

# **The National Policy on Women and the Challenges of Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Nigeria, 1985 – 2005**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, the **University of Leeds, School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)**. The candidate confirms that the work is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relevance of the National Policy on Women (NPW) to the aspirations of Nigerian women through their eyes. It also investigates the extent to which state institutional capability exists to implement the policy (and to mainstream gender perspectives as the policy stipulates). The study is based on six months of field work carried out between 2002 and 2004. It combined qualitative and quantitative methods using mainly participatory research techniques.

Nigeria has acceded to several regional and international covenants promoting the rights and well-being of women. Finally, in 2000 it made an official statement of intent to promote gender equality by approving the NPW. Yet, successful implementation of policy objectives remains elusive in the absence of comprehensive measures to reverse significant gender disparities in access to socioeconomic resources, opportunities and benefits. The thesis explores the experiences, perspectives and collective agendas of women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to ascertain the nature of their interests and needs and how they compare with the NPW.

The study found a considerable degree of compatibility between women's aspirations and the NPW, particularly in terms of addressing immediate practical necessity. However, awareness of the policy is low among most women. Consequently, there is no concerted agenda to push for its implementation. The Gender Management System put in place by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs to oversee the mainstreaming of gender policy is undermined by institutionalised and routinised gender bias and by distortions in the wider policy environment.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- ACORD Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
- AFROL Africa Online
- AGA Abuja Grassroots Association
- ANPP All Nigeria People's Party
- BPW Business and Professional Women
- CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- CEDPA Centre for Development and Population Activities
- CGRD Centre for Gender and Rural Development
- COCIN Church of Christ in Nigeria
- COHRE, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
- COWAN Country Women Association of Nigeria
- CRCW Christian Resource Centre for Women
- CSSR&D Centre for Social Science Research and Development
- EIWAN Eweyhae Isoko Women Association of Nigeria
- FIDA International Federation of Women Lawyers
- FMWA Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
- FMWAYD Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development
- FOMWAN Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria
- FOS Federal Office of Statistics
- GDRI Gender Development Related Index
- GEM Gender Empowerment Measure
- GMIF Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework
- IDEA Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- INC International Cooperation Programme (Canada)
- INTER-GENDER International Centre for Gender and Social Research
- LEEDS Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
- LGA Local Government Area
- MAMSER Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Reformation
- NACCIMA Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines & Agriculture
- NAWACS National Association of Women Academics
- NAWOJ National Association of Women Journalists
- NCW National Commission for Women
- NCWS National Council of Women Societies Church of Christ in Nigeria

NEEDS National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy  
NEPAD New Economic Partnership for Africa  
NIPSS National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies  
NWCTS NIPSS Women's Cooperative & Thrift Society  
NPW National Policy on Women  
ODLC Ondo Ladies Club  
PAC Progressive Action Congress  
PDP People's Democratic Party  
SEEDS State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy  
TAP The Adolescent Project  
TWA Tarok Women's Association  
UNDP United Nations Development Programme  
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund  
USAID United States Agency for International Development  
WALF Women Alive Foundation  
WARDC Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre  
WLDCN Women, Law and Development Centre of Nigeria

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction: Thesis Structure and Organisation

### 1.1 Background and Research Context

I was getting dressed for work one morning when Itunu, my five year old daughter, made one of two remarks that set the course for this research, “Mummy, you look so nice.” I was about to comment on how smart she looked in her school blazer and pinafore but she continued, “I think it’s harder to be a woman than a man you know, women have to get up early and get the house ready, take the children to school, then go to work and come back and still look after the family.” Her statement shocked me for two reasons. First, gender roles had never come up in previous discussion, and second, like most Nigerian women, I had always taken my roles as home maker, full-time employee and community volunteer in stride with a deep sense of joyful pride. What would make a five year old come up with something like that?

I am not suggesting that what has come to be referred to as women’s ‘triple development role’ is essentially oppressive. As shall be shown in this study, Nigerian women embrace their biological-sex and gender roles. The issue is: should society continue to penalise rather than reward women for those roles? Itunu’s question set me inquiring why Nigerian women, who perform productive, reproductive and community labour crucial to societal functioning and development, are quasi-citizens with gender differentiated access to rights, resources, opportunities and benefits. And why, regardless of empirical studies proving that the disproportionate deprivation of half of the world’s population threatens sustainable growth and development, government does not prioritise female empowerment.

Months later Itunu, now six years, and excited about her burgeoning reading skills, read Hebrews 12:5-9 aloud to me from the Bible (*New International Version*):

“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
because the Lord disciplines those he loves,  
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we

respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!”<sup>1</sup>

A puzzled look spread over her face. “But, where are the girls, mummy? What about the daughters and the mothers?” I tried explaining to my six year old that, ‘He’ and ‘Son’ also include ‘She’ and ‘Daughter,’ and ‘human fathers’ also stood for parents. The look on her face declared what adults often refuse to acknowledge. It does not add up! While this is a problem acquired by Anglophone countries like Nigeria by default of colonisation the principles underlying generic he/man language persist in the social relations of gender and in the organisation of modern society. Take for instance the Nigerian Constitution that uses ‘he’ to describe the standard citizen and aspirant to any leadership post. The use of he/man language, and its inherent corollary, the standardisation of male values, interests and needs begs the question: If a female is a ‘he’ how come her foreign spouse is denied citizenship unlike that of the male ‘he’? <sup>2</sup> How come a married nine year old girl would be considered an adult liable under the law, yet deprived of electoral enfranchisement, whereas a 17 year old male remains a minor.<sup>3</sup> Why is a woman not a ‘he’ when it comes to choosing the village chief, the local Imam or breaking kola nut in public meetings?

The fact is the ‘he’ status of women is conditional upon how much power is at stake in a given situation or relationship. Where there is responsibility for actions and duties to be performed women are included among those expected to pay taxes, obey the law and be liable for wrongdoing. Where power and privilege are vested interests in domestic or public spheres gender differences are highlighted and invariably women find themselves excluded from the category of self-determining ‘he’s’ possessing the unqualified right to inherit land and property, to freedom of movement, and to aspire to any position of leadership within their sect, community, organisation or nation. Men may also be excluded from power and privilege because they are poor, come from a minority ethnic or religious group, or are lacking in some specialised requisite qualification. But their exclusion, relegation or marginalisation in private or public institutions (except women’s groups) is not linked to biological sex. I set out to enquire why this is so and what is being done about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender-inclusive renditions of texts abound in newer Bible translations such as *The New Living Translation* (1996), Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers; *God’s Word* (1995, 1996), World Bible Publishers, Inc.: USA; and the *Inclusive Language Edition* (1995) of the *NIV*, UK: Hodder & Stoughton.

<sup>2</sup> Section 26

<sup>3</sup> Section 29 (3) (a) and (b)



Agitation for gender inclusiveness and equality by women activists led to the approval of a National Policy on Women by the Federal Government to eliminate discrimination against women as a means of promoting socioeconomic development. This study argues that despite the existence of the NPW since July 2000 women's interests and needs remain peripheral to state affairs. Five years on, steps towards implementing the policy are still in the infant stages; the NPW runs the risk of articulating gender issues in programmatic form yet lacking an adequate institutional framework and grounding in popular support required for its actualisation.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives of Study**

The primary nub of concern for this study is the social exclusion of women and whether they can be integrated in an equal and equitable way through the National Policy on Women. It conducts an empirical analysis of women's differentiated incorporation into the Nigerian state using the NPW as an analytic cutting tool to explain how structural inequality poses complex challenges to the mainstreaming of gender issues. This is not a technical or statistical treatise on policy outputs as the NPW is still in the initial phase of implementation. The study has two specific objectives. The first is to make an inquiry into the sort of change Nigerian women and women's organisations envision in light of their experiences and perceptions of their sex-class positions. In so doing, it studies women in relation to men instead of as a separate category to demonstrate that female poverty and underdevelopment are the outcome of pre-ordained social positioning as opposed to being sexually determined. It does not assume gender is the only source of identity and oppression but notes how the interface of gender, ethnicity, religion, class, and age create a multiplicity of identities and interests requiring diverse policy responses. This is vital for determining the relevance of the NPW to women's lives.

The second objective is to find out whether the NPW is viable in the Nigerian milieu. Here the study is concerned with policy context, content, and advocacy. In this regard, it is both a descriptive and analytic exercise in as much as it describes the origins and socioeconomic and political environment of the NPW (context), its goals, objectives and sectoral emphasis (content), and critically assesses its relevance and feasibility as a basis for advancing arguments and recommendations for institutional reform (advocacy).

To achieve these aims and objectives the study poses two research questions:

1. ***Is the National Policy on Women compatible with the needs and interests of Nigerian women as identified by them?*** Does the policy appropriately identify, reflect and anticipate the diverse needs of Nigerian women? What background work went into identifying the specific needs and interests of women? What steps were taken to get their input into the policy? Do they identify with the issues, goals and objectives of the NPW? Do Nigerian women own the policy and are they cooperating in its implementation by adopting it as part of their collective agendas?
2. ***Does the institutional capability exist in Nigeria to implement the NPW?*** The ideological orientation and organisational competence of public institutions and their operatives are important determinants of successful policy implementation. The study assesses potential constraints to the NPW arising from the nature of the political system and public administration in Nigeria. It investigates the measures and structures that have been put in place for executing the NPW and mainstreaming gender issues.

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

The sheer magnitude and intricacy of the challenges posed for achieving gender equality in a complex and volatile country like Nigeria make defining the parameters of this study difficult yet pertinent. It is impossible to cover all the issues in depth. This thesis concentrates on women's individual and collective understandings of and responses to the structural root causes, manifestations and impacts of gender inequality, as well as the role of the state in supporting or impeding their bid for social inclusion. Chapter Two establishes a theoretical basis for the research using a gender and development analytical framework to argue that female subordination is socially constructed and deeply embedded in all social processes and institutions. This requires consciousness raising among women (and men) and the interrogation and transformation of the structures of gender oppression particularly marriage, culture, religion and the State.

GAD is not just a framework for analysis; it also is also a framework for policy action. It advocates a more fundamental and strategic approach to social change than the piecemeal, 'add-women-and-stir' orientation of Women in Development approaches adopted for development projects in Nigeria. But the thesis argues that gender mainstreaming can be divested of political intent and co-opted by the patriarchal establishment. On this basis the thesis argues that the gender mainstreaming component

of the NPW, which requires the incorporation of women's interests across all policy sectors, can only be effectively implemented if women are viewed comprehensively in the context of their sex-class positioning rather than as a separate category requiring state hand outs. Notwithstanding the utility of the GAD framework the thesis argues that its inadequacy as a largely western feminist paradigm necessitates a home-grown feminist analysis that captures the historical, cultural and spiritual peculiarities of Nigerian women.

Chapter Three defines the parameters of gender inequality as the socio-political context that dictated the emergence and content of the NPW. It depicts how socio-cultural, economic, legal and political gender inequality are institutionalised and routinised in formal and informal institutions deeply ingrained with anti-female sexist ideologies. These ideologies have a profound impact on individual and organisational behaviour including the ways and reasons women organise for social change, and state orientation towards women and their gendered interests. It argues that the Federal Character principle enshrined in the 1999 Constitution does not incorporate the gender character of Nigeria. The chapter demonstrates that gender has not been a critical variable in development planning or national politics which have been dominated by patriarchal, ethnic, religious and class interests to the exclusion of women and the poor, the majority of whom are women. These factors provide the rationale for the emergence of 'femocracy' – a top-down approach to women's development spearheaded by First Ladies and their pet projects. They also form the context of women's mobilisation for social change culminating in the approval of the NPW. The chapter concludes with a broad-spectrum examination and critique of its purpose and sectoral components. The policy document was found to contain theoretical inconsistencies that are in part a product of the historical and political process that preceded its approval.

Chapters Four and Five explore the experiences and views of grassroots and elite women to establish how they articulate their interests and needs. Both chapters demonstrate that issues raised and concerns expressed by women reflect the various dimensions of gender inequality extant in Nigeria. The theoretical inconsistencies identified in Chapter Three were evident in women's perspectives of their subject realities. Therefore, the study argues that such inconsistencies, rather than point to misconceptions about women's needs by the policy drafters, are an indication of the complex interaction of women's multiple and fragmented identities and their internalisation of patriarchal conditioning. The study found both similarities and differences between the priorities and planning needs highlighted by diverse social

categories of women. There was a significant level of compatibility between women's self-defined interests and needs and the NPW agenda, although awareness of the policy, except among certain categories of NGO members, was low. There was no sense of a coherent, broad-based commitment to the NPW even among those groups aware of the policy; as such women lack ownership of the policy. Furthermore, the policy was found to be inadequate with respect to, *inter alia*, the needs of workers in the informal sector, women in seclusion, and the empowerment of women in intra-household and community decision-making.

Given the pervasiveness of female poverty the majority of women prioritised economic and educational empowerment over other needs. On the whole, practical needs to address immediate necessity were prioritised over strategic interests. Nevertheless, there was an acute awareness of political marginalisation among rural and elite women and an express desire for affirmative action to address female under-representation at all levels. The perspectives of some rural and elite men, and male students are also incorporated in Chapters Four and Five to contrast them with those of women. Although some accepted the notion of gender equality in principle many, particularly but not exclusively, rural men and students explained and justified inequality on the basis of divine ordinance and 'natural' male/female predispositions. The study also shows that, on similar premises, not all Nigerian women subscribe to gender equality. Among the majority who desire it, several expressed pessimism at the possibility of far-reaching change given vested male interests and the entrenchment and complexity of the interacting forces of indigenous culture and religion.

Chapter Six argues that the agendas of women's organisations are largely home-grown initiatives that reflect the nature and extent of women's social problems, and align with the NPW in several respects. Using five cases studies of selected women's groups the study found agendas to vary according to organisational type, the needs of target beneficiaries and the orientation of group members to gender equality which affect the choice of WID and/or GAD approaches to carrying them out. Although long-term strategic planning interventions are undertaken most programmes/projects focus on practical and self-help schemes to improve material/physical conditions and women's capacity to contribute to development. To a large extent the research found that this instrumentalist approach is what women want. Nevertheless, although the study privileges the standpoint of women, it does not shy away from making 'outsider' observations. It points beyond women's subjective viewpoint to argue that inherent to the concept of oppression is the lack of consciousness of its victims, hence the need for

consciousness raising argued for in Chapter Two. Chapter Six further argues that in addition to common logistical difficulties, women's groups encounter specific ideological constraints and resistance from prevailing patriarchal culture, to the extent that their agendas stand at variance with it.

Women's organisations also identified institutional constraints emanating from the wider policy environment which serve as potential obstacles to NPW implementation. Therefore, Chapter Seven argues that regardless of women's collective agency and the Gender Management System instituted by an under-funded Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, male bias built into the composition and orientation of state institutions and distortional factors in the political and public administration systems undermine the feasibility of the NPW and the mainstreaming of gender issues. Consequently, this study argues that while the NPW advocates the integration of women into national development through gender mainstreaming neither the state nor its development processes are unproblematic. It therefore raises the question as to what sort of state women envision, if any, and how they can realise it? This is a topic for future research. Chapter Eight concludes with an overview of findings.

## **1.4 Justification of the Research**

This research centralises women's experiences and perspectives on the premise that successful public policy planning and implementation are impossible without the mainstreaming of women's gendered interests and needs. Gender is a critical missing link in national development efforts. Feminist theory involves "taking women's interests and perspectives seriously, believing that women are not inferior to men [...] that women's experiences, concerns, and ideas are as valuable as those of men and should be treated with equal seriousness and respect" (Andersen, 1993:7). The standardisation of male interests, needs and viewpoints provide an incomplete understanding of human society and how to improve it. Feminists argue that being different does not mean deficient, and sex difference should be celebrated not penalised (Phillips, 2001). Gender equality is a step towards the betterment of human society, but it must be equality on women's terms by centralising their experiences and worldview to produce equality of opportunity and policy outcomes (Bryson, 1999). It demands women's informed, direct and full participation and representation in all spheres of private and public life as wholly self-determining persons (Phillip, 1995). Participation is construed, not simply as a means to efficiency and productivity, but as an end leading

to genuine empowerment (Wright and Nelson, 1995). In line with this feminist epistemology, the voices of women dominate the bulk of this research.

African women scholars and activists like Kilanko, (1994) have sometimes adopted western feminist extrapolations wholesale and uncritically to explain and diagnose the social condition of African women. Others have shied away from the feminist label for a variety of reasons that are explored in this research. One is the stereotyping and stigmatisation of feminists as western-style liberationist anti-male, anti-family, anti-God, anti-establishment, lesbian troublemakers. In seeking to distance themselves from such appellations African writers have resorted to denying the existence of gender oppression (Oyewunmi, 1997) or adopting alternative nomenclatures such as womanism (Ogunyemi, 1996) and stiwanism (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Other African women writers romanticise about an idyllic past and the ideal traditional African woman as a disappearing relic; they disparage the 'elite' modern woman as a failure and neo-colonial sell-out who has jettisoned the right to speak on behalf of women (Steady, 1987; Sofola, 1982; Amadiume, 1995). Indeed, they are not alone in their assessment. Widespread criticism has been levelled against women's human rights organisations that they represent an elitist movement with a hidden agenda to put privileged women in positions of power. Male critics point to the many 'liberated' women in Nigeria to deny the existence of oppression and allege that such women do not qualify to speak for the generality of Nigerian women or to place value judgements on their cultural contexts (Chinweizu, 1990). As a corollary they claim rural and urban poor women are satisfied with their status and only require basic amenities to improve living standards.

These writers correctly point out the inadequacies of foreign-bred feminisms to African contexts. However, in drawing on the experiences and perspectives of grassroots and elite women this research demonstrates how both have a unique yet common experience of gender oppression and have begun to organise for change across social divides. The blaming and shaming of elite women negates the reality of ongoing opposition they encounter from traditional and modern patriarchal structures, further alienates them from the grassroots and undermines their strategic placement as drivers of change. On the other hand, the idealisation of rural women denies the reality of their suffering and belittles their intelligence for, as the study proves, they are neither oblivious nor passively acquiescent to gender oppression and need to work alongside elite women for change. Idealisation is also a cop out from confronting oppressive

relationships among women rooted as they are in traditionalism, capitalism and patriarchy. The image of the contented rural dweller sheds romanticists of the responsibility to work for intra-gender equality and equity. These issues provide a basis for a Nigerian-style feminist analysis that is multidimensional and inclusive.

Findings from this study reveal that a critical interrogation of religion is integral to a comprehensive Nigerian feminist framework. All categories of women in the study were conscious of the role of religion in female subordination. Yet, religion and spirituality are central to women's identity and living. Owing to the politicisation of religion and the deep sensibilities it evokes it has either been vilified by militant feminists or gone largely un-critiqued by those unwilling to part from faith. From a personal standpoint of experiential knowledge and faith in Christ as Redeemer and Living Saviour the undertaking of this research is an attempt to explore how feminism and faith can be compatible. If, as biblical feminist Van Leeuwen (1993:22) suggests, "A feminist is a person of either sex who works to restore social, economic, and political justice between women and men in a given society," a feminist theological critique of oppressive aspects of religion need not spell its end but foreshadow its redemption from the damaging impacts of patriarchy.

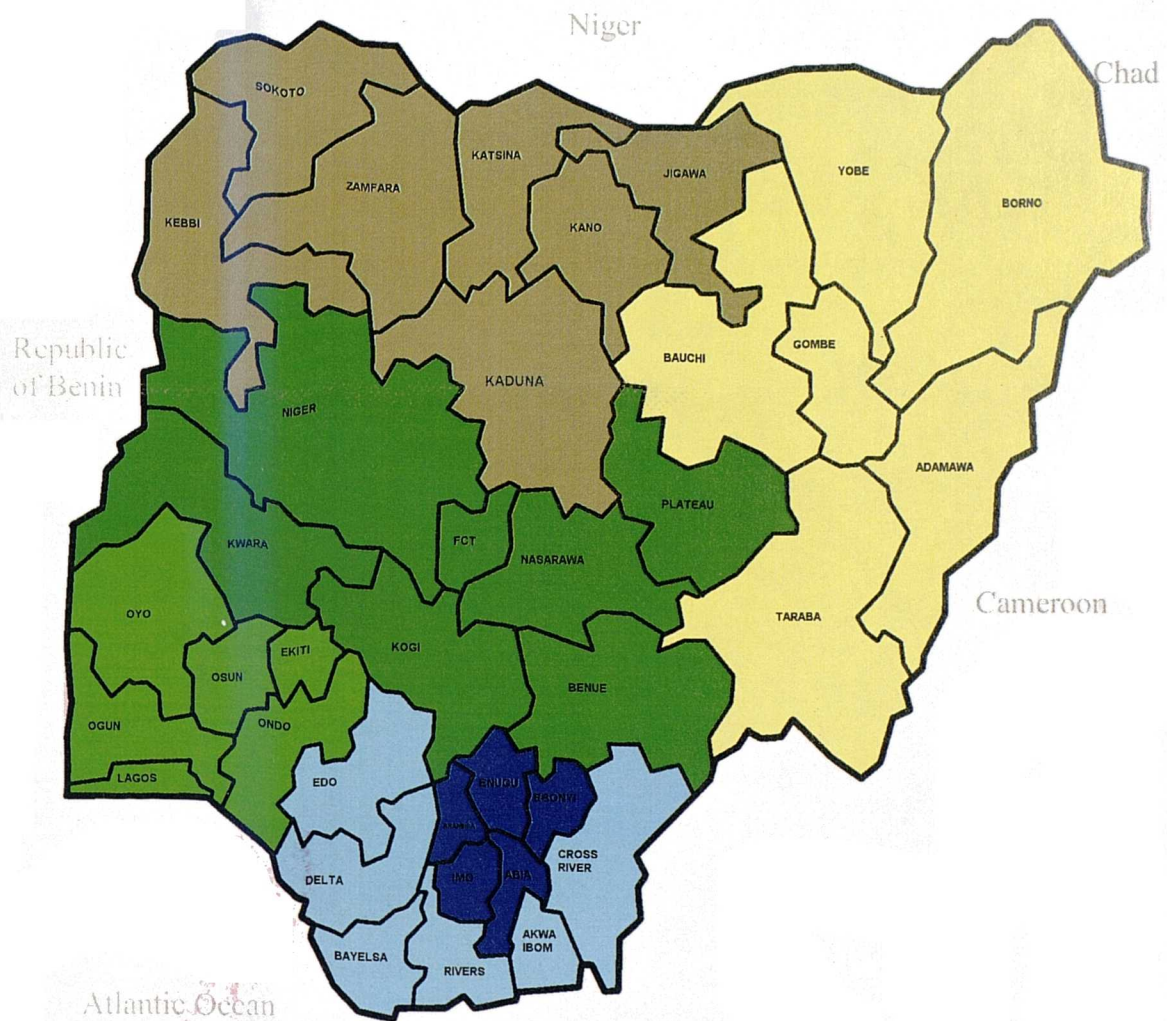
## **1.5 Research Design and Methodology**

The feminist ideas discussed above inform the methodological approach of this research. To answer the two research questions the study employs a dual research strategy premised on "an actor-oriented analysis of development" (Long, 2002:1). For the first question an abductive strategy is used to seek out the nature of reality as constructed by social actors based on, or deriving from, their perspectives and interpretations of events, symbols and phenomena (Blaikie (2000). It entails looking into the 'life-worlds' of social actors to discover how local 'accumulated knowledge' is negotiated and culturally constructed (Long, 2002). This affirms the feminist contention that there are multiple realities informed by women's experiential knowledge, which has long been excluded from social scientific analysis (Rowbotham, 1973).

The second research question demands a retroductive research strategy since reality exists at various levels and is often produced by real structures and mechanisms that lead to both unobservable (actual) and observable (empirical) events (Blaikie, 2000). The social actors themselves are often not aware of these structures or mechanisms, and therefore may not factor them into their accounts of reality. This combined strategy trains the research-light on insider and structural meanings.

Fig. 1.1

### Map of Nigeria: Geopolitical Zones



#### Key: Zones and States

	North West: Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara
	North East: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe
	North Central: Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau
	South East: Abia, Anambara, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo
	South West: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo
	South South: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers



### ***1.5.1 Research Methods***

The research is primarily qualitative although quantitative techniques are also employed. Qualitative methods facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of hidden processes that might otherwise go unnoticed by purely statistical measurement (Abbot, 1998).<sup>4</sup> One of the greatest values of qualitative investigation is that open-ended questions and probes give participants some control over discussions and space to talk about what is really important to them. Consequently, not all prepared topics and questions were covered and unanticipated, yet critical, issues surfaced during discussions. The aim of gathering quantitative data was to obtain a ‘snapshot’ reference frame with which to triangulate findings and “extend inferences” made from qualitative data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:46). Three qualitative and one quantitative tool were selected on the basis of their suitability to the nature of participants and the type of data required from each source. They consisted of:

#### **1.5.1.1 Qualitative Methods**

1. Participatory Rural Appraisal: PRAs are similar to focus group discussions but are uniquely suited to extracting knowledge from pre-literate communities and to diagrammatically charting differentiated experiences of poverty and social exclusion by providing a forum for marginalised groups to voice their opinions (Chambers, 1997). The practical activities involved, and indeed the entire participatory process, can be an empowering mechanism to raise awareness among rural people, promote non-confrontational exchange, and stimulate change (Johnson and Mayoux, 1998). PRA sessions were required to generate detailed and contextual community data and information about the socioeconomic conditions of pre-literate rural, semi-rural and semi-urban women. They took place in two of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> Forty women and 10 men from Gora in Kaduna State (North West) and Kushehe and Bukuru in Plateau State (North Central) participated. In order to properly situate women’s prioritised concerns and needs within their social context sessions involved discussions about the nature of gender roles, leadership and power structures, the extent of women’s power (or powerlessness), problems in the community (only in

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, Chapter Four refers to a statement made by a village elder who asked what this research was about. On hearing it was about women he exclaimed how women were being cheated in that village!

<sup>5</sup> Fig. 1.1 shows the six geopolitical zones and 36 states of Nigeria.

Gora), those peculiar to women, and changes desired. Practical activities during the sessions included using stones and flip charts to produce charts, diagrams and matrixes to summarise discussion points as follows:

- a. General community information: provides details from local histories about community formation, language, culture, the sexual division of labour and socio-economic organisation
  - b. Problem definition and analysis matrix: presents an overview of gender roles and the nature of women's problems as well as their causes
  - c. Change analysis matrix: displays changes desired by women
  - d. 24hr work day chart of women (and men in Gora): shows time allocation and constraints
  - e. Venn diagram and social organisational chart: maps power distribution according to participation in decision-making structures.
2. Focus Groups: provide opportunity for in-depth discussion and refinement of the research topic through group dynamics and reflection; they constitute a natural learning and consciousness raising process (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Twenty-five people participated in three focus groups comprising Jos Main Market women, business/professional women, and female and male students. Since Jos Main Market women are listed among grassroots women in the study it would have been ideal to employ PRA research techniques with them. However, the women were unable to take the time required for PRA session away from their busy market schedules. All sessions took place in Jos, the capital of Plateau State – a melting pot of ethnic and language groups. Sessions covered similar issues to those in PRA sessions, except among Market women who chose to focus on economic issues. The focus group with University of Jos students was the only mixed-gender group in the study and provided an opportunity to observe group gender dynamics.
3. Semi-Structured Interviews: In relation to policy-related research semi-structured interviewing fosters an understanding of the context or system in which change is envisaged (Potter and Subrahmanian, 1998). Thirty-five senior executive members of women's organisations, top-level policy-makers, politicians, statespersons, and senior bureaucrats participated in semi-structured interviews. Participants' contributions provided insight into the motives behind the actions of political actors and policy-makers, and the hidden agendas behind organisational decisions. Because interviews are

“well suited to research that requires an understanding of deeply rooted or delicate phenomena or responses to complex systems, processes or experiences,” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:36) they proved particularly useful in garnering information about the history and politics of the NPW, and issues relating to its wider institutional context. Interviews helped establish relationships that proved useful as the research evolved facilitating the gathering of post-field work data via emails and follow-up telephone interviews.

#### 1.5.1.2 Quantitative Methods

- 1 Survey: 159 questionnaires administered to executive/active members of women’s organisations yielded statistical data on the factors associated with women’s low social status and development needs, the level of inter-group partnership and awareness about the NPW, and the extent of compatibility with its objectives. Open-ended questions explored the nature of organisational agendas and target beneficiaries. The survey method was employed among members of women’s groups in order to obtain a wider geopolitical coverage than the PRA and focus group approaches would allow.

#### ***1.5.2 Sampling***

Study participants in PRAs, focus groups and interviews were selected on the basis of purposive and convenience sampling to achieve symbolic representation according to: gender (mostly female), geopolitical zone, ethnicity, geographical location (rural/urban areas), religion – Christianity and Islam (the two main religions), class and age. Policy-makers and women’s organisations were selected using purposive and convenience sampling on the basis of accessibility (from researcher’s residence in Jos, Plateau State – see Fig. 1.1), local networks and availability. A number of the former were participants on Senior Executive Course 23 of the National Institute, Kuru, which had its highest intake ever of female participants in 2003. This allowed for ready access to a large pool of top-level public and private sector actors. Although organisations were selected based on established credibility in the community and the need to assure wide geopolitical spread, the size of the country and travel logistics warranted the concentration of organisations in the North Central Zone. However, a wide range of

groups were selected. As a result, seven typologies of organisations emerged from the data analysis.<sup>6</sup>

### *1.5.3 Description of Participants*

There were both similarities and significant variations in the concerns and needs expressed between and within the units of analysis. In order to find out about the prioritised concerns of Nigerian women and to distinguish between them and their planning needs different questions were asked that would readily convey the distinctive meanings of concerns and needs to questionnaire/interview participants and focus group/PRA participants within their differing socio-cultural contexts. (Appendix B: Table B1 contains a summary of the questions). Prioritised concerns were construed as problems, difficulties, worries, complaints, burdens and struggles and the questions were constructed to elicit personal as well as impersonal responses. For example, PRA and Focus Group participants were asked what problems they faced in their individual lives and what the problems of women in their communities were. Questionnaire participants were asked about the difficulties and complaints of their target beneficiaries/members. Planning needs were construed as conditions for improvement; immediate/long-term needs (survey), critical needs and areas of focus (semi-structured interviews), changes desired (PRA/Focus groups). The focus group sessions held with market women, (and business/professional women and students in Chapter Five) followed similar lines of discussion as the PRA sessions with variations in accordance with contextual relevance to each group and, without the practical activities.

All PRA participants were selected using purposive sampling on the basis of four attribute sets: marital status (single, divorced, separate, or remarried), marriage type and position (monogamous/polygamous (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>), age (17-25; 25-35; 40-50; 50+) and educational level (no schooling, primary, secondary, post-secondary). To carry out the practical tasks<sup>7</sup> associated with PRA the participants were split into small sub-groups (A, B, C or A, B depending on group size) after being randomly assigned numbers. Purposive sampling was also used to select focus group and survey participants on the basis of two separate attribute sets: geopolitical and ethnic origin for the former and organisational type and geopolitical location for the latter.

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<sup>6</sup> Detailed demographic and classification details are in Chapters Five and Six.

<sup>7</sup> The activities are described in Section 1.5.1.1

### *1.5.3.1 PRA with Jaba Women (and Men) in Gora*

Between 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2003 two groups (One and Two) comprising 10 and 11 women respectively and one of 10 men (Group 3) participated in PRA sessions. Appendix C: Table C1 shows details of participants' attributes. All 21 female participants practiced subsistence and/or cash crop farming. In addition to farming, three taught in the local primary school. Participants' ages ranged between 17 and 80 years. Ten women, mostly the older ones, had no schooling at all. Seven women had attained between primary or secondary level education, and four had post-secondary qualifications (Grade Two Teachers' Certificate). An observation of group dynamics revealed that age seniority and education elicited respect from group members; older and educated women were more likely to speak. Those least vocal were young women and those with little or no formal schooling.

### *1.5.3.2 PRA with Birom Women in Kushehe*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2003 a group of ten Birom women participated in the PRA session, which split into two sub-groups (A, B) during practical tasks.<sup>8</sup> The group ranged between 17 and 70 years with a mean age of 29.9. Appendix C: Table C2 shows participants' demographic attributes: Only two women had no schooling at all; most had some form of formal education. Of the ten participants six (aged between 15 and 30 years) were subsistence farmers with no income earning activities. Two were petty traders in vegetable garden produce. Five of them completed primary school while two had some primary education. Only one participant had secondary school education. Several of the younger women were unable to enter or complete secondary school because their families were too poor to support their education. Consequently, most of them had married young (as early as 15 or 16 years) since another socially perceived benefit of marriage is the right to have material needs catered for by husbands. Maternity is also a benefit that normally should be limited to the marriage institution and childlessness is looked upon as a major tragedy. The 'barren' woman, in particular, carries the social stigma attached to infertility.

### *1.5.3.3 PRA with Hausa-Fulani Women in Bukuru*

On 20<sup>th</sup> July 2003 a PRA session was held with eight Hausa-Fulani women in *purdah* (seclusion) in Bukuru, Plateau State, after seeking permission from a

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<sup>8</sup> See Section 1.5.1.1

community leader and husband to two of the women. All participants were married and ranged from ages 24 to 54 years with a mean age of 36.1. None of the three women over 40 years had any formal schooling. The rest had either primary or secondary education. (See Appendix C: Table C3 for details of demographic attributes). None of the participants had previous awareness of the NPW, although they had been invited to participate in State programmes organised by First Ladies during the Military era.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the Jaba women here the younger educated women were more active in the discussion.

#### *1.5.3.4 Focus Group with Jos Main Market Women*

On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2003 eight petty traders at the Jos Main Market participated in focus group discussions. They originated from five of Nigeria's six geo-political zones: South East, North West, South South, South West, and North Central. The ethnic origin of the women covered seven (two majority and five minority) groups and seven of the 36 states. The ethnic groups are Bini (Edo State), Chala (Plateau), Chawe (Kaduna), Igbo (Anambara), Idoma (Benue), Jarawa (Plateau), Urhobo (Delta), Yoruba (Oyo). Participants' ages ranged from 26 to 56 years with a mean age of 40.6 years and a median age of 41. Appendix C: Table C4 displays the demographic attributes of Jos main market women. None of the women had heard of the NPW.

#### *1.5.3.5 Focus Group with Business/Professional Women*

Six women from four geopolitical zones and six ethnic groups of Nigeria<sup>10</sup> participated in focus group discussions. Appendix E: Table E1 shows the occupational profile and educational levels of the participants. All, but one, of them possessed tertiary education. Their ages ranged from 32-45 years with a mean age of 37.8 and a median age of 37.

#### *1.5.3.6 Focus Group with University Students*

A focus group session was held with female and male students of the University of Jos Centre for Continuing Education. Eleven students (six female and five male)

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<sup>9</sup> During consultations arranged between the Office of the First Lady and Hausa/Fulani women in purdah

<sup>10</sup> North Central (Plateau: Angas), South East (Imo: Igbo), South South (Edo: Edo)/ (Akwa Ibom: Ibibio), North West (Kaduna: Kaje) and South West (Osun: Yoruba)

from all six geopolitical zones<sup>11</sup> and representing seven ethnic groups<sup>12</sup> participated in the session. The Students were in first and second year diploma programmes and their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years with a mean age of 20.9 and a median age of 20 (See Appendix C Table C6). The mean age for female and male students was 19.3 and 22.5 years respectively. Eight were Christians and three Muslims.

#### *1.5.3.7 Semi-Structured Interviews with NGO Leaders*

Twenty leaders (19 female and one male) in top-level executive positions and representing 21 women/gender non-governmental organisations participated in semi-structured interviews (see profile of interviewees in Appendix E: Table E2). The 21 organisations were located in four geopolitical zones, in five of the 36 states and in Abuja, the Federal Capital territory.<sup>13</sup> Most (13 (65%)) were based in Plateau State – 10 in Jos, the State Capital. Of the 13 two operated nationwide with headquarters in Jos (NAWACS, COCIN), five were state branches of national bodies (COWAN, EIWAN, FOMWAN, NAWOJ, NCWS), three were indigenous (CGRD, TWA WALF) and two were independent non-location-, non-ethnic-specific groups (INTER-GENDER, NWTCS). The 21 organisations were spread across the seven categorisations used for the purpose of this study (See Appendix F: Table F2). Participants' ethnic/geopolitical origin covered 11 states and four geopolitical zones. The majority were well-educated and/or medium-high income earners. Sixteen (80%) had some form of tertiary education (School of Nursing, Higher National Diploma, First Degree), nine of the 16 (45% of total) had an additional post-graduate qualification, while only two (10%) had primary school leaving certificates and one (5%) was a secondary school leaver with some ad-hoc vocational training. The mean age range of participants was 41-50 years.

#### *1.5.3.8 Semi-Structured Interviews with Policy-makers/Politicians*

Eighteen policy-makers, senior bureaucrats and politicians (13 (72.2%) female and 5 (27.8%) male) agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews ranging from 30 minutes to one and half hours in duration. They included top-level civil servants, heads of professional bodies and government parastatals, full-time politicians – incumbents or

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<sup>11</sup> South West (Ogun State ; Osun ; Lagos – 3), North Central/Middle Belt (Kogi, Benue and Nassarawa States – 3), North East (Adamawa State – 1), North West (Kaduna State – 1), South South (Edo – 1) and South East (Enugu and Abia States – 2)

<sup>12</sup> Yoruba, Igbo, Idoma, Edo, Igbira, Bassa, Bachama

<sup>13</sup> South East (Imo State), South South (Rivers), North Central (Plateau) and South West (Lagos, Ondo)

those who recently left public office, and one State Governor's wife (Appendix E: Table E3 contains a profile summary of the interviewees).

### 1.5.3.9 Questionnaire Survey of Non-Governmental Organisations

Two hundred and thirty questionnaires were administered to 51 women/gender organisations located in five geopolitical regions to be completed by five executive or active members from each group.<sup>14</sup> One hundred and fifty-nine participants representing 45 groups returned the questionnaires giving a 69% response rate (see list of NGOs in Appendix F: Table F1). A categorisation of the 45 groups based on organisational type and the frequency of members in each category is shown in Appendix F: Fig. F1.<sup>15</sup> The 45 organisations are located in all six geopolitical zones and in ten of the 36 states, including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory) Table 1.1 displays the geopolitical and state locations of participating NGOs. Participants originated from all the six geopolitical zones (see details in Table 1.2). The mean age range of participants was 41-50 years. The majority of members were women who comprised 86.5% of the sample; 13.5% of participants were male.

TABLE 1.1

#### Location of NGOs: Geopolitical Zone and State

No. of Groups	Geopolitical Zone	State
5	North East	Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa
30	North Central	Kogi, Plateau, Abuja (FCT)
2	South East	Imo
2	South South	Rivers
6	South West	Lagos, Ondo
1	North West	Kaduna

Source: SPSS Survey Results

<sup>14</sup> Some groups passed on questionnaires to other NGOs they worked with and some members photocopied extra copies for members to fill in. Hence the distribution pattern of responses was as follows: 40 groups (5); 8 groups (2); one group (1); one group (6); one group (7).

<sup>15</sup> Categorisation was based on the main mission of the organisation and membership criteria (open or selective) and is merely a heuristic tool for easy analysis. There are elements of overlap in groups' mission statements.



**TABLE 1.2**  
**Geopolitical origin of Survey Participants**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	North Central	54	34.0	37.2	37.2
	South East	28	17.6	19.3	56.6
	South West	20	12.6	13.8	70.3
	North West	5	3.1	3.4	73.8
	South South	25	15.7	17.2	91.0
	North East	13	8.2	9.0	100.0
	Total	145	91.2	100.0	
Missing	99	14	8.8		
Total		159	100.0		

Source: SPSS Survey Results

### ***1.5.4 General Information on Communities***

#### ***1.5.4.1 About Gora***

Gora is a village in Jaba Local Government Area, one of the twenty-three LGAs located in the south eastern region of Kaduna State<sup>16</sup> in the North West geopolitical zone (see map in Fig. 1.2). It lies seven kilometres south west of Kwoi, the local government Headquarters, and 45 kilometres south west of Kafanchan. Kaduna state is located between longitudes 06 00m 09 00 11 30 North of the equator bounded by parallels 9o03`N and 11o32`N extending from the upper River Mariga on 6o05`E to 8o48`E on the north western border of Jos, Plateau State. The 1991 census put the population of Kaduna State at 5,001,258.30.<sup>17</sup> Gora has an estimated population of approximately 2,500 people based on a census taken by the village authority in 2002. Population density in the state ranges from 200 to 700 persons per square kilometre with that of Jaba LGA estimated at 350.<sup>18</sup> However, population figures vary through the year as seasonal migration of young able-bodied male labourers to and from urban areas during dry and rainy seasons respectively is rampant. Emigration of young secondary school leavers to surrounding cities – Kaduna, Zaria, Jos (in Plateau State) and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) – is also common. The Jaba-speaking people are a minority ethnic group in Nigeria but one of the six major ethnic groups in the State.

<sup>16</sup> Kaduna, the State capital, was the political capital the old North-Central State and the administrative headquarters of northern Nigeria during colonial rule

<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://www.kaduna-state.com/kad.html>

<sup>18</sup> Source: Kaduna State website <http://www.kaduna-state.com/kad.html>

They and other groups in Southern Kaduna (i.e. Kataf, Kaje, Koro, Kamanton, Morwa and Chawai) are referred to as Nerzit people. The Jaba descend from the ancient Nok civilisation which dates back to 90BC-500AD, the oldest in recorded Nigerian history. The Nerzit people share greater cultural and religious affinity with the Middle Belt/North Central zone with which they share boundaries and historical links than with the predominantly Muslim Northern Kaduna State. They are mostly Christians with a few animists and Muslims. Besides their local dialect, Jaba, the majority are Hausa-speaking as a result of a long history of Hausa political domination. According to oral traditional accounts Gora was founded in pre-colonial times when people from Kwe migrated there in search of cultivable land. Gora remains a predominantly farming community dealing in cash (mainly ginger) and food crops. Women and men participate in farm work although men are primarily responsible for farming yams, coco yam, and cassava, and women for acha (a local grain), beans, ground nuts, bambarra nuts, rice, and other grains such as guinea corn, sorghum and maize. Both farm ginger. However, they have different farming responsibilities: men plough and harvest yams; women plant, weed and harvest all other crops.

In Gora there is a general perception of shared poverty due to the lack of basic amenities and social services. Few families have concrete/zinc roofed houses; most are mud/thatched roofed. Gora has had a primary school (since 1978) and a small 'hospital' and maternity centre since 1993, which was housed in the home of a village elder until 2000 when a building was constructed for that purpose. It lacks electricity, pipe-borne water or tarred roads. The access road leading into Gora (off the Kaduna-Keffi motorway) is laterite and un-tarred.

#### *1.5.4.2 About Kushehe*

Kushehe (also called Gada) is a semi-rural village settlement on the outskirts of Jos, the Plateau State capital.<sup>19</sup> Plateau state lies between latitude 8°24' north and longitude 8°32' and 10°38' east. It is characterised by a cool-temperate climate and rocky terrain granite slopes in the North and grasslands in the south. Historically the state was a refuge for Christians from Islamic domination. It has a population of 2,959,588.<sup>20</sup> Kushehe is located in Jos-North, one of the 17 LGAs (Fig. 1.3 is a map of the state showing all the LGAs), and has a small population of 30 people from eight

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<sup>19</sup> Plateau State is in North Central/Middle Belt geo-political zone.

<sup>20</sup> Source: <http://www.plateaustategov.org/history/geo-info.html> , <http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/J/JosPlate.html>

families. It belongs to a wider community of loosely connected villages: Kushehe, Mazarang and Zawang. The inhabitants are settlers who migrated from other bigger Birom villages. The Biroms are a minority Nigerian ethnic group but one of the major groups indigenous to Jos and its environs. Kushehe has electricity but it is illegally tapped from an overhead extension wire running through it. It has no pipe-borne water or any other government supplied amenities. The few wells are from self-help individual/household efforts. Most households practise subsistence farming of maize, vegetables, acha, potatoes and other grains. Some are also involved in cash crop farming. As in Gora there is a perception of shared poverty among most of the residents. Only a few families appeared to be relatively well off indicated by the ownership of cement houses as opposed to mud with thatched roofs.

Many of the women are petty traders, stonebreakers and seasonal building site workers. The men also work as artisans, masons, welders, carpenters and junior civil servants in nearby Jos and Bukuru. Both men and women form part of the cheap labour fed into Jos metropolis from satellite villages. Jos and environs were a prominent tin mining area under the colonial economy. Tin mining absorbed a sizeable proportion of the male labour force, which affected agricultural production. Consequently, farming remains a predominantly female responsibility among the Birom. However, as is the case in Gora, Kushehe women farm lands belonging to male relatives who have control over income generated from cash crops.

#### *1.5.4.3 About the Hausa-Fulani in Bukuru*

The Hausa constitute one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Together with the Fulani, with whom they commonly inter-marry and share historical and religious ties, they account for 29% of Nigeria's 140 million people.<sup>21</sup> The Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslims and the seclusion of married women is a common Islamic practice. They comprise over 90% of some core Northern states in the North West zone (Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa), and form a significant proportion in other Northern states. In certain North Central States the Hausa-Fulani have migrated over centuries to form politically powerful settler communities among indigenous populations. Plateau state has a sizeable Hausa-Fulani population dispersed throughout its territory including Bukuru, a semi-urban locale about 20 kilometres from Jos, and the headquarters of Jos-South LGA (see map: Fig. 1.3). It has a population of

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<sup>21</sup> Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html#People> and <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/AboutNigeria.aspx>

20,212 people and population density of 360 people per sq. km.<sup>22</sup> It is electrified and has a few small privately-owned clinics, a government medical centre, postal services, banks, and primary and secondary schools. A sizeable number of homes have pipe-borne water while others rely on wells or nearby streams.

#### *1.5.4.4 About Jos Main Market*

In February 2002 the 'ultra-modern' Jos Main Market, the largest and only one of its kind in West Africa, was burned down after a spate of politically motivated religious crises in Plateau State. The fire resulted in the loss of billions of naira worth of private property and revenue to market sellers and the government of Plateau State. Women suffered severe losses in several ways. Most of those who could not afford to rent stalls in the market were women who used to sell their wares in corridors, porches and other open, but shaded, spaces outside the market. At times they were pursued with whips by the Jos Market Development Board authorities who attempted to clear out hawkers and make-shift traders from the precincts. But usually, they turned a blind eye to these women trying to eke out a living through petty trading.

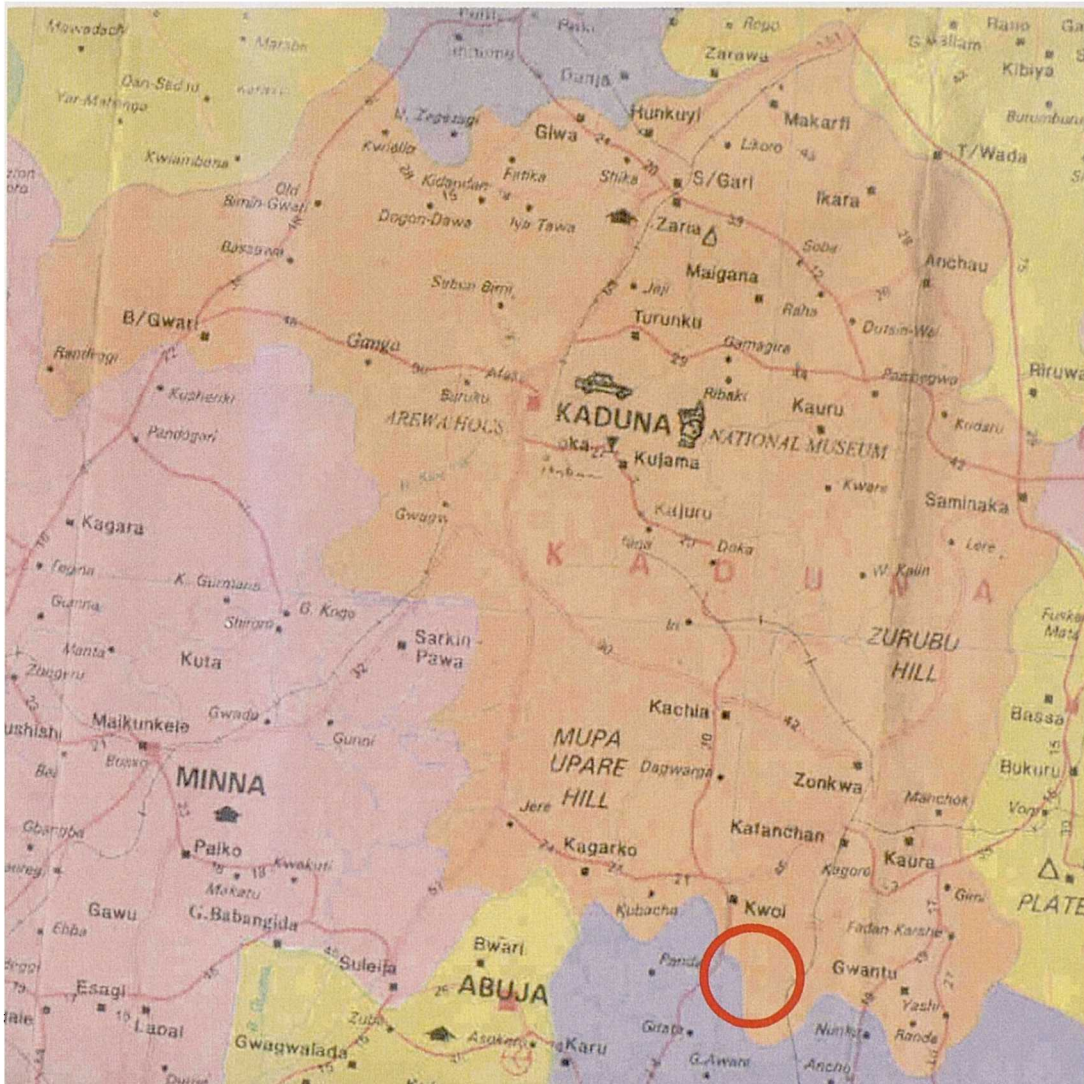
After the market was destroyed these women, and some of the men, moved outside along the roadside to what is referred to as 'Abuja Market'. A good number of those who had stalls inside the market (mostly men) were able to rent shops along the road. Others, particularly the meat sellers (all men), erected temporary sheds on the land just beyond the roadside. Several women perched make-shift wooden benches and stools along the roadside subject to the vagaries of weather and unruly traffic.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.nigeriacongress.org/fgn/administrative/lgadetails.asp?lg=Jos-South>

Fig. 1.2

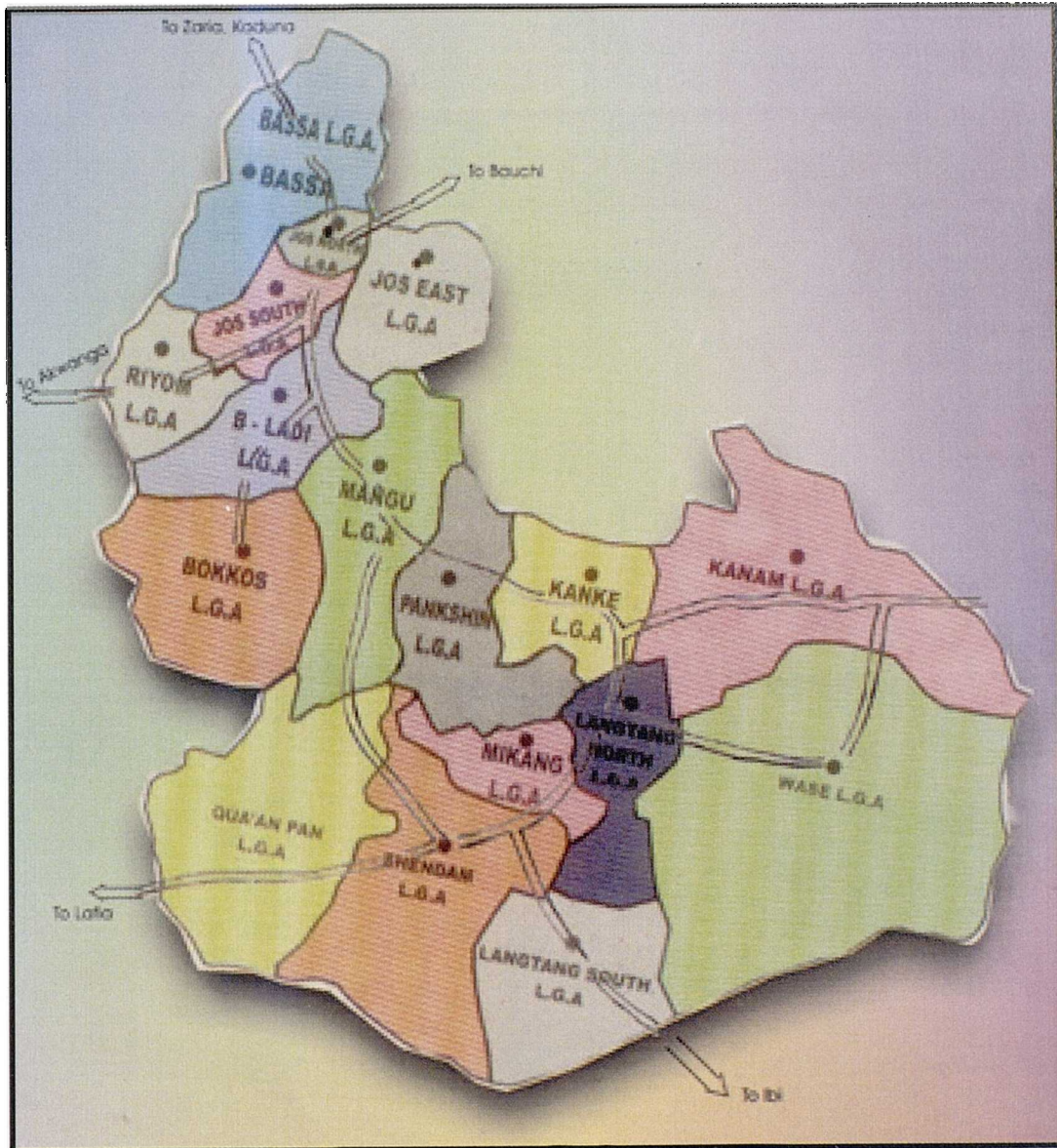
### Map Showing Kwoi, Jaba Local Government Headquarters



Source: Kaduna State Library

Fig. 1.3

### Map of Plateau State Showing Local Government Areas



Source: [http://www.plateaustategov.org/history\\_geo-info.html](http://www.plateaustategov.org/history_geo-info.html) (24/10/05)

### ***1.5.5 Data Management and Analysis***

The field research yielded approximately fifty hours of recording for transcription, maps, charts, newspaper cuttings, questionnaires, official documents and paraphernalia of NGOs. Qualitative and quantitative data gathered from field work were processed using NVIVO®, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package, and SPSS® respectively. NVIVO® entails the use of raw data to design a thematic coding index (see Appendix A) in order to facilitate rigorous, transparent, systematic data management and analysis.

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The research process experienced certain limitations. Some PRA participants in Gora spoke neither English nor Hausa requiring the services of an interpreter. Official documents and records are often difficult to obtain or unavailable and statistics inaccurate. For example, statistics produced during the last national census in 1991 are controversial and highly contested. Efforts to obtain records of workshop proceedings of the National Policy on Women drafting processes to corroborate data from interviews and to get records of budgetary allocations to Federal Ministries between 1985 and 2005 proved abortive. It was therefore impossible to view FMWA budgetary allocations in relation to other line ministries. Due to the country's size, 923,773 square kilometres, and the need to sample the six geo-political zones the research process required reliance on research assistants. This entailed not having total control over the data. However, every effort was made to secure the process through adequate training and monitoring. Inadequate databases and lapses in organisation registration procedures in Nigeria made it difficult to distinguish between credible and dubious NGOs. This necessitated restricting the study mostly to established NGOs and some newer authentic ones may have gone un-investigated.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This research is groundbreaking in a number of respects. This is the first comprehensive and systematic study on the National Policy on Women. The construction of the history and political processes of the NPW, and the structure and organisation of the country's Gender Management System are the result of primary research generating new and valuable data for further gender analysis. The nature of the research topic necessitated a multi-sectoral approach unlike the customary sector-based

studies. While in-depth sector analysis was sacrificed, the study yielded a kaleidoscopic overview of Nigerian women in community, in action and in relation to each other and to informal and formal institutions and to the state. As a result, the data generated constitute a reference point for inter-sector comparisons of gender policy as well as a framework for monitoring gender mainstreaming capability in Nigeria.



## CHAPTER TWO

# The Gender and Development Analytical Framework: Towards an Integrated Feminist Analysis

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for the thesis on the basis of which, chapter three develops a critique of the policy thrusts of the National Policy on Women (NPW) in relation to the status<sup>23</sup> of women in Nigeria. It presents an overview of relevant feminist (and non-feminist) literature within and outside development studies from both the North and AALAME countries<sup>24</sup>. Establishing an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of gender issues in Nigeria is problematic. Feminism is not homogenous and there is no such thing as *a* feminist theory – only feminist theories, sometimes with conflicting analyses and emphasis. These theories apply in some ways to gender relations in Nigeria, and not in others. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of the dynamics surrounding the NPW and its role in the search for gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender concerns in the Nigerian context requires an integrated approach.

This Chapter demonstrates that the gender and development (GAD) analytical framework is such an approach. GAD is an apt tool to examine the NPW because the latter uses the former, as well as the Women in Development (WID) framework, as its conceptual basis and theoretical point of departure. However, even GAD-based transformative approaches have certain limitations. Despite the analytic utility of a GAD framework, it lacks wholesale applicability within the Nigerian context; it takes insufficient account of the centrality of spiritual and cultural dimensions of women's lives and their roles as sources of 'woman power' and women's empowerment. Consequently, gender and development analysis needs to be synchronised with indigenous spiritual/religious/cultural themes that configure a Nigerian feminist dynamic but remain under-theorised.

The chapter begins by tracing the link between feminist theories and development in general, and the specific ideas that underpin WID and GAD approaches,

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<sup>23</sup> Brydon and Chant (1989:1) define women's status as, "the value and meaning given to [women's] activities by wider society, which in turn both reflect and influence the general rubric of gender relations."

<sup>24</sup> African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries.

in order to demonstrate in chapter Three the overlap of both in the NPW, as well as in the self-defined needs of women in chapter Four. Section 2.3 applies a GAD framework to demonstrate how gender inequality is rooted in indigenous, colonial and contemporary global patriarchal norms and traditions, which create structures of constraint and exclusion against the full participation of women in socioeconomic and political life. Conversely, it shows how local traditions also contain emancipatory elements that promote gender harmony, female dignity and voice. Section 2.4 looks at women's agency, particularly how through collective action organisations set change agendas based on practical needs and strategic interests. Section 2.5 states the case for gender mainstreaming to ensure sustainable development. Nevertheless, it argues that structural constraints, along with faulty conceptualisations of women's problems, undermine both collective action and state institutional capability to meet women's needs and integrate gender issues into policy frameworks. In order to develop a perspective that captures the complexity and diversity of Nigerian women's experiences section 2.6 discusses the basis for a Nigerian feminist framework drawn from a synergy of universal concepts, traditional/religious values and existing reality. In doing so, however, attempt is made to dispel assertions by certain Nigerian 'womanists' that feminism and gender are purely imperialist impositions.

## **2.2 Feminism and Development: Tracing the Connection**

Feminist scholarship in diverse fields drew attention to the universal oppression of women and their systematic exclusion from socio-political processes and power. They argued that in the production of knowledge women's perspectives and realities were left out of 'malestream' academic analyses and of the social world in virtually every field of human inquiry and endeavour. In the elaboration and evolution of development theories and strategies between the 1950s and 1970s women's contributions, interests and needs were rendered invisible, ignored or muted by theorists and practitioners alike. It was the vociferous spate of feminist analyses and activism that forced an insouciant international community to listen to its deafening silence on the woman question.

In the development field controversies in the North and South over the causes and cures of underdevelopment produced a series of internally contested development paradigms - modernisation, dependency, institutionalism, Neo-Marxism, and, the present dominant orthodoxy, neo-liberalism. These theories represent ideas about the

nature and impact of global capitalist expansion within which 'development' is said to be taking place. To varying degrees they focused on macroeconomic growth as the primary development stimulus. Governments, international finance and business, and global markets were variously seen as the key agents of economic policy and planning.

Feminist analyses revealed a commonality between all these theories and the strategies they proposed. They assumed 'man' to be the agent and standard beneficiary of development. Women's priorities and needs were subsumed under a welfare orientation limited to their reproductive roles or totally excluded. Through United Nations agencies women began to challenge the andocentric worldview that marginalised women's participation in development by highlighting the centrality of sex and gender to economics, politics and society (Stamp, 1989; Sweetman 2000). These challenges led to the emergence of the WID framework consisting of five distinguishable approaches: it adopted the conventional welfare approach but added equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment objectives. The WID strategy sought to integrate women into development processes, tap their potential as a human resource, reduce poverty and maximise efficiency and productivity (Tinker, 1990, 1997; Tadesse and Snyder, 1995).<sup>25</sup> This was done primarily by facilitating women's access to cash income, expanding educational, training and employment opportunities and alleviating the burden of their reproductive roles through population control policies, family planning services, and the supply of basic needs for water, sanitation and health.

Underlying WID theoretically was largely a reformist liberal feminist vision premised on Western social contract notions of individual freedom, autonomy, equality of opportunity and treatment before the law, and access to an enabling market environment to increase women's income earning capabilities (Stamp, 1989). Feminist critics of WID observed that while there was a massive mobilisation drive to get women involved in development they were not initially target beneficiaries but instruments to serve the broader goals of agencies and/or governments. Prior to the WID empowerment approach women were regarded as passive recipients of development rather than active contributors (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995). They were 'acted upon' rather than 'actors'. Individual women and women's groups were hardly ever consulted about their needs leading to short-term benefits that did nothing to reverse underlying causes of inequality.

WID enjoined governments and agencies to set up institutional/legislative machinery to secure a place for development planning without necessarily seeking to

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of WID approaches see Moser, 1997:55-79.

transform structures that caused women's oppression and poverty. Consequently, Stamp (1989:22) argues that WID, "far from liberating women in the Third World, emerges from the development effort that fosters the international capitalist system and, in turn, contributes to the maintenance of that oppressive order." This statement underscores Stamp's earlier admission that even though most of the early academic work by feminist scholars provided a crucial intellectual stockpile for formulating gender theory, it "was within the liberal tradition of 'adding women on' rather than presenting coherent challenges to the social science corpus (1989:11)." Yet, as Porter (1999:1) argues the "add women and stir" approach is inadequate for achieving sustainable human development. It was in view of this lapse that feminists discerned "the need to develop a more systematic and powerful framework of analysis." (Stamp, 1989:22)

Alternatively, Socialist/Marxist feminists drew attention to the role of structural constraints imposed by the sexual division of labour and other gender relations (Walby, 1990). Socialist feminism prioritises economic and social rights over individual legal rights while Marxist feminism underscores the historical specificity and material basis of female oppression (Bryson, 1999). Their combined analyses depict the symbiotic relationship between traditional and modern forms of patriarchy and capitalism as mutually reinforcing causative agents in women's oppression and hierarchical relations between men. Consequently, GAD calls for the transformation of oppressive institutions and structures in pursuance of women's gender interests. Radical feminist scholars underscored the importance of micro-level analysis of intra-family/household and interpersonal relations. Like socialist/Marxist feminists they challenged the public/private (or domestic) dichotomy underpinning Western social and political thought. This dichotomy allowed development analysts to treat the household as an undifferentiated unit of analysis, analogous to the family, existing for the mutual interests of members. Radical feminists contended that this 'false' separation served as an avenue for legitimising sexual oppression by concealing intra-household/personal injustices and inequalities (Millet, 1970; Oakley, 1974). By demonstrating that 'the personal is political' they highlighted the most intimate aspects of women's oppression and characterised patriarchy as a system of male hegemony primarily indicated in institutional and individual violence against women. Consequently, GAD insists on a gender desegregation of households and development planning data for an adequate situation analysis of women's condition. Furthermore, GAD pays attention to all forms of gender-based violence.

Critical theory feminists built on the standpoint of socialist feminists to argue that women are not mere victims of oppression; they are agents who negotiate the terms of their engagement with oppressive structures and initiate change (Van Leeuwen, 1993). Women's collective agency is a vital component of GAD on the premise that sustainable development can only take place when people own the change process. Only in so doing are they genuinely empowered (Young, 1997a). In order to mobilise women's capacity for collective action GAD draws on psychoanalytic feminist assumptions about positive female identity and self-concept combined with consciousness-raising techniques popularised by radical feminism. Such approaches serve to break the silence surrounding women's suffering and legitimate women's voices in naming present reality and determining the direction of change.

Owing to the influence of AALAME feminist writing (Hooks, 1982; Walker, 1983; Mama, 1984) the GAD analytical framework takes cognisance of colonial and neo-colonial influences, and how gender, class, race, ethnicity, age and other identities intersect to create complex, multiple, and often fragmented experiences for women and men across cultures, space and time. This underscores the need for a flexible and responsive approach to policy formulation in ways that do not underplay gender differences but are sensitive to specific needs and local contexts.

In summary, GAD is an integrative feminist framework (Bryson, 1999) that synthesises mainstream and psychoanalytic feminist perspectives, on the social, economic, political and psycho-sexual roots of women's oppression<sup>26</sup> and proposes major transformative strategies. GAD accepts the importance of facilitating women's access to societal resources but goes beyond WID reformist strategies to address the sexual division of labour that locates women in a socially disadvantaged position in relation to men. In so doing it challenges socially embedded structures of inequality to foster a just and enabling environment for women and men (Young, 1997a). GAD embodies the content and progress of feminist debates. It represents an integrated analytical framework for interdisciplinary macro, meso- and micro-level inquiry. In *Technology, Gender and Power in Africa* (1989: 22- 24) Patricia Stamp stresses the need for an integrative feminist political economy framework that would recognise the equal importance and interaction of economic production relations and class formation on the one hand, and the contradictions inherent in inter-personal gender relations on the other. GAD accomplishes this since, in the words of Kate Young (1997:52) it,

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<sup>26</sup> Social oppression means "a relationship of dominance and subordination between groups or categories of people in which a dominant group benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward a subordinate group." Johnson (1995:263).

...starts from a holistic perspective. That is, it looks at the *totality* of social organisation, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society. As a result it does not focus merely on the reproductive aspect of social life [...] Nor does it focus solely on production and the distribution of goods and services [...] Rather it focuses on the 'fit' between family, household, or the domestic life and the organisation of both political and economic spheres. [Emphasis mine]

Finally, the GAD framework is a concrete policy outcome of feminist theories of development deduced from normative principles through a process of conceptual/empirical and trans-national/cross-cultural analyses of women's experiences (Young 1997; Pearson, 2000). Feminist analyses and GAD-based policy proposals have had a rippling effect on women in AALAME countries, including Nigeria. Consequently, GAD lends itself most suitably to a critical analysis of gender inequality and policy mainstreaming efforts in Nigeria in four ways. First, it is a lens through which to study how gendered power relations impact on women and men's access to resources, benefits and opportunities in society (Kabeer, 1994; Young, 1997; Sweetman, 2000). Second, GAD links gender relations at the micro-level (intra and inter-household dynamics) to social relations and structures at the national and global levels providing a gender analysis of the causes and manifestations of poverty, exclusion and underdevelopment, as well as gender-sensitive and gender-specific policy strategies for change. Therefore, it permits an investigation of the extent to which institutions are prepared to address women's concerns (i.e. their gender-sensitivity). In so doing, it renders the 'hidden' role of men and masculinity discernible in policy-making and institutions. Third, it critically analyses women's agency and leadership potential through collective action in indigenous initiatives as a process and means of empowerment. Fourth, it challenges and interrogates universalistic top-down assumptions that homogenise people's development needs without due recognition of differences arising from multiple, intervening identities (e.g. class, ethnicity, religion). It, therefore, is able to promote location-specific, culture-specific policy interventions through bottom-up participatory analysis and action. The rest of the chapter is an application of GAD in the Nigerian context in relation to these four areas.

### **2.3 Structural Inequality: The Woes and Pros of Patriarchy**

Removing structural constraints against women's development is a cardinal GAD objective. This section explains the theoretical relationship between socio-cultural/ideological constructions of gender identity and difference, and women's

political and economic exclusion. The resulting structural inequality is evidenced by, and re-enacted through, male bias in policy/ regulatory frameworks. This fact underscores the critical importance of investigating Nigeria's institutional preparedness to mainstream gender, and to implement the NPW. According to a World Bank statement the causes of gender inequality are complex and linked to intra-household decision-making processes (1995:1). In most of Nigeria households are structured along patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal lines. Patriarchy is conceptualised as a deeply embedded social construct of male hierarchy over women, as well as over men, that runs through all other political, social, cultural and economic forms (Millet, 1977). This patriarchal 'code of conduct' becomes both the justification and instrument of female devaluation. Tobin (1985:291 in Aluko, 1999:66) explains further:

Patriarchy as a worldview assumes the alienation of women. It places the male on the centre of reality and makes the masculine normative. In such a world order, women cannot be anything but inferior since if the male/masculine is normative they are different (abnormal). Where patriarchy as a worldview is in operation, symbols, rituals and laws will perpetuate fundamental inequality.

The household is the basic unit for the formation of gender identities and socialisation into gender roles which are further reinforced by society. It is here that, "pre-adult males and females are not only socialised into different participative roles, but that both boys and girls learn that adult political expression is more of a male than a female gender role" and that privilege and entitlement belong primarily to the former (Jennings, 1985: 265 in Okwuosa p.12). Thus, female poverty and underdevelopment are not the *a priori* causes of gender inequality but symptoms of patriarchal and capitalist systems, both of which rely on the sexual division of labour within households and in the marketplace (Pateman, 1989; Kabeer, 1994; Pearson, 1991, 1998). A sex-class system, predicated on male-female differences, lies at the root of other social divisions and is reflected in the unequal allocation of power and resources within households and in society (Firestone, 1970, Kusterer, 1990).

### ***2.3.1 When Different Means Deficient: Gender Identity, Roles and Relations***

Since the 1960s/70s feminist controversies have raged over whether men and women are different and if so what are the extent of and bases for ascribing difference. Linked to this is the debate over whether male/female similarities warrant equal, as in

the same, treatment for both sexes, or whether women's biological peculiarities and social responsibilities earn them special rights and privileges. Claims to equality imply that men and women receive similar treatment under the law and that affirmative or positive action policy, such as the NPW, which target women reinforce their inferiority and constitute reverse discrimination against men (Wolgast, 1980). Difference often ignores or denies similarities, and is usually construed to mean female deficiency and to justify their exclusion (Woodard, 1997). This argument delineates the distinct definitions of sex and gender in GAD analysis where sex refers to biological characteristics of men and women, and gender to those characteristics and roles that are socially constructed and ascribed (Magezis, 1996). Sex is universal and normally irreversible while gender varies across cultures and time. Woodard (1997:9) shows how identity is relational in that it relies on something outside itself to exist and define itself in relation to. When premised on essentialist claims to a shared identity – such as a historical past, cultural heritage, religion or biological traits - difference can lead to conflict, war and dominance. In Nigeria, as in many other parts of the world, gender identity is socially constructed in a way that cultivates male dominance and female dependency.

Identity, signified by difference, is socially and symbolically constructed to produce meanings that function to exclude the 'other' and lead to differentiated social outcomes. Chodorow's (1994) psychoanalytic theory of gender identity explains how male differentiation from the mother occurs through the denial (and/or repression), and devaluation of the feminine in search of identification with the father or masculine. Thus, for the male to have a separate identity from the female differences are posited using cultural symbols and meanings that create and reinforce binary opposition, and prevent flexibility and change. Binary oppositions in turn produce power imbalances because the opposing groups or individuals are differentially weighted as in male/female, active/passive, strong/weak, leader/follower.

These symbols of difference and their meanings give rise to subject-positions and represent individuals within them. Consequently, a cyclical relationship emerges between identity, difference and representation which "creates social and material conditions that may privilege some and disadvantage others" (Woodard, 1997:12). To illustrate this Chodorow (1994) claims that the implication of male differentiation and separation from the mother/feminine compels them to seek identity and accomplishment by pursuing abstract male role models and categories in extra-familial public settings. Thus, she agrees with Rosaldo (1972) that the public/private (domestic) divide is based



on women's reproductive role which restricts them to the birthing and nurturing of children freeing men to participate and be represented in the construction of social meaning and order.

Critics of Chodorow and Rosaldo point out that the family and the dichotomy between public and private spheres are not historical or universal facts and do not apply to pre-colonial or pre-industrial societies (Rosaldo, 1980; Nicholson, 1986). Neither does boy/mother differentiation explain the devaluation of feminine qualities, which itself is not universal in that some societies prize mothering and mothers. Some commentators refute the relevance of the public/private divide in the African context pointing to evidence of high levels of female participation in trade, social networking and governance in pre-colonial communities (Amadiume, 1987, 1997; Callaway, 1987; Afonja, 1990; Awe, 1992). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the centralisation of power in contemporary Nigeria, economic restructuring, and globalised labour mobility have led to the distancing of domestic and public spheres in ways that increase gender disparities. GAD analyses confirm that the sexual division of labour imposes a triple role (reproduction, production and community activities) on women in comparison to men's double role (production and community participation). This places practical limitations on women's ability to participate in development (Benería and Sen, 1997; OXFAM, 1994).

Accordingly, Harrison and Davis (2001:2) explain how identity and difference create distinctions between people and groups that erect structures of constraint or opportunity, and "have an impact on politics, policies and academic analyses." Structural imperatives, be they cultural, social, economic or political, embody the interests of those who wield power in society, and have the ability to exert ideological control by shaping the consciousness of others (Doyal and Harris, 1986). Ideology is a particularly potent tool of female repression given that:

In essence and critically understood, ideology refers to beliefs or a set of beliefs which rationalise, justify, and sanctify vested interests of an individual or a group (Berger) [sic]. They rationalise these vested interests by making actions seem to be something different than they are. They justify by providing premises or conclusions which seem to support the interests. They sanctify by making them seem natural or inevitable.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> (<http://www.angelfire.com/or/sociologysshop/IDEOLOGY.html>)

Ideology plays on identity and difference to create hierarchal distinctions. Oganwu, (1996) asserts that in Nigeria patriarchy is an ideological/ institutional barrier erected by a male dominated society to exclude women from all levels of decision making. According to Okwuosa (1992) patriarchal gender socialisation is the foremost causative factor that works to undermine female autonomy and decision-making capabilities. This barrier is legitimated and solidified by a gender-insensitive regulatory framework.

In Nigeria gender identity and gender role stereotyping are shaped and entrenched through cultural and religious ideologies. Woodward (1997:31) refers to Emile Durkheim's theory of culture as a "form of ritual, symbol and classification [that is] central to the production of meaning and the reproduction of social relations." In this way gender bias and roles have been socially constructed through religious beliefs, proverbs and sayings to devalue females and femininity and prize males and masculine roles. Through cultural and religious indoctrination women and men are locked into stereotypical gender roles and relations within households and in public life. The ceremonial symbolism of circumcision in traditional and rural Nigerian societies is illustrative in this regard. Teenage boys would undergo a ritual procedure during which they would be tested by feats of strength, endure the pain of circumcision and qualify to enter the 'class' of those who were 'not-women.' Any boy who refused to go through the ceremony, or displayed fear was ridiculed for showing female weakness bringing shame on himself and his family. In this way culture has authority to induce assent to otherwise unpleasant circumstances through the assent of others (Douglas, 1966: 38-39). Although urban dwellers tend to circumcise baby boys in hospitals the symbolism of male strength through the refusal to display emotion persists.

Socially constructed notions of masculinity can be artificial in that not all men fit in to the masculine ideal and there is considerable overlap of male and female personalities. Yet men cling to and perpetuate the masculine ideal because of its correlation with power and privilege. This constructivist perspective complements rather than refutes a materialist explanation of female oppression. Marxist/Socialist feminists like Gloria Emeagwali (1985) argue that culture, ideology, law, and religion are super-structural forms that derive from a basic need to secure both patrilineal heritage and the means of production thereby necessitating the subordination of the reproducers of sons and labour. Material conditions of 'enforced' subordination are institutionalised through these super-structural forms which create conditions for gender oppression.

However, concepts such as 'gender,' 'gender roles,' and 'patriarchy,' which are central to the GAD analysis, are contested by both Western and AALAME feminists/womanists. Postmodernist feminists have questioned the validity of the universal categories 'woman', 'gender' and 'patriarchy' as concepts that essentialise women and men, without recognising the diversity, differences, complexities and contradictions that exist between men and women, and among women (Benhabib, 1999). Okonjo (1976), Amadiume (1987, 1995, 1997), and Oyewunmi (1997) fault the concept of gender on the basis of its insistence on putting men and women in hierarchical binary opposition to each other. In their study of pre-colonial Igbo society Okonjo and Amadiume contend that male and female roles were fluid and interchangeable since, in certain situations, a woman could be a husband and a son. In this dual-sex system the categories male and female were not necessarily occupied by men and women respectively, and women held socially organised independent matriarchal power parallel to patriarchal authority. Okonjo and Amadiume conceptualise matriarchy as female structures of power and authority in domestic and public affairs. Amadiume (1995) further asserts that African women were active in constructing and mediating gender difference through gender neutral spaces within which they could self-actualise and hold power. Thus, she asserts, African women "had no problem" with difference whereas European women had gender difference thrust on them by a male dominated patriarchal system that was also responsible for the erosion of African women's power through colonialism (1995:40).

In Oyewunmi's (1997) study of Oyo-Yoruba she challenges the notion of the universal category woman as non-existent and totally irrelevant. Like Amadiume, she sees gender as a historical-specific and culture-bound concept which she refers to as 'western bio-logic' (pp. x and 32). She depicts an intricate weaving of fluid, interchangeable and mutually-affirming roles played out by women and men in Yoruba society. For example, the *Alafin* (king) of Oyo could kneel to only one person who happened to be a woman - the *Iyamode*, the worshipper of the departed spirits of the dead kings. As in Igbo society Yoruba women could marry wives, serve as heads of households and hold traditional titles. She also refutes the notion of the universal oppression of women on the argument that age seniority, not gender, was the preferential ranking system of the Yoruba that gave older women considerable power and authority at home and in public matters.<sup>28</sup> Oyewunmi, therefore, denies the

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<sup>28</sup> Brydon (1989:77/8) refers to a threefold classification of African societies into communal societies, kin corporate societies and pre-industrial societies to compare and explain the near

importance of woman's oppression seeing it as a derivative of the 'somatocentricity' of western thought (p. ix). Yet, she distances herself from postmodernist feminist tendencies to deconstruct the body into dissolution.

The analyses of Amadiume and Oyewunmi contain certain contradictions. Amadiume admits that matriarchal and patriarchal power were juxtaposed in binary opposition to each other in a system predicated on contending gender ideologies due to conflicts between the patriarchal family and the matri-centric kinship unit. She points to historical evidence that gender antagonisms often led women to emigrate en masse from villages and set up alternative settlements along river banks where they sometimes established goddess worship as in the case of Idemili. Yet, they had no problem with gender difference! Moreover, from Okonjo, Amadiume and Oyewunmi's accounts when women assumed male roles as sons, husbands, fathers or chiefs/rulers their status was elevated. Within kinship relationships sons and daughters took precedence over wives irrespective of age. Households were usually patrilocal and an incoming wife as 'non-owner/outsider' was disadvantaged *vis à vis* the owner/insider (male or female). Thus, while the traditional African dual-sex system allowed for a certain amount of gender role flexibility, male identity was more heavily weighted and cast in terms of strength, leadership and supremacy. Within marital and kinship arrangements African/Nigerian wives were/are stratified at the bottom rung of the social ladder. The status of *oko* (husband in Yoruba), whether it belongs to what Oyewunmi refers to as *anafemale* or *anamale*, always privileges the title bearer. Seniority merely mitigates the effects of female oppression - the same way in which class mobility does in the modern Nigerian state - rather than eliminates it. In any case older women are deemed to have paid their dues of subservience to the patriarchal order and elite women can be said to have circumvented its harsher aspects.

Osinulu (1996) observes that while traditional Nigerian customs and religions sometimes confer greater gender role flexibility and authority it is usually tied to patrilineal and/or spousal affiliations or age. Okonjo, Amadiume and Oyewunmi are not able to successfully show that women were not generally subordinated. Oyewunmi ignores the fact that even in traditional African society there were very marked and distinctive gender behaviour characterised by socially, physically and ceremonially/ritualistically separate spheres which produced different socio-economic and political outcomes for women and men (House-Nidamba and Ekechi, 1995). It

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absence of or variations in female subordination and exploitation leading to significant differences in women's status within and across communities. The implication of this for my analysis is that the Yoruba and Igbo

appears that in the desperate need to recapture a non-Eurocentric identity, many Afrocentric feminist/womanist theorists (see for instance, Oke, 1996; Oluwole, 1994) fall into the ever-present temptation of romanticising the African past – just like their male counterparts do – that permits them to deny or underplay the reality and pervasiveness of female oppression in traditional Africa. This tendency permits a selective reclaiming of an idyllic past, a denial of painful pre-colonial realities, an incomplete understanding of the present, and underscores African women's inability to pragmatically strategise for a better future.

Nonetheless, studies such as those of Okonjo, Amadiume and Oyewunmi are useful in revealing alternatives to the rigid dichotomisation of gender identity and roles. They show how the construction of gender neutral spaces is possible through the use of gender neutral language. In her study Oyewunmi explains how the English language privileges the male by the generic use of the term 'man' or 'he' for individual or person. Conversely, in several Nigerian languages gender neutral words refer to male and female in various social capacities. For instance, in Yoruba 'o' means 'he' or 'she.'

African feminists fault the tendency to focus on gender as the sole basis of female oppression. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) attempts to detangle the complex intricacies that arise from the intersection of gender and other categories such as age, ethnicity and religion by contending that African women's lives should not be analysed solely in the context of conjugal relations. Typically conjugal relations have always been studied as sites for explaining women's oppression. According to Ogundipe-Leslie African women operate in consanguine and social contexts in which they hold superior status and wield power and authority on the basis of seniority, personal standing and class. She enunciates a more complex paradigm where some women are also active patriarchs who contribute to the force and effectiveness of patriarchy. These realities arise from "African complex kinship structures and the day-to-day negotiations of our lives through gender, sex, and male and female relational experiences..." Her paradigm agrees with the Silberschmidt's (1999) findings regarding the effects of modernisation and globalisation processes on gender identities, roles and relations. Silberschmidt's study of changing gender relations in Kisii, Kenya shows trends typical all over Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria. She asserts that stereotypes of male domination and female subordination can be misleading and static because they do not fully reflect the massive social changes that are eroding men's patriarchal power and undermining male identity. In the context of the modern post-colonial nation-state and the nature of neo-colonial incorporation into the global economy, gender identities, roles and relations are

more complex and fragmented than a one-dimensional (e.g. class or gender) analysis of traditional society portrays. Silberschmidt argues that, “not all men are successful patriarchs and not all women passive victims” (p.8). Thus oppression cannot be read-off womanhood; rather cross-cutting identities must be factored into the investigation of women’s self-defined interests and needs.

A paradox exists within tradition and in the interface of traditional gender formations and the political and economic realities of modern capitalist society. Both tradition and the modern nation-state could be sites for women’s social prestige and subordination simultaneously:

In reality, women can be subordinate; powerful; marginalised; and central: and can occupy different positions at different times or at the same time in different contexts. (Flew et al., 1999: 399)

As Harrison and Davis (2001) argue, simultaneous oppressions can result from multiple and fragmented identities and roles rendering the analysis of human experience a highly complex process. There is a wide disparity for instance between a middle aged urban female bank executive and a thirty year old female rural farmer. Conversely, Rai (2002) demonstrates how growing up in an era of Indian nationalism and development she learned that different role expectations were placed on boys and girls despite the rhetoric of equality and regardless of women’s other identities as part of castes, classes, religions and ethnic groups. In spite of women’s participation in nationalist struggles post-colonial development and nation-building policies and processes are reflective and constitutive of culturally embedded gender biases that make women invisible and constrain female agency. She notes how this “affected the materiality of women’s lives through policy-making and through the institution of certain norms in the constitution of the decolonising nation-states” (p.3).

In summary, although a uniform categorisation of women’s oppression under gender is problematic as “there is no single universal position occupied by all women” (Flew, 1999:397), it is the case that in whatever other category they exist (class, ethnicity, religion, age) overwhelmingly women *qua* women stand at a disadvantage in relation to their male counterparts. Badgett and Folbre (2001) argue that gender asymmetries begin at the household level through role ascription, and are mirrored in gender differentiated outcomes. It is this systematic exclusion of women from social, political and economic power structures and processes that renders gender and patriarchy constructive diagnostic concepts. As Alexander and Mohanty (1997: xvii) contend “if we dissolve the category of race for instance, it becomes difficult to claim

the experience of racism.” Similarly, feminist critiques of postmodernist deconstruction contend that gender properly understood and applied has analytic utility in explaining the cross-cultural fact of women’s lower socio-economic status and keeping their needs, interests and priorities – differentiated as they may be by cross-cutting identities – on the centre-stage of public policy and development planning. This is necessary to even out gender imbalances derived from the standardisation of male perspectives and behaviours leading to male bias in development and policy-making processes (Diane Elson, 1991).

Bryson (1999: 205) argues that gender analysis has the paradoxical yet positive effect of problematising socially constructed patriarchal masculinity by removing policy problems from a *solely* woman-centred focus (see also *The Polity Reader*, 1994:3). She posits that a gender analysis helps to visibilise and interrogate masculinity and formulate policies that respond to the complex diversity and realities of men’s lives. For just as women have been rendered invisible through exclusion, men have been invisibilised by the non-recognition of their gendered roles:

When men are no longer equated with humanity, their gender becomes visible. This makes it possible to approach the analysis of economic, political or personal life from a viewpoint that recognises the gender-specific nature of male life-patterns and behaviour rather than seeing these as standard. This means, for example, that a gender analysis is central to an understanding of how political elites function, precisely because they have generally excluded women. (Bryson, 1999:205)

In seeking to visibilise and analyse masculinity several writers distinguish patriarchal masculinity from other competing masculinities, and it is the former that is usually indicated in gender inequality (Hall, 1994; Sampath, 1997; Chant and Gutmann, 2000). White (1997) associates masculinity with an overall structure of dominance and power that underlies western modals of politics and development. Ogunyemi (1996) sees a clear link between patriarchy and male dominance in the African context (see page 42). Nevertheless, she demonstrates an ambivalent attitude towards patriarchy, which she does not find entirely objectionable if it is counter-balanced by a public political role for women and female essence, creating space for a feminine worldview. She shares the view of Augie (1993) that sex difference is not the problem but the ranking of sex difference which produces disproportionate political and economic outcomes for women and men. The ranking of sex differences in favour of masculine qualities made some feminists to conclude that women had to be the same as men and do the same jobs to qualify for equal treatment. Inability to do so, for whatever reason,

validates belief in female deficiency. However, as Phillips (2001:3) contends, it is neither conceivable nor desirable to eliminate differences between men and women because certain differences are valued as central to human well being. Equality should not be contingent on the denial of differences. Consequently, she rightly concludes that, “it has to be possible to be both different and equal” to ensure equitable socio-economic and political outcomes (p.12).

Studies on men, masculinity and development indicate that for GAD to live up to its analytical premise and political goal of gender equality men GAD planning and interventions must find creative, sensitive and beneficial ways to incorporate male concerns, needs and workers (White, 1997; Chant and Gutmann, 2000). This requires a deconstruction of stereotyped gender roles and relations to engage with the tensions and disadvantages hegemonic masculinity imposes on men and boys (Cornwall, 2000; White, 1997).

### ***2.3.2 The Politics and Economics of Difference***

Gender identity impacts significantly on one’s access to economic and political power. Feminist theorists contributed significantly to a redefinition and broadening of conventional political and economic analysis (Humm, 1990; Nugent, 1997; Jackson and Pearson, 1997; Afshar, 1997; Rai, 2002). They have unveiled the gender dimensions of politics and economics by drawing the connection between the personal, private (domestic) realm and public spaces, and between reproduction and production. In the connection between the personal and political GAD analysis implicates male dominance as a hindrance to the development of what Nussbaum (2001:54) refers to as women’s central human functional capabilities including leadership and decision-making.

Some western feminists have theorised the state as a political actor mediating patriarchal interests institutionalised through policy and legislative frameworks and, exemplified by gender hierarchy of personnel and gendered institutional practice (Fanzway et al., 1989; Pateman, 1989; MacKinnon, 1991; Goetz, 1997). Ogunyemi (1996) opines that in the Nigerian state patriarchal interests are mediated and premised on the idealisation of motherhood. Thus, the Federal Government becomes the “big Mama” who bestows an unending stream of resources, which are also mismanaged. The paradox of Nigeria’s matricentricity is that the “Public Mother” is divorced from the nation’s millions of individual mothers who strain impoverished under the burdens and constraints of female servitude enforced by a patriarchal chain of authority. This is because the Public Mother serves, first and foremost, the needs of sons, as does the



private wife and domestic servant. Ogunyemi agrees with Nigerian sociologist Kamene Okonjo (1976) that the public mother syndrome is a disenfranchisement of Nigerian womanhood. Nevertheless, women often employ the glorification of motherhood as a basis upon which to make claims on the State.

