

**SECTION THREE:
WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY**

CHAPTER 8 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANISATION IN MOZAMBIQUE

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Introduction

In August 1991, at the Pigs Peak Protea Hotel, in Swaziland, a regional PSLM (1) meeting took place, attended by about 60 researchers, government bodies and NGOs of the host country, and international donor agencies. The aim of this meeting was to present and discuss the results of the first stage of research, into the problematic of "Women and the Right to Maintenance in Southern Africa" (1990-91). In the closing part of the meeting, the Mozambican collective of researchers - formed by researchers, teachers, students and members of various organisations, including both women and men - in an unprecedented and unexpected gesture, offered the national and regional PSLM coordinators a tin of cashew nuts and a capulana (2) each. The gesture took the participants by surprise, used as they were to conventional words and gestures. After this brief ceremony, in the ensuing interval, the Mozambican group was praised for its attitude: "It was very significant: we heard how your country is at war, we know that you are one of the poorest countries in the world, we have heard how your children, your women, your old folk are living. But it was the Mozambican group, the "poverty-stricken ones", who have given us a lesson".

What relation could exist between this episode and the theme that I intend to deal with?

When dealing with the problematic of alternatives to the current world order, researchers and other social actors point to, as potentially emancipatory and full of lessons, the unrealised acts and the silenced alternatives of the south, of the excluded, in relation to the homogenising and universalising development project. This gaze at what has not been allowed to exist would be in the sense of completing one of the fundamental pillars of modernity, that of liberation, deferred since the 16th century in favour of that of technological modernisation (Wallerstein 1995, pp. 471-473). As Boaventura S. Santos remarks, to speak of the south is to tell of *silences, silencings, suppressed traditions, subaltern experiences, the perspective of the victims, oppressed, margins, periphery, frontiers, the south of the north, the famine of abundance,*

the *misery of opulence, the tradition of what was never allowed to exist, unended beginnings, ununderstood intelligibility, forbidden languages and life styles.* (Santos 1994, pp.279-280; Santos 1995, pp.481).

Participating in this meeting were researchers from the African continent, and it was held in a peripheral area of the world system - southern Africa - a region where, since the 16th century, a gradual integration into the capitalist world economy has taken place, through the looting of raw materials, slavery, and colonialism. But it is also a region where people have tried to explore new human possibilities and desires, fighting in the first place for the right to exist and for improved living conditions (despite the fact that forces in the world system impede human beings from dreaming, from challenging their emancipatory potential...). In this part of Africa, the individualism of the neo-liberal project has not yet completely corroded individual and collective relations among citizens. Forms of solidarity, of mutual aid and of resistance persist. Women have played an important role in the struggle to recreate and restore the original values permitting the maintenance of links of solidarity, despite all the transformations caused by colonial occupation and by the various development policies imposed in the period after the independence of Africa's various nations.

Are these diverse forms of solidarity able to generate emancipation? Or might they degenerate into more regulation, which would therefore be lacking in liberation?

The Capitalist World System and Social Movements

The history of humanity has been the history of successive struggles to realise, in immediate, material life, the human notions of freedom, equality and solidarity. However, known history, dominant history, the history that western culture tries to impose on all of humanity, has been characterised by glorification of war, by acceptance of hierarchies, authority and power, by valuing growth and procreation, and by the rational justification of control over "the other" through the appropriation of truth. In the dominant western patriarchal culture, the fundamental tone of human relations is based on submission to the power of reason (Maturana 1995, pp.5).

The "New Social Movements" that arose in the second half of the 20th century have sought other dimensions and explanations in the field of selfhood, in order to face disillusion before a world of war, hunger, wealth, opulence, dictatorships, atomic bombs, environmental destruction, violence, discrimination - the world of the "Chalice and the Blade" of masculinity, arrogance, power and intolerance (Eisler 1991). As part of the "New Social Movements" - blacks, chicanos, native peoples, gypsies, women, the elderly, that is, "the others" (3) - feminism has meant "the possibility of including new dimensions in knowledge and in socio-political praxis", in a context of fatigue

with the only explanations hitherto accepted about the problems of the world - class relations, the economy, production and the market, geopolitics etc. (Kirkwood 1987, p.46).

