

A stylized illustration of a woman's profile in silhouette, facing right. She is wearing a headband and a necklace. Her hand is holding a black silhouette of the African continent, from which a small green plant with three leaves is growing. The background is a warm yellow and orange gradient, with a green and brown landscape at the bottom.

# WOMEN AND AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA

## Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges the integrity and essential dignity of all human beings. Still, in too many cases women's rights are more limited than those of men. The situation is particularly burdensome for women living in rural areas in developing countries, where they are often unable to exercise their economic and social rights. At the same time, the majority of the world's hungry people live in rural areas where most of the food consumed locally is produced by women.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the vulnerability of women is four-fold. First, there is the systemic discrimination women face in relation to access to land as well as control and ownership of land, including the legal protection of their land rights (albeit the issue of aware-

ness also arises, as women do not know whether they can access land). Second, women generally face discrimination in the socio-cultural and political structure, especially from a leadership aspect and even more so in decision-making. Third, women form the bulk of laborers in agriculture while the men get all the proceeds in the form of cash income, thus leaving women economically disempowered. Yet, in many parts of the world, women are more likely than men to spend their income on food, healthcare or children's education, thus improvements in food security, household agricultural productivity and nutrition must address women's needs. And fourth, vulnerability arises through gender-based and sexual violence due to physical characteristics and their lower social position.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FAO (1998)

<sup>2</sup> MOKORO, CIRAD, ILC (2011)

During the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, governments recognized a gender dimension to poverty, which in turn has led to the introduction of a wider definition of poverty - one that not only takes into account minimum basic needs but also includes the denial of opportunities and choices.<sup>3</sup>

The so called **feminization of poverty** essentially means that there is a higher incidence of poverty among women than men; women's poverty is more severe than that of men and there is a trend towards greater poverty among women (associated with the rising rates of female-headed households).<sup>4</sup>

In this paper we will look at the problems faced by rural African women. We will focus on their role in food production, impediments they face in land tenure, issues they confront in connection to climate change, the global economic system and violent conflicts. We believe that showing the link between development problems and human rights is the only way to achieve the aims of our development policies.

## RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

*"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."*

*Beijing Platform for Action, 1995*

The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** recognize the fundamental value of gender equality. While equality between men and women and women's empowerment are in themselves a development objective (MDG 3), they also serve as critical channels for achieving the other MDGs and reducing income and non-income poverty and hunger (MDG 1). They also help to promote universal primary education (MDG 2), reduce under-five mortality (MDG 4), improve maternal health (MDG 5) and decrease the likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS (MDG 6). Combining the MDGs with human rights is of crucial importance.

In practice, women who live in rural areas are those who practice agriculture; they live in poverty, and to fulfill MDG 1 it is imperative to improve the livelihoods of these farmers. Women face sexual and gender based violence and this predisposes them to HIV/AIDS, leading to the deterioration of labor for agriculture and food security risks as indicated in

MDG 6. Women farmers should be empowered by being taught how to counter these problems.

*"Gender equality is more than a goal itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."*

*Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General*

## Key human rights documents focusing on women

### → CEDAW (1979):

A crucial document focusing on women's rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recognizes a set of complementary rights. In order to improve the situation of rural women it requires that State Parties ensure that all rural women have the right to:

- participation in development planning at all levels;
- education, training and extension services in order to increase their technical proficiency;
- agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
- adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling and services in family planning.

### → The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981):

Adopted by the Organization of African Unity (predecessor of the African Union), the Charter declares that: "The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions."<sup>5</sup>

### → The Beijing Platform for Action (1995):

The global agenda for women's rights, gender equality and empowerment goes further with regard to poverty, as it looks directly at women's poverty issues. Especially far-reaching is the fact that not only is poverty, education, health, economic resources or employment examined, but attention is also given to issues such as violence against women, sexual and reproductive health rights in war, and the environment, which is missing in the CEDAW framework.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Department of Public Information (2000)

<sup>4</sup> IDS (2001)

<sup>5</sup> The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, available at: [http://www.achpr.org/english/\\_info/charter\\_en.html](http://www.achpr.org/english/_info/charter_en.html).

### → The Optional Protocol to the CEDAW (1999):

“By ratifying the Optional Protocol, a State recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the body that monitors States parties’ compliance with the Convention) to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction.”<sup>6</sup>

### → The Maputo Protocol/ Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003):

The Protocol stipulates a ban on female genital mutilation, women’s right to sexual self-determination, the strengthening of women’s rights within marriage, equal rights for women and men to land and property, the right to participation in political and decision-making processes, the right to peace, the right to food security and the right to sustainable development. To date, more than half of African countries have signed the Protocol.<sup>7</sup>

#### Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

The legal framework of human rights obligations has been the subject of a growing international consensus under the title “human rights-based approaches to development”. This concept builds upon the collection of universal human rights standards and acknowledges that the enjoyment of human rights must be both the means and the goal of development.<sup>8</sup> This approach also identifies “right-holders” and corresponding “duty-bearers” in specific development contexts and reinforces their capacities to claim their rights and fulfill their duties respectively.<sup>9</sup>

Applying the **PANTHER** principles (participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment, and the rule of law) is corroborating the effects of human rights principles and helping to achieve the development goals.<sup>10</sup>