Waylen (1998) provides a gender analysis that questions the functionalist view of the state as a gender-neutral, homogeneous entity existing outside society and acting upon women as objects rather than as a multi-faceted outcome of the complex processes of group-interest interactions. She contends that the state is not a unitary category nor are the interests of men, women and groups within it undifferentiated and uncontested. It is therefore a site and by-product of political struggles. It is vital to acknowledge however that to the extent that state institutions and policies are primarily male creations their varied interests are likely to be carried forward according to the power resources men are able to draw upon. Conversely, the interests of under- or un-represented groups are likely to be marginalised. This informs the need to assess state institutional capability to implement the NPW.

GAD analysis conceptualises politics and power beyond the narrow confines of formal institutional structures to include women's collective action. Smyth (1999:27) classifies their activities as micro-politics "being active in struggles which are 'embedded in the daily lives of individuals' to redefine the practices and discourse of the institutions they inhabit." One benefit she ascribes to collaborative micro-politics is that, "it can involve individuals in all aspects of their identity – gender, class, race and so on – without prioritising one over any other." However, Molyneux (1998:223) makes the point that while women's organisations are avenues for female political agency to impact on policy...

Women's entry into positions of power within formal, institutional politics has everywhere been fraught with difficulty, and this is despite women's extensive incorporation into the public sphere as the century has progressed. While there have been some notable exceptions, the upper echelons of political power have remained a remarkably resilient bastion of male exclusivity.

In their study of the role of African women in economic markets and development House-Nidamba and Ekechi, (1995) raise the question as to why women were not able to convert relative economic autonomy (e.g. in West Africa) to political power. They attribute this to the sexual division of labour rooted in deep-seated cultural/ religious ideologies and practices and accentuated by colonial/post-colonial state interaction with capitalism. Madunugu and Madunugu (1985) argue

from a Marxist materialist viewpoint that patriarchy is predicated upon the sexual division of labour, and reinforced by capitalism asserting that, “women cannot enter fully and equally into social production until they cease to be unpaid servants in the house, that is, until they are liberated” (p. 35). This gives credence to the earlier observation regarding the factual limitations placed on women’s public participation as a result of their triple societal role. Nevertheless, various gender analyses of global labour markets reveals that increased participation may increase women’s burdens if men are not willing to share reproductive responsibilities (see for example Bradley, 1994; Badgett and Folbre, 2001). Gender identities tend to be so firmly embedded, tied as they are to power and privilege; they prove impervious to role exchange. This is particularly so within households: a woman may step into a man’s provider role but a man can hardly step into a woman’s service and nurturing/caring role without risk of losing his masculine identity. An ACORD survey (2004) of changing roles in conflict areas reveals that while men often display a flexible attitude towards women’s involvement in tedious manual labour they reserve decision and policy-making for themselves.

A GAD framework investigates the nature of women’s work revealing the gender hierarchy in women’s employment concentrating them in low paid, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs (Moser, 1993; Loutfi, 2001; Méda, 2001; Benería, 2001; Greenwood, 2001). Besides paid work gender analysis of women’s unpaid domestic and subsistence agricultural labour reveals their massive contribution to economic development that is devalued and usually not factored into systems of national accounting (SNA) or macro-economic calculations (Brydon, 1989; Nugent, 1997, Kabeer, 2003).<sup>29</sup> Delphy and Leonard (1994) demonstrate how women’s unpaid domestic labour sustains economic activity and men’s participation in it. Walby (1994) explains how the devaluation of women’s labour within the patriarchal mode of production enables men to have access to income from the public sphere with which they are able to exert control over the household economy. A wife’s non-wage contribution is not recognised in a world where income confers power and prestige. Certainly, this is the case in Nigeria where feminist economists have begun to point out the need for public policy frameworks and economic measurements to take account of unpaid domestic and subsistence labour. Nugent (1997: 127) describes the frustration of one politician:

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<sup>29</sup> Kabeer refers to unpaid reproductive and subsistence labour as non-SNA activities

“As a politician, I found it virtually impossible to prove – given the production framework with which we were faced – that child care facilities were needed. “Nonproducers” (housewives, mothers) who are “inactive” and “unoccupied” cannot, apparently, be in need. They are not even in the economic cycle in the first place (cited from Waring, 1988:2).

Kusterer (1990) links domestic labour to the preponderance of female poverty. He maintains that since the capitalist mode of production is predicated on a patriarchal domestic mode of production their interaction is responsible for the perpetuation of poverty and inequality. Jackson (2001) uses a materialist analysis to explain the depreciation of female labour. She asserts that concrete factors such as lack of education, information, technological skills and income complement and merge with ideological and socially constructed justifications for women’s exclusion and poverty. A gender analysis of intra-household resource allocation uncovers other tangible dimensions of female poverty such as the “elasticity” of women’s time, the energy intensiveness of their labour and unequal access to nutrition, and restrictions of choice and autonomy (Bradley, 1994; Delphy and Leonard, 1994).

Yet, the question arises as to whether women’s domestic production and constrained socio-economic involvement are the problem or the fact that income does not accrue directly to women from reproductive work. If women had more income would there be greater gender equality? Empirical studies of micro-credit schemes show that increased income does not necessarily increase female financial autonomy (Lont, 2001). From a gender analytical perspective poverty is not discerned solely by economic measurement. Furthermore, men and women experience poverty differently. A World Bank survey of rural Nigeria, in which women and men were interviewed about their experiences of poverty, found markedly different indicators for both (*WDR*, 2001/2). While men listed the lack of income and mobility as indicators of poverty women included non-tangible aspects such as the lack of autonomy, social prestige and security. The lack of choice and autonomy is linked to the lack of economic independence and affects women’s rights to free movement, control over their bodies, and limits their access to opportunities in society. It is important, as Jackson (2001:286) observes while arguing for a materialist feminist analysis of social inequalities, to recognise that differences are,

...founded upon real, material inequalities. Institutionalised racism, the heritage of centuries of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism along with local and global divisions of labour, are at least as important as culturally constituted difference. Moreover, if we neglect the structural, material

dimensions of social life, we may risk valorising differences that are products of oppression and inequality.

Jackson's comment helps to navigate a way through the complexity, diversity and specificities of gender subjectivities and contestations, and the intricate structures within which women must act to negotiate order and change. From her argument it is apparent that policy responses to gender inequality must be pluri-dimensional and contextual if they are to represent conflicting interests (more on this in section 2.5). The following section first examines how women organise for change outside formal policy mechanisms.

## **2.4 Women Organising for Social Change**

A basic GAD assumption is that, "Empowerment is not something outsiders do to people" and women must be the agents of their transformation (Mazey, 2001:6). Thus, women's organisational capability is critical. Brown's (1995) meta-analysis of organisational and leadership studies concludes that conventional organisational theory does not pay due attention to women's organisation and leadership. It concentrates predominantly on the study of male society. Even when it does include women it focuses on gender-stereotyped forms of female agency. Brown stresses the need for a sophisticated analysis of women's collective action and political mobilisation that reflects the diverse and complex nature of organisational type, agenda and strategy. A number of empirical and analytical studies have sought to fill the lacuna in theorising the role of women's movements in social change. In a study of women's contributions to economic development through participation in local development groups in AALAME countries Weinberger and Jütting (2001) found market and state failure to meet basic needs to be a strong motivator for women's organising. Their activities tend to improve living conditions by facilitating access to basic goods and services; promoting the accumulation of social capital thereby providing social security through information sharing, collective decision-making and social networking; articulating the interests of vulnerable and marginalised groups; serving as an avenue for empowerment; and promoting socio-political transformation through advocacy and public policy reform. A similar point is made in a very different context by Riordan (2000) who conducted research on women's organisations in the UK between 1996 and 1999. She also found that such organisations have a key role in carrying forward the agenda for gender equality.

Nonetheless, GAD analysts and practitioners sound a note of caution about their capacity to achieve GAD objectives. Central to this concern are the need to critically examine the nature of women's participation, the definition of interests and needs, the presence or absence of clear feminist goals and certain organisational practices, and the direction of social change. The NPW states that women's NGOs are key to its success. Therefore, the ensuing critical examination forms the basis for conceptualising the role of women's collective action in implementing gender equality policy.

#### ***2.4.1 Planning and Implementing Policy 'With' Women***

According to Eduards (1994:185) women's agency and collective action are "key analytical tools of feminist political theory," adopted by GAD for the purpose of empowering women to participate in social transformation. The GAD analytical framework emphasises women's participation as an end not just a means to development and social re-engineering (Nelson and Wright, 1995). When participation is an end women's involvement is crucial in the design and implementation of policies and projects as a step towards empowering them and factoring their expertise and concerns into policy planning. This can only be done by consulting women themselves to define interests and needs. Both men and women have a legitimate right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and policy objectives are undermined when all stakeholder interests are not represented.

Nigerian female and male academics have pointed out that the gender-blindness and male bias of Nigerian public policies and laws derives from the gross under-representation of women in decision-making (Ayoade et al., 1992; Ityavvyar and Obiajunwa, 1992; Afonja, 1995; Chisea and Njoku, Soetan, 2000). In *The Politics of Presence* Ann Phillips (1995) examines how women's absence from policy and decision making distorts policy outcomes: "When policies are worked out *for* rather than *with* a politically excluded constituency, they are unlikely to engage with all the relevant concerns" (p. 13). Just as men cannot presume to represent women, elite, urban-based, women cannot presume to speak for all women in the formulation of a women's policy. Genuine participation implies that the policy-making process must be owned by the beneficiaries and targeted to their concerns, and that helpers or 'experts' (female or male) work alongside them rather than hijacking the agenda. Here again, because gender intersects with other identities giving rise to distinct and splintered realities; women's policy requirements cannot simply be read off from womanhood (Baylies, 2000). Diversity among women could threaten women's capacity to act collectively to

end gender inequality. Conversely, diversity could enrich the change process as women learn to negotiate differences and build consensus and trust (Ryan, 1992). From a GAD perspective shared oppression is a touchstone that can override or mitigate the potentially de-mobilising effects of difference and rally women for collective action.

These factors are crucial in establishing the degree of consultation with and participation by Nigerian women that went into drafting the NPW, the extent to which women's collective agendas depict ownership of the policy, and collaboration towards its implementation. As Imam (1997) shows, despite intense ethnic, religious and geopolitical cleavages Nigerian women have been able to form organisations anchored in a commonality of purpose that transcends such divides (IDEA, 2000: 111). Nevertheless, the ethnocentric predisposition of Nigerian politics and the politicisation of religion in the struggle for scarce resources pose a persistent threat and serve as a litmus test to the cohesiveness of women's collective agendas. Indeed, collective action is a major feminist political strategy for bringing about social change being more likely to weather punitive countermeasures that would quash individual resistance (Eduards, 1994.). The capacity of women's organisations to achieve the supreme feminist goal of gender equality and equity appears contingent upon an awareness of structural constraints and opportunities, the adoption of suitable organisational arrangements, and the specification of appropriate agendas.

#### ***2.4.2 Consciousness-Raising: A Means of Em 'power'ing Women***

Eduards (1994) infers that a 'blame the victim' standpoint exemplifies patriarchal power mechanisms that constrain and delegitimize women's agency (see for example Oke (1996) on page 57). The basic power mechanism of patriarchy is its resistance to women's ability/right to challenge male oppression through "legitimate political collectivity" (p. 182). When women do engage in collective action they must do so as part of a group i.e. nationalist or liberation struggle, social class, religion, or other mixed sex organisations in cooperation with men (Rai, 2002). When women act in response to the gendered impacts of socio-economic and political realities they are deemed to alienate and/or threaten the established political order. Eduards (1994) depicts the tension between structure and agency. Here structure refers to stable, entrenched and naturalised patterns of social interaction that persist over time (Apter and Garnsey, 1994; Harrison and Davis, 2001); agency denotes voluntary actions to effect change. Apter and Garnsey (1994) employ social enactment theory in search of a

middle road that explores the complex interplay of both in relation to women's oppression and action.

Apter and Garnsey (1994:19ff.) advance three crucial arguments: First, structure involves "patterns of interaction so routinised, embedded in power bases, and taken for granted in shared interpretive schemes, that outcomes are experienced as divorced from the causal network of prior action." It is therefore difficult for subordinated groups to develop a clear awareness, and, thus challenge the source of their oppression. Second, structural constraints tend to be interlocking and mutually reinforcing such that they are extremely resilient in the face of change. Consequently, Ortner (1972 in Humm, 1992: 255) observes that change in one area is insufficient to alter women's unequal status and argues for a two-sided approach to social transformation:

A different cultural view can only grow out of a different social actuality; a different social actuality can only grow out of a different cultural view. It is clear, then, that the situation must be attacked from both sides. Efforts directed solely at changing the social institutions – through setting quotas on hiring, for example, or through passing equal-pay-for-work laws – cannot have far-reaching effects if cultural language and imagery continue to purvey a relatively devalued view of women. But at the same time efforts directed solely at changing cultural assumptions – through male and female – consciousness-raising groups, for example or through revision of educational materials and mass-media imagery – cannot be successful unless the institutional base of the society is changed to support and reinforce the changed cultural view.

Third, Apter and Garnsey (1994) argue that dominance and subordination are legitimated through a circuit of recursive, individual, relational actions that constitute the shared commitments of a group sustained by actual or potential censure. This renders the separation of individual consciousness from that of the dominant ideology a difficult and risky project and explains why women become accomplices in their own oppression. They give the example of female foot binding carried out in China (1994:27). In Nigeria, female genital mutilation is a case in point because it is carried out by women who ardently defend it (Wilkie, 2001).

For these reasons consciousness-raising is an established tool of feminist organising and a cardinal feature of the GAD framework. It seeks to raise *collective* awareness of contextual, relational and individual issues and provide a forum for the articulation of interests and action strategies. Consciousness-raising does not presuppose an absence of personal awareness but seeks to form a critical mass of consciousness. Ogunjide-Leslie (1994) refutes the notion of the ignorant, unquestioning rural women

incapable of articulating her problems or wanting change. Instructively, Rowbotham (1973) warns that even when women are silent it is not a basis for assuming consent,

When the conception of change is beyond the limits of the possible, there are no words to articulate discontent so it is sometimes held not to exist [...] the revolutionary must listen very carefully to the language of silence. This is particularly important for women because we are from such a long silence. (Cited in Humm 1992:94)

Consciousness raising is a means of empowering women to act collectively to induce desired change. So far power has been mentioned without unpacking implicit assumptions about what it really is and how it works or is acquired. Within conventional political analysis and ‘commonsense’ knowledge the prevailing interpretation of power implies ‘power over’ where an individual or group exercises overt or internal control over another (Rowlands, 1998). According to Rowlands ‘power over’ is finite and exclusive in that more for one entails less for the other. This, she explains, is why the notion of women’s empowerment is so threatening to men as they anticipate a loss of power and control. It is illusory and transient because it is bestowed by the dominant group and can be withdrawn. In a comparative analysis of WID and GAD conceptualisations of empowerment Rowlands asserts that the latter goes beyond an instrumentalist view of power which merely opens women’s access to public participation as a means of enhancing economic development.

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1982), Jackins (1983), Harstock (1985) and Radke and Stam (1994) Rowlands elaborates a gender analysis of power dynamics and relations that conceptualises three alternative models of power which are generative and productive as opposed to controlling: ‘power from within,’ ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ (Rowlands, 1998:13). These three models of power and empowerment are concerned with process as much as with the end-products of power, and feed into each other. “Power from within” is internally generated referring to internal spiritual strength resulting from self-respect and respect and acceptance of others (Williams et al., 1994). ‘Power to’ is motivational. Rowlands defines ‘power to’ as developing leadership capability to encourage innate creativity and motivate self and others. It presupposes that human beings have the inherent capability of setting their own agendas. The role of policy-makers, development workers and the like is to facilitate the process through opening up new opportunities. ‘Power with’ is collaborative and collective permitting people to transcend barriers of resistance. Brown (1995: 198) suggests that feminist theories of power originate from “a both/and rather than either/or perspective” stressing cooperation, inclusion and interpretive diversity.



A broad conceptualisation of power facilitates an understanding of women's empowerment in non-antagonistic, non-combative ways. It fulfils the need identified by Baden and Goetz (1998) to move away from the rhetoric of oppression and inculcate a rigorous gender analysis of power theory. Most importantly, it addresses concerns raised by feminists about the negative implications of masculine models of power that stipulate a separatist autonomy inconsistent with women's relational commitments and aspirations (Miller, 1987). The 'power over' model normally construes women as powerless whereas they may be alternatively/simultaneously powerful/powerless in different contexts. In investigating the experiences, perspectives and priorities of Nigerian women it is important to take cognisance of the diverse means through which they exert power towards change.

This signifies that the *process* and *direction* of change are critical factors in women's organising. What sort of change do women want/need? What would be strategically beneficial in the short and long-term? And how can it be achieved? Reviewing the radical changes in the lives of American women Vago (1989) argues that the collective status of women increased through greater access to education and employment at huge costs to their overall *physical and mental health*. A GAD analysis reveals that while economic exigencies and policy/legislative reforms have meant women take on additional responsibilities their burdens have increased due to persistent gender role stereotypes that prevent role flexibility and exchange (El-Bushra, 2000). Two things are, therefore, essential to ensure women organise for change that will improve their lives in real terms.

First, policy goals and agendas must reflect women's self-defined needs, interests and priorities (see subsection 2.4.3.) Second, both men and women need to be involved in the change process. Empirical GAD analyses on the impacts of women's organisations on development indicate that for change to be brought into the realm of the possible men must be included in consciousness-raising and consensus-building efforts (Bhasin, 1997; Cornwall, 1997; White, 1997; Chant and Gutmann, 2000; Weinberger and Jütting, 2001). Men need to be aware of the positive impacts of women's empowerment on overall community well being. Organisational patterns and structures may constitute another important factor in effective change. This is given more or less weight by different feminists analysts with some contending that organisational forms and goals are central to effective organising and others adopting a more pragmatic and flexible approach.

Molyneux's (1998) meta-analysis of studies on women's collective action provides a useful and flexible framework for analysing the relationship between organisational structure and impact. She develops three different models of collective action as heuristic tools to examine the wide spectrum and complexity of organisations, namely: *independent* (or *autonomous*), *associative* (or *associational*) and *directed*. An independent movement is where "women organise on the basis of self-activity, set their own goals and decide their own forms of organisation and struggle, authority derives from and resides in the community (p. 226). Cottrell (1999) depicts this form of participatory community development as most successful in effecting change and empowerment. Molyneux warns that in certain contexts autonomy could represent marginalisation and reduce political effectiveness if there are no avenues for collaboration and networking.

Associative organisations are also independent but "choose to form alliances with other political organisations" with common goals and interests on a range of issues (Molyneux, 1998:228). It has been noted that associative arrangements could lead to a compromise in the agendas of women's organisations as they may become subsumed or co-opted by the broader interests of affiliates (Porter, 1999; Cottrell, 1999; El-Bushra, 2000; Rai, 2002). Directed organisations were prolific in the 1970s/80s as governments set up national machinery to integrate women into development. Here "authority and initiative clearly come from outside and stand above the collectivity itself" (Molyneux, 1998:229). Besides government establishments, women's wings also exist under the direction of political parties, labour unions and religious bodies. Women's concerns are considered within the parameters of, and are often secondary to, wider organisational objectives. Both associative and directed arrangements could provide ready channels for information exchange and collaboration that advance policy formulation and implementation processes.

The point has also been made that organisations struggling for equality should have internal democratic organs and procedures (IDEA, 2000). In this regard, gender analysis incorporates an inventory of institutional gender sensitivity and feminist democratic principles which call for the flattening of hierarchies in favour of horizontal forms of decision-making (Harding, 1987; Baden and Goetz, 1997; Porter, 1999; Aftab, 1999; Cottrell, 1999; Oseen, 1999). Porter et al. (1999:4) maintain that all organisations – international development agencies, government women's ministries, NGOs – should be assessed on this criterion:

The rationale for analysing institutions from a gender perspective has been that development can only have a beneficial outcome for women when the working culture, structure, systems and procedures, and underlying values of the institutions which shape women's lives themselves reflect a concern for gender equity.

Oseen (1999:102) insists that besides the need to ensure consistency with feminist democratic theory non-hierarchical organising makes for sound feminist development practice as empirical evidence points to its transformative power. Hence, "transformational organising is critical for intra-organisational structure and agenda setting because gender hierarchies and inequalities within organisations are incapable of transforming gender relations in the field."

In contrast, Molyneux (1998) and Flew et al. (1999) contend that empirical evidence demonstrates that non-hierarchical arrangements are not a guarantor of equality. The absence of formal authority may lead to the tyranny of the majority as centralised authority is replaced by dominant ideas about reality; or it may precipitate a paralysis of powerlessness where informal structures of power hold sway. A rigid insistence on certain forms of structure may preclude partnering relationships between international agencies, government machineries, the private sector and NGOs which Smyth (1999:23) admits constitute a core platform for promoting gender equality policies. Smyth claims such partnerships are also necessary to prevent the 'NGOisation of feminism' with its propensity for evading "issues pertaining to the allocation of institutional power, resources and, more specifically, gender-specific access to influence." Molyneux concludes that, despite the merits of horizontal organising, there is no correlation between organisational form and effective collective action due to the diverse and complex nature of the contexts that shape women's interests and needs. Nevertheless, organisational typology will be considered as a possible factor influencing which interests and needs are placed on the agenda of women's groups in Nigeria.

### ***2.4.3 Putting Gender Interests and Needs on the Agenda***

Effective policy formulation and implementation require the specification of what concerns and whose interests are to be served in any given context. Molyneux (1985a:232 cited in Moser, 1993:38) distinguishes between women's interests and gender interests to help discern between goals that have a clear feminist agenda and those that do not. She argues that women's interests are not necessarily gender interests

because they may share concerns around other identities<sup>30</sup>. She defines gender interests “as those that women (or men for that matter) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes.” Moser believes the distinction is theoretically significant for gender analysis.

Prindeville (2000) revealed in her study of Hispanic and American Indian women’s groups in south western United States that although they were averse to feminist labelling, their activities showed a discernible pattern of feminist advocacy and agenda setting. These had profound impacts on the formulation of development and social policies in their localities. Of importance was that the women organised across racial, ethnic and religious lines around common interests and shared concerns. Collective action through formal alliances is critical for realising strategic goals as they are most likely to incite resistance and require concerted networking (Young, 1997b).

Molyneux (1985, 1998) makes an analytic distinction between practical and strategic gender interests. The former derive from women’s deficient living conditions created by their subordinate positions. Strategic interests tend to be more political in nature as they envision social restructuring of oppressive relations so as to emancipate women in the long-term. However, Molyneux (1998), who invented the terms during a study of Nicaraguan women’s political struggle (1985), cautions against enforcing a rigid dichotomy between practical and strategic gender interests.

Weiringa (1994) also warns of the danger of prioritising strategic over practical needs. The multiple and fragmented nature of women’s identities and experiences necessitate consultation, negotiation and flexibility in the definition of interests and needs. Women’s needs are varied and often conflicting because they are conditioned by diverse historical, social and institutional factors. Depending on specific contexts the practical needs of some may be strategic for others. For example access to land, may meet practical income/dietary needs and strategically increase women’s status opening opportunities within communities. Thus, practical needs may be a point of departure towards more strategic goals (Young, 1997b). Other practical needs – such as skills training – may serve practical and strategic ends simultaneously. The defining feature and link between practical and strategic needs, according to Young, (1997a) is the capacity of the former to have transformative potential through a cumulative effect that brings long-term change.

Kabeer (1994) affirms the need for policies and projects to be informed by women’s self-defined priorities to enable them own the change process and ensure

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<sup>30</sup> Chapter Three contains examples of intersecting identities

success and sustainability. This is true whether women's organisations identify themselves as feminist or not. Therefore, in drawing up development policy and planning projects there is need, not only for awareness and intentionality in setting project agendas, but also for flexibility and responsiveness to women's concerns and aspirations. In the long term, however, as Baylies (2000) observes, the success of such projects also depends on their ability to address deeper questions of structured gender relations that generate or aggravate social problems. This is crucial because "it is clear that a purely subjective account of women's gender interests cannot suffice because subjective constructions do not stand outside of prevailing gender ideologies" (Pearson and Jackson, 1998:7) and "the embedded character of women's social positioning might make it more difficult to separate affect from interest" (Molyneux, 1998: 238). This means that outsiders – academics, researchers, policy-makers, development practitioners etc., still have a role to play in contributing to the discussion and agenda for gender inequality. Imam (1997: 303) makes the point well:

Oppressed groups have a right and necessity to say what it is they feel in defining their oppression, and which issues need to be dealt with. But felt oppression is not the privileged last word in the analysis of that oppression.

Thus, the delineation of interests and needs takes place within discursive and institutional frameworks which condition agency. The concept of collective action draws attention to the tension between the structures that constrain women's organising, and steps and risks they take in concert to be agents of change (Eduards, 1994). Despite confining and/or hostile rules, norms and ideologies women can and do exercise human agency. Eduards (1994: 181) makes a basic three-fold assumption: "that all human beings, by nature, have agency, the capacity to initiate change, to commit oneself to a certain transformative course of action, independently of historical circumstances." Women are not mere victims but actors and responders to circumstances. Flew et al. (1999) counter pose women's agency with their 'victimhood' to demonstrate the complex process of agenda setting as women negotiate meanings and change strategies in multiple contexts. The process reveals not only that, "women can be, and often are, victims of oppression, but that women can be both agents and victims simultaneously, according to relations of power" (p. 399).

Eduards posits that the capacity to organise successfully is influenced by the socio-political contexts within which people are differentially trained due to class, race, sex, location, and in this regard "women's agency [...] is less applied than men's" (p.339). She suggests that this may be the reason women find it easier to organise

around non-confrontational practical development agendas. Yet, 'politically neutral' collective action projects such as micro-credit schemes that increase women's income and potentially their economic independence, could threaten male identity and roles. In the final analysis, Edwards (1994:184) says "the emancipatory and transcending character of women's collective action in particular contexts cannot be settled at the theoretical level" but must be based on empirical studies of specific women in movement. Accordingly, Ogunjipe-Leslie (1994) argues that African women must set their own agendas on the basis of indigenously woven feminisms. The research questions raised by this study address both assertions.

## 2.5 Towards Gender Equality: The Case for Mainstreaming Gender

According to a UNESCO definition gender mainstreaming is a process of including issues considered to be marginal in the core or mainstream of public policy-making, organisational decision-making and operations (UNESCO: *GMIF*, 2003). The term became popular within the UN system after the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies conference where the need to remove women's issues from the periphery to the core of policy planning, programming and evaluation was highlighted (UNESCO: *GMIF*, 2003). Gender mainstreaming was formally endorsed by and adopted into the Beijing Platform of Action document in 1995 which stated that "Governments, the United Nations system and all other relevant organizations should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, inter alia, in the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes" (Chapter Five, Item 292). Chapter Three traces how WID and gender mainstreaming policies were adopted in Nigeria.

In *Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy* (1995) the World Bank maintains that despite the limitations of policy reform gender inequality can be addressed through a gendered approach to public policy. It states that the dire effects of gender inequality on human capital hinder long-term economic growth and severely counteract the short-term gains of unequal resource distribution. Taylor (1990) argues that huge social and human capital costs have been incurred by liberal market policies. Furthermore, such policies always have gender differentiated outcomes. In an empirical study of Thatcherite work policies David (1990) shows how British women's lives deteriorated under an enforced double burden from paid employment and unpaid domestic work. Imam (1997) portrays a similar picture of the detrimental effects of

structural adjustment policies on Nigerian women forcing them into marginal informal sector jobs and increasing their responsibilities for family care as social service provisioning collapsed (see also Aina, 1992 and Soetan, 2000). Moser (1993:10), therefore, asserts that it is pertinent to “inform policy, through the formulation of gender policy at international, national and NGO levels, as well as its integration with sectoral planning.” This is the rationale behind the mainstreaming of gender in public policy. Yet, she observes, this is no easy feat due to the political constraints imposed by “largely male-dominated and gender-blind” decision-making processes.

Gender mainstreaming is a political process essential to equitable resource allocation between women and men. According to Gunew (1993:xxii) “politics is a contestatory relationship between those who name themselves as excluded by established policy and those who are positioned as the guardians of established policy.” Dominant interest groups have the power to influence public policy by deciding what is included or excluded from the political agenda, and how problems are represented and diagnosed. Effective policy formulation and planning for development require the specification of what and whose interests are to be served. Bacchi (1999:1-12) elaborates a ‘What’s the problem?’ approach to policy in which she contends that the representation of a social problem influences policy responses to it. Bacchi stresses that policy, like the state, is not gender neutral; rather it is shaped by values and competing interests. Thus if a problem –poverty for example - is perceived to be caused by individual deviance structural and systemic issues may not be addressed, and may have the effect of casting moral aspersions on the subjects.

Sunday Oke’s (1996) analysis and problem diagnosis of gender inequality illustrate this point. Despite idealising women’s place in traditional Africa he contends that women’s uncritical adoption of culture makes them “victims of ‘barbaric’ African religions and traditions (p.2). Oke names women’s cowardice and lack of self-confidence as factors that “necessitated their unwarranted relegation and severe predicament” (p.2). He summarises that women’s inequality is due to their “lack of mental awareness, competence, and too much submissiveness” and they are responsible for change.

In response to his construction of the problem, he emphatically argues that affirmative action strategies encourage inequality and are unconstitutional. He brushes women’s marginalisation aside as an ‘artificial creation’ requiring an “artificial solution or remedy” (p. 4). Oke’s solution is for a psychological and cultural reorientation of the women themselves. He calls on women to reject “archaic, barbaric, retrogressive

dogmas and ailing cultures” and be prepared to compete on equal grounds with men. Yet, he enjoins them to “be culturally clothed and be fully informed by the culture of the past.” Oke’s recommendations clearly portray the dilemma of Nigerian women and men who want the trappings of modernity without abandoning gender hierarchy or challenging the patriarchal power structure. The quote below aptly depicts Oke’s ambivalence:

Nigerian women and women globally, should not allow any institution to play down on their capabilities and intelligence. Those that have already drank “the water” of self-defeatism, second-class citizens and undue submissiveness, resulting from ignorance and stupidity, should be persuaded through education to “urinate out” these “waters” of retrogression and relegation unconditionally. My position here is not saying that, women should fling off their scarf in readiness for “a battle” of supremacy, liberation or equality with their menfold [sic]. (p.6)

Oke does not consider the ideological, institutional and economic barriers that prevent disadvantaged groups from benefiting from formal legal equality in the absence of substantive equality. Neither does he acknowledge that women’s excessive submissiveness derives from their socialisation within a demeaning value system causing them to develop a negative identity as they learn to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant culture (Okwuosa, 1992; Apter and Garnsey, 1994). Rowlands (1998:12, 14) refers to this as a process of “internal oppression” or colonisation where socially received ideas about one’s self-identity become so ingrained as to be mistaken for reality, condition interpretations of it, and thereby sustain inequality. In contrast to Oke’s argument, Kabeer (2003) says substantive equality is necessary in all aspects of development to insure against unfair gender-related outcomes. Glaser (1995:38), discussing people’s capacity to influence policy and participate in politics, makes a cogent point that,

To be active participants in politics, and thus collectively self-determining, we may need access to politically relevant resources on a roughly equal basis. Substantive (if rough) equality may be a precondition of equal political agency.

In support of affirmative action Bryson (1999:76) argues that a feminist model of equality rejects the dominant liberal gender equality model which standardises men’s needs and experiences and “assumes that rights are exercised by self-sufficient individuals who scarcely have to look after their own physical needs, let alone anyone else’s.” Accordingly she contends that,



Equality on women's terms would recognise that women's biological responsibilities are essential to the survival and well-being of society. Their sex-specific needs therefore represent the importance of women's contributions rather than a sign of inferiority or individual particularity.

Others adopt an instrumentalist or rational comprehensive approach to policy problems and regard policy solutions as a pragmatic means of acting in the public interest (Parson, 1995; Bacchi, 1999). Nwabah (1996) adopts this model and argues for improving female gender capabilities as a means to more efficient human resource use - a critical ingredient in economic development. Central to enhancing women's capabilities are improved access to education, healthcare and nutrition. Nwabah sees women's traditional domestic roles as important reasons for helping them develop their human capabilities for the benefit of themselves and their families. Education is instrumental in that it confers dignity and recognition, provides access to better jobs, income and health status, and is an indicator of development. While Nwabah acknowledges the wide gender disparities in access to power, his analysis does not tackle female powerlessness. Mamman M. (1996) posits a theory of the fragmented and multi-faceted nature of women's social roles to generate a multi-dimensional perspective of their social status. His analyses of gender inequality in Nigeria confirm global research findings that show an inverse relationship between female educational levels and fertility, and a strong correlation between education, better maternal/child health and respect for women's rights. Mamman, therefore, advocates that a basic education policy that encourages female enrolment and educational achievement is a key factor in the national development process. Although he concurs with Oppong et al. (1987:19) on the need for a holistic approach to improving women's status, his policy proposals, like those of Nwabah, do not challenge structural causes of gender discrimination.

Bacchi's 'What's the problem?' approach permits an assessment of underlying understandings of what the problem is represented to be and attendant policy responses. It highlights the interests and commitments of political actors and probes their ethical presuppositions. The approach has two interrelated functions. It aims "to create a space to consider *competing constructions of issues addressed in the policy process, and the ways in which these constructions leave other issues untouched*" (p. 4, original emphasis). Thus, it provides "a framework for examining gaps and silences in the policy debate by asking what remains unproblematised in certain representations" (p. 12). Similarly, a GAD analytical framework contains a 'What's the problem?' component. It highlights the limitations of the WID approach deriving from silences on the

implications of the role of men/masculinity in development, and the causal structural constraints placed on women (and men) by local, national and global environments. This approach will facilitate an understanding of how women's problems are conceptualised in the NPW and by women themselves and, to what extent such conceptualisations facilitate or impede sustainable development through the transformation of gender relations.

GAD analysis seeks to uncover and redress gender bias in public policies and institutions through regulatory reform and the 'engendering' of public policy (Imam and Sow, 1997; Mazey, 2001). According to Moser (1993:3) this marks a fundamental difference between WID and GAD frameworks underpinned as they are by "very different theoretical positions." The GAD strategy is to promote gender mainstreaming<sup>31</sup> through gender-aware planning and gender planning. Moser (1993:6) makes a distinction between the two. Gender-aware planning entails incorporating feminist concerns into global, national, sectoral and local policy and planning frameworks, while gender planning is "a specific planning approach in its own right" that may target particular women's (or men's) needs. Mazey (2001) insists that focusing on a gender mainstreaming policy as opposed to a women's policy ensures that men are incorporated into the construction and analysis of social problems and that both women and men make attitudinal and behavioural changes in attempts to solve them. She does not deny the usefulness of women's policies and other reforms that target women, as she points out their role in bringing about the cumulative changes that paved way for gender mainstreaming in the European Union. Indeed, she warns that gender planning is crucial because without it gender mainstreaming could serve as a basis for denying women's legitimate requirements for affirmative/ positive action such as quotas and other concessions to correct existing gender imbalances. Nevertheless, woman-centred policies like the NPW may be incapable of bringing about long-term change if gender concerns are not integrated into the whole spectrum of policy-making. Kabeer (2003:225) asserts that mainstreaming gender must be a "core competence of policy-making bodies" with requisite expertise.

However, Pearson (2000), Mazey (2001) and Rai (2002) argue that gender mainstreaming requires precautions against co-optation. Gender is one category of identity politics that, without constant vigilance, risks getting sidelined or subsumed under ethnic, race, disability or seemingly gender-neutral human development issues. Kabeer (2003:xv, 20) sounds this warning in relation to the Millennium Development

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<sup>31</sup> See definition of gender mainstreaming on pp. 56 and 118

Goals and International Development Targets. For instance, goal #1 on poverty eradication does not factor gender dimensions of poverty. The fact that gender concerns stand the chance of sublimation is indicative of the tendency to conflate women with gender, and of their minority status in relation to systems of male dominance (Sweetman, 1999). Pearson and Rai point out that if the incorporation of gender concerns is not done in a manner that is consistent with feminist objectives it amounts to co-option rather than the successful implementation of a GAD policy agenda. Citing Razavi and Miller (1995a:41) Baden and Goetz (1998) contend that mainstreaming constitutes a real risk if it is attended by a de-politicisation of feminist goals for *de facto* gender equality:

Although the gender discourse has filtered through to policy-making institutions, in the process actors have re-interpreted the concept of gender to suit their institutional needs. In some instances, 'gender' has been used to side-step a focus on 'women' and on the radical policy implications of overcoming their disprivilege.

These caveats preclude the sole reliance on state machinery and underscore the importance of women's organisations and networks in pushing the agenda for gender equality as previously discussed. More specifically, they signal the importance of ensuring that the gender components of development agencies and government machineries embody the perspectives, experiences and needs of women in African states.

## **2.6 Towards a Home-grown Feminist Analysis**

### ***2.6.1 Is Feminism Germane to Africa?***

The GAD analytical and policy framework has made noticeable inroads into development planning machineries of governments in Africa, and the agendas of NGOs. This has elicited varied reactions from Africanists and African feminists. To many it has spelt the wholesale, uncritical adoption of Western development paradigms and Western feminist priorities to the detriment of African values and well being (Stamp, 1989; Amadiume, 1987, 1995, 1997; Afonja, 1990; Aina, 1992; Ogundipe -Leslie, 1994 (a) and (b); Sow, 1995; Soetan, 2000). African women in the Diaspora have drawn attention to the inherent racism and exclusivity of white upper/middle class feminism and its attempts to standardise white women's experience (hooks, 1989; Walker, 1983; Hudson, 1988; Hudson-Weems, 1998; Steady, 1992). Stamp (1989) calls for a critique of the role of Western feminism in promoting hegemonic Western discourses on

AALAME women and their circumstances. African feminists contend that issues specific and relevant to African women are left off the Western feminist agenda which appears to be obsessed with sexuality and materiality. When African issues are on the agenda they are cast in terms that are demeaning, incipiently racist displaying a lack of insight regarding African women's psycho-spiritual and community involvement. Ogun-dipe-Leslie (1994) expresses distaste for Western-driven over-emphasis on African women's victimhood in female genital mutilation and conjugal relations (especially polygamous) to the exclusion of other empowering situations.

Outside the academia, African men, governments, and women's groups condemn feminism and gender discourse as western cultural imperialism seeking to confuse African women and destabilise the family. Udoh (1996) makes a strong case for sex-based gender roles on the premise that woman as mother is shock absorber and stabiliser for the family. However, citing Ann Oakley's (1974) anthropological study on the cultural variability of gender roles he advocates flexibility and interchange ability as a pragmatic requirement of development in the modern capitalist world. Chinweizu (1990) claims that African women are not oppressed at all but are oppressors of men through subversive manipulation of their domestic power. Western feminist ideas are seen as inapplicable and inimical to specific local contexts. Cultural feminists argue on the premise of the superiority of African tradition and value pluralism, for the right to protection from the corrosive effects of westernisation. Controversies rage over the weighted importance of individual rights versus group rights, and over the standards for judging right and wrong treatment of women within any given culture. These raise questions as to whether feminism is germane to Africa.

As mentioned earlier (p.19) in response to criticism GAD analysis has expanded to incorporate issues of diversity and difference between women. There is now a reiterated concern with how women's experiences are shaped through the intersection of gender with other social categorisations. Despite this, Soetan, (2000:12) contends that there is still a need to develop an inclusive development paradigm that "reflects the subjective experiences of grassroots African women as well as critical discourse from African feminists" from which "a critical African gender consciousness" can emerge. The alleged flaws and limitations of Western feminism and GAD discourse have made some African female academics abandon the feminist project altogether (Oluwole, 1994; Sofola, 1992). Sofola considers the cosmologies of African holistic harmony and communalism versus Western individualism to be mutually exclusive parallels. Through the decaying effects of the latter the African woman has been "de-womanised" and

robbed of her essence. Sofola has nothing but vilification for the African female elite who she claims has been brainwashed and her psyche damaged beyond repair by distorted knowledge and misinformation from Western-style education. Unlike the rural, 'illiterate' woman who bears a closer image with the heroines of a glorious past, she is a caricature of true African womanhood.

Conversely, Collins (1993) argues convincingly that Afrocentric and feminist knowledge systems emphasise the dual importance of knowledge/wisdom and dialogue as a means of establishing connectedness and harmony in the knowledge validation process. She counter poses this with a Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process which is linear, abstract, adversarial and decontextualised. Collins believes there are creative meeting points between feminist and African thought. Soetan and Ogundipe-Leslie see the contrast between the Western pursuit of material gain in search of social well being and the Afrocentric search for communal harmony as a viable breeding ground for feminist theorising. Both believe feminist theory must be re-invented and re-interpreted in line with local histories and present realities to generate indigenous feminist theories. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:208) argues that, "African women must theorise their own feminisms" reading white feminisms with critical sensitivity to racist overtones and cultural misapplications.

Several have attempted to do so, albeit from diverse and contradictory perspectives. Steady (1987) promotes a humanistic African feminism that downplays women's oppression as a gendered-class and advocates for a comprehensive struggle against class, race and imperialist forms of subordination by men and women in a complementary fashion. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) also relates female oppression to the poverty induced by the unequal distribution of privilege, power and property between poor and rich people and between men and women. However, while espousing socialist/Marxist ideals, she resists attempts to subsume gender concerns under class interests because "black men and black women cannot unite around conflicting interests and across antagonistic classes" (1994:207). It is not clear what Steady means by male-female complementarity. But it appears to be a tacit acceptance of the sex-based division of labour. She considers traditional African values that stress complementary gender roles as an essential framework for African Feminism. For instance, production organised along parallel lines as opposed to hierarchical ones, parallel spheres of autonomy, communalism, and cooperation for the preservation of life as opposed to the rivalry, individualism, and dichotomy of western culture. Although Steady claims not to want to romanticise pre-colonial African woman's status she ends up doing so by

cataloguing its positive elements and ignoring its oppressive features. She launches an apologetic for the economic and social bases of polygamy, and blames colonial and neo-colonial imperialism for gender inequality.

A number of African feminists have contested the portrayal of pre-colonial African traditional society as being devoid of indigenous feminist activism in protest against gender injustices. Based on Obbo's (1989) ethnographic studies of traditional Africa, Aina (1992) rejects the assertion that African women belonged to an unproblematic past devoid of gender discrimination. Kilanko (1994) indicts African tradition and religion as the roots of almost all female oppression. Findings from a comparative anthropological study of witchcraft in four Nigerian societies conducted by Nadel (1952) indicate that backlash against feminist protest is not only a feature of modern Nigeria. Nadel reveals that allegations of female witchcraft were often the result of marital conflict or socio-economic tensions between men and women. For example, the successful economic position of Nupe women traders married to poor farmers led to higher sexual antagonisms. Onwuejeogwu (1969) discloses that women often used the power of religion to escape from the restrictions and hardship of marital life and from a subservient or non-existent public role. Forde (1959) describes witchcraft as a defence mechanism for women living under patriarchy as co-wives. He claims divination was used to maintain proper social order. Okonjo (1976) and Amadiume (1995) record several instances of feminist protest in pre-colonial and colonial times on the basis of women's reactions to unjust treatment, laws or threatening situations to them and their families akin to what Wells (1992:251) refers to as 'maternal politics'.

As Aina (1992) argues, present realities of socio-economic hardship, gender injustice and discrimination arise from historical, customary and institutional forces which make for a compelling linkage between rigorous theory and praxis of African feminism. It is safe therefore to conclude that feminism is indigenous to Africa. Although the landmarks have shifted; the issues contested and the struggles fought were pressing questions of that time.

### ***2.6.2 The Trouble with Feminism: Defining the War Choosing the Battles***

Women who raise issues dealing with gender justice are branded as western feminist stooges, sell-outs who are frustrated and embittered without cause. To dissociate themselves from the stigma of western feminism, linked as it is to

confrontational hate politics, many female writers have embraced the terms 'womanism' and 'Africana womanism' coined by Alice Walker (1983) and Clenora Hudson-Weems (1987, 1998) respectively and adopted by other African women in the Diaspora. Walker's womanism is an adaptation of feminism to the needs of black feminism, while Hudson-Weems makes a clear separation between feminism and Africana womanism on the grounds of cultural and historical inconsistencies between it and western feminism. Chukukere (1992:139) says Nigerian feminism and womanism are the same thing, "a non-violent, non-confrontational concept which places high value on disciplined freedom, self-determination, and the ability of women to produce maximum results through cooperative endeavours."

Ogunyemi (1996) distances herself from the label feminism in favour of the womanist concept, which she believes is a more contextually suitable approach. While she identifies with the issues raised by Western feminists and their applicability within Nigerian women's experience, hers is a difference of opinion on goals and strategies for change. According to Ogundipe-Leslie (1994 in Delamotte et al., 1997:455, 456), feminism, if construed as "an ideology of woman; any body of social philosophy about women" [...] need not be oppositional to men" and womanism may provide a way for African women to escape the confrontational nature of western feminism. For her, a womanist neither accepts culture uncritically nor rejects it wholesale, rather she seeks to preserve those elements of culture that are positive for women's dignity in the ultimate aim of preserving humanity – female and male. This totally negates the path of separatism and "adversarial gender politics" (p.456). She invented *Stiwanism: Social Transformation Including Women in Africa* "to deflect energies from constantly having to respond to charges of imitating Western feminism" and concentrate "on the real issue of the conditions of women in Africa" (Ogundipe-Leslie: 454).

The efforts to circumvent and deflect criticism appear pointless. For as Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) points out, even this conciliatory stance is not enough to placate the angry voices of critics who see women's calls for equity and justice as a challenge to male authority and African cultural heritage. Consequently, she contends that critical transformations of culture and religion are a must. Rooted in traditionalism are contempt for women's labour, the concentration of women in labour-intensive low paid or unpaid jobs and the control of women's bodies and reproductive abilities as evidenced by girl-child marriage, FGM, purdah, and widowhood rites. African women do not need to be confrontational; the issues are adversarial in themselves. This is feminism's greatest trouble. Tomasevski (1993:44) explains the dilemma at hand,

Because women have always been burdened with unpaid domestic household work and absent from public life, this is deemed to be a natural state of affairs [...] this is the way it has always been. To challenge such practices and the deeply rooted attitudes on which these are based is a tremendous task indeed.

Consequently, no matter how low women whisper their plea for gender justice it will be received as a rebellion against the 'nature of things' and a call to war. But the real war declares Pharr (1993:62), is the "hate violence against women" in cultures that have institutionalised violence and made it invisible to society and society numb to its horrors.

### ***2.6.3 Gender Violence as a Site of Feminist Theorising and Organising***

Pharr (1993) exposes the branding of feminists as man-haters as a diversionary tactic to prevent women from recognising the real source of violence: "the threat of the label 'man-hater' threatens women with loss of privilege and controls our behaviour, but more importantly, it keeps us from working honestly and forcefully on our behalf to end the violence..." Pharr and Heise (1993) see gender violence as a major incentive for feminist organising; women must organise nationally and globally against violence because it is a global war though it may take different forms locally. Heise claims it is a point of commonality for the development of international feminist networks. In her worldwide travels researching maternal and child health issues she would ask women to name their greatest problem and overwhelmingly women said, "My husband beats me." Alemika (2001:13) asserts that "patriarchy breeds hegemonic masculinity and associated violence and discrimination against women." Thus, gender violence is not so much tied to tradition as it is to a faulty socialisation of males, a process which confines women to motherhood and domesticity and precludes men from developing nurturing and caring relationships. Ogunyemi (1996) views African masculinity as a socially constructed trap from which men need to be released. This is how she interprets the saga of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* as his life goes through a cycle of violence and he wanders from his father's house to his mother's house and back in denial and in search of his feminine side.

To Cottrell (1999:93) gender-based violence is a valid source of feminist theorising because those who own the problem are given occasion to theorise about it in line with a key feminist principle that theory should be "grounded in experience." Ganny's (1996) discussion on the effects of domestic violence on women's contribution to development uncovers the gaps and silences due to selective public inattention.



Encouraged by female economic/ psychological dependency, social stigma, isolation and fear the experience of domestic violence could provide an empirical context for developing an integrative theory of gender inequality in Nigeria. Obviously, this applies to all problem areas that concern women's lives and could serve as focal points for feminist theorising and organising across sectional interests.

The issues women organise around or theorise about derive from their own experiences of hurt and denials of authenticity. Effah-Chukwuma (2002) claims one such area of hurt and denial is domestic violence. She says, "The ruthless killing of women by their spouses has over the years become a major source of concern to Nigeria women" (2002:1). Chukukere (1992:137) asserts that the gender inequities of daily life induce struggle for a meaningful existence and make the average Nigerian woman a feminist in practice though she may not articulate theoretical formulations. It would appear that Nigerian society is in denial of women's pain. Effah-Chukwuma (2001:xi) stresses the importance of "breaking the silence and challenging myths that have surrounded the issue for decades." Ogunyemi (1996) reveals that gender violence is a multifaceted and significant theme in women's literary texts raising pertinent social questions. However, she notes the reluctance of literary critics to engage with the prickly substance of women's writings,

Trivializing the texts is an old ploy, a cover for an inability or unwillingness to confront the socio-economic questions and institutionalised injustice raised by women's subversive texts. In writing the hitherto unwritten, in voicing the hitherto unspoken and unspeakable, the women writers have wittingly or unwittingly, fashioned a political agenda. The different strata of governmental authority in Nigeria, the Nigerian peoples themselves, and the international readership are willed to address issues of oppression raised in the texts, which also grapple with controversies in contemporary culture traced to their traditional roots. (p.3)

Effah-Chukwuma (2001) posits that the conspiracy of silence arises from the structural nature of gender violence perpetuated daily by the state, communities, organisations, statute books and individuals, especially within families. Indigenous feminist theorising must therefore seek to encapsulate the present realities of women's varied experience of personal and corporate violence recognising that, "power, power relations and ideology play very important roles when analyzing violence against women."(2001:12) She identifies the roles of cultural and religious ideology in fomenting gender violence and suggests that their negative and positive effects are issues for feminist analysis.

### 2.6.4 *African Spirituality and Africanised Religion as Sites of Feminist Theorising*

Spirituality and religion are pivotal dimensions of African women's oppression and social engagement. Central to both are women's identity/roles as mothers and custodians of culture. Sofola (1992) despite her pessimism asserts that any attempt at constructing an African feminist paradigm must begin with a redefinition of African womanhood. This can only take place at the level of the psyche - the genderless "god-man in the individual which connects the creature to the centre of Creative Energy" (p.52). This god-man or essence (*ori* and *mo* in Yoruba and Igbo respectively) is linked in origin and etymologically to the Supreme Essence making all beings equal in divine essence. This equality forms the basis of community in which individuals fulfil distinct roles. Thus, according to Sofola, the African traditional woman had a strong psyche derived from a situated relational self: "The principle of relatedness is the *sine qua non* of African reality" (p. 54). Sofola therefore sees woman as possessing a four-fold identity: 1) as man's equally created divine essence; 2) as daughter; 3) as mother; and, 4) as wife. Since the psyche of the contemporary African woman has been scarred by colonialism and imperialism it needs a re-orientation so that she can become conscious of identity and esteem in communality. Sofola's re-construction of Yoruba and Igbo mythology bears some similarity to the consciousness-raising agenda discussed above. Both recognise the need for women to be empowered from within and through collectivity. There are two differences with significant practical ramifications.

In GAD-based consciousness-raising woman is empowered by increased awareness of her situation and by her ability to act in concert with others. However, she is not bound to the community but retains her individuality linked to the notion of individual rights and responsibilities. Sofola's African traditional woman, though possessing a unique self, is not allowed to develop a separate subjectivity but is always in relation to another be it father/mother, child or husband. The link with spiritual Creative Energy is muted, except she is a priestess/medium, and her own essence is enmeshed in the community. Accordingly, Hudson-Weems believes gender issues must be analysed in connection with women's relational self. But, commenting on the implications of cultural specificity Phillips (2001:17) points out how women's interests are usually subsumed under those of the family or community:

There are many women around the world today whose individuality is so little recognised that they are systematically passed over in the distribution of food or health care, or required to sublimate their own needs and desires in the perpetuation of family honour. The results are not just unpleasant but all

too often deadly. [...] Women desperately need to be recognised as separate beings, whose well being is distinct from that of a husband's [...] they need more rather than less liberal individualism; they need the flourishing of individual human beings to be made prior to the flourishing of the state or nation or religious group.

Western and AALAME feminists have contended that as patriarchal religions Christianity and Islam have worked to de-link women from power and wealth (Figs, 1978; Brown et al., 1989; Reuther, 1989; Afshar, 1985, 1997). Drawing on the work of Cheikh Ango Diop, Amadiume (1987, 1995) asserts that Islam and Christianity eroded women's dignity and social power in Africa. In view of the prominent role of religion in private and public life other feminists insist on the need to re-interpret religious texts based on original meanings and contemporary realities (Owanikin, 1992; Kemdirim, 1996; Elmadmad, 2002). Biblical feminist Mary Stewart van Leeuwen claims that the motherhood of God as depicted in the Bible has been erased from divine imagery and needs to be brought back into church perspective and language as a means of promoting gender equality. Studies of matrilineal/matriarchal societies demonstrate a correlation between female deities and feminine images of God. Mbiti (1969, 1970) does not conclude that Mother images of God are exclusive to matriarchal society. However, he (1969:49) gives examples of the Ndebele and Shona whose concept of God consisted of a triad of Father, Mother and Son, and the Ovambo and southern Nuba, all matriarchal societies, who addressed God as Mother. Owanikin (1992) shows how the presence of female deities and priestesses resonated with positive images of womanhood in Nigerian traditional thought and stresses the need to incorporate such images through female ordination in churches.

Religion and spirituality are critical to an analysis of gender inequality in Nigeria because as Gifford (1998) portrays in his analysis of churches in Africa, religion has assumed an increasingly public role in the context of modernising states. Faith-based groups, he claims are "widely admitted to be the strongest form of associational life in contemporary Africa" (p. 20). Alongside economic associations religious groups are the most popular and legitimate form of women's organising in Nigeria. Gifford (1998) notes that Islam and Christianity have cultural, economic and political baggage as well as international allegiances, which account for the intense competition for supremacy. Gifford elucidates unique brands of African Christianity (and Islam) which emerged from the association of mainstream religion with technological and economic progress and elements of Islam and Pentecostal Christianity that resonate with a supernaturalistic worldview to meet popular magico-spiritual needs. Both function

parallel to indigenous religions. Women's lives are deeply affected by religious ideology and norms which, on the one hand, interlock with African traditional culture to legitimate male dominance and female subordination. Saghal and Yuval-Davis (1992:7) cite Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to explain women's fundamentalist politics as being characterised by a desire for freedom from uncertainty and insecurity. This 'freedom from' stands in contrast to the 'freedom to' be a self-determining, autonomous individual emphasised in GAD consciousness raising and much of western feminist politics. Nevertheless, women have been known to use both fundamental and liberationist religious ideologies as a launch-pad for self-empowerment and social involvement.

Herein lay the paradox of religion and culture. African women appear to be captives and custodians of both. For example, Chukukere (1992) acknowledges that motherhood and matrimony are rightly prized cultural/religious institutions but contends they should not be obligatory for women. Both could be potentially empowering or enslaving for women who are held prisoner to fixated ideas that lock them into mother and wife roles. Aspirations and attainments outside them are not accorded equal validity and prestige in religious and traditional society. Arguments for cultural relativism and specificity have been countered by western and AALAME feminists on several fronts. First, culture itself is reflective and constitutive of established hierarchies and is therefore a site of interrogation and contestation (Flew et al., 1999; Kandiyoti, 1997; Rai, 2002; Jolly, 2002). Second, culture and tradition present an erroneous image of homogeneity when in fact internal conflicts and contradictions based on class, caste, ethnicity, gender and age are typical within cultural groups. Powerful interests within groups clamour for cultural 'sovereignty' and non-interference while the marginalised and voiceless are muted, compliant or silent (Molyneux, 1998; Phillips, 2000). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:456) raises rhetorical questions challenging the tyranny of culture:

Should culture be placed in a museum of minds or should we take authority over culture as a product of human intelligence and consciousness to be used to improve our existential conditions? Should we preach cultural fidelity only when it does not affect us negatively, which is usually the position of African men who wish to keep only those aspects of culture which keep them dominant?

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues that to lay claim to their right to inclusion in the social transformation of society Nigerian women must re-invent themselves in the light of *woman-friendly* historical legacies and traditional values, and existing realities. In so

doing, they must listen to each other across differences. The neglect of listening to the multiplicity of African/ Nigerian women's voices is a problematic reflected in the arrogation of the right to know and speak on their behalf by 'others' in literary and academic works, and in the formulation of theories and public/ development policy. Significant differences exist between Nigerian women which are accentuated by a political culture of geopolitical and ethno-religious tensions and violence. Nevertheless, the foregoing clearly shows that the issues that divide Nigerian women have to be weighted against overriding shared needs and interests that require bringing gender from the margin to the centre of analysis, politics and policy. A Nigerian feminist theoretical framework that is grounded in women's diverse perspectives and experiences, and which critically interrogates and creatively engages with those "formal laws and statutes and...unwritten norms and shared understandings" (Kabeer, 2003:2) that construct gender inequality could serve this purpose.

## 2.7 Conclusion

In applying a GAD analytical framework and in developing a Nigerian feminist paradigm it is critical to realise that acquiescence to the dictates of institutional norms/procedures or the circumvention of controversial issues would undermine efforts to postulate appropriate theories and address underlying structures of gender imbalance. The 'depoliticisation' of gender for the purpose of institutional acceptability portends certain dangers. The resultant disjuncture between a well-grounded feminist theory, mainstream academic analysis and official/organisational policy agendas would precipitate the subsumption, co-optation, bureaucratisation and trivialisation of gender issues and policy. As Mazey (2001) observes, this constitutes a double edged sword. It not only leaves women in a perpetual state of subordination, it deprives women's movements of the medium to rally around 'gender' as a unifying theme. These issues will be explored in seeking answers to the research questions that inform this thesis, particularly in determining the institutional preparedness of government and the role of women's movements in implementing the NPW.

Reconciling universal feminist principles of inalienable individual rights and the legitimate claims of multiculturalism and diversity is critical. A Nigerian feminist (or womanist) paradigm need not be a homogenising force, a monolithic body of dogma, or code of conduct. It must be dynamic in allowing for the expansion of women's capabilities, amenable to a pluralistic analysis of difference, and acculturated to local realities. Such flexibility may chart the course for navigating Nigeria's conflicting

triple legal system and other institutional barriers. Secondly, it must be holistic, encompassing every dimension of human interaction. Finally, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994 in Delamotte et al., 1997:455) points out that “more research is needed to discover what African women themselves, particularly the working classes and the peasantry, think about themselves, daily and historically.” Such discovery is a central aim of this research. The data obtained during this research will test the relevance of a GAD analysis, and provide a rich resource base for the elaboration of a home-grown feminist framework.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Gender Inequality and Gender Struggles in Nigeria

### 3.1 The Parameters of Gender Inequality

In her preface to the NPW policy document the then Minister of Women Affairs, Aishatu Mohammed Sani Ismail, asserted that the existence of a National Policy on Women reflects the recognition of the “global trend towards gender parity.” Therefore, she explained, the overall aim of the NPW is to ensure that women are more effectively involved in nation-building *as equal partners*. In order to ascertain the feasibility of the NPW in achieving this aim it is essential first to provide insight into the nature and dimensions of gender inequality in Nigeria and how women have negotiated their existence therein. It is also pertinent to understand key historical and political processes that shaped the Nigerian state, and which precipitated the need for the National Policy on Women. Therefore, this chapter sets out the parameters of gender inequality so as to highlight forms of marginalisation and exclusion, and the means through which women have struggled for inclusion. It describes the peculiar features and the colonial legacy of the Nigerian Federation and, specifically, how traditional and modern forms of patriarchy in a patrimonial state marginalised women (Shettima, 1995; Suberu, 2000; Okome 2000). It then presents a brief historical review of women’s activism to demonstrate how, since pre-colonial times, Nigerian women have organised actively at micro-levels to contest their marginalisation by traditional, colonial and post-independence authorities with limited success (Mba, 1976; Okome, 2000). Despite persistent protest activism women have not been able to penetrate the mainstream of Nigerian power structures.

The chapter explains how the international agenda for women’s rights formed a distinctive blend with local initiatives and elicited mixed policy responses. However, this agenda has been assimilated and re-interpreted in light of dominant values and institutionalised through the creation of new structures and programmes in the policy making process. At the level of civil society the pro-democracy struggle for the end of Military rule saw the proliferation of women’s organisations and provided them with a platform upon which to advance an argument for gender inclusive democracy and mobilise for greater participation. Women activists, scholars and senior female bureaucrats were able to collaborate in the formulation and eventual approval in 2000 of

a women's policy. The National Policy on Women constitutes an official recognition of women's 'differential incorporation' into Nigerian society in a manner that undermines their citizenship rights and limits their access to resources, benefits and opportunities. Most significantly the existence of the NPW affirms their right to make claims on the State as a disadvantaged group. The next section outlines the historical origins of gender inequality in Nigeria.

### ***3.1.1 Traditional and Colonial Patriarchy***

Owing to male bias in the recording of African history female writers have had to embark on a reconstruction of 'herstories' to shed light on the lives and deeds of pre-colonial women. Much of what is known is, therefore, inferred or conjectured from what is contained, or left unsaid, in 'malestream' historical accounts. The few women who have been deemed noteworthy in Nigerian history were either queens, queen-mothers, or Kings' sisters/daughters or women associated by lineage or marriage with aristocracy (Moremi of Ile-Ife, Inikpi of Igala land, Kambasa of Ijaw, Amina of Zaria, Owari of Ilesha); or those prominent in acts of rebellion (e.g. Emotan of Bini Kingdom). Since the focus of history emphasised dominant ruling groups it is natural that powerful women associated with such groups would feature (Emeagwali, 1985). The class structure moderated gender roles to enable certain women a degree of social elevation. Some historians refer to the extraordinary feats of these women as evidence of the high social status enjoyed by pre-colonial Nigerian women (Awe, 1991). Yet, the sparsity of women in historical accounts is more likely to suggest their social exclusion as a result of traditional patriarchy (see definition on page 33).

Even so, as argued in Chapter Two, patriarchy was never total and all embracing; matriarchy (see pp. 37/38) as a moral, social and ideological force enabled the existence of a dual-sex system, and created space for a measure of political representation and female autonomy in the regulation of economic and social affairs (Okonjo, 1976; Kandiyoti, 1997). Notably Yoruba, Igbo, Benin, Nupe, Kanuri, Hausa (before the advent of Islam) and Efik women had broad-based representative councils, prominent institutionalised positions in palace courts, held prestigious chieftaincy titles and waged war (Okome, 2000). In Southern Nigeria, the Sole Native Authority (SNA) and the Warrant Chief System (WCS) were used by the British to do what the Islamic revolution had accomplished in the North, namely the removal of female power structures such as the *Iyalode* and *Erelu* in the West and the *Omu* and *Umuada* in the East respectively (Okome, 2000).



Prior to colonisation during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century women in West Africa enjoyed a significant amount of economic power and control over their own resources. They owned property and engaged in trade across the West African sub-region. Okonjo (1976), Mba (1982), Amadiume (1987), Awe (1991) and Okome (2000) describe how large-scale social changes began to occur through the invasion of Islamic culture, the introduction of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Christianity and the colonial capitalist economy that reshaped gender roles and relations. The depletion and displacement of the male rural population severely circumscribed the time available to women for economic activities beyond subsistence farming. In urban areas the capitalist requirement for men's waged labour saw the reorganisation of kinship units into smaller nuclear families that relied heavily on unpaid domestic work and led to the exploitation of women's labour (Zack-Williams, 1985). In line with the colonial project the few girls admitted to formal western education were subjected to a programme preparing them for domesticity and low-cadre supportive roles in the Civil Service. In this way, colonialism imposed a European form of patriarchy predicated on "a monolithic male gendered power structure" (Amadiume, 1997:15) that promoted female dependency and "eroded the material bases for women's relative autonomy" (Kandiyoti, 1997:89).

Both traditional and colonial patriarchy sought through different means to regulate female sexuality for economic ends. In pre-colonial times, as far back as oral tradition records, polygamy existed, ostensibly to boost agricultural production. Control over the reproducers of labour was an essential factor in the agrarian economy and crucial to the accumulation of family wealth and communal stability in pre-industrial societies. But polygamy also served to bind women's allegiance to a single male head and engendered competition among co-wives for his conjugal favours. Various taboos and rituals such as female genital mutilation were instituted to guarantee female fidelity and chastity. (See for example the case of Isoko culture on p.66). While it is argued that polygamy provided women with social networks and older wives in particular with space to engage in personal economic ventures (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1985; Ogunyemi, 1996), it is also the case that the regulation of female sexuality in traditional society ensured an unequal power balance between husbands and wives.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as colonial rule took shape, control over the reproducers of labour was equally essential to sustain the low wages required by the capitalist economy. In rural areas this was achieved by organising rural men into the production of cash crops with low financial returns while women focused on unpaid subsistence farming and/or domestic work. In urbanising centres the colonial capitalist

economy engaged the services of urban women as petty traders and domestics in the informal sector and subjected market women's incomes to various forms of taxation. In both urban and rural areas this undermined old structures of the family division of labour, isolated women in the domestic sphere and excluded or marginalised them in the sphere of economic production. The result was, "a loss of economic independence for women and an increase in their work load as producers and reproducers of labour" and "women were incorporated into the political system as subordinate, ineffectual adjuncts to men" (Okome, 2000:9).

There were various forms of resistance from women as individuals and groups in both pre-colonial and colonial society. The case of mass emigration due to conflicts between the patriarchal family and the matri-centric kinship unit in Eastern Nigeria was cited earlier as an example of resistance before colonialism (see page 38). The story of Princess Emotan's rebellion against the authority of the Oba of Benin has also been reconstructed in modern literature (Salami, 2002). There are more records of resistance during the colonial period. According to Okome (2000:3):

There were many strands in women's response to the despotism of colonialism. It is clear that women lost more political power than men in the transition from pre-colonial to colonial rule. From being valued participants with official representatives in the political systems of their communities, they lost their voice. They also lost the opportunity of participating in the economy, and with this, opportunities for upward mobility. Some sought inclusion in the administration of the political system, while protesting their exclusion and vigorously opposing injustices that caused their marginalisation. [...] Colonialism victimised and de-possessed women by denying them the opportunity to participate in politics and to wield authority. Their protest was mobilised through the traditional modes of power that they vigorously maintained and protected against colonial elimination.

On the other hand, although women's traditional power and privileges had been reduced or eliminated, other opportunities inadvertently arose with the expansion of the colonial economy through limited access to formal education and participation in the formal labour sector. This gave rise to a few female educated elite who became active in nationalist opposition to the colonial authority. From the 1920s – 1960s women like Margaret Ekpo, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Charlotte Obasa, Wuraola Ekan, Elisabeth Adegboye and Oyinka Abayomi fought alongside their men folk for emancipation from British colonial rule (Awe, 1992:31 –33).

However, the majority of Nigerian women were excluded from the new educational opportunities and found themselves silenced and/or saddled with the burden of unjust tax laws and other restrictions. Organised resistance to colonial authority

began. The most famous resistance organised by market women were the Aba women's riots (*Ogu Umunwanye*) in 1929. At that time women organised a violent and successful protest against the tax policies of the colonial government. Other mass protests took place in Ijemo (1914), Adubi (1918) in Onitsha (1930) and in Abeokuta (1946) and several in Lagos between 1927 and 1941 (Johnson-Odim, 2000; WARDC, 2003). On different fronts and at various levels market and professional women fought for self-determination and independence in their respective spheres of endeavour. Under the leadership of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba and others women formed groups like the Lagos Women's League (1923), Abeokuta Ladies Club, which later evolved into the Abeokuta Women's Union (1946) then into the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies in 1953 (Johnson-Odim, 2000). Abayomi's women's political party, launched in 1944, canvassed for women's voting rights together with other women's organisations such as the Nigerian Women's Union, the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies and the Women's Movement (Nwankwo, 2003).

Thus, women waged a double war against specific aspects of colonial rule and against patriarchy. Ransome-Kuti's article in the August 10, 1947 issue of the *Daily Worker* put her at loggerheads with the British colonial authority and the male ruling class. The article (cited in Johnson-Odim, 2000), titled, "We had equality 'Till Britain Came" spoke of women's political, social and economic slavery under colonialism. Ransome-Kuti's article documented historical evidence of women's active political participation before colonisation, condemned women's political disenfranchisement by the colonial and traditional authorities, and called for universal suffrage. This was won for women in the South progressively through the 1950s but not until 1978 in the North. In the political era leading up to independence on October 1 1960 and during the First Republic (1960-66) a minute number of women were represented in regional and local governments in the South West and South East, and only one woman nominated by the Western Region, Mrs Wuraola Esan, made it into the 36-member national Senate.<sup>32</sup>

As argued in the previous chapter, despite the assertion by Ransome-Kuti, gender inequality predated colonialism and has ideological underpinnings rooted in traditional customs and modern value systems. These are the subject of the next section.

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<sup>32</sup> See Nwankwo (2003:14), for more details of female representation in pre-colonial and post-colonial politics

### *3.1.2 Socio-cultural Underpinnings of Gender Inequality*

Johnson (1995:68) defines culture as “the accumulated store of symbols, ideas, and material products associated with a social system...The most important of these ideas are ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, VALUES and NORMS” (original emphasis). Culture in the Nigerian context is the sum total of traditional beliefs, mores and norms associated with shared and diverse historical and ethnic<sup>33</sup> identities. Nweze and Takaya (2000) describe various Nigerian cultures as a graduated synthesis of Eastern (Arab Islamic), Western (Judeo-Christian) and African customs and traditions. Women occupy an ambiguous and paradoxical status in traditional belief systems that venerate them as mothers and hold them in subordination as females and wives. Nweze and Takaya (2000:1) contend that,

If there is any trait on which all Nigerian sub-cultures appear to be totally united, it is in the anti-female gender discrimination, culminating in the unfair subjugation and abridgement of the rights of women. Clearly, it is in our character.

Put simply, Nigerian cultures generally espouse an anti-female ideology and value-system. In 1999 the Federal Government commissioned a nationwide survey on Harmful and Positive Cultural Practices against Women and Girl-Children in Nigeria (FMWSD, 1999). The survey found that the vast majority of cultures across the country circumscribe the ability of females to enjoy full citizenship. It covered matters affecting both private and public spheres<sup>34</sup> and provided statistical and anecdotal evidence of gender discrimination through female genital mutilation, domestic violence, girl-child marriage, dehumanising widowhood rites, and unequal inheritance practices and property rights. It analysed the way gender roles and gender bias have been socially constructed through religious beliefs, folklore, proverbs and sayings to devalue females and femininity and prize males and masculinity. Such social constructions generate and reinforce gender oppression within households and in public life. The survey portrays how cultural ideologies are so deeply engrained and sustained by the fear of societal censorship as to remain unaffected by formal legal/constitutional provisions. Communal ties through ethnic and faith-based identity are strong among rural and urban dwellers alike. Consequently, cultural and religious beliefs form the basis of unequal power

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<sup>33</sup> Ethnicity defined as “the mobilisation and politicisation of ethnic-group identity in situations of competitive or conflictual pluralism” has been a dominant theme of national politics since independence (Suberu, 2000:124).

<sup>34</sup> Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen et al define ‘public’ as “the activities of the marketplace, the academy, and the political forum” and ‘private’ as “activities encompassing domestic life and genital sexual activity.”

relations. Hence, “Gender inequality is embedded in the most fundamental aspects of society, in the socio-cultural, religious and structural ways of being citizens” (IDEA, 2000:107).

The male bias at the heart of many religious ideologies and customs in Nigeria is manifest in marital, property and public relations. To take one example, Rhoda Efajemue (Interview, 02/06/03),<sup>35</sup> highlighted the male-bias in the regulation of sexual conduct in Isoko culture and its implications for women’s public participation:

Isoko tradition, Isoko where I come from the woman is meant to be... initially I said that the woman does not come out to go out and let other men see her. Because in the old...an Isoko woman is so reserved, so preserved. An Isoko woman does not come out for any other man to see. An Isoko woman does not really mingle outside because of the tradition that the Isoko man has – the Isoko as a whole has. We have a tradition that bans the Isoko woman not to go out and have an affair outside. The moment you do that either your children will start dying, followed with your husband and if you don’t confess, you will follow suite... And also because of the tradition an Isoko woman will keep herself for the fear of leaving her children or leaving her husband, or killing her children or killing her husband. So the Isoko woman is reserved and preserved because of that.

The reservation and preservation of the Isoko woman implies that “women do not really have too much to say, we always believe that the husband as the head of the home has every say” (Efajemue). Culture also discourages Isoko women from opposing men in defence of their own rights in public meetings. Another example of how culture shapes gender relations in marriage by curtailing women’s freedom of thought and speech is given by Lucy Chindaba (Interview, 24/06/03):<sup>36</sup>

Like in eliminating gender inequality like I always say our culture, culture, culture, culture, we will always have a problem with that. If we want to create gender equality first and foremost, like I said, if you have women that are outspoken they will say in Hausa, ‘*ta fi karfi miji ta.*’ She’s controlling her husband. It starts from there and before you know it they are *zugaring* (instigating) the husband somewhere...

This statement indicates that culture is a powerful undercurrent running through every facet of life and determining the nature and extent of social, material and political outcomes for women and men. Ideologies about women’s worth and role produce structural imperatives that heavily impact on women’s choices and opportunities in the Nigerian economy. In other words, the formal guarantee of citizenship rights is undercut by the deep-seated socio-cultural sub-structure that promotes, protects and sustains male

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<sup>35</sup> Full ID at Appendix D List D3

<sup>36</sup> Full ID at Appendix D List D3

hegemony thereby perpetuating gender-specific material/economic conditions that leave most women on the fringe Nigerian economy.

### ***3.1.3 The Economic Nature of Gender Inequality***

Economic inequality implies that women have less access to and control over resources than men do. They have little or no say concerning how resources are allocated due to their low political empowerment levels reflected by their poor representation in governance and decision-making. The gender-related development index (GDI) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM) provide inter-related gender disaggregated statistics on the differences between the achievements of women and men in society, as well as their respective levels of social exclusion and empowerment. Empowerment entails “increasing the capacity of poor people to *affect the decisions* that have a bearing on their lives, by investing in them and *removing the barriers* they face to engaging in political, social and economic activities.” *World Bank Poverty Manual, 2000* (Emphasis mine). The GDI is a disaggregation of the Human Development Index (HDI) by gender and uses the same indicators. These are: adult literacy, male/female life expectancy, combined gross enrolment ratio and estimated earned income, which is a reflection of the level of economic independence.<sup>37</sup> According the 2003 *Human Development Report*, Nigeria’s 2001 GDI score of 0.450 ranked it 124<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries. However, as shown in Fig. 3.1, which compares GDI values worldwide, this marked a slight increase from a value of 0.425 recorded for the year 1998 in the 2000 *Human Development Report*.<sup>38</sup> Nigeria’s GDI remains lower than the average for Sub-Saharan Africa and for the whole world which stood at 0.459 and 0.706 respectively in 1998.<sup>39</sup>

Evidence of economic inequality between women and men in Nigeria can be observed in rural and urban areas. Women experience distinct forms of economic marginalisation in both. In rural areas this is primarily connected to land and property entitlements, and access to agricultural income, and in urban areas to women’s participation in the informal and formal sectors.

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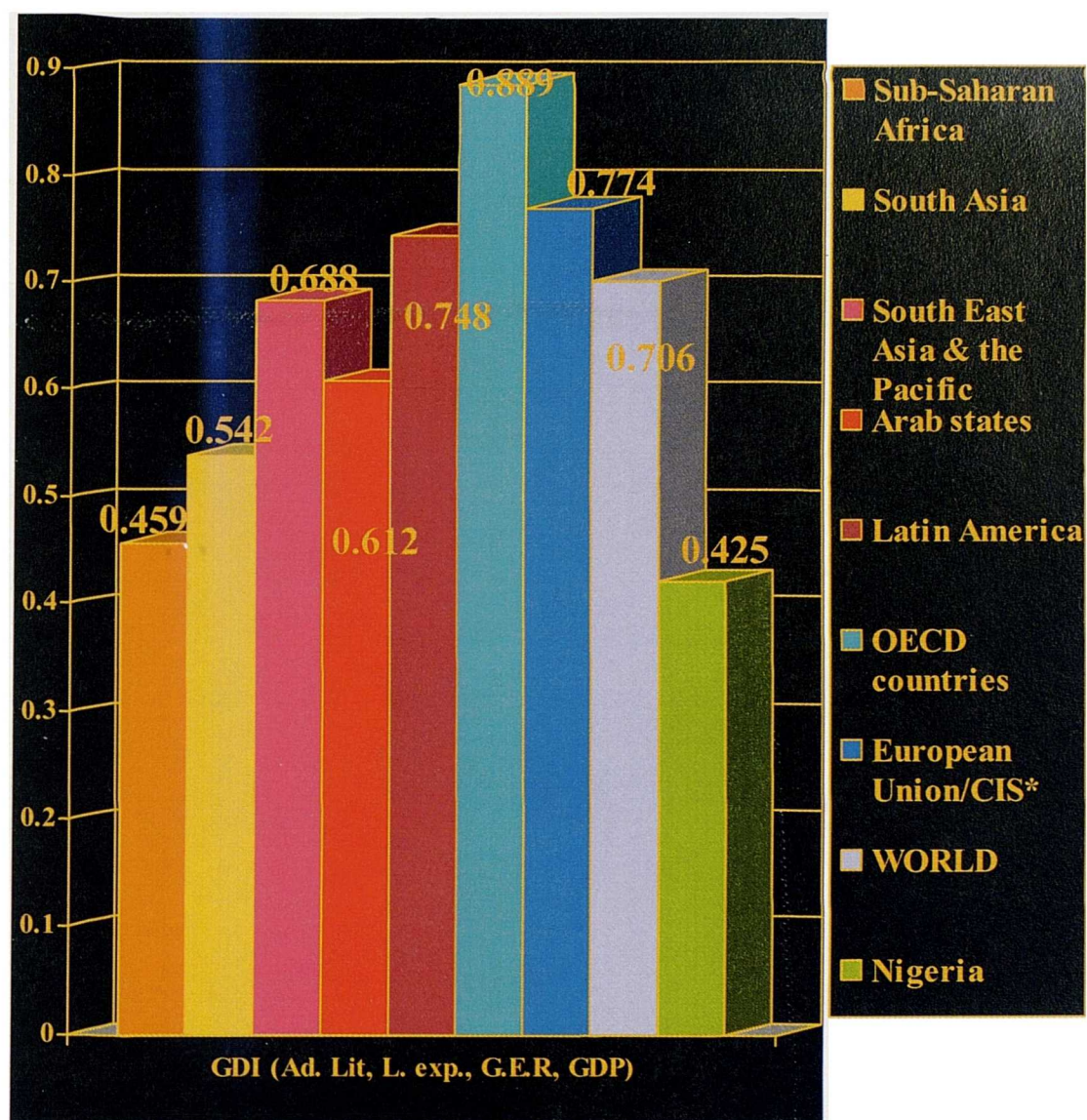
<sup>37</sup> Between 2002 and 2004 the Economic Commission for Africa/the African Centre for Gender and Development developed the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI). It was formally introduced in October 2005 (*ACGD, 2005*).

<sup>38</sup> Nigeria ranked 124 out of 143 countries in 1998.

<sup>39</sup> The 2003 *HDR* does not provide comparative regional GDI data.

Fig. 3.1

Facts and Figures Worldwide: Gender-related development Index (GDI)



\* CIS – European Union and Commonwealth of Independent States

Source: *Human Development Report, 2000*

### 3.1.3.1 Property and the Rural Dweller – My Papa Owns the Lands

The right to own and dispose of property lies at the heart of classical definitions of what encapsulates citizenship rights. Property rights have expanded to include intellectual property such as “any skill, trade, fine art or science” for self-support.<sup>40</sup> This does not mean that every citizen must own property or even be self-supporting, but that the opportunity is made available to all to do so without additional barriers.<sup>41</sup> In the rural areas where most of Nigerians reside, girls and women have less access to formal education, skills training, export markets, formal sector employment, health, housing, and, most significantly, to land. In a country where strong attachments to communal land are maintained by both urban and rural dwellers, the curtailment of female economic activity and independence is secured through the functioning of the various customary land tenure systems. In most Nigerian cultures female inheritance rights are either non-existent or substantially less than men’s. Inheritance is kinship based; land and houses are passed on from fathers to sons, uncles, brothers or other male relatives. Gender-biased inheritance practices occur in varying shades and degrees across the country depending on which legal system or customs are prevalent.

Inheritance rights are considered, for the most part, to be a private affair because of the strong ethnic-based links to land. This makes land tenure reform particularly sensitive and difficult to implement (AFROL Gender Profiles, 2000). Customary land tenure systems continue to exist alongside the 1978 Land Use Act, and the former prevail in the administration of land in rural areas. According to a survey of law and practice in relation to women’s inheritance rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, the “hodgepodge of rules” in Nigeria, compounded by multiple belief systems, has resulted in “a complex and often confusing legal system” allowing for wide variations in the specification of rights and the nature of discriminatory practices (COHRE, 2004:72). Customary landholdings and property rights belong mostly to males. Between kith and kin, men have the right to will their lands and property to whomever they chose. If the inheritor decides to sell to a third party, he must dispose of such property according to laid down legislation with proper documentation (and sometimes even without it). In some communities, if women cannot inherit land, they may buy it if they are economically empowered to do so, which is typically not the case. In certain parts of Nigeria even land purchase is prohibited or made very difficult for women. This is

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<sup>40</sup> From Immanuel Kant’s “Political Writings” cited by J. Sterba (1999:104).

<sup>41</sup> As Chapter II section 17, subsection 3 of the Constitution provides.



especially true in Igbo land in the South Eastern part of Nigeria where the patrilineal transference of land from father to son (or other male relatives) is strictly adhered to, and land/landed property are the preserve of men. The following excerpt from an interview with Lolo Onyewuchi, a politician and President of a collective of women's associations in Orji, Imo State, is instructive:

Researcher: Is this [land inheritance] a problem in your area?

Participant: Big problem here o.<sup>42</sup> Like for instance, when my father died they never gave me any land. My brothers shared the land among themselves. Even when they are selling it, when they sell they wouldn't even give me a naira. That is our culture here, which is so bad. Even if you have a land, now that I'm married...maybe I have land or any property, eh? I won't own that property. They say it's your husband's property. Yes! You cannot claim it. But you bought those things with your money. They will say you are not entitled because you are in your husband's house (28/07/03).

Researcher: Even if you bought it and you have the certificate of occupancy?

Researcher: Wonderful! They wouldn't allow you. If you dare sell that land you will be in trouble

Yet, women are closely tied to the land through agricultural labour on farms belonging largely to fathers and husbands. The state of Nigeria's agricultural sector is also linked to women's relations to land which affect the productive capacity of female farmers. Agriculture accounts for up to 70% of the total labour force (INC – *Gender Profile: Nigeria*, 2002). Between 48% - 70%<sup>43</sup> of Nigeria's rural population are female agriculturalists who farm and market most of the country's food produce. Most of these women do not own the land they work on; in addition many of them participate in eco-farming or backyard gardening to feed their families and gain some personal income. Government agricultural subsidy policies and projects overlook them in the distribution of fertilisers and credit facilities in favour of male farmers who own land and are heads of households. Female household heads, increasingly common in both urban and rural settings, are considered an aberration of the norm and not factored into policy planning or the delivery of agricultural services.<sup>44</sup> As Pittin (1991) observed policies in Nigeria have not been gender-sensitive in their formulation or impacts.

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<sup>42</sup> A Nigerian manner of speech

<sup>43</sup> 1995/96 data from UNICEF cited in INC – *Gender Profile: Nigeria*, 06/02.

<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, contrary to the common assertion that female headed households tend to be poorer than male headed ones, data from surveys spanning 1992-1998 conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics in Nigeria indicate that the former, "make up about 12 percent of all households, have higher per capita expenditures and are less likely to be in poverty than male headed households." This includes female headed households in both rural and urban areas.

For example, Abdullah (1993) and Imam (1997) have asserted that the 1986 Structural Adjustment Programme was not conceptualised with due regard for the social locations of the poor and women, and have documented its negative gender impacts. The sexual division of labour worked to ensure that women suffered far worse than men. Evidence of this cuts across every sector. For instance, in the agricultural sector agrarian policies, such as the removal of subsidies and intermediary marketing boards, benefited some political and rural male elites by giving higher prices and direct access to international markets.<sup>45</sup> Conversely, they undermined the livelihoods of subsistence farmers, particularly those of female farm labourers who practised food crop farming and had little or no control over income from cash crops.

Government (in)attention to the needs and interests of women farmers has consistently been grossly disproportionate to their numbers and role in the agricultural industry. Oladele (2002) of the University of Ibadan demonstrates that Nigeria reflects the overall picture of female agricultural workers in Africa:

Women are responsible for at least 70 percent of food staple production in Africa. They are also important in other agricultural activities; including food processing and marketing, cash cropping and animal husbandry. (World Bank (1989). Egunjobi, 1991 also reported that 70% of women employed in the Third World are actually employed in agriculture and that they produce 60-80% of Africa's food. FAO (1996) reported that women's contribution to labour in Africa is about 33% of the workforce, 70% of the agricultural workers, 60-80% of the production of food for household consumption and sale, 100% of the processing of basic food stuff, 90% of household water and fire wood, 80% of food storage and transport, 90% of hoeing and weeding work and 60% of the harvesting and marketing activities.

The 1973 oil boom led to an increase in government spending on expensive imports and capital intensive urban projects at the expense of development in the agricultural sector, which still remains the largest employer of labour (Lewis, 1996; Abdullahi, 1999). The subsequent decline in agricultural output exacerbated poverty, food scarcity and hunger in rural areas more than any other single factor. At an even deeper level the neglect of structural issues surrounding the class-based and gender-biased distribution of land, agricultural inputs and extension services is a major contributory factor to rural poverty, especially for women. Sixty-six per cent of Nigerians live below the poverty line.<sup>46</sup> Of the 46.1% of Nigerians living in abject

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<sup>45</sup> All women are affected by gender differentiated intra-household resource distribution

<sup>46</sup> Defined as below US\$1 a day by the World Bank. Olaniyan (2000) argues that a more appropriate poverty line for Nigeria is one that is calculated relative to per capita expenditure and varies according to total population consumption instead of based on a fixed income.

poverty 70% are women (IDEA, 2000). Hence the term ‘feminisation of poverty’ aptly depicts the Nigerian woman’s social condition. Hence the term ‘feminisation of poverty’ aptly depicts the Nigerian women’s condition where the incidence and severity of poverty is disproportionately higher than for men (BRIDGE, 2001). Moreover, not much has changed since Brydon’s (1989) assertion that female agricultural labour often consists of subsistence farming devoid of cash exchange value; it is, therefore, not recognised as real work by governments or individuals. A comment made during a Participatory Rural Appraisal of women’s needs carried out among Jaba men in Gora, a predominantly farming community (see details in Chapter Four) highlights this point. In response to the claim made by the women that farming was their major occupation, Paul Dogara (21/05/03) – a youth leader (see Fig. 4.5 and Appendix D: Table D1 for more details on participants) – had this to say:

The reason we say it is men only who farm is that in reality when a man marries a woman he is the one in control, he supports her, feeds her and gives her everything. However, if he cannot do the work or if he is tired, then women come in to assist. Then in the course of rendering assistance some people do not have children to help them that is why the women have to help. Also some women’s husbands have died that is why you see women assisting just a little. They say they are farming but in our culture women don’t have the responsibility to farm, only the men do. What a woman does on the farm is work but her work duties are different. If you marry a woman she is supposed to cook for us, to do the dishes, and there are certain jobs that she is not supposed to do. So, the farming she does is work but she is just assisting. It is not the work she was brought in to do.

Not only do men ‘have the responsibility to farm’ in Gora they also own all the land. According to Bohar Gandu (21/05/03), a village *Mai Angwa* (clan head: Fig. 4.5 Appendix D),

It is not good to give them [women] inheritance because they can marry outside and even sell the inheritance and compromise the village. At best women should be allowed to inherit monetary wealth but not houses (except there are several), and certainly not land.

Gigin Yut (21/05/03) agreed: “Women are not even concerned about land inheritance. As long as they are given property that is okay. Land is not to be given to the women.” To Ishaya Maisamari (21/05/03) the implications of giving inheritance and property rights to women were all too obvious: “All we will be the same, male and female; there will be no difference, even a little bit.” These comments make it clear that women are foreigners married into other families and are therefore not deserving of full ‘citizenship’ benefits even at the village level. Interviewees and Focus group/PRA

participants from cultures across five (5) geopolitical zones shared similar, though less extreme experiences and views.

This is not to infer that all over Nigeria female agriculturalists are excluded from commodity markets. They are prominent in the production and sale of palm oil, poultry, fruits and vegetables in various parts of the country. Nevertheless, men dominate cash crop farming; they have greater access to agricultural resources, and more personal control over agricultural inputs and income.

### 3.1.3.2 The Peripheral Urban Survivor

The majority of the female workforce is found in the informal sector (which includes the majority of the agricultural) in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>47</sup> In urban areas women are highly concentrated at the bottom rung of the sector in petty trading, menial labour, low cadre 'pink' collar jobs, and high risk occupations such as street hawking and sex work. Besides being female the greater proportion of the sector are poor, unskilled and illiterate or semi-literate. Between 1985 –1992 urban-based informal sector participants in the Nigerian service sub-sector were the hardest hit by SAP-aggravated poverty (FOS, 1996, 1998). The removal of agricultural subsidies led to steep food price rises, a greater proportion of income spent on food and the attendant sharp fall in domestic savings. A large number of low and middle-income formal sector workers, notably women, were forced to seek additional income in the informal sector increasing their work burden on domestic and public fronts.

