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WOMEN IN GHANA: THEIR INTEGRATION IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Max Assimeng

Introduction

For some time now, women have been a focus of discourse on a variety of platforms. From the days of the suffragettes in Europe and the United States, during which the right to vote and the shortening of working hours were major issues, the conscience of mankind has been stirred towards the generally acknowledged discriminatory practises under which women have lived. Nevertheless, from a scholarly point of view, women were relatively ignored. As Mary Maynard (1989: 58) asserts: 'although more than half of the world's population are women, sociology largely ignored them for the first one hundred years or so of its existence. Sociological theory was about men's lives and men's worlds.'

Now the situation is being rectified. And as Lina Fruzzetti and Marilyn Rueschemeyer (1988: 1) have observed:

Research on women's issues has begun to correct and to recover perceptions of "the other," of women in their own cultural context, of women in different class positions, different political economies.

The climax of this concern, at the scholarly level, is the new academic discipline that goes under the label of Women's Studies. The rationale of this discipline is that women can be better understood and appreciated when they are studied from a feminist hermeneutics. As is usual with several spheres of modern-day scholarship, the United States has been the principal centre of such studies from several perspectives. In the field of sociology, for instance, the major perspectives in the study of women have been structural-functionalist, Marxist, and symbolic interactionist (Haralambos 1980, ch. 9; and Maynard, 1989, ch. 6). Three major works that capture this scholarly concern are Evalyne Sullerot's *Women, Society and Change*, Jessie Bernard's *The Female World: A Global Perspective*, and an earlier essay by Evans-Pritchard in *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies*.

With Evans-Pritchard's essay as an example, it is clear that Africa has not been ignored in such stirrings concerning the position of women in society. The following references are a bare sample: Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria*; Denise Paulme, (ed.) *Femmes d'Afrique Noir* (1962), Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970), and Christine Obbo, *African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence* (1980).

For Ghana, Oppong (1981; 1987), Oppong and Abu (1987), Little (1973; 1965), Date-Bah (1977), Greenstreet (1972; 1971), Peil (1975), Hagan (1980), Robertson (1984), and Assimeng (1987) have also pioneered scholarly studies of aspects of women's lives and struggles, especially as women operate in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Lately, the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation have programmed an Africa-wide study of the disadvantages which young women suffer in their attempts to obtain basic education in African countries. Without anticipating the end result of such researches, one might state that boys fare better than girls in terms of opportunities for educational advancement. The male - female adult illiteracy rates are the best indicator of this trend.

A major forum that has championed the sensitisation of the plight of womanhood, has been undoubtedly the United Nations. For instance, the United Nations Declaration of 1975-1985 as the Decade for Women, focused attention on the otherwise less acknowledged phenomenon in the

consciousness of mankind. The Declaration is in itself part of the continuing concern of the World body. As a result of this concern, the U.N. established the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946 as

the fundamental commission charged with improving the status of women in the political, civil, legal, economic, social and educational fields, and with implementing the principle that men and women shall have equal rights. (The United Nations and the Status of Women. N.Y.: United Nations, 1964 p.5).

The rationale of the Declaration of the Women's Decade relates to the fact that, although statistically women out-number men, they have for long been treated as a minority in several spheres of social, economic and political life. In the distribution of substantive power, (as opposed to formal honour and esteem), men have advantage over women. Besides, when it comes to critical decision-taking on matters affecting society as a whole, women are often ignored. In addition, they are only marginally integrated into the mainstream of national, social, and economic development.

In Africa, various myths, taboos, customs and traditions had historically assigned the women to a ritually (and therefore, socio-politically) inferior status. One principal cause of this discrimination has been menstruation, seen as both spirit-charged and polluting at the same time.

Despite the fact that women work almost twenty four hours in the day to cater for the welfare of family and society, as Christine Obbo (1980) graphically describes for East Africa, their rewards have been less than compensatory for their efforts. Ironically, some women in commerce, industry, and bureaucracy, probably are obliged to work harder than men on several measurable criteria: yet they earn less, that is to say, in terms of what actually goes into their purse. In addition, they face greater uncertainties in terms of tenure, and in terms of promotion prospects. Mention has not been made so far, in this paper, of what has become known as the women's unpaid labour.

