

GENDER, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By

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A. Background:

Global Actions for Women towards Environment, and Sustainable Development

In order to implement Agenda 21 the International Community has endorsed several plans of action and conventions for the full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities, in particular;

- The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of women. This emphasizes women's participation in national and international ecosystem management and control of environment degradation
- The convention on elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women
- Conventions of ILO and UNESCO adopted to end gender –based discrimination and ensure women access to land and other resources, education and safe and equal employment.
- The 1990 World Declaration on the. Development of Children and its plan for Action

Countries were urged to take urgent measures to avert on-going rapid environmental and economic degradation in developing countries that generally affect women and children in rural areas suffering drought, desertification, and deforestation, armed hostile, natural disasters, toxic waste and aftermath of the use of unsuitable agrochemical products.

It was envisaged that effective implementation of the above programmes would depend on the active involvement of women in economic and political decision making, thus women should be fully involved in decision making and in the implementation of sustainable development activities.

In this submission, we will review how much African countries integrated gender in major laws, policies, plans and actions that have a bearing on environment, who are the major actors to effect change at the various levels namely; governments, citizens, political environment and the business sector. The linkage of gender and environment to sustainable development, governance and globalisation will also be reflected. What is the way forward for Africa?

B. Introduction:

Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development:

Since the creation of man, there has always been distinct roles that are performed by youth, men and women in society based on gender. Gender can be defined as a dynamic and culturally determined social pattern created by men and women to define their relationships with each other and with their environment. It is these very relationships that determine decisions and activities that in turn have been affected in both the management and utilization of the environment for sustainable development. With time it has been observed and accepted that there is an undesirable imbalance that has developed between men and women and has affected the performance of their roles. In many cases, this has either distorted or hampered development with often-adverse effects on the environment. Efforts have therefore been made internationally and nationally to speed up development. In particular principal

No. 20 of the Rio Declaration on environment and development stresses this aspect and so does section III of the Agenda 21. Prior to that, the women's decade had highlighted many imbalances and made efforts to formulate strategies that would reduce the gap between men and women to be effectively incorporated in the main stream of development. This is the main reason that led to countries to create Directorates, Party affiliates, Women Bureaus, Women Affairs and National Council for Women

The Major Gender Policies and Laws:

Several countries in Africa have exhibited a broad spectrum ranging from strong commitment to political dressing. By 1998 most governments had set legal and political measures to honour women's rights.

The Uganda Government has taken a clear stand on promoting women's advancement. When creating the Ministry of Women in Development, the President of Uganda stated **“Our Policy aims at strengthening the position of women in the economy by rising the value and productivity of their labour and by giving them access to and control over productive resources. By productive resources I mean land, capital, credit, seeds, fertilizers, tools, water, energy, education and information”** (Ministry of Agriculture memoir). Since then this Presidential statement has obliged every organization, government or private sector to review, revise and formulate new policies where necessary translating the statement into sectoral specific policy objectives and strategies. It is in this regard and also in view of the of the provision of the Agenda 21 that the National Environment Action Plan found itself obligated to follow suit. This gender approach strategy is effected mainly through the Ministry, which is required to lead the way in enhancing gender awareness. Its function and mandate is to coordinate and facilitate the development of gender responsive policies and strategies for implementation in the various sectoral programmes. The Ministry reviews, revises the existing policies and formulates new ones where necessary with a gender perspective approach with special emphasis on disadvantaged groups, particularly women and youths. The ministry therefore is expected to ensure that gender concerns are made EXPLICIT in the sectoral policies so that the interests of youths, men and women are adequately catered for in developmental projects and programmes. The Ministry is consequently required to work closely with other gender sensitized persons who are involved in promoting gender in various organizations.

The Gender Approach:

Critiques of Women in Development (WID) approach pointed out that WID machinery failed to address women subordination and oppression. This led to Gender and development approach that differs from that of women and development.