Of all the "New Social Movements", the feminist movement is perhaps the most controversial. One of its most remarkable characteristics is insolence and impudence, the freedom of disorder. "...es esa suerte de irresponsabilidad para con el paradigma científico y sus conceptos que se asume en su lenguaje. Esa especie de desparpajo en mezclarlo todo, como si se tuviera la certeza de que las tablas de la ley del conocer, por venir tan desde lo alto, se hubiesen hecho añicos en su caída a lo humano, y que, en consecuencia, habría que arrelarselas con lo que tenemos" (Kirkwood 1984, p.1). The feminist movement has not been concerned only with "the women's problems", of this or that international development agency, or with its various enemies. It is concerned with people, in their most intimate human relationships, in the socially constructed relationships between women and men which take shape and are sanctioned by norms and values defended by the members of their respective society. For this movement, particular groups with common interests or political goals are not at issue. It is people, and their relationships, in all spaces, from the private and the domestic to the public, from places of work to places of leisure, that are its subject (Mies 1989, p. 6). This movement attempts to obtain a holistic vision of society, looking at the total life of the social, economic and political organisation, in order to understand particular aspects of society, trying to understand the structure and dynamic of gender (4) relations, interlinked with variables of class, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, lineage, generation, income, amongst others. It looks at the specific cultural forms of inequality and social division, and tries to see how the gender dimension is related or linked to a wide variety of forms of social hierarchy. It struggles in various ways to discover the causes of women's oppression and submission, linked to other forms of discrimination in society. Its goal is to transform the current situation, mobilise the creativity of women and men to imagine the kind of future society which can inspire everyone to a collective effort to make it a reality. A society that establishes the conditions for each person to live their life with dignity in harmony with nature and supported by a culture which enriches and strengthens individual creativity and imagination. A society in which cooperation, altruism and sociability are central values instead of competition and possessive individualism.

Contemporary feminism has gained in strength at a historic moment of tremendous ideological displacement, and loss of perspective, in which not everything can be explained merely by scientific rationality, thus disturbing the harmony of the social, scientific and political knowledge guaranteed by the dominant male-centred scientific paradigm. Feminist thinking is being undertaken as a counter-culture, counter-domination, counter-language and counter-power, that is, as subversive thinking (Kirkwood 1987, p.45). Feminism does not allow us to remain indifferent. Sooner or later we are

obliged to take a position. And choosing is always a painful process, because it implies transformations in our way of looking at the world, and at the relationships we establish with our partners or husbands, our friends of either sex, or the other people with whom we work or whose paths cross ours in day to day life. For us women, having to choose between the known, that which protects us and guarantees our survival, and following an unknown path, with unforeseeable consequences, could mean a loss of identity. "...Feminism has planted its roots in this no-man's land. Like any social movement, it appears as a challenge. It is a demand to transgress against an order which, confused with common sense, has ruled over the ages, attributing to the male the right to define the female as its opposite. Today we are living the denial of this order, the plunge into a disorder which, paradoxically, is organising" (de Oliveira 1992, p. 14).

Frelimo (5) arose as a New Social Movement in the 1960s, fighting for a Mozambican space, a citizenship. During the armed national liberation struggle (1964-1974), and influenced by other African independences, by the building of socialism in several countries, and by the experience of social welfare states (above all in the Nordic countries), this citizenship was extended to women and to men, as a fruit of the struggle undertaken to eradicate all forms of exploitation and to build a free society for all its members. In an initial phase, the mobilisation of women was motivated by instrumental reasons, to step up the efforts for liberation from colonial rule. The liberation movement was obliged to appeal for the participation of women, as individuals, mothers, sisters, militants and comrades, as part of the people whom Frelimo represented. Their participation in the struggle, and consequently the advance of the struggle, would have been limited, had women been mobilised as dependents, inferior to men. Mozambican women were involved in activities related with the guerrilla war and with administering the liberated areas - feeding the guerrillas and the population, guaranteeing defence and security, working in schools, orphanages, and health centres, undergoing military training and taking part in combat - as well as continuing their normal domestic activities. This situation did not lead to changes in the sexual division of labour, and in the perceptions and practices of women and men about social gender relations. Women made a fundamental contribution to the advance of the struggle, and were involved in a new environment, in new tasks, among a variety of people with whom they did not traditionally live and work. But there was no rethinking of the reproductive tasks of women, which led to an increase in the time women spent working, within the prevailing division of labour, thus reconfirming their activities as women, wives, mothers and invisible workers.

