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# **GENDER MAINSTREAMING NGOs IN AFRICA: AN EMERGING AGENDA OF THE GLOBALISATION ERA.**

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## 1- SUMMARY

The endeavour to promote Gender and to make it a determinant factor of development in the actual context in Africa reveals one salient question ; should the old conflict of interest and power be brighten up ? From the traditional customs at the grassroots to the institutional approaches and policy building, Gender awareness encompasses many common traits among which the need to share power, the need for reflection on recent events in participatory development, its challenges, inadequacies, and its reality as a strategy for the sustainable share of opportunities, the need for concrete policy action rendering the matter its real reason of being. Indeed enormous hurdles are to be overcome by Gender mainstreaming NGOs in Africa.

Almost African leadership do not see their legitimacy in their respective population, and all the decisions are taken without people consent. Africa do not produce anything but people continue living, they deserve social care, water, education,... and undoubtedly the problems will find their answers provided, responsible governance, rule of law stand at the core of policies

## **2- INTRODUCTION**

These last two decades have seen an acute and serious debate about women's position in the society drawing on men and women relationship which has being deteriorated bringing women to gain audience in a world not merely made but dominated by men, giving women a real right set up a severe problematic on the social ground, as whether to trim down the existent paradigms of development, or not? What a dilemma! this era of globalisation is no more astounding since precursors factors have appeared some years ago, and this new wave could stand as a new breath to feminist organisations to make women's voices heard, therefore, women conscious of their social status began raising associations in view to combate the system in which they stand as objects instead of staying as actors. There, in countries where feminist associations meet flexible jurisdictional possibilities they have boomed claiming women inalienable right to share the same opportunities with men, and indeed, they deserve it.

Further, on social ground, studies have shown a great gap between men and women living standard, due to cultural, religious, economical interdictions as such that in the horn of Africa (Ethiopia) women are forbidden to practice any lucrative activities and brutalized by their husband or in some cases kidnapped for marriage against their will. View to these, Gender mainstreaming NGOs sought in globalisation some feasibility in fulfilling their requirements owing to the opportunities available, such as communication avenues, that supposedly to make women voices heard.

### **3- FEMINIST ORGANISATION: AN ENGINE FOR WOMEN DEVELOPMENT**

The recent expansion of Gender NGOs field in Africa and the development of a distinct communality of interests' priorities on their part have launched a platform fecund for building a sustainable framework of gender issues. The only remaining questions is whether the ruling teams will let free conditions of exercise to the NGOs in their line of duties, or will try to exert control on them ?

But the globalisation factors as well as liberalisation and the communication avenues will be the boarding means when they spring into action; essentially in the formation of people instead of using public system such as radio, schools. It is worth mentioning that some liberalisation factors will have positive effect on the Gender NGOs work, namely the increase of revenue due to free economic market policy; and the adjustment of exchange rate, both will help for a good share of the resources.

Most of African countries have launched the structural Adjustment Program reforms, related to globalisation. This program basically aims to provide equal opportunity to every citizen of each country carrying it insofar yearning for social justice and a sense of yearning for more decency and fairness but the record in each country is abominable referring to its practice. Gauging women level of development they still lagging behind, be it in business, academics, and government. So, there's the opportunity for Gender mainstreaming NGOs to fill the vacuum and to act in such away their point of view been incorporated in social and economical, why not in the political debate. Gender mainstreaming NGOs have a lot to do.

Yet the atmosphere in most developing countries is far to be favourable, because the unsavoury regimes compromise their mission, willing to control their agenda. But where governments have failed NGOs can fare, why not? – Insofar, the relation NGOs – government is critical, but why this? Many decision-makers complained about government attitude, lacking transparency in their activities, laws are made quickly, with little debate or analysis of the social economic consequences. Pressions in some parts (Senegal, Morocco) are made on governments to follow the globalisation wave, in providing safeguards necessary. Conversely, in central Africa the NGOs are made known implicitly that the Impact of their work could possibly raise populations against government. Therefore access to tools or data is strictly forbidden. The environment, however, frustrating would never set the NGOs out of their route to improve women living conditions. The NGOs first reason of being is to reach out to poor and the needy wherever they are in the world and to construct an order where they have a chance to take control of their own lives and futures and to climb out of poverty and be humans actors in their individuals lives. (Clare Short, 1996).

