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WOMEN AND PARTICIPATION IN THE HIPC DEBT RELIEF INITIATIVE:

A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF THE UGANDA PRSP

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witswatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of International Relations

Cape Town, June 2005

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in International Relations in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.



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Ms. Njeri Mwagiru

9th day of June, 2005

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COUNTRY PROFILE OF UGANDA: Map of Uganda[1]



[1] **http://0www.iss.co.za.innopac.wits.ac.za/AF/profiles/Uganda/uganda1.html**

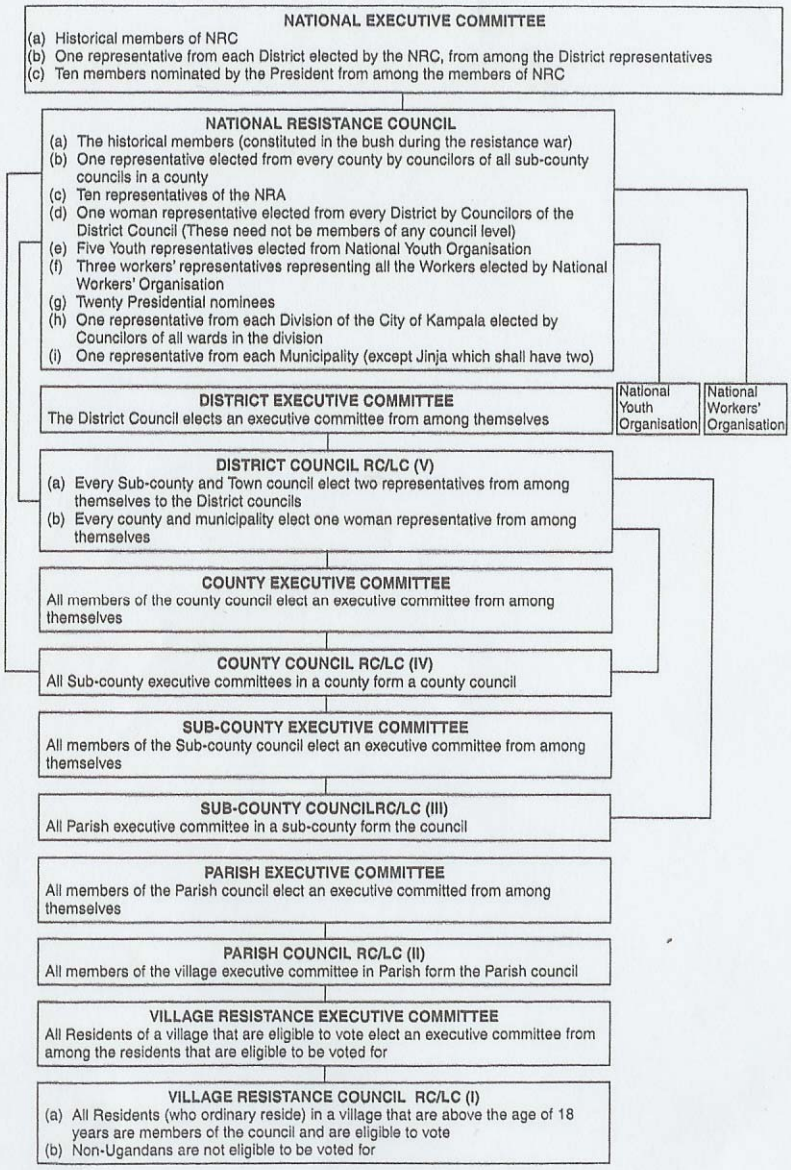
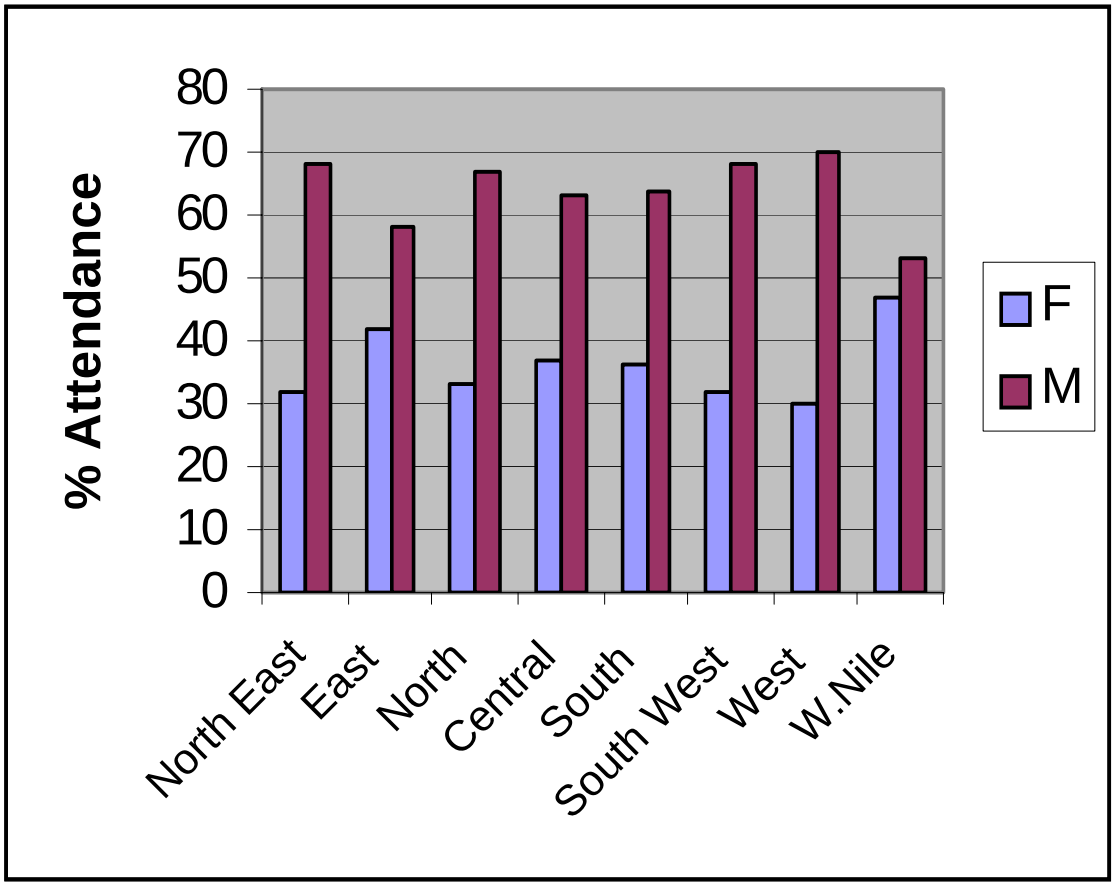


Figure i The structure of resistance/local councils and committees
Source: NRM Secretariat, Kampala, Uganda.

The table below shows the gender distribution at the consultation meetings.
Source: Civil Society Organisations Taskforce



List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO	**Community Based Organisation**
CSO	**Civil Society Organisation**
GAD	**Gender Analysis and Development**
GDP	**Gross Domestic Product**
GNP	**Gross National Product**
HIPC	**Heavily Indebted Poor Country**
IFIs	**International Financial Institutions**
IMF	**International Monetary Fund**
MFPED	**Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**
NGO	**Non-governmental Organisation**
NRM	**National Resistance Movement**
PAF	**Poverty Action Fund**
PEAP	**Poverty Eradication Action Plan**
PRSP	**Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper**
SAP	**Structural Adjustment Program**
SNA	**System of National Accounts**
UPPAP	**Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project**
WID	**Women in Development**

ABSTRACT

Research has consistently demonstrated that due to stratified socio-economic inequalities and gender-based disadvantages women from low-income countries and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs) specifically, experience extreme impacts from poverty. Such feminization of poverty has been accentuated, especially in Africa, by the spiraling debt crisis and high levels of absolute poverty, which intersect and interact with gender-biases and macro and micro dimensions of international development assistance. In particular, the negative impacts and limited success of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) have contributed to women's further disempowerment and marginalisation, through the cutbacks they conditionally prescribe for budgetary allocations in the social sectors.

To address these shortcomings, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the HIPC Debt Relief Initiative in 1996 which was subsequently enhanced in 1999. The HIPC Debt Relief Initiative has been introduced as a coherent strategy for assisting the economic development of poor countries linking debt relief funds to the reduction of extreme levels of poverty. A key element of the HIPC initiative is the required participation of all social groups and stakeholders in the activities and processes of national development and poverty eradication strategies.

By undertaking a gender analysis of the Uganda PRSP/PEAP, this dissertation examines the extent to which participatory processes have included women and gender concerns within the PRSP framework of intervention. Such examination and analysis has involved the application of a comprehensive Gender and Development (GAD) analytical framework, focused on the empowerment approach. The initial findings indicate that although specific gender concerns continue to be neglected within the Uganda PRSP document, nevertheless the participatory process allowed the space for voices, especially women's voices, previously silent and invisible, to be heard within the corridors of power.

The study concludes that there exists within the PRSP framework, spaces for more effective gender integration due to the inbuilt flexibility of the process, and the broadening of the consultative process through the ongoing revision of PEAP/PRSP policy. Additionally, there is the continuous monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the impacts generated by the country's poverty reduction plan and associated budgetary allocations. The analysis of the extent to which gender has been

mainstreamed in the PRSP process has yielded outcomes and lessons that can be built upon for the attainment of equitable and sustainable development in HIPCs in Africa.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In current literature from a variety of disciplines, the contemporary internationally marginalized socio-economic status of Africa has come to be referred to as 'the African dilemma' and 'the African crisis'.[1] The spiraling debt crises, the persistence of high levels of absolute poverty and failure to produce the desired outcomes towards sustainable growth, despite decades of development assistance and aid in Africa stand as clear manifestations of this condition.[2] As noted by James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank since 1995, while the number of people living in absolute poverty – less than one dollar a day – declined globally in the period between 1990 and1998, the same number increased in sub-Saharan Africa from 242 to 291 million people.[3] This despite net flows of aid to the sub-Saharan region from 1970 to 1997 being estimated at over 300 billion dollars[4].

This unremitting debt and poverty crisis has precipitated dire consequences for sustainable development in many poor African states, and especially for women, with gender-based disadvantages and inequalities accentuating their already vulnerable status.[5] Findings detailing the negative impacts of debt on women in heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) in Africa[6] have conclusively shown that indebtedness and the channeling of capital and resources towards debt repayments gravely affect expenditure for the social sectors of HIPC economies.[7] This has negative impacts for women because more than any other social group, women's well-being and their opportunities for equity and advancement are directly linked to the social sector and determined by their levels of education, access to health care, sanitation and so on.[8] Data have further consistently supported the hypothesis that because of social inequalities and gender based disadvantages extreme poverty impacts are felt most intensely by low-income women in the developing regions of the world, and in particular in HIPCs.[9] The 'feminization of poverty'[10], indicative of the fact that

[1] International Relations: Clapham (1996); Political Science: Anyang'Nyongo (1992); Development Studies: Mkandawire and Soludo (1999); Feminist Studies: Jagger (1983); Economics: Mshomba (2000) Literature: Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986); History: Iliffe (1987)
[2] Burnside and Dollar (1998); Lancaster (1999)
[3] Devarajan et. al (2001), pg xii
[4] Lancaster (2000)
[5] Afshar and Dennis (1992); Lewis (1980)
[6] The World Bank has identified 80% of the world's HIPCs to be within the sub-Saharan African region. (41 HIPCs have been identified, 33 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa).
[7] Leonard and Strauss (2003), pg 21; Floro (2001); Wallace (1991)
[8] Sparr (1994)
[9] Longwe (1991); United Nations (1989)

"women tend to be disproportionately represented among the poor", has thus become a phenomenon concurrent with the debt crises and clear illustration of it.[11] Such evidence has also been suggestive of the fact that macro and micro aspects of international economic development assistance over the past decades have often intersected with gender-biases to – despite good intentions – propel women into social categories within which they constitute the majority with regard to the negative impacts of national debt and poverty on their general well being.[12] Of substantial bearing, have been the effects of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).

SAPs, concerned with macroeconomic structural and policy reform were the initial World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) response to the debt crisis and approach to poverty reduction in the developing world. Emerging as a result of significant shifts in the lending policy of International Financial Institutions (IFIs)[13], the central aim of SAPs was to reduce the role of the state in the economy and give centrality to market operations. The application of such an approach was due to the ascent in the West of conservative governments concerned with the implementation of neoclassical economic policy[14] as well as in response to the inadequate levels of growth achieved by state-led development models (popular in the 1970s) with their focus on industrialization through import substitution and trade restrictions. Directed at deregulating the market, thereby providing an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and increasing incentive for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the policy reform required by SAPs generally involved trade liberalization, currency devaluation and a reduction in government spending through privatization of the public sector, in exchange for the conditional disbursement of funds.

