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SENSITISED WOMEN AS A
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:
THE UGANDA CASE

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"Women constitute half of the total population of the world. By limiting women's opportunities and participation in development, societies deprive themselves of the full talents of half of the human race".

1975 International Women's Year.

Introduction:

Meaningful development entails visible, felt and qualitative changes in the living conditions of the entire population of a given society. Such changes in the quality of life must involve equitable distribution of wealth; availability of food, shelter, health services; provision of work;¹ better and relevant education; and the liberation of the population from servitude and dependence, not only in relation to other nations but also to the forces of ignorance and poverty. The process of attaining meaningful development entails efficient and proper utilisation of all the available resources of a given society - material and human. It is therefore vital that the uses to which such resources are put be systematically and correctly analysed; the course of development planned and the means of attaining it seriously mobilised.

In Uganda, in particular, the country is well-endowed with natural resources. It is estimated that 85% of the land area is arable. Rainfall, while seasonal, is sufficient for perennial cultivation in most parts of the country. Additionally, Uganda possesses 22,000 square kilometres of natural forests; and five major lakes with quite a lot of fish. The River Nile provides hydro-electric power, at its source, for industrial, institutional and domestic use. Moreover, there are vast resources of wild life in the national parks and game reserves plus the scenic features to be found around the country. All these could be put to efficient use for the development of the country.

Uganda's human resources are to be found in her estimated population of thirteen or so million. It is estimated that women constitute slightly more than a half of the above total population.² It is in the light of this fact and that of the need for efficient utilisation of all the available resources that women's contribution to development should be made viable in the overall national development efforts.

For, in Africa, in general, and Uganda, in particular, women have always participated and continue to participate in socio-economic activities which contribute to the development of society as a whole. The women have been the producers of wealth and the reproducers of manpower required for the development of society. Economically, Uganda depends largely on agriculture; and women constitute up to 80% of agricultural labour force. Furthermore, many women are actively engaged in commercial activities which bring in the direly-needed cash for household expenses. Domestically, women provide the comfort and refuge for the work-force through their daily care of the homes. They care and socialise the young; nurse the sick; and care for the aged. However, great technological and scientific development and changes have been ushered in. Drastic and, in many ways, negative changes have taken place in Uganda over the last decade. All these changes must be taken stock of in the analysis of the sensitised women as a strategy for development.

It is therefore vital to sensitise the society as a whole, and women in particular, to the important part women can play in the strategy for development. This can be done, among other things through education (formal and informal), through the mass media - the press, radio and television, and through the various formal and informal organisations whose common aim is the improvement of the quality of life of the society. Much more importantly, such sensitising efforts should result in the integration of women's socio-economic activities into the mainstream of national development programmes. In so doing, the full utilisation of women's potential will be made and their effective participation will be integrated in the process towards meaningful development.

The specific aims of this paper are:

- a) To appraise the general contribution of Uganda women to the development of the country;
- b) To analyse the viability of their contribution to the overall national development;
- c) To indicate the constraints on the full utilisation of their potential; and
- d) To make suggestions for their full and effective participation in and contribution to meaningful development of the country.

Dependent Development

The type of development that has taken place in Uganda up-to-date is dependent development. Dependent development is used here to indicate a certain amount of development which is attained through external stimuli which result from external orientation of a given economy. The economy is neither self-generated nor self-sustained. For instance, the rate of economic growth may rise as a result of external stimulus when the social infrastructure has not undergone any change at all. Similarly, a certain amount of industrialisation may take place only as a result of substituting the formerly imported luxury goods. Such type of industrialisation does not benefit the masses of a given society. It benefits a minority and disguises the underlying problem of underdevelopment. Thus dependent development can be seen as part of the state of underdevelopment which characterises the economy of Uganda as, indeed, it does those of other Third World countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Underdevelopment is here taken to mean socio-economic, socio-political situation where a society which was once viable finds itself unable to determine its economic base as well as its political structure. The non-viable status of the society includes lack of capital, unacceptably high level of unemployment, endemic poverty etc. Dependence, on the other hand, has been said to involve an external orientation of a given economy for most of its activities. Dos Santos defines dependence as "a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected..... The concept of dependence permits us to see the internal situation of these countries as part of world economy."³ Thus dependent development is attained not through internal stimuli and self-sustained economic activities, but through external stimuli. It is the contention of this paper that this type of development is true of Uganda. If this is true, the basis of dependence should be analysed and a solution suggested. Questions such as who controls Uganda's development, what the objective of such development is, who benefits from it, and how meaningful development can be achieved, should be asked.

