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Economic Commission for Africa
Commission économique pour l'Afrique

ACW/ECA/MR/CdI/99

REPORT
OF MISSION TO
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, ABIDJAN

Côte D'Ivoire, 25-26 February 1999

By
H. M. K. Tatria, Regional Advisor, ECA
H. Alyek, Uganda Police Force

I. Introduction:

The African Development Bank (ADB) has a mandate to promote the Economic and Social development of its member countries. In 1990 the Bank issued a policy paper on Women in Development and efforts have since then been made to carry out a number of activities focussing on integrating gender in its operations.

The mid-term review in 1995 however, indicated that the Bank's WID activities had not succeeded in mainstreaming gender issues in the Bank's regular lending program. The report noted that the "quality of gender analysis in the context of project design is not up to the level necessary for an adequate mainstreaming of gender issues in the operations of the Bank: On the basis of their recommendations for Mid-term Review, a new Gender Strategy was approved by the Directors in 1995. However, in the same year, restructuring in the Bank resulted in the elimination of the WID unit.

A new Unit, Environment and Sustainable Development, has now been created and has been mandated to address all crosscutting issues, including gender. The major function of the Unit is to enhance the mainstreaming of gender issues in the Bank's operations. Specifically it is to ensure gender-sensitive policies and guidelines, and to enhance the visibility of gender issues in all the Bank's policy dialogues with the member countries.

In order to carry out the new mandate, a major gender-mainstreaming program has been established. One of the activities in the program is a "Keynote speaker series" whose major objective is to sensitize the Bank staff and open dialogue on gender issues.

2. Mission Objective

The ADB invited the Regional Advisor to prepare and present a Keynote speech within the context of the newly established gender-mainstreaming program. The purpose of the mission therefore was to:

- Present a Keynote speech on "Addressing Poverty Reduction and Economic Development through empowerment of women."
- Lead a group discussion on experiences in mainstreaming gender issues within institutions.

3. The paper "Addressing Poverty Reduction and Economic Development through Empowerment of Women" proposed by the Regional Advisor, was presented and discussed at the ADB over a period of 2 hours and 45 minutes. (The paper that was presented is attached). The presentation was attended by about 25 people from within the Bank and other partners from outside the Bank. The Keynote address was said to come at the right time as the Bank is at a critical stage of developing programs for the 8th African Development Fund. Among the main issues followed up on discussions after the Keynote address was made are:

- The impact of empowerment of women institutional practices.
- The concept of poverty and empowerment.
- The process for ensuring changes in cultural and traditional values, norms and practices.
- The nature of housework in African rural homes
- The reasons for failure in the Bank's Women in Development programs
- Other experiences of success stories in addressing gender issues
- Need for paradigm shift in discussing development concerns as well as the value of redefining women's work.

4. During the mission, a group discussion focussing on experiences in mainstreaming gender in institutions was organized for member of the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit. The experiences of ECA in gender mainstreaming were shared to emphasize institutional mechanisms. The main points highlighted, during the discussions, as important for effective institutional gender mainstreaming are:

- High Level commitment and Support to gender mainstreaming as a process towards achieving gender quality.
- Establishment of institutionally visible gender focal point, with adequate resource policy guidelines and gender mainstreaming mandate.
- Institutional policies and practices, which support recruitment and promotion of women as a way of creating gender balance in the institution's staff.
- Consistent gender training, for staff, to enhance technical capacity for

addressing gender issues in programs and projects.

5. After the discussion, the gender focal point of ADB suggested that the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit should maintain collaboration with the African Centre for Women. One of the activities in which the gender focal point might solicit for further technical advisory assistance is in the development of a gender policy for the Bank.

**BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT
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COTE D'IVOIRE

REFERENCE:
DATE: 24 NOV. 1998

Mrs. J. Ouedraogo
Head
ECA African Centre for Women
BP 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FAX: (225) 51 30 38

Attention: Dr. Hilda Tadria, Senior Adviser

Dear Mrs Ouedraogo,

Subject: Letter of invitation

As you are aware, the mandate of the ADB is to promote the economic and social development of its Regional Member Countries (RMCs). In order to achieve this mandate, a general awareness by its staff and RMCs officials on environmental and social issues is important. It is in this vein, that the Bank is organizing a Key Note Speaker Series.

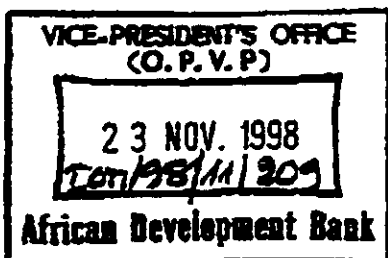
We are pleased to inform you that Dr. Tadria, Senior Adviser, has been identified as one of the Key Note Speakers. We would expect her to prepare a present a paper titled "Addressing Poverty Reduction and Economic Development through Empowerment for Women" either on February 25 or February 26, 1999 at the Bank's Headquarters.

In view of the above, it would therefore be appreciated if you would facilitate the participation Dr. Tadria in our Key Note Speakers Series.

Yours Sincerely,

Cyril Enweze
Vice President, Operations

UNION AIA
SDB/ATRCV
Date 25/11/98
Date Received
No. 2804
ANS'D
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INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: 23 NOV. 1998

TO : Mr. Cyril Enwezé
Vice President, OPVP

FROM : K. Opsal
Manager, OESU

SUBJECT : Training and Advisory Project -Key Note Presentation:
"Addressing Poverty Reduction and Economic
Development through Empowerment for Women "
by Dr. Hilda Tadria, Senior Adviser, UN ECA
February, 25 or 26, 1999

1. In continuation with Training Module 2 of the captioned Project, we would like to inform you that Dr. Hilda Tadria, Senior Adviser at the UN ECA African Centre for Women (ACW) will be speaking to Bank staff on the issue of "Addressing Poverty Reduction and Economic Development through Empowerment for Women" either on February 25 or February 26, 1999.
2. In view of the aforementioned, we have prepared for your signature the attached letter of invitation addressed to Ms J. Ouedraogo, Head of the UN ECA ACW inviting Dr. Tadria to the Bank.

Thank you

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24/11

ECA – CEA



**Economic Commission for Africa
Commission économique pour l'Afrique**

**ADDRESSING POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

**PAPER PRESENTED
AT THE
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

26 February 1999

**By
Hilda M.K. Tadria, Regional Advisor
African Centre for Women, ECA**

INTRODUCTION:

1. Most African economies have for many years performed poorly, to say the least. Even those countries that have been quoted as having done relatively well in the last 3-5 years, their performance is still lower than that of the early seventies. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African countries need to attain and sustain a near to double-digit growth rate if they are to meaningfully improve the standard of living of their people. (Economic Report of Africa 1999). But the hope for Africa is that in those few countries which have shown improvement, research information shows that there is a strong link between Competitive index and Human Development Index.

2. The Africa Competitiveness report (1998) shows that human development is positively correlated with national competitiveness. This is true for only five countries in Africa. For the rest of the countries research also shows that Africa ranks as the second most unequal region in the world. Research further shows that of all the inequalities which exist in Africa, gender inequalities are the most pronounced. The most fundamental characteristic of these gender inequalities is the exclusion of African women from the economic and political sectors. To date, it is still possible to find African countries where cultural norms are being used to define official policy regarding women's access to productive resources like land. Feminization of poverty has never been more meaningful than when applied to poverty in Africa.

3. The main contention of this paper is that poverty cannot be eradicated in Africa unless the African woman, the invisible backbone of household economies (that is livelihood and survival) and general well being, is fully empowered. The need to focus on empowerment of women, as a means of addressing poverty and development, gains support from UNECA's argument that Africa's economic performance must be measured within an effective and relevant evaluation framework. Such a framework, it is argued, should reflect the aspirations of its people.

