



# BEYOND INEQUALITIES

Women in  
**Malawi**



Women in  
Development

Southern Africa Awareness



# BEYOND INEQUALITIES

Women in  
Malawi



Southern African Research  
and Documentation Centre



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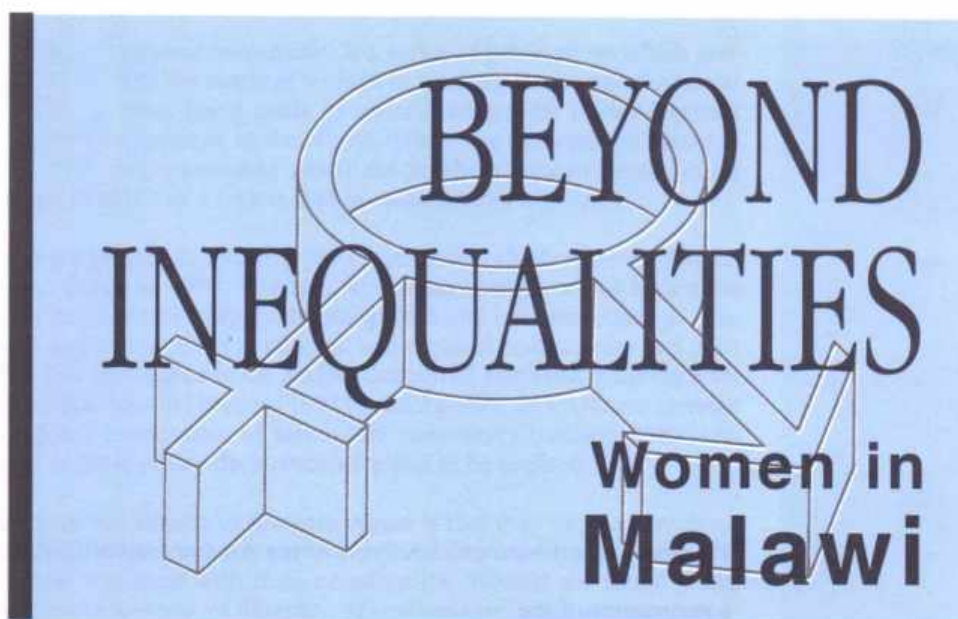
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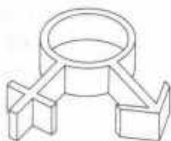
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# PREFACE



*Beyond Inequalities* is a series of publications which profile the status of women in southern Africa and the initiatives being made to mainstream gender in development processes in the region. The series presents the situation of women and men in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as a region, and in each member country.

In the process leading to, and after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, southern Africa has seen slow but noticeable change in the attitudes towards the integration and mainstreaming of gender issues and perspectives in national and regional programmes and policies. This has culminated in the SADC Council of Ministers adopting a set of recommendations in February 1997 to make gender an important element in the region's programme of action and community-building initiatives. The fruits of these policy declarations are still to be realised.

The reality of the women of southern Africa is that they remain a vulnerable, marginalised group that is yet to enjoy equality in status, and access to services and resources with male counterparts. Women are found at the "bottom rung of poverty, of illiteracy, of landlessness";<sup>1</sup> and are concentrated in the rural areas where facilities and services are scarce. Women are the most affected by negative impacts of economic adjustment programmes. Cuts in social expenditure such as in health and education mostly impact on women and girls, who are victims of the worst forms of violence.

While women are the daily managers and users of natural resources, largely for the benefit of others, women are not involved in the major decisions that affect these resources and the environment.

In politics and decision-making, women turn up in the largest numbers every election year as they constitute more than half the population of the different countries. Yet women are visibly absent in decision-making positions of government, of parastatal organisations, and of private companies. Women remain concentrated in the so-called "female professions" and at the very best are in the middle-management positions.

For strategies to be developed that address the subordination and vulnerability of women, it is important that the causes of this situation are identified. The series *Beyond Inequalities* reviews the roles and responsibilities, access to and control over resources, decision-making powers, needs and constraints of women *vis a vis* men.

The identification of the causes of these problems should lead to appropriate strategies to resolve them both at national and regional level.

The 12 country profiles in this series document and analyze information along themes drawn from the Critical Areas of Concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) and derived from what the countries of the region consider to be priorities. The profiles are therefore part of an initiative that seeks to bring to light gender issues as they relate to the development process. In addition to providing information for planning and



### UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

The Centre is a department within the University of Malawi whose mandate is to undertake research, training and consultancies. It conducts workshops on gender sensitisation and has done research in income-generating activities for rural women, girl-child education, and women and HIV/AIDS. The Centre has produced a *Directory of Women Researchers in Malawi*, an *Annotated Bibliography on Women in Malawi* and a *Bibliography on Family Planning Literature* for the country.

### SOUTHERN AFRICAN RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) is a regional resource centre covering the SADC region. Its objective is to improve the base of knowledge about regional, economic, political, cultural and social developments, and their implications, by making information accessible to policy makers, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, development agencies and the media in the region and internationally. SARDC's main programmes are on the environment and disaster management, gender, sustainable democracy and SADC information. SARDC has offices in Harare, Maputo and Dar es Salaam. Patron is Julius Nyerere.

development purposes, the profiles indicate gaps for future research focus and will be updated at intervals.

These national profiles on the status of women in southern Africa are an achievement of Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness (WIDSAA), a regional networking information programme that covers the 12 member countries of the SADC region. WIDSAA is a programme of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), in collaboration with a range of national partner organisations and supported by the Netherlands Government Directorate of International Cooperation (DGIS), through the Royal Netherlands Embassy regional WID programme.

The WIDSAA objective is to contribute to the improvement of the status and position of women in the SADC region through awareness-building; and to collect, document and disseminate relevant and accessible information based on national and regional perspectives. WIDSAA aims to collect and organize gender information in such a way that it is easily accessible for analysis and presentation toward the development of policy frameworks; and seeks to assist governments, organisations and peoples of the region to move quickly and effectively towards the empowerment and involvement of women in development.

A workshop of WIDSAA national partners and local consultants reviewed the Terms of Reference and defined a framework for preparation of the profile series.

The WIDSAA partners consulted national stakeholders, interest groups and gender activists in the process of developing the national profiles.

A regional profile on Women in Southern Africa, mainly deriving from the 12 national ones, includes further contributions of more than 30 professionals from throughout the SADC region.<sup>2</sup> An advisory Gender Reference Group guided the process of organising and presenting information.

An Introduction to each profile outlines the methodology and conceptual framework.

Part I gives the national perspective and context, including a historical summary, macroeconomic framework and demographic information. This is followed by a situation analysis of gender issues by theme, containing baseline data on women in society and how they fare relative to men.

Part II reviews the programmes and policies of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor and development agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other stakeholders involved in mainstreaming gender into development, assessing the extent to which gender imbalances receive due attention.

Part III highlights the achievements and commitments in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as priorities for future action. This section seeks to establish links between the current situation and the future ideal, contrasting the situation of women with the policy intentions to address it.

Part IV contains a reference of materials used in compilation of the profile as well as a bibliography of country-specific WID documents and additional statistical tables.

The series title *Beyond Inequalities* is a forward-looking one, based on an assessment that inequalities are now generally acknowledged as an impediment to development and economic growth in most countries and regions of the world. The challenge, therefore, facing women and men is to look beyond inequalities to cooperation, peace, development and prosperity.

### Critical Areas of Concern

Box 1

A review of progress since the Nairobi Conference highlights special concerns — areas of particular urgency that stand out as priorities for action. All actors should focus action and resources on the strategic objectives relating to the critical areas of concern which are, necessarily, interrelated, interdependent and of high priority. There is a need for these actors to develop and implement mechanisms of accountability for all the areas of concern. To this end, Governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, are called upon to take strategic action in the following critical areas of concern:

- ◆ The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- ◆ Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
- ◆ Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
- ◆ Violence against women
- ◆ The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
- ◆ Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- ◆ Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- ◆ Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
- ◆ Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
- ◆ Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media
- ◆ Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safe-guarding of the environment
- ◆ Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child.

SOURCE: *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, United Nations Department of Public Information, New York, 1996

### Malawi National Platform for Action

- ◆ Poverty alleviation and empowerment
- ◆ The girl child
- ◆ Violence against women
- ◆ Peace

SOURCE: Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, 1997

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SARDC-WIDSAA would like to thank all of our national partners and members of the Gender Reference Group (GRG) for their active participation in a continuing process. We also want to thank national and regional readers and reviewers, who gave constructive comments on contents and presentation. Names of the individuals and organisations in each country are listed in Appendix 1 and 2. Very special mention must be made of Monique Calon, who was the regional WID Advisor at the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia, during this process and was our partner in nurturing the programme from conception to maturity. Margaret Samuriwo who was instrumental in the conceptualisation of the programme is also acknowledged.

To my other colleagues, the staff of WIDSAA listed in the frontpiece, who worked so hard in the early stages of production of these profiles, and the people in the other SARDC departments - R. Salimu, M. Sachikonye and their staff - who assisted in so many ways, goes the satisfaction of a job well done. Thanks to all of them, and to the SARDC Executive Director, Phyllis Johnson, who supported the process throughout, and to the Director of SARDC's environment resource centre, Munyaradzi Chenje, who shared his experience of the process of developing information tools for the SADC region. Most of all, recognition goes to the University of Malawi, national partner for Malawi, and to the Royal Netherlands Government Directorate of International Cooperation (DGIS) without whose financial support this mammoth task would not have been accomplished. All others who were involved with the process in any way, at any time, are gratefully acknowledged.

*Bookie Monica Kethusegile, Head of Programme*  
SARDC-WIDSAA, Harare

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In spite of such attention and support, errors may have been made. For these, we claim sole responsibility.

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## ACRONYMS

ADB	African Development Bank
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
ADD	Agricultural Development Division
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
BASW	Business Advisory Services for Women
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCAM	<i>Chitukuko Cha Amai M'Malawi</i>
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CONGOMA	Council for NGOs in Malawi
DGIS	Netherlands Government Directorate of International Cooperation
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EMPOWA	Malawi Professional Women's Association
FHH	Female-Headed Households
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GG	Gender Gap
GIN	Gender Initiative Network
GNP	Gross National Product
GOM	Government of Malawi
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MHH	Male-Headed Households
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOWCACS	Ministry of Women, Children's Affairs, Community Development and Social Welfare
MSIS	Malawi Social Indicator Survey 1995
MUSCCO	Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives
NABW	National Association of Business Women
NAC	Nyasaland African Congress
NALP	National Adult Literacy Programme
NCWID	National Commission on Women in Development
NFWCM	National Family Welfare Council of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPAWM	National Plan of Action for Women in Malawi
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSSA	National Sample Survey of Agriculture
PFA	Platform for Action (Beijing)
SACA	Smallholder Agriculture Credit Administration
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARDC	Southern African Research and Documentation Centre
SAPM	Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SAW	Society for the Advancement of Women
SEDOM	Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIMA	University of Malawi
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WIDSAA	Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness
WB	World Bank
WWB-MA	Women's World Banking-Malawi Affiliate



**MALAWI DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS**

Official Name	Republic of Malawi
Capital City	Lilongwe
Independence Date	6 July 1964
Head of State and Government	Bakili Muluzi
Last Election Held	May 1994
Ruling Party	United Democratic Front
Political System	Parliamentary Democracy
Legislature	National Assembly
Languages	English, chiChewa, chiNyanja
Land Area	118 484sq km

**POPULATION (1994)**

Total (estimate)	9.6 million
women	51%
men	49%
Density	81 people/sq km
Estimate by the year 2000	11 million
Annual growth rate	2.3%
Doubling date at current rate	2024
Urban population	13%
% of total annual growth rate	5%

**HEALTH (1994)**

Life expectancy at birth	41.1 years
women	41.5 years
men	40.6 years
Crude death rate*	22.7
Crude birth rate**	50.2
Total fertility rate***	7.1
Infant mortality rate	560/1,000 live births
Maternal mortality rate	147/100,000 live births
Population with access to	
health services	35%
safe water	37%
sanitation	6%

**EDUCATION (1994)**

Adult literacy rate	55.8%
women	40.4%
men	71.7%
Primary, secondary and tertiary	
enrolment ratio (combined)	
women	63%
men	71%

**ECONOMY (1994)**

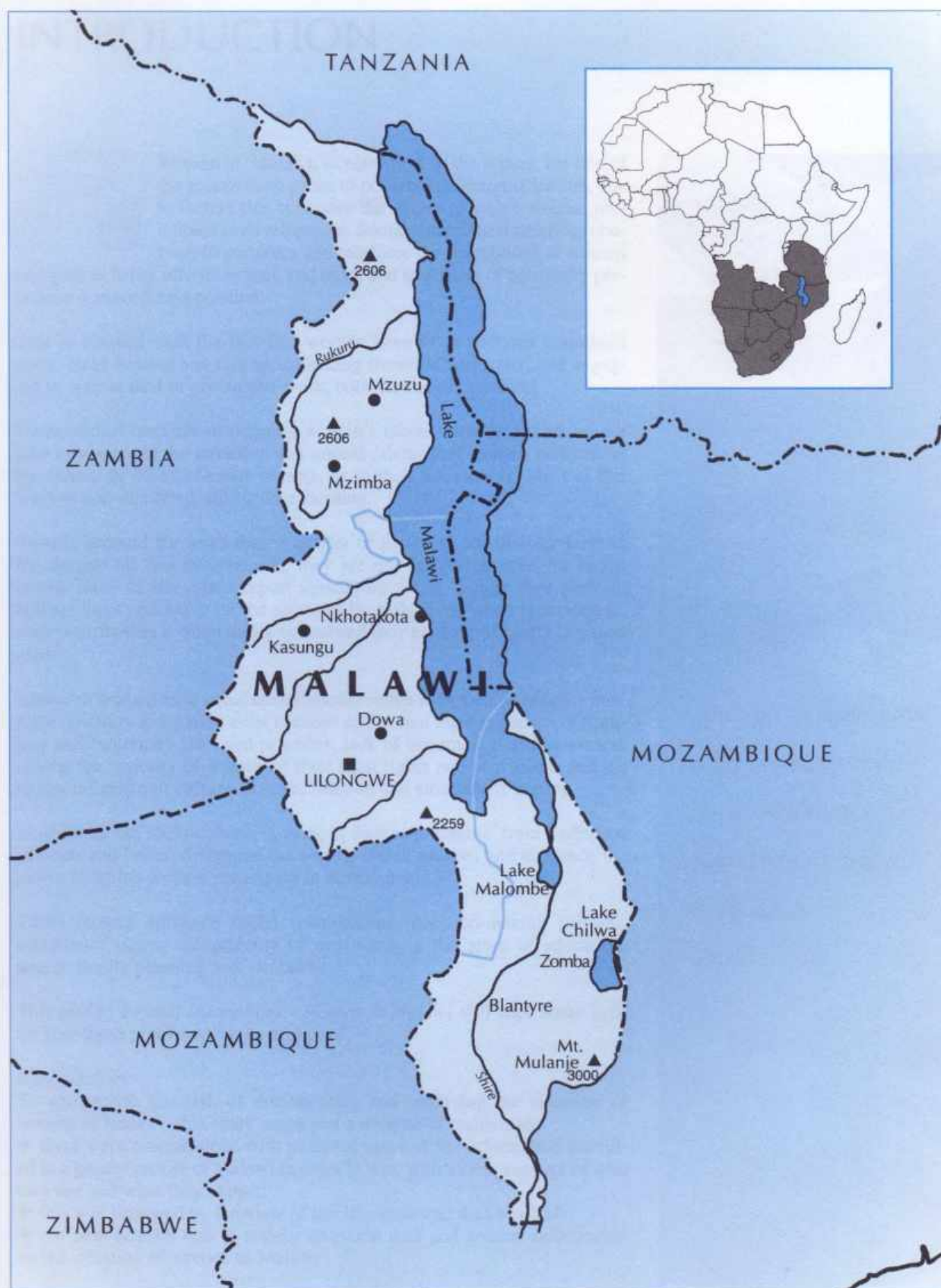
Gross National Product (GNP)	US\$1.6 billion
per capita	US\$170
annual growth rate	2.9%
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	US\$1.3 billion
as % of GDP	
-agriculture	31%
-industry	21%
-services	47%
Average annual rate of inflation	21.8%
Foreign Debt	US\$2 billion
Export-import ratio	61%
(exports as % of imports)	
Currency (1 kwacha = 100 tambala) exchange	K15.30 = US\$1 (March 1997)

\* Crude Death Rate: Annual number of death per 1,000 population.

\*\* Crude Birth Rate: Annual number of births per 1,000 population.

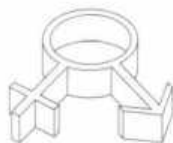
\*\*\* Total Fertility Rate: The number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and bear children at each age in accordance with prevailing age-specific fertility rates.

SOURCE: UNDP Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1997. Figures given here are taken from current international sources, often estimates, and may differ from national data contained in the text and tables. Most figures given are for 1994, the most recent available in the UNDP HDR, 1997.





# INTRODUCTION



Women in Malawi, as elsewhere in the region, are one of the groups most prone to poverty and marginalization, due to factors that influence the extent to which women participate in development. Social and cultural practices continue to permeate and reinforce the perceptions of women and girls as being inferior to men and boys, and structures of patriarchy perpetuate a subordinate position.