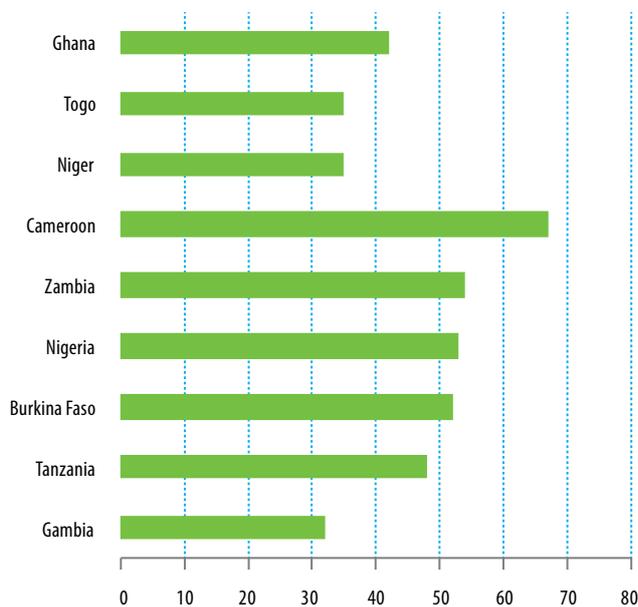
## WOMEN AND FOOD PRODUCTION

### Basic facts:

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

- Women comprise, on average, up to **50 percent of the agricultural labor force** in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- About **two thirds of poor livestock keepers**, totaling approximately 400 million people, are women.
- **Average male wages are higher** than average female wages, and women tend to have more part-time and seasonal employment.
- The **yield gap** between men and women averages around **20-30 percent**, and most research finds that the gap is due to differences in resource use.
- Closing the gender gap in agriculture could **reduce the number of the world’s hungry people by 12 to 17 percent**.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1: Agricultural labor supplied by women (%)



Source: FAO (2011)

6 The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/>.

7 The Maputo Protocol, available at: <http://www.maputoprotocol.com/index.php>.

8 ActionAid, Amnesty International, Terre des hommes, International Human Rights Network, Human Rights-Based Approaches and EU Development Aid Policies (2008)

9 Minority Rights Group International (2011)

10 UNESCO (2011)

11 FAO (2011)

forests. In fishing communities, capturing fish in coastal and deep-sea waters is almost always a male domain.

Rural women have the primary responsibility of maintaining the household. They raise children, grow and prepare food, manage family poultry, and collect fuel wood and water. But women and girls also play an important, largely unpaid, role in generating family income by providing labor for planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing crops, and processing produce for sale. Women may also earn a small income for themselves by selling vegetables from home gardens or forest products.

With the increasing commercialization of agriculture, the dominant position of men is changing gender roles in men's favor. For example, as urban demand for vegetables increases, men are taking over women's traditional gardens to establish commercial enterprises. The expropriation of women's activities reduces their production of food for the household, their income and their social position. Another growing trend is the departure of poor rural men in search of employment, which leaves women with the sole responsibility for food and cash crop production, as well as raising children.<sup>12</sup>

- Lower use of improved technologies.
- Lack of necessary education and training.
- Lower wages.
- Exclusion from contract-farming arrangements.

#### CASE STUDY: Small-scale coffee production in Uganda

"Coffee is Uganda's largest export, providing employment (directly and indirectly) to an estimated 5 million people. Smallholder coffee is usually intercropped with staples such as banana, plantain, beans, sweet potatoes and maize. Simple farming methods are normally used to produce coffee; purchased inputs such as fertilizer or pesticides are used minimally and irrigation is rare.

...

Because female-headed households farmed on a much smaller scale, women sold smaller amounts than men (only 47 kg, on average, compared with 151 kg for men). Members of male-headed households were more likely than those of female-headed households to travel to market to sell their coffee. Fifteen percent of the transactions made by male-headed households took place in the nearby coffee market, compared with only 7 percent of transactions by women. This may be because men were more likely to own a bicycle and could therefore travel to the market more easily than women.

...

Gender differences in marketing are largely explained by the fact that women market smaller quantities of coffee and do not own bicycles. It also finds that a major constraint facing women is their relative difficulty in accessing marketing channels that allow added value. By engaging in marketing channels in which they add value, male-headed households received 7 percent more per kilogram of coffee."<sup>13</sup>

**Table 1: Contribution to production in relation to shares of population and land ownership in Uganda**

Indicator	F (%)	M (%)
Population	51	49
Food production	80	20
Planting	60	40
Weeding	70	30
Harvesting	60	40
Processing/preparation	90	10
Access to/ownership of land and related means of production	8	92

Source: ENERGIA (2009)

#### Key problems faced by rural women:

- Lower access to resources (land, financial services, agricultural inputs, technologies, technical assistance, market opportunities).
- Smaller plots of land of poorer quality, lower number of working animals.
- Often no control of the credit they obtain.

