



**REPORT OF MISSION TO BLANTYRE
MALAWI TO ATTEND WORKSHOP
ON YOUTH INITIATIVE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZED BY THE
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH
PROGRAMME, AFRICA CENTRE**

BLANTYRE MALAWI 17-24 JULY 1995

**By
Wanjiku E. Mwangi
Regional Adviser
ECA/MRAG/ACW**

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group

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Addis Ababa
July, 1995

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MALAWI, JULY 17-24 1995**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Workshop on Youth Initiative on Environment and Development was organized by the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), Africa Centre, of the Commonwealth Regional Office based in Lusaka Zambia, in collaboration with the Pan-Commonwealth Office in London. The Commonwealth Youth Programme Africa Centre is an intergovernmental organization representing all African countries of the Commonwealth. The workshop was held at the Blantyre Conference Centre and was attended by 43 participants, most of whom were representatives of the youth from 15 countries of Commonwealth Africa namely, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. (See list of Participants Annex I).

Several factors provided the backdrop for the workshop (a) It was taking place during a period of unprecedented economic crises in Africa, accompanied by increased environmental degradation (b) In the past, and even in current practice, young people have not been centrally involved in policy formulation and implementation in matters pertaining to environment and development. Young people tend to be perceived as mere targets of change, but not as architects or participants in such change. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 identified women and youth as special groups deserving of particular and concerted focus in any envisaged measures to harmonize environment and development. Further, there is need to integrate environmental education in the school curricula and syllabi of Commonwealth countries in Africa, and to establish environment and development networks at regional, subregional and national levels.

Opportunities for young people to participate in democratic governance are increasing, but appropriate structures for the enhancement and realization of these opportunities have to be created. (c) Poverty is the major drawback in the fight against environmental degradation in African countries and concerted efforts must be made to reverse the trend.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The principal objective of the workshop was to explore how best young people can be centrally involved in the care and protection of the biodiversity of African ecosystems. The youth represent a storehouse of human resource potential whose energies could be released and channelled into activities which can stimulate environmentally sound and sustainable development. The workshop sought to bring together the youth of Africa as the leaders of tomorrow, to share and exchange experiences on new initiatives in development that take account of the need to protect the environment. The forum was also intended to provide young people with a new impetus in addressing environmental issues continually amongst themselves, leading eventually to the incorporation of environment related issues into national youth policies. The specific objectives of the workshop were to: -

- (i) Carry out a situational analysis of issues related to environment and development in the respective countries of the youth participants, and to share new country experiences and joint efforts.
- (ii) Serve as a launching pad for practical environment related projects that can be implemented by young people at national and regional levels.

- (iii) Create awareness among the young environmental experts on how negative impacts of human activities bring about environmental degradation.
- (iv) Launch a Regional Newsletter through which the youth and others can share country experiences and strategies in environmental management and protection.
- (v) Promote and facilitate the establishment of specific environmental conservation projects in each of the countries represented at the workshop.
- (vi) Establish a Regional Youth Committee through which future youth-focused and regionally - based environmental programmes can be formulated and mapped out.

III. PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP

Discussions and exchanges during the Workshop were organized around five themes. Key papers were presented for each theme viz:

- Young people and the rapidly changing African environment.
- Gender, environment and sustainable development.
- A guide to youth participation in conservation strategies.
- Population pressure, poverty and the plight of the commons .
- The participation of the youth in environmentally friendly micro enterprises.

Our contribution was on Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development. (See Annex 3).

After its presentation, a discussion and exchange of views followed along the following lines: -

- (a) The gender perspective is a fairly new approach and has to be seen within the context of the African continent, taking into account the particularities of the region such as, the prevalence and pervasiveness of poverty which tends to blur the gender disparities; the role of culture and traditions; and the strong influence of religion amongst some cultures in Africa.
- (b) The cleavage and differences between rural and urban areas and populations may be a more remarkable feature of African development than gender differences between men and women. There is need therefore to integrate rural and urban communities and not to concentrate only on gender issues. The bias towards the urban dwellers could be greater and potentially more damaging for African societies, than the inequities and disparities between males and females in Africa.
- (c) Provisions should be made for young people to make and influence some decisions now, rather than waiting until later when young people will be considered "more mature". Their perspective on environment and development issues could be more valuable now than later.
- (d) Young women need role models whom they can emulate. There should also be dialogue between older and younger women with a view to giving the young women more experiential and professional exposure.
- (e) There should be more focus on advocacy by the youth.