This is coupled with the fact that women have to do arduous household tasks, child-bearing and raising, collecting firewood and water, and engaging in a great deal of productive work, both on and off the farm.

Conventional methods of defining women's labour force and work do not take into account the intensive and unpaid labour that women perform on the farms, as wives of estate tenants, or in their households. Most of this work is non-marketed, subsistence farming.

Women account for more than a quarter of part-time smallholder farmers but despite all this involvement, they are not fully accounted for in the labour force of the estate export agriculture sector though they perform tedious tasks necessary for the estate to flourish. Even when remunerated, their contribution is often under-valued and they earn significantly less than men.<sup>3</sup>

Although women have equal constitutional rights with men, in practise non-legal obstacles to equality exist because of the dual legal existence of statutory and customary laws and practices, lack of information and awareness among the majority of women of their legal rights and provisions, and the strong influence of culture, custom, religion and attitudes of society.

In addition, the socio-cultural system, as well as pressures from traditions, customs and belief, determine the way of life in Malawi and influence the extent to which women participate in development.

These factors influence social relationships, decision-making patterns, inheritance rights, acceptability of new ideas in the areas of education, health, family planning and sanitation.

This profile *Beyond Inequalities - Women in Malawi* will shed some light on how these problems can be mitigated.

## Methodology

To accomplish the task of documenting and analysing the situation of women in Malawi, this study employed a number of techniques:

- ◆ there were consultations with potential users of the information provided in a gender profile of Malawi in order to start with a clear concept of who they are and what they expect;
- ◆ this was followed by a review of the literature and data available;
- ◆ our next activity was to review statistical data and general information on the situation of women in Malawi.

*Although women have equal constitutional rights with men, in practise non-legal obstacles to equality exist.*

The focus was on the most current material and other relevant documents from 1980 to the present (See Bibliography). Efforts were made to have as much dialogue as possible with women involved in gender-related issues in the country.

#### PROFILE OF THE COUNTRY

Malawi is a small, landlocked country just south of the Equator. It is bordered by Tanzania to the north, Mozambique to the east, south and south-west, and by Zambia to the west. Malawi is 901 kms long and varies in width from 80 to 161 kms. The total area is 118,484 sq kms, of which 79.6 percent is land mass. Lake Malawi occupies almost 20 percent of the country's total area, and other lakes are less than one percent.

The population is now estimated to be more than 11 million of whom just over 50 percent are women. The population is expected to increase to 12 million by the turn of the century.

#### Historical overview

Present-day Malawi is inhabited by descendants of different ethnic groups who settled in the area at different periods of history.

The first inhabitants are thought to have begun settling around Lake Malawi about 10,000 BC. During the 16th century AD, Bantu-speakers known as Maravi (from which the country derives its name) settled in the area that is now Central Malawi.<sup>4</sup> These later became known as Chewa. The Mang'anja, who are now known as Nyanja settled in the Southern region. The Tumbuka, Tonga, Ngonde and Lambya later arrived in what is now Northern Malawi. In the 19th century, the Ngoni, Yao, Lomwe and Sena settled in Malawi. In the late 19th century, the Europeans also arrived in the country.<sup>5</sup>

On 14 May 1891, Great Britain declared the territory to be the Nyasaland British Protectorate. The name was changed in 1893 to the British Central African Protectorate. The people of Malawi opposed the colonial administration from the beginning, and this resulted in an uprising led by Rev. John Chilembwe in 1915.

The Chilembwe uprising was provoked by the deaths of African soldiers in fighting between British and German armies in northern Nyasaland during the early years of World War I. Chilembwe, a pastor with the Provincial Industrial Mission at Chiradzulo, felt the European conflict did not concern Africans. He also opposed the system of forced labour which required African males to perform two months or more of work a year on European plantations as "rent" for eight acres of land per family. This system obviously had an adverse effect on the women whose spouses migrated to work on the plantations. In some cases the men abandoned their families in the village and started "new" lives on the plantations.

After the suppression of the Chilembwe uprising, African political activity was limited to Native Associations which raised local grievances but did not challenge the legitimacy of colonial rule.

In 1953 the colonial administration established the Central African Federation, comprising Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi). Africans in Malawi protested this move and opposed it through a nationalist movement founded in 1944, the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC). On 3 March 1959 a

state of emergency was declared by the colonial administration, the Congress was banned and all its leaders were arrested, including Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who later became Malawi's first president.<sup>6</sup>

#### Political context

In September 1959, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was formed to replace the banned NAC. On 1 April 1960, Banda and several other detainees were released from prison in Rhodesia. By this point Britain had accepted Nyasaland's independence and secession from the federation as inevitable. In August 1961 the first multi-party general elections were held in Malawi.<sup>7</sup> Four political parties contested and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) won all the seats in the lower house as well as two which it contested in the upper house. On 6 July 1964, Malawi became an independent state with a Parliament of 50 elected members, three special members and a cabinet headed by Banda, the country's first prime minister.

This Parliament operated under a monarchical constitution which was replaced by a republican constitution on 6 July 1966 when Malawi became a republic and an official one-party state.

Constitutional changes made Banda the Life President in 1971. Although Malawi retained the institution of Parliament during this period, from independence up to 1979 no parliamentary elections were held and the ruling MCP party nominated all MPs. In the elections of 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992 a number of individuals (all MCP members) were allowed to stand for each constituency, although they were not allowed to campaign.

Until the 1990s, open criticism of the government came from exiled opposition groups such as the Malawi Freedom Movement, the Socialist League of Malawi and the Malawi Democratic Union. By 1991, there was a small but growing force within the country that began agitating for a return to pluralistic politics. This was matched by pressure on government by donors.

In response to this increasing opposition and criticism, it was announced in October 1992 that the President had decided to hold a national referendum on whether to retain the one-party system of government or adopt a multi-party system. On 14 June 1993 the referendum was held and two-thirds of the electorate voted in favour of a multi-party system. Two weeks later, Parliament was recalled and it amended Article 4 of the Constitution, legalising other political parties in addition to the MCP. Within weeks there were seven registered political parties in Malawi.

After 30 years of single-party rule, Malawians went to the polls in May 1994 and elected a new President, Bakili Muluzi. His party, the United Democratic Front (UDF), won 85 of the 177 National Assembly seats, while the MCP took 56 and AFORD, 36.<sup>8</sup>

In 1995, a new Constitution was approved by Parliament and promulgated.

#### Role of women

Prior to the referendum the situation of women had deteriorated and their subordinate position was reinforced, despite the Banda regime's official policy of promoting women. The role women played in society was used for political purposes.

The public image of women in politics was stained by the compulsory involvement of Malawian women in praising, campaigning and dancing

*Women's participation in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels is limited.*

publicly for the president, by the political activities of the MCP Women's League, by the questionable practices of the league's charitable organisation, *Chitukuko Cha Amai M'Malawi* (CCAM), and by the involvement of women in the paramilitary group, the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP). The traditional self-help structures at the grassroots level were obstructed by the authoritative and intrusive structures of the MCP.<sup>9</sup>

The suppression of women and violations of human rights in Malawi can be traced back to the period when the country was a British colony. As in some other countries, repressive practices by the colonial power provided an administrative model for the newly independent government.

During the transitional period leading to multi-party democracy, women played a significant role by turning out in massive numbers to cast the votes. Yet only a handful contested the general elections.

With the advent of democracy, women in Malawi have begun to hope that their involvement in national affairs will bring some enjoyment of the fruits of their struggle for democracy. That goal, however, is far from being achieved due to numerous obstacles.

#### Governance

Malawi is divided into three administrative regions: Northern, Central and Southern. The three regions are sub-divided into 24 districts, five in the Northern region, nine in the Central and 10 in the Southern. The country's administrative system consists of a central government, local government and traditional authorities. There are 43 traditional authorities in the Northern Region, 79 in the Central Region and 83 in the Southern Region. The smallest administrative unit is the village. Each branch of government plays a key role in the implementation of development programmes.

Unfortunately, women's participation in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels is limited. Almost all traditional authorities are male, and most chiefs and headmen are conservative and traditional; even though in some parts of the country, under the matrilineal system of succession, it is women who choose the chiefs and village headmen.

Malawian society is in transition, for its complex traditional structures are changing rapidly. Nowhere do people behave in ways that match textbook theory, and extensive research in villages is needed to document the reality of social behaviour.

Generally, though, the matrilineal system predominates in the Central region and parts of the South, while the patrilineal system is found in the North and in two districts (Chikwawa and Nsanje) in the far South. Each system has its own set of social rules, though these are flexible.

Generally, in the matrilineal social system the husband will move to the wife's village when married. He will have little control or authority over his children. Instead, the children's maternal uncle will have influence over family matters. The uncle is also responsible for the welfare of his sister's children. He and his sons will have control over the use of his sister's land and will play a major role at the time of inheritance, when land nominally passes from mother to daughters.

Under the patrilineal system, the males of a family make decisions regarding family and property. Specifically, they are responsible for the welfare of

*Women in Malawi have begun to hope that their involvement in national affairs will bring some enjoyment of the fruits of their struggle for democracy.*

the children and for allocating land within the family. Inheritance is through the father and sons. When a woman marries into a family, she moves to her husband's home. When her husband dies she may remain there, where she and her children will continue to get support from her husband's family.

While these distinctions are basic to understanding Malawian society, they are neither absolute nor immutable. Because men have more power in Malawi generally, even in matrilineal areas where women control their land in theory, their authority is overridden by their male relatives. Nonetheless, a woman's husband and children in a matrilineal society will live among her relatives, which generally offers her more security and support.<sup>10</sup>

#### Macro-economic structure

Malawi is one of the least developed and poorest countries in the world. With a population now estimated at over 11 million, and with a fertility rate of 6.7 it is expected to increase to 12 million by the end of the century. The population is relatively uneducated, largely illiterate and unskilled, and more than 80 percent depend on smallholdings to live. Agricultural technology is not developed, many people cannot afford improved seeds or fertilisers, and irrigation is underdeveloped.

With the possible exception of bauxite, there are no sizable and exploitable mineral deposits, commercial fishing is not viable, and there is little industry. Communications and infrastructure are poor and deteriorating. Figures recently published indicate that population density ranges from 136 per sq km in the North to 314 in the Southern region, making Malawi one of the most densely populated countries in Africa.<sup>11</sup>

These resource constraints have been exacerbated by policy decisions, and the Malawian economy has performed unevenly since independence. Banda's economic policy emphasised the development of estate agriculture to the detriment of industry, social services (including education and health), and subsistence agriculture.

Though the latter was initially to receive substantial attention, it was planned that estates would grow faster and would produce more export earnings and domestic income than smallhold farming. As it turned out, between 1964 and 1986 gross production on the estates rose at a rate of 10.4 percent per annum, which was almost five times that in the smallholder sector. The improvement in tobacco and tea production especially, resulted in an average annual GDP growth of about six percent for the first 15 years after independence.

Such undifferentiated statistics gave observers a sense that Malawians' lives were improving, when in fact subsistence agriculture grew at a rate slower than the population.<sup>12</sup>

Also, according to policies laid out by the Banda government, the Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) monopolised the purchase of smallholder produce at prices far below world levels, making large profits, some of which were directed to the estate sector. At the same time ADMARC was used to keep food prices relatively low, permitting reduced wage levels and maintaining peace in the countryside.

Transport and communications took a significant share of infrastructural expenditure, which largely benefited the commercial agricultural sector, while manufacturing remained highly capital intensive to absorb Malawi's

excess labour. Wages were kept low, partly by stifling the development of independent trade unions, in order to ensure that growth in the estate and export sectors was not hindered. Little money was put into basic education and public health.

Inflation stayed relatively stable at just under 10 percent throughout the 1970s, rising sharply in the 1980s as the kwacha depreciated, and import prices, government borrowing and transport costs increased. These policies helped a small section of the population, and provided Malawi with the highest level of income inequality of any of the 13 African countries for which data of this kind is available.

On the whole, social and economic indicators demonstrate that Banda's fiscal and development policies did little to help the average Malawian. In 1990, for example, 54 percent of rural smallholders were estimated to live below the poverty line (equivalent to US\$40 per capita). GNP per capita was US\$190 in 1980 and 1981, and fell to \$150 in 1986 and 1987. It climbed again and was \$210 in 1991, but has vacillated since, falling especially in years of drought because of the country's high dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

A real GDP growth rate of upwards of nine percent has been reached in the last two years and is forecast for 1997 because the rains have been relatively good. Inflation, which was over 80 percent in 1995 following the floatation of the kwacha by the MCP in early 1994, is now back to single-digit figures.<sup>13</sup>

Malawi has been attempting to restructure its economy since the early 1980s, when it first negotiated loans for balance of payment support from the World Bank. From the mid-1980s structural adjustment loans from the IMF have been used to promote liberalisation of foreign exchange control, restructuring of the parastatal sector, monetary and tax reform, deregulation of the private sector and improved incentives for private investors.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, the underlying weaknesses of the economy — including dependence on plantation agriculture, low levels of technology, a small industrial sector, poor infrastructural development, few resources and too little land, a high population growth rate and a low literacy rate — continue to deepen rural poverty. As a result, in an average year more than 50 percent of rural families run out of food before the next harvest and nearly 60 percent of Malawians are chronically malnourished. Purchasing power of earnings have continued to fall since at least the early 1980s. "At the official minimum wage, it took a

household 11 days of work to purchase a 90-kg bag of maize in 1989 and 20 days in 1990. Two years later, the same bag of maize required 22 days on minimum wage labour."<sup>15</sup>

Female-Headed Households (FHH) are among the poorest. Half of these — FHH comprise at least a quarter of all families — are among the poorest 40 percent of rural smallholders, compared to one-third of male-headed households.

*The underlying weaknesses of the economy continue to deepen rural poverty ... female-headed households are among the poorest.*

Selected Economic Indicators			Table 1
Year	GDP growth rate %	Inflation rate %	GNP per capita US\$
1990	4.8	11.5	180
1991	7.8	11.9	210
1992	-7.9	22.7	190
1993	10.8	19.6	200
1994	-12.4	34.7	140
1995	9.0	83.3	150
1996	10.3	9.2	160

SOURCE: GOM/UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi*; and *The World Bank Atlas 1996*; EIU, *Mozambique Malawi*, second quarter, 1995 and Malawi 1995-96; and information supplied by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 5 May 1997.

FHHs tend to have a higher dependency ratio, meaning there are less able-bodied labourers in their families, as well as smaller landholdings. Particularly detrimental to their food security, FHHs generally suffer from shortages of labour at crucial times of the agricultural season.<sup>16</sup>

#### Agriculture

Agriculture is clearly the mainstay of Malawi's economy, affecting the livelihood and welfare of more than 80 percent of the population either directly or indirectly. Agriculture accounts for just over one-third of GDP, about 90 percent of export earnings and approximately three-quarters of total employment.

A striking feature of Malawi's agricultural economy is the intense pressure on land. Most of the country's arable land is already under cultivation.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture, women continue to dominate the agricultural work force. In 1993, 92.5 percent of female labour was engaged in agriculture as compared to 69.3 percent of men. But despite their major contribution in the agricultural sector, women, who account for 51 percent of the total population, have limited access to land in their individual capacity because of the various social, economic, cultural and legal constraints.



## PART I

# SITUATION ANALYSIS



### ECONOMY

Malawi's GDP is largely produced by agriculture (31 percent in 1994), government services (16 percent), manufacturing (14 percent), and transport and communication (12 percent).

### Land and agriculture

The agricultural sector is divided between smallholders and estates. While more than two-thirds of agricultural GDP comes from the smallholder sub-sector, two-thirds of agricultural export earnings come from the tobacco and tea estates. Half of the people in paid employment work in the agricultural sector, and at least 85 percent of the total population are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. By the mid-1990s the smallholder sub-sector comprised approximately 1.8 million farms, compared to approximately 30,000 estates.<sup>17</sup> Mining, fishing, forestry and tourism also contribute to Malawi's economy.

Agriculture uses the largest labour force with women making the major contribution.

Women's responsibilities in the rural, agricultural sector go far beyond the need to produce food if account is taken of the fact that one-quarter head their own households and are responsible for the general welfare of their families, including hygiene, health and nutrition. Not only are they responsible for growing, harvesting and preparing food, but they must fetch water and fuelwood, often from several kilometres away. In most instances, they are entirely responsible for ensuring their children attend school, receive inoculations and

visit clinics when ill, all of which adds considerably to their workload.

Women dominate the smallholder agricultural subsector. Some 30 percent of smallholder families are female-headed, and half of them (compared to a third of smallholder male heads of households) do not reach the 40th percentile of income. Twelve percent of urban households are headed by women.

### Land tenure

Land in Malawi falls into three categories: customary, public and private land. Currently a special presidential land reform commission is investigating the competing interests and needs of the existing system of land ownership and use.

Customary land tenure, to which most people have access, differs according to ethnic group although there are some common characteristics. In nearly all communities, households and male and female individuals have usufructuary rights and may sell the products of the land without interference.<sup>18</sup> Land allocated to a household or individual within a community is considered to be under their ownership. However, the land may not be sold or given to strangers, and, as there is no legal title, it cannot be used as collateral. Rights to land may be inherited.

