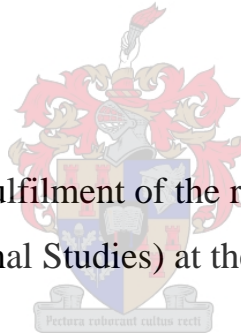


**THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND GENDER:
FINDING THE FEMINIST VOICE**

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (International Studies) at the University of Stellenbosch



Supervisor: Prof. A. Gouws

April 2006

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this Thesis is my own original work and had not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any other university for a degree.

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Signature



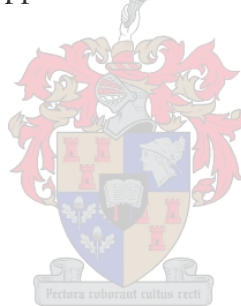
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- My parents; Archibald Tiro & Mabel ‘Koto’ KOLOI, my mother-in-law Augustine Koumba Kondi and my family for their constant support and encouragement.
- All my friends for their support and love.

I am greatly indebted to them all.



OPSOMMING

Die Afrikarenaissance, wat in die 1960's tydens die dekolonisasietydperk van Afrika ontstaan het, het in die algemeen met transformasie te make – 'n herontdekking van die vasteland van Afrika wat 'n pleidooi lewer vir hernude outonomie en Afrika se pogings om self verantwoordelikheid te neem vir sy eie intellektuele lotsbestemming. Afrika gaan gebuk onder talle probleme, en die Afrikarenaissance probeer in die breë na hierdie vraagstukke kyk om 'n oplossing daarvoor te kry. Dit is al beskou as 'n oproep op die mense van Afrika om die herlewing van Afrika – ekonomies, sosiologies, polities en spiritueel – te probeer bewerkstellig. President Mbeki van Suid-Afrika gee die toon aan met betrekking tot die Afrikarenaissance-projek en die implementering daarvan, maar die visie is vir die res van Afrika wat insgelyks moet deel in die konsep en op aktiewe wyse die verwesenliking daarvan moet nastreef.

Die beperkinge van die Afrikarenaissance lê daarin dat nie al die Afrikalande dit aangegryp het, of so sterk soos ander lande daarvoor voel nie. Die meeste mense op die vasteland verstaan nie die konsep van die Afrikarenaissance nie aangesien hulle steeds in toestande leef wat vir hulle geen voordeel inhou nie en hulle worstel met ander lewensvraagstukke. Die belangrikste is egter dat dit nie vroue insluit nie, ondanks die feit dat vroue, wat getalle betref, die meerderheid op die vasteland van Afrika uitmaak. Daar kan geen noemenswaardige kulturele renaissance plaasvind nie terwyl sektore van die bevolking te midde van transformasie steeds geen stem het nie. Wanneer gekyk word na die posisie van vroue in Afrika en hulle ontwikkeling, is dit belangrik om die implikasie van gender in die diskoers in te sien, die rede waarom die Afrikarenaissance nie vroue in hierdie diskoers ingesluit het nie en die vraag of dit tot 'n diskoers van hernuwing kan oorgaan sonder die stem van vroue. Die Afrikarenaissance word tans beskou as die epitomee van die demokratisering van die vasteland van Afrika, en daarom moet die stem van die vrou en die rol wat gender moet speel, van groot belang wees.

ABSTRACT

The African Renaissance, which has its origins in the 1960s during the de-colonization period of Africa, is about transformation, an African continent reinvention that pleads for renewed autonomy and Africa's own effort to take its intellectual destiny. Africa is beset with a massive amount of problems, and the African Renaissance in general is trying to address these issues and find a solution to all these problems. It has been seen as a call for the people of Africa to work towards the resurgence of Africa, economically, sociologically, politically and spiritually. President Mbeki of South Africa sets the tone for the African Renaissance project and its implementation, but the vision is for the rest of Africa that must equally own the concept and actively fuel its realization.

The African Renaissance has limitations in that not all African countries have embraced it, or are passionate as other countries are. Still, most people in the continent do not understand the concept the African Renaissance as it has found them in conditions that are still disadvantageous to them and are grappling with other issues of life. Most importantly, it is not inclusive of women despite the fact that they constitute a clear numerical majority on the African continent. There is no significant cultural renaissance that can take place while sectors of the population under transformation are victims of silencing. Looking at the position of women in Africa and their development, it is important to understand what the implication of gender is in this discourse. Also, why has the African Renaissance not included women and lastly, that can it hold as a discourse of renewal without the voice of women? The African Renaissance has come to epitomize the democratization of the African continent, therefore, the voice of women and the role that gender must play, should be of great importance.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1.1 Introduction

The African Renaissance is a discourse through which some countries on the continent have been doggedly attempting to define themselves (Hountondji, 1996). It has its origins in the 1960s during the de-colonization of Africa. In its proper historical context, it can be looked at as the rise of Africans universally, on the continent and in the Diaspora, from slavery, colonialism, segregation, apartheid and neo-colonialism.

The concept of the African Renaissance does not introduce any new terminology. Through the ages this concept has been described by many other terms such as reconstruction, rebirth, revival, restore or even regeneration. Late 15th century Italian scholars used the word renaissance to describe the revival of interest in classical learning. The Renaissance in religion was built upon the spirit of questioning that led to the Reformation. In politics it saw the rise of assertive sovereign states – Spain, Portugal, France and England – and the expansion of Europe beyond its own shore with the building of trading empires in Africa, the East Indies and America (Luck, 1997:564-565).

Thus, the African Renaissance is about transformation. It concerns the seeking of new ways to think and feel about Africa, its history, and its economic, social and political status. It is an invitation to re-invent the African people, what they do, how they do it and those that benefit from their efforts. It is about raising new questions, new possibilities, and reconsidering old problems from a new angle. Frantz Fanon calls it a growing of a new skin, the development of new thinking and trying to set afoot a new man (*sic*) (Solomon, 2001:50).

The intellectual environment changed greatly in the ensuing years. During these years the concept of the African Renaissance has provoked lively debate. It pleads for renewed autonomy and encourages Africans to embrace their intellectual destiny. However, the

main concern is for the improvement of life on the African continent. This is a very practical concern which makes the technical and theoretical debate about the African Renaissance focus on the question of what intellectual direction to give to a continent beset by a multitude of problems in this day and age. Some of the issues at stake on the African continent are conflicts, globalization, leadership and pandemics. The African Renaissance is trying to address these issues and find a solution to all these problems.

The South African president, Mr Thabo Mbeki, started to refer to the African Renaissance in his public speeches when he was still deputy president. Today he is the driving force behind the African Renaissance, since he has made it the key component of his governing ideology. The ruling African National Congress government has embraced this idea with the intention to promote it and make it part of Mbeki's vision for Africa. It also supports the underlying economic and political assumptions of the African Renaissance¹ (Bongmba, 2004:292; Msimang, 2000:78).

Mbeki repeatedly mentions this concept's concerns or central themes in his discourse. These include creating indigenous solutions to Africa's ills, the alleviation of poverty not only in South Africa, but throughout the continent; embracing Africa's ancient and intellectual history; addressing African humanity; promoting the importance of democracy and multi-party rule throughout Africa; ending African corruption and bad leadership, speaking strongly against those who manipulate and abuse political power and lastly encouraging African states to participate in global politics and decision-making in an equitable manner (Msimang, 2000:71-72).

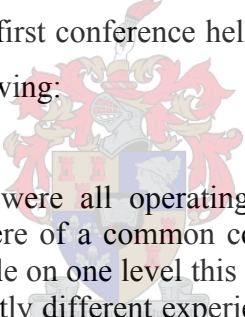
The African Renaissance has been seen as a call for the people of Africa to work towards the reawakening of Africa on the levels of economy, sociology, politics and spirituality (Mbeki, 1999). Mbeki has helped to create a program of action which embraces the entire continent. This program is known as The New Partnership for African Development

¹ For example, the Black Economic Empowerment Policy in South Africa that encourages the increased participation of black people in the corporate sector (See Msimang, 2000:78-80 for a detailed analysis).

(NEPAD) and it clearly signals a post-nationalist path that highlights instead a pan-Africanist view of renewal (Msimang, 2000).

Mbeki sets the tone for the African Renaissance project and its implementation. This project deals with two main problems. The first is how to restore Africans to their culture and reclaim their history; the second pertains to the challenges of development that Africans must tackle. In order for these problems to be solved the rest of Africa must equally own the concept and actively fuel its implementation. However, the governments of these countries can only be actively involved in this project if it is relevant and necessary for them in terms of their own national development initiatives to move towards building critical partnerships with the rest of Africa (Dalamba, 2000:3).

Finally, the African Renaissance has limitations from a general point of view. Many of its critics have noticed that the concept is not poverty friendly and that it did not represent grassroots communities during its first conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1998. Instead, it reflected the following:



African Intelligentsia who were all operating under the assumption that their experiences as Africans were of a common colonial history and space in global international relations. While on one level this is true, on another level, they failed to take into account the vastly different experiences that are dictated primarily by ethnicity, gender and class. Their assumption - that they could convene and speak on behalf of Africans—was flawed (Msimang 2000:73-74).

Critics also noticed that not all African countries have embraced the African Renaissance and that not all of these countries are as passionate about it as other countries are. More importantly, most people on the continent do not even understand the concept of the African Renaissance. It has no immediate effect on their lives, since they are still living in conditions that are disadvantageous to them and grappling with the primary needs in life.

Lastly the critics have found that the African Renaissance is not inclusive of women. It is this last limitation with which this study will concern itself.

1.2 The African Renaissance and gender

There are a few things to consider before incorporating gender into the discourse of the African Renaissance. The concept of gender has to be understood in order to understand the disadvantaged situation of women. This concept refers to the relationship of power between men and women.

Africa is currently undergoing a tremendous gender revolution that is central to the African Renaissance. This is part of a radical increase in democratic culture and a greater respect for human rights, but it is also part of a much wider economic challenge. To say that if poverty is fought a lot of women will benefit, is simply not enough. It is only through empowering women that there is a chance of eradicating poverty. It is also not just a case of democracy automatically leading to the empowerment of women. It is only when women have the power to participate in the decision-making of their country that a new democratic culture will emerge (Sadasivam, 1998).

The term gender, however, also brings men into view. It focuses on the interaction and power relations between men and women. It draws attention to all the factors that constitute and sustain gender relations, such as men, women, institutions, law, religion art, education and others. Societies naturally differentiate between men and women. This differentiation influences the way people behave and feel, it influences their opportunities and access to resources as well as the way development programs benefit men and women (Everts, 1998:59).

Hountondji (1996) is of the opinion that the African Renaissance seeks to not only create knowledge, but also to create channels in which accumulated knowledge can be mastered, capitalized, developed and applied by African societies in order to solve their problems and improve their quality of life. In the context of historical power relations between men and women, women have to confront the problem that men have always been in control of the knowledge systems of the world, whether it is in the field of science, culture, religion or language. Women have been excluded from the enterprise of creating symbolic systems or interpreting historical experience. It is the lack of control

over knowledge systems, which causes them not only to be victims of violence, but also to be part of a discourse which often legitimizes or trivializes violence against women.

1.3 Finding a feminist voice in the African Renaissance

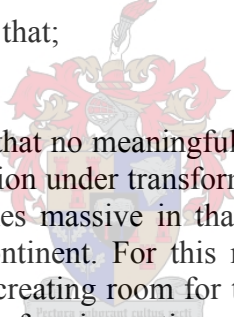
What normally comes to mind when referring to feminism is a movement which has as its main objective the equality of women by making them the social equals of men. Mainstream literature on world politics used to underestimate or ignore the contributions of women by treating the differences in men's and women's status, their beliefs and behaviours as unimportant. (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997). Women have always been stereotyped as filling in history and their experiences have never been taken into consideration. Feminist theory emphasizes gender and women's issues in the study of world politics (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997:532).

For the empowerment, equality and advancement of women in Africa, women have joined forces to fight male supremacy and promote the increasing interest in their unique life experiences. The new millennium is a critical opportunity for the transformative change needed for women to progress towards equality. Furthermore, women are key partners in this kind of development. Their capabilities and leadership skills must be employed in order to create qualitative changes which will benefit women empowerment, equality and the achievement of an African Renaissance in this continent. The full participation of women in decision-making will lead to an equitable sharing of resources and sustainable human development for the African Renaissance. It is at this point that this research finds its relevance.

Firstly, the ideologies and discourses that shape the everyday lives of women vary. In these discourses women often do not have a voice in shaping the world they live in or global governance. Women want to be part of these discourses. They also want to contribute to the decision-making that determines the way they live their lives. Since the principal actors in this decision-making tend to be men, women feel that their voices are being drowned out.

It is important to note here that the intention of this study is to steer clear from mainstreaming a gender perspective since this inevitably suggests an essentialized womanhood – that is, a singular gender perspective as the voice for all women. D’Amico, (1999:38) observes that when opening a door to only a singular gender perspective, it will only neglect the diversity of women’s life experiences. There should be an adequate representation of women’s diversity.

In addition to all this, it is important to discover whether men are listening. It is believed that a number are listening. However, the question is how to ensure that it goes beyond listening. The policies in some African countries are formulated around ideologies that do not include the voice of women. These policies will eventually govern all life despite the absence of the female voice. Therefore gender must be emphasized in the discourse of the African Renaissance and the voice of women must also be audible. Emphasizing this point, Micere Githae Mugo reflects that;



The point of labour here is that no meaningful cultural renaissance can take place while sectors of the population under transformation are victims of silencing. The silencing of women becomes massive in that they constitute a clear numerical majority on the African continent. For this reason, token or politically correct recognition has to cave in, creating room for the kind of participation that places women at the center of transforming action and discourse (Micere Githae Mugo as quoted by Msimang, 2000:77).

Secondly, the dysfunction of African women in some parts of the continent is due to African men being forced off their land in order to provide cheap labour for European farmers or work on the mines. This was the beginning of the migratory labour system. Consequently, in the absence of men, women became heads of their families, albeit with limited powers. This framework had grave consequences on social and gender relations amongst the African people. Therefore, any discussion of the African Renaissance and the role of women in it, has to locate women within this context of quasi heads of families and comforters for displaced men.

In several African countries women make up the majority of the entire population. In addition they produce 60 to 80% of all the food and head 30% or more households. This is a monumental task. The value of the entrepreneurial contributions of women can only be awed at. This is why it is so shocking that, when it comes to large-scale operations at national, regional and international levels in business and the economy in general, they are marginalized or they are largely under-represented. Thus it is obvious why women should be in the centre as well as on the foreground of the African renewal.

Lastly, Mbeki calls for a renaissance scholarship in Africa. Its purpose should be to correct the distortions that define Africans as being “something other than what [they] are, as not quite human, perhaps sub-human but definitely not human” (Mbeki, 1997). The purpose of this proposed scholarship also includes the reclaiming of the humanity of Africans which European colonizers trampled upon by characterizing every African they met as “lazy, dishonest, with below average intelligence; [and] given to unbridled sexual promiscuity” (Mzamane, 2000). Mbeki’s aim is also to counter certain fixed stereotypes specifically those used by most post-colonial leaders to reinforce their rule through projecting Africa as inherently violent and dictatorial.

These stereotypes that labelled Africans as irredeemably ignorant and backward are the same stereotypes that have been used in labelling women as “other”. This study argues that if the African Renaissance’s intention is to address these ills, then it also has to consider including the feminine voice in the discourse by addressing the marginalization of women and their exclusion. Feminist theory calls upon the same scholarships to redress the inequality of women on the continent.

1.4 Problem statement

This study acknowledges the importance of the African Renaissance for the transformation of the doubtful socio-economic situation in Africa. It will attempt to understand the silence of women in the African Renaissance by first exploring its story from its historical past to its contemporary status with its pan-Africanist stance.

Looking at the position of women in Africa and their development, the study will seek to understand why the African Renaissance has not included women in this discourse. Can it hold as a discourse of renewal without the voice of women? It will review Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance and argue that the goals of the renaissance, as outlined by Mbeki, should include the voice of women. It will explore the implication of gender within the discourse of the African Renaissance. The study will then make some recommendations on how women can make meaningful contributions to creating an African Renaissance.

Finally, this study will analyse the role of gender in the African Renaissance concept, concentrating on finding women's voices and the changes they will bring about with regard to the status of women on the African continent. In this discourse, which has come to epitomize the democratization of the African continent, the voice of women and the role that gender has to play should be of great importance. Thus the main question this study hopes to address is: Are women really silent on the issue of the African Renaissance or is there a tendency among the public to judge statements as having meaning only if presidents and men make them?

1.5 Nature of the study

Neuman (2000:49) says that qualitative theory is build from the ground up since you begin with detailed observations of the world and move towards more abstract generalizations and ideas. De Beauvoir (1949:143) argues that the representation of the world is the work of men as they describe it from their own point of view. Since one characteristic of qualitative research is that it occurs in natural settings where human behaviour and events occur, it is important to look at feminist issues as they are suggested by women. This is a view shared by Meyer and Prügl (1999:5) who urge women's presence as one that will introduce the discourse on women-centred ways of framing issues. In turn, this will advance feminist agendas.

This study is an exploratory research. Babbie & Mouton (2002:79) remark that exploratory research is typical when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study itself is relatively new. Based on its pan-Africanist history the African

Renaissance is not entirely a new concept. However, as indicated earlier, the intellectual environment has changed greatly in the ensuing years. This has provoked lively debates on the concept of an African Renaissance which are in themselves reasonably new. This change has also emphasized processes rather than ends. Accordingly, the African Renaissance is a process neither about to start nor on the verge of collapse (Landberg & Hlope, 1999:2). It is inductive in that it does not seek to prove any theory or hypotheses, but seeks to describe and analyze the position of women in the African Renaissance and try to find a feminist voice within the discourse of the African Renaissance.

1.6 Data collection methods

The principle method of data collection will be an analysis of published and unpublished texts focussing on both the gender issues and the African Renaissance. A number of books have been written on the subject and this study will draw on them. Secondary data from various sources, including the Internet, the media, academic and other functional texts, will be used. The media material will include newspapers, editorials and magazines produced by both local and international, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Finally, consulted literature will also include academic journals and electronic reports.

Mouton (2001:108) notes that “the aim of analysis is to understand the various constitutive elements of one’s data through an inspection of the relationship between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or establish themes in the data.” The data processing section includes observations, analyses, comparisons, descriptions and explanations of the trends from secondary data. The final section consists of a summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

The approach that will be followed in this research project will have to make provision for the diverse nature of the topic. The following three complementary aspects have to be dealt with:

- the position of women in Africa in relation to the African Renaissance;

- the concept of the African Renaissance and its impact on women; and
- lastly, the impact of development, and the influence of development approaches (WID,WAD,GAD,NEPAD) on women.

1.7 Chapter outline

Chapter 1

Chapter one introduces the study. It details the objectives and aims of the study as well as the methodology.

Chapter 2

Whilst the concept of an African Renaissance is taking shape, women are seeking to introduce an awareness of gender and women's concerns into policy-making processes. Firstly, it is imperative to know the position of women in Africa, their social, economic, and cultural indicators. Women throughout the world continue to be disadvantaged in relation to men. This is true in a broad spectrum of educational statistics, such as literacy rates, school and college enrolments and targeted educational recourses. Women also enjoy less access to advanced study and training in professional fields, such as science, engineering, law and business. Within occupational groups they are in less prestigious jobs. They also face tremendous resistance against their involvement in politics. Lastly, they receive less pay than men across the board.

