is implementing the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). However, the SAP has had a negative impact on both women and men. Formal sector employment declined from 25% in 1975 to 10% in 2000. Data on job losses in the civil service and public sector shows that the percentage of women employed in these sectors had gone down from 20% in 1992 to 12.5% in 1996, while that of men had increased from 80% in 1992 to 88% in 1996. These figures suggest that the women who lost their jobs were replaced by men. The loss of jobs leads to increasing the already heavy workload of women because

they have to engage in extra economic activities to make ends meet as well as care for the ill, a burden which is rising due to HIV/AIDS.

There has also been an increase in criminal activities. In 1998 alone, a total of 1,446 cases were reported to the Victim Support Unit (a body set up within the police to deal with gender-based violence). Most of these affected women and girls more than men and boys. There were 146 cases of defilement, 694 cases of spousal assault (mostly women), 55 cases of rape, 37 cases of indecent assault, 341 cases of property grabbing from widows and 173 cases of child abuse. It should be noted that most crimes still go unreported.

Women are poorer and more affected by poverty. Women are vulnerable to poverty due to a number of factors including:

- Low levels of education and literacy among women and girls
- The very small share women have of formal sector employment (12% for women compared to 88% for men in 1996. In the same year 39% of women were employed as unpaid family workers compared to only 16% of men)

With respect to education, there are important differences between females and males in terms of access to education. At entry to the primary level, there are generally an equal number of girls and boys. Female drop-out from school becomes significant at the 4th year. By the end of secondary school only one-third of the students are females. At college and university level, the gap widens further, with

females representing only about 20% of the student body.

The majority of Zambians earn their living from agriculture. Women are responsible for 70% of unpaid labour on small scale-farms. Women are also estimated to make up 65% of the rural population. Studies have shown that only 26% of those who own cattle are women. It has also been found that only 14% of women have ever received a loan, while only 33% of women use ox-drawn ploughs to cultivate and 67% use the hand hoe.

The worsening of the situation of women in agriculture is closely linked with the process of commercialisation of the sector. Men have gained control of the cash crops and the money generated from those crops while women have primary responsibility for subsistence agriculture as well as the responsibility for ensuring food availability for the household.

One of the main challenges facing the Zambian woman is the dual legal system, which recognises customary and statutory legal regimes. Although customary law varies from ethnic group to ethnic group, it generally tends to discriminate against women. Customary law allows polygamous marriages and entrenches the view of women as minors before the law.

In addition, there is no constitutional requirement or government policy which stipulates that the provision of international instruments should be incorporated into domestic law. The ratification of CEDAW is therefore of limited effect. The provisions of CEDAW are such that fundamental revision of customary law would be necessary. Its status under the

Constitution would have to change. Currently the Constitution recognises discrimination against women under customary law.

With respect to statutory law, attempts have been made to remove statutes that discriminate against women, notably statutes which relate to inheritance, tax, and employment laws. However, the reality is that women are unable to access the justice system because of the lack of knowledge about how it works, they cannot afford to pay legal fees, or the courts are not within easy reach of where they live.

Other statistics on Africa show on the whole similar disturbing trends and statistics presented in detail in terms of Zambia. According to the UNIFEM report Progress of the World's Women 2000, 11 out of 33 sub-Saharan African countries recorded a decline in secondary school enrolment. South Africa and Botswana recorded high levels of female enrolment at over 90%. Eight countries have rates below 10%, with Somalia at the bottom end with only 3.5%.

Sixty per cent of women in Africa are unable to read or write, compared to 40% of men. About 44% of Africa's population and 51 % of those in sub-Saharan Africa live in absolute poverty.

The status of women's health is poor. Decreased health spending and the privatisation of health-care systems in many countries without guaranteeing universal access to affordable health-care has led to this situation. In addition, the HIV/AIDS tragedy is destroying the African continent.

Unfortunately, several African countries are still at war and millions of Africans continue to lose their lives. Many more are refugees in other countries or are internally displaced within their own countries. In the year 2000, of the 20 million refugees in the world, 35% were found in Africa with women and children making up at least 80% of the refugee population.

6. WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT – WHAT THE WORLD HAS PROMISED

The United Nations International Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City in July 1975 recommended that a decade for women be established with the themes of equality, development and peace. Later in 1975, the UN General Assembly established the UN Decade for Women from 1976 to 1985. This action firmly put women's issues on the international agenda.

