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## Structural Transformation and Gender Rights in African Agriculture: What Pathways to Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Food Security?

Bola O Akanji

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## Abstract

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This paper brings up for policy discussion, some of the threats to Africa's food sovereignty, gender rights and food security, in the process of agrarian transformation. The key questions are: What threats does structural transformation pose to the sovereign rights of countries as well as to gender rights and inclusive growth in Africa's agriculture? What are the likely outcomes of recent policy changes with respect to agricultural growth and transformation on small farmers especially with focus on land rights and corporatization of land (land-grabbing)? How can these threats be turned into opportunities for rural women such that sustainable agrarian growth as well as food security is achieved? We raise and discuss pertinent issues to seek answers to these questions in the body of the paper. The implicit hypotheses of this discussion paper is that current pathways to structural transformation (ST) may appear to pose more threats than opportunities for food security and the rights of small women farmers and inter alia, for sustainable food security in agrarian African countries.

The reviews and analyses have tried to demonstrate that the dominant policy and conceptual frameworks driving envisaged changes in agricultural productivity and food security are contradicted by the actual strategies driving structural transformation and global competitiveness. Food security frameworks are either weak and inadequate or poorly understood, while food sovereignty principles are blatantly absent within these policy frameworks, especially the extent that these strategies put the necessary attention on women farmers as food producers. Development policies and compacts that address poverty are not viewed as determinants of food security and pathways to future economic possibilities,, rather as separate social and political contracts. Therefore, positive trends in the former have no significant effect on the latter. We suggest a number of conceptual and policy fusions that could ensure concomitant achievement of the core goals.

## Section One: Problem Overview

### *1.1 Introduction and background*

Agricultural transformation is imminent and necessary in Africa, given the new trend of the global economic agenda, characterized by increasing integration through trade, including in food supply chains. Structural transformation (ST) of the agricultural sector is critical to long term growth in any agrarian economy. ST involves a progressive movement of labor and resources from primary agriculture into its vertical chain (agro-based industrialization) (Staa, 1998, Staa and Dembele, 2006). ST therefore transforms the labor-technology relationship in the agricultural sector. More importantly, it enables the movement of labor from the farm to

the non-farm sector where returns to human capital have been consistently higher (Gollin et al, *op cit*).

Policy trajectories in Africa align with the theory of Structural Transformation (ST) in agriculture via the critical elements of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and given the growing relevance of Africa's primary exports in the global food and non-food supply chain, ST provides the opportunity to add value to production. What is not so clear or clearly specified in emerging agricultural policy frameworks is what ST means for majority of African countries and their teeming rural women farmers and traders. The need for an appropriate framework of engagement of local with the global will be necessary, and a focus on the types of intervention that would ease the farm-non-farm movement for both women and men will need to be continually diagnosed.

The Comprehensive African Agricultural development Programme (CAADP, 2003) conceptually rests on four Pillars of Change: One, Land and Water Management; Two, Market Access; Three, Food Supply and Food Security and Four, Research and Development. Faithful implementation of CAADP is expected to move African agriculture more towards productivity growth via commercialization and privatization, and promote the growth of agricultural markets, employment and food security via agro-based industrialization. Greater productivity and output are achieved through technology input; more affordable food prices will result from higher domestic supply; and through greater access to markets and higher cash income of agricultural workers, especially women farmers, food accessibility and adequacy can be ensured. The outcomes depend on the extent that the governance of resources for food production (Pillar One) and of output markets (Pillar Two) are improved; it has implication for the absorptive capacity of labor for farm and non-farm employment of the most vulnerable populations, towards food security and poverty reduction(Pillar Three). The role of technology, knowledge and innovation transfer is critical in promoting the transformative power of modern technology through research and development (Pillar Four).

Within the framework of ST, certain threats to this trajectory are notable, especially for the landless and those whose livelihood depend agricultural production, output markets and agricultural wage labor (mainly women). A priori, these threats will lead to a de-feminization of agriculture and further marginalization of women agricultural (food) traders, as Africa expands her global reach. Low productivity in the farm sector has resulted mostly from resource access problems leading to low use of internal resources and high cost of external resources such as transportation, market information, uninsured risk and so on (Gollin and Rogerson, 2012, Dearcon and Christensen, 2012). From a gender perspective, human capital may be a greater barrier to the movement and would perpetrate considerable gender wage gap. While women will be worse off in the farm sector, they are also likely to be worse off in the non-farm sector.

Although gender wage gap reduces as one moves from farm to non-farm work, for comparable education and experience (Fontana, 2009, Gollin, *op cit*), in most developing countries, the gender wage gaps may actually be higher in the non-farm sector because of human capital gap between rural and urban dwellers. Rural women transiting to non-farm sector already stand at a disadvantage to men. These are just some of the evolving scenarios. More important to the paper is the way that a decimation of the role and status of rural women (farmers) will also compromise the all-important goal of food security on the continent. As seen later in this paper, recent spate of agricultural growth has not translated into significant reduction in food insecurity or hunger.

If this is perceived as “Pillar gone wrong” for CAADP, the need for new concepts to be incorporated into dominant frameworks is critically called for. In this regard is the more contemporary concept of food sovereignty which may supersede the contemporary concepts of food security. This has however, yet to be integrated into these evolving policies and strategic frameworks. Indeed, issues identified as important pillars of the latter are seen to have been seriously compromised in the Pillars and strategies of CAADP. Such inconsistencies are too obvious to ignore or not to understand. The most obvious outcome of this inconsistency is that in spite of recent positive changes in the Continent’s (agricultural) growth and global partnerships, food insecurity has not abated. In re-engineering her agrarian sector, the African Union’s flagship strategies through the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Policy (CAADP) may become another theatre of change where gender relations are likely to be altered (positively or negatively), with possible (positive and negative) consequences on food security. In the governance of land and water access, in the thematic, currency and inclusiveness of research and development, in shifting labor force from the primary to the secondary sectors, there are inherent dualities that raise pertinent concerns about the state of food security and the rights of persons or operatives in the sector.

*“Small-scale agriculture is back in the spotlight. Numerous important expectations explain this renewed interest. Expectations include the fact that small-scale producers are a key to reducing poverty through improved food security, providing market opportunities for agribusiness, seeds and other inputs. In addition, they are stewards of biodiversity and part of the solution to climate change. Focus in the development world on connecting small-scale farmers to markets is the result of this renewed attention. However, there are concerns that the new orthodoxy on making markets work for small-scale farmers, is taking root without real evidence of benefits for the poor”.* Sophia Murphy, 2010<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sophia Murphy, Hivos/IIED Knowledge Programme on Small Producer Agency, Sept 2010

In a recent report by the International Centre for Research on Women<sup>2</sup>, it was noted that after about three decades of worsening poverty and insecurity and declining government and donor commitment to agriculture, there is renewed interest and discussion on the role of agricultural growth and development as a means to address both hunger and poverty. Policies framework for agricultural development, including the CAADP, are now recommending increasing shares of budgets to agriculture. “However, the strategies for explicit attention to women farmers who are accepted as agents of food security and biodiversity are still missing from these discussions”. The new policy frameworks need to be assessed for their ability or otherwise to manage agrarian transformation as well as deliver food security to the African populace in a socially-inclusive manner. The priorities are therefore to re-engineer the emerging policies for better outcomes for both women and men.

### *1.2 Food Security remains a major problem of the African region.*

According to recent FAO data, the total number of undernourished people in the world reached 1,023 million in 2009. Between 2008 and 2009 alone, the population of undernourished moved from 850 million to over 1 billion people reported for 2009 (FAO, 2009). In spite of the overall improvement in 2010, down to 925 million people (a 9.6% decline) the nutritional situation and the absolute number of undernourished people have been reducing at a much slower rate than had been anticipated. The report also indicates that majority of the world’s undernourished people live in developing countries. FAO (2006) had reported that out of 820million hungry people in developing countries, 1 out of every 4 are in SSA; Out of 14million hungry people in the SADC region, 60% were women; One out of five children in selected southern African countries were underweight in 2004; more than there were in 1990. By 2009, developing countries alone accounted for 98 percent of the undernourished with a prevalence of 18 percent. Two-thirds of these live in just seven countries (Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Pakistan). According to Figure 1, the proportion of undernourished people remains highest in sub-Saharan Africa. And at 30 percent in 2010, according to FAO (2011), it is far below the target set by the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 to be achieved by 2015. According to this most recent FAO report, progress varies very widely at the country level. For instance, the Congo, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria claimed to have already achieved MDG 1 by 2007, but in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the proportion of undernourishment had risen to 69 percent from 26 percent in the 1990/92 period!

Just like the indicators of poverty and hunger among the MDGs, status of several of the other goals are still of concern. But more importantly, their achievement or otherwise appear to be intricately linked with abatement or otherwise of hunger and poverty. Statistics on the MDGs

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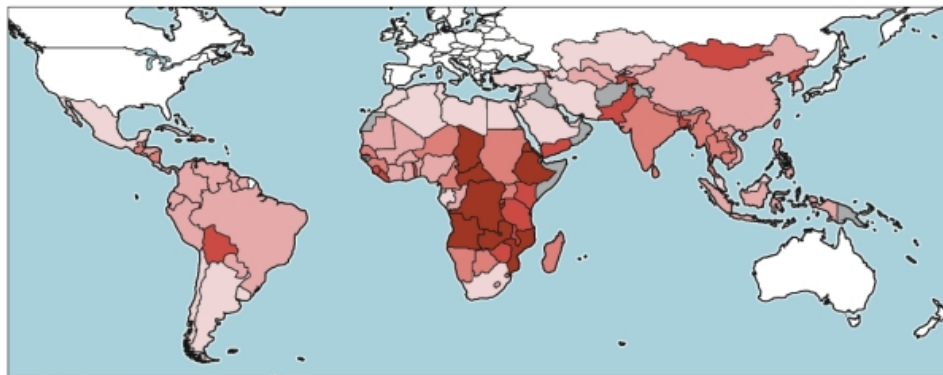
<sup>2</sup> ICRW (2008). Women, Food security and Agriculture in a Global Marketplace: A Significant Shift. By Rheka Mehra and Mary Hill Rojas called for changes in perspective of the role of women farmers towards greater market access.

show that countries that have achieved progress in Goal One are also commensurately advanced in other goals such as education, health and environmental safety and vice versa (UNSTAT, 2010<sup>3</sup>). This begins to underscore the interconnectedness of poverty, food security and human development factors. And again, the negative correlations show up most strongly in less developed countries, including sub-Saharan Africa.

The strong gender dimension of this global status of food insecurity comes not only in its causes (which are focused on in subsequent sections) but in the impacts which are also linked to women's household responsibilities and the impacts on household quality of life (especially health and productivity). Undernourishment in men leads to lowered productivity, but in women, apart from this, it has serious intergenerational effects on children yet unborn, making undernourishment in women and children a greater cause for concern. Low weight births, child stunting and fetal vulnerabilities have huge cost streams on human development of nations, currently difficult to estimate.

Figure 2 shows that while the scourge of hunger as measured by MDG indicator of proportion of undernourished population was on a rise through the 1990s in SSA and indeed globally. Some sharp decline between 1995 and 2001 in LDCs and in SSA from 1999 has not been sustained in later years.