4. If in future, the economic performance of Africa is to be measured on the basis of whether it has promoted the economic well being of its citizens, then the starting point is the empowerment of women, the majority of the poor in Africa. This framework indicates a major paradigm shift in measuring economic performance, and comes a long way to accommodate what feminist practitioners and academicians have argued for in the past. In order to utilize this framework, however, African economists have to go through a major shift in thinking about the economic role of women. It remains to be seen whether this shift can be made. The conclusion of this paper is that the African Development Bank has a major role to play in the process. Its stated commitment to integrating a gender perspective in its development priorities is an important starting point.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, THE OPTIMAL PATH TO DEVELOPMENT:

I believe there are only two kinds of economics- good and bad! Good economics are about the quest for the optimal path to improve people's lives in a tangible way. Of course , macroeconomic instrumentation can be intricate and complex, but we should always remember to keep our eyes on the prize,"- sustainable development.

Marc-Andre Fredette

Source: Lynn r. Brown and Joanna Kerr; 1997

5. There is no doubt, for many of us striving for the advancement of women, that empowering women is a major key to the prize: economic development. There are others yet, both men and women who because they are not sure of the outcome, empowerment of women spells doom. For a lot of these men, empowerment is regarded as a finite commodity, available only to a few. For this category of people, women's empowerment spells men's dis-empowerment. In fact their belief, and perhaps the major basis of their fear, is that because empowerment is a limited commodity which men already have, women cannot get 'empowerment' unless they take some of it from those who already have it, that is the men. In their view, when women get some 'empowerment', there will be nothing left for men. Obviously, viewed from this perspective, women's empowerment cannot be but a threat.

6. Women's empowerment, as perceived by some women, is also a scary prospect. For some of these women, mistakenly, empowerment conjures up male behavior and therefore undesirable behavior for women. From an uninformed perspective, empowered women are usually conceptualized as obnoxiously assertive, insensitive, masculine and therefore social misfits, not fit for marriage. It is such power of imagination that makes it unthinkable for many women to fight for empowerment.

7. I would like to suggest that we view women's empowerment from another, positive, perspective. The process can be compared to lighting a candle from another candle. When one candle is used to light another, the light does not go out from the first candle. Neither does that diminish the light available in a room. Women's empowerment must be seen, and addressed seriously, as an optimal path to improve people's lives and not as a means of dis-empowering men.

9. The struggle for women's empowerment dates back to the mid 1800 when the women suffragette stormed the world. Yet today, the skeptics continue to ask the oldest question, what do women really want? Empowerment is a difficult and loaded concept. But what women really want is to be able to control their lives, to define what is or is not good for them, and to have the ability, the means as well as the skills to solve their problems and maintain their well being. What women want is empowerment to get rid of human poverty and deprivation, as it is defined in the Human Development report of 1998:

More than a lack of what is necessary for material well-being, poverty can also mean denial of

opportunities and choices most basic to human development: To lead a long healthy, creative life. to have a decent standard of living. **To enjoy dignity, self-esteem, the respect of others and the things that people value in life.** Page 25

10. In terms of empowerment for poverty eradication and development, the UNECA's Economic Report (1999) echoes the same principle:

In the context of Africa, one way of summarizing the objective of enhancing well-being, which also translates into the main objective of development, is the eradication of poverty....Poverty can be viewed as having two dimensions. The first is material poverty, which is typically defined in terms of low levels of income. The second is human poverty, which is associated with low status in terms of health, education, and liberties.

Draft: Economic Report on Africa 1999

The paradigm shift that is being articulated in the ECA economic report is ground breaking in the analysis of poverty and development in Africa because it provides possibilities for analyzing poverty and development from a gender perspective, and in particular, from a women's perspective. It is pertinent because it reiterates what African women have been saying they want; empowerment in terms of income, health, education and liberties. These are some of the "master-keys" (or shall we say, 'mistress-keys') to poverty eradication, and development.