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[10] This term was originally coined to describe the situation of women in the U.S in the 1970s, specifically concerning the accumulating data signifying an increasing number of single mothers on U.S. state welfare programs. Jagger (2002)
[11] World Bank (1989), pg iv
[12] Elson (1991)
[13] In 1979, President of the World Bank Robert McNamara initiated a move away from project-based to program-based conditional lending, expanding the development functions of the World Bank from targeted sector-wide projects to include funding the macro economy. This shift corresponded with the extension of the IMF spheres of operation to allow for the provision of long-term concessional loans with the introduction of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) in 1975 and the Structural Adjustment Fund in 1986 to be enhanced in 1987 (ESAF). Long-term development financing on the basis of policy reform for low-income countries with balance-of-payment deficits thus became part of the IMF mandate. For a detailed synopsis of these changes see Mosley, Harrigan and Toye (1991) and Bordo and James (2000)
[14] Little (1982)

The negative social impacts and limited success of SAPs however instigated a plethora of academic literature and research-based critiques[15], that were concerned with the relevance and utility of SAPs for effective poverty reduction and economic growth in developing countries. On the one hand, the cited shortcomings of SAPs highlighted inherent theoretical discrepancies in the logic of the IFIs vis-à-vis the reality of global conditions. These included a neglect to acknowledge the realities of formal and informal market structures and operations, thus in many instances rendering women invisible[16]; over-estimation of the financial returns to be gained from traditional exports given the depression of global prices for primary commodities[17]; and an exaggeration of the significance of FDI and external capital for the economic development of HIPCs, sometimes at the expense of other social and political factors.[18] On the other hand, in the World Bank and IMF estimation, the failure of SAPs resided predominantly in the limitations posed by internal factors, specifically the lack of efficient institutional, economic and state management on the part of recipient governments. Significantly, this assessment arose from the essential recognition of the need to include the role of state intervention in macrodevelopment policy. Indeed within the IFI perspective it has now been acknowledged that state intervention is important in so much as it must enhance and assist market operations if developing countries are to fulfill their economic potential.[19] Accordingly, the World Bank and IMF self critique of SAPs included an excessive emphasis on the role of the market, disregard for the relevance and necessity of efficient state management, and inadequate mechanisms for the protection of vulnerable social groups (including women and low income level groups) against the consequences of adjustment.[20]

In an attempt to address these issues, as well as in response to demands from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the informal sector for substantial debt cancellation and relief[21], the World Bank and IMF jointly launched in 1996 the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Relief Initiative, with its enhancement to follow in 1999. The stated aim of the HIPC Debt Relief initiative is to offer

A coherent strategy to help poor countries move on to a

[15] For a succinct summary of the findings of such research see Rapley (1996)
[16] Sparr (1994)
[17] Stewart, Lall and Wangwe (1992)
[18] Onimode (1989)
[19] World Bank (1997)
[20] World Bank (1991)
[21] For example the Jubilee 2000 Initiative

> sustainable faster growth path, bringing a substantial reduction in poverty…[This through] increased emphasis on ownership, transparency, and broad-based participation, as well as a much greater emphasis on more effective social policies.[22]

More explicitly, the intent of the HIPC debt relief initiative is to substantially and functionally link concessional debt relief funds to poverty reduction through continued macroeconomic adjustment as well as now through social and political policy reform.[23] The pivotal claim of the IFIs is that without conducive and enabling social, political and economic national environments, billions of dollars in foreign development aid and debt assistance will continue to fail to effectively reduce poverty in HIPCs, to the detriment of those already socially vulnerable.[24] The creation of this enabling environment – in the form of, for example, accountable institutions and sound operational policy– for sustained economic growth and equitable development is considered as being substantially influenced by the governance framework and machinery of the state[25]. As stated in the World Bank 1997 World Development Report,

> An effective state is vital for the provision of the goods and services…rules and institutions – that allow markets to flourish and people to lead healthier, happier lives. Without it sustainable development both economic and social is impossible.[26]

As a result of this reorientation of focus, 'Governance' has become a current key term and focal point in World Bank and IMF development analysis, policy and strategy.[27] 'Governance' may be defined here as the formal and informal institutions and traditions through which authority is exercised in the management of state resources for the common good of the people.[28] Contemporary research and recent literature focused on the domestic policy and institutional environments of African states have also underscored the importance of issues related to 'good governance', depicting them as central dimensions and vital contributory factors for effective aid and debt relief for poverty reduction.[29]

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[22] IMF (2000)
[23] Andrews et. al (1999)
[24] Burnside and Dollar (1998)
[25] World Bank (1992)
[26] World Bank (1997), pg 1
[27] World Bank (1992); OECD (1993); Bratton and Hyden (1992); Williams and Young (1994)
[28] World Bank (2003)
[29] Kaufmann and Kraay (2003)

The World Bank and IMF have reflected this focus on internal policy and institutional structures in the HIPC Debt Relief Initiative with the establishment of good governance being a key condition and target. Specifically, the critical role of democratic governance in the promotion of participatory processes at the national level is an integral aspect of the initiative with governments expected to be more effective when mechanisms for giving citizens voice, such as the ballot box are established, as well as more efficient when working in partnership with vital stake holders in deciding and implementing policy. In other words, the engendering of national ownership through the participation of all targeted parties and stakeholders in the formulation and preparation of poverty alleviation measures and development plans is considered as directly correlated to, vital for and the keystone of the debt relief process and its effectiveness.[30] Consequently, in order for HIPC countries to be eligible for debt relief funds under the initiative, recipient governments are required to design, in consultation with all stakeholders, a comprehensive national development strategy. The PRSP, as requisite documentation outlining the necessary policy reform and proposed economic growth plan of a country must be based specifically on the participation of citizens through civil society organizations (CSOs), private enterprise and business representatives, the government and the World Bank and IMF in relevant consultations. The core informing claim of the IFIs is that "greater ownership of reform programs by recipient country governments…through increased participation of citizens and civil society groups"[31] will give voice to and empower disadvantaged social sectors. This would also ensure that development policy is responsive and the government accountable to people's needs,[32] thus "strengthening [the] domestic constituency for reform through a better appreciation of their own interest"[33]. As McGee et. al (2001) have stated,

> Embodied in the PRSP framework by the IFIs is the expectation that participation by civil society in developing and implementing the Strategies will, firstly, deliver a sense of broad-based ownership, not only by government, but by civil and political society at large. To the IFIs national ownership is an important political imperative and also favours commitment to and successful implementation of

[30] Ndulu (2001)
[31] Birdsall et. al (2001), pg 3
[32] United Nations (2001)
[33] Ndulu (2002), pg 5

> policies. Secondly, participation is expected to strengthen democratic governance and accountability in countries where poverty is related to weak government accountability and the disenfranchisement of large sectors of the population.[34]

It is important to note however, that there has been contestation around the issue of ownership as encapsulated within the PRSP process. Firstly, PRSPs are ultimately subject to IFI approval and therefore fundamentally based on the World Bank and IMF's perspectives and analyses of a country's poverty and debt situation, and the best methods for promoting sustainable development therein.[35] Secondly, and in relation to the above, some dissonance in the assumed smooth linkage between participatory processes and ownership has been noted, with some HIPC governments tending to approach 'participation', (identified by the IFIs as the primary tool for the achievement of genuine ownership), as an external political condition to be met within the PRSP process, and not as a process valuable in itself.[36] Such 'process conditionality'[37] whereby funds are made conditional on the adoption of inclusive and participatory processes in the formulation of the PRSP, has paradoxically compromised efforts to reform ownership[38] resulting in 'rubber stamp participation'[39].

Regardless of these broader debates however, it has been noted that in some countries the PRSP process has engendered higher levels of civil society/government interaction in policy formulation than has historically been the case.[40] Specifically, the recent focus on participation has allowed the space, though minimal, within which voices previously silenced in the "corridors of power"[41] may be articulated or at least represented.[42] With explicit reference to CSOs and NGOs, the World Bank has noted that these organizations have recently become significantly active in developing countries and represent an "important first step in articulating citizen interests and the concerns of minorities and the poor in public policymaking and consultative processes".[43] For low income women however, issues such as limited access to, and time for, development processes including inadequate dissemination of information

[34] McGee et. al (2001), pg 8
[35] Guttal et. al (2001); Floro (2001); Eurodad (2001); Northover (2000)
[36] McGee et. al (2001)
[37] Ndulu (2002)
[38] Tsikata (2002)
[39] Christian Aid (2001)
[40] Eurodad (2001)
[41] World Bank (1997), pg 10
[42] Fierlbeck (1997)

and inhibiting cultural practices at the local level have compromised their full participation in national dialogue surrounding the PRSP process.[44] This is significant in so much as women constitute over half of the world's population as well as its human resource and development capacity. Any exclusion of females from the development process therefore will inevitably impact negatively upon efficient growth and be adverse to overall human welfare and sustainable development. Indeed, as Floro (2001) has stated, without recognition of women or analysis of the gender factor and its implications for national poverty reduction strategies, any efforts to reduce and manage external debt will fail to bring about sustained poverty alleviation for both women and men. Additionally, the promotion of gender equality through equal representation of the interests of both women and men in development constitutes a desirable objective in its own right.[45]

It has been argued that through the advocacy and contributions of gender-based and sensitive NGOs, the participation of low-income women may be facilitated, and their needs, aspirations and perspectives better voiced, acknowledged and responded to within national level development policy-making procedures.[46] Through activities related to information sharing, group mobilisation and direct representation, such organizations can facilitate and secure the participation of low-income women in the PRSP process and enable them to more effectively challenge their exclusion in developmental processes.[47] However, it is important to note that women's organisations are diverse and as such may not always democratically represent and address the interests of low-income women or support their empowerment.[48]

The question of particular interest in this dissertation then, is the extent to which participatory processes have actually influenced acknowledgement of the concerns of low-income women within the content of the PRSP. Specifically, how effective has NGO and civil society 'gender-concerned' intervention been in the mainstreaming of gender in national poverty reduction strategies?

The significance of this question lies in the crucial importance of continually examining and assessing approaches and measures adopted and applied for the achievement of the inter-related goals of sustainable development and gender

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[43] World Bank (1997), pg 11
[44] Cornwall (2000)
[45] Muntemba and Blackden (2000)
[46] DAWN (1995)
[47] Sarin (1995)

equality. The rationale for such an argument is based on recognition of the dynamic nature of social reality, as well as the embedded nature and characteristic of poverty. This correlates with a commitment to recurrently appraise the relevance and impacts of development practice on the well-being of populations to whom such initiatives are accountable. Specifically, the poverty reduction strategy approach, encapsulated within the PRSP, has emerged as the contemporary national framework and focal point for development growth and poverty reduction in a large number of African countries.[49] It also provides the basis both for debt relief under the HIPC initiative and for all other World Bank and IMF concessional loans.[50] Additionally, as "PRSPs have been in existence for only a couple of years, there is little documentation of how well gender has been incorporated" into their design and formulation, or how adequate particular strategies have been in this regard.[51] Consequently, it is necessary to consistently review the relevance and thus effectiveness and sustainability of such development initiatives for debt relief and poverty reduction as the HIPC, including an analysis of the gender implications of this process.

This study is focused then on a gender analysis of Uganda's PRSP in the overall context of that country's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). Uganda is of particular interest as a case study as it was the first country to qualify for debt relief funds under the HIPC initiative and has been classified as a 'successful reformer'[52], despite the country's violent past and continually agitated present.[53] In this respect, various research studies have commended this country for the comprehensive nature of its PRSP as well as for its participatory and inclusive processes of poverty reduction strategy formulation.[54] Hailed as a marker of success within the HIPC initiative and frequently cited by the World Bank as an example of 'good practice' within the PRSP process[55], Uganda's experience offers firstly, a good benchmark by which to assess the World Bank and IMF estimation of 'good governance' and satisfactory participatory processes. Secondly and in relation to the success of participatory processes, a gender analysis of the Uganda PRSP will allow for an

[48] Oxaal and Baden (1997)
[49] Ndulu (2002)
[50] Robb (2000)
[51] Bell (2002)
[52] Devarajan et. al (2001)
[53] For example rebel troops in the North of Uganda continue to threaten political stability within the country
[54] McGee et. al (2002)
[55] Brock et. al (2002)

evaluation of the role of participatory processes in the acknowledgement and impact of gender concerns within the initiative thus far.

For Uganda then, the planning framework of the PEAP, the country's overall vision and goals, and the proposed poverty reduction strategy within which actions for poverty eradication will be executed, are examined and analysed. Applying a gender and development (GAD) analytical framework (elucidated below) the purpose of this analysis is to assess the impact of gender-focused advocacy by NGOs and civil society in the participatory processes surrounding the formulation of the PEAP. This analysis is undertaken in terms of how Uganda's PEAP/PRSP responds to and integrates a gender perspective for the purpose of ensuring gender equity for long term sustainability of the poverty eradication measures adopted. At the outset, the findings indicate that despite the inclusion in the PRSP process of NGOs and civil society groups primarily concerned with issues of gender, the gender dimension and its implications for poverty eradication measures, is not as explicitly stated or elaborated as, it is argued, would have been appropriate. Following from this, a second objective in the present analysis is to identify the more glaring gender gaps in the PEAP/PRSP propositions, and to suggest the more appropriate entry points for the explicit inclusion of gender based poverty eradication measures. Importantly, it is argued that the inclusion of gender priorities in the PRSP will be facilitated by the in-built flexibility of the PEAP planning framework and surrounding participatory processes. This conclusion is recapitulated with reference to the HIPC initiative as a whole, and discussed in specific context of the concept of participation as promoted by the World Bank vis-à-vis the experience of the process by the vital stake holders in Uganda, namely the government and CSOs. In the final analysis then, although the gender dimensions and implications of Uganda's poverty reduction strategy are not explicitly stated or elaborated upon, 'windows of opportunity' nevertheless remain within the mechanisms of the process for the inclusion of gender and women's concerns in the transformation of the Ugandan economy and society.

The remainder of this thesis will proceed as follows. Firstly, as a means of setting the conceptual stage for the research, a brief literature review will be given followed by an explanation of the analytical framework employed herein. Secondly, a concise presentation of the gendered analysis of the content of the Ugandan PRSP will be given. This will be followed by the identification of 'gender windows of opportunity' and possible entry points inherent within Uganda's poverty reduction

plan and planning process. Finally, a brief description of the participation process for the Uganda PRSP and the roles played by the World Bank and IMF, Uganda Government and CSOs will be given. The findings of this analysis will be summarized in a succinct conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a brief review of the relevant literature surrounding the debate and discourse on a number of issues concerning the concept of development. Inter alia these include interfaces between gender and development, the role and responsibility of the state in poverty and debt reduction as well as the participation and contribution of CSOs and NGOs in the development process. A key underlying theme remains the role of the international community and IFIs in the articulation and operationalisation of the concept of development within sub-Saharan Africa. This specifically because of Africa's colonial history during which linkages between the socio-economic and political institutions of the continent and the Western world were formalized, including the establishment of the financially dependent and paternalistic relationship between the two.[56]

2.1 Early Recipes for Development

The modern concept of 'development', although not fully adopted as a guiding principle and policy for action until the early years of African independence and the Cold War, was initially popularized and introduced into international discourse at the end of World War II. The successful implementation of reconstructive initiatives in post-World War II Europe, as well as the founding of the Bretton Woods international institutions, catapulted development assistance and especially economic development theory and practice into the spotlight of international relations and world politics as a new platform of interaction and influential level of cooperation. Many of the foundations that continue to underpin contemporary poverty reduction policy were established during this period as part of the discourse that linked material and monetary poverty to the concept of 'underdevelopment' and thus established economic growth and the necessary financial assistance as the most viable means for achieving 'development'.[57]

Influential post-war economic development theories, such as structuralism, were based on the central premise that pervasive market failures characterized underdeveloped economies[58] and were underpinned by an assumption that poverty

[56] Brown (2000)
[57] Brock et. al (2001)
[58] For an extensive critique of this assumption and an alternative analysis of the causes of underdevelopment, see Walter Rodney (1972).

could be quantified solely by monetary measures.[59] Such dominant early views of development conceptualised southern countries as being at an early stage of a linear and universal path towards a capital rich and industrial 'modern society' of which Western countries were the epitome.[60] Mainstream economists and proponents of modernization theory within the international community thus aimed to catalyze and implement development through a comparison of the economic and social conditions of 'underdeveloped' areas with those of the industrial, developed West, including through the transfer and emulation of institutions, policies and practices in the latter by and to the former. Appropriate economic growth according to this perspective was measured through the unbridled application of GNP, GDP, per capita incomes, capital expansion, and other indices and benchmarks of real wealth. This in terms of the degrees of similarity, (or dis-similarity), between the developed and developing worlds in a process that sought to 'modernize' Third World populations.[61]

For the international community, by understanding and "framing poverty as an economic problem… the solution – economic growth, facilitated by capital investment – [could]…be presented as a self-evident truth which underpinned the transfer of resources between countries in the form of development aid".[62] The focus was primarily on the provision of government budgetary and general support for the construction of infrastructure necessary for industrial expansion and economic growth, equated with, and defined as development for the African continent. The success of U.S.A. recovery programs such as the Marshall Plan in the blitzed and ravaged nations of Europe entrenched a precedent that informed the conviction that government controlled "aid-based strategic planning would enable developing countries to bridge the gap that separated them from the industrialized world"[63]. As such, during the 1950s/60s state-sponsored and state-led top-down approaches to development were dominant. The perennial potential for widespread and pervasive market failure, suggested within dominant economic development approaches, further demanded and supported state intervention as a critical element for the success of development projects.[64]

[59] McMichael (1996)
[60] Rostow (1969)
[61] Lewis (1980), pg 33
[62] Brock et. al (2001), pg 10
[63] Visvanathan, Dugan, Nisonoff, and Wiegersma (1997), pg 2
[64] Onis (1995), pg 2

Within such perspectives however, attention was not focused on the socio-political arena or on people but rather on monetary aggregates with such analysis "concerned with fluctuations in the level of output and in rates of growth and in changing the balance between different sectors of the economy…"[65]. Consequently, the viability of existing types of political regimes and state institutions and bureaucracies within Africa for the promotion of economic growth in an increasingly globalised world was not sufficiently interrogated, a point to be further explored in the next section. Additionally, the distribution of income and the relative position of groups within the economic and social structures of society were not regarded as vital aspects in gauging the developmental status of nations. As such, while low-income women experienced few or none of the benefits of the economic growth achieved and recorded in data, their experiences of social reality were largely excluded or altogether ignored.

