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AFRICA'S FOOD PRODUCERS :  
THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON RURAL WOMEN

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D R A F T

AFRICA'S FOOD PRODUCERS: THE IMPACT OF CHANGE  
ON RURAL WOMEN

In Africa, as in other areas of the developing world, food production continues to lag behind population growth, while rapid urbanization creates new demands for food, and drought provokes claims for emergency food supplies. It is time, therefore, to examine the mode of production of Africa's food supply and the manpower for the same. It is time to recognize that the major food producers for Africa are women, and to assess the impact of change on their productive capacities in agriculture and marketing, and their household work.

The diverse nature of African societies makes an examination of the roles of the African woman difficult. In addition, since relatively little attention has been given to women's roles in production, and distribution, there is a dearth of comparable data. But available data show definite trends, as seen in the examination of women's roles in agriculture, marketing and the household, and review of their opportunities for education and training.

AGRICULTURE

In most of traditional Africa women were the backbone of rural farming. They were responsible for growing the subsistence crops for feeding the whole family. The men helped only with the more strenuous jobs such as cutting down trees and clearing the bush. <sup>1/</sup> Thus a woman in the rural area had a very important role to play in terms of production within the family. But with the advent of modernization of the agricultural sector of the economy, women have found themselves left behind; their role in agriculture is not considered as important as before.

This change in the importance of a woman's role as a farmer may be traced in large part to the introduction of the cash economy. For example, under colonization, taxation in the form of cash was imposed on all the able bodied adult males. This, and the attractiveness of

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<sup>1/</sup> David A. Mitchnik, The Role of women in Rural Development in the Zaire. OXFAM, Oxford, 1972.

money itself, influenced them either to look for paid labour in the towns, mines or on plantations, or to cultivate cash crops. Both of these alternatives had impacts not only on the agricultural role of the rural women but also on the rural community as a whole.

### Migration

It is estimated that, in 1931, 60 per cent of the able bodied males among the Bembas of Zambia were away from the villages - a majority of them in the mines. Consequently, agriculture was disrupted, and marriage difficulties increased. "The women, old men and children could not take the place of the able bodied men in agriculture, and very serious food shortages arose through-out a wide area. In one large Mission School classes had to be dismissed and the majority of the students returned to their homes. 2/ The women were left to do double the amount of work in order to feed their families in the absence of the men. Where men and boys formerly did the clearing, now the women had to do the clearing. 3/ The 1969 census revealed that in Vihiga District of Kenya, 30 per cent of the land in individual parcels remained uncultivated as a result of migration, 4/ and in Kenya as a whole today, more than a third of rural households are headed by women.

When the women do migrate with the men the effect may still be discouraging. When the whole family moves to town, because the women usually have very low education or no education at all, and because they are not often favoured by employers in the modern sector, what remains for them is child rearing and house-keeping. This may cause a great strain on the family economy 5/ and the woman, once her role is divested of most of its rural economic importance without any

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2/ Modern Industry and the African: An Enquiry into the Effects of Copper Mines of Central Africa upon Native Society and the Work of the Christian Missions, by J. Merle Davis, Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry and Editor of the Report, Second Ed., London, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1967, page 57.

3/ Ester Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development, St. Martius Press, New York, 1970.

4/ Report by ILO to the 25th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 1973.

5/ Aidan Southhall, ed., Social Change In Modern Africa, studies presented and discussed at the First International African Seminar, Makerere College, Kampala, January 1959, Oxford University Press, 1961.

substitute, may turn to illicit brewing or prostitution as the only economic opportunities readily available to her to fill the vacuum left by the loss of her rural tasks. 6/

The growth of towns and large settlements composed mainly of men also affects the women and girls living in the rural areas adjoining these towns. Near the Copper Belt Mines of Zambia the young girls were easily lured to earning money by prostitution instead of going to school. 7/

However, not all the effects of migration by men are negative. There are positive effects, such as the fact that these men may build better homes for their families with the extra cash earned. It was noted in the Luapala Valley of Zaire that sun-dried brick houses with several rooms were constructed as a result of the work of the men in mines. 8/ While at the mines, the men ate varied foods which stimulated their appetites. When they returned home they were dissatisfied with the monotony of the village food. This encouraged the women to keep more fowls and goats, and grow vegetables and plant fruit trees. 9/ Although this meant more work for the women, it improved the quality of the food they presented. Thus migration can stimulate positive change through exposure to new ideas, and a consequent creation of new attitudes.