Chapter 3

This chapter both introduces and explains the origins of the African Renaissance and its impact on women. It analyses the history of the African Renaissance, the Renaissance as outlined by president Mbeki of South Africa and the exclusion of women in the discourse of the African Renaissance.

Chapter 4

Chapter four focuses on the African Renaissance and development. Issues of discussion will be Women in Development, Women and Development, Gender and Development and NEPAD's influence on women's development. Women's economic capacity needs to

be improved. There is such a large unemployment rate by which women are particularly targeted. Lastly, this chapter will focus on the important part that economic capacity plays in women's status.

Chapter 5

This will be the last chapter. It will summaries the study and serve as a platform for a few recommendations on the ideal discourse of the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance concept is relatively new and it is the intention of this study to make some recommendations on how this discourse will benefit from the inclusion of women's voice in these early stages of its creation.

1.8 Concluding remarks

Gender and the African Renaissance have provoked many debates since South Africa's independence. As the discourse is taking shape, the position and women's voice should be made clear. What men think about women and their voice in the discourse is of great importance to this study. In terms of African Renaissance and gender politics, an argument can be made for the position of women in Africa. How do they fit in the reality of today? Does their status affect development? And in that development, are their voices heard? Are they giving voice in the NEPAD structure? In conclusion, doing this study is important in two ways: Firstly, to have an understanding of gender politics in the African Renaissance and, secondly, to address the absent voice of women.

CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN'S CONDITIONS IN AFRICA

2.1 Introduction: an overview

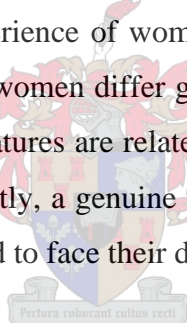
Although women constitute a significantly large proportion of the population on the African continent, they are the most deprived and marginalized of all groups (Williams, 1999: 254). They have also systematically been excluded from participation in political and economic markets since independence. In fact, in most African countries, women are usually relegated to perform domestic chores such as house cleaning, cooking, carrying water, searching for firewood, and subsistence farming. These responsibilities contribute to women not being able to fully participate in decision-making or income producing. It also hinders them from obtaining high status positions. Thus these positions are all filled by men (Warren, 1999:1).

As men had been drawn into the modern sectors, women's productivity eroded during the pre-independence era. The colonial perception of women as home-makers eclipsed women's substantial political and economic activity (Snyder and Tadeze, 1997:75). In those societies where women are represented in the modern sector, many of them can be found performing primarily unskilled and low-paying tasks. Part of the problem comes from the fact that in many African societies, families rarely allow their girls to be educated or to acquire the skills that will allow them to participate more effectively in the modern industrial sector. Thus, during the last forty years, women have not been utilized very effectively in the development of the continent (Mbaku, 1999: 13).

Liberal feminists regarded women as victims of development rather than partners with men in nation building (Okeke, 2004:482). During an opening address in South African Women In Dialogue (SAWID) of 2004, Mrs Mbeki affirmed women as the core of civil society in Africa. This is why it is so disturbing that, although African women join political and social organizations in large numbers, their impact in state policies has been minimal (Turshen, 1994:90). Thus, there is still a pervasive lack of recognition of the position and contribution of all women in Africa. Even the African Union (AU) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) structures contain only limited references to women (SAWID Report, 2003; Lowe Morna, 2004:27).

This chapter will give an overview of the conditions of women in Africa. It is important to understand the conditions or circumstances, especially those essential to women's existence on this continent, that affect women's state of being. For instance, how do African traditional institutions and practices such as circumcision, marriage, family, widowhood rites and ceremonies construct the "African woman"? This chapter will also explain the impact of colonialism and patriarchy on women. For example, does the vision of the African Renaissance characterize a historical perspective that justifies the discourse in women's struggle against colonialism and patriarchy? Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to analyze the political, economic, social, cultural and historical context more closely. The contemporary aspects concerning the conditions of women on the African continent and their influence on the African Renaissance as a discourse will also be scrutinized.

When discussing the conditions of women in Africa, it is important to question whether the perspective on women's reality is true to the life experience of women as a collective entity. It is certainly true that, for example, the status and power of women differ greatly from region to region. Thus, there are good reasons to expect that these social features are related to the economic role and independence of women (Steiner & Alston, 1996: 898). Lastly, a genuine African Renaissance is impossible without a radical change in the way women are forced to face their daily problems.



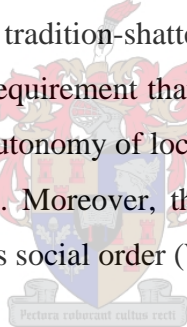
2.2 An overview of colonialism

Historically, women on the continent of Africa come from a past of being marginalized. Their subordination, exploitation, and oppression tends to reflect the combined forces of the labour market under capitalism and patriarchal ideology in the shaping of their identities and conditions (Stromquist, 1998:26). The advocates of the discourse of the African Renaissance concede that the purpose of this identity is to bring self-identity, renewal and rebirth. Women have been given a subordinate status that does not allow them to establish themselves, firstly, as individuals in their own right and, secondly, as a group whose participation is central to developing and implementing initiatives for nation building (Okeke, 2004:483). Okeke (2004:483) goes on to argue the following:

What is clearly evident, however, is that from the colonial period to the present times, the status of women across the continent has suffered a significant decline that strongly reflects patriarchal continuities and contradictions of a hybrid contemporary society.

The legacy of three and a half centuries of colonialism, neo-colonialism, the Cold War and apartheid are still widely visible on the continent of Africa. The factors mentioned above as well as the functioning of the international economic system primarily accentuated the impoverishment of the continent and the inadequacies and shortcomings of the policies pursued by many countries in the post-independence era (SAWID Report, 2003, Bongmba, 2004:298 quoting NEPAD protocols)

It is very important to analyze the conditions of women in Africa by first discussing Africa's colonial past. This will ensure that the present situation of women is completely understood. Todaro (1989: 19)¹ argues that, after their arrival, the colonial powers had a dramatic and long-lasting impact on the economies and political institutional structures of their African colonies. This is due to the introduction of, for example, three powerful and tradition-shattering ideas: private property instead of communalism, personal taxation, and the requirement that taxes be paid in money rather than in kind. These ideas were combined to erode the autonomy of local communities and to expose their people to many new forms of potential exploitation. Moreover, the European occupation destroyed many of Africa's ancient cultures and undermined its social order (Wepman, 1993:29).



Central to the maintenance of the political and economic system of exploitation was the construction of a supremacist discourse that justified and legitimated the need to perpetuate the control of Africa and Africans (Mbeki, 1992:2). This colonial discourse constructed Europeans as superior, civilised, rational, progressive and modern while Africans were represented as inferior, primitive, irrational, static and backward (Mzamane, 2001). African countries fought for self-rule and national liberation and eventually ended with the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, Resolution 1514(XV) by the General Assembly (Dugard, 2000). This declaration called for immediate steps to be taken in non-independent territories. It required that the transfer of all power to the people of these territories transpired without any conditions or reservations

¹ Preference was given to data that is recent and accessible, although Todaro (1989), as an old source, was also used in this study.

and that inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence (Dugard, 2000:86; Kegley and Wittkopf, 1997:109).

Despite most African countries receiving their independence and being legally independent entities, sovereignty could not erase the colonial heritage and insecurity growing out of the political, economic, and military vulnerabilities that the former colonies faced (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997:100; Mzamane, 2001). Colonialism did little to equip the continent to develop and profit from its own resources. In fact, it left the former colonies in a state of dependence on the technology and the financial support of industrialized states without preparing them for self-sufficiency. Thus, the high aspirations following independence have been largely unfulfilled (Todaro, 1989:600; Wepman, 1993:127-128; Stiglitz, 2002: 6).

2.2.1 The aspects and impact of the colonial legacy on women

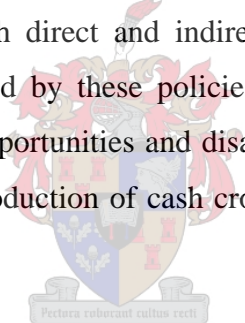
This study explores women's position in Africa. Justice will not be done to the study if it does not introduce the conditions of women in this continent by analyzing the impact of colonialism on them. The African Renaissance is mainly concerned with colonialism due to the racial wrongs that comprise Africa's history. Mbeki argues that colonization had an effect on the psychology of Africans. It made them have a negative view of themselves (Bongmba, 2004:309). Nonetheless, the African Renaissance does not recognize the dominance of gender when confronting colonialism and its legacies. Msimang (2000:73) argues that

(i)f the African Renaissance is at its core a decolonization project, then it is an ideology/movement that cannot hope to reflect on or transform relations if it does not use a gender lens. In Mbeki's own words, the African Renaissance is the hope of a decolonised Africa. In its current state however, at best, it can only offer a partial response to decolonization, but it cannot pretend to present a liberation theory if it is gender blind. The history of colonialism is also one in which a catalogue of gender oppression – intrinsically linked to racial oppression – can be named.

With this in mind, the roots of colonialism and its impact on African women will be explored. The combined force of the labour market under capitalism and patriarchal ideology is the source of the domination of women by men in the shaping of women's identities and conditions as discussed above

(Stromquist, 1998:26; Gordon, Nkwe & Graven, 1998:231). In Africa, the predominance of agriculture for subsistence had created a pre-capitalist mode of production that was less exploitative and hierarchical in nature than the capitalist mode of production (Stromquist, 1998:27). Therefore, it is conceded by some writers that African women in pre-colonial times enjoyed levels of status and prestige similar to those of men and engaged in a sexual division of labour based primarily on complementarity rather than values of inferiority or superiority between men and women (Stromquist 1998: 27). Thus, the woman's essential function, for example as a producer in an agricultural society, awarded her status and some authority (Baden, Hassim, and Meintjies, 1998:5).

Colonialism is presented as entirely hegemonic and totalizing in its impact. However, over the last few decades postcolonial scholars have argued and documented the heterogeneity in colonialism's impact as well as local resistances and insurgencies among those colonized (Subramaniam, Bever and Schultz, 2002:203). The impact of colonialism was explicit and political. Charlton (1997:9-10) also declares that its socio-economic impact was both direct and indirect. Although colonial regimes generally assumed that the people directly affected by these policies would be men, the indirect effects on women were vast. These included the opportunities and disadvantages presented by urbanization, the shift in female labour caused by the introduction of cash crops and the innumerable other changes in the traditional ways of life.



Charlton (1997:9-10) depicts how colonialism also prepared a bad foundation for educating women. Men were favoured with opportunities not only for education, but also employment and access to resources (Snyder and Tadese, 1997:76). Missionaries from the French colonies were interested in educating both boys and girls, but female instruction was largely religious and orientated towards helping the girls become better mothers and housewives. Not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000:3 quoting Staudt, 1981). Often there is no engagement with the complex manner in which colonialism both created and exaggerated gender inequalities. It used these inequalities to further imbed itself in the public and private lives of those it oppressed. National responses to colonialism run the risk of re-appropriating traditional oppressive values and re-writhing them into contemporary African women's lives (Msimang, 2000:75-76).

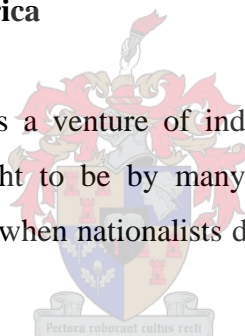
Finally, another structure used in colonialism, was to separate women from each other. Rowan-Campbel (1999:14) argues the following:

By placing strictures on association across race and class lines, colonial rule enforced distances between mistress and servant, between merchant's wife and soldier's wife, between local and expatriates. Women who joined a common condition and experience could not join together to explore the possibility of fighting for change.

In South Africa, the long-term effects of colonialism and apartheid have resulted in a dismal picture for the majority of its people, and especially for women because what has been described above; classism, racism and sexism combined to forge what has often been referred to as the "triple oppression of women" (SAWID, 2004).

2.2.2 Patriarchy and independent Africa

Patriarchy on the African continent was a venture of indigenous and imported forms, not only a colonial manifestation, as it was thought to be by many (Boehmer 1992). As such, in vilifying colonialism there is a danger that, if and when nationalists discuss gender, patriarchy is presented as a legacy or consequence of colonialism.



Msimang (2000:76) quoting Mama (2000) argues that, in the heady romanticism of depicting the idyllic pre-colonial African existence, a few critical factors can be forgotten. The chemistry between home-grown and foreign patriarchies was certainly toxic. For example, although Africa is referred to as "mother", its power remains with men. In the same way the stereotypical mother of the Victorian middle class may have had her formal or moral power in the family which was circumscribed, in practice, by male authority. Therefore, a national ideology privileging symbols and motherhood at the state level in independent African nations, did not in reality empower mothers². The authority of fathers has been entrenched. Boehmer agrees with this in his following statement:

Women in the various nations came to be subjected to a syncretic fusion of male rules, encoded as principles of law and often enforced as tradition. Taking into account that power is consolidated through gender and that successful power is self-confirming, the usefulness of this

² See Elleke Boehmer, 1992: 237-242 for an analysis on Africa being incarnated as a woman.

system guaranteed its ubiquity and its survival beyond independence both in national and pan-national ideologies (Boehmer, 1992:240; see also Charlton, 1997:10).

Madoc-Jones and Coates (1996:3) state that patriarchal control refers to the power of men in relation to women which has resulted in the widespread oppression of women. Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulos and Kirkby, (2003:15) define patriarchy as “a social system in which structural differences in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and or social positions of men”. This, in other words, means that women are excluded from positions of power and the exercise of authority³. Furthermore, patriarchy is perpetuated by means of laws and private and public structures that include the family, religion, schools and the media.

2.2.2.1 African independence’s construct of women

National independence in Africa represented a take-over rather than a radical transformation of power, therefore, the strong patriarchal presence already built into nationalist ideologies and state structures continued by and large to dominate unchallenged. The form of the independent state was deeply shaped by the African colonial experience. The ruling party, which was exclusively men, remained manifestly in charge. They defined the shape and meaning of post-colonial nationhood with no participation by the people. They arrogated dominance and autonomy to themselves (Boehmer, 1992) and did not think that women issues were important (Khanna, 2001).

Patriarchy has resulted in unfavourable conditions for women in Africa especially with the lack of power, resources, education and many other social conditions in relation to the power and or influence societies give to men. This ideology continues to legitimize women’s subordinate status in society. For example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is escalated by the fact that women are in a position of powerlessness and are not influential even in their marriages. This causes the infection rate within marriages to be high, accounting for half of all HIV positive people. Some of these women have never even related sexually to anyone but their husbands and have never been unfaithful. They are dying in their marriages because they can't afford to leave and have nothing to fall back on [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp? 01/06/2004>]. Colonialism and patriarchy laid the foundations for

³ The only time women can exercise power and authority is where that power and authority works to support individual men or the social system (See Cranny-Francis et al, 2003: 15-16).

education on the continent. It is therefore, of the utmost importance that the African Renaissance addresses colonialism and patriarchy and the way forward

2.3 The impact of the lack of education on the status of women in Africa

The question of unequal access to education among males and females appears to be universal in the developing world. However, females in Africa seem to suffer more discrimination in terms of access to education. Substantial progress has been made in the last forty years, but female illiteracy rates are still high compared to that of males. On average 21% more women than men are illiterate. This means that many women are being excluded from the economic and technical changes affecting their respective societies (Stromquist, 1998:32). Entrenched attitudes continue to keep females out of the educational system, thereby perpetuating the gender gap. According to Yahya-Othman (2000:35), the limitations on academic freedom for women actually begin very early in the educational cycle, i.e., from primary school. This bears consequences for the academic freedom of women in tertiary education. In addition, there are spatial inequities that enable people in certain locations to have better access to education than others (Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang, 2004).

The issue of women and systems of education in Africa is not simply influenced by one factor, but by the interaction of different elements located in historical, patriarchal, cultural, socio-economic and political contexts. Giving voice and agency to women's experiences, Tabachnick and Beoku-Betts (1998:301) argues therefore that African women should not be treated as a homogeneous category or as victims of the system.

We need to go beyond the analysis of gender differences to recognize and analyse the contradictions and complexities within all of those multi-textured, dynamic social systems that situate education as a site of struggle. This requires the development of policies, and programs in which women are actors in creating new understandings and directions for education (Tabachnick and Beoku-Betts 1998:301).

According to Bloch and Vavrus (1998), education is not a benign "good" at every moment of its historical path, but rather it is a set of practices that have been used differently by each individual, group, government and international agency, depending on their intention, power and conceptions of gender. If education is a way to promote certain individual, group and national or international interest,

then how has education been used within the context of sub-Saharan Africa to govern, empower, disempower and regulate the lives of women?

As indicated above, education, both within and outside of schools, can operate as a form of governing by the state, by a colonial power or by a religious group or leader over those who are construed as being in need of education. Thus, although education is often associated with terms like development, modernity, independence and status, one can debate whether the educational development strategies, imposed most often from above, have had more positive or negative effects in Africa (Bloch and Vavrus, 1998: 5). This is due to the fact that there is a considerable disparity between men's and women's access to education. 64% of women are illiterate compared to 40% of males (Sall, 2000:7 quoting UNESCO, 1990).

In Cameroon, for instance, over 55% of women aged 15 or older can neither read nor write, as opposed to 34% of men in the same age range (Ouendji, 2000:135). In Sudan, the ratios of women to men in academic departments at Khartoum University are as follows: Political Science 1:15; Sociology 3:18; and Law 1:12 (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000:7 quoting Hamad, 1995:77). Sall (2000:7) maintains that "the educational achievements by gender reflect deep-rooted social and cultural norms which infiltrate the educational system right from the elementary level". This structure is maintained until higher education and results in inequality or disempowerment of women. For instance, female faculty members and students often encounter diverse forms of harassment in the academy, which could range from sexual harassment to ideological harassment (Zezeza, 2004:62).

To this end Okeke (2004:485,480) argues that the state of women's education in Africa makes a powerful statement about the roles society has reserved in comparison with their male counterparts. Their role in the modern economy has been limited to that of wife and mother. They are largely excluded from the decision-making process and actions that define nation building.

2.3.1 Legislative policies on education

It has become clear that education can be thought of as a relationship between power and knowledge that governs our understandings, our constructs of self and others and our actions. It then follows that, because most educational systems in developing countries are funded primarily by the state, when

discussing the condition of women's education in Africa, it is important to take the policies of some states on education into account. Few have enacted legislative policies explicitly designed to meet women's educational needs. This is probably due to their reluctance to engage in challenges that might possibly seek to transform established power structures. This attitude causes the character of African states to continue being very patriarchal and it is unlikely that much will be done to modify current patterns of intervention that maintain the status quo in educational systems (Stromquist 1998). However, post-modern perspectives will likely make inroads into promoting a greater understanding of the complexities, contradictions and dilemmas within educational policymaking and the need for fewer imposed strategies and more local agency (Tabachnick and Beoku-Betts, 1998:301).