Specifically, the engines of economically defined growth as well as the operative indices and benchmarks of 'success' and 'achievement' within modernization theory, namely "capital-intensive industry and agricultural production"[66], have been traditionally restricted to the formal/financial sectors of economies, driven by a primarily male labour force. As such, mainstream development initiatives defining progress largely in terms of increased production and consumption[67], tended to focus essentially on the male, 'productive' and thus 'growth-inducing' segments of national populations as the primary agents of economic growth within societies[68]. Within this narrow and restrictive perspective, women's work, identified mainly with their reproductive roles, and largely operating in the informal or domestic and non-monetary domains, was perceived as secondary, if not immaterial, to the monetary sector, and to overall growth of the economy. In sum total, therefore, "women were relegated to the more marginal 'welfare' sector"[69] of national economies.

Subsequently, most development strategies implemented by the international community targeting low-income women translated into a heavy focus on development projects that inundated them as a 'special-need' and isolated group

[65] Elson (1991), pgs 165/166
[66] Harding (1998), pg 5
[67] *Ibid*
[68] Jaquette and Staudt (1988)
[69] Kabeer (1994), pg 5

category, with the overall emphasis being to support them in their practical roles as nurturers. Developmental processes, reflecting the favored state-based contemporary approaches to economic development, were thus essentially based on top-down, 'trickle-down' initiatives including the provision of food aid, nutritional information, family planning assistance, etc. Within such a welfare approach, the complex web of gendered relationships within which all socio-economic and political activity derive and unfold, within both the public and private spheres was neglected. Simultaneously, the productive contributions of women to development were rendered largely irrelevant and invisible. The overall outcome of these early approaches to development has been the failure to ensure a distributional 'trickle-down' effect of benefits and thus the continued marginalization of women. This retarded achievement of efficient levels of sustainable growth, and triggered gradual recognition of the limitations of modernization theory for the advancement of Third World low-income women, alongside general criticism of state-based approaches to development.

2.2 The Inadequacy of the State and the Rise of Women in Development (WID)

Onis (1995) has noted that the central weakness of government approaches to development resided in the idealistic and naïve conceptions of the state as benevolent. Corresponding to the heavy preoccupation, in early development theory, with market failure as the main underlying cause of underdevelopment, was "the implicit belief that government action…would automatically result in superior economic performance and welfare"[70]. Accordingly, little consideration was given to the institutional and policy requirements necessary for effective state intervention. This gave rise to crucial disparities in development practice arising from severe fractures unaccounted for in the infrastructural make-up of national economic and political institutions. With specific regard for development practice in Africa, the inability of African governments to efficiently and productively manage their national economies was evident in their practices of often overspending national budgets, investing in ineffectual development projects, over-borrowing and embezzling millions of dollars through corruption etc.[71]

Dominant modernist theories on the political dynamics of the continent have tended to explain this legacy of despotic rule in post-colonial Africa as well as the

[70] Onis (1995), pg 3

accompanying persistent economic crisis as reflective of the inability of Africans to properly and independently manage their economies and states. As Thomas (2001) has noted, instead of offering themselves as custodians of a possible public good, African leaders are believed to notoriously assume greedy authority over their dominions. This is regarded as the main cause for the limited success of state-led approaches to development. In their exclusive focus on the internal dynamics of African states however, these perspectives typically ignore the international dimension thus implying a certain level of neutrality on the part of the international community.[72] An important caveat to put on any discussion centred on the dynamics of African political and/or economic reality for example, is the imperative to acknowledge the role of the 1884/5 Berlin Conference in setting the particular contemporary context of interest herein, namely the balkanisation of the African continent for the specific economic interests of Western Europe. Consequently, as Zack-Williams et. al (2001) have noted, the interaction between power and economic accumulation through various illicit acts should not be regarded as unique to Africa and the reification of an African exceptionalist project should be avoided. In seeking to fully understand the dynamics of African political and economic regimes it is essential to transcend the historically enforced and derogatory epistemological distinctions of civilised vs. uncivilised, developed vs. undeveloped, modern vs. traditional and so on. Instead, identified trends may be regarded as part of a particular socio-economic and political trajectory best understood through a historical lens linking the exploitative behaviour of dominant social groups and actors today to Africa's insertion into the international economy in a mode of dependence.[73]

More explicitly, with the abolition of foreign political rule at independence, African leaders inherited intact the political and economic institutions as well as the operational methods of the colonial administration and its related infrastructure. These institutions, fundamentally authoritarian in nature, were based on the mercantilist extraction of natural resources and primary commodities at a surplus detrimental to African societies.[74] In the absence of any reformation and with minimal adjustments, such oppressive conventions continued into the post-colonial era, with Africa's relationship with the global economy continuing to be based on unequal

[71] Ndulu and O'Connell (1999); Clapham (1996); Collier (1991)
[72] Hoogvelt (2001)
[73] Zack-Williams et. al (2001)

terms of trade and financial dependence. As Mamdani (1996) has stated, while the African state was deracialised after independence this time with African leaders in dominant positions, it was not essentially democratised to the extent that despotic aspects of the colonial legacy were encapsulated, contextualised and perpetuated. A systemic consequence of this has been the entrenchment of highly inequitable social conditions and amenities, with a gross maldistribution of income and wealth becoming a structural feature of most African societies. That is, given the historical context, state-led development strategies were conveniently wed to the consolidation of the masses in order to extract the necessary surplus and support for the industrialisation initiatives and the developmental expansion of newly independent Africa societies.[75] The funding of such state-led development strategies as import substitution policies for example, as was the norm during this era, meant the authoritarian extraction of surpluses from the peasantry who paid for high rates of urban and industrial growth through worsening terms of rural trade.[76] Furthermore, evolving authoritarian regimes were able to symbiotically base their legitimacy and continued accumulation on the provision of public welfare in a system Bangura (1992) has referred to as the Social Contract. State-led development strategies which located the state as the main resource base and channel for development initially reinforced this contract. This through the use of extensive expenditure budgets to support an increase in the public sector labour force and the middle classes. In this way political constituencies were built as bases for groups in power. Simultaneously however, such state-led development strategies identified the state as the sole source and key vessel for private capital accumulation based on a patronage system thus prompting the emergence of 'wealth networks'. Initially, terms of trade for African goods and the ready availability of OPEC Dollars and foreign exchange on loan in the international market, supported this contradiction in government responsibilities. With the deterioration of Africa's terms of trade on the global market however, and increased balance-of-payment deficits as a result of rising interest rates on loans, the structural equilibrium between the requirements of the proletariat in terms of welfare and social services and the accommodation of accumulation practices collapsed. With the contraction of the global economy in the 1970s, such rent-seeking activities began

[74] *Ibid*
[75] Young (1999)
[76] Bangura, Gibbon and Ofstad (1992)

to subtract detrimentally from the jobs, incomes, working conditions and quality of life for the vast majority of the populations in Africa. Many African governments had insufficient capacity to absorb the resultant impacts of this rapid deterioration of global prices on their economies. This commenced the continent's downward spiral into the debt trap – characterized by unsustainable levels of debt and repetitive cycles of debt service.

The 1970s also heralded the rise of the International Women's Movement, which initiated the proliferation of women-based NGOs and feminist forums that forced and pushed for an acknowledgement of women in development in the arena of the international community. Ester Boserup (1970) specifically contributed to this agenda when she highlighted the critical roles women play in economic growth, through their contributions in agriculture and in the informal sectors of national economies. Based on an analysis of data from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, Boserup emphasized women's essential contribution to local and national economies through agricultural production and human resource sustenance. Indeed, data have highlighted that African women perform about 90% of the work of processing food crops and providing household water and fuelwood; 80% of the work of food storage and transportation from farm to village; 90% of the work of hoeing and weeding; and 60% of the work of harvesting and marketing.[77] Boserup noted that despite this, women were continually unacknowledged, underrepresented and unremunerated in development sectors. The core of her criticism revolved around the failure of current development practice to take into account the direct impacts on women, stemming from economic development policy**.** Rather within orthodox approaches, gender was hidden in apparently inclusive terms such as 'the people', 'the oppressed', 'the marginalised', or simply 'the community'. It was only on closer analysis that it became evident that such 'inclusive' groups were often exclusively male dominated.[78]

It was in the context of this international recognition of the role of women in development that the first United Nations International Women's Conference was held in Mexico City in 1975. It was during this conference that the United Nations declared 1976 to1985 as the Decade for Women concurrent with the emergence and proliferation of the women in development (WID) approach and movement. Simply

[77] Quisumbing et. al (1995)

stated**,** the objective of WID is to promote sustainable and equitable development through the successful identification and removal of obstacles that bedevil the advancement of women.[79] WID is fundamentally based on the recognition and legitimization of women's contributions, through their numerous and varied roles, to the economic development of their respective countries and societies.[80] As Supriya Akerka (2001) has stated, although women have been largely excluded from the benefits of economic growth and are unequally responsible for shouldering the consequences of poverty and the costs of growth, this has not been due to a lack of their involvement in national economies. Such ignorance of female's multi-faceted gender roles, has led to 'band-aid' solutions to their poverty.

A clear manifestation of this criticism was particularly evident in the advent of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the IFIs in an attempt to resolve the unfolding and deepening debt crisis.

2.3 The Debt Crisis and the Shift to Efficiency

The debt crises posed a significant challenge for Western multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors in so much as declarations of bankruptcy would have automatically translated into pervasive defaults by African countries on their loan repayments. Such a situation would have gravely compromised the stability of the international financial system and brought into question the efficacy and validity of past IMF and multilateral loan practices.[81] Consequently, and in line with the contemporary shift within Western governments towards conservatism[82], an appropriate avenue for the avoidance of such a situation emerged in the form of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Amongst other directives, SAPs included:

1) Decreasing public expenditure as a means of decreasing fiscal balance-of-payment deficits and releasing funds for debt service
2) Implementing austere monetary policies aimed at decreasing inflation through cutbacks in the money supply and public incomes
3) The privatization of public enterprise to improve FDI incentive and thus productive efficiency
4) Increasing the production of export goods vis-à-vis those for the domestic market in a bid to gain international capital and more credence in the global economy.

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[78] Gujit and Shah (1998)
[79] Moser (1993)
[80] Østergaard **(**1992)
[81] Jagger (2002), pg 2
[82] Mosley et. al (1991); Leonard and Strauss (2003)

Simply put, SAPs were designed to remove obstacles compromising the efficient functioning of markets. Typically, these were seen to result from government intervention.[83] That is, based on neoliberal assumptions about economic growth, state-led approaches to development were abandoned and precedence was given to the role of the market. Aiming at inducing productive efficiency and thus sufficient economic growth to insure loan repayment and national development, the principal focus of development from the IFI perspective became macro economic policy reforms tied to developmental aid in the form of SAPs. As Jackson and Pearson (1998) have noted,

> "A new orthodoxy of development assistance was born. Third World states had to reform their economies in order to be able to meet international obligations in the long run, a process known as structural adjustment… These now familiar reforms included a range of supply side and demand cutting measures designed to reduce balance-of-payments and domestic government deficits. Implicit and often explicit was a change in the role of the government as a development agency. In order to meet the new objective, the role of the state, including government expenditure and services as well as redistributory functions such as subsidies, was to be curtailed"[84]

At the same time, a latent but cardinal precept behind the IFI adjustment programs was the belief that African states needed strong leaders capable of pushing through the necessary economic reforms and resisting clientelist and patrimonial claims. As such, to begin with at least, SAPs permitted for the existence of authoritarian and repressive regimes unbound by social contracts. These regimes believed to be viable vehicles for the pushing through of painful reforms were often financed, regardless of their undemocratic regimes[85], for the sake of economic stability.[86] In other words, within the efficiency approach to development, the overriding and sole focus has been on the need to achieve efficiency in production in order for meaningful economic growth, and thus poverty reduction, to occur. Consequently the enclosing political context and related interactions were initially considered a secondary issue at best.