Frelimo's experience, as the movement which waged the armed liberation struggle, although limited to areas that were peripheral to the colonisation of Mozambique, and were mainly rural, formed the basis for "national reconstruction". During the armed national liberation struggle, and in the areas that were then freed from colonial rule, a form of power was gradually

implanted that had participatory democratic characteristics, with popular support of an informal, plebiscitary type (Santos 1994, pp.229); at grass roots level, the political process was conceived of as didactic, with popular participation in decision making. With the taking of power in 1975, an attempt was made to reproduce the experience of the armed struggle throughout Mozambique, through the construction of socialism, and the institutionalisation of the nationalist movement as a party cast in the Leninist mould. The emancipation of women was regarded as a priority task of the Mozambican revolution, within the socialist principle that women's liberation would be possible through their integration into social work. Frelimo believed that women could only be freed from the double oppression of which they were victims - oppression by men and by society - through participation in the productive process. Uncritically adopting this postulate from a model of how to build a new society, Frelimo conjured away the fact that women were already the main agricultural producers in Mozambique. This is revealing of the contradiction within the leading group, which recognised women as participants in the social process, but at the same time reduced this to formal integration in the labour market (Casimiro and Andrade 1992, p.104). But it also shows the weakness of the women's movement, in terms of theoretical and practical reflection, and a lack of knowledge of the reality of Mozambique and of women in sub-Saharan Africa.

Frelimo's liberation project aroused a variety of national, regional and international forces, who resorted both to direct aggression - the war of destabilisation, a low intensity rural guerrilla war - and to economic conditionality. Gradually, and with the combination of various factors, the project of cultural liberation was postponed. Among these factors, one should stress the lack of government experience, over-hasty nationalisations, the transformation of a movement of the entire people into a Marxist-Leninist party, the lack of skilled personnel, in quantity and in quality, to fill the vacuum left in economic and social sectors by the exodus of staff of Portuguese origin, and the need to respond to the aggression against the utopia of "Mozambique, liberated zone of humanity". The democratic memory sometimes gave way to authoritarianism (Santos 1994, p.229), and to a distancing from the grass roots. Some of the "mass organisations" created by Frelimo after independence (6) ended up functioning more as arms of the party, than as catalysts for resolving growing problems. In this post-independence period, but particularly after destabilisation had spread across the country, there were moments in which the emancipatory nature of the process was strengthened, but others in which its control character was stronger.

The economic and social situation deteriorated in the 1980s, which was a period of sharp military destabilisation, coinciding with the imposition of the structural adjustment programme, known as PRE (Economic Recovery Programme) (7), and later as PRES (Economic and Social Recovery Programme), after the social component had been added. It was a decade

when the model of neo-liberal development, representative democracy and multiparty politics was universalised, as a condition for economic aid, imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Once again, the model imposed was discussed outside the continent, paying no attention to the prognoses of African scientists made ever since the 1970s. Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa have led to a crisis of the distributive state, which gradually lost legitimacy precisely through its inability to redistribute. Social movements, revolts and strikes followed one another in quick succession, in order to oblige the state, weakened by IMF and World Bank policies, to redistribute the little that exists for the many who need it. Existing institutions in Africa have shown that they are unable to contain the disorder that had been generated and find responses. As power has been withdrawn from the state, so international agencies are imposing their own political order as a way of predicting and limiting popular uprisings, forecast by the elites, given the deterioration in economic, social, political and cultural conditions. Within a neo-liberal scheme, it is demanded both that the state be a victim, and at the same time that it be the engine of the transformations imposed on the country.