**Figure 1 - Global Geography of Hunger**

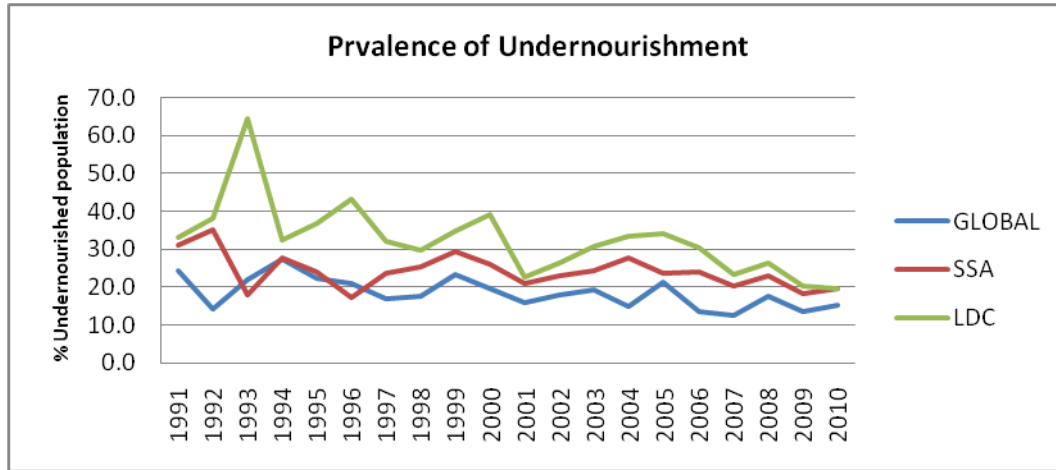


Source: FAOSTAT 2010 ([www.fao.org/hunger](http://www.fao.org/hunger))

Source: FAOSTAT, 2010

<sup>3</sup> UNSTAT provides data on trends and status of different countries and regions in achievement of all the MDGs. Data – later presented in section 3 - show that in a general sense, indicators of poverty and food security (purchasing power parity, proportion of undernourished population) move in the same direction with indicators of child and maternal mortality rate and in opposite direction with gender parity in education (school enrolment), proportion of population with access to potable water, sanitation, and so on.

**Figure 2 - Trend in Undernourishment compared globally**



Source: UNSTATS /Millennium Indicators

If food security is still a major problem in much of sub-Saharan Africa, despite the plethora of strategies and funding from local governments and development partners, we may chose to call to question, the conceptual frameworks of the determinants of food security, among other possible factors. Some of the most touted factors are the outcomes of faulty policies for economic development in general and agricultural development in particular. These policies continually set most of the countries as net food importers, despite the huge potentials of natural resources as well as abundant labor. The dilemma is the persistent low productivity and slow growth on one hand and the demographics of the agricultural terrain or the human capabilities of the rural populace on the other hand. The operatives and custodians of food and the food system are mostly rural women, and against the background of patriarchal barriers to resources, technology, markets, knowledge and other human capabilities, it is meaningful to draw a link between the status of rural women and the (slow) pace of agricultural growth, leading to the intractable food insecurity. As long as the framework for food security is still conceptualized around the current capabilities of rural women, and policies are not directed to effectively address their low capabilities nexus, most agrarian African countries will remain food insecure, import dependent and starved of much needed growth. Unfortunately, contemporary policies and strategies in Africa further threaten the food security situation because of the increasing threats to the tenets of food sovereignty. We therefore further explore the nexus of food security and food sovereignty to give an insight into more progressive pathways to food security. This nexus cannot be delinked from gender rights, entitlement and outcomes in the sector (Mcferson, 2010)



In the next sections, we attempt to situate this scenario by elaborating on the dominant concepts of food security and how gender rights are affected, in spite of strong gender linkages. We explore the linkages between food security and food sovereignty as a possible working framework. Then we review the effects of contemporary policy frameworks on the nexus; with particular emphasis on the governance of land and value chain development. Finally we proffer some recommendations for immediate reversal of looming threats to food sovereignty and food security inter alia.

First, what is the evidence of this nexus? To what extent would female-intensity of food production be a threat to agricultural growth?

## **Section Two: Gender and African Agriculture: Feminization or Defeminization?**

### *2.1 How gender-intensive is agriculture in different regions and different countries of Africa?*

The gender profile of agriculture shows wide regional variation. While female employment in agriculture is about 55% in south East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, it is only about 40% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and about 25% in Latin America and the Caribbean. (FAO, ILO and IFAD, 2010). These have significant inter country variation. For instance from 11% in South Africa to 84% in Ethiopia; from just 2% in the United Kingdom to 28% in Romania and 38% in Moldova UNSTAT, (2010), (ILO,2009). The obvious fact is that, in all regions of the developing world, except Latin America and Caribbean, women represent the majority of all agricultural workers. Looking at Figures 3 and 4, it is noted that defeminization of agriculture is the norm in most developing countries and that as the participation of women in non-agriculture rises, and that in agricultural employment falls, food security improves or the proportion of the hungry declines. However, in most of Africa, defeminization is not yet observed. Table 1 shows that overall in Africa, female work in agriculture has been on the rise from less than 45% in 1980 to over 50% in 2010. Intra-regional variations are remarkable only in respect of north Africa and southern Africa where the proportion is well below the average. It is noteworthy that this estimation excludes millions of unpaid female farm workers on household farms who are not classified as economic agents in mainstream statistics. The reasons are not far-fetched.

**Table 1 - Share of female employment in agriculture in Africa by Regions**

	1980	1995	2010
AFRICA	44.3	46.4	48.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	46	47.1	48.7
Eastern Africa	49.6	50.6	51.3
Middle Africa	49.4	50.1	50.8
Northern Africa	30.1	37	42.8
Southern Africa	43.8	40.9	42.5
Western Africa	40.7	40.9	43.3

Source: Akanji, 2012; Extracted from FAO (2011)

More recent models of production which emphasize export-led production continue to modify aspects of this feminization. Liberalization of agricultural trade has induced a change “from traditional export crops grown on plantations such as coffee, sugar, and cocoa to labor-intensive horticulture crops such as vegetables, fruits, and flowers” (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006:3). This change implied a shift in the type of wage labor demanded in commercial agriculture to a seasonal and temporary labor force rather than permanent labor force. This author highlights further evolving aspects of this new wave of feminization to include:

- An increasing proportion of women working in agriculture even while the overall proportion of the labor force engaged in agriculture declined, especially in the 1990s;
- Off the farm, large-scale production of non-traditional agricultural exports (or high value agricultural exports) offered wage-work opportunities in processing and packaging for both women and men. But in contrast to traditional agricultural export production, much of such work done by women tends to be unstable and poorly paid; Examples are the cut-flower-export and tea industry in Kenya, Uganda among others.
- The high proportion of women employed in these emerging market sectors and the occupational segregation within them reduced production costs because of women’s low wages; Gender inequality has thus seen to subsidize growth in export-oriented industries.

The Figure 3 shows that more recently, women's non-farm work has risen while their farm work has declined as shown by the gender ratio of employment (gender equality between women and men shows that female proportion is on the rise). The fact that this is associated with decline in percent of undernourished (food insecurity) may imply that a gradual defeminisation of food agriculture is accompanied by a secular decline in food insecurity.

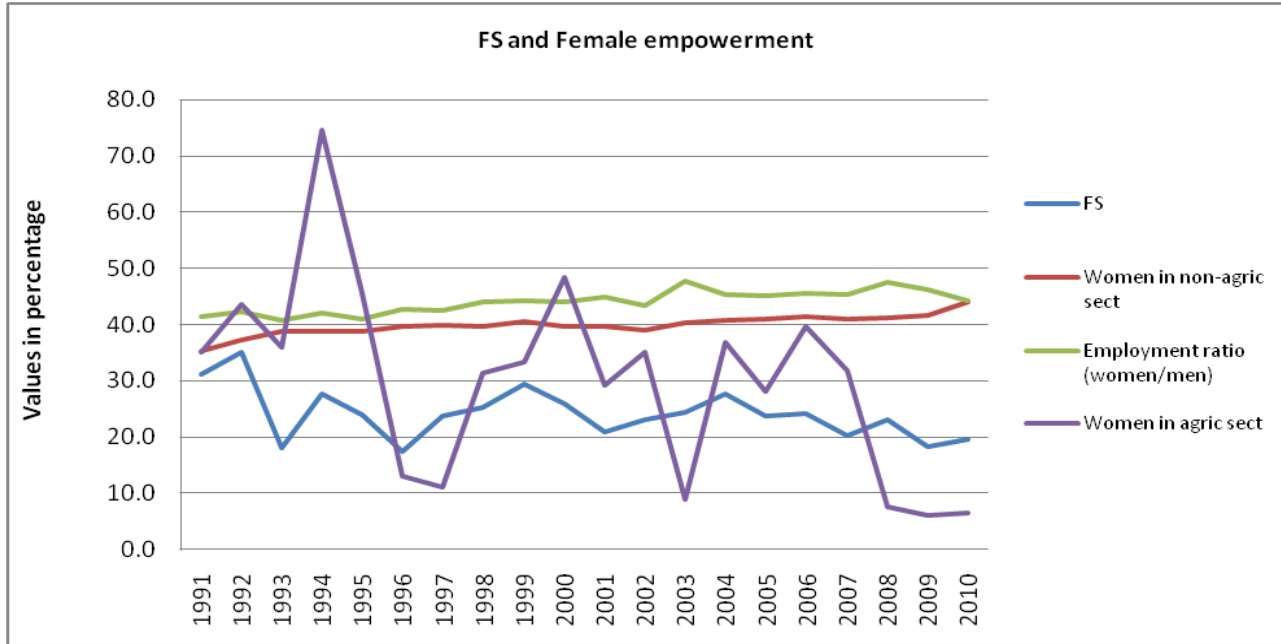
This gradual defeminisation may be a global phenomena, as being rapidly evolving in emerging economies and newly industrializing countries of the Oceania and Latin America<sup>4</sup>, but evolving slower in SSA. The percent change was from 32% to 35% in SSA – a three-percent point change, compared to a five-percent point change in Latin Americas and the Caribbean and nine-percent point change in Oceania. The finding has interesting implication for policy as it may suggest that alternative non-farm livelihood for rural women augurs better for their livelihood and food accessibility than otherwise. In the sense that this is linked to agro-based industrialization and export sector, in agrarian nations of Africa, how can such opportunities be enhanced especially in the agricultural value-chains?

The question is what triggers defeminization in other countries where this is occurring? Defeminization could be a sign of structural transformation, as labor – technology relations change over time, and would be seen as a positive, if women who are exiting agriculture are better off, or at least not worse off. Another answer is that when this trend is accompanied by improvement in food security, defeminization is a positive trend and it can be concluded that higher non-farm income improves food security via the channel of accessibility or affordability. However, if the reverse is the case, then defeminization of agriculture would be seen as a decapitation of value inherent in the continent's people. When women are stripped of capacity and livelihood in agriculture, what happens to food security (at the household level)? What happens to human and social capability of women vis a vis men (gender inequalities)? What happens to the lives that depend on women, especially the health and wellbeing of children, the future human value of the continent?