Despite the pros and the cons of globalisation it pays to stress the fact that African NGOs in relation with Western NGOs have played a key role in the fight against poverty. By illustration: small scale scheme credit for women in the horn of Africa has improved the living standard of women. Now the time has come for Gender mainstreaming NGOs to underline the important new development in Africa which need to be integrated into the planning of the support services provided by the industrial countries, developing network as well as the ability to make known, to the rest of the world their work and their potential. The functional correlations existing between some African NGOs and Western one must be stressed in such a way to challenge the union government-donors which has deteriorated. Fund disbursement has slackened during this decade on account of a new reconfiguration of the aid to development which made responsible governance a preliminary step. Beyond this, the distance between nations and people has been shortened by globalisation. Communications have belittled the world; and the networks have increased and the quest of NGOs to achieve sustainability require a systematic observance of human rights.

Almost everyone express concern about globalisation: business people, academic, government, the media, strikes workers, and so on. The political discourse about globalisation in the west is strongly varied and pluralistic. Therefore, to skip the question we believe that mainstreaming trends within that discourse in Africa has constructed political and social choices in ways that leave out two critical elements: can ruling teams achieve their mission without human rights or to govern within social grievance?

All Human right NGOs like Gender mainstreaming NGOs face the same difficulties in the field. The Globalisation process will contribute to lift millions of people out of poverty, but millions of others risk being excluded, if precedence observance of human rights does not occur. Human rights are the safeguarding approaches of globalisation process. In conducting their activities over the past several years the donor's communities have clearly demonstrated their partiality concerning the importance of democracy in co-operation with African ACPs countries. The conduct varied, like human rights protection ( since 1990 ), exclusion as in case of Sudan ; silent tolerance of human rights violation as in the case of Nigeria ; strategic weighing of interests as in Nigeria, Zaire, and Liberia ; and clientelistic relations ( Francophile Africa ).

Since the European Council Resolution of 28<sup>th</sup> November 1991, the commission has acted in accordance with the so called Budget line B7-522, which is aimed at allocating funds to support democracy and preserve human rights. According to the resolution, the community and its member states should grant high priority to a positive concept that promotes respect for Human rights and supports democracy as well. Human rights initiatives could be actively supported in the following areas: in holding free and fair elections, in re-inforcing the administration of justice, in supporting NGOs and in decentralisation. In case of severe human rights violations, the European Union may establish a catalogue of gradual steps to take against the offender. This relative donor's position will foster in developing countries the observance of human rights and the erection of feminist organisations to influence

policy. The tidal wave of globalisation which is sweeping across the black continent will help trimming down the old and trivial paradigms of development

#### **4- GENDER AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION-ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN**

Despite different agendas of gender mainstreaming NGOs in Africa, all mention normally one that incorporates economic and social rights in addition to the political right. The lack of genuine African input into the formulation of development paradigms separates modern African experience from that elsewhere in the world, and it accentuates the fact that the main challenge for development is to increase the capacity of African entities to analyse past experiences and to formulate new strategies for a better future. The identification of the social deprivation in every part of the rural Africa expresses a communality of difficulties and frustrations of everyday life that women encounter. Everywhere, women used to bewail their lot and undergo severe threats of poverty. With very little opportunity to have education with farm or household tasks, feeble income, having responsibility for the whole family rather than their own personal use, in short there's no significant change recognised in the rural women's life. Borrowing money from close friends for a while (but this is not a serious loan with interest). In the search for effective gender mainstreaming strategies, it has become apparent that local communities especially the women have a critical role to play for the betterment of their lots, but this can be done provided, they break the ice and cease to feel the worse-off amongst men, therefore their effort will see endorsement from NGOs, leading to some participatory approaches.