Women, Resistance and Organisations

Since the colonial period, forms of mutual aid and solidarity have been developed in Mozambique. These were maintained both during the colonial period, and after independence. In the towns or in neighbouring countries - where Mozambicans took refuge, during colonialism, fleeing from political persecution and forced labour - various kinds of association were set up. Women have played an important and leading role in the emergence of forms of mutual aid and solidarity, as well as of groups, organisations and movements. Examples of their leading role can be found in associations of mutual aid - for birth ceremonies and funerals, to support those who have lost their jobs, to support prisoners and their relatives - in professional associations, in the Mozambican Women's Association (OMM) (8), in the Maputo General Union of Cooperatives, and in the more recent movement of associations that arose at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The different waves of association have been influenced by certain forms of mutual aid, inspired by lineage and community level values and forms of solidarity. Notable among these are:

* "Tsuma" - a work team involving members of several households, formed for agricultural labour, and building houses or barns. Payment for the "tsuma" consists in the offer of a meal, accompanied by drinks, to those who took part in the work by the household that requested it. It is characteristic of the Mozambican countryside.

* "Kuthekela" - a general strategy employed by households to protect themselves against hunger. It consists in household members traveling to places where there is an abundance of produce, where they work on other people's fields, in exchange for foodstuffs. Also characteristic of the countryside.

* "Xitique" - used today most frequently by women in urban areas, this forms the major support for the informal sector of the economy. It is a kind of monthly saving of a certain amount of money stipulated by the group. One member of the group receives the full amount each month in rotation. It is through these savings that the women of the informal sector manage to acquire greater quantities of goods to sell, or invest in the education of their children, or in the purchase of clothing, or other goods that they regard as important. This strategy is important for women, since it allows them to manage the money they earn and gives them access to and control over resources. It is characteristic of the urban milieu.

* "Mukhosi wa mina" (my close friend) - This is an expression of the spaces of female friendship - ways of supporting and resolving women's problems outside the lineage system. It is a form of friendship cultivated by two adolescents into adulthood. They support each other in moments of sadness and joy, and look after each other's children. (9)

These groups have been a feature of African societies for a long time, but it's important to stress that, in spite of the fact they brought people together, mainly women, they did not challenge the social construction of gender and the discriminatory position of women

Today some of these forms of social solidarity are important strategies for survival and for accumulation of capital, in both rural and urban areas. They are a factor of friendship and complicity among women, and help stabilise society, at a time when the social fabric has been eroded, due to the various processes of transition, and particularly to the war of destabilisation and the structural adjustment programme. The absence of a welfare state has made it civil society's task to solve the increasing number of problems that result from globalisation. The result is more overwork for women who find themselves obliged to resort to a variety of stratagems. In this context of social crisis, in which the extended family is no longer able to support its members, the job of sustaining the family falls basically on the shoulders of women. Women have always had these responsibilities, regarded as an extension of their *natural* duties as mothers, spouses, daughters, within the sexual division of labour, but limited to the domestic sphere. The current needs force a reproduction and extension of the same responsibilities both in the private and the public domain, leading to a multiplicity of activities aimed at optimising alternative survival strategies and living in a permanent state of emergency (Loforte 1996, p. 17 and 18).

Southern Africa has seen high levels of individual mobility, marital instability and broken marriages, disrupted households, "extra-conjugal" families,

households headed by women, or articulated around the mother, as a result of the system of labour migrating to South Africa, since the late 19th century. This part of Africa has been described by Samir Amin as "the Africa of the labour reserves" (Mafege 1992, p. 260-262). Women have been obliged to resort to their own criteria to handle matters of the household, acquiring greater autonomy, but also heavier work loads and responsibilities. Insecurity, the possibility of being abandoned by husbands, and economic and social pressure, are characteristics of households where the husbands are absent. In recent years, the negative impact of the transformations that have occurred also tends to be borne by women, under very severe conditions of discrimination, but now in a context of family crisis. Research carried out shows that the war of destabilisation and the PRE have strengthened the economic power and the decision making capacity of women, somehow contributing to challenge the status quo, but the results of these transformations have been contradictory as regards the struggle of women for their citizenship and their emancipation: on the one hand, the greater presence and visibility of women in the public domain allows them to transcend patriarchal domination of domestic space-time; but on the other hand, this domination spills over from the domestic sphere into the space-time of production, and by this route reproduces, or even expands, sexual discrimination against women (Santos 1994, p. 264).