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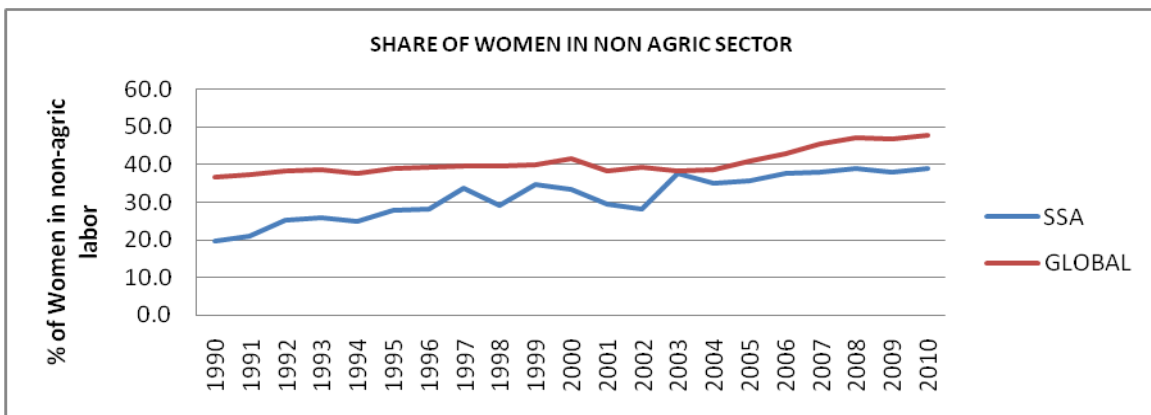
<sup>4</sup> See World Development Journal Special Volumes (1995 and 2000) for empirical findings on changing patterns of FLP in newly-industrializing countries.

**Figure 3- Trends in Food (In)Security and Female Labor force Participation  
(All Developing Countries)**



Source: unstats/Millennium Indicators

**Figure 4- Trends in Defeminisation of Agriculture: Global and African**



Source: unstats/Millennium Indicators

The strong link between gender-intensity and food security in Africa, and the need for empowering women in agricultural sector therefore becomes more valid, when considered against the low capability endowment of women farmers and the poor state of agricultural development on the continent, given this female-intensity of the sector.

**Box 1: A much known fact needs no further elaboration**

African women farmers still lack access to the most critical resources – adequate and secure farm-land, affordable credit for yield-enhancing inputs, access to technological information and access to remunerative markets. They mostly lack control over the income made from their activities. These conditions lower their capability for larger scale and more commercial production. Loss of entitlement and control among women farmers has been noted to accompany agricultural modernization (Dolan, 2001)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, in spite of recorded fast growth of Africa’s agricultural output in the past decade, persistent slow productivity growth (per capita) continues to be evident in form of low return to labor and low yield per hectare (AfHDR, 2012, African Economic Outlook, 2011, Timmer, 2001, Gollin et al, 2012); meaning that Africa could perform much better if more inclusive approaches to productivity growth are adopted.

*2.2 Rural Women’s Disadvantages Hurt Africa’s Economic Progress*

The AfHDR 2011 report showed, using a three-year moving average, that cereals yield have virtually stagnated in the past four decades, in spite of huge financial resources invested in agriculture<sup>6</sup>. Africa’s share of global trade was also one of the lowest although dramatic growth occurred at the end of the last decade as investment fund from developed economies and newly industrializing developing countries, especially the BRIC<sup>7</sup> countries, flowed into Africa’s agriculture. Intra-African trade however was just 5 to 12 percent of all trade volume on the continent while exports still comprised largely of primary agricultural products (UNCTAD, 2010). All these cannot be de-linked from the significant roles still played by rural women in agriculture and the effects of their lack of capability.

<sup>5</sup> Dolan, (2001) documented substantial resource shifts from women and from home consumption into men’s commercial production in Kenya following growth in the high-value horticulture supply chain..

<sup>6</sup> Yield per hectare in year 2010 of about 1.0 metric tonne per hectare was just marginally above its 1960 level, compared to an increase from below 1.5 metric tonnes to almost 4 metric tonnes per hectare in Asia and Latin America over the same period (AfHDR, 2012: 33). While world-wide yield increase accounted for over 90% of total production over the last four decades, Africa’s yield increase constituted just over 30% of its total production increase. This compares unfavourably with almost 80% in Asia over the same period. Increased agricultural output was due more to expansion of cultivated land than productivity increase. Cereals area harvested in Africa was 83million hectares, 23 million hectares of roots and tubers and 20 million hectares on pulses over the period 2008 to 2010, but per capita production showed only a marginal change from its 1960 level.

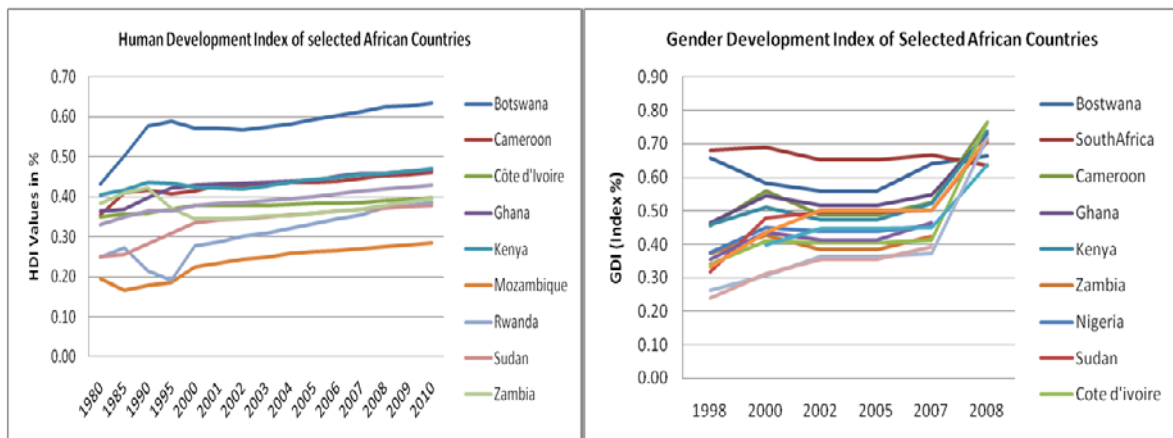
<sup>7</sup> Brazil, Russia, India and China

The foregoing underscores the consequences of low productive capacity of African women for Africa’s global competitiveness. Factors linked to their low resource use, low productivity and output, and poor access to more remunerative markets among all small farmers, especially women, has constrained agricultural growth and agricultural trade, limiting the gains from new opportunities. As a result, in spite of the large agricultural workforce and growth in gross domestic product (GDP) from agriculture measured by value-added (VAD) as percent of GDP averaged 13% in 2009, poverty reduction has stagnated and (rural) unemployment has grown (World Development Report, 2011)!

The gender dynamics that disadvantage women and hurt the African continent transcend the realm of the economic. They are reflected in the social sectors via the human development indicators (HDI), especially the consequences of slow demographic transition. HDIs in Africa have generally shown disparities between women and men, skewed against women and reflect as low Gender Development Index (GDI) (Figure 5, adapted from Human Development Reports, various issues). The slow pace of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa also strongly implicates the low status of women. Specific goals and targets related to women’s biological life-cycle such as maternal mortality, child morbidity and mortality, and their social roles such as access to social infrastructure such as access to water and sanitation, are worst in sub-Saharan Africa (UN Millennium Reports, 2011).

Other factors related to gender norms and practices have been indicted for Africa’s slow growth, especially in the agricultural sector. This is related to the role of population dynamics in the determination of national and household food self-sufficiency and food security. Statistics show that total food production in Africa has grown, but has not kept pace with population growth in the region, bringing up a concern for women’s fertility behavior and the consequences on food security of their households.

**Figure 5 - Human Development and Gender development in selected African countries**



Source: Akanji, 2011 (adapted for Human Development Reports, various years)

After three decades of stagnation, growth rate of food production was the highest in the last decade, peaking at just under 5% in 2010, while other regions growth stagnated or fell (AfHDR, 2012). On the other hand, the total fertility rates have not declined. Estimates in 31 African countries for periods after 2000 showed that while in the poorest African countries, birth rates ranged between 5.8 and 8.1 births per woman, in the richer countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Botswana. it still ranges between 3.8 and 6 births per woman (Seagher, 2010)! Average global fertility rate in 2005 was 2.7 births per women; this was 1.4 in Europe while in sub-Saharan Africa, combined, the same figure was 5.6. Projected population growth between 2005 and 2050 globally is 43%, in Africa, population growth projection is 117%, actually 130% in sub-Saharan Africa. (Population reference Bureau, 2005). Rural fertility rates were also 53% higher than urban fertility rates Asiimire (2008) estimated from the Ugandan UDHS, 2006 at 7.1 births per woman in rural areas, compared with 4.1 in urban areas. These obviously have graver implications in farming populations. Slow demographic transition on the African continent was indeed recognized as one of the barriers to her global competitiveness (African Economic Outlook, 201, Ndulu et al, (2006, 2007), ECA (2011).. It is however surprising that neither this report nor others analyzing the factors constraining more rapid economic growth pursued the central role of women's fertility behavior and its determinants on economic growth as key variables in the solution to the economic challenges!

From the perspective of mother and child health, WHO (2000) had pioneered this important linkage, reporting that more than 5 million children lose their lives every year before their fifth birthday. More than three quarters of all child deaths are caused by neonatal disorders and increased vulnerability of children who are undernourished and underweight at infancy, compared to proportion caused by a handful of treatable infectious diseases, including diarrhea, pneumonia, malaria and measles. These seemingly unrelated diseases are however strongly linked to nutrient deficiencies and household food security, inter alia. A deficiency in vitamin A increases the risk of dying from diarrhea, measles and malaria by 20 to 24 percent. There were more than 3.7 million infant deaths in 2000 attributed to underweight (WHO, op cit). Deficiencies in three key micronutrients – iron, vitamin A and zinc—each caused an additional 750 to 850 thousands deaths and an estimated 25 million babies in developing countries to be born malnourished (WHO, op cit). In the mid-1990s, the World Bank had also estimated that 450 million adult women in developing countries were stunted due to under-nutrition during childhood. About 250 million were at risk of iodine deficiency disorders and almost two million were blind due to vitamin A deficiency. About half of all adult women in developing countries (745 million) were anemic. This means that low human development

status of women immediately compromises that of children and would worsen inter-generational transfer of poverty.

**Box 2: Gender Inequality and Agricultural growth**

A lot of research has been carried out to analyze the effects of gender inequality on agricultural growth, and these studies include those in a number of African countries, which generally confirm the negative effects of unequal access to resources on productivity and output of food (Saito and Spurling 1994, 2004, Quisumbing 1996, World Bank, 2001, Goldstein and Udry, 2002, Udry, 1995, Blackden et al, 2001)<sup>8</sup>). These series of studies show how improved productivity can be achieved if the boundaries of inequality can be shifted, and not only in access to resources, but also in the distribution of social services that determine quality of life and human capabilities they also, in very many studies trace the impacts of discrimination against women, not only on their present human capacity, but also in many ways how the health and capabilities of children are affected by mothers' status, meaning that further compromise African futures may result from gender inequalities, if the holistic development of future generations are compromised<sup>9</sup>. In the more human-centered conceptualization of gender inequality as causal factor for endemic poverty in poor countries, Amartya Sen also defines seven domains (faces) of inequality<sup>10</sup> which compromise global human development and productivity. Similarly, in a recent analysis of the linkages of gender inequality and food security (Akanji, 2011), this author observed close correlation based on annual trends between selected women-focused MDGs and food security trends<sup>11</sup>.

These series of findings have provided sufficient evidence that attention needs to be paid to the demographics of the agricultural sector.

<sup>8</sup> estimated the productivity loss in agricultural production as a result of gender inequalities in access to resources and capabilities and also calculated potential growth possibilities in agriculture when these inequalities are bridged through gender-responsive policies. Results from Kenya showed that equal access to all inputs by women and men could increase total production by 10 to 15% and gross value of output by 8%. Blackden et al (op cit) estimated that in Uganda and Botswana, up to 1.3% of growth differential between men and women is accounted for by gender gap in education which is usually associated with differentials in technology application. Goldstein and Udry, 2002, similarly estimated a possible increase of women's output by 22% in Ghana.