This was emphasized in the fourth World Conference on Women “Action for Equality, Development and Peace” held in Beijing China in 1995 that gave a new and added impetus to a full implementation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 2000. One of the objectives; that is to mobilise men and women at both the policymaking and grassroot level.

This led to several countries taking up legal actions to address the concerns, notable were the laws and policies to address this.

The 1995 Constitution emphasizes the equality of women and men in Uganda and calls for affirmative action for all the marginalised groups. The National Gender Policy 1997 emphasises gender mainstreaming in the planning process at all levels of national development.

The Local Government Act 1997 decentralises government services and the management of natural resources inclusive, it also provides for women to form one third of the seats on local councils at every level. Each of the districts has local councils (LCs) namely: the local-level council 5 at the district level, below the district is village LC1, parish LC2 and sub-county LC3 and county level LC4. One of the nine positions at the local council is a secretary for women. Expenditures of all tax revenues and a substantial portion of national revenues are decided at the district and lower levels of governance.

The Land Act 1998 that ensures ownership of land makes minimal provision, by requiring at least one member of the various land management institutions set up to be a women, out of a total of four or five members. However the land tribunals established to adjudicate disputes have no such requirement.

Women are under represented on informal institutions in the community where decisions affecting inheritance, land use and other social services are made. In Zimbabwe, African culture dictates that upon marriage, a women moves to the husband home and become answerable to him. Any wealth she generates usually goes under the husband's name. Today as Zimbabwe braces for a historical land redistribution, women are clamoring for a fair share of the land. They want 30% of all the land acquired by government allocated to female-headed households. 52% of the 12 million people are women; 7 million make a living out of agriculture. 30% of total number of household in the country is headed by women but land distribution does not reflect this. The chiefs and other traditional leaders who make the initial selection in land redistribution exercise are men. This gives women no representation at this crucial level. There is need for gender-balanced committees. There is also no legal flame work to protect vulnerable groups like women, aged and children. The banking sector in Zimbabwe is convinced that women headed farms will transform the economy as they are more honest clients.

Key areas affecting women in decision making are political processes, management, employment, commerce and trade, and personal right. Factors causing female subordination are socio cultural values, attitudes and practices related to patriarchy.

As response to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a National Action Plan on Women 1999, was formulated whose goal is to achieve equal opportunities for women by empowering them to participate in and benefit from, the social, economic and political development.

The National Action Plan for Women is a five-year plan that will enable key players at all levels to identify, formulate, implement and monitor interventions at the community, district and national level.

Although there has been translation of gender laws and policies into a National Action Plan, such plans are not yet reflected at district level. Implementation is thus still limited because of the unwillingness of the key players to take action. There is also a limited understanding by both women and men of gender needs that arise from gender roles and the gender division of labour.

How has gender been integrated into Environment and sustainable development?

In order to avert the rapid degradation of the environment Uganda developed a National Environment Action Plan, 1995, that adopted a gender approach in planning the long-term investment of managing

the natural resources in the country. The NEAP makes a strong commitment to addressing environment problems and to sustainable development in a comprehensive manner. The plan also argues for participatory approaches to environmental planning and the integration of gender analysis. The Uganda National Environment Management Authority NEMA is charged with formulating national environment policies and providing guidance in the implementation, including environment impact assessment, and environment education and training in environment management

The main objective of incorporating gender in environment is to enable women and men perform their roles in the best cost effective methods that will conserve the environment, accelerate sustainable development consequently lead to the improvement in people's quality of life.

To achieve the above objectives there was need to formulate activities, which would contribute to the integrated promotion of sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection, covering various sectoral interventions involving a range of actors, from local to global that are essential at every level especially at the grassroots levels in the rural areas with special emphasis on the disadvantaged groups like women and youths.