The youth are capable of exerting pressure on governments, which could bring about positive changes.

- (f) The economic empowerment of women should be regarded as perhaps the most important aspect of equitable gender relations. Women must be enabled to have more control over their labour and resources.

Three Working Groups were set up to address in detail issues related to (a) Networking amongst youth organizations in the region. (b) Human resource mobilization and capacity building. (c) Identification of viable and innovative youth-based projects. (d) Development of a Communique to be issued by the participants after the workshop. I assisted the working group on the Communique which is attached to this mission report as Annex 2.

IV. OUTCOME OF THE WORKSHOP

A Committee was set up to coordinate networking amongst the youth from the various subregions. This Committee consists of Ghana (West Africa); Kenya/Uganda (East Africa); Seychelles (the Islands); Namibia/Zambia (Southern Africa). The Secretariat for the Committee would be established in Lusaka Zambia, and the Commonwealth Youth Programme would act as the Clearing House for both the Committee and its Secretariat. National focal points for each representative country (in the Committee) were also identified. The broad mandate of the Networking Committee would consist of resource mobilization, initiation of projects and facilitation of information exchange between the subregions. The Committee will be further expected to relate its activities to the youth activities of the CYP and to initiate and highlight national youth networks.

To facilitate youth networking activities, a periodic Newsletter would be produced and distributed to all the

countries. It would be targeted at the 13 to 25 years youth group and its principal objective will be to provide a forum and a mechanism for the exchange of information and ideas on national and subregional environment related activities, that would reflect the situation prevailing in the African region.

Under the auspices of the Networking Committee, a Video Project would be initiated to produce an Environment and Development video which will be used as a communication tool to portray the state and status of the environment in Africa, the impact of the population and of its activities on the environment, and ways and means of encouraging young people in Africa to participate effectively in environment and development initiatives. It was also decided that the CYP would initiate subregional competitions amongst the youth through the application of various environment and development themes in relation to; an essay competition; an art competition; and a competition in photography.

Further, the CYP Africa Centre will assist in the development and strengthening of youth structures in the Commonwealth countries of Africa, particularly in the formulation and establishment of a Youth Policy. Such a policy would propel the required impetus for young people's increased participation in democratic governance. The CYP has already assisted in the development of a youth policy for the Government of Malawi.

After deliberations on the most viable and innovative youth-based projects, the workshop agreed on several areas which would provide the basis of initial environment and development activities:

- (i) Agroforestry;
- (ii) Tree nurseries;
- (iii) Seed collection and establishment of seed banks;
- (iv) Commercial vegetable growing and other horticultural activities;

- (v) Soil and water conservation activities;
- (vi) Alternative energy sources such as fabrication of energy-saving wood stoves, conversion of cow-dung; coffee husks/saw-dust collection and their conversion into easy-to-use and energy saving forms such as brickets;
- (vii) Bee-keeping;
- (viii) Waste management techniques;
- (ix) Arts and crafts based activities.

With regard to human resource mobilisation and capacity building, it was agreed that immediate and relevant initiatives would include:

- mobilisation of the youth;
- formulation and development of youth training programmes;
- mobilization of financial resources;
- creation of a data bank on, and for the youth, of Africa.

V. VISIT TO STATE HOUSE IN BLANTYRE AND AUDIENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF MALAWI HIS EXCELLENCY BAKILI MULUZI

On the afternoon of Friday 21 July 1995, the workshop participants were invited to State House in Blantyre and were granted audience by the President of Malawi, His Excellency Bakili Muluzi. Also in attendance were the President's Political Adviser as well as the Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture and other senior Government Officials.