#### Cultivation of Cash-crops

In many parts of Africa, only the men were encouraged to cultivate the cash-crops, while the women were left to cultivate the food-crops. But whereas the women could cultivate enough food once the fields were cleared, the men's labour alone was not enough for the cultivation and processing of cash-crops. Therefore the women's work in agriculture multiplied. Now they had to help with the weeding, harvesting, processing and transportation to the market of cash-crops as well as foodstuffs.

This trend of division of labour in agriculture has continued. Among the Akwapin of Ghana, the men considered food farming as an unworthy occupation and therefore left it to the women; but the idea

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6/ Ibid, page 50.

7/ Modern Industry and the African, op.cit, pages 286-287.

8/ Ibid, pages 287-289.

9/ Ibid.

of export agriculture appealed to them because of the money to be earned.<sup>10/</sup> Among the Akin nearly half of the cocoa farmers were women farmers in their own right, <sup>11/</sup> but when "companies" were being formed for the express purpose of growing cocoa for export, many of the women suffered disabilities. It was unusual for a woman to be a "Company" member in her own right. <sup>12/</sup> But women seldom have returns from their work on cash crops. In the Bouske region of Ivory Coast only 10-15 per cent of the family income is allocated to women, as against 50 per cent allocated to them in traditional villages. <sup>13/</sup> In Southern Ghana the women assist with the preparation of oil, but it is not theirs to sell, and when they market it, it is on behalf of their husbands. <sup>14/</sup>

#### Introduction of Farm Machinery

Rural women have had very few positive effects from farm mechanization. They are often ignored despite the fact that they are the backbone of rural farming. Training in preparation for farm mechanization is given mostly to men, with the result that it is only men who are able to use these new implements. In Uganda it was the women who began the cultivation of cotton, but when the new methods of agriculture were introduced only the men were taught. <sup>15/</sup> Thus the more strenuous jobs like clearing the fields and breaking up the soil which traditionally are men's work are the ones which are being mechanized. The plough and the tractor are widely used in the modernizing rural areas both for tilling and sowing, while weeding, harvesting and processing of the farm produce which are usually performed by women are still done by hand. "Often the only type of innovations possible for the women farmers

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<sup>10/</sup> Polly Hill, The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study in Rural Capitalism, London, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

<sup>11/</sup> Ibid, page 11.

<sup>12/</sup> Ibid, page 116.

<sup>13/</sup> Report by FAO to the 25th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 1973.

<sup>14/</sup> Polly Hill, Ibid, page 164.

<sup>15/</sup> Ester Boserup, Ibid, page 54.

are those involving the use of their own additional labour and not those involving the reduction of labour due to mechanization."16/

Rural women have sometimes - even if only a little - benefitted from farm mechanization. If men or women farmers are able either singly, co-operatively or with the help of the government, to mechanize all operations on the farm, the women are freed from the chores which otherwise they would have been required to perform. 17/ At the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, female agriculture students learn to drive tractors.

### Land Consolidation

In some African countries land consolidation causes hardships for women. The traditional allocation of household fields to the wife or wives, once made, was nearly irrevocable so long as the woman remained a member of the family. 18/ Her right to a field was recognized and guaranteed by the society in whom the ownership of the land was vested. With the introduction of land consolidation however, her security may not be guaranteed any more because the land is no longer held by the community as a whole. It is the men who have the money from their cash crops, and can purchase the land. 19/

The argument for introducing land consolidation in Kenya, for example, was that individual ownership ensured rapid development because individuals could then raise loans for agricultural development against the security of their titles. 20/ Since it is the men who hold titles, it is they alone who can get loans. And when they get a loan they need to develop the land more, probably by devoting more land to cash agriculture in order to earn enough to pay back the loan. In the process women may lose part of the land they had for the cultivation of food crops but not gain the use of the money obtained

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16/ Jane Wills, A Study of Time Allocation by Rural Women and Their Place in Decision Making, Makerere University, Faculty of Agriculture, 1967.

17/ Guy Hunter, Modernizing Peasant Societies, A Comparative Study in Asia and Africa, London, Oxford University Press, 1969.

18/ Migot-Adholla, "Traditional Society and Co-operatives" in C.G. Widstrand (ed) Co-operatives and Rural Development in East Africa, African Publishing Corporation, New York, 1970, page 21.