On independence, economic dependence on Britain, the colonial power, which had been established upon conquest, continued. Although attempts were made to diversify the economy, two cash crops - coffee and cotton continued to be the backbone of the economy. These were the two commodities

established to meet the industrial needs and requirements of the imperial power. Thus political independence came to mean very little as long as the economic base remained undermined. Indeed, quite a bit of development was achieved during the 1960's - the first decade of development. Health services were expanded; more schools built; communication networks expanded. However, all these activities depended, to a large extent, on outside fundings. This type of dependence breeds instability for it is not conducive to progressive changes. When attempts were made for change in that direction, a violent coup d'etat took place in 1971. This period then ushered in the decade of eclipse in the development of Uganda.

This period brought a halt to development plans, projects and efforts. All this led to stagnation, administrative break-downs and the complete break-down of the rule of law. Consequently, those who could and wished, fled the country. Some of the people who remained were murdered. A few went underground. Shortage of trained manpower followed; and the process of planned development stagnated.

Traditionally in Uganda, the male has always been regarded as the "bread winner". He is considered the head of the family in every way. He is the figure of authority in the home. The female has been the "home keeper". Her labour is unwaged. She is the solace for paid labour. She cares for the children, and the aged, socialise the youth, and nurse the sick. Further this traditional domestic division of labour extends to economic activities as well. As already stated above, agriculture is the mainstay of Uganda's economy. Women provide nearly 90% of agricultural labour force in Uganda. The statement below though speaking of Africa as a whole, sums up the situation in Uganda very aptly:

"In accordance with the traditional divisions of labour within a family structure, women provide a large part of labour force for agriculture, especially for production for subsistence. In subsistence economy, with slight regional variations, 60-80 per cent of food production is undertaken by women, who participate at virtually every phase of food production, i.e. ground preparation, cultivation, planting and transplanting, weeding, harvesting processing and preserving, storing, transporting and marketing. They manage poultry and livestock, process fish, fruit and vegetables.

In a nutshell, they provide most of the services essential to the working of the family as a basic production unit."

Despite this obvious fact, this great informal contribution is normally not integrated in the mainstream of development plans. When statistics are given out for the employed (which accurate figures are not available currently) women who are engaged in agriculture are not included. Furthermore, the benefits of technological and scientific development have not really reached the majority of the toiling women. For instance, the cultivation skills and new methods which use improved technology usually are extended to men.

This is because of several reasons: invitations are sent to men as heads of families; many more men than women have had some form of education and are therefore literate; certain improved technological tools can only be used in large-scale farming, and such farming are limited to cash-crops. Men tend to monopolise this type of farming even if they only supervise the women who do the actual work at all the stages except for receiving the cash! Women continue using traditional tools. In a few cases where women would like to get loans for purchasing the necessary tools, traditional practice precludes the ownership of land and property by women thus these women cannot benefit from the credit system, most of whose lending practices are based on securities in landed property.

Here, a distinction must be made between rural and urban women. Most of the foregoing statements are more true of the rural women, the majority of whom are poor. Indeed, it has been argued that the role of women in development must be viewed within the context of class since we are dealing with a class society. While this is a very correct observation, it must be admitted that certain aspects of the struggle can be isolated and highlighted for the sake of clarity and information on the complexity of the problem. For, it can easily be argued equally that without social transformation of this or any other society, it is meaningless to analyse any aspect of society. The urban women still carry the domestic, productive and reproductive roles that their rural sisters carry with greater burden. This category of women include the civil servants, the professionals and the self-employed. In many ways, these are the women who have both benefitted and at the same time suffered from the dependent development. These women, while benefitting from the introduction of education and its use as a criterion for

good-paying jobs, are still expected to play their traditional roles, as outlined above. This remains so because of the attitudes indicated in both males and females by the society, through socialisation. They therefore find this attitude a constraint to their full and efficient contribution to development of the society. Even the earlier educational system in this country re-inforced this attitude towards traditional divisions of labour. Thus, the productive role of women, positive as it may be, is not fully integrated into and appreciated by the main development plans. It is also felt that women, in general, do not benefit adequately from the wealth to whose production they contribute both formally and informally. The constraints on efficient and integrated contribution are many. The lack of skills, the traditional attitude towards the role of women in development, the socio-economic system within which women's contributions are made and the decade from 1971 to 1980, which brought untold destruction and sufferings, have all affected the women as a development resource.

