Gender, Globalisation and Marginalisation in Africa

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Abstract

Globalisation is discussed as an all-encompassing historical process of change that has been with humanity for generations. Yet, it is a system of domination and disempowerment which impacts social groups differently and some detrimentally. Globalisation is altering gender relations in societies as well as distancing people from the very cultural resources within their societies. In the latter sense, globalisation deepens dependency in all its facets. The paper's main objective is to demonstrate how globalisation is producing marginalisation between gender groups. In its recent ramification, globalisation is portrayed as liberalisation of the economy (structural adjustment programmes) and of politics (democratisation). But men and women differ in their responses to globalisation and in the strategies that are being employed to smuggle gender-specific agendas into the state arena. As its methodology, the paper employs content analysis, observation, and personal interview to enrich the analysis. The paper, in its conclusion, cautions against an undiscriminatory consumption of the products (whether material or immaterial) of globalisation. It also describes the forms of resistance women have deployed in the face of globalisation.

Résumé

La mondialisation est ici considérée comme un processus historique et global de changement, présent au sein de l'humanité depuis des générations. Il s'agit d'un système e domination et de dés-autonomisation qui agit différemment sur les groupes sociaux. En effet, la mondialisation transforme les relations de genre au sein de la société, et éloigne les individus des ressources culturelles de leur société. Dans ce sens, ce phénomène accentue la dépendance sous toutes ses formes. L'objectif principal de cette présentation est de montrer comment la mondialisation produit u ne certaine forme de marginalisation entre les genres. Une des récentes ramifications de ce phénomène est la libéralisation de l'économie (programmes d'ajustement structurel) et de la politique (démocratisation). Les hommes et les femmes ont des réactions différentes envers la mondialisation ; ces derniers déploient également des stratégies différentes de dissimulation de programmes de genre spécifiques, au niveau de l'état. En

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guise de méthodologie, cet article utilise l'analyse de contenu, la méthode de l'observation, ainsi que les interviews personnels, afin d'enrichir l'analyse effectuée. Dans sa conclusion, cette contribution met en garde le lecteur contre une consommation discriminatoire des produits (matériels ou immatériels) de la mondialisation. Elle décrit également les différentes formes de résistance à ce phénomène, déployées par les femmes.

Introduction: Globalisation through the ages

The plethora of literature that is being churned out from the Internet, books, research articles in journals and discussions in the media on the concept of globalisation has the tendency not only to mystify it but to obfuscate the fact that this process has been happening for ages. Social change is ever taking place even though those who witness the process may not notice it. Those who observe the change process from outside may also exaggerate it.

The means by which human society is influenced by the process of social change is referred to as cultural diffusion. The imported element of any culture is not small. This is so whether we examine the material and the immaterial aspects of culture. There is no culture that is closed to influence through diffusion from other cultural systems.

With regard to America, Ogburn and Nimkoff (1958:640) observed as follows:

> Most of the social heritage of colonial America was brought here from England, Spain and other European countries. Some items of the social heritage such as the potatoes, maize, type of cooking and methods of warfare were contributed by the American Indian, though this fact is not generally known. There have been many additions to the culture since then, some of which were invented here, but most of which were imported from other countries.

Borrowing of ideas and material culture through diffusion is thus inevitable and this is largely facilitated through migration over long distances a process that has now been abridged in time because of transportation and the revolution in communication technology. Authors differ regarding their conceptualisation, analysis, cause and course of social change. Yet, whatever our orientation, the economic factor in the process of change is important. Globalisation itself is a process of economic change. But Africa's position in the world's social structure has put it at a disadvantage in loudly proclaiming its own positive impact on globalisation. The implied assumption from a survey of writings is that if it is global then the source can only be in Western Europe and North America. In rejecting the notion

that globalisation has a dual character - globalisation from above and globalisation from below – Ojo denied that Africa has contributed meaningfully to globalisation (see alfa.fdu.edu/ojo/glob.htm at page 6).

On the surface, this may seem so. However, it is more heuristic to conceive of globalisation as a dialectical process of thesis and antithesis which then produces a synthesis which later triggers the entire process again. The ways in which the consequences of globalisation are negotiated also induce modification in the process at a later stage of this phenomenon. Ironically, a one-sided view of globalisation has led many authors to overstretch the concept as an all-embracing independent variable on which every other significant change depends.

There is no consensus yet among several authors as to the starting point of globalisation nor as to its desirability or inevitability. As diverse as the authors are with regard to the recency or otherwise of this phenomenon, they all seem to agree in some respects. It is important to outline these commonalities as a means of providing a conceptual framework for the discourse of globalisation. First is that globalisation must be viewed historically. A number of authors referred to the classic work of Walter Rodney on *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Rodney himself was influenced by Marx's historical materialism. The economic infrastructure is regarded as the most important factor in change.