<sup>9</sup> Holistic child development has been conceptualized around four main development rights of the child. UNICEF defines the bundle of rights survival rights, development rights.

<sup>10</sup> Amartya Sen's seven faces of gender inequality (Frontline, 2001) identify mortality, natality, special needs, and professional inequalities among others.

<sup>11</sup> Women-focused MDGs are those targets that measure specific human conditions of women alone. These are maternal health, child health, female labor force participation and environmental targets that affect women disproportionately such as access of households to potable water and sanitation services. All these targets moved in tandem with MDG 1.2 on percent of undernourished population. Food security (drop in the percentage of the poor) progressed as indices of MMR, U5 mortality, child stunting improved. As environmental conditions improved and as female labor force participation increased, FS also improved.



The foregoing simply confirms the central role that gender rights can play in fostering growth, especially in agriculture or among rural populace where these rights tend to be mostly compromised. Therefore, governments that fail to work towards gender equality in rights to resources, not only jeopardize its present, but also its future growth prospects.

### Section Three: Food Security and Gender Rights: An analysis of embedded concepts

#### 3.1 *Food Security as a Broadening Concept*

Food security is broadly conceptualized as encompassing physical, social, cultural and economic and environmental factors which all inter-twine in various complexes to define the supply and demand sides of the problem of insecurity. Local and global organisations have keyed into this framework to redefine their food security mandates in more specific relation to achievement of different dimensions of food security. This schema (Figure 6) indicates that there are different but complementary determinants of food security. While the supply side resonate more with the availability and access factors and demand side resonates more with stability and utilization factors, both sides are intricately inter-linked through social, economic, cultural, environmental and policy determinants. It is not possible to have sustainable food security unless all the components have been taken on board simultaneously. Decentralization of approaches into this framework also has the merit of identifying the broadest range of indicators for effective targeting and for the broadest scope of intervention. It also implies that food security is not a mandate of agriculture or food sector alone, rather all agents must work together in a multi-sectoral manner to ensure that no aspects are overlooked in the holistic spectrum of human development and human capacity for economic development at personal, group and national levels to ensure food security.

The macro-context of food security is also implicitly situated in the framework.

**Food availability** at the macro level refers to total aggregate production or exchange capacity of the nation in relation to its population size and needs. Investment capital and support strategies for producers underlie this.

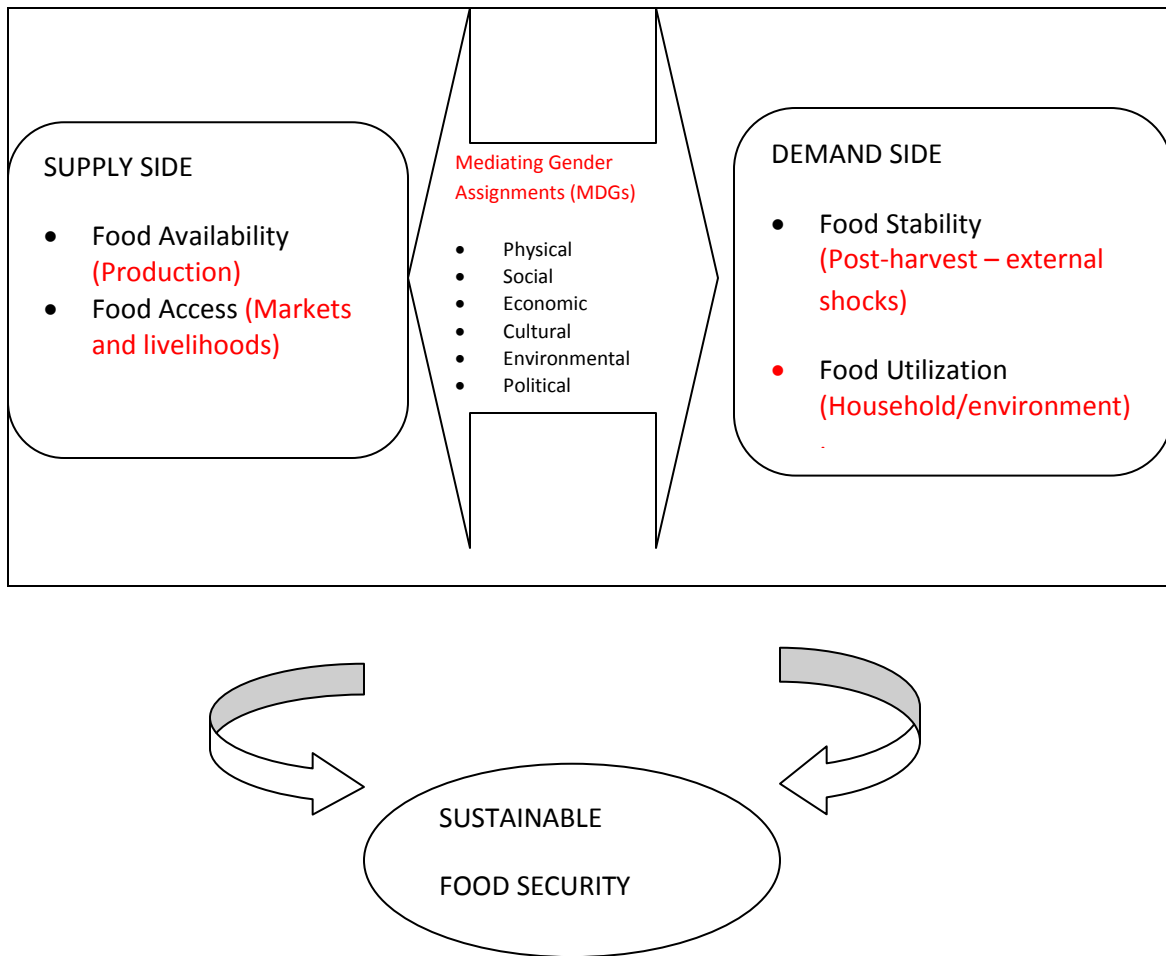
**Food access** here refers to the distributive mechanisms within the population and the functioning of markets for commercial access through purchases. It involves government strategies through the right fiscal and monetary policies to ensure employment, income for consumers and in the quantum and quality that meets the specific dietary needs of all citizens, as defined by global benchmarks.

**Food utilization** at the macro level is a function of the role of government in providing the enabling environment for effective post-harvest management, not only at the household level but at an increasingly industrial level to promote necessary shift in food preferences from primary food to processed foods and to develop a growth-inducing value-chain for primary

food products. Food utilization in this respect indicates the national knowledge systems and infrastructure for food processing and storage. The household dimension indicates the knowledge and capacity of food managers within the household (mainly women) to adopt practices that promote the utilization of available foods and the stability of women’s livelihoods to ensure year-round access to food markets.

**Food stability** indicates the extent or otherwise of inclusiveness of government policies. It is possible to have a non-poor economy with pockets of food insecure segments due to institutional power structures or failure of government (decision makers) for inclusive governance. On the other hand, creating employment and income, ensuring efficient structures for the distribution of income and putting in place non-income transfers in moderating food-price inflation and other shocks are all macroeconomic policy factors that can stabilize a population predisposed to food insecurity.

**Figure 6- A Holistic Model of Sustainable Food Security and Human Development (Author’s Concept)**



### 3.2 *The gender dimensions of food security*

The gender dimensions in addressing food security are viewed from the prism of the four-pronged conceptualization outlined above, with particular focus on some of the factors linkages, which determine the context of the important emerging issues in different populations, towards solutions.

#### *Gender, resources and food availability*

The production of food crops in most parts of Africa is the main preoccupation of African women. Many reports statistics have shown this. However, aggregate supply of food for Africa's population depends on the ability of the women farmers to drastically improve their output by intensification through yield enhancing inputs and extensification through the use of large parcels of land. Enabling women to move beyond subsistence production and into higher-value and market-oriented production becomes an important element of successful agriculture for development strategies. Many studies have documented the capability of women to boost national production if given access to prime resources and given their population involved in farming and the roles they play in the production process (IFPRI working papers<sup>12</sup>, FAO, 1999). However, to achieve this, women need to be empowered through education and the provision of appropriate technologies that are gender sensitive. UNIFEM 2010<sup>13</sup> identified the empowerment strategies for rural women that will lead to agricultural growth and surpluses in production and that will enhance market access and improved livelihoods, given a set of gender-aware growth strategies, including value chain development (VCD). Both micro and macro level policy factors are implicated in the ability of both women and men to produce process and distribute food abundantly, efficiently and affordably. Food availability may continue to be compromised in less developed countries where gender assignments in agriculture disadvantage women.

#### *Gender, poverty and food accessibility*

Food accessibility hinges almost totally on livelihoods of women and men and how sustainable this is to stave off hunger in a consistent manner. Thus an interwoven factor of stability also underlies the accessibility. The World Bank (2008) reported that women, more than men, spend their income on food, thus improving household food and nutrition security and particularly the development of children is enhanced by improved economic livelihood and income of women.

<sup>12</sup> Many publications of IFPRI between 1990 and 2000 provided verified proof of women's cultural capabilities in African agriculture and the productivity losses due to limited resources.

<http://www.ifpri.org/publications/results/gender%20and%20food%20security>;

<http://www.ifpri.org/publications/results/gender%20and%20productivity>

<sup>13</sup> UNIFEM Strategic Programme for Empowerment of Rural Women focuses on both the ability of rural women to address food security as well as gain economic empowerment.

Sustainable livelihood, which was first used in the Bruntland report, has been adopted as an important poverty management concept, evolving from Amartyr Sen's broad conceptualization of poverty indicators within the framework of capabilities and functioning (Sen, 1985). This concept is also strongly linked to women and men's entitlement to resources for production and income for consumption. It is still a fact that in spite of many policy reforms, women's entitlement to assets and income are still highly constrained. Yet, human capital acquired by women effectively improves economic capabilities and promote the legal structures that allow access to assets, skills, employment and income to smooth over transient poverty and hunger. Women's economic or income enhancement will contribute to family welfare including food security (affordability, adequacy, nutrition and frequency of meals), education of children especially girls, and intergenerational acquisition of productive assets by females.

The linkage of gender, poverty and food security in Africa can therefore be seen in the feminization of agriculture and the feminization of poverty in these agrarian economies. The disadvantaged position of women both in food production systems and in agricultural markets (supply side) is closely related to the gender-differentiated livelihood (and income) options and consumption (demand side). Other demand side problems of women are in relatively poor access to knowledge and technology to promote food utilization; asset poverty which limits their ability to withstand periodic shocks in food markets such as price hikes; physical dislocation from food access points as in conflict situations. Within these scenarios, therefore, we see the interlocking factors of the four dimensions.

*Poverty responses and poverty reduction strategies are also gendered.* As household income rises above poverty levels, risk management often dictates behaviors that appear more appropriate to lower income levels, at least until the new higher level becomes more secure – a manifestation of the Permanent Income Hypothesis. Well known are such responses as increased time spent on work, reduced consumption levels, increases in debt, migration, and fostering in or out of household members even as income rises. Poverty reduction efforts are capable of leading to other dimensions of food security – such as malnutrition and poor care economy. All these are more characteristic of female members of households, much more than men (refs).

#### *Gender, food utilization and child health*

The nutrition effects of gender roles have been some of the most researched in this nexus and are a very strong basis for its conceptualization. Women are responsible for nutrition in the majority of homes. They decide what food to buy and how to prepare it. In comparative studies, households in which income was controlled by women demonstrated better levels of nutrition. Women tend to devote a greater share of their income to food and fuel as opposed to luxury items.