Studies on theories of African women's life experiences in their diversity need to be taken into consideration (Okeke, 2004:482). Currently, the trend is changing based on what was inherited from previous dispensations where education and women in Africa is concerned. It should not be forgotten though that gendered experiences in the process are still shaped by a configuration of state policies, social institutions and cultural as well as traditional socio-economic systems. For instance, many of the present day policymakers, educators, and community leaders remain wrapped up in the old legacy in which men control education, capital and social valuation (Moshi, 1998). They do not consider the diminishing of the nation-state and the rise of the composite state in the context of globalization (Crossman, 2004:323). Teaching methodology and materials used in schools also play a role in reinforcing both stereotypical views about women and gender-based divisions of labour. Consequently, women continue to be disadvantaged and discriminated against at various educational and social levels:

The administration, curriculum, staffing and pedagogical evaluation of African systems strongly exhibits characteristics that seriously mediate women's educational experiences, placing severe limitations on the prospects of recipients (Okeke, 2004:486).

2.3.1.1 School curriculum

There seems to be a systematic discrimination with regard to quality education for women (Moshi, 1998:viii-xi). The objective should be the establishment of true parity and quality education for women, an educational system where discrimination and disregard of women and girls is eliminated

and one that establishes equality at all levels (Moshi, 1998:xi). The manner how to achieve this objective is, for example, advocating a change in teaching methodology and materials that emphasize both stereotypical views about women and gender-based divisions of labour. This division of labour must be based on ability, skill and interest and not solely on gender (Moshi, 1998). Finally, African countries need to have policies that would enable them to reap the benefits that ensue from women's education (Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang, 2004).

2.3.1.2 Female school enrolment

A sound general education provides young people with the best foundation for their future participation in the employment market. This also applies to the informal sector where the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are essential for most legitimate profitable activities in the modern sector. It is not surprising then that those whom the education system has failed to retain in schools are likely to be found in the least profitable economic activities. This category mainly comprises of women as is obvious from the fact that at least two thirds of the world's adult illiterates, who make up the world's poorest people, are women (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:47-48). These women are also not prepared or educated in critical fields such as science. Serious educational gaps between men and women remain on all levels of education as seen in Table 1.

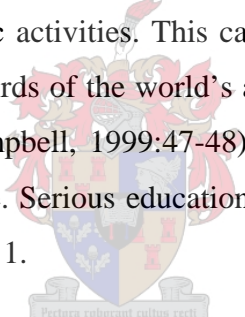


Table 1: Gross enrolment ratios by level of education in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1970 to 1997 with comparative estimates of the world total in 1997. MF represents male/female.

Area	Year	Primary (%)			Secondary (%)			Tertiary (%)			Total (%)		
		MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F
SSA	1970	52.5	62.3	42.8	7.1	9.6	4.6	0.8	1.3	0.3	25.6	30.8	20
	1975	62.1	71.9	52.3	11.2	14.5	7.9	1.2	1.8	0.5	30.8	36.4	25
	1980	79.5	88.7	70.2	17.5	22.2	12.8	1.7	2.7	0.7	40.6	46.4	35
	1985	78.9	87.2	70.6	22.1	26.3	17.9	2.3	3.5	1.1	42.3	47.6	37
	1990	74.8	81.9	67.6	22.4	25.5	19.2	3.0	4.1	1.9	40.9	45.4	36
	1995	76.6	83.8	69.4	25.4	28.1	22.7	3.7	4.8	2.5	43.0	47.4	39
	1997	76.8	84.1	69.4	26.2	29.1	23.3	3.9	5.1	2.8	43.2	47.7	38.7
World	1997	101.8	106.9	96.4	60.1	64.0	56.0	17.4	18.1	16.7	63.3	66.7	60

(Okeke, 2004:485 taken from *UNESCO Statistical Year Book (Education and Literacy) 1999*, www.uis.unesco.org)

In African countries, gender differences in human advance are particularly pronounced. Gaining access to education at all levels is much more difficult for women than men. They hold fewer teaching

positions at all levels of education and fewer PhD degrees than men. They are also under-represented in the academic hierarchy consisting of senior lecturers and professors and administratively as deans, heads of departments and vice-chancellors (Sall, 2000: x). For example, far fewer girls than boys enrol in school and graduate. As a result the literacy in Burundi, for instance, in 1990 was 47% among adult men but only 20% among adult women (Kegley & Wittkofp, 1997: 128-129). In Angola, the level of illiteracy is approximately 75%, and the vast majority comprises of women (Ducados, 2000:14). Nonetheless, women throughout the world continue to be disadvantaged relative to men across a broad spectrum of educational statistics, such as literacy rates, school and college enrolments and targeted educational resources (Kegley & Wittkofp, 1997:309; Zeleza, 2004).

It has long been recognized that improving access to quality education for women and girls dramatically improves other indicators of human well-being. For instance, it is known that the majority of countries with the lowest secondary school enrolment rates for girls also have among the highest rates of child mortality, where more than 15% of children die before age five.

Conversely, female enrolment in primary schooling has achieved parity with male enrolment in some African countries and this caused girls' enrolment to increase considerably in the 1960s. Countries such as Botswana, Namibia and Tanzania can attest to the fact that some of their girls' enrolments exceed that of boys since the governments of these countries changed their policy as far as enrolment was concerned (Moshi, 1998:1). This phenomena has also been observed in Islamic and Quranic schools that continue to grow in number and enrolment, in some cases alongside Western-style schools and as substitutes for these in other cases. Islamic schools that also offer a secular curriculum (e.g. Ahmaddiyah schools in northern Nigeria and Sierra Leone) often show increasing enrolments of both genders in areas where the enrolment in government schools are poor (Tabachnick and Beoku-Betts, 1998:303).

2.3.2 Social environment impact on women's education

Despite the fact that the government prides itself on gender equality in school enrolment, girls in Botswana struggle against huge disadvantages to obtain an education. Some of the obstacles hindering girls from getting an education include schools that are too far from home, lack of clean water and

separate toilet facilities and the ever-present threat of violence in and around the school environment. [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?Botswana> Downloaded on 06/01/2004]. In Tanzania the drop-out rate for girls at primary level is high. Some of the reasons for this are the initiation rituals when reaching puberty, early marriage, pregnancy, and pressure from some parents who see education as irrelevant for girls (Yahya-Othman, 2000 :35).

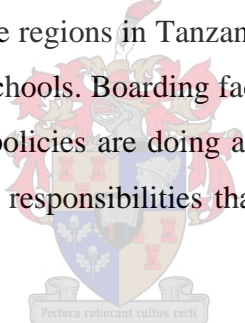
In Lesotho, the government has provided free primary education for all children. However, the government's plan of financing primary education will remain flawed until children no longer have the option of staying out of the classroom. Pressure is often placed on children - especially girls - to stay home by families affected by AIDS and poverty. There are, however, other conditions that also affect women and force them to drop out of school. In Somalia, for instance, extensive drought in the northern Togdheer region has caused water wells to dry up and the livestock population to decline significantly. Consequently schools were forced to close. The prevailing harsh conditions in the region forced about 40% of children, most of them girls, to drop out of school (Stromquist, 1998:28; [<http://www.irinnews.org/Somalia> Downloaded on 06/01/2004]).

2.3.2.1 The impact of globalization on female education

It is important at this point to bring to light how female education is construed under the changing conditions of globalization. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa international assistance is very important. For instance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assigns assistance to basic education. This assistance includes literacy programs that could benefit women, but the nature of this assistance often leaves the problem of gender inequalities untouched (Stromquist, 1998:33-34). For example, the production of textbooks with the help of international assistance has been on the increase, yet these organizations do not encourage the removal of sexual stereotypes from these textbooks (Stromquist, 1998:34). Furthermore, development institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), exert an incredible power over educational-policymaking in developing countries and Bloch and Vavrus (1998:4) emphasizes that these “voices contest what should happen, and whose discourse gains control”.

Dibua (2004:473-474) argues that in Nigeria students protested against the federal government who, in their view, had made an agreement with the World Bank and IMF to, among other things, introduce school fees and rationalize programs that were regarded as not relevant to the country's development. Their protest is premised on the argument that it would make university education unaffordable to the majority of the people. Taking into consideration that it is mostly the women that are compromised in such situations, it becomes clear that these Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have a negative impact on women's education. "The World Bank's policies reduce girls chances for education and will perpetuate this situation for at least another generation" (Turshen, 1994:90).

In Tanzania, women are the key agricultural producers and therefore responsible for getting the fees for their school-going children. The SAPs have destabilized women's ability to purchase farming inputs, affecting what they are able to produce. This in turn affects their ability to pay for their children's education (Yahya-Othman, 2000:37). In addition, there are regional imbalances in Tanzania as far as schooling is concerned. There are regions in Tanzania that do not have schools and then there are regions that have more than enough schools. Boarding facilities are provided as a means of dealing with this imbalance. The liberalization policies are doing away with this policy, and as always, it is especially difficult for girls as they have responsibilities that often deter them from getting a proper education (Yahya-Othman, 2000:37-38).



2.3.3 The influence of traditional/cultural mores on women's education

Schools modelled along European lines are not the only education offered to children and adults in sub-Saharan Africa. As formal "modern" schools have gained acceptance, support for more traditional schooling has tended to decline. Given relatively low participation rates in formal schooling for girls and young women in many sub-Saharan countries and the relatively high dropout rates, women spend most of their lives participating in other kinds of education than formal schooling. (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:48).

A wide range of factors, many of them deeply embedded in the gendered nature of culture and society, prevent women from participating on equal terms with men in formal education and training and, later on in life, in employment and self-employment. The most important factors include poverty (where

choices have to be made, parents usually choose to educate boys before girls); the greater demand for girls' labour in the home; and the "hidden curriculum" of everyday school practice which presents a male-dominated hierarchy of authority and which socializes girls into accepting a subordinate adult role and expectation of themselves (Stromquist, 1998; Mbow, 2000; Ouendji, 2000). In general, formal education and training in developing countries appears to not acknowledge the heavy involvement of women in economic activity and, as a result, does little to provide them with relevant skills. The gendered nature of the curriculum, as mentioned, and the quality of their training serves to reinforce rather than weaken the social and economic constraints operating against the equal participation of women in a labour market which is both highly competitive and discriminatory (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:48-49; Ouendji, 2000:139).

Tradition and culture has certain aspects that are looked at as values that are rooted in both formal and informal education. These aspects have weaknesses that continue to foster gender discrimination in African societies. To this end, how does the education acquired shape and influence the lives of women living within the constraints of social traditions and forces present within each country (Moshi, 1998)? As indicated above, education is seen as a way to create new ideas and opportunities, while at the same time we see it as restricting other possibilities.

The concept of the "new African women" has been fostered by the result of education being seen as a liberating factor. As women-headed households increase, a few of them claim educational independence and economic independence from their male counterparts. The new African woman expresses new ideas of personhood, is politically and economically aware of her environment, and can structure her stature to her own advantage economically and socially. She has gained all these abilities by means of her education.

On the other hand, education can bring confusion and contradiction for the African woman. Formal education may serve to empower her, raising her from poverty and inequality. However, it may also create confusion for the woman as her education automatically makes her a target of criticism against her culture and traditional mores (Moshi, 1998). Moshi (1998: xi) argues that this type of instruction, for instance social and cultural values, including gender identity and the division of labour based on gender, is acquired at home. Subsequently, the school has become an extension of social values

imparted at home. Thus, the roles, activities, and goals that have been shaped by the social order at home are allowed to govern.

Finally, studies on theories of the life experiences of African women in their diversity need to be taken into consideration (Okeke, 2004:482). Currently, the trend is changing based on what was inherited in previous dispensations where education and women in Africa is concerned. The harsh illiteracy and the under-education of African women clearly affects their ability to articulate and express their interests in a wide variety of fields, ranging from politics to the economy (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000:4). Education and especially higher learning is important since universities, for example, have to fulfil their real mission and play their role in the construction of their respective countries by producing knowledge (Abdoul, 2000:108) that will give women a voice in the discourse of the African Renaissance. Higher education for Africa's women should also question the conditions of their lives and the cultural elements that legitimize their subordinate status in society (Okeke, 2004:490).

Thus, the concept of academic freedom in the context of the changing socio-political landscape in Africa has had to be rethought. Cultural practices and cultural biases can condition academic freedom to the detriment of women and these practices and biases are cultivated within our societies (Yahya-Othman, 2000:34). Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that women's voices be included in the discourses that intend to shape the continent's socio-political landscape. These will have to incorporate government structures that bring the voices of marginalized people into policy settings and the inclusion of women and girls in family and community decision-making.

2.4 Women and politics

The fact that in 1990, 93 countries did not have any women ministers is a visible symptom of a much deeper social inequality (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996:31). Steiner and Alston (1996:962-964) admit that the structure of the international legal order reflects a male perspective and ensures its continued dominance. The primary subjects of international law are states and, increasingly, international organizations. In both states and international organizations the invisibility of women is striking. Power structures within governments are overwhelmingly masculine. Women only have significant

positions of power in a few states⁴ and in those where they are in positions of power, their numbers are miniscule (Lowe Morna, 2004). Women are either un-represented or underrepresented⁵ in the national and global decision-making processes.

In ideal conditions, women, like men, need political stability which guarantees protection of their basic human rights and social security to be able to engage in productive activities. They also need the right to develop and utilize their talents, fair pay for the work they perform and the right to participate in the management of their societies as intellectuals, policy makers, producers and consumers. Ouedji (2000:134) quotes Marie Louise Eteki Otabela of Cameroon where she affirms that “for centuries, the exclusion of women from the political sphere has deprived communities of half of their creative potential”.

2.4.1 Women and the political struggle

African women were engaged in a substantial role in national liberation struggles, fighting against various colonial incursions into their social, economic and political domains (Okeke, 20004:483). The African women who witnessed the independence of their countries possessed rich traditions as leaders, as participants in women’s movements and, along with men, in liberation struggles (Snyder and Tadeze, 1997:75). Women in many parts of Africa played a visible role in the political struggle. For example, Algerian women were active during the War of Independence. These women, primarily Arabophone and illiterate, were structurally marginalized by both colonial and native societies, yet they used the weight of their silent physical presence to play an important role in the revolution (Knauss, 1992).

The various nationalist liberation movements, however, showed little commitment to women’s advancement beyond the periods of political struggles. Mbeki’s renaissance has even been questioned. It may only be post-apartheid nationalism writ in large and aimed at promoting a new nationalist foreign policy. Quoting Urdang (1989) and Wieranga (1995), Okeke (2004:483) concludes that African women emerged in the post-colonial society as second class citizens subordinate to a male

⁴ The South African government has a gender machinery in place. The ANC also committed itself to the achievement of at least a 30% target of positions filled by women in political and decision-making structures.

⁵ “The quantitative school of thought, reflected in various Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) resolutions and international commitments, holds that women’s under-representation in politics is a violation of the democratic principle of fair representation” (Lowe Morna, 2004:28).

ruling class who kept them on the sidelines of formal politics, the state machinery and the modern economy.

Currently, women in the Democratic Republic of Congo are affected by the on-going conflict. Grave violations of human rights, such as the rape, murder, amputation, torture and abduction of children and women, have been committed. The gravity of this war and the increased poverty brought on by it has prompted women to condemn and fight against the lack of peace.

Women have realized that involvement in the process (of political struggle) is a pre-condition for peace. For this purpose they have changed their conduct and attitudes to bring about peace. Thus women have taken several initiatives, such as broadcasting messages of peace on the radio and television. They have organized demonstrations to raise awareness for peace. They have not spared any efforts to find ways and means of making their voices heard (Report by the Caucus of Women of the Congo, 2003:10).

South African women during the apartheid era expressed their political aims and struggle by joining political parties, being involved in the general struggles of trade unions and civic organizations against the apartheid government (Albertyn et al., 2002:17). Women were encouraged to fight apartheid alongside men rather than address concerns specific to women and for this they were heralded by the current post-apartheid government.

However, at the time of the national struggle, such gender-specific activism was considered divisive and detrimental to the movement (Stiehm, 1999:52; [<http://www.anc.za/ancdocs/history/women> downloaded 06/01/2005]). Msimang (2000:80-81) argues that the role of these women seem not to have had a lasting effect on post-liberation conceptions of citizenship. “Citizenship is now articulated in the language of the African Renaissance, in terms that clearly have little space in the history books for women” (Msimang, 2000:81). It is in this manner, amongst others, that the African Renaissance fails to take gender into account. This stance has an immediate impact on women’s lives.

The Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), an activist organization in Zimbabwe formed in 2003, recently attempted to give women a voice to protest Zimbabwe's political crisis which has been marked by violence and severe socio-economic problems. Women organize themselves into pressure groups protesting Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis and take part in marches to urge national reconciliation, protests against the rising cost of living, against the backdrop of a deteriorating economy, political violence, corruption, and hunger. They believe that they are making strides in

strengthening women's voices. [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ZIMBABWE> downloaded 06/02/2005]. In this respect, women have made a lot of conscious efforts during armed struggles, in particular. Micere Githae Mogu (in Msimang 2000:77) argues this point in the following extract:

Women did at least make an effort to break cultural and political silences around African women. Unfortunately the spaces created during such moments of historical glimmer have proven to be rather short-lived; hence the need for continuing struggles against silencing in which women are engaged today. These struggles are a significant part of the kind of cultural action that must inform the African Renaissance.

2.4.2 The representation of women in government

Feminist scholars established that women who were oppressed within their family unit or by their society were found to only participate in politics on a very low level. They were also found to have a tendency to accept the private sphere as their only legitimate world (Stromquist, 1998:26). Lowe Morna ((2004:25) quotes a UN report (1995) that says that nowhere is the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality among men and women greater than in the area of decision-making. Thus, women are caused to be non-citizens by their implicit non-participation in decision-making (Lowe Morna, 2004).

However, many women do excellent work in various facets of their societies. Achievements by men may make them eligible for leadership positions in society, but when women are considered for these positions, different criteria are used to evaluate them. African women experience inequality when it comes to representation in most African countries. Thus, their ability to influence situations in their favour is hampered by a lack of political voice in the government (Turshen, 1994:90).

Traditionally, in politics, women held fewer seats in parliament and national cabinet than men. Kegley & Wittkopf (1996:129) quotes UNDP (1995) by saying that the reason is “the current institutional, legal, and socio-economic constraints to women’s access to opportunities”. In Africa women constitute a very small minority in policy-making bodies, such as parliament, (see table 2) cabinet, judiciary and managerial and executive positions in both public and private sectors. Take, for example, the parliament: in 1997 in Malawi, when the head of states signed the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, both lower and single houses in the national assemblies were represented by only 17.5% of women. Since then the average figure of women in parliament in the SADC region has increased by

1.9% to the 19.4% at present (Lowe Morna, 2004:15). In Zimbabwe, women have played a very marginal role in the cabinet. Similarly, in Tanzania, women members of Parliament constitute a very small minority despite the introduction of a constitutional quota system, which has ensured the maintenance of a certain percentage of women in Parliament.

However, South Africa, Mozambique and Seychelles, have reached the 30% mark. It is important to notice that the constituency system does not help much when seeking to increase the representation of women (Lowe Morna, 2004). As Lowe Morna states (2004:18):

Southern Africa confirms the global experience that the combination of the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system with quotas, that are either legislated or adopted voluntarily by the main parties, is the surest means of achieving speedy results.

Table two: Regional averages of women in parliament

Region	Average
Nordic countries	39.7%
Americas	17.7%
Europe including Nordic countries	15.6%
Asia	15.4%
Sub Saharan Africa	14.1%
Pacific	12.1%
Arab states	5.9%
Global average	15.4%

(IPU, Lowe Morna, 2004)

The participation of women is essential to a democracy that claims to reflect and represent the diversity of its people. To live in a society based on the values of justice and equality, which require that women and men participate equally in decision-making, this is of the utmost importance. The women concerned with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action also decided that “achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making is...a demand for simple justice and democracy and a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account” (para.181). These statements suggest that women are needed to represent the interests of women. Further justifications may be based on the idea that women bring different values to decision-making, which in turn will impact on the content of politics (Albertyn et al., 2002).