19/ Ester Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development, New York, 1970.

20/ C.G. Widstrand (ed) Ibid, page 26.

from the cash-crops. In Nyeri District of Kenya where farms had been consolidated, it was found that a number of farmers were curtailing subsistence production and some giving it up entirely, usually for the sake of extending land devoted solely to dairying. 21/

Consolidation may also affect a woman who had left the livestock roaming about and tended by young sons. After consolidation the plots are usually fenced. Women are forced either to sell their livestock or to keep them at home. Either way, they are at a disadvantage. If the animals are sold, the women lose the milk and butter, while they do not get the income obtained from the sale. If the animals are kept, women must cultivate or gather fodder and fetch water, unless there is a nearby well or stream.

However, consolidation is sometimes advantageous to women in that it may reduce the journeys which they might have had to walk from one field to another under shifting cultivation. It was also noted in Nyeri District (referred to above) that after consolidation the yields were generally better, even in maize, potatoes, cabbages and beans 22/ which in the area are food crops. After consolidation the keeping of dairy cattle for commercial purposes increased. This resulted in an improvement of diets because a considerable quantity of milk was consumed on the farms. 23/

### Settlement Schemes

It has been stated that the lot of women is often worsened by settlement, 24/ because, firstly, it deprives women of previous sources of income. For example, the women of Kariba, Zambia, were expected to lose their cultivation rights to land, and the women on the Niger Agricultural Project lacked raw materials for spinning, dyeing and making palm oil.

Secondly, it is noted that mechanization on these schemes usually places women at a disadvantage by leaving to hand labour those tasks, such as weeding, normally performed by women.

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21/ John C. de Wilde, Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Vol. I, The Synthesis, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1967.

22/ John C. de Wilde, Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Vol. II, page 78.

23/ Ibid, pages 49-51.

24/ Robert Chambers, Settlement Schemes in Tropical Africa: A Study of Organizations and Development, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

While it is agreed that women living in Settlement Schemes may be at a disadvantage, it is also correct to point out that women living in the rural areas in general experience many of the same disadvantages, for example, when more land is taken up for plantations or when their husbands decide to put more land under cash-crops. Compared to their counterparts living in scattered homesteads or in small villages, women living in settlement schemes probably have been able to benefit more from the effects of modernization. This is because governments are usually interested in the success of settlement schemes, especially the irrigation schemes, and therefore give more help towards the modernization of agriculture than is given in traditional areas. It is easier to provide services such as water, grinding mills, day-care centres and schools to village settlements, than to scattered homesteads.

In Mali, the Office du Niger gives mechanical help to the settlers in its irrigation schemes by ridging rice fields, and assists with the marketing of produce. 25/ In the irrigation scheme of Mwea-Teberra in Kirinyaga District of Kenya the cultivation is done by tractors only 26/ and the incomes received by the tenants are increasingly being used to lure labour to enable the farm family to enjoy more leisure. 27/ In a research carried in the Gazira Settlement Scheme in the Sudan, it was found that the settlers used the extra cash to build good houses and in addition other household auxiliaries such as kitchens, latrines and storerooms were constructed.

The Ujamaa Villages in Tanzania show that it is, in fact, possible for women to gain a lot from settlement schemes. According to studies carried out by the Buhare Home Economics Training College in Musoma, Tanzania, in Ujamaa Villages "the division of labour between men and women tends to be more democratic. . . . Each individual receives his share of profits from sale of crops produced according to the labour she/he actually expends. Women also have equal say in the democratic processes of the villages, particularly with regard to the disposition of total profits of individual villages." 28/ Government policy has effected this change.

25/ J.C. de Wilde, Volume II, Ibid, page 281.

26/ Ibid.

27/ Ibid.

28/ "Division of Labour in the Rural Areas and Identification of Women's Work which could be Lightened by Village Technology", paper presented by Mary Essanga, Acting Principal, Buhare Home Economics Training Centre, during the Training for Trainers in Home Economics and Other Family-Oriented Fields, organized in Musoma, Tanzania by ECA/FAO and the Netherlands Government in March, 1974.



Summarizing women's role in agriculture in African countries, it is clear that because of the influences of male migration, increasing numbers of women become household heads, responsible for the economic and social welfare of themselves and their children. With the introduction of cash crops and farm machinery, the acreage on which they must perform their tasks increases. Land consolidation may deprive them of incomes. Thus despite the fact that the economic value of their traditional role may be less respected in modern days, it can be estimated that 70 per cent of the agricultural labour in Africa is women's work. Women remain as Africa's major food producers.