Informal sector labour also tends to be 'invisible' since, like reproductive work, it is difficult to measure and therefore usually not included in National Accounting Systems. This may indicate that the World Bank figure rating economic activity between 1995/2000 for women and men at 48% and 87% respectively is misleading. Women in domestic and sex work experience additional vulnerability arising from exposure to violence (Albert, 1995). Various governments paid lip-service to the importance of the informal sector and its high potential for generating growth by promising to integrate it through closer regulation; yet it is said to have exceeded its

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<sup>47</sup> Although there is a dearth of current statistical data, women's economic activity in Africa has traditionally been confined to the informal sector. Ekpo and Umoh (1999) categorise the Nigerian informal sector into productive (e.g. agriculture, small-scale manufacture, building and construction; service (e.g. repairs and maintenance, menial work, traditional medical practitioners and birth attendants); and financial sub-sectors (e.g. savings and credit schemes, money lending, parallel bureau de change). The service sub-sector includes the 'entertainment industry' or sex work ("Meeting of Experts on Women in the Informal Sector", UNESCO, Kenya, 1995).

absorptive capacity with minimal potential to generate income and employment (UNESCO: MEWIS<sup>48</sup>, 1995). Due to the lack of adequate regulatory frameworks and social security provisioning labour and income in the informal sector are exceptionally vulnerable to fluctuating market prices and inflation. Informal sector workers often labour without adequate facilities under harsh environmental conditions; small perishable low-income earning merchandise are the mainstay of their trades. Consequently, many are unable to make ends meet and therefore fulfil a basic citizenship responsibility and right to self-sustenance. A focus group discussion with market women at the Jos main market in August 2003 – 22 months after the market had been burnt down – portrayed the precarious living conditions of women in the informal sector including lack of security, accommodation and income. Chapter Four discusses this in greater detail.

Yet, for Nigerian women, poverty is not restricted to rural women or the urban informal sector. In the formal sector female participation is just 36% of the labour force, concentrated in low-income ‘pink collar’ jobs, and occupying 18% of managerial/professional cadres (NPW Item 2.4). Moreover, poverty goes beyond economic indicators and women and men, owing to their different social locations, may experience poverty in different ways. The Nigerian Federal Office of Statistics, while still conforming to the conventional income-based measurement of poverty, acknowledged its wider social ramifications. When asked to define what they meant by ‘poor,’ women in the World Bank survey (mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2) also mentioned non-tangible non-economic factors such as the lack of social prestige, insecurity, powerlessness and voicelessness. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen et al (1993) contend that the last two factors reflect how women have been silenced and their fundamental human rights curtailed by androcentric language use and socio-cultural symbols, which are reproduced and reinforced by state institutions.

### ***3.1.4 The State and Institutionalised Gender Inequality***

The institutionalisation of gender inequality is expressed in the nature of the Nigerian state and maintained by state policy and regulation. Before 1985 independent Nigeria was described as a neo-patrimonial state. To acquire and maintain power political/business elites used ethnic and religious divisions to manipulate and control the

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<sup>48</sup> Paper titled, “Meeting of Experts on Women in the Informal Sector” in Sub-Saharan Africa <http://www.unesco.org/most/wom-infs.htm>

poor (Williams, 1980; Lewis, 1996, Olukoshi, 1998). Thus, clientelist networks on the basis of ethnic, religious and class identification bred ‘spoils politics’ and became the dominant mechanism for the distribution of state patronage (Allen, 1995, Tiyaamiyu, 1999; Ifeka, 2000). Under military rule, more so from 1985, state power became increasingly centralised at federal government level and prebendalism<sup>49</sup> replaced ethno-religious and class client networks.<sup>50</sup> The hegemonic and personalised nature of the State foreclosed constitutional and policy-oriented politics in favour of ethno-religious and class-based patron-client relationships (Diamond, 1988; Suberu 2000). Having been incorporated as dependents and adjuncts to men into colonial and post-colonial economic and political structures women remain dependent on clientelist rewards and patronage, and are thus closely integrated into these networks and relationships (see section 3.2). Nevertheless, women’s access to socioeconomic resources in the prevailing context of state patronage is indirect being contingent upon sexual and/or relational connections with men. The state, therefore, directly perpetrates gender inequality through the way it operates.

On the surface women appear to enjoy the outward trappings of formal equality with men based on constitutional provisions that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnicity or religion. Citizenship rights are enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution in Chapters II and IV on “Fundamental Objectives and Directives of State Policy” and “Fundamental Rights” as belonging to the individual. They represent a compromise position between republican and liberal conceptualisations of what it means to be a citizen – one who has the ability to actively exercise rights in political, legal, social and economic domains, and to passively expect the state to guarantee certain rights within a stipulated framework. Accordingly, Sections 33 through 46 specify a citizen’s rights to life, dignity, fair hearing, free religious and socio-political expression, property acquisition and legal representation. They also endorse the right to privacy in family life and all forms of correspondence. As summarised by Marshall (1950)<sup>51</sup> civic rights entail equality before the law, freedom of speech, association and movement; political rights guarantee the right to vote and be voted for; and socio-economic rights provide the citizen with the right to work for self-sustenance, and collective action in negotiation or opposition to employers, as well as the right to social

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<sup>49</sup> Allen (1995) defines prebendalism as the retention of public resources for personal gain as opposed to distribution among political clients.

<sup>50</sup> Nigeria is a Federal Republic with a three-tier government system at federal, state and local levels.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall’s ideas on citizenship are summarised by Allan Johnson (1995) in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology. A User’s Guide to Sociological Language*.

welfare and security. All these are guaranteed to the individual in the Nigerian Constitution. In addition, Section 16 (1)(b) mandates the state to “control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity.”

The point has been made that intrinsic to the concept of citizenship – be it of republican or liberal formulations – is an underlying patriarchalism that requires a sex-based division of labour, a separation between public and private spheres and a higher ranking of the former (Pateman, 1989). The conceptual and practical separation of private and public life ensures that male privileges within the framework of kinship, household and family institutional rules and practices place them in a better position to take advantage of resources and privileges available in the wider society (Pateman, 1995). Saunders (1975:31 cited in Parsons, 1995:136) argues that dominant and powerful interest groups interpret, define and shape social problems, political institutions and policy agendas resulting in the “unconscious routinisation of bias.” Bachrach and Baratz (1963) explain how this routinisation of bias makes the political system impenetrable to certain ‘unacceptable’ demands that threaten or overload the system thus producing a state of non-decision-making for excluded or silenced groups. Moreover, apparent juridical ‘neutrality’ conceals institutional gender bias in that the state has refrained from setting out specific provisions in the Constitution and in the law in gender terms as a means to redress female disadvantage. Consequently, it tends to defend and enforce prevailing patriarchal practices and conceptualisations about women. Pittin (1991: 38, 39) is worth quoting here:

In Nigeria the state, or sections of the state, pursue parallel yet often contradictory policies, differentially verbalised or operationalised depending on the underlying and immediate interests to be served. In relation to women, state policy at the level of federal text and tenor appears supportive and benign, [...] This, however, must be related to other aspects of law, statute, and policy, associated with control over production and reproduction [...] The overall direction of these policies is the maintenance of ideological assertion of women as mothers, housewives, helpmates to men, and peripheral workers. This justifies women’s continuing to undertake the entire burden of domestic labour withdraws women from competition for wage labour and justifies unequal access to education, information, technology, credit, training, and productive resources including land and landed property.

This ideological justification lies at the root of the non-committal policy response to women’s concerns or well-being. On various occasions military and civilian governments have displayed active or passive resistance to women’s interests by their refusal to respond to agitation for change; where concessions have been made they have

typically been followed by inaction. Section 3.1.4.1 and Section 3.2 highlight gender asymmetries and disparities in female citizenship as it relates to legal status and political participation. The first demonstrates how the state, its institutions and the law give rise to and sustain inequality in personal and public domains. Section 3.2 portrays how Nigerian women's lack of success in penetrating political structures is a result of non-decision making on the part of the state.

#### 3.1.4.1 Split persona under a triple legal system

All adult persons are formally guaranteed equality before the law under Nigerian Statutory and Common Laws.<sup>52</sup> Commenting on women's capacity to secure justice through legal redress a BAOBAB synthesis report (2002:5) remarked that,

The intention of the drafters is clearly to ensure that equality before the law is afforded to all citizens of Nigeria. However... it ignores the fact that the *status quo* already privileges citizens who are members of certain categories (in this case men) and who therefore already enjoy privileges and the material ideological resources provided by such.

Nigeria is also a signatory to several international documents including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Nonetheless, under statutory and common laws women face discrimination from unfavourable income tax, labour and family laws and from the lack of enforcement of sexual offence laws. In addition, these laws are silent on areas specifically related to women's concerns such as harmful traditional practices, minimum age at marriage and marital rape. Elsie Thompson, the Country President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)<sup>53</sup> spelled out the nature of the difficulties women encounter before Statutory Law:

The laws are not adequate to protect the woman, because of our nature, because of these cultural factors. Like we are talking about harmful traditional practices, technically if you go through the criminal code you can actually prosecute people under the criminal code for harmful traditional practices. For instance widowhood, a woman who is told to wash corps and then drink the water, that's administering of obnoxious substance to the woman. It's there; it's for both men and women. But which policeman will you get to prosecute? Who will now start analysing the water to know whether it's obnoxious substance and things like that? So, the laws that could help are there. But the rigours... there's so much... it's not specific to women.

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<sup>52</sup> "These include the statutes and common law of the United Kingdom" up until 1960. Statutory law embodies decrees and status by military and civilian governments. Statutory law has precedence over common, customary and religious laws. (BAOBAB Synthesis Report, 2002:1-2).

<sup>53</sup> Thompson is also the Executive Secretary of The Adolescent Project (TAP) initiated by the wife of the Governor of Rivers State.



And that's why we are saying let us have specific legislation. (Interview, 28/06/03).

Amali (2000:8) contends that “major legal-based constraints” to women’s economic advancement and political representation exist “in the areas of access to physical resources, human resources, financial resources, dispute settlement and authority.” These legal constraints are complicated by the nature of Islamic and customary laws that co-exist with statutory and common laws giving rise to what is referred to as Nigeria’s triple legal system. This system is administered through a formal court system consisting of area, customary, Sharia and magistrates’ courts with last resort residing in the Supreme Court.<sup>54</sup> Gender discrimination contained in the triple legal system is partly responsible for the depression of women’s material conditions and economic output discussed in section 3.1.3. Amali (2000) mentions two areas where this is particularly acute: 1) Inheritance and property rights that limit or hinder access of all females to land ownership and productive resources; 2) Marriage laws “which deny women equal rights with men to own and utilise property” (p.12).

Both Sharia and Customary Law enjoy quasi-legal status with restricted jurisdiction under the 1999 Constitution. Sections 1 and 3 unequivocally establish the supremacy of the Constitution over both and nullify any law incompatible with it. Specifically, Section 277 restricts the jurisdiction of Sharia Law to personal law and precludes criminal law. Criminal cases were to be adjudicated by Sharia Courts under a modified Northern Penal Code in Northern States, with the option of recourse to Nigerian Statutory Law. Section 10 further prohibits the promulgation of a State religion by Federal or State governments. However, with the adoption of full blown Sharia since 2000, jurisdiction has extended to criminal matters.

The strict application of Sharia Law is seen by human/civil rights and women’s organisations as being particularly repressive of women’s rights, and – under international and domestic pressure – the Federal Government denounced death sentences passed on two women for sexual immorality: Safiya Hussain Tungar-Tudu, (35) from Sokoto State and Amina Lawal Kurami (30) from Katsina State.<sup>55</sup> Bariya Ibrahim Magazu (17) was also sentenced to 180 lashes for premarital sex. She received 100 lashes on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2001 after an appeal managed to get a reduction. In all three

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<sup>54</sup> “Women’s Access to Justice and Personal Security in Nigeria: A Synthesis Report.” BAOBAB, 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Safiya was sentenced in October 2001 and Amina in March 2002. Both sentences were later overturned by Higher Sharia Courts due to pressure from indigenous women’s rights and international human rights groups, and from the Federal Government.

cases the men accused of impregnating them were acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence to convict them.<sup>56</sup> A joint statement issued by BAOBAB, an indigenous women's rights group, and Amnesty International objected to the gender injustice inherent in the sentences against Safiya and Amina:

Discrimination on grounds of gender: Under the Maliki school of thought, which dominates the interpretation of Sharia in northern Nigeria, pregnancy is considered sufficient evidence to condemn a woman for Zina, an offence which is to be read as adultery or as voluntary premarital sexual intercourse. The oath of the man denying having had sexual intercourse with the woman is often considered sufficient proof of innocence unless four independent and reputable eye-witnesses declare his involvement in the act of voluntary sexual intercourse. [...] Sharia Law as practised in the northern states of Nigeria, does not protect women from possible sexual assault and coercion, instead it is willing to punish the victims of such assault. [...] women and girls who are victims of rape or coercion have their situation further compounded. They will be subjected to charges of Zina and false accusation. This clearly violates women's rights, justice and security while protecting those men who harass, molest and rape women and girls.<sup>57</sup>

There also exists a vast array of customary laws which affect women, particularly rural women. These laws are not codified and therefore, the gender discriminatory practices contained therein are non-justiciable. They encapsulate harmful traditional practices (HTPs) against women and girls. Citing the case of *Akinubi v. Akinubi* (1997)<sup>58</sup> the BAOBAB Synthesis Report (2002:18) claimed that,

Under the customary court system and laws, women are subjected to the same disabilities as infants, slaves and aliens. That is they are as chattels of the same order as land, livestock, and farm implements and are considered as man's property.

Conversely, both Sharia and customary law afford women a modicum of protection and entitlements. Lawal (2003) argues that Islamic laws promote women's human rights, particularly in relation to marriage, inheritance and property rights. However, the majority of customary laws deny females access to land and property and

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<sup>56</sup> The plight and rights of Muslim women under Sharia has been the source of much local and international contestation. The decision of the Nigerian Authorities and Miss World pageant organisers to shift the venue of the 2002 Beauty contest from Abuja to London in the wake of blood-letting protests that killed 200 people further tarnished the nation's human rights record and drew international condemnation.

<sup>57</sup> BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights and Amnesty International Joint Statement on the Implementation of New Sharia-based Penal Codes in Northern Nigeria. AI Index: AFR 44/008/2002. Published: 25/03/2002  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/2002/nigeria03252002.html>

<sup>58</sup> The customary court denied a widow right to be co-administrator of her deceased husband's family holding that widows are part of the husband's estate to be administered or inherited by his family.

the custody of minors. Furthermore, the entire Nigerian legal system does not protect women or children against domestic violence. Section 55 of the Northern Penal Code and the Zamfara State Sharia Penal Code permit a man to beat his wife as long as he does not inflict grievous body harm that causes her to be hospitalised for up to 21 days. Under the Constitution, where women are guaranteed fundamental freedoms and human rights, they are still not equal to men. In the words of the Dr. Bolere Ketebu-Nwokeafor (Interview, 31/05/03), National President of the National Council for Women's Societies – the umbrella organisation established in 1958 to oversee all women's groups - even the Constitution demonstrates a considerable amount of 'double-speak' on several issues including gender. For example, Section 26 (1)(a) confers citizenship on a non-Nigerian female spouse but not on a man married to a Nigerian woman. Also, under the Constitution all married girls under the age of 18 are regarded as adults for the purposes of law and would therefore be prosecuted as such lending tacit support to girl-child marriage. This provision was inserted into the Constitution as a concession to the Muslim North where girls are known to have been married off as young as nine years old. A high incidence of vesico-vaginal fistula has been recorded in areas where girl-child marriage is practiced. Attempts to raise the minimum age at marriage to 18 have been resisted by opinion leaders from those areas.

Section 42 (1) and (b) of the Constitution have been used to resist special temporary measures aimed at affirmative action for women.<sup>59</sup> A major issue concerning women and the law is the lack of access to formal justice administration mechanisms and institutions. As argued in Chapter Two affirmative action is required to level the playing field and secure substantive gender equality, particularly in the area of political representation. Bearing in mind that, 'the personal is political' the next subsection demonstrates how women have been and continue to be the weakest link in politics and decision-making.

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<sup>59</sup> It stipulates that "No Nigerian citizen shall be accorded any privileges or advantages under the laws etc where such privileges and advantages are not accorded to other communities, ethnic groups, sex, religions etc."

### 3.2 Women, Political Participation and Decision-making from 1985

From the foregoing it follows that ideological, cultural, material and legal constraints have resulted in the relative “de-politicisation of the female personality” Okwuosa (1992:5). According to the highly contested and politicised 1991 census women in Nigeria comprise 49.6% of the populace.<sup>60</sup> The World Bank gender profile of Nigeria for 2000 estimated the female population at 50.7%.<sup>61</sup> Yet, even if one were to accept the authenticity of the 1991 census, it stands in stark contrast to women’s acutely disproportionate representation in politics and decision-making. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is “A composite index measuring gender inequality in three basic dimensions of empowerment – economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making and power over economic resources” (*HDR*, 2003:352). It measures disparities in the opportunities available to men and women to participate in society. There are four GEM indicators:

1. The proportion of seats held in parliament by women (proportion of women/men in parliament).
2. The proportion of female senior officials and managers
3. The proportion of female professional and technical workers
4. The ratio of estimated female to male earned income

A basic assumption underlying the GEM is that the inability of individuals or groups to participate or to be represented in governance and decision-making constitutes an important dimension and indicator of material and social poverty because it determines access to and control over resources. Figure 3.2 provides a snapshot of the level of female disempowerment in Nigeria using two GEM indicators: the number of parliamentary seats and female/male estimated earned income among top-level government functionaries.<sup>62</sup> The data depicts the disproportionate distribution of political and economic power between men and women.

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution espouses the principle of Federal Character in order to prevent the predominance of persons or groups in politics and public structures. The 1991 census presents a basis for the entrenchment of proportional gender

<sup>60</sup> The census has been disputed by ethnic minorities and by Southern Nigerians who argue that figures for Northern States are seriously inflated.

<sup>61</sup> <http://genderstats.worldbank.org/genderRpt.asp?rpt=profile&cty=NGA,Nigeria&hm=home>

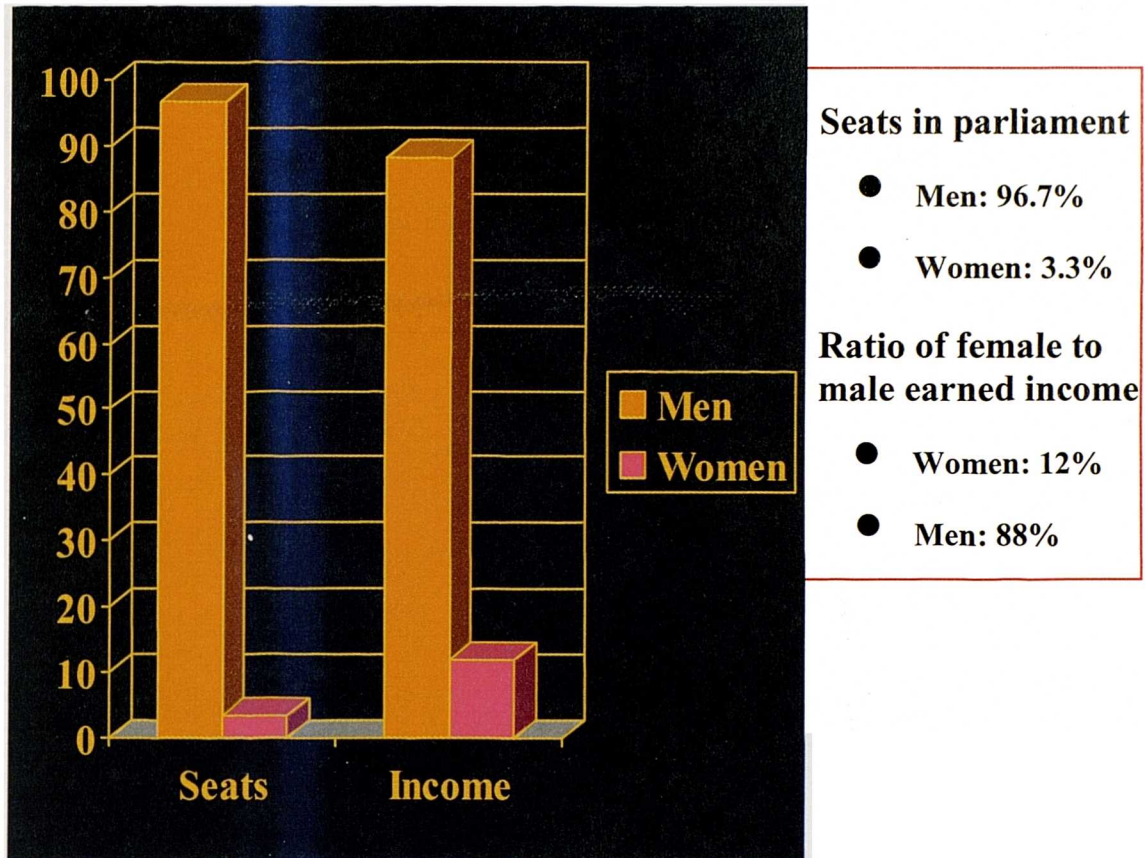
<sup>62</sup> Estimated earned income in this respect is drawn from calculations made by Dung Pam Sha (2001). Only one GEM indicator – seats in parliament – is recorded for Nigeria in the 2003 *Human Development Report*.

representation in the Constitution for a true portrayal of Federal Character. However, the principle only epitomises Nigeria's multi-ethnic, multi-religious composition and is restricted to ensuring proportional ethnic representation. Its main goal is to foster constitutional patriotism by uniting Nigeria's ethnic and religiously diverse people-groups into a national-civic culture or citizenship.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Provisions for Sharia and Customary Law were carefully crafted into the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions in deference to ethno-religious sensibilities to provide freedom of cultural expression and to promote national integration through the protection of community interests and equal opportunity. For example, membership of the present House of Representatives is based on proportional ethnic representation calculated on the basis of 1991 census figures (Gordon, 1992). Federal Character operates on the basis of affirmative action strategies for addressing geopolitical disadvantages in the allocation of resources. It has been used to help educationally disadvantaged states and people-groups (such as Fulani Nomads) through the award of bursaries, lower intake scores, quotas and special programmes. See page 91ff for discussion on impacts of Sharia and Customary Law on women.

Fig. 3.2  
Some GEM Indicators for Nigeria



Source: *Human Development Report, 2003*

Sha, Dung Pam (2001). "Women and the Management of the Nigerian State: Past, Present and Future." Paper presented at the National Conference on Gender Violence and Family Poverty organised by the Office of the Special Advisor to the President on Women Affairs in Jos, Nigeria, 03/07/01.

Chapter II of the Constitution lays out the *Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy*; after stating in Section 14 (1) that, “The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice.” Section 14 (3) affirms that,

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies.

Nevertheless, Federal Character excludes women as a result of gender-blind and gender-biased policies and laws, through which it advantages men in all spheres of national life leading to their predominance as a sectional group (Okome, 2000). Thus, the state lacks a truly federal character, or what Mark-Odu (2000:2) referred to as ‘Gender Character.’ Despite the disadvantages women experience as a result of their sex-related positions military and civilian governments have resisted the idea of affirmative action, particularly in the area of political representation. From 1985-2005 there were three military regimes (1985-1999) and one civilian government elected twice (1999-2005), with a brief four-month interregnum of a military-appointed civilian Interim National Government (August-November, 1993). This section outlines the political marginalisation of women under military and democratically elected governments and their campaigns for inclusion.

### ***3.2.1 The Military and the Marginalisation of Women, 1985-1999***

The August 1985 palace coup that brought General Ibrahim Babangida into power was hailed as a beacon of hope to reverse corruption and mismanagement and engineer economic development. He promised to initiate free market economic reforms that would wear a human face unlike those of his military predecessor, General Muhammad Buhari, whose severe stabilisation measures had alienated large and powerful sectors of the country. He immediately initiated a phased political programme to ensure a smooth and systematic transition to civil rule by 1988. He began a process of dialogue and consensus building by appointing reputable opinion leaders into key decision making positions, and called for a national referendum on the stalemated IMF loan issue. In June 1986 the Babangida Administration obtained a structural adjustment

loan and began to implement a World Bank-prescribed Structural Adjustment Programme.

Contrary to initial pledges SAP saw the living standards of the majority of Nigerians drastically deteriorate in real terms. When his political transition turned into a Russian roulette, botched twice by official delays and the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections, it became crystal clear that the Military, was out to entrench itself in power, buoyed up by a clique of geo-political elitist interests. Babangida initiated administrative changes that centralised executive power in the President and pre-empted the emergence of “a multilayered ‘ethno-military’ and Northern Muslim hegemony” which further deepened ethnic and religious cleavages (Richard Joseph, 1999:359-60). His military presidentialism bred personality cult leadership and moved the State from prebendalism to predation as the polity became extremely polarised. This situation intensified under the regime of General Sani Abacha (Lewis, 1996).<sup>64</sup> Commenting on the failure of SAP and the crass private accumulation and repression under military regime, Adebayo Adedeji (1997) former Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, alluded to the privatisation of the Nigerian State rendering it devoid of a people-oriented development strategy or any meaningful popular participation in its decision-making processes.

Ironically, it was economic crises and external intervention that provided the catalyst for changes in gender policy and, at the same time, increased both the visibility and voice of women on the political landscape. The ‘gender conditionality’ tagged onto IMF/World Bank loan facilities and the funding/ technical assistance programmes of other United Nations and international development agencies impacted on official policy orientation towards women and forced open a wider political space for them. Governments made public pronouncements and commitments towards women’s economic and political empowerment as a fundamental and crucial development strategy.<sup>65</sup> The wives of Military leaders, as will be shown in Section 3.3.1, were the driving force and dominant players in women’s growing socio-political space through the establishment of officially-sponsored development programmes. Consequently, women’s political and economic involvement continued to be marginal, tokenist and regulated by an institutional framework committed to preserving women’s traditional roles (Pittin, 1991). This was evident in the minute number of female nominations and

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<sup>64</sup> According to Lewis (1996:99), “Predation embodies a reconfiguration of neo-patrimonial rule, towards more despotic and rapacious control.”

<sup>65</sup> During his tenure General Buhari mandated governors to appoint at least one woman into State Executive Councils.



appointments to public positions by military administrations from 1960-1999 as documented by Nwankwo (2003). Nwankwo (2003:14) offers an assessment of how women fared under the military:

The military occupation of the political space was not helpful to the political development of women. For one thing there were very few women in the military but even those belonged to the service sectors such as nursing. In other words, women were not highly placed enough to be in the decision-making bodies of the military governments.

However, the situation was not much better in areas that did not require the appointment of military personnel. In January 1986 the Babangida Administration inaugurated a 19-member Political Bureau comprising eminent Nigerians mandated to consult public opinion to chart the country's political future. The Bureau had only two female members. It submitted a report to the all-male Provisional Ruling Council with an affirmative action clause recommending that five percent of all political appointments be reserved for women. The recommendation was rejected on the assertion that it was undemocratic and would constitute reverse discrimination against men.<sup>66</sup>

During the five years of General Abacha (1993-1998) the gender component of international development assistance packages along with women's campaigns on the domestic front played an important role in the creation of a fully-fledged ministry for women and the appointment of two female ministers into the federal executive.<sup>67</sup> When Abacha died suddenly in 1998 General Abubakar Abdulsalam took over power. However, the aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections by Babangida intensified the ongoing battle for the entrenchment of democracy which in turn gave impetus to the campaign for women's political rights. Under intense diplomatic and international pressure from the USA, Canada, Britain and the EU, and from national

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<sup>66</sup> Similar allegations of reverse discrimination have been raised by Southerners against the Federal Character quota system aimed at increasing ethnic representation of Northerners. Southerners claim that by 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' constitutional affirmative action led to the promotion of mediocrity over merit. The PRC rejection of affirmative action for women ignored the fact that the inability of institutionally marginalised groups to acquire the skills and experience to compete and effectively challenge power monopolies is itself undemocratic. Affirmative action is, therefore, required to redress the legacy of disadvantage brought on by historic injustices and systemic prejudice. Even with formal legal/constitutional guarantees of equality and fundamental freedoms, without affirmative action, "there will be neither freedom, nor competition and no fairness" Ginwala (1991:70). Thus, constitutional gender character would be a means of getting Peter to cede to Pauline what is rightfully hers.

<sup>67</sup> Mrs Mobolaji Osomo and Mrs Ada Odugu – Minister and junior minister of Establishment and Agriculture respectively (Nwankwo, 2003:17).

pro-democracy resistance efforts Abdulsalam handed over power to a civilian government on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

### ***3.2.2 The Place of Women in 'Democratic' Nigeria, 1999-2005***

Before assuming office in 1999 Chief Olusegun Obasanjo<sup>68</sup> made election campaign promises to institute 30% affirmative action in line with provisions of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action. Nevertheless, at the end of his first four-year term Agina-Ude (2003:31) surmised that, “the perception that democracy would automatically boost gender equality in political participation has not been validated after five years of return to civilian rule.” Women continued to be grossly under-represented in managerial positions, governance and decision-making at all levels. At the end of the 1999 elections women occupied a mere 9.5% of political positions at the Federal level and less than five percent at the State level (Okoye, 2000:5). There were six (12.2%) female members of the Federal Executive Council out of 49, three female senators in the National Assembly out of 109 (2.8%), 12 (3.3%) female members of the House of Representatives<sup>69</sup> out of 360, one deputy-State Governor of Lagos State, and one deputy-Speaker in the Benue State House of Assembly, Mrs Grace Icheen, who resigned due to assassination threats. Marginal gains were made during the 2003 general elections. Women only managed to attain 2.3% representation in the 36 State Houses of Assembly up from 1.2% in 1999. Still, no women were elected as Governor but two Deputy-Governors were elected, Olusola Obada and Salimat Badru (of Osun and Ogun States respectively) instead of one in 1999. Two women were elected as speakers of Anambra and Ogun State Houses of Assembly –Eucharia Azodo and Titi Sodunke-Oseni.<sup>70</sup>

Notwithstanding, the excessive gender imbalance portrayed by these figures, they represent the highest share of appointments for women in any government, Civilian or Military, since independence. The Obasanjo administration has also been hailed for giving female Federal cabinet ministers ‘hard’ portfolios in defence, science and technology, transport and aviation, and finance. Yet, in the National Political Reform Conference inaugurated in Abuja on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 by President Obasanjo to

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<sup>68</sup> A retired General and Military Head of State 1976-1979

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter Seven Table 7.2 for details of the gender composition of the 1999 and 2003 legislatures.

<sup>70</sup> Sources: Momodu (2003:17-19) and Lawal (2004).

discuss the terms of Nigeria's nationhood, women were poorly represented.<sup>71</sup> The 400-member NPRC comprised only 30 (7.5%) women representatives. Of these only three were State Government nominees among a total of 216.<sup>72</sup> Without the required critical mass for structural change women continue to be unable to significantly impact on the political system to institutionalise female representation and other improvements.<sup>73</sup> There are ideological and practical causes for this.

The special rights of Nigerian men, alluded to earlier, and the concurrent constraints faced by women are constitutive and reflective of deeper ideological deterrents to female political participation. They derive from dominant assumptions underlying the Nigerian political system namely that the male is always supposed to be the natural head in the domestic sphere and the principal actor in public life. Most communities and religious sects, except a few traditional religions with female deities and priestesses, do not usually cast femininity in a leadership mode. The findings of a 2002 national survey on perspectives on leadership confirm "the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, with 61% of Nigerians preferring male to female leaders" (CSSR&D Report, 2003:vii).<sup>74</sup> Politics is gender coded as a male enterprise. Thus, the cultural devaluation of women works not only to depoliticise women but also to de-link them from socio-political power configurations.

The nature of Nigeria's democratisation process presents further structural barriers to women in politics. Premised on a liberal democratic ideology the process requires the election and appointment of representatives who represent their geographic constituencies in local, state and federal government. Political party membership is the sole means of election into public office and the top echelons of party hierarchy have traditionally been dominated by rich and powerful men. During every electoral process since independence political parties have been sites of patronage networks, violence and

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<sup>71</sup> A coalition of women's groups submitted an *ex parte* motion before the Federal High Court, Abuja demanding *inter alia* that the NPRC be declared discriminatory, illegal, unconstitutional, and a violation of women's rights as contained in Section 42 of the Constitution and Article Three of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and that it be re-constituted to comprise 200 women.

<sup>72</sup> Akwa Ibom, Ekiti and Lagos States

<sup>73</sup> Lovenduski (2001:744) contends that a critical mass of 15% - 40% can turn a skewed minority into a tilted minority that is "able to form alliances and act as a coherent force to affect the dominant culture of their institution and in a position to perform 'critical acts' that Dahlerup argues are necessary to the feminisation of political institutions." In 1995 the United Nations set the critical mass required for *minimal* female representation at 30%. Still, the track record of women in politics and executive management in Nigeria demonstrates that during their tenure they have been committed to pushing an agenda for improving women's rights and social status. For instance, during Nigeria's first Republic the first ever female Permanent Secretary, Francesca Emmanuel, moved for the inclusion of maternity leave in the Nigerian labour laws.

<sup>74</sup> The 2,600 sample was 64% male and 34% female (missing: two percent).

election rigging. Party procedures and electoral processes are insensitive to women's issues and to the time and domestic constraints of female aspirants. According to Momodu (2003:38,) being the driver of Nigerian democracy, the party system poses "the greatest challenge" to women's political aspirations. This is because political parties are "formed and run/operated based on male fraternal connections and relationships and they lack formal internally democratic structures. Essentially, all the political parties are run as 'old boy' networks" to exclude the masses who are manipulated for the political ends of those in power (2003:44).

The lack of a solid and legitimate economic resource base that the Nigerian political terrain, dominated by money politics, requires serves as another practical constraint to women's political participation and representation. Poverty makes women easy pawns (clients) in the hands of political moneybags (patrons) who have had long stints in power to accumulate wealth, and mobilise women's numerical strength to retain it. Olorunmaiye, Solicitor-General to the Kwara State Government shared the following example:

In fact, in my state the present Governor's father has been in politics for many years; it is the women he uses most of the time [...] Whenever he's around he will bring [...] truck loads of rice, bags of rice, truck loads of bails of cloths and cash and he will distribute to thousands [...] So anytime they hear Saraki is in town women in their droves, including those in their 60s and 70s...if they don't have transport fare they will trek to his home in GRA. And they will line up, they will feed them, they will give them money... So when it's time to vote they are there for him. (Interview, 24/06/03)

Adedeji (1997:6) refers to the reliance on elections and multipartyism as "low intensity" democracy: "a compromise between pseudo-democratic institutions and dictatorships enjoying little popular support." Ihonvbere and Vaughan (1995) observe that this form of liberal democracy has not gone uncontested and un-critiqued by Nigeria's democratic movement and refer to the insightful comments of Claude Ake (1993):

What is being foisted on Africa is a version of liberal democracy reduced to the crude simplicity of multi-party elections, this type of democracy is not in the least emancipatory especially in African conditions because it offers the people rights they cannot exercise, voting that never amounts to choosing, freedom which is patently spurious, and political equality which disguises highly unequal power relations. (Cited in Ihonvbere and Vaughan, 1995:87)

Notwithstanding, these crucial contestations over liberal democracy, Ihonvbere and Vaughan's own treatment of the issue do not factor unequal gender power relations into considerations about what is wrong with liberal democracy. Instead they

concentrate on disparities in the international politico-economic order, as well as internal class and ethnic inequalities. Women's subordinate social status and political invisibility are, once again, taken as incontestable givens. Typically, political analyses of the dysfunction of Nigerian statehood have been fixated on class, ethnic, religious and military dimensions and the rural and urban poor defined as the oppressed 'masses' or 'people' in a non gender differentiated construct (Williams, 1980; Diamond, 1988; Onimode, 1989; Ihonvbere and Vaughan, 1995). Such analyses have adopted an unquestioning stance towards the dominance of men in the body politic, and totally ignored the fact that 'popular' has never included women at the level of representative politics or in the management of the economy. The letter in Fig. 3.3 published in *ThisDay* Newspaper (Vol.9 No. 3002; 12/07/03) is poignant in its portrayal of Nigerian politics as an arena exclusive to corrupt males:

Fig. 3.3

Letter to *ThisDay***In Search of Leadership Qualities for Nigeria**

**T**he Federal Republic of Nigeria, every four years, seeks qualified individuals to occupy important positions to ensure continued stagnation, underdevelopment and corruption in the country, through a grueling selection process. This negative continuity is important to ensure the complete and total support to Nigeria of the G8 countries of the world, who are committed to the noble objective of humiliating and dehumanizing the entire black race, particularly Africa.

Candidates who seek to occupy these positions must possess proven abilities and skills in crime, violence, forgery, fraud, dubious backgrounds and previous convictions. (Candidates whose crimes were committed in any of the G8 countries have preference, as they serve as confirmation of their departure from the affected countries and can be blackmailed to carry out the G8 biddings, in the interest of their own citizens and against Nigerians).

The positions available are as follows:

President (1); Vice President (1); Governors (36); Senators (109); House of Representatives (435); Ministers (36 or more); Special Advisers and Special Assistants (36 or more).

Pre-qualification requirements (Supporting evidence must be provided): Multi millions in any currency (without any legitimate sources); Illegal gun running/control/access;

criminal record; prior or current conviction; allegations of crime (the more serious the better); fraud; forgery; indictments; community disregard; unemployment (minimum of 5 years); organized crime access/control; ownership or control of local militia

Interested candidates should forward Expressions of Interest to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (with supporting documentation), through the office of the Independent Electoral Commission at the Federal Capital Territory or any of its other offices in the 36 Capital Territories across the federation, to begin the pre-qualification exercise for the selection process.

Men recently out of jail and also those who have been unemployed for several years are encouraged to apply. Male Civil Servants indicted for previous offences and punished for such, are also encouraged to apply. This is your final chance to legitimize yourselves in society, on an elevated status.

Please note: There are no clear procedures or ground rules for the selection process. Guns, money and students are a necessity for the process. (Schools are currently closed for this exercise to ensure ample supply of students to use the guns).

Women need not apply!

• Ken Kalada,  
Lagos

The concepts 'popular' and 'participation' need to be unpacked to examine which people are or should be included in decision-making processes and structures, and what the nature of their participation is. Adedeji (1997:6) advocates inclusive

grassroots democracy and opines that, “for democracy to survive, grow and thrive in a society it must derive from and be inspired by a deep-rooted culture of popular participation.” He defines popular participation as:

The empowerment of the people to involve themselves in creating structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of *all* and contribute optimally to the development process. (p. 6. Emphasis mine).

In the political education manual published by MAMSER<sup>75</sup> *Towards a Free and Democratic Society*, popular means “anything which people freely support and fully participate in...” Still, a gender disaggregating of ‘people’ is pertinent given that women and men’s capacity to freely participate in society are significantly asymmetrical. A GAD conceptualisation of democracy entails that the full and active participation of all members of society - youth, men and women is *sine qua non* for peace and development.

Instead, women have been mere foot soldiers in the Nigerian political economy comprising the majority of voters in the Nigerian elections and the least constituency to be voted for (Sha, 2000). Within the party structure women serve as support members in charge of welfare and entertainment with their activities confined within women’s wings<sup>76</sup> of political parties. Sarah Jibril (Interview, 20/08/03), the first and only female presidential candidate in the 2003 elections, asserted that the culture of women’s wings and women’s leaders is a means of sidelining women from the mainstream of political power broking. Her party, the Progressive Action Congress, decided rather to adopt a 30% quota for all executive party positions and select six National Deputy Chairmen on behalf of six interest groups.<sup>77</sup> But Chief Solomon Lar (Interview, 12/05/03), the former (and first) Chairman of the ruling People’s Democratic Party felt the women’s wing brings women into mainstream politicking and helps them, “come up to the highest echelon and discuss the policy of the party with men.” Yinka Olatunji<sup>78</sup> (Interview, 27/05/03) who was involved in the drafting of the National Policy on Women, agreed with Imam (1997) that women’s wings and meagre political handouts to a few appointed women are part of the overall patriarchal package:

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<sup>75</sup> Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Reformation

<sup>76</sup> A branch or department of a party

<sup>77</sup> The six interest groups are: men and elders, women and elders, youth and students, special citizens and NGOs, corporate affairs and professionals, and international affairs and the Diaspora.

<sup>78</sup> Full ID at Appendix D List D3

At the end of the day we are now subjected to a different aspect of patriarchy which is called tokenism. So they say, 'Okay, so you are shouting. Please just give them something so they will stop yelling at us.' And so they say, 'give them three out of a hundred, and shut them down.' And we come saying, 'Oh they just gave us three, next year they are going to give us six. So let's take this three and keep quiet.'[...] You know in tokenism that's why I keep talking about tokenism and patronage. When men want to patronise you, you are a part of the token that they want to contribute to politics; they are very open because they have decided you are a token for contribution.

Bunmi Dipo-Salami, Senior Programme Officer at BAOBAB agreed: "There is a lot of tokenism in the form of putting a woman here and there just to keep them quiet or shut them up." Women are thus relegated to informal ad-hoc levels of micro-politics. Consequently, women's informal power has not translated into formal political and economic returns beyond the token few (Olaitan, 1998). Ali Mazrui (1991) contends that token representation in high office of a select number of well-connected or privileged women<sup>79</sup> does little to engender equality between women and men, and argues against such a narrow political focus in prescribing ways to remove restrictions to women's participation in formal political institutions in Africa. Dr. Bolere Ketebu-Nwokefor<sup>80</sup> claimed Nigeria has moved beyond the level of tokenism in public and private (business) sectors due to the competence of the women being appointed to high posts. But whereas a number of women have distinguished themselves in business, professions and politics, the vast majority of Nigerian women remain excluded from the power structure and subsist at the periphery of the State. Mazrui (1991:6) correctly points out the tendency to centre women's societal role and worth on domesticity and mothering, and to deprive them of equitable decision-making power even at household level undermines efforts to bring about substantive gender equality and genuine democracy:

A woman can be at the Centre without being empowered, a woman can be Liberated without being either centred or empowered.... The strategy of redemption needs to go beyond liberation and beyond centring towards genuine power-sharing between the two halves of the Black world, male and female ....in real life; motherhood leaves the African women at the centre but not necessarily in power.

The next section traces women's collective attempts from 1985 until 2005 to move into the centre stage of political life.

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<sup>79</sup> This select few are referred to by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen et al (1993) as 'privileged femininity' because they play by the rules of the patriarchal game and its definitions of ideal womanhood.

<sup>80</sup> Full ID at Appendix D List D3

### 3.2.3 *Mobilisation and Campaigns, 1985-2005*

Women's struggle for inclusion and equality gained strength and significance in the context of the development discourses and the connection between human rights, democratisation, 'good governance' and development. They provided the language, policy thrusts and strategies that the women's movement in Nigeria used as part of a political agenda for inclusive democracy and mainstreaming women's issues. The gender and development discourse provided the cohesive conceptual framework within which to situate a solid argument for a more gender-sensitive participatory approach to policy making. This argument had a natural ally in the good governance and democracy ideology adopted by major development agencies including the Breton Woods institutions. Women's organisations latched onto it with fervour and pushed for a National Policy on Women that would call attention to the systemic nature of gender inequality and its structural root causes as well as spell out strategies for social change.

1985 was a watershed year for the Nigerian state and for the agenda for gender equality in several respects. It was on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1985 that Nigeria ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>81</sup> and thereafter successive governments began to pay more attention to the needs and interests articulated by an expanding and increasingly activist women's movement. The movement sought to shift women's concerns away from the periphery to central political discourse, economic participation and policy action. The struggle for gender equality in Nigeria also sought to mimic the WID to GAD trajectory in the international arena.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, owing to the fierce ethno-religious and ethno-military competition for state control it had limited success in doing so. The country's severe economic difficulties and turbulent politics acted to both sideline and open up opportunities for gender politics.

During the pro-democracy struggle from the late 1980s 'women's empowerment' and 'gender' became buzzwords in the Nigerian media and in NGO work, particularly among civil/ human right's groups and development agencies.

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<sup>81</sup> CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1979 and came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1981.

<sup>82</sup> Using the analysis of Rees (1998) Sonia Mazey (2001:6), discusses three models of gender equality strategy with distinctive policy approaches: 1. Anti-discrimination legislation to achieve equal treatment based on the liberal principle of equality before the law (1970s to early 1980s), 2. Special measures (i.e. positive/affirmative action) to ensure equality of outcome by assisting women to overcome 'deficiencies' and gain equal access to the labour market (from mid1980s), and 3. Bringing gender into the mainstream through "equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes" such that gender "differences are accorded equal respect" and recognition (from late 1990s)



Women's groups and human rights NGOs mounted campaigns calling for a democracy that includes women and their rights to equal access to, and control over, resources, benefits and opportunities. Their ability to construe gender inequality as a distinct and serious social problem calling for urgent public policy action was due both to a favourable international climate and to its strategic links with the democracy movement of which it was a part.

The intensification of women's activism rendered women and gender issues more visible in government pronouncements, the media, and academic discourse, particularly with regard to peace-building, poverty alleviation, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. A major portion of women's rights campaigns focused on advocacy for legislative enactment and reform to improve the socio-economic status of women. These campaigns gathered increasing momentum from the end of the International Women's decade in 1985 and the initiation of development programmes for women by wives of military leaders.

A great deal of activism involved protests against gender-biased government/institutional policies and regulations. Mobilisation against Babangida's population policy is a case in point. It espoused a family planning strategy, premised on a Malthusian theory of population and development, in the attempt to restrict population growth by regulating female sexuality and leaving men's unchallenged. The policy, which came under attack from women activists, stipulated four children per woman in deference to men's (and women's?) rights to polygamy under Islamic and Customary Law. Activists saw the population policy as a further attempt to exert control over women's sexuality, encourage male promiscuity and a public endorsement of hegemonic masculinity<sup>83</sup> in household and family life with undesirable implications for social relations in family and public life.

From the late 1990s women began to mobilise in protest against political marginalisation and gender mainstreaming became the latest slogan.<sup>84</sup> Two examples will suffice. In 1998, at the end of a women's Political Summit about 2000 participants marched to the National Centre for Women Development in Abuja to present to the 1999 Constitution Review Drafting Committee demands for the inclusion of affirmative action and other gender-specific measures in the Constitution. The 21-member committee had three women at the insistence of President Obasanjo who rejected the initial list sent by the 36 states (seven nominees per state) because it contained no

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<sup>83</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is identical to patriarchal masculinity discussed earlier (see page 66).

<sup>84</sup> For the definition of gender mainstreaming see page 56 and 118.

women. None of the recommendations submitted by the Summit delegates, including a 30% quota for women into appointive and elected posts, and for a gender-sensitive constitution, were incorporated into the committee's final recommendations (Thompson, 1999).

In March 2005 a coalition of women's rights groups led by Professor Jadesola Akande, Executive Director of WLDCN, mounted a protest against low representation of women in the National Political Reform Conference (see pp. 100/101 and footnote 71). Nothing came of the *ex parte* motion submitted by the coalition before the Federal High Court in Abuja as the lawsuit was thrown out by the court. However, in response to the outcry by women's groups and the Minister of Women Affairs, Obong Rita Akpan, the President nominated an additional 27 women. A coalition of women's rights groups in Imo State also unsuccessfully challenged the exclusive nomination of male representatives to the NPRC at a Federal High Court in Owerri.<sup>85</sup>

In spite of such efforts Okome (2000) contends that the multiplicity of women's fragmented and shifting identities and experiences complicate attempts to mobilise for equal political representation or gender interests in general. Since Nigerian women are not an undifferentiated category but come from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic strata, ethnic, religious or class interests have on occasion spurred women's activism. The grassroots women of the Niger-Delta region provide an important example of class-based organising and gender solidarity (Turner and Oshare, 1993). Despite being sidelined from the mainstream of resource control contestations, in 1984 and 1986 women from Ogharafe and Ekpan in Delta State staged protests against an oil installation in Warri (Turner and Oshare, 1993:1). In 2002 Niger-Delta women resumed militant protest on/outside company premises. In July and August 2002, over 3000 Ijaw, Itsekiri women respectively, stormed Escravos oil plants and facilities owned by ChevronTexaco in protest against environmental degradation, the destruction of their livelihoods, lack of employment and social amenities. In January 2003, girls and women aged 10 – 70 years from Beniboye, an Itsekiri village blocked naval waterways and staged a protest march to a Chevron plant. The women insisted on face-to-face consultations with oil company directors and managed to secure some agreements to provide facilities and jobs to their communities. In July 2003 women from Amukpe, Delta State, took over a Shell oil installation for five weeks. Many protests were met with violent repression by government-commandeered military personnel.

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<sup>85</sup> Source: <http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Nigeria/May05/Equality.html>

In the complex constellations of the South-South pursuit of resource control the people-groups sometimes temporarily set aside intra-community land and political disputes that hitherto were a perennial source of violent clashes. For their part, Ijaw, Ilaje and Itsekiri women seem willing to set aside any concerns they may have about gender relations to the more pressing problem of economic survival. On the other hand, Turner and Oshare (1993) assert that both class and gender interests are involved in women's struggles which set them up against older men allied with oil companies who exploit them for capitalist development. The gender undertones of women's economic conflicts are evident in a statement made by an Amukpe woman, "When your husband has three or four wives and has children, you have to struggle to fend for yourself."<sup>86</sup>

The diverse contexts of women's mobilisation campaigns demonstrate the importance of evolving contextual, location-specific approaches to women and development. The rest of the chapter reviews the evolution of development strategies, including the National Policy on Women, to address the varied needs of Nigerian women.

### 3.3 Women and Development: The Creation of the NPW

Women's development rights and requirements specified in international documents have informed government planning and NGO agenda setting. Three international instruments held primary significance for the construction of a gender equality agenda and mobilisation for women's development in Nigeria. CEDAW (1979), the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA). Various United Nations World Surveys on the Role of Women in Development since 1986 were also important. CEDAW is a radical document in terms of its expansive definition of 'discrimination' and the prohibition of discrimination in public and private spheres. It covers intentional and unintentional, direct and indirect discrimination, which Article 1 defines as

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the *effect* or *purpose* of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic social, cultural, civil or *any other field*. (Emphasis added).

According to Byrnes (2002:124) this prohibition extends to "neutral practices or policies that have the effect of disproportionately excluding women", and it also aims to

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<sup>86</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3155525.stm>

establish both formal and substantive gender equality. It therefore, requires state parties to make the playing field level for women to be sufficiently empowered to make full use of opportunities and have equal access to resources; it calls for a review of policies and laws that create unequal conditions for women. The 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, adopted at the end of the third UN Conference on Women, enunciated goals and strategies for achieving gender equality, development and peace. ‘Equality’ is defined, not just as equality before the law, but also includes equal access to resources and “the realisation of rights that have been denied as a result of cultural, institutional, behavioural and attitudinal discrimination” (paragraph 11). ‘Development’ is seen as holistic incorporating all aspects and spheres of human life in which women and men have a moral right to development that is “just and responsive to the needs and rights of the individual” (paragraph 12). The definition of ‘peace’ goes beyond ‘the absence of or threat of violence and war’ to include the enjoyment of social justice and fundamental human rights and freedoms (paragraph 13).

The FLS specified three parameters for measuring the success of these goals: constitutional and legal enactments; social and economic participation; and political participation and decision-making (Pietilä and Vickers, 1996). The framers of the FLS expected this agenda to be pushed forward through the establishment of women-focused government machinery, and by increasing the number of women in elective positions. The BPA is a popular reference point for the majority of NGOs based on its delineation of 12 priority areas for action by governments and development agencies.<sup>87</sup>

Two continental documents address the question of women’s rights and women’s empowerment respectively: The 1981 African Charter for Human and Peoples’ Rights (the Banjul Charter) and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, and more recently the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) “an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa” adopted by the OAU in July 2001.<sup>88</sup> Nigeria was at the forefront of drafting, signing and ratifying the former and one of the five initiating countries of the latter. Article 18 (3) of the ACHPR stipulates that: “The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as

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<sup>87</sup> 1) Poverty, 2) Education and training, 3) Health care, 4) Violence against women, 5) Armed and other forms of conflict, 6) Access to economic structures and resources, 7) Power sharing and decision-making, 8) Institutional mechanisms (or gender mainstreaming), 9) Human rights, 10) Media and communications, 11) Natural resource management and environment, and 12) Girl-child rights.

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.touchtech.biz/nepad/files/inbrief.html>

stipulated in international declarations and conventions.” However, Onoria (2002:232) problematises the ACHPR’s conceptualisation of human rights as belonging to the community where “the status of the individual is defined within the family, society and state.” Secondly, not only are women and children treated at the same level, the rights of the woman referred to in Article 18 (3) are situated within the context of the family and traditional African values in Article 18 (1) and (2). Onoria (2002:234) makes the point that has been made earlier:

The major violations of rights of women occur within the private realm of family relations, or, for that matter its wider forms of clan, caste or tribe. Further, the suppression of women’s rights often occurs under the cloud of tradition, custom and cultural values.<sup>89</sup>

NEPAD lays down a multi-dimensional programme for achieving renewal in Africa with special emphasis on sustainable development, priority sector investment (in agriculture, health, ICT, energy, trade, environment etc.,) and resource mobilisation. NEPAD has four priority objectives. The first is to eradicate poverty and the fourth is “to accelerate the empowerment of women.” The other two primary objectives are to bring about sustainable development and to reverse the global marginalisation of Africa. NEPAD’s main point of reference is the Millennium Development Goals which also includes a provision to “promote gender equality and empower women” (no. 3). The MDGs also aim to develop a global partnership for development in trade, debt relief, development financing among others.

Women’s groups and empowerment programmes/projects in Nigeria have benefited from the ‘centring’ of gender in development strategising. For the first 15 years or so after the International Year of Women in 1975 international development agencies (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, DFID, and CEDPA) channelled financial and technical assistance for women’s development through government agencies – notably First Lady programmes. But from the late 1980s and early 1990s more funding was allocated to NGOs in the bid to build civil society capacity for democratisation and development. Thus the movement for women’s development has followed two discernible but overlapping streams: one at the level of government and the other via civil society organisations. The latter formed networks with feminist and human rights pressure groups working within and outside the UN system, to establish collaborative partnerships. The questionnaire survey of 45 women’s organisations (listed in

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<sup>89</sup> Incidentally, few documents and members of women’s groups cite the Banjul Charter as a framework of reference for women’s advancement. The 1995 protocol is more elaborate on women’s rights.

Appendix B) carried out in the course of this research found that 44.9% of participants said their organisations collaborated with at least one international agency.<sup>90</sup> Seventy-four percent<sup>91</sup> said the nature of organisational partnerships involved donor funding as well as networking/resource sharing, agenda setting and programme design/implementation. Women/gender rights groups accounted for the highest number of participants who said their organisations had international partnerships (82.3%) followed by generalist organisations (63.6%), and community-based organisations (47.6%). Participants of cultural/ethnic groups were most likely to say they had no links with an international agency (only 7.14%) followed by faith-based groups (12%). Only 28.6% of business and professional groups said they collaborated with international agencies (Appendix F: Table F2 and Fig. F2 contain details of organisational categorisations and their frequency).

The prominence of donor assistance to both government bodies and NGOs dealing with women's issues has elicited criticism that the women's empowerment and development agenda is a western imperialist agenda foisted on Nigerian women. However, senior executives of organisations receiving donor funding who were interviewed during the study claimed that they were very much in control of their own agendas which sprung more from the needs on the ground than any international project. According to Josephine Effah-Chukwuma (Interview 17/07/03), the Executive President of Project Alert on Violence against Women in Lagos, women's groups are forced to rely on donor funding to execute their projects because of the lack of a culture of funding 'social entrepreneurs' among the Nigerian business elite. Elsie Thompson of FIDA/TAP admitted that co-optation into the agendas of donors was an ever-present risk but not one that could not be handled as the following example shows:

“We got money from Shell which many people do not want, or didn't want. When we got the money from them they wanted to tell us how to run the programme; we said, 'No, we've collected your money; this is our programme. This is what we want to do.'” (Interview, 26/07/03)

The main argument in favour of NGO-INGO partnerships is that they have provided women's groups with the leverage and space to independently articulate needs and interests that are specific to women. This is often difficult to accomplish within the framework of general human rights or development organisations. For instance, mainstream human/civil rights organisations, a number of which took on board the rhetoric of gender inclusiveness in the campaign for democracy, were mainly concerned

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<sup>90</sup> 147 out of 154 participants answered this question.

<sup>91</sup> 118 out of 154 participants answered the question

with cooperating with women's groups such as Women in Nigeria, National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and other professional/civil bodies, to end long-standing repressive ethno-military rule (Ihonvbere and Vaughan, 1995).<sup>92</sup>

Despite the growing prominence of NGOs successive federal governments have also deployed resources in the cause of women. This second stream of development assistance to women is examined in the following sub-section.

### ***3.3.1 Development by Fiat: The Era of 'Femocracy'***

The Nairobi document enjoined governments to set up a policy framework at the highest level of government to oversee the implementation of the Forward Looking Strategies (paragraph 125). Accordingly, a National Women's Advisory Committee was established in 1986 chaired by Dr. Simi Johnson, Minister for Social Development and head of the women's delegation to the Nairobi Conference, to advise government on modalities for integrating women into national development. Most cardinal among the Committee's recommendations was the establishment of a Ministry for Women Affairs. This proposal was not accepted until 1989, and then only partially, by the commissioning of a National Commission for Women at the Federal level with similar organs at State and Local Government levels. The NCW owed its establishment in 1989 much to the lobbying of the then First Lady Mrs Maryam Babangida, who had in the meantime set up the Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP) in 1987 to operationalise three women in development objectives anchored on education, occupation and recreation (Nigeria Country Report to the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference on Women, 1995:21). The BLP organogram had a federal secretariat directed by the First Lady, and State Committees directed by wives of State Governors. Its main objectives involved:

1. Stimulating and motivating rural women towards achieving better living standards and sensitising the rest of the Nigerian population to the problems of women
2. Educating rural women on simple hygiene, family planning, the importance of child-care and increased literacy rates
3. Mobilising women collectively in order to improve their general lot and ability to seek and achieve leadership roles in all spheres of society

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<sup>92</sup> For example the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), the Association for Democracy (AD), which later became the Alliance for Democracy, a political party originating in South West Nigeria, the Association for Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria (ADGGN) - formed by current President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), the People's Committee for Liberty (PCL) and the Campaign for Democracy (CD) – an amalgamation of over forty groups). Many of the groups that joined the democracy movement were ethnic based.

4. Raising consciousness about the rights of women, the availability of opportunities and facilities, their social, political and economic responsibilities
5. Encouraging recreation and enriched family life; and
6. Inculcating the spirit of self-development, particularly in the fields of education, business, the arts, crafts and agriculture.<sup>93</sup>

Between 1987 and 1992 the BLP played a catalytic role in promoting and centralising women's issues in national development discourse and planning, and attracting international funding for both governmental and non-governmental development initiatives. The BLP, through the agency of the First Lady, also highlighted the need for a National Centre for Women's Development that would "stimulate consciousness towards attainment of higher levels of development and activity of Nigerian women and promote international cooperation" It was also to contribute towards "integrating the womenfolk in the development process of Nigeria and also in the total emancipation of the Nigerian women from social injustice and gender insensitivity."<sup>94</sup> The Centre was commissioned by Mrs. Babangida on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1992.

The BLP helped draw attention to the plight of rural women, particularly those in the agricultural sector, exposing them and other artisans to credit facilities and markets. After General Abacha came to power the NCW was upgraded in 1995 to a fully-fledged Federal Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD), and the BLP was replaced by the Family Support Programme (FSP) and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) both initiated by the new First Lady Mrs. Maryam Abacha. FSP/FEAP had a similar structure to that of BLP with the Office of the First Lady at the apex and State and Local offices administered by wives of State Governors and Local Government chairmen respectively. It had similar aims and objectives with greater emphasis on the role of women in the family. FEAP sought to extend credit to women for small-scale industries and agro-allied business.

Nevertheless, both BLP and FSP/FEAP were criticised by activists, the media and the general public and they bred resentment among other mainline ministries for overlapping their portfolios. Among the general public there was doubt that BLP was reaching its target beneficiaries. It was regarded as a guzzler of public funds securing patronage for well connected urban women and rural elites earning itself the nickname 'Better Life for Better Women'. Thus Elsie Thompson (1999:1) surmises that,

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<sup>93</sup> [www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/program/nigeria/toc\\_main.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/program/nigeria/toc_main.htm)

<sup>94</sup> Draft Chapter (One) on the National Centre for Women Development (in the Press).



The initiatives though laudable did not create a definite change in policy towards women's participation in decision making, rather it created an institution for the First Lady with large sums of money spent.

While FSP/FEAP recorded some successes, particularly for urban women, it fell foul of public opinion due to the same criticisms levelled against its predecessor. According to Olorunmaiye, Kwara State Solicitor-General, not only did economic empowerment not descend the ladder to the grassroots, disbursed project funds were not always utilised for designated purposes. It appears there was a significant amount of window-dressing at the grass-roots level to create the impression of economic activity in a bid to secure more funds. On occasions where Olorunmaiye accompanied wives of military administrators to inspect small-scale local government projects in the state there were dubious signs that anything was being done. She gave one example:

The impression I had was people just did things for the sake of doing it [...] Like there was one we visited they said they were rearing goats as their own project in I think it was Offa local government or one local government in Kwara. [...] as soon as they knew we were coming, I'm sure each woman went and brought one or two goats; they tied them down in one location and said that was their own project. And as such they would want the state government to help them.

Julie Ser (Interview, 12/06/03), President of the Jos Chapter of the NCWS and founder of the Centre for Gender and Rural Development (CGRD) affirmed Olorunmaiye's impression. Ser says of BLP, "It had a good motive and good goals but it was more of a 'social menu-menu' and more to do with sharing the national cake" inferring that it was not a viable development strategy but a continuation of the customary spoils politics through the office of the First Lady. The Cross River State Permanent Secretary for Manpower, Training and Development, Teresa Ikwem (Interview, 10/06/03) agreed claiming that although a large amount of resources was poured into such programmes they served the political class and the interest of the First Lady. For some this was actually a virtue rather than a vice. Efajemue (Interview, 02/06/03) lamented Obasanjo's decision to de-institutionalise First Lady programmes because they were women's only means of access to national resources. And Olatunji asserted that due to the hierarchal nature of Nigerian society First Lady initiatives created effective channels of communication and disbursement from Federal through to state all the way to local government level. The assessment of BLP by journalist Toyin Egunjobi (2000) was less accommodating:

Her Better Life for Rural Women Programme was hijacked by elitist women in the cities, becoming a platform for the wives of service chiefs, governors and

ministers to showcase the latest fashions. It was also an avenue for 'squander mania.'

Chindaba (NAWOJ) cited FSP/FEAP in Plateau State as another example of programme hijacking. Large numbers of women travelled from villages to the state capital (Jos) in the hope of receiving loan disbursements. However, "The rural women ended up going home without anything but the urban women hijacked everything. And if you go to the villages, like in my place [...] they say, '*Matan Jos!*'"<sup>95</sup> (24/06/03). These examples underscore the need for development programmes to be initiated and controlled from the grassroots by the target beneficiaries to encourage accountability and continuity.

As with BLP, FSP/FEAP came to an abrupt end with the Abachas' exit from power upon the sudden death of General Abacha in 1998. In its place, the next First Lady, Justice Fati Abubakar set up an NGO called Women's Rights and Advancement Protection Alternative. Unlike the first two WRAPA continued to function as an independent NGO after her husband left power. Consequently, WRAPA and subsequent private first lady initiatives have somewhat more credibility since they are not financed from government coffers. Whatever their merits, 'first ladyism' and 'wifism,' also referred to as 'femocracy,'<sup>30</sup> are carryovers from the personality cultism plaguing the Nigerian political system, and may be detrimental to gender advancement. Jibrin Ibrahim (2005) agrees with Amina Mama (1997:97) that,

Femocracy has affected the gender politics of the nation, but not in the way that one might have hoped. It cannot be said to have enhanced gender equality or to have in any way challenged conservative attitudes to women. Instead, eight years of femocracy had generated promises to appoint token women, and has made the parading of expensively attired wives into a political tradition.

Upon the return to democratic governance in 1999, President Obasanjo declared his intention to abolish the office of First Lady and the allocation of public resources for use by First Lady Projects. However, femocracy remains alive. The wives of the Vice-President and State governors scurried to set up 'privately funded' NGOs urged on by Mrs. Stella Obasanjo who established the Child Care Trust. Indeed, media reports made allegations of intense competition for pre-eminence between the wives of the President and the Vice-President, Mrs. Titi Atiku Abubakar, who set up the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Fund (WOTCLEF) and between the latter and another US-based wife of the Vice-

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<sup>95</sup> Those Jos women!

President, Jennifer Atiku-Abubakar who initiated the Gede Foundation in March 2002. Ibrahim (2005:7) points out how "the increasingly crowded arena of elite women's activities and organisations did not find favour with the First Lady" Stella Obasanjo who on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2003 called the wives of the state governors to Abuja and publicly declared that "There is only one First Lady in Nigeria. Period" (Ibrahim 2005:7 citing *Africawoman* no.4, 2-3:1). She asked them to desist from using the title 'First Lady', and to revert to the proper title 'Wife of the Executive Governor'. She also directed them to stop receiving the wife of the Vice-President, who should be received by wives of Deputy Governors.

The inordinate prominence of First Ladies has the propensity to 'ghettoise' women by squeezing them into a restricted political space and to perpetuate official stereotyping of women's roles as mothers, wives and secondary income earners (Pittin, 1991; Salihu, 2001). Furthermore, most programmes adopted a WID strategy of opening women's access to training and income thereby seeking to integrate women and squeeze them into official expectations for promoting national productivity and efficiency without due concern for long-term strategic transformation. First Lady programmes have been accused of sidetracking huge amounts of donor funding that may have more productively served the needs of grassroots women, if channelled through the Ministry of Women Affairs, NGOs or community-based organisations (CBOs). BLP and FSP/FEAP were often seen as overtaking the role of the Women's Ministry and contributing to its poor funding.

However, several years into the post-military era, FMWA still remains poorly funded. In response, it has launched a Gender Budget Initiative towards executing gender action plans.<sup>96</sup> Like the South African GBI it also seeks to conduct a gender analysis of all government spending to ensure that women's concerns are factored into policy planning. The poor funding of FMWA and women's commissions and intra-ministerial departments before it, may be more due to the low government priority accorded to women's issues, especially since they exist largely as a result of donor pressure, women's lobbying and the requirements of international conventions such as CEDAW, NFLS and BLP. It may well be evidence of a government response strategy to public issue attention whereby it initiates organisational change (by setting up new bodies to tackle issues of public concern) as "simply a way for policy-makers to do something to make it look as if they are

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<sup>96</sup> Also referred to as gender-responsive budgeting. See details on pp. 289-291

actually doing something" (Parsons, 1995:119), or even to maintain the status quo and sidetrack the agenda for radical systemic change.

### ***3.3.2 From 'Women in Development' to 'Gender and Development'***

The BPA obliges governments to work towards gender mainstreaming for the achievement of gender equality implying the "equal visibility, empowerment, and participation of both sexes in public and private life" (Mazey, 2001:7). Gender mainstreaming is defined by Mazey (2001:6) as, "A multifaceted, holistic and long-term strategy of integrating gender perspectives into *all* public policies in order to achieve equality between men and women in and beyond the workplace." GAD, via gender mainstreaming, encourages multi-sectoral, cross-sectoral and gender-aware public policy planning that is cognisant of the differentiated needs/interests of men and women, and the potential effects of policy responses on both with a view to guaranteeing equity and justice. Gender mainstreaming removes women and their concerns from the sidelines onto the centre stage of the power structure that appropriates and allocates national resources. The principle of formal legal equality along with expanded access to training, education employment and/or income was the thrust of the women in development strategy that dominated the women empowerment agenda in Nigeria from the mid-1970s to the early-1990s. This agenda did not challenge the status quo of women's subordination in intra-household, family and social life but sought to improve women's lot within it and mitigate its more severe effects.

After the 1995 Beijing Conference, there was a gradual shift in FMWA and NGO discourse towards gender mainstreaming under the gender and development strategy with 'tentative' attempts to deal with the deep-rooted causes and effects of gender oppression. From the late 1990s development projects organised by FMWA and major NGOs attempted to ensure more male participation to facilitate dialogue and gender sensitisation. And FMWA became more vocal in its criticism of government policies where it felt a gender perspective was lacking. As stated in Chapter Two, the gender and development strategy involves improving women's physical and material conditions. However, for material benefits accruing to women to endure, GAD challenges structures and institutions that produce and recycle gender inequality. Any challenge to the culture-based gendered stratification of Nigerian society would entail an interrogation of male privilege and dominance.

However, while the discourse changed, in official and 'lay' circles bureaucrats and members of women's groups, including activists, continued to justify a woman-centred focus. Confusion and disagreement over the applicability of a gender mainstreaming strategy and how to implement it meant gender continued to be equated with women rather than the social relations between them and men. Furthermore, the WID approach did not elicit much resistance because it had the effect of allowing policy makers and men to think that no radical changes were/are required in their institutional and personal attitudes and behaviour, and that it is women who need to act or be acted upon in order to 'catch up' with men.

According to Esther Eghobamien, Assistant Director of Women Development in the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Abuja,<sup>97</sup> WID's sectoral piecemeal approach was less threatening and therefore potentially more productive in that it prevented outright hostility and resistance to women's projects and allowed field workers quietly execute project objectives. For example, in agriculture and textiles several schemes were initiated within existing infrastructure to extend services to women and provide them with access to income and markets. Take as an example the Women in Agriculture (WIA) scheme. It was set up by the Federal Government in 1991 within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to:

Integrate women into agricultural development through the alleviation of production constraints facing women. WIA has disseminated information on modern production, processing and utilisation technologies which could reduce women's workload. It has also tried to link women with sources of credit and better agricultural inputs, such as improved seeds and fertilisers [...] WIA women's groups have been organised around innovative agro-based activities and new technologies have been used and disseminated to women farmers. This has resulted in an increased output, hence more surplus and income for the family. (Oladele, 2002:1).

The Rural Export Craft Scheme initiated by the National Directorate of Employment was not specifically set up for women but benefited them by linking them up with export trade while promoting indigenous crafts. These schemes, along with others in health and education, have helped improve the material well-being of some urban and rural women.

Eghobamien's argument in support of the more practical WID strategy infers that the GAD policy framework might not gain the mass support necessary for effective implementation. Her contention is supported by the views of Gelb and Palley (1979

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<sup>97</sup> Mrs Eghobamien was a senior officer in NCW and later FMWA. She was interviewed in her office in Abuja on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002.

cited in Parsons, 1995:103) who argue that the efficacy of a women's policy depends on its fulfilling six conditions. It must:

1. Be broadly supported
2. Be narrow enough not to alienate support and disturb the values of supporters
3. Have a good policy network to provide information and access to decision makers
4. Be able to be subject to compromise during the process
5. Define success in an incremental way
6. Focus on equity rather than change of roles

But as Mazey (2001) points out the incremental approach compromises a cardinal goal of gender mainstreaming: "focusing on a gender mainstreaming policy as opposed to a women's policy ensures that men are incorporated into the construction and analysis of social problems and that both women and men make attitudinal and behavioural changes in attempts to solve them." Nevertheless, she acknowledges that, even in the EU, gender mainstreaming policy is the cumulative result of an incremental process comprising a build up of small policy initiatives. It is possible that the National Policy on Women, which incorporates WID and GAD approaches, is part of such an incremental process. The direction it will take depends on the relative power and decisiveness of policy-makers, women's groups and grassroots women. Whatever the case, the enactment of the policy was hailed by women academics, activists, politicians and policy-makers as a landmark accomplishment for women. The process of its final approval and highlights of the policy content are taken up in the remaining part of the chapter.

### ***3.3.3 The National Policy on Women: The History and Politics***

In 1992 the United Nations Development Programme in collaboration with the National Commission for Women commissioned a baseline needs assessment and background study on women in development in Nigeria as part of the its 4<sup>th</sup> Country programme. The UNDP National Programme officer – Dr Keziah Awosika<sup>98</sup> - and international consultants met with a team of researchers in different fields, led by

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<sup>98</sup> Awosika became the Deputy-Director of the Women, Law and Development Centre one of the organisations surveyed in this study.

Professor Simi Afonja, to deliberate and draft a programme for women's development. The team was detailed to produce a situation analysis of the status of urban and rural women. From the findings it was decided that there was a need for a holistic approach to women's issues, and that the first step towards this was to produce a national policy that would expound goals and multi-sectoral intervention strategies. By this time other countries, particularly in the Eastern and Southern African sub-regions, already had women or gender policies in place.<sup>99</sup>

The NCW set up a committee, chaired by Professor Jadesola Akande, to draft a policy and set down a framework for action to "help with the mainstreaming of gender in the various sectors." (Oby Okwuonu, interview: 27/05/03).<sup>100</sup> The committee, comprised staff of NCW, UNICEF, UNDP, academics, the National Council of Women Societies, and other senior public officers. Awosika, and all the senior bureaucrats interviewed in this study, spoke of a powerful sense of anxiety and pressure to get the policy drafted and approved as the Babangida Regime tottered on the brink of collapse amid escalating political instability. Consequently, the committee rushed to prepare a draft document, which was ready by April 1993. In May the document was edited at a finalisation workshop. But Olatunji observed that,

In retrospect, had we produced that document as we were rushing to produce it, it would probably not have been the best of documents. It was too wordy; it was too wide scoped. It would have been an unmanageable policy. But what we said then was, 'It can always be reviewed.' So we rushed. (27/05/03)

In July the draft policy was sent to the National Women's Advisory Council – established by the National Working Group of the BLP. The Council was to take a final look at it and adopt it for signature by the President. However, in spite of the concerted efforts of the then First Lady, Mrs Maryam Babangida, the Policy "went into the cooler" (Okwuonu, Olatunji, and Awosika) in the face of the more immanent threat of state collapse. In August of that year Babangida was forced to step aside and an Interim National Government was hurriedly put together to fill the gap. By November the ING had been swept out of office by Babangida's second in command, General Sani Abacha. But, both Professor Jadesola Akande, Chief Executive of the Women Law and Development Centre, and Awosika advanced another reason for the failure of the NPW to get signed during the Babangida era. Mrs Babangida apparently wanted her own

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<sup>99</sup> Uganda and Kenya in East Africa. In 1997 the Heads of State/Government of the SADC had made a declaration to establish a policy framework for the mainstreaming of gender in all SADC activities.

<sup>100</sup> Full ID at Appendix D List D3

stamp to be in the body of the document; a number of the policy drafters felt it was inappropriate to personalise a policy document and did not endorse her wish. The allegation underscores two related trends in the Nigerian political system. First, is the tendency for political leaders to regard public office as personal property rather than a public trust. Second, is the tendency for state machinery to be run according to the preferences of those in power over and above laid down rules and procedures. Not only did the NCW operate as an extension of Mrs Babangida's BLP, the Chief Executives of the NCW (and later FMWA) were answerable to the First Ladies rather than to the President as officers under the presidency, in the case of the former, or members of the Federal Executive Council, in the case of FMWA. This situation proved highly problematic for the NPW.

For the entire five years Abacha was in power the policy remained in the cooler. It had been presented to Mrs Maryam Abacha in the hope that she would promote it. However, true to the nature of personality cultism she was not interested in promoting a project perceived as being the 'baby' of her predecessor. Olatunji summarised the situation:

The wife of the Head of State, who was also now the Chairperson of the Family Support Programme, was supposed to have reactivated it (the NPW) [...] You know in the Military regime the Ministers of Women Affairs were more answerable to the Chairpersons and not Mr. President. That was clear. And so if Madam First Lady had not sanctioned there was no way Honourable Minister could take it to any Federal Executive Council. And in any case in the whole five years that Abacha was President, I don't think the Federal Executive Council met more than three times. So! (27/05/03)

Yet another complicating factor in the NPW saga, according to Awosika, was the power intrigues between senior bureaucrats in the NCW/FMWA. Many of those who had worked enthusiastically on drafting or collating the policy were no longer in power or favour during the Abacha regime and were replaced by others who had little to do with the process. Consequently, it was not until General Abubakar Abdulsalam assumed office in 1998 that the policy was brought off the shelf. The new First Lady, Justice Fati Abubakar proved more amenable to supporting the NPW and promised to facilitate its adoption. The Minister for Women Affairs, Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi collaborated with the Women, Law and Development Centre to constitute a National Action Committee on Affirmative Action and the Development of the National Policy on Women. This was largely initiated and funded by USAID/CEDPA, and John Hopkins University/Centre for Communications Programme. The committee was once again



chaired by, Akande and included in its membership Hajiya Aishatu Ismail who was to become the next Minister of Women Affairs.

The NACAA subjected the NPW to various review processes. First, women's groups and opinion leaders were invited to four zonal stakeholder review workshops in Abuja to make an input into the policy. Next a smaller group consisting of staff of federal line ministries, NGOs and CBOs was assembled for a national review meeting. Besides the formal channels numerous ad-hoc meetings, reviews and amendment submissions took place on bilateral bases between NACAA and women's groups that showed an interest in the policy.<sup>101</sup> At this stage it was considered important to garner sufficiently broad-based support in order for the policy not to be faulted. After the national review meeting, it fell to a group of desk officers from the various federal ministries to collate the input. This time the policy was presented to the Federal Executive Council. Yet, despite the promise to approve the NPW made by General Abdulsalam during the launching of the First Lady's NGO – WRAPA – it did not happen before he handed over power in May 1999.

With Hajiya Aishatu Ismail<sup>102</sup> as the new Minister for Women Affairs she wasted no time in presenting the policy to the Federal Executive Council. It was subjected to further review. Both Olatunji and Okwuonu claimed that the language of the policy was watered down during the review process. Olatunji placed the blame on NACAA contending that it was done as a compromise to get the policy approved. In her words, "When I talked to one of them who was a member of the committee, they kept saying, 'Ah we have to give them something these men will accept.' Okwuonu on the other hand, who was a member of the committee, said they were more inclined to be assertive in the use of language and that rather it was the Federal Executive Council who watered it down. Effah-Chukwuma (Project Alert) who saw the draft approved by NACAA also claimed that the final document had indeed been watered down."<sup>103</sup>

Finally, in January 2000 after seven years of stalling the NPW was approved by the first democratically elected government in 16 years led by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

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<sup>101</sup> A list of groups that participated in the process could not be obtained as several records were lost in the process of office relocation to Federal Secretariat premises.

<sup>102</sup> She had been a member of the National Action Committee on Affirmative Action and the Development of the National Policy on Women

<sup>103</sup> Efforts to obtain the initial draft policy proved abortive.

### **3.4 The National Policy on Women as a Tool for Gender Targeting**

The NPW is what Parsons (1995:15) describes as "a plausible story which secures the purposes of the plotter..." to highlight the detrimental socio-economic effects of structural and institutionalised gender inequality on national development in general and on women in particular, and to devise multi-sectoral action strategies to counteract them. According to Item 17.2.1 of the General Policy Guidelines its provisions are intended to form an integral part of the National Development Plan. In recounting the NPW story this section provides an overview of its conceptual framework, rationale, goals, objectives, policy thrusts, and sectoral emphases to show how its plotters have construed the problem of gender inequality in Nigeria and how to address it. Appendix G1 contains an overview of the NPW.

#### ***3.4.1 Conceptual Framework***

In its introduction the NPW asserts that gender has been the missing link in national and international development because pre-UN Decade for Women development planning omitted women's reproductive and community management roles from national accounting systems. It sketches the historical origins of women's low status and the many constraints against gender equality tracing the roots of inequality in Nigeria to "the continuous interaction of indigenous and inherited patriarchy from the colonial administration, the strong inhibiting effects of traditionalism and capitalist ideologies" (Item 1.1). Item 1.2 makes the case that under conventional gender-blind development plans women made minimal gains from the process which in fact intensified existing gender inequalities. This situation, it further argues, gave rise to the yearning for a "National Women in Development Policy" that would incorporate women's strategic and practical needs into national and sectoral policies and thereby "facilitate the full integration of women into the social, economic and political life of the nation." The NPW is proffered as the instrument to accomplish this because in it "all Gender and Development (GAD) policies and programmes are articulated into a coherent whole..." Furthermore, its provisions "actualise the provisions of the Constitution" (Items 1.3 and 1.5).

### ***3.4.2 Rationale***

Item 2 of the NPW delineates the development indicators that serve as the primary rationale for its existence, which also form the basis for the policy goals, objectives and thrust outlined in Items 3-5. In a broad sense, the policy posits that capacity building for women, through sectoral interventions to promote gender equality/equity, is a prerequisite for increasing national economic efficiency, productivity and growth. The policy contends that women's numerical strength and crucial contribution to national development in the face of clear indicators of their disproportionate representation in governance, mass poverty and general underdevelopment provide the empirical justification for an integrated development strategy targeting women as a special category. (See Appendix G2 for more details on the NPW rationale). Within the limitations imposed by the Nigerian State the NPW reflects the concessions and negotiations undergone to maximise women's opportunities and well-being rather than outrightly challenge the existing order. However, notwithstanding the efficiency/ productivity justification, the framers of the NPW recognised that social justice, equity and equality are desirable ends in themselves and can only be achieved when fundamental issues concerning women's access to and control over resources are addressed.

### ***3.4.3 Goals and objectives***

Attacking female poverty as a pervasive material and non-material reality is at the heart of the NPW as stated in the preamble of the General Policy Guidelines (Item 17). The preambles to the goals and objectives (Item 3.1 and Item 4.1 respectively) clearly spell out that the NPW draws heavily on WID initiatives and that women's empowerment is a means to enhance efficiency and productivity through human resource maximisation for national economic growth. In her preface to the National Policy on Women the Minister for Women Affairs, Aishatu Mohammed Sani Ismail, showed that the NPW took as its point of departure a WID strategy aimed at, "encouraging sectoral and national actions to better recognise and thereby, more effectively involve women as equal partners, decision-makers and beneficiaries in shaping a greater future for all the citizens of this great nation." To this end the goals of the NPW can be summarised as follows: (1) The promotion of constitutional safeguards to promote social justice and equity through raising national awareness and removing legal, cultural, religious and other constraints; (2) the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; (3) women's empowerment through human

resource development; (4) the creation of an effective Gender and Development (GAD) management and co-ordination structure under the Ministry of Women Affairs; and (5) the establishment of a gender disaggregated databank. See Appendix G3 for details on the goals and objectives of the NPW, and on its constitutional and equity bases.

### ***3.4.4 Policy Thrust and Sectoral Emphases***

While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide an in-depth sector-by-sector analysis of the National Policy on Women a summary of the overall policy thrust and sectoral components will shed more light on how it perceives and interprets the needs, priorities, interests and aspirations of Nigerian women, and strategies devised to address them.

#### **3.4.4.1 Policy Thrust**

The five-fold policy thrust set out in Item 5 demonstrates a commitment to work towards:

1. Social restructuring to establish equity, order and the well-being of women and the entire society. Nigeria's accession to CEDAW is stated as the moral impetus behind social restructuring. Item 5.1(1) asserts that by its ratification of CEDAW the government has an obligation to ensure the elimination of discrimination- through the removal of all constraints to women's full integration into the development process. Women's integration is a key terminology throughout the NPW and, in 5.1(4); it is specified as a determinant of the country's overall level of development and a pre-requisite for social well-being. Item 5.1(5) asserts that women's integration will be achieved through the mobilisation of women as an essential, yet largely untapped, human resource, and it singles out the need to improve the quantity and quality of female employment in every sector as a major strategy in this direction. The use of the word 'alleviation' in Item 5.1.1 rather than 'elimination' as used in CEDAW may hint at a certain degree of pessimism regarding the ability or willingness of the state to deal with the structures underlying gender discrimination. Items 5.1.2 through 5.1.5 explain how social restructuring is to be accomplished through planned interventions to re-awaken their self-consciousness

and re-evaluate their self concept. Re-awakening alludes to a latent or inhibited African 'feminist' consciousness as defined by the likes of Zulu Sofola (1992) who sees re-awakening as a spiritual process of re-connection to the divine essence, and whose self-concept is rooted in relationships to others.<sup>104</sup> A new self-concept has limited capacity to influence society on a large scale. Therefore Item 5.1.3 portrays gender inequality as a destructive force responsible for the erosion of social cohesiveness necessitating a second intervention strategy: consciousness raising among the general populace to ensure national re-orientation towards "equity, complementarity of roles and respect for family values." This reference to complementarity of gender roles and family values may appear somewhat anomalous given the fact that anti-gender equality protagonists argue that women's rights tend to undermine family stability (and social order) by encouraging female independence and gender role flexibility. It is precisely female economic dependency, domestication and culturally-imposed identification with the family that are called into question under the GAD framework since they serve a functionalist purpose of maintaining women's subjugation for community cohesion.

2. Resource reallocation for women's full and equitable economic empowerment, integration and participation. The NPW is a redistributive policy that seeks the removal of constraints (such as denial of access to land and other productive resources) that frustrate women's aspirations and ability to participate fully in the economy (Item 5.2).
3. Economic restructuring to promote growth and efficiency through entrepreneurial, professional and managerial capacity building for women. As for the economic system, the NPW is uncritical in its approach and unequivocal endorsement of a liberal free market paradigm. It demands that the playing field be levelled to allow women compete equally, effectively and fairly in business, the professions and industry so as to increase the country's productive capacity (Item 5.3).

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<sup>104</sup> See pp. 67/68

4. Ideological and legislative reform to phase out patriarchy and its related practices through education, enlightenment and awareness. One of the features of patriarchy identified in Item 5.4.2 is the "strict adherence to division of labour along gender lines", which the NPW claims must be discouraged through the process of national re-orientation. In view of the earlier commitment to complementary gender roles the undertaking in Item 5.4.3 to dismantle the ideologies and structures that buttress patriarchy through the entrenchment of "egalitarian principles" is indeed curious. Advocates of egalitarianism and complementarity form two distinct camps with different theoretical premises upon which they argue for interchangeable and separate gender roles respectively (Van Leeuwen, 1990, 1993; Piper and Grudem, 1991). The attempt to embrace both egalitarian and complementarian perspectives reflects the dilemma faced by Nigerian women in the quest for freedom and autonomy without jettisoning positive traditional roles. A way out of this ambiguity may have been to talk about the complementarity of gender perspectives rather than roles, thus stressing mutual enrichment deriving from difference, and the need to feminise socio-political institutions to reflect the diversity of needs and interests of both halves of the population.<sup>37</sup> It could be argued that the policy's allegiance to family values stems from the perspective that the patriarchal organisation of family, kinship and all other social relationships is dysfunctional and incapable of bringing about sustainable social peace/order (Item 5.4.1). Thus, the policy may espouse an alternative concept of family as a forum for mutual nurturing and protection of individual rights, interests and capabilities. A re-conceptualisation of family along these lines justifies its mention, along with culture and the legislative framework as sites for re-socialisation, consciousness-raising and transformation (Item 5.4.4). Under Item 13 on Legal Reforms/Legislative Framework, the policy calls for far-reaching reform in the legal framework as a measure of government commitment to its implementation. A major step in this direction envisaged in Item 13.1.2 and 3 is to harmonise the tripartite legal

system and thereby eliminate discriminatory and harmful cultural practices.

5. Cultural reform through a progressive re-interpretation and reconstruction of culture consistent with women's positive self-identity and full participation in society. Item 5.5 enjoins a re-interpretation of culture compatible with current development needs and realities. It perceives culture as dynamic and evolving making it possible "to replace deleterious practices, images, stereotypes, attitudes and prejudices against women..." (Items 5.5.2 and 5.5.3).

#### 3.4.4.2 Sectoral Components

The NPW targets eleven sectors. Appendix G4 contains a brief discussion on some of these sectoral components. Surprisingly, given the proportion of women involved, there is no mention of domestic unpaid labour, and only marginal mention of the informal sector (except agriculture: see Appendix G4) which it suggests should be restructured to facilitate the incorporation of women's work into the national accounting system and to guarantee the protection and security of their labour. The absence of a specific treatment of women's reproductive (child bearing, childcare, domestic chores) and subsistence labour which constitute the 'hidden economy' sustaining productive economic activity, is a serious omission in the policy inferring that female unpaid labour is not real work.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that ethnicity, religion and class have dominated Nigerian politics, and that participation therein has marginalised women and their gender interests. It described the nature and extent of gender inequality in Nigeria as a *raison d'être* for the emergence of the National Policy on Women: its history, politics and content. The NPW materialized out of converging, although diverse, indigenous and international feminist/womanist interests and agitations for social inclusion. The tortuous and protracted political process that preceded its approval reflects the patriarchal worldview underlying state policy. Furthermore, it points to the institutionalisation and routinisation gender bias in both informal and formal social institutions.

Being the first coherent statement on government responsibility towards women the NPW is broad and far-reaching in its bid to address deeply embedded and pervasive gender discrimination. Nevertheless, the policy document contains contradictions in terms of intent and desired outcomes which, in part, indicate the diversity and complexity of

Nigerian women's ethnic, religious and class identities/locations. They also evidence women's attempts to bargain with the patriarchal establishment through compromise and consensus to secure approval of the policy. There was a significant amount of political horse-trading to win support for the NPW, during which "a lot was jettisoned" (Eghobamien, Interview: 22/04/02) as the women were compelled to bargain with the patriarchal establishment. Kandiyoti (1997:86) defines the patriarchal bargain as a blueprint produced by women who have to "strategise within a set of concrete constraints" which,

Exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression.