Finally, SADC is show-casing good governance in that it prides itself on good practice and groundbreaking achievements. Rwanda has achieved the highest number of women representation in the world with 49% of its parliament members being female. This surpasses even Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway. However, apart from Rwanda, South Africa, for example, has the largest cabinet and highest number of women ministers in the region, with a female vice-president. Although experiments with quotas have produced high levels of women's representation in parliament and local government in South Africa and Mozambique (Lowe Morna, 2004:19), Seychelles has a soaring representation of women in decision-making without using quotas.

2.5 Women and economic relations

Increased industrialization of Third World countries has brought greater employment opportunities for women. However, this seeming improvement has not increased their economic independence or social standing and has had little impact on women's equality. African governments lack the sufficient political determination and sustained commitment to meet the needs and interests of African women [<http://www.herafrica.org/Njoki> Downloaded 02/05/2004]. Although they are important, current efforts to address issues of equal rights for women and protection from discrimination have done little to update policy-making. Subsequently, little has been done to improve living and working conditions for women.

Formal employment policies across the continent have not significantly deviated from the colonial structure that simply accommodated women in an essentially male dominated work environment (Okeke, 2004:490). This hampers Africa's development as a continent by excluding the perspectives, skills and dynamism of half the population [<http://www.herafrica.org/Njoki> downloaded 02/05/2004].

Williams (1999:245) also supports this fact by saying that, for over two decades the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral institutions have argued that integrated, sustainable and meaningful development in Africa can only be undertaken if women are provided with the facilities to participate fully and effectively in the process. Without meaningful commitment in the form of policy changes and the provision of resources to deal with the root causes of women's conditions, Africa cannot hope

to see a breakthrough in its development and renewal. This could mean the death of the African Renaissance.

Women workers are marginalized in the process of economic development because their economic gains as waged workers, farmers and traders are minimal compared to those of male workers (Benería and Sen, 1997). Despite the African woman's increasing participation in the workforce, existing gender inequalities have intensified with respect to working conditions and compensation. The reality of economic conditions for women in Africa is that women are still not economically empowered and therefore find it difficult to practice their entrepreneurial skills [<http://www.herafrica.org/Njoki> Downloaded 02/05.0224]. They have to face discrimination in training, hiring, access to credit and the right to own and inherit property. In South Africa, gender equality is a constitutional right, but in practice many women do not possess equal rights in community decision-making, land allocation, access to finance, etc. Under customary tenure, women's access to land was mainly through marriage. "Women's land rights vary but in general they are limited and insecure, threatened by chiefs, the rules and practice of customary law and by patriarchal household and community relations" (Baden et al., 1998:52).

In virtually every country, there are more women than men at the lowest levels of income. In general, poverty affects a disproportionate number of women. Most households headed by women tend to have an increasing incidence of poverty and, to that end, become the poorest groups in society (Baden et al., 1998; Todaro, 1989). Poor women outnumber poor men in Africa and more poor women than poor men live outside the cash nexus, mainly in rural areas. In fact, most Africans are poorer today than they were when African countries gained independence in the early 1960s when women did not have opportunities for self-advancement, growth and development (Williams, 1999). Women are now doubly disadvantaged, since they occupy lower status and lower wage jobs in virtually every society while retaining the overwhelming burden of childcare and household responsibilities. The labour women do outside caring for the family remains unvalued and uncompensated for where it does not form part of the cash economy. Economic visibility depends on whether they work in the public sphere or not. Unpaid work in the home or community is categorized as "unproductive, unoccupied, and economically inactive" (Steiner & Alston, 1996:895,901; Muthien, 2000:52). As a result women in

Africa still experience a lack of economic participation and poverty remains a bigger problem for women than men (Turshen, 1994).

2.5.1 Agriculture

In Africa, where subsistence farming is predominant and shifting cultivation remains important, women perform nearly all tasks associated with subsistence food production.⁶ Women comprise a much smaller proportion of the non-agricultural work force than men (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997:128; Stromquist, 1998:34; Snyder and Tadesse, 1997:75). While men who remain home generally perform the primary task of cutting trees and bushes on a potentially cultivable plot of land, women are responsible for all subsequent operations. These include removing and burning felled trees, sowing or planting the plot, weeding, harvesting and, finally, preparing the crop for storage or immediate consumption (Todaro, 1989).

One of the major reasons for the heavy burden borne by women in the agricultural sector of many developing countries is the relative inefficiency with which they perform their tasks due to the lack of capital and technology. Unfortunately, little effort is being made to improve women's productivity. Most development programs are targeted at improving the productivity of the male worker in the agricultural sector. Men are usually given access to credit and are taught modern methods of production while the women continue to rely on traditional methods of farming. This implies that they do not possess the means of production necessary to cultivate their land and ensure food self-sufficiency. As a result, the differences in labour productivity between men and women are constantly increasing (Todaro, 1989: 312). The work that women do require many days of long, hard labour simply to produce enough output to meet the family's requirements.

In addition to performing virtually all the subsistence farming, women may also contribute to the production of cash crops, usually on plantations (Todaro, 1989:311; Stromquist, 1998). However, their most important role in plantation production comprises the cultivation of small plots of land to meet the family's subsistence needs. This is their attempt at preparing themselves and their families for the

⁶ In a large number of early African societies, argues Snyder and Tadesse, (1997:75), the gender division of labour allocated responsibility for cultivation fell to women, who could barter or sell their excess produce while men engaged in hunting. The division of labour was different in other societies. For example, in Ethiopia men ploughed the fields and women weeded and harvested along with them. In parts of West Africa, women and men even farmed side by side.

losses that occur due to the very low male wages paid on most plantations. Thus, women have a heavy burden to bear in the African agricultural sectors.

This burden is compounded by their responsibilities within the home: housework, food preparation, and child-care. “Housework” may include difficult chores such as hauling water over long distances, gathering heavy loads of firewood, or washing clothing in a stream. “Food preparation” may include several hours a day of pounding and grinding grain or cooking for several small children and nursing infants at the same time. It then becomes evident that rural women in Africa usually work longer hours than men, working both inside and outside of the home (Todaro, 1989: 311 – 312)⁷.

2.5.2 Informal sector

As agricultural mechanization and the commercialization of farming have denied women access to land traditionally used for growing food, they have turned to the informal sector for a source of income. Therefore, when women are not engaged solely in subsistence agriculture, they tend to be involved in the so-called informal sector (also known as the “hidden” or “shadow” economy). Within the informal sector, women are generally found in low-income activities which barely guarantee survival. They are likely to be involved in self-employment or in casual or seasonal paid labour, often of an unskilled and physically demanding nature, with low productivity, long hours and little opportunity for upward mobility or for acquiring or improving skills. (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:46).

Typical activities for women are petty-trading and street vending (of vegetables, poultry, processed food or handcrafts), paid domestic work, casual employment in unregulated small enterprises or on construction sites and agricultural schemes (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:46). Such work is rarely protected by labour legislation and its precarious nature makes women an easy target for unscrupulous money-lenders and contractors. Economic recession, structural adjustment, and the growing incidence of

⁷ In its general recommendation No.17, The Committee called on states parties to take steps to “measure and value” domestic activities by, for example, conducting time-use surveys and collecting gender-based statistics on time spent working in the home and on the labour market. States should quantify such work and include it in the gross national product, both to reveal the true contribution of women to the national economy and to provide the basis on which policies for the advancement of women could be formulated (Steiner & Alston, 1996:917).

female-headed households (an estimated one-third of households worldwide) have increased the pressure on women as well as their children to contribute to the family income (Rowan-Campbell, 1999: 46-47).

2.5.3 Structural adjustment programs and gender relations in Africa

Women are part of the global economy which has an impact on them. As indicated above, there is considerable evidence that development, including economic globalization and restructuring, puts the well being of women at risk rather than improving it in view of the type of jobs and wages that will be available for them. During the last several years, many international institutions have become involved in institutional reforms in Africa. The most prominent of these organizations has been the Bretton Woods institutions consisting of the IMF and the World Bank. Faced with an existing or projected balance of payments deficit on combined current and capital accounts, developing nations have a variety of policy options (Todaro, 1989:407). One of the options is through the IMF and World Bank. They can follow very restrictive fiscal and monetary policies (called “structural adjustment” by the World Bank and “stabilization policies” by the IMF) designed to reduce domestic demand so as to lower imports, reduce the inflationary pressures that may have contributed to the “overvalued” exchange rate that slowed exports and promoted imports, promote growth and turn around the declining economies of Africa (Todaro, 1989:408; Geisler and Hansen, 1994:95).

The SAPs⁸ of International Financial Institutions (IFI's) and the World Bank that were intended to manage the debt crises, endured by many developing countries during the 1980s, further exacerbated the precarious situation of women (Steiner & Alston, 1996; Williams, 1999; Farr, 2000). These two institutions have promoted and prompted the orthodox formula for economic reform through their lending activities. This formula involves some or all of the following elements: privatization of government services and corporations, economic deregulation and liberalization of trade and reduction in the civil and social services spending. These programs have led to sharp cutbacks in “social safety

⁸ The mechanism used by the World Bank and the IMF is *conditionality*. This is the practice by which powerful institutions impose their agenda on weak governments as the price of international financial aid. Conditionality transforms policies once considered internal matters, such as subsidies on basic foods or funding policies for health and education, into international concerns, subject to outside influence if not outright control (Turshen, 1994:91).

net” spending in health, education and social services. The burden often fell disproportionately on women and children (Steiner & Alston, 1996:895-896; Turshen, 1994:77).

The World Bank, previously known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Stiglitz, 2002:11), has begun to experiment with a new measure of the “wealth of nations”. This measure counts not only the production of goods and services, as the Gross National Product (GNP) now does, but also incorporates how states manage their natural resources and how much they invest in human resources (Kegley & Witkopf 1996:342). Both these institutions have attempted to force improvements on both macroeconomic performance and governance by using their SAPs. They also compel countries to generate enough resources to service their debts and provide for domestic development (Mbaku 1999:10). SAPs have reminded Africans of the need to engage in comprehensive institutional reforms to provide themselves with more effective governance and economic structures. However, after more than sixteen years, they have had little positive effect on the African economies. If Africans do not enforce these reforms the continent will be unable to generate the wealth that it needs to meet the needs of its people, and will continue to operate on the periphery of the global economy (Mbaku 1999).

The World Bank’s neo-liberal “structural adjustment” should be seen as an economic technique of political power. As with most African countries, the casual application of structural adjustment to societies with vastly different traditions and conditions has had disastrous results, particularly for the impoverished (Peet 1999:2). The policy was enforced in Sub-Saharan Africa despite the knowledge that the free play of market forces can generate levels of poverty that are socially unacceptable (Turshen, 1994:90). This is why the “SAPs are seen as foreign-formulated, foreign-inspired, and foreign-imposed in a grand strategy to re-colonize the continent under the supervision of the IMF and the World Bank” (Muthien, 2000:52, quoting Julius Ihonvbere).

The conditions of economic crisis in which sub-Saharan Africa currently finds itself was produced, to a great extent, by its high per capita external debt. Due to these conditions, the solutions being proposed by donor agencies through SAPs assign priority to strategies that will enable the African countries to pay back their debt. Since African governments generally allocate a smaller share of their total spending to health care than European governments, this concern invariably has led to the reduction of

social services (Stromquist, 1998:37). In the 1980s, however, many Sub-Saharan countries accepted strict measures, reducing public expenditures on social services in general and on health in particular. Unfortunately, the market model forced governments to abdicate their responsibility for the welfare of the people and their households. This is indicated in the budget cuts of water, housing, education and sanitation. These budget cuts have placed an increased workload and responsibility on women who mostly shoulder the burden of social reproduction (See Geisler and Hansen, 1994 for a detailed account on Zambia).

2.5.4 The damage caused by SAPs on women

These reforms have had a bigger impact on women since they rely more heavily on social services. This can be traced to the biology of reproduction and to social arrangements that present women with more domestic responsibility to care, such as caring for the young, the elderly and the ill. The loss of public service means that women are forced to spend more time providing such services for their family. They carry water farther, nurse sicker kin, search for informal credit arrangements and stand in long queues to obtain exemption.

Reductions in public spending for social services and poverty alleviation programmes impact on women and men differently, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Reduced public spending affects greater numbers of women than men and has a more adverse impact on women than on men (Turshen, 1994: 77-78). In Senegal, budget reductions led to shortages in hospitals and public health centres, the introduction of payment for consultations and medical care even for the destitute and a freeze on the recruitment of doctors (Turshen, 1994:77-78).

These cutbacks have affected women more adversely than men for a number of reasons. Firstly, women were poorer than men when the reforms were enacted, and the poor rely more heavily on public services than those living above the poverty line. Secondly, poor women are more vulnerable to inflation, social conflict and uncertainty all of which structural adjustment policies tend to increase (Turshen, 1994:77; Lowe Morna, 2004:26). The economic reforms themselves are also gender-biased because they ignore the unpaid labour of women in the maintenance and reproduction of the workforce and they contain economic distortions (Turshen, 1994). For example, structural adjustment policies

assume that land is the scarcest resource in Sub-Saharan Africa. In reality, labour is scarcer than land in agriculture and women provide most of the farm labour. Labour is needed for the critical moments in the agricultural cycle, such as planting and harvesting and weeding which is exclusively women's work. Lacking mechanical equipment, needing assistance and unable to hire labour, women use the labour of their children. Yet, despite the tremendous costs of maternal and child health, adjustment policies ignore the unpaid labour of women and encourage the misuse of this resource (Turshen, 1994: 77-78).

Although SAPs is a serious attempt to solve the current financial crisis that is forcing third world countries to allocate substantial portions of their national income to pay their external debt, it is also clear that one cannot attempt to implement them in a way that is gender-blind. (Stromquist 1998:35).

African Renaissance thinkers or scholars argue that the African Renaissance is an imperative due to the precarious socio-economic situation in Africa. The economic situation of women in this continent obviously shows a desperate need for renewal, restructuring and a renaissance. This study will discuss the possibility for this restructuring considering the fact that women are excluded in the African Renaissance phenomenon. Professor Dlamini of the University of Zululand in South Africa reminded people in a conference on the African Renaissance, held on the 26th March 1999, that poverty has a feminine face. Bongmba (2004:316) suggests that if there is going to be a rebirth of values, "attention must be given to values and practices that recognize and raise women to the level of equal partners in the revitalization of political and economic life."

2.6 Women and social conditions

Women have been constrained by existing socio-cultural norms through which they are perceived as inferior or second-class citizens. Although the position of African women in traditional societies remains undocumented, there has been a tendency to use culture and tradition to undermine that position. Culture has been used to justify the subordinate position of women in the household, a factor that excludes women from property ownership. Culture has also been used to justify the existing unequal division of labour. Some cultural norms concerning age of marriage and marriage rights have also limited women's participation in formal schooling. The most disturbing factor about African governments is that the state can be limited to a large extent depending on tradition and religious concepts.

Therefore, culture and customary law practices have become a salient concern. Steiner & Alston (1996: 958-959) argues that a government may find it difficult to disregard the sentiments of politically powerful groups or segments of society that wish to maintain religious rites or customary law. Another problematic issue is violence against women. The system of male dominance has historical roots and its functions and manifestations change over time. Thus, the oppression of women becomes a question of politics, requiring an analysis of the state and society, the conditioning and socialization of individuals and the nature of economic and social exploitation. The use of force against women is only one aspect of this phenomenon, which relies on intimidation and fear to subordinate women (Steiner & Alston, 1996:943).

2.6.1 Women and religion

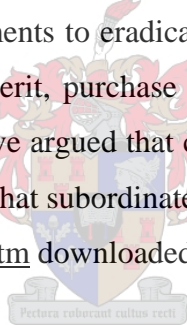
In humankind's search for meaning and purpose in life and for personal immortality, religion became a paramount force in most societies. However, the hierarchical structures of the religions of the modern world are dominated by males and the teachings, theology and laws of these religions also place women at a disadvantage. Religion has a substantial influence on the creation and especially the maintenance of gender roles. Christian women, for example, are found to be more religious than Christian men and are therefore more regular church-goers. Subsequently, women are preached to more than men, but are also preached to by men, since most preachers are men. This causes women to become increasingly more conservative. While Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism differ in many doctrines and rituals, all prescribe lower status for women.

Women have suffered subordination in all spheres of life. In many Islamic countries, for example, women must hide their faces with veils in public, and women and men are often completely separated in social and religious activities (Kegley & Wittkopf 1997:309). Thus, as African women slowly make inroads into professions in law, business, finance and medicine, some women groups face more social constraints than others in negotiating the hybrid social order. However, addressing women's rights is difficult because it involves deeply entrenched as well as widely divergent religious and cultural beliefs.

2.6.6 Customary law and culture

The main problem identified around customary law is that women are not taken seriously. African customary marriages are marriages that are negotiated, celebrated or concluded according to any of the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African people. In South Africa, legislation was passed in the form of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, which recognizes African customary marriages as legal, and explicitly permits the possibility of polygamous marriages (Mamashela and Xaba 2003). Thus, there are customary laws that women would like abolished such as rites like *ukungenwa* (arranged marriage).

Land is the most important resource in Africa because people depend on it for cultivation and therefore their livelihood depends on it. Unequal access to land is one of the most important forms of economic inequality between men and women and has consequences for women as social and political actors. African women have mounted new movements to eradicate customary land tenure practices and fight for the rights of women to be able to inherit, purchase and own land in their own name. Feminist lawyers working with these movements have argued that customary law in the present day context has been used to selectively preserve practices that subordinate women
[<http://www.Africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v714al.htm> downloaded 16/18/2005].



There has also been conflict over customary arrangements and women's land rights. There is a belief that legal reforms have undermined local systems of adjudication and created a rigidity in customary laws that prevents them from being modified and used flexibly
[<http://www.Africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v714al.htm> downloaded 16/18/2005].

According to Gita Gopal of the World Bank, unwritten customary systems offer women more options than legal reforms because customary adjudication is not based on rules and laws in the same way that formal legal systems are structured.

Customary practices are fluid because they are socially embedded and are based on evolving local social and political relations. But this can potentially hurt or help women, and at a time when the clan leaders feel under siege and land scarcity is great, women have no guarantees that their just claims will be given their full consideration [<http://www.Africa.ufl.edu.htm> downloaded 16/18/2005].

With regard to inheritance law, which represents an important way to acquire property, Cameroonian women are granted equal rights to men. They can inherit property, and use it as they please. Discrimination lies in customs that prohibit a woman from inheriting from her father or mother because it is considered a woman's vocation to get married. Once married, a woman is considered part of her husband's "estate" in the same category as his personal property and real estate [www.reproductiverights.org downloaded 15/09/2005].

Thus, the African Renaissance relegates women as minors, children and property. The proponents of the African Renaissance need to focus on reforms that are increasingly seen as key to women's emancipation and, in particular, on constraints imposed by customary laws and practices.