[83] Rapley (1994)
[84] Jackson and Pearson (1998), pg 3
[85] The most notorious case in point being the continued IMF and World Bank financing of Mobutu's Zaire.
[86] Hoogvelt (1997)

The role of women within such a perspective has been regarded as vital in so far as females represent approximately 51% of the labour force, and can thus make valuable and quantifiable contribution to economic growth. The underlying assumption being that if women were allowed more equal access to factors and assets of production, and provided with the opportunity to sell their labour as a marketable service, their economic value would be enhanced and society as a whole would benefit from augmented growth. Additionally, opportunity to generate personal income, it is claimed, would decrease women's dependence on men, heighten their bargaining power within the household and result in significant social gains such as lower fertility, better household nutrition and reduced infant, child and maternal mortality.[87]

Such assumptions, however, neglect the obtrusive fact that the 'economy', and thus 'economic development', remains principally defined and confined within the context of the formal market system and the goods and services circulating therein. 'Women's work', involving such activities as the reproduction, nurturing and caring for children; subsistence farming and the preparation of food; household management and community involvement etc. is subsequently excluded from such perceptions of the 'economy' and detrimentally unrecorded in the System of National Accounts (SNA).[88] Moreover, such an exclusively focused economic perspective continues to ignore the social reality within which women have to continually operate with the multiple demands emanating from their triple roles (reproductive, productive and communal). Women are solely responsible for the bulk of unpaid work at home and in the community; they are actively engaged in the production of goods and services for the market; yet their competitive status within the formal market economy, and thus their opportunities for growth, remain at a disadvantage in comparison to the status of men.[89] Put differently, there is little acknowledgement of the gendered differentials affecting women and men as individual economic agents within this approach.[90] In reality, access to, management and use of, and control over the productive resources necessary for economic growth, oscillates on the basis of the gender (and race, class and caste) of economic agents. Feminists have criticized such 'gender neutral' development policies for their disregard of the social aspects of development, arguing

[87] IMF (1994)
[88] Muntemba and Blackden (2000)
[89] Boserup (1970)

that such development practices are in fact fundamentally flawed and based on gender biases. Efficiency based approaches have subsequently unleashed adverse impacts and effects on women, during their implementation. As feminists have argued and as is increasingly being recognized, such perceived 'neutrality' in the underlying concepts or tools of economics has translated into and perpetuated gender bias through the presentation of a predominantly male and thus incomplete depiction of economic activity. In the absence of full accounting of economic activity, there exists potential risk that what is perceived in conventional/male-based economic analysis as 'efficiency improvements' may in fact entail 'inefficient practices', such as the shift in costs from the visible, predominantly male, economy to the invisible predominantly female, economy.[91] One example of this is when privatization under the requirements of SAPs leads to an increase in service prices as a result of government cutbacks on expenditure in the social sectors, primarily education and health care.[92] This results in the entry of informal sector operatives with the responsibility of filling this vacuum left by the state, in terms of for example home-based care for the sick and the education of children, falling principally on women who are already overloaded with other demands.[93] Hence, while SAPs specifically targeted the perceived 'excessive' role of the state as the prescribed remedy for the debt crisis, nevertheless reform policies were narrowly and economically defined. This exclusively economic focus however, firstly gave little consideration to the socio-political context and impacts arising from the implementation of SAPs, and secondly detracted from the utility (if not necessity) of accountably and reliable state involvement in development.

As such, numerous doubts surfaced in various social spheres, academic disciplines and areas of interest regarding the authoritative conviction that the principles of structural adjustment are optimal for poverty reduction and economic growth. Indeed, widespread literature and research revealed that the economic policy-based lending encapsulated by SAPs neither resulted in the necessary macroeconomic policy reform, nor contributed substantially to poverty reduction and overall development.[94] With specific reference to Africa, Rapley has stated,

> The African experience with structural adjustment has

[90] Elson (1991)
[91] IMF (1994)
[92] Visvanathan et. al (1997)
[93] For detailed case-study examples of how the implementation of SAPs has led to the intensification of women's work in many countries, see Elson (1991); Lourdes and Feldman (1992); Sparr (1994)
[94] Mosely (1988); Burnside and Dollar (1999); Sachs (1989); Diwan and Rodrik (1992)

> generally pointed to one conclusion: while yielding short-term improvements, the policy is apparently jeopardizing long-term development… SAPs tend to have concentrated benefits while immiserating a substantial part of the populations.[95]

Subsequently, the World Bank's assumption, that the obligation of liberal macroeconomic policy reform through loan conditionality "would stimulate a virtuous economic circle of growth, rising employment and rising investment"[96] is questionable[97].

> SAPs have harmed rather than helped development in many debtor nations…the growth rates of most debtor countries have been significantly reduced, living standards… have declined, and some have become trapped in a vicious cycle of stagnation and decline caused by the interaction of low investment, increased unemployment, reduced social spending, reduced consumption, and low output.[98]

Low-income women in the developing world especially, have been unfairly and unequally burdened with the above mentioned costs of structural adjustment.[99] Particularly for the social sectors, reductions in government public expenditure have had direct negative impact upon women as the primary "producers and consumers of wealth, health, education and welfare"[100]. Decreases in expendable incomes and consequently longer and harder working days have also predominantly burdened low-income women.[101] Jagger has commented that,

> Worldwide cutbacks in social programs are the most obviously gendered feature of neoliberal theory [and SAPs]. They…affect women's economic status…more adversely than men's because women's responsibility for caring for children and other family members makes them more reliant on such programs. In the global south, cuts in public health services have contributed to a rise in maternal mortality…[and] more work for women has resulted in higher school dropout rates for girls… Less education and longer hours of domestic work obviously contribute to women's impoverishment by making it harder for them to attain well-paying jobs[102]

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[95] Rapley (1994), pg 496
[96] Jagger (2002), pg 2
[97] Frenkel and Khan (1992)
[98] *Ibid*
[99] Elson (1991)
[100] Afshar and Dennis, pg 4
[101] Moser (1993), pg 70

Additionally, the idea that insurance of economic growth will be achieved through increased female productivity, as is the case in structural adjustment, is cushioned in the assumption that the load of women's work, engendered by their triple roles is irrelevant, with primacy given to growth generative results. This has dramatically increased the demands made on the already limited time of low-income women, as the efficiency approach presumes that women will fulfill their domestic roles regardless of external pressures. It is well documented that women work longer hours than men throughout sub-Saharan Africa and this clearly demonstrates the time pressures experienced by women. In Uganda for example, the ratio of women's productive hours per day as compared to those of men is 15 to 9.[103] Despite this however,

> In the efficiency approach women's unpaid time is used as self-help components in economic activities, specifically with respect to human resource development and for the management of community problems. It assumes that women's unpaid labour in areas such as child care, fuel-gathering, food processing, preparation of the meals, nursing the sick etc. is elastic. [104]

Critics have argued then that SAPs based on an approach dominated by economic analysis, fail to capture the many dimensions of poverty and thus pay insufficient attention to their 'social implication'[105]. With specific reference to gender issues, while both men and women participate in and are affected by economic adjustment, policy-makers often do not recognize that this occurs in different ways due to the fact that men and women play different roles within society, and therefore face different constraints in responding to economic policy changes and to shifts in relative prices and incentives.[106] As such, orthodox neoliberal approaches to development have tended to marginalize the importance of impact of development policy on third world women especially and have thus largely continued to ignore their contexts. Consequently, the possible contribution of indigenous knowledge to the search for relevant and effective solutions is also often ignored.[107] The informing aspiration has instead largely been to advance the status of females within the already

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[102] Jagger (2002), pg 6
[103] Blackden and Bhanu (1999)
[104] Anderson, Cecilia, in Østergaard, Lise (1992), pg 174
[105] Robb (2000)
[106] IMF (1994)
[107] Parpart (2000)

existing schemes for economic development, through emphasis on women's essential input in this process. Yet as,

> Many feminists have observed…calculating economic productivity exclusively in monetary terms encourages viewing the provision of social services as draining the 'efficiency' of an economy and as creating 'dependency', rather than as investing in human welfare. It also encourages categorizing women as unproductive welfare clients, thereby delegitimating their claims on national budgets.[108]

In a bid to depart from such segregated theories, alternatively, it has been argued that gender equity, well-being and quality of life for all may be better improved and assured through the application of a more holistic and multi-disciplinary approach. That is, persistently and increasingly the call from low-income women, in the developing world especially, has resounded and resonated with the need for poverty relief within equitable and sustainable approaches to development, more than with the desire for equality within the existing and largely unsuccessful economic development regimes.[109] Such a diversified approach would focus on such problems as vulnerability, socio-political as well as economic; physical and social isolation, exclusion and insecurity; lack of self-respect and legitimacy; lack of access to information and institutions of power; distrust of state institutions and disenfranchisement. [110] It is claimed that this would more beneficially contribute to a deepened understanding of social, political and economic contexts, and to the long-term improvement of the lives of the poor, both women and men. As such, the claim is that this approach would be more relevant than the traditional incomes-based approaches to development.

There has subsequently been significant recognition of the need to reform contemporary approaches to development cooperation with many academics and development practitioners chronicling the shift from a segregated WID focus to the promotion of Gender Analysis in Development (GAD)[111]. The argument is that taking cognizance of social relations is a fundamental prerequisite to the empowerment of women and general upliftment of society. As Jackson and Pearson (1998) have reiterated,

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[108] Jagger (2002), pg 9
[109] Moser (1993)
[110] Robb (2000)
[111] Rathgeber (1990)

> In principle the enthusiasm for gender…reflects the fact that at all levels of the development 'business' there is an acceptance that it is not women per se who are to be problematised, but gender relations in which women are subordinated which must be problematised".[112]

Related to this is the claim that it is also unrealistic to address 'women' in general as a monolithic category since various differential factors contribute to women's abilities to engage in developmental activities across contexts.[113] The GAD approach argues that, "women's status in society is deeply affected by their material conditions of life[114] and…by the nature of…power in their societies[115] at the national, community and household levels"[116] making it difficult to categorise all females as one and the same just by virtue of their biological sex. The term 'gender', not synonymous with 'sex', refers to the differences in social characteristics or culturally described roles, duties and responsibilities of women and men, focusing on the relationship between the two at many levels including the macro, micro and inter-personal levels. More specifically GAD emphasizes the diversity of both male and female experiences of oppression and poverty with regard to such factors as age, race, class, social status, religion, history, global position, culture, sexual orientation etc. and the necessity of recognizing these differentials in the development processes. This because a blanket focus on women may disguise additional forms of differences, and exclusion within the category 'woman', and thus mask certain levels and relations of dominance and subordination.

Postmodernist-feminists, operating from the assumption that no complete or coherent reality exists support this investigation of women's experiences and knowledges as essential to the overall investigation of existing multiple realities and experiences. These experiences and their influence on the generation of knowledge are seen as fluid, contingent, diverse, and historically and culturally specific, supporting the position that knowledge claims should therefore be formulated from a broader base of experience encapsulating not only women's experiences but acknowledging also the significance of diversity.[117]

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[112] Jackson and Pearson, (1998), pg 4
[113] Kabeer (1994)
[114] See socialist feminist approaches in which class-gender interactions have been widely debated.
[115] See the feminist movement within anthropology which focuses on cross-cultural and intra-cultural gender differences.
[116] Sen and Grown (1987)
[117] Parpart, (2000)

With the objective then of interjecting such an alternative approach to development in general and to the role of women in development specifically, Third World women have began to consolidate and adhere to the empowerment approach. This within the shift from WID to the more inclusive GAD, as well as in context of the wider shift in development theory from a sole economic focus to include also analysis of the political economy of developing nations.

2.4 Gender and Development (GAD): The Empowerment Approach

The empowerment approach within GAD has evolved from the knowledges and general experiences of Third World women, but was most lucidly articulated by the Development Alternatives with Women for A New Era (DAWN) organization. This approach aims to identify and deconstruct the fundamental assumptions underlying the main developmental approaches, with its specific intent being to initiate discourse, regarding the linkages between processes of development and existing power structures. Such linkages include sex, class and race/ethnicity based social exclusion; intrahousehold allocation of resources; and the structure of access to networks of support and relations with those in power.

Chambers (1994) has related this empowerment approach to the broader debate within the international community on the relationship between poverty and powerlessness, and identified similarities located within the two discourses. Most particularly, the recent World Bank and IMF focus on governance and the need to make public institutions more democratic and accountable to populations, has adjacently corresponded to the agenda of the empowerment approach which insists that the voices of the poor and disadvantaged come to the forefront of development agendas. That is, the current IFI approach which assumes a direct correlation between economic impoverishment and the political oppression of populations by the state, has close parallels to the GAD movement wherein women's silenced voices and social, economic and political exclusion are perceived as key elements in the perpetuation of pervasive and entrenched gender-based inequalities. The empowerment of women is proposed as the vital process through which such discrimination may be addressed and eliminated, just as the liberation of populations through democracy is offered as the solution to politically based economic oppression, disenfranchisement and

poverty. It is important to note however, that such comparisons may not be quite so simplistic.

Firstly, on a practical level, the currently dominant neoliberal and democratic approach to the African political economy (particularly endorsed by the IFIs) attempts to initiate a top-down liberation process in so much as the onus is on the state to institute democratic rights, liberalize trade policy etc. Alternatively, the empowerment approach "represents a confluence of experiences at the grassroots"[118] and aims to mobilize liberation from the bottom, focusing on the power of people to liberate themselves. That is, "empowerment is essentially a bottom up process rather than something that can be formulated as a top-down strategy"[119].

Secondly and on a more theoretical level, liberal democratic theory essentially postulates a positive relationship between, and thus the compatibility of processes of political democratization and economic development. This through the release of hitherto restricted spaces for the institutionalization of liberal economic (trade and finance) practices that will ensure equal and competitive access to capital for all, and this productive economic growth and efficient development. That is, based on theories concerning the economic nature of political cleavages[120] the theoretical assumption underlying neoliberal approaches to development is that the diffusion of political discrepancies will alleviate restrictions on the economy whose market-based operations will finally be able to reach their full potential and thus usher in economic and sustainable growth. Stating that the rural and agricultural sectors form the basis of African economies in that they dominate and own abundant factors of production, the argument is that groups within this sector, who also comprise the masses of the population will ultimately be the beneficiaries of processes of political and economic liberalization. This through the mechanisms of majority rule and comparative advantage which will assure and sanction the wealth and prosperity of these sectors. Ruling and urban elite ruling coalitions, according to this perspective, having habitually (inherited from the colonial administration) achieved their levels of affluence through discriminatory state-initiated price controls, food subsidies and import/export protectionist policies, will suppress any liberal democratic inclinations towards equitable distribution of wealth or power.

[118] Kabeer (1994), pg 9
[119] Oxaal and Baden (1997), pg 3

Such zero-sum identification of certain sectors as 'winners' or 'losers' of processes of liberalization and democratization however, neglects to acknowledge or analyse the full complexity of communal/collective relations which constitute the African social fabric as well as its matrix. That is, the intricacy of interactions occurring across class, rural/urban and ethnic boundaries is submerged within this neoliberal perspective by superficial (though not altogether irrelevant) economic distinctions; an emphasis that tends to sensationalize individual African greed as the source nuisance to processes of democratisation. Specifically, the IFI assumption that political interests and behaviour can directly and correctly be deduced from market based incentives is questionable. This is because firstly, political interests cannot be detached, from their historical context, but rather are holistically enveloped in the languages of pre-existing ideologies and accommodate traditional political rhythms and codes of behaviour. Secondly, the allegation that economic activities are isolated, linear and unidirectional events from which distinct political trends may be discerned, perpetuates the positivist abstraction of economics as a discipline and activity from the social anchorage and context of which it is necessarily a part.