**Box 3: Women's status and child nutrition**

Smith et al. (2003) explored the relationship between women's status and children's nutrition in three developing regions: South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean from 36 developing countries. They show that higher women's status has a significant, positive effect on children's nutritional status in all three regions; Women's status impacts child nutrition because women with higher status have better nutritional status themselves, are better cared for, and provide higher quality care to their children. It was shown in particular case of SSA that if women and men enjoyed equal status, child malnutrition in the region would decrease by nearly 3 percentage points.

The pathways to this judicious outcome are women's educational status, livelihood pattern, own nutritional status (as measured by body mass index (BMI), prenatal and birthing care for women, complementary feeding practices for children, treatment of illness and immunization of children, and the quality of substitute child caretakers.

Conceptually, factors affecting female nutrition operate throughout their life cycle. These include (i) social status - female discrimination, and fertility patterns that influence both exposure to and consequences of disease. (ii) Individual behavior and psychological factors, including dietary practices, reproductive patterns, health-seeking behavior and use (iii) Biological factors (age of menarche, menstruation, pregnancy, and increased risk of infections) (iv) cultural factors - access to, quality of, and quantity (coverage) of health and nutrition services. In other parts of the world, especially Asia, the culture of male-preference in childbirth has also been seen to affect the nutritional status of male and female children differently, although this is less so in Africa (FAO, 2011). All such inequalities show up at later life cycles – in education, employment, fertility rates, asset ownership and decision making – much more than in child nutrition or infant care. These life-cycle inequalities are some of the factors to address through policies in order to improve the efficacy of other food security programmes. Food security cannot be a stand-alone objective.

Another important dimension of utilization of food for household consumption of women farmers is the growth in agricultural commercialization. The debilitating effects that gendered responses in agriculture do have on food utilization are notable. Cash crop expansion may be seen to detract from household nutrition and child care premised on the following assumptions: That poor farmers, especially women substitute between household consumption of (prime) products and sale of same as rural agricultural markets expand; That women's individual productivity and access to resources decline as households increase commercial crop production; That commercialization is often associated with increased workloads for women; And though women's time is valuable in agriculture, it is also valuable in the production of child

nutrition; That care of children is at least as important to their growth and nutritional status as are food intake and health. Thus achieving food security through adopting new agricultural technologies, agricultural growth and transformation must be placed in the context of these trade-offs. In other words, if agricultural markets are to work better for female farmers, what compensatory effects will this have on the time lost to social reproduction?

### Gender, technology, conflicts and food stability

#### *Post harvest food handling*

The gaps that are created in household consumption due to seasonal food shortages cannot be over-emphasized. Seasonality continues to characterize food availability (production, processing, marketing, storage) due to the sub-optimal level of technology in these areas. Especially for women who hold the rein of family food supplies, their ability to spread different forms of food year-round is a function of their access to appropriate, gender-sensitive technologies in all areas of agriculture. Studies have documented the gaps in technology access between men and women in much of LDCs (Akanji, 2001, 2003). Resultant effects are the loss of the stability factor in the food security milieu. Limited livelihood options for women farmers during off-farm seasons also reduce the ability of to bridge food shortages with food purchases during the “hunger season”.

Other factors affecting food stability include low wealth (asset) and inability to invest in future consumption of households. The role of assets in bridging transient price shocks or disasters that reduce food access also come into play. Coping strategies against transient hunger deplete future possibilities. Strategies such as selling prime crops or substituting nutritious food with very basic cheap staples simply worsen human poverty and productivity on the long run. Not only durable goods, but security of land and landed assets are useful bridging assets. Low cultural entitlement of women to assets is thus viewed in the complex of low consumption (adequacy), future consumption (stability) and women’s livelihood and cultural entitlement, as well as their quality of life.

Just as intra-household conflicts over resources arise, political and religious conflicts also arise over communal resources and tend to affect women and children disproportionately due to their helplessness to protect themselves against assaults and food sieges. Such **conflicts over communal land, water, forest resources** have become more rampant as agricultural policies tend more and more towards privatization and commercialization. Although many food aid programs are now targeted to the most vulnerable ones<sup>14</sup> cultural and institutional practices in patriarchal set-ups still perpetrate marginalization. Further, the effects of conflicts on national

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<sup>14</sup> World Food Program (WFP) promotes the idea of women’s centrality to the governance of food aid in all its programmes.

infrastructure in terms of siege on major installations, road blockades that cut millions off their normal food supplies often have disproportionate effects on women, children and the poorest.

The conclusion from the foregoing is that relationship between these different dimensions of food security is by no means simple or linear. Factors affecting food security in Africa depend on a wide range of social and cultural factors that affect gender roles and responsibilities at the household level and at the macro level. Uni-directional approach to gender empowerment and household food security would be missing the point. Unless complimentary policies accompany agricultural improvement schemes targeted at women, the impacts may neither augur well for food security at the household level nor for national improvement at the macro-level.

In promoting gender rights in the quest for food security, therefore the concepts that have informed gender roles in the past need to be continuously revisited because the dominant socio-cultural and economic conditions and the local and global contexts continue to change. Women's status has improved due to huge investment on human development, following the MDG declaration, meaning that their capacity to be productive and entrepreneurial have improved in the recent past. As women continue to gain more voice and agency in their economic decision making, it becomes more practical to focus on their entrepreneurial roles rather than their 'provisioning' and subsistence roles and bring to the fore the role of other countervailing conditions or other enabling frameworks.

By way of new conceptual imposition on accepted knowledge on the subject, our hypothesis in this discussion is that lack of appropriate value placed on rural women in this critical nexus and failure to situate this within broader, more global policy responses, erodes not only the sovereignty and agency of these key actors but also indict the sovereignty of national governments to tailor national responses to global socio-economic changes in ways that fully domesticate the concerns of its citizens.

### *3.3 Food Security and Food Sovereignty: A meeting point*

In accordance with the way that food security concepts and empirics have centrally situated women's roles and status, advocates of food sovereignty similarly put the producers of food at the center of the concept, via six Pillars:

**Food for people.** This is the conventional rationale for this concept in most discussions – the right to food for people and this requires policies to ensure Food Access. The relevance of this to women's roles and rights is that rural women farmers are affected in three ways when food prices rise, especially in net-food importing countries, especially in the context of agricultural expansion and trade in food commodities:

- As workers and producers, they are affected when local production competes with cheap imports, thereby affecting domestic supply response and income. Women are also affected by the micro-level impacts of meso-level institutions and enterprises such as large food supply chains (supermarkets) on the local food supply chains;
- As consumers in poor households - while there may be price advantage when prices of imports are lower, the basket of food of rural and urban households varies, and so, the price effect is segmented by location. Rural households would usually benefit less from food imports. On the other hand, export intensification hurts subsistence and household food security as women small scale farmers intensify the quest for income;
- As citizens benefiting from government transfers and public investments, women and poor families may be affected by lack of state support when trade revenue falls or when huge budgets go into trade facilitation. Budget cuts affect the social sectors more acutely and state farm support schemes are often biased towards larger farms (OXFAM, 2006). This usually worsens women's burdens of welfare provision, worsen female illiteracy, reproductive health problems and generally affect gendered human development factors negatively.

**Values for food providers** – this refers to the millions of small farmers who produce food and who need to be protected from violence, discrimination and exploitation. Women farmers in the poorest countries are most prone to these negative conditions, by virtue of dwelling in some of the most underserved environment and suffer the greatest threat to basic human entitlement. The exploitation of women farmers as sellers, as farm workers (cheap and un-unionized labor), as citizens who must provide food for their families against all odds, pits this value against most condition in most African countries. The profile of human (and gender) development in several dimensions earlier discusses demonstrated the low value placed on the lives and livelihood of women food producers and providers.

**Localizing food systems:** This Pillar rejects policies that promote trade and speculation in food for “growth and competitiveness” or for corporate profit, while domestic access and consumption is compromised. In Africa, the global rush for the food market is as a result of liberal trade policies which give no consideration to the rights of the people. Another factors is structural transformation that promotes private investment (including foreign corporate investment. Structural transformation that is catalyzed by private investment in a liberal financial system puts the development of commodity value chains under the control of private and foreign investors. These investors tend to promote productivity growth and value-addition for food that are in demand in the global food supply chain. They thus externalize the food systems rather than localize them. In the case of women farmers, the consequences of ST



policies, threaten their very livelihood in several ways..... Their gains from the fast growing value chains and markets for high value agricultural products are highly compromised by the terms of employment that discriminate against women in form of wage gaps, inclement conditions of service and technical capacity building. This on reverse threatens their right to food – food security in its four dimensions (outlined above).

**Promoting local control and governance of production resources** such as land, including grazing land, water bodies, seeds, fauna and flora by local providers of food is another important plank of the food sovereignty debate. This gives due respect to food producers' rights as the natural custodians and users of the resources and as the natural agents to secure the sustainability. Privatization of land and water thorough commercial contracts is therefore unacceptable. This important Pillar turns our attention to the governance of resources, especially land which is the backbone for food production. The developments in the global land market, which will be discussed in the next section runs counter to this tenet. In spite of ongoing protests over an evolving phenomenon, African leaders are yet to take a definite policy stand on the transfer of ownership of land from food producers to corporate investors.

Other values of this school of thought include the **acquisition and use of technology** for the preservation and productivity in the food system (rather than for the rapid transformation of food form to other products – such as use of food as bio-fuels, and other non-food industrial feeds); the **preservation of nature** in the pursuance of the goal of food production which calls for regulatory policies to ensure that nature (and its renewal) is held sacrosanct.

It is in the context of these values that we view the trajectory of the African agricultural food system in the wake of structural transformation and trade expansion in the quest for global competitiveness. Rather than ensure food sovereignty, they erode it in multiple ways especially with respect to the rights of African women farmers.

### *3.4 Pillars at risk: What are the problems?*

As in the outlined pillars of food sovereignty, the CAADP also rests on a Pillar that emphasized the governance of land and water resources. Yet, in more ways than one, as will be evidenced, these Pillars run the risk of being the greatest bane of food security on the continent. We shall review the contemporary development with respect to gender rights from the standpoint of land rights and land use of women farmers and the threat that all small farmers now face.

**Box 4: FOUR CAADP PILLARS**

**Pillar 1:** Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems;

**Pillar 2:** Improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access;

**Pillar 3:** Increasing food supply, reducing hunger, and improving responses to food emergency crises;

**Pillar 4:** Improving agriculture research, technology dissemination and adoption (NEPAD, 2003).

The expected underlying principles of agrarian change at regional and national levels are:

- Agricultural Privatization and commercialization
- Agricultural Value Chains Development
- Agricultural Investment (Public and Private sector-driven)
- Agricultural policy responses to climate change
- Access to critical agricultural resources, especially land, credit, technology and ICT-based knowledge systems.
- Reduction of food insecurity for the poorest and excluded and vulnerable household members

African countries are expected to key into the CAADP framework by modifying agrarian policy thrusts to achieve the goals of the Four Pillars mainly through greater commercialization and privatization. It also recognized need to address inherent constraints in the pathways to agrarian transformation through (i) technological support, (ii) Improved agricultural trade and market systems (iii) Building human capital, infrastructure and institutional capacity (iv) Promoting sustainable environmental management, and (v) Supporting community organizations.

At national levels, therefore, agricultural policies are expected to focus on:

- Increasing capacity to support farmer **productivity**
- Establishment of partnership between public and **private sector for increased investment**
- Increasing the **efficiency** and use of water supply for agriculture
- Improving the **security of land tenure** for traditional and modern farming.
- Enhance agricultural credit and financing schemes through improvement of access to credit by small-scale and women farmers.