2.6.3 Women and violence

One of the concerns that unite women all over the world is violence. It is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which they are forced into a subordinate position (Steiner & Alston, 1996:941). Women have lived with male violence against them for centuries and internalised it in such a way that some of them now even blame themselves for its occurrence. It leaves them feeling wounded and ashamed. Over the years the accumulation of research and the testimony of an ever-increasing number of support groups, crisis centres and shelters have made the personal public and revealed these shameful acts to the world. Yet the problem has not been significantly diminished. Whether the new openness means that more violent crimes against women are reported or whether there is an actual increase, is not clear. However, the extent of the violence is numbing (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:20).

Violence against women is a critical tool in the maintenance of male hegemony. It is the means by which the patriarchal requirements of conformity and obedience are extended to women and enforced (Rowan-Campbell, 1999). Traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage, acid attacks and female circumcision. Such prejudices and practices may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women. The majority of women are living in an explosive or potentially explosive and violent environment. For instance, the issue of domestic violence has not been addressed by existing political systems yet the mass media is full of horrifying reports of domestic violence, especially against women and children. The mass

media even reports employers and senior executives sexually harassing women (Steiner & Alston 1996:941).

The effect of such violence on the physical and mental integrity of women is to deprive them of the equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The underlying consequences of these forms of gender-based violence help to maintain women in subordinate roles and contribute to their low level of political participation as well as to their lower level of education, skills and work opportunities (Steiner & Alston, 1996:939). The ideologies that justify the use of violence against women base their discussion on a particular construction of sexual identity. Their construction of masculinity often requires that manhood be equated with the ability to exert power over and to control the lives of those around him, especially women. The construction of femininity in these ideologies often requires women to be passive and submissive, to accept violence as part of a woman's estate (Steiner & Alston, 1996: 944).

After four UN World Conferences and one year devoted to women, the world seems to agree that women should have equality and equity and that gender issues are of some importance. Even the World Bank's report of 1993 conceded, for the first time, to violence against women being a health issue. Domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse and genital mutilation are problems that cause maternal deaths, miscarriage, low birth weight and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as higher rates of mental illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, depression and suicide (Turshen, 1994:89).

It is on this basis that this study argues that the notion of the African renaissance is linked to the struggle for emancipation of African women. The democratization and renewal process will be incomplete if half of its population remains in bondage. Moreover, to exclude half of the continent's population from the process of social transformation will not necessarily be a transformation, but an entrenchment and perpetuation of male values. Msimang, (2000:67-68) argues the following:

Concerning identity, the advocates of the discourse African renaissance concede that the purpose of African renaissance is to bring self –identity, renewal and rebirth. For example, gender is rarely articulate as a meaningful site of identity in national discourse about what it means to be a South African. Yet for many, the lived experiences of being a woman in South Africa is defined by the fear of sexual violence, difficulties in obtaining and maintaining work in the formal economy, etc. Instead Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance offers a numbing silence when it comes to analyses of gender oppression.

2.6.3.1 Domestic violence

More than half the women in the world have been abused in some way by a present or former intimate partner. In many cultures one way to feel unambiguously male is to dominate women, to behave aggressively and to take risks (Pillay, 2000:33). One of the strongest predictors of societies with high violence against women is the presence of a masculine ideal that emphasizes dominance, toughness or male honour. Another strong factor seems to be the wide social acceptance of violence as the only way to resolve conflict (Pillay, 2000:33). Violence against women is largely perpetrated in the private domain of intimate relationships and is generally explained in terms of antagonisms between men and women in dysfunctional interactions (Sideris, 2000:41). When women are threatened with sexual and physical abuse, they are constantly fearful. Therefore the issue of domestic violence can even result in interaction with men in the workplace becoming problematic for women (Rowan-Campbell, 1999:28).

2.6.3.2 Women and war

The feminist analysis of militarization holds essentialist notions of gender and violence that equates women with peace. These notions view aggressiveness as inherently male, in contrast to women's nurturing nature ⁹ (Ducados, 2000:12). However, civil wars and cross-boundary conflicts are not matters that affect men alone. Thus, women's active participation in the determination of national decisions must be ensured (Farr, 2000:30).

The vast majority of women have been excluded from the delegations that decide on war and on peace-building on a continent where war is very prevalent and where world attention has tended to focus almost exclusively on military solutions. Women and girls, who form part of the terrain of battle, bear a tremendous burden as victims of conflict and war, specifically as targets of sexual violence and

⁹ According to feminist critics, international relations theory, as it has evolved, incorporates "masculinist" prejudices at each of its three levels of analysis: man, the state, and war. Realists are "andocentric" in arguing that the propensity for conflict is universal in human nature ("man"); that the logic and the morality of sovereign states are not identical to those of individuals ("the state"); and that the world is an anarchy in which sovereign states must be prepared to rely on self-help which includes organized violence ("war"). Feminist theorists would stress the nurturing and cooperative aspects – the conventionally feminine aspects – of human nature. They would expose the artificiality of notions of sovereignty and their connection with patriarchy and militarism and they would replace the narrow realists' emphasis on security, especially military security, with a redefinition of security as universal social justice (Kegley & Witkopf 1996:354).

abuse. They are scarred, abused and violated on a mass scale with no promise of justice in the post-war (Hayson, 2000:3; Ducados, 2000). To attack women and children is to attack the most vulnerable members of society and lays bare the inability of men to protect their kin. The forms of violence experienced, including sexual violence, threaten community coherence and stability, and undermine the foundations of relationships and practices, which give a society its identity (Meintjes, 2000:8).

Hayson (2000) reiterates the fact that there are shifting gender identities¹⁰ in war and the aftermath of war. Women successfully use networks, custom and song to make peace and to fight wars of liberation as women and as cadres. However, when the revolution ends the women find they are still disadvantaged by unequal gendered division of power and resources (Ducados, 2000:13). Women are seen to be seeking a role in bringing about peace during the height of conflict but are seldom mentioned in the brief political histories of these conflicts (Pollecutt, 2000:91). Msimang (2000:67-68) argues that the silence of the African Renaissance proponents on issues of gender is indicative of the selective memory of patriarchal nationalism which, once liberation has been achieved, can afford to forget what women have done to secure independence or, worse yet, restores women to their “rightful” subordinate places.

Therefore, gender equality needs to be part of the paradigm if peace and human security is to be achieved. Militarisation and security are a masculinised area of study that has yet to include consideration of women or their human security needs. This discipline and its language need to be *feminized*. Women’s contribution is still new and undervalued, but it must increasingly be heard and recognized if peace and human security is to be achieved (Hayson, 2000:3).

There are women that are still living in conditions of conflict and war, for example, the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Sudan and especially Rwanda. At the height of the civil war in Rwanda there was a public call to rape ethnic Tutsi women. Sexual violence against Rwandan women occurred on an unprecedented scale. More than 250 000 Rwandan women were raped by all parties involved in the conflict. Women’s bodies were used as the figurative and literal

¹⁰ For example, Angolan women were heroines during the liberation struggle. This strongly suggests that nationalist struggles are gendered as they involve the manipulation of gender identities, symbols and gendered divisions of power, labour and resources. On the other hand, Angolan women have been excluded from peace negotiation processes and seem to have been relegated to passive agents and victims of the process, as if the war was an “all-men’s business” (Ducados, 2000:21).

sites of combat (Moodley, 2000:94). In Sudan, Southern Sudanese women have been affected by war in a gender-specific way. They have been subject to rape and abduction. They were also used as tools of ethnic cleansing (see Ali, 2000:67).

The effect of forms of torture, such as rape,¹¹ was to induce shame, humiliation and feelings of inadequacy and personal disintegration (Meintjes, 2000:8, Farr, 2000:27). Rape is a war strategy against women and used to boost soldiers morale. It is also used to spread political terror and boost the morale against the opposition. It destroyed women's capacity and ability to sustain their communities and ensure their social and physical continuity (Moodley, 2000:95). Internal wars spill over and touch the lives of everyone. Most women and children become displaced and refugees. They may never rebuild their lives, see their families or be able to make the journey home (Farr, 2000:30; Pillay, 2000:32).

2.6.4 Health

Women's low social and economic status, combined with greater biological susceptibility to HIV, put them at high risk of infection. The deteriorating economic conditions make it difficult for women to access health and social services and exacerbate their vulnerability [www.info.usaid.gov/pop_health downloaded 15/06/2005]. Spousal separation due to male labour migration encourages high-risk sexual behaviour among women and men. Angola is one of the 11 countries with the highest level of infant mortality which, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is close to 40% (Ducados, 2000:14). The number of births taking place in public healthcare facilities has dropped. More births take place at home and this contributes to increased sickness among infants. Women who give birth at home bring their sick newborns to hospitals for treatment of jaundice and infections of the umbilical cord (Turshen, 1994:82). In Zimbabwe twice as many women died during childbirth in the first two years after the introduction of structural adjustment programmes and health spending was cut by a third (Muthien, 2000:53).

¹¹ Rape, as with all terror-warfare, is not exclusively an attack on the body, it is an attack on the "body-politic". Its goal is not to maim or kill one person but to control an entire socio-political process by crippling it. It is an attack directed equally against personal identity and cultural integrity (Sideras, 2000:41). The article explains how rape perverts social norms, and destructs social and cultural integrity.

2.6.4.1 HIV/AIDS

The spread of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is difficult to predict because many cases go undiagnosed or unreported, particularly in the global South. The virus that causes AIDS is hard to detect because of its long incubation period. The AIDS death toll continues to mount. It is predicted that AIDS will increase the infant mortality rate in the next five years by 26%. By 2010 it will have increased by 40% [www.info.usaid.gov/pop_health]. In Africa, women are already bearing a disturbingly high share of the AIDS burden. Women constitute 48% of the AIDS victims in Africa in comparison with 13.7% in the United States and 17.2% in Europe (Steiner & Alston, 1996:892). AIDS poses a wholly different safety issue for women. Beyond its social and economic costs, it also has an impact on the safety of women since their risk factor is increased by military men and soldiers who are infected and rape women. The impact of AIDS on social structures and economic performance is more devastating than its victims' number suggests. Its spread affects mostly young and middle-aged income-generating people. Thus, it affects the family care giving and food production in countries where agriculture remains heavily labour-intensive (Kegley & Witkopf, 1997:285-286).

South Africa has one of the most severe HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world. The virus is rapidly spreading and a large population is at risk. About 3.6 million people – eight percent of the entire population – are infected with HIV [www.info.usaid.gov/pop_health]. The HIV/AIDS situation in South Africa is fundamentally worse for women. In 1998, 23% of pregnant women in antenatal clinics tested positive for HIV [www.info.usaid.gov/pop_health downloaded 15/06/2005]. In the most affected province - Kwazulu-Natal - women are the hardest hit by the HIV virus. HIV prevalence was 33% among pregnant women. It is necessary for the women in this province, and for all the women in this country, to make the issue of HIV/AIDS one of the utmost importance (Benjamin & Einloth, 1998:97; [www.info.usaid.gov/pop_health downloaded 15/06/2005]).

2.6.5 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

This practice involves the removal of a woman's clitoris and parts of the external genitalia in order to reduce the woman's sex drive. It was defended as a cultural preference till as late as 1985. Luckily, it was dismissed a few years later on the agenda of feminists in most African countries (Stromquist,

1998:27). The African Union (AU) held a conference in February 2004 in Addis Ababa against this practice. At this conference it was established, according to statistics, that between 100 million and 130 million women have endured FGM or excision at the hands of unqualified practitioners, often without any anaesthetic or sterilised instruments. The practice is ubiquitous in the Horn of Africa where, for example, 98% of Somali women are estimated to have undergone the procedure. In Ethiopia, it is almost as widespread [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?NIGER> downloaded 05/01/2005].

The AU has established legal frameworks towards helping to enforce a continent-wide ban on FGM. Philomina Bience Gawanas who is appointed in the Commission of the AU said that, although the AU had embarked on a “large scale” campaign to persuade African governments to sign up, only a handful of African governments - a total of sixteen - ratified their laws to introduce the AU into their domestic legislation. She told the conference that, without their commitment, legal and policy instruments to combat this practice against women were just “dead letters” (Cornish, 2004: 14). Dr Olusegun Babaniyi, who heads the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Ethiopia, said that FGM was a human rights violation and that it is caused by social reasons relative to the low status of women in society. FGM affects the physical, emotional and social well-being of women. In fact, it is an important form of violence against women [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?NIGER> downloaded 05/01/2005].

Earlier, Ethiopian President Girma Woldegiorgis had told delegates that harmful traditional practices were obstructing development and preventing women from reaching their potential. "Above all, by preventing individuals from utilizing their potential and abilities effectively, it hinders them from making a meaningful contribution to their country's development," he argued. [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?AFRICA> downloaded 05/01/2005]. Such cultural practices may be perceived as a hindrance to development and to the project of the African Renaissance. Bongmba (2004:316) quotes Hunter (1999), who argues that rites like FGM continue to be a concern to many people in the West albeit not proposing that the West should put an end to such practices. That relies entirely on how African states address these issues.

Female Genital Mutilation is also widespread in West Africa and was, for example, made illegal in Niger three years ago. However, it remains widespread and no one has ever been prosecuted for performing operations. The government does make efforts to combat FGM. The minister, Abdoulwahid Halimatou Oueini, issued her appeal to mark the first ever worldwide Anti-FGM Day at

a ceremony in the village of Komba, South East of the capital. Komba was chosen because it was the first village in Niger in 1994 where local health officials denounced the practice which is still carried out by a number of ethnic groups in the region.

Among certain ethnic groups excision is a right of passage for young women. A young woman who has not had the operation is subjected to ridicule by her peers and she will have great difficulty finding someone to marry her. Medical complications frequently occur during excision and some girls even die, mainly from heavy bleeding. However, the traditional “exciseuses” that carry out the operation, usually with a razor blade in unsanitary conditions, are reluctant to take the girls to hospital. The Niger government is concerned that, besides damaging the girls' health, the practice is also fuelling the spread of HIV/AIDS through the use of non-sterilised blades.

[<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?NIGER> downloaded 05/01/2005]

2.6.6 Fistulae

Obstetric fistulae is a crippling health problem and the struggle of many of the poor women in some parts of the African continent. Women suffer from fistulae if they have had a prolonged childbirth. The constant pressure of the baby's head in the birth canal causes a perforation of the tissue separating the bladder and the vagina and sometimes also the tissue between the rectum and the vagina. In nearly every case, the baby dies. As a result of the weakened birth canal, women then experience urine leaking uncontrollably from the vagina. Older women have lived and dealt with fistulae for up to 30 years before finding the resources and expertise to cure them.

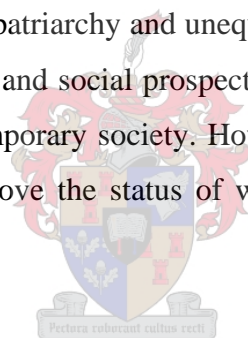
[<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?TANZANIA> downloaded 05/01/2005]

Fistulae represent not only a health condition; its roots lie in political, economic and social determinants that underlie poverty and vulnerability. These include limited expenditure on priority sectors that benefit the poor, absence of government structures that bring the voices of marginalized people into policy settings, lack of transparency in the use of public funds for basic services and the exclusion of women and girls from family and community decision-making. Fistulae provide a lens onto these determinants of inequality. It also serves to determine whether or not policy objectives to reduce poverty are creating meaningful change for the poorest and most marginalized members of society. In rural areas, where there are few doctors and only one or two gynaecologists, many girls and

women with fistulae have to travel more than 500 km to reach one of the major centres for fistula repair. The cost of treatment and transport makes it difficult to receive treatment. [<http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?TANZANIA> downloaded 05/01/2005].

2.7 Conclusion

Women make up a significantly large proportion of the population of the African continent, yet they are the most disadvantaged of all groups. They have been excluded from participation in political and economic markets since independence. Women are usually the poor in a society. They are usually less educated, have fewer employment opportunities, their health conditions are marginalized and they receive lower wages than men. They have less access to land, capital and technology. This lack of access greatly diminishes the efficiency of production both inside and outside the home. Women in Africa have suffered colonial injustices, patriarchy and unequal measures were used against them even after independence. Economic, political, and social prospects remain the most crucial determinants of African women's progress in the contemporary society. However, the extent to which education as a variable to these determinants can improve the status of women depends largely on the conditions under which it is acquired and utilized.



Women have been the core of civil society in Africa, but, although African women join political and social organizations in large numbers, their impact in state policies has been minimal. There is still a persistent lack of recognition of the position and contribution of women in Africa. Even the African Union (AU) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) structures contain only limited references to women. African women are not given the attention of values and practices that recognize and raise them to the level of equal partners in the revitalization of political and economic life. Therefore, it is impossible to even think of an African Renaissance that does not include women or allow for their voices to be heard.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IS THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE?

3.1 Introduction

In finding meaning to the notion of gender in the African Renaissance, it is essential to explore the concept of the African Renaissance. The objective of this exploration will be to find out how women are included in or excluded from the African Renaissance. To realize a clear and meaningful African Renaissance idea, a proper analytical basis must be laid for. It is essential to understand the meaning and scope of the African Renaissance. What is the historical background and the origin of the African Renaissance as a concept? More importantly, what is the stance of gender politics in the African Renaissance and is it possible to find a feminist voice in this discourse?

Africa's historical liberation movements include the Négritude movements, the Pan-Africanist movement, the Garvey movements, the Civil Rights movement, and the Black Consciousness movement. They contributed to the present day African Renaissance concept (Dalamba, 2000:2, Bongmba, 2004:295). Cheikh Anta Diop programmatically proclaimed the African Renaissance as far back as the early 1950's and African politicians during and after the independence struggles have also sown seeds of the African Renaissance (Buchholz, 2001: 147). In fact, 1960 was affirmed as the "Year of Africa" (Dalamba, 2000:2). By publically introducing the African Renaissance, President Mbeki of South Africa continues a long history of Africa's struggles for its identity, its search for a sustainable guide to stability, prosperity and peace. He sees a renaissance in which people of Africa take a stand.

He wants to see an African continent in which the people participate in all systems of governance, a continent in which they are truly able to determine their destiny and put behind them the notions of democracy and human rights as peculiarly "western" concepts (Speech delivered at the Summit on Attracting Capital to Africa that was organized by

the Corporate Council on Africa in Chantilly, Virginia, April 19–22, 1997). As this is a renewal of values and individual and social practices that shape public life, it is the interest of this chapter to find out whether these ideals have the well-being of women at heart and if their voices are also making a difference in the project of the African Renaissance.

3.2 Origins of the African Renaissance

There have been a lot of attempts at realizing a reform in Africa (Ntuli, 2004). Many discourses have been built around the African Renaissance, but its early advocates named it differently. African scholars and leaders came with concepts that varied in names but specified this African renewal. Amongst others, Negritude, African Personality or Africanité and Authenticity are some of these concepts.

3.2.1 Négritude

The champion of Négritude and one of its chief architects was Leopold Sedar Senghor. Négritude grounds African cultural specificity on the essence of the Negro. It is the expression of specific aspects of black peoples' identities. In its historical formulation, Négritude had a cathartic effect. It was an invigorating liberation that gave self-confidence back to the black man and permitted him to perceive himself more positively and affirm his cultural identity (Glele, 1991:191). Certain aspects of Négritude, in so far as it was a cultural and a political mobilizer, have made the socio-cultural identity of black people an arm of emancipation and renaissance. Glele (1991:192) points out the following:

[Négritude] fought against the Euro-centrism, racism, prejudice, incomprehension and arrogance of cultural domination, assimilation and alienation, dethroned the Western cultural paradigm from its privileged position as the universal criterion and model for all others, and in this way vigorously affirmed the right of African cultures to differ.