Certainly, recent years have seen a rapid expansion of effort to applying participatory approaches to promoting policy change. This new wave of participation has swept across all international NGOs involved in policy change and the same way it must be the cornerstone of the African NGOs policies.

The gender mainstreaming NGOs primary functions is the advocating process, a process that aims to influence public policies, societal attitudes, and socio-political process that enable and empower the marginalized to a speak for themselves. Its purpose is the social transformation through the realisation of human rights. To carry this, the NGOs in the field need trained and experienced full-time personal much in the same ways as international NGOs do, achieving this goal requires an organization structures, long term planning, and funding strategies but hitherto, they are lagging behind. External technical assistance might be better focussed on these needs rather than seeking for government support in vain. Sustainability was not seen as a financial issue. The NGOs know that their credibility and effectiveness are built on a number of factors. They recognise that their management or accounting practices might not be all the donors want and they would be happy to have technical assistance in this respect.

They are especially concerned with their ability to plan strategically that is to develop five or more year's plans and to set goals accordingly. One specific obstacle they are encountering is the ability to assess and evaluate their work an issue discussed bellow. Many groups noted that they would be delighted to have more help and training in evaluating their work, and to what extend are policies of globalisation needed to address their plight, trustworthiness in their eyes of constituencies and in the eyes of potential leaders rather than on the group and tits activities as a whole.

Regional communication and collaboration must be encouraged. In West Africa, where language has always been a barrier between former English and former French colonies, once is a growing realisation that just the globalisation factors will foster. Regional contacts are cost effective and yield to more benefits, if only, as we suggested in the friendship, that accrue from contact between people whose common activities make them a small minority in their own countries.

The question therefore moves on to the choice of form and extent. The most obvious areas where benefits would accrue were seen as pooling ideas and resources to support regional corporation, exchange of information and access to one another documentation, joint reports and studying on common issues, namely women's participation in politics. Efficient regional co-operation allows the better integration of women in development policies, and to overcome the disadvantages as of their relatives small influence zone. NGOs in Africa are resource - poor and face many problems. The groups need more resources to be able to assure logistical and administrative support for sustained regional activities. Above this, African Gender mainstreaming NGOs must be able to meet very often home without being limited to the reception of funds for travel to western countries and international conferences. Co-operation and reciprocity require more open initial negotiations so that local NGOs can, express their real preferencies and to ensure that aid from donors is not determined solely by their agenda or that of the donors'.

African NGOs have priorities but they find it difficult most of the time, to articulate them and to incorporate them into the agenda of the better funded NGOs. Enhance links among African NGOs also strengthens their ability to participate in the search of answers to global issues, and could lead in the directions of further progress towards non-discriminatory multilateral decentralisation and liberalisation . The challenge of the future will be to ensure that they regional organisation are perceived as effective vehicle for the integration of African countries into the world economy, providing mutual support to their members in the reforms. Such institutions or organisations should not be considered defensive apparatus or system intended to ward off the non - constructive aspect of globalisation.



## **5- CORRELATION BETWEEN WOMEN INTEGRATION MEASURES AND GENDER DEVELOPMENT**

The revival of interest in gender mainstreaming is one salient question that gained unimpeachable audience from most of the donors communities, that's why efforts from international or local institutions to bridging the gender gap have occurred on all ground be it in social, economical, political and anthropological field. One prominent fact is that in any part of the rural Africa women stand at the core of the development and they do more than men do, unfortunately they are the worse-off. There, gender biases have been the mould of social injustices, and flagrant abuse of women rights, now the time has come to unveil such practices, and to render to women their rights, but provided, a thorough commitment to the feminist principles is obtained from every part.

A report from the south Sudan said : " We are well aware of women situation at present when we are in war, they are the ones who cook for wounded persons, taking care of our children we pray for peace to settle to change their status." Indeed they deserve being rehabilitated.

Rehabilitation will be effective if only full membership status is recognised and this leads to a concept of citizenship.