The overview of the history and provisions of the NPW has provided insight into the articulation of women's development needs from an official standpoint. In furtherance of the aim of this study, to examine the feasibility of the NPW in light of its compatibility with women's aspirations, it is time to find out how they articulate their interests and needs, and subsequently, what agendas they have set for change.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Women Imagine Change: Grassroots Women and Members of Women's Groups

### 4.1 Gender Interests and Planning Needs

Women's gender interests constitute areas of prioritised concern which "develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes." (Moser, 1993:38 citing Molyneux, 1985:232). These prioritised concerns provide insight into women's living conditions and status. For the purposes of policy and development planning the "means by which women's concerns may be satisfied" are classified as gender needs (Moser 1993:37). Gender needs, therefore, are specified planning interventions.<sup>105</sup> Chapter Three elaborated the policy processes that produced the NPW whose goals, objectives and strategies represent planning interventions based on the policy drafters' interpretations of women's interests. Chapter Four and Five present a range of interests identified and ranked by individual Nigerian women, groups of women and women's organisations. In addition they discuss practical and strategic planning needs proffered by participants to produce social change. Both chapters draw comparisons and contrasts between women's perspectives and the goals and objectives of the NPW to determine the degree of compatibility between them.

Grassroots women comprise rural, urban poor or low income earners. They constitute the majority of Nigerian women. Chapter Four presents their experiences and perspectives under three principal themes, and those of members of women's groups – most of who work with or constitute grassroots women. It covers prioritised concerns and planning needs defined by rural, semi-rural/urban, market women and NGO members.<sup>106</sup> It aims to provide insight into the thematic emphases of each unit of analysis<sup>107</sup> and draw patterns of congruence and divergence between them. Chapter Five covers interests and needs articulated by 'elite' women. The prioritised concerns

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<sup>105</sup> The theoretical assumptions underlying practical and strategic gender interests/needs, and the distinctions between them were identified in Chapter Two.

<sup>106</sup> Find full descriptions of women in Chapter One. Rural dwellers constitute 54% of the population. Source: [http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf\\_library/country\\_profiles/pop\\_cou\\_566.pdf](http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/pop_cou_566.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> 1. Semi-structured interviews with policy-makers/politicians and women NGO leaders 2. Focus group sessions with market women, business/professional women and students (male and female), and 3. PRA sessions with rural, semi-rural, and semi-urban women (and rural men).

presented in both chapters mirror fundamental gender inequalities discussed in Chapter Three; they are the premise for women's change agendas discussed in Chapter Six.

## 4.2 Prioritised Concerns: Grassroots Women Speak

Before the commencement of the Gora PRA sessions an elder and retired pastor in the village came to find out the purpose of this research. On finding out that it was to study the lives of women he said, "*Kai! mu na cu ce mata anan Gora*" (Oh! We are really cheating the women here in Gora (18/05/03). It is in this context that Jaba women shared a wide range prioritised concerns. The needs assessments made by both women's PRA groups in Gora were the most wide ranging among all grassroots women. Groups One and Two listed 17 (77.3%) and 15 (68.2%) areas of the 22 items on the qualitative (NVIVO) coding index respectively (See Appendix A)<sup>108</sup>. The matrix in Table 4.1 is a summary of economic, social, political and personal problems identified by Jaba women and an analysis of their respective causes and impacts. None of the participants from any of the three groups in Gora knew about the NPW.<sup>109</sup> Neither were they aware of any local, state or federal government initiatives for women's development. However, when a summary of NPW goals and objectives was read out and interpreted it received a spontaneous outburst of applause from Group One.

Among all the units of analysis Birom women identified the fewest prioritised concerns and planning needs (four (18.2%) out of 22 items on the coding index) in the study. They focused primarily on poverty alleviation. There appeared to be a fatalistic acceptance of reality no matter how unpalatable. As in Gora none of the women were aware of the NPW. However, unlike in Gora the NPW objectives elicited apathy and disinterest from Kushehe women. This could be a result of general apathy towards government activity, an age factor – the women being too young to appreciate the issues or too old to be bothered, or the fact that the women were preoccupied with their impoverished material conditions.

It also seemed that the women did not want to be seen as complaining about their lot. For instance, in response to the question: "What things do you do as a woman that you enjoy doing? Martha Nyam said, "*Aikin gida* (house-keeping)" and then added, "*To, yaya za mu yi*" (Oh well, what can we do (but like it)? This may be why the women of Kushehe were more inclined to enumerate practical gender needs to help

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<sup>108</sup> The index is a thematic summary of prioritised concerns and planning needs deduced from the data collected from the various sample groups and individuals.

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter One p. 15 for further details about the composition of PRA groups

cope with immediate and pressing economic concerns rather than consider more fundamental changes. However, as the session progressed with open ended probes some of the women hinted at other concerns related to subordinate gender positioning which the women felt were still rooted in economic factors. Hausa-Fulani women discussed prioritised concerns and practical and, to a limited extent, strategic gender planning needs covering 10 (45.5%) of the 22 items on the coding index with emphasis on economic and educational empowerment. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 summarise the prioritised concerns of Birom and Hausa-Fulani women respectively.

In the context of poor and unstable working conditions Jos market women focus group discussed their concerns covering eight (36.4%) of the 22 items on the coding index. The prioritised concerns of grassroots women are discussed below under three sub-headings: Material well-being, physical well-being, and political participation and decision-making.

TABLE 4.1: Problem Identification Matrix: PRA Gora

	Gender relations in households	Women's work in the community	Men's work in the community	Women: community decision-making
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Men: heads of households, relate with wives as subordinates</li> <li>2. Patrilineal marriage</li> <li>3. Domestic violence</li> <li>4. Men make the important decisions</li> <li>5. Polygamy common but phasing out</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welfare work</li> <li>2. Reproductive work</li> <li>3. Paid and (mostly) unpaid farming</li> <li>4. Participate in some cultural festivals but are barred from others</li> <li>5. Family/ social networking</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leaders/ decision-makers at every level</li> <li>2. Major income earners from cash crop farming</li> <li>3. Muscular work: hunting iron smelting building, digging</li> <li>4. Security &amp; defence</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No formal public opportunity to express views about major community decisions.</li> <li>2. Decide on daily household duties, 3. Spiritual/ church involvement</li> <li>4. Seek husband's permission on personal movements &amp; major issues on children</li> </ol>
WHAT PROBLEMS DO WOMEN HAVE?	<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of income, poverty</li> <li>2. Lack of food</li> <li>3. Lack of school fees for children</li> <li>4. Lack of clothing</li> <li>5. Lack of fertiliser and other farm inputs</li> <li>6. Excessive financial burden for family</li> <li>7. Youth unemployment</li> </ol>	<p><b>Social</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Juvenile delinquency due to unemployment</li> <li>2. Teen pregnancy</li> <li>3. High infant mortality</li> <li>4. Husbands' promiscuity/ polygamy</li> </ol>	<p><b>Political</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Women are not permitted to lead</li> <li>2. There is frustration at not getting your ideas or opinions heard.</li> <li>3. Women are outsiders in husband's house. Married women have no authority in fathers' houses</li> </ol>	<p><b>Personal</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fear of AIDS</li> <li>2. Infertility</li> <li>3. Ill-health (high blood pressure - <i>hawa jini</i>)</li> <li>4. Abandonment by husbands</li> <li>5. Excess work load, especially farming</li> <li>6. Domestic violence</li> </ol>
CAUSES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-4 Dependency on husbands; lack of education and information</li> <li>5. Women not given fertiliser</li> <li>6. Abandonment by husbands, and male drunkenness; polygamy.</li> <li>7. Few opportunities for young people.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family poverty, low premium on girl-child education</li> <li>2. Poverty and unemployment; lack of opportunities, motivation, role models for girls</li> <li>3. Cannot afford treatment</li> <li>4. Men's traditional rights,</li> <li>5. More females in village</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Men are the 'head', low regard for women. Religion: "God created it that way"</li> <li>2. Women not listened to or consulted; have no voice.</li> <li>3. Patrilineal/ patrilocal marriage: "he brought me to his house. I am under him."</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Husband is flirting/ polygamy</li> <li>2. Supernatural causes. Don't know.</li> <li>3. Poverty: cannot afford to buy drugs</li> <li>4. Husbands can send wives away or leave the village to search for work.</li> <li>5-6. Patrilineal/ patrilocal marriage: must work for husband's family</li> <li>6. Some husbands beat their wives</li> </ol>

Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Gora (19-21/05/03)

TABLE 4.2: Problem Identification Matrix: PRA Kushehe

	<b>Gender relations in households</b>	<b>Women's work in the community</b>	<b>Men's work in the community</b>	<b>Women: community decision-making</b>
<b>WHAT HAPPENS NOW?</b>	1. Men: fathers of the house, relate with wives as subordinates 2. Patrilineal marriage 3. Men make the important decisions 5. Wives are often maltreated	1. Reproductive work 2. Subsistence farming 3. Seasonal building site work 4. Vegetable gardening 5. Family health care	1. Leaders/ decision-makers at every level 2. Builders, artisans, mechanics 3. Junior government workers	1. Women do not perceive themselves as leaders. 2. Decide on daily household duties 3. Spiritual/ church involvement – women's fellowship leader is prominent
<b>WHAT PROBLEMS DO WOMEN HAVE?</b>	<b>Economic</b> 1. Poverty 2. Unemployment	<b>Social</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Personal</b>
			1. Women are outsiders in their husband's house. They do not have much say.	1. Excess work load, especially farming 6. Maltreatment from husbands
<b>CAUSES</b>	1. Lack of personal income and 2. Lack of education 3. Seasonal nature of unskilled work		1. Patrilineal/ patrilocal marriage	1. Lack of male support 2. Lack of employment. 3. Dependency on husbands

Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Kushehe (03/08/03)

TABLE 4.3: Problem Identification Matrix: PRA Bukuru

	<b>Gender relations in households</b>	<b>Women's work in the community</b>	<b>Men's work in the community</b>	<b>Women: community decision-making</b>
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?	1. Men: heads of households, relate with wives as subordinates 2. Mothers of sons wield considerable power over sons' households 3. Polygamy permitted by religion	1. Reproductive work 3. No work outside the home	1. Leaders/decision-makers at every level 2. Sole income earners from petty trading or junior government jobs	1. No public role 2. Decide on daily household duties,
WHAT PROBLEMS DO WOMEN HAVE?	<b>Economic</b> 1. Lack of income, poverty 3. Lack of school fees and healthcare for children	<b>Social</b> 1. Prostitution	<b>Political</b> 1. Women are not permitted to lead	<b>Personal</b> 1. Cannot move about freely
CAUSES	1. Lack of education 2. Lack of training, skills, information 3. Husbands are poor	1. Poverty and unemployment	1. Men are superior 2. Islamic injunction 2. Men look down on women	1. Lack of education 2. Husbands are uneducated

Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Bukuru (20/07/03)

### 4.2.1 *Material Well Being*

Poverty is the most serious problem faced by grassroots women. Indeed some of them – particularly Birom and Jos market women – said it was the only problem. The general consensus among all categories of grassroots women was that their first prioritised concern was the lack of *personal income* for self-sustenance to improve overall material conditions. They felt a dire need for personal income to take care of children’s education and health as well as basic needs such as personal health and clothing. Jaba women complained that while there was a local hospital, they often did not have the money to purchase drugs and medical care.<sup>110</sup> It was clear from the discussions that child welfare is the primary concern of the women as Hadiza Umar, a Hausa-Fulani woman, said,

...We have things that burden our hearts like you see we have little children but we don’t have any trade, a trade that is big enough so that we can sponsor our children to school. Government schools now no longer teach well and we cannot put our children in private schools or teach them ourselves. This is a big problem [...] Sometimes our children are sick and we don’t have money to take them to hospital. The time you will go to hospital there will be some little expenses that you cannot afford even a mere N50 or N100. Our husbands themselves don’t have the financial strength to pay. So you won’t even bother to go to the hospital. Today this child falls sick tomorrow it is that one.

Hanatu Musa, another Hausa-Fulani woman, explained the emphasis on children “You know as an adult you can bear it but a child cannot. That is why one is more disturbed about the children.” Nonetheless, the priorities and needs of most remained unattended to because few women had a say over how *household income* is spent. In the words of one Jaba participant, very often when women attempted to express their opinions about financial matters, among other things, they were told, ‘*wanene ke?*’ (Who are you? Or, who do you think you are?). Birom women expressed concern over unemployment/under-employment for themselves and low-paid employment for men/husbands. The younger ones among them felt constrained to take up subsistence farming for lack of formal sector employment, and the insecurity/instability of seasonal work. This can be deduced from Table 4.4 and Fig. 4.1 showing the proportion of time spent on women’s daily activities.

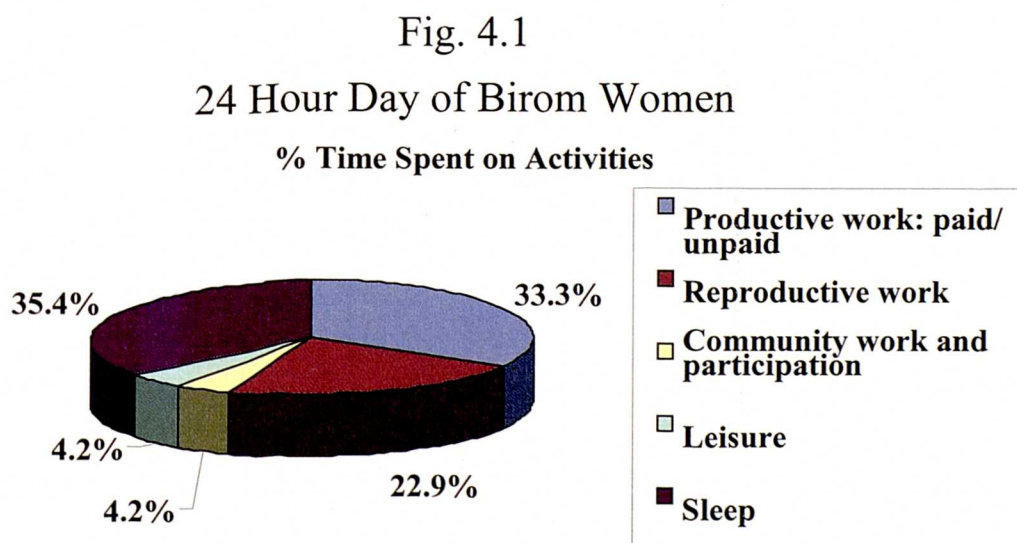
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<sup>110</sup> During the one week PRA period I visited a woman and her daughter who were both lying ill with fever in their room from a boil and malaria respectively unable to afford the N200 (about £1 in 2003 and 80p in 2005) it would cost for antibiotics and an injection.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**24 Hour Work Day of Birom Women**

	Group A	Group B	TOTAL	AVERAGE	HOURS OF WORK (per day)
<b>FARMING &amp;/OR INCOME GENERATION</b>	8	8	16	8 (10 during dry season) <sup>111</sup>	13hrs 30mins
<b>HOUSEWORK*</b>	6	5	11	5hrs 30mins	
<b>SLEEP</b>	8	9	17	8hrs 30mins	
<b>COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION</b>	1	1	2	1hr	
<b>LEISURE (rest)</b>	1	1	2	1hr	
<b>TOTAL (hours)</b>	24	24	48		

Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Kushehe (03/08/03)



Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Kushehe (03/08/03)

<sup>111</sup> Building site work normally lasts from 7 am to 5 pm. The extra two hours are taken off from leisure and sleep.



During the dry season (October to April) Kushehe women commonly scout around for odd jobs on building sites and farm vegetables. The rest of the year is spent farming. They decried the deteriorating conditions in the economy which hit them hardest as occasional job seekers and as domestic managers in the face of sky-rocketing food prices, tightening household budgets and heightening marital tension.

Hausa-Fulani women said they lacked entrepreneurial and vocational skills, and the financial resources to start up small income generating projects at home. All the women said their husbands were low-income earning traders or junior government workers whose wages were grossly inadequate to cater for family survival needs. But it is not just the lack of financial resources or skills that prevents women from engaging in productive ventures. Female seclusion (purdah) – an Islamic practice that forbids married women to be seen in public places – is also responsible. Zainab Lawal explained how seclusion aggravates female poverty,

As for our problems they are many. For example some of us are not allowed to go out even to learn something and come and do it at home. So we are at a loss as to what way to take to get the training for skills to use at home so we can sell in the market [...] Even the permission to go and learn outside, because some men don't even want you to go out at all to learn and come and do it at home. So we lack the means to get anything to do at home – and if we get it how it can get out to the market.

The women confirmed previous research findings that female seclusion is a primary reason for child labour in Hausa-Fulani communities across Northern Nigeria (Callaway, 1987) since they too planned to use their children in the event that they secured any opportunity for trade. Table 4.5 and Fig. 4.2 display a typical 24 hour day of secluded Hausa-Fulani women and show how they constitute a latent human resource base whose productive capabilities are checkmated by religious practice. Sleep and leisure take up 16hours! Reproductive work accounts for five hours while they spend an average of three hours on community work involving family networking (among female members), religious worship and tending the sick. However, it appears that purdah-induced indolence is a frustration to them as one participant – Zainab Lawal, in response to the question: “Can you mention some things you dislike doing but you have to do them because you are a woman?” said,

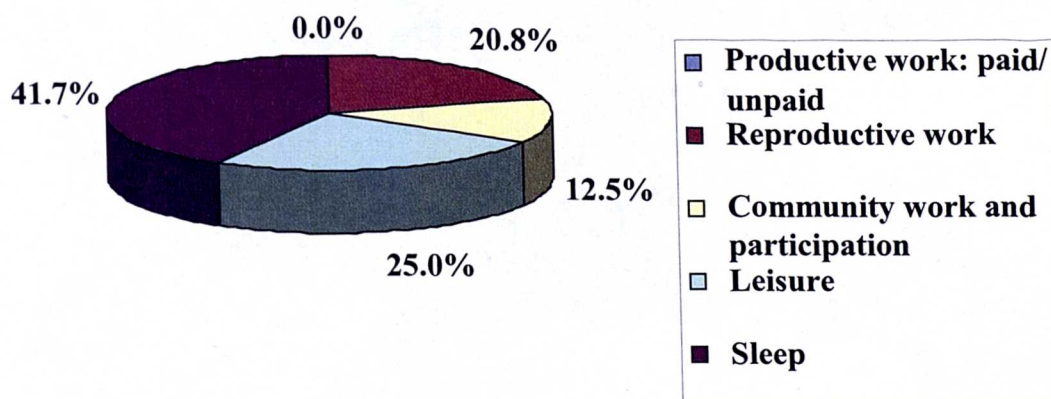
Like this staying at home that we are doing, that is the thing nothing else. This staying at home it is not of our own choice but because we are under somebody we must do what he wants.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**24hr Day of Hausa-Fulani Women in Bukuru**

Activity	Group A	Group B	TOTAL	AVERAGE	HOURS OF WORK (per day)
FARMING &/OR INCOME GENERATION	0	0	0	0	5hrs
HOUSEWORK	4	6	10	5hrs	
SLEEP	12	8	20	10hrs	
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	3	3	6	3hrs	
LEISURE	5	7	12	6hrs	
<b>TOTAL (hours)</b>	24	24	48		

Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Bukuru (20/07/03)

**Fig. 4.2**  
**24 Hour Day of Hausa-Fulani Women**  
**% of Time Spent on Activities**



Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Bukuru (20/07/03)

Another concern which Jaba and Hausa-Fulani women said was closely linked to female poverty is the lack of opportunities for child, further and adult education. The lack of opportunities for post-secondary education and employment for young people, particularly young girls who end up marrying prematurely or getting pregnant outside wedlock was a major concern to both men and women in Gora. Juvenile delinquency and youth unemployment are perceived as re-inventing the wheel of poverty thereby shattering community aspirations for advancement through the contributions of upwardly mobile young persons. Mothers of unwed teenagers, in particular, expressed grief over the extra costs of teen pregnancy that fell to them in terms of childcare support and more mouths to feed, and not to the baby's father or his family.

In Amina Abdullahi's opinion the lack of education is the biggest problem that Hausa-Fulani women have. She and Ziliatu Ibrahim lamented the fact that having completed secondary school they were unable to go on to tertiary level education, which would have greatly enhanced their employment opportunities. Without that, said Ziliatu, going to secondary school "it's like a waste because we are now married." Their husbands' lack of education also posed a problem since educated Hausa men were more likely to sponsor their wives' education after marriage, more inclined to allow their work outside the home. Although the NPW targets secluded women them for 'strategic human resource development' (Item 3.1 (4) on NPW goals) under its education sector plan, objectives and strategies listed under employment and industry sectors only target women already in formal jobs and small, medium and large-scale business respectively.

Jaba women also lack capital, skills, information and opportunities to invest in small-scale ventures outside their regular farm duties. However, unlike Hausa-Fulani women they lack time as a crucial development resource. Even if they had the economic wherewithal they are constrained by the magnitude of unpaid farm and domestic labour. The time constraints on women's capacity to engage in personal productive projects became apparent from the 24 hour work chart drawn up by both groups to chronicle a typical day in the life of a woman (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7 and Fig. 4.3). Each group was divided into three sub-groups (A, B, C) and required to allocate time spent on women's daily activities.

**TABLE 4.6: 24 Hr Work Day of Jaba Women: Group 1+**

Activity	Group A	Group B	Group C	TOTAL	AVERAGE	HOURS OF WORK (per day)
FARMING & INCOME GENERATION	8	6	8	22	7hrs 20mins	13hrs 40mins
HOUSEWORK	4	9	6	19	6hrs 20mins	
SLEEP	9	6	6	21	7hrs	
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	2	2	3	7	2hrs 20mins	
LEISURE	1	1	1	3	1hr	
<b>TOTAL (hours)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>72</b>		

**TABLE 4.7: 24 Hr Work Day of Jaba Women: Group 2+**

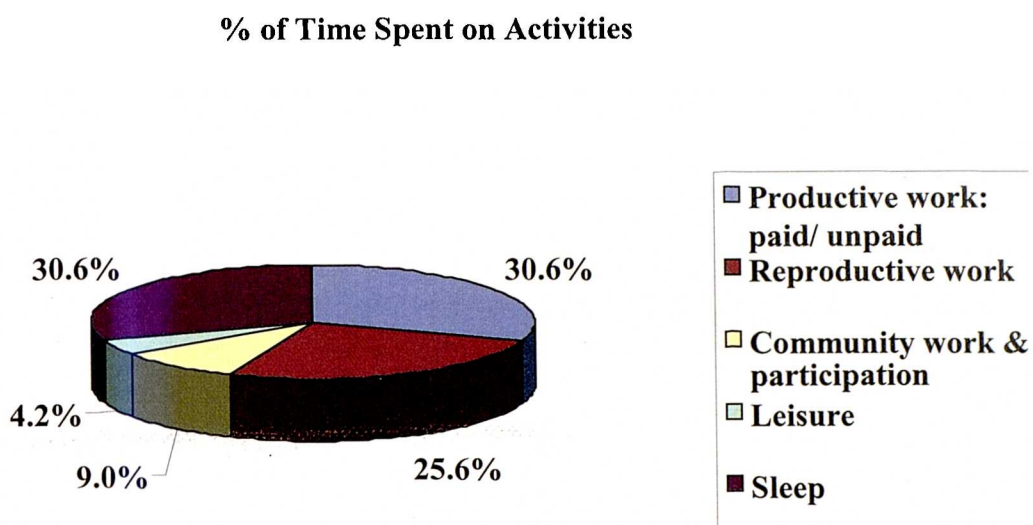
Activity	Group A	Group B	Group C	TOTAL	AVERAGE	HOURS OF WORK (per day)
FARMING & INCOME GENERATION	7	8	7	22	7hrs 20mins	13hrs 20mins
HOUSEWORK	6	6	6	18	6hrs	
SLEEP	8	7	8	23	7hrs 40mins	
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	2	2	2	6	2hrs	
LEISURE	1	1	1	3	1hr	
<b>TOTAL (hours)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>72</b>		

**TABLE 4.8: 24 Hr Work Day of Men in Gora: Group 3+**

Activity	Group A	Group B	Group C	TOTAL	AVERAGE	HOURS OF WORK (per day)
FARMING & INCOME GENERATION	9	7	8	24	8	11
HOUSEWORK*	2	3	4	9	3	
SLEEP	8	9	6	23	7hrs 40 min	
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	3	3	4	10	3 hrs 20 min	
LEISURE	2	2	2	6	2	
<b>TOTAL (hours)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>72</b>		

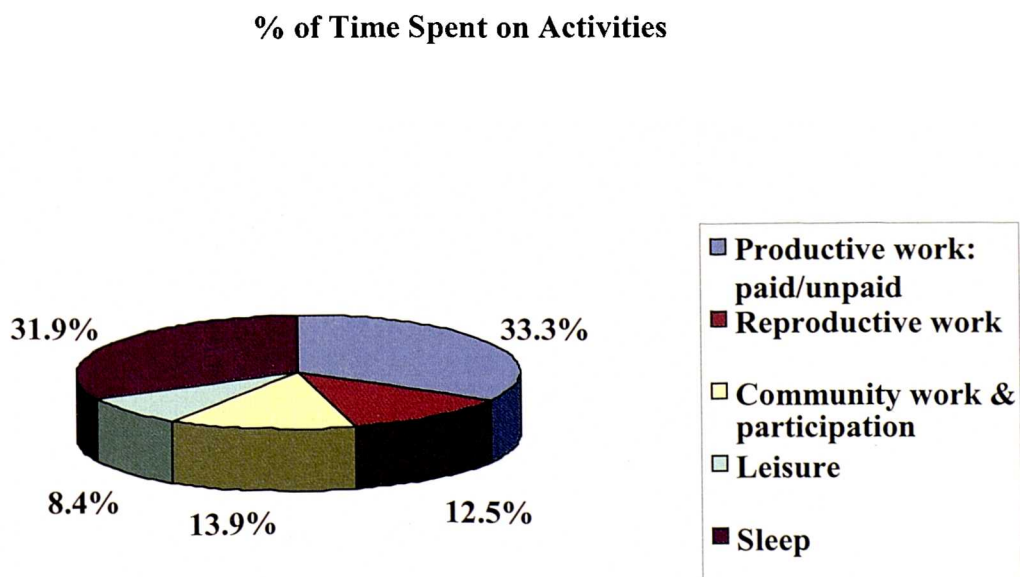
+Source: Field work: PRA Activity, Gora (19-21/05/03). \*Household supervision/yard work.

**Fig. 4.3: 24 Hour Day of Jaba Women**



Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Gora (19-20/05/03)

**Fig. 4.4: 24 Hour Day of Jaba Men**



Source: Field Work – PRA Activity, Gora (21/05/03)

Work (productive and reproductive) takes up an average of 13hrs 40mins per day and 13hrs 20mins per day for groups One and Two respectively.<sup>112</sup> Much of women's productive work is unpaid subsistence farm work. According to Group Two women and girls are overworked with family burdens and too many other responsibilities. Furthermore, after community activities (extended family obligations, care for the needy, sick and elderly, social networking) which take an average of 2hrs 10mins for both groups, women have only one hour left for leisure (rest and recreation).

This compares unfavourably with men's time resource (See Table 4.8 and Fig. 4.4). In a similar exercise with men (Group Three) it was found that they spend over two hours less than women working per day: eight hours on productive labour (40 minutes more than women) but three hours on domestic work (over three hours less than women – mainly cleaning the residential surrounding environment and supervision). They have 1hr/p.d more than women for community activities (meetings/visitation/security) and twice as much time for re-creation/rest.<sup>113</sup> The NPW does not devise strategies for addressing the time constraints of rural women as its formulations and objectives only acknowledge such constraints confront urban women in formal sector jobs.<sup>114</sup> The concerns expressed by Jos market women reveal that the NPW may not cater to the needs of those in the informal sector either. They complained about severe financial insecurity due to the seasonal nature of petty trading exacerbated by harsh working conditions in the aftermath of the destruction of Jos Main Market. They described themselves as refugees and hawkers with no stable business outlet and were unanimous in the definition and ranking of financial insecurity as their most important concern. Serifatu Yusuf illustrated their plight:

Our problems in this market – see we are in the sun; we are suffering and business is not moving. Since the market got burned down we sell under the sun. We are suffering. Everyday there is no business, except we continue to suffer. We are beaten by the rain, and the sunlight. Some days we get business, some days we don't. Some days we are happy; some days we are not.

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<sup>112</sup> This finding is comparable to a quantitative study conducted by Akande, (1981) of rural women in some Southern states (Oyo, Ondo, Ogun and Bendel (now Edo and Delta) "Participation of Women in Rural Development (Nigeria)." Paper prepared for the International Labour Office, Tripartite African Regional Seminar, Rural Development and Women, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>113</sup> The line between community tasks and recreation is not always definite.

<sup>114</sup> One of its objectives in the employment sector is "To create conditions of employment conducive to women's special needs in reproductive and community management." Section 9.2 (6). The crèches and low-cost labour saving devices referred to in Section 9.3 (5 & 6) are for the benefit of urban women in the formal sector.

All the market women in the group engaged in the sale of perishable food stuffs like tomatoes, vegetables, oil, rice, and the like which, they said was common to many petty traders. Men on the other hand sold more durable items such as clothing, shoes, cosmetics etc. Where they sold foodstuffs they are normally non-perishable items, and wholesale. Men comprised the majority of food wholesalers in the market and other parts of Jos. They had more investment capital even for perishable food businesses such as meat and vegetables. This is not to say that there are no established businesswomen in the Market – several exist who are prominent in the sale of plastics, women's clothing, provisions, among other things. But the point made by focus group participants was that female traders have greater business insecurity, lower incomes, and more pressure on their incomes.

These pressures are the factors that contribute to financial insecurity. Participants claimed that many women in the market were widows and/or primary/sole breadwinners. Appendix C: Table C2 shows that of the eight participants one was a widow, one was separated. Three others were married with husbands who were either not working or in temporary seasonal work. Five women were either the sole or primary household breadwinners. Thus, the burden of household maintenance and children's school fees fell on their shoulders. This is why all the participants felt that the lack of money lies at the root of all other problems. Table 4.9 contains excerpts that portray women's desperate financial situation. The experiences and perspectives of the market women are significant in view of the large number of women surviving on the edge in the informal sector.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Item 2.4 of the NPW cites the predominance and poor working environment of women in the informal sector as a rationale for its existence. However, although the policy calls for the recognition, support and structuring of the sector for improved social security its makes no concrete proposals for how this should be done. Consequently, the dire needs of a huge proportion of Nigerian women are left unattended to.

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<sup>115</sup> See footnote 47 page 86.

TABLE 4.9: Excerpts from Focus Group Discussions with Jos Main Market Women

Question	Part. 1	Part. 2	Part. 3	Part. 4	Part. 5	Part. 6
What problems are the women here facing?	We are in the sun suffering and business is not moving. Since the market got burned down we sell under the sun, we are suffering. Everyday there is no business, except we continue to suffer. We are beaten by the rain, and the sunlight. Some days we get business, some days we don't. Some days we are happy, some days we are not.	This place where we are staying. So we are there managing that place to feed our children. Moreover, many of us we are widows. A person like me now I'm a widow. Then some of us it's inside this market that we are feeding				The problem is this. You know before the market burnt we had a union but because as of now Jos doesn't have permanent market, we are just on attachment. The JMDB people are saying that even we women that are there we are just on refuge that is like refugees to that place.
Are more women outside in the rain and the sun than the men? Do more men have shops than women?	We women are more than the men in number in the sun [because] we are looking for food for our children.	Some [men] were able to get some were not able to get shops	Yes there are more women outside	Before there were more men in the market but now there are more women		
Are there women whose husband's do not work or who work but they [the women] are still responsible for family upkeep?	My husband is not working. He has no regular job. He does daily work when he gets it. He doesn't get work everyday. I am the one who pays children's school fees	There are many, many widows. Even widows are more in population than people who have husbands in this Terminus market.	Many, many. There are many of them	It's all of us no work. What sort of work is that that you cannot even feed your	My own husband is separated from me	Plenty. Plenty. In this market plenty. Many have husbands who are not working
What kind of business do women do mainly and what kind do men do mainly? Is there a difference?	We sell tomatoes and food stuff.	We go on food stuffs, all these petty traders trading. We sell tomatoes, oil, rice – food stuffs. Men mainly like selling meat, cloths. They prefer government work – to work in office most of all. But we prefer to sell daily business like this. We sell anything we get. That's all what we do.		We are like hawkers. [...] Petty traders – most of us.		



paining me [...] I am afraid because you know even though I know I am faithful to my marriage, what about my husband? What about his other wife? I don't know what they are doing or where they are going? So I am always afraid, and this is really affecting me and making me unhappy. (20/05/03)

The fear expressed by this participant, and others, arises from the structural gender relations that allow polygamy, and condone extra-marital promiscuity in men without spousal accountability. Male sexuality is largely unsanctioned in most parts of Nigeria beyond expressions of displeasure at pre-marital sex and what may be perceived as marital excesses, such as extreme womanising. Sleeping with another man's wife is considered an infringement of his rights rather than those of the cheating man's spouse(s). On the other hand, women who commit adultery face heavy social censorship and cultural penalties.

Jaba women also drew attention to the destructive health implications of domestic violence, especially wife battery, while Chundung Pam, a Birom woman highlighted the fact that domestic violence, and other forms of abuse, is a dimension of women's economic dependency on husbands. According to her, it makes them vulnerable to maltreatment and leaves them without options when their husbands decide to practice polygamy. As pointed out earlier by another Birom woman economic pressure could fuel marital tensions and precipitate domestic violence. On the other hand, Zainab Lawal, from Bukuru, drew a connection between the lack of a husband's economic support and another social problem with major health risks for women – prostitution. She said it was common for women with child dependants, such as widows, or young unmarried women to feel compelled to sell their bodies for sustenance.

On domestic violence one of the Jaba participants in Group Two was married off in accordance with tradition to the younger brother of her late husband. She complained of constant physical abuse without any support from the extended patrilineal family/household where she lived. Several women claimed that domestic violence was a normal and/or regular occurrence in their homes. The fact that women do not have sufficient recourse to family or social support networks to stop the violence also underscores the structural gender relations that give men the right to 'discipline' their wives as they see fit. The sense of alienation and helplessness is particularly acute for women married into the village/family unit from outside, far removed from their natural kin.

Jaba women's health needs tally with the priority areas pinpointed in the NPW (Item 8.1.3). However, the policy does not address the health implications of domestic violence, although it seeks to criminalise it and to harmonise the three legal systems to eradicate loopholes and inconsistencies that leave women open to abuse. Furthermore, the NPW is silent about women's mental/emotional health. Kanda from Group One in Gora argued that both economic and socio-cultural factors trigger mental illness in women. For instance, she described the psychological impacts of women's powerlessness owing to the lack of social recognition and decision-making power:

One feels frustrated inside because you have something that you want to say but there is no opportunity to do so. Rather they come to you last after they have listened to all the bright ideas from everybody else. Then last of all when they come to you, they will not even agree to listen to what you have to say...It eats you away on the inside (PRA, 19/05/03).

The nature and extent of female powerlessness and how it stands as a prioritised concern are looked at in the next section.

### ***4.2.3 Political Participation and Decision-Making***

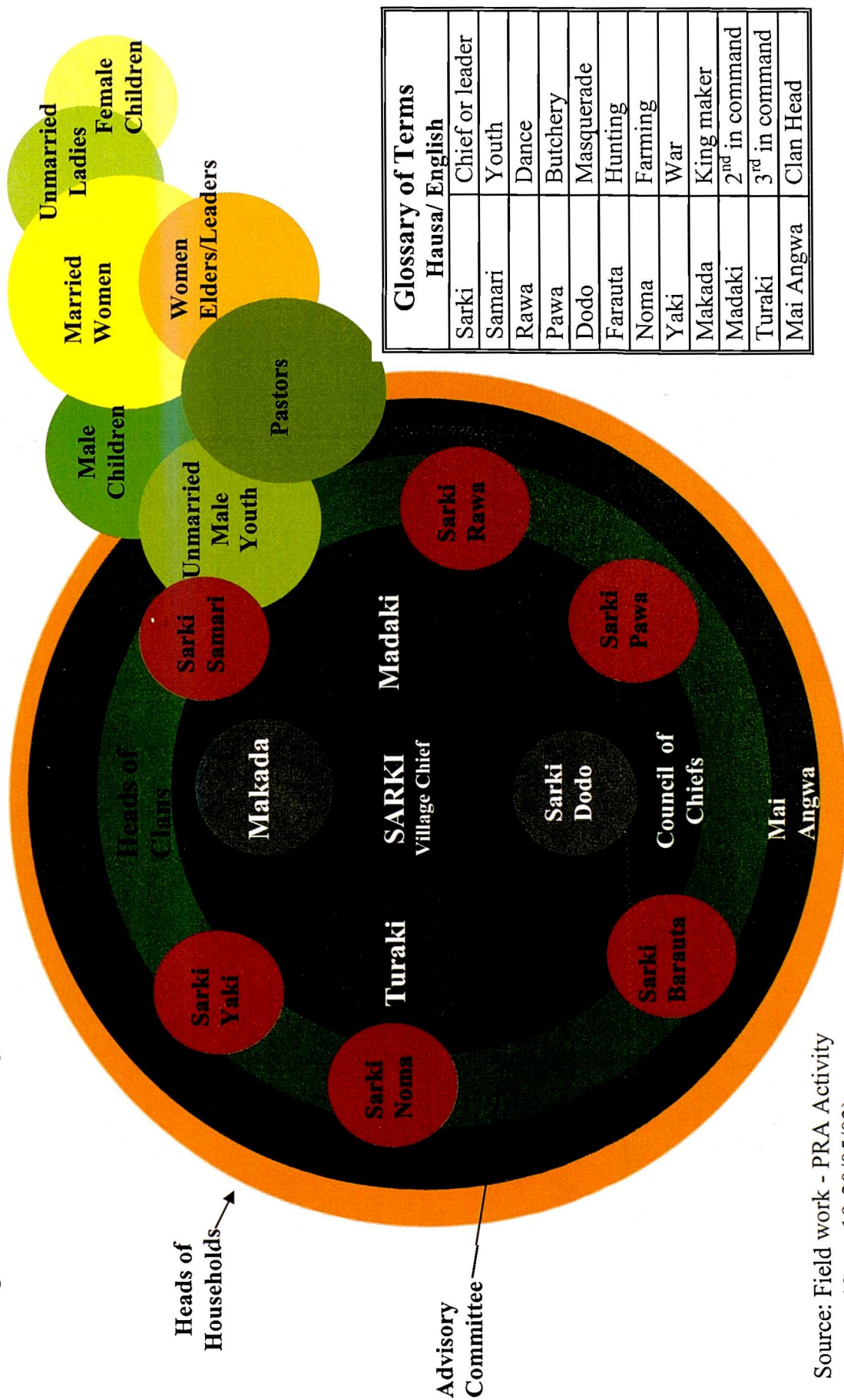
Concerns raised about women's lack of political participation and non decision-making power were incidental to one of the activities of the PRA sessions which involved mapping social relations by means of a community organisation chart. All PRA participants (women and men) acknowledged that being female places tangible and undesirable restrictions on the nature and level of participation in community and intra-household decision-making. As the Venn diagram and social organisation charts of Gora, Kushehe and the Hausa-Fulani community in Bukuru indicate men wield power and authority in all decision-making structures in political, economic and cultural life; women are at the bottom rung of society (See Fig. 4.5 to Fig. 4.8).

In Gora, the chain of authority extends from the *Sarki* (village chief) down to the various male heads of households. Widows, divorcees and separated women are not regarded as heads of households though they may function *de facto* in that capacity. It is always expected that there will be a supervisory male relative. The supreme leader in Kushehe is the *Mai Angwa* (Clan Head) who can only be a man. As is the case in Gora, the supreme leader receives advice from an all-male council of elders and, on occasion, the youth leader who is also always male. Among the Hausa-Fulani male superiority is evident in social, religious, political and economic/material arrangements. Men are the traditional rulers, religious leaders and heads of households. Fig. 4.8 depicts how the

channel of authority runs from the *Sarki* and religious leaders down to female children. Male children rank higher than female children and adult women.

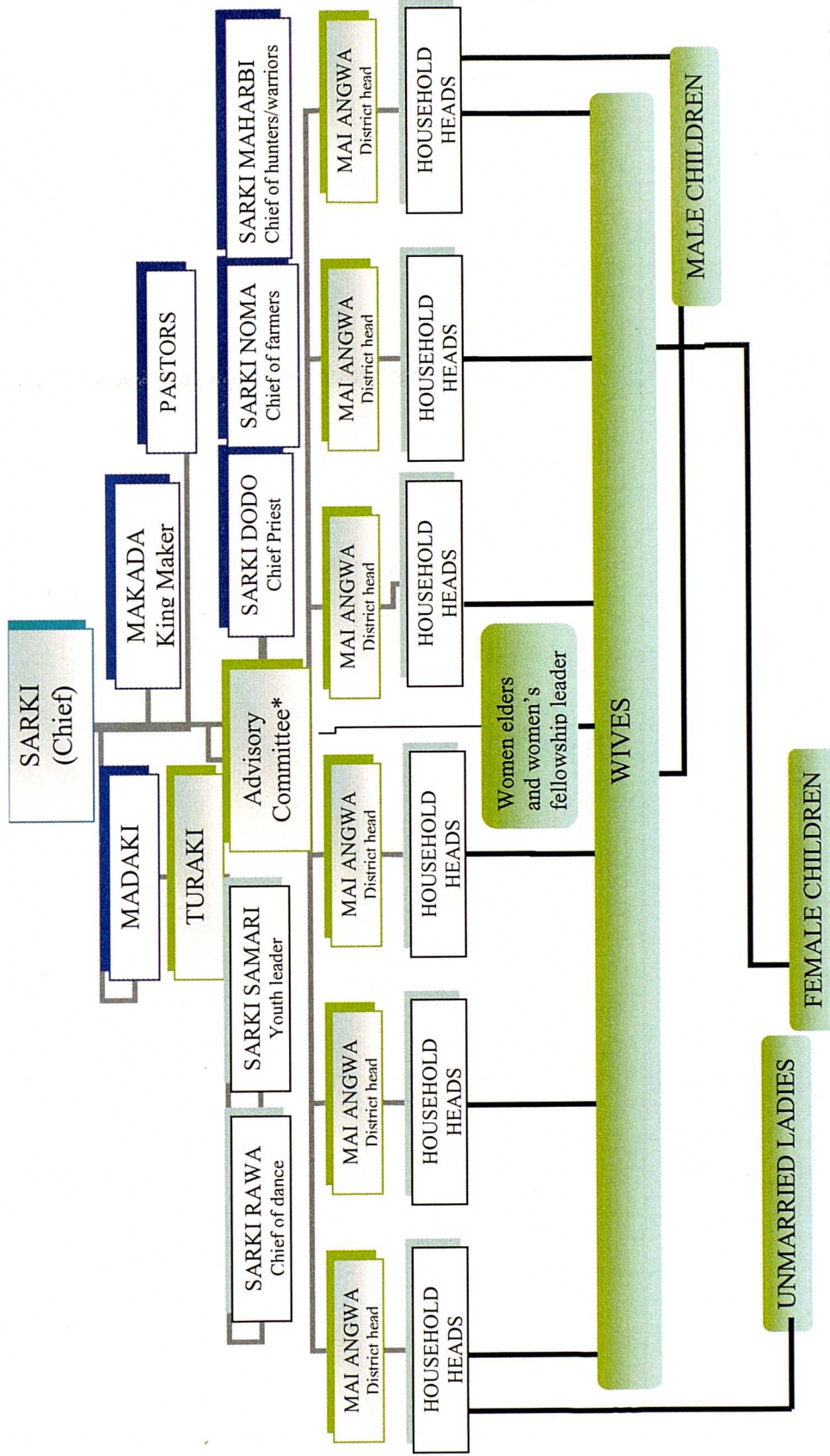
The wives of village chiefs, council of chiefs and advisory committee members have no institutionally recognised role or leverage in community matters, though they are given their due respect as elders and/or wives of important men.

Fig. 4.5: Venn Diagram Mapping Social Organisation in Gora by Groups 1 & 2



Source: Field work - PRA Activity  
(Gora, 19-20/05/03)

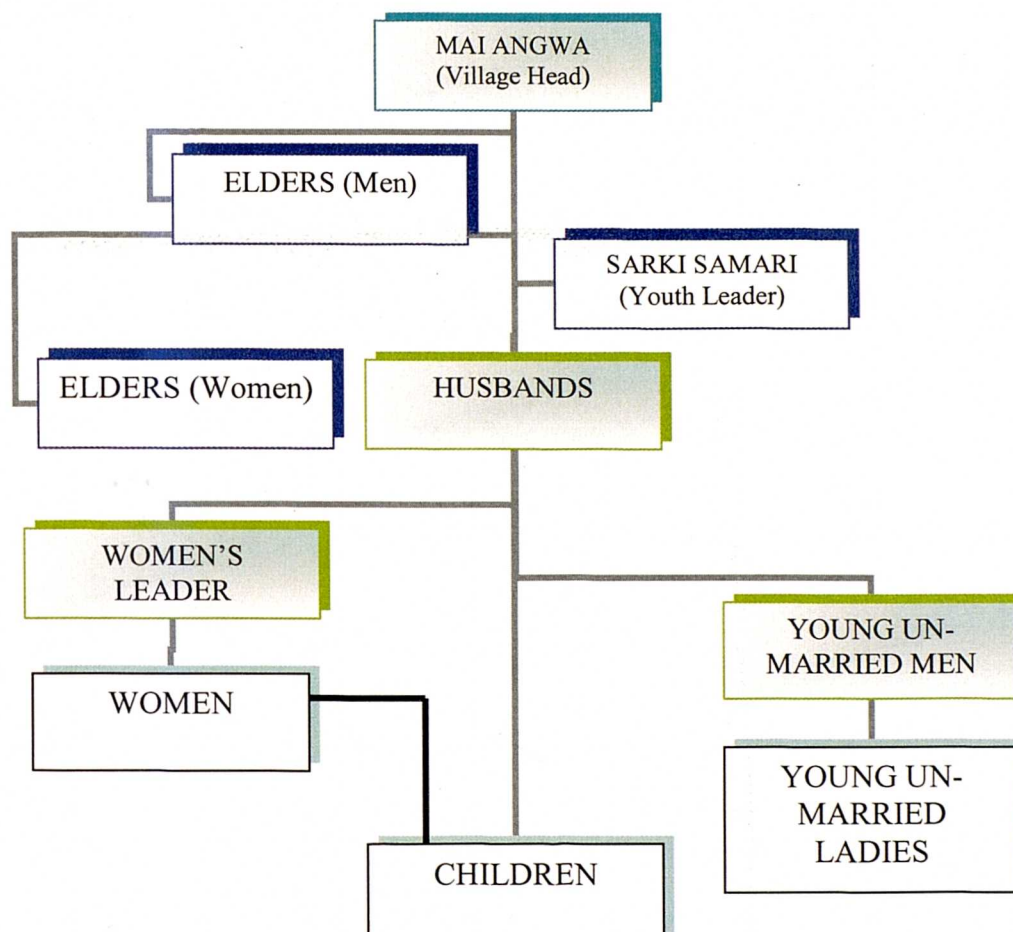
Fig. 4.6  
**Social Organisation Chart for Gora by Group 3 (men)**



\* Comprising resident and non-resident elders and accomplished Gora indigenes

Source: Field work - PRA Activity  
 (Gora, 21/05/03)

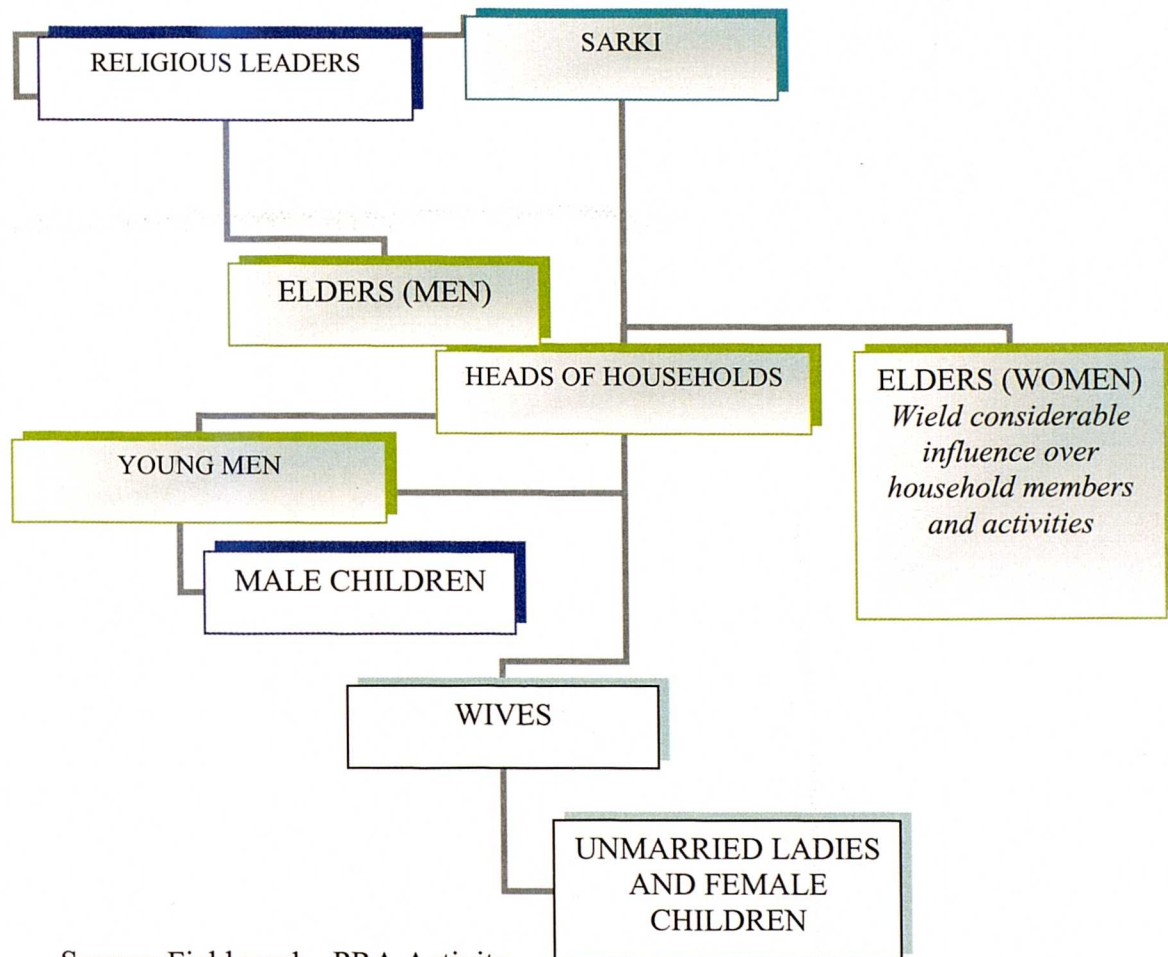
Fig. 4.7  
**Social Organisation Chart for Kushehe**



Source: Field work – PRA Activity  
 (Kushehe, 03/08/03)

Fig. 4.8

### Social Organisation Chart for Hausa-Fulani Community, Bukuru



Source: Field work– PRA Activity  
(Bukuru, 20/07/03)

Consequently, the low social regard for women was a constant refrain among Jaba women. Regardless of character, talent or ability women do not have the right (*isini*) by Jaba tradition to exercise rule or control over the people. Therefore, they are neither listened to nor their views respected, and women were listed – by men as well as women – along with children (especially female), as the least powerful in Gora society. Hence on the Venn diagram (Fig. 4.5) and the organisation chart (Fig. 4.6) respectively they appear at the outside the concentric circles of power and at the bottom of the social ladder.

Female exclusion begins at the level of family and kinship. In Gora, not only is their capacity to participate in nuclear family decision making circumscribed by the will of husbands/fathers, women do not attend the statutory periodical extended family/kinship meetings during which issues and concerns relating to family life are discussed. Among the three communities studied, in the domestic domain the man/husband is the father to everybody in the household, including his wife; everybody defers to his authority. This is not a reciprocal relationship; the wife is not mother to her husband but only to their children (and possibly those of co-wives). In relation to her husband she is a child not a mother. Very often the husband's mother is part of the household and plays the role of mother to all its occupants. The diagrams in Fig. 4.7 and Fig. 4.8 show that women elders, especially mothers of sons, wield considerable intra-household (and to a lesser extent community) influence among the Birom and Hausa-Fulani. Nevertheless, the patrilineal set up in all communities studied accords wives the status of perpetual outsider-stranger as Chundung Fidelis observed, "We have left our homes so it is compulsory that they [husbands] have the power over us. He brought us." Therefore, a married man has,

The ability to give orders and get the wife to do the husband's bidding like telling her to 'go and fetch water for me, go and do this for me', and a wife has no control over the decisions because she is a woman. So men have more voice than women and are more listened to within the household.

This sentiment was echoed by a Jaba participant who claimed that men are able to demonstrate power (*nuna iko*) as the owner of the house and thereby enforce their wishes on the wives and other household members under them. She gave a similar reason to Chundung for the power imbalance in marital relations:

For example me and my husband, he is the one who married me from my house and brought me to his house. That is the power that he will show to me because he has the authority to tell me to do this and that. If he says I should not do something I will not do it. (20/05/03)



Amina Abdullahi from Bukuru contended that since Islam gives men the right to marry four wives, all women are placed under men who “are above.” For Habiba Yakubu from Gora age-long traditional prejudice is responsible for female subordination. She drew a parallel between female marginalisation in national politics and their invisibility and powerlessness at family/village levels: “Even if we look at our nation, like in politics and other things, you will hardly find a woman becoming anything important in the country.” (19/05/03)

Thus, the rationale, advanced by all PRA participants (as seen in Appendix C: Tables 4.1-4.3) for female exclusion from private and public decision-making structures resides in tradition and religion via ordinances contained in the Bible and Koran, which prescribe the gendered hierarchal organisation of society. Ironically, in Gora and Kushehe, it is religion through the *zumunta mata* (women’s fellowship) that provides space for considerable female influence. Women are very active in church functions and mundane organisation. Indeed, one of the few spheres where women said they had considerable autonomy is in the area of their spiritual lives and religious observances. However, women’s fellowship leaders exercise authority largely with respect to issues relating to the church membership and activities of women.

Strict gender hierarchy among the Birom and Hausa-Fulani is slightly mollified by respect for elderly women, and the marriage institution as a status symbol. In as much as a woman behaves according to acceptable social norms and expectations, displaying moral rectitude, marrying and raising children, and shunning sexual promiscuity she is seen as carrying herself well and therefore deserving of respect. When asked about the benefits of being female in Kushehe it became clear that these accrue primarily to married women who receive societal recognition as responsible members of the community. According to Bang Julius,

If you are married people respect you; but if you are ‘roaming about’ unmarried you don’t get respect. A woman who is not married is still a ‘girl’ and is not respected. Even if you are a girl (age-wise) if you are in *gidan aure* (the house of marriage) you will be given respect.

Marriage provides an avenue for women to act independently in certain routine aspects of day-to-day household management. Some of the women said they were free to decide on what meals to cook, and during elections could vote for candidates of their choice, though a few still had to seek their husband’s preference in culinary matters. Notwithstanding such pockets of freedom, Hausa-Fulani participants discussed how marriage, particularly for poor uneducated women, places limitations on female choice

and autonomy, especially in the area of reproductive rights. Marriage in Islam is a compulsory religious duty enjoined upon all believers. The unequal power balance between wives and husbands gives the latter the right to determine the number of children the couple will have and renders women's bodies sites of male control. When asked whether they could make choices about the number of children to have all seven participants, except Amina Abdullahi, said it was their husbands who determined the number of children as the following excerpt exemplifies:

RESR: So what happens if a woman gets married and she doesn't want too many children, like not more than three but she marries a man who wants ten, what will she do?

Ziliatu Ibrahim: She has to get ready to have the ten

Despite the foregoing only Jaba women said the lack of autonomy was a prioritised concern. However, Hausa-Fulani women admitted being unhappy at the indolence and poverty induced by restrictions placed on their movements (see page 139). Yet, when Birom and Hausa-Fulani women were asked, "Who are the powerless in your community?" only children and social deviants were categorised as such. The explanation for this may reside in the statement made by one of the Birom participants to the effect that no woman actually perceives herself as a leader or initiator because leadership, and whatever goes along with it, is not associated with women in domestic or public affairs. For example, even where a Birom woman has the economic power to build a house she would not do so because it is not regarded as an appropriate gender role. Thus, women may not regard themselves as deprived or disempowered because they are not entitled to power in the first place, and the quest for it is alien to female socialisation.

This is not to suggest that women are entirely content with the situation. Indeed, they advanced a variety of practical and strategic planning needs to address the concerns mentioned under the three sub-headings above. These are discussed below.

### **4.3 Planning Needs**

Grassroots women spoke of the changes they desired to address their prioritised concerns. These are categorised below into practical and strategic planning needs, albeit with an emphasis on the former. Although none of the women had previous knowledge about the NPW a summary of its goals and objectives were presented during the sessions. On the whole, grassroots women were positively disposed to the NPW agenda. They felt that the policy, if implemented, would improve the living conditions of

Nigerian women but many expressed pessimism at the possibility of actualising the NPW. They also identified potential obstacles to meeting development planning needs, which coincided with obstacles to the successful implementation of the NPW. The changes analysis matrix in Table 4.10 lists some of the desired changes (planning needs) and obstacles mentioned.

### ***4.3.1 Practical Gender Needs***

Based on their prioritised concerns the women suggested a number of practical gender planning needs akin to women in development projects. Hausa-Fulani women emphasised government responsibility in establishing vocational/skills training centres where women could learn to knit, make soap, and other such crafts, and in providing equipment for the take off of home-based industries. In this regard, the women lauded the efforts of past and present First Ladies who had made efforts to invite Hausa-Fulani women for consultations. The Office of the Plateau State First Lady provided a forum for consulting the women, including those in *purdah*, to assess needs and conduct vocational training. Birom and Hausa-Fulani women wanted government to pay workers regularly so their husbands could meet family obligations. At the time of the PRA session civil servants in Plateau State were owed several months salary arrears. The women in Bukuru claimed that if their husbands had more disposable income they would take care of wives' daily needs and even send some of them back to school. They could also give them start-up capital for trading. Changes desired by Jaba women in the economic sphere centred on practical gender needs such as access to:

1. Direct control over resources through credit for small-scale non-agricultural income generating activities.
2. Fertiliser for use on their gardens as well as on family farms. Besides stipulating institutionalised credit, extension services and farm inputs to women the NPW recommends the development of "environmentally friendly technology including biogas and organic fertilisers for the promotion of sustainable agriculture (Item 10.3 (2), (4), (7)).

TABLE 4.10: Change Analysis Matrix<sup>117</sup>

	a. What Women Need	b. What grassroots women think about the NPW
<b>1. Changes Women Want</b>	<p>1. Women should be empowered economically through skills training and credit facilities so they can meet basic needs like healthcare and children's school fees</p> <p>2. Include women as government workers and community leaders</p> <p>3. Employment and bursaries for youth and for young girls to develop themselves</p> <p>4. Basic amenities: pipe-borne water to reduce work, access roads, transport costs</p> <p>5. Good leadership</p> <p>6. Husbands to stop beating wives</p>	<p>1. NPW goals are what women need for a better life</p> <p>2. Even if we want change it is hopeless; change is impossible because of age-long tradition</p> <p>3. Let them change it and let's see how life will be for us.</p> <p>4. Women want to cooperate with men not control them. Women want partnership.</p> <p>5. The goals are good but some are contrary to religion</p>
<b>2. Obstacles to Change &amp; Implementation of NPW Goals &amp; Objectives</b>	<p>1. <b>Problems with women:</b>  a. Bad character b. lack of money c. lack of obedience, self-doubt d. lack of confidence willpower (<i>ba zuchia</i>) e. Shame f. there is fear in women g. Women are not educated or well-informed h. Lack of unity among women. Some women will oppose female leadership. They will say, 'It is not good for a woman to be a leader. A woman won't be able to lead.'</p> <p>2. <b>Problems with men:</b> a. men will not agree because of all the (economic) benefits they will lose e.g. inheritance rights. It will be hard because of male opposition.</p> <p>3. <b>Problems with tradition and religion:</b> a. for women to inherit land will be a problem because before in the olden days they were not distributing the land with the women. Our religion forbids it.  b. Because right from the beginning women have not had the opportunity to stand before people (lack of a public role for women – no role models)</p> <p>4. <b>Problems with marriage structure:</b> women who are married have no authority in their fathers' or husbands' houses so they may be hindered from change</p>	
<b>3. Women's Change Agendas</b>	We already have our women's group and we do contribution ( <i>adase</i> - rotating loan and credit scheme).	
<b>4. What Change Strategies are needed to Implement NPW? (Mechanisms)</b>	<p>1. Government should: Face women's education, give them employment, visit the village to find out our problems, provide adult education and basic services and amenities e.g. water, free health services, pay attention to teen pregnancy</p> <p>2. Women should: Show interest and motivation, get together, take our requests to our leaders, form a women's group and chose leaders, write a report and give leaders to take to government</p>	
<b>5. Who is responsible for Implementing NPW Goals &amp; Objectives?</b>	<p>1. Leaders (men)</p> <p>2. Important people</p> <p>3. Government</p> <p>4. The chief</p>	

Source: Field work – PRA Activity

<sup>117</sup> Matrix data covers issues discussed in chapters Four (items 1, 2 & 3), Seven (item 2) and Eight (items 4 & 5).

3. Social amenities, especially pipe-borne water, to reduce time spent on domestic chores, and access road into Gora to reduce transport costs

None of the participants from Kushehe or the Jos main market linked increased income to more strategic outcomes like personal autonomy, accomplishment or political empowerment. Discussions on change strategies, for instance through market women's associations and other women's groups, revealed that the women are too preoccupied with small self-help methods like rotating savings and credit schemes (ROSCAS) for the immediate alleviation of poverty to be bothered with broad-based networking. In fact, similar to the NPW policy thrust (Item 5.3), the vast majority of grassroots women view economic empowerment from an instrumentalist perspective. The NPW argues for women's economic empowerment as a means to national growth and development; grassroots women see it primarily as a means to counteract material deprivation and help them fulfil their traditional family responsibilities better.

The same applies to educational empowerment. All women desired that government provide finance-based assistance towards the education of their children, further education for young women and adult education schemes for older pre-literate women to enhance income earning power to meet basic needs. Jaba women wanted government to bring education closer to the community by awarding admissions, scholarships and bursaries to young people, and building a secondary school in Gora so that the children would not have to walk the six miles to the nearest one in Ankum. But semi-rural, semi-urban and urban women from Kushehe, Bukuru and Jos respectively displayed apathy towards government schools. Instead, their preference was for access to money to finance child education in private schools. Item 6.2 of the NPW tackles female low educational status by specifying the expansion of facilities for "second chance" education and the reinforcement of non-formal educational programmes to provide selective types of learning/training for adult women specially targeting those with special needs such as nomads, market women, women in *purdah*, and rural areas among others.

Grassroots women are not entirely oblivious to the strategic potential of economic and educational empowerment (see next Section). However, their priority is to address immediate material and physical concerns. With respect to the latter, Jaba and market women felt the solution was for them to have disposable income that would enable them access and pay for better medical care. Jaba women also expressed the need for community leaders and elders to talk to the men to stop beating their wives.

### 4.3.2 *Strategic Gender Needs*

As can be deduced from Table 4.11 some grassroots women yearn for change in their prescribed gender roles to improve their overall living conditions. The table contains women's responses when asked what they wished they could do but could not because they were women.<sup>118</sup> Jaba women came up with strategic needs that would entail significant shifts in gender roles and relations. In Kushehe one participant said she would like to be the head of the home and experience being in control of everything in the home. Two participants said they wished they could become the Clan Head. Four said they would like to build and own their own homes. One of the four women felt frustration, not so much for being a woman, but from the lack of income, which prevented her from building a house and contributing meaningfully to the household. However, as pointed out above even when a woman does have income it is not socially appropriate for her to build a house.

In addition to the list of things they wished they could do PRA participants mentioned things they did not like doing, but which female gender roles compelled them to do. These are shown in Table 4.12. The planning needs identified and desires expressed by participants belie popular assertions by critics who accuse women activists engaged in grassroots empowerment of fomenting non-existent discontent. Such critics claim that rural and poor urban women are satisfied with their lot and their needs are limited to basic survival. However, it is clear from Tables 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12 that women desire structural and strategic changes that would enhance material well-being, expand opportunities for community participation and self-actualisation, and increase household/social privileges and prestige. Suggested strategic gender planning needs include taking steps to promote female leadership, changing societal attitudes towards women through awareness, education and information. Jaba and Hausa-Fulani participants regarded post-secondary education as a key factor in increasing female autonomy and participation in leadership.

For example, according to Amina Abdullahi from Bukuru educated women are more likely to have a greater amount of control over their fertility and end up having fewer children. She cited examples such as Hajiya Aishatu Ishmail (former Minister for Women Affairs and Youth Development).

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<sup>118</sup> This was a gender awareness exercise during PRA session. Focus group participants (i.e. Jos main market women) did not do this.

TABLE 4.11

**Male Roles Grassroots Women Desire**

<i>Desired Role</i>	<i>Why?</i>	<i>PRA Location</i>
Marry a wife	To cook and clean	Gora, Kushehe
Inherit land and property	To be an important person in the community	Gora
Have my own household	To have power and exercise control	Kushehe
Build my own house	To have my own space	Gora, Kushehe
Farm yams, be a carpenter, pastor	To have more opportunities to do what I enjoy and earn money	Gora, Kushehe
Become the village chief	I think I will do a good job of it. I will show compassion and listen to others.	Gora, Kushehe
Move about freely	To look for work	Bukuru
Have more resources to give to others	To feel like I am contributing something meaningful	Kushehe, Bukuru

Source: Field work – PRA Activity in Gora, Kushehe and Bukuru (19-20/05/03; 20/07/03; 03/08/03)

TABLE 4.12

**Female Gender Roles Grassroots Women Find Undesirable**

<i>Role</i>	<i>PRA Location</i>
Farming to feed children	Kushehe
Leaving my family or home town for marriage	Gora, Kushehe
Enduring domestic violence	Gora
Housekeeping	Gora, Kushehe
Not being able to move about without getting permission	Bukuru

Source: Field work – PRA Activity in Gora, Kushehe and Bukuru (19-20/05/03; 20/07/03; 03/08/03)

The following excerpt illuminates this point:

RESR<sup>119</sup>: So what do you feel about women who have already attained very high positions of leadership? How did they get there?

Amina Abdullahi: People like Aisha Ishmail?

RESR: Ah ha!

Hanatu Musa: Those ones since they are educated their men allow them to do that sort of work. Their husbands gave them the space to do that sort of work.

Zainab Lawal: They are educated, and their husbands are educated. So of course they will be able to do what they want to do.

Notwithstanding, the acknowledged economic and political benefits of female education Hausa-Fulani and Jaba women were categorical in stating that culture and religion impose limits on the extent to which education can alter gender roles and relations. With regard to culture several Jaba women expressed doubt over the possibility of change due to the entrenched nature of traditional practices and the intense conflict attempts at change will generate – particularly over women's access to land and property. The following statement by Habiba Yakubu, (PRA, 19/05/03), a primary school teacher and divorcee with three children, exemplified this pessimism:

Since things are already the way they are even if we want change we will not get it because right from the word go things have always been this way. So we at this time will not be able to change it.

Indeed, the validity of such pessimism towards the changes women desired for themselves and the NPW agenda derives primarily from women's compliance with religious and culture-based gender discrimination and men's attitudes to change.<sup>120</sup> Discussions with Hausa-Fulani women provide an example and illustrate the tension between the desire for change and religious identification. Their statements conveyed an impression of acceptance of conventional gender roles, which they believed were prescribed by religious texts, interpreted by religious leaders, and therefore not subject to change. Thus, change is impossible owing to the divine origin of male super-ordinance over women. Although, these Hausa-Fulani women expressed some dissatisfaction and would desire certain structural changes in gender relations, in view

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<sup>119</sup> Researcher

<sup>120</sup> Women also expressed pessimism at government commitment to assisting women. This reflects a general apathy towards government pronouncements and programmes based on previous track record and will be discussed in greater detail under institutional capability in Chapter Seven.



of their religious faith they do not feel that the capacity to bring about change falls within the purview of individual or collective female action. Thus, Ziliatu asserted that, if gender equality in property ownership and inheritance rights was a Muslim practice, “...nobody would refuse...” The Change Analysis Matrix (Table 4.10) displays further evidence that grassroots women did not consider far-reaching change possible. They listed only authority figures as those responsible for, and therefore capable of, implementing the NPW.

Perspectives shared by Jos market women provide a further example. Gender-biased practices in property and inheritance rights existed to varying degrees in all eight ethnic groups represented. The women appeared to accept gender discrimination as incontestable cultural norms and even expressed ownership over practices against them. For instance, Jummai Garba said, “We too in our place we don’t give women land. And we don’t also make you marry the brother of your former husband...” Rather than entertain any notion of social change they seemed content to accept smaller inheritance shares (compared to those of male siblings) in their fathers’ households – where females are residents-in-transit, and to gain access to husbands’ wealth through their children, particularly sons. Men’s attitude to change also poses a problem. During PRA discussions with Jaba men the NPW objective of equitable resource distribution to improve women’s lives met with stiff resistance from participants as comments by Bohar, Gigin and Ishaya indicated (see page 85).

#### **4.4 Survey: NGO Members Articulate Women’s Interests**

Table 4.13 indicates that thirteen (28.8%) of the 45 women’s organisations that participated in the questionnaire survey were community-based groups and cultural/ethnic groups located in rural or semi-rural areas among grassroots women (see list of NGOs in Appendix F: Table F1). Fig. 4.9 shows that 34.9% of group members said they targeted rural, urban poor, poorest of the poor, illiterate women and farmers as primary beneficiaries of projects. And 15.8% said they targeted all categories of vulnerable and needy women, including those at the grassroots. Furthermore, certain questions explicitly requested that participants share the experiences and perspectives of target beneficiaries. It is on these premises that the views of members of women’s organisations are presented to corroborate or contrast those of grassroots women whom they are part of or work with.

Tables 4.14 (a) and (b) indicate a relatively high level of awareness about the existence of the NPW: 99 participants (66.4%) had heard about it. However, only 53

(36.8%) had read: part of it (23.6%), most of it (6.9%) and all of it (6.3%). Women's rights, welfare/rehabilitation and business/professional bodies had the highest level of awareness with 96.3%, 75% and 64.1% of members respectively saying they had heard of the policy.

**TABLE 4.13: Frequency of Organisational Type/ Membership**

	Type of Organisation	No. of Groups	% of Sample (organisational representation)	No. of Members
1	Business and Professional	8	17.8	35
2	Community Development	8	17.8	24
3	Cultural and Ethnic	5	11	19
4	Women's/Gender Rights	8	17.8	25
5	Faith-based	8	17.8	29
6	Welfare/Rehabilitation	4	8.9	11
7	Others/Generalist	4	8.9	16
	Total	45	100	159

Source: SPSS Survey Results

**TABLES 4.14(a & b)**

**a. Level of Awareness: Members who know about the NPW**

I have heard about the NPW

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	99	62.3	66.4	66.4
	no	49	30.8	32.9	99.3
	Unsure	1	.6	.7	100.0
	Total	149	93.7	100.0	
Missing	99	10	6.3		
Total		159	100.0		

**b. Level of Awareness: Members who have read the NPW**

I have read the NPW

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	91	57.2	63.2	63.2
	part of it	34	21.4	23.6	86.8
	most of it	10	6.3	6.9	93.8
	all of it	9	5.7	6.3	100.0
	Total	144	90.6	100.0	
Missing	99	15	9.4		
Total		159	100.0		

Source: SPSS Survey Results

**Fig. 4.9: Target Beneficiaries of Women's Groups**



Source: SPSS Survey Results

#### 4.4.1 *Prioritised Concerns*

The questionnaire was designed to find out members' assessments of the nature and severity of problems faced by Nigerian women, as well as the assessments of the women they met/served on the field. The responses are fairly consistent across the various questions approaching the issue of prioritised concerns from different angles. In question four participants were asked to select the four most important obstacles to a better life for women from a 17-item list. The results are shown in Fig. 4.10; those chosen were similar to concerns raised by grassroots women: 1. cultural beliefs and practices, (61.6%), 2. the lack of formal education (59.6%), 3. material poverty (52%) and 4. ignorance due to lack of awareness and information (47.6%). Part C of question four required participants to circle the obstacle they would rank the highest among the four. Fig. 4.11 contains the results. Responses showed a similar pattern to part A as follows:

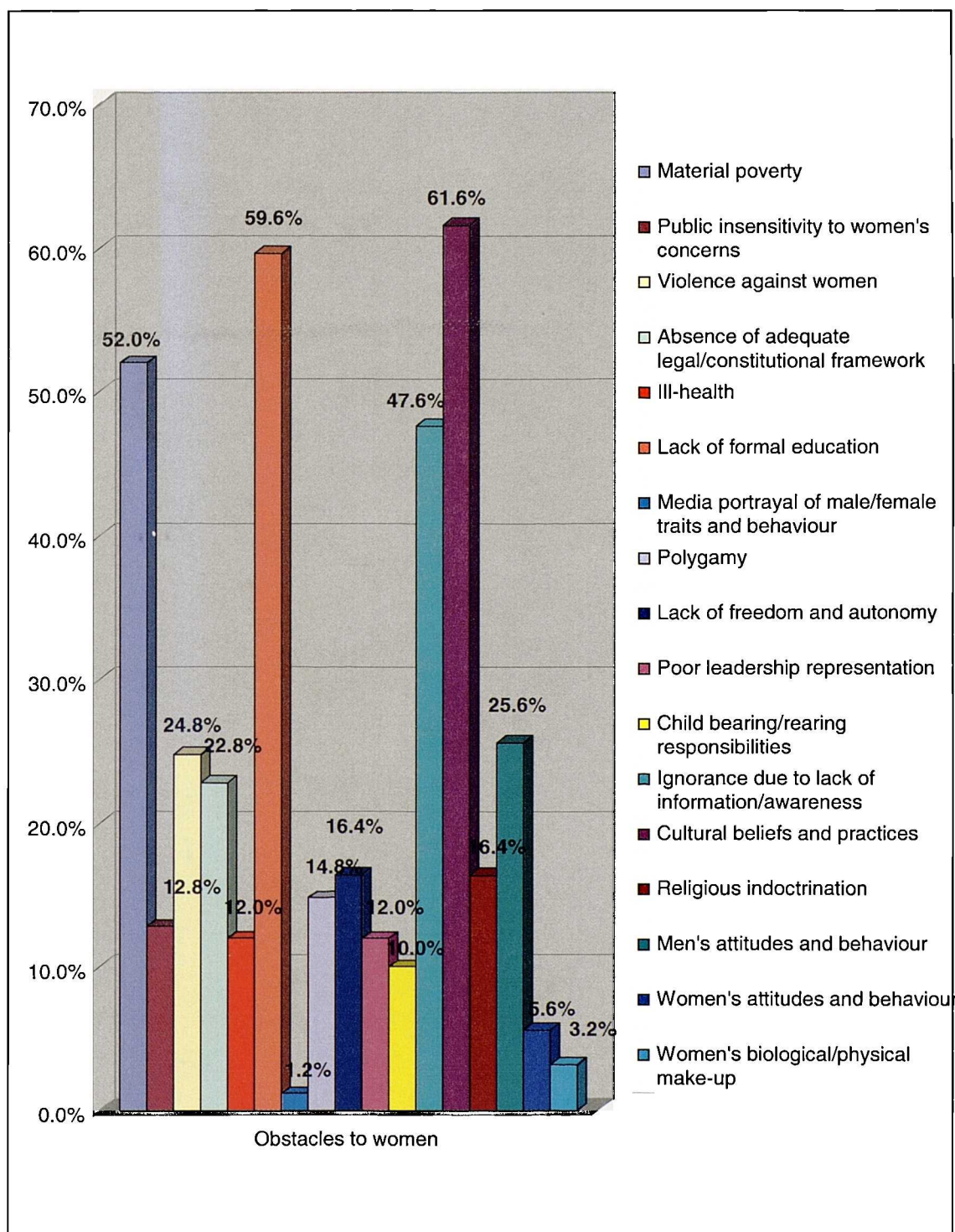
1. Cultural beliefs and practices	21.3%
2. The lack of formal education	20.5%
3. Material poverty	16.4%
4. Ignorance due to lack of awareness and information	12.3%

However, there is a variation in the ranking of prioritised concerns when responses are analyzed according to sex and organisational type. Taking into account the small number of men in the sample, a higher proportion of male participants ranked culture and material poverty (35.29% and 29.41% respectively) as the most important obstacle than female participants (19.42% and 14.58% respectively). A higher proportion of women (22.33%) than men (11.76%) selected the lack of education. No male participant considered men's attitudes and behaviours to be *the* most important obstacle while 4.85% of women did.

Business/professional organisations selected material poverty as the most important obstacle to a better life, community-based development organisations chose the lack of formal education, cultural/ethnic organisations chose men's attitudes and behaviour, an equal number of participants from women/gender rights organisations (26.09%) chose material poverty and cultural beliefs and practices, faith-based groups chose the lack of formal education, welfare/rehabilitation groups chose cultural beliefs and practices and an equal number of participants from generalist organisations (12.5%) accorded priority to material poverty, lack of education, ignorance, cultural beliefs and practices, religious indoctrination and men's attitudes and behaviours.

Fig. 4.10

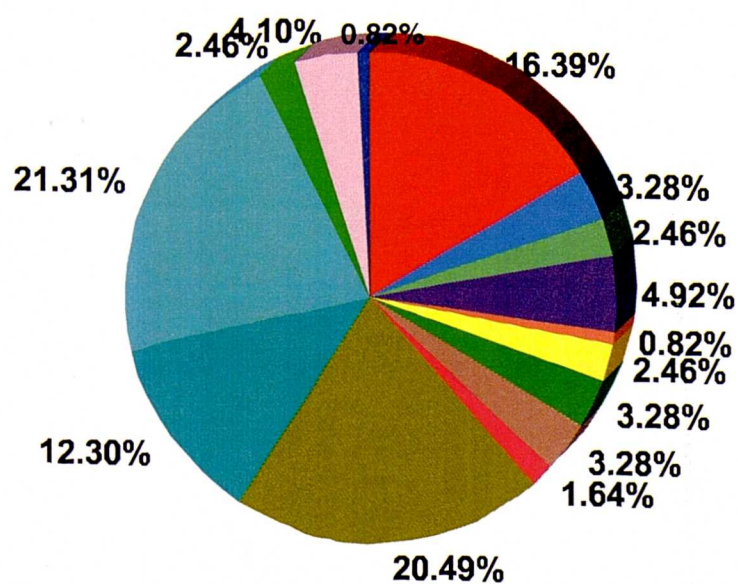
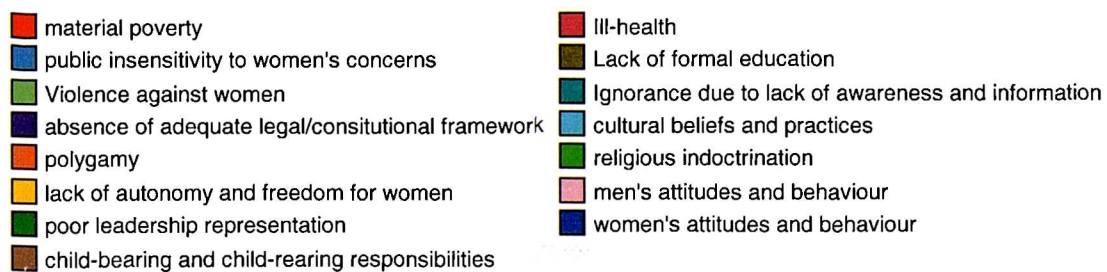
## Four Most Important Obstacles to a Better Life for Women



Source: SPSS Survey Results/Excel Chart

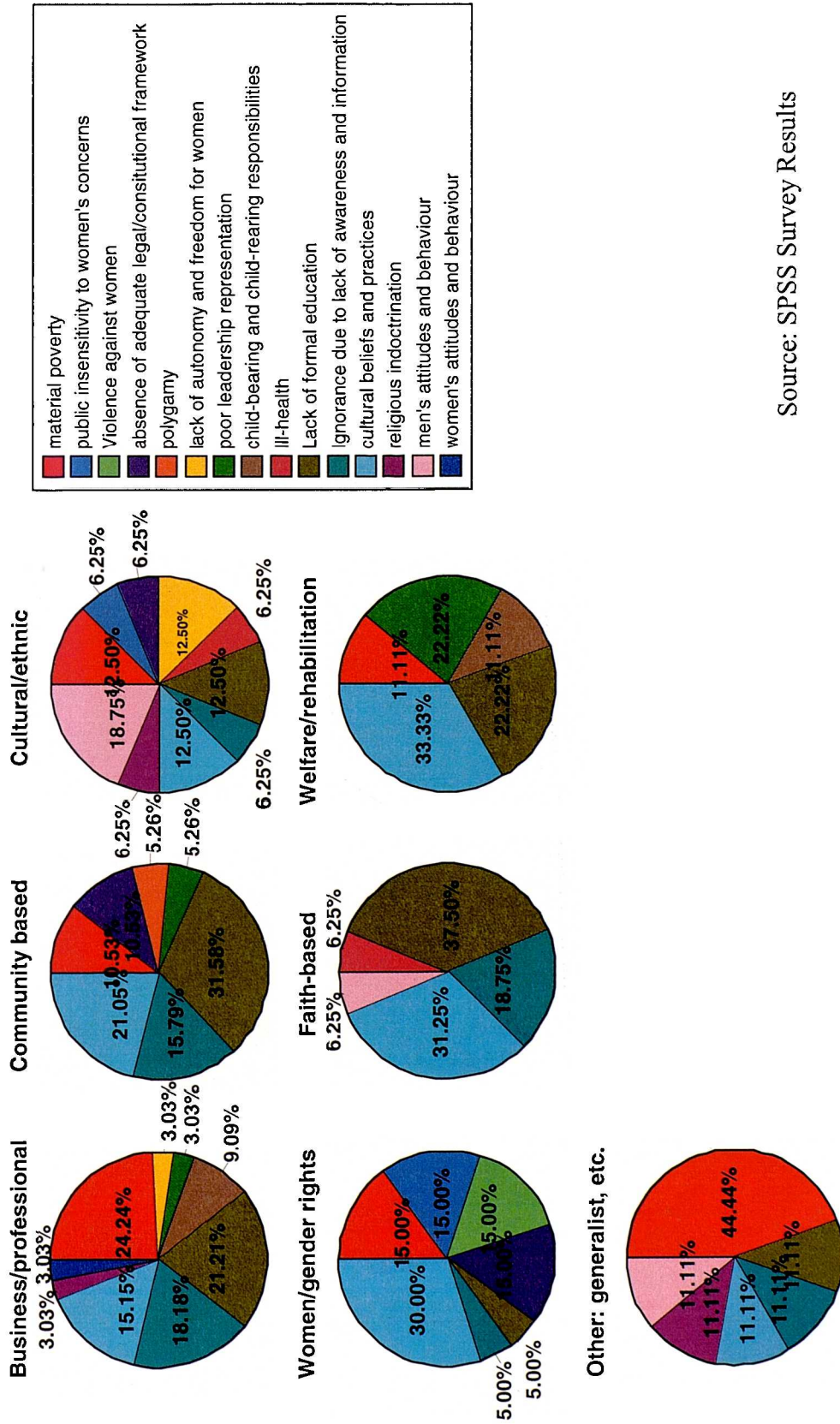
Fig. 4.11

### Most Important Obstacle to a Better Life for Women



Source: SPSS Survey Results

**Fig. 4.12**  
**Most Important Obstacle by Organisational Type**



Source: SPSS Survey Results

Fig. 4.12 provides further details of these ranking differentials indicating the four most important obstacles selected by each organisational type.

From the 17-item list participants were also asked to select the four they considered as being the least important obstacles to a better life for women. 'Women's biological /physical make-up' was selected most frequently in 52.3% of responses by all organisational types except culture/ethnic groups, indicating participants' belief that socioeconomic progress and public performance are not biologically determined. In response to question seven a participant explained that: 'They [women] must recognise their challenges as man-made, social and cultural and not biological and therefore strive hard to break out of their limitations through hard work and determination to succeed.'<sup>121</sup> The next ranked least important by 43.2% participants was 'Child-bearing and child-rearing responsibilities' indicating that women do not regard their reproductive role as a hindrance to development potential.

This may reflect the traditional community support available to women of child-bearing age, through assistance from relatives, friends and/or paid domestic helpers. That culture/ethnic groups ranked the reproductive role as the least important ahead of women's biological make-up may be evidence of the idealised place accorded to marriage and children in the Nigerian cultural context but it does not reflect the time constraints encountered by grassroots women as a result of reproductive responsibilities. Nevertheless, participants' responses may explain why the NPW provides for labour saving devices to facilitate women's domestic responsibilities rather than agitate for gender role flexibility. Another factor possibly influencing the selection of this option is the age of the sample most of who ranged between 41 and 50 years, and were largely past the child-bearing phase. The less structured groups such as Rhema women's fellowship in Abuja, and some women/gender rights groups had younger participants whereas cultural, community development and professional groups, which comprised the majority of the sample, had older members. Women of child-bearing age have less time to participate actively in social groups and would probably not be at the executive level even if they did.

Despite the prevalence of TV images of women as sex symbols, witches, gold diggers or stereotypes of domesticity, the 'Media portrayal of women' was not seen as having a significant effect on the condition of women's lives ranking as the third least important obstacle by 32.5% participants. However, participants from

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<sup>121</sup> Grassroots women mentioned problems with women as a hindrance to change but in relation to women's attitudes not biology. See Table 4.10.



business/professional and culture/ethnic organisations placed ‘Women’s attitudes and behaviour’ in third place. ‘Polygamy’ was the fourth to be rated as not having much significance by 29.5% but only two organisational types, namely business/professional and community development groups accounted for all responses. The data on marriage type does not indicate a correlation between being in a polygamous marriage and the ranking of polygamy as a priority concern.

In question 8 participants had to list the problems most commonly complained about by women they served in the field. The results of this open-ended question provide a deeper insight into members’ responses to question 4. The four most commonly reported concerns of women they worked with in the field are shown in Fig. 4.13. These were:

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Poverty (unemployment and financial dependency)                 | 61.1% |
| 2. Male dominance (controlling attitudes and behaviour of men)     | 30.9% |
| 3. The lack of education/skills/information and awareness          | 28.9% |
| 4. Marginalisation (powerlessness, voicelessness, low self-esteem) | 22.8% |

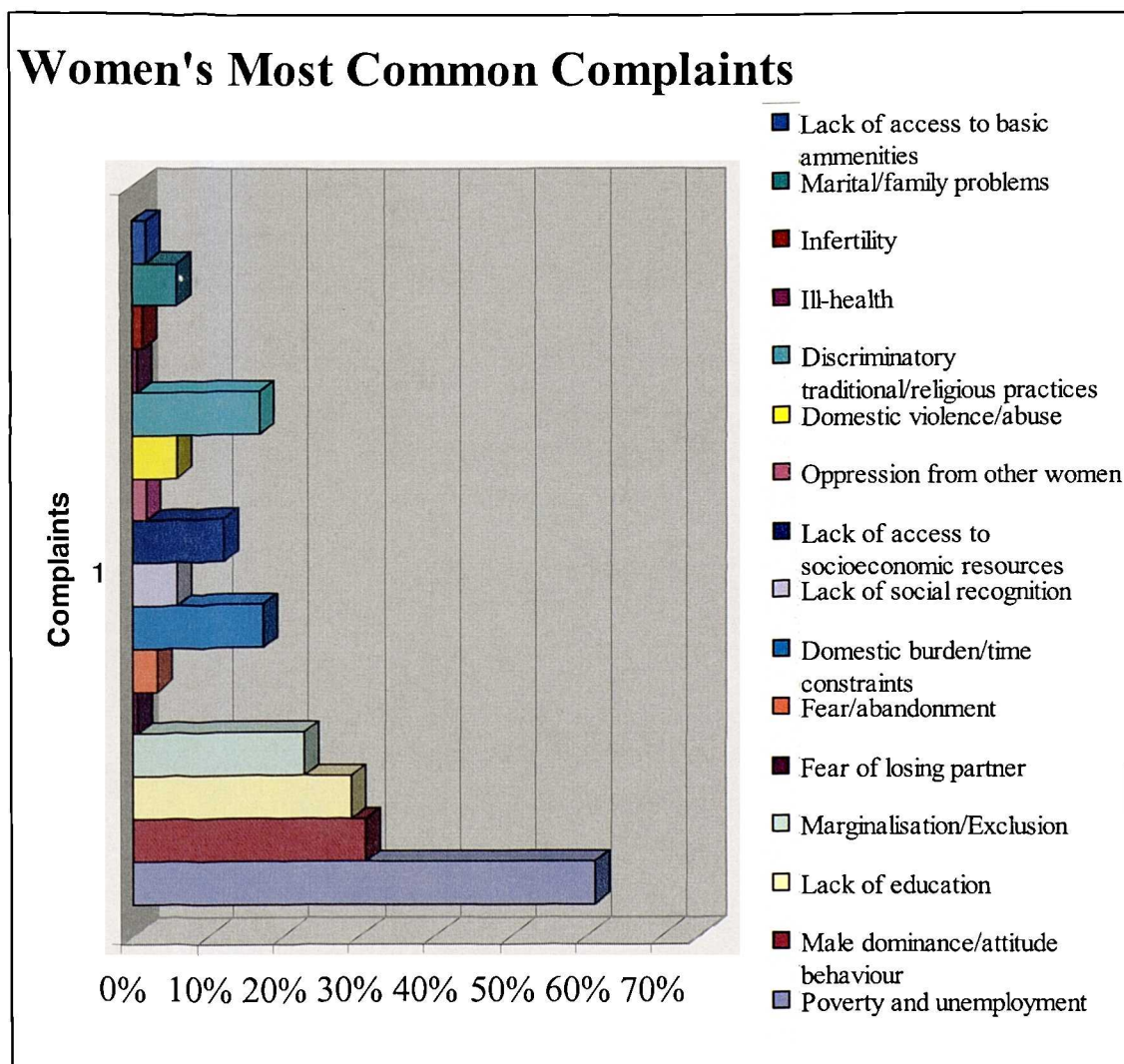
Stress and time constraints from women’s double reproductive/productive burden and discriminatory traditional /religious practices ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> place respectively with 17.4% and 16.8%. It is important to consider that male dominance and female marginalisation are both cardinal features of the majority of Nigerian cultures (and mainline religions). Thus, members of non-governmental organisations confirm that culture, or at least specific elements of Nigerian customary systems (male dominance and male bias), is a prioritised concern of the women they serve.