Exclusion and Participation

Contrary to desires and forecasts, the last two decades showed that globalisation has sharpened social and political conflicts, divisions, inequalities between the centre and the periphery, increasing the number of those who are excluded on a scale never known before. For the first time, the whole planet finds itself faced with an unprecedented transition, whose solution is unpredictable. The main characteristics of this crisis are:

- * the planet-wide move away from the countryside
- * accelerated urbanisation
- * increasing social costs in shifting company costs from one country to another
- * economic costs with the generalisation of the multiparty democratic system - popular demands are expensive
- * the collapse of the old left, of the anti-system movements
- * a decline in the strength of state structures, and the rise of ad-hoc defensive structures (Wallerstein 1996).

The imposition of the neo-liberal development model and of representative democracy in Mozambique, through structural adjustment programmes, has dragged with it new forms of social structuring, based on original values and ties of solidarity. The introduction of a variety of socio-cultural values has given

a new organisational and structural dynamic to these forms of solidarity and to the development of civil society, via NGOs. The increasing pauperisation of the state and its inability and lack of will to solve the growing problems of society has facilitated their appearance. Their members have mostly come out of the state apparatus and belong to the urban elites. They are very diverse organisations as regards their goals, the characteristics of their members, where they operate and their work programmes. Organisations of women, or organisations linked to women's questions were the first to appear, in the late 1980s. This seems to be related to the role women have been playing in seeking survival strategies, but it may also be because the OMM has remained the only organisation active at national level since independence, helping women to organise themselves, in rural and urban areas, through its Circles of Interest. (10) After 1990 the number of organisations grew, as did the kind of matters that concerned them - economic survival, social well-being, land, education, health, housing, employment, community development, water supply, human rights. Associations also developed around women's rights, the development of the family and questions linked to reproductive rights, around environmental decay, as well as associations for peace, groups of young business people, and, in recent years, associations of the natives of the most diverse parts of Mozambique. (11)

Up until 1989, the OMM was the only women's organisation that covered the entire country. Before the new constitution was passed, in November 1990, and before the approval of law no. 8/91, on the freedom of association, the Maputo General Union of Cooperatives (UGC) was founded. The initiative for setting it up came from Frelimo, in the post-independence period, with the "People's Farms" project, and with the support of the Maputo City Green Belt Office, as a way of attenuating food and employment problems. Initially formed by women whose husbands were absent, and by single mothers, without any formal employment, the UGC is today one of the largest and most successful experiences of cooperative work in the country, because of the alternatives that it has offered to its members - it possesses collective and individual farms, it raises livestock, it has a bio-gas system, it has creches, playgrounds, primary and secondary schools, literacy classes, professional training, pottery, basketwork, and sales posts for all its various produce.

In 1989, the first women's organisations outside of the OMM appeared: ACTIVA (Association of Women Entrepreneurs and Executives), and AMODEFA (Mozambican Association for Family Development), which is affiliated to the International Family Planning Association. PROGRESSO (Progress), an organisation of a community nature, but national in scope, and working outside Maputo, in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, was founded in 1990. The initiative to set up these organisations came from former members of state institutions, members of liberal professions etc., some of whom were unhappy with the transformations that had taken place and with the erosion of the socialist dream, while others were seeking spaces