AFRICAN WOMEN: THE CROSSROAD TO POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT:

11. There are several reasons why poverty eradication and development in Africa must be addressed through empowerment of women. One of the ways of reducing poverty is increasing domestic productivity. The role women play in domestic productivity, though not clearly understood by economists, is critical to development in Africa. Secondly, research on the status of women in Africa shows that gender inequality is a key characteristics of the social status, and relations, of women and men. In the final analysis, because of the role they play in development, and the unequal position they occupy in African societies, women are indeed the 'cross roads' of poverty and development.

12. The nature and impact of gender inequalities on poverty and development has been well researched:

Women make up 51 percent of Africa's population; in most countries, they dominate food production. Research and experience prove that investing in this large productive group is the best way to promote social and economic development in general. Overall in Africa, however, significant gender gaps persist in access to social services. On the continent, more girls than boys die before they reach age five. African women suffer greater incidence of morbidity than African men do. School enrolment for girls is less than those of boys. More than half of the women in Sub-Saharan Africa over 25 years of age is illiterate.

Source: Economic Commission for Africa: Forging Partnerships for Africa's Future, 1997

THE COMPELLING REASONS:

13. All the research data show that there are many compelling reasons why women's empowerment must be given attention, in addressing poverty in Africa. Africa has set its target to reduce poverty by half in fifteen years from now. Women form, not only more than half of the population in most African countries, but also the majority of the poor. Given the statistics on the unequal situation of women and men in Africa, and the related feminization of poverty in particular, it makes sense that if poverty eradication is Africa's development goal, women, the majority of the poor should be Africa's major port of call.

14. Another compelling reason for empowerment of women is that gender inequalities are still pervasive in all aspects of African existence. Further, the fundamental characteristic of this inequality is that of exclusion whereby the majority of women continue to be denied access to important means of production, while playing significant roles in economic production and family welfare.

15. In the paper (Gender, Growth, and Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa) prepared for ECA 40Th. Anniversary conference, the writers¹ highlight the nature of gender inequalities that predominate in most African countries and thus provide additional reasons why women's empowerment must be a development issue. First they illustrate that women and men experience poverty differently because of differences in access to and control of key assets. Secondly, they show that time allocation in many parts of Africa is a major gender issue, with women reported to work longer hours than men do. Thirdly, and most revealing are the statistics education which show that there are gender differentials at all levels of education, with girls' enrolment rates lagging behind those of boys, and that these differentials widen at higher levels. Ultimately this has negative effect on the participation of women in the political and economic arenas. These are not simply coincidences.

16. The existing gender inequalities are not simply coincidences. In many African countries, it

¹Gender Team, Institutional and Social policy unit, Africa Region, World Bank, 1998

is still possible to find official policy and cultural barriers that determine differential access to resources, legal and human rights as well as participation in public spheres. Many governments have, since Beijing, made policy changes and developed action plans to facilitate the advancement of women. In Africa, however, policy and cultural constraints still largely account for the persistent inequalities between women's and men's participation in formal employment, education, as well as policy and decision making institutions. In most African countries, budgetary allocations continue to ignore the gender differences and to date, very few countries have made any substantial budget allocation for the implementation of the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action.²

17. Compared to men, women have a higher incidence of poverty, their poverty tends to be more severe, because of lack of control of productive resources, and their poverty, especially under the structural adjustment programs seems to be increasing more than men's. In their report, Mapping Progress, the Women Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) shows that by committing themselves to the Beijing Platform of Action, governments have committed themselves to a gender approach. This, it is reported, has influenced "the incremental progress towards women's equality". But in addition, the report shows why a gender approach, and especially women's empowerment, must continue to be integrated into all development planning:

"The debilitating impact of economic globalization and restructuring programs on women's lives, as reported by a number of women's organizations, cannot but raise concerns that even while the building blocks of Beijing are going up, the edifice is on shaky ground. The gender impact of such macroeconomic policies may not be uniformly negative across countries, classes and economies. Nor can their impact be allowed to obscure the fact that the record of many developing countries in social sector spending has been dismal prior to structural adjustment. *What is undeniable is that economic restructuring has exacerbated -even legitimized- governments' lack of will to address women's concerns in policies and budgets.* As a result, it is women who, as workers, producers, and consumers, mothers and caretakers, are the shock absorbers of adjustment efforts and bear a disproportionate burden of the cost of transition. The evidence is inescapable from the reports of women in Africa."