Results from question 9 show a similar trend in the ranking of problems. The question presented a list of six prioritised concerns identified by feminist scholar, Mọlara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), which she refers to as mountains on the back of African women. Participants were asked to select the three most important mountains among which they were to assign one with the highest priority. Fig. 4.14 shows the three most frequently selected mountains which were:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Her own backwardness (due to ignorance, the lack of information and education) | 91.4% |
| 2. Oppression from traditional structures   | 85.6% |
| 3. The African man  | 59.8% |

When asked to rank the most important mountain, in line with (1) and (2) above 45% chose 'her own backwardness' and 31% 'oppression from traditional structures.' However, Fig. 4.15 shows that 12% ranked 'herself because she internalised these oppressions' ahead of 'the African man' which only 10% opted for as the most important mountain on the back of African women. Those ranked the least were oppression from outside in the form of colonialism/neo-colonialism (1%) and her colour or her race (1%).

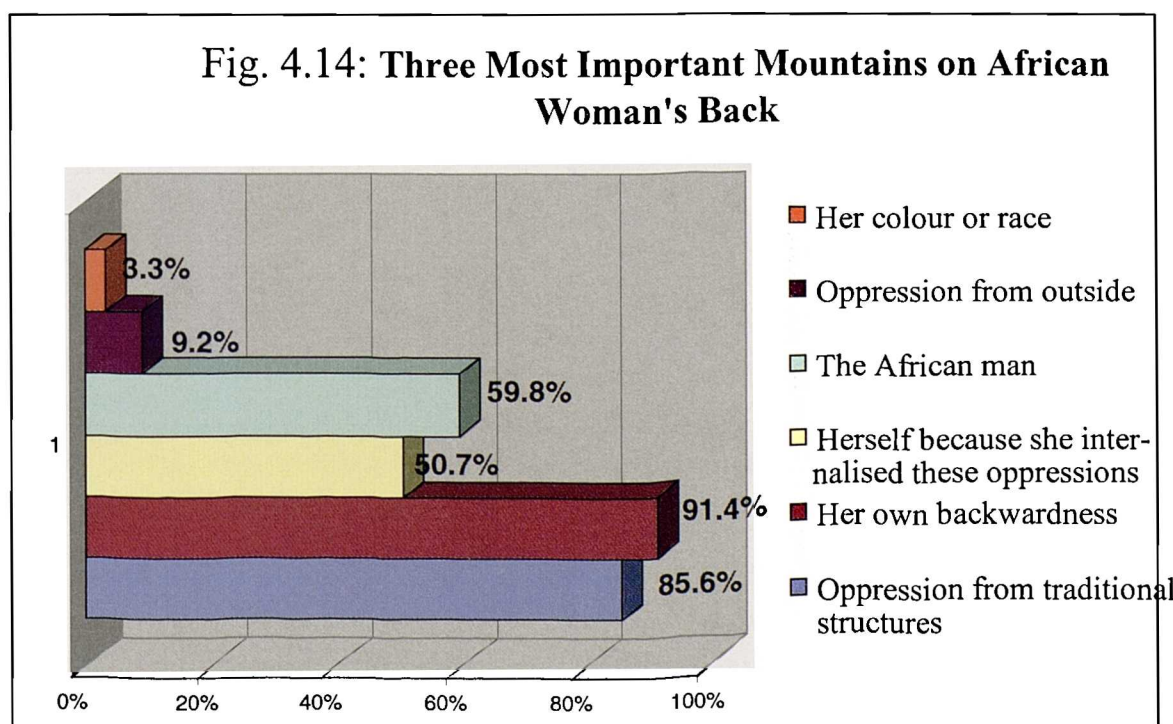
Fig. 4.13: Most Common Complaints



Source: SPSS Survey Results/Excel Chart

Thus the overwhelming majority of participants perceived domestic causes located within the African socio-cultural context, and the psyche of African women and men, as having a far greater impact on women's living conditions than external causes arising from the nature of international political economy. In Ogundipe-Leslie's analysis these two factors carry equal weight, and are in fact implicated in the others. It is noteworthy that Ogundipe-Leslie does not identify poverty as a separate mountain but subsumes it as a consequence of the international economic order. If poverty had been listed previous results indicate that there is every likelihood it would have been reflected here as a prioritised concern.

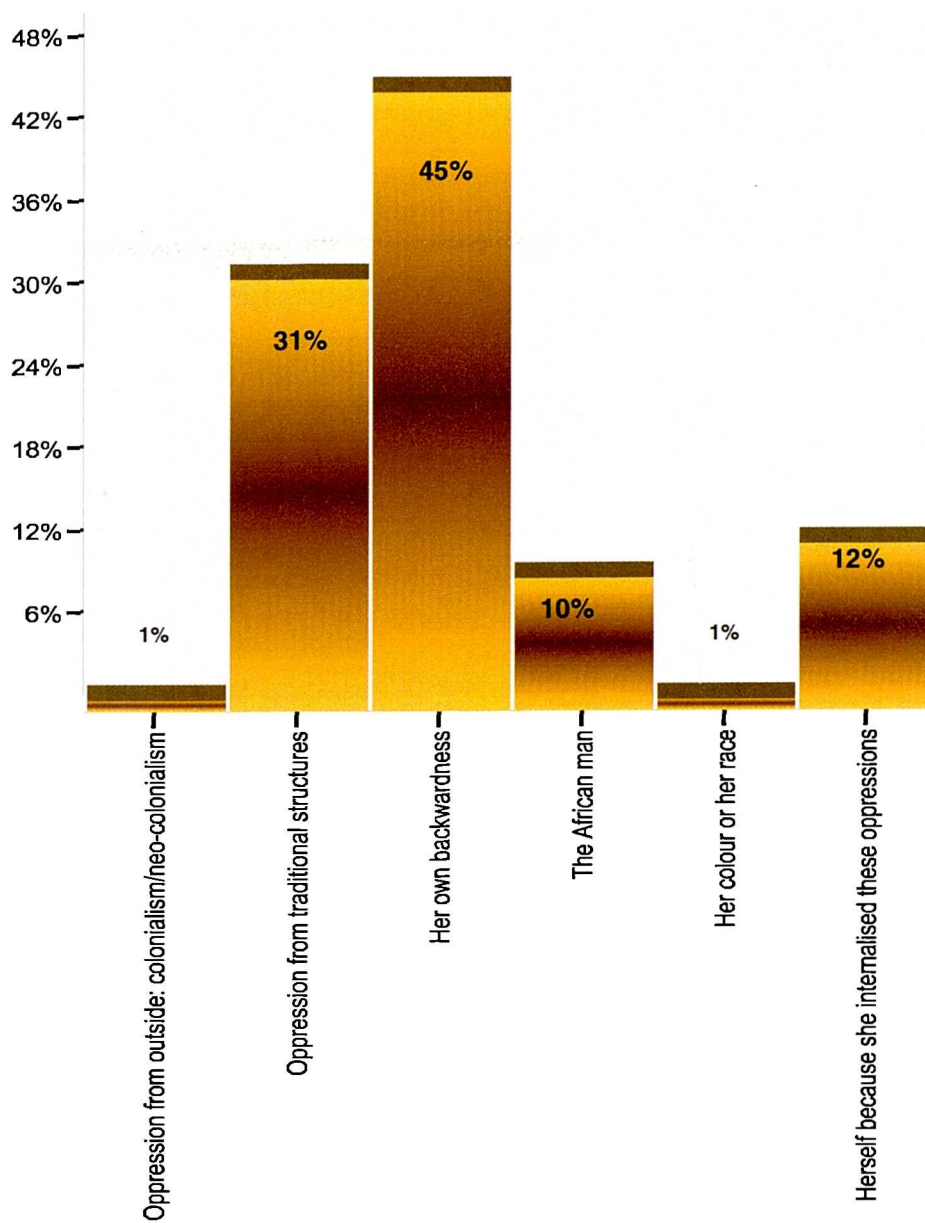
Overall, the prioritised concerns listed by questionnaire participants showed a similar pattern to those mentioned by grassroots women. The main difference lay in the emphasis between the four most consistently defined problems: harmful traditional beliefs and practices (HTPs), material poverty, lack of education, and lack of awareness/information/skills (ignorance).<sup>122</sup> While grassroots women emphasised poverty and the lack of education, information and skills, it was clear that in their daily realities they bore the brunt of HTPs.



Source: SPSS Results/Excel Chart

<sup>122</sup> The separation of education and ignorance in the questionnaire is justified by the fact that several interviewees distinguished between formal education and awareness on the premise that it is possible to have the former and yet be ignorant of one's environment, rights and opportunities that exist in society. Likewise there are women who have little or no formal education yet make effort, through networking and participation in women's groups, to gain information and an awareness of their environment (Sarah Jibril, Interview 20/08/04). These distinctions are reflected in survey responses.

Fig. 4.15

**Most Important Mountain on the Back of African**

#### 4.4.2 *Planning Needs*

The survey began with an open-ended question in which participants were asked to list what they believed were women's most important immediate and long-term (planning) needs.<sup>123</sup> These needs were codified into a 25-item index as shown in Tables 4.15 and 4.16 in descending order of frequency. To a large extent, responses to question one reflect what participants defined as women's most serious problems or prioritised concerns. Planning needs identified by questionnaire participants were also similar to those of other units of analysis. Here again economic empowerment and education were identified (by 66.9% and 65.6% participants respectively) and featured among the five most frequently listed short-term planning needs. Nevertheless, a considerable number of participants considered education and economic empowerment as both short and long-term planning needs. Both rank second (36.55%) and third (27.59%) as long-term planning needs identified in q.1b and occurring in reverse order to question 1a where economic empowerment took priority as a short-term need (Tables 4.16).

As part of an economic empowerment package more than half the participants specified the need for micro-credit, low interest government loans, and formal sector employment. For women's educational advancement both formal and non-formal adult education/training schemes were mentioned as vital components of an effective development plan. Good health/reproductive health delivery services, affirmative action/political representation and access to basic needs and social services were also identified among the top five immediate planning needs by 43 (28.5%), 37 (24.5%) and 35 (23.2%) participants respectively.

The majority of participants tend to see women's political participation/representation in leadership/ decision-making as a long-term rather than a short-term planning need. This could be why it failed to rank among the highest prioritised concerns in question four. However, Tables 4.16 reveals the importance of political empowerment as 57 (39.31%) participants identified it as the foremost long-term planning need. Responses to q.11 provide more insight into participants' perspectives on the importance of political participation. Question 11a provided a list of six empowerment steps from which to choose the three most important. Once more economic empowerment and educational empowerment were the top two selected by 135 (85.4%) and 130 (82.8%) out of 157 participants respectively (Fig. 4.16).

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<sup>123</sup> 151 of 159 participants answered question 1a (immediate needs) and 143 answered 1b (long-term needs).

**TABLE 4.15: Most Important Immediate Planning Needs**

<b>Immediate Planning Needs</b>	<b>No. of Participants<sup>124</sup></b>	<b>% of total</b>
<b>1. Economic empowerment</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>66.89</b>
<b>2. Education/training/skills/information</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>65.56</b>
<b>3. Good health/health services/ reproductive health</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28.48</b>
<b>4. Political representation: affirmative action, leadership</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24.5</b>
<b>5. Basic needs and social services</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23.18</b>
6. Human rights protection for gender equality, justice 6. Supportive relationships: Family/ marital stability	22	14.57
8. Production of/access to economic resources, opportunities	21	13.91
9. Psychological empowerment: self-esteem, awareness, consciousness 9. Abolish harmful cultural/religious beliefs and practices	18	11.92
11. Social reorientation/ gender sensitisation	16	10.6
12. Social support, recognition, appreciation	15	9.93
13. Capacity building: empowerment, leadership development and exposure	14	9.27
14. Protection from violence/abuse	12	7.94
15. Autonomy/freedom/independence	11	7.28
16. Legislative/constitutional change, enforcement /harmonisation/ CEDAW	9	5.96
17. Security (environment)	7	4.64
18. Spiritual/moral awakening/virtue	5	3.31
19. Reduction of reproductive burdens and stress 19. Property: land, houses, collateral	3	1.99
21. Clean environment	2	1.32
22. Dismantle patriarchal norms/ structures 23. Spiritual moral awakening 24. Fashion 25. Research towards a gender database	1	0.66

<sup>124</sup> 151 of 159 participants answered this section of question 1

**TABLE 4.16: Most Important Long-term Planning Needs**

<b>Long-term Planning Needs</b>	<b>No. of Participants<sup>125</sup></b>	<b>% of total</b>
1. Political representation: affirmative action, leadership	57	39.31
2. Education/training/skills/information	53	36.55
3. Economic empowerment	40	27.59
4. Human rights protection for gender equality, justice	24	16.55
5. Abolish harmful cultural/religious beliefs and practices	19	13.1
6. Production of/access to socioeconomic resources, opportunities	17	11.72
7. Legislative/constitutional change, enforcement /harmonisation/ CEDAW	15	10.34
8. Social reorientation/ gender sensitisation 8. Social support, recognition, appreciation	14	9.66
10. Good health/health services/ reproductive health	13	8.97
11. Capacity building: empowerment, leadership development and exposure	12	8.28
12. Autonomy/freedom/independence	11	7.59
13. Psychological empowerment: self-esteem, awareness, consciousness	10	6.9
14. Basic needs and social services	9	6.21
15. Supportive relationships: Family/ marital stability	8	5.52
16. Protection from violence/abuse 16. Property: land, houses, collateral	6	4.14
18. Security (environment)Spiritual/moral awakening/virtue 18. Clean environment	3	2.07
20. Dismantle patriarchal norms/ structures 21. Spiritual moral awakening 22. Research towards a gender database	2	1.38

Source: Tables 4.15 and 4.16 SPSS Survey Results

<sup>125</sup> 145 of 159 participants answered this section of question 1

The third most frequently selected empowerment step was ‘ensuring women have the freedom and power to make decisions’ selected by 82 (52.6%) participants ahead of ‘political empowerment’ which was ranked fourth by 57 (36.3%) participants. This substantiates the theory that, ‘the personal is political,’ that decision-making power in the private sphere has strategic implications, and is a prerequisite, for women’s well-being and potential in the public realm. It also signifies the higher premium placed on empowerment at the personal/relational level than on public political participation/leadership, at least in the short term. In question 11b participants ranked the most important empowerment step in the following order of frequency as shown in Fig. 4.17: educational empowerment (65 (49.2%)), economic empowerment (32 (24.2%)), personal/relational empowerment (i.e. freedom to make decisions) 16 (12.1%), psychological empowerment (9 (6.8%)), legislative/constitutional empowerment (6 (4.5%)) and lastly political empowerment (4 (3%)).<sup>126</sup>

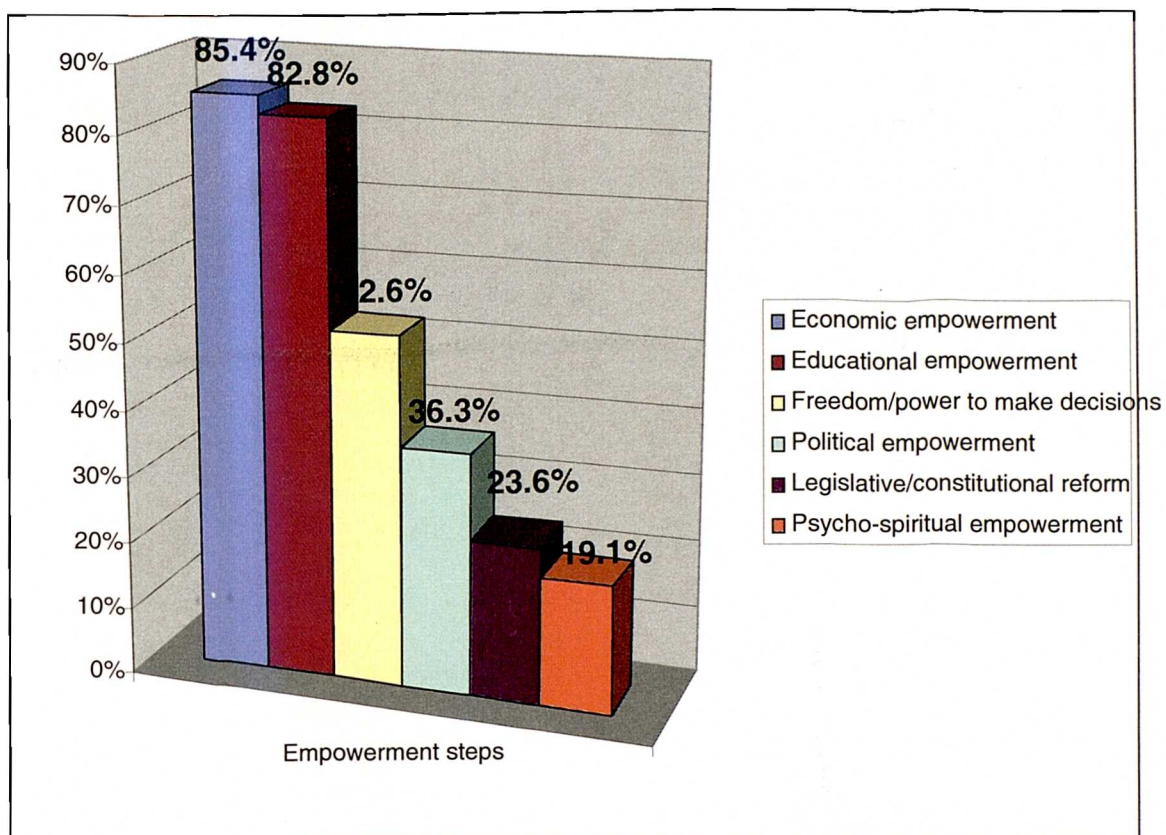
Politics and decision-making (followed by media relations) could also be said to rank at the bottom of prioritised concerns identified in the NPW as they are placed last among the sectoral components while education is at the top. Nevertheless, political empowerment ranked fourth out of seven in question 32 where participants were given a seven-point summary of NPW goals, objectives and policy thrusts and asked to rank them from most to least important on a scale of 1-7. The results are listed in Tables 4.17.

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<sup>126</sup> It is possible that results from question 11b in which the positions of economic and educational empowerment are reversed are distorted by the fact that only 132 participants supplied responses to question 11b as opposed to the 157 who answered in question 11a.

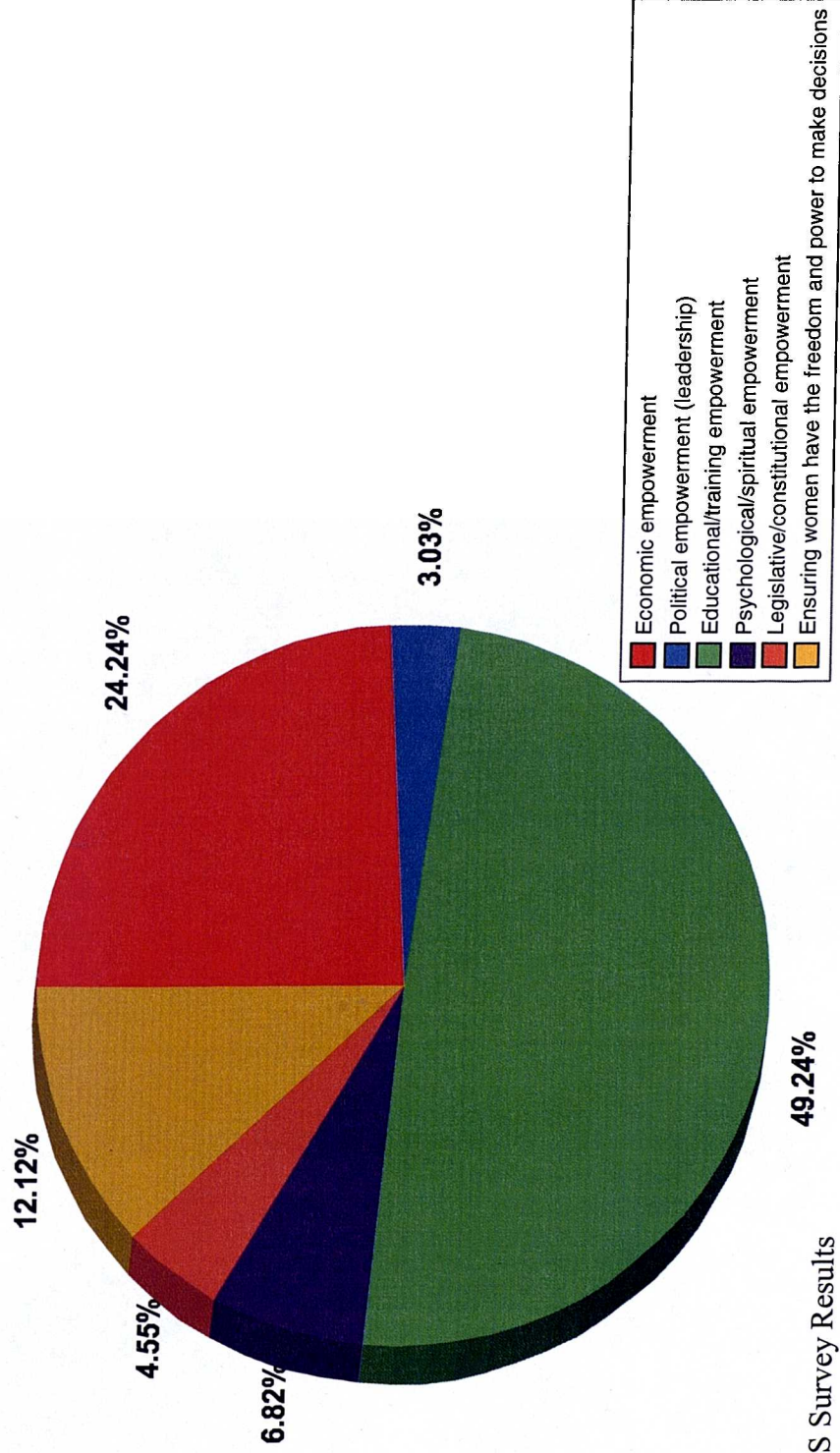


Fig. 4.16

**Three Most Important Empowerment Steps**

Source: SPSS Survey Results/Excel Chart

**Fig. 4.17**  
**The Most Important Empowerment Step towards Improving Women's Lives**



Source: SPSS Survey Results

In question five participants had to select from among eight options: a) the three most important conditions for improving women's lives, b) the two least important conditions and c) the most important condition of the three selected in part a. Of the 158 who participated in q.5a, an equal number – 114 (72.2%) – selected 'Abolish harmful cultural beliefs and practices' and 'Empower women economically,' and 66 (42.8%) chose 'Raise social awareness about gender issues'. Among all three options 51 (39.9%) participants selected economic empowerment as the most important condition for improving women's lives attesting to the perception of widespread female poverty and the urgent need for its eradication or alleviation. Thirty-four (27.1%) participants said the abolition of harmful cultural beliefs and practices was most important while only 12 (9%) opted for raising social awareness about gender issues; another 9% chose 'put women in leadership positions.'<sup>127</sup>

**TABLES 4.17: Summary of NPW**

Rank	Summary of NPW Goals, Objectives, Policy Thrusts	Frequency	
		No.	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	Raising national awareness on citizens' constitutional/human rights so as to remove legal, cultural, religious, and all forms of discrimination and other constraints against women.	51	44.3
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Empowering women to participate fully in the Nigerian development process by developing their human resource potential.	29	25.7
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Making all policies at all levels of government gender sensitive through the systematic integration (or mainstreaming) of gender perspectives.	27	26
4 <sup>th</sup>	Ensuring the protection of women's rights by incorporating them into decision-making positions in the legislature, judiciary and entire political system	20	18.2
5 <sup>th</sup>	Developing a positive self-concept in women so they can act to gain access to resources and social justice.	18	17.5
6 <sup>th</sup>	Eliminating gender inequality by re-orienting society to accept equity, complementary gender roles and respect for family values.	22	21.4
7 <sup>th</sup>	Promoting egalitarian principles by dismantling patriarchal structures <sup>128</sup> through education, enlightenment and national awareness.	28	26.7

Source: Survey questionnaire

<sup>127</sup> There is a possibility that this result is somewhat distorted by the fact that only 128 of the 159 participants answered the 'b' part of question five.

<sup>128</sup> Examples of such structures mentioned in the policy include: male ascendancy in inheritance, authority and decision-making in and outside the home, high value of male children, strict adherence to division of labour along gender lines.

From these results it appears that most NGO leaders like the majority of participants in units of analysis believe the cause for women's development must be advanced within a patriarchal context that provides scope and mechanisms for the actualisation of female potential. Hence the dismantling of patriarchal structures was ranked last. Most significantly, responses reveal some ambivalence about the extent to which gender equality is acceptable and where it is applicable. Only 105 (66.5%) out of 158 participants believed that women should have access to the same opportunities, benefits and rights as men 'all the time'. Thirty-two (20.3%) and 20 (12.7%) believed they should have equal access 'most' and 'some' times respectively.

This ambivalence is further demonstrated through responses to q.40. On a five point Likert scale participants weighted women's decision-making power and participation in different social structures. Tables 4.18 and Figs. 4.18-23 contain the results. Participants signalled their level of agreement or disagreement regarding whether 'for a better society women must participate *actively* and *equally* with men in all aspects of leadership and decision-making' in six areas: the home, religious institutions, traditional/cultural institutions, the economy, politics and public policy/law enforcement. Figs. 4.18-23 indicate that women were less likely to be given unfettered participation in institutions that have been the strongest bastions of patriarchal privilege namely the home, religion and tradition. There was more disagreement and indecision about women's participation in these areas. Conversely, there was greater concession about the need for more participation in areas more open to modernising/globalising influences – the economy, politics and public policy/ law enforcement. These responses demonstrate the socio-culturally problematic context in which the NPW was formulated and the attendant dilemma in resolving the tension between gender equality and traditional gender roles.

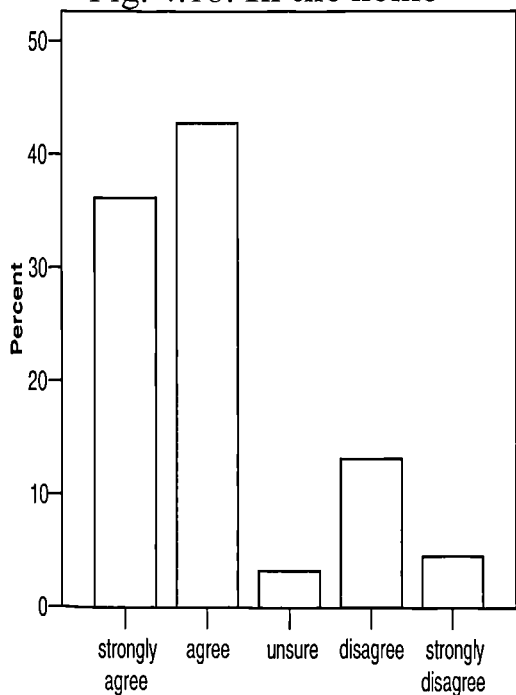
**TABLE 4.18: Data Table for Figs.4.18-4.23**

	The home		Religious institutions		Traditional/cultural institutions		The economy		Politics		Public policy and law making/enforcement	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	strongly agree	55	36.2%	31	20.4%	25	16.7%	81	52.9%	82	53.6%	79
agree	65	42.8%	70	46.1%	60	40.0%	67	43.8%	59	38.6%	63	41.2%
unsure	5	3.3%	19	12.5%	24	16.0%	1	.7%	2	1.3%	3	2.0%
disagree	20	13.2%	26	17.1%	37	24.7%	3	2.0%	8	5.2%	7	4.6%
strongly disagree	7	4.6%	6	3.9%	4	2.7%	1	.7%	2	1.3%	1	.7%

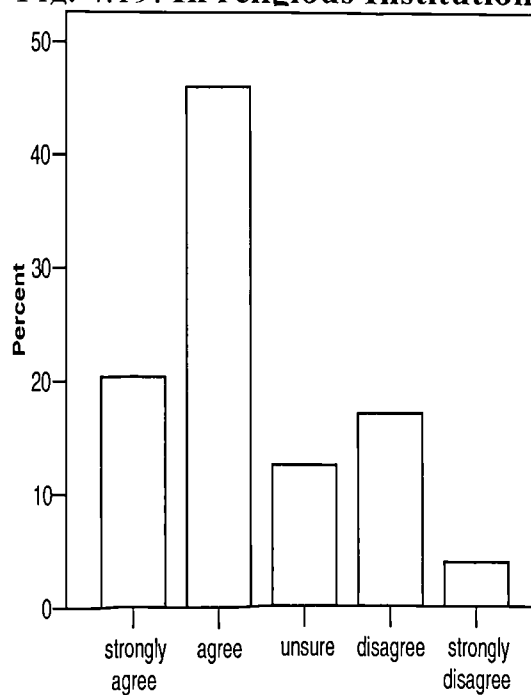
Source: SPSS Survey Results

**For a better society women must participate *actively* and *equally* with men all aspects of leadership and decision-making:**

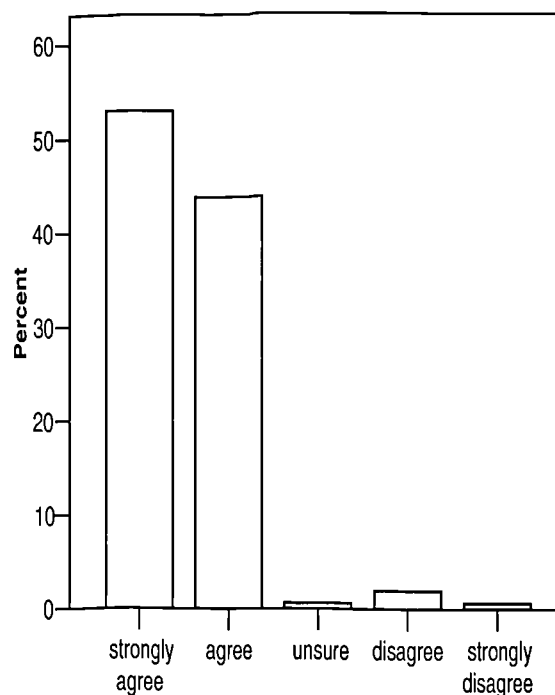
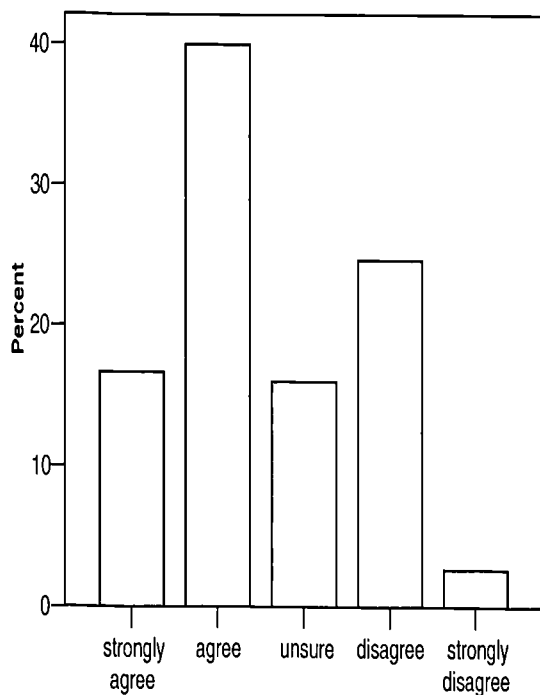
**Fig. 4.18: In the home**



**Fig. 4.19: In religious Institutions**



**Fig. 4.20: In traditional Institutions**      **Fig. 4.21: In the economy**



**For a better society women must participate *actively* and *equally* with men in all aspects of leadership and decision-making:**

Fig. 4.22: In politics

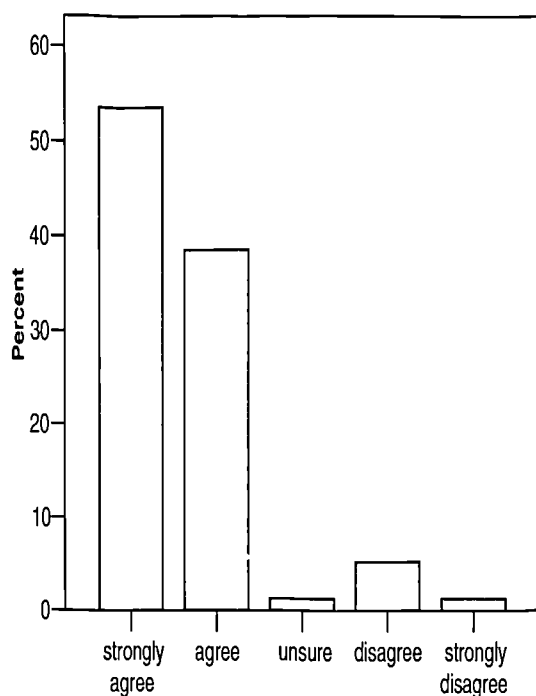
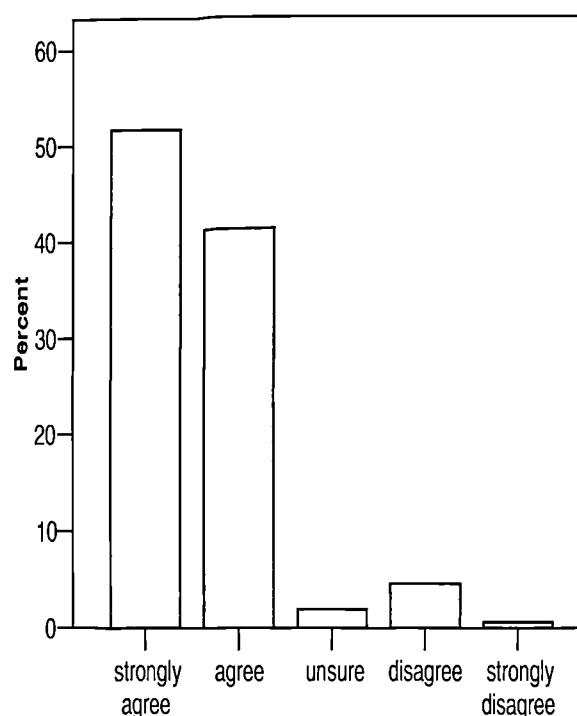


Fig. 4.23: In public policy and law



Source of Figures 4.19-4.24: SPSS Survey Results

Participants generally considered the NPW to be significantly compatible with the interests and needs of Nigerian women. One hundred and twenty-six (89.4%), out of 141 endorsed the policy's goals and objectives as listed in Tables 4.17. Fifty-two (36.9%) strongly agreed and seventy-four (52.5%) agreed they were an accurate and adequate reflection of the needs and interests of a majority of women. One hundred and forty-one (97.9%), out of 144, participants said if the policy were implemented it would greatly improve the lives of most women with seventy-four (51.4%) strongly agreeing and 67 (46.5%) agreeing.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter showed that widespread poverty and social exclusion among rural dwellers and urban poor people in general obscured and subordinated underlying issues of gender oppression from the immediate focus of grassroots women. Accordingly, they are preoccupied with survival needs. Grassroots women and members of women's organisations agreed that material poverty and the lack of education were the two foremost prioritised concerns and that empowerment in these areas were primary

planning needs. The women also focused on practical measures to address immediate problems (such as the lack of skills, unemployment, ill-health) and provide basic necessities (e.g. training, jobs, credit, potable water). However, the lack of public or private investment indicated that these needs are not being addressed by local, state or national authorities. Grassroots women felt that greater opportunities for basic and further education and skills acquisition would increase access to economic/material resources and lead to a substantial improvement in the quality of life for them and their children.

This is not to suggest that they are entirely unaware or unconcerned about structural issues, particularly with regard to the removal of cultural/religious barriers to women's economic and political participation in domestic and public arenas. Indeed, the immediate and practical concerns and needs identified by grassroots women arise from inter-related structures of gender hierarchy in social organisation, most notably with respect to intra-household and public roles/relations and decision-making. Yet, there was evidence of acquiescence and pessimism with respect to the possibility of structural change involving female political participation/representation and legislative reforms against entrenched religious and culture-based gender discrimination. The majority of PRA and focus group participants accepted religious and cultural premises of gender exclusion as unquestionable givens.

In spite of the low level of awareness about the NPW among grassroots women they, for the most part, endorsed its provisions. So also did members of women's groups who were generally more aware of the policy. Nevertheless, the general opinion was that its strategic and transformative aspects required a long-term and cautious approach. Women expressed fear that a frontal attack on cultural and religious norms would elicit resistance from men, whose social positioning as 'heads of households,' leaders and principal entitlement bearers of land and property would be threatened. It could be deduced, therefore, that grassroots women's desire for greater access to education and personal income, represents a means of improving their social status through non-confrontational means. This does not directly address the underlying structures of gender inequality. Nevertheless, access to education, skills and income may alleviate female poverty and better position women to act against discrimination. This in itself is strategic.

It is important to find out how the interests and needs expressed by grassroots women compare with those of elite women whose perspectives and experiences are the focus of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Women Imagine Change: ‘Elite Voices’**

Grassroots women may constitute the bulk of Nigerian women but it is normally the business and educated elite who are better placed to impact on policy and governance; they are the drivers of change. Consequently, this chapter presents the prioritised concerns and planning needs of women from the perspectives of elite women (and some men) comprising business women/professionals, university students, Chief Executives (or senior officials) of women’s/gender organisations, top-level bureaucrats, politicians and policy makers. Data for this chapter was gathered using focus group discussions with business/professional women and students, and semi-structured interviews with the remaining participants who spoke in their personal capacity and as representatives of women’s groups. Chapter One contains a full description of participants and research techniques (see also Appendices C, D, E and F).

Business/professional women identified 12 (54.5%) of the 22 prioritised concerns and planning needs on the coding index. More than any of the other group-based participants (PRAs and Focus groups) they delved into topics and themes relating to women’s strategic gender interests and planning needs. Nonetheless, none of them had previous knowledge of the NPW. Neither were the students aware of the NPW. Therefore, as an entry point into the topic of gender issues and women’s specific needs and concerns the opening discussion centred on leadership. As stated in Chapter One the invisibility of women in leadership (i.e. governance, politics and decision-making) is the most glaring indicator of their low social status, poverty as well as the existence and extent of gender inequality. For this reason, in a group of young intellectuals, the subject of gender inequality and strategies for change was broached through a discussion on leadership. The group defined leadership and the qualities of a good leader as well as those factors that tend to help people get into public office in the Nigerian setting. Then a gender component was introduced through an investigation into the benefits and disadvantages that accrue to people included or excluded from leadership. From there the discussion naturally progressed on to gender-specific interests and planning needs to promote change, if necessary.

NGO leaders identified more interests and planning needs of Nigerian women than any other unit in the entire study covering 20 of the 22 items on the coding index. Moreover, fifteen NGO leaders (75%) were aware of the existence of the NPW although only seven (35%) had read it or knew about its goals and objectives. Eleven policy



makers/planners/politicians (61.1%) knew about the NPW; eight (44.4%) had read it. Three had been actively involved in the drafting and approval process of the policy - two as staff of the organs responsible for its creation and implementation: the UNDP and the Ministry of Women Affairs, and one as a member of various Federal Executive Councils that considered it for approval. Interests and planning needs identified by policy-makers/planners/politicians covered 20 of the 22 items on the coding index. All semi-structured interviews examined the nature of women's most critical problems and concerns, their root causes and impacts on women and national development.

While all units of analysis identified similar prioritised concerns for the majority of Nigerian women, there was considerable variation in what was considered to be their root causes and prescribed solutions (i.e. planning needs) to dealing with them. Critical areas of concern identified by focus group and interview participants are categorised below under socio-cultural, political, material/economic, psychological, and physiological issues. In addition, Section 5.7 discusses certain prioritised concerns and planning needs highlighted by NGO leaders, which are specific to each organisational category.

## 5.1 Socio-cultural Issues

### 5.1.1 *Prioritised Concerns*

In contrast to grassroots women, the vast majority of elite women (and men) opined that the myriad of customary beliefs and practices dotting the Nigerian cultural landscape constitute the single most important causative factor undermining women's well-being and life chances. African cultures constitute a hydra-headed source of all social, economic and political problems women encounter. Thus, the greater the tendency towards traditionalism, whether at the level of the family/household, community, or in the conduct of organisational or government affairs, the greater is the level of female disenfranchisement and deprivation. According to Julie Ser<sup>129</sup> women suffer a lot because of African traditions that favour men yet erect barriers against women. Elsie Thompson<sup>130</sup> was quite emphatic about the adverse effects of culture:

Culturally women are laid back. There's no need to argue. We are second-class citizens. We are supposed to be seen not heard. In fact, a woman is equated with a child. And when you are even talking about that child it is the

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<sup>129</sup>Jos Branch President of the National Council of Women's Societies and the President/founder of the Centre for Gender and Rural Development. Interview, 11/06/03: Jos.

<sup>130</sup> Country President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA). Interview, 26/07/03: Port Harcourt.

female child they equate her with because the male child is higher than her in the society.<sup>131</sup>

According to Adegboyega Ojora<sup>132</sup> the main problem women have is “the conflict between their traditional motherly roles and their formalised roles” in the professions and business, which results in a double burden and diminishes their potential for maximum career success. Competence and success in the private sector, Ojora contended is a matter of individual ability rather than gender. However, women’s reproductive role – determined by biology and reinforced by traditionalism - deprives them of the time-factor which, Ojora said, is also an important function of competence. Time poverty is a major constraint for urban women, despite access to labour-saving resources, as well as for rural women as seen in the three PRA surveys in Gora, Kushehe and Bukuru. However, Olorunmaiye<sup>133</sup> pointed out that female agriculturalists in rural areas carry even more serious physical and economic burdens than career women in towns and cities:

In Benue, where I lived for some years, and maybe parts of the Eastern region you have a situation where the women are the ones who do the farming. The man will stay in the hut and smoke his long pipe. And this same woman will have to bear children, nurse the children, do the farming, come back home and cook food and yet also meet his sexual needs or whatever else she supposed... I mean are his needs. So the average man in such culture is almost idle, if you can use the word. And yet he’s still the man and the boss in the home. And she still has to obey him and do whatever he wants her to do. So...in some areas the burden is serious.

Hildah Makonta<sup>134</sup> explained how the double reproductive/productive burden extends to the girl-child whose academic performance is often diminished because she has little time for homework or recreation since she often wakes early and comes back from school to attend to farm work and/or household chores.

Aisha Umar Usman,<sup>135</sup> and Dr. Mohammed Khalid,<sup>136</sup> (both from Sokoto State/North West) asserted that the combination of Hausa tradition and Islam relegates women to the background through practices such as seclusion, male/son preference in educational/employment opportunities and selection/election to traditional/political

<sup>131</sup> Social organisation charts in Figures 4.7-4.10 on pp. 151ff. confirm Thompson’s statement.

<sup>132</sup> Chairman of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. Interview, 16/06/03: Kuru.

<sup>133</sup> Kwara State Solicitor-General. Interview, 24/06/03: Kuru.

<sup>134</sup> Permanent Secretary, Adamawa State Ministry of Women Affairs. Interview, 11/06/03: Kuru.

<sup>135</sup> Sokoto State Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Women Affairs. Interview, 07/07/03: Kuru.

<sup>136</sup> Secretary-General of the Nigerian Medical Association. Interview, 26/06/03: Kuru.

leadership posts. Comparatively, the North West has the lowest levels of female enrolment at primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions nationwide and the lowest level of female participation in the formal labour force. Indeed, a majority of participants cited the socio-economic condition of women in predominantly Northern/Islamic areas as a worst-case scenario for Nigerian women. However, Usman and Ojora, and Hajiya Sumaya Hamza<sup>137</sup>, contended that Islam itself does not deny women their rights or accord them inferior status but it is the misinterpretation of Islamic texts out of historical/social context combined with widespread ignorance of the religion that leads to female relegation and “male chauvinism.”

On the other hand, Usman subscribed to the Islamic/traditional practice of polygamy and was herself a second wife. Women from the PRA session in Gora had earlier pointed out that polygamy itself is an indicator of women’s inferior power status, at least in marital relations and flowing over into community life. Valentina Dariye,<sup>138</sup> argued that female relegation pervades all of Africa as it is predicated on the ubiquitous cultural assumption of male headship and the concomitant devaluation of women. Consequently, she observed, women in Plateau State are generally timid and unable to engage in independent decision-making and risk-taking that are essential for entrepreneurship.

Participants also stressed the fact that custom denies women access to land in parts of the South West, South East, South South, North Central/Middle Belt and non-Islamic areas of the North East and North West.<sup>139</sup> Female children do not inherit land from fathers and widows have no right to husbands’ lands or property except via their sons, if the late husband’s family is so inclined or, in some instances, by marrying a brother of the late spouse. Makonta, a widow, gave a first-hand account. When her husband died she was not allowed access to his land or property. However, she considered herself more fortunate than other women from her area because she had an education and a steady income to fend for herself and her five children. According to her culture-based gender discrimination in inheritance rights is a major issue in the lives of rural women and “a very big thing that degrades the women” by forcing them into a life of dependency, poverty and in certain cases prostitution.

Women are excluded from participating equally or at all in traditional power and decision-making structures in most Nigerian communities. In response to the question

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<sup>137</sup> President, Federation of Muslim Women Societies. Interview, 02/07/03: Jos.

<sup>138</sup> The wife of the Executive Governor of Plateau State and President/Founder of the Women Alive Foundation (WALF). Interview, 18/06/03: Jos.

<sup>139</sup> Islam accords women land and property rights but to a lesser degree than men

“Are there any problems that the women are seriously experiencing in your community?” Bernice Lolo Onyewuchi<sup>140</sup> mentioned how men use culture to silence women and exclude them from decision-making at community and household levels:

This cultural something. You know the men are intimidating us. They won't let us have any say. They won't let us have our own say. They want to take the whole decision by themselves. And these are human beings! You don't have to decide for somebody, eh? [...] You want to go and do this he [husband] will say, 'No o, don't do that o,' this and that. We are not given all that freedom like the men. We are not given all that freedom. But we want to be left alone to decide by ourselves. And although they said we have little mentality, maybe our decision may not be the best, but let us decide by ourselves.

Teresa Ikwem<sup>141</sup> contended that culture works to restrict women's exposure to opportunities for self-development and self-actualisation consequently limiting their potential for contributing to national growth and productivity. Business/professional women (Focus Group, 10/07/03) discussed how the deleterious effects of culture truncate women's human capabilities such that they are unable to maximise their potential and contribute optimally to national development. They diminish women's personal autonomy, intra-household decision-making power and participation in public life leading to economic impoverishment and low self-esteem.

### ***5.1.2 Planning Needs***

Owing to the deeply embedded nature of culture and tradition in the psyche and practices of individuals and people-groups several participants advocated a two-pronged approach. The first aims at changing social behaviour in the form of inhumane treatment of women through the reformation of laws and policies by governments at federal, state and local levels. For nine (45%) NGO leaders the most tactical means of jump-starting cultural change is to criminalise discriminatory customary/religious practices through the domestication of CEDAW. Dr. Bolere Ketebe-Nwokefor<sup>142</sup> emphasised that this would resolve the inconsistencies in the triple legal system by superseding contradictory provisions and simultaneously activating the NPW. However, Thompson argued that domesticating CEDAW is a highly controversial process because of the diversity and sensitivity of ethnic and religious affinities in the country that would engender resistance and division from and among the intended beneficiaries – girls and women. A

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<sup>140</sup> President, Orji Women Association. Interview, 28/07/03: Orji, Imo State.

<sup>141</sup> Cross River State Permanent Secretary for Manpower Development and Training. Interview, 10/06/03: Kuru.

<sup>142</sup> President, National Council of Women Societies. Interview, 31/05/03: Abuja.

more pragmatic solution, she said, is to pick out aspects that are less contentious for certain regions and lobby for their adoption by the respective state assemblies.

Only seven (38.9%) policy-makers/politicians identified abolishing or targeting harmful traditional practices (HTPs) as a specific planning need. They felt that the enactment and enforcement of human rights protective legislation for women at federal, state and local government levels with outright proscription of deleterious cultural practices would serve as a partially or wholly sufficient measure to counteract the incidence and impacts of gender discrimination and inequality. However, Barry Simon<sup>143</sup> argued that the Nigerian Constitution and Statutory Law guaranteed the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens but due to ignorance, inadequate access to legal services and the primordial/communal essence of custom, people were unable or disinclined to avail themselves of those rights. Conversely, business/professional women argued that Nigerian women, especially middle class women, are generally aware of their rights but constrained by a deep-seated fear of the damaging consequences of asserting them. Furthermore, the group agreed that the existence of formal legal rights is impotent without steps directly aimed at changing certain cultural norms because,

The truth of the matter is like we have to address the fear of the Nigerian woman. Our culture has taught us that a woman's ultimate is to be married and have children, that your ultimate in life – if you like you have ten PhDs on top of each other, if you are not married and in your *husband's home*,<sup>144</sup> and then with children, you don't have respect. And if we don't address these underlining issues, women can know all these things, you can legislate it but you can't legislate a man's mindset. (Nosa Tukura, Focus Group 10/07/03)

Tukura's observation lends credence to Ortner's (1972) assertion that both psychoanalytical and institutional mechanisms are required to change the social status of women.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the second more gradual approach concentrates on inducing attitudinal change through the creation of mass gender sensitisation and awareness about women's human rights. NGO leaders said awareness creation was as an essential forerunner to ensure the effectiveness of legal measures. Even Simon conceded that party constitutions and manifestoes are insufficient to change basic mindsets and norms because those meant to apply party provisions have vested interests in the status quo and manipulate custom and religion for political ends. He suggested that religious and

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<sup>143</sup> Plateau State Chairman of the All Nigeria People's Party. Interview, 21/04/04: Jos.

<sup>144</sup> The phrase husband's/his house/home was used repeatedly by grassroots and elite women when referring to marriage/marital home.

<sup>145</sup> See page 49 for Ortner's full quote

traditional leaders, politicians and other opinion moulders be specifically targeted in the campaigns since they are the principal custodians and/or advocates of tradition. The NPW also favours the adoption of a pro-awareness creation approach to engineer cultural change as part of its five-fold policy thrust (Item 5.5.3).

But, Ojora,<sup>146</sup> hinted at the dilemma regarding custom and change with respect to women's right to inherit land:

Nobody can stop me giving what I want to somebody. [...] There are lands in some of the river basins, and so on and so forth, that are being given to people. Yes, there can be some positive discrimination there, we - you will need to change it. State government land in Victoria Island or wherever else you want to say, those belong to the state. You can have ratios there *as long as women can afford them*. [...] I think those are the laws and whatever is the state's own we can positively discriminate in favour of women with it. There's no reason why if they're giving away ten plots in Jos, GRA that two or three cannot be reserved for women. I'm not saying it must be equal but somewhere along the line we must say that at least this number should be for women. And then the Nigerian thing comes in that it's the Governor's wife and her ten cousins. (16/06/03)

Ojora opined that in land matters legal measures are impotent in changing social behaviour as no government has the right to determine who people (men) will their lands to. Thus, in order to redress female disadvantage in access to land he recommended the use of executive fiat to allocate a proportion of government owned lands to women in River Basin Areas and other exclusive areas such as Victoria Island in Lagos. The fact that River Basin Areas are remote and not largely accessible, and that land purchase in Victoria Island is extremely costly, was not considered. Furthermore, Ojora's recommendation would do nothing to alter land/wealth distribution at the village level and its corollary – the structure of gender relations. Indeed, in certain parts of Nigeria even land purchase is prohibited or made very difficult for women. This is especially true in Igbo land in the South Eastern part Nigeria where the patrilineal transference of land from father to son (or other male relatives) is strictly adhered to, and land/landed property are the preserve of men. The earlier excerpt from the interview with Onyewuchi is instructive in this regard (see page 83).

Business/professional women, 13 (65%) NGO leaders and thirteen (72.2%) policy-makers/politicians argued that customary beliefs and practices are too complex, deeply ingrained and intrinsic to ethnic identity to be eradicated by constitutional/legislative means alone. Consequently, participants called for massive

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<sup>146</sup> Ojora was one of the four male policy-makers/politicians interviewed

awareness and public enlightenment campaigns sponsored by government and NGOs in order to imbibe gender sensitivity in men and women and change stereotyped mindsets about the worth and role of women. Dr. Irene Salami<sup>147</sup> considered this to be an approach to deconstruct and reconstruct culture to meet present-day realities; she proffered how-to steps for achieving gender sensitivity. First she stressed the importance of training peer educators to reach out to opinion moulders and people in formal positions of influence who in turn would train others (Training-of-Trainers (TOT) style). Then she recommended gender dialogue workshops to promote non-confrontational discussion and negotiation between men and women. Finally, antenatal clinics and infant/child welfare clinics should be used to educate women about their human and civil rights and how to access them.

Conversely, Dr. Keziah Awosika<sup>148</sup> rejected the wholesale denunciation of African culture. Awosika argued that while “Those cultural aspects which we feel are inimical to our potential and growth should be jettisoned [...] We mustn’t just change culture for change sake.” She considered it central to African identity and the continuity of a healthy social order to safeguard positive elements of traditions and culture such as respect for the elderly. University students (except for one female student), took a similar position. In the words of one female student, Ijeoma, “According to the custom there are specified duties for men and women. Women are models in the domestic sphere; men jive around and support the kids.” Nevertheless, all participants agreed that some degree of change was required to mitigate the negative effects of culture on women’s life chances.

Professor Dennis Ityavvyar,<sup>149</sup> the only male NGO leader interviewed and Chief Executive Director of Inter-Gender, took an entirely different position and contended that the influence of culture has been overstated; he said blaming culture for women’s woes was an escapist route to the real issue i.e. ignorance which breeds prejudice and superstition. Ityavvyar, Khalid and university students asserted that the key planning need to address cultural gender discrimination was to increase female access to education, and thereby expand employment opportunities and reduce female dependency. Ityavvyar believed the lack of exposure to formal education was the principal basis for low socio-economic status and gender oppression. Consequently, he, including 26 (74%) of all interview participants, believed the education of girl-children

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<sup>147</sup> President, National Association of Women Academics. Interview, 26/05/03: Jos.

<sup>148</sup> Deputy-Director, Women Law and Development Centre of Nigeria. Interview, 17/07/03: Lagos.

<sup>149</sup> President, Inter-Gender. Interview, 23/08/03: Jos.

was the most important medium-to-long-term strategy for empowering women and changing people's minds about their worth and roles. Tied closely to this is the provision of skills, training, relevant information and adult formal education for women to increase their productive capacity, income-earning power and personal autonomy.

Still, business/professional women insisted that so strong is the impact of culture on the mindset of Nigerian men and women that it overrides or dampens the influence of education and wealth and renders government policy and legislation ineffective. Yinka Olatunji<sup>150</sup> revealed that religion equally puts women in a fix between faith and feminist convictions. In discussing areas off limits to female leadership she spoke of her personal dilemma with regard to religion:

Researcher: What about in community participation and in religious bodies? Is there any area off limits?

Participant: Of course. (Laughs). Especially Islam, a lot of areas are off limit - a lot. Well in Christianity in the [...] dominant Christian establishment as we know them, it is still off limits to women. But in the new emerging, new age Christian religious organisations, a woman can be anything – pastor or bishop.

Researcher: Do you think it's right for these areas to be off limits to...

Participant: Why should it be off? Well, I don't know. Maybe I'm talking as a Christian maybe I will say I would talk differently. If I'm talking right now as a women activist or...

Researcher: No, as a human being do you in your conscience think that any area of religion or community participation should be off limits to women...?

Participant: Unfortunately I cannot talk to you as a human being in my conscience when you talk of religious matters.

Researcher: Ok.

Participant: Em because I happen to have my own er... that's probably where I now have my own watershed – that in religion I declare that I am a born again Christian therefore I am guided by the tenets of the Bible as it says it clearly. So I cannot talk to you as an ordinary human being now. I can only talk to you within the limits of what I believe within the scope of that religion.

Researcher: Ok, within your belief system do you think any area should be off limits to female leadership?

Participant: Yes.

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<sup>150</sup> Deputy Director, Office of the Federal Head of Service. Interview, 27/05/03: Abuja.



This conversation demonstrates that, as the business/professional women focus group argued, class is an insufficient determinant of the status and well-being of women in society. For instance, their comments below emphasise the limits of educational attainment in affecting husbands' behaviour towards wives:

Floxy: when it comes down to it you find out that education hasn't really got an influence on the way the man thinks. It's the culture and the society. That's my own impression o. [...] it depends on the man, you know the individual person. If he's the type that consults he will consult with the wife. But if he's not the type I don't think education has ...because when it comes down to it you find out that his [...] culture has a lot of influence.

Nosa: [...] on the long run the results are almost the same whether the person is educated [...] or not. You still find out that the man feels that because he has the right, he's the head of the home, he can take decisions whether in the beginning he consulted with the wife or [...] he didn't consult. It's not as if to say education doesn't have its place but on the long run you find out that the educated man and the non-educated man are thinking and behaving the same. So culture seems to have a stronger effect on the mindset of the man than education. Education has its place but I think culture and our setting – growing up we all come from different backgrounds different walks of life – those things seem to have an overriding effect on whatever education you may have acquired or exposure from interacting with other people. (10/07/03)

Some participants cautioned that although culture would change over time due to the influences of female educational, economic development and globalisation/modernisation, it was likely to be a very long and tortuous process due to the vested interests men have in using culture for political and personal gain. The political fall-out of culture-based gender discrimination is discussed further in Section 5.3. There was an obvious tension between allegiance to what is perceived as desirable or natural gender roles specified by culture and religion and the quest for a better deal for womenfolk. This tension persisted throughout contributions made during PRA, focus group and interview discussions and may explain the ambiguity in NPW language and provisions evidenced by the juxtaposition of planning objectives aiming at egalitarianism and complementarity.

## **5.2 Political Issues**

### ***5.2.1 Prioritised Concerns***

Discussions on women and politics highlighted three areas of major concern: 1. The skewed participation of women in Nigerian politics 2. Their under-representation in governance and 3. Their lack of intra-household decision-making power and personal

autonomy. By skewed participation participants referred to two characteristics of women's role in politics. These were mentioned in Chapter Three, namely 1. The manipulation of women's numeric electoral strength to suit the political ends of wealthy male politicians and 2. The relegation of women to party welfare organisation and to women's wings of mainline parties. As a consequence women are under-represented in governance and in the top echelons of party hierarchy.

Therefore, seventeen NGO leaders (85%) and thirteen (72.2%) of policy-makers/politicians asserted that the under-representation of women in appointive and elective posts is a priority concern because, in the Nigerian political economy, public office is the archetypal gateway to all state resources and exclusion from it secures female deprivation and subordination. However, politics, governance and any activity involving leadership and public visibility are particularly off limits to women in most Nigerian cultures. Most participants agreed that in their respective ethnic groups it is usually not appropriate for women to be too vocal or to lead men.<sup>151</sup> According to Prof. Jerry Gana<sup>152</sup>, religio-cultural silencing and inhibition are the root cause of the low political profile of Nigerian women. This traditional predisposition makes it difficult for female politicians to be respected or accepted by both men and women in local, state and federal electoral campaigns. Simon said traditional and religious leaders in particular found it difficult to embrace the idea of women in leadership and therefore tended not to endorse the candidacy of female contestants, which had a strong bearing on electorate behaviour. Male university students (Focus group, 13/06/03) also used religion to justify female political exclusion. Paul Nuga claimed that "right from creation men were made to lead by God," and Jude Azi and Ahmed Hamidu cited the Bible and Koran respectively as valid bases for the predominance of men in leadership. Others gave sociological reasons:

Nickson: In politics women are not given the opportunity to say their views. But there have been good women leaders for example if not for Margaret Thatcher Tony Blair could not have become the Prime Minister. (Male)

Solomon: From the outset women don't have much exposure to politics. It is more of a 'men's game'. Then you know women don't go for war it is men who do that according to the culture and tradition. (Male)

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<sup>151</sup> Wide variations exist across Nigeria with Northern/Muslim communities listed by participants as the most prohibitive and the South West as having relaxed several severe restrictions on females.

<sup>152</sup> Political advisor to the President. Interview, 27/04/04: Abuja.

Rifkatu Adeyemi: Nigerian forces also work against the women like ethnicity, wealth. You need money to play politics. ((Female))

Kemi Odekunle: Women are disadvantaged educationally, and they are not encouraged to go into politics. (Female)

It was generally argued that under-representation stalled the critical mass required to effect changes beneficial to women and the entire political system and led to male-bias in government institutions. Makonta alluded to experiences of women MPs and cabinet officials in this regard:

We also have problems even at the policy making level. Because in the cabinets now you just find a few women. And if you bring an issue of a woman with two, three, four women out of about twenty men they will just drop it there. They will not pick any interest because they will just think ah you are trying to bring something that will overshadow them. So they will drop it. And you know that game of numbers will not actually be favourable to you because you don't have that number in the executive council. [...] No matter how genuine. Only few people, only very few people will tend to look at it positively. Otherwise if it is an issue of woman, woman: "you've started disturbing us again about women, women." So in most cases they don't think over it seriously. They don't give it a serious thought as they give to other topics or subjects or issues. (11/06/03)

Eight (22.9%) policy-makers/politicians argued that endemic political corruption and 'godfatherism' were both a cause and symptom of female under-representation.<sup>153</sup> Sarah Jibril,<sup>154</sup> made an assertion reiterated by other participants that political corruption was in part a function of overwhelming male dominance. She also alleged that women's wings or departments of political parties were a tool for sidelining women from hard-core decision-making where they could checkmate primitive accumulation. Senator Stella Omu<sup>155</sup> claimed that female leaders were less prone to embezzling public funds or offering and/or taking bribes. Chief Solomon Lar provided an example from during his tenure as Governor of Plateau State:

Here in Nigeria for example women seem to be more kinder (*sic*) and more reliable when they give them an assignment especially when you are a leader and I will give you an example [...] I had some few women on my cabinet

<sup>153</sup> It is noteworthy here that all participants who opined that women were less corruptible than men did so on the basis of an essentialist premise owing to an innate proclivity in females to be more considerate of others and more concerned about public opinion. The fact that this could be a 'positive' fall-out from extra social censorship on female behaviour did not arise in any of the discussions.

<sup>154</sup> First female presidential aspirant and chairperson of the People's Action Congress. Interview, 20/08/03: Abuja.

<sup>155</sup> Member National Assembly 1999-2003 and first female Chief Whip (PDP). Interview, 05/06/03: Abuja.

and I had one or two permanent secretaries and these few women really changed the life of the administration [...] First of all, they were not corrupt...people wanted to corrupt them and they would not accept bribe... And unknown to them the same people who offered them bribe, which bribe they refused to take, the same people would come to me and say, “Look *Gomina* (governor in Hausa) you have some very, very good government functionaries that if all of them were like that oh, your administration would be number one or so in Nigeria. (12/05/03)

Not all participants subscribed to this glowing image painted of female public office holders. Ojora claimed that political corruption via sexual clientelism is increased with females taking up high office because they ‘sell’ their bodies in lieu of competence to climb the social ladder. But Ketebu-Nwokeafor, citing examples from the banking industry, explained that sexual patronage is itself a function of an underlying psychosocial malaise plaguing private and public sectors, borne out of men taking advantage of women’s quest to gain access to socioeconomic opportunities and resources.

However, Lar made the case that such access is denied to women due to the lack of personal autonomy and equal intra-household decision-making power. He further argued that married women are excluded from full participation in democracy because, “Women are not independent [...] They are under their husbands,” (12/05/03) and are often told by husbands to choose between politics and their marriages. Olorunmaiye claimed married women find it difficult to pursue independent career and political interests because these have to take a back bench to husbands’ priorities and preferences. These assertions were supported by discussions and personal examples provided by business/professional women. Four of the five married participants said they had a considerable amount of freedom to move about and make decisions in their daily lives, as long as they kept their husbands informed. For more important decisions they found that to maintain peaceful relations it was necessary to make them in consultation with their spouses who would also usually consult them over important matters.

But there is a noticeable gender differential, premised on male headship, in women and men’s comparative leverage to make unilateral decisions for themselves and on behalf of the family. Leadership (or headship) in the home is a non-negotiable gender exclusive space that allows a man to be “seen to be in charge of his home,” and serves to, more or less, limit women’s scope for intra-household and personal decision-making. Moreover the women observed that they had to “sacrifice” their desires and dreams more than their husbands did “for the good of the family.” Tukura gave up a

Computer Science postgraduate programme in a nearby town because her family lacked adequate supervision without her as a result of her weekly commuting:

I've always had a flare for computer science [...] Even when I finished secondary school I actually wanted to read computer science but my father didn't buy into it at that time. So, for me it was like here's an opportunity to do this [...] But you see things were not very smooth at that time because I didn't sit with my husband to discuss it with him [...] [...] I found I have to make some sacrifices for the good of the family, not necessarily looking at it from my perspective because I have...in my decision making I have to think of my husband, I have to think of my children. I have to think of the impact of my decisions on their future as well as on mine [...] I now had to make another decision on my own. When I saw that [...] it had some effects on my family at that time, because the supervision that I needed to provide for my children and my cousin who lived with me was not there [...] And then it also got to a time I knew that I had to let go of that particular project of mine and face my home. So, I had to just withdraw [...] I find it a bit difficult to explain to people, I paid so much, I paid all my fees, I was very interested in the course and you know, from the way I was coming I know I would have been one of the good ones in the class. But I had to cut all that short... (10/07/03)

Adigun gave up the car she bought with a staff loan for her husband to use because they were trying to build a retirement home and could not afford to buy another car. She recalled being beaten by rain while she waited for transport to make the 24 km journey to work, although he worked nearer home. Elisabeth Silas, a one-time political aspirant, said the only reason she was able to contest elections successfully was because she was lucky to have an understanding husband whose confidence she had worked hard to win through faithfulness to her marriage so as to gain freedom to pursue her goals. These examples validate the assertion made by Phillips (2001) that women may need “more rather than less liberal individualism” in the face of cultural orientations that require them “to sublimate their own needs and desires in the perpetuation of family honour.”<sup>156</sup> However, the group affirmed the point made by Lar that freedom and autonomy – or liberal individualism – for women could only come at great social and emotional costs as career women often feel constrained to choose between personal ambition/career development and keeping their marriages. The group cited numerous examples of successful business and professional women who had broken homes.

Without full personal autonomy or freedom of movement (as was the case with Hausa-Fulani women in Purdah) women's ability to enter into politics and perform maximally in public life is curtailed. University students underscored attendant impacts of political disenfranchisement which raise further prioritised concerns discussed in

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<sup>156</sup> See page 69

Sections 5.4 to 5.6. To set the stage for discussion on the socio-economic hiatus between the leader and the led the question was asked: “What are the benefits of being a leader in your community?” Leaders were said to enjoy a high degree of respect, honour, social recognition (particularly with respect to their views being publicised and listened to), popularity and fame. They also tend to have high self-esteem and personal dignity, and to be rich. These benefits attest to the high degree of visibility, access to public voice and control over resources that go along with leadership in Nigeria. Conversely, the group agreed that those deprived of decision-making power, namely women, are disrespected, discouraged and victimised, have their views under-represented, experience deprivation and poverty, denial of their human rights and other forms of oppression such as the lack of opportunities to self-actualise.

Another critical hindrance to female political participation and therefore a prioritised concern mentioned by some participants was the issue of political violence. Political violence against women came into the limelight in the wake of the assassination of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola – the wife of former presidential aspirant, late Chief M.K.O Abiola. While male politicians remain the primary victims of violence participants claimed that the fear of it served as an additional barrier against prospective female politicians. For example, during the last democratic phase (1999-2003) Mrs Esther Ezeoke of Benue State, the first ever female State House of Assembly Speaker, was compelled to resign her post due to death threats from political opponents. Another female politician from Benue State recounted how she had to give up her election bid, despite massive local support, when a prominent politician and principal officer of the state issued her face-to-face with a death threat.<sup>157</sup> According to Onyewuchi, a local politician and councillorship aspirant,<sup>158</sup> female politicians do not have the networks and resources to pay for protection (bodyguards) like their male counterparts do, which increases their vulnerability and sense of insecurity. The following excerpt from her interview depicts women’s inability to match muscle for muscle and fight back in the event of political intimidation:

Researcher: How will you handle things like violence at the polling booths...?

Onyewuchi: (Bursts into laughter) Oh this question *o*.<sup>159</sup> What do we do? You know we don’t have powers. The men, you know how they behave? They have thugs. We can only shout...Eh heh! We can only shout and say, ‘Come and

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<sup>157</sup> Private interview (29/04/04) Names withheld on request.

<sup>158</sup> Onyewuchi won the 2003 election to become Ward Councillor. See details in Appendix E

Table E3

<sup>159</sup> Nigerian manner of speech

see o! Eh heh! We will shout. Maybe at times we hook (grab) them like the past elections. We got some men we held them; we were shouting, ‘Come and help us o! Look at! You know, because they were carrying ballot boxes here and there. I’m sure you know what I’m [saying]. You cannot fight them. They will beat you. You just report to the police, the nearby policeman, and say, ‘Come and see.’ Or you go to the village and tell the village heads, although they won’t do anything because this is politics. They will tell you they are not in politics, that the village problem is not political something. So there’s nothing else you can do, you just keep quiet. (28/07/03)

### 5.2.2 *Planning Needs*

Ten (55.6%) policy-makers/politicians and 15 (75%) of NGO leaders said 30% affirmative action was required to encourage women to engage in politics and expose them to leadership, which would in turn have the short-term effect of ‘purging’ the political system and eliminate gender prejudice over time. Participants claimed that the more women in government the more likely women’s needs and concerns would be addressed with the commonly quoted phrase “She who wears the shoe knows where it pinches.” Participants shared Ketebu-Nwokefor’s contention that the main reason for female representation is to lend a gender perspective to all institutions of governance. However, their analysis confuses women’s interest with gender interests by assuming that a gender perspective is the automatic outcome of female leadership. For as Ser, Lucy Chindaba<sup>160</sup>, and Awosika, pointed out female leaders do not necessarily promote women’s gender interests any more than men do. Ser and Chindaba cited examples from Plateau State where women in the State Executive had been a disappointment because they did not use their positions to help the women. Esther Wazhi,<sup>161</sup> provides a reason for this:

Women are conscious of the expectation on them, because everybody in society sees them as the weaker sex, so in order to prove them wrong, to prove a point and correct an impression they strive to make good leaders. I have observed that women leaders tend to be very strict in policy implementation sometimes even to women.

Five (27.8%) policy-makers/politicians felt that specialised leadership development schemes are required to target women and girls. NGO leaders of human/civil rights groups unanimously listed leadership training and development for women as a strategic gender planning need to halt women’s rights violations. The

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<sup>160</sup> Plateau State Chairperson of the National Association of Women Journalists. Interview, 24/06/03: Jos. (See Appendix D: List D)

<sup>161</sup> Former Commissioner and member of the Plateau State Executive Council (1999-2003) and President, Tarok Women Association. Interview, 14/06/03: Jos.

objectives are: 1.) To build self-confidence, competence and consciousness of citizens' rights in females to enable them make informed decisions about every area of their lives and, 2.) To facilitate their active participation in politics and representation in governance at all levels. Awosika, pointed out that formal education does not necessarily predispose women to political activity. She noted for example that due to the de-politicisation effects of culture and tradition "even though the southern women are very educated and articulate and all that, they are still... many of them are not in politics." (Interview, 17/06/03). Consequently, she argued, that effective leadership training must take place informally in the home through gender role flexibility in assignments given to boys and girls, and be reinforced by gender sensitisation of and in public institutions, especially the educational system.

Josephine Effah-Chukwuma<sup>162</sup> disagreed that female representation is solely to introduce a gender perspective. She saw it also as a human rights and social justice issue because women have a right to participate in structures that impact on their lives. Thus, in order to achieve government with a human face that is responsive to the needs of women Effah-Chukwuma went beyond the minimum 30% representation stipulated in Item 15.3 (1) of the NPW to call for direct proportional representation through affirmative action strategies to reflect female numerical strength and priority concerns on public policy and action.

Thompson (FIDA), Salami (NAWACS), Morayo Fawehinmi<sup>163</sup> and Hamza (FOMWAN) supported the idea of affirmative action and quotas with a caveat. They warned that female appointees and nominees for elected posts must be consensus candidates selected in consultation with accredited women's organisations. Such organisations are more likely to have a database of women with positive track records of involvement with women's issues. Thompson explained that to avoid the paralysis of tokenism not only is direct proportional representation essential but also the selection of the right kind of women – in terms of qualifications, integrity and, most importantly, gender awareness. For Fawehinmi and Hamza women in leadership should serve as change agents for their female constituencies as well as for the overhaul of the political system.

Thompson and Ser believed the overhaul must begin at the community level through the inclusion/acceptance of women on traditional councils and community development committees from where they could work their way up to local, state and

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<sup>162</sup> Executive Director of Project Alert on Violence against Women. Interview, 17/07/03: Lagos.

<sup>163</sup> President/Founder of the Christian Resource Centre for Women. Interview, 16/06/03: Lagos.



national government. Consequently, they called for leadership training for rural women and, like Simon, for the conscientisation of community members to accept female leadership.<sup>164</sup> Likewise, Item 15.2 (1) of the NPW also advocates for a wholesale gendered restructuring of the political system through adequate female representation in “village cabinets, political party offices, social organisations, political and managerial posts, board appointments into Federal and State parastatals, key diplomatic assignments and other national and international jobs.”

For some participants the idea of female participation in politics or governance is a means of extending the system of clientelism and patronage to women rather than an avenue for systemic change as a consequence of female integration in decision-making structures. For instance, Rhoda Efajemue<sup>165</sup> assumed that governors and other political leaders would be men who should include women in the distribution of largesse. Once women receive a share of the national cake, currently being referred to as ‘democracy dividends,’ they would be content to take a back seat and not necessarily participate directly in decision-making. Two statements seem to convey this:

“I am not happy because the men oppresses [sic] the women. They oppress them from always, especially when you go to meetings. There are some meetings that you attend with men, like all these political meetings. [...] And as we move with them you find out that when anything comes maybe the person who want to come out, either the governor aspirant or the house of assembly aspirant they give money to the group you find out that the men will sit on it; they will not want the women to take from inside.”

[...]

“Democracy simply means ... mostly they are the politicians that mostly come out and during the political era in those days the women and the children enjoy democracy because a lot of money flows a lot of food flows. So if the women are really involved in working with the governor elect they will enjoy most part of the things that are being given at that particular time.”

(02/06/03)

She explained that women would probably always have to act indirectly through male leaders to access state benefits because it was not likely in the foreseeable future that Nigerian men would condescend to be led by women.

Ketebu-Nwokeafor affirmed the need for direct female participation in governance but enjoined women to adapt to the existing political order to penetrate it. She said women should not rely on affirmative action or political hand-outs to infiltrate the system but be prepared to “follow due process” by applying themselves to its

<sup>164</sup> However, Simon argued against affirmative action on the premise that it was a form of reverse discrimination and unconstitutional.

<sup>165</sup> President of the Jos branch of Eweyhae Isoko Women’s Association of Nigeria. Interview, 02/06/03: Jos.

demands. For instance, while several participants criticised the godfather syndrome characteristic of Nigerian political horse-trading for its propensity to undermine the democratic process, Ketebu-Nwokefor argued that women should quit whining, take a cue from the men and play the game:

“What I have found wrong with women is that, I don’t know why, nearly 80% of women believe in Nigeria, they believe in short circuiting. Things don’t work that way. [...] We have to be focused there is no short circuiting. Every man who has got somewhere went through due process. [...] Every single man even that one who you think had been appointed because you think he has a godfather the due process he went through was to serve the godfather [...] for women to excel in any area of national development it’s a matter of choice. If you chose the area of politics you must go through due process in politics. If you chose corporate life you must go through due process. And every system you chose has its own due process. There is no where in the world that you can make it in politics without going through due process.” (31/05/03)

In politics, she further explained, women must be prepared to adopt the strategy of serving the patriarchal order to their advantage. She proposed an antidote to the complaints made by many women that their husbands and/or in-laws hinder their political aspirations/involvement. Married women must first ‘market’ themselves on the home front through rendering sacrificial service in their husband’s community, and winning his (and his family’s) confidence. For in so doing they would have the necessary backing to enter into the field of politics and succeed. Usman and Omu supported this strategy claiming they had adopted it successfully.

Salami, condemned this attempt to bargain with patriarchy because it co-opts women into a masculinist/patriarchal framework: “Women want power but they want it on the platform of men” (26/05/03). The willingness to play by men’s rules has prevented meaningful advancements in women’s social change agendas. Instead, she contended, women should seek to transform the system – not adapt to it – by developing alternative pressure groups for concerted action outside mainstream political parties. Wazhi (TWA) agreed and asserted that in order to facilitate lasting social change women need to build bridges across class divides and work to level hierarchical structures typical of Nigerian society. She found that village women in her association were often wary of elite or ‘township’ women who looked on them with condescension. For their part elite women, do not “find it easy to flow” with rural women or identify with their peculiar concerns; Wazhi included herself in this indictment. Ketebu-Nwokefor pointed out that effective political mobilisation and constituency building

requires identifying with the needs and aspirations of the disenfranchised, a strategy she said women need to borrow from male leaders:

If you want to lead people over time you will come to realise that the easiest and cheapest way to attain leadership is to take, you know, is to show people that you care. [...] Routinely - watch men who lead people – routinely they go out of their way they buy drinks for their workers, they go out of their way they give them tips - in the office! Different groups have different needs. Every church you go to in the village if there are Chief Launchers eight of them are men. Even if the man has come to donate 5,000 the whole community will clap. People have different needs. You have to show people that you care. (31/05/03)

However, she did not mention that the need to “show people that you care” often precipitates clientelism to distribute public resources to potential political clients. Leaders compete to display their ‘generosity’ publicly in order to score political points against opponents and sway the electorate. Overwhelmingly, participants condemned money politics claiming it constituted a major hindrance to women’s entrance into politics.

With respect to personal autonomy and intra-household decision-making power the majority of participants felt that gender awareness campaigns, female educational and economic empowerment were needed to promote spousal partnership and increase the scope of choice and opportunities available to women (business/professional women had pointed out the limitations of education as a change agent in view of stronger cultural influences). No participant called for the dismantling of the patriarchal structure of marital relations. On the contrary, Khalid, Omu, Olatunji and Aduda (Interview, 04/06/03), saw no correlation between women’s personal autonomy, intra-household decision-making power and their political/public involvement. Khalid claimed, as did Hausa-Fulani PRA participants, that the only place where women should accept subordination and subservience is in relation to their husbands, but they should be ready compete on an equal footing with men in the workplace because in that arena competence counts not gender. Omu (05/06/03) was categorical in asserting that “In the home the man is number one” regardless of a woman’s public status. Olatunji argued that if a woman agreed to take her husband’s name in marriage she had automatically designated him “captain of the ship” although this did not stop her from aspiring to become the President.

If Nigerian women’s quest for equality in political power and decision-making is restricted to public affairs the narrow NPW focus on this domain may be justified.

## 5.3 Material/Economic Issues

### 5.3.1 *Prioritised Concerns*

Participants asserted that culture and religion create concrete material/economic conditions for women with critical consequences for themselves, child welfare and national development. Therefore, female economic deprivation was identified as a critical concern. Nineteen (95%) NGO leaders and 16 (88.9%) politicians/policy-makers highlighted the feminised face of poverty largely related to combined reproductive/productive work load, poor working conditions, and limited access to educational/training and employment opportunities or to personal income. A combination of these factors ensures that,

“Nigerian women... bear the brunt of poverty in the home. When there is poverty sometimes the men run away and leave the woman with the children. And they have to feed! And you see mothers really struggling...” (Gana, Interview, 27/04/04).

Ityavvyar classified poverty into psychological and physical poverty, the former (discussed below in Section 5.5) induced primarily by the lack of access to education and the latter characterised by the lack of income to meet basic needs (food, shelter, healthcare). Most participants dwelt on the prevalence and dire effects of female income poverty on women, children and families. To others, such as Bunmi Dipo-Salami<sup>166</sup> and Salami, poverty is a symptom of deeper causes. They explained that although poverty is widespread among male and female members of the Nigerian populace, female poverty is rooted in and exacerbated by institutionalised patriarchy. Effah-Chukwuma makes the point that psychological (and social) poverty does not derive solely from the lack of education, and further distinguishes between income poverty and financial/economic dependency, contending that there is a direct link between the latter and all forms of domestic violence. She underscores the relative nature of poverty and the fact that non-tangible forms of poverty are harder to recognise, measure and tackle. Neither are they limited to those with low incomes. Household income poverty, for instance, is often a shared material condition and may or may not cause violence. On the other hand, economic dependency applies to women of all classes and Effah-Chukwuma claims that her experience in the field revealed that domestic abuse is routinely covered up in wealthy households where the wife (or wives) are dependants of a rich husband. For various reasons such women feel compelled to remain in abusive situations:

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<sup>166</sup> Senior Research Project Officer at BAOBAB. Interview, 16/06/03; Lagos.

What we found out was that in terms of speaking out the so-called educated women, average women, middle class women, rich women are actually more afraid and ashamed...ashamed of talking out. How can you – I mean I'm the wife of a minister with three, four, five, ten cars in my fleet, with an ADC and an orderly always around me – you know? How can I say my husband is beating me? Then they are always wearing these dark [sun] shades – huh? Take out those shades and you see black and blue. A poor woman feels she's on the floor she fears no fall. She's already on the floor –eh? What more can you do? She is more willing to come out and talk about it, '*I no want am I beg I don tire I don tire*' (pigeon English – I don't want this anymore, I'm fed up). But the big woman she's thinking of everything. She's thinking of her interests, business - maybe the husband gave her money to set up, maybe all the glitterati that goes with the office and being the wife of whoever – you know? 'If I go out and talk about it now he's going to take all this away from me.' In fact, it will shock you to realise that it is we, it is our class of women; the problem is actually more with us than even poor women.

This point is buttressed by a study (by Okeke, 2000) which surveyed educated/professional women. It found that this class of women is more likely to endure a bad marriage to avoid the stigma attached to elite women that they cannot keep their homes. Such women have to prove they can be educated/economically well off and still be successful at marriage. Consequently, for women the poverty trap is a complex range of experiences that reflects the lack of economic as well as socio-political purchasing power.

Dariye and Wazhi argued that female poverty, induced and/or exacerbated by abandonment/male absenteeism, is a major problem in Plateau State leaving women in many parts of the state (e.g. Birom women) responsible for ALL reproductive and productive farm work.<sup>167</sup> Thus, they are the family caregivers and breadwinners. Nevertheless, the majority of them are subsistence farmers and traders with little or no exposure to advanced agricultural technology, farm inputs or extension services. The economic conditions of women on the Plateau, and other such areas, are therefore considerably worse than those of Jaba women where men engage actively in ploughing and harvesting. Here again women's economic status is made worse by the patriarchal nature of Nigerian cultures since male heads of households or extended family relatives remain in firm control of any excess cash earned from the marketing of farm produce because lands are normally patrilineal family holdings.

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<sup>167</sup> This situation arose as part of the colonial legacy of tin mining where men were taken away from their farms and co-opted to work in the mines as part of the burgeoning colonial economy.

In the North West and other core northern states the low level of female education and employment, girl-child marriage, married women's dependency on husbands' incomes and restricted roles for women combine to create a situation in which "the level of poverty is disgusting" (Usman, 07/07/03). That poverty is a prioritised concern among Hausa-Fulani/Muslim women in the North West (and other parts of Northern Nigeria) was amply reflected in the PRA session with Hausa-Fulani women in Bukuru. Another facet pointed out by Olatunji had to do with the poor working conditions and lack of labour protection for those women in purdah involved in leather making and other crafts or trades:

In the North the women do most of the work. That's what I discovered from my managing the UNDP for over 5 years. We had a programme with the UN Trade Agency in Geneva to organise Nigerian women into export groups ... And so we had two consultants who I took round the country to see what women were doing and how it could be developed into export potentials, and we discovered that even jobs we had thought it is the men who are doing it were being done by the women at the end of the day – in purdah! You know some of these puffs, the skin seaters. You will think it's a man's job, ah ah. All the men do is beat out the skin. All those designs and sewing are done by the women in purdah...they get paid but what are they paid? It's next to nothing. You see there's a lot of exploitation going on there. (27/05/03)

Olatunji explained that while the women have the capacity to earn decent wages from the leatherworks trade they are only given a fraction of total income by the men who market the goods. Excluded women lack the opportunity to organise themselves into a trade union to protect their interests. In the Southern and Middle Belt parts of Nigeria while women have greater access to participate publicly in economic activities most do not have an adequate capital base for medium to large-scale capital investment, which limits them to informal petty trading.

### ***5.3.2 Planning Needs***

Economic empowerment towards financial security was identified as an urgent planning need of Nigerian women by 16 (88.9%) policy-makers/politicians followed by education for capacity building to create equality of opportunity by 14 (77.8%) from the same category. In defining the critical planning needs Olatunji was emphatic,

Economic empowerment and education, that goes without saying for me: education, economic empowerment. I say education because of the Northern parts of the country where there is still very low education for the girl-child due to problems of early marriage, drop-out syndrome, what have you, even street trading. Some women would rather their children – their girls – go hawking (street trading), than being in school.

So those are still some of the [problems] in the North – the level of girl-child education is still quite low compared with what you have in the South. But mostly, in the South, it's mostly economic empowerment that the women need. Even in the North, economic empowerment.  
(27/05/03)

Practical planning needs to address immediate material deprivation were suggested such as the provision of micro-credit/loans and skills acquisition for cottage industries, modern machinery and fertiliser for female farmers to *create wealth* and help women afford basic goods and services. Gana argued for development programmes and projects geared towards sustainable wealth creation in the manufacturing and food processing sectors, particularly since women constitute the dominant players in food production and marketing. Item 11 of the NPW on industry addresses this as it seeks to facilitate women's access to institutionalised credit, entrepreneurial skills, business information and technology. However, while the NPW acknowledges women's key role in food production it is vague on how they may be harnessed to consolidate the industry in Nigeria. Under agriculture Item 10.3 (9) merely states that,

Government will strengthen home economic services to vigorously promote consumer education in order to encourage quality development of food and other agricultural commodities.

On the personal level several female participants and one male participant claimed that women could do with much more support from their husbands and extended family members to increase their productive capacity. Their assertion is buttressed by the fact that 12 (41.4%) of the 29 women who participated in the semi-structured interviews claimed that active cooperation and support from culturally atypical husbands and/or fathers (particularly the former) were major contributors to their career success. In light of this participants suggested that awareness and conscientisation programmes should specifically target adult men and thereby build a support-base for women.

Participants also suggested strategic planning needs that aim at the *redistribution of wealth* such as reformation of the land tenure system to facilitate women's ability to inherit and purchase land and property, policy reforms that treat women as autonomous economic agents instead of as members of households in order to facilitate their unfettered access to resources, and tax law reforms that recognise women as breadwinners in their own right with entitlements equivalent to those of male taxpayers. Some participants felt that education was a key strategic tool towards expanding employment opportunities in the long term.

As discussed in Chapter Three wealth creation and reallocation action strategies resonate with NPW objectives to raise women's socio-economic profile and promote social justice and equity.

## 5.4 Psychological Issues

### 5.4.1 *Prioritised Concerns*

Participants across all units of analysis asserted that the psychological conditioning of females and males through the socialisation process has significant negative development outcomes. They argued that gender socialisation in the Nigerian context devalues females and produces demeaning attitudes towards women and their concerns. For instance, eight (44.4%) policy-makers/politicians (six women and two men) and eight (40%) NGO leaders affirmed the assessments made by grassroots women, university students and business/professional women to the effect that due to cultural devaluation and the lack of social recognition women often suffer from low self-esteem, negative self-concept, fear/timidity, false consciousness and the lack of self-confidence. Maduagwu (16/05/03)<sup>168</sup> explained that the lack of social recognition cuts across women of all classes:

When you don't eh have eh decision-making power or leadership power you're denied recognition. For instance if you come to gatherings no matter the percentage of women who are there, no matter how enlightened they are you just discover it's the men the men the men that are being recognised because they are louder than us.

According to Gana, gender socialisation also has negative implications for males as they come under intense psychological pressure to maintain the status quo and resist change. In his words,

Even for men who would want to promote gender issues, that will promote women, they are looked upon as weak. They are looked upon as people who have committed class suicide (Laughs) [...] You know there are stories; there are songs that they sing in communities. They say, "Ah this man is now a woman." (Laughs). And it has a very powerful effect, particularly on the younger ones. So it's a psychological thing that has been developed over the years because it's been consistently a male-dominated society. (27/04/04)

As a result of gender socialisation, Salami asserted, men and women become co-accomplices in female oppression. However, both essentialist and sociological reasons were advanced for this. Some participants (mainly male) felt that gender socialisation was a continuation of innate psychological traits merely reinforced by upbringing.

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<sup>168</sup> President, National Institute Women's Thrift Society, Kuru.