and power at a moment when the political forces in Mozambique were being reshuffled. They were set up as a kind of parallel, alternative state, in opposition to a corrupt and/or inefficient power. The work experience of some of the associations still reflects an organisation with a tradition of centralised power, authoritarianism in their behaviour, and not much solidarity with other, similar organisations, in terms of fund raising and joint programmes of activity. A further characteristic is the great promiscuity between the state and civil society, because some of the NGOs depend directly or indirectly on the state for support in infrastructures. Few of the associations have shown any ability to sustain themselves. Some international organisations make their aid conditional by imposing a certain type of project, or the geographic areas of activity, the target groups, the problematics to be dealt with, so that the associations do not operate as groups supporting initiatives arising from the community. Due to their recent creation and their lack of experience, not all the organisations have shown an ability to negotiate the terms of aid, and their sustainability sometimes results from tasks which, in the long term, may not lead to economic and political independence (Tandon 1991). In this aspect, the experience of the General Union of Cooperatives has been exemplary, because it thinks and acts in terms of an increasingly broad and participatory democracy and citizenship, in the interests of its members and in the search for viable alternatives.

But it is important to stress that the majority of needy Mozambicans are still not reached by these new NGOs. They live in conditions that do not even allow them to organise themselves given the plurality of activities of household members in order to optimise alternative and multiple survival strategies. (12) The areas most lacking in health and education facilities, in employment opportunities and in access to the legal system, cannot simply be left up to community based projects. They need greater services from the state and from the private sector. These are the areas where the majority of the population need the greatest support, so that they can gradually emerge from the cycle of emergency/dependence, to one of self-sufficiency and development. This is support which would allow the majority to support itself.

Contrary to what has happened with women's organisations in areas at the centre of the world-system, and because of the character of the process in Mozambique, many of the women's organisations also have men within them, and some have tried, since the beginning, to maintain links of solidarity with like-minded groups in the country, in Africa and in the world. This is also a characteristic of the association movement in the countries on the periphery of the world-system where, apart from the discovery of the multiplicity of female selfs by a growing women's movement, there is the perception and practice of the need "to establish a chain of equivalences among the various democratic struggles, so as to create an equivalent articulation among the women's demands" of workers and of other categories among the excluded (Mouffe 1996, p.105). The women's organisations are trying to build a new

concept of citizenship, which guarantees equality in respect for the differences between their members, despite the belief that modern citizenship is a patriarchal category and that their rights have been won within a power structure that is male-centred and eurocentric. This new conception of citizenship requires a concept of social agent that can articulate a series of positions, corresponding to a multiplicity of social relations which include the social relations between women, and between women and men (Mouffe 1996, p.111-112).

One example of an attempt to build a new citizenship is Forum Mulher (Women's Forum), which is a network of a variety of organisations of differing kinds, united by the aim of struggling for women's freedom and equality. Forming part of the Forum are women and men, national and international organisations, UN agencies and development agencies of several countries, national and international NGOs, research centres, religious organisations, women's leagues of political parties, peasants', workers' and business organisations, cooperatives and trade unions. It is a network that tries to find equivalences between various democratic struggles, not only in Mozambique, but in other parts of the world, so as to articulate forms of struggle for collective and group human rights, forms of participatory democracy, of institutional autonomy and equality, cultural identity, expansion of freedom against state authoritarianism, or against mass cultural domination, stressing empowerment (Santos 1995, p.266-267).

The Women's Forum played an important role in voter education at the time of the 1994 multiparty elections. It lobbied so that at least a third of the members of the new parliament would be women (13), so that the government would include respected, professional women and would write a gender perspective into its programme. Forum members were part of the working groups that drew up reflections on ethical questions in the exercise of power and on participatory methods of work at government level and in the work of the government with civil society. It was this network that guided the NGOs' preparations for the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and that was the dynamic force behind post-Beijing activities, coordinating the "All against Violence" campaign, a movement against domestic violence. It was in coordination with the Women's Forum that the first awareness seminars on questions of Gender and Development were organised nationally, and a network of trainers in this area has recently been set up. It had a mobilising and active role in discussions on the new Land Law, passed by an extraordinary sitting of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, in July 1997. This is a very hot issue in Mozambique, where there are both outside pressures and domestic pressures pushing for the privatisation of land. Up until now, all property in land vests in the state. But after the structural adjustment programmes, the burgeoning informal market in land brings fears of privatisation, with unforeseen consequences for women, who are the main producers of food and of about 60% of the country's exports.