The nature of sex-division of labour in Ghana depends, of course, on customary usages and practices that exist among the different ethnic groups, and on the nature of economic activities in which the people are engaged. But the general tendency has been for males to perform economic roles that are very demanding in terms of physical exertion, while females supplement male efforts with those activities that are in conformity with the nature of their strength and physique. In fishing communities, for instance, the men go to sea and make the catch, while the storage and distribution/marketing activities are a female preserve. Similarly, in farming communities, the initial weeding of the forest, the felling of trees, the gathering of branches, and bush burning, are done by men. Women, on the other hand, plant the seeds, roots, etc., and mostly do the harvesting except cocoa and coffee. But the sale of farm produce is done almost exclusively by women.

With regard to women engaged in agrarian activities, attempts are now made to introduce to them the challenges and advantages of appropriate technology, although the process has been rather slower than envisaged. This exposure to appropriate technology is being done for several reasons: to lessen drudgery in the work situation of women; to advance women's income earning capacity; and to increase the amount of time at their disposal with which to care for the home and children. The traditionally assigned sexual division of labour nevertheless pertains:

It is also well documented by a number of researchers that whilst both men and women are engaged on different activities depending on their responsibilities, women are usually involved in time-consuming and tedious tasks on farms and in the home with very little leisure. Activities centre around food production, storage and processing, water and fuel supply for home consumption or to

generate income. (Anokwa, unpublished mss. p.18).

The following Table I indicates the degree of involvement of women in some economic activities in Africa.

Table I
**Units of Participation of Women in Traditional
and Modern Economic Activities**

Activity	% Female
Food production	70
Food storage	50
Food processing	100
Animal husbandry	50
Marketing	50
Brewing	60
Water supply	90
Fuel supply	80

Adapted from: *The Changing and Contemporary Role of Women in
African Development. UNECA 1974.*

Problem

The increasing awareness of inequity in male-female relationship has given rise to equity movements and pressure groups in Europe and the United States. As noted earlier in the essay, it has also created the increasingly fertile field of Women Studies in several University departments, and is a topic that is relevant to studies that examine the betterment of women's lives. Certainly, the ramifications of the awareness that gender roles determine patterns of economic and social behaviour, deserve considerable attention. This is because such ramifications enable us to put the present study in the context of wider theoretical and applied perspectives in the study of national development as a whole. They also enable us to examine and evaluate the position of women in organizations that promote female social advancement on a wide variety of programmes. Family planning, maternal and child health, and adult literacy, are some of these programmes.

There are several questions that need probing with regard to the position of women in society. To begin with, how do women view their own position within the context of the social system in which they operate? On the assumption that they view their position as that of subordination to their menfolk, what do they do about such a position? In their desire to assert a position of equality, what structural impediments do they encounter? And what efforts have been made or should be made, by women themselves and (a sympathetic) society at large? It is with regard to the collective efforts of women to better their condition of living, that this paper is particularly concerned.

Method

This study of women in Ghana, and their integration in socio-economic development, has been undertaken through the following approaches:

- a) literature review of what has been documented about the status of women in the country;
- b) an inventory of women's organisations from first hand experience, and lists of such bodies that have registered with the N.C.W.D.; and
- c) administration of questionnaire to a select list of women's organizations chosen to reflect the regional, ethnic, religious-secular, and orientational mix of such organizations. These approaches were adopted to elicit information about the evolution of women's organisations in Ghana, and about their nature, types, and functions.

History of Women's Organizations

Although the contribution of women to social and economic life in Ghana has always be extolled, the fact that women do come together to work collectively towards the achievement of their felt needs, has not been amply studied and documented. Polly Hill's (1970) penetrating study of West African indigenous economies, although dealing with the relationship between capital accumulation and the evolution of rural capitalists, hardly mentions women in collective economic ventures. Nor does Margaret Peil (1975: 73-90), in her very perceptive study of *Female Roles in West African Towns*, give any stress on women in collective activities, such as what we are probing in the present study. This is in spite of her very useful delineation of the economic opportunities available to women in rural and urban communities.