Access to communal and family farmland is a key feature in subsistence rural economy. Land allocation is undertaken by the traditional chief and village headmen, subject to the overall direction of the commissioner of lands. In areas where land is highly valued for leisure or commercial purposes, especially Lake Malawi, some chiefs and officials have made

*Despite their major contribution in the agricultural sector, women have limited access to land in their individual capacity.*

Female and Male Heads of Households		Table 2
	Female %	Male %
National households	25	75
Urban households	12	88
Rural households	26	74
All smallholder households	32.1	67.9
Prevalance of poverty among rural smallholders: % below the 40th percentile	50.0	35.3

SOURCE: 1990-1991 Household Expenditure and Small-Scale Economic Activities Survey, National Statistical Office of Malawi, cited in WB, Malawi: Human Resources and Poverty Profile and Priorities for Action, Nov 1995, Annex 3, Tables A3.3 and A3.4.

need of additional natural resources. Under-utilization of estate and public land in the face of growing population and poverty remains a contentious issue and the basis of the need for reform.<sup>19</sup>

Although Malawi law does not discriminate against women in matters of land ownership, women are disadvantaged by a general lack of information about how to buy and register land, claim ownership or contest land rights. There is ample evidence that women have been discriminated against in matters relating to land allocation because of custom and traditional practices, even in rural areas where many families are headed by women.<sup>20</sup>

#### Size of landholdings

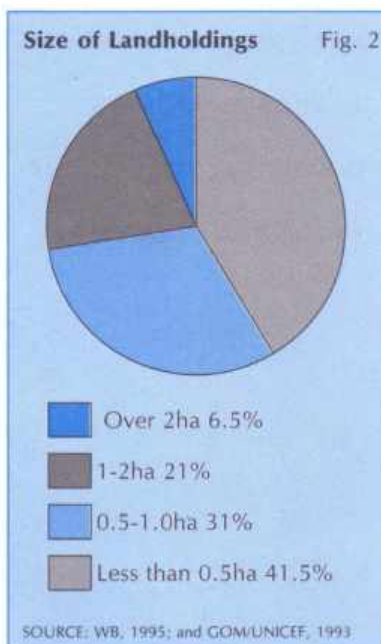
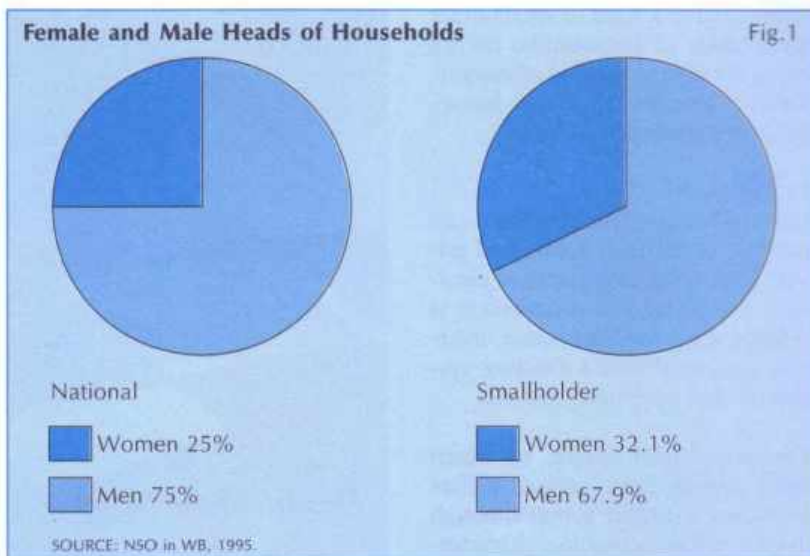
Malawi's agricultural sector is divided into the estate and smallholder sub-sectors. As noted above, when more estates were created they grew smaller, from an average of 250 hectares in 1979 to 14 hectares some 10 years later. Now most new estates are established by smallholder farmers who register customary land they have cultivated for years.<sup>21</sup>

The success of smallholder agriculture is dependent on landholding size, labour availability, and the amount of income available for inputs and fertilizer. In 1991-92,

- ◆ some 41 percent of smallholders cultivated less than half a hectare;
- ◆ 31 percent farmed 0.5-1.0 ha.;
- ◆ 21 percent planted 1-2 ha.; and
- ◆ only six percent cultivated more than two hectares.

Landholdings will continue to shrink as population grows, and the average size is expected to decline from 0.46 ha. person in 1987 to 0.31 ha. per person by the end of the century.<sup>22</sup> If past trends hold, those most affected will be farmers who hold small plots of land and are already impoverished.<sup>23</sup>

In Malawi there is close correlation between poverty and landholding



it available to outsiders, resulting in the forced removal of villagers.

Customary land tenure is evolving as mobility increases, population pressure grows, commercial agricultural opportunities expand, and a demand for smallholdings results. Since the 1960s, thousands of leasehold and freehold estates totalling more than one million hectares have been carved out of customary landholdings. In the 1980s and 1990s estates have grown smaller, blurring the distinction between commercially viable smallholdings and small estates.

Nearly a quarter of Malawi's land is occupied by forest and wildlife reserves or national parks, often encroached upon by villagers in

size. Given the level of technology and irrigation, it is necessary for a family to cultivate more than one hectare to meet food requirements. And, as noted above, women in the rural areas tend to be among the poorest Malawians. Therefore, FHH are more likely than MHH to cultivate smaller pieces of land and have lower incomes (Table 3).

Moreover, there is a direct correlation between landholding size and cropping patterns. Small-plot farmers are more likely to plant unimproved maize seed, which produces less grain per hectare than hybrid. Insufficient land also means that plots are not left fallow, which affects soil fertility; crops are not diversified, which impacts on nutrition; and cash crops are not grown for sale.<sup>24</sup>

The trend of land distribution between 1980-91 is represented in Table 3. About a quarter of the population was, in 1980/81, cultivating less than one hectare of land. The average smallholding then was 0.30 ha. in the "less than one hectare" category. In 1990 more than 25 percent of the population was cultivating less than one hectare and the average was down to 0.25 ha. With this trend continuing, women are at a distinct disadvantage because of their lack of access to information about legal issues concerning land and the process of privatizing land.

#### Labour

In Malawi additional labour is needed at peak times of the agricultural season — during land preparation, weeding and harvesting. Men, women and children work in the fields, and if wages or payment-in-kind are available, piece-work labourers are hired. Draught animals might also be used to ease the work load. If cash crops such as tobacco are grown, even more labour is needed.

Farmers with larger plots of land are more likely to own animals and

**Farm Characteristics by Gender of Household Head**

Table 3

Cultivated area	Female-headed	Male-headed
under 0.5 ha	51%	37%
0.5-1.0 ha	31%	31%
1.0-2.0 ha	15%	24%
over 2 ha	3%	8%
average area cultivated	0.631 ha	0.897 ha
area/adult equivalent	0.206 ha	0.231 ha
adult equivalents	3.77	4.42
rural dependency ratio (children per adult)	1.43	0.96
land planted to		
hybrid maize seed	16%	22%
maize	83%	78%
burley tobacco	1%	3%
hiring labour	29%	40%
using fertilizer	30%	46%
using pesticides	1%	3%

SOURCE: NSSA 1992/93 cited in World Bank, *Malawi Human Resources and Poverty Profile and Priorities for Action*, Tables 3.6, 3.19 and A3.9

to hire piece-work labourers. Seen in gender terms, fewer FHH have animals and their herds are smaller than those of MHH. Women also generally own smaller plots, have fewer adult labourers in their families — that is, FHH have a higher dependency ratio — and therefore need more piece-work labourers than others, but are generally less able to pay them. In fact, it is the poorest women who must work on others' farms to earn additional wages. As a consequence, their own farms are neglected, which perpetuates their poverty.<sup>25</sup>

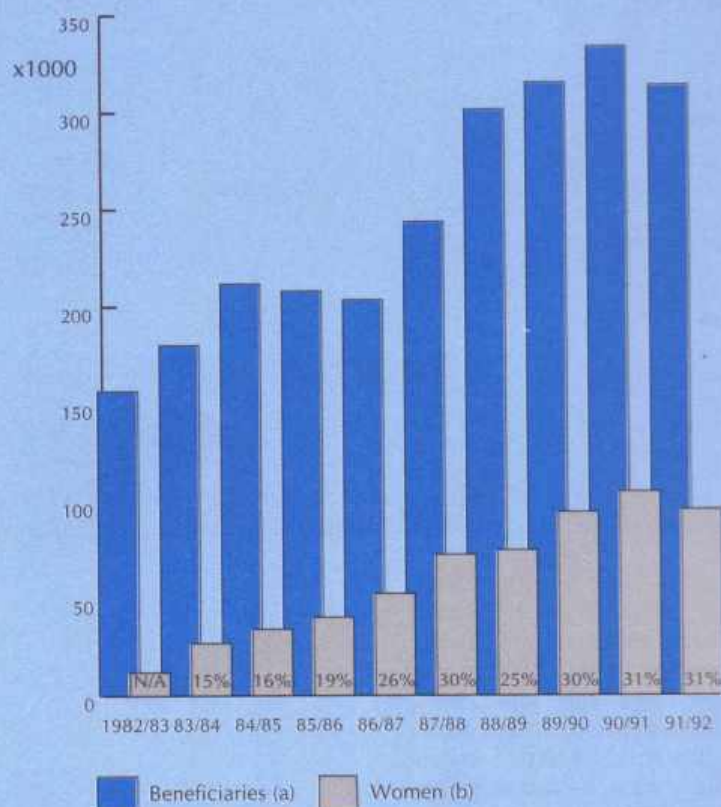
Female-headed households are often found, but not exclusively, in matrilineal areas, where husbands have divorced or abandoned their wives, or where women remain single or have been widowed. Other women are left behind by their husbands who seek work off the farm in order to augment the family income.

Research has shown that those women whose husbands are successful (such as those working in South Africa) earn significantly more than MHH and other FHHs. Ironically, those female heads who are divorced, widowed or single are

*Girls often undertake such chores while the boys are studying.*

SACA: Credit Uptake and Participation

Fig. 3



(a) total number of farm families receiving credit  
(b) number of women of total credit beneficiaries

SOURCE: GOM/UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi*, Lilongwe, 1993; GOM, NCWID, *Towards Equality, Development and Peace: National Report to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, 1995, June 1994.

*Access to credit,  
market information  
and technology are the  
biggest constraint to  
women's advancement.*

not as poor as those married women whose husbands are absent for more than half a year in search of work or working within Malawi. The World Bank, contrary to what one might expect, says the prevalence of poverty is higher for the households who receive cash remittances than for those who do not, except for the widowed who for the most part are older women.<sup>26</sup>

As noted above, labour shortages also influence the choice of crops grown by female headed-households who will plant subsistence crops over high-value cash crops such as hybrid maize and tobacco, since the latter require a high labour input coincidental with the labour peaks required by subsistence food crops.<sup>27</sup>

Another manifestation of labour shortages is the extensive use of child labour, often depriving children of time and energy to go to school. It is generally accepted that children should work at home as part of their training for adulthood. However, the length of working hours and the type of work usually goes beyond which a child could normally do.

The girl child is particularly prone to this as she is being prepared for a lifetime of work as an adult woman. As early as six, girls become responsible for younger siblings and perform heavy domestic work such as drawing water and fetching firewood. Even when the girls are in school, they are still expected to do domestic work while boys are exempt.

This was confirmed in a study which showed that girls often undertake such chores while the boys are studying, obviously reducing the girls' chances of performing well in school. Similarly, it is generally accepted that girls can be employed as domestic workers, making people who employ them guilty of perpetuating the low status of women because these girls are not able to attend school. This discrimination is particularly directed towards girls from poor families whose parents need the income to support themselves and other children.<sup>28</sup>

#### Credit

Access to credit, market information and technology are among the most critical barriers to self-employment as well as being the biggest constraint to women's advancement. Research proves that there have been very few appropriate credit programmes for urban or rural women.

Over the past years, credit has been biased in favour of larger landholdings or estates. The smallest holdings were considered "high risk"

and could not benefit from lending institutions. The inability of villages to use communal land as collateral made it difficult to get commercial credit. The only credit scheme available to them was the Smallholder Agriculture Credit Administration (SACA), a unit in the Ministry of Agriculture. Table 4 shows that women have taken up SACA credit much less than men have in previous years.

Since 1994 credit has become more available to farmers, including women. The Malawi Social Action Fund, supported by the World Bank, makes credit available to community projects and public works. Other money is especially available to women through Women's World Banking and the National Association of Business Women.

#### *Agriculture extension*

Extension services provided by the previous government tended to specialise in maize production, emphasising hybrid maize and fertiliser use. Other crops were largely ignored. Resource-poor farmers, which included many women, were less likely to receive extension advice. Moreover, the advice given was largely inappropriate to their needs.<sup>29</sup>

To compound the situation, the extension service as a whole was heavily dominated by male agents; in 1984 only 11 percent of 2,000 extension agents were female. Ten years later that number had dropped to nine percent. The same year there were some 1,800 male Farm Assistants (who taught animal and crop husbandry) and some 200 female Farm Home Assistants, teaching home economics and domestic activities. Rarely would extension officers work with farmers of the opposite sex. The scarcity of trained female personnel partly explains the lack of good advice received by female farmers.<sup>30</sup>

A survey in the late 1980s of smallholders receiving advice from agri-

**Recipients of Advice from  
Agricultural Extension Workers, 1980-81**

Table 4

Topic	Male Heads%	Wives%	Female heads%
Land husbandry	27	14	13
Animal husbandry	18	6	7
Crop husbandry	31	18	11
Vegetables	10	6	3
Credit	26	13	12
Food storage	15	8	7
Farmers club	18	7	6
Farmers training	17	7	6
Home economics	7	10	7
Any topic	54	33	32

SOURCE: Data supplied in the NSSA 1980-81; and re-analyzed by the Centre for Social Research, "The Characteristics of Nutritionally Vulnerable Sub-groups within the Smallholder Sector of Malawi", 15 June 1988 (draft), Table 2.

cultural extension workers indicated that both wives and female household heads were discriminated against (Table 5). There is little reason to assume the percentages changed significantly in the following decade.

Gender bias in agricultural training courses has also reduced the productive capacity of women. For instance, at Chilumba in Karonga in the far north in the first few months of 1986, courses were offered on identification of mealybug in cassava, cotton pest management, farmers' club organisations and leadership, functional literacy, and general agriculture. Of the 143 people who attended the seven courses, 17 percent were women. Only when the courses focused on food and nutrition, vegetable growing and meal-planning did the number of women increase to nearly equal that of men.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Employment*

Malawi has an active labour force of 4.4 million people, of whom women account for 1.9 million.<sup>32</sup> Female participation in the formal employment sector is low. Available figures indicate that, by 1992, women comprised around 15 percent of the total labour force in the formal employment sector, in which most women work as teach-

ers, nurses, secretaries and typists or sales people. They make up nearly 20 percent of clerical workers, 22 percent of sales workers, 23 percent of service workers and less than five percent of administrative and managerial workers.

Data that is nearly 20 years old, but still accurate, indicates that young women must be more highly educated to obtain the same relatively unskilled, entry-level jobs as men. More recent research demonstrates that women are paid less than men for the same work. For example, as the number of men in manufacturing declined in the mid-1980s and the number of women rose, average wage levels fell.<sup>33</sup>

Women are poorly represented in technical and management positions in government as well. In 1994, only nine women occupied middle management decision-making positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, representing one percent of the total women in that ministry. The same year in MOW-CACS only two percent of the total community development and social welfare assistants were female.<sup>34</sup> In addition, there were about 2,000 female literacy instructors out of a total of 5,000.

In the political arena and decision-making too, women remain significantly under-represented.

In the informal market, women process food and beverages and work as tailors, potters, and in other poorly paid jobs. They are found selling in the rural and city markets, but rarely on urban streets, where young and relatively well-educated men predominate. Several factors, in addition to poor education, combine to close entry to women in this sector, including lack of business skills and employment experience, and poor access to information and credit.<sup>35</sup>

#### Income

Incomes and expenditures are low

and distributed unevenly in Malawi. Poverty is worse in the rural areas, especially in the South. The poorest group are female household-heads who are widowed, divorced or single, who have little or no education, and must support several small children. The poorest FHHs are those that receive cash remittances and are most dependent on off-farm income.<sup>36</sup>

Income from smallholder production is generally insufficient to support rural families. It was estimated in the early 1990s for example, that farm production accounted for an average two-thirds of smallholder income, but that smallholders had very few productive assets or other opportunities to generate income outside agriculture. In some parts of the country this is more true than others; in the relatively land-abundant North, 91 percent of income is generated on farms, compared to 70 percent in the densely populated Shire Valley. Paid agricultural employment generates between two and 11 percent of income in different parts of the country, while fishing varies between one and five percent and beer-brewing (traditionally done by women), between one and three percent.