After formal introduction of the participants, a statement was made by the Director of the CYP Dr. Richard M. Mkandawire. A representative of the youth participants at the workshop also made a statement. His Excellency the President then addressed the workshop participants. He said that Malawi was privileged

to be hosting the workshop and extended a very warm welcome to all the participants. He emphasized that the youth is the hope of Africa and he urged the youth participants to seek to participate actively, with commitment and dedication in all matters repetition pertaining to the development of African countries. He called on the youth to protect the environment in their respective countries which was the most important basis for the well-being of Africa, since the majority of the population in Africa are rural and are directly dependent on the environment and the primary resource base. After his address, H. E. the President then invited the participants to tea, and for a group photograph.

While having tea, the President made himself available for informal exchanges and discussions with the workshop participants. I was privileged to be able to talk to the President at some length and in his capacity as the current chairman of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), I informed him of my scheduled advisory mission to COMESA in Lusaka Zambia, in November 1995, and which will focus on "Food Processing to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship, including Food Security in relation to Reduction of Post-harvest Food Losses and Food Storage Techniques. I then sought his opinions on both the situation of women in Africa and their need for accelerated advancement, as well as on the relevance of the specific objectives of the advisory mission to COMESA. In his open response, the President of Malawi emphasized that the issue of the advancement of women in Africa, and of the specific needs of women in the COMESA countries hinged on four important factors and requirements namely:"

1. The imperative need to have open, participatory and democratic governments and institutions in Africa.
2. Facilitating the political empowerment of African women.

3. The necessity of committed policies and interventions on poverty alleviation and eradication, focused on women.
4. Economic and financial empowerment of African women is the key and catalysis for their advancement. In particular, since women are the principal producers of food in Africa, and with specific reference to women in the COMESA countries, an important aspect of their economic empowerment is to fully involve them in the manufacturing and food processing sectors. Women should not be relegated to only the primary production of food and other primary commodities. They must also venture into secondary and tertiary production processes.

In answer to a more broader question on what he sees as the possible solution to Africa's current economic crisis, the President responded that African Governments must adopt more stringent economic and financial policies and practices in their approach to development. They must also make their citizens fully aware of the severity of the situation in order for them to have the full cooperation of their citizens when they introduce policies for greater 'tightening of the belts' as well as measures to curb inflation. He reiterated that "nothing comes easy and African Governments and their citizens must be prepared to make some sacrifices". The focus should be on a long-term perspective for lasting results.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE WORKSHOP
ON YOUTH INITIATIVES ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT, BLANTYRE, MALAWI,
17-21 July 1995

NAME	COUNTRY/ORGANIZATION
Adjodha, D. (Mr)	Mauritius
Arhin-Sam, D. (Mr)	Ghana
Banda, B.	Malawi
Birungi, Olive	Uganda
Chatholoma, Patric	
Chikonda, M. G.	Malawi
Desaubin, Hna	Seychelles
Dlamini, Z. (Ms)	Swaziland
Dutch, Stella	
Imbamba, S. K. (Professor)	UNECA, MULPOC Lusaka, Zambia
Jailosi, Ntolo	
Jiyan, Ellen (Mrs)	
Kalumba, E.	Malawi
Kanyesi, R.	Malawi
Kawanga, Victor Kazembe	Zambia
Kinyaha, Y. G. Mr.	Tanzania
Korom, Abdul S.A.	Sierra Leone
Liwonde, W. Mr.	Malawi
Lungu, K.	
Manda, L. B. W. (Mr.)	Malawi

Mbewe, Ozily	
Mbula, Chola Faith	Zambia
Mdege, Vimsayi	Zimbabwe
Mkandawire, C. G.	Malawi
Mkandawire, Richard (Dr)	Director, Commonwealth Youth Programme, Lusaka
Mmangisa, E.R. (Mrs)	
Mobena, V. P. (Mr.)	South Africa
Mondo, Kyateka	Uganda
Msemnyane, P. M. Mr.	South Africa
Mwagiru, Wanjiku, (Dr)	UNECA ACW/MRAG, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Mwanyongo, M. K.	Malawi
Nkambule, C. W.	Malawi
Nondo, Bwalya Lypa (Mr)	Zambia
Nonkulukeko, Zoly (Ms)	Lesotho
Obiero, Judith A.	Kenya
Phiri, W. (Mr.)	Malawi
Ralehika, M. K.	Botswana
Seitshiro, Jennifer M.	Botswana
Sembeye, E. K. (Mr.)	Malawi
Tiyani, E. (Mrs)	Malawi
Vanwyk, S. M.	Namibia
Wachira Charity G. (Mrs)	Commonwealth Youth Programme, Lusaka, Zambia
Wamuya, Catherine (Ms)	Kenya