Characteristically then, such a perspective neglects the fact that in actuality in Africa, there is no distinct or clear separation between the public and private sectors of the economy or between rent-seeking and competitive market practices. Rather many individuals utilise both urban and rural networks and mechanisms, formal and informal economic ties and practices, and neutral as well as patrimonial relations for their survival.[121] Additionally, groups in power often straddle both arenas, the rural and the urban, through the use of various rites and traditions, alliances and ideologies.[122] In the African context then, socio-political and economic entities and their formulations are not as clearly dichotomised as for example rural/urban, but rather are more ubiquitous, complex and interrelated making the allocation of particular interests to specific groups problematic.

As has subtly been noted by Bangura (1992), such distinct categorisation of the majority of Africans as the 'winners' of applied liberal democracy then may prove to be more an instrument for the promotion of the IMF/World Bank agenda than an

[120] See Rogowski (1987); Haggard and Maxfield (1996); Biennen (1990) for a fuller exposition of how the interaction between economic interests and political behaviour and power are socially manifested.
[121] See Herbert, Grans' (1962) concept of the 'villigization of the cities' for a more in-depth exposition on how rural migrants to the cities remain largely dependant on communal and kinship ties for their sustenance.

accurate tool for the analysis of African political and economic regimes. Therborn (1977) has further insisted that in fact no natural correspondence or innate relationship exists between capitalism (liberalisation) and democracy. Instead, sustainable democratisation and development require the institutionalisation of appropriate and contextually relevant socio-economic and political systems as support and reinforcement for these processes.[123]

On the other hand, a specific objective of GAD is the elimination of gender-based discrimination through the necessary upliftment of women. Beyond this the empowerment approach emphasizes not only the promotion of equitable development through the full participation of women and men, but also the general removal of the unequal power relations that occur throughout and across all social groups and contexts. As such, although contemporary neoliberal approaches do correspond with the tenets within GAD in so much as both seek to give power to and legitimise specific segments of the population, it is important to note that the empowerment approach offers itself as a more manoeuvrable and applicable solution. This in so much as there exists no consensus on the meaning of the term empowerment, rather the concept remains fluid. That is, "rooted in the notion of power and its reverse powerlessness or the abuse of power"[124] empowerment refers to an equalising process whose specificities may be determined by the nature of the context and details of the situation. In other words, the focus here is on the existence of gender-based as well as global inequalities. Subsequently, the empowerment approach more so than liberal democratic theory is widely applicable to and relevant in scope for a diverse array of arenas although it has emerged specifically from the perspectives of women at the grassroots.

This is because the concept of 'power' in all of its pervasive manifestations is at the root of the empowerment approach. Zoe Oxaal and Sally Baden (1997) have noted that power must be understood as working at different levels, including the institutional, household and the individual, and here may also be added the regional and global levels. The aim within the empowerment approach is to moderate situations wherein 'power over', which involves an either/or relationship of domination/subordination, prevails, and to promote instead 'power to' which is

[122] Bangura. Gibbon and Ofstad (1992)
[123] Ake (1981)
[124] Kabeer (1994), pg 224

having decision-making authority and the creative ability to solve problems. Such individual 'power to', when combined within the social context becomes 'Power with' which is the organization of people in pursuit of a common purpose or the sharing of common understandings in the achievement of collective goals. The empowerment approach also recognises the linkages between 'power to' and 'power within' as related to such issues as self agency, self-confidence, self-awareness and self assertiveness, which are especially encouraged for historically disadvantaged groups.[125]

It would be useful to emphasize here that the definition of the concept of empowerment has been given as an equalising process whose application aims to achieve balance between those with power and the powerless. By virtue of the fluidity of the concept is had also been noted that means and opportunities for providing access to power bases for the excluded remains contextually relevant. These shifts in the site of power however are not necessarily zero-sum processes as some would suggest, as a redistribution of power towards the empowerment of the disenfranchised would not necessarily involve a conflict wherein more power for certain sectors of the population would automatically entail less power for others. To use gender as an illustrative example, men would also benefit from the outcomes of women's empowerment both functionally in terms of improved and sustained development for all, as well as conclusively with the chance to live more equitably and explore new and more equitable roles.

The empowerment approach is thus power-enabling as opposed to power restricting in that it stresses the importance of a unified and wholistic approach to development and equality in general and to women in development more specifically. That is, it focuses both on issues of inequality and underdevelopment and sees these within a historical and cultural perspective, with the objective of empowering the oppressed, including women, within their contexts, to own and effectively engage in processes of their development. A pertinent critique of the empowerment approach however states that such dualistic identification of who has power and who does not may itself be problematic further complicating unnecessary social dichotomies.[126] DeGroot (1991) has noted however that the empowerment approach aims to transcend and avoid reproduction of the gender-blind and ethnocentric distinctions and dualisms

[125] Oxaal and Baden (1997)

which have underpinned dominant development studies and policy-making, and focus instead on the "real complexities of women's lives"[127]. She states that,

> It is important to address women's dual and sometimes contradictory experience of structures and processes within their own societies on the one hand, and on the other hand, the effect of external economic influences, of colonial and post-colonial interventions and of the presence of foreign experts, reformers and foreign examples and studies…[That is] it should be the task of any research analysis and policy-making concerned with women and development to clarify both the central importance of gender divisions, inequalities and conflicts, and also the interweaving of gender with other [social] inequalities in resources, power and influence. These need to be discussed in terms not only of structures and circumstances shaping women's lives, but also of women's own sense of their selves, their situation, their interests and of the real and conflicting localities, choices or commitments which women have formed historically and in the present.[128]

Specifically then, the empowerment approach focuses on:

- increasing women's control over the choices in their lives through participation in decision-making processes.

- increasing women's self-reliance and self confidence thus building their capacity as active players in society.

- Increasing access to and control over crucial material and non-material resources

- Raising awareness and motivating women to take steps to influence the direction of social and economic transformation.[129]

The main objective within the GAD/empowerment approach then is people-centred development with the equal participation of both women and men in decision-making procedures and broad programs of democratization supporting the advancement of equitable and sustainable development.[130] Intimately linked to this point is the already mentioned fact that initiatives targeted at the promotion of overall sustainable development and the removal or amelioration of obstacles to women's advancement, can only be successful when both women and men are fully affiliated

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[126] Sachs (1996)
[127] DeGroot (1991), pg 120
[128] *Ibid*, pg 120,122
[129] Østergaard, Lise (1992)
[130] Oxaal and Baden (1997)

and involved as equal participants and key stakeholders, in the search and identification of appropriate and all inclusive strategies.

2.5 Participation and Governance

The empowerment approach offers itself as a "process of awareness and capacity-building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action".[131] Indeed as Rasheed (1994) has noted,

> In the absence of…empowerment, not only will it be next to impossible to respond effectively to the needs of the poor and improve their conditions, but it will also be futile to attempt to revive the failing economies of Africa, hope to accelerate growth and development on a sustained and sustainable basis, or bring about the socio-political stability that are so vital for achieving these tasks.[132]

It is important to note here however, that this idea of participation as a viable means of achieving equality is not novel to the GAD movement. On the contrary, the concept of participation began to gain currency in the 1970s as a methodology of action and research particularly in Latin America then Asia.[133] Participatory action research (PAR) largely evolved from the experiences and perspective of activists and theorists at the grassroots level who aimed to initiate processes of social transformation through the populations themselves and their perceptions of their reality, thereby avoiding the degeneration of the development process into a "bureaucratic, top-down and dependency-creating institution". Genuine processes of dialogue and intervention referred to as 'dialogical intervention' and 'conscientisation' it was believed should replace the traditional "subjective-objective" relationship between "interveners and the intervened". This would thereby enable all oppressed peoples to organize themselves as "free subjects of their own destiny" capable of acting to defend their interests and advance towards shared goals of social change within a particular system.[134]

Popular participation defined as "the organisation of efforts to increase control over resources and movements for those hitherto excluded from such control"[135] was

[131] Karl (1995), pg 14
[132] Rasheed (1994), pg 62
[133] See Paulo Freire (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Orlando Fals-Borda and Anisur Rahman (1988) *Knowledge and People's Power.*
[134] Sachs (1996), pg 21
[135] Stiefel and Wolfe (1984), pg 12

then intended to promote human-centred development through the fulfillment of four key (but not exclusive) functions. These are,

1- The regeneration of the development discourse and its practices on the basis of an alternative perception and understanding of the realities to be addressed. A 'popular' knowledge system based upon and representing people's own culture and heritage would then be substituted for the dominant but irrelevant 'episteme' representing and ethnocentric, Western understanding of development.

2- Closing the gap between development practitioners and target populations by empowering the voiceless and thus providing development with a new source of legitimacy.

3- Opening unexplored avenues and untapped knowledge bases in the search for new and sustainable answers to the failure of conventional development strategies.

4- Ensuring that development policy and strategies respond to everyone's basic needs and more effectively eradicate poverty through acknowledgement of the diverse experiences of it.

More succinctly, participatory methods are intended to create new forms of knowledge, power and understandings of reality, appropriate to the fighting of oppressive trends. The possible utility of participation as a tool for the advancement of social equality then has already been recognized.

The adoption of participation as a strategy of development however remained in the peripheral spheres of the development community until the 1980s with the failure of state-led development models. That is, participation only emerged as the new development orthodoxy and rhetoric when development policy shifted within the international community from the 1970s to the application of SAPs and a reduction in the role of the state in development. This shift stimulated an increase in the number of NGOs whose work conveniently filled the gaps left by the state in terms of especially social service delivery. Concern with the corrupt state also meant that NGOs and other non-state actors became the preferred channels through which the international community would deliver aid funds.[136] As Jackson and Pearson (1998) have noted, "the attack on the state coincided with a rise in interest in the efficacy of organizations within civil society to respond more effectively to the 'real' needs of the people at the

[136] Dicklitch (1998)

'grassroots'".[137] More recently however, the World Bank has also linked participation to the concept of good governance, as part of the urgent search for responses to pervasive poverty and indebtedness in Africa. As Ndulu (2002) states,

> In the context of this incremental search for diagnostic answers and solutions, the pendulum has swung from emphasis on concerns with market failure…to a greater concern on…the need to create developmental states through improved governance structures and more inclusive political processes. Inclusiveness is broadly characterised by representational political processes, accountability and openness; participatory process in national policy choice; and feedback on outcomes and impact in public service delivery. [138]

Participatory governance then according to the current IFI perspective is linked to two desirable outcomes. One is democracy itself, as a means of assuring equitable distribution of resources, control, and responsibility; the other is better targeted and more efficiently delivered public services[139]. As Huther and Shah have stated indicators of 'good governance' should incorporate an evaluation of a government's ability to:

1) Ensure political transparency and voice for all citizens;
2) Provide efficient and effective public services;
3) Promote the health and well-being of its citizens;
4) Create a favourable climate for stable economic growth.

The argument is that the establishment of public systems and institutions of accountability, and the democratic engagement of civil society in national policy debate and formulation will play a crucial role in meeting the developmental needs, interests and aspirations of the people.[140] More precisely, the key to the institutionalization of democratic governments anchored in an ethos of accountability and transparency "euphemistically referred to as 'good governance'" is believed to be an active and developed civil society with enough capacity to effectively challenge the state and hold it accountable.[141]

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[137] Jackson and Pearson (1998), pg 4
[138] Ndulu (2002), pg 2
[139] Viera da Cunha and Junho Pena (1997), pg 1
[140] Reuben (2002); Alence (2004)
[141] Ndegwa (1996)

Whaites (2002) has referred to this as the "democratizing of development dialogue", a trend which has recognized the fact that "it is difficult to implement and administer effective programs over a long period of time without broad-based support".[142] Genuine national ownership of the overall development process will involve full citizen participation, in the design and implementation of development initiatives, which will serve to promote transparency and equity as well as a collective responsibility with regards to the prioritization and attainment of identified development goals by government.[143] Liberal-democratic theory insists that the existence of autonomous organizations and independent centres of power is necessary for the appropriate checks and balances to central and local abuses of power, as well as alternative structures to the monopolies of the state be established.[144]

Hoebink (2000) on the other hand has referred to this shift in trend as a 'marriage of convenience' between orthodox and participatory approaches to development; a process whereby the dominant narrative has subsumed within it "key words associated with alternative development discourses – 'bottom-up', 'people-centered', 'participatory' – [which] have served to qualify, but not dislodge, its foundation."[145] In this way concepts challenging the dominant narrative are liable to lose their revolutionary clout and be coopted by power centers as a positive asset for set processes and planned changes whose main parameters have already been decided. With respect to the HIPC Debt Relief Initiative, as opposed to offering a new and redirected strategy, it has been claimed that PRSPs have served only to afford the World Bank and IMF new 'leverage' in their relations with countries in need of debt relief and concessional lending. This in the sense that the recent insistence on participatory processes in the formulation of the PRSP is simply one more condition to be met by HIPCs in order to access necessary funds for their development, further compromising HIPCs' economic sovereignty.[146]

Birdsall and Williamson (2002) have maintained however, that "debt relief is not a magic bullet" emphasizing that "there is also of course, a whole agenda of domestic reforms that developing countries themselves need to pursue. [These] span governance, macroeconomic discipline…institutional infrastructure…public

[142] Fierlbeck (1997)
[143] Ayerigg (1998)
[144] Bratton (1990)
[145] Brock et. al (2001)
[146] Whaites (2001); Schmidtz (1995)

expenditure on basic social services and other priorities"[147]. The achievement of these priorities is necessary if the intended goals of debt relief under the initiative are to be attained. Generally, the HIPC initiative aims to ensure effective and efficient use of released debt relief funds for poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development. The argument being that by reducing the "burden of debt service by poor countries to multilateral organizations and other official donors, [concessional debt relief will] allow debt-laden countries to devote more of their own resources to health, education and other programs to reduce poverty and improve people's well-being"[148]. Additionally, the initiative it is claimed has the potential to reduce what is referred to as the 'debt overhang' - the negative impact of debt on investment incentives contributing to decreased private capital flows necessary to generate economic growth.[149]

Despite this usurpation of the concept of participation into the dominant development dialogue of the IFIs however, greater emphasis by policy makers on the benefits of participation has created a favourable climate for the interjection of genuine concerns from the grassroots onto the development agenda, and especially for women who have historically been the most neglected in development.[150] Similarly, McGee et. al (2001) found that civil society participation in the PRSP process added value in a range of ways including widening public awareness as well as beneficially orienting the process and its leading actors towards the realities of poverty beyond analytical debate. There is also evidence that civil society participation has affected the content of PRSPs with regard to "issues of marginalisation, exclusion, regional differences in deprivation [and so on]... These contributions derive from the strongly multi-dimensional perspectives on poverty which civil society analysis… has brought to the PRSP process"[151].