The amount of land under cultivation is a strong indicator of household income. The World Bank has calculated that a one percent increase in available land will raise household income by 0.6 percent. In other words, if a family planting half a hectare were given another 0.2 ha., their per capita income should rise about 40 percent.<sup>37</sup>

As has been noted throughout, Malawian women have lower incomes than men generally; and it is estimated that FHHs have about 79 percent of the income of MHHs on average. The reason for this is because female heads have limited opportunities for generating additional income, are less likely to have a secondary education, and

*Female participation  
in the formal  
employment sector  
is low.*

*Women are paid  
less than men for  
the same work.*

their households have a higher dependency ratio.<sup>38</sup> Generally, then, women suffer from lack of employment opportunities, access to land, inputs, information, technologies and credit, and are frequently forced to neglect their own food production in favour of seasonal labour on others' farms or on the estates.

Not surprisingly, women working on estates and doing piece-work on others' farms earn lower wages, often do more tedious and painstaking tasks, and are relegated to seasonal jobs.<sup>39</sup>

In recent years, incomes in Malawi have generally fallen. The income of smallholders first improved from an index of 100 in 1982 to 105 two years later, followed by a steady decline to 88 in 1990. Their position improved again in 1991, but the 1992 drought had a devastating impact on their living standards, when the index dropped to 59.

The income of wage earners who form 12 percent of the labour force eroded considerably between 1982 and 1989, when the index fell from 100 to 58. Since then, their situation seems to have stabilised, suggesting they lost about 40 percent of their purchasing power over the past decade.<sup>40</sup>

A third group, representing about 10 percent of the work force, are informal sector workers whose earnings approximate the minimum wage. Expressed in constant prices, the minimum wage followed a downward trend between 1982 and 1988, partially recovered in 1989, but has further eroded. The purchasing power of wage earners has dropped about a quarter in a decade.

#### WOMEN'S WORKLOAD

Women spend an exceedingly large percentage of their time performing arduous domestic chores, such as childbearing and raising, collecting

water, gathering firewood, pounding maize and walking long distances to shops and clinics while at the same time, they are required to undertake productive activities both on and off their farms. Regardless of the season, a Malawian woman is always busy, averaging at least 12 hours of work each day, more than twice that of a man. About half these hours are spent on household chores (Table 6).

#### Work for maize

Box 2

"At the official minimum wage, it took a household head 11 days of work to purchase a 90-kg bag of maize in 1989 and 20 days in 1990. Two years later the same bag of maize required 22 days on minimum wage labour."

SOURCE: COM/UNICEF, 1993.

**Average Number Hours/Day Spent on Farming by Gender Over Two Seasons**

Table 5

Season	Farming System	Sex	Market Production	Subsistence	Household ***	Total
Feb*	Tobacco	Male	4.1	0.4	1.9	6.4
		Female	3.8	2.5	5.9	12.2
	Subsistence	Male	0.3	2.4	1.9	4.6
		Female	1.6	4.3	6.4	12.3
July**	Tobacco	Male	0.2	2.4	1.5	6.1
		Female	0.2	5.5	7.3	13.0
	Subsistence	Male	0.1	5.5	0.6	4.1
		Female	0.4	4.9	6.7	12.0

\* Pre-harvest.

\*\* Post-harvest.

\*\*\* Fuel/water provision, food-related activities (gathering, meal preparation, beer brewing), shopping, household/farm maintenance, child care, health care etc.

SOURCE: L. Engberg et al. *A Comparison of Rural Women's Time in Two Villages in Malawi*, cited in COM/UNICEF, *The Situation of Children and Women in Malawi*, 4 September 1987.

#### Food production/food security

Women play a predominant role in producing, storing, processing and preparing food for the family. Their work in food preparation involves them in choosing foods available on the farm or in the market, then cooking and apportioning it for family members. Malawian women are frequently unable to obtain the ingredients for a balanced meal, however, and many are unable to recognize the early signs of malnutrition among their children.<sup>41</sup>

Women concentrate on growing food for their families to eat, while men often grow commercial crops. This is mainly because women have limited access to credit facilities, land and inputs. As a result, women have less cash income than their husbands. Though women are

**Woman worker**

Box 3

During the harvest period I work very hard. I get up at around 4.30 a.m., fetch water and make a fire. Sometimes I go to the barn to tie leaves while waiting for the dew to dry in the fields. If there is time, I cook breakfast and clean the plates from the night before, and by 6 a.m., I have started picking tobacco with my husband. At noon I go to the house to cook lunch for the family, and after eating return to the fields. In the afternoon we tie leaves together, and sometimes we continue doing this late into the night using lamps to light the work. After that I prepare supper and also cook relish for the next day, heat water for bathing, and go to bed.

SOURCE: Woman worker on flue-cured tobacco estate, Malawi, 1986; cited in GOM/UNICEF, *The Situation of Women and Children in Malawi*, 4 September 1987.

**Population Growth and Maize Production in Malawi, 1987-94**

Table 6

Year	Population*	Season	Maize**
1987	7.98	87-88	1.424
1988	8.25	88-89	1.510
1989	8.52	89-90	1.343
1990	8.80	90-91	1.589
1991	9.09	91-92	0.657
1992	9.39	92-93	2.034
1993	9.70	93-94	0.819
1994	10.02	94-95	1.328

\* estimate (millions)

\*\* production (metric tonnes)

SOURCE: J.S. Johnson, *An analysis of the extent, causes and effects of food insecurity in Malawi, with an approach to improving food security*, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, March 1996 (draft), adapted from Tables 2 and 12.

involved in income-earning activities such as brewing beer, and other informal activities to earn money with which to buy food, these activities are usually poorly paid and rarely bring in significant amounts of cash.

Food security in Malawi is often equated with food self-sufficiency and increasing maize production has been the main strategy for achieving self-sufficiency. But, this strategy has not succeeded because maize production has not kept up with the increase in population. Specifically, smallholder maize production between 1980 and 1991 remained fairly constant while the population (excluding refugees) increased by more than 41 percent. As a result, the country moved from a situation of self-sufficiency in maize production in 1980/81 to a deficit of some 274,000 tonnes in 1990/91.

The deficit became obvious in the 1985/86 season when the gap between production and requirements was 81,000 tonnes. The situation deteriorated after that, and now the deficit in grain production is estimated to run above 300,000 tonnes annually, and is expected to reach about 500,000 tonnes by 2005.<sup>42</sup>

Households with less than one hectare, planting traditional crops, and using traditional farming practices can only produce 75 percent of household food requirements.

They, and those with even less land, are particularly food insecure. There is little prospect of generating a sustained surplus above their own food requirements in spite of improving technologies. On the other hand, additional land could raise smallholder production and income. According to World Bank estimates, a one percent increase in land would increase incomes by 0.6 percent.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, this is not a viable option for most families, as additional farm land is scarce.

**Water collection**

At the national level, 37 percent of all households obtain their water from a safe source located less than half a kilometre away; nearly 50 percent when the distance is extended to one kilometre. Over 80 percent of urban dwellers have access to clean water at a short distance.<sup>44</sup>

The poor quality and quantity of water, the long distances and time involved in fetching it, create an additional burden for women. In a single day, it is estimated that an individual uses an average of 15 to 20 litres of water.

A study undertaken by the Centre for Social Research revealed that containers used for drawing water often hold precisely that amount — 15-20 litres. To meet the needs of households averaging four to five people, women have to make the same number of trips (four to five) to the water source daily. This means that women spend more time and energy fetching water than any other activity.

Drought makes the situation worse, as women must walk further and further after nearby water sources have dried up.<sup>45</sup>

**Gathering firewood**

Wood is the main source of energy (90 percent) in Malawi and the main consumers are the rural households who use fuelwood

almost entirely for cooking and heating. Forests cover 38 percent of Malawi, but are disappearing at a rate of 3.5 percent per year. Since fuelwood collection is mainly a woman's task, she is most affected by fuelwood scarcity. On average, women spend six to nine hours per week collecting firewood for household energy consumption in rural and urban areas respectively. Time spent on fuelwood collection is at the expense of other important tasks such as childcare or food preparation.

#### Sex workers

Information about sex workers in Malawi is scarce. Recent studies indicate that sex workers are mostly young, uneducated or under-educated women from the rural areas, who are supporting dependents (their children, siblings or parents) at home. While they demonstrate some initiative by leaving the villages, they have no skills or capital to start businesses. Some work as bar girls for K150-200 per month, while others are freelancers who rent houses nearby and frequent the bars in search of customers. Both groups of sex workers move from bar to bar and from town to town where they sell sex at a rate varying between K50 and K200 (about US\$3-13) per encounter. They retain their earnings and send some to the family. Sometimes the sex workers are brought from a distant town into an area by a bar owner, who is keen to attract patrons.

Sex is sometimes sold in villages by freelancers, especially where local employment (including development projects) have brought significant amounts of cash into an otherwise poor area.<sup>46</sup> Women are often responsible for their children's upkeep, and men are often away from their wives for months, so this is one way a woman without skills, education or capital can earn money for food. There are reports of directly bartering sex for food.<sup>47</sup>

#### POLITICS AND POWER

Under the Constitution of Malawi, women have equal legal rights with men. In 1987, Malawi became a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), although for a number of years the Banda government reserved the right not to adopt a policy to eliminate gender discrimination.<sup>48</sup>

The reservation was dropped in the 1990s and the new 1995 Constitution is particularly progressive when it comes to guaranteeing human rights, including women's equal rights.

Unfortunately, while men and women above 21 have the same legal status and rights, in practice there are many non-legal impediments to true equality that are based on custom and tradition. For instance, women have trouble inheriting their husband's property, although legal protection exists.

#### Laws and legal reform

The legal position of women has been a subject of continuous discussion in Malawi because of the dual existence of statutory and customary laws, lack of awareness of rights and provisions under the law and the powerful discriminatory influence of culture, custom, religion and social attitudes.

Recognizing these failures and contradictions, the legal sub-committee of NCWID published a booklet in 1994, entitled *Women and the Law in Malawi*, which discusses many of the laws affecting women.

In recent years modest efforts to inform women about their rights have been undertaken by a number of women's NGOs, including the Society for the Advancement of Women, CARER, the Women and Children's Committee of the Law Society, and Women's Voice.

#### Distance to Firewood Supply

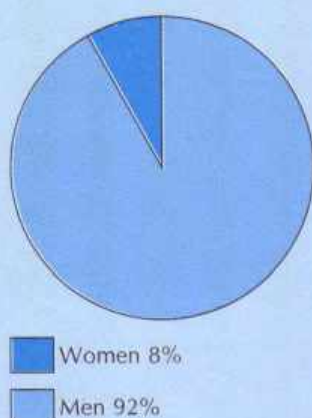
Table 7

% Households by Agricultural Development Divisions	Distance to firewood supply		
	<2 km*	2-8 km	>8 km
Northern			
Karonga	69	31	<1
Mzuzu	89	10	<1
Central			
Kasungu	84	13	3
Salima	62	36	2
Lilongwe	68	26	6
Southern			
Liwonde	56	33	11
Blantyre	63	30	8
Ngabu	52	38	10

\* < 2 km = up to one return trip  
2-8 km = up to three hours  
> 8 km = minimum three hours

SOURCE: L. Engberg et al., A Comparison of Rural Women's Time Use in Two Villages in Malawi, 1985; cited in World Bank, *Women and Development in Malawi: Constraints and Actions*, 27 August 1991.

*There are reports  
of directly bartering  
sex for food.*

**Women in Parliament****Fig. 4**

### Ordinary business women are neglected, says director

Box 4

The director of Soche Business Women's Association, Mrs Hanna Kachotsa, yesterday accused government of sidelining ordinary business women on foreign trips where they can learn new skills.

In her speech before the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs, Mrs Edda Chitalo, at Soche Township in Blantyre, Mrs Kachotsa said government has been organising foreign trips for privileged women but ordinary women are not benefiting from such trips.

"We beg the government to consider the ordinary women on these trips so that we can learn other things which can help us to uplift our businesses," she remarked.

She also asked government to consider the association as an independent body and not affiliating it to other women's associations in the country. In her remarks, the Minister assured the association that government will consider the request.

SOURCE: Phinleys Pinifolo, *Daily Times*, December 7, 1995.

### Decision-making

From independence until 1993, the main avenue through which women could participate in power-sharing and decision-making was the League of Malawi Women (CCAM) of the then-ruling MCP. However, even that was limited because it did not include any women on its National Executive Committee until 1992, when three female members were appointed. Moreover Banda's conservative view of the role and status of women permeated the discourse and activities of the organisation. The central role of CCAM in the women's movement also ensured that the empowerment of women has remained a hotly contested political issue.<sup>49</sup>

While the integration of women into mainstream development has been on the agenda for two decades, the current government increasingly recognises the centrality of women's issues in development.

Through NCWID, and since Malawi's full acceptance of CEDAW, gender disparities in decision-making positions, employment, education, training, politics and religion are being addressed. Moreover, efforts are being made to include women in national development planning at all levels to ensure their needs are adequately addressed.

Yet even in this era of multi-party politics, women remain poorly represented. Only three women hold positions in a Cabinet of 33. There are 14 women MPs out of 176 parliamentarians, one woman deputy speaker and two women are ambassadors. Five percent of the now-dissolved Local Councils were women. Of the 40 principal secretaries in government ministries and departments in 1994, only four were women. Out of the 27 positions of general managers of statutory organisations in Malawi, only

one is a woman and no woman holds a position of chairperson of an Executive Board of any Statutory Body.

Women have attempted to gain more power in the political arena, mostly by campaigning for the creation of a Senate in which a third of its members would be women. No progress has been made on this initiative because there is still no Senate in Malawi. Nonetheless, a number of women's organisations — including CCAM, NCWID, the National Association of Business Women (NABW), Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi (NMCM), Women's World Banking-Malawi Affiliate (WWB-MA), and the Gender Initiative Network — have continued to press for additional political representation for women.

During the 1994 election there were special programmes to educate women about the election, and with local elections promised in the near future, women's and human rights organisations are beginning to design new programmes for civic education for women. Rural men and women are still reluctant to elect women to office, feeling that it is not appropriate for women to lead.

### SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Malawian society is based upon the extended family, rooted on the land in the home village. A well-educated urban Malawian will speak of these lands as home, even though most of their life is spent in town. Those who are better off regularly take in the children of siblings to educate them, and many orphan children are living with aunts, uncles and grandparents.

### Kinship

As noted previously, the Malawian traditional social structure is characterised by both patrilineal and matrilineal systems. Under the patrilineal system, the husband and his relatives (particularly the males)

are the pivot of family life and decision-making. The responsibility of providing for the children, and the allocation and owning of land, belong to the husband and male members of the family. Inheritance is through the man's sons.

In the matrilineal system, the husband goes to live in the village of his wife and has little authority and management over his children. Traditionally, it is the woman's brothers who exercise authority and influence in family affairs. They have authority over land and property, and are responsible for the welfare of their sisters' children. Inheritance is generally through the wife's nephews. All this means that control over land and inheritance is usually in the hands of male family members, regardless of the type of system.

A basic social unit which acts as a protective shield for women, is the *Mwini Mbumba*. It consists of the female dependents of the Chewa matrilineage residing in the same village under the protection of the men of the matrilineage. It is often referred to as a co-operative domestic unit.

### Sexuality

Women and girls have only limited control over their own sexuality. Sexual matters are not easily discussed, especially between parents and children. Some parents think that if they ignore the topic, it will go away. Others use proverbs and "scare" tactics to discourage their children from early sexual experience.

As society changes, less information is received from elders or initiators (*Anankungwi*) and more is obtained from classmates, radio, magazines, and older siblings. In spite of ignorance about HIV/AIDS and STDs, anatomy and physiology, menstruation, puberty, masturbation, conception and contraception, data suggest that the majority

### Widows cry

Box 5

Widows in Malawi are crying over property they and their respective husbands made in many years of hard work before the latter's death. As she and her husband work to make their fortune, the relatives are not present; but they are the first, before the creditors, to make profit from zero investment.

Many women with children to support cry that the husband's relatives take everything when husbands die. The relatives grab houses, bank books and household items. This makes them bigger profiteers than thieves, one Blantyre-based widow, who lost her house and a joint business to her husband's relatives, said.

"When I say, they take everything, I mean everything including your dignity," the Chairperson of the Widows Association of Malawi, Mrs Seraphine Katenga, said.

She said that it is painful losing a husband; and that making women lose their property as well, was very cruel for vulnerable women. Grabbing her property "is a human rights abuse," Mrs Katenga says.

But more painful than all these is the relatives taking your dignity, she said.

"You are 'Dear Mlamu' when your husband lives. The minute he dies, you become 'that woman!'. It is painful. This robs women of their dignity since they become the 'intruder' who is using their relative's property," she said.

Sadly, women too, join the grabbing exercise, the association learnt during its meetings.

When a husband and a wife make profit-and-loss accounts for their family, no relative is present. There is "no one to see whether you are eating meat everyday, or living on *nsima* and beans all year," she says.

The association hopes to lobby government to stiffen laws that protect widows from the property-grabbers. One suggestion has been to imprison the people who steal a widow's property.

Recently the widows association organised a premiere of the celebrated Zimbabwean film "Neria". The film highlighted the path a woman takes to protect her children and the small fortune — from a property grabbing in-law — that she and her husband made for the family before his death.

SOURCE: *The Independent*, 3 July 1996.

of girls begin having sexual intercourse by age 14, often before menstruation.