ANNEX II

WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUE

We the participants from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe attending the first ever Commonwealth Youth Programme Workshop on Youth Initiative on Environment and Development held at Kwacha International Conference Centre, in Blantyre, Malawi from 17th to 21st July 1995, which addressed among others the following issues:

- a) The Changing Environmental Context of Young People in Africa.
- b) Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development
- c) Youth Participation in Conservation Strategies
- d) Population Pressure, Environment and the Plight of the Commons
- e) Youth Participation in Environmentally Friendly Micro-enterprises
- f) Agriculture degradation: A Search for Sustainable Growth
- g) Youth Networking on Environment in Africa.

- Realising the need for Environmental protection, Care, Management and Development.
- Recognising the important role the youth can play in protecting and managing the environment in Africa.
- Aware that the youth make up over fifty percent of the total population of Africa and further aware that the youth must be involved and consulted for development to be sustainable and to promote inter-generational equity.
- Bearing in mind the fact that problems relating to the environment are similar in many of our countries.
- Appreciating the need for an integrated comprehensive, participatory and sustainable approach to development hereby request

1. **Member Governments in the African Region to:**

- a) Provide increased opportunities for young people to participate in policy formulation, planning and implementation of environment and development programmes and projects, and to support national environmental youth networks as a viable strategy for youth empowerment;

- b) Make available training opportunities to young people who are actively involved in environment and sustainable development projects:
- c) Urgently set up a youth revolving fund with the objective of making the youth the beneficiaries of this fund through the funding of environmentally-friendly micro enterprises.
- d) Urgently formulate comprehensive national youth policies that incorporate the concept of environment and sustainable development:
- e) Establish national youth data banks/resource centres and further support the establishment of a regional youth data bank.
- f) Formulate and implement sustainable food policies.
- g) To honour their pledges and commitments to the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

2. **We appeal to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to:**

- a) Strengthen its support to the youth outreach programmes.
- b) Reactivate its environmental youth ambassadors programme within Africa.
- c) Facilitate the establishment of a regional network of young environmentalists by providing seed funding for the publication of a youth environment newsletter in Africa and funding of environment - friendly micro-enterprises in African countries.
- d) Facilitate the establishment of a data and resource base for young environmentalists at the Commonwealth Youth Programme - Africa Centre in Zambia.
- e) Offer short term training to sub-regional network coordinators who were identified at the Blantyre Workshop.
- f) Provide training and other relevant documentation in successful environmental projects in Africa and elsewhere.
- g) Provide sponsorship for competitions by young people on environment and sustainable development through essay writing, photography, Art etc...

3. We urge international donors, local and international NGOs and other Africa's development partners to include in their development activities, programmes targeted at strengthening youth participation in pertinent environmental issues such as:- Environmental rehabilitation activities, Afforestation, Waste Management, Water Conservation and Management, Agro-forestry, alternative renewable resources of energy etc...
4. The workshop fully endorses agenda 21, whose recommendations relating to the special needs of women and youth, provide the basis for equitable development which recognises the gender perspective, and the crucial role of women and youth in sustainable development programmes.
5. Member countries should seriously consider, putting in place a rural investment policy, to help check rural-urban migrations, which deprive rural areas of critical human resources, and able-bodied youth, whose potential should be tapped to develop these areas, this would also help to scale down, the growing number of street youths, which is a common phenomenon in many African cities.
6. The workshop urges member governments to invest in the youth, as a priority action in order to guarantee social economic, and political stability, for the present youth, and for generations to come.