Executive Summary, Mapping Progress, 1998, p. 4

18. It has been said many times and perhaps needs no repeating, but the fact that women still have to struggle for basic needs like water, cooking fuel, decent means of transport should be food for thought in a continent whose objective is to eliminate poverty by 2015. Many women still accommodate domestic violence, sexual abuse and female trafficking. There are many countries where a woman cannot move physically, or take any initiative, without the permission of a husband, brother or father. This is not so much because there are no protection laws but because in many cases, women are not culturally and economically empowered enough to take advantage

²In Mapping Progress, Assessing Implementation of the Beijing Platform, 1998, the Women's Environment and Development organisation (WEDO), analyses the extent to which governments have accomplished their commitments made in Beijing. Out of the 88 countries analysed, 18 are African countries.

in many cases, women are not culturally and economically empowered enough to take advantage of the laws. In most cases, the patriarchal system render the protection laws useless; so, the protectors of the legal system during office hours become the abusers, during the night and off duty, under the patriarchal system. In spite of the many schools of thought, most economists agree that one of the objectives of economic policies equitable distribution. Equity and equality are important indicators of human well being. Another compelling reason for women's empowerment is that it is a first step in eliminating gender inequalities, which is itself a necessary condition for establishing sustainable human well-being and economic growth.

19. The Africa Competitiveness Report of 1998 further demonstrates the strong correlation between competitive economies and human development. In this report, it is shown that even when using different data, as was the case for the UNDP Human Development Report and the Africa Competitiveness Report, there was a strong correlation between the Competitiveness Index and the Human Development Index. Strong performers like Mauritius and Tunisia, for example, were shown also to have a high human development index. The conclusion from this was that there are "strong benefits in human well being of a national competitiveness (and no doubt, the contribution of human development to the achievement of a competitive economy.)"³

20. The UNDP Human Development report is a global report, but it makes important conclusions from well-established data. Many of these conclusions have implications for women's empowerment and how this is directly related to poverty eradication and development in African countries. The Human Development Reports of 1995 and 1996 show very clearly that **"no society treats its women as well as its men"**. According to the data, no society was able to score the maximum achievement with regard to gender equality and further, for all the regions, the GDI is lower than the HDI. It has already been said that gender inequality is pervasive in Africa and that this inequality is mainly characterized by greater deprivation for women than men, and that women's achievement is lower than that of men. **That no society treats its women as well as it treats its men has been demonstrated by all the studies quoted in this paper. This alone is a compelling reason for empowerment of women.**

21. It is particularly revealing to note that removing gender inequalities is not dependent on having high-income levels. **The gender empowerment measure (GEM) used in the Human Development report to measure gender inequality in economic, political participation and decision making further shows that the creation of opportunities for women does not depend on the income level or economic growth rate of a country.** The Human Development Report further shows data to prove that some developing countries have outperformed richer countries in gender equality in political, economic and professional activities. What all this means is that *establishing gender equality is dependant on good development policies, and methodologies that focus on creating economic growth with equity.*

³Jeffrey D Sachs, The Africa Competitiveness Report, 1998, page 19. This report measures the competitiveness of 23 countries in Africa, based on : openness, government, finance, labour, infrastructure and institutions. The UNDP Human Development Report measures general human welfare, based on life expectancy, literacy, school enrolment rates and real percapita GDP.

GENDER INEQUALITY HAS NEGATIVE IMPACT ON HUMAN WELL BEING AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE.