#### MARKETING

Most women in rural Africa are engaged in market trade. Even when market trade is not the main occupation, many still visit the market at least once every week to sell some farm produce. For some, marketing is their only source of income for the support of themselves and their children. In the Yoruba region of Nigeria two-thirds of all adult women are engaged in trading, half of them with trade as their main occupation. <sup>29/</sup> Even in areas where religious tradition restricts women mostly to their homes, they may be found trading from their back doors, as in Northern Nigeria.

But as the marketing sector is modernized the women lose because "modernization and development tend to increase the importance of bulk buying arrangements and decrease that of the market-place for food. Even this becomes more specialized; the vegetables come from horticulturalists, the food is packaged. The range of non-agricultural goods in the market is wider and more sophisticated, purchased by the cash from the main crops ... produced by men." <sup>30/</sup>

At the Regional Conference on Education, Vocational Training and Work Opportunities for Girls and Women in African Countries, it was noted that "women traders and market women are in danger of being squeezed out by big commercial undertaking". <sup>31/</sup> As the marketing sector modernizes, the participation of women in marketing seems to be

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<sup>29/</sup> Ester Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development, New York, 1970

<sup>30/</sup> Guy Hanter, Modernizing Peasant Societies, a Comparative Study in Asia and Africa, London, 1969.

<sup>31/</sup> Report of the Regional Conference on Education, Vocational Training and Work Opportunities for Girls and Women in African Countries, Rabat, Morocco, 1971.

decreasing. In Dahomey the percentage of women among commercial persons decreased from 95 to 89 per cent between 1961 and 1967. In Nigeria the percentage of females among petty traders in Lagos decreased from 84 to 70 per cent between 1950 and 1963. <sup>32/</sup> This trend among full-time marketers may also affect the marketing activities of women in the agricultural areas.

In Africa as a whole, despite women's being driven out of petty trade, data and experience indicate that at the least, 60 per cent of the marketing activities remain in the hands of women.

### Co-operative Societies and Other Associations

The services of co-operative societies are therefore necessary to help the rural women, who in most cases are producers as well as marketers. To date, these societies appear to be most useful to the women when formed exclusively by and for the women. Examples of these are found among the market women of West Africa with their Credit Societies and Associations for the regulation of trade within the market.

The Revolutionary Women of the Congo, members have co-operative plantations of food crops and the society also gives agricultural implements for field work to its members. <sup>33/</sup> In Zanzibar, the vast Marketing Co-operative Movement that extends to the Island's inland trade is completely in the hands of women. <sup>34/</sup>

When these societies are formed for both sexes, however, the participation of women may be limited. The producers co-operatives formed in Ujamaa Villages in Tanzania appear to be exceptional. More typical is the Co-operative Society formed in the Million Acre Scheme in Nyeri, Kenya, to market pyrethrum grown by the settlers. This society

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<sup>32/</sup> The Changing and Contemporary Role of Women in African Development, paper prepared by Human Resources Development Division, UNECA, for Publication in the Economic Bulletin for Africa.

<sup>33/</sup> Integration of Rural Women in Modern Progress, an article in Women of the World, 1972, pages 23-29.

<sup>34/</sup> Integration of Women in Economic Life, article in the 1971 edition of Women of the World, page 42.

accepted as members only those who held title deeds, i.e., the husbands. This meant that the women who originally grew the crop and marketed it were now not entitled to get the proceeds because they were not members; yet they continued to cultivate, pick and dry the pyrethrum flowers. 35/

When the women become members of these mixed societies they often cannot participate fully because they may be ignorant of the procedures of a co-operative unless they are given guidance by officials of government or of the society. But in many cases the government field staff neglect food-crops and concentrate on cash-crops.

### Transportation

In many rural areas of Africa, the roads are either very poor or non-existent. The only means of transportation available is on foot or on an animals' back. For the women who, in addition to their other duties, have to visit the market once or twice every week, the problem is serious. Therefore the construction of good roads and the provision of quick means of transport is of great help to women. In the Zambian Copperbelt it was noted that the availability of means of transport as simple as bicycles stimulated trade. 36/

## HOUSEHOLD TASKS

### Food Preparation

The major tasks of traditional African women include, among other things, the collection processing and the actual cooking of food; the provision of water and fuel; bearing and nurturing children; and making sure that the homestead is kept clean.