During the decade, three world women's conferences were held.

Each of these conferences adopted plans of action in which the world made certain promises to women.

The Mexico City International Women's Year Conference in 1975 adopted the World Plan of Action. The mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980 adopted the Programme of Action and CEDAW was signed at Copenhagen. The Forward Looking Strategies to the Year 2000 were adopted at Nairobi at the end of the decade conference in 1985.

6.1.

The United Nations Conferences on Women

6.1.1. The International Women's Year United Nations World Conference

This was held in Mexico City in 1975. It was the largest meeting ever to deal with the problems and concerns of women. One hundred and twenty five of the 133 UN member nations sent delegates to the conference and about 70% of the delegates were women. It was the first time that more women than men were delegates to a world conference.

The conference was approved by the UN General Assembly at its meeting in 1972. But it had its opponents. There were those, like Saudi Arabia, who argued that the conference was unnecessary. They argued that women already had more equality than men as they were supported by men and when men died their wives inherited.

The Conference finally took place and adopted the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year that came to be

popularly known as the World Plan of Action.

Ambitious, two-fold objectives were set out: “to define a society in which women participate in a real and full sense in economic, social and political life and to devise strategies whereby such societies could develop”. These objectives acknowledged that, for women’s development to take place, attitudes needed to change and that the reassessment of women’s and men’s role in the family was required.

The methods and strategies for achieving this were outlined and included: legal rights, free primary education and access to general education, the right to family planning information and services, child-care and other social services, reducing women’s work-load, providing access to employment opportunities and training for employment. It was recognised that the integration of women in development processes embraces all aspects of life and requires that women are active as decision-makers and recognised as contributors as well as beneficiaries of development.

The World Plan of Action provided for a national action section giving governments, and virtually all sectors of society, a set of guidelines. The national action plans must list five-year minimum goals. These goals include equal access to education, increased political rights and employment opportunities, and recognition of the economic value of the work traditionally carried out by women. One of the strong recommendations was for the setting up of national government “machineries” i.e. women’s bureaus, commissions or committees with

adequate staff and budget. Although there is heavy emphasis on what governments should do, there is also recognition that governments alone cannot bring about equality between men and women. Women’s groups are expected and encouraged to supplement government efforts.

Other major recommendations are:

- The need for constitutional and legal changes to ensure equality and remove discrimination.
- For women’s full and equal participation in policy and decision-making and in public life generally.

Education is recognised as a most important goal. In the list of minimum goals, the first three deal with education, while of the fourteen goals education is mentioned in six.

The shortage of data and information on women led to the inclusion of a strong section on research and data collection. In addition to recognising the need for adequate data as essential to policy formulation, the problem of attitude is also recognised. Accurate data cannot be collected without attitudinal change. This is because of the tendency to automatically classify women as housewives and the fact that house-work and child-care are not valued or included in economic statistics.

The problem of attitudes regarding women and their role was raised again with reference to media and mass communications. Media was recognised as important both in terms of effecting social change but also in maintaining the *status quo*. The media was therefore called upon to project a more dynamic image of women.

The World Plan of Action also called for a Decade for Women and Development and challenged the UN system to do more for and about women. A call was made for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and eliminating discriminatory employment practices within the UN and other international organisations.

The final section of the plan is devoted to regular monitoring and evaluation at national, regional and international levels to ensure that the World Plan of Action is implemented. This was a signal that a decade-long plan had been made with a view to hold further conferences that would review and assess progress.

6.1.2. The Mid-Decade Conference

This conference took place in Copenhagen in 1980. A Programme of Action was adopted which built on the earlier World Plan of Action by moving from identifying the problems and setting goals to being much more specific. The Programme recognised that progress in the previous five years had not been enough and, therefore, more needed to be done.

Forty-eight resolutions were adopted by the Copenhagen Conference. Seven priority areas requiring special attention were identified: food, rural women, child-care, migrant women, unemployed women, female-headed households and young women.

It acknowledged that integration of women into development processes and the concept of equality had been accepted as general principles but much more still needed to be done. This is because women were

largely still thought of as dependents of men and programmes for them had tended to be welfare-oriented.

The idea of defining development only in terms of economic growth was rejected. Development was interpreted to mean political, social, cultural as well as economic development. It was agreed that the worsening economic situation in most countries needed special attention. It was noted that modernisation or development had in fact made poor women even poorer. A strong emphasis was on the inclusion of data on women.