12 FAO, Why Gender?

13 FAO (2011)

## WOMEN AND LAND

### Land tenure rights and customary norms

Land is a key and critical factor in the subsistence strategies of poor people. Land rights are basic human rights that have a direct link to the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights, especially the right to food. In Sub-Saharan Africa, most of the land is formally owned by the state and customarily held by local tribes. In most traditional societies, a woman's status within the household is almost always related to male family members. Yet, "land is not only the most basic agricultural input but ownership and control over land are crucial determinants in whether a farmer has access to other resources and participates in local decision-making process."<sup>14</sup>

When women farmers lack the security of land tenure, as they do in many African countries, the result is lower access to credit and inputs and, hence, inefficient land use, which reduces yields. Discrimination in credit markets and other gender inequalities in access to productive inputs (seeds, fertilizers, and technologies) also make it more difficult for female-headed families to be as productive and profitable as male-headed ones.<sup>15</sup>

### Case of Ethiopia<sup>16</sup>

- Land is property owned by the state, which provides user rights to its citizens. The inheritance of user rights is allowed. The Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation from 2005 acknowledged the autonomy of regional states in issues of land. As for women's rights, the Proclamation is progressive and codifies user rights for women and men in terms of titles that last 100 years. Nevertheless, although it is not officially recognized or supported by customary law, men and elite farmers, in many cases, are allocated larger plots than women and small farmers.
- Ethiopia is characterized by great ethnic and religious diversity, with over 85 ethnic groups, most major world and animist religions and a multiplicity of patrimonial and customary laws; this implies variations in the status of women. Land, people and cattle are men's property, although women can own household utensils, chickens and a couple of sheep. When women want to sell any personal assets they possess, they must have the approval of their husband.
- As for divorced women or widows, the land they live on is not entrusted to them unless they live and farm with the husband's family. Polygamous marriages make the issue of land rights even more complicated, especially in the di-

14 FAO (1998)

15 World Bank, World Development Report 2012 (2011)

16 FAO, Land and Gender database

vision of use rights among several women. In practice, the oldest wife has access to land because only one of them is allowed to register. Such user rights are vulnerable and are subject to contestation in the case of divorce.

### Case of Kenya<sup>17</sup>

- Customary law continues to govern the inheritance of agricultural land, crops and livestock; according to this law, wives and daughters do not inherit family property even though the new Constitution from 2010 recognizes inheritance for women. In rural areas, it is widespread practice for fathers to leave land to their sons with the expectation that their daughters will be cared for by their husbands. In many communities, when a man dies and leaves behind a widow but no children or only daughters, his estate is treated as though he were unmarried. It is therefore inherited by his father, if he is alive, and in his absence by his paternal nephews, uncles or the nearest paternal male relative in that order.
- Private ownership allowed men to sell their plots of land without consulting their families. They would take the money and move to cities, leaving their families homeless and landless. Women were the most affected since they are almost never registered as group members and they have no voice.
- Unmarried daughters have the right to use land within the paternal dwelling, but they can only plant annual crops and not permanent crops. When a father decides to allocate land to any unmarried or divorced daughters, these women in most instances are likely to be forcefully evicted from the land by their male siblings, who believe that daughters should not have a share of paternal land.

### Land grabbing<sup>18</sup> from a gender perspective

Since 2007, a new wave of foreign direct investment (FDI) and large-scale acquisitions of agricultural land in developing countries in order to produce food staples and biofuels has been a subject of heated debates at the national and international level. However, there has been little discussion about the diverse effects that land deals have on rural women and men. The impacts of large-scale land deals depend partly on their rights and responsibilities. Due to the land tenure settlement, large-scale land deals are often aggravating the existing disparities between men and women due to their gender, social role, marital status, age or ethnicity.

When the title is only in the name of the male household head, a woman might not have any role in the consultation process or decision-making linked to any land lease or sale even if she uses some part of the land for productive purposes. In a situation where customary land rights dominate,

17 UN HABITAT (2002)

18 More information on Land grabbing can be found in "Land Grabs in Africa – A Threat to Food Security" by Glropolis, 2011.

the decision about land investment is in the hands of those who can successfully assert ownership, such as community leaders. Moreover, common land women depend on for collecting firewood, water, fodder, and medicinal plants often have the most insecure tenure (secondary use of land). Governments may label them as “wasteland,” so this property is even most likely to be given up for outside investment. Land primarily used by women is regularly converted for biofuel production, which might contribute to women’s socioeconomic marginalization.<sup>19</sup>

Access to education has been a great impediment to women’s access to formal employment. Local men and women may not benefit equally from the new employment opportunities often cited as the main advantage of large-scale land deals for local population. Women are typically small-scale farmers without independent resources, while investment projects focus instead on large-scale production. Some jobs also require formal education, but many rural communities prioritize school attendance for boys over girls. Of course, some contracts can provide employment opportunities for women, but the jobs are temporary, low-paid and insecure.<sup>20</sup>

Generally, a new commercial opportunity often means that men assume control of the land at the expense of women’s access. Thus, new sources of income from the land are likely to burden women and benefit men. The new competition for land between biofuels and food crops, leading to less availability of food and higher prices, is also likely to affect women more than men, as women tend to take responsibility for feeding the family. In addition, rural women often end up with the double burden of providing for and managing the household when men migrate in search of work, which is another consequence of land shortages.<sup>21</sup>

In the **Benin** coastal area, commercial pressures on land have undoubtedly worsened the relative poverty of “women without men”. Nevertheless, as most women live in male-headed households, the poverty impacts of large land deals are not necessarily markedly gender-differentiated. It is also likely that the presence of large numbers of migrant women working in tourism and industry in the local area, combined with the tendency toward polygamous marriage, could lead to an increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted diseases to local women.<sup>22</sup>

## WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change has the greatest impact on the poorest, and viewing this issue from a gender perspective in this case is not only necessary but even obligatory since the vast majority of the poor are women – two thirds of the 1.3 billion poor people in the world.<sup>23</sup> They depend heavily on the natural environment for a living and to produce food for their families and with climate change negatively affecting their livelihoods, the already harsh conditions for women are exacerbated. They have the least capacity or opportunity to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate or to participate in negotiations on mitigation.<sup>24</sup>

**Mitigation** means taking concrete steps to lower the levels of GHGs in our atmosphere or to enlarge the world’s carbon stocks.