Elders complain that social norms that prevented early or premarital sexual relations are breaking down. On the other hand there are a number of traditional initiation practices that are said to have encouraged or condoned early sex.

With government's increased awareness of the relationship

*Abortion is illegal except in extreme cases to save the mother's life, and when a doctor approves.*

#### Decency Dress Act

Box 6

There was a six-month prison sentence awaiting any woman who:

"...dressed in any clothing which by reason of its nature or of the manner in which it is worn cause, when she is standing in an upright position with arms unraised and with her feet not less than twelve inches apart, to be exposed to view any part of her body between the lower level of her kneecaps and her waist or any under-garment covering such part..."

SOURCE: (Decency Dress Act, 1973, section 2(a))

between underdevelopment and rapid population growth, the administration made it easier for people to obtain contraceptives. Where in the 1980s and before, married women were unable to receive contraceptives without their husbands' permission and girls were unable to get them without their parents' approval, now condoms and more sophisticated birth control measures are widely and cheaply available for the asking.

Abortion is illegal except in extreme cases to save the mother's life, and when a doctor approves.<sup>30</sup>

#### Culture

In Malawi, the day-to-day life of most people is deeply influenced and guided by traditional value systems. However, traditional values were manipulated for political ends by the Banda government in an effort to maintain power and combat his opponents. For example, so-called traditional courts were used to try opposition politicians without access to lawyers, and *nyau* traditional dancers were used to harass anyone who opposed the MCP.

During the former regime, women's traditionally subordinate role was cemented and so was their involvement in campaigning for the then president. The cultural background of matrilineal systems and the position of women was effectively used to legitimize the ex-president's power. Even today, women are seen wearing the *chitenges* with Banda's picture which were worn when they had to praise and dance for him in the past.

Traditional values were used to keep men and women from being influenced by western ideas. For instance, Malawi imposed prison sentences on women who wore skirts above the knee or trousers, and similar restrictions were placed on long-haired men or those who wore flared pants. Though the act was repealed during the transition,

women wearing mini-skirts are subject to all sorts of harassment from the public, especially men.

Traditional attitudes, beliefs and taboos directly influence gender roles, behaviour and participation of women in development. Culturally, both girls and boys are expected to abstain from sex before marriage, but this norm is breaking down. Initiation ceremonies for boys and girls are common and dictate conformity by the family and the child to avoid losing respect in the community.

The *nyau* and *jando* (traditional mask dance and initiation ceremony) prevalent in the Central and Southern regions are sometimes in conflict with formal education. Initiation ceremonies that encourage early marriage often prevent girls from regular school attendance, and may be an influence in their high drop-out rates.<sup>31</sup>

Food taboos, as well as mal-distribution of food within a household, negatively affect the nutritional status of women and children. Traditional and modern healthcare often conflict, in such areas as contraception, family planning or modern child-feeding practices. Adapting to new ideas can be especially difficult if it demands a radical change from customary practices.<sup>32</sup>

#### Socialisation

Socio-cultural factors founded on historical, religious and ethnic-social organisational groups play a major role in the socialisation process of Malawians as these factors define gender roles and relations. Like most other places in the world, women and girls are socialised to see themselves as inferior to men.

The media often reinforces this image of weakness and inferiority in their portrayal of women. Until recently there were no specific pro-

grammes that encouraged women and girls to become more assertive, gain self-confidence and develop the spirit of fighting injustices. Increasingly, radio is being used to raise women's and girls' issues, including protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS, foregoing early marriage, staying in school, etc., at the same time local NGOs are talking to women and girls about discrimination, and their rights.

Scientific data on socialization are scarce. The process entails a small child being taken by any of the women in a village on a temporary basis. As the child gets older, he or she moves into a kind of hostel. Boys move into the *Mphala* (boys' hostel) and girls move into the *Gowelo* (girls' hostel). In this hostel environment, younger girls and boys learn a great deal, including respect for seniors, from the older youths and adults in the community.

Disobedient children are usually punished in the form of either scolding, cursing, caning, or denial of food for a given period. Among certain ethnic groups, such as the Yao, adolescents are especially afraid of being cursed by their mothers for disobedience. The curse takes the form of the mother lifting her breasts and pointing the nipples downward saying, "if you have never sucked from these breasts, nothing dreadful will happen". However, should something dreadful happen, she can also take back her words. The consequences of this is greatly feared; stories have been told of curses uttered by mothers where a child has either died shortly after the curse or has gone mad. The curse is supposed to operate through ancestral spirits.

Even though Christianity and western education have led to a decline in such activities, the role of women as agents of socialisation of young female members of their community has important implica-

### Woman stripped naked in broad daylight

Box 7

People around the Lilongwe garages off Malangalanga Road were on Tuesday, October 29 given a spectacular scene as a woman was being stripped naked by an angry mob.

The lady is said to have been walking "half-naked" wearing a big short-sleeved shirt with nothing else underneath leaving her body wide open to the amazement of the people.

This is said to have sparked off loud whistling and ululating from the mechanics near the Matola School of Driving, which did not take long to attract other people's curiosity from afar who started flocking to the scene.

Seeing this, another respectable lady who was passing by is said to have quickly and calmly cautioned this woman to at least put on something to cover her body since the people were booing and whistling at her "indecent" dressing.

However the woman is said to have reacted, "Let them whistle, I don't care...they are simply showing that they are really old fashioned and are trailing behind in fashion. These are democratic days. Everyone is free to wear what she likes.

"No one has a right to dictate to me on what to wear! There is freedom of dressing, don't you know?" she is said to have retorted to the concerned lady, who then left her to live through what followed.

"This was what she wanted to show off: her body to everyone. So they simply were helping everyone to see it," an on-looker Inusa, commented after the pandemonium.

"The shameless lady with tears in her eyes, tried to wrench off the garment from the hands of her assailants to no avail and simply cried openly," he narrated.

Other women onlookers, when asked for comment said, "We can't back her actions. She deserved it and if ever she prays she should thank God for being spared, she was going to be raped."

SOURCE: Dalitso Kubalesa, *The Statesman*, 1-7 November 1996

tions for the community's social structure. The *Anankungwi* (tutors) are chosen by virtue of their age, as well as good behaviour in the community. A woman gains additional status when chosen as a tutor, which makes such women influential in their communities.

### Marriage and access to children

Marriages in Malawi fall into four categories:

- ◆ marriage under the Marriage Act;
- ◆ marriage under Customary Law;
- ◆ Asiatic marriage; and
- ◆ Foreign Customary Law marriage.

The first requires that the male be at least 21 or there must be parental consent. The marriage is celebrated 21 days after announcing the banns and is celebrated in a public place with two witnesses who must be related to those marrying. Banns are designated to enable those who know of any lawful reason why a particular marriage should not take place to object to the marriage if they so wish.

Under customary matrilineal marriage, the formalities include the exchange of gifts and the man moves in with the woman. In patrilineal marriage, the woman moves in with the man after the formalities which include payment of *lobola* in the form of cattle or cash. Customary marriage can also include church and council marriages. These follow the local customs but are presided over by priests, pastors, church elders or councillors. Generally, all customary law marriages are potentially polygamous.

Asiatic marriages apply to non-Christian people of Asian origin who wish to marry under their customs and practices.

Foreign customary marriage is between a Malawian and a foreigner who marry according to the practices of the foreigner.

Custody of the children under seven is usually with the mother. The father, however, is supposed to pay maintenance. Very few women claim maintenance due to lack of information about the cumbersome procedures. Cultural attitudes where single mothers are looked down upon, also inhibits women from claiming maintenance from the father of their children.

#### EDUCATION AND MEDIA

##### Formal education

Formal education in Malawi follows a three-tier structure: eight-year primary level (Standards 1-8);

four-year secondary school system (Forms 1-4) and post-secondary options which include technical schools, several types of training colleges and university.

Since the inception of multi-party democracy, primary education has been made free, and primary school enrolments have soared from 1.4 million in 1990-91 to 3.2 million in 1994-95. Government now estimates there is a shortage of 38,000 primary school classrooms.

Women and girls are generally under-represented in the education system which in turn limits their participation in the socio-economic, and political development of the country. Inadequate access to education and professional training for girls, has led to the high rate of female illiteracy. Female literacy is only 42 percent, whereas male literacy is 72 percent. The estimated number of illiterate people aged 15 and above is 3.5 million, almost a third of the population.

At primary school levels, the ratio of girls to boys is almost equal, but relatively few girls acquire the school-leaving certificate and therefore very few can be found at the secondary level of education, in colleges or universities. For instance, in late 1995 it was discovered that 89 percent of boys and 83 percent of girls remain at school until Standard 5. Those children whose mothers have achieved a Standard 5 or higher education are more likely to remain in school.<sup>53</sup>

Factors contributing to the low level of educational attainment for girls include long distances travelled to get to school and the fact that girls often begin Standard 1 classes quite late (age 11 or 12). They do not stay at school until school-leaving age due to early marriages and initiations at the age of 15, when most girls will have just achieved Standard 3. The low value placed on girls' education by

*The low value placed on girls' education by many parents means they are able to leave school more easily than boys.*

**Female Enrolment as a Percentage of Total Enrolment**

Table 8

Educational Level	1980 %	1984 %	1987 %
Primary	30	42	44
Secondary	20	29	34
University	20	21	23
Primary Teacher Training	37	37	35

SOURCE: Green, C. and Baden, S., *Women and Development in Malawi*, Institute of Development Studies, Zomba, 1994.

many parents means they are able to leave school more easily than boys, and girls are more likely to be withdrawn by parents to help with household chores.

Women in Malawi are especially disadvantaged in education. Only nine percent have had more than four years of schooling. Girls drop out of school more frequently than boys, so that in the 1994/95 academic year, only 25 percent of all students were girls.

At the university level, female students have always been in the minority. Table 9 gives details of the gender gap (GG) of graduates of the University of Malawi from 1967 to 1994. In 1967 for example, the gap was 46. In 1982 it went up to 58 and in 1994 it went back down to 48. By this time there were more girls completing secondary school, and an effort was made to close the gender gap. Nevertheless, the proportion of women at university never has been much more than one-quarter.

Differences between male and female students at the tertiary level are also manifested in the subjects that they take. Generally, women in university take liberal arts subjects, while men take mathematics and other sciences. In 1989, only 22 percent of the women enrolled in tertiary education were studying science or maths.<sup>54</sup>

#### Adult education

Concerned with its high adult illiteracy, the government in 1986 launched a functional adult literacy programme. Unfortunately, access to, and coverage of, this programme has actually declined from a high of 68,750 in 1987 to a low of 40,243 in 1992 (Table 11).

In 1995 there were some 27,000 learners in the government's adult, literacy programme. Other adult literacy classes are run by World Vision, Action Aid, the city coun-

**Gender Gaps in University Education**

Table 9

	1967			1982			1994		
	Number	F/M	GG	Number	F/M	GG	Number	F/M	GG
Graduates	41	27/73	46	491	21/79	58	3420	26/74	48

\* F = Female M = Male GG = Gender Gap

SOURCE: GOM/UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi*, 1993

**National Adult Literacy Programme, 1986-92**

Table 10

Year	Actual No. of Literacy Centres	Actual No. of Learners
1986	2,563	64,075
1987	2,750	68,750
1988	2,485	49,700
1989	2,238	44,086
1990	2,185	44,150
1991	2,176	43,635
1992	2,617	40,243

SOURCE: GOM/UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi*, 1993

#### Education and training of women

#### Box 8

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.

Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men.

Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change.

Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.

Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.

SOURCE: *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, UN Department of Public Information, 1996.

cils, and various churches, while additional programmes will be started in 1997 by various international NGOs.

SAPM attributes this low coverage to inadequate teaching and learning materials, and poor instructor retention rates. Most students enrolling in the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP) are women. Men represent only 11 percent of enrolment.<sup>55</sup> Reasons for this include men's reluctance to study

with women, and to be seen by women to be in need of training.

#### Access and control of media

Before the multi-party elections and change of government in 1994, there were two main newspapers, both owned by the MCP. Now there are almost two dozen newspapers and magazines, though some publish intermittently. Often reporting is less than accurate and sometimes, libelous. Freedom of expression is widely practiced and cherished, and censorship is rare.

The government has maintained ownership of the Malawi Broadcasting Company, which operates a nation-wide radio service, in much the same way as national broadcasting in other countries, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). There is one other small radio station operated by a Christian organisation, and it is not allowed to broadcast news.

There is pressure from some quarters to re-write the MBC Act, to distance MBC radio (and ultimately, television) from the government. However, in most countries, private broadcasting is less gender sensitive than state broadcasting, which can commit national funds to special programming. Television is being developed by the Post and Telecommunications parastatal, and is scheduled to start broadcasting in mid-1997.

Research shows that there has been a lack of gender sensitivity in many programmes aired on MBC radio.<sup>56</sup> But, as noted, programmes are now sometimes aired that deal with issues relevant to girls and women, including health issues, human rights, civic education and the like.

Radio is particularly popular, and research shows that about 75 percent of men and 52 percent of women listen to MBC weekly. Newspapers rarely reach the rural areas, and many people cannot read

English (the language of the press) which means that only 41 percent of men and 19 percent of women read a newspaper at least once a week.

Regarding gender bias in staffing in the media, the MBC has a work force of about 490; in 1995 only 56 of these (11 percent) were female. Of 180 programmes broadcast on the MBC every week, 12 percent were for, or about, women.

Of the 30 or so journalists working in November 1995 on 17 private newspapers and six private magazines of varying sizes, circulations and ideologies, only eight (27 percent) were women. Only one publication has a female proprietor.

Of the 115 people employed by Blantyre Newspapers, linked to the MCP, only 20 were women, representing 17.3 percent of employees. One woman is at the second managerial level while three women are on the board.

#### ENVIRONMENT

##### Living conditions

##### Housing

Housing is generally poor. In 1992 it was estimated that 84 percent of all the dwelling units in Malawi were grass-thatched and 15 percent had iron sheet roofs, while 53 percent had mud-wattle walls and 32 percent unburnt brick walls.

Striking differences show up when comparing urban and rural dwellings. Dwelling units in the rural areas, where most women live, are generally basic. In the cities much of the housing in "high-density" suburbs is small and crowded. Street lighting is poor, making neighbourhoods insecure, especially for women where there is little public transport at night.

##### Sanitation

Recent research shows that only 5.5 percent of Malawians have access to adequate sanitary facilities located

ed at a convenient distance from their houses. About 30 percent have no sanitary facility at all. Three-quarters of households have access to a pit latrine. The situation is better in the urban areas where nearly a quarter of the people have access to decent sanitation.<sup>57</sup>

#### Access to water

Just under half of the population of Malawi has access to safe drinking water within one km of their homes; and one-third have this within half a km.<sup>58</sup>

In 1992 it was found that 47 percent of the rural population used wells, 14 percent communal standpipes, and another 14 percent used boreholes as their regular supply of water.<sup>59</sup>

#### Natural resources and management

Natural resources in Malawi include its forests, parks and wildlife. Currently over one-third of the land is covered by forest, but it is being depleted at a rate of 3.5 percent per year, and this is expected to climb to 4.1 percent by 2000.

About 70 percent of the total demand for fuelwood is for household consumption, as only 45,000 households have electricity. Most of the rest is used for agro-industries, including tobacco curing. About 56 percent of fuelwood is from sustained yields. Trees are felled as land is cleared for agriculture. The demand for charcoal, mostly from urban areas, is rising at a rate of 11 percent per annum.

Malawi has some 10,000 square miles of national parks and game reserves, totally 11.6 percent of the country, along with more than 1,200 species of vertebrates, including 160 species of mammals, 600 birds and 100 reptiles. Lake Malawi has the most diverse fish population of any lake in the world. As elsewhere in the world, tension exists between government, which

**Urban/Rural Households' Access To Safe Drinking Water, 1992**

Table 11

Source of drinking water	Rural	Urban	Total
Piped into residence	0.6	11.1	1.8
Piped into yard/plot	1.2	22.5	3.6
Public tap	16.2	48.5	19.8
Protected well	23.6	8.8	21.9
Unprotected well	40.7	6.7	36.9
River, stream, spring	15.8	1.0	
Lake/Dam/Pond	1.7	1.2	1.6
Don't Know/Missing	0.1	0.2	0.1
Total	100	100	100

SOURCE: Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 1992

proposes using these resources for tourism, and local people who need the resources for food.

The advent of multi-party democracy led many local people to believe that restricted access to protected areas and their resources was going to be lifted. As a result, government has had trouble keeping parks and animals secure. The recent drought has also killed many trees and animals. At the same time, the lake is being exploited by leisure companies and private individuals building homes, who are sometimes in conflict with local people who rely on the lake for fish.<sup>60</sup>

#### HEALTH Nutrition

Malnutrition is a significant problem in Malawi and remains the major cause of the high infant, child and maternal morbidity and mortality rates. The 1981/82 National Sample Survey of Agriculture (NSSA) revealed that 56.4 percent of pre-school-aged children suffered from chronic malnutrition and had low height-for-age, 27 percent were underweight and two percent were wasted.<sup>61</sup>

In 1990/91, 56 percent of children under five were stunted. The 1992 DHS found that 48.6 percent of all children under five were severely stunted. At the time of the Malawi Social Indicators Survey (MSIS) in October 1995 the rate of moderate

under-five stunting was 48.3 percent of whom 24.2 were severely stunted. The rate of underweight children was 29.9 percent, while wasting stood at seven percent. Acute malnutrition is seasonal, and is worse before harvest time.