22. In the 1998 UNDP Human development report, the negative impact of gender inequality on a country's Human Development Indicator (HDI) is made clear. A Gender Development indicator (GDI) measures achievements in human development, but captures inequality in achievement between women and men. The report clearly shows that "*the greater the gender disparity in human development, the lower a country's GDI, compared with its HDI. If Africa ignores the empowerment of women, then it is selecting to maintain the gender inequalities; a sure route to poverty.*"

IN AFRICA, EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN WILL HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT ON HUMAN WELL BEING AND DEVELOPMENT.

23. The case for empowerment of women is brought home more strongly when one look at the health sectors as one of the current development challenges of the African continent. One of the indicators of health is the longevity of a country's population. In almost all-African countries, the life expectancy of women at birth is higher than men's. However, this is usually reversed by age five. Most of the causes of this reversal can be addressed through focussing on women's empowerment, either social-culturally, or economically.

24. As far back as 1987, a major program on Safe Motherhood was launched in Nairobi. It was envisaged that there would be a 50% reduction in maternal mortality by the year 2000. Last year (1998), in a conference organized in Nigeria to track progress shocking revelations were made. Half a million women die, each year, in childbirth. 30% of all these deaths are in Africa. The major causes of maternal mortality in Africa are obstructed labor. This is itself related to the fact that many women have narrow birth canals, or undeveloped pelvic. The latter is partly a result of under-nourishment. Anemia mainly related to poor feeding and over work, is a constant condition of many women in rural Africa and a major cause of underweight births, itself a contributor to child mortality. Another cause of obstructed labor is under-age teenage pregnancy. In many other cases, sheer lack of facilities for, and information on, reproductive health is also a major contributor to maternal mortality.

25. Then there are other cases where women still have no say in their reproductive health or sexual life. But the need to focus on women's empowerment becomes more urgent when one analyses the trends of HIV/AIDS infection in Africa. In a recent report on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, it was reported that the prevalence is greater in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere in the world. 83% of all HIV/AIDS related deaths since the epidemic first broke out are reported to have been recorded in Africa.

26. The studies also show people most at risk. These are young people aged between 14-24, and the majority among these are girls and young women. The studies also showed that girls and young women became infected at a younger age than that of boys. In one country in Africa, it has been found out that 22% of girls aged 15-19 were infected compared to 4% of boys in the same age group. In another country in a higher age bracket (20-24), 35.4% of women were infected,

compared to 10.7% of men in the same age bracket. (Office of the Coordination of humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional Information Network special report, 1998). Again, these cannot be pure coincidences

27. **Looking at the state of their health, as exemplified by HIV/AIDS infection and maternal mortality rates reported in the above sections, women's biology has indeed become their destiny.** Women's empowerment, through education on Sex and reproductive health must be combined with economic empowerment. But this is only part of the story; the patriarchal system which allocates privileges to the male members of society while treating all women as children and dependants, men's preference for young and biologically immature girls, domestic violence which ensures women's silence, all these must be targets for change in the process of empowering women. Only then can women have, and make, the right choices for their well being. While well-being is a development right, in another context, empowerment of women for their well being cannot be but a sure route to poverty eradication and development. As the Africa Report emphasizes, "In the context of Africa, one way of summarizing the objective of enhancing well-being, which also translates into the main objective of development, is the eradication of poverty". (Draft: Africa report, 1999, p. 35)

28. In Education, as in health, the positive relationship between poverty eradication, development and women's education has been demonstrated... First, the education of women has direct impact on reduction in population growth, (another development challenge for Africa) because it is related with low fertility. Secondly, women's education contributes to improved family healthy because an educated woman (even up to only six years of education) tends to invest more time in child health care (e.g., post natal care, immunization) and family nutrition. Studies have also shown that women's income, (unlike men's income) is spent mainly on improvement of the family and less on personal luxury goods. In spite of these positive indicators, education for women in Africa continues to be a low priority. For example, statistics in the 1998 Human Development Report show that in almost all African countries, the literacy rate for women is at least 15-20% lower than that of men and in some countries it is as high as 30-40% lower. Only one country, South Africa, has an adult literacy rate for women (81.7%) which is almost the same as men's (81.9%).