Preparation of food is often a very tedious and time consuming affair. Cereals and other staple foods have to be pounded or ground into flour and some require laborious preparation. Maize, for example, must be stripped from the cob. A sample survey in Tanzania shows that women average nearly 3 hours daily preparing food. 37/ In some countries

35/ R. Apthorpe, "Some Problems of Evaluation" in C.G. Midstrant (ed) Co-operatives and Rural Development in East Africa, New York, 1970.

36/ Merle Davis (ed) Modern Industry and the African, Ibid.

37/ Report of a Study on Patterns of Living in South Mora Village, Ministry of Regional Administration and Rural Development, Buhare, Tanzania, 1970.

flour mills are available in the big trading centres or settlements where women in the surrounding areas can take their grains for milling, but these are not yet widespread, and in many cases they are owned by private individuals who wish to make profit. Therefore, the poorer women still have to pound their grains. Women in the Cameroon have solved this problem with co-operative purchase of maize mills; others may be following their example.

Food preparation includes the collection of vegetables for relish plus the collection of firewood and the fetching of water as well as the actual cooking. All these tasks consume valuable time which could be used profitably for development activities - literacy classes, learning from extension workers, etc. - and yet not much has been done to modernize them. The women in the majority of the rural areas still have to walk for miles to fetch water, and their filled pot may weigh 40 kilos. They sometimes go three or four times daily, especially when water is needed not only for cooking, drinking, bathing and washing clothes and dishes but for brewing beer too. Provision of water supplies, in villages is therefore a priority need for women.

Sudan provides an example. Nearly all the villages in the Gezira Settlement Scheme were provided with bore-holes. This not only reduced the long journeys in search of water, but also made available water of good drinking quality. <sup>38/</sup> With the clearance of forests for cash agriculture and settlements, the task of collecting firewood has become more and more time consuming, as a wider area needs to be covered before enough fuel is collected. Re-afforestation is essential, or alternative sources of fuel should be made available.

The cooking places in many of the rural homes are still open fires, either in the open air or inside the houses. In the former case, no cooking can be done while it is raining and in the latter case the little children are in danger of burns.

Problems of food preparation may be compounded by opportunities for schooling of the children. The young girls who used to help their mothers to fetch water and prepare meals may no longer be at home. Sometimes foods essential to family health are marketed, to obtain money for school fees. And sometimes only the boys are sent to school; the little girls stay home to help. Women have not the time or energy to adopt improved nutrition practices, even when learning opportunities are offered to them.

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<sup>38/</sup> George Brawseh, Patrick Crooke and John Shaw. Bashagra Area Settlement 1963. Case Study in Village Development in the Garira Scheme. Khartoum, 1964.

### Care of Children

Women are responsible for bearing and nurturing children. Today in some rural areas of Africa women are faced with the job of feeding larger families than in earlier times, while there has been little change in their means of production.

The introduction of health facilities in many rural areas of Africa is resulting in a decrease in overall death rates. Therefore the number of children now able to live to adolescence has increased, while the birth-rate has not decreased. In a recent study carried out in Egypt it was found that the size of the family does not depend on planning but on the number of deaths which have occurred in the family. The family was small if many of the pregnancies terminated in death or if there was a large number of child deaths. 39/

Thus modernization in one area like improved health facilities, if not coupled with improvement in other sectors, such as educating the women in ways which can make their tasks less laborious and more productive and providing facilities and education for child spacing may result in the women having children for whom they cannot adequately provide.

### Self-help

Self-help in traditional Africa was in the form of mutual help during the times of need such as housebuilding, weeding, harvesting, etc. Either the women, together with some men, worked on a project, or a group of young men would carry out the task, their services being rewarded by the women, with beer and food. However, with the introduction of the money economy, the young men no longer offer their services without cash payment. For many women, no source of cash is readily available.

The modern self-help activities are building of schools, clinics, dispensaries, roads, markets, bridges, wells and other public services. These activities impose extra burdens on the rural women who are already over-worked. The women have to be involved because they need these services, yet they cannot neglect their traditional mutual help activities or other responsibilities. In Lesotho, women build 90 per cent of the roads, under the food-for-work programme; in Somalia, they provided the labour for the capital city's largest hotel.