It was also agreed in Copenhagen that the recommendations of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural development had shown that the needs of rural women, employment, health and education are the crucial issues and should be given the highest priority.

Another subject that was given increased attention is the effect of technology on women including the effects of the movement of multinational companies in search of cheap labour and the need for appropriate technological transfer. Appropriate technological transfer could reduce the heavy work-load of women and increase their productivity.

Achievement of lasting peace and stability was recognised as a prerequisite for sustainable development and the elimination of inequalities and discrimination. It called for the elimination of colonialism, Zionism, racism, apartheid, hegemonism and foreign occupation. Respect for the dignity of peoples and their right to self-determination and independence were called for.

For the first time, domestic and sexual violence were explicitly mentioned. Previously the subject was considered to be too sensitive.

In the national section, the general strategies and objectives were stated first followed by explicit recommendations. This was an attempt at ensuring that the diverse contexts between and within countries was taken into consideration. The guidelines for national strategies included:

- That governments in their national development plans and policies should establish clear qualitative and quantitative targets for the second half of the decade, make clear projections for a 10 year planning cycle and conduct reviews in 1985 and 1990.

These would seek to remove the gaps between men and women, between rural and urban women and between all women in employment, health and education.

- The national machinery should be understood as not only the establishment of central, high-level bureaux and commissions but as a resource to upgrade women's capacity and role in national development. Such machineries should develop policies and mechanisms for affirmative action and develop institutional linkages with national planning units and with women's organisations.
- All remaining discriminatory laws should be examined with a view to repealing laws that discriminate in terms of nationality, inheritance, custody of children, ownership and control of property.

In addition, governments should develop programmes to inform women of their legal rights, and establish commissions to assess women's legal status, carry out investigations into the extent of protection, oppression and discrimination experienced by women under customary law.

Governments are also required to ratify or accede to and implement the provisions of CEDAW and other instruments of the UN. Laws to prevent domestic and sexual violence have to be enacted and enforced.

- Every effort should be made to enact laws guaranteeing women the right to vote, to qualify for election or appointment as public officials. Goals, timeframes and special efforts must be made to increase the number of women in public office.

CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and signing up to it began in Copenhagen. This is the most concise and useful document adopted during the decade. Unlike other documents adopted during and after the decade, CEDAW remains the document most referred to in terms of women's development issues. CEDAW, also referred to as the International Bill of Rights for Women, sets out internationally accepted principles and the measures needed to achieve equality between women and men.

The first sixteen articles of the convention deal with the issues, ranging from a definition of discrimination to the need to end discrimination against women in the field of education. The last fourteen articles deal with structural issues, such as the setting up of the

committee on the elimination of discrimination, its functions, and how progress for CEDAW will be reviewed.

6.1.3 The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievement of the United Nations Decade for Women

This conference was held in Nairobi in 1985. It adopted the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. The strategies have as immediate and special priorities the promotion and effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, irrespective of sex. The strategies set out concrete measures to achieve the Decade's goal and objectives.

Measures for implementation at national level include:

- Governments that had not yet signed on to CEDAW were urged to do so. They were also urged to take necessary steps for ratification and to ensure its provisions are complied with. Those governments that had not established national machineries were asked to do so. Statistical programmes of countries to include concepts and methods for measuring inequalities between women and men.
- Education was once again reaffirmed as essential for the full realisation of equality between men and women.
- Governments were asked to recognise and undertake measures, such as employment laws, to implement the right to work for both men and women on equal conditions regardless of marital status. In order to

eliminate discrimination against women, it is equally important to recognise women's informal and traditional contributions, such as housework, which should be given an economic value.

- Agrarian reform is important to ensure legal access to land and other means of production. It is also necessary to ensure women control their labour and the income earned.
- It was recognised that one of the main obstacles to effective women's development is the international situation, including the continuing arms race, exploitation, policies of force and foreign domination and apartheid. The worsening economic situation, especially in Africa, negatively affected the effective and equal integration of women in development.