**Adaptation** means taking certain measures to adjust to the changes induced by a varying climate.

*“From food shortages to forest degradation and new and more complex health risks, as well as an increased likelihood of conflict over resources, the impacts of climate change threaten to further jeopardise the lives of women and girls. But just as many women are bearing the greatest burden of climate change because of their role as providers for their families, it is women who are developing the solutions that will save our world from the impacts of global warming.”<sup>25</sup>*

### Climate change impacts on women in agriculture

Africa is expected to be the continent most vulnerable to climate change, with the main adverse impacts being on food security and crop production (especially in subsistence farming), water stress and health issues.<sup>26</sup>

#### Climate-induced crop failure

Warmer and drier conditions have led to a reduction in the length of growing seasons, which has a detrimental effect on crops. Dry seasons are longer and rainfall more uncertain. Food security could be greatly compromised due to alternations in crop production; for example, East Africa could suffer a decline in the length of the growing period for key crops of up to 20 percent by the end of the century, with maize yields declining by almost 20 percent and the productivity

19 IFPRI (2011)

20 W. Wilson International Center for Scholars (2009)

21 Oxfam (2011)

22 MOKORO, CIRAD, ILC (2011)

23 UNDP (2011)

24 IDS (2008)

25 Wangari Maathai (2010)

26 IPCC (2007)

of beans falling by nearly 50 percent.<sup>27</sup> Crop and livestock production changes could affect the gendered division of labor and possibly have negative effects on both men's and women's incomes.<sup>28</sup> It is usually the women who then have to give up their meals for their children and husband.

## Health

Higher temperatures mean that various diseases spread easier, especially vector-borne diseases such as malaria or dengue fever. Climate variability may also exacerbate additional vulnerabilities such as immuno-compromised populations (HIV/AIDS) and conflict and war in the future, bringing increased risk of other infectious diseases (e.g. cholera) and malnutrition.<sup>29</sup> Women have to spend more time looking after the ill, thus spending less time on income generating activities or farming to feed the family. They themselves may fall ill and are very likely to get worse treatment than men, if any at all.

## Dwindling natural resources

Climate change may also lead to an increasing frequency and intensity of floods and deteriorating water quality. In drought-prone areas affected by desertification, for example, the time required for water collection will increase as women will be forced to travel greater distances to find water. The irregular but heavy rainfall and more frequent floods predicted to result from climate change in many areas will also increase women's workloads.<sup>30</sup> It is mainly women who are responsible for collecting water and are thus more sensitive to the changes in seasons and climatic conditions that affect water quantity and accessibility that make its collection even more time-consuming.<sup>31</sup> Walking the long distances to fetch water or fuel can furthermore expose women and girls to harassment or sexual assault.<sup>32</sup> Household conflict is also more likely to occur between men and women regarding the use of the available water for gender-specific activities, as women use water mainly for household chores, whereas men use it for livestock or cash-crops.<sup>33</sup>

## Natural disasters

Over 90% of deaths caused by natural disasters occur in poor countries. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during disasters.<sup>34</sup> Their particular vulnerability

is due to several factors, including differences in socialization; for example, girls are not taught important skills that boys are, such as swimming and tree climbing.<sup>35</sup> Very often the warnings of disasters do not reach the women, in many cases because they are announced in places not accessible to women. Even after disasters women tend to have a heavier workload; there are issues concerning the lack of ownership titles for resettling and a rise in incidents of sexual and domestic violence.<sup>36</sup>

*"In many parts of the world women do not own collective or individual title to the land from which they live. This lack of control means they are less able to implement sustainable agriculture or adapt forest management strategies that contribute to climate change mitigation as their voices are not heard when decisions are made. It also impedes their ability to participate effectively in programmes such as REDD+, which offers financial incentives for reducing emissions from deforestation."<sup>37</sup>*

## Natural resource conservation

### REDD

"Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. "REDD+" goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks."<sup>38</sup>

The REDD presents opportunities for outcomes of communities dependent on forests, but also risks serious negative outcomes, especially for women who rely on forest resources to sustain their livelihoods.<sup>39</sup> Despite their heavy dependence on forests, women are seldom consulted because they are not the owners. Moreover, they are often excluded from REDD payment schemes.<sup>40</sup> Their differentiated needs are not considered in implementing programs.

27 Oxfam (2011)

28 CIDA

29 IPCC (2007)

30 IDS (2008)

31 CIDA

32 IDS (2008)

33 ISS (2010)

34 UNFPA & WEDO (2009)

35 IUCN/WEDO (2007) in IDS (2008)

36 GTZ (2010)

37 Wangari Maathai (2010)

38 UN-REDD programme (2009)

39 Youssouf, J.K. (2011)

40 IUCN (2010)

## Green Belt Movement

One of the most famous natural resource conservation projects is the Green Belt Movement, a Kenyan grassroots initiative that aims to “mobilize community consciousness for self-determination, equity, improved livelihoods and security, and environmental conservation” through planting trees to counter deforestation.<sup>41</sup> The movement was founded by Professor Wangari Maathai in 1977 after recognizing the increasing problems deforestation and the connected soil erosion were bringing to local women: streams were drying up, they had to walk farther to collect firewood and their food supply was less and less secure. “GBM encouraged the women to work together to grow seedlings and plant trees to bind the soil, store rainwater, provide food and firewood, and receive a small monetary token for their work.”<sup>42</sup>

## Renewable Energy

“Making energy supply secure and curbing energy’s contribution to climate change are often referred as the two overriding challenges faced by the energy sector on the road to a sustainable future.”<sup>43</sup> Reliable modern energy is considered the bouncing board to improving other aspects of wellbeing such as economic development, health, education and gender equality by enhancing the economic empowerment of women and is thus considered paramount in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Women experience energy poverty differently and often more severely than men.