The programmes therefore focus on;

- Empowerment of local and community groups by delegating authority, accountability and resources to the most appropriate level.
- Formulating a long term strategy aimed at establishing the best possible conditions for sustainable local, regional and national development
- Assisting the most disadvantaged groups particularly the women, children and the youth within those groups

The following groups were identified as potential groups to implement the programme:-

- ✓ Grass root peoples organizations (CBOs)
- ✓ Women groups and societies
- ✓ Non –governmental organizations

Recognising the women and men's role in daily decisions, activities, short and long term strategies of development cannot be over-emphasized. This helps to focus on the intended target groups to produce the desired results. Sustainable, environmentally safe development can only be achieved through a gender-oriented approach of particularly recognizing the roles of the disadvantaged groups in the utilization of the natural resources.

Uganda is currently implementing a programme of decentralization meant to shift decision making and budgeting from central government level to district to better align the interest, needs and issues of rural communities. Decentralisation empowers rural communities with the responsibilities of problem identification and prioritisation of local concern, leaving the technical solutions and resource allocation decisions at the district level. The devolution of authority from the centre to the district level and grass root levels is a bold step to increased levels of participation.

Decentralisation gives districts the right to retain more taxes and other revenues half of which is held at sub-county level. While central government will retain control over land, mines, minerals water resources and secondary education; districts will assume responsibilities for natural resources and social services including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, health and primary education.

Gender and Decentralisation

One dimension of the multi-dimensional aspects of equity is socio-economic especially as it relates to gender. As significant decision-making responsibilities are moved to the districts, both women and men must be included, from grassroots upwards. It is given in many developing countries that traditional and cultural practices do not often consider gender equity. Development interventions designed to alleviate women's conditions, can be said to be responding to their practical needs. But it is also necessary to respond to their social position, to address their strategic needs and overcome problems that stem from their subordinate position in society. There is therefore need for empowerment by raising the women's position in society relative to the men.

The reserved seat for advancement of women issues at the local councils (Secretary for Women) would facilitate gender integration in decision making at all levels. This would also enhance mobilisation of women around various policy issues and actions.

Gender and the Environment

As gender issues are linked to environment, so are environment issues. In Sub-Saharan Africa environment issues include deforestation, decreasing availability of water and desertification. Increased deforestation leads to soil erosion and flooding, reducing agricultural productivity, contributes to decreased water availability and contributes to the burden of women.

Primarily households feel the effects of deforestation as energy needs as fuel wood becomes scarce; women spend less time cooking and spend more time looking for firewood. They may be forced to cut multipurpose trees, which provide other non-timber products. Men who are more likely to use fuel wood for making charcoal and firing bricks, also may cut trees without regard for environment or household consequences, thus forcing women to walk further for cooking fuel. Because of the differential access to and control of land, women may not have control over tree planting and management.

As population increases, demand for water increases. Very often the decision about location of water sources, types of water sources, and who will maintain the operation of the facilities are made without consulting women resulting in no-one taking responsibility.

In Western Kenya, a group of men and women have been working together to reduce the problems of poverty and increase agricultural production. The quality of life and relationship has improved.

Gender responsive environmental planning

Environmental planners must recognise the role women play in managing the environment and learn to include gender analysis among the tools they use for the project scoping, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment. Combining gender with the environment planning

makes sense in countries where the majority of users are women. The district gender analysis tool and guidelines have had limited use as envisaged in the already existing projects below being implemented by the districts;

Uganda - Mbale District – who builds the kitchen? Who cooks?

In 1992, Mt Elgon Conservation and Development project promoted an improved multipot stove to encourage villagers to use less firewood. This is a typical approach in fuel wood conservation projects. By 1994 however women had largely abandoned the stoves. Subsequently, the project trained its staff in gender analysis. A re-examination of the stove issue indicated factors overlooked by the original effort. Rural men, who often held the cash, were not interested in cook stoves because they did not cook. This understanding has convinced the project members that subsequent projects to address cook stoves should address both men and women.

Uganda - Kabale District – whose trees?