ECA/MRAG/95/94/MR
Annex III

ANNEX III

WORKSHOP ON YOUTH INITIATIVE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT BLANTYRE AND LAKE MALAWI
MALAWI, JULY 17-24 1995
GENDER ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BY

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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
PAPER PRESENTED AT THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME
AFRICA CENTRE:

MALAWI
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. It is no longer acceptable to view development solely in terms of capital and technological inputs, however pervasive and manifest these two are. The state of the environment upon which all capital and technology are vested and are dependent upon, and the state of the human resource without which there would be no capital and no technology, must be considered as integral components of any analysis of the development process. Environmental sustainability and human resources development have now become widely integrated in the definition of development at national, regional and international levels.

However, the success of development efforts also depends upon making women full partners. They must be enabled to contribute their efforts but above all, they should share equally in the benefits of development.

2. Women constitute approximately half of the world's total population and hence, their actions- or inactions - in environmental protection and management are critical determinants in shaping a sustainable future. In Africa, women are estimated to be 51% of the continent's total population of 644 million. In addition, young people in the African region comprise at least 50% of the population and are thus the most vital resource base for future development. It is essential therefore, that the needs and concerns of both women and youth be addressed in the total development effort of African countries.

3. Both men and women are equally dependent on the capacities of natural ecosystems but their relationships and interactions with these ecosystems are often subtly different. Throughout history, women have operated as integrators, connectors, convertors, and managers of natural and often limited resources.

They link households to the environment; production and domestic resource use; homes and markets; and conversion of raw materials to usable products. Women are therefore practitioners, major users, consumers and experts in numerous ways which all cumulatively determine many ecological capacities and qualities in different natural ecosystems. By tradition and practice, women have managed prescribed - and sometimes even proscribed! - resources, whether these limits are determined by natural conditions, custom, culture, family or community status. Since managing finite resources and capacities is the major challenge of the 21st century, and since the goal of sustainable development is to integrate environmental parameters into development and economic activities, then women (and youth) are very well equipped to meet both the challenge and the goal.

4. We should not isolate or separate female perceptions, knowledge systems and initiatives on the environment. To do so is to shut out the potentials and possibilities of new options from more than half of Africa's population, thereby denying ourselves, and the future generations, the doubling of human ingenuity. In other words, no society can afford to ignore the accumulated knowledge acquired over millennia by the women who continue to live and interact very closely with the environment. This would threaten the future of Africa and its peoples.

II. THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

5. The gender perspective is an important denominator in any analysis of the linkages between population, environmental management and sustainable development. A gender perspective looks at how and why women and men interact differently with the environment for instance, and how their experiences of this interaction also differ. A gender perspective might therefore change the way environment and development concepts are understood and expressed.

6. Inequality between women and men is part of a continuum of inequalities between countries, social classes and ethnic groups. But just as in these other categories, there is great diversity among women and a problem emerges in attempts to group women as a homogeneous class or category. It is also problematic to see women as having similar attributes, potentials and constraints given the numerous and differing dimensions of structural constraints on women's economic and social roles, and their social and institutional contexts.

7. It has therefore become increasingly acceptable to formulate women's issues, problems and concerns in terms of gender. This approach shifts the emphasis from women as a homogeneous group that requires new targeting with each cohort or generation, to an emphasis on relations between the sexes. Gender relations are the social, economic and political relations, between men and women, that determine gender identity and roles. Gender relations are therefore social constructs in any given society. These relations determine women's access to resources and their work opportunities. They set the limits of what a women may or may not undertake at the work place, in the family and household, or in public life. Similarly, they delineate male behaviour, responsibilities and entitlements, thereby affecting social, economic and political functioning at all levels. Relationships between spouses, children and parents, managers and employees and among community members are all influenced by the dominant model of gender relations. In turn, gender relations are influenced by class, ethnicity, religious and political factors power and economic relations between countries. Gender relations, therefore, function like a "silent code" that regulates how men and women should behave towards each other in their respective societies, households and communities. The relations are not static but evolve in response to economic opportunities and obstacles, or become fashioned in their traditional form to fit a chosen strategy.