Marx in his three volumes of *Das Kapital* and in his other writings had analysed the global nature of capitalism and its capacity to bring the entire world under its feet and in its own image but for no other good other than the profit motive which he saw as the main driving force and capitalism's main undoing. In the holistic writings of Karl Marx, no region of the world was too far to be integrated into this system of production – even the most backward regions regardless of artificial separation. Thus the end of the bi-polar world (itself a product of globalisation) which many saw as a negation of Marx's predictions may in fact be a prelude to the final collapse of capitalism as it is creating neo-bipolarism (between the haves and the haves not) and thus between the north and the south in an unprecedented way.[1]

Secondly, a number of these authors regarded globalisation as re-positioning Africa between marginalisation and globalisation. This implies somehow that globalisation is a kind of continuum, a sort of bi-polarism with globalisation being the ultimate and desirable end. See for example Ali Mazrui's *From Slave-Ship to Space Ship: Africa Between Marginalization and Globalization* – web.africa.ufl.edu/asgd. A variant of this position was that advanced by Henriot who advocated globalisation

from below through NGOs (see sedos.org/english/global.htm). Lipumba (1999:157–218) was of the opinion that if Africa makes good use of the opportunities and challenges of globalisation then improvement will certainly not be a mirage.

A third point emanating from the appraisal of the various authors is that globalisation in its recent ramification has impoverished Africa. This position was premised on the absence of the African viewpoint in the initiation and implementation of the global change processes of structural adjustment programmes and democratisation and in the different world trade agreements that were foisted on Africa (see Nyangoro 1998:27–33). For the authors in this group, globalisation as a process of change has merely deepened Africa's dependency, and it is increasingly becoming helpless. It is in active support of this position that a group, (outside Africa) the anti-globalisation movement has been organising protest against the damaging consequences of globalisation on Africa.[2] The resistance to globalisation and the protest against it through the resilience of certain African social institutions is often ignored. Globalisation may not be inevitable after all. In fact, when the number of those who are really active in it is considered, the process may be regarded as a minority movement. Of course, African leadership can do more to make globalisation more beneficial to the majority at the grassroots.

A fourth characterisation of the writings on globalisation is its being viewed as all-encompassing in that it is interpreted as influencing every facet of life and therefore every significant change unfolding in society must be analysed from this premise. Its impact is regarded as immediate in that it has brought time and space within its reach (see Aina 1996). This seems a sophisticated form of reductionism. This position tends to ignore not only the resistance to the phenomenon of globalisation but also the sphere of socio-economic and political life that remains to be affected by it.

A fifth appraisal was the absence of an explicit gender implication of this process of modernisation. There are two aspects. First, as a matter of fact, all of the contributors that I have come across were men. Secondly, the female voice was absent. There has not been enough gender-specific analysis of the consequences of globalisation. This lacuna is difficult to justify considering the fact that the process of globalisation affect men and women differently.

This paper will attempt to fill this gap. Globalisation is in addition being understood to mean a change process of cultural diffusion encompassing material and non-material (non-tangible) culture. The younger

generation in Africa is under the tremendous influence of the western culture in music, dress, food and behaviour generally. Globalisation not only negates economic development but it brings about cultural disorientation as well. When we consider the centrality of culture to development, then it can be appreciated that globalisation in its present form is compromising Africa's future development. It means the ease with which decisions in far away places affect people at the local level – the breakdown of geographical barriers and space. The research question which the paper addresses is whether or not globalisation has implications for gender relations in the third world. Does it affect one gender in such a way as to produce marginalisation? If so, which gender is marginalised and what are the manifestations and consequences of this marginalisation? Is globalisation breaking down cultural barriers between men and women by allowing women also to access significant economic resources in society? Is there also a gender specific resistance to globalisation?

In order to address these issues, the paper has been structured into four sections including the introduction. In section two, we demonstrate that globalisation is a form of domination and dis-empowerment in that it enforces an agenda of development that is rigid and allows no room for variation across the African continent in spite of evident diversities. It erodes the autonomy of the state and gives a free reign to multinational corporations. The implications of globalisation for gender relations are addressed in section three. In section four, we provide a gender analysis of the resistance to globalisation. This resistance reflects the perception of globalisation by the female gender as an extension of male chauvinism which further confines women to the domestic arena and the informal sector by excluding them from the public sphere.[3]

Globalisation as domination and dis-empowerment

In establishing whether or not globalisation promotes domination and disempowerment of Africa, and African women in particular, we need to find out the goal of globalisation. The driving force behind globalisation is not philanthropy or a pre-occupation with human welfare or social reproduction. The invisible hand behind globalisation is the profit motive; the rate of return to capital being the main goal (as clearly admitted by Lord Lugard in *The Dual Mandate*) that informed the British colonial adventure in Africa as elsewhere. And the goals of profit and of humanity are not often compatible except accidentally. The former is driven by relentless greed and the other by moral considerations.[4]

For Africa, it can be summarised that the central elements of globalisation include the structural adjustment programmes which were meant to make the African economy more business-like by removing wastages and cutting down on social spending. It endorses the withdrawal of states from economic activities – the requirement that the economy must be regulated. Africa must also comply with the requirements of the World Trade Organisation – trade liberalisation.