29. Not surprisingly, according to the UNDP Human Development report, the women's share of income in every African country is much lower than that of men. In Libya, the only African country ranked among countries with a High Human development index, the women's share of income is 16.3 % while that of men is 83.7%. This of course has negative implications for overall development as Libya then gets a negative ranking of -22 on the Human Development indicator, which shows that its GDI is worse than its HDI. Tanzania is the only country with a narrow difference, where women's share of income is 47.3%, compared to that of men, 52.7%. Considering the role of women in family health and well being already discussed, their empowerment in terms of income would go along way to enhancing the general well being of the African population, thus contributing to development.

30. The most important relationship between poverty eradication, development and women's empowerment is best illustrated in the agricultural sector, where women's production is concentrated. Agriculture is said to be the engine of growth in Africa, yet, women, the managers of this engine, have received the least attention in this sector. The persistent neglect of gender issues in agricultural production is directly linked with the poor performance of agricultural sector, especially in the food sector where women's labor is concentrated. In almost all African countries, women and men have different access to and control over basic economic production resources, especially land. This inequality has also been shown to affect labor supply, labor productivity and access to resources, with direct negative impact on growth.

31. Several studies have shown the relationship between the crisis in food security and lack of appropriate support to women, the major producers. Writing about African women in agriculture Winrock International Institute for Agriculture makes the following pertinent observation:

...The pace of food production lags behind the world's highest rates of population growth. The food shortfalls generally are discussed in terms of the "four Ds": drought, degradation, deforestation, and desertification. They are also often discussed as "the sins of the state"-failure to get the prices right, overvalued currencies, an urban bias in development policies, bloated bureaucracies, and so on...

But the African food crisis can be considered in another way, focussing on African women, who raise most of the food and produce all of the children. Women Farmers- who raise 70% of African staples and as much as 80% of locally grown food crops-have many burdens and do not receive enough incentives and support to keep food production above the high fertility levels they want and need to help them subsist. In fact, African women, overwhelmingly rural, raise higher proportions of food and have more children than women in any other world region. Yet, they suffer from the greatest discrepancy in the world between levels of production and access to the factors for agricultural intensification-education, extension, and inputs.

Source: African Women in Agriculture: farmers, students, extension agents, chiefs, 1992.

32. Recognising the role women play in agricultural production, family management and maintenance by providing the necessary support at policy and basic support services level is one giant step towards raising economic growth in Africa. Studies show that women and men have different time allocations to productive, reproductive and community management activities but that in almost all African countries, the division of labor is such that women have longer working hours than men. The key concern in agricultural production, therefore is not simply the empowerment of women for greater involvement. The key question is, what can be done to enhance men's participation to become equally responsible for food agricultural production. But the issue of the "missing men" in productive and reproductive activities is a full topic of its own.

33. In 1995, a major research was carried out in three countries to establish the gender dimensions of economic reforms. The study found that "While women constitute a key part of the agricultural sector in all three countries, and are responsible for a major share of crop production,

neglect of female farmers is still the order of the day.”⁴ The research findings of this study reconfirmed the reasons why women’s empowerment must be addressed, as part of the process of poverty eradication and development:

“This research has illustrated how macroeconomic policy reforms that are seemingly gender neutral have significant differential impacts on women and men. For example, one important realization has been that structural adjustment programs depend critically on the ability of individuals to reallocate productive resources in line with new economic incentives; this ability is determined in large part by a person’s gender. Gender is a fundamental social construct which conditions the nature of relationships between the sexes in the household, community, or work place. In other words, cultural and social patterns shape women and men’s involvement in production and reproduction and the distribution of resources and social value between them. As a result, women do not have the same access to , control of, or ability to move productive resources between differing sectors of economic activity as do men.” (Lynn R. Brown and Joanna Kerr, 1997, page 2).