*“Without access to modern energy services, women and girls spend most of their day performing basic subsistence tasks including time-consuming and physically draining tasks of collecting biomass fuels.”<sup>44</sup>*

Although access to energy is not explicitly established as a basic human right, it cannot be seen as isolated from achieving other human rights. However, for a myriad of reasons this important ingredient for reaching the MDGs has been denied to women: in many societies the contribution and worth of women is deeply undervalued, might we say ‘taken for granted’; no economic value is seen in the work women do, such as collecting fuel wood; women’s roles and needs are not prioritized and women are therefore not the beneficiary of any investment such as improved cooking technology.<sup>45</sup> The lack of access to

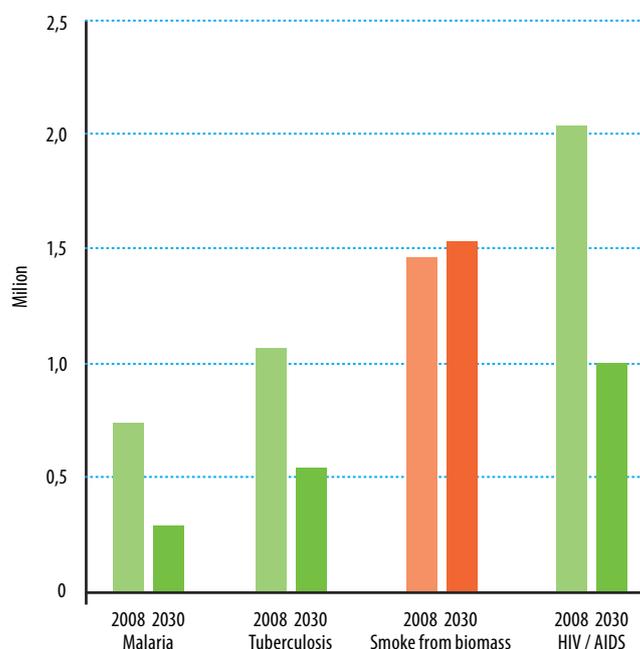
improved energy sources impedes their productivity potential and leaves them less time to earn additional income. Although most of the focus is on improving access to modern energy services, biomass will still play an important role, especially for women in rural areas and for the urban poor.

## Biomass

Biomass is heavily relied on for energy production in Africa, with over 80% of the population using fuel-wood or charcoal.<sup>46</sup> This heavy reliance is driven by population growth, poverty, and a lack of access to other substitutes.<sup>47</sup> However, traditional burning can be dangerous and toxic for women cooking at home, not to mention the environmental impacts as it exacerbates deforestation, land degradation, and desertification. Fuel collection is also the most time-consuming and strenuous activity women face and can cause them long-term physical problems. Furthermore, there are risks of sexual harassment, falls or insect bites on their long walks for collecting fuel, which could become longer and longer due to deforestation and the negative impacts of climate change.<sup>48</sup>

It is predicted that there will be more deaths caused by indoor burning of biomass than HIV/AIDS or malaria by the year 2030 – over 1.5 million people per year or 4,000 people a day!

**Figure 2: Premature annual deaths from household air pollution and other diseases**



Source: OECD/IEA (2010)

41 Green Belt Movement: <http://greenbeltmovement.org>

42 Green Belt Movement: <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/who-we-are>

43 OECD/IEA (2010)

44 Danielson, K. (2012)

45 Ibid.

46 World Bank (2012)

47 Njoka, F.N. (2008)

48 OECD/IEA (2010)

### The potential of energy-efficient stoves

The three stone fire or charcoal stoves are commonly used for cooking; however, they are highly inefficient and waste fuel, leading to deforestation.<sup>49</sup> Energy-efficient stoves and ovens can reduce firewood consumption and thus curb deforestation rates and serve to decrease the instance of respiratory diseases or death from indoor pollution. For example, the Improved Biomass Stoves in Tanzania are estimated to significantly reduce fuel-wood consumption by 50% and possibly save around 1000 ha of woodlands; also, the time women spend collecting wood will be reduced by eight hours and the time spent on cooking could go down by 40%.<sup>50</sup> However, it often happens that energy-efficient stoves are promoted without complementary training. The stoves can take longer to heat up and women can be impatient and eventually prefer the quicker option of firewood for cooking. Thus training is paramount to explain the long-term benefits of the improved stoves that are not immediately visible, such as saving time on fuel-collection.

families, thus losing their subsistence.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned earlier in the section on land grabs, in many African countries men are in charge of cash crops, which biofuels essentially are, thus leaving little space for women to generate income for themselves.