The meaning of structural adjustment has been highlighted as follows:

> All over Africa, the hallmark of structural adjustment entailed massive currency devaluation, price interest rate payments and trade liberaliza-tion; the imposition of credit ceilings and control over money supply, a freeze on wages and salaries, public enterprise privatization/commerciali-zation/liquidation, public expenditure reduction, the withdrawal of subsi-dies (real and imagined) and the introduction of cost recovery measures on a range of (mainly social) services, the reduction of the size of civil service through staff retrenchment and the stepping up of efforts at rev-enue mobilization through inter alia, the introduction/enforcement of a range of direct and indirect taxes (Gibbon and Olukoshi 1996: 57–58).

The *Oxfam Poverty Report* (1995:73–75) had also outlined the essential focus of structural adjustment as summarised above. Thus what really dominated economic thought for much of the 1980s and 1990s was the belief that good economic performance depended upon the liberalisation of markets as the private markets could be trusted to undertake an effi-cient allocation of resources. This philosophy was promoted as the uni-versal solution without regard for the unique sociology of economic life in Africa.[5] There had been several other critiques of this approach to de-velopment as it was not even internally consistent as well as being ahistorical. It has been pointed out for example that post-war reconstruc-tion in Europe and Japan was based upon expansionary economic poli-cies to restore infrastructure and wider economic activity. The state of infrastructure in Africa prior to the structural adjustment was perhaps the equivalent of what then obtained in Europe during the post world war era. Moreover, the implementation of structural adjustment in such coun-tries as Ghana which the international community has often paraded as a model has not produced any spectacular result.[6]

Although there had been some successes recorded here and there, over-all, structural adjustment had failed to deliver the promised dividend. The optimistic position of Faruqee (1994:280) that structural adjustment in Nigeria had been able to reverse the decline in the economy could not be borne out by the people's life experiences as we shall see shortly. particu-

larly the consequences of structural adjustment for women. The question here is whether or not structural adjustment enhanced women's role in the dominant peasant agricultural sector?

The other major element of globalisation is in the area of political reform. The states in Africa, especially those under one party systems, were required to open up the political space to admit competition and political liberalism with a view to making the state more stable and to minimise political contestations from ethnic and religious groups. The question is how has political liberalisation altered gender relations – has it opened up for women more opportunities for political leverage and participation in state activities from which they had been previously excluded or only marginally involved? There are other components of globalisation. Information Technology is presently the most visible and perhaps a most powerful and indomitable component of globalisation. There is the Cable News Network, the Voice of America and the BBC which have since drowned the voice of the national radios in Africa. There is also the Internet. Information technology has made it easier for the entire world to be within the reach of global investors than ever before. How has this global technology advantaged women vis-à-vis men in Africa? In Africa who are the marketers of this technology and who are the consumers? The sphere of culture and popular education are also now under the pressure of globalisation. This has implications for local consumption and production relations. There is presently a vast centralisation of strategic knowledge being shared only by Internet users. This promotes social exclusion, particularly of women in Africa, who, because of low education, fuelled by poverty and social discrimination, cannot participate in large numbers in this process of information technology. Simultaneously, useful local knowledge is also being pushed further to the background as this is not included or made part of the global culture and education. And where they are, there is distortion. The combined effect of all these processes of globalisation is to accentuate the dependency and thus the dis-empowerment of Africa generally and of African women in particular. Unfolding social processes do not have the same effect on groups that constitute society. It seems obvious why the social processes which globalisation triggered off may not have benefited men and women equally. Though men and women differ with regard to their biological make-up, it was social prejudice and stereotypes which had, over the ages and across societies, been employed to exclude the female gender from society's most valuable resources. This largely functions through the social meanings that are imposed on purely biological differences. It seems

that with the conclusion of each phase of globalisation, men and women became more unequal. The colonial officers, with their Victorian concept of women as home makers/workers bluntly turned against African women's visibility in the public domain. The people's world view revealed that there were few areas of unequal relationship between men and women in the pre-colonial era, especially in the economic and political sense. The ways in which globalisation in its concrete manifestation has worked to alter gender relations are discussed next.

Implications of globalisation for gender relations

Peasant agriculture employs well over 70 percent of the population and remains the dominant form of economic activity in Africa (on peasants and their organistions see Romdhane and Moyo 2002:341–361). Women are dominant in this sector. In Tanzania for example, about 54 percent of agricultural workers were women compared to 46 percent men in 1990/91 (See Bureau of Statistics Publication on Women and Men in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam 1997). In Uganda 81 percent of employed women were in agriculture compared to only 68 percent of men (See facts and figures on women and men in Uganda 1998:4). The corresponding figures for Tanzania were 90 percent and 76 percent (See p. 36 of Bureau of Statistics Publication, and also Mbilinyi 1991 and Ngware 1996:21–24). In Kenya as well, women make a vital contribution in subsistence agricultural production. They are actively involved in 'planting, weeding and harvesting of beans, maize, millet and vegetables which are produced for household subsistence consumption. They normally would sell a small surplus in a good season. The men are primarily responsible for the production of sugarcane, pyrethrum, coffee and wheat for sale. Male labour participation in food production is much less regular than that of women and other members of the households' (Suda 1996:124–125). The result is a double workload for women not only in Kenya but across the entire continent of Africa. Women in other cultures also have a greater workload than men but the availability of modern technologies reduces the tediousness of domestic labour for women in the developed world.