As Karl (1995) has stated, no true democracy or economic growth, and no true people's participation in governance and development can be achieved without the equal involvement of men and women in all spheres of life and levels of decision-making. Specifically, as the experience of poverty is gendered (women and men

[147] Birdsall and Williamson, (2002), pg 101
[148] Ndulu (2002), pg 3
[149] Boote and Thugge (1997)
[150] Karl (1995)
[151] McGee et. al (2001)

experience poverty differently)[152], contemporary discourse on the necessity of broad-based, inclusive and participatory development processes and initiatives has of necessity also highlighted the imperative to acknowledge the gender factor in the formulation of national poverty reduction strategy. In other words, the worsening socio-economic conditions and marginalized status of low-income women in HIPCs[153] has provided the rationale and focus for arguments detailing the importance of targeting and including these women and their perspectives within the PRSP process. The primary contention is that unless macro development policies acknowledge and are formulated on the basis of female experiences and perceptions of poverty, the subordinate and poverty-stricken status of women will be further aggravated.[154]

In order for women's perspectives to be validly considered as significant to the formulation of national economic growth and poverty reduction strategies however, communication processes wherein women are afforded the opportunity to eloquently and confidently express their concerns will need to be developed. This is especially important in sub-Saharan Africa contexts, where national machineries and government/public agencies remain largely unaware of and unresponsive to the particular needs of women. In this region, barriers such as high levels of illiteracy, lack of access to transport and so on, decrease the probability of low-income women engaging meaningfully in national level participatory processes. Indeed as Agarwal (1997) has aptly noted, simply allowing women a given space within which they may voice their concerns will not necessarily enable them to fully exercise their agency in decision-making. Rather, strategies are needed to increase women's awareness of their rights, assertiveness and vocal influence in public policy debate. To this end, one identified strategy through which women's effective involvement in the PRSP process at national level can be secured, is the establishment and support of women's grassroots initiatives, organizations and social networks.

Edwards and Hulme (2000) have challenged such an assertion, interrogating the legitimacy and relevance of the role of NGOs and CSOs who claim to represent the interests of the poor within developing countries where the presence of democratically elected governments has been increasing since the early 1990s. Oxaal

[152] Baden and Milward (1997); Floro (2001); Muntemba and Blackden (2000); Kabeer (1994)
[153] World Bank (1989); UNDP (1995)
[154] Floro (2001)

and Baden (1997) however have maintained that NGOs can provide the opportunity for the articulation of women's interests, independent of distortions that may arise from party politics and government interests. Nevertheless it is important to note that while women's organisations and NGOs are key partners for gender initiatives, they are not always the best or only partners. Rather, alliances must be created broadly across sectors and interests in order to not only generate new synergies and bring new competences to the gender arena, but also to assure that gender concerns will be addressed by those with the necessary capabilities to do so.

The United Nations reports that the feminization of poverty is a global and growing phenomenon with women comprising 70% of the world's 1.3 billion poor – Poverty has a woman's face[155]. Raising the status of women and girl children therefore will improve not only the economic and social development of countries, but in changing the unequal balance of decision-making power and control in the relations of men and women – in the household, in the workplace, in the community, in government and in the international arena – a more progressive and equity-based future can be assured. Equal female participation in policy/project identification, design, implementation and evaluation and assessment must therefore be ensured[156]. The irrefutable assertion is that the systemic exclusion of women and their perspectives in the functional top policy and decision-making organs and mechanisms of development has adversely affected or even reversed, desired equitable and sustainable development, at local, national, regional and global levels.

In attempts to address and redress this predicament for women, there is the imperative to adopt and promote gender-sensitive and gender-equity approaches. This should be accomplished while avoiding top-down impositions of externally derived cultural ideas by the donor agency, as well as the application of blanket definitions in diverse contexts. Such a process therefore would necessarily take into account the relevance and feasibility of proposed developmental interventions in terms of the political, social and economic conditions of the context, subsequently encouraging equitable and sustainable development.

In designing equality based and sustainable development programs then, it is imperative that national governments, donor organizations and development planners

[155] UNDP (1995), pg 4

take into account the contexts of women, and be aware of how their policies might impact on women's various roles. The UNDP Gender in Development Policy (GIDP) has explicitly stated that promoting gender sensitive macroeconomic policy and poverty indicators through the integration of gender analyses and gender equality practices in poverty reduction is necessary to foster an enabling environment for sustainable development. Particularly, at the national level, it should be the responsibility of the government to ensure assertive levels of gender-awareness at all levels of developmental processes and practices. According to Longwe, such awareness requires the recognition of three essential elements namely,

- Women have particular and special needs;
- Women constitute a disadvantaged group relative to men, with regard to female levels of welfare and access to control over factors of production;
- Women's development entails increasing equality and empowerment for women, relative to men[157].

Such gender-awareness would necessarily be grounded on, and inseparable from cultural sensitivity, emanating from an awareness of women's historical realities and cultural contexts and recognition that the absence of women in nearly all the key criteria and benchmarks at national level adversely affects the attainment of equitable human-centred development. One of the ways in which such gender awareness may be cultivated is through a gender analysis. This process entails the interrogation of how gender factors manifest themselves in any given community or society, including the identification of gender gaps.

Wallace and March (1991) maintain that "the primary practical requirement for incorporating a gender analysis into development is to consult with and listen to women so that their roles and resulting needs are better understood".[158] As such, it will be possible to identify and define women's practical and strategic gender needs and interests in consultation with the women (and men) within the community targeted for development initiatives. Maxine Molyneux (1985) has specifically highlighted the importance of addressing these practical and strategic gender needs

[156] Sara Longwe has identified five criteria for the assessment of levels of equality – welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control – these are outlined in detail in Wallace, T. & March, C. (1991), pgs 151-152
[157] Longwe, Sara Hlupekile, in Wallace, T. & March, C. (1991), pg 150
[158] Brett, April, *Why is Gender a Development Issue?*, in Wallace, T. & March, C. (1991), pg 6

and interests, for equal and sustainable development.[159] For women, practical needs and interests here refer to those concerns associated with their biological roles, for example, health care, sanitation and the availability of clean and portable water amongst others. On the other hand, strategic gender needs and interests are related to those concerns regarding the gendered subordination of the female sex, addressing for example the gender division of labour and unequal access of women, as compared to men, to vital sites of power and control. Glaring gender disparities that illustrate the degree to which women's concerns have been marginalised from sectors such as education and health, as well as their interests subordinated with regard to such issues as wage employment, etc. will then be more adequately addressed.

[159] Akekar (2001) has also emphasised the inter-related nature of women's practical and strategic needs so that demand for a practical need can lead to a strategic shift of power for women.

III. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The dependent variable of interest in this study is the Uganda national poverty reduction strategy, as encapsulated within that country's PEAP/PRSP. To reiterate, access to debt relief funds under the HIPC initiative is conditional upon the submission, by the respective HIPCs, of comprehensive PRSPs which constitute and elucidate a distilled summary of a given country's proposed plan for poverty alleviation. The PRSP has been proposed by the World Bank and IMF as the most viable and appropriate framework through which government accountability as well as national ownership and transparency of national poverty reduction strategies can be achieved. The central claim within this perspective is that the inclusion, within the PRSP process, of diverse representative groups such as government, NGOs, women's grassroots organizations, CBOs and other civil society groups within the wider population, will ensure the validation of popular experience and thus promote greater ownership of national poverty reduction and development strategies.[160]

In relation to this proposition, a persuasive argument emanating from the grassroots levels posits that the inclusion and participation of such diverse groups in national policy dialogue will be a useful measure for ensuring the legitimization of the knowledge base and knowledge systems of all stakeholders. A potential consequence of this will be meaningful contribution to the search for effective systems and solutions to the poverty crises within national borders, the African continent in general, and the globe as a whole. While there has been increasing recognition that participatory processes are necessary for the formulation of effective and relevant policies however, little research exists with regard to the methods that may be utilized for the enhancement of this process for women and the possible outcomes. This is largely due to the current and contemporary nature of the PRSP process, and also to the traditional neglect of issues of gender within international development discourse. Consequently, gender has largely been relegated to a marginal status in the development priorities of governments in many HIPC countries.

Recognizing the importance of constant review and assessment in the search for further knowledge and solutions for improving the well-being of all, the imperative to contribute to the appraisal of poverty alleviation measures is evident.

[160] Recall that the underlying IFI assumption here is that the masses, being the owners of abundant factors of production, will automatically support the liberalisation of national economies and integration into the capitalist global system, and thus push through successful reforms.

Since women bear the brunt of impoverishment and are doubly disadvantaged as a result of their sex and gender, it is important to particularly address the effectiveness of efforts directed at a better understanding, appreciation and inclusion of gender within development and other social relations. This is because, in the absence of equitable gender-based macro development policies, female populations will continue to detrimentally suffer restricted access to the necessary resources for, as well as the distribution of growth benefits. To address this condition and as a vital end in itself, feminists have advocated more insistently for the empowerment of women. The assertion is that the amplified voice and enhanced agency of women will instrumentally reinforce women's systemic participation in development initiatives as well as promote greater gender awareness and equality. In other words, the culminative results of women's empowerment will catalyse and support more effective poverty reduction measures and thus be conducive to sustainable development. Such 'gender lenses' it is argued may be most effective in telescoping and addressing issues related to female discrimination and gender inequality. More succinctly, there is potential for the empowerment of women as an approach to enhance female participation in national level development dialogue and strategy, as well as promote the mainstreaming of gender issues by targeting the participation of women in the development process.

Beyond the level of theoretical discourse however, for such empowerment to be practically meaningful, it must translate into tangible and demonstrable outcomes. This in terms of, for example, increased levels of participation for low-income women in decision making bodies and processes, a heightening of awareness regarding the exercise of human rights, increased female access to education, and thus more opportunity and ability to engage with information, and enhanced self-assertiveness among other factors, providing women with vital life skills and a suitable context within which to apply these. Through such a process of empowerment, women complement and facilitate community transformation. It has been acknowledged that an appropriate means to foster and support such processes of female empowerment and their participation in decision-making may be through interventionist action by female networks of NGOs at the national, regional and international levels and the effective mobilization of women's groups and organizations at the community and local level. It has also been argued that where socio-cultural and traditional constraints frustrate the free expression of women's perspectives, strengthening the

capacity of women's organizations and networks would augment women's representational voice as well as their capacity to fashion the instruments necessary for the fulfillment of their own developmental and growth needs. More explicitly, gender-based NGOs may intervene to assist female empowerment and foster their participation through the creation of appropriate spaces, for the necessary dialogue between those in positions of political, economic and social power and women at the local level, thus bridging the often wide gap between the local and national arenas. The potential contribution that NGOs with a gender focus and civil society initiatives can make to the empowerment of low-income women and their participation at the national level is therefore of interest as an independent variable.

Through the application of a GAD/empowerment framework (elucidated below), the participation and contribution of gender based and focused NGOs and CBOs will be assessed with regards to the concrete gains made, in terms of the visibility of gender within the Uganda PEAP/PRSP document. Such 'visibility' will be evaluated with specific reference to:

- Gender Objectives: In order to assess the inclusion of gender concerns within Uganda's PEAP/PRSP, it is important to analyse the gender dimensions of the proposed strategies with regard to the gender concerns/problems that will be addressed, as well as with regard to the identified goals for meeting women's practical and strategic gender needs. Mayoux (1995) contends that little empirical evidence exists where particular programs without an explicit gender focus have empowered women to share control of development processes. As such an explicit gender focus is important.
- Gender Roles: As has been discussed, both women and men play substantial economic roles. These however are not distributed evenly across sectors nor are the demands on women's and men's labour and time equal. Time allocation studies throughout sub-Saharan Africa have confirmed for example that women play a preponderant role in agriculture (about 70% of all agricultural labour) while men dominate in the industry and manufacturing sectors of national economies. Additionally, women due to their triple gender roles work longer hours than men and remain primarily responsible for human resource production and nurturing.[161] As such it is important to ensure that targeted sectors for growth and strengthening

[161] Jacobson (1992)

do not exclude those sectors (such as the informal sector of which women make up 60%) within which women work, nor disregard the variations based on gender, on the time demands of labourers. Furthermore, care should be taken to ensure that the gender division of labour does not confine women to certain areas of 'work' that limit their access to the benefits of developmental growth.[162]

- Gender-based Assets Equality: Evidence in sub-Saharan Africa points to gender disparities in access to, ownership and control of the critical assets and resources necessary for poverty eradication. This in terms of, at times, lack of legal rights, but more importantly as a result of traditional laws and institutions.[163] Such resources include productive assets such as land, financial capital and infrastructure; human capital assets such as education and health; and social capital assets relating to household relations and participation. Significantly, it has also become widely recognised that there are inequalities in resource allocation within the household that comprise women's net benefits from development.[164] Consequently an awareness of intra-household gender dynamics, including for example the incidence of gender violence, is also of importance to assure equal resource distribution. In all cases, women's more limited access to and control of these assets hampers their efforts to reduce poverty and diminishes the effectiveness of poverty reduction more generally.[165]
- Gender-disaggregated Data: Making gender visible in data gathering and in its analysis through statistics and indicators on the situation of women and men in all sectors of society, is of vital importance to sustainable development, and a useful tool for promoting gender equality. Gender statistics have an essential role to play in the formulation of policies and in monitoring progress towards full equality.[166] Specifically, gender disaggregated data can be used to understand the impact of budgetary allocations and enable the re-allocation of budgets for gender equality.[167] A useful approach is the development of 'women's budgets' or gender budget analysis. Women's budgets analyse the efficiency and equity implications of budget allocations and the policies and programs that lie behind them[168] and

[162] Baden and Milward (1997)
[163] Ostergaard (1992); Baden and Milward (1997)
[164] Goetz and Gupta (1994); Anker (1993)
[165] Muntemba and Blackden (2002)
[166] *Ibid*
[167] Akerkar (2001)
[168] Muntemba and Blackden (2000)

can provide information as to whether gender concerns are acknowledged within the development initiative.[169]

The following sections present the findings of the gender analysis, as well as discuss the identified windows of opportunity for gender, enclosed within the participatory processes surrounding the Uganda PRSP/PEAP.

[169] Akerkar (2001)

IV. GENDER ASPECTS OF THE PEAP VISION AND GOALS

The PEAP framework has identified several dimensions of poverty, each of which has immediate and critical gender implications. They are: Low levels of income and consumption, physical insecurity, poor health, low levels of education, disempowerment, unemployment and high work load, isolation and lack of voice in design and implementation of public policy.

Based on these dimensions the implementation plan has been anchored in, and has targeted four strategic clusters of concern. These clusters represent the overall vision and goals of the PEAP in terms of how its implementation will target poverty eradication. The clusters and their basic characteristics will be described briefly with a focus on where they create possibilities and opportunities for gender-focused sector level programs and projects.

- Increasing the low incomes associated with absolute poverty levels

Income levels are pervasively low in Uganda making it impossible for large numbers of households to meet their basic needs in terms of education, health, food, clothing and shelter. "In 1997 44% of the population was estimated to consume less than what is required to meet the basic needs of life."[170] The PEAP is meant to marshal public access and effort at improving these intertwined dimensions of household, gender-based and individual poverty.