For example, there are disproportionately very few women in decision-making positions in Uganda to-day. There is only one Deputy-Minister in the Cabinet of over twenty ministries. This same lady is also the sole woman member of parliament. There is one woman Permanent Secretary and three women Under-Secretaries. There is a woman Branch Manager of Uganda Commercial Bank; four Managers of Uganda Hotels and one Acting General Manager. This is true despite the fact that women's number is higher than that of men in Uganda population. Similarly, quite a few women have had education although the statistics is below that of educated men. This means that the fate of more than a half the population of Ugandans is decided without their participation or adequate representation. In a sense, this is due basically to lack of training and skill, since women have not had fair share of educational opportunities. It is also due, in part, to the traditional attitude that relegates women to domestic activities only. To a lesser extent, it may also be due to the unwillingness of certain women to occupy decision-making positions. This negative action is of course a legacy of traditional ways of socialising the female youth.

Tentative Suggested Solution:

What is to be done if women are to be sensitised as development resource? There are of course several ways in

which women can be made conscious of their vital contributions to development. The most basic means is through education. It is common knowledge that a country's development is closely related to the level and quality of the education and general training of its population. The philosophy of education and training of the population must not only be relevant but must be progressive as well. Historically, in Uganda, especially during the colonial era, the quality of education was limited and geared towards the lower echelon of the government administration and the social services. The theoretical knowledge acquired by a few Ugandans had no clear relationship to the improvement of the quality of life of the majority of the people. The few schools introduced by the missionary re-inforced traditional divisions of labour. The boys were encouraged to take science subjects while the girl schools limited themselves to arts subjects particularly to such subjects as "domestic science". With independence in 1962, government ministries and departments, schools and higher institutions of learning demanded increased Ugandan manpower. So a form of equality in educational opportunity ensued. Such opportunities helped sensitise many girls and women to their potential and capability and therefore to the kinds of contributions they could make to the development of the country. Much more importantly, it is vital for some men and most women to re-examine the traditional attitude towards the prevailing divisions of labour and their implications for development of Uganda. Although educational opportunities are extended to both men and women, it is still clear that very few women do reach the height of educational establishment in Uganda. The statistics below illustrate the point:

Percentage of Girls at Educational Institutions 5
Primary I Enrolment (45%)
Primary 7 Enrolment (35%)
Primary 1-7 altogether (39%)
Grade II Teacher Training Colleges (45%)
Grade III Teacher Training Colleges (28%)
Technical Schools (5%)
Technical Institute (4%)
Secondary Schools (28%)
University (17%)

If it is accepted that the quality and level of education heightens the awareness of the women to their role in development, then as the statistics show, very few women are sensitised. Although this statistics was produced during the

turbulent time in Uganda's political history, it can be argued that the actual figures have changed but the proportion of women to men in these education institutions have not changed.

Sensitisation of women through formal (institutional) setting has also contributed and will continue to contribute to women's participation in development. In present day Uganda, four Ministries can be singled out as the ones most directly involved in this process. Ministry of Culture & Community Development; Ministry of Rehabilitation; Ministry of Co-operative and Marketing and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Of these four Ministries all of which have direct contacts with the masses of the people, the Ministry of Culture and Community Development has responsibility for a wide range of district-level and rural development activities. The philosophy of the Ministry sums up its contributions to overall development of the country. The Ministry attempts "to educate, organise, encourage and mobilise the people in their communities to take action for the improvement of their own socio-economic conditions through self-help with little or no assistance from government or other agencies. The approach is based on the integrated method of multi-departmental work."⁶ The District Community Development Officer co-operates with other district administrative officers to build schools, bridges, roads; to develop community water supplies and to provide adult literacy facilities and other non-formal education; to assist the local population for the production, processing and marketing of agricultural and live-stock commodities. These mobilisation activities take place through the creation of women's and youth groups at the village, parish, county and district levels. Thus this Ministry creates the necessary social infrastructure for the sensitisation of women in development. However, the legacy of the decade of administrative and economic mismanagement (1971-1980) has reduced the effectiveness of this Ministry's contribution to development.

The Ministry of Rehabilitation is a New Creation - an attempt to rehabilitate and reconstruct the Uganda Society after 1979 liberation. It has a section that deals with widows and orphans - legacy of the decade of the 1970's. The widows' association is organised down to each constituency and the hope is that the association will eventually form a self-sustaining income-generating co-operative

movement for the benefit of the members. Needless to say, the forced self-reliance has awakened the widows to their potential and capability. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, through its extension service comes into contacts with the rural women who constitute 60-80% of Uganda's agricultural workforce. The Ministry of Co-operatives is important in that co-operative economic activities may become a solution to our economic problems, if large scale farming, with its accompanying advantages, is to expand. All these activities contribute to the sensitisation of women to their role and potential.