Because of women's participation in the sector, whatever affects agriculture therefore will certainly alter whatever gender relations existed in that sector before. Structural adjustment in advocating specific reforms in the agricultural sector must therefore have impacted on gender relations. Lets us summarise the reforms that structural adjustment outlined for the agricultural sector and thereafter assess the implications for gender relations. One way in which structural adjustment immediately im-

pacted on agriculture was through the abolition of the marketing boards
which had been in place since the colonial period to stabilise the com-
modity price of export cash crops. Many regarded the activities of the
marketing boards as largely exploitative as they often withheld large sur-
pluses from peasant farmers without shielding the farmers from the con-
sequences of depression when prices fell. In the past, politicians had squan-
dered these accumulated surpluses, which can be substantial. The abolition
of the marketing board was intended to allow farmers to reap the full
reward for their labour. There are variations across the different regions
of Africa on women's role in agriculture with regard to the kind of crops
that they are allowed to cultivate. It had been pointed out that in Uganda
the production and marketing of coffee are controlled by men while women
concentrated in staple food production, but in west Africa women also
engage in the cultivation and marketing of commercial crops (Watkins
1995:89–90). As a matter of fact, Yoruba women in South-West Nigeria
could inherit cash crop farms, cultivate and market the same. But there
are constraints. The abolition of the marketing boards within the context
of local currency devaluation implies more returns from the export of
cash crops. Over the years, as women were being pushed into the cultiva-
tion of food crops for reasons connected with the food security crisis,
they were not able to take full advantage of the liberalisation of the cash
crop agricultural sub-sector. Men more than women would have also ben-
efited from the credit facilities that came with liberalisation as men have
the requisite network to secure loans. Even though some women do culti-
vate cash crops and even though the people's world view in some cases
allowed them to undertake the marketing in practice, pre-occupation with
domestic activities prevented women from this profitable venture which
is increasingly becoming more male dominated. The improved returns
from export crops mainly cultivated by men may make them to subtly
coerce their wives' labour into the sector. Food security in the domestic
domain may become threatened as women's labour time may be with-
drawn from subsistence farming. The liberalisation of agriculture also
has implications for land transactions. All over Africa, land is commu-
nally owned even though individuals have usufruct rights. With the in-
creasing tempo of commercialisation of the agricultural sector, alienation
of land is in full force. How this process is to men's advantage should not
be difficult to discern.[7]

The increase in returns to male cash croppers and the resultant priva-
tisation of land resources have the potential of promoting individualism
and greed which pose a danger for community life in which women are

very active. This will further exclude African women from meaningful participation in the activities of their society. Once family land has for example been sold, there may be no basis to hold family or community meetings. Women often employ the forum provided by such meetings to sponsor gender specific agendas. It is also important to note that farming is a last resort for men who have lost out in the reform of the civil service thus further pushing women to the fringe of the agricultural food sub-sector when male migrants returned home to settle down to farming.

Structural adjustment in practical consequence has aggravated poverty in Africa as it has ensured that more countries in Africa paid more to the IMF than they received from it. Also Africa's share of the world trade has drastically reduced compared to the 1960s. This is spectacularly true of agricultural cash crops (see Nyang'oro 1998:30–31; Lipumba 1999:173 particularly Table 2 on the Sub-Saharan share of agricultural exports). The *New York Times* of June, 20 1994 as cited in Nyang'oro 1998:30) provided a graphic illustration of this development. It said inter alia

> Africa's share of the world trade... is now closer to 2 percent. That is so marginal it is almost as if the continent has curled up and disappeared from the map of international shipping lanes and airlines routes that rope together Europe, North America and the Far East. Direct foreign investment in Africa is so paltry it is not even measured in the latest World Bank study.

Thus as far as the economy is concerned, especially with regard to agriculture, structural adjustment is a failure in Africa. Women have consequently become more disadvantaged as there are more women in the sector than in any other. We recognised the boom in commercial crop marketing which structural adjustment initially created but the gains were wiped away by the unprecedented level of inflation, particularly in the price of farm implements that accompanied it. That structural adjustment has more women as casualties than men can hardly be disputed. Some accounts by women speak volumes for the real meaning of globalisation processes as manifested in structural adjustment. A few examples will suffice:

> ESAP (Zimbabwe's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Programme) has meant that we can only eat two meals a day. We can no longer afford meat because prices are too high. Everything costs more. I can not afford to pay the school fees for my son and daughter since they started charging. Government said it was because of ESAP. We can not even go to the clinic when the children are sick because we can't afford the medicines – Zimbabwean woman, Harare.

> I have read that our country is stabilising. That may be true, but we have
> no jobs. We can't send our children to school. May be stabilising is a good
> thing for the countries we pay debt to, but here life is getting harder. –
> Zambian women (See the Oxfam Poverty Report 1995:71).