## **6- CAN THE WAYS OF BECOMING A CITIZEN AFFECT GENDER POLICY BUILDING ?**

Gender awareness can be applied in extenso to many aspect of life owing to the bad living condition of women and here is the case of citizenship. Far from being an astounding fact it puts emphasis on the notion of Equity and Belonging.

The concept is relevant and reveals a problematic as whether it serves as a motive of putting aside at the main stream of the society the main actors of development, women who are endowed with a certain inalienable right; right which predispose them to share the same opportunity as men.

Addressing gender realities is critical, for many ambushes depending on different group render the participatory process non-existent. In countries such as Mali, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso where the excision rate is high women should be considered as full member of their clan if only the step of excision is overcome.

Thus then, excision taken as a regressive matter is raising concern about women emancipation. Furthermore, it also raises health problems which most of the time draw to death.

The belief that every society has its own set of social norms and values can undermine seriously somehow efforts to addressing such acute impediment to development.

*Thus the case of excision cannot stretch the membership status as it's believed. The following story is sorrowful rather than joyful as the process of excision takes it-*

*She was very young and small and she walked slowly with a cane, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the lightness of a pendulum.*

*She was bleeding. She wore a dark striped dress reaching down to her shoe tops and was followed by an old woman; probably she would be the nurse in question.*

*" My daughter, walk " she said harshly*

*" I cannot " she replied slowly*

*" what a hell, you're stubborn nobody has ever done this with me, so walk" she complained.*

*It was very difficult for the old women to notice that the surgery has been performed badly. As they were walking the lady faded and fell down. A while after, she sat down to rest and she folded her hands over her knees.*

*The old woman looked at her and got to know finally that she was bleeding seriously and she began trembling all over by then the old woman began calling for help but the cry could not be heard from where they left. Could I stay hidden without doing anything? What a dilemma! Leaving or staying, rescuing whether or not when it is forbidden to men to tread their path. I left the woods for as good as a reason as I went there.*

*Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more tasks to perform, and could not spare any more time for that one.*

*It is unexpected how easily and insensibly. I fall into a particular route and make a beaten track for myself. I had not stayed there an hour before my feet wore a path from the bush to the village. I reached the village stunned by the event I had witnessed, how horrible, and unpleasant the scene was! I could not help forgetting*

*such atrocity human being is committing in the name of a trivial custom, even a week after.*

*A month after my arrival in town I heard that a lady on whom excision has been committed succumbed from blood short in one of the surrounding hospitals. Disappointment is the lot of women victim of many injustices.*

We all know that we become citizen of a nation by birth ( jus soil ), by naturalization ( country adopted ) by right of blood ( jus sanguinis ). The belief that any law be it customs, religion or any deeds whatsoever grant women the right to be a citizen of a country is a falsehood.

The battle against excision is not senseless because it encompasses gender and its social components as a blueprint for policy reform under the label of the participatory development and this reform will enhance women advancement and their self-sufficiency be it in social, economical, or political grounds. Citizenship must prevail and be the premise or the prerequisite measures for any concrete action supposed to be taken in women's favour.

The proficiency of the prerequisites will stress on the notion of belonging and therefore women will feel to be citizen of their own country. This process non-existent they will feel as an object and this situation would not foster their development nor entail their efforts to shorten the list of poor people. As much literature talk about the feminisation of poverty there is a pressing need to influence the traditional approach of development by sensitising all local staff that fake the laws in their favour.

## **7- DYSFUNCTIONS**

Women input in economic development in Africa cover many sectors of activities, the local model of development based essentially on staple food production (crop selling, and manufactured product selling) doubled with taxes inspectors harassment at all level do not favour savings but the universal economic model want increase of savings which will certainly back the desire and effort to run even a small scale food processing unit or another business. Success appears only with those close to the governors.

The neo-classic paradigms of development that derived from the Western models of organisation reject kinship solidarity as a symbol of prosperity and fortune to certain local lobbies that fake laws and monopolize excessively opportunities they do not deserve. We call for a real reform on social and political grounds.