The rate of stunting in urban areas has increased considerably in the 1990s, to 19.1 percent in 1995, partly because of the migration of people to cities without adequate means of subsistence. No doubt the recent drought made the situation worse.

While malnutrition affects a wide section of society, children are most severely affected. Following is a summary of the effects of malnutrition on mothers and under-five children in the early 1990s:

- ◆ 13 out of every 100 babies born alive, die before their first birthday;
- ◆ 21 of every 100 children die before their fifth birthday;
- ◆ four of every 100 pregnancies end in the death of the foetus;
- ◆ two of every 100 pregnancies result in the death of the mother;
- ◆ 20 out of every 100 babies born alive have low birthweights;
- ◆ 30 of every 100 children below five are underweight;
- ◆ 48 of every 100 children under five are nutritionally stunted; -in some areas (Salima and Dedza), 22 of every 100 young children have vitamin A deficiency;
- ◆ 1.2 to 2.5 million people are at risk of iodine deficiency, in 1983, when data were last collected.

One of the main factors causing malnutrition in Malawi is the lack

of access to sufficient food at the household level where food insecurity is most severe. Most rural and urban families average only 72 percent of their total energy requirements from their own production due to small landholding sizes.

Data on malnutrition among adults are almost unknown, but it appears to be widespread, particularly among women. More than 80 percent of the population with goitre are women. Before puberty, the iodine deficiency problem and goitre prevalence in both men and women is almost the same. But due to rapid hormonal production and changes at puberty and child-bearing age, more women develop goitre. In addition preliminary results of the anemia prevalence survey conducted in the country by the ministry of health in 1994 indicate that 56 percent of all pregnant women in Malawi are anemic. Available data reveal that about 20 of every 100 pregnant women suffer from anemia in Malawi.<sup>62</sup>

The percentage of low birthweight babies from health facility reports has averaged about 13 percent for the past three years, with little regional variation, (Table 13). The reporting system combines all babies with a birthweight less than 2,500 g.

#### HIV/AIDS

Statistics on this pandemic are also scarce and unreliable and underestimate the incidence of the disease primarily because they fail to account for the deaths of people outside the formal health care system.

By the end of December 1993 a total of 31,871 cases had been officially reported. About five percent of these cases were children under five years. According to the statistics, women outnumber men by as much as three to one for those under 30 years. In 1995 there were upwards of 80,000 AIDS orphans in the country, less than predicted

**Low Birthweight by Year and Region, 1988-1990**

Table 12

Year	North %	Central %	South %	Total %
1988	13.1	15.4	12.8	13.7
1989	13.1	14.9	11.9	13.1
1990	12.4	14.2	11.3	12.5

SOURCE: GOM, *Food and Nutrition Situation, Policies and Programmes in Malawi - An Overview*, 1992.

because of the death of so many children.<sup>63</sup>

Rates of HIV infection among girls are higher than for boys, partly because girls start having sexual intercourse when their bodies are immature. Recent surveys suggest that as many as a third of the sexually active urban population is HIV positive, and that the national rate is about 12 percent. One survey of bar girls in Blantyre found that 80 percent were HIV positive.<sup>64</sup> The deaths of young and well-trained people is having a negative impact on Malawian development.

There appears to be a strong correlation between levels of education and knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission. Although surveys indicate that knowledge of HIV/AIDS is almost universal in the 15-49 age group even in the rural areas, incorrect perceptions about methods of transmission were found to be higher in rural areas and among women.<sup>65</sup>

Approximately 13 and eight percent of rural and urban men respectively and 30 and 18 percent of rural and urban women do not consider HIV/AIDS to be preventable, indicating a wide difference in awareness, by both gender and locale. There is also a gender difference in knowledge of transmission, with men having more specific knowledge. Because of the relatively high level of awareness of HIV/AIDS, agencies' programmes now concentrate on getting people to use condoms, improving the supply of condoms in rural areas, and encouraging people to change their sexual behaviour. Efforts are also being made to teach girls and women, including sex workers, negotiation skills, giving them the power to decline unprotected sex.

#### Access to health services

Health services have received considerable support from both government and NGOs but, despite this, are far from being adequate for

most Malawians, especially those in rural areas. The MSIS survey in 1995 found that:

- ◆ 57 percent of Malawians were more than 5 km from a health facility;
- ◆ nearly 20 percent walk between 1-5 km; and
- ◆ only 14 percent travel less than 1 km.

As found in the 1992 DHS survey, access was better in the Northern district than in the Centre or South. Naturally clinics were closer for urban families.

Access to under-five clinics was found to be slightly better, with a third of households more than 5 km away. Nearly half the population must travel 1-5 km to reach an under-five clinic, and only 11 percent are less than 1 km from a clinic or have a clinic in their villages.<sup>66</sup>

As a result of these long distances women spend a lot of time walking back and forth to health facilities. In 1992 the median estimated time to the nearest health facility for women was 90 minutes. One-fifth of women were within half an hour of a facility, but nearly two-thirds were more than an hour away, and two in five women were at least two hours away. It takes women living in rural areas, on average, an hour longer to reach the nearest health facility than those living in the urban areas.

The MSIS survey was particularly interested in determining how these distances affected the delivery of babies. In fact, it was found that in Malawi about half of the women opt to deliver at a clinic or hospital, while 40 percent have their babies at home. As a result, a quarter of babies born at home die at birth, compared to 16-18 percent of those born in health facilities.<sup>67</sup>

#### Reproductive health

With a fertility rate of 6.7 the Malawian population is one of the

fastest growing in the world. The reasons for this are complex but are related to:

- ◆ the low level of literacy, especially among women;
- ◆ the relative powerlessness of women;

### Abortion is a woman's right

Box 9

"I want to talk about women's rights to abortion in response to an article which appeared in *The Lamp: Christians and Politics* of October-December 1996.

Once a woman or girl has decided to end her unwanted pregnancy she will surely end it in spite of the fact that it is illegal, morally wrong and that it may pose great risk to her own life. Consequently it is important that women have access to legal and safe abortion services.

Herein comes the argument of legalising abortion. The danger is for the girl who is desperate — she will end up seeing a backstreet abortionist who uses crude and unhygienic conditions in the absence of abortion services in our hospitals.

How many of our young girls have suffered all kinds of injury and infertility and early death because of backstreet abortions? The point is girls and young women will not stop carrying out abortions simply because it is morally wrong or illegal.

Statistics from Malawi's two leading referral hospitals, Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH) in Blantyre and Lilongwe Central Hospital (LCH) in Lilongwe confirm the urgent need to give women access to legal and safe abortion services if we are interested in saving the lives of our young girls. Studies conducted at the two hospitals indicate that incomplete abortion cases contribute to 54 percent of all gynaecologic admissions.

According to *IPS Africa Reports for December 1995*, at QECH, approximately 30 percent of maternal deaths are due to abortion (Mtimavalye, 1994). It further says at Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) between 21 and 23 percent of women admitted with incomplete abortion were between the ages of 14-19 years and between 6-9 percent were still in school.

These are worrying statistics, confirming that abortion is a major social, medical and public health problem in Malawi. Considering the actual cost of post-abortion care services being provided by QECH and the number of beds taken up which would have otherwise been occupied by other gynaecological cases the pressure on our healthcare services is enormous.

Almost all major healthcare facilities in Malawi both public and private provide a varied range of family planning services.

In the midst of abundant contraceptives — some being offered for free — one would expect there would be no need for abortions as almost all women and girls would be able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies. However, this is not the case.

To save the lives of our young girls from illegal and dangerous backstreet abortionists who are bent on making easy money and take unnecessary advantage of a desperate situation, our national assembly needs to legalise abortion."

SOURCE: Excerpt from Treasurer Kapindula's article in *The Nation*, 19 December 1996

- ◆ ignorance of child spacing;
  - ◆ low rate of modern contraceptive use (seven percent of women in 1992);
  - ◆ early marriages and births (a third of women have babies as teenagers); and
  - ◆ polygamy (a fifth of men over 40 have more than one wife).
- Traditional values favour large families and until recently birth control measures were difficult for women to access.

Religious constraints on birth control are a factor in some communities. As noted above, women must travel long distances to clinics, which restricts the continuous use of birth control measures. Efforts are now being made to bring simple child-spacing methods to villages, through the community-based distribution of contraceptives, and to involve men in the decision to use birth control methods.

### VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

Defilement, rape and child abuse are common in Malawi, although data are difficult to find. In the pre-democracy period, nothing was ever reported about such incidents, leaving people with a feeling that Malawians were not prone to domestic violence. Because democracy brought free expression, incidents are now widely and luridly reported, giving rise to assertions in some quarters that such abuse is the result of social liberalisation and democracy.

#### Personal violence

A controversial study in 1995,<sup>68</sup> indicated that 12.6 percent of the girls surveyed at Chancellor College in the University of Malawi reported they had been raped and 67 percent of students reported sexual harassment. An earlier study of rural girls aged 10-18 indicated that 55 percent had been forced to have sex. In 1993 *The Democrat* reported there were 600 rape prosecutions per year, but more than 6,000 rapes.<sup>69</sup>

### Domestic violence

There is also little information on domestic violence although research has shown that this type of violence is common and usually takes the form of wife-battering, girl-child defilement and assault against female domestic workers. Wife battering includes actual beating, sexual abuse, intimidation and denial of the basic necessities of life. Wife-battering exists at all levels of society and in all classes.

This is culturally condoned in some traditional songs that urge women to persevere, and say that wife beating is oil for a marriage. Some folk tales depict women negatively and undermine their capabilities. Certain initiation ceremonies teach women that, first and foremost, they must please and serve men sexually and otherwise. These views are also perpetuated by the mass media which frequently depict stereotypical views of women.<sup>70</sup>

### Displaced persons and refugees

Malawi has experienced many droughts and other natural disasters which affected thousands of people in most parts of the country. Although there is no gender disaggregated data, there can be little doubt that women and children suffer most from such calamities.

Between 1985 and 1993, floods affected 31,818 families representing 384,138 people. Out of these, 500 were killed, 39 were unaccounted for and 1,400 were injured. Crops were destroyed on 935 hectares while 43,000 houses were lost.<sup>71</sup>

Storms affected 3,500 people, 300 of whom were killed, while the drought in 1992 affected 6.2 million people who needed 860,000 metric tonnes of food aid. Similarly, heavy rains in the south in the 1996-97 rainy season displaced tens of thousands of villagers from Malawi and Mozambique who received relief from the Malawi government and donors.

Malawi's population grew by more than 10 percent during the war in Mozambique, with the heaviest burden in the late 1980s. Almost all the refugees returned home during the two years after the 1992 peace agreement when the fighting stopped in Mozambique. As in other parts of the world, Mozambican women were the subject of sexual abuse perpetrated by officials and refugee men who delivered relief.<sup>72</sup>

### Working women harassed

Box 10

There is a growing concern over the use of authority by men to obtain sexual favours from women employees, writes Agness Mizere.

Lucy (not her real name), a newly appointed secretary in Lilongwe is under pressure. Her boss demands sexual favours as a form of job security.

"He tries to fondle and caress me every time I enter his office," says Lucy, frustrated.

In another scenario, an older woman seduces young men at her place of work promising them a financially stable life if they agree to satisfy her whims.

But it is mostly women who fall prey to sexual harassment. "There are more men in prominent positions who use their powers to take advantage of women," says Lucy.

In a paper on "Sexual Harassment at the Work Place in Malawi" by Etness Kumwenda, 21 percent of domestic workers, 39 percent of working women in offices and 35 percent of those interviewed indicated this form of harassment existed.

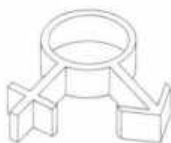
Out of these, 68 percent alleged that they had been sexually harassed by their bosses. "There have been incidents where a boss demands sexual entertainment from his secretary by threatening her with dismissal," says Catherine Munthali, Director of Society for the Advancement of Women (SAW).

SOURCE: *The Nation*, Malawi, 14 August 1996.



## PART II

# POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES



Due to the difficult conditions in which women find themselves, and the recognition of the role of women in development, the government accepts the need to improve the status of women in Malawi.

In spite of the new Constitution, coupled with presidential declarations and official government pronouncements, however, this commitment is not manifest in government policies, particularly in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. There is little provision, for example, for adequate female representation on the proposed committees which are to provide a mechanism for the implementation and control of community-based anti-poverty programmes.

The commitment to women outlined in the Constitution is as complete and progressive as any African government has made, yet it remains unfulfilled for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, the values expressed in the constitution about human and women's rights are not widely known, due to a lack of civic education, and in many communities, not widely believed, due to cultural traditions. A concerted effort by government, agencies, the media, educators, churches and others is needed to teach people about their rights.

The UDF also promised a 25 percent female participation in government but this has not been fulfilled. The participation of women has remained low at all levels.

Now women are demanding specific policy changes and the imple-

mentation of these new programmes. A first step was the adoption by government of a policy and plan of action for women. This was included in its Statement of Development Policy. The National Plan of Action for Women in Malawi (NPAWM) reflected the government's recognition that sustained progress in the economic and social development of the country requires the full participation of women.

The overall objective of the policy statement was to facilitate and support national efforts that bring about sustainable social and economic development; enhance growth through poverty reduction; and raise the standard of living of the people through full and equal participation of Malawian women.

### Structures and organisations

The government has put in place a number of institutions to bring to reality the integration of women in development and their effective participation in all structures and decisions which affect and protect their livelihood. One of the objectives established in the government's 1987-1996 development strategy was to undertake a women's development programme for rural areas. Some progress has been made in that direction.

Among the structures put in place by government were the Ministry of Women, Children's Affairs, Community Development and Social Welfare (MOWCACS); the National Commission on Women in Development (NCWID); and *Chitukuku Cha Amai M'Malawi* (CCAM), the latter being a part of the MCP.



**National Plan of Action Box 11  
for Women in Malawi**

Specific objectives of the policy are:

- ◆ to review and develop policies and programmes which reflect full recognition of the equal and complementary partnership and access to resources by both men and women towards economic growth;
- ◆ to promote self-confidence in women and facilitate their role in economically productive activities and their contribution to the national economy;
- ◆ to facilitate women's access to productive resources, services and opportunities;
- ◆ to reduce social, cultural, political and economic constraints which deny women the opportunity and right to participate in, and benefit from the attendant development programmes; and
- ◆ to improve the capabilities and effectiveness of institutions responsible for promoting and facilitating women in the development process.

*Girls Attainment in  
Basic Literacy (GABLE)  
attempts to change  
community attitudes  
towards girls' education.*

**The Ministry (MOWCACS)**

The government established MOWCACS to recognise structurally the role women play in development. Its main function is to enhance the management and implementation of women's, children's and communities' programmes and projects in the country. It is the central coordinating machinery for all women's issues.

At present MOWCACS implements a wide range of activities relating to women such as income-generation, nutrition, education and child care through the WID and Community-Based Child Care programmes. These programmes emphasize fulfilling women's aspirations and relieving their burden of work.<sup>75</sup> MOWCACS works at the local level, and encourages the full participation of individuals and communities in projects.

Projects currently underway in MOWCACS include the promotion of micro-enterprises for rural women, improving their cash income by offering business management training, credit schemes and appropriate technologies. For instance, activities include oil extraction, vegetable growing, fish processing and roof-tile production. Community development assistants are trained in business and credit management. Women's Savings and Credit Clubs have been created, as have a number of Credit Groups.

A second large project is the WID component of the Population Health and Nutrition Sector Credit. The project works in 23 of the 25 districts and aims to increase the incomes of rural households through the introduction of income-generating activities and the issuing of credit to women. WID officers work throughout the country, and a training centre at Magomero is being completed.

A further programme in eight districts working at the grassroots level supports income-generating

activities. Support for equipment and technical expertise is currently being obtained.

To avoid duplication of efforts and to coordinate donor assistance, the ministry has created the Economic Activities Programme. It will manage the various income-generating activities and micro-enterprise programmes, and extend them to all districts, subject to funding.

The ministry also manages the well-regarded GABLE (Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy) programme and the Social Mobilization Campaign. Funded by USAID, it attempts to change community attitudes towards girls' education, and increase girls' enrolment and retention in schools. Started in one district in 1995, it is spreading to several others. There is a GABLE radio programme that disseminates messages about girls' education, while the project has produced a number of books about successful Malawian women in a "role model" series.<sup>76</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development in the past marginalised women, both in its credit and extension services. It now, however, realises that women are the key productive factor in rural areas and cannot be ignored. In order to increase agricultural production, women must be the recipients of agricultural training and advice. For this reason the Women's Programme Section of the ministry was created in 1981. The programme targets female smallholders, with special emphasis on single heads of households.

The programme also emphasises activities that increase agricultural production for improving the nutrition and health of family members.

Its policy objectives are:

- ◆ to increase women's participation in extension programmes and services;

- ◆ to increase household income through income-generating activities related to agriculture or agribusiness;
- ◆ to improve home and farm management skills.