Others claimed that nurture not nature was responsible for a male supremacist complex on the one hand and female servility and over-submissiveness on the other.

Discriminatory gender socialisation was said to have two detrimental impacts on development. First, Makonta (11/06/03), contended that women's "potentials cannot be harnessed to the maximum to contribute to socio-economic and political advancement." Thompson and Onyewuchi viewed women as being held in a perpetual state of childishness preventing them from competent and competitive involvement in formal institutions. Thus, women constitute a vastly untapped human resource base. Second, Onyewuchi and Ser explained how male supremacist ideologies and behaviour ultimately lead to the power drunkenness and violence that characterise Nigerian politics. The former gave an example of how, besides intimidating female political candidates, in the contest for political supremacy men had used physical intimidation against political opponents seizing ballot boxes to rig the 2003 elections. Twenty-three (66%) semi-structured interview participants agreed that the male ego posed a key obstacle to women's agendas for change and public engagement. However, Ketebu-Nwokefor did not see this as peculiar to Nigeria: "...In Nigeria, in America, all over the world, the whole world stands on the male ego leg."<sup>169</sup> In view of this, Lar opined that getting men to concede public space to women, particularly in relation to power and privilege, was a priority concern.

#### ***5.4.2 Planning Needs***

Besides gender awareness creation, affirmative action and legislative protection for women advocated in response to previous issues, some participants recommended self-development programmes to counteract detrimental psychological conditioning. Oby Okwuonu<sup>170</sup> argued that programmes aimed at developing a positive self-concept and talents were women's foremost planning need. Dipo-Salami said such programmes should include the promotion of past and present female heroines and leaders as role models. Participants believed personal development schemes were an essential step towards emancipation from internalised slavery and motivation to go beyond the

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<sup>169</sup> References to a male supremacist complex and male ego are reminiscent of assertions made by Alemika regarding the indication of patriarchal (hegemonic) masculinity in male violence (see page 66).

<sup>170</sup> Chief Women Development Officer and Head, Women and Development Unit, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. Interview, 27/05/03: Abuja.

mediocre space society had confined women to. Gyarta Pofi,<sup>171</sup> Jessica Obadiah,<sup>172</sup> and Salami also stressed the need to involve men in gender and development projects as avenues for non-threatening and non-combative spaces for male-female dialogue.

Male participants assigned responsibility for change in the first instance to women as individuals. Simon (21/08/04) advised that women “must really come out of their cocoon...they must come out of their shell and participate meaningfully” in order to deal with what he identified as the foremost prioritised concern for women: their lack of “integration in the affairs of state, particularly in governance, politics” due to social bias and systematic exclusion.

## 5.5 Physiological Issues

### 5.5.1 Prioritised Concerns

Ten (50%) NGO leaders, six (33.3%) policy-makers/politicians and business/professional women raised concerns regarding women’s health, particularly reproductive health. Gana explained how, besides economic underdevelopment, male-bias in policy formulation accrued to gross negligence of women and children’s peculiar health requirements with drastic consequences. With a maternal mortality rate of 1,100 per 100,000 live births Nigeria ranks 24<sup>th</sup> out of 43 countries evaluated in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>173</sup> According to a UNFPA report, one out of 13 Nigerian women has a lifetime risk of maternal death where “A lifetime risk of 1 in 3000 represents a low risk of dying from pregnancy and childbirth, while 1 in 100 is a high risk!”<sup>174</sup> Nigeria’s infant and child mortality rates stand at 110 and 183 per 1000 live births respectively, both above the reported average for least developed countries (99 and 156 respectively – *HDR 2003*).

According to participants the nature of women’s health concerns vary significantly according to geographical location and educational status. For instance, rural illiterate women suffer more from serial pregnancies and have more children than urban-based educated women.<sup>175</sup> In the core Muslim North the problem is compounded by girl-child marriage leading to a high rate of vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) in those

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<sup>171</sup> Head of Women in Democracy Unit of the Church of Christ in Nigeria. Interview, 19/06/03: Jos.

<sup>172</sup> President, Country Women Association of Nigeria. Interview, 18/06/03: Jos.

<sup>173</sup> 1995 estimate: *HDR 2003*

<sup>174</sup> [www.unfpa.org/mothers/statsbycountry.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/statsbycountry.htm)

<sup>175</sup> The total fertility rate estimated between 2000-5 per Nigerian woman is 5.4 down from 6.9 in 1970-5. Contraceptive prevalence rate for 1995-2001 is a mere 15%.

areas.<sup>176</sup> Dr. Khalid (from Sokoto State (North West), and Secretary-General of the Nigerian Medical Association) refuted the link between VVF and early marriage,

I attended a symposium, it's one gentleman, he's from Netherlands, he's been working in Nigeria for quite some time now [...] He came to the conclusion that look: what is actually causing this problem in these women is not because they marry early, but it's because the government does not want to accept it's responsibility of rendering social services to everybody wherever he is in this country. He said in Europe and America it's not that people don't have problem with delivery they do have but the services are so efficient they are so adequate [...] but in our own society the government, the elites are running away from facing up to their responsibility. They are looking for some other reasons that will enable them keep their elitist idea and resources away from the people. So before we could really say that this early marriage is causing this we must be able to provide social service for the women and then see whether when you put all those infrastructures in place you still have that problem. (09/06/03)

Khalid ignored the fact that VVF is rare in other remote parts of Nigeria where there is also severe deficiency in health services; most rural women have little or no access to modern health care delivery and yet VVF is uncommon in other parts of Nigeria where girl-child marriage is not prevalent. His argument is further weakened by statistical evidence that maternal mortality rates and the incidence of carcinoma (cancer) of the cervix) in the North among Hausa-Fulani women are well above the national average (Usman, 1997). He suggests that girls who want to marry early may be forced into an immoral life style if made to stay single. However, his support for girl-child marriage contravenes No. 4 of the goals enunciated by the Safe Motherhood Campaign, which women activists in Nigeria want to see incorporated into domestic law and is also adopted by the NPW in Items 6.2 (7) and 8.1 (6) under education and health respectively.

For educated women and city dwellers there is a greater level of exposure to modern contraceptive methods, and the exigencies of employment and urban survival have triggered a significant decrease in fertility rates. Nevertheless, Omu and Sarah Ocheke<sup>177</sup> explained, women's biological role as child-bearers places factual limitations on career opportunities and political involvement, thereby reinforcing gender disparities in socio-economic achievement levels. And there was general agreement among business/professional women that men had more disposable income to spend on healthcare, whatever the health issue. A further concern for rural women in particular,

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<sup>176</sup> A condition in which due to the immaturity of internal organs the bladder and at times the anal passage are torn during childbirth. It is a life-long condition for most sufferers who have no access to reparative surgery.

<sup>177</sup> Director, Federal Ministry of Information. Interview, 19/08/03: Abuja.

but also for low-income semi-literate urban women, is the lack of control over their reproductive function arising from the low contraceptive prevalence rate and the cultural right given to husbands to determine the number of pregnancies/children a woman has, and even when sexual intercourse occurs. All this converges with the lack of adequate basic health care delivery to create the high maternal and peri-/neonatal mortality rates discussed in the previous Section.

Vulnerability to physical violence was another prioritised concern raised by nine (45%) NGO leaders and five (27.8%) policy-makers/politicians. The various forms of violence mentioned included domestic violence, rape, physical/sexual assault during communal clashes, political thuggery and the threat of assassination. The 1999 Baseline Survey on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Girls in Nigeria confirmed the high incidence of domestic violence, ranging from 20% to 67% *reported cases* in Southern and Northern parts of the country respectively.<sup>178</sup> The highest incidence was found to be in the South-South and the lowest in the North West. Communal clashes have also been on the increase since 1999 with large numbers of displaced persons – especially women and children – as well as reports of sexual assault on women by both military/police personnel and civilian insurgents. Thompson pointed out that marital rape is not recognised as a crime in Nigeria and domestic violence is sanctioned under the Northern Penal Code and Sharia Law.

### ***5.5.2 Planning Needs***

Educational and awareness campaigns were the only planning needs mentioned with regard to improving women's reproductive health status. Although participants had raised concerns over women's reproductive role they affirmed that motherhood is a desirable role with positive outcomes for mother, child and societal well being. However, all participants felt that it was important to devise measures to facilitate the participation and re-entry of mothers with infants/young children into the job market. Such measures include laws to protect the interests of female employees. Nine (54%) NGO leaders and five (27.8%) policy-makers/politicians mentioned the need to increase women's level of physical security through the enactment and enforcement of legislation to protect women and girls from domestic and other forms of violence.

Surprisingly most participants mentioned only women and teenage girls as beneficiaries of campaigns for female reproductive rights forgetting the dominant role men play in sexuality and reproduction in most Nigerian cultural contexts. However,

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<sup>178</sup> Domestic violence in Nigeria is under-reported according to Effah-Chukwuma (2002)

Okwuonu argued for more male involvement based on field experience handling workshops on health and sexuality, and how male participants (and their wives!) had shown great appreciation of the knowledge and skills imparted. Okwuonu found that grassroots awareness campaigns served the strategic purpose of empowering women to gain control over their reproductive lives thus reducing fertility and maternal mortality. She, and other participants, therefore argued that the strong correlation between reduced fertility and female education provided a strategic reason to focus on girl-child education.

## 5.6 Issues-Areas Specific to Organisational Categories

### 5.6.1 *Business/Professional Organisations*

#### 5.6.1.1 Workplace Gender Discrimination

The distinctive area of prioritised concern for this group was discrimination against women in the workplace, whether in business or formal private and public sector paid employment. Participants raised three issues:<sup>179</sup>

1. Career development opportunities: Women's opportunities for career development and chances of reaching the peak of their careers are severely curtailed by three factors:

- a. *Lower expectations from the establishment*

There is a lower expectation of female staff evidenced by the assignment of less challenging, and ultimately less rewarding, tasks. Men are more likely to be given challenging assignments, selected for on-the-job and professional development training, nominated to attend conferences and be promoted. This trend stems partly from a belief in greater male competence. But it also derives from women's biological reproductive role and the social expectations placed on married women to be primary homemakers, which place factual limitations on their ability to be fully dedicated to the demands and rigours of the workplace. Salami, Feminist playwright and university lecturer, and Thompson, a lawyer owning her own practice, shared personal experiences of this. Male lecturers were given more interesting and demanding courses to teach. When opportunities to attend conferences and seminars came up at the university Salami

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<sup>179</sup> These issues were also raised by women from other organisational categories and units of analysis.

observed that men would automatically be short-listed. It was assumed that female staff would be unavailable/unwilling to attend due to family responsibilities. These opportunities provided men with vital networks to further develop their careers and gain recognition. Several years into her career she found herself outpaced by both contemporary and junior male colleagues. Thompson observed that private law chambers in Port Harcourt were often reluctant to hire women because of the potential encumbrances of family commitments.

b. *Attitudes and behaviour of others*

The attitudes and behaviour of other people within and outside the workplace also affects the career development of women. Men in the working place often show contempt for or disregard the abilities and efforts of their female colleagues, subordinates and bosses. Salami gave an example of the reaction of male academics when NAWACS began to gain recognition for female academics through the organisation of national/international conferences and the publication of journals:

Sometimes men feel threatened especially this our new move all over the universities we get reports that men feel threatened by our coming up. For instance in our last meeting we had reports from three universities whereby the men refused to acknowledge the journal brought out by women. And when the Vice-Chancellors asked them to set up a committee to accredit this journal, the committees they set up said that these journals were reputable journals. But the men just would not agree and said that they were rubbish, they were substandard, even though professional independent bodies have said that these journals are reputable. But they refused, why? Because they feel threatened. They feel that women are now becoming a major threat to them and women are now trying to share the space with them, share the academic space with them. A place where they felt they were the leaders. (26/05/03)

Salami and Thompson admitted that in a society that places premium on women's child-bearing function, the time-frame imposed by the female biological clock, which coincides with the period where people concentrate on building their careers poses real challenges for

women. However, both opined that the challenges would be easily surmountable with the willingness of husbands to participate actively in domestic responsibilities. More often than not husbands constitute stumbling blocks to women's careers by insisting on having more children and leaving the responsibility of caring for them solely with wives. Furthermore, most husbands are unwilling to make sacrifices so their wives could travel away from home. For instance, Salami explained that female academics were often forbidden by their husbands to attend conferences and cited a personal example. Thompson admitted that law chambers on occasion suffered disruption because a female lawyer had to take a sick child to hospital when a husband was 'unable' to do so. According to Chindaba (NAWOJ), it is not down to husbands alone; society also exerts pressure. She recounted a personal example:

Even as the chairman of NAWOJ, I've had times my husband has cautioned me on some things because he says, 'please o, this your NAWOJ thing is getting too much.' You know, he has not been really specific but, you know, he has said, 'you should be careful, people are talking, people are saying this and that.' And because of the nature of my profession too, I mix with a lot of people; I travel a lot... So people started talking and he just said I should just watch it that this is what people are saying [...] Like em, you go to government house, you are seen talking to this person, talking to that person, and you get close to the person – you probably have an appointment for an interview or something - news starts spreading, 'Oh she's beginning to flirt.' And things like that (laughs).

c. *Female psychology of under-achievement*

Not all workplace gender discrimination is from the establishment or from others. Women also discriminate against themselves through self-limiting attitudes. Salami said that at the beginning of her career she was content to let the men 'get on with it' and focus on her family as she had young children to raise. It did not bother her that the men were moving ahead. She was content to plod along and consoled herself by saying, "I am not in competition with anybody." She accepted to teach courses nobody else wanted, and opted to look the other way, refusing to assert her rights in protest against glaring evidences of gender discrimination. Thompson agreed that women's attitudes towards their jobs exhibit a

defeatism that turns out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy of under-achievement. In the legal profession most female lawyers would rather settle for an easier civil service route in the Ministry of Justice than the more strenuous, yet professionally lucrative, private law practice. Both women opined that programmes aimed at developing self-esteem, assertiveness and coping strategies through personal/time management are a vital gender planning need for career women.

2. Resource distribution:

Men are normally favoured in the distribution of office facilities such as office space, equipment, and toilets, as well as other perks of office (e.g. official cars and allowances).

3. Sexual harassment and patronage:

While this issue was not mentioned by any of the NGO leaders listed in the business/professional category it was discussed by several career women interviewed. Morayo Fawehinmi (CRCW), a businesswoman and former company manager and Temidola Fawehinmi<sup>180</sup> (unrelated), a former bank manager, claimed that, regardless of personal competence or qualifications, it is common for women to be expected to render sexual services in exchange for appointments, contracts and promotions. Where women resist they are either fired or sidelined. According to Temidola,

Some women, they have to bend over backwards in order to get to where they are supposed to go. I don't know whether you understand what I mean about that? [...] In some cases even if a woman is educated enough and has what it takes to move forward, you know that some men subject them to some sort of – how can I explain it? – ‘You have to sleep with me or else you cannot move forward.’ That is not education. In some cases they just have to. (Interview, 09/11/03)

Accordingly, less qualified women have been known to move ahead through a client-patron system where free access to women's bodies is guaranteed to male patrons. In some regions the system bears the code name *goro* (kola nut in Hausa) a cultural symbol of light entertainment and friendly exchange. This was the basis of Ojora's earlier assertion<sup>181</sup> that sexual patronage casts a slur on all professional, business or highly

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<sup>180</sup> President Ondo Ladies Club

<sup>181</sup> Page 199



placed women because of the widespread belief that successful women used their bodies to reach the top.

Item 9.2 of the NPW enumerates objectives and strategies that deal extensively with some of the above-mentioned concerns. It seeks to eliminate all workplace gender-based discriminatory practices and socio-cultural constraints to female entry into public and private sector employment. It also calls for legal reform to institute ‘more and better protective measures for women workers.’ (Item 9.2 (10)).

## **5.6.2 Community Development/Self-help Organisations**

### **5.6.2.1 Infrastructural Development**

Organisations such as the Country Women Association of Nigeria and the Centre for Gender and Rural Development, which carry out a large share of their work at the grassroots among rural women, found the lack of infrastructure to be a major hindrance in the execution of projects. Jessica Obadaiah President of COWAN in Plateau State put access to water at the top of the list of priority concerns for village women in the State. Due to the lack of access to water near their homes women had to travel long distances to haul water, particularly during the Harmattan (dry season). This prevented them from being able to invest time in developing cottage industries with the loans acquired from the organisation. For those involved in eco-farming (also referred to as garden or vegetable farming) the lack of water was indicated in low and poor quality produce output. Furthermore, the absence of potable water posed serious health and sanitation challenges to women and children leading to the preponderance of water-related diseases and unsanitary practices. Consequently, COWAN designated the provision of wells and boreholes a cardinal planning need in its village outreach projects.

According to Ser (NCWS/GCRD), rural women also need access roads to facilitate the transportation of goods to market outlets. Many women in the local communities where she served expressed concern and discouragement over the inability to get fresh/perishable farm produce to surrounding markets before spoilage set in due to the lack of good roads, insufficient road networks and transport facilities.

Such concerns and needs are dealt with under *Social Services* in Item 14 of the NPW. In order to enforce citizens’ rights to social services it lists five implementation strategies for the provision of family recreational units, rural road networks and transport systems, potable water, communication systems and housing credits. Other

studies have included the lack of food storage and processing facilities as another major problem faced by rural food producers (Oladele, 2002).

### **5.6.3 Cultural/Ethnic Organisations**

#### **5.6.3.1 Environmental/Ecological Issues**

This issue was raised by Efajemue (EIWAN). Isoko land is an oil producing area in Delta state where community clashes took intermittently place between 1984 and 2005. Efajemue drew attention to women's plight as major food producers; ecological damage to farmlands brought about by oil pollution impacts on them and their families. For instance, food scarcity has led to a noticeable decline in the nutritional status, and to the outbreak of new diseases associated with pollution. The practical planning need mentioned to counteract the negative effects on the environment was to provide women with micro-credit to purchase fertilisers and thereby increase farm yields. Nothing was mentioned about the strategic need to hold oil companies accountable to local communities for long-term sustainable use of the environment. Ityavvyar (Inter-Gender) raised another ecological concern that bears mentioning here though Inter-gender was not classified under this category. He discussed the impact of regular inhalation of smoke from using firewood on the health of rural girls and women. He stressed the need to find affordable and accessible alternative energy sources to safeguard both the environment and health.

Item 12 of the NPW enjoins the effective integration of women in the management, protection, preservation and use of the environment on the basis of their close affinity with it as managers, extractors and users of environmental resources. The aim is to improve awareness and access to alternative environment-friendly energy sources, sanitary conditions and effective ecosystem degradation control among other things.

#### **5.6.3.2 Marital/Family Stability**

Leaders of three groups in the culture/ethnic category (Tarok Women's Association, Ondo Ladies Club, and EIWAN) contended that cultural stipulations regarding husbands' rights, privileges and behaviour breed marital/family instability, which gives rise to negative emotional and physical consequences for women, and diminishes their ability to be productive. Wazhi (TWA) cited polygamy as a primary area of concern because it increases the chances of men abandoning their family care

responsibilities leaving women to shoulder the burden by themselves. Efajemue explained that polygamy and concubinage were major causes of hardship for women:

Nigerian men are known for going out wanting to have too many wives, wanting to have too many concubines, not taking care, not really taking good care of the home that they have. If it was a white man, a white man is made for one wife. And they look solely on that woman. But Nigerian men being what they are they will tell you it is their custom; it is their tradition to go out and look for women. And by so doing even when you are so buoyant as a Nigerian man, the money will not be enough to take care of your family because you are taking care of somebody outside. (02/06/03)

According to Wazhi abandonment and absenteeism are not just caused by polygamy but also by the high incidence of male alcoholism. All this places financial stress on the family and especially on the woman who as the pivot of the family is expected to ensure its sustenance. Besides emotional dissatisfaction, financial distress can result in wife battery and other forms of domestic violence. Fawehinmi (ODLC) claimed that the lack of husbands'/extended family support also prevented women from getting involved in productive ventures that would otherwise help them come out of poverty. She and Obadiah (COWAN) cited examples of women who had been forbidden by their husbands or in-laws to join self-help schemes, and gave examples of women having loans confiscated by their husbands. In terms of planning needs participants felt it was important to ensure the financial independence of women through access to micro-credit and by introducing procedures to make men accountable for the loans obtained by their wives.

#### ***5.6.4 Women/Gender Rights Organisations***

##### **5.6.4.1 Human and Civil Rights Violations**

According to NGO leaders in this category the violation of the human/civil rights and fundamental freedoms of girls and women encapsulates every other form of deprivation they experience, and is a major priority concern. Effah-Chukwuma, (Project Alert on Violence against Women), considered these violations as a form of systemic, pervasive and catalytic violence in that they are embedded in all formal and informal institutions and rife in every part of the country. She claimed they generate female dependency, pandemic HIV/AIDS, ill-health and women's comparatively low socio-economic development. In her words,

Whatever you say about women it starts and ends with violence, be it discrimination against them in the work place – it's violence and all that. So you cannot do away with talking on issues bordering on violence against

women. And like also as I often say for as long as you are a woman in this our society at one point or the other in your life you cannot escape one form of violence or the other [...] I think at the bottom of it all is this issue of violence because it is only a woman who is safe at home, safe in the work place, safe in the public, in the society, that can put in her best in every aspect of life. Like I tell people I often say that violence against women is not only a health issue it is also a development issue. (Interview, 17/07/03)

Effah-Chukwuma and Dipo-Salami (BAOBAB) spoke of violence in broad terms. They enunciated four forms of gender-based violence observable in the Nigerian context: 1.) State-sponsored violence in the form of institutionalised sexism through the decisions and actions of government personnel, particularly law enforcement agents<sup>182</sup> leading to male-biased, gender-insensitive or inadequate legislation/policies and 2.) Cultural violence (via harmful traditional practices, customary/religious laws and practices) 3.) Physical violence (battery, sexual assault and the denial of reproductive rights) and 4.) Psychological violence (verbal abuse and mental/emotional torture).

#### 5.6.4.2 Educational Curriculum Review

Dipo-Salami and Effah-Chukwuma claimed that Nigeria's educational curriculum from primary through tertiary levels displays a strict adherence to stereotypical gender roles thereby perpetuating the image of male leader/property owner/power broker and female follower/dependent/domestic. In so doing it robs girls (and boys) of female role models in diverse social functions, which are vital for holistic identity formation and future public involvement. Effah-Chukwuma gave the following example from her daughter's school:

The teacher was actually the one that called my attention, that they were teaching them social studies – of course it's the stereotype social studies: daddy goes to work, who cooks the food? Mummy. Who sweeps? Who tidies? Mummy and the girl. So they asked her, who cooks and who does the chores at home? She said, 'Aunty' (I have a cook - a lady that comes in) 'It's aunty that does it and mummy if she's at home sometimes, daddy sometimes,' and the teacher said, 'No this is not...' – you know wanted her to say what they taught her and she said, 'No!' and they said, 'Okay daddy is the one that brings money' and she said, 'My mummy brings in money too; my mummy buys things for me too.' My daughter found it difficult taking it that it is only daddy that brings because here I am oftentimes I'm the one buying things for them, getting things for them going out, not that their father doesn't but she said, 'Mummy I could not, it's not true that it's only daddy that buys things for me. We travel together you buy things for us.' So it wasn't right.

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<sup>182</sup> The interviewee gave the example of the rape of female victims by soldiers and mobile police sent in by the government to quell communal uprisings in Odi, Rivers State and Benue State in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

So I had to go to the teacher and I said, ‘this is a dilemma you people are putting these... it’s a stereotype thing you are teaching them: ‘Oh daddy is the one that brings money, mummy is...’ – man-the-hunter, woman-the-gatherer... (17/07/03)

Consequently, she emphasised the need to revise the educational curriculum to reflect real-life gender roles characteristic of a modernising society. Awosika (WLDCN), however, contended that role diversity is not intrinsic to modern Africa alone because Yoruba women had historically been active in trade and property development/ownership, from pre-colonial times. Nevertheless, women’s socio-economic activities have been and remain a muted reality rather than a publicly acknowledged fact. Hence Effah-Chukwuma enjoined a re-writing of historical and sociological texts to reflect women’s capabilities and contributions to society.

### ***5.6.5 Faith-Based Organisations***

#### **5.6.5.1 Re-Interpretation of Religious Texts**

Owing to the influential role of religion in private and public life in Nigeria, most notably for women, a large number of faith-based women’s groups exist which exert considerable influence over the lives of members. Participants from religious groups said their organisations concentrated on inculcating and building religious knowledge and virtue in women as well as tackling social issues that affect them. However, all three participants in this category observed that mainstream/dominant interpretations of the Bible and the Koran are vested with patriarchal values and interests that greatly undermine the worth of women as persons, and limit their freedom and productive capacity. Pofi (COCIN) and Morayo Fawehinmi (CRCW), alleged that African traditionalism and conservative/fundamentalist religion operate in alliance to promote the oppression of women in domestic and public spheres. Consequently, tradition, spirituality and religion have been the basis upon which, regardless of class, ethnicity or location, “Most of the women have accepted what has gone on for decades – the discrimination against them [...] they’ve accepted that they are a lower class.” (Pofi, Interview: 19/0603).

According to Hamza, human/civil rights violations are the summation of female deprivation while the faulty interpretation and application of religious texts/tenets are its bottom line. The problem, she explained, is not with religion but with male egocentricity and female ignorance and acquiescence; both impact on women’s capacity

to live as autonomous individuals. Subsequently, she explained, based on a faulty understanding of what Islam expects of men and women,

The men feel they are the ones that should decide and the women should be at the receiving end. And the women tend to accept it and go by it. So that you find a situation where a woman is confronted by the children trying to decide on what to do they will say, 'Wait for your father'. So she has succumbed to that position. She has not been able to show that yes, she's competent. That she's able to take decision when it is needed. (02/07/03)

The PRA session with Muslim Hausa-Fulani women in Bukuru provided an example of female acquiescence to this male-decision-maker/ female-devotee construct. As a strategic means towards women's empowerment all three NGO leaders called for the critical interrogation of religious interpretations that deny the full expression of women's humanity in order to arrive at gender-balanced elucidations that reflect the original unbiased intent of sacred texts.

Owing to the politically sensitive and explosive nature of religion in Nigeria, the NPW does not address it directly. Rather it uses a blanket approach to deal with all forms of gender discrimination through the harmonisation of the tripartite legal system and legislative reform to provide protection to vulnerable women (Item 13.1 (3)).

#### 5.6.5.2 Non-Western Strategic Approaches to Feminist Agendas

Quite significantly, all three participants sounded a note of caution regarding how to change the status quo of inherent male-bias, and were unanimous in their rejection of combative western style feminism, which often polarises male/female relations. Fawehinmi contended that the anti-male stance and extreme liberalism of western feminism had failed to deliver its promise of freedom to women. At the centre of this failure is the rejection of God and godly values. In their bid to do away with religious patriarchy western feminists have thrown out the baby with the bath water. As Fawehinmi put it:

We have freedom in Christ not to do whatever we like. This is not American-style liberation. They claim to be free but are in bondage. This is a paradox. So we believe in liberation but not secular activism that is, just being vocal. We believe in being vocal and free but have different values. It's about being free in our hearts to become who we really are in the spirit. (17/06/03).

Fawehinmi and Pofi believed that true freedom is from within and resides in a close relationship with a Creator who, properly understood, transcends gender delineation and inspires holistic human development. Both Pofi and Fawehinmi asserted that a correct discernment of Scriptural meaning is essential to healthy identity

formation in women (and men), which is a first step to their liberation and self-actualisation. Beyond accurate religious instruction however, Hamza argued that another strategic way forward to transform gender stereotypes is for women leaders to serve as models of integrity and excellence and thereby inspire younger women, and debunk sexist put-downs. Pofi agreed; although she found men were initially antagonistic to the idea of women empowerment, with exemplary leadership and a conciliatory as opposed to confrontational approach, they often became supporters and collaborators. According to her a conciliatory approach involves giving men their due respect, involving them in gender and development projects, acknowledging positive efforts, and engaging in rational, non-accusatory and winsome dialogue. Similar to suggestions made by other participants Pofi said the approach also called for wives to make husbands feel safe, respected and loved by seeking to meet their needs. By so doing, she claimed, women would be able to get what they want from men. Although, Pofi said she did not regard this method as encouraging manipulative tendencies in women or as a form of pandering to patriarchal egocentricity, the approach concentrates on piecemeal, localised change involving individual relationships.

During the course of this research participants frequently expressed objections to western-style feminism. The NPW for its part does not shy away from its support of a feminist framework as a pre-requisite for the comprehensive analysis of women's development needs (Item 17.3). This is evident by its adoption of feminist language enshrined in WID and GAD formulations. Nonetheless, the policy expresses faith in the ability of men and women to collaborate to bring about gender equality for the common good, and treats government or the state as a gender neutral space charged with the duty to dispassionately create and allocate resources and opportunities among citizens.

#### ***5.6.6 Welfare/Rehabilitation and Generalist Organisations***

Priority concerns and planning needs shared by groups in these two organisational categories fall under the five general themes discussed previously.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

Elite women (and men) identified both practical and strategic interests and planning needs. The most commonly and consistently identified priority concerns by all units of analysis were cultural discrimination, female poverty and ignorance and/or social disability due to the lack of education and/or information. Like grassroots

women, the vast majority of participants considered economic empowerment and access to formal education to be the most crucial planning needs for women's socio-economic advancement. However, strategic interventions such as affirmative action for direct representation in governance and decision-making, legislative reform and gender awareness creation also featured as priority areas. Nevertheless, the overall focus of most elite women was similar to that of grassroots women – the need to address immediate physical necessity of the masses of Nigerian women to enhance their capacity for self-reliance and public engagement. Similarly, the majority of elite women displayed deep sensitivity to and personal conflict over tensions between religious/cultural ideologies, the preponderance of male dominance and vested interests in inter-personal/public gender roles/relations, and gender equality/equity issues. The experiences and perspectives shared by participants demonstrated how “very practical needs of women are closely enmeshed with their need for structural change” (Young, 1997) and how women themselves are deeply enmeshed and complicit in their own subordination through gender socialisation from cultural and religious conditioning.

The interests and needs identified by elite women for themselves and the Nigerian female masses compare favourably with the NPW and the majority endorsed the policy, particularly with regard to its sectoral emphases on education, employment, income generation (industry and micro-enterprise), health, and political participation/representation. However, several participants, particularly those who were previously aware of the NPW, observed that the policy document requires amendment to correct lapses in relation to the vagueness of its language and the absence of clearly specified responsibilities and sanctions in the event of non-compliance. (Appendix H presents further recommendations proffered by women for the successful implementation of the NPW).

Having looked at what Nigerian women say their needs are and how they compare with the NPW, the next chapter examines how women organise for change and the degree to which they have adopted the NPW agenda.



## CHAPTER SIX

# Women Organise for Change

The preceding two chapters provided an overview of the interests and needs of a cross-section of Nigerian women from diverse walks of life. This gave an insight into women's experiences and what sort of change they desired to improve living conditions. Moreover, they demonstrated important similarities and differences among and between grassroots and elite women. There was also a significant level of compatibility between women's self-defined interests and needs and the goals and objectives of the NPW. It is now crucial to find out how women have translated their interests into agendas for change and to explore the extent to which such agendas are aligned with the NPW. Chapter Three demonstrated that Nigerian women have historically pursued common goals through collective action on several fronts. Using a case study approach this chapter zooms in on specific non-governmental organisations to examine their goals and objectives and discover the ways in which they have sought to realise them. Concurrently, it evaluates these organisational agendas in light of the NPW.

In the course of programme/project implementation it is normal for organisations to encounter difficulties or obstacles. Consequently, this chapter investigates the nature of constraints encountered by women's groups. This is important because the NPW document has specified its reliance on indigenous organisations for successful implementation. The constraints they identify are a pointer to potential obstacles to the NPW and hint at mechanisms required to facilitate its effective execution. Semi-structured interviews were held with Chief Executives of five women's groups representing different categorisations to obtain information on organisational objectives, profiles and operations. However, the organisational constraints enumerated at the end of the chapter are not limited to the views of case study participants but include the experiences and perspectives expressed by the entire selection of NGO leaders interviewed.

### 6.1 The Proliferation of NGOs in Nigeria

The 1990s was easily the decade of the NGO in Nigeria. 'NGOism'<sup>183</sup> increased in scale and importance phenomenally during the period and continue to do so. This situation arose from economic and political factors. The post-1985 economic crisis led

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<sup>183</sup> A widely used term in Nigeria referring to the unremitting formation and activities, including the vested interests, of NGOs.

to a decline in government spending on support services and an expansion in the role of the private sector as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme. External debt between 1985 and 1990 almost doubled from US\$18.904 billion to US\$33.1 billion<sup>184</sup> and the number of people living in poverty rose to 64.7 million in 1996 from 38.5 million in 1985.<sup>185</sup> Of these 26 million and 13 million people respectively were living in abject poverty – most of them in rural areas (19 million in 1996). Consequently, an increasingly impoverished citizenry attempted to offset state failure to provide social services and to counter the non-responsiveness of the profit-driven private sector through the creation of self-help organisations.

As shown in Chapter Three political crises erupting out of years of oppression by military dictatorships and civilian elites also fomented pro-democracy organising and the expansion of a virile civil society. Thus, the international push for good governance and advocacy by civil society, and the lure of donor funding also impelled the proliferation of NGOs. Both the state and donor agencies have been hard pressed to distinguish between genuine NGOs and an array of briefcase NGOs ('BRINGOs')<sup>186</sup> and Non-governmental Individuals (NGIs). As a result of an anti-establishment agenda (evidenced by protest and/or external alliances/funding), the shadowy motives of certain groups or the unwillingness of government to engage with civil society demands, non-governmental organisations, along with the press and the judiciary, have often operated under a climate of distrust and executive/legislative repression/manipulation (Iheme, 2002). Nigeria's 1999 return to democracy enlarged the space for NGO participation and generated greater government-civil society consultation and partnership, a fact attested to by several NGO leaders that participated in qualitative and quantitative surveys.

A multitude of women's organisations emerged from the wave of NGO formation. They continued to proliferate and gain prominence in proportion to the variety, severity and enormity of women's concerns and needs bearing witness to women's sense of exclusion/marginalisation and their desire to gain access and control. NGOs are required by Nigerian law to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission. In addition, although not a legal requirement, the Nigerian Commission for Women Societies (NCWS) an umbrella body set up in 1958 to promote, co-ordinate and monitor

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<sup>184</sup> Federal Ministry of Finance and Central Bank of Nigeria.

[http://www.cenbank.org/paymentsystems/externa\\_debt.htm](http://www.cenbank.org/paymentsystems/externa_debt.htm)

<sup>185</sup> Poverty Profile for Nigeria. The World Bank Group: Africa Poverty Monitoring Survey Navigator. [http://www4.worldbank.org/afr/poverty/databank/docnav/show\\_doc.cfm?ID=3007](http://www4.worldbank.org/afr/poverty/databank/docnav/show_doc.cfm?ID=3007)

<sup>186</sup> Organisations that may or may not be legally registered but have no physical premises from where they conduct official operations.

women's interests and groups, encourages such groups to register with its state branches. Nevertheless, it is common for NGOs not to register either with the CAC or the NCWS. Moreover, both bodies lack the required database or monitoring framework to track or regulate the plethora of associations that exist.

## 6.2 Organisational Types and Classifications

This study adopts Mazibuko's (2005:1) working definition of an NGO to mean "any grouping of people who have a common mission to meet a particular need in their society or community, and are not formed or controlled by government." In Nigeria, as elsewhere, women's organisations represent a diverse and immense category (Wiegersma, 1997). Maslyukivska (1999) classifies NGOs on the basis of: 1) work focus or what they do, and 2) level of operation. For the purposes of this study a synthesis of this two-fold classification is adopted to categorise the 45 organisations that participated in qualitative and quantitative surveys along with a third classification method based on membership. This produced the seven categories of NGOs contained in Table 6.1.

Classifying groups according to what they do (e.g. women's/gender rights, welfare/rehabilitation and generalist) serves to bring their agendas into sharper focus, which is the point of this study. Women's/gender rights groups seek to promote and protect women's rights. Welfare/rehabilitation groups assist in the physical rehabilitation of victims of social misfortune through the provision of welfare service. Yet, some groups have no distinct or singular focus. They are generalist organisations dealing with a multiplicity of issues according to the needs of target beneficiaries. Other groups have a main or general work focus but seek *primarily* to service the needs of a restricted membership or extend charity to a select group of target beneficiaries. They are best assessed according to those accepted into membership to help understand the rationale behind their chosen agendas or the strategies they adopt to advance them. These include faith-based, cultural/ethnic and business/professional groups all of which seek to promote sectarian values and interests. A large number of groups in Nigeria and other ALAME countries operate at the community level. Regardless of work focus they are normally classified as a distinct category called community-based development organisations (CBOs).

The operational level of an NGO provides insight into its geographical coverage which gives an idea of the breadth of its circle of influence or potential development impact. This information is also provided in Table 6.1 and indicates that the groups are

fairly spread from local to national level and two have international affiliation. The study included a broad range of NGOs ranging from informal, loosely structured “local-neighbourhood mutual-support groups”<sup>187</sup> (Wiegersma, 1997), including State-based and national bodies up to internationally-affiliated organisations with simple to complex administrative set-ups. Once again these are not hermetic groupings; organisations may operate at various levels. For example, the Business and Professional Women (BPW) Abuja, FCT Chapter operates at State level. It has a national office in Lagos and is internationally affiliated to the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. Other groups are situated in a given locality and do not have offices outside it. However, they operate beyond state boundaries – i.e. at regional or national levels – in response to issues that fall within the purview of their set objectives and agendas. Inter-Gender, the Women, Law and Development Centre of Nigeria (WLDCN) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) are examples of such groups.

Usually smaller, local groups tend to operate in a more team-oriented fashion, sharing responsibilities and power, and rotating leadership, while bigger state and national level groups maintain clear-cut hierarchal structures similar to mainstream NGOs and corporations. The potential impacts of internal operational structure on programme content and efficiency is an important issue but outside the scope and aims of the present study. However, it is important to note that all internationally affiliated and state-based groups in the study said outside broad constitutional and policy areas, they set their programme/project agendas indigenously and independently of undue interference from international or national offices. Although 36% of respondents said their organisations received assistance in programme design and implementation from donors and other partners this was usually on request and not imposed. Only 3.5% received merely funding assistance without other forms of technical support.

These typologies and categorisations are not airtight and there is considerable overlap between them. For instance, the University Muslim Women’s Association (UMWA) is both professional and Muslim and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) is a women’s rights group as well as a professional one. Where an NGO fulfils the criteria for more than one category it is grouped according to what makes membership into it exclusive from others. Hence UMWA which accepts only Muslim women is classified under faith-based organisations and FIDA, being open only to lawyers, under business/professional.

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<sup>187</sup> Referred to as Community-based development/self-help organisations in this study

TABLE 6.1

## Types and Operational Levels of Women's NGOs

Organisational Type	Frequency (no. of groups)	%	Operational Level	Frequency (no. of groups)
Women's/gender rights	8	17.8	Local-community	0
			State	2
			National	6
			International affiliate	0
Community-based/ development	8	17.8	Local-community	8
Welfare/rehabilitation	4	8.9	Local-community	2
			State	2
			National	0
			International affiliate	0
Business/professional	8	17.8	Local-community	1
			State	3
			National	4
			International affiliate	2*
Faith-based	8	17.8	Local-community	4
			State	0
			National	2
			International affiliate	0
Cultural/ethnic	5	11.1	Local-community	5
			State	0
			National	1
			International affiliate	0
Generalist	4	8.9	Local-community	1
			State	1
			National	2
			International affiliate	0
Total no. of NGOs	45			

Two among the eight groups had international affiliation

Source: SPSS results

The rest of the Chapter looks more closely at women's change agendas using case studies of select indigenous, autonomous (independent) or directed organisations<sup>188</sup> working at various operational levels.

### 6.3 Case Studies

In the context of widespread female poverty and gender discrimination 'women empowerment' has become the most commonly stated over-arching goal of all types of women's groups. Most understand empowerment to be a process of equipping women with tools and resources to enable them become self-reliant. Nevertheless, this does not fully capture the conceptualisation of empowerment under the GAD framework, for which gender equality is an outcome and therefore, "involves the radical alteration of the processes and structures which reproduce women's subordinate position as a gender." (Young, 1997:372) This definition underscores a distinction between efficiency-oriented WID and transformative GAD approaches to programme/project planning – a distinction which could be discerned from the case studies covered below.

The case studies exemplify five of the seven categories elaborated above: Women's/gender rights, Welfare/rehabilitation, Community-based development, Business/Professional, and Faith-based organisations. The foci of their activities involve practical and strategic planning needs in several key areas earmarked by the NPW, particularly human resource development, income generation, and awareness creation to eradicate gender discrimination. These interventions are diagrammatically represented in a tripod in Fig. 6.1 indicating three loci of concentration of organisational activities together aimed at achieving female empowerment: the target beneficiaries, social institutions and significant 'others,' namely partners/spouses and other household/family members, men/boys.

#### 6.3.1 Case Study One: Project Alert on Violence against Women<sup>189</sup>

Project Alert is an indigenous autonomous women's rights organisation set up in January 1999 to break the silence and raise public concern over violence against women in Nigeria being a n "invisible, unrecognised and...trivialised"<sup>190</sup> social problem. It is located in Ikeja, Lagos State where the majority of its activities are carried out. Violence against women is the fourth of the 12 critical areas highlighted in the 1995 Beijing

<sup>188</sup> See Chapter Two pp. 52-53 for a brief discussion on organisational structure

<sup>189</sup> For further information on this NGO go to: <http://www.prolert.kabissa.org>

<sup>190</sup> Taken from Mission Statement: <http://www.prolert.kabissa.org/newpage1.htm>

Platform for Action and Project Alert takes this as its point of departure. It adopts an all-encompassing definition of violence<sup>191</sup> and assumes that women constitute the overwhelming majority of victims of gender violence and targets them for assistance and intervention.

The organisation is hierarchically structured with an Executive Director (also the founder), a Deputy, Project and Documentation Officers, a Lawyer and various support staff. Project Alert is a member organisation of two coalitions: the national coalition on violence against women, of which it is the co-ordinating secretariat, and the legislative taskforce coalition on violence against women. The first is a pressure group aimed at impacting public policy in the long-term. The second is a short-term taskforce set up to ensure the passing of a law on violence against women. The taskforce succeeded in drafting a Bill and is presently involved in advocacy campaigns to mobilise support for its adoption by the National Assembly. The Bill on Violence against Women (prevention, protection and prohibition) was sponsored and presented in the House of Representatives in 2002 by Florence Aya, Chairperson Committee on Women Affairs and Youth Development.<sup>192</sup> It is yet to be passed into law.

### 6.3.1.1 Goals and Objectives

Project Alert sees gender-based violence as a development issue and therefore, envisions a society where every woman is “Safe at home, safe in the workplace, safe in the public...so she can put in her best in every aspect of life.” (Effah-Chukwuma, Interview: 17/07/03). Consequently, its primary goal is to enhance the peace and security of females and thereby contribute to national development. It has two broad objectives:

1. To publicise data on the various forms of gender-based violence in order to sensitise the national conscience to its severity and impacts on girls, women, families, communities and national development. The intention is to present the ‘hard faces’ of gender violence through exposing real-life cases and amassing statistical evidence of their regularity.
2. To provide support services to female victims of violence

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<sup>191</sup> See page 223 for four forms of violence in Nigeria identified by Effah-Chukuma)

<sup>192</sup> Aya won a seat in the Kaduna State Assembly although she originated from Adamawa State. Her husband originated from Kaduna State.

Fig. 6.1

## Organisational Agendas: Loci of Concentration for Planning Interventions

### Female Empowerment

0-05-4-050-4-50-0

00-50-0-0500-0-05-00

000-0-50-4-05-000

Source: Field work



### 6.3.1.2 Programmes and Projects

In order to actualise its goal and objectives the organisation has embarked on two major programmes with several projects through which it implements them:

1. Research and Documentation Programme: To address “the dearth of statistics and lack of a [sic] systematically documented information on violence against women”<sup>193</sup> Project Alert gathers and disseminates information via:
  - a. Newsletter: A quarterly publication titled *Women’s Watch* documents existing and emerging trends in violence against women nationally and internationally. It monitors media reports, its own case files as well as those of other organisations to record attacks on women during the quarter under review.
  - b. Annual Report: This is published in form of a book titled *No Safe Haven* at the end of every year during which the organisation monitors 10 newspapers on a daily basis to examine the frequency and manner of reporting cases of violence against women. The report seeks to determine whether gender violence is sensationalised or criminalised by the press.
  - c. Vocational Research: A research report that details the experiences of women from all walks of life and their encounter with various forms of violence in private and public spaces.
  - d. Education and Awareness Campaign: Seminars and workshops are organised to raise awareness on violence. At the time of this study Project Alert was conducting workshops for secondary school students across the country on women’s human rights and the abuse of their bodily integrity as part of a plan to counteract the effects of prejudiced gender socialisation and gender role stereotyping in young people and thereby expand their vocational possibilities. Part of its education and awareness project involves encouraging collective parenting responsibility in males and females. The campaign ultimately aims to “break the shackles” placed on future generations of girls and women due to the “ever-pervading presence of culture.” (Effah-Chukwuma, Interview, 17/07/03)

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<sup>193</sup> Taken from Mission Statement.

## 2. Support Services Programme:

- a. Counselling Services: This has two components. The first offers direct counselling sessions to assist victims of violence to develop emotional and social mechanisms for coping with past and present violence. The second links violence to health by training health providers, especially doctors and nurses, to recognise signs of abuse in female patients and how to respond. Special attention is paid to victims of rape and forced sex in marriage, and to promoting female sexual health for HIV/AIDS prevention.
- b. Legal Aid: Free legal aid is provided to victims of violence using the services of a full-time in-house lawyer and two part-time legal practitioners. Although the organisation has used the services of two male lawyers in the past its preference is for females for two reasons: first, it was found that target beneficiaries responded apprehensively to male lawyers because “they see their abuser in them.” (Effah-Chukwuma) Second, male lawyers, though competent as professionals, would at times subconsciously place their sympathies with male perpetrators of violence, which stood in the way of being able to secure appropriate measures of redress for the victim. They would at times express the view that the organisation was too hard on male perpetrators.
- c. Shelter: In January 2001 Project Alert set up the first shelter in Nigeria. It is the only organisation to provide a shelter specifically designated for battered women. According to its Mission Statement the shelter meets a dire need in the absence of support to victims within the traditional African extended family context where women are often blamed for being battered and made to remain in violent homes. The shelters aim to remove them from situations of immediate physical danger and empower them with information, skills and resources that would break them out of the cycle of dependency that keeps women in abusive relationships.

In the execution of its projects the organisation employs both welfare (basic needs) and strategic gender planning approaches. It addresses women’s immediate need for physical and legal protection through the provision of a shelter, individual/health service counselling and legal aid, and seeks to restructure gender relations and roles in

domestic and public spheres through education and enlightenment campaigns. The development of a database on gender violence serves a strategic end for policy advocacy and development planning.

### 6.3.1.3 Project Alert and the NPW

Project Alert acquired and circulated a copy of the NPW among its staff members. Certain members were familiar with the process of NPW formulation and the policy document. The NPW specifically targets violence against women as a site for policy/legislative action and several Project Alert projects feed into its overall agenda. For example, one of its general proposals for action (Item 18) is the institutionalisation of a gender and development policy. A key step identified towards this purpose in Item 18.4 is the collection of primary data at all levels, including in collaboration with NGOs, for planning purposes. Education and awareness campaigns fulfil the NPW goal of eliminating gender discrimination by raising national awareness of citizen's constitutional and human rights in Item 3.1 (1). The focus on gender-based violence and the linkage between it and health is a realisation of the express intention of the NPW to "go beyond mere medical attention to encompass development matters that affect the totality of human life..." (Item 8.1.4) in order to ensure the effective delivery of health services tailored to meet women's needs.

A crucial implementation strategy drawn up under the NPW for legal reform and legislative protection includes ensuring women's access to free or low-cost legal services (Item 13.3 (1)). The Legal Aid Project is a step in this direction as are the free counselling services. Efforts to promote women's economic independence through training and skills development etc., align with the NPW objective to develop women's human resource potential and integrate them into the national economy. Nonetheless, most of Project Alert interventions in this regard remain at the level of small-scale cottage industry and junior level employment cadres and may not constitute the "enhanced strategic human resources development" envisaged in Item 3.1 (4).

### ***6.3.2 Case Study Two: Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN)***

COWAN is an indigenous and autonomous community-based development cooperative established in 1982 in Akure, Ondo State by Mrs Bisi Ogunleye in response to widespread female social exclusion and poverty, particularly among rural women. It

is one of the fastest growing CBO/NGOs in Nigeria increasing from a six member group to 35,000 by 1997 with branches in 28 States of the Federation (Iheduru, 2002:4). It is rated as one of the most successful micro-finance providers in Nigeria earning it consultative status in UN bodies and partnerships with UN subsidiaries and foreign agencies such as UNDP, CEDPA, Water AID and USAID. By 2002 COWAN had disbursed N74 million (seventy-four million naira - £60,000 approx.) and benefited 150,000 rural and urban poor families (Iheduru, 2002:5). The organisation relies on a multi-layered, consultative and participatory management structure. The national body and each State branch have a Co-ordinator – the political head, a President – the administrative head, two Vice-Presidents and several other officers. The post of national Co-ordinator is for life and the State Co-ordinator is also long-term depending on interest.<sup>194</sup> All other executive members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term. However, projects are selected and policy decisions made in consultation with all groups who make up the General Assembly.

COWAN emphasises group-based over individual membership because it relies on the African Traditional Responsive Banking System (ATRBS), similar to the Grameen Bank model, to promote its goals and objectives. Its primary target beneficiaries, and indeed the majority of its membership, comprise rural women. However, the organisation's success earned it popularity among working and middle class women who have joined its ranks through urban-based constituent cell-groups. COWAN also targets youth for capacity building schemes. With expansion the State branches have been allowed to develop their own location-specific agendas to address women's needs while subscribing to the overarching goals of the organisation. This case study is based on the Plateau State branch of COWAN. The Plateau Chapter was set up in 1990 by 15 women who currently facilitate its operations in 15 of the 17 Local Government Areas in the State. In 1992 it "was incorporated as a non-tribal, non-religious, non-governmental, voluntary organisation." (Vomkat, 2005).

### 6.3.2.1 Goals and Objectives

COWAN as a national body has the principal goal of advancing "the well-being of women in agricultural, economic decision-making for the total development of the

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<sup>194</sup> Iheduru (2002) makes the point that for long-term success the organisation needs a stronger management structure with a strategy of succession beyond the founder

capacities of women to contribute to self-reliance and sustainable development.”<sup>195</sup> The broad objectives set by the national body are:

1. To empower rural women economically, socially, politically and thereby promote sustainable development;
2. To promote popular participation and a bottom-up approach in decision-making
3. To develop skill, improve knowledge, promote culture and consultation in decisional processes;
4. To give rural women a sense of belonging and the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the development of Nigeria; and
5. To give the youth a sound knowledge of the local technology, tradition and culture that is sustainable for economic development.

### 6.3.2.2 Programmes and Projects

In pursuit of these objectives Plateau State COWAN has embarked on a number of programmes and projects tailored to suit its operating environment. These include:

1. Economic Empowerment: This is the core essence of COWAN’s existence and activities through which it aims to increase women’s income earning power by facilitating their access to socioeconomic resources, denied to them by formal banking procedures. It does so through the following approaches:
  - a. Micro-credit: Using the ROSCAs<sup>196</sup> mechanism women are required to form a group of five to qualify for an initial credit facility of N75, 000 (fifteen thousand naira per person) to set up an income generating agricultural or cottage industry project. Before the loan is disbursed the group must undergo three pre-training consultations to apprise them of COWAN requirements and best practice ideas for the use of micro-credit. The group runs for three years during which members are mandated to contribute to a daily savings plan. Members are collectively responsible for loan

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<sup>195</sup> COWAN brochure

<sup>196</sup> Rotating Savings and Credit Associations are small self-help arrangements where funds are pooled and rotated among members as interest yielding loans.

repayments. After three years members qualify for N100, 000 (twenty thousand naira per person). However, this time, it is an individual facility that enables each member to invest in her own income generating project. Nevertheless, members continue to stand as guarantors for each other for the security of the loan. As such they mentor each other and monitor the progress of their respective investments. According to Jessica Obadiah, President of the Plateau State branch, the rate of default on loan repayments is extremely low and there is a high success rate in terms of the immediate and long-term impacts of micro-credit on the lives of members. For example, during monitoring and evaluation exercises members were found to have built their own houses and educated children to university level.

b. Skills and Entrepreneurship Training: To improve members' chances of business success COWAN gives each group applying for a credit facility a compulsory one week training in business management and fund sourcing. For three months after loans are disbursed it continues to provide technical support to members to help them over the initial take-off phase. It also organises ad-hoc training workshops to build members' entrepreneurial capacity in general and specialised business ventures. In the agricultural sector COWAN works with experts to secure technological support through extension services and with local government authorities to obtain farming inputs for rural women in order to enhance productivity and output.

2. Awareness creation: To ensure women are well informed about their social, economic and political environment. COWAN disseminates information to its members through the following projects:

a. Periodic meetings: Since a majority of its membership are pre-literate grassroots women COWAN informs them of organisational and societal developments through local community executives. Regular group and team-leader meetings are held to ensure effective communication and feedback between members and local/state offices. In order to gain popular support the organisation consults and informs community leaders such as ward and district

heads of its programmes and activities. This is particularly important for ensuring that community members who belong to COWAN have additional accountability for the repayment of loans.

b. Awareness seminars/workshops: COWAN organises seminars and workshops on any topic of interest/need expressed by members as well as those of general public interest and relevance. Common issue-areas and themes in the past included:

- i. Health and sanitation (HIV/AIDS, family planning and environmental hygiene)
- ii. Family life/marriage seminars

c. Political education/mobilisation: Efforts are ongoing to guarantee women's informed and active participation in current democratisation processes by informing women of party manifestoes, candidates and other political issues. Although it is not a political organisation, COWAN also encourages and mobilises support for female candidates.

3. Basic Amenities Provisioning: In the course of seeking to empower women economically COWAN has had to respond to extraneous issues of importance to its members and which have the potential of thwarting its purpose if not addressed responsively and adequately. The Plateau State branch has partnered with international organisations such as CEDPA and Inter-Church for Co-operation and Development (ICO) to carry out the following projects:

a. Potable water supply: An initial baseline survey found a low loan repayment rate among rural women due to the long hours spent in hauling water during the dry season when they were expected to take time off farming for non-agro-based ventures. Women were spending five to six hours daily on fetching water over long distances and had little or no time to attend to business activities. In response to acute water shortages in different parts of the State in 2000 COWAN initiated a project for drilling wells and boreholes in Local Government Areas. So far it has drilled eight boreholes and dug five wells in its pilot LGA – Kanke and short-listed two other LGAs for more.

b. VIP latrines:<sup>197</sup> In response to the prevalence of water-related diseases such as diarrhoea and typhoid as well as snake bites sustained during night visits to the bush owing to the lack of in-house toilet facilities COWAN trains and involves local communities in building ventilated improved pit latrines for households.

c. Health clinics: In response to the lack of health care facilities and poor access roads from villages to towns and cities COWAN sets up functional health clinics in remote areas. It has done so in three places: Nyango Gyel in Bukuru LGA, Toff in Bokkos LGA, and Kazuk in Kanke LGA.

Like Project Alert COWAN's operational schemes involve a combination of practical and strategic approaches with huge success and widespread endorsement at grassroots and government levels. Through the provision of micro-credit and social services it meets basic needs by alleviating poverty and suffering. Furthermore, through political education and mobilisation the decision-making power and socio-political profile of women is raised. The COWAN experience bears evidence that practical projects such as the provision of micro-credit could have strategic implications. Obadiah(Interview, 18/06/03) gave the following example:

[In] one of our remotest areas this woman is right now economically empowered. She doesn't know English or Hausa but she is always invited for meetings at the community level and she has even been invited to the local government. So she came up and she came specifically to thank COWAN. And so many of them have come like that to just come and thank COWAN that they can now speak even in the rural areas and be heard. It's something. That in the past who is she? Or who was she to even speak and be heard? But now she said they even come to ask for advices from her. So she was so proud...

Quite significantly, COWAN works tacitly yet strategically to transform gender roles and relations by the means it has chosen to involve men in furtherance of its goals and objectives. This will be discussed in greater detail in the last Section on constraints to women's agendas. In future COWAN aims to become a fully-fledged micro-finance institution offering bank-like loans and services responsive to individual women's needs.

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<sup>197</sup> The VIP latrines, as it is commonly called, was invented in 1973 by the Blair Research laboratory of the Ministry of Health in Zimbabwe.



### 6.3.2.3 COWAN and the NPW

The entire COWAN agenda coincides considerably with NPW aims. This is not contingent upon the level of awareness about the NPW as, unlike with Project Alert, only two of the four Plateau State executive who participated in the questionnaire had heard about the policy, and none of those who knew of it had read it, including the President. Therefore, it is unlikely that the groundswell of the, largely pre- and semi-literate, membership are informed about it. Notwithstanding, the consistency between NPW aims and COWAN agendas signals the extent to which the policy is a true reflection of popular perceptions on women's socioeconomic concerns and needs. This in turn is a pointer to the broad-based consultative process with various stakeholders that was followed in drafting the policy. Indeed, the NPW consistently reiterates the importance of consultation and collaboration with women's groups in the implementation of its goals and objectives, especially in certain key sectors: health, agriculture and industry.<sup>198</sup>

In the health sector COWAN is working in line with two NPW objectives delineated in Item 8.2(5 & 6):

1. To provide accessible, affordable, well-equipped and well-staffed health facilities for the use of women and other vulnerable groups and to encourage local efforts to establish and maintain such facilities.
2. To provide information, services and technical advice on women's health issues and family life.

Also the provision of regular water supply is an implementation strategy under Social Services Sector 14.3 as well as health.

In agriculture COWAN projects partially correspond with the NPW objective in Item 10.2(2) to promote women's access to water, credit, farming inputs and extension services. However, the organisation tends to concentrate on only one productive agricultural input – fertiliser – by popular demand among rural communities. It is yet to develop an effective programme of enhancing women's access to improved technologies and tools. This may be because COWAN's emphasis has been on extending credit facilities to women for small-scale non-agricultural ventures during the dry season or animal husbandry and vegetable gardening projects. As such COWAN does not focus on potentially controversial issues surrounding women's access, or lack of it, to land as envisaged in Item 10.2(2). In dealing with the needs expressed by rural farmers the emphasis has been on increasing food security, nutrition and personal

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<sup>198</sup> Sections 8.3(8), 10.3(10) and 11.3(3)

income – via non-farm projects. Hence when the organisation does get involved in agriculture it works within the existing patriarchal land tenure structure to enable women to maximise the use of any land at their disposal for family well-being.

### ***6.3.3 Case Study Three: The Adolescent Project (TAP)***

Tap is an autonomous NGO established in 1999 by Justice Mary Odili, the wife of the Executive Governor of Rivers State, to cater for the welfare and rehabilitation of troubled and underprivileged adolescents, particularly the girl-child. As a high court judge in charge of the juvenile court Justice Odili had come to the conclusion that the adolescents were the most abandoned in society, and developed a special concern about teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency evidenced by the high rate of crime and cultism. Consequently, she set up a committee of 14 women charged with the responsibility of drawing up the blueprint for the vision, mission and operational strategies of an organisation that would bridge the gap created by an inadequate social welfare system for young women. However, the committee felt that due to the high profile of Mrs Odili it would be politically incorrect to target only girls and exclude boys. Hence it was decided to have an adolescent project for both while laying emphasis on the girl-child during the execution of programmes and projects.

TAP operates a hierarchically structured management system ordered through a nine-member Board of Trustees, and a five-member management committee comprising the Founder/Executive Director, an Executive Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer, Financial Secretary, and Project Advisor. The Executive Secretary is responsible for day-to-day running. Owing to the pivotal and highly politicised role of the Founder/Executive director TAP could be described as a directed NGO since it exists and operates at the instance of her dreams and benevolence. Like other similar pet projects of First Ladies TAP is barred from recourse to government funding and has to rely on donor agencies and philanthropists for financial support. Yet, it is clear that TAP is an NGO with appreciable political clout having used the high profile of its Chief Executive to secure advantages and advance its cause in several respects. Nevertheless, in recognition of its success in addressing grassroots deprivation TAP won an award from the Global Health Council in Washington in 2003.

### 6.3.3.1 Goals and Objectives

The Adolescent Project aims at “giving back lost hope to the down trodden adolescents.”<sup>199</sup> According to its Mission Statement:

TAP is designed to ethically rehabilitate, morally re-orientate and economically empower the adolescent of Rivers State and Nigeria at all levels of national development. Pursuant to this, our mission is to inculcate leadership and responsive citizenship qualities in our adolescents while rescuing them from social vices.<sup>200</sup>

To achieve its mission the organisation set out nine objectives as follows:

1. To establish an Integrated Adolescent Development Centre.
2. To provide support services and facilities for ethical rehabilitation of the under privileged and abandoned adolescent.
3. To provide the Life Planning Education skills to all categories of adolescents.
4. To maintain and sustain national and international support required for keeping the ideals of the project.
5. To encourage formal and informal education of adolescents.
6. To conduct research into adolescent related issues.
7. To advocate for adolescent friendly policies and legislations.
8. To establish an Adolescent resource institute
9. To organise training on parenting skills<sup>201</sup>

### 6.3.3.2 Programmes and Projects

Four programmes, with their attendant projects, have been drawn up to actualise the above. They are:

1. Youth Rehabilitation Programme: This is the cardinal programme through which TAP seeks to provide young people an escape route from the slide into delinquency, a safe space where they feel accepted and understood, and a re-entry point into family and the larger society. All other programmes revolve around this. TAP’s immediate response to youth in trouble takes the form of four projects:

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.h-net.org/~thompson/tapivers/aboutus.html>

<sup>200</sup> <http://www.h-net.org/~thompson/tapivers/aboutus.html>

<sup>201</sup> <http://www.h-net.org/~thompson/tapivers/aboutus.html>

- a. Counselling: to provide counselling services to young people and their families so as to help them deal with personal problems, open channels of communication between family members and facilitate reconciliation. According to Thompson counselling services are very active in helping young girls deal with pregnancy and single parenting. Also due to the social stigma attached to extra-marital pregnancy and the tendency for young girls to be kicked out of home counselling services offer support to help families deal with the societal prejudice.
  - b. Legal Aid: TAP engages the services of private lawyers so as to provide free legal aid to young people in promotion and protection of their human and civil rights.
  - c. Youth hostel: to serve as a half-way home prior and during counselling in order to keep youth off the streets and vulnerable to abuse and criminal activity. TAP works hard to reconnect young people with their families to prevent the latter shirking their responsibilities towards them by taking undue advantage of the service. As such the turn-over rate of youth passing through and benefiting from the service is high. The hostel has been particularly useful in rescuing girls from street-walking, sexual abuse and dysfunctional relationships.
  - d. Scholarships for the indigent: TAP awards bursaries to the indigent to prevent drop-out syndrome among students whose families cannot afford to keep them in school.
2. Life Planning Education Programme: As part of the desire to rehabilitate young people TAP instituted the LPE ostensibly to re-orientate them to become well-informed and responsible citizens. The LPE consists of two modules:
- a. Family life and sexuality education: This consists of developing effective communication skills among family members and problem tree analysis to encourage discussion on topics such as sexual relations, teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) etc. It also focuses on self-control and respect for the bodily integrity of others.
  - b. Civic rights and responsibilities education: To inculcate qualities that depict ethical behaviour, leadership and responsible citizenship young people are educated about their voting power/rights, duties to government and country, and relationship to public property among other

things. This project contains a gender education component to address gender role stereotyping and expand young peoples horizons beyond conventional gender roles learned from family and communal living. The youth are encouraged to interrogate stereotypes through panel discussions and gender role play.

3. Holiday Skills Acquisition Programme: Apart from poverty TAP singled out boredom, unemployment and underemployment as major contributory factors leading to juvenile delinquency. According to Thompson, the Executive Secretary, the structuring of the academic session with a long summer vacation, during which adolescents have little to do, is a Western invention alien to Nigerian local reality where most people do not plan family holidays.<sup>202</sup> Consequently, TAP engages in-school adolescents by providing:
  - a. Vocational training: Here the objective is to develop financial independence by training adolescents in food processing, balloon decoration, chemical technology, textile (e.g. tie-and-dye), bleach, and petroleum making jelly, hairdressing and other handcrafts. This project has yielded tangible returns for youth and their families as they have transferred skills on to family members, thereby increasing, or even commencing, income generation. Parents have returned to thank project organisers for turning the lives of their youth around. Thompson told of one girl who taught her mother what she had learned in petroleum jelly manufacturing and both joined hands to make it a lucrative source of family income.
  - b. Foreign language training: So far the only language being taught under this project is French. The module employs a user-friendly audio-visual approach to facilitate speedy learning of conversational French. By the end of the training participants are able to perform plays, render poetry and songs and hold basic conversations.
4. Safe Motherhood Programme: This programme is a direct response to the high rate of teenage pregnancy and deaths due to abortion in Rivers State,

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<sup>202</sup> This may not be a problem in farming communities who require the extra labour young people provide during rainy season farming which coincides with the long vacation. In Rivers State oil exploration, environmental pollution has led to a decrease in farming activity coupled with the fact that fishing – the primary occupation in many local villages – is at an all-time low during the rainy season.

particularly in the rural areas. TAP also found that there is a severe lack of adequate maternal healthcare facilities and personnel to cater for the health needs of girls and women. As a result it embarked on the following projects:

- a. Massive Awareness Raising Campaigns (MARC): This project involves intensive and continuous publicity and education outreaches to rural and urban areas among people of all walks of life to sensitise them to the nature and scale of social problems arising from the neglect of young girls' and women's health needs, as well as strategies to combat them. In collaboration with UNICEF it has carried out MARCs on HIV/AIDS among the general populace and in secondary schools in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor LGA.
- b. Legislative advocacy: Sequel to its awareness raising campaign TAP decided to pursue a programme of legislative advocacy to concretise gains from the momentum of MARCs. So far it has succeeded in drafting and getting a Reproductive Health Services Bill passed into law by the Rivers State House of Assembly in 2002. It did this to guarantee the continuity of its goals and objectives beyond the tenure of the present democratic administration.
- c. Maternal health services: The massive awareness campaigns and legislative advocacy led to significant results enabling TAP to deliver the following services to target beneficiaries:
  - i. Free healthcare: Through TAP's agency Government hospitals offer free reproductive healthcare, including family planning services, to all female residents of Rivers State who are registered with a hospital. This includes free ante-natal and post-natal care for adolescents and free caesarean Sections for women. Prior to the Bill three private hospitals, including one belonging to the Governor – a medical doctor, had offered free or subsidised health to adolescent girls under the care of TAP.
  - ii. Training of TBAs: TAP trains traditional women healers and local midwives to be competent birth attendants. It furnishes them with improved and sanitary midwifery methods and practices to ensure rural women's access to safe maternal healthcare. So far it has conducted TBA training workshops in 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

iii. Family planning education

- d. *Women's skills acquisition*: TAP believes that female poverty is a major contributor to the low health status of women and the young people they are responsible for. Consequently, it initiated a state-wide skills acquisition project targeting women aimed at empowering them economically. The project develops women's capacity for income generation and is conducted in partnership with the State government.

In addition to these programmes and projects TAP devotes considerable time and resources to research, media outreach, the publication of information, education and communication materials (IEC) and developing networks with government and non-government partners. The organisation adopts a welfare approach to resolve immediate physical and social needs of its target beneficiaries such as through the provision of shelter, counselling and legal services. Awareness and education programmes are strategic in as much as they attack societal perceptions that hinder the advancement of women and youth. Poverty alleviation programmes, like the vocational skills acquisition programmes, are both practical and strategic, addressing immediate need for income and expanding people's opportunities and choices for the long-term.

### 6.3.3.3 TAP and the NPW

The level of awareness among the TAP management is high. As mentioned in Chapter Three the Executive Secretary was involved in the process leading to the approval of the Policy by the Federal Executive Council. Consequently, TAP works in synch with NPW aims finding ways to integrate women's practical and strategic gender concerns into all programmes and activities. In the first instance, TAP's emphasis on the welfare and rehabilitation of the youth addresses the first policy thrust stated in Item 5 of the NPW regarding social re-structuring for social equity, order and well-being. Specifically, Item 5.1(3) stipulates:

Programmes shall be designed to remove social malaise associated with gender inequality which is destroying social cohesiveness and eroding social order at national, community and family levels...

According to Thompson (Interview, 26/07/03), Executive Secretary of TAP, gender inequality is a major contributory force to the social malaise referred to as youth delinquency requiring rehabilitation as a curative measure. Preventive measures, aimed

at breaking the cycle of gender and other forms of social inequality, and embarked upon by TAP include educational, training and awareness programmes. With respect to education the TAP agenda fulfils the NPW objective to target specific vulnerable groups for education and training, notably girls in riverine areas, drop-outs, and single parents (Item 6.2(6)). Health education projects in secondary schools are a direct realisation of Item 8.2 (3) which objective is “to intensify the teaching of appropriate health education in schools...to promote women’s health.” Also in the health sector, TAP’s TBA training workshops constitute one of the implementation strategies outlined in Item 8.3(6) of the NPW to “expand current programmes for Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) to include traditional women healers...” Most importantly, the safe motherhood programme achieves the NPW intention to promote maternal healthcare service delivery and family planning (Item 8.3(3)).

#### ***6.3.4 Case Study Four: National Association of Women Academics (NAWACS)***

NAWACS is an autonomous professional organisation established by female academic staff of the University of Jos to promote the career development of women scholars. Since its inception in 2000 it has spread to initiate chapters in most of the Federal and State universities. Unlike the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW), which is internationally affiliated, NAWACS is indigenous. Furthermore, while NAUW is an outward-looking organisation with a mission to support the education of women and girls as well as advocate for better working conditions for all women, NAWACS is more inward-looking as it services the interests of members. The organisation quickly rose to social prominence owing to the activist stance it took in combating gender discrimination within the academia and in the Nigerian polity.

Female university academic staff did not feel their issues were on the agenda of the mainstream academic body, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) for two reasons. First, its leadership profile at the national and campus levels is gender-biased in favour of male academics who drive the agenda and are unlikely to pay attention to matters of concern to their female counterparts. For instance, female academics had mooted for strict disciplinary measures in response to the upsurge in reports of sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers and of female students offering sex in exchange for good grades. Second, ASUU has become a highly politicised organisation given its perennial run-offs with government over pay rises, conditions of service and the general state of tertiary education in Nigeria. In this



context, women's issues are even more likely to be sidelined by matters judged to be more pertinent.

NAWACS has a National Executive Committee composed of a President, two Vice-Presidents, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Treasurer, Finance Secretary and Publicity Secretary. The national secretariat rotates as it must be located at the University of the President, the General Secretary and the Treasurer who must all belong to the same chapter. Each university chapter has a parallel structure.

#### 6.3.4.1 Goals and Objectives

Given the wide gender gap in the performance and appointments of academic staff its main goal is to expand the opportunities for female academic staff members of universities to develop their careers to the highest level. It has two specific objectives:

1. To create an academic environment that is conducive and responsive to women's needs and provides them the freedom to explore and develop abilities, skills and resources. According to the Irene Salami, President of NAWACS (2000-2004), women's domestic responsibilities coupled with the low expectation of female staff, undermines their ability to compete on equal terms with men. They have less time and incentive to publish, present papers at conferences, conduct research beyond normal teaching schedules and network with other academics. NAWACS seeks to motivate women out of academic apathy by bringing programmes and opportunities to their doorsteps that would encourage them to work at their own pace among peers and mentors and become more productive.
2. To promote and protect the interests of women academics in all Nigerian universities in order to remove institutional barriers against their career advancement. NAWACS provides a forum for women academics to become collectively active and proactive in ensuring their concerns are taken into account in the conduct of university affairs.

#### 6.3.4.2 Programmes and Projects

In addition to the nationally set agenda, the various campus chapters are expected to devise programmes and respond to issues specific to their own locality. NAWACS seeks to fulfil these goals and objectives through a number of activities,

which it runs at national and/or branch levels. The activities revolve around the following two focal points:

1. Career development training: To enable women attain the peak of their academic careers through exposure to skills, academic forums and opportunities NAWACS organises:
  - a. In-house seminars: University chapters hold seminars as a clearing house for members to share and brainstorm over ongoing research. The seminars are expected to help women present papers and scholarly arguments in a professionally acceptable fashion, and thereby gain confidence and poise to do so in larger forums. In-house seminars also create opportunities for senior academics to develop mentoring relationships with less experienced ones.
  - b. National conference: A biennial conference is held around a chosen theme where scholars –female and male – are encouraged to present papers and form research networks. Since 2000 there have been two conferences in 2001 and 2003 respectively.
  - c. Skills acquisition workshops: These are organised to pool resources to facilitate skills transfer. According to Salami many female academics “do not actually know how to strike a keyboard” yet they require information, communication and technology skills to put them at the cutting edge of 21<sup>st</sup> century research as well as leadership development and self-esteem-building courses to motivate them to take on greater responsibilities and realise their potential. Therefore, each chapter is expected to arrange regular workshops where women can transfer knowledge, exchange professional skills and experiences or hire consultancy training services. The workshops tend to be highly popular and are in constant demand by members.
  - d. Publication and production of journals: The “publish or perish” syndrome is the Achilles’ heel of university academics in Nigeria more so for female academics for reasons already discussed. NAWACS started the Journal of Women Academics (JOWACS) to motivate women scholars to initiate individual or team research projects and publish their findings. A lot of the material published in the first few editions provided women’s knowledge, perspectives and

experiences on topics of interest in social sciences, science and technology, and business management/administration and information sciences. Papers submitted for publication are peer reviewed by a panel of scholars. The response to JOWACS was so enthusiastic that some chapters and scholars in specialised fields decided to produce subject-specific journals. Currently, twelve journals are published under the auspices of NAWACS.

2. Equal opportunities monitoring: This is where NAWACS has its most significant impact on the campus administrative and social environment. The organisation has succeeded in making gender an issue in major university decision-making processes especially with respect to resource usage, appointments and course content. NAWACS gave female academics a concerted voice to protest against gender injustices that hitherto had gone unchallenged. Consequently, since the organisation came onto the stage there has been a rapid rise in the number of female appointments to professorial chairs and senior positions such as deans, departmental heads and institute directors. For instance at the University of Jos the Vice-Chancellor approved 13 appointments between 2001 and 2003. Seven of them were women.<sup>203</sup> According to Salami “this actually wouldn’t have happened if it was before [NAWACS].” Furthermore, NAWACS seized on the importance of gender in international development planning to lobby for university grants that mainstream gender concerns in university research and administration. In this regard, the University of Jos received a grant to establish the Carnegie Subcommittee on Gender, chaired by the NAWACS President and charged with the responsibility of drawing up a gender policy for the university. It is now common for NAWACS chapter Presidents/Executive members to be consulted or made members of committees by university managements.

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<sup>203</sup> Director of American Studies, Director of Nomadic Education, Dean of Law, Director of Consultancy, Director of the Institute of Education, Chief Internal Auditor, Deputy Bursar.

### 6.3.4.3 NAWACS and the NPW

The signing of the NPW and its approval by President Obasanjo was announced at the maiden national conference of NAWACS in April 2000. A limited number of copies of the NPW have also been made available at conferences. Thus there is some level of awareness about the policy although most have not bothered to familiarise themselves with its minute details. The NAWACS agenda coincides with the NPW in two foremost respects. First, in the employment sector NAWACS is working in line with Items 9.2(3, 4 & 7) to sustain equality of treatment for men and women, encourage equal access to education and skills acquisition to increase the demand for women's labour particularly at managerial and executive levels, and to involve them actively in workplace decision-making processes.

Second, its publications have generated a gender desegregated database premised on gender analyses of a wide range of socioeconomic phenomena, albeit on a limited scale given the small sample populations used for most studies. The NPW describes gender analysis and gender desegregated data as the missing links in the National Development Plan and ongoing national rolling plans, and underscores the need for such information for formulating an effective gender and development policy (Item 17.2).

### ***6.3.5 Case Study Five: The Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) Women's Fellowship Unit (WFU)***

The COCIN Women's fellowship is a faith-based and indigenous directed organisation initiated by a woman in 1942 to cater for the spiritual and developmental needs of women and girl-children within the framework of the church mission and administrative structure. The Women's Fellowship is a unit under the Department for Evangelism and Church Growth, which is led by a Director. WFU operates nationally and is about 500,000 members strong, spread among 26 States of Nigeria. It has been an active force in Church community life. It has the keen support of the Church leadership, particularly since it accounts for the bulk of COCIN membership. Unlike the previous autonomous groups the WFU approach to development and project planning is largely informed by the COCIN mission and management apparatus to which it is responsible. Projects are planned at the executive level and handed down to the provincial church councils and local church bodies in the local government areas.

### 6.3.5.1 Goals and objectives

WFU aims “to produce a holistic woman” who will be ready and equipped to meet the needs and challenges of her present-day community. It has three wide-ranging objectives which include:

1. To inculcate in women and girls a spiritual and biblical understanding of God’s valuation and requirement of women.
2. To train wives to partner with husbands to build wholesome and godly families, and
3. To enhance the human resource potential of women and girls towards socioeconomic development for individual, family and societal well-being.

### 6.3.5.2 Programmes and Projects

The WFU agenda covers spiritual, psychological and intellectual enlightenment, personal and inter-personal skills development, and practical assistance for improved material well being. Three cardinal programmes, comprising a variety of preset and improvised projects, are underway through which WFU seeks to accomplish its goal and objectives:

1. Biblical Teaching: The premise upon which WFU builds its entire mission and the driver behind all other programmes and projects is that the Bible, being God’s Word to humankind, is the life-improvement manual that provides the key to a meaningful and productive life for women. Gyarta Pofi, Head of the Women in Development Sub-Unit, explained that the objective is not to merely rehash conventional religious ideas about women’s worth and role which tend to limit their human capabilities. Rather the WFU Biblical teaching programme is about spiritual empowerment for positive self-development. It aspires to build knowledge, consciousness and self-esteem in women and girls so they can proactively take control of their lives, surmounting barriers erected by traditionalism, prejudice and deprivation. However, ‘taking control’ is not to be understood entirely in same way it is used in the secular context, with its roots in the rights of the individual. Here it entails a willingness to act, even altruistically, in fulfilment of the Divine purpose for womanhood, in anticipation of success on earth and eternal

reward. Hence, while certain activities may be similar to those of secular groups, the inspiration and motivation are not entirely so. The Biblical teaching programme is sub-divided into three activities:

- a. Group Bible study: In concert women explore biblical truths and female biblical role models to discover what God thinks about women and how God's purposes were realised in and through the lives of women in the Bible. Pofi claims that conventionally the Bible has been interpreted outside its proper historical and cultural context to support the subjugation of women. Consequently, WFU adopts an approach whereby the Bible is studied inductively and deductively to give it contemporary application for everyday living and decision-making. It is through Bible study that women are expected to gain insight into how to handle personal challenges and situations.
  - b. Lectures/talks: Bible expositions and teachings are another means of accomplishing the above
  - c. Prayer seminars/meetings: The ability to draw supernatural strength to deal with women's concerns as well as to advance the cause of Christ is a key emphasis of WFU activities and is similar in other church bodies. Most significantly, in the wake of severe national crises and state failure to guarantee social services delivery and security to citizens there has been an intensification in prayer for divine intervention in personal, family and national problems. In WFU women are encouraged to pray individually and in groups as a means of self-empowerment on all fronts - spiritual, social, material and physical.
2. Education and Awareness: WFU engages in a variety of faith-based initiatives aimed at social transformation. A foundational strategy of these initiatives is education and awareness creation among its members, general church membership and target groups using the following activities:
- a. Family life education: WFU organises family life seminars and workshops that emphasise partnership and effective communication between spouses to promote stable and harmonious marital relations. Partnership here implies an 'opening up of space' for wives to be involved in family decision-making processes for the overall benefit of the family unit; it does not necessarily imply male involvement in

traditional female domestic responsibilities. Family life education seeks to make women aware of the pivotal role they can play in planning and directing family affairs. Nevertheless, women are still encouraged to play their culturally ascribed roles with devotion and creativity to make sure peace prevails in the home. The essence of family life education is to train women how to fulfil their aspirations and secure their rights in the context of a male-dominated culture through non-combative non-disruptive means. Pofi explains the strategy:

You know you can go about have a very beautiful agenda and with the male-dominated this thing – and many husbands are like that – you have to find a way of reaching him to have your way, you see. I mean you are not being manipulative, but just do it the proper way. Just do it the right way because you have a goal. You address it in the right way and you will get it. I tell Christian women most of the time that the unbelieving women that snatch their husbands and take their attention, it's not because they are more beautiful. They are not more beautiful; they are not cleverer or more educated. It's just that they know the way. They just get to know the kind of food he likes and they prepare it for him and they invite him to go and eat that food. They know the way he likes to be petted, appreciated and they just do, and they get their way. And women can do it and the women we have trained are now doing it. And they are rejoicing because they are having their rights.

At the heart of this strategy lies an attempt to bargain with patriarchy in order to negotiate a wider space for female engagement in domestic and public spheres. The belief is that a woman must be an astute political strategist and manager of intra-family politics to be able to exercise greater personal and social freedom.

- b. *Political and civic education*: WFU keyed into the current democratic dispensation by initiating 'Democracy and Governance' training seminars to educate women on their political and civil rights and responsibilities. The objective is two-fold: 1.) to mobilise women to contest elections and/or support female political candidates, and 2.) to counteract the moral decline occasioned by secularisation and poverty through an infusion of Christian values practiced by Christian female politicians. WFU has held nationwide training seminars on the democratic participation of Christian women and their civic responsibilities. Most significantly, it has joined forces with other

women's groups to lobby local and state governments for political concessions and support for women candidates. In 1999 WFU held pre-election talks with gubernatorial aspirants to lobby for female increased representation in governance. The candidate, who eventually won the election, Chief Joshua Dariye, promised to appoint 30% of women to the State Executive Council and made good on his promise. WFU was planning another pre-election dialogue at the time of interview with Pofi. As a result of WFU 2003 pre-election mobilisation efforts 44 women contested for councillorship positions (three of them chairmanship) in Plateau State alone – the highest ever number of female contestants in the State. According to a CEDPA report WFU's 'Democracy and Governance' project has recorded resounding success with a profound effect on the church leadership:

During 1998-2002, the Women's Fellowship implemented various DG activities, including civic education programs, capacity building, and the formation of "accountability" and "democracy" watch groups. These activities promoted transparency, accountability, and democratic ideals among church leaders and elected officials. The program also educated the public on women's rights and promoted the participation of women in politics. COCIN mobilised women to register to vote and to run in elections for their Local Government Council (LGC). Voter turnout in targeted areas reached record levels. Two women won party primaries to contest the chair of Jos South and R yom Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the 1999 elections. A member of the Women's Fellowship, Rachel Adanci, became the Chairperson of Bokkos LGC. The DG project also changed the thinking of church leaders, who had previously made no distinction between church-inspired morality and science. They began to see that they had a responsibility to warn their members of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. This insight led to the introduction of a RH<sup>204</sup> project. (*The Enable Project*, CEDPA, January 2003).<sup>205</sup>

Adanci is said to have done what no man had ever done in Bokkos and is referred to by the people as the '24-hour mama'. The COCIN Reproductive Health project was conducted in close collaboration with WFU with the assistance of male peer educators to draw in male target beneficiaries. This was used as a gateway to raise awareness and facilitate the exercise of women's reproductive and human rights.

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<sup>204</sup> Reproductive Health

<sup>205</sup> The Democracy and Governance seminars were funded by CEDPA as part of its '100 Women Groups' programme.



- c. Gender awareness: Pofi believes a silent revolution is taking place in COCIN through WFU's attempts to sensitise people to the need to ensure girls have equal opportunities as boys to maximise their potential and contribute to national development. According to her, in the past, "women in the COCIN Church didn't know that women – the girl-child – could explore engineering and all that [sic] areas." (Interview, July 2003). Now, she says, as a result of gender awareness campaigns there is a gradual departure from gender role stereotyping in the way boys and girls are assigned tasks within households and the expectations placed on them. Gender awareness is also being deliberately integrated into other project plans and church programmes where WFU has an input. It has also found it necessary to invite male COCIN members to participate in seminars to ensure project effectiveness. However, despite certain success indicators, Pofi observed that COCIN needed to make more progress in its overall leadership/administrative structure. The Church appoints women elders but does not practice female ordination, though women are allowed to lead services and in some instances preach during Sunday worship.<sup>206</sup> None of the departmental heads, at the time of this study, was a woman although the immediate past Director of Finance had been a woman. According to Pofi, there was supposed to be a general departmental re-shuffle but she was the only one to lose her post. Nevertheless, Pofi is hopeful that since the Church is gradually opening up more space to women this will engender leadership in the not-too-distant future.
3. Poverty Alleviation: This is another faith-based initiative to tackle widespread poverty among its members and the general public. WFU embarked upon a poverty alleviation programme with two components:
- a. Skills acquisition: women are taught simple handicrafts such as sewing, knitting, soap and pomade making etc., to enable them set up cottage industries.

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<sup>206</sup> The COCIN Constitution stipulates that two of the seven-member Elders Board must be women. One of every three representatives on provincial church councils is female and WFU has institutional representation on the General Church Council, which is the highest decision-making organ.

- b. *Micro-credit*: WFU secured funding from CEDPA to disburse short-term low-interest credit to women to start up income generating projects.

### 6.3.5.3 WFU and the NPW

At the national executive level few members are aware of the existence of the NPW or its agenda. This is likely to be a reflection of the low level of awareness among the general church membership. Nevertheless, in certain respects, WFU activities – through its networking relationships with international and indigenous NGOs – are in tandem with several NPW goals and objectives. Most prominent among these is its work on democracy and governance, which activates Items 15.2(1, 2, 3, & 5) and 15.3(1, 2, 3, & 5) of the policy. These provisions stipulate the introduction of measures to redress women’s under-representation in politics and governance through appropriate structures, networks, affirmative action, mass mobilisation of women, and gender sensitisation of traditional and religious opinion leaders. The poverty alleviation programme is also a step towards furthering the NPW agenda as elaborated elsewhere.

## 6.4 Constraints to Women’s Agendas

It has often been pointed out that despite the effusion of activity aimed at women’s development and empowerment there has been more motion and less progression. Women’s group leaders highlighted a number of constraints to the implementation of their respective agendas, which may throw light on why Nigerian females continue to lag behind their male counterparts on virtually every front, and specifically, why substantial gender disparities persist in men and women’s access to and control over resources, opportunities and benefits? The critical constraints identified during semi-structured interviews with leaders of various women’s NGOs (not restricted to the case studies) can be classified as institutional, logistical and ideological. Institutional constraints relate mostly to the wider functioning of the State and are closely intertwined with factors participants identified as obstacles to NPW implementation and will therefore be discussed in Chapter Seven.

By way of logistics, all case study NGOs listed the lack of finance as a major constraint to day-to-day operations and programme execution. So did 16 (80%) NGO leaders in the entire study. Irregular cash inflows as a result of over-reliance on donor funding cause programmes to be delayed or unimplemented. NGO leaders asserted that the situation reflected inadequate or non-existent support from government, who they

look to as a chief source of finance. Given that the policy document stresses the importance of NGOs as policy implementers the nature of NGO-government relationship is discussed in Chapter Seven as an aspect of institutional capability to implement the NPW. The remainder of the chapter discusses ideological constraints to women's agendas and strategies they have adopted to surmount them.

### **6.4.1 Ideological Constraints**

This study has demonstrated that culture and religion in Nigeria are pervasive forces that rationalise, justify and sanctify the pre-eminence of maleness and male interests over femaleness and female interests. Constraints posed by impersonal societal structures embedded with gender-biased ideologies were highlighted as prioritised concerns in the previous two chapters. In addition, women's NGOs find themselves in contention against individuals and vested interests in the following respects:

#### **6.4.1.1 The Male Factor**

All case study NGOs, except TAP, reported experiencing hostility from men in the course of their activities. This corresponds with general findings from semi-structured interviews with NGO leaders where 14 (70%) participants said male egocentricity and hostility constituted obstacles to women's agendas and to female empowerment, particularly female leadership. Activists found a considerable amount of ignorance, misconception and fear about women's empowerment. Several activists opined that men fear women taking over power to dominate them. But activists like Pofi (COCIN), Salami (NAWACS) and Obadiah (COWAN) were quick to declare women wanted partnership not control and therefore posed no threat to men. As a result of this perceived threat to what men believe is their rightful social position women NGOs come against covert and overt resistance, particularly from husbands of target beneficiaries, opinion moulders (e.g. religious and traditional leaders), professionals and even male activists who accuse their female counterparts of going overboard in their empowerment efforts.

COWAN provides an example of covert resistance. At the outset of its operations, COWAN found a major reason for poor loan repayment was husbands taking the money from their wives. To forestall this it embarked on awareness campaigns targeting local community leaders and husbands to inform them of its vision and mobilise support for members. Consequently, all members' husbands are inducted into associate membership as 'co-men' of COWAN. This makes them accountable for

momes given to spouses. Moreover, loan disbursements are a community affair conducted ceremoniously in the presence of ward heads for the purpose of inducing communal accountability and protecting members from intimidation by husbands. This strategy has proved effective as Obadiah explains, “We are on the right track...in some of the areas where we went, some of the ward heads even said, ‘any man who collects money from his wife it is the zinc of his house that will be removed and sold out.’”