Ione Acquah (1958) whose Accra Survey still constitutes perhaps the best socio-economic study of the country's capital, catalogued several traders' and sellers' and manufacturers' associations (p.86). But there is no indication, from her study, of the 'pulling together' of financial resources for economic activity. So also is there no such indication about women's collective economic activity, from the mutual benefit societies or 'nanamei akpeɛ' that she examined in her study (p. 88). Busia's examination of these women's groups in urban communities, as embodied in his Report on a Social Survey of Sekondi-Takoradi (1950), also viewed these groupings mainly in terms of mutual succour. Indeed, when Busia (1950: 25) had the occasion to examine The Fish Sellers' Union in his area of study, his conclusion was that 'The main activity of the Union seems to be connected with funerals... The mutual help given at funerals seems to be the only group activity holding the Union together.'

Claire Robertson (1984) has also made an extensive study of how women in Accra have been responding to the imperatives of socio-economic changes in Ghana. Her study is firmly rooted in the perspective of gender anthropology, and provides illuminating portraits of several Accra women and their family and household arrangements that are meant to ensure a difficult survival for themselves and their children. But again, this very illuminating study does not see the women's survival strategies from the point of view of collective socio-economic action.

In any examination of female organisations in Ghana, it might be worthwhile to study such organisations as they have emerged and operated in the history of the country, under the following well demarcated socio-political conditions: (i) the colonial period; (ii) the pre-independence nationalist period; (iii) Nkrumah's period; (iv) the National Liberation Council; (v) Busia and the Progress Party; (vi) Acheampong and Akufo's regimes; (vii) the period under Limann; and (viii) the combined periods of Rawlings and AFRC/PNDC.

It appears that there is very little documented information concerning Women's Organizations in Ghana during the colonial period. There might have been female groupings in various religious denominations, such as women's classes and women's fellowships, especially in the coastal cities and towns; but their role tended to be essentially religious and social. Unlike the classic case of the Aba riots of women strikers in 1929 in Nigeria, or even the celebrated role of

Yaa Asantewaa in the British-Asante war of 1900, women in Africa have been generally quietistic, and their role has been essentially that of benevolence and charity.

Such female organizations as have emerged, succeeded in whipping up enthusiasm among the womenfolk for charity work, for the deepening of religious conviction and enthusiasm, and for serving as the female counterpart in the general evangelical work of the churches. Their special attire, which they used to wear on church anniversaries, harvests, picnics and during bereavements, tended to serve as symbolic binding foci for mutual self admiration. Kenneth Little (1965: 67), an anthropologist who has studied extensively the voluntary organisations of West African urban centres, comments on these 'Christian' Societies, as they embrace men and women in West African towns:

These church associations comprise a host of organisations catering for children as well as adult men and women, including women's followships and guides, choirs, bible classes, boys' and girls' life brigades, boy scouts, girls guides, wolf cubs, brownies, etc. Many of them have specifically religious names such as Children of Mary, Apostleship of Prayer, Guild of the Good Shepherd, Sacred Heart, etc.

But, unless one observes their functions in an unintended manner, there appeared to be nothing specifically worldly, that is to say, in the economic sense, about these organisations. This is in spite of the fact that benevolent associations such as *esusu* groups, which catered exclusively to the concerns of women in offices and the markets, also existed. The history of market women's associations, their boycotts of consumer goods, and occasional protests against market tolls, should be examined in future, however.