Sensitisation of women through the mass media is one of the most effective ways of educating the society. It has already been stated above that a country's development and its socio-economic structure are closely related to the level and quality of the education and training of its people. In Uganda, most of the people are not literate, and women constitute a large proportion of this category. The mass media therefore plays a big part in sensitising the masses on issues of importance to development of the country. The radio is, for instance, used for schools' educational programmes. If development issues are included in the schools programmes, both boys and girls, or, indeed men and women (through adult literacy programme), would become conscious of their role and contribution to national development. This will not, in fact, be a new thing since in Uganda a few of the development issues are usually discussed on radios and television. This medium has the advantage over the others in that even illiterate people can easily follow the discussions. What is needed is more issues connected with the role of women in development and most women can be made conscious of it.

Other means of sensitising the women in particular is through the various organisations to which many women belong. Some of these organisations are exclusive in membership, and their aims geared towards the satisfaction and fulfilment of the needs

of their members. This is particularly true of the religious organisations, and many of the professional ones such as the Mother's Union, the Catholic Women's Club, the Uganda Muslim Women's Association and the Uganda Women's Legal Association and the Uganda University Women's Association respectively. However, the Uganda Women's Legal Association is doing a commendable job.. It has embarked on explaining and simplifying parts of the laws of Uganda which are directly relevant to women's rights and responsibility with regards to property, marriage, separation, divorce and custody over, and responsibility for, the children. These are cyclostyled and disseminated to women. This type of activity contributes greatly not only to women's awareness of their rights and responsibility, but the awareness of their potential as well. For as a society develops, so do the individuals within it. Mention have already been made of women's clubs which bring them together and enable them share their ideas in their attempt to suggest solutions to some of their problems. The Uganda Council of Women is an umbrella organisation, for all girls and women's organisation, within the Ministry of Culture and Community Development.

It was earlier stated that all voluntary organisations reach the rural areas - the grass roots of society - through the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, organised from the Headquarters in Kampala down to the rural areas, through the village part-time voluntary workers. These come in daily contact with rural women. Among the aims of the National Council of Women are: the provision of a single machinery through which women can channel their ideas and concerted activities; the eradication of illiteracy; the encouragement of women's positive role in the development of the country; and the use of the Council as a machinery for channelling financial benefits and social amenities to all women throughout the country. It must, however, be pointed out that the effectiveness of the material aspects of these organisations has been greatly reduced as a

result of the economic crisis, which is mainly a legacy from the 1970's a decade of stagnation and destruction in the country. Specifically, educational materials, training equipment and other social amenities have dwindled almost to nothing. These various organisations are attempting to solve certain problems by improving the women's lot. However, if they are to succeed and contribute positively to development efforts, they need definite directions, revitalisation, effective and relevant orientation as well as self-reliance.

In addition, seminars should be held regularly, not only in the urban centres but in the rural areas as well. At such seminars, experts-women or men could discuss topics of interest to women; explain certain issues; and listen and take suggestions from the women themselves. More research must be carried out to assess women's current situation, their needs and future prospects. Methods of participatory research should be used more often in order to solicit ideas, suggestions and recommendations from the women themselves. In a nutshell, all means should be used to sensitise women toward their participation in development activities.