Another method COWAN employs to involve men in a transformational way is by accepting them into membership but laying down express constitutional limitations on their sphere of operation. In response to a question regarding possible power and authority difficulties arising from male membership Obadiah explained:

Knowing who men are we made it categorically clear that no man will be the president or the treasurer. You can only write for us but you can never be the president or the treasurer. But you can be a member and you can opt to be a secretary because you will be doing the writing. So they hardly handle money...They are very authoritative [sic].

An example of overt male resistance was cited in Chapter Five regarding the efforts of male academics to discredit a journal published by NAWACS.<sup>207</sup> The experience of BAOBAB, although not one of the case studies, is another. Established in 1996 to address violations of women’s rights under Muslim laws, its staff members have been subjected to death threats and violent attacks because, according to Diposalami their agenda works “against the interests of powerful men, some of whom violate the rights of their wives every second or every minute.” She deemed male resistance to be a direct consequence of how men understand and wield power as a zero-sum winner-takes-all game. BAOBAB offers para-legal training for the defence of Muslim women and covered controversial cases such as that Safiya Magaji from Zamfara state in 1999. However, in response to violent opposition they have keyed down on the publicity of ongoing cases, refusing to name cases to protect their privacy. They have also invested time and money in lessons in self-defence training for staff. Their office premises in Lagos have no sign board.

Julie Ser of the Centre for Gender and Rural Development contended that men’s staunch belief and commitment to the idea of female domesticity is a major hindrance to efforts at women’s political empowerment, specifically with regard to community participation in decision-making. Her organisation introduced the concept of ‘women’s leader’ to sit on community committee panels and participate in decision-making during the execution of development projects. By making this a required component of any

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<sup>207</sup> See page 217

project the CGRD teased open some space for women's voice to be heard in certain Plateau State villages where it worked.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, male attitudes and behaviour were not singled out as sole impediments to women's agendas. Ideological/psychological factors produce inhibiting attitudes and behaviours in women that impact on organisations.

#### 6.4.1.2 Women: Their Own Worst Enemies?

A popular saying in Nigeria, repeated by PRA, focus group, interview and survey participants, is that, "Women are their own worst enemies." Twelve (60%) NGO leaders claimed that both members and target beneficiaries acted in ways that threaten the goals and objectives of organisations on several fronts. First, a few echoed the claim made by Gana that women lack internal gender solidarity which frequently led to opposition and rivalry among and between women's groups. Second, Ketebu-Nwokefor, Thompson, Fawehinmi and Chindaba<sup>208</sup> insisted that women display a lack of seriousness and focus that hampers efficiency. They turn up late for meetings, renege on financial commitments and do not follow through on decisions made. According to Ketebu-Nwokefor (Interview, 31/05/03) women are unable to make significant strides towards implementing their agendas for social change because they "talk 100% and do 20%."

Thompson said women's organisations are not taken seriously by public authorities because of the *laissez-faire*, self-limiting attitude of members. However, Fawehinmi (Interview, 16/07/03)<sup>209</sup> argued that the attitudes and behaviours described above reflect a psychology of the oppressed resulting from the internalisation of cultural and religious subjugation, which constitutes "a mighty stronghold" confronting those who work among women. Salami suggested a material basis. She contended that women's apparent lack of seriousness, focus and commitment to a shared purpose is a function of the heavy reproductive burden they carry and its attendant time constraints dissipating their energies and leaving little space for public engagement beyond that required for survival. Onyewuchi<sup>210</sup> surmised that they are the result of women's lack of education and their gendered socialisation into a state of permanent childhood which either restricts them to trivial pursuits or splinters organisational responses to social issues.

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<sup>208</sup> Of the National Council of Women Societies, the Adolescent Project, Ondo Ladies Club and Nigerian Association of Women Journalists respectively

<sup>209</sup> Of Christian Resource Centre for Women

<sup>210</sup> Of Orji Women Association

On the other hand, women are not mere objects of vested interests in the perpetuation of gender oppression. Effah-Chukwuma noted that not all women or women's groups want to alter women's subordinate positioning and some, actively or implicitly, seek to maintain the status quo of male privilege because they benefit from the gender-class system through the patriarchal approval, favours and perquisites extended to them. The example of financially dependent 'elite' women who remain in abusive relationships to hang onto affluent lifestyles is a case in point.<sup>211</sup> Dipo-Salami and Effah-Chukwuma said women's organisations were beginning to recognise the need for networking and collaboration in agenda setting and programme execution not only as efficiency requirements but also to check fragmented responses to women's gender interests.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Numerous similarities exist in the organisational agendas of the foregoing case studies. These agendas mirror the prioritised concerns and planning needs specified by Nigerian women and several NPW goals, objectives and strategies. However, just as nuances of distinction were observable in the experiences and views of individual grassroots, working class, elite women and activists, here again significant differences in emphasis in terms of issue-areas, operational strategy, and targeted end-users are evident. No significant differences were observed based on organisational structure among autonomous, affiliated or directed groups. Yet, for analytical purposes it is possible to discern three orientations or predispositions which underlie their approaches, and those of other NGOs surveyed, to women and gender issues.

First, there is a militant, though not necessarily combative, stream of women activists closely allied with international development agencies and global feminist networks. They are explicit and intentional in their identification with and pursuit of the agenda to transform gender relations. Such women form part of a growing, largely urban-based network of organisations working in policy advocacy, and the reconstruction of knowledge to inform social discourse. They are predominantly found in women's rights and professional bodies.

Conventionalism is the second orientation. Conventionalists are mainly concentrated in the groundswell of self-help cultural/ethnic and community-based organisations or social clubs at the grassroots and in faith-based groups. They form the

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<sup>211</sup> See Chapter Five p. 218

majority of women's groups in Nigeria. Their core purpose is to counteract the material effects, rather than the root causes, of women's social positioning. This agenda co-exists with a commitment to the primacy of women's traditional wife and mother roles for overall societal well-being and order. This is not to suggest that all conventionalists subscribe to women's subordination but their emphasis is on expanding women's human resource potential to improve their ability to fulfil such roles and simultaneously contribute to socio-economic development.

The third orientation represents a middle ground between militancy and conventionalism: pragmatism. Pragmatists are militant activists who subscribe to avant-garde GAD approaches but recognise that the ideal is not always possible and therefore seek to adapt them to suit the pace and preferences of local contexts. They combine militant and conventional values about gender equality and complementary gender roles. In other words, women and men are coequal beings "Of the same rank and dignity"<sup>212</sup> in terms of their personal worth and the value of their work and respective gender roles.

As with the classification of organisations these distinctions in orientation are not functionally discrete. Although each orientation is more common to some organisational categories than others, none is exclusive to any one. Indeed, all three could co-exist in one organisation manifesting variably as the situation demands. They cannot be read off from the selection of programmes. Instead, they point to intent behind programme design and signal that varying shades of opinion exist within and between organisations about operational strategies and the direction of social change.

In the bid for change women's groups have recorded more success in the realm of practical self-help initiatives for improving material conditions at the micro-level. Political strategising and capacity building in large-scale economic enterprise, particularly corporate business, have proven more difficult. As argued in Chapter Two women's inability to penetrate and re-configure state political and economic power structures is a reflection of the sexist ideologies that underpin them. Such ideologies produce and permeate public institutions undermining state capacity to act in women's interest. They have the potential of obstructing the NPW. We turn to this issue in the next chapter.

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<sup>212</sup> *Chambers Concise Dictionary (1997)*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Institutional Constraints: The Rhetoric of Change and the Reality of Inaction

Chapters Four through Six provided empirical analyses of the prioritised concerns and planning needs of a cross-section of the Nigerian female populace as well as their collective agency. Chapter Six demonstrated that women's organisations have set agendas consistent with the NPW and have encountered a series of constraints in the course of programme implementation. Besides the logistical and ideological constraints previously discussed these NGOs are encumbered, by the wider policy environment. Activists generally acknowledged that democratic governance between 1999 and 2004 had improved the climate for civil society participation. With regard to gender there had been several pronouncements and gestures by governments signalling amenability to women's issues. Nevertheless, the volatile and dysfunctional nature of political and public administration systems warrants an enquiry into whether these constitute a case of government posturing or a genuine commitment to gender concerns, and by implication to the NPW.

This chapter examines the country's capability to move from the 'sloganisation' to the institutionalisation of gender through implementation of the NPW. It reviews the institutional mechanisms put in place to implement the policy, discusses potential bottlenecks arising from the policy environment with particular reference to organisational culture and the gendered nature of state organisations/institutions.<sup>213</sup> Since there has never before, in the country's development planning process, been any policy document this elaborate or specific in relation to women it is vital to assess the degree of institutional capability to deliver desirable policy outcomes. This is especially so because institutions are constitutive of any society's gender asymmetries and produce

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<sup>213</sup> Institutions are historically constructed "frameworks for socially constructed rules and norms which function to limit choice. They are 'humanly devised constraints' (North, 1990:3 in Goetz, 1997:5) which reduce uncertainty and provide structure to everyday life, making certain forms of behaviour predictable and routine, *institutionalising* them" (Goetz, 1997:5). Institutions, therefore, include but also transcend organisations. Economist Douglas North delineates three institutional arenas that provide "a general normative environmental constraint" (Goetz, 1997:8) for organisations, policies and social actors: The state, the market and the community. Chapter Four already alluded to community level constraints encountered during the operations of indigenous women's groups. In this chapter, although reference is made to the market in terms of the role of the private sector, the state is the primary concern.



their own gendered preference systems often concealed behind formal, seemingly gender neutral, institutional arrangements. Yet, state institutions link policy statements to concrete actions thus playing a determinant role in policy effectiveness. They must therefore be committed to women's gendered interests and planning needs if policies concerning them are not to be consigned to "bureaucratic circumspection and equivocation which can fracture gender policy rhetoric" and impede action (Goetz, 1997:6).

## 7.1 The Historical and Cognitive Contexts of Gender Policy in Nigeria

The gendered archaeology of organisations, institutional arrangements or systems constitutes an important measure of institutional capability to articulate and incorporate women's interests (Goetz, 1997). Historical and cognitive contexts are aspects of a gendered archaeology which review the interests that shaped the formation and framework of political systems and state institutions,<sup>214</sup> the ideologies and disciplines that animate them and the extent to which they demonstrate receptivity to gender equality/equity projects. Goetz (1997) argues that an investigation of the gendered dimensions of institutional/organisational history, make-up and practice are critical determinants of institutional preparedness to meet women's needs.

The search for a viable institutional mechanism to incorporate women's interests and agendas into a male-dominated political system began in 1976 with the establishment of a Women Development Section which became a division in 1986,<sup>215</sup> an independent Commission in 1989 and was upgraded to a Ministry in 1995. As argued in Chapter Three, in the context of underlying male bias contestations for power, privilege and wealth paid little or no attention to women or to gender as a critical

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<sup>214</sup> Goetz et al (1997) demonstrate how the gendered nature of institutions, such as state bureaucracies and other organisations, affects gender policy implementation. With regard to gender policy institutions matter in three respects: institutional decision-making produces gendered outcomes, the gendered constitution of institutional structures and practices produces gender differences<sup>214</sup> and, structures and agents are imprinted with and influenced by gender-biased standards, legitimating ideologies and disciplinary foundations that impede equality of opportunity for men and women. Case studies conducted by Goetz et al (ibid.) explain how in institutional structures and processes "gender operates as a pervasive allocational principle linking production with reproduction, domestic with public domains, and the macroeconomy with the [local]-level institutions within which development processes are played out." (Goetz (p.13) citing Kabeer:1994:62)

<sup>215</sup> Under the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports. Source: 1999 Brochure of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

development variable. Indeed, the very need for a women's ministry was keenly contested by civilian and military governments.

After the NCW was set up government felt it had fulfilled its obligation to give women their slice of the 'national cake' and they were left to get on with it through the initiation of programmes and projects targeting women, children and family related matters. It was not expected that either the Commission or Ministry would be concerned with the broad sweep of development issues beyond interpersonal and familial realms perceived by the patriarchal order as women's field of interaction. Under the leadership of First Ladies the NCW/Ministry obliged to the dominant ideological construct through the adoption of WID projects focused on piecemeal intervention strategies targeting women's practical needs in health, education, and micro-enterprise.

However, towards the end of the 1990s, supported by international partners and women's non-governmental organisations, in addition to the socially prescribed female role the Ministry became more assertive in seeking a central role in policy and decision-making structures and processes on the premise that all development issues affect women. This led to the inauguration of ad-hoc issue-related committees and agencies working under the supervision of the Ministry which could be described as Nigeria's gender management system (GMS)<sup>216</sup> of which the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA) is the hub.

## 7.2 Overview of the Gender Management System

Chapter Three mapped out the historical relationship between the National Commission for Women – which later became the Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development – and the National Policy on Women, and the role of the former in the birthing process of the latter. Upon approval the NPW was entrusted to the oversight of the then Federal Ministry for Women Affairs and Youth Development as the principle organ responsible for its implementation. This section provides an overview of the mandate, organisation and functioning of the Ministry as part of the institutional framework put in place to actualise the NPW. The policy document envisages a gender

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<sup>216</sup> "A Gender Management System (GMS) is a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organisational framework, to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organisation's work, in order to achieve greater gender equality and equity within the context of sustainable development. A GMS may be established at any level of government, or in institutions such as universities, inter-governmental or non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations or trade unions." *Gender Management System Handbook*. UK: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999.

management system in Item 17.11.1 & 2 where it stipulates the retention and strengthening of existing structures and the creation of new ones in the form of action committees. It also calls for the initiation of working partnerships between FMWA and organisations outside its formal jurisdiction.

Fig. 7.1 displays the broad-based institutional framework that constitutes the country's Gender Management System. This framework is deduced from interviews with senior FMWA staff in the Women Affairs Dept. It had not been overtly set out in official documents neither was there any coherent sense of its functioning among those NGOs in the study who interacted with FMWA. The GMS evolved partly in response to factual limitations encountered by FMWA in the course of fulfilling its mandate.

### ***7.2.1 The Mandate***

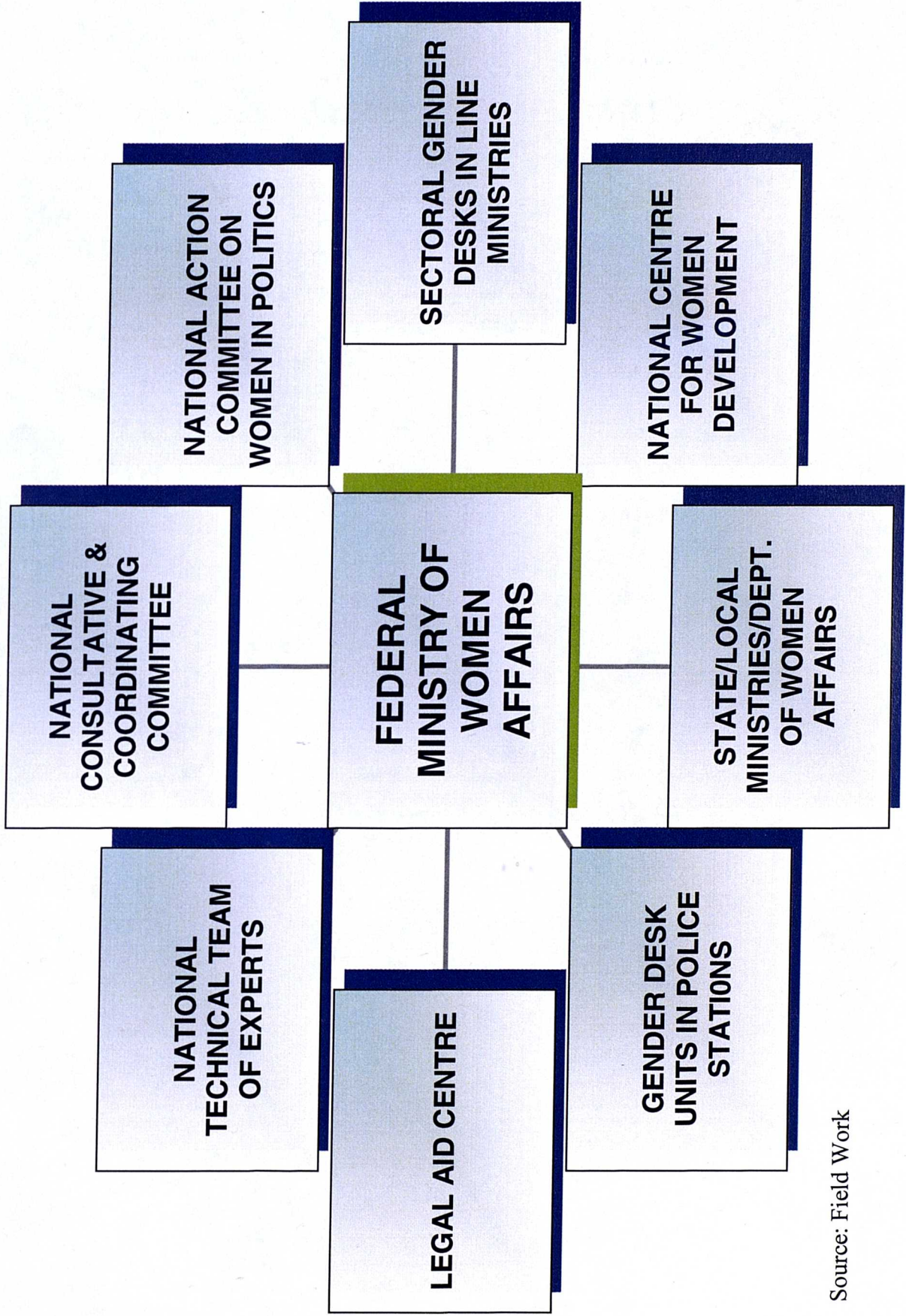
The mandate of the NCW was identical to that of Mrs Babangida's BLP (see pp. 113ff). In 1995 in addition to the objectives of the FSP the Federal Ministry for Women and Social Development, as it was then called, was "responsible for the promotion of the welfare and advancement of Nigerian women, children, the family, the elderly and the disabled." In 1999 the Ministry was given oversight of the National Youth Service Corps and 'Social Development' was changed to 'Youth Development' with a directive to focus on the welfare of women, children and youth. Yet again in 2004 the Youth Department was moved to the Federal Ministry of Special Duties and Youth Development and the Ministry is now called the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, though it remains in charge of child development. FMWA sees its role as one of facilitating women's active participation to ensure equitable policy outcomes for women within the context of a liberal democratic, free market economy. Rita Obong Akpan, Minister for Women Affairs, said at a Press Briefing<sup>217</sup> that the document establishing the ministry mandated it to:

1. Initiate policies, projects and programs to provide services towards ensuring the survival, protection, development and participation of the Nigerian Child.
2. Empower Nigerian children to channel their energy towards positive activities that promote national development.

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<sup>217</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at the National Centre for Women Development, Abuja

Fig. 7.1: Nigeria's Gender Management System



Source: Field Work

3. Initiate policies, carry out programs/projects and provide services towards total elimination of all socio cultural practices that discriminate against women; promote their economic and political empowerment and accelerate the pace of attainment of general parity in national development processes.
4. Facilitate the domestication of all conventions, treaties, charters, and declarations to which Nigeria is signatory.
5. Ensure codification of laws to protect women and children where religion and /or culture do not provide.

The merging of women, children and youth into one ministry is a testament to the minority and subsidiary status accorded women and their concerns in public policy affairs. Moreover, as argued by Pittin (1991, see page 89) it served to institutionalise women's reproductive role of mother and care-giver, fixate the minds of policy-makers about women's role in development and reinforce the latter's subordination and dependency. This made it difficult to challenge or change restrictive ideological assumptions that continue to underlie the ministry's existence: that women's place and concerns belong in the social domain and are always inter-linked with children, youth and family affairs.

There may be scope for a possible departure from this status quo based on two developments. First, a review process of the NPW in FMWA began in 2003. According to Oby Okwuonu, Head of Women Affairs Unit, it aimed to align policy provisions with current challenges regarding gender and development, and thereby make it more relevant to women's needs by replacing it with a National Gender Policy. The NGP will be used to push women's practical and strategic gender concerns and interests into the mainstream of state institutions and development planning. It was expected to be out by the end of 2005.

This review reflects the input of NGO advocacy efforts as well as FMWA's internal process. Indeed, 68 of 103 (66%) NGO leaders who responded to Q.39 of the questionnaire in this research felt the NPW required amendment before it could be successfully implemented. Thirteen (12.6%) felt major amendments were required while 55 (53.4%) said there should be minor ones. Nevertheless, 85% of 144 participants in Q.36 opined that the NPW is a feasible policy if the necessary amendments are made. In addition to amendments to the policy document participants in semi-structured interviews emphasised the need for appropriate institutional frameworks and mechanisms, and specifically for an overhaul of FMWA framework and operational procedures. The rest of this chapter presents the existing institutional set

up within FMWA and the Nigerian public sector, and highlights potential bottlenecks and pitfalls where change is required to facilitate gender-sensitive policy implementation.

The second area holding hope for broadening the horizon for gender-aware and gender planning concerns the nature of the FMWA mandate. In her briefing, Akpan (2004) hinted at the intention of FMWA to re-think its mandate in light of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy – the Obasanjo Administration’s new economic policy and poverty reduction strategy drafted in March 2004. Under the NEEDS framework the Ministry is required to identify critical focal areas over the next four years (2003-2007), and work out manageable strategies for the actualisation of its mandate. FMWA singled out four areas as shown in Table 7.1:

**TABLE 7.1**  
**Critical Focal Areas for FMWA 2003-07**

	<b>FOCAL AREAS</b>	<b>EMPHASIS</b>
1	The human rights of women and children	Trafficking and Harmful Traditional Practices
2	Economic empowerment of women	Poverty, unemployment and lack of skills
3	Issues of vulnerability for women and children	Girl and boy children education
4	Women and Children’s health	HIV/AIDS

Source: Re-constructed from *Ministerial Press Briefing*, (2004)

The four critical areas and their emphases correspond with three of the five immediate planning needs identified by women in Chapter Four (economic empowerment, education, and health) but fall short of two priority areas – political representation and the provision of basic needs/social amenities. The latter could be met through the execution of plans to reduce poverty and provide education, health, and skills. Increasing women’s representation in policy-making structures and political processes is an essential step towards incorporating women’s perspectives into development planning and transforming institutions to become gender sensitive (Goetz,

1997). Although it is not mentioned as one of the four focal areas, the removal of harmful traditional practices may be a first step in this direction. HTPs were identified by women as a prioritised concern and their removal as a long-term planning need (along with increased political representation).

With respect to women as a specific category, since its inception in July 2000, the ministry claims to have adopted the NPW as its Magna Carta for institutionalising women's concerns in all policy sectors and issue-areas. According to Akpan (2004) the NPW informed all ministry programmes and activities. In a country response report submitted to a UN Committee the Ministry presented a 16-item list depicting the successful implementation of the NPW achieved through institutional restructuring, strategic partnerships, advocacy and intervention projects.<sup>218</sup> Prior to 1999 most of its activities revolved around short-term WID projects. In the area of policy and legislative change it was only recently with the political clout of NGOs founded by Stella Obasanjo and Titi Abubakar – wives of the President and Vice-President – that FMWA was able to secure the passage by the National Assembly of the Child Rights Act and the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act – both in 2003.

### ***7.2.2 Organisational Set-up and Operation of FMWA/GMS***

Among the three large parastatals that reported to the Minister through the Permanent Secretary while it was still the FMWAYD: The National Youth Service Corps, the Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre and the National Centre for Women Development, only the latter had women as its primary focus. Furthermore, among the FMWAYD's six main departments only the Department of Women Affairs, with its three sub-units (women organisation, economic services and human resources & capacity), was charged with addressing women's concerns.

NCWD is a think-tank originally established in 1992 by Mrs Maryam Babangida under the Better Life Programme to promote women's "emancipation through education, self-achievement and mobilisation."<sup>219</sup> It now assists in the execution of the FMWA mandate through the provision of services towards the elimination of discrimination against women and their equitable integration in national development. NCWD is modelled after the United Nations International Research and Training Institute (INSTRAW). As a parastatal under FMWA, it conducts specialised training,

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<sup>218</sup> Responses Raised on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Country Periodic Reports on the Implementation of CEDAW, January 2004

<sup>219</sup> Source: NCWD Brochure

research and documentation into women's gendered interests and concerns. As part of its objective to promote gender equity and women development through the stimulation of national consciousness it functions to:

1. Conduct short and long-term research and documentation on women's strategic concerns, activities and achievements
2. Serve as a databank on Gender and Development in Nigeria
3. Facilitate the formulation of policies affecting women in all sectors
4. Provide training in skills development and acquisition
5. Provide guidance and counselling to rural and urban women
6. Liaise with national, regional and international agencies involved in Gender and Development.<sup>220</sup>

The Centre works independently with local and international organisations to commission studies and source for funds for the programmes and projects it initiates. Its mission and objectives comply with the goals of the NPW as stated in Item 3. However, there are problems of overlap and duplication of efforts arise from its status and function as a parastatal which, as Section 7.3.2 below demonstrates is characteristic of the public sector.

The department for Child Development has three sub-units and, before its removal in 2004 Youth Development had two. The other three departments: Personnel Management, Planning Research and Statistics and Finance and Supplies are statutory requirements for all government ministries and parastatals, and they are service arms to all other parastatals and departments in their respective ministries. Fig. 7.2 shows the organisational structure of FMWAYD.<sup>221</sup> As the diagram indicates the FMWA human and material resource-base is dissipated among the concerns of women, children and youth, with a large proportion of its annual budget spent on the National Youth Service Corps, for which it was responsible until the transfer of the Youth department.

Like most public sector institutions FMWA suffers from an unwieldy, non-professional and gender-imbalanced bureaucracy. Due to the pool nature of transferring staff within the civil service, ministries are subjected to high staff turnover ranging at

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<sup>220</sup> Source: NCWD Brochure

<sup>221</sup> This was obtained from FMWAYD during field research in Abuja in 2003. Therefore, it does not reflect the new status of FMWA for which an official organisational chart was not available at the time of writing.



any point in time between 70% male and 30% female across all grading categories.<sup>222</sup> This impacts the ministry's proficiency and organisational culture in several ways. For one, besides the lack of financial and material resources (to be discussed later) FMWA has insufficient personnel trained and equipped with the specialised skills required for gender and development analysis and management.

Such skills have been found to be crucial to ensure gender-balanced outcomes in the execution of projects and programmes, and their absence contravenes objective two of the NPW which calls for systematic gender analysis towards the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all policy sectors (Item 4.1.2). A second negative impact derives from the lopsided ratio of gendered participants.<sup>223</sup> For instance, in the Women Affairs Department there are 32 members of staff – 12 female and 20 male – although departmental/unit heads and deputies are usually women.<sup>224</sup> Consequently, FMWA has to conduct its mandate in the context of a largely 'masculinised' work environment.

These problems are replicated and exacerbated at state and local government levels as institutional resources dry up and communal ideologies prevail further away from the centre. The ideal situation envisaged in a three-tiered federal structure to facilitate the decentralisation of authority and resources is not necessarily the case in the Nigerian context as shall be seen later. These are some of the limitations that warrant a more flexible and diffuse institutional framework through which FMWA may garner the expertise and resources to implement its mandate to women.

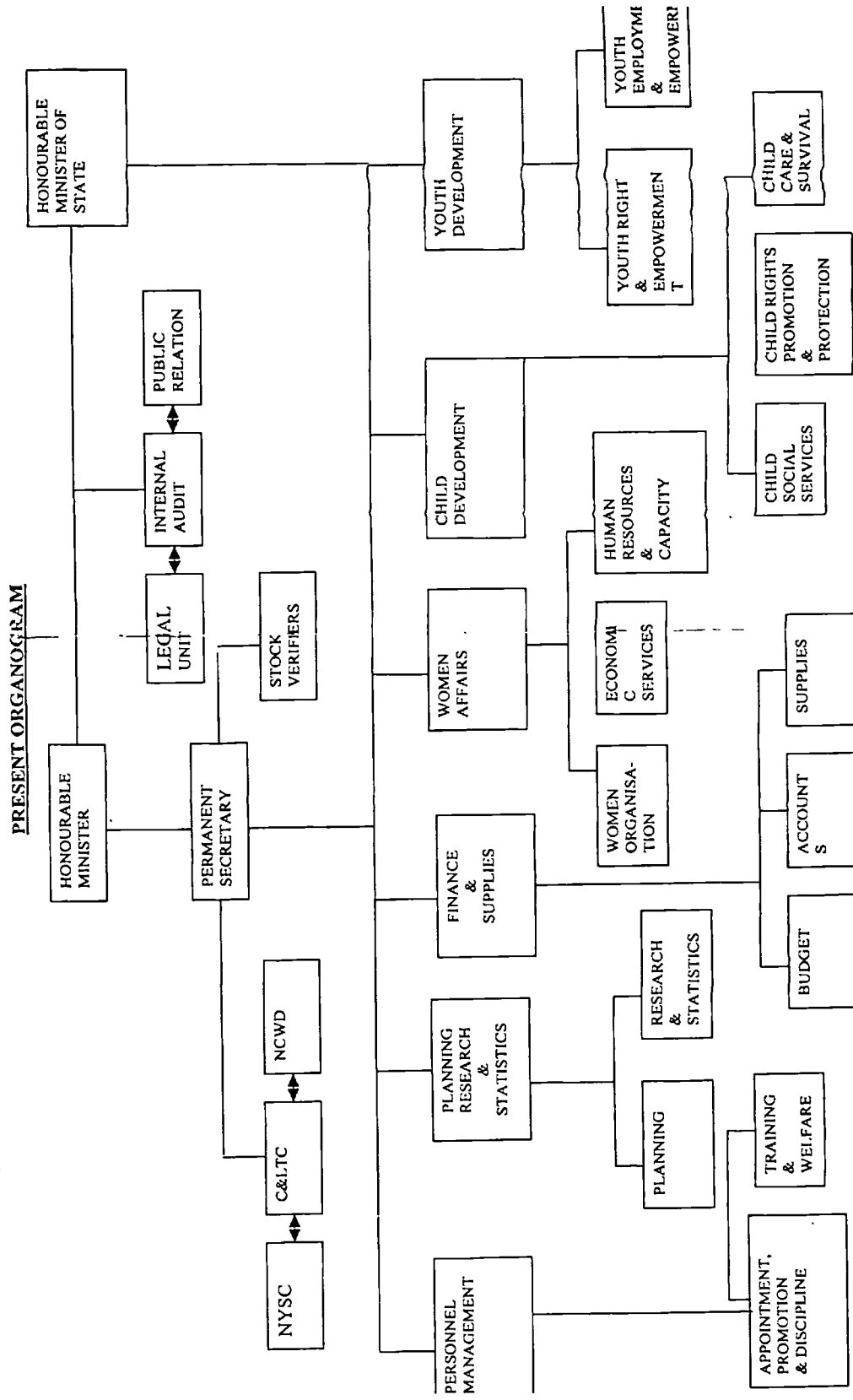
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<sup>222</sup> Evidence of gender-insensitive male staff in FMWA was found in the course of this research in the form of ridicule and antagonism towards the project.

<sup>223</sup> The analysis of gendered participants is another aspect of the gendered archaeology model proposed by Goetz (1997). It assesses steps taken to empower women to be decision-makers and thereby change the character and gender awareness of institutions. For lack of empirical evidence Goetz (1997:19) stops short of asserting that more women decision-makers reorient institutions towards responsiveness to women's interests. She concedes that "men as a group do appear to act to defend their interests as a gender, even across class divisions..."

<sup>224</sup> Some state ministries/departments have been headed by men! For example Kwara State (1999- 2003);

Fig. 7.2: Organogram of Federal Ministry of Women Affairs



Source: Obtained from the Federal Ministry of Woman Affairs, April, 2004.

Indeed the limitations highlighted above are the source of disaffection about the existence of FMWA and SMWAs<sup>225</sup> among women's NGOs, scholars and development practitioners. Many interview and survey participants opined that women's ministries have done too little too late and thereby failed to improve the living conditions and socio-political profile of women. Some argued that its existence has helped to ghettoise women's concerns and remove women further away from the mainstream (Olatunji, Dipo-Salami, 2003); others called for FMWA to be scrapped in the absence of radical institutional reform to make women more relevant at the centre of nationwide policy formulation and implementation (Awosika, Interview, 17/07/03).

According to Akpan (2004) in view of human and material resource limitations FMWA has embarked on internal re-structuring of its organs and operations as well as the development of strategic partnerships to enable it cope with the enormity of its task. The ministry recognises that the framework for implementing its mandate for women must go beyond its formal organisational structure. In response to its several limitations FMWA has attempted to re-structure and extend its reach beyond the confines of its bureaucratic structure and *personnel/material resource base through the creation of committees*, and increased networking with international agencies, NGOs and academic institutions.

In 1998 FMWA started establishing gender focal points, in the form of gender desks staffed by trained officers in line ministries to oversee the incorporation of NPW goals and objectives into all sectors. By the end of 2003, in response to global issues – with particular reference to the Millennium Development Goals - the FMWA had set up sectoral gender desks in almost all the Ministries and Parastatals/Agencies at the Federal level to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's human rights. In line with Item 18.3.2 of the NPW gender desk officers are trained yearly on how to mainstream gender and human rights in their respective ministries, and on the monitoring and evaluation of the gender suitability of all policies and projects. Gender desk officers are constituted into a National Technical Team of Experts commissioned to monitor the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (which informed the drafting of the NPW) and the multi-sectoral mainstreaming of gender policies.

Another body was set up with a similar mandate to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the BPA and the African Plan of Action – the National Consultative and Coordinating Committee. It was created by the Federal Government as recommended by the African Regional Conference (ARC) under the oversight of

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<sup>225</sup> State Ministries of Women Affairs

FMWA.<sup>226</sup> FMWA has initiated steps to introduce gender focal points at state and local government levels. There are also pilot gender desk units in a few police stations to experiment on how to provide women with access to a gender-sensitive hearing and case reporting. Based on NPW guidelines, FMWA established a Legal Aid Centre to provide assistance, particularly to poor women, and to fight gender discrimination. It is seeking ways to support the replication of this at state level. The National Centre for Women development also has a Women Crisis Centre that provides free legal and counselling services.

One of the ways adopted by FMWA to redress the gender-imbalance represented in the masculinisation of political/public policy-making processes and structures is the establishment of the National Action Committee on Women in Politics (NACWIP). This national machinery with coordinators in the six geo-political zones was set up by the FMWA to facilitate the achievement of 30% affirmative action for the election of women into public office as stipulated in the NPW. The Committee is responsible for developing strategies to mobilise women to register, vote and be voted for in electoral processes. During the 2003 elections NACWIP launched an appeal towards raising funds for female political candidates from all parties. It recorded some success in mobilising women to stand for elections and the number of female contestants rose from 631 in 1999 to 861 in 2003.<sup>227</sup> Successful aspirants comprised 1.63% and 5.68% of the total in 1999 and 2003 respectively.<sup>228</sup> Since political participation and representation is not directly one of the four focal areas it is unclear whether the resources required for the sustained functioning of NACWIP will be available. FMWA collaborates with the National Assembly House Committee on Women and Youth Affairs to sponsor bills and ensure women's concerns feature on the political agenda.

In this fluid institutional setting FMWA believes its role is to “remind, inform and influence other partners in development” and to constantly “navigate, motivate and facilitate” in order to “influence the direction of contracts and projects at many levels and within many sectors to produce changes in society that benefit all” (Akpan, 2004). However, in spite of institutional restructuring FMWA has recorded slow progress in carrying out its more transformative mandate to women as set out in items 3-5 above. In addition to lapses and gaps in the policy content set forth in Chapter Three some of the

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<sup>226</sup> Source: 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Country Report on the Implementation of CEDAW. July, 2002 and Responses Raised on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Country Periodic Reports on the Implementation of CEDAW. January, 2004.

<sup>227</sup> Out of 11,881 available positions nationwide (Iyare, 2004:63).

<sup>228</sup> Source: INEC (Independent National Commission), Elections results 1999/2003 and Iyare (2004:63)

reasons for the slow progress derive from the way public institutions function and the policy/political contexts in which they operate. Key aspects of institutional capability, including the role of FMWA and issues pertaining to Nigeria's broader policy and institutional contexts are examined below.

## 7.3 The Public Sector and Policy Implementation in Nigeria

### 7.3.1 *The Legacy of Policy Failure: What Hope for the NPW?*

Notwithstanding the re-positioning and re-structuring efforts of FMWA, extensive cross-sectoral and sectoral studies exist that elaborate on the prevalence of policy failure in Nigeria, which can be used to prognosticate the feasibility of the NPW. Sanusi (ed.) (1992) and Olowu et al (1997) discuss recurring distortional factors inherent in the socio-political fabric, and transferred onto the internal functioning of state bureaucracies, that display a lack of the ten governance and management capabilities enumerated by Weaver and Rockman (1993:15).<sup>229</sup> These distortional factors are responsible for institutional drift across the broad spectrum of public sector decision-making and, have eroded state capacity. According to an IDEA-sponsored dialogue series on *Democracy in Nigeria*,

After years in which the Nigerian state perpetuated undemocratic rule, the state itself needs "reconstruction" to consolidate democracy, and minimise the dangers of tyranny or dismantlement. Consultations with Nigerians nationwide confirm that the image of the state is in tatters and its legitimacy undermined.

Systemic distortions re-emerge in sector studies relating to agriculture (Rogers, 1999), education (Ogunyemi, 2005), and trade (Jerome, 2005) to mention a few. The major causative factors are summarised by Sanusi (1992) as political instability from frequent regime change, political patronage and corruption<sup>230</sup>, and an unstructured decision-making process arising from conflicting ideologies and principles, and to the

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<sup>229</sup> They are to: 1. Set and maintain priorities among conflicting demands 2. Target resources efficiently and effectively 3. Innovate when old policies have failed 4. Coordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent whole 5. Impose losses on powerful groups 6. Represent diffuse, unorganised interests in addition to concentrated, well-organised ones 7. Ensure effective policy implementation once they have been decided upon 8. Ensure policy stability so they have time to work 9. Make and maintain international commitments 10. Manage political cleavages so that society does not degenerate into civil war.

<sup>230</sup> Pradhan (1997) deems corruption a symptom, rather than a cause, of distortions in policy and regulatory regimes, and of weak institutions of restraint.

dearth of policy planning data and/or linkages between research data and policy formulation/implementation.

Olowu et al (1997) place these distortional factors and their effects into seven categories: 1) *Political clientelism* transformed the public sector into a “theatre for ‘sharing the national cake’” resulting in the excessive expansion, fragmentation and gross inefficiency of governmental structures. 2) *Economic decline and mismanagement in the face of public sector expansion generated weak incentive systems*,<sup>231</sup> fuelled “a yawning gap between private and public sector wages, a high level of wage compression and wage erosion...with creeping institutionalised corruption” (Olowu et al, 1997:9). Prior to salary reviews in 1998 and 2000 it was extremely difficult for the public sector to retain highly-skilled professional staff. Wage differentials also exist between federal and state civil services resulting in increasing emigration from the latter to the former, and a scramble for jobs at the centre. 3) *An adversarial yet conspiratorial relationship between politicians and bureaucrats* demonstrated on the one hand by contestations for the predominance of personal/professional and/or partisan political interests, and on the other by the collusion to loot the treasury. 4) *Internal power struggles between generalist administrators and professionals* dating back to colonial and parliamentary government in the 1940s. Such power struggles are carried over from the personal level to intra- and inter-ministerial/departmental feuding. 5) *Long years of military rule* during which the press was censored, the rule of law was suspended through the proscription of the constitution and the legislature, and the containment of the judiciary where judges were political appointees. Consequently, there has been a sustained enfeeblement of institutions vital for fostering a culture of accountability to citizens. 6) *Ineffective and inaccessible avenues* through which citizens may voice complaints seek redress and participate in decision-making. 7) *The excessive centralisation of administrative power and institutional resources* away from regional/local needs.

Olowu et al (1997:1, 10) note that due to the first four factors the civil service “has, over time, lost its inherited commitment to political neutrality, professionalism and a developmental, meritocratic ethos” and partisan political interests tend to “dominate even routine operational activities.” In addition to the gendered organisational culture of male numeric and hierarchical predominance in the Civil Service, the general organisational culture of uncommitted, unenthusiastic and

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<sup>231</sup> Capital investment in the sector halved between 1974 and 1985 and the value of salaries in real terms halved between 1980 and 1993. (Olowu et al, 1997).

incompetent civil servants constitutes the makings of a major cog in the wheel of NPW implementation.

The first factor takes the form of the distribution of contracts, jobs and other public property as political/economic favours to clients on the basis of primordial affiliations such as ethnicity, religion, family, party etc. Sexual patronage – the giving of prebends in anticipation or appreciation of sexual services – is a less mentioned but well-known secret. Female staff and contractors are sometimes required to render sexual services to men who dominate public office numerically and hierarchically. Public space is therefore gendered on the perception of women as sex objects.<sup>232</sup> Women have been known to take advantage of this perception of the sexed body by offering themselves as mistresses to well-placed public functionaries in exchange for contracts, promotions, polygamous alliances etc. The perception of women as sex objects has informed government policy towards female employees. With the proclamation of Sharia Law in Zamfara State in January 2000 the government announced that single female civil servants should get married or lose their jobs.<sup>233</sup> Some married employees were ordered by husbands to leave their jobs. The Katsina State Governor announced in public that government offices are no place for women to be milling around seeking contracts as this undermines female dignity. The extent of the cost of sexual patronage on the national treasury and its share of responsibility in the failed contracts syndrome are hypothetical questions that require research. Comments made by some interview participants' in Chapter Five inferred that sexual patronage undermines *all* women's ability to be secure from sexual harassment in the work environment, and to be treated with respect as credible public agents.

The third factor – the prioritisation of private accumulation over public interest – lies at the root of the lack of political will to implement policies that will benefit the general citizenry. Ogunyemi (2005) identifies the absence of political will as a major cause for failure to implement series of education policies such as the 1992 Nigerian Conservation Education Strategy. Other sectoral analysts (Rogers, 1999; Jerome, 2005) have also pinpointed the absence of political will to follow through on policies as a recurring decimal that stands in contrast to the haste and rate at which policies are drafted. In agriculture Rogers (1999) asserts that the lack of government commitment

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<sup>232</sup> Goetz argues that the gendering of public space, implying perception about the sexed body in public institutions/organisations affects women's ability to feel physically secure and gain respect as equal public agents. The issues include: sex-typed tasks (who makes the coffee, cleans?), sexual harassment and sexual patronage.

<sup>233</sup> General Muhammadu Buhari had made the same declaration in 1983

has led to uncoordinated and stunted growth in the sector. It is responsible for the absence of a standardised delivery of agricultural extension services to female farmers despite the logic of doing so based on numeric considerations.

The fourth factor curtailed the country's ability to strengthen the democratic institutions inherited at independence in 1960. As explained in Chapter Three recurring coups and 29 years of military rule disrupted Nigeria's democratisation process by undermining constitutionalism, due process and the rule of law, civil society activism, public accountability and popular participation, particularly female participation.<sup>234</sup> However, the nature of 'low-intensity democracy' (Adedeji, 1994) practised in the form of multiparty electoral representation of elite, mainly male, politicians has contributed to the occurrence of the fifth factor. There has been no concerted or sustained effort by successive governments to create functional avenues for people's voice and participation in decision-making and the functioning of public bodies (see Section 7.5 below for further discussion). For example, the Public Complaints Commission set up since 1975 has no compliance powers, is under-funded and is not autonomous; it has always had to report to the Executive. Thus, the kind of democracy existing in Nigeria does not lend itself to a situation whereby government feels duty bound to listen to or fend for the needs of vulnerable social groups.

The seven distortional factors have culminated in the personalisation and politicisation of public sector institutions, processes and procedures. This has further skewed the policy-making/implementing functions and organisational culture of institutions in two important ways. First, it has occasioned endemic political instability and policy discontinuity through the premature termination of old policies and the introduction of new ones with every military/civilian regime/ administrative change. FMWA has had its own share of the destabilising effects of personality politics through the cult of First Ladyism (see pp. 113ff). Furthermore, evidence of existing rivalries between the FMWA secretariat and the NCWD, among FMWA women, child and youth departments, and between FMWA and other line ministries could be gleaned from comments and incidents in the course of the current field research.<sup>235</sup> According to

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<sup>234</sup> Pradhan (1997) argues that improving state institutional capability requires three inter-related sets of mechanisms: rules and restraints, voice and partnerships and competitive pressures. The second entails the establishment and accessibility of forums for citizens to voice their views and get feedback from public institutions. This ensures institutionalised input and oversight to strengthen policy-making.

<sup>235</sup> Feuding is mostly around personality, ethnic and religious cleavages than gender-based rivalry, although there are incidences of this.



Awosika (Interview, 17/07/03) such rivalries had the effect of delaying the policy process and frustrating the efforts of NGOs seeking to work in partnership with state bureaucracies.

But it must be noted that in the Nigerian context where hierarchical authority is embedded in the social and cultural organisation of indigenous community life excessive centralisation has also been used to secure political and economic inroads for vulnerable or marginalised groups. The gendered archaeology assessment model demonstrates that rigid hierarchy and power centralisation tend to be a function of the predominance of male gendered participants in leadership and decision-making structures (Goetz, 1997). Nevertheless, such arrangements have been used to advance women's causes. In Nigeria, many of the gains made by women have been pushed through by the executive fiat of Federal or State government policy decisions and actions, often backed by the political influence of First Ladies. International agencies have used the strong powers of central/personalised governments to ensure that gender is kept on the policy agenda, albeit nominally, at Federal level. Centralisation and the three-tiered hierarchy of institutional relationships provide avenues for the trickling down effect of policy guidelines. Hence Olatunji's endorsement of hierarchical structures (page 115). In certain states anti-discrimination legislation has been championed by the NGOs of First Ladies in collaboration with women's groups.<sup>236</sup> Notwithstanding, the utility of personality politics and the rigid hierarchy of government institutions policies and projects are unsustainable because they are usually not continued by subsequent administrations or by local communities.

The situation facilitates a continual re-invention of the wheel of new and conflicting policies. New policies, programmes and projects provide the political class with means to award contracts and secure the allegiance of clients leaving minimal resources for long-term development planning.<sup>237</sup> According to Nuhu Ribadu (16/12/2004), head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission corruption and

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<sup>236</sup> Edo, Enugu, Rivers and Cross River states

<sup>237</sup> In an interview with Femi Adeoti of *The Sun New On-line* titled: "My frustration as Finance Minister -People were disappointed that I didn't give them *egunje* (prebend)" former Minister of State for Finance, Jubril Martins-Kuye, revealed the expectation on high-level public functionaries to serve as patrons. He is quoted as saying, "The frustration of not being able to meet the aspirations of your constituents, your political colleagues. They thought a ministerial position should be used as a leveller to channel political opportunities and contracts to them [...] They would always come to you and let you know that your ministerial tenure had not brought much benefit to them materially. When somebody develops the audacity to tell you that to your face, you may feel extremely unhappy with yourself. You may feel frustrated."

mismanagement swallow about 40 percent of Nigeria's \$20 billion annual oil income.<sup>238</sup> The 2004 Corruption Perception Index published by Transparency International ranks Nigeria the third most corrupt of 146 countries surveyed.<sup>239</sup> Resource mismanagement is also evident in the elaboration of a crippling federal structure through the indiscriminate creation of multiple federal agencies and economically unviable states/local governments scrambling for allocations from the National Federation Account. Political instability and patronage are associated with the high rate of turnover of government officials and, over-bloated and ill-equipped Civil Service personnel whose overheads consume over 96% of Federal Government expenditure.<sup>240</sup>

Another problem arising from the personalisation and politicisation of institutional resources is the scant attention paid to the technical requirements of informed policy planning and analysis. The absence or non-utilisation of research data and development statistics and/or non-responsiveness to research discourse, make public policy planning an ad-hoc fire-fighting activity instead of a coordinated effort with political rationality (Osagie, 1992 and Sanusi, (1992). The NPW places high premium on building a gender desegregated data bank for planning purposes in furtherance of policy objectives, and it sets out the means for doing this through the joint efforts of the Federal Office of Statistics, the National Data Bank, line ministries and all state/local ministries/units of women affairs coordinated by FMWA (Items 3.1.5; 17.3 and 18.4). It encourages the use of participatory methodologies as a form of action research with the view of “changing values, norms, perceptions, attitudes and orientations at all levels of society” (Item 17.6). In a response Report to the Committee on CEDAW FMWAYD claimed to have developed social indicators for generating gender-disaggregated data in collaboration with the Federal Office of Statistics.<sup>241</sup> However, the policy fails to outline a plan on how to coordinate and fund the collection and collation of research data, and the training of research personnel on a sustained

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<sup>238</sup> *The Boston Globe* December 17 2004.

[www.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles/2004/12/17/corruption\\_costs\\_nigeria\\_40\\_percent\\_of\\_oil\\_wealth\\_official\\_says?mode=PF](http://www.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles/2004/12/17/corruption_costs_nigeria_40_percent_of_oil_wealth_official_says?mode=PF) The anti-graft chief claimed that the amount of oil wealth illegally siphoned off is down from about 70 percent in 2002 as a result of new central government controls.

<sup>239</sup> The Corruption Perceptions Index is a poll of polls, reflecting the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. The 2004 CPI draws on 18 surveys conducted by 12 independent institutions between 2002 and 2004.

[http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases\\_archive/2004/2004.10.20.cpi.en.html](http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2004/2004.10.20.cpi.en.html)

<sup>240</sup> Source: 2003 press briefing on the budget by Jubril Martins-Kuye (see footnote 237)

<sup>241</sup> Responses Raised on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Country Periodic Reports on the Implementation of CEDAW January, 2004, section 8.1 page 9.

basis given the sparse resources available for public sector capital expenditure, especially at regional and local levels.

Poor policy coordination makes the misplacement of priorities, the misallocation of resources, other forms of fiscal indiscipline and, ultimate policy failure, inevitable. A key strategy through which the NPW seeks to address the concerns and needs of women is by ‘engendering’ sector policies in line ministries. Consequently, the capability “to coordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent whole” (Weaver and Rockman, 1993:15, see footnote 229) is a decisive benchmark of the potential for successful NPW implementation. This is the focus of the next section.

### ***7.3.2 Multiple Visions, Mismatched Vocations: The Issue of Poor Policy Coordination***

Akinola (1992:111) points out that the “rather chaotic assembly of institutions” that constitute the Nigerian public bureaucracy is both a reason for and a function of the lack of policy coordination.<sup>242</sup> Osagie (1992) contends that the spirit of co-ordination and collaboration is lacking in public administration, and indeed the entire political system. He locates the cause of this in the separation of powers, which he refers to as an imposed principle alien to the Nigerian cultural context:

The fragmentation of national sovereignty into executive, legislature and judicial segments may do well in Western societies to check dictatorship, but fails to do so in our system. Where the political system is operated by immature minds, the principle tends to promote confrontation among the three tiers of government. (Osagie, 1992:13).

There are several manifestations of the situation described above. Opposition party members of national and state legislatures are known to frustrate policy initiatives of executive governments out of party vindictiveness and myopic economic interests in the attempt to increase bargaining power.<sup>243</sup> Rather than serve as checks and balances the separation of powers often constitutes a bottleneck in the political/policy process as the diffusion of political power squelches radical executive reform.<sup>244</sup> Policies approved and adopted by federal and state executives are often stalled by legislatures seeking to settle scores with the government of the dominant party. Sometimes ideological

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<sup>242</sup> There are 30 federal ministries (source: <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/Ministries.aspx>) and 127 federal parastatals and boards. Source: *Response Report 2004* As with FMWA these have had numerous changes in their nomenclature and terms of reference over years and no website, including the official government website contains consistent information about them.

<sup>243</sup> National Assembly stalling over the Anti-corruption Bill is a notable example

<sup>244</sup> Pradhan (1997) and Weaver and Rockman (1993) allude to this occurring due to excessive veto points.

differences are harder to broker at the legislative level where constituency representatives are more numerous and more attached to local ideas. This was said to have been responsible for the initial rejection of the Child Rights bill and the delays encountered by the Violence against Women bill.<sup>245</sup>

A climate of non-cooperation and rivalry also prevails in the operations of state bureaucracies. Ministries and departments compete with each other to draw attention (and donor funding) to popular programmes. From the 1990s programmes in HIV/AIDS, governance, skills acquisition, education/training, information, communication and technology (ICT) and even so-called gender and development projects, have been in vogue. It is not unusual to have multiple ministries or departments engaged in similar programmes with overlapping and/or contradicting objectives and outcomes. Osagie (1992) and Olowu et al (1997) claim that confrontation and competition characterise annual budget-making exercises where state institutions spar and lobby for allocations thereby forestalling future inter-ministerial collaboration in resource management. This state of affairs is worsened by bureaucratic secrecy, a short-circuited information dissemination network, and out-dated or non-existent communications systems. However, besides the lack of co-ordination in policy formulation there is also a lack of non-bureaucratic mechanisms for the independent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policy outcomes. M&E is a requirement for donor funding and state bureaucracies claim to have integrated it into project cycles. Yet, many programmes remain at the level of well-written project proposals for which funds are disbursed with questionable end-user returns.

The FMWA institutional framework is tailored to facilitate the decentralisation of authority and resources through state and local women's ministries/departments, line ministries, parastatals and ad-hoc committees. However, Osagie (1992) contends that while numerous institutions are hallmarks of decentralisation they tend towards duplication of effort, confusion, inconsistency, wastage and protectionism. For instance, duplication arises from the overlapping functions of NCWD, FMWA departments of Women Affairs and Research, Planning and Statistics and is compounded by the undercurrent of rivalry between NCWD and FMWA. Confusion and wastage ensue when agencies claim territorial rights over programmes and resources yet pass the buck of responsibility for unwanted duties or lapses. In the course of data collection it was difficult to demarcate between the three organs as to which was responsible for the documentation and dissemination of FMWA activities and publications. For instance, in

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<sup>245</sup> Presented to the House of Representatives since 2002. See Chapter Six, p.244.

the publication and circulation of reports and documents (including the NPW) Women affairs seemed to have taken over a role that should have been left for NCWD according to its terms of reference (see page 275). FMWA has made attempts to depart from the spirit of territoriality through the establishment of functional inter-ministry linkages whereby it delegates its mandate to gender desks in line ministries. However, policy/programme implementation is dependent on the degree of receptivity to gender policy in ministries outside FMWA. Thus, if the minister/permanent secretary/bureaucrat does not share in the vision of the NPW mere lip-service may be paid to the execution of projects and funds could be held up or allocated elsewhere.

Olowu et al (1997) conducted a survey showing that despite the decentralisation of state institutions they remain unresponsive to the public as a result of considerable social and spatial gaps between urban-based civil service structures and the rural populace. Consequently, functional linkages are required between FMWA and its constituent parts at departmental, state and local levels, on the one hand, and between FMWA and women's indigenous organisations, and the private sector on the other. The coordination of conflicting objectives is also a major challenge for FMWA at the state level, particularly with states where traditional and religious attachments are strong. For example, Aisha Umar Lawal, Sokoto State Commissioner for Women Affairs, made it clear that certain provisions and values of the NPW, such as gender equality in inheritance matters, are at variance with Sharia law. All State Ministries for Women Affairs received ten copies of the policy document from FMWA. They were required to distribute them among state executives, the judiciary and the legislature, and write to the request for the formal adoption of the NPW. But the Sokoto SMWA discarded the policy in favour of home-grown WID projects aimed at improving women and children's access to education, health and poverty alleviation. According to Lawal Sokoto SMWA felt it was doing pretty well without the NPW.

The situation is similar in Adamawa State where, although Sharia Law is not the legal system, due to traditional orientation the SMWA focuses on welfare and income generation projects. As noted earlier, while such projects correspond to the FMWA-NPW focus on immediate practical planning needs, they jettison strategic elements aimed at transforming the structure of gender relations. Nevertheless, Adamawa State SMWA circulated copies of the NPW among the three arms of government. However, nationwide it appears the NPW was not widely circulated among the various arms of government at Federal or State level. Certain states, particularly in the South-South and South East geopolitical zones, had greater success in instigating piecemeal legislative

reform as a result of the activities and advocacy of women's non-governmental organisations (see page 284 and footnote 236).

At the local level women development units have little or no funds above recurrent expenditure on wages to invest in development projects. The lion's share of local projects is instigated when FMWA targets communities for interventions which are usually conducted in collaboration with local personnel. Although some projects are the result of situation analyses of community needs, this top-down approach raises the question of the sustainability of development in the absence of sufficient budgets and resources to foster independent gender-aware planning and action at the local level. This calls for an evaluation of the place gender occupies in government budgeting procedures.

### ***7.3.3 The National Budget and Gender Responsive Budgeting***

As a key development tool employed for socioeconomic policy implementation the government budget is central to the analysis of gendered impacts and the mainstreaming of gender policies. Indeed, Igbuzor (2005) argues that the budget is the most important instrument of governance. The problems enumerated above regarding policy failure and poor coordination in Nigeria are exemplified in the management of public finance, particularly in annual budget making, implementation and review processes. Olajide (2005:1) sums up the situation:

A great gulf had always existed between the country's budgetary plan and its implementation since independence. There had never been any correlation between what is on paper and what is on ground. For instance, the country's infrastructural facilities of which has been a major target of the budgets have remained in a state of comatose, especially electricity. Also, despite many developmental programmes and pro-poor projects, poverty has continued to gallop, because the budgets were never executed with sincerity of hearts and pure hands.

The distortional factors discussed above and the exploitation of constitutional loopholes account for delays in the presentation and approval of budgets by the executive and legislature respectively. This induces massive extra-budgetary expenditure and end-of-year budget deficits (Central Bank Occasional Paper, 2004).<sup>246</sup> Consequently, "development has never been seriously addressed in a holistic and enduring manner...different components of development have been addressed

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<sup>246</sup> Loopholes include the unlimited power of amendment, auditing and monitoring of the executive budget by the legislative and an unlimited time-frame for budget approval.

independent of others, such that projects, which are not complementary or even counter productive are executed simultaneously” (Olajide, 2005:1 citing Diyo, 2005).<sup>247</sup>

An appraisal and budgetary analysis of national education policy (1995-2002) provides an example of how the budgets of military and civilian administrations have had differential impacts on males and females to the disadvantage of the latter (Akanbi et al 2005). Government budgets ignore gender disparities in access to socioeconomic benefits and resources and disregard women and girls’ unpaid work. Although they claim to be gender neutral they are gender blind. Moreover, state agencies charged with the responsibility for promoting women’s interests receive disproportionately low allocations. Since its upgrade from a Commission in January 1995, FMWA has been grossly under-funded receiving only 0.02% of a annual national budgets for overheads and operations.<sup>248</sup> Following advocacy visits by the Minister and female members of the National Assembly, the budgetary allocation increased to about 0.08% in 2004.

Budgetary constraints have made FMWA heavily reliant on donor funding as a major proportion of programmes and projects are funded by UN development agencies and other international partners. A limited proportion of the funds go towards supporting the efforts of NGOs who, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, also look to the Ministry for sponsorship. The situation is replicated at State level in the various State Ministries of Women Affairs.<sup>249</sup> Budgetary restrictions have forced the Ministry to delegate responsibility by developing working partnerships with other line ministries, state agencies and directly with local women’s groups or indirectly through the NCWS.<sup>250</sup> After the Federal Executive Council approval of the NPW, FMWA applied for extra-budgetary allocations for the sectoral implementation of women-focused programmes. The funds were placed under the direct authorisation of parent ministries to be monitored by gender departments/units. Some ministries (i.e.) agriculture, education and health received allocations and instituted programmes for women (and girls).<sup>251</sup> But there is no system in place requiring a accountability to FMWA for how allocations are expended.

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<sup>247</sup> Prof. Sheidu Aminu Diyo was guest speaker at the annual lecture of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria.

<sup>248</sup> Source: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs.

<sup>249</sup> The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja has a Women Affairs Department

<sup>250</sup> The NCWS is statutorily recognised as the umbrella representative of women’s interests and organisations in Nigeria

<sup>251</sup> The process is still in its experimental phase and there was no formal documentation at the time of writing.

The high demand on limited public funds, the nature of the budgetary process and the low prioritisation of women's interests and needs compelled a structured approach to the gender-based redistribution of resources. Between 2001 and 2004 UNIFEM supported gender budget initiatives<sup>252</sup> in Nigeria (and 14 other countries) in collaboration with the National Centre for Economic Management and Administration, the Centre for Development and Democracy and the National Planning Commission. The programme resulted in: 1) the incorporation of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) principles into the NACEMA Curriculum 2) training on GRB for planning and budgeting officers from executive and legislative arms of government 3) capacity building with a sectoral focus on health through the training of 40 (HIV/AIDS) officers in GRB. 4) the establishment of a Gender Budget Network of stakeholders in October 2004 under UNIFEM and CDD leadership to provide training in GRB, advocacy and lobbying skills and thereby ensure the prioritisation of gender in resource allocation 5) A proposal to incorporate GRB into the NEEDS and SEEDS<sup>253</sup> frameworks through the NPC<sup>254</sup> and, 6) the production of a document titled: "The Budget Process in Nigeria and a Gender Analysis of the National Budget."

FMWA submitted a proposal that was accepted in principle by the Ministry of Finance for introducing gender-sensitive indicators and gender disaggregated data into the 2006 budget.<sup>255</sup> With these initiatives underway what remains is for gender-responsive budgeting to be institutionalised through legislative and enforcement measures to make it standard practice throughout the public administration system. Insufficient legislation and enforcement thwart the implementation of the NPW. We turn to this issue in the next section.

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<sup>252</sup> GBIs, gender-sensitive or gender responsive budgets (GSB/GRBs) are strategies and tools for budgetary analysis with a view to promoting gender equity/equality. They were pioneered in Australia in 1984 and emphasise the reprioritisation and reorientation of policy planning and resource allocation (Igbuzor, 2005).

<sup>253</sup> State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy.

<sup>254</sup> Source: UNIFEM Gender Responsive Budgets: Program Results 2001-2004. UNDP has also called for proposals on tools and methodologies for the integration of gender into LEEDS at local government levels.

<sup>255</sup> The current Minister and Minister of State for Finance are women – Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Esther Nenadi Usman



## 7.4 Regulatory Frameworks for Policy Enforcement

### 7.4.1 *Legislative Backing for the NPW: The Constitution and CEDAW*

Institutional capability is determined in part by the body of formal or codified laws that shape organisational and individual behaviour (Pradhan, 1997). In democratic countries where the rule of law holds sway citizens can hold authorities and each other accountable according to legally stipulated standards. The general contention of semi-structured interview participants and some survey participants was that despite the laudability of its goals and objectives the NPW is a toothless bulldog with moral as opposed to legal authority. Policy provisions as guidelines for government action are not judiciable and women cannot hold government accountable in a court of law for non-implementation. Policies are statements of intention regarding government's responsibility towards citizens. While they can be used as a yardstick to measure performance, they possess no inherent powers to ensure compliance with policy provisions. Two institutional mechanisms have been proposed to compel governments to fulfil policy obligations towards women: 1) The entrenchment of gender in the Constitution and 2) The domestication of CEDAW (*Gender Views*, Vol.6 no.1, 2002).

Whereas the military era minimised women's scope for demanding greater participation the return to democracy in May 1999 stimulated agitation for increasing women's space. Nevertheless, the 1999 Constitution, like previous constitutions, assumes an equal start-off point and level playing field for men and women, and therefore does not sufficiently address gender discrimination and imbalances. The current situation that privileges men through he/man language and discriminatory nationality rights, and obstructs temporary special measures for women means their gender-specific interests and needs are not clearly enshrined therein.<sup>256</sup> Thus the constitutional basis for the institutionalisation of gender in Nigeria is defective. The Constitution fails to serve as a reliable entry point for making legally compelling demands for women's equitable share in the political and economic system.

The enshrinement of gender character in the Constitution is a first step towards the legal grounding of the NPW/NGP to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender in the same way the Federal Character principle is used to direct state policy towards the institutionalisation of ethnic, cultural and religious rights and interests. Figure 7.3 uses a tree to depict the array of laws, codes, decrees and regulations springing from the constitution as laid down by Nigerian people. Since Section 1 the 1999 Constitution

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<sup>256</sup> See Chapter Three for details on constitutional instigators of gender differentiated citizenship

accords it supremacy over all other laws and decrees the NPW requires constitutional grounding to navigate the discrepancies of the triple legal system. The content of gender character has been spelled out in position documents presented to the 1995 and 1999 constitutional review committees (see for example *Gender Views*, vol. 6 no. 1, p.20). South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana and Uganda are examples of African countries where this has been achieved.

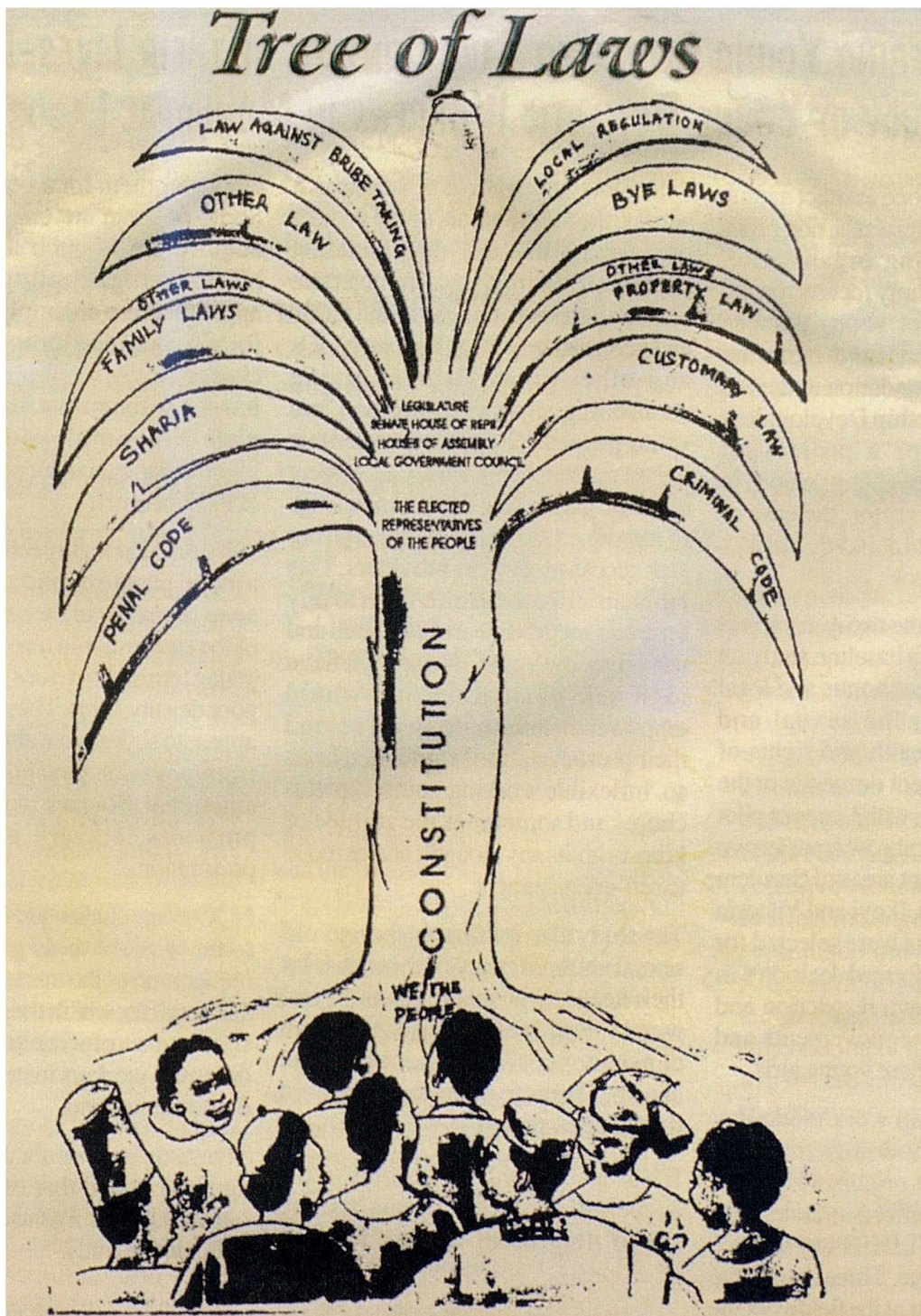
Yet, there remains an important constitutional loophole that must be sealed to give legal teeth to the NPW. Section 12 (1) is an ouster clause specifying that,

No treaty between the Federation and any other country shall have the force of law except to the extent to which any such treaty has been enacted into law by the national Assembly.

This clause has been identified as a major stumbling block to the implementation of CEDAW since it was ratified by Nigeria in 1985. CEDAW, dubbed the international bill of rights for women, lays down extensive gender-specific anti-discrimination provisions. The NPW derives its anti-discrimination and gender equity/equality agenda from the BLP and CEDAW. The latter has the status of a legally binding treaty and forms part of the body of international law; its domestication is envisioned in Item 18 (9) of the NPW stipulating the need for legal reform. Without domestication through the due process of National Assembly legislative enactment both CEDAW and other ratified international conventions, such as the African Charter and its protocols, “only have persuasive effect in Nigerian courts – they are not laws” (NGOs CEDAW Report for Nigeria, 1998:28). As a corollary, the NPW only has persuasive effect on the decisions and actions of federal, state and local governments, and on attempts to engineer social change.

Fig. 7.3

## Tree of Laws with Constitutional Grounding<sup>257</sup>



Source: *Gender Views*. Vol.6 No. 1, 2002

<sup>257</sup> Contrary to this portrayal, the "people" who drafted the Constitution and laws largely excluded women

FMWA recognises how crucial CEDAW is for enhancing institutional capability to actualise the NPW agenda. In the 2004 Response Report it states:

Once domesticated the provisions of CEDAW will become justiciable in municipal courts and any customary, religious or civil law which runs into conflict with any provision of the Convention will be declared null and void to the extent of the inconsistency (p.7).

Domestication would also criminalise gender violence and outlaw gender-biased socio-political and organisational processes and practices. Therefore, FMWA and women activist groups have been pushing for the domestication of CEDAW. FMWA packaged a report, which was presented to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in April 2004. The outcome of that report was the approval by the FEC to domesticate CEDAW and the President requested it should be made an Executive Bill. Subsequently, in October 2004, the Federal Government ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW and in January 2005, it also ratified the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. In July 2005 the Federal Ministry of Justice forwarded the requested Bill to FEC on behalf of FMWA. After executive approval it will be passed for adoption by the legislature. If the case of the anti-violence Bill is anything to go by, having been submitted before the Lower House since 2002 without passage, the process of domesticating CEDAW may take years. Being an Executive Bill may accelerate its approval subject to the state of relations between the Executive and the Legislature. The latter has been known to stall the approval of Bills in political vendetta against the executive (as in the budgetary process).

The gender biases of individual legislators represent another key factor that may hold up the domestication process. It took over three years to domesticate the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the form of the Child Rights Act, 2003, largely due to the opposition of legislators who objected to its provisions on ideological (i.e. cultural and religious) grounds. This raises the question of the gender composition of national and state legislatures. At the end of the 1999 and 2003 elections respectively, women accounted for 1.2% and 2.3% of the 990 members of state legislatures, and 1.7% and 3% of parliamentarians nationwide. In the National Assembly women constituted 3.3% and 5.8% of the upper and lower houses in 1999 and 2003 respectively (Lawal, 2004). Table 7.2 and Figs. 7.4 and 7.5 contain a breakdown of the gender composition of state and national legislatures in 1999 and 2003. The weighting of gendered participation in all legislatures in favour of males carries the potential of privileging men's interests and sidelining those of women whose numbers are too insignificant to form a critical mass for change. The passage of

CEDAW into law requires men to oversee the dismantling of the entire system of male privilege. In anticipation of this FMWA and several NGOs began conducting CEDAW dialogues and awareness workshops for legislators and policy-makers to educate them on the benefits that will accrue to all members of society from the passage of the Bill.<sup>258</sup>

The Bill was packaged to stipulate simultaneous adoption by State Governments and so it automatically becomes national law. The hierarchy of authority is guaranteed in Section Four of the Constitution that voids state laws that are inconsistent with those enacted by the National Assembly, and subjects both legislatures to court jurisdiction of which the Supreme Court is the highest authority. This is crucial in view of the triple legal system and potential resistances from states on the basis of local customs and religion. Furthermore, since 2001 FMWA initiated a process of codifying customary laws and practices so as to “remove contradictions between the three legal systems and pave way for easy resolution of conflict of laws on matters pertaining to non-discrimination and equality” (Response Report, 2004). Bodies involved in the codification process include the National Human Rights Commission, The Nigerian Law Reform Commission, Federal Ministry of Justice, NGOs (such as the Women, Law and Development Centre) and FMWA.

Upon the domestication of CEDAW and the codification of customary laws there must be sufficient institutional capability to enforce new legislation, and by implication NPW provisions.

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<sup>258</sup> FIDA and other groups were able to secure the passage of anti-discrimination laws in an all-male state legislature using advocacy and awareness techniques among legislators' wives

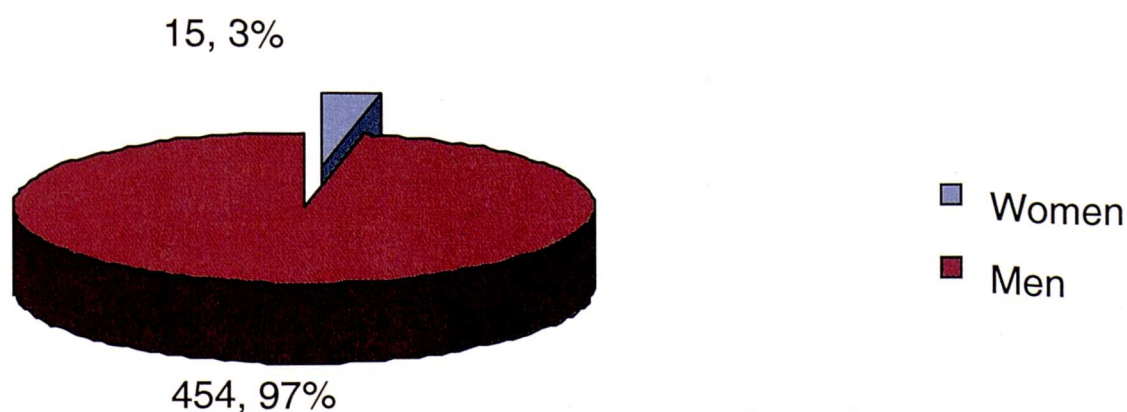
Table 7.2

### Gender Composition of State and Federal Legislatures, 1999/2003

	No. of Seats		No. of Women 1999	No. of Men 1999	No. of Women 2003	No. of Men 2003
<b>National Assembly</b>	Senate	109	3 (2.8%)	106 (97.2%)	3 (2.8%)	106 (97.2%)
	House of Rep.	360	12 (3.3%)	348 (96.7%)	21 (5.8%)	339 (94.2%)
<b>State Houses of Assembly</b>	990		12 (1.2%)	978 (98.8%)	23 (2.3%)	967 (97.7%)
<b>Total no. of Parliamentarians Nationwide</b>	1549		27 (1.7%)	1432 (98.3%)	47 (3.0%)	1412 (97%)

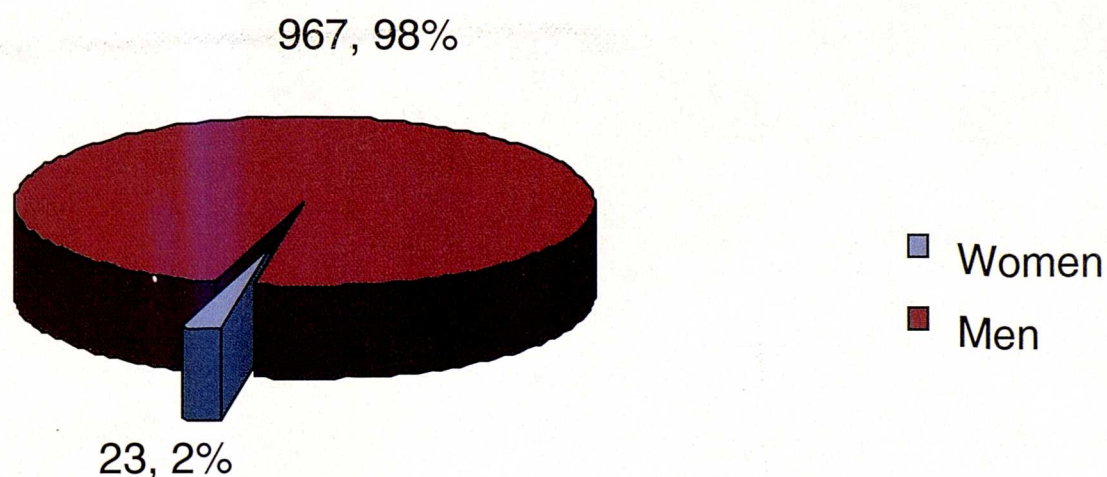
Source: Lawal (2004) culled from *Women in Parliament* (2004)

Fig. 7.4: Gender Composition of the National Assembly (2003)



Source: Lawal, 2004

Fig. 7.5: Gender Composition of State Legislatures (2003)



Source: Lawal, 2004

#### 7.4.2 *The Rule of Law and Enforcement Capability in Nigeria*

The rule of law is a valid barometer for gauging state capacity and legitimacy. It is not an ingrained feature of the Nigerian State. The hallmarks of the rule of law – respect for the law, equality before the law, protection of the rights of the individual, supremacy of the law and its *impartial* enforcement – have not been upheld but rather consistently jettisoned by military and civilian governments (Ejiofor, 2005). The following have typically been the hallmarks of the Nigerian legal and judicial system:

1. Suspension of the Constitution under the military and rule by ad-hoc decrees
2. Disregard of court orders by governments
3. ‘Sacred cow’ Syndrome: the treatment of well-connected and/or wealthy individuals as entities above the law
4. Human rights violations through torture, unlawful detentions, the suppression of voices of dissent (the media, civil society organisations, critics) by government and law enforcement agents – notably the police

5. Refusal to honour ratified international treaties such as CEDAW
6. Supremacy of sectarian political and economic interests over the principle of due legal process
7. A compromised judiciary and police force where judges and the entire police hierarchy have been found to be corrupt and protect the interests of political benefactors who appoint them
8. A poorly trained, underpaid and ill-equipped police force. It is not uncommon in Nigeria to find police officers who are armed robbers, and a number have been dismissed and prosecuted since 1999
9. Long delays in the administration of justice causing prison overcrowd and case backlogs, and
10. Low capacity to gain access to legal protection and services by ordinary citizens, particularly the poor, children, rural dwellers and women.

Consequently, Nigeria has a weak judicial system incapable of serving as an institution of restraint against corruption, the abuse of power and societal delinquency. The country has acquired an international reputation as one where law and order are almost non-existent. Public confidence in the judicial system is low and there is widespread apathy about seeking legal redress even among those who could afford it. As Ejiofor (2005:1) explains, “a victory in court has not been effectively enforceable against organs like the police, government, and even some “powerful” individuals as such actions would only spell more tales of woes for the complainants.” This has serious implications for the conduct of public affairs and business. In the absence of the rule of law, laws and policies amount to empty rhetoric or even instruments of terror. Ribadu (2004:4), Head of EFCC asserts that, “It is not so much the lack of laws or deficiencies in them but the total neglect to enforce that have [sic] been our bane as a country.”

The gender dimensions of the lack of law enforcement are depicted in the BAOBAB Synthesis Report on “Women’s Access to Justice and Personal Security in Nigeria.” It enumerates issue-areas where the state and its agents fail to safeguard women’s rights and protect their interests. Two key issues are the gender composition of courts and the conduct of judges. Female judges do not feature at all in customary and Sharia courts where the majority of women go.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, the BAOBAB report (p.17) claims that, “in relation to the treatment of women in court, it is a truism that

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<sup>259</sup> Most judiciaries all over the Federation are male, except for in Lagos State,.



judges' attitudes, biases and backgrounds affect the type of judgement received." Many do not give equal regard to the testimony of women and men. Women's testimony is often "devalued or their claims discounted."

The means of ensuring women's right of access and equal participation in all spheres of public life – such as formal schooling, employment, political appointments and electoral processes – are underdeveloped and not rooted in indigenous culture. Therefore, the climate of prejudice and negative treatment of women is likely to obstruct the enforcement of laws and policies that contradict embedded ideologies and threaten the powerful and privileged. The solution may lie in popular participation and competitive pressures in public sector management.

## **7.5 Popular Participation and Competitive Pressures in Public Policy Processes**

Pradhan (1997) argues that through the introduction of voice and partnerships and market mechanisms (such as privatisation, commercialisation and outward contracting) states may reduce costs, undercut corrupt bureaucracies and thereby improve institutional capability to deliver services. To a limited extent these measures have been applied in Nigeria with variable results. Although they have facilitated closer interaction between government institutions and women's organisations giving women more voice and visibility in public life, the nature of partnership relationships remains hierarchical and not entirely participatory.

### ***7.5.1 Building Strategic Partnerships: Participation or Cooption?***

The formation of strategic partnerships between agencies/individuals responsible for policy/project implementation is currently considered best practice for ensuring success. Governments and organisations are keen to be seen as progressive in adopting a participatory approach to involve stakeholders who affect or are affected by decision-making in the execution of plans (Nelson and Wright, 1995). FMWA in consonance with NEEDS has developed a network of partnerships with international agencies, state institutions, women's organisations, civil society human rights/faith-based groups and private sector professional and business associations. Both FMWA and NEEDS have made it clear that development partnerships are aimed at increasing project efficiency and effectiveness as well as empowering target beneficiaries.

Of interest, therefore, is the nature of relations between decision-makers/resource controllers and target beneficiaries – in this case: women. Do they

represent power shifts from organisations/powerful individuals onto beneficiaries such that the policy/development process leads to women being empowered to take control and determine the direction and pace of change? Do they facilitate change in the structure of gender relations? In other words, are they transformative? (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Of interest too is the kind of women involved, and the level at which they participate.<sup>260</sup>

Women's suffering has been the rallying point for their mobilising at community, occupational, and regional levels. The commonality and severity of suffering has induced willingness to collaborate for social change across ethnic, religious and class divides to varying extents. However, while rural and urban women from all walks of life are being mobilised into collective action and participation, the change process is clearly driven by educated elite women. It is they, as leaders of NGOs, state functionaries and well-placed individuals, who are usually consulted – particularly at federal and state levels by FMWA and development agencies. Elite women and organisations use consultative processes in the form of seminars, workshops and meetings to gain input from target beneficiaries and re-present them to decision-makers such that there tends to be a hierarchy of representation and participation.

In order to enhance direct representation of local communities in its activities FMWA conducts projects at local government level on the basis of needs assessments and situation analyses. Surveys are normally conducted by bureaucrats and/or technical/academic consultants using quantitative social science methods.<sup>261</sup> At the national level FMWA liaises with organisations to improve the nature and quality of service delivery to women such as in the establishment of gender focal points in police stations to facilitate fair hearing/reporting of cases, and encouraging private sector employees to adopt gender-fair labour practices. FMWA also contracts out projects to NGOs for their expertise and proximity to target beneficiaries.

The level and nature of relations between development partners vary according to which group is on the giving or receiving end. This is evident from responses to Q.16

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<sup>260</sup> Such questions are investigated by the gendered archaeology of organisations model proposed by Goetz (1997) and, as discussed in Chapter Two, they are central issues in the GAD framework.

<sup>261</sup> The use of qualitative methods such as participatory action research and participatory rural appraisal is not well established. This is likely to be because results from quantitative surveys yield the sort of significantly representative data policy makers find convincing and are therefore, more suitable for policy advocacy. The 1999 Baseline Survey of Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Girls is an example of the privileging of such data collection processes.

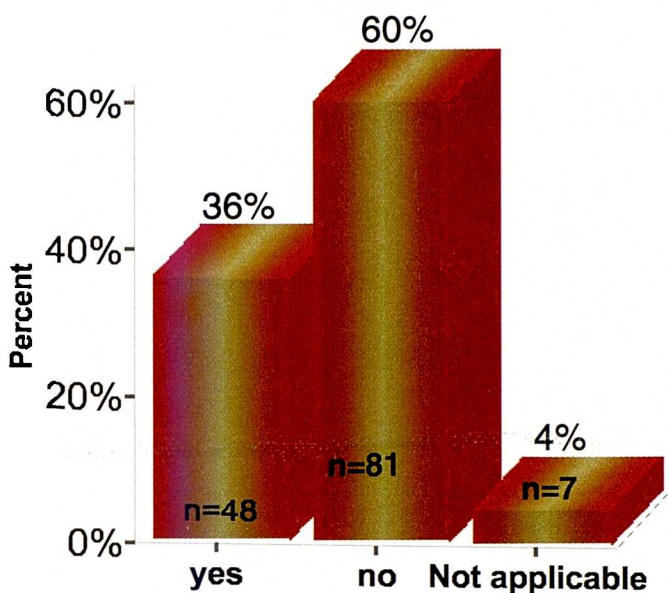
of the survey. NGO leaders were asked to indicate whether they were satisfied with relations between them and various partners. Figure 7.6 (7.6.1 through 7.6.6) displays the results. While only 36% and 43% expressed satisfaction over partnerships with government bodies and international agencies respectively, 76% were satisfied with their level of partnership with target beneficiaries. Fifty-nine percent and 66% were satisfied over partnerships with local communities and grassroots women respectively. This is significant because a large number of NGOs surveyed were urban-based. Responses reflect efforts by NGOs to target grassroots women as beneficiaries.<sup>262</sup> However, responses to Q.17b shed light on the different expectations of partnership relations. As Fig. 7.7 indicates whereas only 7% of NGO leaders felt the need to have more beneficiary involvement in agenda setting, 15% desired to create more awareness for greater impact on beneficiaries. In relation to government and international donors, 29% and 39% respectively said they needed more funding. Conversely, none wanted more government involvement in agenda setting and only 7% wanted it from international donors. Twenty-six percent desired greater government support and recognition.

The data points to a perceived hierarchical scale of importance and power along which partners are arranged from international to local level such that they work within a top-down framework. This gives rise to a tension between organisations wanting to relinquish as little of their autonomy as possible to benefactors while they resist power sharing (power shifts) with beneficiaries. In this context understandings and experiences of partnership and participation are somewhat conflicting and ambiguous. This does not necessarily imply that projects/programmes do not have important benefits for grassroots women who are often quite happy to receive help from external 'experts'. Interactions during project cycles carry the potential of awareness raising, conscientisation and advancement on both sides of the facilitator/end-user divide. If services delivered improve women's access to opportunities and their quality of life, the issue of participation or cooption may be a moot and rhetorical issue. Yet the sustainability of projects conceptualised and executed in this context remains an open question.