At the household level and within it there has been recognition within the PRSP that "unequal sharing of resources…reflects not only cultural factors but unequal access to education and physical assets such as land, in which women are disadvantaged"[171]. In efforts to raise the low incomes of the Ugandan population, such focus on the household level allows for the identification of persistent inequalities and thus the kind of interventions via the PEAP that would facilitate and catalyse the formulation of strategies and indicators in support of improved quality of life for women and men.

It is important to note however that concrete procedures by which to reduce gender-based income inequality with regard to wage differentials between men and women are not delineated within the PEAP. This despite the fact that a number of studies have confirmed that women on average earn less than men within the labour

[170] PEAP pg 8
[171] *Ibid*

market as a result of gender-based discrimination.[172] Specifically, the PRSP has identified accelerated agricultural growth rates as a means to achieving higher incomes. However, while it has been noted that agriculture is a sector dominated by women, nevertheless the planned intervention including transfer of technology, access to rural finance and access to markets does not explicitly take into account gender factors that might inhibit women benefiting from such initiatives. For instance, the focus within this section on labour intensive approaches to infrastructural development for agriculture because "it is cheaper"[173], is evidence of the lack of consideration for women's time constraints related to their reproductive roles. On the other hand, the PRSP does note significantly that inequality pervades land ownership, and in particular the document acknowledges the fact that women's land rights need to be strengthened further.

- Raising educational levels and achievements

In as much as poverty is a cross-cutting disempowering condition, education is a cross-cutting empowering tool and one of the critical pathways by which to promote social and economic development. Increasing education levels and achievements, particularly amongst the more disadvantaged socio-economic and gender categories, has a direct positive correlation to the eradication of poverty. That is, education is the investment with the highest social returns in that it is the catalyst that increases the impact of other investments in health, industry, agriculture etc.

In 1997, Uganda introduced the policy of free education for four children in every family. As a result primary school enrolment increased markedly from 2.6 million learners in 1996 to 6.5 million in 2000. Gross enrolment rates rose to 128% in 1997 and 145% in 1999. While this admirably progressive, for the purposes of the gender analysis proposed in this essay, it is recommended that it may be important for the PRSP document to explicitly state that at least one, and at best two of the four children per family being educated for free, be female(s). This would translate into 25% or 50% respectively of female children per household being offered free primary education. Additionally, the PRSP recognizes that in order for the impacts generated by free primary education to significantly trigger the gradual attainment of sustainable development, mechanisms by which to maintain such gains in enrolment rates are necessary. As such, the goal of raising educational levels and achievements through

[172] Anker and Hein (1986); Birdsall and Sabot (1991)

the PEAP constitutes an important aspect of the framework. In the PEAP document, it is stated that the challenge currently faced by Uganda "is to encourage children to remain in school and to acquire relevant skills for adult life".[174] In order to achieve this, three critical objectives are identified

- Maintain universal primary school enrolment
- Reduce drop-out rates and raise completion rates
- Raise the cognitive skills of primary school graduates.

The PRSP however neglects to explicitly propose mechanisms by which to retain girls in school. Therefore, it is recommended that a fourth objective should be included to the above namely to ensure the active visibility and mainstreaming of gender in all initiatives undertaken under the ambit of education at sectoral, district and local levels. A parallel strengthening measure involves the disaggregation of educational date along gender lines. This would 'unmask' the blanket categories and provide insights into the nature of inequalities at household and local community levels and thus contribute to the alleviation of gender inequity.

- Improvement of People's Health

Policies aimed at improving the health status of vulnerable groups are an important feature of any development strategy. This justified by the recognition that "good health is a basic right as well as a critical determinant of economic productivity".[175] This has been recognised within the Uganda PEAP, which states that "illness is a dimension of poverty which affects all income groups in Uganda, although it affects the poor particularly badly".[176] The gender-specific manifestations of this dimension of poverty however are neither identified nor explicitly stated. The gender disaggregation of health related data is therefore another recommended avenue through which to incorporate gender aspects. This is especially important as studies have consistently indicated that the double constraints of poverty and gender often translate into poor women being the least likely to have access to appropriate health care and treatment.[177]

The PEAP further states that, "health outcomes depend on at least six factors: incomes, education, information, health services, water supply and sanitation". With

[173] PEAP pg 14
[174] *Ibid*, pg 10
[175] Baden and Milward (1997), pg 39
[176] PEAP, pg 10
[177] Baden and Milward (1997)

regards to education for example, "studies of household data in Uganda have shown that both education and specific information about the causes of illness significantly reduce child mortality".[178] This confirms other findings derived from studies on the intersection between gender and education in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, namely that the education of women is positively correlated to the reduction of child mortality rates. Indeed because of women's reproductive roles, each of the above mentioned factors is closely correlated with gender relations and the gender division of labour at the household level.

To further demonstrate the necessity of a specific and committed focus on gender within the PEAP it is important to note the minimal attention given to the issue of HIV/AIDS. While recognising that AIDS is a crosscutting issue, the Ugandan PRSP neglects to elaborate on intended measures to combat the epidemic. It may be argued that this is as a result of the well documented previous success within this country of containing the virus. Nevertheless, it remains questionable that such an assertion offers viable justification for the absence within the PEAP of specific policy on the issue. Significantly however, there is recognition with the PEAP of the gender dimension of HIV/AIDS, specifically with regard to cultural factors. It is noted that "in some parts of the country, single women cannot get access to land. Finding a partner then becomes a matter of survival and people in these circumstances take risks which they would otherwise avoid".[179] While this acknowledgement of the gender dimensions of the epidemic has not been directly translated into policy, it is appropriate to applaud the Uganda PRSP for its role in the demystification of this contentious issue.

- Giving Voice to Poor Communities

One of the main features of the Ugandan PEAP is to address the isolation and disempowerment of the poor. An important strategy identified in this respect is to "give voice to poor communities" thereby enabling them to confront their powerlessness, and give them the capacity to control and direct their own lives. Thus one of the main goals of the PEAP/PRSP of Uganda is the empowering of vulnerable groups. Under this goal, the stipulated indicators are access of disabled people to necessary equipment, economic activity of disabled people to earn a living, and the number and living conditions of child-headed households. The establishment of a

[178] PEAP pg 10

Poverty Action Fund (PAF) to which all savings from debt relief funds are directed is commendable as evidence of genuine commitment to the empowerment of the poor. Indeed data has shown that the total savings made from debt relief in 1999/2000 went directly towards the reduction of poverty through the PAF.

Nevertheless, although the PRSP recognizes that "all government policies should reflect the importance of distributional considerations of gender, of children's rights and of environment impacts"[180], there remains little evidence of efforts to actually do so. That is, from a gender analysis perspective, the omission of women as an explicit category of the vulnerable and disempowered, especially as it has been highlighted, women comprise the majority within this category constitutes a significant gap. A pragmatic recommendation then is that firstly a significant portion of the Poverty Action Fund should be earmarked and redirected specifically towards supporting the policies and services which directly affect women. Furthermore, it would also be more constructive to include gender-based household surveys into the PEAP goals. Using gender as an entry point for such surveys would comprise one effective strategy towards giving poor women a voice.

The key findings of this analysis then have been that despite commitment to the eradication of poverty, significant gaps with regard to gender in the PRSP will continue to compromise the full attainment of the state objective. The next section therefore identifies possible points of intervention through which the mainstreaming of gender in the PRSP may be assured.

[179] *Ibid*, pg 11
[180] *Ibid* pg 13

V. INTERVENTION POINTS FOR THE MAINSTREAMING OF GENDER IN THE ONGOING REVISION OF THE PEAP

This analysis has identified that the gender component of the Uganda PRSP/PEAP framework is not explicit enough, being only implied under the blanket reference to poor groups, and 'vulnerable' social categories. The next section therefore, focuses on the areas and points of the framework that may be used as the entry points for more meaningful integration and mainstreaming of gender issues and concerns. In particular it is noted that the planning and implementation frameworks of the PEAP provide an in-built flexibility that allows for the modification and enhancement of the stated goals.

- The Periodic Continuous Process of PEAP Revision. Every two to three years, the PEAP will be revised. This activity should offer on-going opportunities for gender-impact monitoring, and the identification of gaps that should be addressed. This process should be accompanied by the continued development of gender-related indicators and benchmarks.

- Structural administrative and institutional levels of PEAP implementation constitute other useful entry points for gender mainstreaming. The sector-based implementation plan spans across sectoral (ministerial) level, district level, to the local council and community levels. Such an arrangement should facilitate a systematic integration of gender at each of these levels.

- The PEAP requirement that all new policies be budgeted offers another opportunity for inclusion and legitimisation of the gender component in the framework. The comprehensive costing of gender-based programs and projects which reveals the full implication of gender funding requirements and levels, should provided the basis for adjusting the government's PEAP expenditure programs.

- The assessment of impacts of PEAP plans on civil society and on the targeted beneficiaries through the application of a wide range of monitoring techniques – technical assessment of progams/projects, statistical household surveys, more

participatory methods etc. – opens up ‘windows’ of opportunity to include and integrate emerging gender related needs.

This dissertation proposes and recommends then that the PEAP gender mainstreaming process be part and parcel of the policy planning, implementation, monitoring and revision of actions agreed to by all the stakeholders. That is, the continuous process of revision built into the PEAP entails the establishment of a series of mechanisms to facilitate consistent and diverse feedback from all stakeholders. Through such mechanisms, gender concerns could translate into concrete policy and program proposals.

VI. PARTICIPATION OF UGANDAN CSOs IN THE PEAP PROCESS

The following section attempts to explain the noticeable absence of gender concerns within the Uganda PRSP through a description and analysis of the participatory processes surrounding its formulation. Of particular interest are the modes of interaction between the Uganda government, citizens through the CSO task force, and IFI representatives. With regards to this, the current political regime in Uganda will be discussed, followed by an evaluation of CSO participation and the role of the donor community.

3.1 The Uganda National Resistance Movement (NRM) Regime

The current political regime within Uganda, the NRM, has been referred to as a 'unitary republic'[181] or 'movement system'[182]. Instituted in 1995 with the promulgation of Uganda's current constitution, this system under the leadership of President Yoweri Museveni aims to support popular participation while concurrently limiting the opposition of political parties. The claim is that such a consensus based regime is more appropriate to the Uganda and African context than neoliberal democratic multi-party democracy. To quote President Museveni,

> In Africa we do not have the social structures that make party politics viable…[as] there are no economic or political interests to tie people together across ethnic lines Africans…understand democracy…we have practiced it for centuries. In our own way. The individual must have a say in how he is governed…knows who he can trust to represent his interests. We elect individuals not parties…In this way… the interests of everyone in the country is represented, not just that of the people belonging to the biggest party. And in Africa, we make our decisions by consensus , not confrontation.[183]

The NRM therefore refutes the claim that it is a one-party state, maintaining that the preferred no-party approach is a means of avoiding the sectarianism and competitive social divisions which have been the main cause of Uganda's violent political instability.[184] Alternatively, the NRM regime aims to uphold the inherent values of democracy through the Local Council (LC) system.

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[181] Central Intelligence Agency – World Fact Book
[182] Uganda Constitution
[183] Versi (1995), pg 10
[184] Dicklitch (1998)

Envisioned as a vital source of social mobilization and national cohesion, the primary function of LC system is to act as a democratic source of control and resistance to any tendency on the part of government officials towards the abuse of authority, human rights and corruption.[185] As such there are five levels of the LC system (see fig.1 delineating the structure of this system) intended to afford transparency to all levels of the state bureaucracy. It is useful to note at this point that the inclusion of women is theoretically integrated into each level of this system, and that Uganda has been widely commended for being the country in sub-Saharan Africa with the best gender indicators. As identified in the Resistance Council and Committees (Statute 6) Ammendments (1989) the main functions of the LC levels are, to identify local problems and find solutions; formulate and review local development plans; pass annual budget estimates at the district level; exercise judicial powers dealing with civic or customary matters and make bye-laws, and any other functions the Ministry of Local Government may indicate as necessary.

The LC system has proven to some extent to be a "cost-effective mechanism for settling disputes, maintaining security, improving infrastructure, and at the district level, making policy, managing local revenue, and supervising the work of the district administrator"[186]. Increasingly however, the system has come to be more limited by the top-down bureaucracies of the state. Azfar, Kahkonen and Meagher (2001) have related this fact to the decentralization of Uganda within a unitary structure.

Decentralization, it is argued, will improve efficiency by fostering accountability, reducing corruption and increasing cost-effectiveness in the government.[187] This because sub-national governments are closer to the people and consequently citizens more aware of and involved in the actions of sub-national government. The assumptions within this view however may be incorrect as decentralization may also lead to more systemic corruption. This is because while decentralization will diffuse authority and resources within the system to lower levels, such a strategy simultaneously establishes a system of fiscal allocation, monitoring and decision-making that is top-down in nature with government as the key authority. Within such a system, as Dicklitch (1998) states,

> Co-option may occur because the state seeks to direct participatory aspirations through alternative mechanisms

[185] *Ibid*
[186] Oloka-Onyango (1991), pg 134
[187] Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne (1993)

> which it has established and which it regards as legitimate and satisfactory. Although the state does not oppose community involvement, it seeks to neutralize spontaneous participatory actions hoping to channel them through established mechanisms.

In other words, within such a system the state would support community participation but only for ulterior and selfish motives. "Among these are a desire to use community participation for purposes of political and social control and a recognition that community participation can reduce the costs of social development programs and facilitate implementation".[188] That is the possibility still exists that sub-national government structures may be captured by local elites with ties to government, potentially compromising good governance and public service delivery.[189] Such a situation is encouraged by the general lack of accountability of LC officials beyond the local level, where the mechanisms for assuring this are unoperational.[190] There is therefore a significant gap between the populist efforts at the local level and the functioning of state bureaucracy at the topmost levels.[191]

True political participation then, defined as "action which is directed at influencing (controlling, changing, supporting or sharing in) policy making and/or execution in a political structure"[192], is lacking. Dicklitch (1998) has described the situation in Uganda instead as a manipulative form of political participation, arguing that NGOs and other non-state actors fit into the LC system as facilitators of NRM objectives and not necessarily as alternative centres and sources of power. No checks or balances currently exist for the Executive power, with the opposition from political parties, trade unions, CSOs etc incorporated into and controlled by the regime under the umbrella of no-party politics. Nevertheless, Dicklitch (1998) also recognizes that the regime maintains a strong populist image, offering stability, the consolidation of national unity and the restoration of security after years of unrest. This makes the line between no-party and single-party rule very thin in Uganda. Thus although the NRM regime is not authoritarian per se, it is a 'pseudo-democracy', incorporating opposition where possible and oppressing where necessary. This continues to allow the regime significant control of the public arena which could also partially account for the success of Uganda's reform process. On the other hand, the significant

[188] Midgley (1986), pg 41
[189] Azfar, Kahkonen and Meagher (2001)
[190] Dicklitch (1998)
[191] Hansen and Twaddle (1988)

engagement of the Uganda Government in participatory development processes should also be recognized. An exemplary instance is the establishment of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED). The objective of this participatory project was to collect data and information from poor people regarding their own perceptions and definitions of poverty. The Uganda government ensured that these research findings were included in the PRSP. Such inputs "widened the scope and definition of poverty and broadened ownership"[193] of the PRSP.