8. The complexity of gender relations must be taken account of when analyzing trends and policies for environment and development. The gender analysis seeks to define a rational organized distinction between men and women in their productive and reproductive roles. This approach is applicable to women and men, irrespective of their age group - to young and old alike.

III. WOMEN'S POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

9. It is now an acknowledged fact that the deprivation of traditional means of livelihood is most often the result of environmental degradation resulting from natural and man-made disasters such as droughts, desertification, deforestation, erosion and inappropriate land use practices. Such environmental degradation pushes many poor women and poor households into marginal environments and habitats with critically low levels of essential resources such as water, vegetation cover, woodfuel¹, among others.

10. Poverty and environmental degradation are mutually reinforcing, and they become even more so when women are involved as the key environmental custodians and managers in economies which are still heavily dependent on primary production and raw materials. Under conditions of extreme poverty, women become more and more dependent upon the environment in order to meet the survival needs of their families. Under the relentless exploitation and utilization, primary environmentally derived resources - water, soils, fuelwood, etc - become more and more depleted and a vicious cycle of want and scarcity becomes unleashed. The physical/climatic/human dynamics of problems such as drought and desertification, deforestation, soil erosion and famines can be largely explained with reference to such linkages. Thus, the gender dimension of poverty is manifested in the

¹ 1985 Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women Paragraph 226.

unequal burden borne by women in managing consumption under conditions of scarcity. The failure to take gender into account has therefore contributed in some degree to the perpetuation of poverty.

11. More than 550 million, or 60% of the world's rural population live below the poverty line in rural areas. This is a 50% increase for women since the 1970s. This "feminization" of rural poverty can be attributed to several factors, inter alia, cutbacks in basic and essential services as a result of restructuring policies; environmental degradation which impacts much more negatively on the smallholder and subsistence agriculture in which women are the majority; increasing male out-migration which in itself has contributed to the feminization of smallholder agriculture; increased number of female - headed households which are often the poorest and most disadvantaged of rural households; women's limited access to productive resources and services; and civil strife and armed conflicts which contribute to the growing number of displaced women and refugees who are forced to provide for their families under exceptionally harsh circumstances. A combination of these factors and trends is particularly evident in the African region. This has grave implications in view of the fact that Africa's populations are almost all rural - based, with figures ranging between 60% and 85%. They live very close to the environment and primary resource base, with the largest majority of them being women and youth. At the same time, many countries in the region are experiencing political and civil instability which is threatening to dislocate women, youth and their families from their accustomed places of abode and livelihoods.

12. The linkages between gender, poverty, environment and development are therefore particularly marked in the rural areas of the developing countries of Africa. The malaise that characterizes these linkages stems from several factors, for

instance,

- . Rural populations, the majority of whom are women and youth, are invariably inadequately served and rarely reached by development resources.

- . The remoteness of rural locales from national decision-making centres places them at a marginal and disadvantageous position.

- . Rural populations, not only in Africa but the world over, tend to cling to their traditional gender relations, while productive and reproductive functions - of both men and women - tend to be merged.

- . Education facilities and services tend to be concentrated in the urban areas and priority access to these resources is given to men and boys because of socio-cultural and economic factors.

- . Restrictions are imposed on rural women and these bar them from participating in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

13. The above constitutes the social economic and political framework that women operate under which places them at the end of the distribution chain of productive resources and social services. Yet the flip side of this coin is in stark contrast in terms of what women actually do.

They are at the beginning of the food production chain that sustains both rural and urban populations. In developing countries, rural women are responsible for more than 55% of the food grown; in Africa they are responsible for 70% of food

production. They comprise 67% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. Strategies intended to ease the burden of poverty must take fully into account the predicament of rural women and ensure that the flow of productive resources and social services to rural populations have a positive impact on firstly, food production for consumption by rural households and the country at large, and secondly, on sound environmental protection and management practices. An analysis of the linkages between gender, poverty, environment and development must of necessity address the issue of access to and control of productive resources: land, labour, capital, technology and extension services. Land tenure and land use systems, and access to water, fuelwood, and other productive natural resources are determined by the prevailing political social and economic conditions, as well as by the gender relations of the society.