It has been opined that operationalizing some of the Pillars' objectives may unearth other forms of vulnerabilities for segments of the African population. For instance, while Pillar Three would be presumed to address vulnerabilities including food insecurity, pursuing the other Pillars such as Pillar One could open new forms of inequality if the governance of resources is not drastically reformed to take cognizance of isolated groups like rural women farmers who culturally lack entitlement to land and other communal and state resources (Akanji, 2010 (in UNIFEM, 2010)).

The following constitute new contexts resulting from new policies– opportunities and threats that will affect and are being shown to affect women disproportionate and exacerbate food insecurity in Africa:

- New incentives to produce for the market, meaning greater competition for land between land owners, land investors and land users; this means that access to land of women farmers will be further constrained.
- New demands for more quantity and higher quality of food, with a growing world population and increasing world affluence as capitalism and technological advances proceed among Africa's trading partners – meaning greater pressures on domestic food output;
- New forms of production and marketing models that require bigger volumes of capital investment into primary production systems, introducing new challenges of the appropriate doses of public and private capital into agrarian systems to develop Commodity Value Chains.
- Labour displacements as structural transformation progresses within primary production systems, transiently affecting farm employment and thus, household income, food self-sufficiency, nutrition and other non-material welfare of rural households.

We shall focus on land as the most critical space of contestation not only between women farmers and male farmers, between small farmers and local elites, but also between African governments and foreign interests.

#### **Section Four: Land Policies, Gender Rights and Food Security in Africa under CAADP**

##### *4.1 Land Rights and Land Use of Women Farmers*

One of the most enduring problems of women farmers in Africa is access to adequate, good quality and secure parcels of land. Security of land is one important aspect of land access. Ownership, often with registered titles confer the security that women farmers need to make

transformative use of land. AfHDR, (2012) indicated that less than 40% of SSA countries operate equal land inheritance rights. Africa is the worst case scenario, compared with Latin America where land rights are almost 100% equal and South Asia with about 56% of countries operating equal inheritance land rights and Latin America with 83% equality of land rights (UNWomen, 2011, also cited in AfHDR 2012). SSA countries have done better in other areas of property inheritance than the case of land (about 60% of the countries operate equal rights to other properties); however, land is tied to women's livelihood at the micro level and to national output growth at the macro level.

#### *Land as asset*

Ownership of land often facilitates access to other resources and their utilization. Unequal rights span not only access to land but other properties which predetermine asset ownership and access to other resources especially finance and adequate food intake. Insecure land rights limit the access of women farmers to investment credit and leads to resource under-utilization. Goldstein and Udry (2008) found significant underuse of resources in association with insecure land rights of women in Ghana. In the study, productivity differentials between men and women farmers was attributed to higher land tenure insecurity for women than for men; even where women had land, their rental value was lower than men's. They were less able to eject inefficient land renters (Bezabir and Holden (2006), Holden and Bezabir 2007). Other empirical evidences demonstrate the positive effects of improved land rights and access on women's enterprises. In Uganda, land security and legal knowledge increased the tendency of both male and female farmers to take up soil conservation measures; this had the effect of increasing the years of possession and productive use by 15 years (Deninger, Ayaleno and Yamano (2008). Investment on owned land increased compared to use-right land in Uganda (Deininger and Ali, 2005). In Nigeria and some other African countries, land security was higher where women were capable of participating in private land markets (Holden et al, 2004, Akanji and Ogunwumiju, 2005, Deninger et al, 2007). Women farmers are better off when they can guarantee that the benefits of improved practices and expanded investment will continue to accrue to them.

#### *Land Size and Quality*

For commercial agriculture that generates surplus for local and global markets, adequate parcels and well maintained plots are essential. It has been shown that women farmers rarely get the good parcels, neither do they obtain large parcel of land; rather women farmers' plots are characterized by large-scale fragmentation, small sizes, usually less than 2 hectares, short fallow periods, long distances from home, except in case of home gardens. NISER-NAMPR, (2005) documented this in a ten-year panel study in the six Nigerian farming systems. This pattern is not different from the majority of African countries. The quality of land available to

women is also found to be affected by the status of the women within the household or community (Onibokun, Faniran, Akanji et al, 1995). Older women and older wives in polygamous households got better land than younger women and younger wives. Although matriarchal powers could favor women and disadvantage men or men who were considered inferior in position to certain women in some cultures (Amadiume, 2005), the dominant pattern is patrilineal. Discrimination in entitlement would often reinforce this differently in different cultures because national laws guiding land ownership are still rife with bad implementation.

In many agricultural improvement schemes, including contract farming, minimum land sizes are specified for participation, and efficiency. Irrigation schemes for instance often require a minimum farm size, ditto tractorization schemes. Women are still largely excluded from these large scale schemes due to low land entitlement. In the study by Dolan and Sutherland in Kenya, only 10% of contract farmers in flower production were women; Only 1 out of 59 farmers contracted to produce French beans in Senegal were women (Maerten and Swinnen, 2009). In Nigeria, less than 10% of farmers on the Sorghum Improvement Programme supported by OXFAM.GB were women (Akanji, 2007). Yet, over 75% of the workers in Kenya's flower farming were women; 70% of workers on a sugar-cane contract farming in South Africa were women (Porter and Phillips-Howard, 1997). Women's restricted access to land therefore has deeper implications for other production needs.

#### *Women Farmers, Still Sowing on Borrowed Land?*

More farmland rather than less makes for transformative farm practices. Pillar 1 of CAADP aims to address the constraints of land, water and other natural resources for all farmers. It notes that access to sizable and good quality farmland constitutes one of the most constraining resources for agriculture growth, enhanced production, output, income and food security. In spite of the feminization of agriculture, many studies document that the dichotomy in access to land and land titles between women and men in agriculture which still persists to date (documented in FAO, 2010).

#### **Box 5: Gender disparities are still reported in land holdings in all regions of Africa.**

Women represent fewer than 5 percent of all agricultural holders in the countries in North Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, average is 15 percent, but this masks wide variations, from fewer than 5 percent in Mali to over 30 percent in countries such as Botswana, Cape Verde and Malawi. In Tanzania and Congo, the female share of landowners was 25 percent (Deere and Doss, 2006);

In Benin, where 11 percent of landowners are female, the average size of women's holdings is about 1 hectare compared with to 2 hectares for men's holdings. Women risk losing entitlement in case of divorce, widowhood or their husband's migration.

Kabutha (1999) notes that in Cameroon, the land registers show that less than 10% of women hold land titles and in the North West Province only 3.2% had land, representing barely 0.1% of the registered land mass;

Even where women had land, the rental value was lower than men's and they were less able to eject inefficient land renters (Holden and Bezabir, 2007)

In Ghana, productivity differentials between men and women farmers were attributed to higher land tenure insecurity for women than for men; In Uganda, land security and increase in legal knowledge increased the tendency to take up soil conservation measures; this had the effect of increasing the years of possession and use by 15 years (Deninger, Ayaleno and Yamano (2008).

In Ghana, asset inequality between men and women was responsible for greater (male) ownership of cattle, donkeys and horse and (female) greater ownership of goats which are less valuable as power plows and production of manure (Oladele and Monkhei, 2008);

Ethiopia, negative association was estimated between use of oxen and female household headship; as a result, crop yield of FHH was 42% less than for MHH (Pender and Gebremedlia (2006)

In Ghana, male farmers with greater initial stock of land, livestock (and male labor) took better advantages of higher-value crops and improved plow technologies; women with lower endowment had lower yields and accessed inferior terms of trade with weaker wealth accumulation (Whitehead (2006);

The implications of lack of security of rights and ownership for bridging assets in times of food supply shocks are notable and more severe for female-headed-households.

#### *Failure of Land Reforms*

The relationship between access to common property resources (governance of land, water, natural resources) is also central to the analysis of outcome of climate change. As climate change continues to restrict land and water masses, communities and groups are facing greater conflicts for these resources. Raging conflicts between livestock herdsman and crop farmers are now rife as famine encroaches southwards and herds are being moved constantly. Recent evidences show that land reform policies abound around the continent, some to address such conflicts and some to secure rights for women farmers, but they are slow to take effect and have largely failed to reduce the gap in ownership status of women and men.

**Box 7: Plethora of Land Reforms in African Countries but .....**

In Zimbabwe only 18% of beneficiaries under the Model A1 Land Redistribution Programme were women and only 12% of beneficiaries under the commercial scheme (A2) were women. In all only 3% of land has been transferred back to Africans;]

In Nigeria, privatization, rather than deliberate land reforms (Land Use Act) have improved women's access to land and this has been more in urban commercial land than agricultural land (Akanji and Ogunwumiju (in) Boko et al, 2005);

In some southern African countries, women farmers were documented to have resorted to unorthodox means such as witchcraft to retain ownership of their small parcels of land in the absence of appropriate land reform policies (*documented in Akanji and Ogunwumiju, 2005*)

New and innovative ways of land redistribution will be needed since existing efforts have failed to equalize access of women to land. New policies on governance of land are called for.

#### 4.2 *Land amalgamation and Land Grabs: Globalization or Localization of Food Systems*

##### *Land Grab: A new and rapidly enlarging Phenomenon in Africa*

A new wave of interest in Africa's agriculture has been driven by several factors. One is the food scarcity and high food prices that started in 2007, leading to outreach of demand to Africa's untapped food market. Two, the heightened demand for food also led to heightened demand for land investment to consolidate production at higher levels, meaning through massive, technologically driven productivity increases or through rapid land expansion (GRAIN, 2008, 2011). In a scenario of cheaper and untapped land market in Africa, this would seem a more immediate option, especially in many areas with weak land reform processes in place. Thirdly is the need for investors to find new grounds after the fall of the financial market. Commodities, including food had become an option, fueling speculation in food futures and a trend that puts food in a market driven by profit rather than by food demand itself. This meant greater competition for land between land owners (men) and land users (women). It has meant that access to land of women farmers have become further constrained. While the evidence may suggest more landlessness for women, the concern is the phenomenon referred to as land-grabbing, not just by men from women, but by large corporate buyers, mainly from outside Africa's local communities<sup>15</sup>. Land amalgamation should be a natural fall-out of agrarian transformation in Africa, but it has become a painful consequence of the growing investment opportunities in Africa's abundant natural resources – a second wave of colonialism?

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Deininger and Derek Byerlee (with) Jonathan Lindsay, Andrew Norton, Harris Selod, and Mercedes Stickler (2011): Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits? The World Bank Agriculture and Rural Development

Unfortunately the amalgamation is proceeding by wealthy capitalists and large corporations, including Chinese large scale farmers who will secure large parcels of land from local communities and often through intervention and complicity of governments- purportedly under partnership schemes.

The pace of land transfers and size of land sales is reported to be highest in Africa with two thirds of total land transfers, amounting to almost 40million hectares occurring on the continent. According to Denninger, 2011, land sales in 2009 alone was more than 20 times of its quantum in the previous years. Regression analysis showed that it was highest in countries with the weakest land security frameworks. Study carried out in Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, and Mali (Cotula et al, 2009) indicated that levels of activity are indeed significant: land acquisitions in the study period totaled some two million hectares in the four countries with foreign investment accounting about 75 percent of the land area. Single acquisitions can be up to 500,000 ha. High food prices and food security concerns are key drivers of recent land-based investment but for most foreign investors, the biofuels boom is a major driver. Food and biofuels production evenly accounted for intended use of aggregate land acquisitions in the four countries.