Large-scale biofuel production can go wrong in so many different ways for women, starting with displacing family food crops to marginal lands creating more work for women to feed their families, to negatively impacting biodiversity and destroying valuable ecosystems on which the rural poor are so dependent, all of which leads to an additional burden on work and health for women. As smallholder production is not concentrated into one large area, there is less potential to destroy habitats.<sup>55</sup> Industrial biofuel production brings all the potential problems that land grabbing does. Furthermore, there is a significant impact on water use and availability, especially on the regional and local level.<sup>56</sup> Already 85% of available freshwater in developing countries is used for agriculture, and water is increasingly scarcer due to population growth but also because of climate change.<sup>57</sup>

### Biofuel production<sup>51</sup>

With a view toward the energy poverty situation in most African countries, biofuels can easily be seen as a viable way of providing home-grown energy.<sup>52</sup> However, the huge scale of land-grabbing that has accompanied biofuel production (for example the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive which stipulates a use of 10% renewable energy in the transport sector by 2020 for all EU members, most of which will be fulfilled with biofuels planted in developing countries) has cast a shadow over biofuels.

Different scales of production tend to have different impacts not only on women, but on rural communities in general. On a small scale, biofuel production could significantly benefit women by eradicating energy poverty and, in turn, also women's time poverty. Many projects target women's groups because of their traditional household energy roles; this is important for women's empowerment.<sup>53</sup>

However, small-scale production does not automatically equal success for women. For example, in Uganda women were concerned that men would start to take the land for themselves, with the women having to work there with very little, if any, benefit; women could be forced to spend most of their time producing biofuels instead of food crops for their

## WOMEN AND THE WORLD ECONOMY

### Trade

The traditional analysis and regulation of trade is most often presumed to be gender-neutral. There is still very little information about women's involvement in trade expansion, the impact of agricultural trade liberalization on women's rights and on gender equality in general.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the major issue to be considered in the context of this publication is the impact of global trade on gender disparities considering women's significant contribution to food production in Africa.

In the era of globalization, trade policies and agreements have an enormous impact on people's daily lives. The general view is that liberalization of trade and elimination of all kinds of trade barriers will reduce poverty for men and women equally. In reality, this is not always the case. Trade liberalization is criticized for serious problems deepening food insecurity in poor countries. Moreover, trade reforms are likely to have gender-differentiated consequences because of women's limited access to and control over resources.

The negative impacts of the globalization of the world economy are experienced disproportionately by women. As the economy becomes increasingly linked to global markets, it

49 GTZ (2007)

50 Tanzania Daily News (2011)

51 More information on Biofuels can be found in "Biofuels – Fuel for Food?" by Glopolis, 2011.

52 ENERGIA (2009)

53 NRI (2011)

54 Ibid.

55 Pícses (2011)

56 Meijerink, G., Langeveld, H. & Hellegers, P. (2008)

57 UN-Energy (2007)

58 FAO (2006)

often leads to a reduction in public spending and social programs, pushing the costs on to the family, where it is most often the women who shoulder the added burden. The loss of government revenue from tariff removal creates the most significant and immediate impact. Due to likely expenditure cuts, governments may curtail social development policies and investment in the agricultural sector.<sup>59</sup>

Experience from Sub-Saharan African countries has indicated that medium and large-scale commercial farmers, large-scale private traders/wholesalers and processors, and providers of marketing support services have benefited most. But these groups are overwhelmingly male. Trade liberalization has also initiated agricultural policies that promote export production and farming of cash crops over that of food staple crops. Because cash crops tend to be farmed by men, they are in a better position than women to benefit from such a policy change.<sup>60</sup>

### CASE STUDY: Horticulture in Kenya

"In Kenya horticulture is the fastest-growing sector of the economy. This performance is mainly attributed to the export of cut flowers, the vast majority of which go to European markets. Seventy-five per cent of the employment in the cut flower industry is female, and over 65 per cent of the workers are employed on a temporary, seasonal or casual basis. Legally, Kenyan employers are required to promote casual or temporary workers to permanent status after eight months, but employees are often found returning year after year on a renewed temporary contract. Women in particular suffer from this legal loophole as a result of gender discrimination in Kenyan employment embedded in social norms that consider women more compliant and better suited to certain types of horticultural work (such as picking and packing), coupled with perceptions that women's income is supplementary, rather than central, to household well-being.

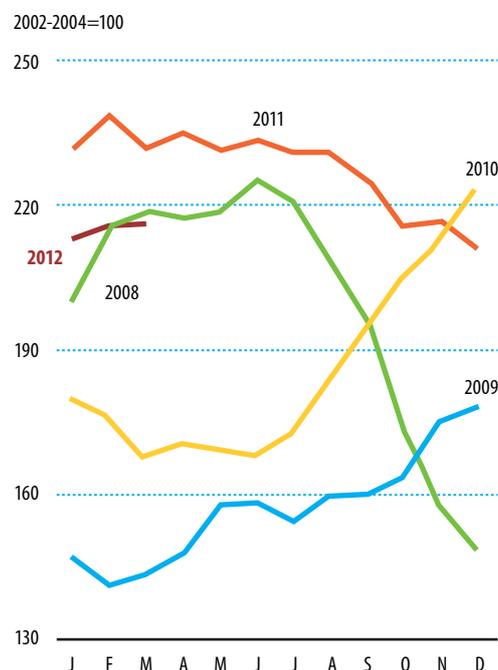
The main codes of conduct operating in the Kenyan context are the Northern sectoral code Milieu Project Sierteelt and the Southern sectoral codes of the Kenyan Flower Council. Also on the increase is the use of the German-based Flower Label Programme, drawn from the International Code of Conduct for Cut Flowers developed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions in Europe. However, while producers found codes to be useful management tools, and there has been some improvement in areas of health and safety and other areas, major concerns over worker conditions – particularly for women – still persist. Interviews with workers found that only 22 per cent were aware of the existence of the codes,

with even fewer aware that they pertained to workers' rights, and only 31 per cent of non-permanent workers had a signed, written contract. Despite many codes of conduct cautioning against the use of 'rolling contracts,' many employers continue to use them as a means of avoiding the additional costs associated with permanent employment."<sup>61</sup>