14. The International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the General Assembly in 1990 incorporates these and other shifts in the current views on development, chief among them being: -

- equality between women and men as both a goal and a means of development;
- significant improvement in the human condition in the developing countries and a reduction in the gap between poor and rich countries;
- enhancement of the participation of all men, women and youth in economic and political life, protection of cultural identities and assuring to all the necessary means of survival.

15. A major goal of the Strategy is "a development process that is responsive to social needs, seeks a significant reduction in extreme poverty, promotes the development and utilization of human resources and skills, and is environmentally sound and

sustainable". The Strategy implicitly embodies the idea that while accelerating economic growth is a major objective, economic growth by itself does not ensure that its benefits will be equitably distributed or that the physical environment will be protected and improved. Consequently, the alleviation of poverty, the development of the human resource and the protection and management of the environment should be priority aspects of development in all countries - developed, developing or newly industrialised.

16. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) that was held in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, achieved a critical consensus on the issue of women, environment and development. The Rio Earth Summit concluded that women are central to the improvement and management of ecosystems and natural resources, which are indispensable in the pursuit of sustainability. Previous to UNCED, the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment, held in Miami Florida in November 1991 concluded that,

"Women's full participation in environmental management is essential for achieving sustainable development....".

17. At the UNCED in 1992, participants called for the engagement of women in environmental management. Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the Rio Conference stipulates that "Women have a vital role to play in environmental management and development and their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development".

Similarly, Agenda 21, the blueprint document that was negotiated and adopted at UNCED to guide the achievement of sustainable development strongly emphasized women's participation in national and international ecosystem management and control of environmental degradation. Agenda 21 underscores the need for

creative and effective partnerships between different groups and stakeholders on environment and development. Chapters 24 and 38 of the Agenda call for an increase in the proportion of women decision makers, planners, technical advisers, managers and extension workers in environment and development fields. These chapters recommend that mechanisms be established at national, regional and international levels to assess the implementation and impact of environment and development policies and programmes on women to ensure their contribution and benefits.

**IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION TO INTEGRATE GENDER,
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

18. In order to fully involve women in decisions on environment and development and in the implementation of sustainable development activities, they must participate at all levels of research, data collection and dissemination of information. To this end, countries should develop gender - sensitive and gender - based databases, information systems and participatory action - oriented research and policy analyses with the collaboration of academic institutions and local women researchers, based on the following:

- (a) Women's knowledge systems and experience on environmental management and conservation which must be incorporated in the databases and information systems for sustainable development;
- (b) How environmental degradation impacts on women through, for example, drought, desertification, floods, toxic chemicals, etc.
- (c) How civil strife, armed conflict and wars disrupt women - environment linkages, thereby rendering women as refugees and displaced persons without the means to

support and sustain their families, households and communities and creating further impoverishment;

- (d) Designing plans and programmes for the creation of rural and urban training, research and resource centres that can serve to disseminate environmentally sound technologies for women.

19. For women to become effective managers of ecosystems, and to therefore contribute to sustainable development initiatives, two issues must be addressed and integrated; firstly, the differing requirements of specific ecosystems should be known, and secondly, regardless of the type of ecosystem, it must be accepted that women have critical roles and responsibilities in natural resource and ecosystem management. They also have a shared set of common requirements for them to become effective ecosystem managers. In these respects, several criteria can be considered, inter alia.

- (a) The specific requirements of women eg.
 - (i) Secure rights to land and other natural resources;
 - (ii) Access to credit, training and environmental education;
 - (iii) Full and effective involvement and participation in:
 - . design and implementation of projects;
 - . selection and development of appropriate technologies;
 - . design and implementation of training programmes;
 - . entrepreneurial activities that encourage and promote sustainable production practices.