The emergence of mass political parties, and the need to mobilise women for social and political action, can be said to have begun more purposefully and effectively with the foundation, in 1949, of the Convention People's Party, by Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah is known to have stressed the activist role of women in a mass political party. He used to exhort that 'if you organise the women, you organise the nation.' Apart from the Women's Wing of the CPP, in which Mrs. Susanna Alhassan, the late Hanna Cudjoe, Madam Sophia Doku and Mrs. Stella Donoh featured very prominently, there also proliferated such other societies as Mass Education Women's Groups, National Crusade for the Advancement of Women, and the Ghana Assembly of Women. As gentlemen's associations, lodges and fraternities became numerous, so also did we have ladies Clubs of various kinds. Such clubs and organisations for women's welfare, especially as they operated in urban societies, continued right through and after political independence. It should be noted, though, that while he acknowledged and admired the considerably impressive role of women in national development, and in the forefront of the pan-Africanist crusade, the late President Nkrumah nevertheless admonished women to 'remain women, above all.' This was before the onset of Women's Liberation Movements in Western Europe and North America, and their imported versions in Africa.

The military coup of 1966, and the subsequent ascension to office of Busia after the military interregnum of 1966-69, appear to have created a lull in the economic and political orientation of women's organisations; it might be surmised that the religious nature and role of female organisations assumed predominance again. But the peculiar social and economic climate of the Acheampong regime, especially at its latter stages, made it possible for women to become important once more.

On a more healthy note, it was the government of Acheampong that honoured the U.N. Declaration of the Decade for Women, by establishing the National Council on Women and Development in 1975, by NRC 322.

As specified by the Decree, the NCWD is enjoined, among other objectives:

- a) to advise the Government on all matters relating to full integration of women in national development at all levels;
- b) to serve as the official national body for cooperating and liaising with national and international organizations on matters relating to the status of women;
- c) to examine and evaluate the contribution of women in the economic, social and cultural fields and to advise Government as to the specific areas where participation by women may be strengthened or initiated;
- d) to study the effects of customary beliefs, prejudices and practices on advancement of women in the educational, political and economic fields and to report to Government from time to time;
- e) to devise a programme for the establishment of machinery and procedures to make possible the continuous review and evaluation of women's integration in the total development effort at local, regional and national levels;
- f) to study plans and proposals for the establishment of large scale non-formal education and training for the purpose of raising living standards in the rural and urban communities and eradicating illiteracy. (Ghana National Council on Women and Development, Annual Report 1980-84, Accra. nd. p. iv).

A major achievement of the NCWD was a Seminar it organized in Accra in 1978 at which reports of commissioned researches were submitted for large-scale discussion, with a view to their action implications. Such papers included those by Dzignodi Fiawoo (1978: 54-70) on 'Women and Custom in Ghana,' and Florence Dvblo (1978: 338-351) on 'Women and Appropriate Intermediate Technology.' Out of these research reports, several efforts have been made by the NCWD to assist women in the country, especially on the question of sensitizing women to the needs for cooperative activities.

But on another score, the image of Ghanaian womanhood came to be soiled during this same Acheampong regime. Indeed, one might say that women virtually controlled the economy under Acheampong and Akuffo. This control was not through organized, honest efforts, but mainly through individual initiatives of often morally questionable methods. Women became rich and dashing, it is true; but this was apparently because they understood best the mechanisms of *kalabule* and *gyinabu* that entailed economic chicanery, moral debasement, and deceit. (cf. Ocuaye, 1980; Assimeng, 1986). Much of what women did later led to the undoing of their husbands. And marital stability and family welfare came to be put on an agonising trial during this period.

When the governments of Acheampong and Akuffo were overthrown, the economic fortunes of women fell; women were obliged to undergo humiliating exposure, opprobrium, and public torture for their supposed part in the genesis and sustenance of *kalabule*, and therefore in the nation's economic decline. In this regard at least, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (June-September 1979) could be regarded as the scourge of Ghanaian women. As an example in this regard, one might recall the anti-female animus that surrounded the razing of Makola No.1 to the ground, just before the AFRC handed over power in September 1979. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ghanaian women gleefully resurfaced under the government of Limann. By the second half of 1981, *kalabule* had been resurrected, women were operating again with impunity, and the reign of *laissez-faire* had become entrenched once more as Ghana's economic way of life.