### Food price crisis

People worldwide experienced rising food prices during the crisis in 2007/8 resulting in food riots in several countries. Food prices rose globally even in 2010 and the year 2011 witness a food price peak ever since FAO started to use its Food Price Index (measure of the monthly change in international prices of five commodity groups including cereals, dairy, meat, oil & fat, and sugar).<sup>62</sup> Prices of on-food items, including fuel, and agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and seed recorded price increases. Poor rural households were hit the most and women in particular due to their lack of access to resources. Estimates say that both crises (2007/2008 and 2011) may have pushed more than 100 million people in low-income countries below the poverty line, representing a loss of seven years' worth of poverty reduction.<sup>63</sup>

Figure 3: FAO Food Price Index



61 Kabeer, N. (2007)

62 FAO, Global Food Price Monitor (Feb 2011)

63 IFPRI (2008)

59 One World Action (2009)

60 IDS (2006)

Figure 4: FAO Food Price Index



\* The real price Index is the nominal price Index deflated by the World Bank Manufactures Unit Value Index (MUV)

Source: FAO Food Price Index<sup>64</sup>

## WOMEN AND CONFLICT

Poor people usually spend 50 to 80 percent of their income on food, and they adjust to high food prices in several ways. While some people eat less (for instance reducing the number of meals per day to only one) and going hungry, the more usual pattern is for people to shift to cheaper, less preferred, and often poorer-quality food. Pregnant and lactating mothers are among the groups considered most at risk, as their health and nutritional status directly influences their babies' conditions. Yet, the effects differ by gender, as women come under more pressure to provide good meals with less food and feel the stress of coping with their children's hunger most directly. This stress pushes women into poorly paid informal sector work, competing among themselves for increasingly inadequate earnings.<sup>65</sup>

To cope with higher food prices, poor farmers and households have to sell assets like livestock, seeds, or tools, which are very difficult to regain in the future. Women's traditional assets like jewellery and small livestock tend to be sold first because they are easier to recover later than men's assets such as land and large livestock.<sup>66</sup>

64 FAO, Food Price Index (April 2012)

65 Oxfam (2011)

66 FAO Gender Insight

*"Conventional, gender-blind understandings of war and its aftermath overlook the causes and consequences of gender-specific disadvantage and how these impact on gender relations. Given that gender inequality persists and is often exacerbated by conflict, it is predominantly the disadvantage faced by women that remains hidden."<sup>67</sup>*

### Intra-state wars

The notion of security has changed over the past decade from a "state-centered" approach to one of "human security" which incorporates new types of threats to human wellbeing other than inter-state wars, such as economic, health, food, environmental, personal, community and political security. This is due to the nature of conflict in the world shifting from inter-state to intra-state wars where the majority of violence is against civilians and some of the greatest threats are hunger, disease, human rights abuses or environmental disasters. The accompanying forced migration or displacement of people creates a situation whereby agricultural production is disrupted, further hindering food security. Women constitute at least half of world migrant populations; however, even so their needs are not prioritized in migration policies.<sup>68</sup>

67 IDS (2003)

68 UNFPA/WEDO (2009)

The vast majority of such conflicts take place in developing countries where poverty and inequalities are conditions that increase the likelihood of conflict. Rape has long been used as a tactic of war and the UN Security Council officially declared so in 2008, stating that: “women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group.”<sup>69</sup>

*“There is probably not a single African woman who has not witnessed violence against another woman. It is the truth that men fight wars and the women are the victims; whether by way of infrastructure breakdown, being forced to turn to sexual exploitation for survival or the after-effects of stigmatisation, forced pregnancies and STDS (sexually transmitted diseases).”<sup>70</sup>*

*Late Mavis Matladi, former President of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) Women’s Caucus*

### Rape as a war tactic in Africa

In the Democratic Republic of Congo approximately 1,100 rapes are reported each month, with an average of 36 women and girls raped every day. It is believed that over 200,000 women have suffered from sexual violence in that country since armed conflict began.<sup>71</sup>

Between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the disproportionate impact of conflict on women, fewer than three percent of signatories to peace agreements are women.<sup>73</sup>

There has never been a female U.N. chief peace negotiator, and women constitute less than eight percent of negotiating delegations in peace processes mediated by the U.N., while less than three percent are peace agreement signatories.<sup>74</sup>