In an interview I conducted in Southwest Nigeria in the year 2000 a woman
respondent said as follows:

> You know my husband left for Abidjan about 13 years now with the hope
> to return after a year or two. That was when the price of flour for bread
> jumped up. You know he was a baker. Initially, he was getting in touch
> with us and sending money. But for the past eight years now he has not
> entered into any form of communication with us. I thought of visiting him
> but then the cost of transport is scaring. Now that education is no longer
> free I have to pay school fees for all these four children. When I could not
> cope again I had to withdraw one of them, one also started working part-
> time after the school hours. I have also changed my job from tailoring due
> to massive importation of second hand cloth. The children are not even
> doing well in school. The teachers are always on strike. They complain of
> low and untimely salaries. And I cannot afford to pay for school lessons
> organised by the teachers because I haven't got the money. In fact, I am
> finished and confused but how can I abandon these children and run away
> from home as their father did 13 years age. This is my dilemma if you can
> help... (narration by a respondent given to the author during an interview).

The informal sector where women are dominant has been particularly hit
by structural adjustment. A study on the effect of structural adjustment on
the working poor in Zimbabwe concluded that:

> the economic crisis of the great majority of women informal operators
> was clearly shown to have deepened. The crisis was popularly perceived
> by women themselves as one of market saturation on the supply side, cou-
> pled with a decline in demand. Both, and especially the latter, were further
> perceived as an effect of ESAP. In several cases, women traders were
> forced out of certain markets by these trends, severely threatening their
> social reproduction (Brand et al 1995:209).

All the above summarise the consequences of structural adjustment for
women in Africa. More and more households are becoming female-headed
as men are deserting homes to escape financial responsibilities and women
have to double the number of hours they work in order to cope. Across
Africa, school drop-outs are on the increase mainly because of poverty
and related causes. In Uganda as in most African countries, women have
higher illiteracy rates than their male counterparts. At the university level,

not only do men predominate, also courses which have better prospect for profitable employment are dominated by men.

It is often ignored that structural adjustment programmes in as far as they affect the economy and thus the status of poverty, also penetrate the realm of reproductive behaviour. And the connection is not remote. If education becomes expensive or rationalised (resulting from cuts in social expenditure), an average family would likely decide that the girl child's education has to be forgone in preference to male education. When girls drop out of school because of pregnancy or fees unaffordability, they may end up in an unsteady relationship or even become prostitutes. The chances of HIV infection are thus higher for women than men.[8]

Let us now discuss how the politics of adjustment (democratisation) has affected gender relations. Women were relatively active in the pre-colonial politics. Women's struggle in resisting colonialism is now well documented.[9] African women also fought in some of the African liberation struggles. Among the Igbo and Yoruba of Nigeria for example, no decision affecting women could be taken without their representation.

Prior to the democratisation processes that accompanied structural adjustment, dictatorial military regimes and one party states were common in Africa. The latter were based on the leaders' assumption that there were no classes in Africa but communal groups. To admit the existence of classes would amount to accepting that there were cleavages and hence conflictual relationships were a possibility.

Recently, Kenya's former president, Daniel Arap Moi, reiterated an earlier position of his that multipartism in his country is aiding ethnicity, political faction and that it is endangering the country's unity (*Daily Nation*, August 1 2001). This was a typical response of most African leaders. The opening up of the political space in Africa however owes a lot to the pressure from the World Bank, the IMF and other multilateral donor agencies who made it a condition for finance. The donor's pressure on political reform in Africa, especially from about the mid 1980s, should not be underestimated. According to Bratton and Van de Walle (1997:135–36)

> By 1990s ... African political leaders discovered that they could no longer court external support simply by professing Marxism-Leninism or anti communism. In order to obtain development assistance they henceforth had to show willingness to observe human rights, practice efficient and honest governance and hold genuinely competitive elections.

But it must not be forgotten that there was also the agitation and pressure on the state mounted by several professional organisations, civil societies, women's groups, ethnic groups and religious bodies to democratise (Olurode 1998). Perhaps equally important was the wider environment in which treaties and conventions on women multiplied with the emphasis on affirmative action.

The research question which emanates from the above is whether or not this development altered the practice of politics to the advantage of women. Did women become more of a force to be reckoned with politically than in the pre-structural adjustment era? Generally, in both the developed and the underdeveloped worlds, men and women participate differently in politics. Women are generally under-represented at the formal level of politics. But this by no means implies that women cannot get their views across or even influence state policies positively. This can take the form of shifting the boundary between the public and the private spheres and thus politicising the private as had happened in many countries where the issues of rape, abortion and domestic violence had been pushed into the arena of public discourse (Alvarez 1990). The important thing is therefore to analyse under what conditions and with what strategies[10] women's movements can influence the state and policy agendas (Waylen 1996:11).