Several years ago, Abiola Irele pointed out that the Négritude movement was a Renaissance since its call for appreciation of the African world, which western influence had obscured, appears to be in fact the most essential and most significant element in the literature of negritude. Therefore, négritude is the principle channel of the African Renaissance (Irele, 1970). Bongmba (2004:300) argues that the problem that the Négritude ideology had was that its advocates used to appeal to Africans to embrace their cultures, but they did not try to encourage the political leadership which would be necessary to empower Africans to face challenges posed by the totalities of modernity.

3.2.2 African Personality

Négritude was followed by the concept of “African Personality”. This was defined as the ensemble of aspects common to African cultures of the entire continent, including the Negro-African and the Arab-Berber cultures. African Personality dates from the beginning of the century when Edward Blyden spoke of “Africa struggling for its own personality”. He describes the African personality as “spiritual, social, communal, consensus-minded, full of emotion, rhythm, and of sensitivity” (Bongmba, 2004:293). Bongmba (2004:293) quotes Mudimbe 1988 by saying that, in the works of Blyden, African Personality is an attempt to critique and reverse western racism. Kwame Nkrumah reiterated this view. African Personality is a historic consciousness of a culturally united Africa, a synonym for African Personality. It delineates and defines the knowledge of African cultures through historical, cultural, literary, artistic and even scientific technologies (Glele, 1991:192).

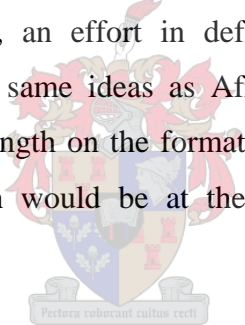
3.2.3 Authenticity

‘Authenticity’ is the contribution of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, who described it as “the duty to think and act for ourselves, affirming the reality and the value of African cultures, such as existed before colonization, without the cultural influences imposed by contact with the West and the modern world” (Glele 1991:193). It does not mean a return but a recourse to traditional

culture by drawing from its elements with which to renew and adapt African culture for the future. Authenticity also refers to the desire to deepen cultural roots in order to find an identity through which Africans can relaunch themselves along the creative path of genuine African initiative. Crossman (2004:322) argues that this intellectual grassroots movement was politically (mis)appropriated by Mobutu and, consequently, condemned to an undeserved premature death. The same train of thought is present in Tanzania's Julius Nyerere's more earnest "Ujamaa", (village collectivization), Kenneth Kaunda's "African humanism", Jomo Kenyatta's "Harambee" ('let's pull together') efforts and in Gabonese President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba's "Renovation" (Glele 1991:193).

3.2.4 Consciencism

According to Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Consciencism appears to be the ideology of the renaissance of the African State, an effort in defining a modern African political philosophy. It brings across the same ideas as African Personality to some degree. Nkrumah even started to talk at length on the formation of the United States of Africa. Henceforth, a political dimension would be at the forefront of such a deliberation (Hountondji, 1996).



This confirms that the African Renaissance is not a new concept. African intellectuals have tried to reclaim the African identity throughout history. The crucial question at this point is what must be different about current efforts to re-ignite the African Renaissance? What must be tackled differently to make the twenty-first century truly an "African century"? And lastly, since men pioneered the above-mentioned concepts, are women now giving any shape to today's concept of the African Renaissance?

3.3 The theory of the African Renaissance

Colonial discourses constructed Africans as lacking in self. The project posited a universality that opened up the possibility for the recuperation or redemption of the native as a "civilizing mission". The intellectual presuppositions of colonialism

represented a formulation, in negative terms, of the African identity. Its racism was a large statement about the nature of the African which called for a refutation (Hountondji, 1996:17). Indeed Africa is a construction of colonial domination and the post colonial fiasco of statism and dictatorial leadership which has shaped, battered, and inhibited the people of Africa. Therefore these people must now attempt to reclaim their distorted identities. (Bongmba, 2004:295). The African Renaissance signals a new day in Africa by calling for a renewal of the identity of Africans. It intends to change the constructed African identity (Glele, 1991:189).

If Africa is assuming a respectful and meaningful place on a “global stage”¹ it will firstly need to reconfigure and reconstitute its sense of self through the negation of the colonial discourse (Registre & Peters, 1998:30-32). Furthermore, Africa itself has suffered ills not only culturally but also politically and economically. The subversion of democracy and the rise of combative military rulers in the African continent are the two main factors responsible for aggravating the slow development of the continent in relation to the developing world (Kegley and Wittkopf 1997:298). Seepe in (Webb, 2004:1) offers the following argument:

When the stage is reached where the military and police become critical components in the concentration of power, leaders create personal rule networks in order to finance military actions that take a large percentage of the budget. Any foreign investments are welcomed and certainly monopolized to the borders of the presidential quarters.

After failing to provide free and independent living conditions, African leaders responded by centralizing and concentrating power at the expense of civil society. Consequently, they silenced women (Webb, 2004:1).

¹ Edward W. Blyden said that the Negro must affirm and fully assume his being and his future in the consort of people, for each race is assigned its own talents and God is attentive to the individuality, the liberty and the independence of each. In the music of the Universe each brings forth a note, different but necessary, for the grand symphony. There are a number of notes that have yet to be played, among which are those that only the Negro can play. When the time comes to play it in its fullness and perfection, the Universe will greet it with joy (Glele, 1991:189). See also Kegley and Witkopf (1997:100).

Chapter two discussed the inadequacies and shortcoming of the policies of countries in the post-independence era. Bongmba (2004:298, 302) argues that African leaders purposefully and precisely abuse economic resources through a regime of corruption, exploitation, and the cultivation of a climate of violence and greed. The opposition parties will not stand this corruption and undermining of democracy and this causes civil war to break out. Countries in civil war turn into failed communities who cannot provide for their inhabitants, as these countries' infrastructures usually collapse during internal conflict (Webb, 2004:1). Finally, ill-advised government policies, political instability, unsustainable resource consumption and inadequate technology are variables that led to the self-introspection of the African people.

Colonialism inhibited the development of indigenous knowledge and technological system, and also undermined Africa's manufacturing capability. The cultural dislocation and inexpressible psychological damage caused by colonialism, should serve as enough reason for the destruction of Africa's confidence (Webb, 2004:1). The ability to understand the wrongs of the colonial past, but also to acknowledge and correct weaknesses in the liberated present and within their own psyche should be nurtured. To this end, Africa must be politically independent, economically advanced and technologically developed. Crossman (2004:332) quotes Lionel Mtshali, the then Minister of Arts, Culture, Language, Science and Technology of South Africa, who said that the systematic revitalization of indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous technology is a major aspect of people's experience of the African Renaissance.

The ideological cleavages on the continent which independence brought in its wake reflect a concern with new social problems in the African states. These problems have to do with the creation of a new internal order following the formal end of colonial rule. This concern now exerts a far greater pressure upon African minds than the question of identity (Hountondji, 1996:23). To this end, the African Renaissance is about taking stock of losses and regaining new insights from past mistakes and shortcomings. Self-evaluation is important in the new architecture of cultures in a globalizing world. It will

help the African people to not only look at the African Renaissance as a rebirth, but as a renewal of the continent's determination to be global partners with other continents.

Hountondji (1996) argues that the African Renaissance can only have meaning if its objective is to grapple with the intricate problem and reality of Africa's complexity and polarity. Bongmba (2000:296) agrees with this in the following statement:

A Renaissance that is multicultural and multidisciplinary in scope could prove indispensably instrumental in helping different African countries and their leaders to establish exactly that new kind of society that Africans have yearned to establish over the years. Such a society would emerge out of the rubble of the present post-colonial state shaped by colonial domination and post-colonial arbitrary rule.

Finally, the African Renaissance can be regarded as a late twentieth century variant of Pan- Africanism that seeks to confront the challenges of globalization in an international order dominated by the West. Thus, it seeks to examine Africa's present position and the efforts made by people on this continent in reversing the structures that are not working in many African countries and to make plans for Africa's future. It seeks to create a framework through which knowledge will be redressed. This knowledge will hopefully assist the continent in being productive enough to be competitive (Landsberg & Hlophe, 1999:1). The African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by the Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by themselves and if they take responsibility for the success or failure of their policies (Buchholz, 2001).

3.4 Mbeki and African Renaissance

President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa started his public references to the African Renaissance when he was still deputy president. Many of his speeches have been reproduced in his collection of speeches; *Africa: The Time has Come* (Mzamane, 2001). The intention of this study is to extrapolate particularly from his speeches, the aims and objectives of the African Renaissance, the vision of the renaissance and how it positions women in Africa in including or excluding them from the making of the discourse. Peet

(1999:56) explains that the discourse of the African Renaissance was created within communities of experts and is used as a carrier of conviction in the form of careful, rationalized organized statements, backed by recognized validation procedures, bound into discursive formations.

Since Mbeki first popularized the concept and raised the clarion call, there have been several gatherings held in South Africa concerning this subject. Numerous deliberations have taken place and many articles and books have been written, all devoted to the subject. An African Renaissance Institute has even been established and the concept has become a rallying point for Africans in many spheres of life. It is invoked and offered as the *raison d'être* for engaging in most activities of a social, cultural, economic, and political nature (Mzamane, 2001).

The speeches of President Mbeki have a sense of balance in that they are self-congratulatory, self-depreciating, introspective and filled with self-criticism and forthrightness that reflects a coming-of-age among some of Africa's post-colonial leaders. These speeches also incorporate the preoccupations with cultural re-awakening and political independence of previous exponents of the African Renaissance. The discourse is also extended to matters of economic advancement and technological development which is of the utmost importance for the continent of Africa (Mzamane, 2001; Bongmba, 2004).

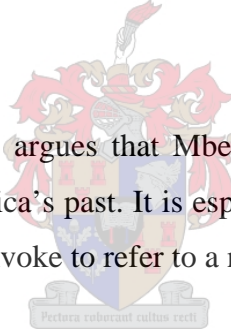
Mbeki proposes the following strategy for advancing the aims, objectives and programs of the African Renaissance:

It is important, therefore, that as we consolidate our democracies and use them as necessary platforms for the acceleration of our development, that the progressive movement ensures that the orientation of our parties is informed by the need to empower the masses of our people, so that they themselves can participate as a conscious force in the Renaissance of Africa...We must be in a position to create democratic systems appropriate to the African reality. (Speech delivered at the Summit on Attracting Capital to Africa that was organized by the Corporate Council on Africa in Chantilly, Virginia, April 19–22 1997).

Mbeki's emphasis on ordinary citizens taking ownership of the process is sparked by the realization that, in the past, renaissance efforts, such as Black consciousness in South Africa and Negritude among people of African descent living under French colonialism, were limited in their impact. This was largely owing to the fact that they did not take hold among ordinary citizens, never entered popular discourse, were never translated into the languages people could understand and speak themselves and remained, to a large extent, the exclusive preserve of a limited elite.

However, the concept has its limitations. The discourse that underlies the African Renaissance is just as opaque and obscure as that of the previous renaissance efforts to its vast target audience. Few African language speakers can even translate the concept into their first languages. It is also not possible, at this stage, to identify any concrete programs to ignite the popular imagination and empower local communities (Mzamane, 2001).

Van Kessel (Bongmba, 2000:293) argues that Mbeki draws his vision and inspiration from mythological readings of Africa's past. It is especially his neo-traditional focus and Africanization, which supporters invoke to refer to a new kind of Black Nationalism.



Despite these criticisms, in seeking to give content to the Renaissance that he envisions, Mbeki (Mzamane, 2001) is highly revisionist in his tone. He argues the following:

Our vision of an African Renaissance must have as one of its central aims the provision of a better life for the masses of the people whom we say must enjoy and exercise their right to determine their future. That Renaissance must therefore address the critical question of sustainable development that impacts positively on the standard of living and the quality of life of the masses of our people (Mzamane, 2001).

Thus, the African Renaissance is a vision of *continental* renewal/reconstruction and reawakening. It is based on the:

- Economic recovery of the African continent as a whole;
- Ability to establish political democracy throughout the continent;

- Demolition of neo-colonial² relations between Africa and the world economic powers;
- Mobilization of Africans to reclaim as well as direct the continent's destiny; and
- Acceleration of people-centred or people driven economic growth and development.

Mbeki concludes (Mzamane, 2001) that the first task is to transform our society in consistency with this vision. The second task is to join hands with all other like minded forces on the African continent since the African people share a common destiny. Mbeki is confident that people of goodwill throughout the world will join in this sustained objective and that it will result in the new century going down in history as the African century. Stremlau (1999) argues that if the vision of an African Renaissance is handled with the right mix of idealism, realism and political will, it would have a far reaching and positive effect on the advancement of civilization in Africa and around the world.

3.5 African Renaissance scholars

The problems of Africa are essentially cultural due to excessively dominant foreign cultural models, conflicts, pandemics, corruption and exploitation. To resolve these problems, Africa must regain its self-confidence and reinvigorate its own genius. It must regain the initiative and prove its creativity in all areas to enable it to meet the multiple challenges thrown at it by the modern world (Glele, 1991). There should be an institution of values that replaces corruption and incompetence, as well as seeking the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Bongmba, 2004:291). Africa must do introspection and reflect on its problems. Thus, Africa needs thinkers who will help to work out a project for a society based essentially on African cultures. It also needs to assimilate the positive contributions of other cultures that are in contact with it. If there is no voluntary and reflective rupture with the models of society, which are imposed by the outside world and a cultural revival, Africa risks remaining marginalized, without consistency and dignity. Such is today's challenge and the challenge is cultural (Glele, 1991).

² According to Kegley & Witkopf (1997:535), neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism constitutes an unequal exchange that permits the wealthy countries of the Global North to exploit other countries through the institutionalized processes of the contemporary world political economy.

Renaissance scholars propose that the African Renaissance is about awakening the mind, or “de-colonizing the mind” for purposes of development (Maundeni, 2004:190). Dialo Diop (1999:6) writes that after political liberation, the priority is to de-colonize the minds of the colonized. Renaissance scholars draw parallels between the European Renaissance and the dream of an African Renaissance. Magubane (1999:13) states that before the Renaissance, Europe – like Africa - experienced a period of great instability. Europe had to renew itself and embark on a campaign to reclaim and revamp its once powerful state (Dalamba, 2000:1)

Msimang, (2000:72]) argues that the African Renaissance concept does not imply a rejection of the benefits of the technological civilization developed in the West. It does, however, caution against uncritical acceptance of everything emanating from the West and seeks a meaningful fusion between Africa and the West. Therefore, Africans have to come to terms with their own diverse cultures, which remain important assets since they will need them to reconstruct the future (Bongmba 2000:296). The recognition of Africa’s multicultural reality does not bury specific cultural norms and regional specificity. Rather, it offers an opportunity to share in different cultural principles that may offer fresh perspectives on solving the continent’s problems.

On the other hand, Maundeni (2004) insists that culture forestalls the emergence of developmental states, making the African states incapable of reviving the economy of the African continent.

Reviving the culture of a whole continent is a commendable job that calls for the extended leadership of pan-African scholars. But this does not mean that what is culturally important is also developmentally important (Maundeni 2004:191).

Maundeni suggests the views of some African Renaissance scholars³ in rebuilding the continent. These include, amongst others, liberating the Democratic Republic of Congo, intensifying cross-border projects such as the Maputo Development Corridor and the leadership of South Africa in the continent. He rightly asks the question that if pre-colonial African culture had been preserved, could it have generated the kind of state

³See Breytenbach (1999), Stremlau (1999); Nzongolo-Ntalaja (1999)

that's structure and capacity could promote development? (See Maundeni, 2004 for a comprehensive analysis). He uses Zimbabwe as a case study and concludes that the Zimbabwean case gives credibility to the fact that indigenous state cultures continue to prevent the rise of developmental states, making the idea of the African Renaissance unrealizable (Maundeni, 2004:208). He never mentions the liberation of women on the continent. Thus, they are not represented in the solutions that he gives.

This study agrees with Bongmba who reckons that the African Renaissance should recognize a balanced approach to culture:

Discussions about a renaissance in Africa that *would* seriously consider cultural elements ought to stress the broad themes that African states face today and should articulate, in an insightful manner, local and specific ideas that offer an agenda for the renewal. A balanced approach that emphasizes local ideas, as well as universal principles, is necessary because an essentialist perspective of Africa will not work (Bongmba, 2004:294).

Bongmba (2004:308) concludes that scholars and thinkers may continue to reflect on the merits of an African Renaissance, but that the men and women that control action in Africa ought to rethink their economic visions and work for a rebirth that will bring new life into communities filled with despair.



3.6 The conference of the African Renaissance, September 28th & 29th 1998, South Africa

In the 1960s, numerous conferences were held aimed at “determining Africa’s objectives and priorities, which were intended to launch the continent into social reconstruction and economic affluence” (Dalamba, 2000:2 quoting Bengu, 1998). In the same vein, 1998 brought a number of scholars interested in the idea of an African Renaissance together at a conference in Johannesburg to critically discuss, debate and chart an agenda for Africa in the new millennium (Msimang, 2000:73; Maundeni, 2004:190; Bongmba, 2004:293). Thabo Mbeki opened this conference, organized by a group of well-heeled, well-connected black elite, which was mainly concerned with the issue of the African Renaissance (Msimang, 2000:73, Dalamba, 2000:2). Dalamba (2000:1) offers the following argument:

The conference is historic not because the concept of an African Renaissance is new, but because it seeks to spiral South Africa, and hopefully the rest of Africa, into the new millennium through a re-consolidated effort to liberate, affirm and transform Africa and its ideologies.

Out of this conference a book was written entitled African Renaissance (Maundeni, 2004:190; Msimang, 2000:74). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) foundation and philosophy was also established from this conference (Maundeni, 2004:190). Most of Africa's poor, disabled, uneducated, ill and women were not represented at this conference. Therefore, they did not get the opportunity to participate in this historic event. Msimang (2000:73) is of the opinion that it was a conference of "African Intelligentsia". It then contradicted the nature of the African Renaissance as perceived by president Mbeki. He emphasized that ordinary citizens should take ownership of the process of reformation since he realized that renaissance efforts in the past, were limited in their impact largely owing to the fact that they did not take hold among ordinary citizens. This was due to the fact that they never entered popular discourse, were never translated into the languages people could understand and speak themselves and remained, to a large extent, the exclusive preserve of a limited elite. Also, Mazwai (cited in Makgoba, 1999:361) comments that it is the work on the ground, in which ordinary people participate, that will herald the awakening of Africa and its people.

Many criticized the conference on its lack of practical implication strategies and the poor representation at the conference, but Dalamba (2000:6) argues that it is understandable that various communities and individuals would feel isolated and marginalized given the intellectual rigor of the conference and the various discussions that ensued. However, it is equally critical that the role of intellectuals is understood. Intellectuals are paid to think. They are the critical and moral conscience of a given society and, as such, it is vital that their role is not undermined. They have a key role to play in this process since they have to ensure that issues are well articulated (Bongmba, 2004:305).

The conference was on the topic of the future of Africa. Msimang (2000:73) describes it as follows:

They (the conference attendees) were all operating under the assumption that their experiences as Africans were of a common colonial history and space in global international relations. While on one level this is true, on another level, they all failed to take into account the vastly different experiences that dictate, primarily by ethnicity, gender and class. Their assumption – that they could convene and speak on behalf of Africans – was flawed.