Of the land titles so far issued to peasants, only one per cent have gone to women.

Through its activities, and the dialogue within civil society and between civil society and the government, the Women's Forum has contributed to a holistic vision of society and to an active solidarity among human beings, that is, to a society of full citizenship and selfhood, for women as well as for men.

At the end of 1996, another Forum appeared, with similar characteristics, but bringing together Mozambican NGOs. The aims of this Maputo-based Forum of National NGOs are:

- a) To contribute towards democracy and social justice in the country;
- b) To strengthen and value the identity of national organisations;
- c) To promote solidarity between national organisations and defend common interests.

Its concerns are linked to ideals of democracy, social justice, the value of identity, and solidarity among member organisations in defence of common interests and while respecting differences. The Women's Forum is part of this second Forum, and within it discussions and lobbies are scheduled around:

- a) Foreign debt; b) Structural Adjustment policies; c) The campaign against land mines; and d) The land question.

The situation of women in Mozambique is complex, due to Mozambique's peripheral situation in the capitalist world system, to the colonial influence, to the destruction and violence the country has been the victim of for the past four decades, but also because of the cultural, ethnic, religious and regional differences that make this country a meeting place of various peoples and cultures. The NGOs are a recent creation and they are still trying to think and rethink development, with a critical and autonomous attitude, with imagination and creativity, to face the present challenges, while trying to strike out towards a society of greater solidarity and of respect for differences. Within the women's organisations participatory democracy does not yet fully exist, nor do they enjoy the necessary trust of their members and constituents so as both to force the state to enter on a constructive path that defends national interests, and to have the capacity to present alternatives to the devastating and neo-colonial programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions. For this and other motives, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have been efficient in coopting various forms of struggle and emptying them of their content, as is the case with the struggle against capitalist patriarchal society.

Women acquired the right to vote and to be elected in Mozambique with national independence in 1975. However, for most of the time democracy is limited to dropping a paper in a ballot box. It lacks the daily undertaking and participation of citizens to solve growing problems to do with the cost of living, the lack of formal employment, mass redundancies arising from privatisation, inability to exercise rights guaranteed under the constitution, and corruption at all levels. Citizenship implies an active, protagonistic function of women and

men in general, and which, in the case of women, is experienced in direct relation to their position as subordinate and discriminated against. It is not enough to pass laws in order for all citizens to exercise their rights effectively. Rights are exercised in so far as people are aware of their condition as citizens, and are able to undertake various activities that transform situations of discrimination and make citizenship wider.

The phenomena of exclusion, of the growing feminisation of poverty, of extreme brutality, of internationally planned crime, with branches throughout the globe, of fundamentalisms of the most varied kind, call on us to think globally and act locally, to reinvent democracy and its institutions, prioritising community participation, citizenship, through respect for the various democratic cultures that explore the diversity of human possibility and wishes.

Notes

(1) PSLM (Project on Women's Legal Situation) is the acronym used by the Mozambique collective for the Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project (WLSA). This research-action project involves six southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe), and began in 1990. It undertook research in 1990-91 into "Women and the Right to Maintenance"; in 1992-93 into "Women and Inheritance Rights"; in 1994-97 into "Families in a Changing Environment". From November 1997 up until 2001, a fourth research phase will be carried out, into "Justice Delivery Systems: Violence and Poverty".

(2) Capulana - a piece of printed cloth used by women in Mozambique, as throughout sub-Saharan Africa, which normally covers the body from the waist to the ankle.

(3) The expression used by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. In this book, de Beauvoir challenges the status of women as secondary and "other", in a society that takes men as its subjects and masculinity as the norm. She argues that women are subordinate because of the patriarchy, and not because of anything natural or biological.

(4) The concept of gender seems to have made its first appearance among English speaking feminists, insisting on the fundamentally social nature, concerned with relationships and with power, of distinctions based on sex, and rejecting the biological determinism implicit in the use of terms such as "sex" or "sexual difference". Gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes. It is a primary form of signifying power relations. Changes in the organisation of social relations always correspond to changes in power relations, but the change does not necessarily follow just one direction (Scott 1989, p.1 and 14).