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39/ The Impact of Small and Large Numbers of Children on the Health and Welfare of Individual Families: A Micro Case Study, by Wafik A. Hassouna - a paper distributed to the Participants of 1971 African Population Conference organized by UNECA and International Union for the Scientific Study of Population in Corporation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Accra, Ghana.

### Crafts

Traditionally almost all married women in Africa engaged in basket or pottery making, or both. Some made these items for sale while others made them for use within the family. In some societies women earned incomes from weaving, spinning and dyeing. When cheap mass produced imported or locally made wares fill the market, however, there is little demand for home produced goods and the women lose their sources of incomes. On the other hand, modern utensils such as enamel plates, and mugs and cooking pots made of tin, which do not break, are very convenient to use. It is easier and more practical when using a donkey or a bicycle for fetching water to take a 4-6 gallon tin instead of a water jar. A tin is lighter and more spacious.

With the loss of their small incomes from crafts, women need new sources of income - either through modernizing their traditional skills, or through new activities. In some countries, for example Swaziland, national programmes assist women to modernize and market their handicrafts, and to develop small-scale industries. Women's individual efforts are given Government support.

### Housebuilding and Repair

Many women in the rural areas of Africa are required to help the men during housebuilding; they mud and plaster the walls and floors. In some places women cut and/or carry the grass for thatching the roofs. In addition it is their job to see that the walls and floors are kept in good repair by replastering - a task which may be done weekly as in Zaire. <sup>40/</sup> Yet when new ideas on housebuilding and plastering are introduced, the teaching is usually given exclusively to men. Botswana is providing an interesting exception; there girls are building modern houses.

It is evident that women who live in the rural areas urgently require help with their household tasks. Modern technology which may make the work of their counterparts in towns a little easier, generally has not reached them.

At present, in the whole of Africa, food processing and preparation and care of the children are almost exclusively women's tasks. Probably 90 per cent of hand-carried water supplies are provided by women, as are 80 per cent of fuel supplies, in rural areas. Women do at least 30 per cent of housebuilding and half of house repairs. They are also responsible for some 70 per cent of self-help projects.

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<sup>40/</sup> David Mitclinik, The Role of Women in Rural Development in the Zaire, Oxford, 1972.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

While the women in rural areas desire to educate their children in order to prepare them for the future, they may sometimes impose hardships on themselves. For example, in areas where it is women's responsibility to provide the income for sending children to school, they have to work much harder to obtain this income. Also when the children are in school, as noted the women's work load increases. They have to perform single-handed those tasks with which the children used to help them - looking after babies, herding the livestock and feeding the family.

In school, children learn modern ways of doing things such as preparing meals and looking after the family. They acquire new tastes and values which, when they come back home, the mother may not understand. This may cause tension between mothers and their children.

But education of children may also benefit women. Some children teach their mothers instead of calling them old-fashioned. Also, education tends to bring in new ideas about the roles of women. For example, a study carried out in Northern Nigeria, showed that the uneducated men did not think that women should be allowed to share in decisions on public matters, but the younger educated group thought the opposite. 41/

As for the women's own education, in most cases they will have missed the formal type of education and the only openings available to them are vocational training and extension services. Many governments in Africa have now realized that if development is to reach the rural areas women living there must be helped. They are making efforts to take literacy campaigns and extension services to the rural women. Some examples :

- (i) In Kenya the Institute of Administration makes its programme for both husband and wife so that men who would have refused to allow their wives to attend will come with them. 42/ The agricultural staff generally agrees that women are often more receptive to advice and instructions than were men. 43/

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41/ Ronald Cohen, Modernization in Africa: A Social and Psychological Model of Analysis, Edinburgh, 1969, pages 6-7.

42/ Participation of Women in Community Development, Report of the Secretary General to the Commission on the Status of Women, United Nations, 4/CN.6/514/Rev. 1, paragraph 66.

43/ de Wilde, Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Volume I, Ibid.