- (b) Integration of the perceptions and the knowledge of environmental conditions and practices of women from all levels and strata of society, into the institutional processes related to environment, development, and natural resource utilization and conservation.
- (c) Participation of women in training, environmental education programmes, and access to fiscal and other resources. This is essential to engaging women in ecosystem management and it also contributes to providing them with the means to reduce poverty.
- (d) Identification of points of convergence between the requirements of a viable ecosystem and the roles and capacities of women within their respective socio-cultural contexts.
- (e) Examination of the differing and complementary economic roles of men and women when formulating joint women in development (WID) and environment programmes. Macro level policies, as practiced by both governments and the private sector, must assess the micro level impacts and consequences for women and ecosystems, and the relationships between the two.
- (f) Taking account of overwhelming population numbers in certain areas, user and consumer demands, and civil war and armed conflict which threaten the capacity of women to manage natural resources and ecosystems.

V. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

20. Some brief recommendations can be proposed on the issues so far discussed:

1. Development of a holistic, multi-disciplinary inter-sectoral approach to manage the multiple demands placed on the environment, and the inclusion of women in every aspect of developing this approach.
2. Information on the roles of women in a given ecosystem must be integrated into environmental assessments.
3. Data on the effects of industrial and urban expansion on women should be collected to serve as the basis for adjusting environment and resource management processes and procedures, including user rights, permits, access, heads of household status for women, credit schemes, adoption of technologies, training, etc., with the inclusion of grassroots/community women.
4. Since so many of the decisions concerning the environment and natural resources are made at top political and managerial levels, it is essential to promote the education and exposure of women in economics, science, technology, managerial and political decision - making, in order for them to participate in determining local economic and management priorities in matters affecting their lives.
5. Training at all levels of girls and women, especially in the natural and technical sciences that will enable them to make informed choices, offer informed inputs, and to be environmental and natural resource researchers and managers.

6. Decentralization of environmental planning and control processes to rural localities to (a) promote community organizations and NGO participation so that isolated groups will not be further marginalized; and (b) allow more flexible planning for localized conditions.
7. All development agents - government, non-governmental private sector - at all levels should, through formal and informal education enhance awareness of the environment, respect for nature, gender equality, and motivate people's participation in protecting the environment and eliminating gender discrimination. Account should be taken of traditional ecological practices which respect to the environment. The educational process should be directed at recognition of ecological values, integration of the environmental dimension in the subjects taught, and cultural sensitivity to gender equality.
8. The media should be utilized effectively in raising awareness and dissemination of education and information to a broad public for environmental promotion, protection and women's development.
9. Preparation of appropriate educational materials should be encouraged on environmental and gender issues through the use of audio-visuals, songs, popular theatre, puppets, etc. Such educational materials should be adapted for use by different groups - men, women, youth and children. In addition, assistance should be provided for participatory action-oriented research concerning women and the environment and appropriate technology to reduce women's workload.

10. Identification and/or creation of appropriate and benign technology and its research, development and transfer in order to minimize negative impact on women and the environment. This should include assessment of existing indigenous technology. The criteria of appropriateness include availability, affordability, acceptability, positive impact and accessibility.
11. Identification, evolution and development of standards and criteria for environmental impact assessment before projects are undertaken, in consultation with the people affected should be undertaken. Assessment of social impact must also be included to determine the effect of developmental projects on women.

VI. CONCLUSION

21. This brief paper has attempted to highlight some of the aspects that have to be considered in any attempt to address the critical issue of integrating gender into environmental and resource management for sustainable development in Africa. Its basic premise is that a successful development strategy cannot afford to ignore the knowledge, experience, intuitions, contributions and concerns of a significant proportion of the African populations, namely the women. With particular reference to sustainable futures and the necessity of attaining inter-generational equity, a special focus must be directed, to the youth of Africa who comprise about 50% of the continents total human resource, and upon whom the future of the region depends.

22. A notable emphasis in the paper is that in many rural regions of the developing countries, and Africa is a case in point, the linkages between women, poverty and environmental degradation are particularly apparent and this calls for an integrated, multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach in the formulation of development policy, the implementation of

programmes and projects and the assessment of social and gender-selective impacts of the development process. Throughout the paper, the running theme is the need to involve women from all levels and strata of society in the design, implementation and assessment of environmental and resource management techniques and practices. To this end, the paper urges that more women be included in natural sciences, scientific and technical training programmes, and in top-level decision - making and managerial positions, in order for them to participate more fully and effectively in the making of decisions and choices that affect their lives.

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