In the post-structural adjustment period, though women might not yet be key actors in large numbers, there are certain political practices which had a positive potential for women's visibility in politics. Across Africa, women's non-governmental organisations have multiplied and some of these organisations are so active that the state had responded by either co-opting their significant members into the state apparatus or by causing divisions within them. Some of these organisations also aid oppressed women to seek legal redress in cases of violation of womanhood or of women's property rights. In a well celebrated case, Nigeria's Court of Appeal ruled that a customary practice which disentitled a wife from the estate of her deceased husband was null and void to the extent that it was repugnant to natural justice, equity and fairness (*The Guardian*, Nigeria October 25 1997: 'A woman's triumph over custom'.) The burgeoning of women's organisations and their activities, the critical role of the media regarding women's marginalisation and governments' commitment to affirmative action are factors which must be considered in the emerging alterations in gender relations in politics.

These women's organisations are of different varieties which reflect their concerns – some being purely professional or philantunapic whilst others are action and research oriented. Their emergence not only further widened the political space but it also has the potential of serving as a recruiting ground for women's future participation in active politics. The emergence of these organisations was therefore a positive development. Ordinarily the more they are, the wider should be the political space for women indirectly influencing state's politics. They could however be used to frustrate women's political goals under a conservative and authoritarian regime.

We should in fact not ignore the fact that women are increasingly mounting pressure to ensure a fair representation at the formal level of politics. They insist on compliance with affirmative action. And this is producing some encouraging outcomes. For example, in the 1995 general elections in Tanzania, 67 (or 5 percent) women contested political positions against 1, 268 (95 percent) men. Definitely, multipartism has somehow opened up more space for women's participation in the politics of Tanzania. Special seats are increasingly being allocated to women which continues to improve their representation in parliament. The number was 15 seats in 1990, 36 in 1995, and 48 seats in the 2000 elections. Their representation in the immediate independence period was low. This declined from 7.5 percent in 1961–65 to 3.9 percent in 1970–75. An argument had been put forward for the inclusion of more women in the administrative cadres of the party structures as well as in electoral bodies (see paper by Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee, 2000).

In Uganda, women are also becoming involved in formal politics as cabinet members, members of parliament and as decision makers at the local level. A recent BBC report also informed us that a woman had emerged as the president of the powerful Mozambique's Miners Union (BBC News, June 26, 2001). In Nigeria's democratisation processes, some women had stood in the presidential elections. A few of them (3 out of 109) won seats as Senators and a dozen or so were elected as members of the House of Representatives in the general election of 1999. A woman[11] also emerged as the deputy governor of Lagos State – the most populous, heterogeneous and politically volatile state in Nigeria. Women are now more visible at all levels of decision-making in Nigeria. For example women in Lagos State dominate the judiciary at the upper level. Though outwardly ceremonial or un-harmful, the symbolic role of the wives of the president and governors and even local governments in Nigeria may sometimes be oppositional and challenging of the status quo. Their roles

are not to be pre-construed as essentially subservient to the state. We should try to understand the circumstances under which those roles get activated and for what purpose – emancipatory for gender relations or exploitative of them:

> These activities often entail entering the public sphere and either making demands or acting collectively, whether on a national, local or community based level. This kind of activity therefore entails the politicization of the private sphere and entry into the public sphere on that basis. The participant's gender therefore becomes a fundamental part of this type of political activity, as the fact of their being women is a central part of the action (Waylen 1996:19).

It is public knowledge that Nigeria's President Obasanjo preferred a non-visible woman as the first lady but his wife objected. In their campaign against behaviour that impaired reproductive health (prostitution, early marriage etc), wives of the president and governors indirectly attacked men's reproductive behaviour. The wife of Nigeria's Edo State governor recently openly opposed the idea of using female young undergraduates as entertainers for visiting male governors.

The simultaneous pressures at the formal and informal levels are desirable in that they not only complement each other but may also generate emancipatory outcome for women. Men and women however require continuous sensitisation and re-socialisation to maintain the tempo of change under political liberalisation.

Women's low participation in the sphere of education also accounts for their marginal role in the new information technology where they are neither the merchants nor the main consumers. Women are thus readily excluded from the vast centralisation of knowledge and empowerment that Internet usage implies. In today's post-capitalist society, information and knowledge are powerful instruments of control and subordination. Peter Drucker (1993) made the point that in today's world, knowledge, (not land, labour or capital) is the most crucial mode of production. The culture of the Internet is strongly gendered to women's disadvantage. Women are not yet key actors in the new information technology.

The emerging global consumption pattern of fast food which is fast becoming noticeable in third world cities also poses a threat to the culture industry, the kitchen and this may further dis-empower women in an area where they exercise tremendous leverage. America's pop music is booming everywhere. Mr. Biggs, McDonalds and other fast food giants would certainly take some consumers away from the kitchen, the home and from the food crops which women grow and derive income from. This erosion

may also take food vending away from women and thereby also the accompanying economic advantages which it confers. The potential of this development for women's further marginalisation and disempowerment is real. These developments are not being unchallenged by women. In the conclusion that follows, we promote a discussion of gender and resistance to globalisation in some detail.