The inadequacy of rules and procedures of the states bureaucracies and the lack of commitment, poor training and education of the state personnel has given rise to

the regressive tendency of the states and an increasing rate of corruption ; all these sustained by laxity, impunity thus the countries are ruled.

This goes to show that capacity building in Africa through government policies may not come true along weaknesses. Poorly performing organisations and officials may only breed the acute dysfunctions we are witnessing actually.

The sudden creation of our states and the dismemberment of clans and entities after the Berlin conference in 1884 have left a gap in social and cultural management of the entities.

If a community has followed the establishment of the colonial administration and the genuine indigenous inputs are valued, rather than the imposition of colonial rules and the introduction of western concepts of organisation and administration, many dysfunctions would not appeared .Of course there are current impediment which necessarily must be overcome.

At the colonial era women are not educated as men and those men who are educated have a sense of superiority vis-à-vis other citizens and this come to accentuate the matter as such that the culture was relegated to a position of secondly importance. Thus equity which must occurred everywhere was banished ever, so was the cultural element. A civic society, based on human rights grant everyone the opportunity to realise one's own nature but as a member of not merely a nation but a family, a community, a religion, a political party. The fulfilment of personal aspiration is possible because of the civic society that provides citizen with safeguards.

All feminist associations were politicised and under the dictatorial regime, they have marched over forty years since independence in the 60's in support of the unsavoury regimes rather than claiming their right for health, education...

Almost everywhere in Africa where responsible governance is not at the core of a proactive development policies, emerging feminist movement served as ferment for monopartism. Most prominent and active personalities that could make policy change were enrolled in a rigid system called " creuset national ". They do however, place great emphasis on the widespread evolution of monopartism across the continent and distort political consciousness of every citizen in profit of nepotism that consent the destruction of the early opponents . This then goes to lay the unsavoury regimes bases in Africa. The continent is suffering from many unpleasant situation be it in political, economical and social grounds. This course of action result from the new shape or understanding colonialist gave to the so-called independence. The belief that African entities are not mature to implement democracy as a form of government is criminal because the unsavoury regimes that collaborate secretly with the colonialist have been the major cause of death of the early local intelligentsia.

The endeavour to rethink policy *vis – à – vis* their African partners is essentially theoretical because the new paradigm reduce South entities to the

consumerism, and the intellectual framework of the proactive side of the cooperation failed to meet some local realities which are not grounded in classic paradigm of development. It is only after that the problem of sustainability is diagnosed in terms of behaviour.

Indeed the complex and corrupted bureaucracies must give place to a conscious and organised administration.

## **8- SUSTAINING FUTURE AGENDA**

Prior to any successful and sustainable agenda responsible government governance must be the cornerstone of any policy action, then issues of corruption, inefficiency and accountability must be tackled. Recognizing the prominence of responsible governance, equity in resource allocation to public expenditure will occur in the management of national resources, strengthening state institutions for reforming the social and economical systems. In addition there's a critical characteristic that will stand as the prerequisite for participatory development, this include cancelling ethnic biases and regionalism that affect the degree of cooperation amongst social entities. This factor coupled with the ability of the states to improve infrastructure and the quality of human resources, will fill the social vacuum for reducing poverty through its multiple faces.

Emphasis on strong state is important to easy right man to rule efficiently instead of putting the sate in "laissez-faire" attitude.

## **9 -CONCLUSION**

Can we break down the new wave of globalisation? Seeking new approaches to negate its inefficiency will be welcomed.

If Africa is to be a great partner and meet commitment either home or abroad gender awareness must be inclusive to policy buildings.

Private or public powers that fake development paradigm in their favour must get in mind that women's failure to achieve success is also a part of their lot. They have to easy Gender mainstreaming NGOs work and to cease tilting the social balance.

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<sup>i</sup> Extended agricultural Group (EAG) has emerged to IDDF (Initiatives pour un Développement Durable Fondamental) in 2005.