The organizers of the conference selected topics and writers. It is clear from this selection that this African Renaissance does not intend to be a development-focused mission, but an academic enterprise. Indeed there is value in the active participation and contributions of academics, argues Msimang (2000:74), but when other segments of society, who are engaged in the work of improving people's lives, are excluded it becomes a serious problem. No one representing any category of marginalized people – women, poor people, elderly people, the physically disabled – was given a formal platform from which to speak (Msimang, 2000:74). To some extent the question of how this African Renaissance was going to be realized was never critically answered except through a general realization that it somehow had to be implemented (Dalamba, 2000:3).

3.6.1 Conference papers

The African Renaissance, as expressed in numerous conference papers and by Mbeki himself, is a philosophy that has the reclamation of the humanity of Africans on its agenda. The need for this reclamation emerged in response to colonialism and racism. All the paperwork of the conference reiterated the importance of securing the place of Africans in the history of the world in order to prove Africans as the intellectual equals of their colonizers. However, the role of women was, once again, ignored.⁴ Msimang (2000:75-76) poses this problem as follows:

More importantly, analyses of the historical gendered realities of the lives of African women and men – both before and during colonialism – either remain unwritten or sit at the periphery, and don't qualify as 'real history.' Furthermore, the great African civilizations were celebrated, and these civilizations were run by great African men.

⁴ Of the 40 writers who contributed to the book, only five or six are women. Three of the female writers team up to write. Like almost all the male authors, they neglect to raise gender as an issue in their essay, and this does not help the gender debate to move forward (Msimang, 2000:76).

The African Renaissance conference perpetuated the very silencing of women's voices, argues Msimang (2000:77) and this demonstrated its blindness to gender analysis. Other issues like class, nationality and race were raised as being meaningful to the Renaissance project, but gender, which is so fundamental in shaping the way that human beings perceive themselves, was ignored. To a great extent, the feminist victories of the early 1990s were won because the links between racism, class and gender were made visible by women activists who had cut "their teeth in the struggle against racial injustice" (Msimang, 2000:77-78). Thus, the absence of women voices was all the more noticeable. Msimang (2000:77-78) argues that this exclusion of the female voice might be the reason why women have not engaged in the Renaissance in any meaningful public manner⁵.

Finally, an area that was utterly omitted from the conference was that of gender and women's issues. The only time when these issues or their role in the African Renaissance were raised, was when a male student mentioned the exclusion of women and youth issues. The conference managers only responded by saying that it was unintentional.

3.7 The African Renaissance and gender

We have seen in the first chapter that women in Africa are joining forces to fight male supremacy and advance interests that arise from their unique life experiences. They are determined to be part of ideologies that will give them a voice in the shaping of the world or global governance. The African Renaissance is seen by many as a discourse, a totality of concepts which are shared by the members of a specific group. Women want to develop their own words with which to describe the conceptions of women that they choose to live. They want to be part of decision-making that can shape their lives and

⁵ Msimang (2000:78) argues that, as far as South Africa is concerned, "the silence of gender activists and feminists on the issue of the African Renaissance is not only symptomatic of the gender-blindness of nationalism and nationalist men in the new South Africa. It is indicative of the very thin layer of young black feminists in academia, the media and political life. White feminists may be wary of entering the terrain of the African Renaissance, given the perceptions of feminism as a white, western import and the confusion about whether white people are considered African and whether they are intruding on conversations about the African Renaissance. So the hesitation of white South African feminists is understandable."

they want to make their voice heard in any political negotiations where men are usually the principal role players. Implementation of policies designed to establish gender balance should be highly prioritized. It is this issue that women should largely be addressing in the discourse of the African Renaissance.

According to Harding, (1987:7), women should not be excluded from participating in projects that involve men since only partial and distorted understandings of women and the world can be produced in a culture which systematically silences and devalues the voices of women. K. Y. Amoako, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa in the WAAD III conference, asserts that Africa is indeed experiencing a renaissance. He questioned the gender implications of this renaissance and whether women in Africa and the African Diaspora can traverse the millennial highway with their male counterparts. President Mbeki, speaking on the issue of gender, said that the matter of gender equality and the emancipation of women, is very important if we are going to say this is a genuinely democratic society. However, the matter needs to be addressed in a very consistent way (Msimang, 2000).

The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, cautioned that the challenge today is to ensure that the wisdom, the energies and the creativity of women are fully harnessed for the benefit of all and to ensure that women are involved at every stage, at every level and at all times in the process of building the new Africa. Without a clear recognition that women's rights are human rights, and that they cut across all aspects of the development process, the African Renaissance will grind to a halt (Sadasivam, 1998). The Assembly of Heads of State of the African Union (AU)⁶ acknowledged the crucial role of women and realized that the objectives of the AU could not be achieved without the full involvement and participation of women at all levels and in all its structures. Therefore, it called on the African women's movement to participate in the regeneration of the African continent through the AU (Wandia, 2003:1)

⁶ The AU replacing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was launched in South Africa in 2002. Women were never included in the OAU despite its 39 years of existence (Wandia, 2003:1)

African governments may voice their commitment to advancing the status of women on the continent. However, if they do not confront the structural and ideological barriers that militate against women's social mobility, such declarations do nothing but pay lip service to the gender question. From the colonial period to present times, the status of women across the continent has suffered a significant decline that strongly reflects patriarchal continuities and contradictions of a hybrid contemporary society. Over this period, women have been placed in a subordinate status to men in establishing themselves both as individuals in their own right and as a group whose participation is central to developing and implementing initiatives for nation building (Okeke, 2004:483). It seemed impossible for newly liberated states to incorporate or deal with issues that affected women into national priorities.

In most African countries women have not made any significant contributions to governance. It is important to note that the cultural susceptibilities in these countries are different. Some respect the political hierarchy no matter how disempowering to women it can be. Women are forced to figure out ways of influencing the process as befits their cultural and historical notions. Other countries, like South Africa, resolved to make women's emancipation and social transformation a priority only after women strived at CODESA discussions⁷ to make their voices heard.

Msimang (2000:68) affirms that the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League won a strategic gender battle that would fundamentally influence the institutions of the new South Africa. This was caused by the pressure that these women put on their government. Hence, from 1994, the government committed itself to the conscious transformation of institutions along non-racial and non-sexist lines. Thus, it can be concluded that in the popular consciousness (which is the level at which the African Renaissance debate has been most meaningful) women were key players in setting up the

⁷ Seeking to ensure that women's voices would be heard inside the negotiating chambers of CODESA, in a little publicized event in March 1993, women ANC activists stormed the negotiating chambers, blocking talks until women were literally given places at the table. Amazingly, all 26 parties participating in the negotiating process accepted a gender quota – a decision that reflected the extent to which women on all sides have already raised issues of gendered representation in the constitution of a democracy (Msimang, 2000:68).

new South Africa. Gender concerns were definitely relevant to the creation of a political identity (Msimang, 2000:68). South Africa is a case in point of what can be achieved when women join forces, regardless of race or class, to compel the architects of democracy and reconstruction to take their needs seriously (Farr, 2000:28).

3.8 Where are the women's voices?

It is imperative to investigate women's concerns in relation to the concept African Renaissance. Workshops, conferences, panel discussion, interviews and focus groups have been held to discuss the role of women in the discourse of the African Renaissance. Women want to know why their voice has been so silent in this discourse. They want to know whether women were actually silent on the issue of the African Renaissance or whether there was simply a tendency among the public to judge statements as having meaning only if presidents and men made them.

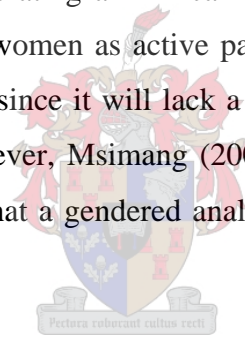
Lulama Xingwana, the deputy Minister of Minerals & Energy in a conference of South African Women In Dialogue (SAWID) in July 2004, said that for the African rebirth to be a reality, African women cannot be excluded. They must play a central role in this process, particularly in the NEPAD and AU structures, because they represent the poorest and most marginalized communities in the country and on the continent. She is of the opinion that the greatest challenge confronting women is prioritizing economic empowerment and pushing back the frontiers of poverty.

We as women should declare that we would no longer allow ourselves to be conditioned by circumstances. We will determine our destiny and call the rest of the continent and even the world to complement our efforts. There is already an acceptance that economic liberation will never be achieved if women are not included and preferred in the mainstream (Xingwana, 2004:7).

Manzini (2002:1-4) spoke on the African Renaissance and why African women should be in the forefront of the social transformation. She explained that during the struggle against colonialism, most countries in Africa believed that women's emancipation and social transformation would only be achieved after independence. Thus, the struggle for

emancipation was subsumed under that for national liberation. With independence, new priorities arose, relating to the reconstruction and defending of the new nation. Thus, issues relating to women emancipation were, once again, relegated to the bottom of national liberation. They were regarded as divisive and irrelevant in Africa's struggle for independence. In African culture and tradition, women's emancipation was regarded as a Western or European notion with no place in Africa.

The process of the African Renaissance will succeed if it draws on the energies and resources at the disposal of the continent. Women constitute an important part of these resources, said Manzini (2002). Right from its conceptualization, Manzini desired that women be involved to develop a sense of ownership of the process of the African Renaissance. Despite the fact that as a major demographic constituency in Africa as a whole, women are central to generating an African renewal, this desire never realized. Manzini concludes that, without women as active participants, the African Renaissance will never reach its full potential since it will lack a solid foundation in the lives of the majority of African people. However, Msimang (2000:78) argues that Manzini's paper fails to offer suggestions as to what a gendered analysis of the Renaissance might look like.



3.9 The impact of political discourses on the position of African women

Women acknowledge that as long as they are not fully incorporated into the development strategies of their countries and those of their continent, their countries and continent will be operating at half capacity (SAWID, 2004:16). Women look at the African Renaissance as both a strategic objective and a call to action. To this end, how do we define the African Renaissance in relation to the lives of women today? Africa's rebirth requires that leaders and governments recognize and indeed act to bring to the fore the centrality of individual citizens and communities-workers, peasants, professionals, the entrepreneurial class and others - in shaping the future of the continent. In particular, it also requires that the character, content and programs of the renaissance be infused with a gender-sensitive perspective.

The African Gender Institute hosted a panel discussion on the 8th of August 2000 on the impact that the African Renaissance had on the position of South African women. Msimang used this opportunity to explore the silence around gender in current African Renaissance debates and argued that the Renaissance means very little for the majority of women. She focused on the notion of an African Renaissance in its historical and political context and drew attention to Amilcar Cabral's contention that only the African bourgeoisie, alienated from its own sense of African-ness, needed a renaissance. In her opinion the majority of Africans experienced African culture, the lived reality of ordinary Africans, as they had always done.

She indicated the ways in which repressive post-colonial regimes expediently propounded doctrines that invoke the idea of an "essential African". In particular, Msimang criticised Mobutu's Authenticity movement and "First Ladyism" in Nigeria for their promotion of women as mothers and wives. By locating Africanism in specific nationalisms, she demonstrated that the well-worn concept of the African Renaissance tended to speak to the collective experience of Africans abroad as much as to those on the continent. The patriarchal notions with which those philosophies were invariably imbued shaped the role of women in African nationalisms.

In the same panel discussion, Naledi Pandor, an ANC member of Parliament in those days and currently the South Africa's Minister of Education, suggested that there had been too much discussion of an African Renaissance. She questioned whether women actually were silent on the issue of the African Renaissance or whether there was a tendency among the public to judge statements as having meaning only if presidents and men made them. She questioned whether it wasn't just a case of men setting the rules and women having too little influence on those rules. Urging a move beyond the boundaries of this concept, she highlighted the importance of a gendered understanding of policies in the African context.

In contrast, South African activist and writer, Elinor Sisulu said that there was not enough discussion of the African Renaissance or support for literature, art and cultural

expression. She stressed that, in a context of Structural Adjustment Programmes, the arts were not prioritised and cautioned that this neglect was inimical to a renaissance. Feminist activist and writer Shamim Meer supported Sisulu's argument by saying that the African Renaissance was "merely a smokescreen set up to disguise the ANC's neo-liberal policies". She drew the audience's attention to the fact that the notion of an African Renaissance failed to address either the widening gap between rich and poor or the fault-lines of poverty and race, which continued to exist. Meer said that, rather than carrying out the dream of African Socialism, the ANC led government seemed to be attempting to make "capitalism more African".

Both panellists and audience were in agreement that the African Renaissance remained at the level of discourse and was not translated into concrete practices and that this level scantily gives voice to women. One participant also indicated that even the discourse was not accessible to the very people the proponents of a renaissance sought to embrace. Another speaker even challenged the gathering to come up with innovative ways to engage a wider range of women, including disabled women, in the discourse of the African Renaissance.



3.10 Conclusion

The African Renaissance seeks to examine Africa's present position, and the efforts made by people on this continent to change the structures that are not working in many African countries and to make plans for Africa's future. It seeks to create a framework through which knowledge, that will make the continent be productive enough to be competitive, will be redressed. The African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by themselves and if they take responsibility for the success or failure of their policies.

Women were excluded at the historic conference that was held in Johannesburg in South Africa in 1999. This was the precedent that was set in the African Renaissance project. Thus, women have not been incorporated or included in any dealings of the African Renaissance. Women acknowledge that as long as they are not fully incorporated into the

development strategies of their countries and those of their continent as active participants, their countries and continent will be operating at half capacity. This will cause the African Renaissance to not reach its full potential since it will lack a solid foundation in the lives of the majority of African people.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

The conditions under which African women have been participating in the development process have not enabled them to enhance their capacity to utilize their physical and intellectual energies in promoting sustainable development. As a continent, Africa needs to develop measures that enhance the capacity of women to influence and make economic decisions as paid workers, managers, employers, elected officials, producers, and consumers. There is also a need to adopt measures, which eliminate biases in the educational system, to counteract the gender segregation of the labour market.

Unfortunately the implementation of these new approaches is currently impossible because of the severe economic constraints African countries face. Continuing poverty, declining terms of trade and the burden of external debt create an unfavourable environment for development. Of the limited resources available, little is directly allocated to women. In addition, governmental policies do not incorporate gender perspectives in their design and these policies ignore the structure of households in Africa and the social relations that influence women's roles in production. These issues need to be addressed if Africa wants to make any progress in development.

Gender equality, democracy and good governance have been three of the most pervasive themes in development debates in recent times (Lowe Morna, 2004:24; Longwe, 2002). The big question that we need to ask is whether women are essential in achieving development that has a long lasting effect or sustainability. Development occurs in the context of many different cultures, yet it is difficult for Westerners and many non-Westerners to picture something called development if it does not resemble both Western values and the Western historical experience (Charlton, 1997:11). However, it is difficult to imagine development taking place along non-African lines in Africa.

This chapter's focus is on the African Renaissance and development. With women being far from experiencing equality, it is important to focus on their development and the intent of the African Renaissance in relation to their situation. In an era when development is the subject of intense governmental concern, there is a need to recognize the ultimate impact of policies on women. This will be determined, to a large degree, by how much power and influence women have. Development does not happen in a vacuum. It is subject to innumerable political and administrative influences, from the headman or caste leader of the smallest village to international agencies and multinational corporations (Charlton, 1997:13).

4.2 History and development

Historically, the process of development, particularly of technological development, has been strongly influenced by men. This gender bias has affected the role of women in the development process and, in many cases, has led to the introduction of technologies that are beneficial and suited to men, but not so much to women. Sometimes technological development has had a clear detrimental effect on the position of women (Everts, 1998:11-12). Most agricultural technology, for instance, has been directed towards certain "cash" crops, which are male, dominated. Little input has been directed to food crops, especially the traditional and staple foods normally seen as women's crops. Hardly any research has explored ways of improving such crops as cassava, sweet potatoes, a variety of yams and traditionally grown peas, beans, vegetables, etc.

Women must be trained in research and development that, for instance, allows technological innovation and has the boldness to stop export technology ill suited to underdeveloped and developing economies in Africa. Africa, it would seem, is a place in which many aspects of development need to be people-driven. This is not because governments are so sensitive to their needs, and or so democratic, but simply because governments very often do not have the will and, even less, the ability to really supply and maintain the process of development.

It is with this background that the proponents of the African Renaissance should influence its discourse to avoid gender-blindness in the African Renaissance and development programmes. Additionally, if women in Africa are going to make any progress socially, politically and economically, they need to realize that changes in thinking can effect changes in material circumstances. Developing an understanding of the connections between thoughts and societal arrangements can lead to concrete action being taken. This action will change things for the better. If the transformative potential in "feminist" ideas are seriously put to work in development and social policies that directly affect African women, fundamental changes could occur in the African society as a whole [http://www.herafrica.org/Njoki_Bio.htm. Downloaded 02/05/2004].

Third World countries are countries that are the focus of development projects and whose populations are usually described by planners as the targets of development efforts. The governments of these countries are often the key factor in determining whether development occurs and how and who profits (Charlton, 1997:8-9). As indicated by this study, women are dependent upon men in formal politics at the local, national and international levels. Charlton (1997:12) argues that actions at the local level, be it in the private or public sphere, are all the more influenced by the institutions of the nation-state, and, to a large extent, by multinational organizations that extend its influence in most countries.

The choice by a village women to breast-feed her infant is conditioned in part by forces over which she has no control: the availability of manufactured formulas, advertising and other sources of information (such as health workers), prices and cash income, and government policies regulating the operations of multinational corporations (Charlton, 1997:12).

4.3 The African Renaissance and projects of development

Bongmba (2004:303) argues that critical responses to the idea of the African Renaissance have pointed out that Mbeki's emphasis on economic recovery and development indicates his focus on industrialization. He uses Emmanuel Katongole's point of view in calling attention to the problematic links that an African Renaissance could have with development since the concept of development has a problematic history in Africa and other regions of the world. Katongole criticizes both Mbeki and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda for accepting World Bank solutions to the problems of Africa, solutions that call for the imposition of liberal economic principles in Africa. He argues that this imposition from New York, Cape Town and Kampala does not consider Africa's agenda. Katongole rightly suggests that many Africans do not see themselves in the narrative of the African Renaissance (Bongmba, 2004:306).

Bongmba (2004:303) suggests that the African Renaissance must generate a cultural and political revival that enables Africans and their leaders to seek to provide a better life for all people. To do this, the Renaissance must address the question of sustainable development which, according to Mbeki, includes a long list of things, ranging from resource development and the emancipation of women to fair international trade practices.

4.4 The policy environment

States have the right and the duty to formulate appropriate national development policies. These policies should assist the constant improvement of the well-being of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting from this participation (Steiner & Alston, 1996: 900). Most development plans and policies of African states have been "gender blind". The planning and policy making processes in the region have failed to appreciate the fact that women and men have different roles to play since their needs and constraints are different. Policy makers and planners have failed to address the socially structured

subordination of women. Unequal division of labour, legal discrimination against women and abuse of women's basic human rights have been more or less ignored by policy makers and planners, despite the lip service paid to the elimination of sexual discrimination.

Thus, plans and policies have not been “gender responsive”. They have not recognized existing gender imbalances and have not taken into account the different gender roles which men and women play. This causes women to be constrained in participating effectively in the development process. Therefore, their subordinate position in society is ignored in development planning and policy making, while their concrete needs are equally ignored. This is reflected in the manner in which resources are allocated and utilized. Economic development and transformation will be impossible in Africa without sustained policies that enhance equality in gender discrimination.