3.2 Participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

With regards to the operationalisation of participatory processes surrounding the PRSP, it is important to note from the outset that the demand to produce a PRSP "coincided with the desire by Government to revise the PEAP, a government framework for poverty eradication that was first developed in 1997 after two years of extensive consultations in which CSOs participated. It was therefore decided by government and agreed with donors that the Uganda PEAP would also be the Uganda PRSP"[194] as it fulfilled the requirement by the IFIs of inclusive and participatory governance as a condition for aid and debt relief.[195]

The consultation processes surrounding the formulation of the Uganda PRSP involved several dimensions, namely:

- consultations between governments and donors
- consultations between government and civil society
- consultations within civil society

The participation of citizens and civil society has been channelled through a CSO task force, organised through the agency of two lead NGOs, one national – the Uganda Debt Network – and the other international – Oxfam. The taskforce was comprised of representatives from both international NGOs, for example Action Aid (UK), VECO Uganda (Belgium), SNV (Dutch) etc. and national NGOs operating in Uganda including Action for Development (ACFODE) and the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET). Research institutions such as the Centre for Basic Research

[192] Hayward (1973)
[193] Gariyo (2002)
[194] *Ibid*
[195] CSO Taskforce (2000)

and MISR. The Uganda unit of the Forum for Women Educationalists (FAWE), a regional NGO based in Kampala, were also included as part of the Task Force.[196]

The task force developed a plan for the wider participation of civil society in the PEAP process. Overall, more than 644 participants were present, at a ratio of 405 males to 239 females (see fig. ii). The taskforce organised country-wide discussions and consultations with grassroots communities under government mandate. This marked the recognition by Ugandan national officials that national CSOs retained stronger networks in poor rural areas and possessed superior experience in facilitating workshops than government machinery.[197] "Moreover, the government did not dictate the agenda of the CSOs in the PEAP/PRSP consultations, nor the methodology to be used in CSO consultations with community people".[198] Ugandan CSO participation involved several activities:

- Organising national and regional meetings for bringing together community representatives and local leaders for discussion and work on the PEAP, and compiling reports on this
- Mobilising other stakeholders to input into the process
- Bringing in the media into the PEAP process through broadcasting information on radio and television spots
- Critiquing the whole process with a view to assuring that any critical issues originally left out in the initial PRSP were included.

The CSO task force served as a crucial link between civil society, district and local level communities, and the ministry of finance, planning and economic development and may be credited with the diversification of perspectives on poverty within the PRSP process.

Despite this however, only a relatively small group of CSOs was involved consistently and heavily in the process, with their 'participation' generally limited to consultations. Uganda CSOs state that they "felt left out of the later stages of the process, when they were excluded from the discussions that turned the Uganda PEAP into the PRSP…presented to the IMF/World Bank Executive Boards."[199] Although there were numerous contacts with government officials at all stages in the preparation of the PEAP, the opinion of the CSO taskforce was that there were too

[196] Gariyo (2002)
[197] McGee et. al (2001)
[198] Gariyo (2002)

few contacts with donors and more specifically the IMF and the World Bank missions in the preparation of the IMF version of the PRSP document. "The few meetings that took place between the missions and CSOs were more like verification meetings to find out the level of civil society participation and the quality of inputs".[200]

It is important to note however, that such CSO critiques of the PEAP seem to have centered more around operational issues, implementation and monitoring, rather than on the identification of conceptual gaps affecting their constituents, and the need for sharper delineation of the 'poor' and 'marginalised'. Thus the critique from the CSO taskforce neglected to mention the absence of an *explicit* expose of linkages between poverty and women/gender in the Uganda PRSP. This has been identified by Thin et. al (2001) as a main weakness of many PRSPs in that lack of specificity about key categories of 'poor people' compromises the specificity and blurs the dimensions of anti-poverty strategies. That is "disaggregation of the poor is useful mainly to gain a better general understanding of the patterns, severity, dimensions and causes of poverty…[and] is useful [as] the basis of prioritising and targeting" budgets.[201]

Critics have suggested that the PRSP process will bring nothing new as it merely reproduces "previous perspectives along the economic growth model espoused by the IMF and the World Bank".[202] That is, inherent in the structure of the PRSP document and process, remains the neoliberal democratic ideology of the West, wherein the continued occupation with economic development through liberalization obscures genuine attention to the social and political spheres. As Gariyo (2001) has suggested,

> The demand that civil society should engage with government and IFIs is neither innovation or a change of heart on the part of the IFIs…In fact, the Bank and the Fund have with the PRSP turned a genuine demand by civil society on its head. Instead of allowing civil society organisation in sub-Saharan Africa to set the conditions of engagement, with their governments, the nature of intervention by [the World Bank and IMF] may have disastrous consequences. Civil society is demanding participation in a broad process of dialogue with donors and governments, but the IMF and World Bank are only interested in preparing a PRSP as an end in itself. They are using these mechanisms as a carrot and stick to restructure the financial

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[199] *Ibid*
[200] *Ibid*
[201] Thin et. al (2001), pg 5
[202] Gariyo (2002)

regime in Africa.[203]

- Nevertheless, in a context whereby civil society has for the most part been marginal or totally excluded from policy and decision-making processes (both at the national and international levels), the PRSP has provided new opportunities for the emergence of true grassroots-oriented social transformation. Civil society organizations are now more engaged in capacity-building at the grassroots level and in the promotion of participatory process, including in the implementation of programs and in the assessment of progress. The broadened base within PEAP for more consultations centered on implementation of the programs gives more CSOs a chance to monitor, revise, modify and enhance its impacts on targeted outputs and outcomes. The next section briefly discusses the proposed structure of continued civil society engagement in national poverty reduction and development strategy.

3.3 The Role of CSOs in Monitoring the Implementation of the PEAP/PRSP

According to the PEAP, there has to be monitoring of progress in the implementation process. This is in order to consistently and continually inform the key operatives on the rate of progress, and of any obstacles encountered. The monitoring activity is meant to track and investigate the causes, trends and changes in poverty levels. In particular, monitoring gives concrete indication of the success of failure of public strategies and actions directed at poverty eradication.

Monitoring facilitates a two-way flow of information: from the targeted beneficiaries to the service providers to the policy makers. This activity enables the continuous modification of implementation strategies. Additionally, monitoring contributes towards accountability. The PEAP monitoring strategy has five components:

I. Household level surveys
II. Participatory approaches
III. Development indicators for assessing sectoral performance developed by the ministry of finance and planning in consultation with the districts

[203] Gariyo (2002)

IV. Periodic preparation of the Poverty Status Report ever two years, focused on synthesis of recent trends, and on making recommendations based on this for the enhancement of poverty eradication

V. Developing and establishing Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to portray the spatial incidence and distribution of poverty in the country.

Monitoring actions are structured around the whole PEAP/PRSP implementation cycle including the outputs level, inputs level and outcomes level. However, by its very nature, successful monitoring cannot be the responsibility of any one actor. It is a huge task. For effective monitoring and the information they derive, mechanisms have to be put in place where by government efforts and the efforts of CSOs are complementary.

Some of these mechanisms include:

- General Consultative Workshops
- Regional meetings organised for district officials to explain the PEAP and its budgetary aspects
- Establishment of feedback through written responses and contributions followed by active follow-up at district and local authority levels.
- Political consultations at parliamentary level for members of all sessional committees
- Measures and strategies for building onto the existing consultative processes, formulated through existing consultative fora namely sector working groups, NGO consultative meetings and regular donor meetings.

Under the PEAP, CSOs have already made moves to support government agencies, and have set up district level committees that track public expenditures under the Poverty Action Fund. CSO committees through their active involvement at the grassroots also provide information on the quality of delivery.[204] These organisations therefore play a key role and assist government to identify the relevant and correct indicators for gauging the outcomes of development. The potential for CSOs to provide critical information related to changes and trends in the wellbeing of

[204] Kakande (2002)

different socio-economic groups and particularly to contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable groups such as women remains.

What has emerged from this analysis then is that processes of participation surrounding the PRSP have not as of yet attained the desired levels of equity. This is partly due on the one hand to of the highly political nature of the process stemming from the multiple conditionalities associated with the disbursement of aid and debt relief funds. As access to aid resources in dependent on government-civil society relations, governments may compromise genuine dialogue through the coercion of civil society. As such, participatory processes will not serve to legitimize or empower disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, the shortcomings of participatory processes could also be due to inherent theoretical discrepancies on the part of the IFIs regarding the nature of linkages between social, economic and political components, and the highly diverse contexts and environments within which these are couched. That is, the limitations of participation may also lie in the fact that the basic orientation of these policies is not directed at the stimulation of dynamic, empowerment-centred growth processes, but at the greater integration of HIPCs into the world economy, thus subordinating domestic realities to the demands of international standardization.

Nevertheless as Gariyo (2001) has noted, the PRSP retains the potential to instigate "a fundamental departure from being a donor tool to a tool for evolving the principles of participation in eradicating poverty". This in so much as the PRSP process presents an arena for consultations with various stakeholders. It may be conclusively argued therefore that CSO participation in the development of PRSPs increases the chances and spaces for more effective equity-based and sustainable responses to debt and poverty.

VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that firstly, the worldwide progress in social and economic development over the past four development decades has not translated into proportional gains for women and in particular low-income women in the developing world and in HIPCs specifically. Although women in many HIPC countries, as in other countries, produce half the food, bear most of the responsibility for household food security and make up a large majority of the work force in menial industry and services, their household and 'informal' activities continue to be relegated to subordinate status within approaches to development. WID programs designed within the larger neoliberal paradigm have tended to treat women as a special target group or as beneficiaries in development projects and programs, thus detrimentally compromising either their practical or strategic needs, or in many cases, both.

This marginalization is even more acute and obvious in developing country contexts, in which the emphasis by multilateral donors has been on economic methods of development despite a lack of well-established systems of state sanctioned support. This situation has been further compounded in many contexts by the lack of legal and regulatory systems necessary to prevent discrimination against women. As such, limitations to women's development has spanned from low investment in their education and health, to inadequate (if at all) access to necessary services and assets for their productive growth. Low-income women in particular continue to disproportionately endure the negative repercussions of culturally de-sensitized and gender blind approaches to development. This is a persisting situation lamenting the lack of recognition within the development sphere both at international and local levels that,

> "Development in the Third World is not merely about increased productivity and welfare…[it] is also about increased participation and equality. Development is… also concerned with enabling people to take charge of their own lives, and escape from poverty which arises not from a lack of productivity but rather from oppression and exploitation"[205].

[205] *Ibid*, pg 149

Reflecting a growing awareness of this fact, recent attempts within the international community to ensure the effectiveness of debt relief for sustainable development and poverty reduction have focused on promoting national ownership in the design, implementation and monitoring of development programs in cooperation with donors. Such a shift in the nature of donor/recipient aid relations has been captured by the HIPC debt relief initiative. National ownership of the PRSP process within this initiative it has been acknowledged has the potential to yield beneficial results through the creation of systems of accountability and thus commitment to poverty reduction.

The value added of bringing a gender perspective to the analysis and design of development policies and projects within the PRSP process is difficult to refute. Societies that discriminate on the basis of gender pay a significant price in terms of higher levels of poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance and a lower quality of life.[206] Consequently, development policies that do not take gender roles and relations into account and that do not explicitly address gender disparities will have limited effectiveness. The empowerment approach to gender issues in development has been proposed as an effective means through which to connect genuine participation to development policy, strategy and process in a transformative process. Improved access to information, participation and inclusiveness, accountability, and local organisational capacity have been identified as some of the core objectives of empowerment.[207] It is argued that change driven and catalyzed by the self-mobilization of women's mutually beneficial collectivity may lead to a wider process of social transformation as well as pose potential challenge to existing power structures. Towards this end, community-based women's groups, grassroots initiatives NGOs and networks of women's organizations may provide useful and valuable service to the achievement of such systemic empowerment of women. These organizations specifically, may act as conduit for reaching local level stakeholders through the provision of necessary mechanisms for effective participation for example increasing information exchange and building consensus on poverty reduction efforts.

The present analysis of the Ugandan PEAP/PRSP has found that despite the participation of CSOs specific gender concerns continue to be neglected within the country's poverty reduction strategy. This has been attributed to the highly political

[206] World Bank, 2000

nature of the process resulting in compromised outcomes, as well as to the continued and overriding focus on the macroeconomic factors of development as stipulated by the neoliberal paradigm. Nevertheless, it has been noted that CSO involvement in the process generated some useful impacts, particularly with regards to bridging the gap between government and the grassroots level. This in terms of, for example, the distribution of information, coordination of consultative processes, implementation of programs and the monitoring of development processes. Additionally it has been noted that the PRSP framework and the participatory processes surrounding its formulation have afforded more possible spaces for effective gender integration. These exist namely in the form of:

a) The in-built flexibility of the framework
b) The ongoing revision of the PEAP that enables subsequent inclusion of policy priorities
c) The broadening of the consultative process which brings on board a wide array of stakeholders, particularly civil society interest groups and district local and level communities
d) Continuous monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the impacts generated by the PEAP plans and budgetary allocations. The results and recommendations of such ground level monitoring and assessment (by civil society organizations and local and district level communities) of the policies, programs and projects, will feed into the on-going revision and adjustment of the PEAP planning framework

The critical task therefore remains to address gender issues pro-actively equity-based through policy, genuine dialogue and consultative processes, disaggregated data collection and analysis, as well as the application of a full range of operational instruments conducive to specific contexts. Recognizing that gender disparities reduce the well-being of all people, there remains a strong argument for a more pronounced integration of gender into national development policy and strategy. While participatory processes have contributed to the recognition of more diverse perspectives of poverty within the PRSP, the onus for the promotion of gender equality through the provision of enabling environments and appropriate spaces for the recognition of gender concerns remains with the state. On the other hand,

[207] Narayan (2002)

responsibility for the lack of an explicit gender focus within the prescribed conditionalities of the HIPC initiative remains with the IFIs. Explicit attention to gender-differentiated constraints and opportunities in the design and implementation of economic adjustment and poverty reduction programs is relevant to the future of Africa if the continent is to redress its marginalised, debt burdened and poverty status[208]. It is hoped that this study has contributed in some way to the realization of that goal.

[208] *Ibid*

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