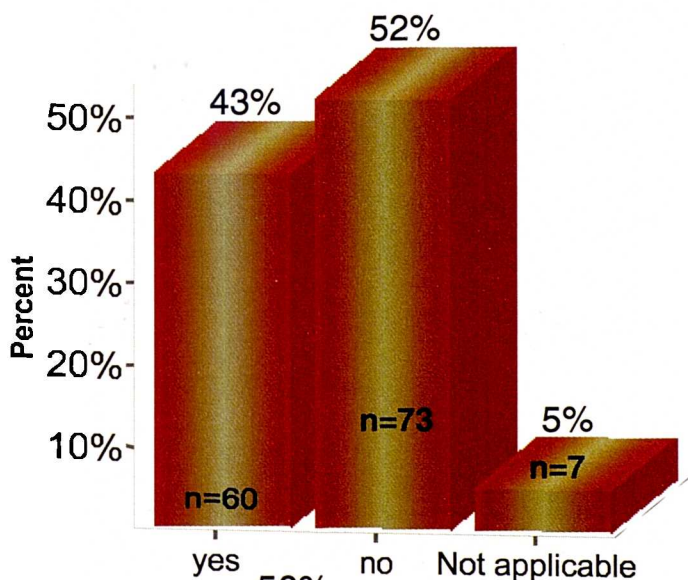
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<sup>262</sup> See Chapters Four and Six for details on beneficiaries targeted by women's organisations

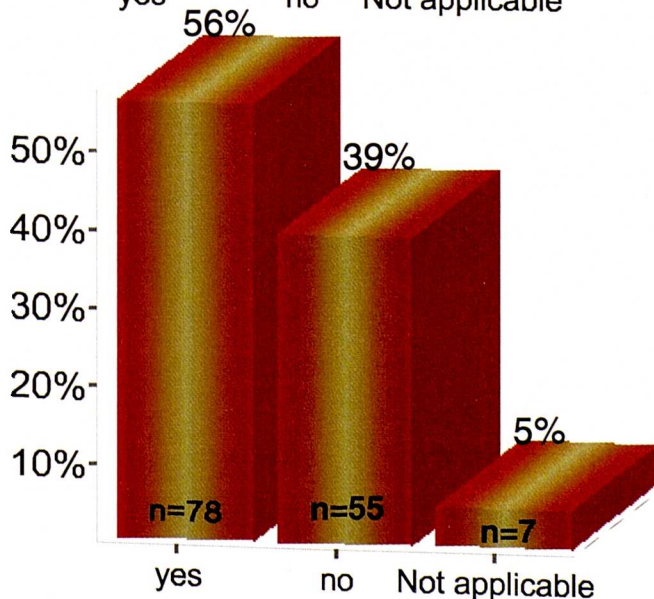
**Fig. 7.6: NGO Members' Satisfaction with Partnership Relationships**



**Fig. 7.6.1: Is your partnership relationship with Government adequate?**



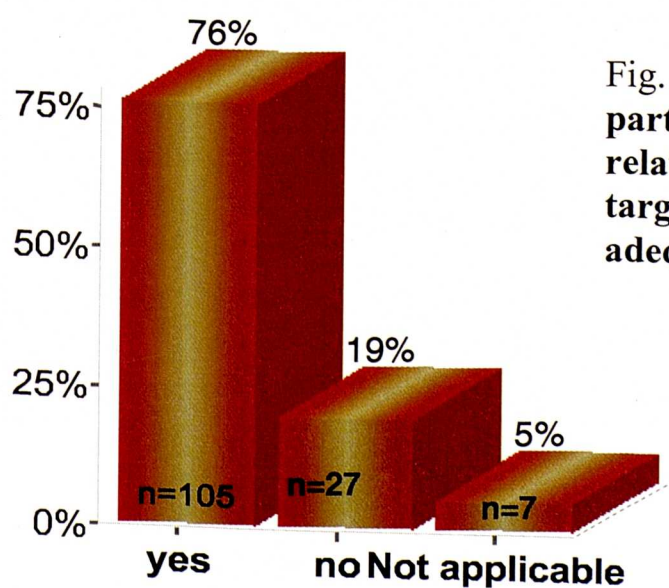
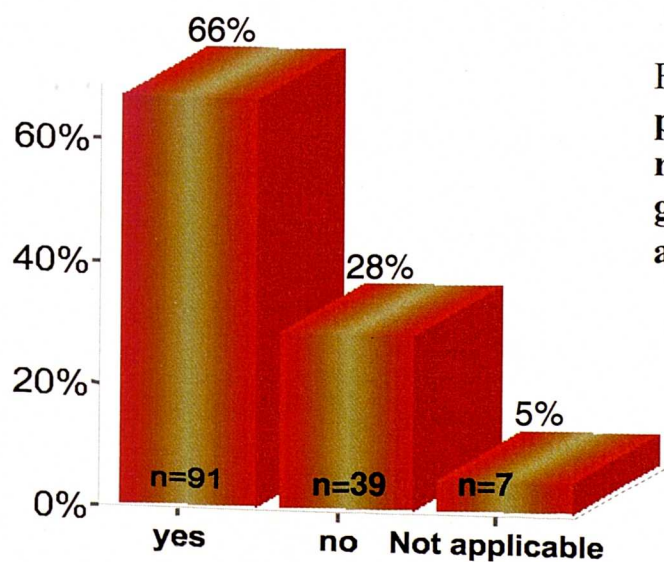
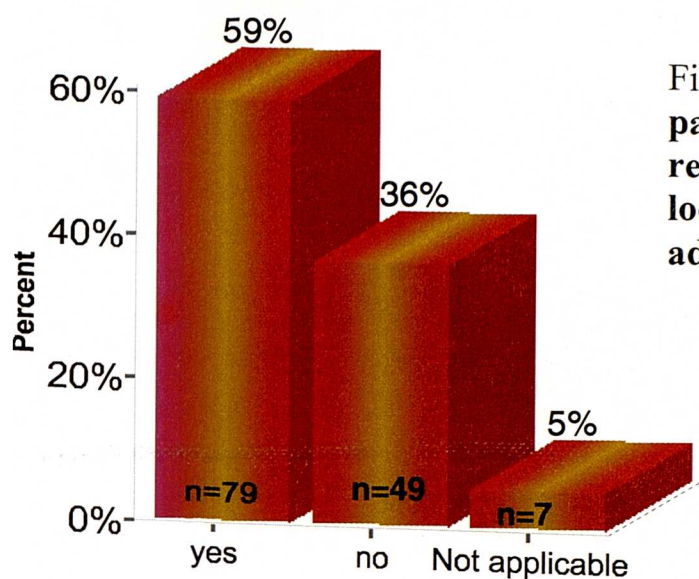
**Fig. 7.6.2: Is your partnership relationship with international agencies adequate?**



**Fig. 7.6.3: Is your partnership relationship with other NGOs adequate?**

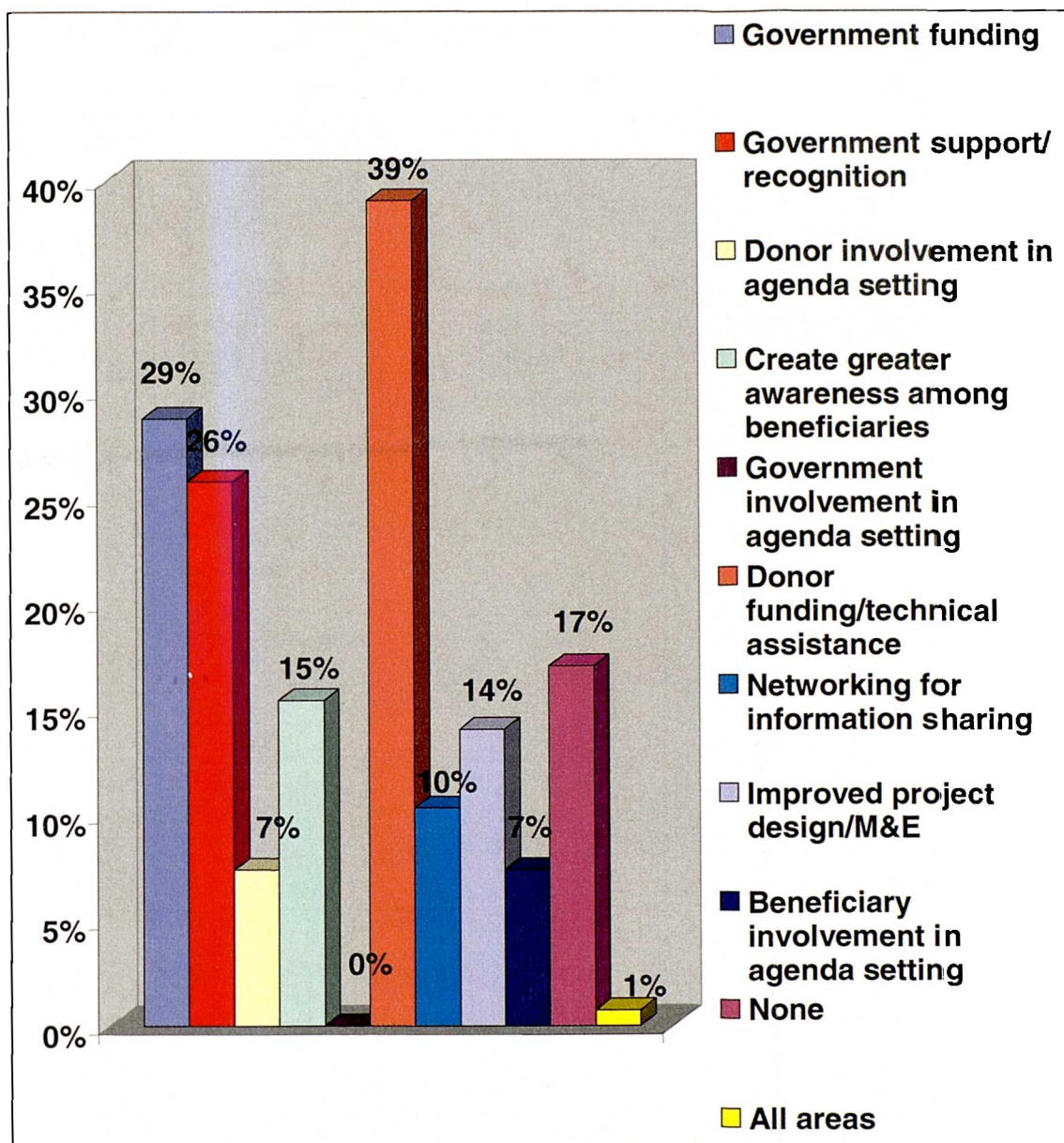
Source: SPSS Results

Fig. 7.6 (continued)



Source: SPSS Results

**Fig. 7.7: Partnerships – Areas Requiring Improvement**



Source: SPSS Results

Furthermore, sustainable policy implementation may be jeopardised through contracting service delivery to international agencies as it signals over-dependence on donor funding by governments and contributes to a fragmented decision-making process arising from a multiplicity of uncoordinated, inconsistent and unsustainable projects. In this way it is common for public investment programmes to become “passive repositories of donor-driven projects” (Pradhan, 1997:25). As noted previously, FMWA and major women’s organisations rely heavily of international donor funding, and there is fierce competition to join the queue of donor-assisted NGOs. In fact, 39% of NGO leaders wanted more funding and technical assistance from international partners as opposed to 29% who said they wanted the same from government. This has undermined the credibility of donor-funded programmes and gender and development activists and development workers have been accused of attempting to impose a foreign agenda. An institutionalised mechanism for coordination, costing, monitoring and evaluation is required to enhance the capacity for effective policy implementation.

### ***7.5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation: Oversight Capability of the Private Sector and Civil Society***

In order to strengthen state capacity for effective policymaking and create a “transparent, competitive and results-oriented process” Pradhan (1997:2) suggests the need to strengthen private sector and civil society capability to provide oversight to governments and vice versa. In addition to building partnerships this involves the following mechanisms:

1. The publication of medium-term costs of policies for debate and consultation.
2. The mid-stream evaluation of all policies to ensure targets are kept in focus.
3. The liberalisation, commercialisation and privatisation of service delivery through contracting/selling out to the private and voluntary sectors to free up public expenditure and accord the public a higher stake in public services. Nigeria’s experience with privatisation/commercialisation under the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) (secretariat of the National Council on Privatisation) has not yielded the desired results in terms of improved service delivery. The process has been bedevilled by the distortional factors discussed earlier. There has been greater transparency and success in the voluntary sector. However, there is still need for quality control mechanisms

to protect consumer rights and ensure the high standards of services delivered by public, private and voluntary sectors. The Public Complaints Commission and Consumer Protection Council have not been able to fulfil this function.<sup>263</sup> State failure to deliver services to women is a major impetus for women's organising and third party interventions. However, whereas the NPW subscribes to the principle of liberalisation women have been on the receiving end of ad-hoc micro-level projects rather than major players in the liberalisation drive. A gender desegregation of successfully concluded privatisation ventures is likely to show minimal female participation in corporate business.

4. The delegation of a coordinating and monitoring and evaluation function to an independent body of skilled professionals to work with public-private deliberation councils and facilitate strategic prioritisation of policies within and across sectors. The government is attempting to introduce such measures under NEEDS (see Section 7.6 below).

It is clear from the foregoing that institutions for implementing the NPW are in place across the broad spectrum of socioeconomic and political structures and processes at various levels. Nevertheless, there are a myriad of loopholes calling for major institutional reform to make implementation feasible. The next section examines the most recent attempt at reform introduced by the Obasanjo government and its implications for the mainstreaming of gender.

## **7.6 Government NEEDS Institutional Reforms**

In March 2004 the federal government put forward a draft National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to reverse decay and decline in the economy, combat poverty and restore state legitimacy. The document acknowledged that the rate of progress arising from government initiatives since 1999 lags behind projected development targets particularly in light of the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, major reforms are needed in both public and private sectors. NEEDS has been endorsed by top-level functionaries and organisations in the public and private sector and civil society, and by leading governments and development/financial agencies in the international community, including the World Bank and the

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<sup>263</sup> See page 283 for information about the PCC



IMF. It is essential to inquire how NEEDS aims to strengthen institutional capability to implement state policies and whether it incorporates gender issues.

### ***7.6.1 The NEEDS Project – Key Features***

NEEDS purports to be “Nigeria’s home-grown poverty reduction strategy,” different from all previous economic reforms initiated by governments and “rooted on the lessons of experience of past failed plans.”<sup>264</sup> It claims uniqueness in terms of process, scope and coordination and content.

1. The Drafting Process: NEEDS builds on a previous two-year process that went into drafting the interim poverty reduction strategy (I-PRSP). The document was drafted by a 35-member committee comprising Ministers, and representatives from government ministries/parastatals/agencies, the private sector and civil society organisations. It received the endorsement of leading political actors including governors and the National Assembly. The federal government intends to circulate the policy widely among stakeholders to obtain their views and “achieve buy-in” (p.117) at all levels. As a result the policy claims to be widely consultative and participatory.
2. Scope and Coordination: NEEDS is a nationally coordinated framework to be incorporated at state and local government levels in the form of State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS). It is a sector-based framework as opposed to the project-based approach of previous development plans which emphasised large-scale project portfolios. In order to reflect federalist planning it seeks collaboration with States in selected sectors – agriculture, industry (SMEs), infrastructural development, public finance and public sector management, and social service delivery. The aim is to generate synergy and complementarity and achieve targets by setting common priorities in these sectors. In addition sector-wide implementation strategies are to be developed spelling out the roles and responsibilities of the three tiers of government.
3. Policy Content: The NEEDS vision and policy thrust are wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation. It relies on a three-pronged approach to achieve them: Governance and institutional reform,

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<sup>264</sup> NIGERIA: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, March 2004 pp.1 &12

private sector growth and human development. Sweeping reforms are enumerated to overhaul and re-focus:

- a. Public sector management and institutions (including the judicial system, civil service, local government) through right-sizing, professionalisation, and waste reduction etc.
- b. Economic privatisation and liberalisation regulations and procedures
- c. Anti-corruption mechanisms to promote the rule of law and enforcement of contracts
- d. Service delivery.

Public sector growth is to be engineered through enforcing security and the rule of law, infrastructural development, privatisation and liberalisation, trade and regional integration and sectoral strategies all with a view to encouraging foreign and local investment. A social charter for human development is to target health, education, rural development, housing, employment and women and youth development, the provision of safety nets for the vulnerable, and gender/geopolitical balancing. NEEDS is the first national development plan to acknowledge the gender dimension of poverty (the 'gender factor' pp. 21, 99). Under the safety nets component of the human development agenda NEEDS identifies key-at-risk groups for social protection through interventions aimed at preventing vulnerable people from slipping into poverty or abject poverty. Gender is identified as a risk factor in relation to unwanted pregnancies, STDs, job discrimination and HTPs. It addresses women's rights issues promising to identify and review "substantive and procedural laws that affect women" through FMWA and the National Assembly (p.58). As a means to women empowerment and full integration into economic, social and political processes NEEDS lays down the following measures:

- a. Affirmative action of proportionate representation, where feasible
- b. Domestication of CEDAW
- c. Legislation for the abolition of all forms of harmful traditional practices against women
- d. Mainstreaming women's concerns and perspectives in all policies and programmes
- e. Promotion of women's access to microfinance and poverty alleviation strategies to reduce female poverty

- f. Reduction in women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other STDs through sustained advocacy, education and mobilisation
  - g. Expansion of formal and non-formal educational opportunities to female students and women through scholarship/vocational schemes at secondary and tertiary levels and adult literacy programmes.
4. Implementation Framework: The policy document sets out a framework that delineates institutional relationships, specifies multiple coordinating points (the Presidency, Independent Monitoring Committee, the National Planning Commission and the National Council on Development Planning) and calls for the development of functional partnerships to ensure input and oversight from the private sector and civil society. A similar framework will be replicated at state and local levels.

### ***7.6.2 NEEDS Pitfalls***

Three critical pitfalls could be identified concerning the NEEDS project in relation to women, the NPW and the gender mainstreaming agenda. First, NEEDS runs the risk of remaining an elitist and therefore exclusionary project. It is not the only development strategy to have donned the 'participatory process' mantle. The 1997 Vision 2010 action plan received input from 57 nationwide workshops, 53 sub-committee meetings and memoranda from the general public. The nature and level of women's participation in these processes has always been minimal because the majority of committee members are male and elitist. Neither women's groups nor rural-based indigenous groups are directly targeted for consultation.

Second, the 'independent' monitoring committee is not non-bureaucratic; it is required to report directly to the presidency and its membership is selected by government instead of through broad-based consultative processes from the grassroots up. It is therefore prone to undue political interference and economic inducements from powerful groups. The policy document is silent about compliance powers required to guarantee independence of action and enforcement of its M&E mandate.

The third major pitfall of NEEDS is that its sectoral focus fails to move away from the 'add women and stir' approach of previous development projects. Despite the targeting of certain sectors (i.e. education, health and labour) where women could reap immense benefits, the failure to utilise gender disaggregated data and indicators in all targeted sectors means women's concerns and needs are not specifically or comprehensively addressed. For instance, although the policy targets female rural

dwellers for intervention in agriculture it does so only on the basis of natural risk factors (drought, flood etc) and overlooks cultural factors that obstruct female access to land and farm inputs. Women's concerns and needs are not mentioned in relation to housing, solid minerals, power and steel, oil and gas, and information and communications technology. The use of gender statistics is restricted to poverty analysis according to the gender of heads of households (1990-96) and primary school enrolment (1991-2002). Instead of incorporating gender interests into the mainstream it will still be left to women's ministries and groups to lobby for public space and resources.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

Nigeria has instituted a Gender Management System revolving around the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs through which to oversee the implementation of gender policy. Important institutional reform and restructuring of FMWA and public institutions have also been set in motion. As part of its restructuring drive FMWA has begun to build partnerships with other organisations including women's NGOs, earmarked as key policy implementers. However, the nature and level of interaction between government and NGOs remains inadequate owing to the hierarchical, non-participatory structuring of relationships and insufficient resource sharing. Despite government institutional reform envisaged in NEEDS, the reluctance to accord women and gender equal status and political leverage in national development planning persists and is evident in the way the Ministry was/is conceptualised through sporadic nomenclature/terms of reference alterations, the unwieldy nature of its mandate and inadequate funding. The gendered culture and composition of public sector organisations is also skewed in favour of male interests. Moreover, numerous distortional factors in the wider policy environment jeopardise ongoing reform efforts and consequently undermine institutional capability to implement the NPW.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The National Policy on Women of 2000 is the officially approved agenda put forward by the Federal Government for promoting female development in Nigeria. This study set out to ascertain, principally within a gender and development analytical framework, whether the NPW is a feasible policy in two respects: its compatibility with women's self-defined interests and the requisite state institutional capability to implement it. The prioritised concerns and planning needs identified by different categories of women, and the agendas of women's organisations were assessed against the backdrop of NPW provisions. The system of public administration and the policy environment were assessed to determine whether the Nigerian State and its institutions are predisposed and equipped to implement the NPW and engage with the gender dimensions of development. The symbolically representative character of the units of analysis in this study led to the emergence of trends and patterns within and across sample groups and allowed for generalised explanations in response to the research questions set out above. These generalisations derive from a commonality in the experiences and perspectives shared by women in their encounters with family/community structures, the state and public institutions.

In response to the first research question: *Is the National Policy on Women compatible with the needs and interests of Nigerian women as identified by them?* The investigation into how women of various ethnic, religious, geopolitical and class origins articulate and prioritise their interests and planning needs revealed a common emphasis among women, also shared with the NPW, on improving material living conditions in response to state and market failure (Weinberger and Jütting, 2001). Because poverty in its non-tangible and tangible forms is largely a feminised phenomenon, women were concerned about its alleviation. For the majority, across all sample categories, this involved practical steps towards the expansion of economic and educational opportunities, as well as addressing women's health issues. Imam (1997) had hinted at the potential for a commonality of purpose among women's organisations and its importance in promoting cohesiveness in agenda setting towards social change and gender equality. However, while it is clear that Nigerian women want change, there is no evidence of a common objective to secure all-encompassing gender equality as envisioned in the NPW. The complex nature of women's multiple identities and the

means through which they negotiate relationships with patriarchal structures in different social contexts undermines the possibility of a cohesive agenda.

Consequently, in spite of a considerable level of awareness among members of women's groups about the existence of the NPW, there was no sense of shared ownership of the policy among women, or any widespread articulation of commitment to its implementation. Official programmes and activities through the three-tiered ministry of women affairs and those of the myriad of women's organisations did not constitute a concerted, coordinated and coherent agenda towards actualising the NPW. This was the case despite the evidence of overlap between women's self-defined interests and needs and the policy's goals and objectives.

The literature review alluded to the sexual division of labour as a root cause of female oppression leading to their marginalisation and impoverishment. However, from the research findings, women across the board largely endorsed their primary role as reproducers and caregivers but desired assistance to alleviate domestic burdens and, at the same time, an expansion of opportunities for wider socioeconomic and political participation. The majority of Nigerian women in the study prized the roles of wife and mother as avenues for attaining socially ascribed virtue. They considered motherhood to be an investment with short-term emotional costs and social privations, and long-term social and material dividends. As Ogundipe-Leslie (1994 in Delamotte et al., 1997:455, 456) argues they have both idealised and "cornered" motherhood.

Furthermore, in spite of women's awareness of how men's position as 'owner of the house' and 'head of household' consigned them to a subordinate and disadvantaged position in terms of decision-making and resource control, the majority did not envision an end to male patriarchal advantage. The 'head of home' syndrome produced female intra-household subordination was not regarded as an issue that could or should be challenged.<sup>265</sup> Instead, the focus of individual women and women's groups was to have measures put in place to open female access to societal opportunities, resources and benefits. Moreover, within the extant patriarchal construct women did not see themselves as completely powerless. Indeed, the female role was considered to be one of veiled *influence* with the potential of being more crucial and rewarding than the overt male *power* role. Consequently, while women expressed dissatisfaction over difficulties arising from their sex-class positions and triple development roles, and some

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<sup>265</sup> Mickelsen and Mickelsen (1986:97ff) advance a critical interrogation of the conventional interpretation of 'head' (kephalē in Greek) in the Bible to imply rulership and authority. They propose a more historically contextual meaning to be 'source' to signify the sexual differentiation of Adam and Eve in God's creative work.

desired greater male cooperation and involvement in domestic work at the household level, they generally did not want to jettison those roles. However, neither did they want to be penalised for them through denial of access to development resources, opportunities and outcomes. They called for increased male-female collaboration, family support and public facilities to enable them to perform their roles more efficiently and beneficially in the context of a benign patriarchal social fabric. Despite widespread acknowledgement of the existence of pervasive gender discrimination and female disadvantage it would appear that the majority of Nigerian women, regardless of ethnicity, class or creed, did not see or describe themselves as oppressed. However, as Imam (1997) contends women's perception (or as in this case, the lack of it) of oppression does not lead to the conclusion that they are not oppressed because their perceptions and feelings are not necessarily the privileged last word in the analysis of oppression. Moreover, as this research demonstrates, these women's daily life circumstances encapsulated the definition of social oppression cited earlier by Johnson (1995:263) as "a relationship of dominance and subordination between groups or categories of people in which a dominant group benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward a subordinate group."<sup>266</sup> Indeed, the fact that Nigerian women did not feel oppressed is evidence of how far gender oppression had become "so embedded in the everyday workings of social life that it is not easily identified as oppression" (Johnson, 1995; 263) and, therefore, institutionalised as explained by Apter and Garnsey (1994) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1995).

As argued earlier, the realisation of gender equality and equity appears "contingent upon an awareness of structural constraints and opportunities...and the specification of appropriate agendas" (Chapter Two, p.48). However, for many women consciousness of the root causes and structures of oppression was lacking. Where they were acknowledged, fragmentation induced by those structures, and women's identification with them and subsequent complicity in their sustenance, made both individual and collective action to confront them difficult. This is hardly surprising given the sexual division of labour that shapes society's collective consciousness. In addition, the study found that despite a large degree of commonality in the identification of concerns and practical planning needs there were differences premised on religious, class and geographical locations. Fundamental differences in dogma and the politicisation of ethnicity and religion have splintered, though not entirely truncated, women's ability to envision and organise across social divides for strategic change. This

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<sup>266</sup> See page 31, footnote 26

was evident in women's relationship with religion and culture through which they experienced empowerment and oppression simultaneously, and tended to rationalise the latter on the basis of divine injunction. Consistent with the rationale given for adopting a gender and development analytical framework the study highlighted important divergences in opinion among Nigerian women indicating that their interests and needs were not homogenous. In Nigeria, ethnicity and religion are as intrinsic to women's identity as gender. In a country where faith and tradition are prominent, both are critical to their sense of well-being and community belonging.

Elite Moslem women criticised the male-biased interpretation of Islamic tenets, particularly in the application of Shariah Law. Semi-literate Hausa-Fulani Moslem women in purdah were more accepting and justifying of 'divine' ordinances though they produce gender discriminatory outcomes. The tendency to rationalise gender discrimination on the basis of religion was also seen among elite and poor Christian women. However, urban-based Christian elite women are more able than rural or urban poor women to escape harmful traditional practices which they considered to be much more of an issue than gender-biased religion. But whereas they may escape cultural forms of oppression, belief in the divine ordering of gender relations entraps them in alternative modes of religious subjugation. Hence, culture and religion act as mutually reinforcing agents of patriarchal oppression. This confirms findings from studies on religion and gender conducted by Effah (1995) and Dipo-Salami (1992) respectively. On the other hand, both Christian and Moslem women spoke of the liberating and empowering effects of religion in private and social life. Female professionals, politicians and policy-makers took alternatively strategic views. Some called for the reinterpretation of religious texts on the basis of a woman-friendly paradigm already inherent in the texts but glossed over by male-biased readings. Others called for legislative enactment to remove cultural and religious constraints against female access to and control over societal resources, benefits and opportunities, particularly governance and decision-making.

It is of significance that the desire for political participation and representation was not exclusive to elite women. Rural women, notably those in Gora, also displayed a keen sense of feeling excluded from decision-making processes at household and community level, and of awareness and hurt at the detrimental effects of this on female identity, worth and development. This confirms the claim made by Ogundipe-Leslie that research and analysis would show that contrary to attempts to vilify feminism and gender politics by idealizing and glamorizing rural, poor women as true African women



who are content with their lot, they are neither “happy with the status quo” nor do they not desire change (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994 in Delamotte et al., 1997:454, 455). Professional women also spoke of the fear of asserting human rights owing to societal pressure and perceptions of women’s socially acceptable roles and worth. Educational attainment, cross-cultural exposure and geographical location also impact on women’s experiences and worldview. Since the gender interests and needs of Nigerian women are mediated by these other variables, they may not be uniformly met through the implementation of a policy applied wholesale without regard to culture/location-specific peculiarities and preferences. Women in the North West and North East prioritised educational empowerment over economic empowerment while for women in the South-South, South East and South West the reverse was the case. This may be a reflection of general educational and income disparities between the northern and southern parts of the country.

From the complex diversity evident in women’s lived realities it makes sense that many women in the sample had imprecise conceptualisations about gender and its relationship to development. Despite the popularisation of gender terminology there was a general tendency to conflate ‘women’ with ‘gender’ and sex roles with gender roles with the effect that gender roles, especially reproductive ones, were regarded by several as natural, universal and/or divine givens. As Bacchi (1999) argues this has a bearing on approaches to development planning and policy. Women at all levels – rural, urban poor and educated/ business/political elite – commonly employed an instrumentalist argument of the sort advanced by Nwabah (1996) and Mamman (1996) to lobby for or justify the call for services aimed at enhancing women’s human resource potential as a means of promoting growth and development. For the most part their main focus centred on ‘women’s problems,’ with a near absence of considerations about women in relation to men. Few critically and coherently analysed and addressed the concealed role of masculinity in politics, public policy and development which Bryson (1999) declared to be central to charting a course for mainstreaming gender and achieving equality on women’s terms.

The question asked by a Bangladeshi development worker is also, therefore, pertinent in the Nigerian context: “Do... you think we are ready for gender in development when we have not yet addressed the problems of women in development?” (Baden and Goetz, 1998:21). With regard to the Nigerian situation, for the most part, this question must be answered in the negative. Owing to their understandings of the ‘natural’ or ‘divine’ order the majority of Nigerian women displayed either hesitancy or

hostility towards the western feminist project of transforming gender relations through the levelling of gender hierarchies. They appeared to prefer womanist approaches of the sort proffered by Walker (1983), Hudson-Weems (1987, 1998) and Chukukere (1992), and in accordance with Filomena Steady's (1987) extrapolation of humanistic African feminism that prioritises gender complementarity over gender equality. It allows for a conciliatory non-adversarial gender politics proffered by Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) in order to promote gender harmony by persuading men to exercise their leadership roles with respect and sensitivity to women's capabilities and aspirations. The womanist approach represents "the path of least resistance," the one least likely to breed controversy (Ketebu-Nwokefor, Interview: 31/05/03). It informs women's perspectives about development and how to achieve it employing a human capabilities approach to expand women's human resource potential alongside a woman-centred basic needs approach that focuses on practical planning needs to address immediate necessity. Only a minority of professional and academic elite and activists vocally asserted support for gender equality and gender justice through a human rights-based approach to women's development. Even here the liberal feminist argument for gender equality as a product of formal legal equality and equal access to public involvement holds sway, whereby women are required to adopt the male-biased standards and rules that permeate state institutions and corporate behaviour (Bryson, 1999).

In this regard, the commitment of the NPW and Nigerian women – as indicated in their organisational agendas – to the acceleration of women's integration into the full range of economic/political structures and processes links the formulation of women's planning needs to the second research question: *Does the institutional capability exist in Nigeria to implement the NPW?* What is the nature of the system[s] into which women seek incorporation? In brief, this study demonstrated that the male-biased standards and rules that underpin the entire rubric of informal and formal institutions obstruct state capability to implement the NPW. To elaborate, institutional capability is circumscribed in the Nigerian context due to certain inter-locking factors. The first concerns the nature of the state and its concomitant ideological and policy orientations towards women and gender concerns. In a patrimonial state dominated by elite-driven ethno-religious politics the politics of gender has invariably been marginalised by silence, denial, negligence and lip-service. Situated within the context of a patriarchal state women are construed as primary reproducers and secondary producers whose interests and needs are contingent on household/family well-being (Pittin, 1991). This patriarchal worldview has perpetuated fundamental gender inequality through the

symbols, rituals and institutions of religion, tradition and law (Tobin, 1985). The resultant sex-class system spoken of by Firestone (1970) and Kusterer (1990) has ensured a consistently unequal allocation of power and resources between men and women within households and in society, and expresses itself in significantly gender-differentiated citizenship. However, the realities of an urbanising capitalist state have opened up opportunities for women in education and formal sector employment producing a newly empowered elite. Even so, formal and informal institutional arrangements inscribed with gender discriminatory ideology continue to obstruct women's full and equal participation and representation in the country's power structures.

Second, the limited political space in which women mobilise for change hampers broad-based democratic participation. Owing to the male-dominated, clientelist nature of the Nigerian state agitation for female empowerment from the end of the international decade for women in 1985 until 2005 was spearheaded by pet projects of the wives of political 'big men.' There was also an increasing momentum in the formation, activities and visibility of women's indigenous and internationally affiliated NGOs. The NPW emerged as a result of these internal agitations combined with external pressure from an international policy agenda. Thus, to a large extent the birthing process of the NPW in terms of its conceptualisation, drafting and approval was top-down and only partially-democratic involving attempts to make it consultative and participatory at various levels. Stakeholders were invited to provide input to a pre-defined blueprint containing a synopsis of issue-areas affecting women that had been gleaned from consultative meetings and workshops. This situation of 'low-intensity' democracy in part answers certain aspects of the first research question regarding the background that went into defining women's needs and securing broad-based input from Nigerian women in the NPW. It also explains how the lack of stakeholder oversight undermines institutional capability to execute the policy.

The situation is symptomatic of the lack of political will and functional mechanisms to generate informed popular participation in Nigeria's democratisation processes, and the absence of a grassroots-based development strategy (Ihonvbere and Vaughan, 1995; Adedeji (1997)). Most importantly, Nigeria's narrow elite-based and male-controlled representative democracy falls short of the GAD vision of gender inclusive participation and empowerment. According to the 1991 census and the 2002 World Bank gender profile estimate of the female population in 2000, direct proportional representation implies that approximately 49.6% and 50.7% respectively of

all electoral and appointive posts are held by women. From the 2003 election results it is clear that the groundswell of Nigerian women are neither informed nor empowered participants in development planning, able to hold the state accountable for policy implementation.

The third factor concerns the lack of organisational competence with respect to gender policy and planning among public institutions. The equation of 'gender' with 'women' in institutional thinking and conduct means that issues relating to women are treated in isolation and divorced from the context of oppressive gender relations and structures. This has important implications for institutional approaches to gender policy and gender mainstreaming. The concept, introduced in Nigeria by UNIFEM, is widely used yet not fully understood even by staff of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs outside the Women and Development Unit or by staff in other line ministries who are not gender desk officers (Awosika, Interview: 17/07/03). Thus, the Nigerian state is not currently engaged in gender mainstreaming in the systematic, comprehensive manner Mazey (2001) describes to guarantee female empowerment and gender equality as measurable policy outcomes.

Consequently, the political and transformative aspects of the gender and development framework, including gender mainstreaming, have been set aside in favour of piecemeal women in development projects in order to adapt to the realities of a political and public administration system whose gendered archaeology is skewed in favour of men. During interviews bureaucrats and policy-makers spoke of 'gender mainstreaming' in ways that depicted *mainstreaming women* implying that women and their concerns should be active and visible contributors to and beneficiaries from national development processes, although not quite as active or visible as men. Although reference was made to incorporating *gender perspectives* this was construed more as incorporating *women's views* rather than a systematic analysis situating women in relation to men in order to equalise development indicators.

As noted earlier, it appears that women's individual and corporate vision of gender equality is for greater integration into the existing order, possibly with a view to initiating change after penetrating the system. Whatever the case, their preference embodies women's efforts to bargain with patriarchy. Thus, the gender politics of Nigerian women and state actions directed toward them converge in that both seek to obtain *more* of the 'national cake' for women not necessarily an *equal* share with men, and to institute programmatic *reform* in order to facilitate women's public participation rather than to *transform* a dysfunctional public administration system requiring change

in personal and organisational attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, regardless of its gender equality and gender mainstreaming components on paper, it is the incremental aspects of the NPW that are reflected in the agendas of state bureaucracies and indigenous women's organisations. The NPW runs the risk of remaining at the level of a WID welfare-oriented, basic needs, efficiency programme with the limitations highlighted by Stamp (1989), Snyder and Tadesse (1995), Young (1997) and Porter (1999). These limitations as well as those inherent in the NPW document spell the need for a functional Gender Management System (GMS) to formulate and implement gender policy as already envisaged by FMWA.

Nonetheless, distortions and gaps in the nation's broader political and institutional frameworks constitute obstacles to executing the NPW in its present or reviewed form – the anticipated National Gender Policy. Indeed, despite attempts at institutional reform and restructuring, through the establishment of a GMS and the specification of gender initiatives under the new government poverty reduction strategy, NEEDS, such distortions and gaps weaken overall institutional capability to deliver expected policy outcomes. As highlighted in the previous chapter there are long-standing systemic failures in the public administration system and political processes leading to a general state of unwillingness to promote public well-being and, to inefficiency and ineptitude in executing public policies.

More specifically, the patriarchal ideological orientation discussed earlier occasioned the institutionalisation and routinisation of gender bias in the character and behaviour of public institutions and their operatives. This has created additional resistance against gender policies which already carry negative political baggage due to their association with western cultural imperialism and to the negative stereotyping of feminism. As Saunders (1979 in Parsons, 1995) explains institutionalised gender bias has meant that men, as the dominant group in control of decision-making structures, have been able to determine the issues for policy attention and action, and dictate how/where resources are allocated. Gender issues raised by women's campaigns for socioeconomic empowerment and inclusion are considered peripheral or discredited by tarnishing them with the feminist label.

As advocated under the GAD framework this research showed that women's groups employ consciousness raising tools in recognition of the need to produce a critical mass of female representation in corporate and political affairs so as to acquire institutional power to re-negotiate their terms of engagement with society (Young, 1997; Lovenduski, 2001). Hopefully, the empirical analyses of women's interests,

agency and constraints, and their recommendations (listed in Appendix H) will contribute to the discovery of “what African women themselves, particularly the working classes and the peasantry think about themselves as women, what ideology they possess and what agenda they have for themselves, daily and historically” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994 in Delamotte et al., 1997:455).<sup>267</sup> It is noteworthy that women have their own visions of power arising from their experience of domination. Women from various demographic categories expressed the desire for participatory, non-confrontational power sharing. They want *power to* develop and deploy the full range of their human capabilities; they desire *power with* men and not *power over* them. Paulina Sale (PRA, 20/05/03) from Gora evocates this non-hierarchical vision of power poignantly:

*In an fadi haka mu mata mu kuma mu kwanta da hankali mu ba wai mu daga fukafuke mu da cewa abin da za ku yi mu ma za mu yi, tau shi ne zayi kara bata masu rai.* (Hausa)

If they say so (that women will participate in decision-making) we women should be level-headed. We should not grow wings and insist on saying, ‘whatever you do we will do too.’ This will only offend them.

This statement contains the seeds of an alternative society. It points to the fact that although the current prevalence of poverty and underdevelopment may warrant the predominance of ‘bread and butter’ politics in the specification of concerns and needs, improvements in women’s material conditions are likely to pave the way for a more strategic vision of social transformation. In the meantime, an overwhelming majority of women from the various units of analysis that participated in this study opined that implementing the goals and objectives of the National Policy on Women would be a step in the right direction.

Notwithstanding the apparent widespread support for the NPW, to some extent this study has been superseded by the FMWA’s review process towards drafting a National Gender Policy. Still, the research findings provide a critical comparative framework for analysing the NGP. Such analysis is essential to discern similarities/differences between the NPW/NGP, and establish the extent to which the latter corrects lapses identified in the former, and addresses reservations about its suitability and feasibility given the dysfunctional nature of the political environment. Most significantly, it is essential to investigate the extent to which the NGP ensures that multi- and cross-sectoral gender targeting, gender-aware planning, and gender

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<sup>267</sup> Also quoted on page 72

responsive budgeting strategies are compulsory components in all programmes and projects of public/private sector institutions.

As this study demonstrated, the concerted incorporation and monitoring of such strategies is imperative if women and their gender interests/needs are to be moved from the periphery into the mainstream of society and development. This research removed women from the margin onto the centre-stage of public policy analysis and demonstrated that the systematic analysis and mainstreaming of gender issues is critical if development planning in Nigeria is not to remain fractured and lopsided. Armed with this indispensable knowledge governments and development agencies will be well positioned to plan *with* women to address present and evolving concerns.

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PRA's/Focus Groups/Interviews (See Appendix D)

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: Thematic Coding Index

(Derived from PRA, focus group and interview participants and generated in NVIVO®)

NVivo revision 1.1.127 Licensee: Polis TA Girls Room

Project: NPW in Nigeria User: Administrator Date: 09/01/2004 - 11:29:02

### NODE LISTING

Nodes in Set: All Nodes

Created: 12/12/2003 - 11:13:01

Modified: 12/12/2003 - 11:13:01

Number of Nodes: 160

- 1 Definition of terms
- 2 Performance~role of MOWA
- 3 Views against women's lib

Description:

Views against western feminist perspectives, agendas and strategies

- 4 (1) /Assessment of women's needs

Description:

What are Nigerian women's most critical needs?

- 5 (1 1) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic

Description:

Income

Employment

Land

Property

Basic needs

- 6 (1 1 1) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic/Fertilizer
- 7 (1 1 2) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic/Micro-finance
- 8 (1 1 3) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic/Skills training
- 9 (1 1 4) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic/Employment
- 10 (1 1 5) /Assessment of women's needs/Economic/Basic needs
- 11 (1 2) /Assessment of women's needs/Schooling ~education~

Description:

What are Nigerian women's most critical needs?

12 (1 3) /Assessment of women's needs/Political participation

Description:

Public politics and leadership development

13 (1 4) /Assessment of women's needs/Freedom to make decisions~leadership

Description:

Autonomy

14 (1 5) /Assessment of women's needs/Self-esteem

15 (1 6) /Assessment of women's needs/Health

16 (1 7) /Assessment of women's needs/Physical security

Description:

What are Nigerian women's most critical needs?

17 (1 8) /Assessment of women's needs/Marital~family stability

18 (1 9) /Assessment of women's needs/Opportunities for human capabilities

Description:

What are Nigerian women's most critical needs?

19 (1 10) /Assessment of women's needs/Social recognition~prestige

20 (1 11) /Assessment of women's needs/Legislation

Description:

Creation of new or review of old legislation to protect women's human rights and expand their opportunities

21 (1 12) /Assessment of women's needs/Awareness~consciousness raising

22 (1 13) /Assessment of women's needs/Affirmative action~equality

23 (1 14) /Assessment of women's needs/Leadership development

24 (2) /Gender Relations~Roles

Description:

## Social attitudes and practices

## Women's attitudes towards gender relations

25 (2 1) /Gender Relations~Roles/Domestic~conjugal relations

26 (2 1 1) /Gender Relations~Roles/Domestic~conjugal relations/How to get your way with husband

27 (2 2) /Gender Relations~Roles/Gender relations in public spaces

Description:

## Social attitudes and practices

## Women's attitudes towards gender relations

28 (2 3) /Gender Relations~Roles/Acceptance of social norms~roles

29 (2 4) /Gender Relations~Roles/Rejection of gender norms

30 (2 5) /Gender Relations~Roles/Partial acceptance or rejection

31 (2 6) /Gender Relations~Roles/Changes in gender relations

32 (2 7) /Gender Relations~Roles/Impacts of changes in gender relation

33 (2 8) /Gender Relations~Roles/Impact of domestic burden

34 (3) /Freedom to make decisions

Description:

## Women's decision making power and potential

35 (3 1) /Freedom to make decisions/Intra-household

36 (3 2) /Freedom to make decisions/In public spaces

Description:

## Women's decision making power and potential

37 (3 3) /Freedom to make decisions/In relations to husband's

38 (3 4) /Freedom to make decisions/Impact of lack of decision-making power

39 (4) /Changes in gender roles

40 (4 1) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~

41 (4 1 1) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~/Yes unconditionally

Description:

## Total flexibility

42 (4 1 2) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~/Yes conditionally

43 (4 1 3) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~/No ~none at all~

44 (4 1 4) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~/Not an issue

45 (4 1 5) /Changes in gender roles/should gender roles change~/Have done already

46 (4 2) /Changes in gender roles/Reasons for change or no change

47 (4 2 1) /Changes in gender roles/Reasons for change or no change/Reasons for change

48 (4 2 2) /Changes in gender roles/Reasons for change or no change/Reasons for no change

49 (4 3) /Changes in gender roles/Impacts of change

50 (4 4) /Changes in gender roles/Obstacles to change

51 (4 5) /Changes in gender roles/Steps towards change

52 (4 6) /Changes in gender roles/Change is impossible

53 (5) /Gender stereotypes

Description:

Social attitudes towards men and women in Nigerian society

54 (5 1) /Gender stereotypes/Negative attitudes towards women

Description:

Social attitudes towards men and women in Nigerian society

55 (5 2) /Gender stereotypes/Positive attitudes towards women

56 (5 3) /Gender stereotypes/Negative attitudes towards men

Description:

Social attitudes towards men and women in Nigerian society

57 (5 4) /Gender stereotypes/Positive attitudes towards men

58 (6) /female leadership~decision-making

Description:

Women's participation in leadership and decision-making in private (domestic) and public spaces

- 59 (6 1) /female leadership~decision-making/Obstacles to female leadership
- 60 (6 2) /female leadership~decision-making/Female leadership performance
- 61 (6 3) /female leadership~decision-making/Female leadership style
- 62 (6 4) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits
- 63 (6 4 1) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits/none at all
- 64 (6 4 2) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits/Household
- 65 (6 4 3) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits/Religious areas
- 66 (6 4 4) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits/Traditional rulership
- 67 (6 4 5) /female leadership~decision-making/Areas off limits/Presidency~governorship
- 68 (6 5) /female leadership~decision-making/Men's attitudes to female leadership
- Description:  
Attitudes to gender equality in all spheres of social life
- 69 (6 6) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership
- Description:  
Opportunities in Nigerian society  
Degree of openness/obstruction to female leadership
- 70 (6 6 1) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership/Open to a large extent
- 71 (6 6 2) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership/Closed
- 72 (6 6 3) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership/More open than before
- 73 (6 6 4) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership/Less open than before

74 (6 6 5) /female leadership~decision-making/Opportunities for female leadership/Still long way to go

75 (7) /Impacts of political~ exclusion~inclusion

76 (7 1) /Impacts of political~ exclusion~inclusion/Impacts of female leadership

77 (7 2) /Impacts of political~ exclusion~inclusion/Impacts of female exclusion

78 (8) /Male leadership~decision-making

79 (8 1) /Male leadership~decision-making/Male leadership performance

80 (8 2) /Male leadership~decision-making/Male leadership style

81 (8 3) /Male leadership~decision-making/Advantages of male leadership role

Description:

What advantages to male leaders have?

82 (9) /Women's needs agendas

Description:

Efforts at meeting women's needs: NGO/Govt./Private sector organisational objectives, programmes, projects and strategies

83 (9 1) /Women's needs agendas/Name and nature of organisation

84 (9 2) /Women's needs agendas/Objectives of organisation

85 (9 3) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects

86 (9 3 1) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Economic needs

Description:

Income generation activities

Skill training for income generation

Micro-finance services

87 (9 3 2) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Political mobilization

88 (9 3 3) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Health needs

89 (9 3 4) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Educational~training needs



## Description:

Further education, adult literacy, bursaries, sponsorship

90 (9 3 5) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Spiritual~religious development

91 (9 3 6) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Legal services

## Description:

Legal aid, legislative lobbying

92 (9 3 7) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Anti-violence

93 (9 3 8) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Research~academic

94 (9 3 9) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Advocacy and awareness

95 (9 3 10) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Teen age~female rehabilitation

## Description:

Counselling services for victims

Rehabilitation of teen age drop outs

96 (9 3 11) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/General social needs

97 (9 3 12) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Leadership development

98 (9 3 13) /Women's needs agendas/Programmes and projects/Community development

## Description:

Wells, boreholes,

Infrastructural development e.g. roads, schools, clinics, etc.

99 (9 4) /Women's needs agendas/Future vision

100 (9 4 1) /Women's needs agendas/Future vision/Future projects

101 (9 4 2) /Women's needs agendas/Future vision/Focus of NGOs

## Description:

What should NGOs be focussing on?

- 102 (9 5) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries
- 103 (9 5 1) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Widows
- 104 (9 5 2) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Married women in dysfunctional relationships
- 105 (9 5 3) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Girl-children~adolescents
- 106 (9 5 4) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Low-income women
- 107 (9 5 5) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Rural~grassroots women
- 108 (9 5 6) /Women's needs agendas/Target beneficiaries/Urban women
- 109 (9 6) /Women's needs agendas/Success strategies
- 110 (9 7) /Women's needs agendas/Involve men in projects
- 111 (10) /Obstacles to women's agendas
- 112 (10 1) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Lack of funding
- 113 (10 2) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Male bias
- 114 (10 3) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Lack of support from women
- 115 (10 4) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Culture and tradition

Description:

African traditions and inherited colonial structures

Traditional rulers

Traditional practices

Misconceptions based on culture and tradition

- 116 (10 5) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Religion

Description:

Religious belief, antagonism and hostility

Misconceptions based on religion

- 117 (10 6) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Lack of support from government

Description:

Lack of political will, institutional framework such as legislation etc.

118 (10 7) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Organisational failure

Description:

NGO: lack of collaboration, ill-motivated, structural issues

GOVT: Policy/institutional discontinuity, lack of political will

119 (10 8) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Embedded sexism

120 (10 9) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Corruption

Description:

Corruption at all levels: government, organisations, and individuals

Lack of accountability, transparency

Moral decline or decadence

121 (10 10) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Men's fear~self-interests

Description:

Fear of losing power, privilege, authority, position

Feeling of being threatened

122 (10 11) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Women's fear~lack of courage~focus

Description:

Fear of loss (of status, family etc.)

Fear of the cost of freedom, autonomy, and independence

Fear of stepping out

Lack of capacity inducing timidity

123 (10 12) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Underdevelopment and poverty

124 (10 13) /Obstacles to women's agendas/Societal perception~apathy

125 (11) /NPW - awareness of

126 (11 1) /NPW - awareness of/Availability of NPW

127 (11 2) /NPW - awareness of/Knowledge of NPW

128 (11 3) /NPW - awareness of/NPW history

129 (12) /NPW - feasibility

130 (12 1) /NPW - feasibility/Consultation with women

131 (12 2) /NPW - feasibility/Steps taken towards implementation

Description:

What has the government already done or put in place towards implementing the NPW?

132 (12 3) /NPW - feasibility/Obstacles to NPW

133 (12 3 1) /NPW - feasibility/Obstacles to NPW/Problems with the policy itself

134 (12 4) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation

135 (12 4 1) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Awareness creation

136 (12 4 2) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/NPW dissemination

137 (12 4 3) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Legislation

Description:

Enact or review laws at federal and state levels

138 (12 4 3 1) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Legislation/Domesticate CEDAW

139 (12 4 4) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Govt~NGO partnerships

140 (12 4 5) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Refocus MOWA

141 (12 4 6) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/New structures

142 (12 4 7) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Political parties~ gender sensitisation

143 (12 4 8) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Demonstrate political will

144 (12 4 9) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/NGO networking

145 (12 4 10) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Affirmative action

Description:

Representation of women in government and decision-making positions

146 (12 4 11) /NPW - feasibility/Mechanisms for implementation/Advocacy~lobbying

- 147 (12 5) /NPW - feasibility/Compatibility with women's needs
- 148 (12 5 1) /NPW - feasibility/Compatibility with women's needs/Compatible~ yes
- 149 (12 5 2) /NPW - feasibility/Compatibility with women's needs/to some extent
- 150 (12 5 3) /NPW - feasibility/Compatibility with women's needs/Not compatible
- 151 (12 6) /NPW - feasibility/Is it attainable~
- 152 (12 6 1) /NPW - feasibility/Is it attainable~/Yes
- 153 (12 6 2) /NPW - feasibility/Is it attainable~/Maybe
- 154 (12 6 3) /NPW - feasibility/Is it attainable~/No
- 155 (13) /Personal profile
- 156 (13 1) /Personal profile/Past challenges~obstacles
- 157 (13 2) /Personal profile/Position
- 158 (13 13) /Personal profile/Success strategies
- 159 (14) /NPW - responsibility

Description:

Whose responsibility is it to implement the NPW? What is the level of responsibility of the various actors?

- 160 (14 1) /NPW - responsibility/Relationship - govt~ and NGOs

**APPENDIX B: Summary of Questions Administered to  
Units of Analysis  
TABLE B1**

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	GENDER INTERESTS ( <i>prioritised concerns</i> )	GENDER NEEDS ( <i>means of satisfying interests</i> )
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS</b> (members of women's organisations)</p>	<p>1. What are the most common difficulties that the women you serve in the field generally complain about?</p> <p>2. Mqlara Ogundipe-Leslie mentions six mountains on the back of African women. From the list below tick the three <b>MOST</b> important.</p> <p>4. Below is a list of (17) suggested obstacles to a better life for Nigerian women Tick the 4 <b>MOST</b> important obstacles. Put a cross (X) next to the 4 <b>LEAST</b> important. Of the 4 you ticked most important <b>CIRCLE</b> the obstacle you would rate the highest.</p>	<p>1. What do you believe to be Nigerian women's most important immediate and long-term needs?</p> <p>2. What conditions must be met for women's lives to improve? Tick three most important from list below.</p> <p>3. What can women do to improve their own lives?</p> <p>4. Below are some statements about women empowerment. Tick the 3 <b>MOST</b> important. Of these 3 <b>CIRCLE</b> the one you would rate the highest.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</b></p>	<p>1. How would you prioritise the needs of Nigerian women?</p> <p>2. In what ways are women's needs similar to/different from men's?</p> <p>3. What obstacles have you faced in your life as a woman in getting to where you are?</p>	<p>1. What do you consider to be the most critical needs of Nigerian women?</p> <p>2. What is your organisation/dept./ministry doing to meet women's needs?</p> <p>3. What do you think women's organisations should be focusing on to meet women's needs?</p> <p>4. What more would you like to see government/your organisation doing to meet women's needs?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS</b></p>	<p>1. What problems you do have as a woman in your own life?</p> <p>2. What kinds of problems are the women (in this market, community etc) facing?</p>	<p>1. What sort of changes do you desire in your life?</p> <p>2. What do women (you) need to improve their (your) present condition?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL PARTICIPANTS</b></p>	<p>1. What problems/ worries/ burdens you do have as a woman in your own life?</p> <p>2. What kinds of problems are the women in the village facing?</p> <p>3. What kind of things would you like to do but cannot do because you are a woman?</p> <p>4. What kinds of things do you not like doing but have to do because you are a woman?</p>	<p>1. What sort of changes do you desire in your life?</p> <p>2. What can be done to improve the lives of women in this village/town?</p>

**APPENDIX C: Demographic Attributes of Study  
Participants from PRAs, Focus Groups and Semi-Structured  
Interviews**

TABLE C1

**Demographic Attributes of Jaba Women & Men**

		GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3 (men)
Marital Status	Single	2	2	3 <sup>268</sup>
	Married	5	8	4
	Widowed	2	0	1
	Divorced or Separated	1	1	2
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	1	3	4
	polygamous	1st	2	NA
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	2	3
Age	17-25 yrs	2	4	3
	26-35 yrs	2	1	3
	36-40 yrs	2	1	0
	41-50 yrs	2	3	1
	50+	2	2	3
	Mean age	39.8	38.1	39.2
	Median age	37.5	38	29.5
Educational Level	No Schooling	4	6	4
	Primary school	1	2	1
	Secondary school	2	2	4
	Post-Secondary	3	1	1

Source: Field Work (PRA, Gora: 19-21/05/03)

<sup>268</sup> One of the men was 40 yrs and yet had never married. There was no such female in the entire village

**TABLE C2**  
**Demographic Attributes of Birom Women**

ATTRIBUTE SETS		No. of Participants	
Marital Status	Single	2	
	Married	4	
	Widowed	4	
	Divorced or Separated	0	
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	1	
	polygamous	1st	1
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	1
Age	17-25 yrs	6	
	26-35 yrs	2	
	36-40 yrs	0	
	41-50 yrs	0	
	50+	2	
	Mean age	29.9	
	Median age	24.5	
Educational Level	No Schooling	1	
	Primary school	7	
	Secondary school	2	
	Post-Secondary	0	

Source: Field Work (PRA, Kushehe: 03/08/03)



**TABLE C3**  
**Demographic Attributes of Hausa-Fulani Women**

ATTRIBUTE SETS		No. of Participants	
Marital Status	Single	0	
	Married	8	
	Widowed	0	
	Divorced or Separated	0	
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	2	
	polygamous	1st	3
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	3
Age	17-25 yrs	0	
	26-35 yrs	1	
	36-40 yrs	3	
	41-50 yrs	3	
	50+	1	
	Mean age	36.1	
	Median age	35.5	
Educational Level	No Schooling	3	
	Primary school	2	
	Secondary school	3	
	Post-Secondary	0	

Source: Field work (PRA, Bukuru: 20/07/03)

TABLE C4

**Demographic Attributes of Jos Market Women**

ATTRIBUTE SETS		No. of Participants	
Marital Status	Single	0	
	Married	6	
	Widowed	1	
	Divorced or Separated	1	
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	8	
	polygamous	1st	0
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	0
Age	17-25 yrs	2	
	26-35 yrs	2	
	36-40 yrs	1	
	41-50 yrs	2	
	50+	1	
	Mean age	40.6	
	Median age	41	
Educational Level	No Schooling	3	
	Primary school	2	
	Secondary school	3	
	Post-Secondary	0	

Source: Field work (Focus Group, Jos: 04/09/03)

**TABLE C5**  
**Demographic Attributes of Business/Professional Women**

ATTRIBUTE SETS		No. of Participants	
Marital Status	Single	1	
	Married	5	
	Widowed	0	
	Divorced or Separated	0	
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	5	
	polygamous	1st	0
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	0
Age	17-25 yrs	0	
	26-35 yrs	1	
	36-40 yrs	4	
	41-50 yrs	1	
	50+	0	
	Mean age	37.8	
	Median age	37	
Educational Level	No Schooling	0	
	Primary school	0	
	Secondary school	1	
	Post-Secondary	5	

Source: Field work (Focus Group, Jos: 10/07/03)

TABLE C6

## Demographic Attributes of University Students

ATTRIBUTE SETS		No. of Participants	
Marital Status	Single	11	
	Married	0	
	Widowed	0	
	Divorced or Separated	0	
Marriage Type/ Position	Monogamous	0	
	polygamous	1 <sup>st</sup>	0
		2 <sup>nd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	0
Age	17-25 yrs	11	
	26-35 yrs	0	
	36-40 yrs	0	
	41-50 yrs	0	
	50+	0	
	Mean age	Female	19.3
		Male	22.5
		Both	20.9
	Median age	Female	20
Male		22.5	
Both		20	
Educational Level	No Schooling	0	
	Primary school	0	
	Secondary school	0	
	Post-Secondary	11	

Source: Field work (Focus Group, Jos: 13/06/03)

## APPENDIX D: Lists of Participants (PRAs, Focus Groups, Interviews)

TABLE D1: *PRA Participants*

	NAMES	DATE	LOCATION
JABA WOMEN	Malikatu Zaka Monica Mallam Rahila Kagoro Kanda Ishaya Rose Istifanus Geiyo Gando Naomi Nzuno Habiba Yakubu Paulina Sale Azumi Galadima Mary John	19/05/03	GORA
	Godiya Obadiah Ladi Yakubu Talatu Ayuba Zipporah Adamu Rhoda Ibrahim Nanu Barnabas Rhoda Nyam Azumi Adamu Malkatu Bulus	20/05/03	
JABA MEN	Danladi Gaya Ayuba Adamu Bohar Gandu (a clan head) Enoch Garba Zappani Ayin Ishaya Maisamari Sasa Zakaria Jatau Paul Dogara (youth leader) Gigin Yut	21/05/03	
HAUSA- FULANI WOMEN	Amina Abdullahi Ziliatu Ibrahim Hanatu Musa Hadiza Umar Zainab Lawal Hajiya Umaru Miriam Habiba	20/07/03	BUKURU
BIROM WOMEN	Chundung Fidelis Bang Julius Regina Jack Chundung Pam Shamin Sabo Simi Yop Vincent Chundung Musa Martha Nyam Rifkatu Francis	03/08/03	KUSHEHE

TABLE D2: *Focus Group Participants*

	NAMES	DATE	LOCATION
UNIVERSITY OF JOS STUDENTS (FEMALE)	Rifkatu Adeyemi Kemi Odekinle Jamila Isa Ijeoma Udeh Zeinab Yakubu Gloria Adamu	13/06/03	UNIVERSITY OF JOS, CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF JOS STUDENTS (MALE)	Ahmed Salihu Nickson Clifford Solomon Ettuhson Paul Nuga Jude Azi		
BUSINESS/ PROFESSIONAL WOMEN	Florence Adejumo Elizabeth Silas Nnekka Florence Adigun Nosa Tukura Mrs Harry	10/07/03	BUKURU
JOS MAIN MARKET WOMEN	Florence Odidi Serifatu Yusuf Jummai Garba Mrs Onyeze Comfort Peters Mrs Odiede Jummai Ango Laraba Amigo	04/09/03	JOS MAIN MARKET

LIST D3: *Interview Participants*

- ADUDA, Jummai (04/06/03) President Abuja Grassroots Association. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- AWOSIKA, Keziah (17/07/03) Deputy-Director, Women, Law and Development Centre. Held in: Lagos, Lagos State
- AYA, Florence (27/04/04) Member, House of Representatives 1999-2002 and Chairperson, Committee on Women Affairs and Youth Development. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- CHINDABA, Laraba (24/06/03) President, National Association of Women Journalists. Held in: Jos, Plateau State.
- DARIYE, Victoria (18/06/03) President, Women Alive Foundation and the wife of the Executive Governor of Plateau State (1999-date). Held in: Jos, Plateau State.
- DIPO-SALAMI, Bunmi (16/07/03) Senior Programme Officer, BAOBAB. Held in: Lagos, Lagos State
- EFAJEMUE, Rhoda (02/06/03) President, Eweyhae Isoko Women Association. Held in: Jos, Plateau State.

- EFFAH-CHUKWUMA, Josephine (17/07/03) Chief Executive, Project Alert on Violence against Women Held in: Lagos, Lagos State
- EGHOBAMIEN, Esther (22/04/02) Assistant Director, Women Development FMWAYD. Held in: Abuja, FCT.
- FAWEHINMI, Morayo (16/07/03) Co-ordinator, Christian Resource Centre for Women. Held in: Lagos, Lagos State
- FAWEHINMI, Temidola (09/11/03) President, Ondo Ladies Club. Held in: Leeds
- GANNA, Jerry (27/04/04) Special Adviser to the President on Political Affairs. Held in: Abuja, FCT.
- HAMZA, Sumaya (02/07/03) President, Federation of Muslim Women's Societies. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- IKWEM, Teresa (10/06/03) Permanent Secretary, Manpower, Training and Development, Cross River State Civil Service. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- ITYAVVYAR, Dennis (23/08/03) President, International Centre for Gender and Social Research. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- JIBRIL, Sarah (20/08/03) Chairperson, Progressive Action Congress and first female presidential aspirant. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- KETEBU-NWOKEAFOR, Bolere (31/05/03) President, National Council for Women's Societies (national). Held in: Abuja, FCT
- KHALID, Mohammed (26/06/03) Secretary-General, Nigerian Medial Association. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- LAR, Solomon (12/05/03) Chairperson, People's Democratic Party (1999-2002) and First Executive Governor of Plateau State. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- MADUAGWU, Kate (16/05/03) President, NIPSS Women's Thrift & Cooperative Society. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- MAKONTA, Hilda (11/06/03) Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, Adamawa State Civil Service. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- OBADIAH, Jessica (18/06/03) President, Country Women Association of Nigeria. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- OCHEKPE, Sarah (19/08/03) Director, Federal Ministry of Information & National Orientation. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- OJORA, Adegboyega (16/06/03) President, Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- OKWUONU, Oby (27/05/03) Chief Women Development Officer and Head, Women and Development Unit, FMWA. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- OLATUNJI, Yinka (27/05/03) Deputy-Director, Office of the Head of Service, Federal Secretariat. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- OLORUNMAIYE, (24/06/03) Solicitor-General, Kwara State Government. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State
- OMU, Stella (05/06/03) Senator, National House of Assembly (1999-2003), Chief Whip, People's Democratic Party. Held in: Abuja, FCT
- ONYEWUCHI, Bernice (28/07/03) President, Umuogwunwada/Umukehi Women's Associations. Held in: Orji, Imo State.
- POFI, Gyarta (19/06/03) Head, Women's Fellowship Unit, Church of Christ in Nigeria. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- SALAMI, Irene (26/05/03) President, National Association of Women Academics. Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- SER, Julie (12/06/03) President, National Council for Women's Societies (Jos Branch). Held in: Jos, Plateau State
- SIMON, Barry (21/04/04) Chairperson, All Nigeria People's Party (Plateau State Chapter). Held in: Jos, Plateau State

THOMPSON, Elsie (26/07/03) Executive Secretary, The Adolescent Project and Country President, International Federation of Women Lawyers. Held in: Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

USMAN, Aisha Umar (07/07/03) Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, Sokoto State Civil Service. Held in: Kuru, Plateau State

WAZHI, Esther (14/ 06/03) Former Commissioner and member of the Plateau State Executive Council (1999-2003) and President, Tarok Women Association. Held in: Jos, Plateau State



**APPENDIX E**  
**Occupational Profiles of Business/Professional Women, NGO**  
**Leaders and Policy Makers/Politicians**

**TABLE E1**  
**Occupational Profile of Business/Professional Women**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Training/Occupation</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>
<b>Part. 1</b>	Physicist/business woman (Information and Communication Technology)	MSc
<b>Part. 2</b>	Librarian/Senior Civil Servant	MA
<b>Part. 3</b>	Printer/Senior Civil Servant	BA
<b>Part. 4</b>	Micro-biologist/Chartered Accountant/Senior Civil Servant	MA
<b>Part. 5</b>	Business woman (General Sales)/Politician	HND*
<b>Part. 6</b>	Teacher	Grade II

\* Higher National Diploma

Source: Field work (Focus Group, Jos – 10/07/03)

TABLE E2: Profile of NGO Leaders

	Post*	Sex	Age	State/Geo-Political Zone+	Name of Organisation*	Location of Org. Town/state
1.	President/ Founder	F	51-60	Abuja, FCT	Abuja Grassroots Association (AGA)	Abuja, FCT^
2.	Senior Project Officer	F	36-40	Osun/South West	BAOBAB	Lagos (South West)
3.	President/ Founder  President (Jos Branch)	F	51-60	Plateau State/ North Central	Centre for Gender and Rural Development (CGRD)/ National Council of Women Societies (NCWS)	Jos-Plateau State (North Central) Jos-Plateau State
4.	Head of Unit~	F	41-50	Plateau State/ North Central	Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN)	Jos-Plateau State
5.	President (Jos Branch)	F	41-50	Plateau/ North Central	Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN)	Jos-Plateau State
6.	President/ Founder	F	41-50	Ogun/South West	Christian Resource Centre for Women (CRCW)	Lagos/Lagos State
7.	President (Jos Branch)	F	41-50	Delta/ South South	Eweyhae Isoko Women Association of Nigeria (EIWAN)	Jos-Plateau State
8.	Country President Executive Director	F	41-50	Enugu/South East	International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) The Adolescent Project (TAP)	Port Harcourt– Rivers State (South South)
9.	President (Jos Branch)	F	36-40	Plateau/ North Central	Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN)	Jos-Plateau State
10.	Executive Director	M	51-60	Benue/ North Central	International Centre for Gender and Social Research	Jos-Plateau State
11.	National President	F	41-50	Edo/ South South	National Association of Women Academics (NAWACS)	Jos-Plateau State
12.	President (Jos Branch)	F	31-35	Plateau/ North Central	National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ)	Jos-Plateau State
13.	National President	F	41-50	Bayelsa/ South South	National Council of Women Societies (NCWS)	Abuja, FCT^
14.	President	F	36-40	Imo/ South East	NIPSS Women Cooperative & Thrift Society (NIWCTS)	Kuru-Plateau State

Source: Field Work

\* Some participants represented more than one organisation

^ Federal Capital Territory

+ Refers to place of origin of participant

~ Name of Unit: Women in Democracy

TABLE E2 (cont'd.)

	Post	Sex	Age	State/Geo-Political Zone+	Name of Organisation	Location of Org. Town/state
15.	President	F	60+	Ondo/ South West	Ondo Ladies Club (ODLC)	Ondo-Ondo State (South West)
16.	President	F	60+	Imo/ South East	Collective of women's associations	Orji-South East
17.	Executive Director	F	36-40	Akwa Ibom/ South South	Project Alert on Violence Against Women	Lagos-Lagos State
18.	President	F	51-60	Plateau/ North Central	Tarok Women's Association (TWA)	Langtang-- Plateau State
19.	President/ Founder	F	36-40	Edo/ South South	Women Alive Foundation (WALF)	Jos-Plateau State
20.	Deputy Director	F	60+	Ondo/ South West	Women Law and Development Centre of Nigeria (WLDCN)	Lagos-Lagos State

Source: Field work

TABLE E3

**Profile of Policy-Makers/Politicians**

	<b>Post</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>State/Geo-political Zone</b>
1.	Solicitor-General	F	41-50	Kwara State Government	Kwara/ North Central (Middle Belt)+
2.	Director	F	41-50	Federal Ministry of Information & National Orientation	Plateau/ North Central (Middle Belt)
3.	Local government councillorship aspirant <sup>^</sup>	F	51-60	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	Imo State/ South East
4.	President	M	36-40	Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines & Agriculture (NACCIMA)	Lagos/ South West
5.	National Party Chairman (1999-2003) 1 <sup>st</sup> Executive Governor (Plateau)	M	60+	PDP	Plateau/North Central
6.	State Party Chairman	M	41-50	All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP)	Plateau/North Central
7.	Member, Chairperson Committee on Women & Youth Affairs	F	51-60	House of Representatives (PDP)	Kaduna/ North West*
8.	Presidential Political Advisor	M	51-60	Federal Secretariat, Office of Political Advisor (PDP)	Niger/ North Central
9.	Former Commissioner for Tourism & Culture (1999-2003)	F	51-60	Plateau State Government	Plateau/North Central
10.	Permanent Sec., Manpower Development & Training	F	41-50	Cross River State Government	Cross River/ South South
11.	Head of Dept. Women and Development	F	36-40	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA)	Anambra/ South East
12.	Deputy Director	F	41-50	Office of the Head of Service, Federal Secretariat	Ogun/South West

13.	The wife of Executive Governor~	F	36-40	PDP, Plateau State	Edo/South South
14.	Secretary-General	M	41-50	Nigerian Medical Association	Sokoto/ North West
15.	Chairperson/ Presidential Aspirant	F	51-60	People's Action Congress (PAC)	Kwara/ North Central
16.	Permanent Secretary, Women Affairs	F	41-50	Sokoto State Government	Sokoto/ North West
17.	Permanent Secretary, Women Affairs	F	51-60	Adamawa State Government	Adamawa/ North East
18.	Former Senator, Chief Whip (1999-2003)	F	51-60	National Assembly (PDP)	Delta/ South South

+ Participant originated from a Yoruba-speaking part of Kwara State that is ethnically regarded as belonging to the South West

^ Participant was an aspirant at the time of interview. She eventually won the 2003 election and became a Ward Councillor in Owerri North West Local Government Council. She is also President of Orji Women's Association which participated in the survey

\* Participant was from Kaduna State by marriage and from Adamawa State by birth

~ Also President/Founder of Women Alive Foundation (WALF)

Source: Field work

**APPENDIX F: TABLE F1 - List of Non-Governmental Organisations**

Name of Organisation	Type of Organisation	No. of Responses	Location (Town/State)
1. Ahu-Osa Ventures		1	Lokoja (Kogi)
2. Avidime Farms and Productions		3	Ihima (Kogi)
3. Federal Polytechnic Nekede-Owerri Women Association		7	Owerri (Imo)
4. International Federation of Women Lawyers	Business/Professional	5	Jos (Plateau)
5. National Association of Women Academics		4	Port Harcourt (Rivers)*
6. Nigeria Association of Women Entrepreneurs		4	Jos (Plateau)
7. Nigeria Association of Women Journalists		2	Jos (Plateau)
8. Nigeria Federation of Business and Professional Women		5	Jos (Plateau)
9. Abuja Grassroots Association+		5	Abuja (FCT)
10. Centre for Gender and Rural Development		0	Abuja (FCT)
11. Country Women Association of Nigeria	Community-Based Development	2	Jos (Plateau)
12. Ebira Virtuous Family Multi-purpose Co-operative Society		4	Jos (Plateau)
13. Grassroots Women Empowerment Association of Nigeria		1	Lokoja (Kogi)
14. NIPSS Women Cooperative and Thrift Society		3	Abuja (FCT)
15. Rahama Women Multi-Purpose Co-operative		5	Kuru (Plateau)
16. Women Alive Foundation+		5	Bauchi (Bauchi)
17. Women Development Association		0	Jos (Plateau)
18. Youth and Women Development Association for Skills Transfromation		2	Burlhi (Adamawa)
19. Avinebe Social Organisation		2	Yola (Adamawa)
20. Ewheyae Isoko Women Association of Nigeria		1	Lokoja (Kogi)
21. Ilorin Women's Forum		2	Jos (Plateau)
22. Ondo Ladies Club	Cultural/Ethnic	1	Ilorin (Kwara)
23. Oyisi Ohuni Ebira Women Association		6	Ondo (Ondo)
24. Tarok Women Association+		5	Lokoja (Kogi)
25. Umuogwunwada/Umukehi Women's Associations		0	Langtang (Plateau)
		5	Orji (Imo)

26. Catholic Women's Group			Jos (Plateau)
27. Christian Resource Centre for Women			Abuja (FCT)
28. Church of Christ in Nigeria			Jos (Plateau)
29. Catholic Women Organisation			Jos (Plateau)
30. Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria			Jos (Plateau)
31. University Muslim Women's Association			Jos (Plateau)
32. Rhema Christian Pilgrim House Women's Fellowship			Abuja (FCT)
33. International Centre for Gender and Social Research			Jos (Plateau)
34. National Council of Women's Societies			Jos (Plateau)
35. Peace Sisters		Generalist/other	Abuja (FCT)*
36. Help for Widows			Jos (Plateau)
37. Network of Caring Women			Jos (Plateau)
38. Society for Widows and Destitute Emancipation			Gombe (Gombe)
39. The Adolescent Project			Port Harcourt (Rivers)
40. BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights			Lagos (Lagos)
41. Gender and Development Action			Lagos (Lagos)
42. Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women			Abuja (FCT)
43. Project Alert on Violence Against Women			Lagos (Lagos)
44. Women Law and Development Centre of Nigeria		Women/Gender Rights	Lagos (Lagos)
45. Women in Nigeria			Gombe (Gombe)
46. Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation			Lagos (Lagos)
47. Women Rights Advancement and Protection Agency			Abuja (FCT)

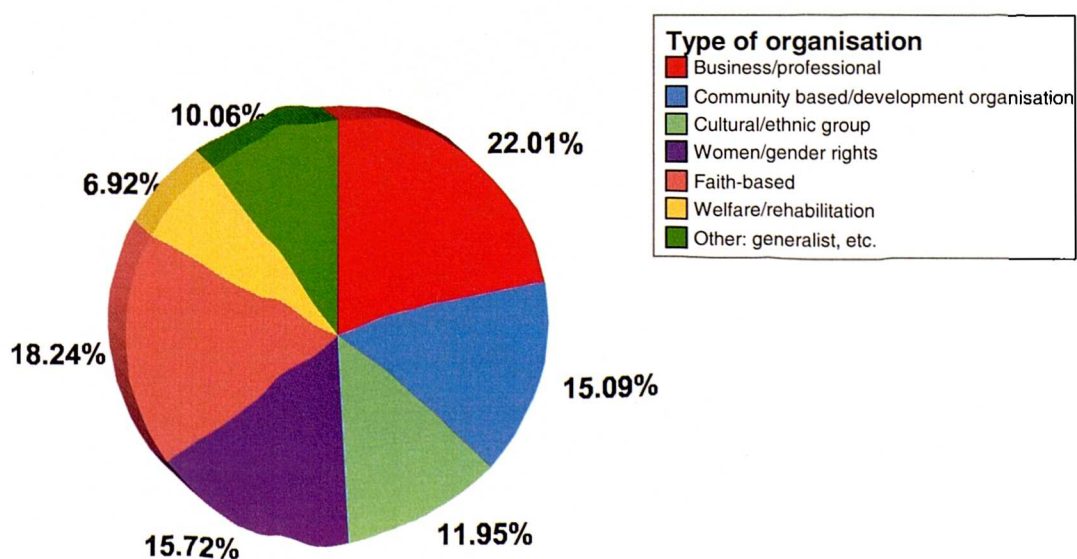
\*National Branch: participants belonged to Kaduna, Lagos, and Gombe chapters.

+Organisation did not participate in questionnaire survey but their chief executives were interviewed in their capacity as NGO leaders/policy-makers/politicians

**TABLE F2: Categorisation of Women's/Gender Organisations whose Leaders were Interviewed**

Name of Organisation		Category of Organisation	
1.	FIDA	1.	Business/Professional
2.	NAWACS		
3.	NAWOJ		
4.	CGRD	2.	Community-Based Development/ Self-Help
5.	COWAN		
6.	NIWTCS		
7.	EIWAN	3.	Cultural/Ethnic
8.	ODLC		
9.	OWA		
10.	TWA		
11.	INTER-GENDER	4.	Generalist
12.	NCWS, JOS		
13.	NCWS, NATIONAL		
14.	BAOBAB	5.	Human/Civil Rights
15.	Project Alert		
16.	WLDCN		
17.	COCIN	6.	Faith-Based
18.	CRCW		
19.	FOMWAN		
20.	TAP	7.	Welfare/Rehabilitation
21.	WALF		

**Fig. F1: Frequency of Organisational Type Based on Participation of Members of Women's/Gender Organisations in the Questionnaire Survey**



Source: SPSS Survey Results



## Appendix G

### Details on the National Policy on Women document

#### 1. Overview of the NPW

The document is divided into 19 Items summarised as follows:

- I. Item 1: Introduction. This sets out the conceptual framework referred to as "General Gender Issues" which inform the entire policy.
2. Item 2: The rationale for the policy's existence
3. Item 3: Policy goals
4. Item 4: Policy objectives
5. Item 5: A five-part policy thrust delineating social and economic focal points where change is envisioned.
6. Items 6-16: Spell out 11 sectoral components which constitute the principal sites for policy action. Specific objectives and implementation strategies are earmarked for each sector.
7. Item 17: General policy guidelines
8. Item 18: General proposals for action at the domestic level
9. Item 19: General proposals for action at the international level

#### 2. The Rationale of the NPW

The NPW document bases its justification on the application of constitutional principles to issues of gender equality. Item 1.5 under "General Gender Policy Issues" argues that the NPW agenda is an activity directly in line with Chapter II Section 17, subsections 2 and 3 of the 1999 Constitution which state that:

- 2.) Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law.
- 3.) All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, shall have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood, as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment.

It then moves on to develop its case on the basis of equity and social justice. Items 2.1 through 2.4 of the policy document argue that, in spite of making up 49.6% of the population and producing over 70% of national food supply, women's share of employment in the formal sector (industry) fell from 13.3% in the 1980s to 9% by 1999 (*INC - Gender Profile, 2002*). They constitute a mere 18% of professional and managerial occupations, are victims of discriminatory tax and labour

laws, and subsist in low-income informal sector jobs. Consequently, based on "national constitutional stipulations," the policy advocates a reconstruction of economic, political and social institutions to bring about economic growth, social equity and well-being. These three parameters are meant to inform a holistic approach to the formulation of national development plans over a decade (Item 17.2.2). The framers premise the call for reconstruction on a philosophical commitment to family stability and complementary gender roles (Item 2.5). In other words, the NPW seeks improvements in women's living conditions for the ultimate benefit of the family; such improvements would enable them better fulfil the traditionally expected supportive role at home and in society. Taken at face value it would appear that any demand women make as a personal right is construed as an illegitimate or insufficient claim on the state.

### 3. The Goals and Objectives of the NPW

*The NPW sets out the following goals and long-term objectives:*

1. *The protection and promotion of citizens' constitutional and human rights in the pursuit of social justice and equity through raising national awareness and the removal of legal, cultural, religious and other constraints.* By couching human and constitutional rights issues in gender-neutral language the Policy has both countered the reverse discrimination argument and made a case for the assertion that 'human rights are women's rights' to which they have a legitimate claim, and which the State is bound to guarantee.
2. *The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.* The NPW calls for compliance with the provisions of CEDAW to achieve the gradual elimination of gender discrimination and inequality through the removal of socio-cultural, economic and political constraints against women's full integration into the development process.
3. *The establishment of an effective Gender and Development (GAD) management and co-ordination structure under the Ministry of Women Affairs.* Here the NPW appears to anticipate a shift from a woman-centred to a gender focus. On the other hand, the combination of WID and GAD terminologies and arguments in the policy may reflect the desire for a pragmatic approach to addressing women's immediate needs or to a non-resolution of the theoretical underpinnings of the women's empowerment project and gender equality agenda in Nigeria. It remains to find out whether

this ambiguity in the NPW's statement of intent arises from perceived/real institutional bottlenecks, the complex and, sometimes irreconcilable differences among Nigerian women, or a misconception of their real needs and interests.

4. ***Women's empowerment through strategic human resource development.*** By 'empowerment' the NPW envisions both incremental changes in women's productive capacity as well as the gradual re-structuring of institutional processes and structures that create and sustain gender inequality. However, the implementation strategies drawn up under the various sectors seem to emphasise the former.
5. ***The establishment of a gender disaggregated databank.*** In order to facilitate gender-aware development planning the NPW is committed to the collection of relevant micro- and macro-level data. According to Item 17.3 a databank would help to construct a credible feminist framework of analysis to provide reliable data for gender and development policy action. The production of gender disaggregated data from socio-economic indicators is expected to help policy-makers incorporate women's needs into the planning process. Given the dearth of planning statistics in Nigeria in general, and more specifically in relation to women, the databank could give feminist lobbyists considerable bargaining power among competing interest groups.

***The NPW constitutional mandate is enshrined in the first of its two objectives:***

1. ***To enforce the principles and objectives of the Nigerian Constitution.*** This objective assumes the gender-neutrality of the Constitution as a platform where women and men can unqualifiedly have access to public 'goods and services.' However, not only does it ignore the gender bias of certain provisions referred to earlier in this chapter, it overlooks covert gender discrimination occasioned by the gender blindness of the Constitution such as the insistence on the usage of he/man language and the omission of gender from Federal Character. As a result of this wholesale endorsement of the Constitution, a call for constitutional reform that would enshrine gender sensitive/inclusive language and action in its philosophy and provisions is conspicuously absent from the policy goals and objectives.
2. ***To bring "into the mainstream, gender perspective (sic) in all policies and programmes based on a systematic gender analysis at all levels of government."*** Regardless of its heavy WID content, towards the end of the

policy document Items 17.2 and 18.3 state that it is a gender and development policy aimed at ensuring women's concerns and interests are incorporated into the entire decision-making machinery. The import of this is captured in the assertion in Item 17.7.1 that, "The National Policy on Women is a challenge to established power structures; it requires wide-ranging changes in the structure of society itself and also in social values." Notwithstanding, this assertion, the implementation strategies put in place by the policy do not call for wide-scale changes in institutional structures or the ideologies that underpin them. Rather, Item 17.7.1 "emphasises the need for gender awareness by women themselves as the major socialising agents in society and as creators and guardians of culture and tradition."

#### 4. Sectoral Components of the NPW

The NPW targets eleven sectors:

1.	Education	Item 6	pp.13,14
2.	Science and technology	Item 7	pp.15,16
3.	Health	Item 8	pp.16-20
4.	Employment	Item 9	pp. 20-23
5.	Agriculture	Item 10	pp. 24-26
6.	Industry	Item 11	pp. 27,28
7.	Environment	Item 12	pp. 29,30
8.	Legal reforms/legislative framework	Item 13	pp. 31-34
9.	Social services	Item 14	p. 35
10.	Politics and decision-making	Item 15	pp. 36,37
11.	Media relations and publicity	Item 16	pp. 38,39

The policy aims to make education for girls compulsory up to the age of 18 years and facilitate women's access to primary, secondary, post-secondary, vocational and non-formal education and training to enhance their living standards (Item 6.2). Special emphasis is placed on scientific and technological education and training relevant for all groups of women regardless of social status, location or physical disability. Science and technology is singled out as a key sectoral component to foster the development and adaptation of indigenous technology by women to suit their needs. Because women are primary producers but secondary users of healthcare services and facilities the policy advocates a comprehensive

multi-sectoral approach to healthcare delivery to improve the total quality of life. This entails a multi-dimensional analysis of non gender-specific and gender-specific health problems such as reproductive tract infections (RTIs), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), female genital mutilation (FGM), teenage pregnancy, vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF) to tackle sociological root causes as well as physical symptoms.

The policy emphasis on employment is narrowly confined to the formal sector. In the formal sector it seeks to remove constraints against women's entry, access to managerial and executive positions, equal pay for equal work, flexible hours to accommodate women's reproductive and community roles, and the enforcement of international labour laws and standards. To do this Item 17.6 under general policy guidelines stipulates a re-evaluation of women's work through a mandated requirement to register all categories of workers and conduct regular estimates of the quantity and value of output.

Whilst there is little mention of unpaid domestic labour or informal sector work outside agriculture, the NPW emphasises agriculture and the need to ensure that women are treated as farmers in their own right with independent and equal entitlements to land, water resources, credit, storage techniques, markets, information, extension/ entrepreneurial/ technological services, training and tools and other agricultural inputs. The importance of guaranteeing access to credit, information, entrepreneurial skills and technological training is further developed under industry as crucial elements towards strengthening the productive capacity of women's numerous petty micro-enterprises, ensuring more efficient labour utilisation, and boosting national output.

Environmental concerns centre on incorporating women as active and informed decision-makers in national ecosystem management and control. As primary stakeholders in environmental resource usage, as victims of displacement in the event of natural or 'man-made' disasters women have typically been left out of environmental planning and resettlement negotiation processes. The aim of the NPW is to build local networks and raise awareness to evolve and promote alternative environment-friendly energy sources for domestic and other uses. In legal/legislative matters, besides the harmonisation of the tripartite legal system, the policy emphasises the need for legislative backing for its successful implementation. This calls for new legislation and proper enforcement of existing laws. Item 13.3 highlights seven critical areas for legislative enactment, review and enforcement:

1. Minimum age of marriage (to be set at 18 years)
2. Mandatory provision of maternal health services
3. The enactment of new family protection laws for the criminalisation of domestic violence and the enforcement of sexual offence laws
4. Enforcement of laws against indecent and denigrating media coverage
5. The repeal of discriminatory personal income tax and labour laws
6. The codification of customary laws and harmonisation of laws to eliminate dehumanising laws, particularly relating to child custody, inheritance and property rights and widowhood rites
7. Mandatory access to free or low-cost legal services

Also stressed is the need for the federal government to place female legal personnel in key positions to oversee these changes and protect women's interests before the law. Conspicuously absent from the NPW are proposals for a review of the status and application of Sharia laws. This maybe a reflection of two factors: the intense political controversy over the Sharia issue and the high profile of Muslim women who participated in pushing the NPW through, and who might not want to antagonise their Muslim constituency.

Item 14 on social services provisioning merely calls on government to enforce people's rights to recreational centres, good roads, transport facilities, communications systems and housing. The policy restricts its proposals for participation in politics and decision-making to the need to enhance women's representation in elective and appointive posts so as to increase their visibility at all levels and "ensure the full realisation of democracy" (Item 15.1). The main strategy mapped out for this is for the National Assembly to legalise "affirmative action of proportionate ratio or 30% representation" in all elective and appointive posts for a trial period up to 2010. The policy also proposes mass enlightenment campaigns to sensitise women and traditional/ religious leaders. It is hoped that in the process of mobilising women efforts will be made to also re-educate men folk about gender role stereotyping. Although a focus on men's enlightenment is central to greater female political participation and representation, the policy does not mention it directly. Also not taken into consideration is the sphere of intra-household politics and decision-making where women often lack full self-determination and executive power.

According to Item 16.1(2) "The role of the media is pivotal to the development of a nation [and] critical to efforts at women development." Since the Nigerian media is male-dominated the policy aims to use government information structures and

alternative media practitioners to re-orientate the media towards a more gender-sensitive stance in order to eliminate gender bias in media language and coverage, and ensure that women and their activities are given proportionate and dignified representation. 'Dignified' here denotes a desire to see women portrayed as intelligent competent persons rather than sex toys for male pleasure or deviant 'Delilahs'.

## APPENDIX H: Women's Recommendations on the Implementation of the NPW

The recommendations listed below reflect the two-pronged approach to attacking gender discrimination suggested by Sherry Ortner (1972). The approach seeks to induce social change at two levels. At one level it aims to create gender awareness to erode the ideological underpinnings of gender prejudice, and at the other it anticipates alterations in the nature and conduct of formal institutions through the reformation of regulatory frameworks, procedures and processes. In line with responses to Q.7 where survey participants were asked to say who they felt was most responsible for bringing about change in women's lives most of the recommendations below are for action by governments, particularly the federal government;<sup>269</sup> others require steps by women's organisations or the collaborative efforts of both.

### The Federal Government should:

1. Review the NPW to rectify lapses in the policy document. Amendments should be made to tighten the policy language from being merely recommendatory to a policy with enforcement powers where responsibility for implementation is duly assigned and sanctions for non-compliance specified.
2. Commission in-depth sector-specific needs assessments and baseline surveys by gender and development experts so as to develop comprehensive and concrete implementation strategies with measurable targets in each sector. The implementation strategies outlined in the NPW were deemed vague and abstract.
3. Conduct periodic gender needs assessments and monitoring and evaluation surveys at local, state and federal government levels to assess progress in implementing the NPW.
4. Disseminate the NPW widely by translating it into local languages,<sup>270</sup> publishing it in user-friendly handbag-size format and distributing it in local councils, community health clinics and marketplaces.
5. Circulate information about the policy through awareness creation workshops and seminars in rural and urban areas to achieve broad-based consultation and conscientisation among women. This would generate public

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<sup>269</sup> Sixty-eight percent said government was most responsible.

<sup>270</sup> Adamawa State Ministry of Women Affairs started doing this, albeit on a limited scaled due to the shortage of funds.



debate and promote the input of grassroots women giving them opportunity to express reservations and/or ownership over the NPW.

6. Initiate gender education programmes for policy/decision makers and public servants in every sector and for law enforcement agents such as the police to facilitate the implementation of the NPW and of CEDAW after domestication.
7. Amend electoral laws to allow for independent political candidates such that women are not restricted to campaign for public office on the platform of the party structure, which has tended to favour male nominees even at the expense of more popular female ones.<sup>271</sup>
8. Commission seasoned researchers to gather gender disaggregated data from the field and disseminate them to public institutions. All tiers of governments should then require that such data are incorporated into projects and programmes to ensure gender-fair outcomes.
9. Establish an independent non-bureaucratic committee of experts to monitor the activities of public and private sector bodies to ensure they comply with NPW directives. The committee should have enforcement powers.

*Women's organisations should:*

1. Forge a strong, broad-based coalition across professional, religious, rural-urban and ethnic boundaries to lobby for the domestication and enforcement of CEDAW.
2. Pool personnel and material resources to eliminate waste and promote efficiency by working on unified fronts.
3. Initiate and collaborate in men-to-men, and men-and-women dialogue forums as part of a gender sensitisation and negotiation-building process. It is vital that these seminars and workshops are facilitated by trained gender and development personnel to ensure that women have the security and space to participate, and that their views are articulated and factored into decisions reached.
4. Gather and collate data from their respective fields for information sharing and networking towards a readily accessible gender and development database that can be used as a resource base for gender advocacy and gender planning.

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<sup>271</sup> A review of the experiences of female aspirants in the 2003 party primaries affirms that popular female candidates were sidelined (WRAPA, 2003). The argument of independent candidature has been also advanced as a means to discourage the money politics that has characterised Nigeria's multiparty democracy.