Then 'December 31st struck - and, for the second time, Ghanaian women were to come face to face again with their 'tormentors.' That the second coming of Rawlings had no room - and no mercy - for women cheats, was amply demonstrated in the following example: A few days after the December 31st process, truck loads of market women began thronging the Burma Camp

(Headquarters of the Armed Forces) to congratulate the new government. But, immediately they were spotted, they were turned back by soldiers, with whips following their backs. That, surely, was an early and firm signal that the days of cheap fortune making by women, were over! (On Rawlings and cheap money making in Ghana, see Assimeng, 1986: 145-165; and Ocuquaye, 1980).

The foregoing situation called for serious rethinking on the part of women. And they were ably aided in this reappraisal of fortunes and images, by the National Council on Women and Development. The NCWD, and later the 31st December Women's Movement, blamed *kalabule* women for bringing Ghanaian women into disrepute; but these organizations, also suggested honest ways by which women could earn decent income, with which to care for their families. The countrywide shortage of essential commodities, such as soap and gari between 1981 and 1984, also became propitious opportunities for commercial ventures. Women had been warned to stop *kɔtɔ bɛtɔn* - buying and selling - and instead engage in the actual production of commodities, and therefore in the creation of real wealth.

The NCWD in particular, admonished women that, on their own as individuals, each woman was helpless in the face of the amount of capital involved in making use of appropriate technology; in this field of appropriate technology, the Technology Consultancy Centre of the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, and various non-governmental donor agencies, began to prove very helpful. An individual woman was equally disadvantaged if she sought credit facilities, especially from the formal banking systems, for any production venture. On the other hand, it was realised that in an organised collectivity, women could pull labour and financial resources together to engage in their production operations. Hence the vogue of the contemporary cooperative women's societies or associations in the country.

According to Raymond Aporhe (1972: 19-20), 'One relatively common feature [of cooperatives] is the policy aim that the management and administration of cooperatives is to be carried out as far as possible by the members themselves acting in concert with a minimum of control from outside and the maximum of equality within.' On the basis of this perspective, the cooperative movement may be seen as an attempt to shift women from trade malpractices, drug and currency trafficking and contraband merchandise, to more honourable enterprises such as cottage industries.

In any examination of contemporary women's societies in Ghana, attention should be focused on two principal aspects: (a) the turning of new leaf of women, especially after the general blame which they had endured as the 'milkmaids' of the country's political economy; and (b) the genuine attempt to mobilize 'women power' as an integral force in the socioeconomic development of the country as a whole. The revolutionary underpinning of these features of women's new image and role in the reconstruction of Ghana, has been done mostly by the 31st December Women's Movement, founded on 15th May 1982 after the second coming into power of Rawlings. This Movement has stressed the revolutionary and politically conscious role of women as housewives, workers, and nation builders. There have also been Women's branches of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, just as women, as in the case of the Sing Women's Mobisquad in the Wa District, have worked alongside men on various community mobisquads development projects.

Less conspicuous in its operations, is The All Women's Association of Ghana, founded in 1984 to assist the integration of women in Development, but apparently with very scarce resources.

It should also be acknowledged, however, that in their rather quiet and less publicised manner, the Ministries of Local Government, Social Welfare and Community Development, and Cooperatives, and the dominant religious denominations and sects, have been no less influential

in assisting women to come together to assist themselves. In addition, some female organizations such as the Gyakiti Ladies Club, and the Obo Ladies Advancement Club, have begun to reorientate their originally benevolent stature by establishing women's vocational training centres to aid young, partially educated girls acquire know-how in callings such as soap-making, fish smoking, pottery making, pomade making, and basket weaving. (A Directory of Women's Organization in Ghana, was provided as an Appendix to Assimeng [1987]).

Results: The Nature, Types and Characteristics of Women's Organizations

Although the foregoing analysis of the evolution of Women's societies helps to put this essay in historical perspective, the central and crucial focus was to respond to the question: what types of identifiable female organisations exist in Ghana, as revealed by any serious survey? Then there was the related question, namely, what attitude do these societies or organisations adopt with regard to family-related activities, such as family planning?