Conclusion: Gender and resistance to globalisation

Most African women may not be able to discuss the concept of globalisation in ways that may sound academic or meaningful to someone from the West but as we have seen in the previous sections, they are able to give vivid accounts of this process in terms of what it means for their livelihoods and political participation. Structural adjustment may be a technical term but its consequences are social in that women experience high food prices, payment for social services that used to be free or which attracted only marginal charges, their husbands' loss of jobs through what is technically referred to as rationalisation of the civil service and privatisation of public enterprises, and the increasing domestic workload being borne. They also know that they suffer more from HIV infection and that more and more of their children are being involved in civil war and communal conflict occasioned by disagreement among principal actors (men) over the sharing of state's resources, itself a product of the imposition of stringent economic measures, poor governance, corruption and greed.

Theoretically, we must not ascribe too much analytical power to the concept of globalisation. But it is not easy to empirically ascertain how much of what goes on cannot be explained by it. How much must be ascribed to factors endogenous to Africa itself – greed, corruption and poor governance? The recognition of this possibility is in itself a step forward. Poor governance and corruption are the very factors which made the imposition of stringent economic measures inevitable in the first instance. The persistence of certain social relationships in the midst of profound social change triggered off by globalisation is somehow problematic. For example, extended family obligations persist. The traditional political institutions retain their vitality. All these remnants may constitute sources of additional economic burden on people already in dire financial straits.

Women do not accept that these processes are inevitable or that there are no alternatives to structural adjustment – as some male state actors had insisted by parroting their external sponsors. In various cities in Af-

rica, structural adjustment, which inevitably pushed up food prices and reduced living standards, was greeted with spontaneous riots largely by women. In Benin republic, the removal of the subsidy on rice resulted in street riots by urban residents. Structural adjustment-induced riots were a common phenomenon in Africa in the immediate post-SAP era.

In response to the difficulties of accessing state resources, women in both rural and urban areas began to exit from the state by constructing structures of finance and politics that rivalled the state. Women are nowadays more active in cooperative societies, market associations and are increasingly assuming household headship with pride. More than before, the incidence of female-headed households is increasing even in areas where during interviews it would be denied (Olurode 1995, Oyekanmi 1993). The context in which this is happening is even more important. The underlying reason is men's failure to recognise that combining domestic chores and reproductive roles with productive roles seriously increases women's workload and impairs their health. Female-headed households may thereby be a mode of regaining control over women's reproductive behaviour.

We also discovered that in a few cases, women are constructing parallel political terrains where male endorsement may not be required. African women are insisting that their own worldview is not always coterminous with that of men though they collaborate with men as the need arises. It was Okonjo (1976:45) who employed the concept of the 'dual sex' system to characterise the African social system of gender relations which implies that 'each sex manages its own affairs and women's interest are represented at all levels'. However, under the European single-sex system, 'political status-bearing roles are predominantly the preserve of men ... women can achieve distinction and recognition only by taking on the roles of men in public life and performing them well'. Thus a European woman merely apes the European man.

In South-West Nigeria, Yoruba women have elevated the title of *Iyaloja* (head of market women) to such a status that not only diminished the status of *Iyalode* (Women's representative in the king's court), but a few Iyaloja also were dissatisfied with even the king's (male) recognition of their title. The former title is achieved whereas the other is hereditary. The case of the Iyaloja of Iwo in South-West Nigeria had been discussed at length in Faluyi (2000). Africa's traditional women have always been relevant politically but its today's women that are removing themselves from the realm of relevance by refusing to link up with grassroots-based illiterate women's organisations. There had been women monarchs in dif-

ferent parts of Africa and even today in some parts of South-West Nigeria (Ondo and Ekiti States) the tradition of appointing women as regents on the death of kings still persists. While they are extending their participation at the formal political level, women are simultaneously protesting the state's incursion into the family and community sphere. There is a need for a re-appraisal of the African world view with the objective of studying which aspects of it can be utilised for the purpose of advancing women's interest at the formal and informal levels of political participation.

Africa cannot afford an wholesale consumption of the product of globalisation. Globalisation works to erase jobs and this cannot be in the interest of Africa which has no social security system. Moreover, from the sociology of economic life in Africa, we know that economic rationality is not the totality of economic activities. In its impact on culture, globalisation fosters alienation from our cultural roots as foreign pop music and the fast foods become the ideal. The real African identity is discarded as we become foreigners in our own land. Also the market for our own cultural objects dries up and the knowledge about the production of such artefacts gradually becomes forgotten. It is part of African women's resistance to globalisation to refuse to be lured by the glamour of this change process. In spite of its drudgery, a large percentage of women in Africa still work as farmers and they also remain dominant in the informal sector. The challenge before African leadership in this age of globalisation is how to promote people-centred development and transparent governance within which women as citizens can pursue legitimate economic activities which will in turn positively impact on their political practices. Africa is sufficiently endowed with natural resources, especially mineral resources, which should enable its leaders to banish poverty from the continent. Unfortunately, in the fierce conflict over its resources, African women are the losers. Rather than abating this conflict, globalisation seems to be intensifying it and this is compounding Africa's poverty profile as well as having the potential to compromise women's welfare as a gender category. The consequences of conflict are more devastating and socially disruptive for women than for men.