### *Chitukuku Cha Amai M'Malawi (CCAM)*

The previous government established CCAM in 1985 as the developmental wing of the League of Malawi Women. Its main objectives were to promote the integration of women in national development with particular focus on rural women, and to encourage the acquisition of business and entrepreneurial skills among women in order to foster and facilitate their development in productive and income-earning activities.

Since it was part of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), it was difficult to draw a line between development and politics. It was, however, a powerful tool for mobilizing women for a number of activities including development. Today it is less active, partly because it (and the MCP) has less funds and its leader, Cecilia Kadzamira (Banda's official hostess and companion) has a lower profile.

### *National Commission on Women in Development (NCWID)*

To mark the Decade for Women in 1984 the government established NCWID, whose major mission includes promotion and assistance in the establishment of institutions which formulate, implement and monitor women's programmes. The commission also coordinates women's programmes carried out by both government and NGOs, including institutions which are responsible for agriculture, health, education, employment, and community and social development. It is the main national machinery for integrating women into mainstream development.<sup>77</sup>

The secretariat of NCWID is located in MOWCACS. It has an execu-

tive board now chaired by a Presidential appointee, Vera Chirwa. The commission plays an advocacy and coordinating role and maintains specialised committees on legal issues, education and training, family health and welfare, planning, research and evaluation, employment, small and medium scale enterprises and agriculture and natural resources.

NGOs are represented on the executive board through the umbrella organization, Council for NGOs (CONGOMA). Specific NGOs are represented on the various committees whose majority members are senior officers in their various organisations.<sup>78</sup>

NCWID also has desk officers in key organisations. Their task is to help incorporate gender concerns in all their development endeavours.

Since its inception, the commission has had some remarkable achievements. It was instrumental in the introduction of three months paid maternity leave for civil servants, providing technical support to other women's organisations, initiating the compilation of a book on women and the law, formulating policy on women in Malawi and developing a five-year plan of action.<sup>79</sup>

In recent years it has organised seminars for cabinet ministers, MPs, policy-makers and desk officers. Many of its members attended the Beijing conference on women.

Despite these achievements, NCWID is fraught with problems, which include inadequacy of financial and human resources. NCWID still relies heavily on financial allocations and staff from MOWCACS who undertake most of its operations over and above their normal duties. NCWID has no premises of its own. Some of the specialised committees have not met as fre-

### **Celebrating womanhood**

Box 12

Malawian women from all walks of life over the weekend celebrated the International Women's Day with real pomp. Unlike previous years when the day passed without fanfare, this year's event was commemorated in real style with drama, music and of course speeches announcing to the whole Malawi nation that the women of this country have become indeed a force to reckon with.

In her address on International Women's Day, Dr Vera Chirwa, who was recently honoured international woman of the year for the second time, said women need to be consulted on issues that affect their lives.

Evidence shows that if women are represented, they are able to influence the way their needs are addressed. Issues of women's perspective are not usually considered when access and policies are being formulated.

Although a lot has been said on gender equality and issues that affect women, the crime of grabbing widow's properties has increased to shameful proportions, she said. This crime deserves the condemnation of all law enforcers, traditional authorities and everyone at large.

The coverage of development programmes are still very poor since NGOs and government have limited outreach. Levels and forms of violence against women and children have increased to alarming proportions.

The women of Malawi have a lot of work to do, if they are to win this battle, she said.

Dr Chirwa has been declared International Woman of the Year for 1996/97 by the International Biological Centre, Cambridge, England. The Director-General of the Centre communicated this in a letter dated January 10, 1997. Dr. Chirwa is Director of Malawi Carer.

SOURCE: Daily Times, March 11 1997

**Constitutional guarantees**

Box 13

An entire section (24) of Malawi's 1995 Constitution is devoted to women:

Women have the right to full and equal protection by the law, and have the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of their gender or marital status which includes the right:

- ◆ to be accorded the same rights as men in civil law, including equal capacity,

- (i) to enter into contracts;

- (ii) to acquire and maintain rights in property, independently or in association with others, regardless of their marital status;

- (iii) to acquire and retain custody, guardianship and care of children and to have an equal right in the making of decisions that affect their upbringing; and

- (iv) to acquire and retain citizenship and nationality.

- ◆ on the dissolution of marriage -to a fair disposition of property that is held jointly with a husband; and

- to fair maintenance, taking into consideration all the circumstances and, in particular, the means of the former husband and the needs of any children.

Any law that discriminates against women on the basis of gender or marital status shall be invalid and legislation shall be passed to eliminate customs and practices that discriminate against women, particularly practices such as:

- ◆ sexual abuse, harassment and violence;

- ◆ discrimination in work, business and public affairs; and

- ◆ deprivation of property, including property obtained by inheritance.

quently as NCWID would have liked. The commission also does not have any representation at lower levels in its organisational structure.

These problems have undermined NCWID's capacity to undertake and fulfil its mandate to coordinate, monitor and evaluate programmes of ministries and maintain linkages with public and private sector institutions.

**Declarations**

Another way of promoting the role of women in Malawi is by acceding to a number of UN Conventions:

- ◆ In 1966 Malawi became party to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women;

- ◆ In 1987 it acceded to CEDAW, though with reservations that were only lifted in 1990;

- ◆ In 1996, Malawi signed the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women.

Similar rights are guaranteed in the Constitution, but legislation is now needed to translate these rights into law. Recently women's groups have joined together to make representations to the Law Commissioner about the laws relating to women that are most in need of reform. As a result, new laws regarding women's inheritance and other matters have been drafted and presented to government.

**Non-governmental organizations**

Since the 1985 World Conference on Women, a number of institutions and organisations have come into being. As of December 1995 there were 73 NGOs in Malawi. Thirty-three of these deal with issues related to women and children. These organizations operate under CONGOMA which represents the interests of NGOs in NCWID. CONGOMA also has a sub-committee on gender, which meets to discuss common strategies and policy regarding women's programmes.

A number of NGOs work almost exclusively on the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's rights. Others are concerned with credit schemes to raise the incomes of the poor, many of whom are women. There are a number of credit institutions in Malawi, which are oriented towards the informal, small-scale or rural sector.

They are Smallholder Agriculture Credit Administration (SACA), now Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC), the Small Enterprise Development Organization (SEDOM), the Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives Ltd. (MUSCCO), the Malawi MUDZI Fund, the Development of Malawian Traders' Trust (DEMATT), WWB-MA and the NABW. Only DEMATT has a programme, including credit, specifically for women. All of them, however, have women clients. One-third of SEDOM's clients are women and as high as 71 per cent of the Malawi MUDZI Fund's clients are women. None of the organisations, with the exception of the MUDZI Fund, has income-generating activities for rural women within its mandate. SEDOM is mainly urban and formal-sector oriented. The same can be said about DEMATT, which has a specific focus on traders.

With the exception of MUSSCO and the MUDZI Fund, Malawian credit institutions do not give priority to small scale producers in rural areas and have no decentralized networks. The financial institutions generally avoid small rural credits since they involve high transaction costs and high risks.

None of the existing institutions has a target group focus, structures or functions necessary to support women in the rural areas of Malawi. There is a serious need to complement the existing mechanisms with a credit scheme, specif-

ically directed towards rural women involved in non-agricultural activities.

Since the advent of multi-party democracy there have been a handful of NGOs created exclusively to foster gender equality. These include Women's Voice, a Blantyre based group formed in 1993 by Vera Chirwa, a political prisoner and lawyer then recently released from jail. Its aim was to teach women about their rights through civic education and training, as well as to offer legal assistance to women. While this organisation no longer functions, Ms Chirwa has created another, CARER, which serves much the same function. She also produces a regular column in a local newspaper providing information about the community law.

A second organisation, the Lilongwe-based Society for the Advancement of Women, aims to teach rural women about their rights. It has held several meetings of urban women to discuss political participation of women, and the need for reform. The director is outspoken about defilement and rape especially.

Women lawyers and members of the Law Society have joined together to form the Women and Children's Committee of the Law Society. They hold regular legal clinics in Blantyre and Lilongwe, at which they provide women with free legal advice.

EMPOWA was formed by professional women in Malawi to raise awareness and encourage discussion about gender issues and to provide training for empowerment of women.

The latest group, the Gender Initiative Network (GIN), was formed by women who want to "bring Beijing back to Malawi". On International Women's Day in 1997 GIN brought women together from

all over the country to discuss the problems of, and the prospects for, local women. Their aim is to increase participation of women in the National Assembly, as well as to

### Unity before equality, say women activists

Box 14

Although the constitution guarantees gender equality, Malawian women feel they have little chance of achieving it unless they can unify their efforts.

Chief among their concerns is that there is little networking among the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working towards empowering women, which they feel is one of their most potentially effective tools.

Women's leaders say constitutional provisions and political rhetoric alone are not enough. "The gender battle needs united democratisation which does not exist now," says Flossie Gomile-Chidyaonga, the Blantyre chairperson of the Malawi Professional Women's Association.

Chidyaonga says lack of networking, weakened the strength of NGOs in the country. For instance, in February when, for the first time NGOs were called upon to lobby together at constitutional talks, "the women could not speak with one voice. NGO networking would ensure that during such fora we get only those people who can truly represent us and speak as one," she says.

The assistant registrar (legal) at the University of Malawi, Ngei Kanyongolo, says fighting gender inequality would be slow because customary law reinforces the myth of male superiority and female subservience. This she adds, is a reflection of "our culture and people's attitudes," despite anti-sexual constitutional clauses.

She points out that the constitution introduced by the new government overrides customary law. And it is here that gender difficulties can be expected because of expected clashes with customary law.

Another retarding factor says Kanyongolo, is the high rate of female illiteracy, which means that change "must be taken as a continuous process questioning culture."

She says "very few women, even those you expect to know, are not aware of their rights." Education is usually considered the basic form of empowerment, she adds.

Wezi Munyenembe a journalist with the *National News Service*, maintains fighting gender equality will not be easy because "it will be difficult for men to change their attitude to us." She says women talk too much among themselves instead of targeting men. "This is wrong because the majority of policy makers whether in government or the private sector, are men."

In a paper presented at a seminar on "Women and the Democratisation Process", university lecturers Panje Chamdimba and Hermes Chidammodzi said men ought to realise that women's liberation is part and parcel of the process of national liberation.

In April, parliament overturned a recommendation for the establishment of a senate in which 50 percent of the seats would be reserved for women.

SOURCE: Excerpt from Steven Nhlane's story, *Africa Information Afrique(AIA)*, December 1995.

address the problems faced by rural women in their communities.

There are also a number of religious-based women's organisations of longer standing, including Christian and Muslim women's groups. Many of these are involved in literacy training, raising awareness of women's rights, and improving the conditions of women and children.

#### Aid and relief

From the mid-1980s about a million Mozambican refugees were recipients of international relief channelled through Malawi's central government ministries and national/international NGOs. Most of the refugees settled in the villages near the border, where they received food aid and clothes, health care and some education from government and donors. In many cases, the Mozambicans were welcomed by relatives and friends, who provided them with small plots of land, work and assistance.

The refugees contributed to the development of the border areas especially by providing cheap labour to Malawians who had land and capital to work it. But the refugees returned home in the 1990s, leaving behind a desertified land, largely devoid of trees that were used and sold as fuelwood. Today there are only about 1,000 refugees in Malawi, most of whom come from the Great Lakes and

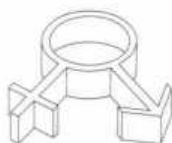
Horn of Africa regions and receive assistance from government, the local Red Cross and UN agencies. Malawians are also recipients of assistance from the international community. Government receives millions of dollars each year in balance of payment support and development assistance. Especially needy are those Malawians stricken by drought or floods, though chronic food insecurity and high levels of poverty mean that Malawi may receive non-emergency aid for some time.

NGOs also provide expertise and aid in various sectors, including HIV/AIDS, maternal child health-care, primary school education, water development, communications, agricultural development, etc. The UN agencies in particular have become aware of the need to target rural women. The WFP, for instance is hoping to provide 60 percent of its aid to women, emphasising food for work projects that benefit women. A number of volunteer agencies work especially in the rural areas, often in schools, including Volunteer Service Overseas, the Peace Corps, UN Volunteers and World University Service Canada.

There are also a number of donors and NGOs working in human rights and good governance, which support local efforts to increase awareness of rights, including women's and children's rights.

## PART III

# THE WAY FORWARD



### Economic empowerment

Women face enormous constraints in their

productive activities. While both men and women in Malawi are poor, women are less likely to raise themselves out of poverty because of a number of factors. First, their productivity is low due to limited access to extension services, information, training, credit and other financial services as well as labour-saving technologies. To assist women in this sector so that they might start their own businesses and become more productive on their farms, they need to be granted equal access to credit, training and extension services.

Specifically, they must gain equal access to programmes that teach modern farming techniques, such as how to use fertilizer and hybrid seeds, grow cash crops, and build irrigation networks. To utilize what they learn, they need credit to buy inputs and fertilizers, or to start a business. If they are to succeed, women will need, just as men need, instruction in basic accounting, marketing, and other business skills.

Women also require childcare to release them from their homes, so that they might undertake productive activities outside. For up to 25 percent of Malawian women who are heading their own households, this is the only way they can feed their families. Innovative childcare schemes based on traditional practices may be started by women's groups with support from funders and government, to find a culturally appropriate and satisfactory means of caring for the children of working mothers.

Women must be included in NGO and government programmes — especially the new food-for-work projects — as equal participants. They should be provided with the same opportunities to learn new skills as men, and should not be shunted off into token projects (clearing roads or planting seedlings) that may generate a wage or food, but do not teach productive skills for future use.

Also, to ensure that women benefit from aid and development projects, they need to be given an equal voice during project design and implementation. NGOs and government should use affirmative action policies to ensure that this is done. For instance, women should hold a minimum number of leadership positions in projects, and should be in charge of distributing food in relief programmes. Putting women in charge also reduces the risk of male distributors using food to blackmail women into providing sex for food.

To further advance the economic status of Malawian women, efforts should be made by government and NGOs to ensure that women gain control of, and benefit from, land they inherit. This will entail changes in the law, as well as in cultural attitudes. Women must feel secure in their ownership of property, including land and personal effects, so that they may invest in it, and use the land for collateral. Similarly, women must be encouraged to buy land that they can build on, and use for productive purposes. Only by acquiring land equally with men can women combat the trend that sees a reduction in the size of landholdings each generation.



**NASME: women just as good as men**

Box 15

The National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME) has urged women in Nkhotakota to utilise business opportunities prevailing in the country to improve their living standards.

NASME national executive member, Helix Dzuwa, made the appeal when he disbursed on behalf of his association loans totalling K44,000 to 10 NASME members from the district at the boma.

He said the women should have the courage to engage in any business activity and discard the thinking that certain things can best be done by men alone.

"If you harbour the notion that you cannot do this because it is a man's domain, you are retarding the developing of the country," he told the recipients, three of whom were women.

He said undertaking a business venture was not a difficult thing provided one had skills to run it.

Dzuwa commended the Nkhotakota NASME branch for what he said was its impressive loan repayment rate which stood at 72 percent and was one of the best nationwide. He however, called on members to wipe out the 28 percent default rate.

He explained that NASME existed to help rural people and for this reason, his association would not be happy to hear that its loans were being taken mostly by people living in urban centres.

Dzuwa appealed to Namse consultants to visit their clients regularly and offer them managerial skills so that they could run thriving businesses.

SOURCE: *The Nation*, 8 January 1997

Land reform is currently being considered by a presidential commission. While the need to raise productivity is of paramount importance because Malawi is food insecure, gender equity should also be a goal of any land reform programme. For instance, returning estate land to traditional authorities to distribute it with no guarantee that women will benefit equally will be both unjust and unproductive.

The World Bank has demonstrated that in Malawi attainment of a secondary education has the same impact on family income as a 17 percent increase in land under cultivation.<sup>80</sup> Certainly education is the key to the improvement of the socio-economic status of women because educated women are better able to compete in the job market. Yet, in order for vast numbers of Malawian girls to become educated, a whole host of reforms are needed, from investing in girls' education to changing attitudes among rural families about education, employment and delayed marriage and child bearing for young women.

Educating girls and women has an enormous impact on family wellbeing too, especially the educational attainment of the children of such women, as well as the nutritional and health status of their children.

In addition to access to land and education, women in Malawi are in need of labour-saving devices that will help them raise their productivity and reduce the time they spend doing domestic and agricultural work. Meeting these needs should become one focus of the NGO and government rural development programmes.

Especially useful for rural women would be cassava peelers and crushers, rice and maize mills, rice rollers and dehullers, maize shellers and solar driers.<sup>81</sup> Animal power

and carts would offer women mobility, which would save enormous amounts of time and energy when they are gathering water and fuelwood, and when visiting the grinding mill, clinics, shops and schools. Alternative fuel sources would save the forests as well as women's time. Ploughs and draught animals, irrigation networks, harvesters and other agricultural devices should also be disseminated widely among women as well as men, to raise productivity in Malawi.