#### *Determinants of Investors' interest in land acquisition*

Evidence shows that countries than fail to recognize local land rights are more attractive to land investors. Among factors driving land demand, a regression analysis of determinants of investor interest (Denninger, 2009, cited in Denninger, op cit) yielded a regression coefficient of about - 0.69 for rural land right recognition, -0.27 for yield gap percent, 0.03 for forest non-cultivated land and -0.0058 for investor protection rank of the country. That is, where investor protection is high, investor interest is low; where recognition of rural land rights low, investor interest is much higher. The interpretation is consistent with the suggestion that land investors are attracted to countries with weak institutional processes for land rights. This also has implication for pricing because it is unlikely to be capable of factoring in the social cost into land prices and thereby, social benefit is more likely to be compromised. The role of the civil society in bringing to light the social cost and benefit implication is highlighted, especially where government are the perpetrators. But such civil society will need concrete empirically grounded information in order to outline alternative pricing scenarios. It is doubtful that adequate methodologies have been developed for this and if local civil society is adequately capacitated to carry out such evidenced advocacy. Non-the-less, the weakness of civil society is still underscored by the color of popular uprisings on the issue of land-grabbing and the conflict with food sovereignty<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> The popular uprisings on the issue of food sovereignty have not put the land-grab issue on the frontline of their agendas. These protests have also been outside of Africa thus far. <http://www.wdm.org.uk/food-and-hunger/defiance-new-alliance>. This underscores the limited capacity of local civil society to interface with this



More importantly, it is also the reality that higher-value lands – with higher rainfall, access to irrigation, and proximity to markets – are more commonly subject to acquisition. In Mali, for example, all recorded land deals are concentrated in the country’s highest potential agricultural zones (Cotula and Vermeulen 2009). The higher-value lands that are most attractive to investors are also most likely to be under existing claims and existing use. This brings to the fore the conflict of interest that land deals have fostered and the weakness of governments to protect the people’s right. Indeed, it might be seen more as the complicity of local governments to defraud the people of their land rights. In Ethiopia, the author noted that, all land allocations recorded at the national investment promotion agency are classified as involving ‘wastelands’ with no pre-existing users. In reality, some, if not most, of these lands have been used for shifting cultivation and grazing (Cotula et al. 2009). Hence, a culture of secrecy around many of the land deals is to conceal deliberate attrition of people’s rights. This goes against the principle of sovereignty of people’s rights to their own land. Mostly, according to Aden-Wiley, 2010, because land registries are inadequate and poorly capacitated, inundated with bureaucratic bottleneck, the chances of taking stock of the magnitude of the problem is very limited. In particular, the ability to adequately compensate local communities is highly constrained. Food sovereignty debates and advocacy need to be backed with well-grounded evidence as well as analysis of linkages with other phenomena and especially gender-differentiated outcomes. Coupled with the low institutional capacity, the “air of secrecy” around the land deals means that the ability for empirical analysis of actual impacts in the near future is further reduced. This institutional weakness compromises the chances of reliable aggregate data on actual land transfers.

#### *Erosion of Gender and People’s Rights*

With respect to gender differentiated effects, Tamrat 2010 and World Bank 2010 had identified resource conflicts with negative distributional gender effects in a good number of Africa countries. Denninger, op cit also identified a weak framework for consultation, for monitoring land contracts and for controlling for environmental effects of rapid technological-intensive land use patterns. The extent that local people are involved in land deals was assessed by Vermeulen and Cotula (2010). They found that because local people lack economic power and firm and cohesive institutions to contest government agencies contracting the deals, their capacity to bargain or give free accent to investment (and thus, a voice in how the deals will be implemented) is very limited. According to the authors “ While host governments may offer policy support to local rights and claims, government agencies tend to align with the interests of large-scale investors when tested in real negotiations”.

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problem in a timely manner. A movement of rural women who are mostly affected has even a slimmer chance of evolving, given their limited agency and collaborative strengths.

These begin to compound the ability of women farmers to meet the food needs of rural households through expanded production. Women farmers are more negatively affected because land compensations (if any) goes to male household heads or village heads (GRAIN, 2011, 2012). When large scale farms replace millions of small farms, increased wage work that results would be selective of skills and education (FAO, 2008). Gender inequalities in these respects will worsen the outcomes of land-grabbing for women farmers. Moreover, *land-grabbing by corporate bodies threatens Africa's food sovereignty* (World Bank, op cit, GRAIN op cit), by not valuing the food producers and by fostering possible externalization of food systems. The World Bank's report indicates that over 400 farm projects by new corporate interests in Africa. Also the GRAIN report, indicted that of 416 cases of land-grabbing identified, 226 were in Africa. Most of the land is used for export crops such as cut-flowers, vanilla, grains for biofuels and other non-food products, putting more constraints on food crop land and on food sovereignty on the Continent. They claim that food output has been negatively affected in countries where land-grabbing has taken place. The World Bank reports inferred that both men and women small holder farmers are at risk of losing their land. The findings from earliest studies indicate that women farmers are already being massively affected, being the cohort with the weakest rights to land. This obviously conflicts with CAADP's objective of making more land available to local farmers – Pillar One

#### **Box 6: Household effects of Land-grabbing**

In Sierra Leone, Zainab Kamarra's story, cited in Grain, 2013 (op cit) is instructive. She has lost all her land when Addax, a Swiss company bought 1000 hectares of rural land for sugar cane production to extract ethanol. "Now I don't have a farm. Starvation is killing everyone. We have to buy rice now because we can no longer produce any".

Similar experiences were recorded in nearby Guinea where the government signed off over 700,000 hectares to an Italian company to grow jathropha for biodiesel.

Source: <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4653-land-grabbing-for-biofuels-must-stop>.

Women's losses from land-grabbing is also viewed from the dimension of their access to unclaimed "wastelands" which were otherwise useful to them for gleaned forestry products both for food and non-food (commercial) use. Therefore, depending on the prior land use, specific groups may suffer differential losses. Also, cash crops controlled by men may encroach upon lands previously used by women for food crops. The large land contracts are often with male household heads, even where it is women who do the bulk of the work on the land. In a

given case, introduction of contract farming for rice in an area previously used for sorghum, traditionally grown by women, led to conflict which was solved through negotiations between husbands and wives, rather than between governments and local elites (Eaton and Shepherd 2001). This underscores the importance of community involvement in food policy decisions.

#### *Weak Policy responses*

Several policy lapses are implicated in the recent development. Attempts to jumpstart agricultural growth through massive land expansion does have its own challenges as well as opportunities, including the availability and transfer of technology to local land users. In the absence of a local bank of appropriate technology, the trend will likely lead to influx of new technologies that are not grounded within Africa's research and development frameworks. The extent that African's will be able to take ownership of such technologies may be limited, given low human capital in the rural areas. The huge prospect for reverse engineering that the imminent flow will bring about has not been considered within the policy discussions on structural transformation.

Secondly, it is clear that the potential gains in technological knowledge will vary between women and men, mainly due to even bigger gender gaps in human capacity in most of the countries (Stamp, 1990, Akanji, 2006 among others document significant difference in technology application by women and men farmers in Africa). Also, due to large differences in labor intensity of various crops, there will be social and equity impacts on livelihood and income, depending on the crops that are grown, technologies that are being used and the extent that local benefits is a core goal of investors. This for now seems not an issue on the policy table. Rather, the factors driving the demand is the expansion of markets outside Africa for food and non-food use of agricultural commodities, the latter being the greater incentive. According to data from GRAIN, while 37 percent is used for food crop land, 42 percent is being used for industrial crops and biofuels with the rest distributed over livestock, game reserve and plantation agriculture.

Third, the need for technological upgrade and the slow prospect of this has led to very slow implementation of planned activities. GRAIN 2012 reported less than 50 percent implementation rate in a number of countries. The reasons include the need for public investment in infrastructure to support needed technology. The readiness and ability for this public upgrade is low in Africa, in spite of the infrastructural development being top of the agenda of NEPAD programmes in Africa. The plans also include the development of rural infrastructure but the intended pace may be at variance with the pace of land transfers.

One major reason advanced for this negative trend is that CAADP has not given the same attention to policies that consolidate people's land and other rights, as it is giving to other

investment decisions, whereas, investment on firming up legislations and regulatory framework ought to be primary on CAADP's agenda at the initial stages of its implementation. The New African Land Policy (2005), for instance, has yet to be translated into actionable strategies or domesticated into national land policies. The delay may result in loss of some of the grounds that have been gained in the past few decades, as the new trend of corporatization progresses. This policy asymmetry calls to question the level of coherence between set development goals in the agricultural sector and actual trends. It reflects on the weakness of the governance structure coordinating long range planning with evolving strategies. It clearly implies that African governments are not in control of the process, rather, they are responding to an externally-driven agenda which is at variance with their own internal goals. The erosion of sovereignty for food policies is strongly underscored.

#### 4.3 *Structural Transformation in Africa: A different Face of Land-Grab*

Having reflected on the negatives, it is pertinent to identify that the spate of land transfers also has potential positives to promote food security and growth, provided that the right policies are put in place and strictly implemented. There are four possible channels of this benefit.

(1) Development of social infrastructure that would accompany the proper implementation of intended agricultural programmes and the use of local compensation within local communities in the huge rural landscape. This has tremendous advantages for breaking the dilemma of rural-urban drift that has characterized spatial growth patterns in African countries.

(2) The opportunities for job creation and income expansion especially from rural non-farm sector, as large scale agricultural projects translate into their vertical and horizontal value chains. For rural women who are currently faced with the higher challenges of job losses in the wake of structural transformation, this could be the empowerment trajectory that they require in order to take advantage of ST rather than be its casualties. Moreover, as long as their land rights cannot be guaranteed, the pro-active search for alternative livelihood outside agriculture seems to make sense.

(3) Technological influx is expected to follow capital influx in rural land deals, for investment to be viable. This represents an opportunity for upgrade of technology from alternative sources, given the challenges that national governments have faced in developing and/or adapting technologies to local needs. For rural women also, technological transformation can be beneficial if and only if there is a targeted effort to reduce gender gaps in education and skills so that they can take hold of technologies in their niche activities, mainly agro-processing. Similarly technological diffusion is often a natural process once the inflow is unrestricted. With highly increased use of information technology, including among rural women, spread of technology beyond their areas of inlet cannot but translate into benefit for all. Potential yield

increases would also improve the prospects of food availability. Currently, most African countries have yield of major crops less than 25 percent of potentials, compared with other regions of the world. Improved yield that should come with technological infusion will have both direct and indirect impact on food security. However, this is contingent on the destination of food output, and of course the types of crops grown (food or non-food), which is a function of effective domestic food policy.

(4) The last potential avenue of benefit is the increased local and national tax revenue that would accompany intensified productive activities. This could transfer into significantly improved revenue profiles that can be harnessed into other areas of local development. The extent that these potential spaces benefit rural women depends on their active agency – highly linked to the level of assimilation of gender discourse and gender mainstreaming in the country’s governance structure. It also depends to the representation of women in political spaces and in public sector governance.