69 OHCHR (2008)

70 Matladi, M. cited in IPS (2011)

71 UN: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/endviol/index.shtml>

72 Ibid.

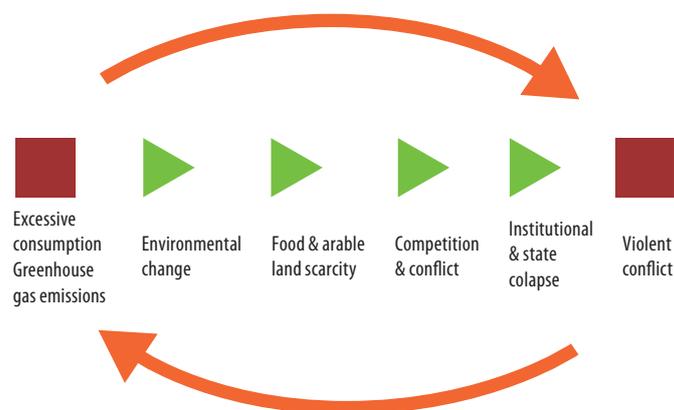
73 UNDP (2011)

74 Bamjee, S. (2011)

## Conflicts over natural resources

Disputes relating to land, environmental and, more recently, climate change issues linked with resource scarcity (land, water, forests) represent another African woe, as the majority of the African population is dependent on natural resources and the environment for its living. In any land conflict, the gender of the people involved often plays an important role. Traditionally, women (wives, widows, daughters) are highly vulnerable because of their limited land rights.<sup>75</sup>

**Figure 5: the link between climate change, resource scarcity and resource conflict**



Source: ISS (2010)

### Conflicts among farmers and pastoralists

Some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are prone to environmental challenges, including drought, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion and insufficient supply of water. Moreover, agricultural production is principally rain-fed. Farmers and herders on the southern fringe of the Sahara Desert struggle to survive in a hostile environment; pastoralists lose their traditional grazing land.<sup>76</sup> The conflicts usually arise from destruction of crop fields by livestock. In response, the resident farmers build barriers around farm areas and across passages leading to productive land. “Sometimes, the farmers and pastoralists were required to pay hefty fines to the authorities even when they were the aggrieved side, thereby heightening the tension,” explains a member of a grassroots network.<sup>77</sup>

75 The African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Natural Resource, the Environment and Conflict (2009)

76 Africa center for strategic studies.

77 ACORD (2011)

The Horn of Africa is home to the largest population of pastoralists in the world. Pastoralist communities in the region are nomadic, live primarily in arid or semi-arid areas, and depend for their livelihood on livestock – cattle, sheep, goats and camels. They rely on access to water and pasture land. But resources are scarce and under increasing pressure due to climate change and population growth. They must be shared with farmers and wildlife. Conflicts involving pastoralists associated with resource competition, cattle raiding, and the wide availability of small arms are nevertheless widespread and of increasing concern in this part of Africa.<sup>78</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Gender inequality hinders development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Removing gender-based barriers and empowering women is a critical factor in freeing the millions of people who are caught in the cycle of poverty and hunger. By providing women with access to economic, social and educational opportunities, as well as the autonomy needed to take advantage of such opportunities, an important obstacle to poverty eradication would be overcome.

### Policy Coherence for Development and gender

“Two decades of gender mainstreaming and twin-track approaches provide lessons and valuable insights into what works and what doesn’t work for a progressive agenda. Importantly, there is clear evidence that without continuous political pressure from women and civil society organizations to act upon enhancing women’s rights and ending gender discrimination, gender mainstreaming would risk becoming a simple bureaucratic management approach that ticks a box instead of being an ally in the struggle for gender justice.”<sup>79</sup>

### Key messages:

- *Women’s economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the MDGs.*
- *In many developing countries, the agriculture sector is underperforming because women lack equal opportunities*

<sup>78</sup> Mkutu, K. (2001)

<sup>79</sup> CONCORD (2011)

*and access to productive resources in order to be able to produce more.*

- *More equitable access to assets and services - land, water, technology, innovation and credit, banking and financial services - will strengthen women’s rights, increase agricultural productivity, reduce hunger and promote economic growth.*
- *When women have more influence over economic decisions, their families allocate more income to food, health, education, children’s clothing and children’s nutrition.*
- *When women control additional income, they spend more of it than men do on food, health, clothing and education for their children. This has positive implications for immediate well-being as well as long-run human capital formation and economic growth through improved health, nutrition and education outcomes.*

**ROPFA’s practical key points for improving the condition of women in rural areas** (Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa):

- a) information on and awareness of rural populations (covering all categories: men, women, and socio-professional groups);
- b) translation of texts into the main local languages for more widespread access to information;
- c) organization of local public debates in order to modify documents so that they address the realities of each area, with particular attention on preserving the role of women;
- d) organize information and reflection sessions on the condition of women and rural security;
- e) reduce administrative and legal procedures (specifically bureaucratic delays and costs) with special assistance for women in rural communities;
- f) strengthen women’s organizational skills in rural communities with the aim of better defending their specific interests.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> EuropAfrica, Women Speak Up: Agricultural Models, Gender Rights, What Kind of Future for All



## Recommendations:

- Ensure equality for women and the elimination of any discrimination under the law.
- Invest in the human capital of women and girls.
- Realize good agricultural policy considering gender differences.
- Provide women access to public services and technologies, credit and education.
- Educate women about land rights and strengthen their property rights.
- Include and educate men on issues of gender discrimination.
- Set out consistent guidelines for investment in land reflecting gender issues.
- Support the inclusion of women in negotiations and the implementation of land deals.
- Realize adaptation and mitigation measures against climate change.
- Promote sustainable practices and the protection of global environment.
- Promote the financial literacy of women.
- Put in place social safety net programs that take into consideration men's and women's different roles.
- Support the role of women in local peace-building.
- Promote the central role of agriculture in the building process and ensure the secure return to rural production and reconstruction of livelihoods.

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