- (ii) In Sierra Leone the field staff of the Ministry of Social Welfare takes a few volunteer women from the villages on field trips and also gives them lectures on mother and childcare, backyard gardening, home management, and literacy. Although these women are not paid workers, it is estimated that 75-80 per cent of them are very active in teaching the other women in their villages. 44/
- (iii) The different States in Nigeria have developed home economics extension services within their Ministries of Agriculture. For example, the North Western State is providing education in agricultural production to both members of the farm family.
- (iv) The Women's Advancement Bureau which is in charge of women education in Rwanda operates through social centres and social homes. In 1970 the Bureau had 359 social centres administered by 654 social counsellors. The Bureau also broadcasts programmes for women twice a day over Radio Rwanda. 45/

But, an examination of the contents of the educational services taken to the women in the rural areas of Africa reveals that almost all of them are oriented towards household tasks only. 46/ Only some 15 per cent of agricultural training and perhaps 20 per cent of training in animals husbandry are directed to women; they receive about 10 per cent of co-operative training. By contrast, almost all training in home economics and nutrition goes to women, although men often control the family finance and should thus be educated about the relative values of foods.

While it is right that the rural women should get family-oriented training, it should be pointed out that "home economics, while essential is not enough" for women who may spend most of their days in the fields or the markets, and carrying water and wood. Women need training and assistance in all of these areas, and many of them need incomes.

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44/ Mariam Kamara, Community Development in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Sierra Leone, A paper presented to the UNECA Meeting of Experts on the Development of Rural Life and Institutions in West Africa, Accra, Ghana, 1970.

45/ Pauline Ntaliobari, Young Working Women in a Young Nation, an article in Women of the World, No. 4 of 1972.

46/ An examination of the UNECA Country Reports on Vocational and Technical Training Opportunities for Girls and Women shows that the subjects taught to women under agricultural, vocational and technical education consist mainly of Home Economics.



## S U M M A R Y

In order to measure the impact of change on women in Africa, the UNECA Women's Programme has developed a method of quantifying women's work and their access to training and services to increase their efficiency. This is called the "proportion of participation" - defined as the percentage of the work or involvement of women in the activity, as a fraction of the total participation of both men and women. The total is expressed as 1.00. Thus, if 80 per cent of the hours of labour in carrying water are women's work, the women's proportion of participation is expressed as 0.80.

The following proportions of participation are derived from numerous studies such as those cited above. They represent rough estimates for the Africa region as a whole, and are intended as models for use in individual countries, or areas within countries, and for purposes of development planning.

The prevailing division of labour in subsistence and early modernizing areas of African countries suggests the following proportions of participation by women :

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Proportion of Participation</u> 47/
A. <u>Production/Supply/Distribution</u>	(Women)
1. Food Production	0.70
2. Domestic Food Storage	0.50
3. Food Processing	1.00
4. Animal Husbandry	0.50
5. Marketing	0.60
6. Brewing	0.90
7. Water Supply	0.90
8. Fuel Supply	0.80

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47/ Data base from: The Changing and Contemporary Role of Women in African Development, UNECA, 1974; Country Reports on Vocational and Technical Training for Girls and Women, UNECA, 1972-4; studies, mission reports, and discussions. Units of participation should be determined first for areas within countries, then on the national level then for Africa.

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Proportion of Participation</u> (Women)
<b>B. <u>Household/Community</u></b>	
1. <u>Household:</u>	
(a) Bearing, rearing, initial education of children	1.00
(b) Cooking for husband, children, elders	1.00
(c) Cleaning, washing, etc.	1.00
(d) Housebuilding	0.30
(e) House Repair	0.50
2. <u>Community:</u>	
Self-help projects	0.70

By contrast with women's heavy responsibilities for rural development in the subsistence and early modernizing areas, women's access to non-formal education may be estimated as follows:

<u>Area of Access to Non-formal Education</u>	<u>Proportion of Participation</u> 48/
Agriculture	0.15
Animal Husbandry	0.20
Trade and Commerce	? 49/
Co-operatives	0.10
Arts and Crafts	0.50
Nutrition	0.90
Home Economics	1.00

48/ Units given are extremely rough estimates due to lack of data. Estimates are based on ECA Country Reports, and informal knowledge. Ideal units in most of these areas might be 0.50, indicating that both men and women have access to the non-formal training.

49/ Very little training in trade and commerce is known to exist at the non-formal level.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is true that development has not reached most of the people living in the rural areas of Africa. But where it is reaching, it tends to benefit men, more than women. Even though increasing numbers of women are active in co-operatives, and earning petty cash from handicrafts and agriculture, on the whole, women's methods of carrying out their household and agricultural activities have changed very little. Women have had few chances for training, and many of them are not participating in the money economy. Numerous studies show that the impact of modernization makes women's tasks increasingly burdensome and even less productive.

This situation imposes a serious strain on the development of the rural areas. Women have responsibility for the health of families. They are Africa's food producers.