How can Africa make better meaning out of the on-going and fast-paced process of land grabbing, especially to regain food sovereignty and shift the challenges to opportunities for small scale farmers, especially women farmers? According to Schutter, 2011, African countries have a choice between focusing on large-scale development models, and thereby jumpstart into an industrial revolution, or practice a mixed model of small and large-scale farming, enabling smaller farmers to learn from large farms through innovation transfer, especially given the advent of ICT. The last option is to reverse the trend and focus on small holder agriculture as the pathway to people-centered growth. Meaning that the development framework of CAADP will take off from Pillar Three, which focuses more on human capital development and government transfers, at the same time that small scale entrepreneurship is being fostered among women farmers. This will allow a firm grounding of food sovereignty principles at the micro level, while supporting and calibrating growth along this value chain at the macro level. This would be best for inclusion of rural women as the key to food security. However, as has been posited, policies must be crafted to change the orientation of rural women farmers to become commercial farmers rather than subsistence producers, while at the same time, the majority are being capacitated with skills for non-farm employment. On-going initiatives within the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) on Empowerment of Women in Agriculture (EWA) must modify its focus towards farm-non-farm skills transfer. Alternative livelihoods must therefore be fostered for them rather than force the food system to move at the pace of rural women’s current capabilities. For innovative farmers, land legislation must be strengthened to secure their rights. The African Land Policy must be speedily domesticated for this purpose.

## **Section Five: Thinking Forward: Pathways for Complementarity of Pillars and Concepts**

### *5.1 Re-conceptualizing Gender and Food security*

Many new and important perspectives are emerging from feminist research which, if incorporated into design of food policies and programmes could re-inform new pathways that take account of sovereign knowledge, capabilities and responses of women producers in food policy decisions. A few of these are outlined to promote new conceptualizations:

- i. *For rural households, food availability at the household level does not always translate into food access or adequacy for household members.* Variations in the composition of the food basket of rural and urban households should be considered *vis a vis* what crops are being promoted for commercial production or not. When the main staple crops are being commercialized, production rarely translates into food availability. Gina Kennedy et al, (2008) showed linkages of about six other factors that determine a household's nutritional status and food security. Rapid urbanization which has altered the determinants of food security from produced to purchased food, affecting the economic prospects of rural women and their household's food security, inter alia, as they respond to progressive agricultural commercialization.
- ii. *Access and control over production decisions at the household level is an important gender factor in the shaping of food policies.* Eldis, 2012 showed that the tendency to use male-head's perspectives and preferences in shaping policies perpetrates the surrogate role placed on women in food allocation decisions at the household level and limits the effectiveness of food policies on food access and adequacy. Inclusion of women farmers (both holders and non-holders of land) contributes invaluable perspectives into what shapes food security and values the producers (wage worker, own-account workers, unpaid family workers) at the same time.
- iii. *Women's access to credit has a strong link to children's food security.* Differences in household investment pattern of women and men has been variously documented. Hazarika G, 2008 in Malawi showed again that women invest more in welfare provisioning (including food) than men. Farm improvement programmes targeted at women farmers have greater food security benefit, mainly in terms of the effect of higher profitability and income; Increasing women's income has a direct positive effect on household **food access and adequacy**. Thus women's improved access to credit and other resources would more likely impact food security positively than male access to credit. This places the right value on the right people to promote household food security.
- iv. *Income growth at the macro level is critical to the achievement of food security at the micro level.* Food security improvement in many low income countries was due more to economic recovery than the impact of local agricultural food policies – meaning that local food production alone was not sufficient without sustained economic and income

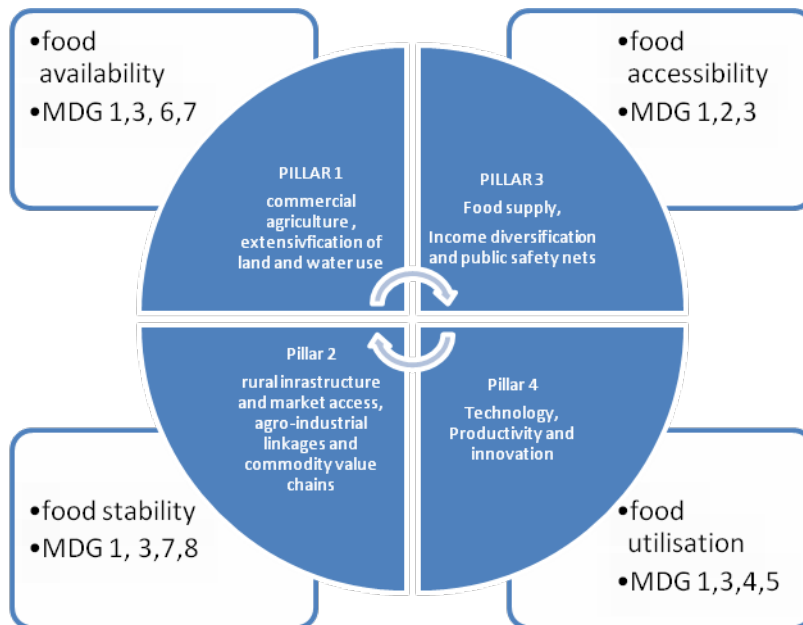
growth and the gender-responsive complementary policies that they can leverage (USDA, 2010).

- v. *In Africa, women still often give up their income to buffer male loss of income.* Therefore food security again depends on the source of household income. In a study in Cote d'Ivoire, when yields on women's farms increase, food expenditure was positively affected but when income from yams, which is a predominantly male crop, was adversely affected by low yield, food and education expenditure were negatively affected, because women were forced to part with their income to buffer male income shortfalls. This further affected future income of women negatively! (Duflo and Udry, 2004).
- vi. *Addressing Patriarchy from a developmental viewpoint is key.* UNIFEM 2008-2009 dwells further on the resilience of patriarchal norms in identifying ways to promote accountability to women in MDG programming. The paper linked human development (MDG achievement) intricately with economic empowerment, access to services, security AND a responsive justice system, among others. This underscores the fact that patriarchy is still a strong force in Africa and women (especially rural women producers in traditional societies), need to be protected from its backlashes as they connect with empowerment strategies. This puts the issue of protecting food producers at the core of agricultural programming, rather than on its periphery. Hence the relevance of the embedded strategic framework (Figure 7).
- vii. *Women's coping mechanisms during food crisis influence their future livelihood options and future food security. Empowerment programmes for rural women during food crises has a longer term effect on food security if they aim to preserve the (productive) assets of women farmers today, for future production and income.* Masika and Joekes, (1996) found that coping mechanisms in food deficits households are not only in terms of calorific reduction, rather, migration and sale of productive assets are rife which affect future sustainable livelihoods and food security (In Tanzania, Mhina EH, 2004; in Nigeria, NISER, 2009). Food safety programming must have a goal of long-term food protection rather than the immediate food transfers. *In the above vein, gender-inclusive food safety programming should be used to safeguard future livelihoods and food security.* The World Food Program (WFP) in its food safety strategies found that control of food aid activities by women enhanced food security of households than if men were managing the same programmes. Integrating women producers into the supply chain of food aid was therefore empowering and translated into higher food security.

### 5.2.1 *Protecting Food Producers: Interlocking Food Security, Human Development and Social Policy Goals*

We conceive a policy transformation process that is premised on the achievement of food security and food sovereignty, by focusing on the strong gendered niches that this and other analyses have identified. A framework which situates agricultural growth (the CAADP Pillars) within an objective criteria of food security of *all economic agents*, and which recognizes and addressed the social and gendered barriers within each facet, will lead sub-Saharan Africa to the desired transformative change, along with the right doses of food sovereignty. This approach is also relevant to the Social Policy Index (SPI) framework, whose principal objective is to enable a greater understanding of the social policy regimes within the broader economic and social structures of each country. A proposed framework (Figure 7) interlinks the CAADP Pillars and the four food security criteria and operates within the MDG framework. That is, for each dimension of food security, specific MDGs, most of which have gendered manifestations, stand as threats and these should be taken on in an integrated policy approach. While all MDGs invariably have direct and indirect linkage with the agriculture and rural sector, some may prove to be more strategic for specific goals. More detailed and evidenced analysis of these determinants (through causal models) will be required to allow prioritizing of key concepts and policy goals in different country contexts.

**Figure 7: Food Security, Food Sovereignty and the CAADP PILLARS**



### 5.2.2 Localizing Food Systems by Linking Women to new agricultural markets

Agricultural food markets must accommodate both big and small farmers, and whittle down the negative effects of the huge land investments. If more smallholders, especially women farmers are able to interact directly with markets through physical and virtual access, the barriers of unequal bargaining position, distance, poor market infrastructure and lack of market



information would have been addressed, and lack of roads. Policies that support smallholders' networks and which link them directly to niche markets puts the control of their production firmly in their hands. Within the COMESA region, various initiatives have evolved with the aim of redistributing land to women, enhancing their access to irrigation facilities and linking them to new markets, documented in (UNWomen, 2010).

#### **Box 7: Empowerment of Poor Food Producers**

**The Swaziland Women Farmers' Network** producing vegetables were linked to hotel chains where food standards are high. While creating a viable market without middlemen, women farmers were exposed to new production standards with respect to organic foods and so on, with higher income

**Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos, PAA)** is a strategic part of the country's food security policy framework known as Zero Hunger (Fome Zero). A farm support component buys agricultural goods of a wide range from poor farmer, largely women; the second component, engaging the food suppliers, distributes the stock of food to food insecure households and groups such as child care centers, school feeding schemes, soup kitchens. For the farmers, the guarantee of a market had led to positive supply response and made available a diverse range of good quality and locally relevant foods for beneficiaries (healthy food for the poor was upheld) and this encouraged the production and consumption of foodstuffs previously deemed irrelevant to the poor on food support!! In addition, the legal status of the schemes is expected to enhance the legalization of land holdings of participants, leading to asset security for women farmers.

#### **Conclusion: Collective Action, Inclusive Markets and Rural Empowerment**

This is all about a strong case for collective action towards a common good. A collective action framework entails a change in mindset about where women farmers are and where they ought to be. The overriding mindset must be the critical importance of their responsibility for household food security and its inter-linkages, not only with national food security but also the ability of governments and communities to make independent choices about their livelihood options, their food preferences and the centrality of their actions and choices to the common good. There is definitely a lot of concern with the trajectory of strategies, calling for redefinition of goals, reassessment of policy frameworks and the openness to fine-tune them for the bigger goals.

In this particular case, the challenge for the CAADP policy is to situate rural women farmers and other poor landless women, not only in a more vibrant domestic food system, but also reposition them into cash-crop agriculture and non-farm agro-based employment for alternative income choices. Africa on the other hand needs to position food crop agriculture in a result-based framework, that is, predetermine the thresh-hold levels of productivity and output within countries and across the continent and set deliberate strategies to achieve this through massive support to both male and female farmers over the shortest possible time, to drive structural transformation. Strong considerations of the overall status and position of women in the food system is a must. A narrow take on productivity growth only ignores many other (often, non-economic) factors that determine their action and the outcomes.

According to Jeannie Scott (2009), “It is time to re-engineer why we must invest in rural women”. Therefore, agrarian policies as well as rural employment policies must start and end with building the ability of both women and men farmers to be at their most productive and most profitable. African governments need the instrument of policy to promote the right kinds of interventions, regulatory and compensatory strategies to reduce the deluge on the livelihoods of small farmers, and on food safety for the most vulnerable, brought about by new global trends.

Need for *sovereign policy choices* which emphasize culturally acceptable goals and that put inclusive growth, food security and gender equality on the agenda for change is a must.

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# FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES

## Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue

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A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has — as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework — barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the [Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University](#) and the [Journal of Peasant Studies](#), and co-organized by [Food First](#), [Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies \(ICAS\)](#) and the [International Institute of Social Studies \(ISS\)](#) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based [Transnational Institute \(TNI\)](#), the conference “Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue” will be held at Yale University on September 14–15, 2013. The event will bring together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an “intellectual future” in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

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