Kabale is a typical rural area where land fragmentation and soil degradation from over use by growing population, coupled with hilly terrain are prevailing problems. In a community participatory rural appraisal, participants proposed building new bands to separate holdings and hold water, to replace old bands that were built haphazardly. Although men built the original bands, the proposal was that women would build these new bands because they are now the principal farmers. Certain species of multipurpose trees, colliandra, and leucena, have been suggested for planting on the bands, but there has been no review of these and other possible species with men and women farmers, who may have different preferences from each other.

Uganda - Jinja District – Negotiated Use of Wetlands

Jinja in association with the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Uganda Fisheries Institute went into partnership with Jinja Urban Authorities Recognizing that women were the predominant users of the wetlands, they made plans to improve their productivity and income while preserving wetlands. Action included forming women groups in swamp areas, enhancing the value of women's income generating activities (through provision of market spaces and credit) developing alternatives for wetland resources, and facilitating allocation of long term user rights on wetlands to encourage women's long term investment in conservation.

Kenya: - Gender and Integration Pest Management in Trans Nzoia District

This case study shows how absence of good gender analysis led to low overall participation in on farm trials. A major pest of maize is the stem borer, which can be controlled by companion planting of napier grass or molasses grass. The International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) wanted to test this technique in Trans Nzoia District, and ICIPE required that on-farm trials be participatory and gender sensitive. Consequently, 50% of the farms chosen were female heads of household or were female-managed farms. A baseline surveys and works with farmers revealed the following;

- Both men and women have access to land; but men control it.

- Female heads of household or female – managed farms had larger farms and more workers but control remained with men. Where the women asked to participate, some did not because absent male or his surrogate decided whether the experiment could be done on the farm. In essence, many decisions were made by men who had not been introduced to the reasons for and methods of the experiment. In some cases, men refused and the trial was terminated. This led to gender analysis training for all scientists in the project.

Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), Namibia

This case demonstrates how strengthening the roles of women in natural resources management resulted in good planning and additional benefits to communities. Since 1983, IRDNC has been working with communities in Kunene and Caprivi regions in Namibia on environment issues, principally through community game guards. Namibia's 1996 legislation allows rural communities to form their own wildlife and nature resource conservancies. Since then, IRDNC has focussed on helping communities to do this, supporting 130 rural community workers employed by rural community structures. IRDNC is committed to involving women in natural resource management but found in most communities that women were not on the local conservation committees that distributed wildlife revenues and engaged in land use planning.

In Caprivi, IRDNC initiated a community resource monitor network through which women are involved in the management of Natural resources; they map natural resources, spot areas that are not used sustainably, and give information on the best way to reduce unsustainable use of natural resources. Their strengthened presence in the community has led to working on other issues such as alcohol for children and loss of local knowledge.

In Kunene, local women as community activators were charged to help establish conservancies. Through the use of household visits, surveys, and public meetings, more women are given access to information and the opportunity to participate in local decision-making. Most successful strategies for involving women were timing for meetings and trainings, role plays as alternatives to public speaking, exchange visits to increase networking and individual participant's knowledge and collection and mapping of social and resource data.

Why do gender inequalities exist in management and decision-making?

GENDER STEROTYPING is the psychological process that results from societal norms about women and men's proper roles

The Organizational/company policies, structures, culture and system of action are major sources that contribute to gender inequality in management and decision-making.

Since the women year 1975, women in Africa have in increasing numbers joined the labour force. They have entered certain sectors, or occupations that hitherto the domain of men, being found in highly skilled, technical, managerial and decision making positions. Despite this notable progress, the majority of women workers continue to be concentrated in a limited range of occupations doing work requiring low skills or earning low remuneration.

Oppressive management attitudes and practices are a cause of deteriorating relationship with employees leading to stress. Stressful management practices include; traditional values and standards,

racial, class, religious and intellectual discrimination, sexual harassment, lack of control or decision making, lack of reward or encouragement; and poor relationship between workers and supervisors.