Typicality implies distinctiveness; in the study, we regarded as a type the main feature with which a particular property might be identified. There is a type that is related to function. Is the organisation economic or social? Is it religious or secular? Is it unifunctional or multifunctional? Is it local, or national, or international? Type might also be related to the basis of recruitment. Is the organisation open to any woman who chooses to belong, as in the case of the 31st December Women's Movement; or is it based on exclusive criteria, such for instance, as The Association of Wives of Stool Elders (Mpanyin Yerenom Fekuo) of Akropong Akwapim, or the Tongu Queenmothers' Council? For instance, a Methodist Women's Fellowship, as in the case of the Women's Fellowships of several Christian denominations, might initially appear to be exclusive in membership; yet the prospect of cross-joining is obviously present. The Muslim Women's Fellowship, and the Ahmaddiyya Moslem Women's Association, would probably hardly embrace women other than those in the Islamic faith. But even here the usual African tolerance and catholicity in embracing non-members who nevertheless share the sentiments of common cordiality, might be evident. But this would be because of the diffused nature of the Association's goals.

Except for elitist women's organisations such as the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the Zonta Club, the Women's Aglow International, and the Federation of Ghana Business and Professional Women, most organizations of women tend to be loosely structured, while the relationships among members tend also to be informal. Indeed, the need for constitutions and for elected officials, has generally arisen as the result of requirements set down by the Department of Cooperatives, and by credit and aid granting agencies. Complex organizational structures are now evolving among women's organisations, however, and this seems to be related to the stress on literacy, documentation, and regularity. Membership fees, for instance, need to be recorded; and share payments, even in the formerly informal *esusu* arrangements, now need to be clearly set down for purposes of future accounting. Membership cards then emerge to signify a person's attachment to a particular organization.

One central feature about women's organisations, is the charismatic, almost domineering role of the leader. As in the case of the Essam Women's Cooperative Society, in the Birim District of Eastern region, the leader is often the Queenmother of the village, or the wife of the Chief, or of an elder in the community. Such a position puts the leader in a class all by itself, since it is a traditionally cherished status to be a chief's or an elder's wife. She is supposed to exhibit the tact, diplomacy, and patience of her husband; but she is also expected to be firm, honest and frank. But this does not necessarily destroy the hallmark of cooperation, namely, the principle of democratic decision-making.

The more settled kinds of women's organisations, were found to be related to economic ventures. They are also a response to calls by women's bodies, as well as efforts of religious

bodies in the creation of Credit Unions, for reappraisal of women's fortunes in society. Such are the numerous fish smoking, gari processing, basket-weaving, pottery, Pomade and perfume making, soapmaking and palm and palm-kernel oil making women's organizations. The fish-smoking cooperative ventures are, by their nature, a coastal phenomenon; and the coastal strips from Accra to Sekondi are especially dotted with such organizations. Famous among these are the Kokrobite, Nyanyano, Mumford, Apam, Moree, and Elmina Women's Cooperatives. They have been particularly aided by the introduction of the 'chorkor smoker', a cheap, simple, and less cumbersome technology for smoking fish.

Soapmaking and its ancillary palm oil making activities, are mostly in the interior where availability of palm fruits can be guaranteed at less cost in transportation. Thus the Essam Cooperative Society, in the Birim District of the Eastern region, and the Akim Odumase Soapmaking Women's Society, also in the Eastern region, are noted palm making and soap making organizations. Nsein, which is abundant in coconut fruits, has a Women's organisation that specialises in the making of coconut oil in the Western region.

Gari processing, apparently, can be done in all kinds of social situation, the proviso being the availability of its principal raw material in the form of cassava tubers. Even then, Antoa, in the Ashanti region, has been identified as one of the well known gari-processing groups in Ghana. The other well known group is at Maafi Kumasi, in the Volta region.