(5) Frelimo, the Mozambique Liberation Front, was founded in Tanzania in 1962. It led the national liberation struggle against Portuguese colonialism until the winning of independence in June 1975.

(6) I refer to the Mozambican Youth Organisation (OJM), the Organisation of Mozambican Workers (OTM), and the children's organisation, the "Continuadores da Revolucao" ("those who continue the revolution"). The Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM) was set up in 1973, during the armed struggle.

(7) After discussions between the Bretton Woods institutions and the Mozambican government, the structural adjustment programme was approved in January 1987, three months after the murder of President Samora Machel.

(8) The OMM was set up by Frelimo, at Tunduru in Tanzania, in 1973, during the armed struggle.

(9) Data collected by the PSLM in Mozambique under Phase III of the project on "Families in Contexts of Change", 1995-97. Partial report on "Access to and control over resources", PSLMOC, DEMEG, CEA, UEM, May 1996, pag. 46.

(10) The Circles of Interest resulted from a recommendation made at the Extraordinary Conference of the OMM, held in November 1984. These are local meetings and education centres for women, at community level, assisted by activists, with the aim of discussing, finding solutions, and learning a variety of skills - sewing, fishing, cooking, seminars about mother and child health, civic and family education, family planning, the promotion of income generating activities through learning the appropriate technologies.

(11) According to a recent publication from KULIMA, there are now more than 300 NGOs, classified as follows: Associations for socio-economic development; humanitarian; youth and students; socio-professional; religious; philanthropic; institutions for supporting and advising NGOs; groups/networks of NGOs; human rights; by province.

(12) Research undertaken by the Planning and Finance Ministry's Poverty Alleviation Unit indicates that 60-70% of rural households and 50% of urban families live below the poverty line. In the countryside the population has less access to social infrastructures, such as water supply, health posts and formal education, and less access to the legal system, than in urban areas.

(13) In fact, 25.2% of Mozambican parliamentarians are women, which is the second highest proportion in Africa (beaten only by Seychelles). This occurs at a time when, internationally, the percentage of women parliamentarians has fallen from 14.8% in 1988 to 11.7% in 1997, according to figures from the Interparliamentary Union.

CHAPTER 9 POSSIBILITIES FOR REDISTRIBUTION. RURAL WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

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Political change in South Africa has done little to bring about much needed economic change for the vast majority who were dispossessed as a result of colonialism and the policies of apartheid. Since the coming into power of the Government of National Unity under Nelson Mandela there has been little change in the situation of the black 75% of the population living in third world conditions with a standard of living slightly better off than that in Congo. Nor has there been change in the circumstances of the white 12% of the population who enjoy a standard of living equal to that of Canadians. Instead the government's move away from redistribution to neo-liberalism promises little change in the life circumstances for that 75% in need of change (Adelzadeh and Padayachee 1995, Pillay 1996).

This paper concurs with recent critiques that neo-liberal options do not promise changes for the majority of the population. Such options do not address issues of equity and social justice which are key issues of stated concern on the part of the African National Congress (ANC), the majority party in government. In particular these policies offer little hope for marginalised rural women who make up a significant proportion of the vast dispossessed majority. What neoliberal solutions do promise is the opening up of the white first world enclave to a small black, and largely male elite.

I argue that in addition to shortcomings relating to neoliberal options, rural women's interests will not be adequately met because of current shortcomings in addressing gender, and because of the fact that rural women do not constitute a force to be reckoned with in considering policy alternatives. Present shortcomings can begin to be rectified firstly through more serious consideration of gender as a stratifier of social life within policy frameworks. And secondly through the organised action of rural women as a social force.

I suggest that policy needs to be informed by an understanding of how gender is constructed or influences conditions in specific local communities and households. This includes consideration of women's participation as agents in a process of development, and leads to questions of how rural women can begin to constitute a force able to advance their interests.