Development policies on this continent have been functioning under the assumption that women's labour supply is elastic. Increasing labour demands, as well as increased infant mortality rates, have been forcing women to produce more children. The time devoted to biological reproduction tasks constrains women's involvement in other productive activities. In Tanzania, for instance, it is estimated that the average woman devotes up to 17 years to pregnancy, breastfeeding and caring for young siblings. Women's biological and social reproductive roles are supposed to go hand in hand with their other productive activities. [<http://www.unsystem.org/ngls/documents/publications>.

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Msimang (2000:79) argues that in South Africa the African Renaissance is the political consequence of the policy of black empowerment, which has moved already powerful men (and very few women) into strategic positions within the private sector. The focus of black empowerment has not been on poor people, but on the elite. Although all policies aimed at improving the lot of previously disadvantaged groups' include women, it is clear that in practical implementation, as in the discourse of the Renaissance, race is privileged over gender. Thus, empowerment comes to be understood as referring to blacks and not to women (Msimang, 2000:80).

4.4.1 Educational policies

Educational policies and educational plans have also limited the ability of women to fully utilize their intellectual energies in the management of their economies. As this study has indicated, African states inherited gender stereotyped educational systems from the colonial states. Under-representation of women in higher education partly explains the marginalisation of women in the mainstream of development planning, a factor which limits their contribution to the implementation of such plans. A more balanced development agenda for Africa needs the intellectual input of both men and women in the development process. This can only be achieved by removing gender barriers that limit women's access to higher forms of education.

In addition to the marginal participation of women in education and particularly in institutions of higher learning, women are socialized into those disciplines which groom them for traditional roles such as nursing, community service and secretarial work. In Botswana in 1990, for instance, university enrolment figures indicated that women were concentrated in the fields of nursing, education and humanities, while men dominated the fields of law and science. This implies that in the formal sector, women will be employed in the health sector and other related services while men will continue to dominate the judiciary, law-making organs and the scientific fields. Thus, women will continue to play a very marginal role in decisions regarding the laws of the land and science and technology [<http://www.unsystem.org>. Downloaded 09/04/2005].

One of NEPAD's goals, that will be discussed, proposes closing gender gaps in school enrolments and eliminating gender disparities in the enrolment in primary and secondary education by 2005. It makes no mention of objectives or actions that will be employed to close these gender gaps in school enrolments. Longwe (2002:2,12) criticizes this goal since schools teach female submission and since NEPAD gives no justification for choosing increased schooling as the only means towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

4.5 Women and initiatives of development

Women have taken various initiatives in order to overcome some of the constraints which limit their effective participation in the development process. A few have even organized economic groups and cooperative ventures. During the 1980s and 1990s, most African states witnessed a proliferation of women's income-generating projects. However, most of these groups are small in nature and have been confined to the informal sector. Most of these women-only projects are not economically viable and, in the majority of cases, tend to be welfare oriented. Most are small and lack sufficient official support and have therefore remained on the periphery of mainstream plans

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Women's income-generating activities, to a minimal extent, help women to cope during severe socio-economic crises. Yet such activities can only be sustained if they are part of the mainstream plans, in other words, if they are planned for, budgeted for and supported. With present trends of economic liberalization, however, these income-generating activities will not survive the competition from external and internal companies. Less state intervention in the economy might be detrimental to women's economic activities.

Women's fundamental contributions to their households, food production systems and national economies have increasingly been acknowledged within the African community. This is largely due to their own efforts in joining forces, articulating their concerns and making their voices heard. At both grassroots and national levels, more women's associations have been formed during the 1990s, taking advantage of women's economic and social opportunities and the advancement of women's rights in Africa.

4.6 Approaches of development in relation to women

As indicated above, development does have a history. There are several approaches that are exploring the effect of development in the past and at present in the lives of women in Africa. It is important to analyze these approaches and find out whether they relate to the African Renaissance and development. It is also important to learn from them in order to better the conditions of women in Africa.

4.6.1 Women in Development (WID)

The first awareness of the position of women in development arose when it was noticed that women as a group are in many respects disadvantaged in relation to men. The situation of women often deteriorates as a result of development interventions (Women's Realities, Women's Choices, 1983:60).

The term WID was articulated by American liberal feminists and originated in the early 1970s after the publication of Ester Boserup's book *Women's role in Economic Development* (Charlton, 1997:18-19). Theoretically, it is related to the modernization theory where traditional societies are viewed as authoritarian and male dominated and modern societies as democratic and egalitarian. This theory places importance on Western values and the individual is observed as the catalyst for social change (Visvanathan 1997:17). Two dominating themes within this approach are gender equality and economic efficiency (Tinker, 1997:21). WID's focus is on women's productive role and aim to develop strategies to minimize disadvantages of women in the productive sector. A major policy initiative in the Women in Development approach is the mainstreaming of gender issues into development agencies by increasing the visibility of women and by setting the agenda for planning (Visvanathan 1997:20).

WID is a non-confrontational approach that failed to reassess societal assumptions about the responsibilities, rights and relations between men and women. It accepted existing social structures and did not question the sources of women's subordination and oppression. Far from being a useful concept to transform the condition of women, it is a model that supports the Western patriarchal nuclear family and sexual division of labour appropriate to it (Charlton, 1997:18-19).

Thus, the benefits of modernization did not favour women. The phenomenon worked against those countries in Africa that are indebted and educational institutions that adhere to SAPs. Subsequently, gender equality was compromised (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000:2).

This study has explored International Financial Institutions (IFIs) structural adjustment program and its impact on women. Women want to articulate a vision of development that is truly shaped by those who the prevailing paradigm ignores, exploits, or marginalizes. Most people living in poverty are women and girls. Therefore, this approach of development must place feminism at its core in order for women to rise above the situation and take the lead economically. WID treated women as an undifferentiated category, overlooking the influence of class, race and culture.

Scholars have argued for and against the prominent role of women in development. Tinker (1997:35) observes that women were assigned a marginal place in early “gender-blind” development efforts. Development alternatives should be equitable, gender-just and sustainable (Skinner, 2000:79). Women should be seen as participants in the development process rather than being passive recipients of development.

4.6.2 Women and Development (WAD)

WAD materialized from a critique of the modernization theory and the WID approach in the second half of the 1970. Its theoretical base draws on the dependency theory. Visvanathan (1997:21) quotes Bandarage (1984) who argues that liberal feminists, using a WID framework, tend to focus narrowly on sexual inequality and ignore the structural and socio-economic factors within which gender inequalities are embedded. Its focal point is that women have always been part of development processes - therefore integrating women in development is a myth. It focuses on the relationship between women and development processes, accepting women as important economic actors in their societies. Women’s work in the public and private domain is central to the maintenance of their societal structures (Charlton, 1997:18-19).

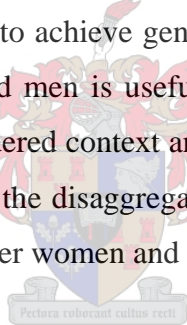
Thus, the movement of women to join forces and uplift themselves from the village to the national level; the integration of women into political and administrative bodies, both public and private; the equalization of political power at every stage and level of organization; and the formal, legal recognition of women’s rights are all “women-and-

development issues” as much as the questions of maternal and child nutrition or credit are for farm women (Charlton, 1997:13).

4.6.3 Gender and Development (GAD)

The move from WID to GAD captures much of the debate around the move from the focus on women to the focus on gender. According to Visvanathan (1997:23) socialist feminists predominate in this framework and they have combined the lessons learnt from WID failures and WAD limitations. This framework focuses on gender relations in both the labour force and the reproductive sphere.

Even though women are the focus, women are considered in relation to men and the GAD approach looks at how women are disadvantaged relative to men. However, it also sees a role for men to play in order to achieve gender equality. This idea of considering the relationship between women and men is useful within the context of redistribution and planning for projects as the gendered context and implications have to be considered. Furthermore, this approach requires the disaggregation of data along the lines of gender in order to be able to establish whether women and men benefit equally.



The standards for evaluating whether third world status has improved are often projections of Western analyses and models. Western ideas of an ideal gender relationship may differ from the views of women in many third world countries. Women in sub-Saharan countries have ideas and understanding acquired through experience and insight into their own social situation. There is every reason to expect that their insights are deeper than those of outsiders. Yet, local women are rarely asked to design formal and non-formal school programs and strategies for their implementation that can lead to the improvement of these women’s own lives or those of their daughters.

4.6.4 New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)

NEPAD was born on 23 October 2001, in Abuja, Nigeria. It was initially called the New African Initiative (NAI) (Kanbur, 2002:87). It is the latest in a long line of policy frameworks intended to place Africa on a sustainable growth with special interest in programmes that create better conditions for development in terms of improved democratic processes, good governance and human rights. As one of its objectives, the NEPAD intends to pursue poverty reduction in Africa.

It is high level, concerns the whole African continent, and is mainly concerned with setting and justifying the overall goals principles and strategies for future development partnership between African and western governments (Longwe, 2002:1,4).

It is in the interest of this study to find out whether a feminist voice is established in this framework and or whether issues that relate to gender are addressed within these conditions for development. It is also important to find out who participated in its negotiations and how the document was finally produced. NEPAD mentions a policy goal to “promote the role of women in social and economic development and assure women’s participation in political and economic life” (Randriamaro, 2002:1). Yet, Randriamaro (2002:1) argues the following:

African women have voiced their concerns about economic reforms and the marketisation of governance by which the state is rolled back and reorganized in the form of deregulation from public interest to regulation in terms of private interest which do not coincide with the dispossessed.

Thus, the transformation that is intended by the African Renaissance does not take the reality of poor women across the continent into consideration since the state will be reorganized in this manner.

One of the action statements proposed by NEPAD is eliminating gender discrimination in primary and secondary school enrolment. Longwe (2002:2) makes the following statement on this issue:

There is no justification given for choosing increased schooling as the only means towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. This would seem to be a curiously indirect approach, given NEPAD's claimed interest in goals to improve democracy, governance and human rights. But the programme objectives and activities in these areas show no interest whatsoever in addressing gender issues.

This study has mentioned issues of structural and institutionalized gender discrimination, but the NEPAD document disappointingly does not acknowledge the dominance of such issues. As such, it needs a comprehensive revision if it is to recognize and address gender issues which are fundamental to addressing African development (Longwe, 2002:2). Some NEPAD critics make demands about how they wish NEPAD to be revised and structured. Some of these demands identify women as a vulnerable group, suggests that they need special development focus, that there should be a clear provision for women's involvement in all of NEPAD activities and that women's marginalization in economic, social and political decisions need to be addressed (Longwe, 2002:3). This study agrees with this position and also suggests that women need to participate equally in the identification of developmental priorities and that they make their voices heard and influence this programme from its initial stages.

Traditional wisdom in women and the poor is a treasure not to be ignored. Africa has to build on it in order to secure participation in projects. The mobilization of people and their integration into planning and implementation cannot be achieved if transparency of information and policy is lacking, if accountability of the leaders is non-existent and if grassroots organizations are weak and marginalized. Therefore, in ideal conditions, women, like men, need political stability which guarantees protection of their basic human rights, social security to be able to engage in productive activities, the right to develop and utilize their talents, fair pay for the work they perform and the right to participate in the management of their societies as intellectuals, policy makers, producers and consumers.

The mention of African culture as an important "resource base" in NEPAD fails to acknowledge the negative elements within culture which subordinates women, and

legitimizes their continued subordination. For women, custom and tradition is, in many ways, more of a problem than a resource (Longwe, 2002:10-11).

4.7 Conclusion

Women on this continent have been implementing projects and plans which have been imposed upon them by their governments and the donor community. African states and donor governments should inject funds into projects directed at the empowerment of women and their development. African women have to fight for greater participation in decision-making organs. They should demand that governments be more accountable to them. Women will contribute more effectively if they participate in the decisions which affect them and in society at large. They can only contribute to the sustainable development process if they are part of those who design plans and formulate policies. African states have to recognize that unless men and women work together in designing development programmes and formulating policies for the development process, sustainable development will remain a distant dream

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Africa should not be afraid to use the same approach when considering implementing the vision of the African Renaissance and making gender the most important issue in policy making. For example, gender-based discrimination is still practiced in many states in varying degrees, but freedom from gender discrimination as state policy, in many matters, may already be a principle of customary international law. (Steiner & Alston, 1996:906) States have the right and the duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at advancing the constant improvement of the well-being of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting there from. (Steiner & Alston, 1996: 900) The effectiveness of Africa's development efforts and the ability to sustain them are dependent on the full utilization of all human resources, both male and female. Yet, as a continent, we continue to suppress and exclude women who, in fact, constitute at least 50% of most populations.

Re-examining these above-mentioned approaches and frameworks, may hold a key to rethinking the question of how to make development with women more productive, inclusive and effective in the twenty-first century. The renewal that the African Renaissance is envisioning in its development policies should include female involvement from the initial stages of its projects in order for women's voice to be clearly heard.



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

The legacy of Pan Africanism lies in its contribution to the decolonisation of the African mind and the liberation of African states from European colonialism. The African Renaissance, like the European Renaissance – a phenomenon that took upward of three centuries to spread across and benefit all of Europe – before it, will lie in the realization of each African country's potential. In most African countries, this potential has temporarily been subdued by a combination of external and internal forces, both man-made and self-induced (war, graft, corruption, etc.). In the preceding sections we have argued for an approach that places the African Renaissance in some historical context. It is all a part of the unfolding culture of the liberation of African people universally.

The African Renaissance seeks to examine Africa's present position and the efforts made by people on this continent to change the present structures that are not working in many African countries. It also aims to make plans for Africa's future. It wants to create a framework through which knowledge will be redressed. This knowledge will help to make the continent be productive enough to be competitive. The African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by the Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by themselves and if they take responsibility for the success or failure of their policies.

There may be common aspirations among African nations, arising from the common aspirations of all human beings, but there are also competing and contending interests. However, no one deserves to wallow in perpetual poverty, ignorance, disease and strife. It is important to note that a vision or a country or continent's destiny usually starts with discourses or ideologies. In these discourses or ideologies women often do not have a voice in shaping the world or global governance. Women want to be part of these discourses and make their voices heard in decision-making that can shape their

lives since the principal actors tend to be men and women feel that their voice is being drowned out.

Furthermore, the new millennium is a critical opportunity for transformative change in women's advancement towards equality. Women are key partners for development and their capabilities and leadership skills must be used if there is to be qualitative change for women empowerment and equality and the achievement of an African Renaissance in this continent. The full participation of women in decision-making will bring about an equitable sharing of resources and sustainable human development to the African Renaissance.

The study has outlined the ways in which the African Renaissance fails to take gender into account. For example, women were excluded at the historic conference that was held in Johannesburg in South Africa in 1999. This was the precedent that was set by the African Renaissance project and women have since not been incorporated or included in any dealings of the African Renaissance. Women acknowledge that as long as they are not fully incorporated into the development strategies of their countries and those of their continent as active participants their countries and continent will be operating at half capacity. The African Renaissance will not reach its full potential for it will lack a solid foundation in the lives of the majority of African people which is constituted by women. The effectiveness of Africa's development efforts and the ability to sustain them are dependent on the full utilization of all human resources, both male and female. Yet, women who constitute at least 50% of most populations continue to be suppressed and excluded.

Within this African Renaissance, as seen by many who advocate it, there may be steep hills to climb and high hurdles to scale. Some of these obstacles are placing women at the core of African history by taking heed of their voices, overcoming patriarchy, crime and abuse of women and children and the inherent threat of this to family life, overcoming some of the past disabilities of women which have taken time to end and ensuring a gender policy that is fully supportive of women's emancipation.

5.2 Recommendations

Having full knowledge of the fact that the needs of the continent are great, the diagnosis of the cause of the African poverty are complex and women empowerment is indeed a slow process that should be taken seriously, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The state of women's education in Africa makes a powerful statement about the roles society has carved for them compared to their male counterparts. There seems to be a systematic discrimination with regard to quality education for women. The objective then should be the establishment of true parity and quality education for women, an educational system where discrimination and disregard of women and girls is eliminated and one that establishes equality at all levels. The manner how to achieve this objective is, for example, advocating a change in teaching methodology and materials that emphasize both stereotypical views about women and gender-based divisions of labour. These divisions of labour must be based on ability, skill and interest and not solely on gender. This requires the development of policies and programs in which women are actors in creating new understandings and directions for education. A committed effort to increase the number of women in the tertiary level of education should also be a requirement of these policies and programs since African countries need to have policies that will enable them to reap the benefits that accrue from women's education.
- African women who witnessed the independence of their countries possess rich traditions as leaders, as participants in women's movements and, along with men, in liberation struggles. Women in many parts of Africa played a visible role in the political struggle and by in doing so they made a brave attempt at breaking cultural and political silences around African women. Unfortunately the triumphs during such moments of historical glimmer have proven to be rather short-lived. Hence, the need for the continuing struggles against silencing in which women are engaged today. These struggles are a

significant part of the kind of cultural action that must inform the African Renaissance.

- Concerning the representation of women in government decision-making and managerial positions, the participation of women is essential to a democracy that claims to reflect and represent the diversity of its people. In order to live in a society based on values of justice and equality, which requires that women and men participate equally in decision-making, this is of the utmost importance, especially since these types of new roles for women have the potential of changing societal perceptions of women's capabilities and options. Therefore, achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making is a demand for simple justice and democracy and a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. These statements suggest that women are needed to represent the interests of women. Further justifications may be based on the idea that women bring different values to decision-making which, in turn, will impact on the content of politics.
- Women were excluded at the historic conference that was held in Johannesburg in South Africa in 1999. This was the precedent that was set by the African Renaissance project and women have since not been incorporated or included in any dealings of the African Renaissance. Attention must be given to values and practices that recognize and raise women to the level of equal partners in conferences. There is also a need for women to contribute their knowledge. Policies in some African countries are formulated around the African Renaissance ideology that will eventually govern all life, despite the absent voice of women in this ideology. Therefore gender must be emphasized in the discourse. The voices of women must also be audible because no meaningful cultural renaissance can take place while sectors of the population under transformation are victims of silencing. The silencing of women becomes massive in that they constitute a clear numerical majority of the population on the African continent. Women must be placed at the centre of

transforming action and discourse and must be allowed to participate in conferences.

- African countries must concede to violence against women being a health issue. Recently in South Africa, sixteen days were devoted to women and children thereby voicing violence awareness to the civil society. The South African government supports such efforts and this should spread over the whole continent. The vast majority of women have been excluded from the delegations that decide on war and peace building on a continent where war is very prevalent and where world attention has tended to focus almost exclusively on military solutions.
- In terms of making certain gender equitable development, there is a need for training opportunities and confidence building of women with a long-term view of building a gender balanced civil service and private sector. African states have to recognize that, unless men and women in the civil service participate in designing development programmes, planning practices and formulating policies, sustainable development will remain a distant dream. Gender analysis and planning is an acquired skill and needs to be learnt and refined.
- A new breed of feminist activists is needed. The type of people that bring awareness and uses political discourse as a site of struggle since most of the women who are the torch-bearers of gender battles are old or in positions of power that do not give them much liberty to be visible in women's movements. They need to carry on the work that older women have started and also to try to improve on it.

In conclusion, these changes can positively influence ideologies and opportunities for women. The challenge of participating in a transformed state requires a clear vision, achievable goals and programs that are easy to implement. Without these changes, gender and the African Renaissance will be a far distant dream.

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