Women's Organizations and Grassroot Participation

In the course of this study, several women's organizations were identified. Some of these are mainly movements of 'social good-doing', but from a highly elitist perspective. Examples are the Federation of Ghanaian Business and Professional Women, Women in Banking, the Women's Aglow Fellowship International, Ghana International Women's Club, the Zonta Club International, Federation of Female Lawyers, and the Women's Research Group at Legon. As their names indicate, they are mostly Ghana branches of international women's movements. These are mainly better-placed, class conscious groups whose members are aware of the significance of family planning for themselves, and for the country. But, although such groups might be prepared to make occasional donations to Children's Homes, Hospitals, or even build an occasional Day Care Centre, they do not see family planning as a collective activity to be undertaken by them. This is in spite of the fact that they plan their families, and would wish others too, to plan theirs themselves.

One Women's group that appears to relate better with the bulk of Ghanaian womanhood, as contrasted with the organizations alluded to above, is the 31st December Women's Movement. For as long as this movement lasts, and without discounting its politically sectarian orientation, there is no doubt that it should be encouraged to harp on the theme of family planning in its country-wide deliberations on the welfare of Ghanaian families. Obviously, movements such as the Ghana Widows Association, or the Association of Wives of Stool Elders (otherwise known as Mpaninfo Yerenom Fekuo, in the Akropong Akwapim district), appear to have such specific orientations that, for purposes of integrating family planning in their *raison d'être*, one might really be overstretching the argument by considering them at all.

We are now left with those income-generating women's groups that are scattered throughout the country. The present author has studied many of these in detail; but only ten were given concentrated analyses for purposes of presentation (cf. Assimeng, 1987). As has been stated before, most of these groups began as attempts to redefine the status, identity, role and responsibilities of women in society. In that regard, and considering Ghana's recent past in which the fortunes of women have undergone serious denting, it might be hoped that at least the motive behind their ventures would endure. Whether in organization and function these groups would endure as they are presently structured, is an empirical matter worthy of further

investigation. But if, indeed, any group of people could serve as a basis for the propagation and effective adoption of family planning activities, that group would appear to be women in cooperative economic activities.

As things turned, the research discovered several aged women who were appreciative of modern family planning but who had little to do with it themselves except the expectation that they would advise the youth on the implications of family planning for better social and family life. Many of these women's organisations did not engage in family planning activities as part of their main functions because, as several of our respondents stated, 'no one had suggested this.' Perhaps now is the time to offer such a suggestion.

Discussion

This paper has its origins in a study undertaken by the author in 1987. The focus of the study was the probable potential of women's organisations for the effective diffusion of family planning ideas and practices. But the findings, as presented in the foregoing sections of the paper, have wider implications for the study of womanhood in Ghana, and I believe several issues arise out of the study.

From the common acknowledgement that the contributions of women are indispensable to the social, economic and political health and functioning of especially societies on the journey to development, how does a country so enhance women's capabilities as to derive the maximum benefits from such contributions of women? Obviously, merely extolling their contributions is not enough; nor is the mere expression of sympathy with the toils and (and often thankless) overwork of women. And, while 'liberation' might have connotations that might not be immediately applicable in all societies, it is argued that women need to be invested with power to be able to control the way they see their destiny as human beings *vis à vis* their menfolk.

In the light of the foregoing, Rosaline Boyd (1989: 26) sees empowerment as:

a process by which people, women in this case, acquire real powers and command real resources within their locality; by that I mean recognised power over material resources and recognised power institutionalized within the political structure. It constitutes an affirmation of confidence that one has the tools, the mechanisms, and the resources to make decisions capable of solving one's problems.

Boyd's analysis of the position of women in Africa, indicates what the African woman is believed to be suffering from: powerlessness. Apparently, Boyd assumes that if women have power over resources with which to adapt themselves to their environment, then they will have power over themselves. But might it not be the other way round, instead? Future studies should elicit, in more empirical terms, these two sets of power, and the significance of their convergence to female (and societal) well-being.

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