6.1.4. The 4th United Nations World Conference on Women

This conference was held in Beijing in 1995. It adopted the Platform of Action (PLA) and Beijing Declaration. The PLA upholds CEDAW and aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

THE PLA also recognises the importance of the agreements reached at various conferences such as the World Summit for Children, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, The World Conference on Human Rights, and many others. It recognised that many goals set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had not been met. Many barriers to the full

empowerment of women remained. To this end, governments, the international community and civil society were called upon to take immediate and concerted action in the following critical areas of concern:

- The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- The inadequate and unequal access to education and training
- The inadequate and unequal access to health-care and related services
- Violence against women
- The effects of armed and other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
- Inequality between women and men in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- Inequality of economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
- Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
- Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to, and participation in, communication systems and the media
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and the safe-guarding of the environment
- Persistent discrimination against, and violation of, rights of the

girl-child

In each critical area, strategic objectives and specific actions to be taken to achieve them are proposed.

The PLA recognises that women face barriers to full equality and advancement due to various factors. These factors include race, age, culture, religion, disability and other status. Additional barriers also exist for refugee women, other displaced women, and migrant women. Many women also face obstacles because of their family status, particularly as single parents, and to their socio-economic status.

6.1.5 Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century

The UN General Assembly resolved to convene a special session in 2000 to review and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform of Action. The meeting's other objective was to identify obstacles encountered in implementing the Beijing PLA and how to overcome these obstacles. That meeting was convened in New York and came to be popularly known as Beijing +5.

The Beijing +5 Outcome Document strengthened commitments to get rid of harmful traditional practices. It also called upon governments to get rid of laws that discriminate on the basis of gender by 2005 and to ensure affordable treatment and care for women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.

The review process identified a number of challenges affecting the full implementation of the Beijing

Declaration and PLA. These included:

- The globalisation process, which has transformed patterns of production and quickened advances in information and communication technologies, while increasing gender inequalities. In many countries the number of women in waged employment has risen but this is often in very poorly waged and harsh working conditions.
- Increasing economic difference among and within countries. The economic difficulties have affected the ability of most countries to provide social security and services. This has led to increased levels of poverty among women.
- The negative effects of structural adjustment programmes, and the high cost of external debt servicing have worsened the existing obstacles to development, making the situation of women worse. This, as a result of budget cuts in basic social services, includes health

7. IS DEVELOPMENT WORKING FOR WOMEN?

Through conventions, agreements and plans of action agreed at the UN General Assembly, the World Conferences on Women and other World Conferences as well as region-specific agreements such as the SADC Heads of State Declaration on Gender and Development, the world has promised a lot to women.

But, have those promises borne any fruit for women and changed their lives? Let us look at a few indicators at the continental and SADC levels to try and answer that question

- Much has been promised in the area of education. The Beijing Platform of Action, for instance, promised to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005. With a few exceptions, that gap has not closed and in some instances has grown worse.
- Elimination of poverty is another area of great promise. Poverty is much talked about and researched, yet levels continue to grow in Africa, with women being poorer than men. It is also worth noting that women's reproductive work continues to be unmeasured despite continued pledges that this be done.
- In health, the gap between, and within, countries in terms of infant and maternal mortality and sickness rates continues to grow. In most African countries these rates are unacceptably high.
- Women and girls continue to be victims of various forms of violence. Although improving, the legal measures to end violence against women remain weak in many countries.
- Wars and other forms of violent conflict continue to cause serious obstacles to the advancement of women. The under-representation of women at all levels in decision-making, in peace-keeping, peace-building and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction only make the problem worse.
- There has been growing acceptance of the importance of the full participation of women in decision-making at all levels. In some countries, women have attained high positions in decision-making spheres, but the actual participation of women at the highest levels of national and international decision-making has not significantly changed.
- In many countries national machineries have been created or strengthened. Progress has been achieved in terms of the visibility, status, outreach and coordination of activities of these machineries. However, lack of political will, together with inadequate financial and human resources, is the main obstacle

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Lucy Mutumba Muyoyeta is a Zambian woman with a BA from the University of Zambia and a Masters of Science degree from the University of Reading in the UK.

Ms. Muyoyeta has worked extensively in the development field in many parts of Africa with a focus on Southern Africa. She has previously worked for Oxfam Great Britain in Southern and West Africa and more recently with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa.

She is also active in civil society movements especially those relating to women and gender issues and is the current chairperson of the Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Committee (NGOCC), an umbrella organisation of 73 NGOs and Community-based Organisations working on women and gender issues.

The full text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) can be found at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

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Prepared by:



wfc@zamnet.zm



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info@8020.ie

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