CONCLUSION

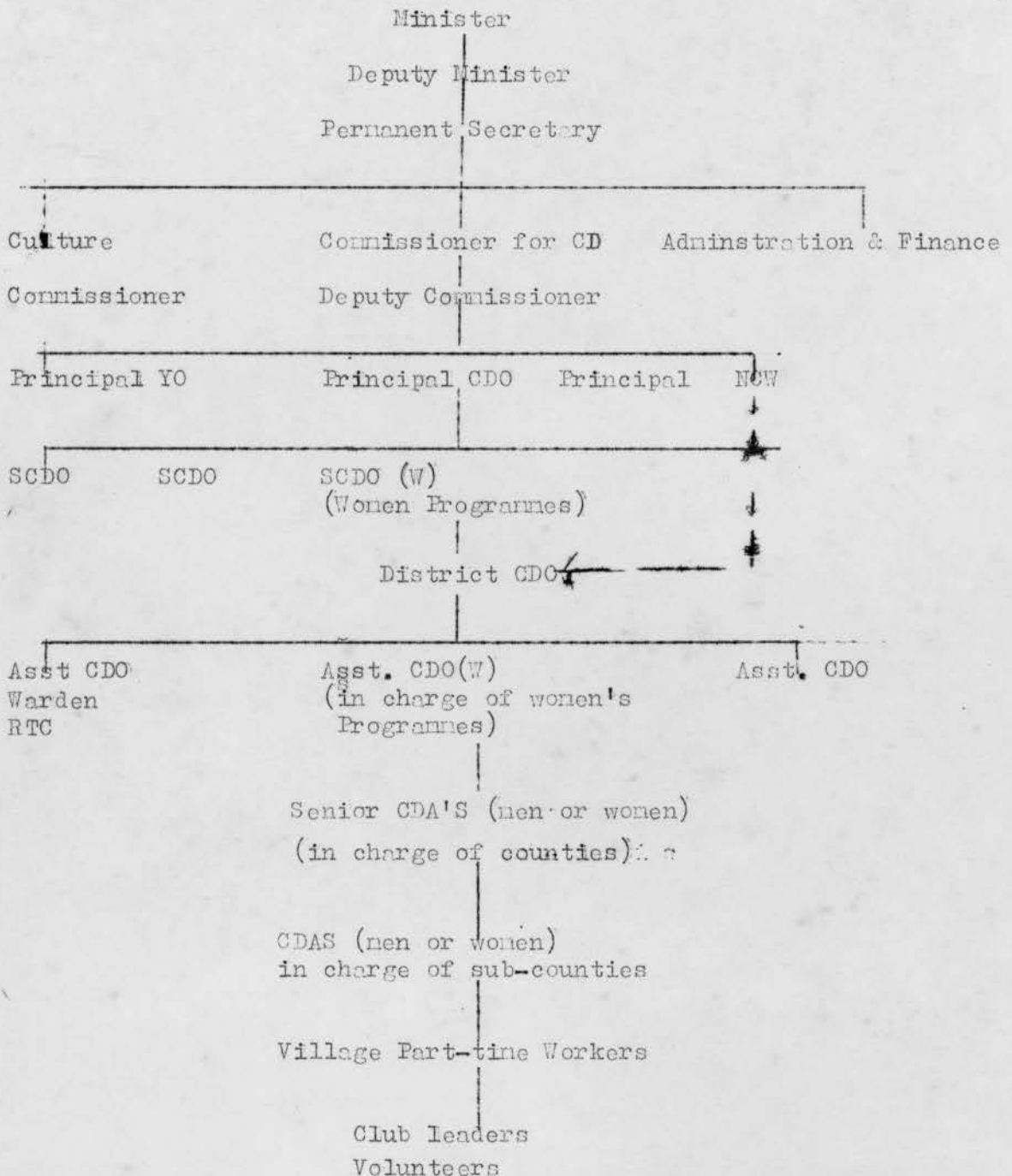
This paper has briefly attempted to analyse sensitised women as a development strategy. It has, in the process, emphasised the fact that meaningful and genuine development requires effective mobilisation and the use of all the society's resources - material and human. Furthermore, the paper has stated the fact that women form more than fifty per cent of the population of Uganda and, therefore, their participation in development must be taken as vital. Moreover, it has been shown that women contribute tremendously to development efforts. They undertake two-thirds of agricultural work; about sixty per cent of marketing (commercial activities); they engage in food production, processing and preservation; they care for the

home and family; they do about a half of animal and livestock husbandry all unwaged. Yet, only one out of every ten waged jobs are held by women. The implication of all this is that women do participate in development activities in the traditional sector of the society whereas they lag behind in training and employment opportunities. This paper has therefore insisted on the correct analysis of women's potential and the viability of their contribution to national development. Attempts have been made in this paper to make concrete recommendations and proposals. For, the majority of women spend so much of their time in laborious activities that the time so consumed could be more productively spent in literacy and self-improvement activities. For example, clean, safe drinking water could be brought nearer homes; agricultural implements improved. Means have to be devised to lessen women's burdensome work. Measures have to be introduced to sensitise the society, in general, and women, in particular, to the requirements of development. Such sensitising effort should result in the integration of women's socio-economic activities into the mainstream of national development. Much more importantly, this paper has implied that dependent development does not lead, nor is it a substitute to meaningful and genuine development which benefits the whole society.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE

AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SECTION:



Key

- CD = Community Development
- CDO = Community Development Officer
- SDO = Senior Community Development Officer
- CDA = Community Development Assistant
- RTC = Rural Training Centre
- YO = Youth Officer

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