34. If agriculture is the engine of development in Africa, and women as the major agricultural producers have no access to the basic production services, then the engine oil has missed the tank. No wonder agriculture, the engine of development in Africa, has stalled. Statistics show that there has been very little positive change in the daily per capita supply of calories in most countries since 1970 and that in many countries, the change has been negative. (Human Development Report , 1999, statistics on food security.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: DOES THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HAS A ROLE?

35. The case for empowerment of women, no matter what angle one looks at it, is watertight. The productive and reproductive roles women play in society, the inequalities and injustices they suffer, the state of their health and the gender specific impacts of structural adjustment measures, all combine to reinforce the need for women’s specific empowerment measures. Improving the well being of fifty percent of African population cannot but help Africa to meet its poverty alleviation and development objectives.

Women are the crossroads of poverty and development in the three areas (agriculture, education and health) where the Bank has decided to put its efforts. Even for selfish reasons, it is in the interest of the Bank to pay attention to the empowerment of women, because experience has shown that when women are not taken into account in lending or development projects, the success is limited, and the results are negative for women.

36. A lot needs to be done. At the African Development Bank, the starting point is a paradigm shift. A shift in the way production is defined so that it can incorporate women’s work. A shift in understanding that the invisibility of women is not because they do not work, but because what they do is not defined as work. This shift will define the way the Bank conceptualizes development projects and the major players and stakeholders in poverty alleviation, and what support they must get.

⁴ The Gender Dimensions of Economic Reforms in Ghana, Mali and Zambia, edited by Lynn R. Brown and Joanna Kerr, 1997

37. In a unique analysis of the factors which have contributed to the institutionalization of the invisibility of women, Marilyn Waring, a former Member of Parliament in New Zealand shows clearly how the United Nations System of National Accounting has played a leading role. Waring shows how the description of production, and producers, that has been used since 1953 focuses on all the stereotypical male roles, but also imposes values of industrialized countries on agrarian and subsistence societies.⁵ She then shows how the origin of the invisibility of women then goes back to the establishment of UNSNA where it was felt necessary, or rather "convenient to draw a production boundary". In drawing the boundaries, households were excluded from the category of producers.

For many of us African women, we find it baffling that African Economists continue to rely on definitions of production, and producers, designed outside the African reality. It is perhaps understandable (but still arguable) when a statistician or economist in the OECD says that in the case of housewives, "general services is too weak to be included in national accounts." But any body born, bred or living in Africa must know that a housewife's general duties include growing food and processing it, fetching firewood and water before anybody in her household can eat; they also include taking children to the local 'doctor' or going to the pharmacy (i.e. in the field) to look for local herbs, as well as any other duties that a patriarchal system may deem fit.

38. It is well and good to set up a women in development unit. But experience has shown that 'mechanical measures' alone are not enough. Mechanical measures relate to adoption of gender policies and procedures; opening opportunities for recruitment and changing institutional structures and practices. Another, equally important measure is the cultural measures. These measures refer to changes in perceptions, attitudes, values and norms, in other words, the paradigm shift needed to see and define the role and status of women differently. The mechanical measures and the cultural measures must be combined in the Bank's operations, as a way of preparing itself to address poverty reduction.

39. As a conclusion, I would like to leave with you a definition of work that is provided by Waring and which I find very down to earth:

"Every time I see a women with an infant, I know I am seeing a women at work. I know that work is not leisure and it is not sleep and it may well be enjoyable. I know that payment is not necessary for work to be done. But, again, I seem to be at odds with economics as a discipline, because when work becomes a concept in institutionalized economics, payment enters the picture."⁶

⁵ Marilyn Waring, *If women Counted: A New Feminist Economics*.

⁶ Marilyn Waring: page 25.

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