Notes

1. This inequality between the north and the south is a major factor in the migration of people from the poorer south at great risk to their lives to the north in spite of stringent immigration regimes which now classify such immigrants' as economic refugees rather than asylum seekers.

2. Recently, the group launched an advertisement campaign depicting a healthy western baby trying to breast feed from a malnourished African woman (*Daily News*, Tanzania, June 20, 2001). A number of protests had been organised by this group in major world cities such as Seattle, Melbourne, Prague, Quebec and most recently in Genoa. This last one provoked anger against police brutality when one protestor was killed. It is however a misnomer to label the group as anti-globalisation. They only stand up against its damaging consequences – see 'Globalization a misunderstood concept', *Daily Nation*, Kenya, July 27, 2001.

3. Women and their organisations were however active in the pre-colonial and even in the colonial period. Women's activism in the years of decolonisation had somehow become dampened in the post-colonial era when it was most desirable.

4. If the process of globalisation sometimes results in humanistic considerations, these are secondary and accidental. It can be recalled that the American firm that produces anti-retroviral aids drug was reluctant to give in to the mass production of the drug in developing countries as this would erode the company's profit level. The company guards its monopoly jealously.

5. In Africa, the profit motive in economic activities may not be the sole motivating factor. There may also be non-economic bases of seemingly economic behaviour such as in strengthening ties of friendship and family bonds, and which may sometimes be valued more than purely economic gain.

6. Thus in spite of the acclaimed success of the structural adjustment programme in Ghana, the point has been made that the private sector's response has been lukewarm as evidenced in the poor performance of Ghana's industry. A major reason was said to be the poor institutional environment. Thus institutional and economic reforms need to go hand in hand to induce the participation of private sector economic actors – see Amponsah 2000:10 for details.

7. Men have an initial edge in strategic economic activities which put them at an advantage in owning prime agricultural land. As more land come under cocoa cultivation and as more peasant labourers accumulate enough savings to become first share croppers and later farm owners, women may have to farm less fertile land and at long distances from home thus increasing for women the cost of production – see E.A. Walker (2000) "Happy Days are Here Again": cocoa Farmers, Middlemen, Traders and the Structural Adjustment Program in South-West Nigeria, 1986–1990', *Africa Today*, Vol. 47 No 2, Spring pp. 151–170 for a general discussion of the impact of structural adjustment on cocoa cultivation in south-west Nigeria. The analysis was however not gendered.

8. The report on Tanzania which is true for most African countries shows that women are at a higher risk of being infected than men and they (women) are even infected at much younger ages (20–24) than men with zero-positive peak between 25–35 years (see p. 28 of Bureau of Statistics Publication referred to earlier). Preference for young girls as sex partners is also a contributory fac-

tor. The belief is that young girls cannot be carriers of HIV because of their tender age. In Uganda, the reason which was given for the higher rate of infection among women was follows: 'This could be attributed to women's sexuality being controlled by men' (see pp. 28–29 Facts and figures on Uganda, 1998 referred to above). Uganda's 1995 Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) also showed that more women (36 percent) than men (11 percent) had not changed their reproductive behaviour in order to prevent AIDS. This was because women lack total control over activities relating to their reproductive roles. The crippling economics of structural adjustment is an additional factor in this disempowerment over reproductive life. Without a skill and without a job, young girls easily become prostitutes. Yet, in the traditional social milieu before globalisation, women were not so helpless in the area of mate selection, family formation and reproductive behaviour. A study of the people's worldview through proverbs had confirmed this to be true of Yoruba women in south-west Nigeria (see Olurode 1999: 170–172).

8. For example see Nina Mba (1982), *Nigerian Women Mobilised: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria*, pp. 140–141 on women's activism in southern Nigeria.

9. An illiterate leader of women traders in the South-West town of Iwo (with a population of over 500,000) in Nigeria in 1992 refused to be coerced by the local authorities into giving her consent to the demolition and reconstruction of the town's popular market. She insisted on a written agreement that she as the leader would be allowed to exercise control over the right to allocate the market stalls after completion contrary to the position of the local authorities. She thumb-printed only when this term was included in the agreement and was translated to her by a trusted fellow market woman. So, women's capacity to influence decisions should not be narrowly construed. But for the market leader's insistence, the local authorities could have allocated the market stalls to political lackies, cronies, friends and family members. Sometimes those who feel disadvantaged politically, especially women, could resort to public ridicule, sarcastic song, dancing and drumming to express their voices of dissent and their rejection of political exclusion (*The Punch*, Nigeria, Feb. 2, 2001).

10. This is unprecedented in Nigeria's political history. This woman deputy gov ernor has been creating some unease in the circle of only male governors. She was accused of making underground moves to outsmart the governor of Lagos State. She claims that she was being denied her constitutional role. Other male governors see her moves as dangerous and threatening (*The Guardian*, Nigeria, June 28, 2001). It should be mentioned that women in the southwest had a long history of political activism.

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