Although both women and men experience stress at work there exists stresses that are unique to women that add to the shared job stress and inflicts a handicap on women. These include; role of a token to a woman, conflict demands of a career and family, social limitations, male mentors, feelings of isolation and power differences

Gender and Globalisation; the environment perspective

Apart from the old demand for equal rights, including education, legal matters and suffrage, women in the Europe and USA focused on the deep seated psychological, social, sexual and cultural roots of discrimination, while the developing countries rose against social or political problems which were sustained by women and characterized by the living conditions and most times have a bearing on the environment, such as access to land, and housing, water supply and waste disposal. On the other hand, Latin America the struggles were against dictatorship and in defence for human rights. These groups have therefore varying social, ethnic and cultural characteristics.

Women in development approach came directly in the international agencies or indirectly by borrowing from western models; the empowerment approach emerged from the south. The theoretical reflections on the relationship between development and power and the criticism of popular conceptions, such as that development benefited everyone, or women wanted to be integrated in the mainstream of western oriented development, found little response in the institutions, although they readily adopted the terminology. Empowerment was not solely an element of a post-modern and postcolonial feminism, but was taken as a means of bolstering self-confidence.

The approaches in 1990s 'mainstreaming gender' contrasted with individual projects and components for women at the project level, seeking their playing field at a macro or intermediate level. In reaction to the gender specific impacts of structural adjustments on job markets and on the production and distribution of services, feminist economists in particular demanded consideration of gender in macro economy. In developing countries women are more involved in micro economy so overcoming male bias in the various economic theories was to be achieved by both gender specific disaggregation and examining the correlation between market oriented and non-market oriented production of goods and services in the context of the prevailing gender system.

Inspired by the Beijing process, many national and local women's groups changed their character and operating methods. They changed their approach from one of meeting basic need to fulfillment of basic rights. This had significant impacts both on their self-image and the way outsiders saw them. They no longer came in as petitioners, but as civil society actors that represented legal rights and demanded for their implementation. These included the right to education, health care, resources and freedom from violence. Women everywhere sought to improve their participation in political institutions and negotiations. In some countries they demanded reserved seats and quotas.

After Beijing the decisive question now is whether the declared political will of the governments was merely fine words or actually got under way practical initiatives for a policy of promoting women as well as mainstreaming. Despite a number of positive moves in terms of policies and new legislation, the overall condition of the women across developing countries has not changed very much, nor have gender disparities been reduced significantly.

There is no doubt that for some women globalisation has created new opportunities especially in the service and information technology sectors. It has enhanced networking, exchange of ideas and mobilized support. However it leads to loss of control over and encourages the spread of values and cultures that would undermine traditional pattern of social solidarity and cohesion.

Women are also making progress in political participation but it is still far from ensured that women politicians represent women interests.

What is the Way Forward for Africa?

The issues concerning gender and their roles in development process and thus environment have been taken for granted by development planners. Now women are viewed as a useful resource to be integrated into development process, thus rendering the projects more efficient and successful. What is the way forward for Africa to ensure the gender issues are mainstreamed in environment and development plans, projects and actions?

- (1) Countries should address perceived inequalities between women and men through reviewing laws and policies that discriminate against women. This would increase women access to land and giving women more decision-making powers.
- (2) Incorporate gender analysis into all development plans, projects and actions,
- (3) Both male and female employees should be conscientiousized to change their attitude value system, and develop positive perceptions about women as competent managers/ professionals.
- (4) Engender organizational/ company policies, structures, culture and system of action.
- (5) Strengthening of women politicians to enable them represent women interests
- (6) Empowering CBOs, NGOs and private sector to champion women cause.
- (7) Capacity building for all women geared for effective participation in local governances and sustainable development

In conclusion, sustainable development is a process that should involve all members of society to the same extent, according to their individual needs.

In order to address strategic gender needs, this will need to involve radical change in attitudes, behaviour, ideology and power structures in government, organizations, companies and individuals both men and women.

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