Rural women are particularly keen to see the establishment of more maize mills, clinics, schools, and markets in their areas. Efforts to involve women in the creation, management and, where appropriate, the ownership of such facilities, should be undertaken by government as well as NGOs, churches and other civil society agencies. Innovative programmes by the private sector, including banks and well-established industries, could help the women get loans to build these facilities. Moreover, women are well equipped, and if they know they are to benefit directly, to work together to mould bricks and learn construction skills in order to build these facilities. Women are also anxious to establish fuelwood lots, and develop water supplies. NGOs with an interest in helping women should facilitate such projects.

Equal pay for equal work should be instituted at all levels of Malawian society, from informal piece-work labour to urban employment. Women doing piece-work on other people's farms consistently earn lower wages than men doing similar work. The same system prevails on tobacco and tea estates, where women also have less steady and less lucrative employment. Government, trade unions and NGOs have a role in raising awareness of this problem, and organising women and men to campaign around this issue. Again, civic edu-

cation is needed to inform the public of the social benefits to be achieved by the economic empowerment of women.

Finally, affirmative action in hiring qualified women in senior positions is needed to offset years of discrimination in hiring.

#### Political power

Enforcement of the rights guaranteed to Malawian women in the Constitution will require the concerted effort of both government and civil society. NGOs, extension workers, and the churches have a leading role to play in the design and implementation of programmes aimed at gender-sensitizing rural families. For example, following the model developed by the GABLE programme, which promotes successful Malawian women as role models for girls, NGOs might help raise awareness about the varied roles women can play in businesses and professions, in families and communities, and in local and national government.

Another way to raise awareness among villagers is for them to meet successful women, who work in senior positions in schools, aid organizations, local government, clinics, unions and businesses. It is necessary, then, for government and civic organisations to make an effort to hire women in these positions, and to modify employment practices to enable women, including married women, to work in the field.

The media — especially radio, and in the future, television and videos shown at rural viewing centres — have a key role in disseminating messages about human, women's and children's rights. Soap operas, drama, and other forms of popular entertainment have been used successfully in other African countries to teach such issues to rural populations. NGOs and donors would do well to support the development

and dissemination of such programmes.

Women are in special need of legal counselling to ensure that their rights are protected. A few NGOs now hold legal clinics for women, but these are generally confined to the urban areas. Programmes such as these should be expanded, and full-time legal and paralegal staff employed to work in the rural areas where women also need advice and assistance.

Human and women's rights education is especially needed by the police, local authorities (including headmen and chiefs), and by judicial staff. Specially trained rape counsellors should be employed in police stations and the police force needs additional instruction in order to protect women in domestic violence cases. The situation of women prisoners requires further study, and appropriate action. Village councils handling local and family disputes should also be the target of rights education. International agencies can provide funding and training for local NGOs, who can undertake these various tasks.

Local elections are past due. When they are called, women should be prepared to contest elections for district council seats. This means quickly preparing civic education materials that will inform women about local politics and promote their involvement in local elections. National elections will be held in 1999. Malawian women have already expressed their interest in contesting a number of National Assembly seats. Political parties should not feel threatened by such activities, but, instead appreciate the spirit and enterprise shown by such women, and work with them to help them organise and manage their campaigns.

At the same time women should take a more active role in their

#### Women activists lobby for increase in marriage age

Box 16

Women parliamentarians in Malawi are lobbying to have the legal age of marriage for women increased from 15 to 18 years.

Participants to a seminar on Parliamentary Procedure and Promotion of Gender Issues, organised by the Parliamentary Women's Caucus in Lilongwe recently, said the marriage age was one of the issues that needed to be addressed when considering the future of the country.

"In order to tackle this problem effectively, we need to address the issues of poverty which is our number one problem. Poverty has seen some of our girls entering marriage long before they are ready," the participants observed.

Women chiefs attending the seminar agreed to increase the minimum age for marriage, saying that marrying too young resulted in a myriad of problems. "For example if a girl is married at the age of 13 she faces serious problems during childbirth since the pelvic bone has not yet matured," they said.

The seminar also called for a review of the offence of defilement saying there was need for a corresponding revision of the law that punishes persons who sexually abuse children.

Although at present the maximum sentence for the offence is life imprisonment, participants noted that in most cases light sentences were imposed and this did not act as a deterrent.

SOURCE: *Malawi News*, 7 February 1997

**"Give women a chance"**

Box 17

Women in the country, on Friday called on the government to ensure that women are not ignored when considering appointments for posts in both government and non-governmental organisations.

The Executive Director of the Society for the Advancement of Women, Catherine Munthali, said this when she opened a gender initiative network seminar in Blantyre.

She said women are capable of performing as well as men if given the chance.

Munthali said the social injustice that has been going on over the years should be stopped to give room to women's advancement.

"We would like to see women take [up] responsibilities and positions like men do," she said.

Meanwhile, President Bakili Muluzi has assured the women that his government is committed to ensuring that gender equality is achieved in the country.

SOURCE: Isaac Masingati, *The Nation*, 10 March 1997

political parties, insisting that the time has come for them to lead. Women's groups have an important part to play in raising public awareness about the need to have women parliamentarians and local councillors. They can also act as a pressure group, pushing the parties to include women in prominent positions, and encouraging women to vote for women. It is important at this stage not to allow the women's movement to be divided by party politics. Donors wishing to foster the empowerment of women may well support non-partisan, but politicised women's groups that campaign for the full involvement of women in politics.

**Health and fitness**

Malawian women and men suffer from ill-health, poor nutrition, family food insecurity, poor sanitation facilities, environmental degradation and unsafe water. Improvements in these sectors will help both men and women, and Malawi will be the better for it.

At the same time, women are known to suffer more than men in some situations. For instance, young women have a higher rate of HIV infection than young men, while women tend to lose more weight before the harvest than their husbands. Such things are the result of gender differences in economic and social status. Empowering women economically, in ways that are noted above, will help such women. But women can also be assisted by becoming aware of the causes of their condition. In other words, civic education is necessary, in this case, to inform women about the relationship between, for example, ill-health and control over their bodies, or between over-work and social inequality.

The spread of HIV/AIDS in young women is linked to the disempowerment of girl children, including their loss of control of their own bodies. Education will help these

girls understand the health issues involved, but boys and girls also need to learn that men and women have rights over their own bodies, and their own reproduction. It is understood that knowing about HIV/AIDS is not enough; behavioural change is needed to stop the spread of the disease. For girls, then, not only must they learn to say "no", but must also learn that it is all right for them to say "no". This will necessitate a change of attitude throughout the country, not just among children.

Women will benefit in other ways. Exercising their reproductive rights, they will be able to decide when to have sex, when to have a baby, and what child-spacing methods to use. Women having fewer babies will live longer, feel better and healthier and more productive. Historically, women learning that they control their own bodies is just a first step in learning that they can control their lives. Women learn how to ask, and how to demand, services, education, jobs and equal wages.

This is a long process which requires the support of NGOs and donors willing to promote social equality through health and nutrition programmes. Involving women in the planning and implementation of such programmes, keeping the social dimension of health and nutritional problems in focus, and explicitly linking empowerment to healthiness and fitness, will promote sustainable good health in Malawi.

**Culture**

In any society the existence of gender-role stereotyping can be attributed to the kind of socialisation process that women and men are subjected to from childhood. In Malawi traditional culture presumed that women were inferior and subordinate to men in a number of important ways. Looking at cultural norms in a positive perspec-

tive, in years past some traditional customs ensured that widows and small children were cared for after the death of the male head of household.

But cultural traditions change as economic structures are transformed, as technology and communications improve, as standards of living are raised, as education spreads, and as outsiders interact with society. Malawi is in the midst of a rapid social, economic, and technological transformation. Old customs are breaking down, much to the chagrin of village elders. New, and often more permissive, social mores are taking their place.

Educated girls and women, and enlightened men, no longer feel that women are inferior to men, or should remain subordinate to them. Now girls and women also want to make their own life-choices, such as choosing a husband, and deciding when to marry and what career to follow. Widows want control over their property, no longer content to become dependent on their husband's or own families. Girls want control of their sexuality and reproduction. Divorcees want their children.

The laws and regulations relating to gender must reflect the new position and status of Malawian women. Efforts to review and rewrite these should be renewed. Programmes to assist and defend women who are struggling against these old laws should be instigated. Civic education concerning repressive, dangerous or unhealthy traditional customs should be extended. NGOs, donors, government and civil society organisations, such as the university, labour unions, and churches also have a role in helping Malawians develop a culture that fosters equality and protects rights.

### Conclusion

It is clear that changes in attitude and opportunity cannot be made by women alone, but must be changes that involve men, and facilitate more balanced gender relations. Many of the economic conditions described in this volume affect men and boys as well as women and girls. In addition, the information gaps clearly present a challenge as there are a number of key areas in which statistical and analytical data is lacking; and more work should be done on data collection and dissemination.

### Fight for gender equality misunderstood

Box 18

At the mention of the word "gender" some men feel jittery. They are afraid of their position in society. This came out clearly at the gender sensitisation workshop for media personnel November 30 - December 2, 1995.

"We should do something with women since they are fighting for equality," started Benjamin Nyirenda. But what followed was typical of male chauvinism. "They should dig graves. They should carry coffins as well." Had he known he should not have said it. He drew the ire of other participants.

Women dig graves when a bay dies, other participants told him. "But are they shallow!" said Pilirani Kachinziri, who works for the Malawi News.

"Can we have some intelligent contributions, please?" Chinyeke Tembo of *The Nation*, pleaded. "We are not here to waste time."

Jennifer Sibanda of Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, referring to Nyirenda's statements, lamented: "it is sad a statement like that should come from a young man like you when most back-breaking jobs like tilling the land are done by women," she said.

Brighton Uledi-Kamanga, an English lecturer at the University of Malawi, said: "The question of women's liberation is a question of power and men tend to see their liberation as a threat. We don't have to be simplistic in our approach."

SOURCE: *The Nation*, 12 December 1995.

**"Malawi Human Resources and Poverty: Profile and Priorities for Action"**

Box 19

A World Bank study undertaken at the request of the Government of Malawi to seek a greater understanding of the magnitude and dimensions of poverty, is intended to guide policy and investment priorities, and inform the design of programmes to improve living conditions and increase incomes of people in Malawi.

The study confirms that the level of human resource development in Malawi is "dismal" and that poverty is widespread and severe. Health and education indicators in Malawi are among the worst in the world. Access to land and inputs is so limited that most smallholders have little hope of moving out of poverty solely by working their farms.

The generally low incomes, combined with marked income inequality, point to severe structural problems which are made worse by the high population growth rate.

Strategies to reduce poverty in Malawi will require substantial efforts in every sector, the report says, identifying the following priorities that require immediate attention:

- ◆ **Develop human resources:**  
Expand access and reduce inequalities in the social sectors and increase effectiveness and quality of social services.
- ◆ **Improve rural livelihoods:**  
Introduce interventions that will enable the poor to respond to the opportunities emerging from economic liberalization, ensure that economic reforms are broadened to reach the poorest, examine land policies with a view to achieving a more equitable distribution of land, and increase opportunities for smallholders to earn off-farm income.
- ◆ **Support safety nets for the most vulnerable:**  
Introduce short-term income transfers to alleviate the most urgent problems of the poor.
- ◆ **Poverty monitoring and analysis:**  
Continue activities and analyses aimed at monitoring progress in poverty reduction.

The 1995 study, entitled "Malawi Human Resources and Poverty: Profile and Priorities for Action", says a greater understanding of the magnitude and the profile of poverty is expected to make it easier to implement a monitoring system to evaluate the effects of programmes and track the progress of key indicators of poverty.

SOURCE: Adapted from Findings: Best Practice Inbrief, Africa Region, No. 13, February, 1997, published by the Knowledge, Information and Technology Centre of the World Bank, Washington, DC.

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# Appendix 3

## GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

A Declaration by Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

### PREAMBLE

WE, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community,

### A. NOTING THAT:

- i) Member States undertook in the SADC Treaty and in the Declaration to the Treaty, and in the Protocol on Immunities and Privileges, SADC not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of gender, among others;
- ii) All SADC member states have signed and ratified or acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), or are in the final stages of doing so.

### B. CONVINCED THAT:

- i) Gender equality is a fundamental human right;
- ii) Gender is an area in which considerable agreement already exists and where there are substantial benefits to be gained from closer regional co-operation and collective action;
- iii) The integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative is key to the sustainable development of the SADC region.

### C. DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT:

- i) While some SADC member states have made some progress towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming, disparities between women and men still exist in the areas of legal rights, power-sharing and decision-making, access to and control over productive resources, education and health among others;
- ii) Women constitute the majority of the poor;
- iii) Efforts to integrate gender considerations in SADC sectoral programmes and projects have not sufficiently mainstreamed gender in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner.

### D. RECOGNISING THAT:

- i) The SADC Council of Ministers in 1990 mandated the SADC Secretariat to explore the best ways to incorporate gender issues in the SADC Programme of Work, and approved in 1996 gender issues at the regional level to be co-ordinated by the Secretariat;
- ii) In execution of this mandate, the SADC Secretariat has developed and maintained working relations with key stakeholders in the area of gender, which resulted in the approval and adoption of the SADC Gender Programme by the SADC Council of Ministers in February 1997.

### WE THEREFORE:

**E. REAFFIRM** our commitment to the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, the Africa Platform of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

**F. ENDORSE** the decision of Council on:

- i) The establishment of a policy framework for mainstreaming gender in all SADC activities, and in strengthening the efforts by member countries to achieve gender equality;

- ii) Putting into place an institutional framework for advancing gender equality consistent with that established for other areas of co-operation, but which ensures that gender is routinely taken into account in all sectors;
- iii) The establishment of a Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Gender Affairs in the region;
- iv) The adoption of the existing Advisory Committee consisting of one representative from Government and one member from the Non-Governmental Organisations in each member state whose task is to advise the Standing Committee of Ministers and other Sectoral Committees of Ministers on gender issues;
- v) The establishment of Gender Focal points whose task would be to ensure that gender is taken into account in all sectoral initiatives, and is placed on the agenda of all ministerial meetings;
- vi) The establishment of a Gender Unit in the SADC Secretariat consisting of at least two officers at a senior level.

### G. RESOLVE THAT:

As leaders, we should spearhead the implementation of these undertakings and ensure the eradication of all gender inequalities in the region;

### AND

**H. COMMIT** ourselves and our respective countries to, inter alia,

- i) Placing gender firmly on the agenda of the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative;
- ii) Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision-making of member states and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least 30 percent target of women in political and decision-making structures by year 2005;
- iii) Promoting women's full access to, and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, markets, credit, modern technology, formal employment, and a good quality of life in order to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- iv) Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination, and enacting empowering gender-sensitive laws;
- v) Enhancing access to quality education by women and men, and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and professions;
- vi) Making quality reproductive and other health services more accessible to women and men;
- vii) Protecting and promoting the human rights of women and children;
- viii) Recognising, protecting and promoting the reproductive and sexual rights of women and the girl child;
- ix) Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children;
- x) Encouraging the mass media to disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women and children.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, We, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community, HAVE SIGNED THIS DECLARATION.

DONE at Blantyre on this 8th day of September 1997, in two original texts, in the English and Portuguese languages, both texts being equality authentic.

Republic of Angola  
Republic of Botswana  
Kingdom of Lesotho  
Republic of Malawi  
Republic of Mauritius  
Republic of Mozambique  
Republic of Namibia  
Republic of South Africa  
Kingdom of Swaziland  
United Republic of Tanzania  
Republic of Zambia  
Republic of Zimbabwe

## Appendix 4

Fourth World Conference on Women  
Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995

### BEIJING DECLARATION

1. We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,
2. Gathered here in Beijing in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,
3. Determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,
4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honouring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,
5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,
6. Also recognise that this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains,
7. Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity, now and carry us forward into the next century.

### We reaffirm our commitment to:

8. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development;
9. Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
10. Build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits — on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace;
11. Achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;
12. The empowerment and advancement of

women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

### We are convinced that:

13. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;
14. Women's rights are human rights;
15. Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;
16. Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development;
17. The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;
18. Local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;
19. It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women;
20. The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action;
21. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognize the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women.

**We are determined to:**

22. Intensify efforts and actions to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the end of this century;
23. Ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms;
24. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;
25. Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;
26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;
27. Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, lifelong education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;
28. Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;
29. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;
30. Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;
31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;
32. Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;
33. Ensure respect for interactional law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;
34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

**We are determined to:**

35. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, *inter alia*, by means of international cooperation;
36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action, which will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organisations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognises empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, subregional, regional and international institutions, a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;
37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;
38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organisations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.

SOURCE: United Nations, *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, UN Department of Public Information, New York, 1996

## Appendix 5

Fourth World Conference on Women  
Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995

### PLATFORM FOR ACTION: MISSION STATEMENT

1. The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development. A sustained and long-term commitment is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

2. The Platform for Action reaffirms the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the Platform seeks to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle.

3. The Platform for Action emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be

addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world. It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognises that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment.

4. The Platform for Action requires immediate and concerted action by all to create a peaceful, just and humane world based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equality for all people of all ages and from all walks of life, and to this end, recognizes that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice.

5. The success of the Platform for Action will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organisations and institutions at all levels. It will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, subregional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels of accountability to the world's women.

SOURCE: United Nations, *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*, UN Department of Public Information, New York, 1996



