

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND CHILDREN**



**GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT
OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION
AND TRAINING**

Presented by

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Hon. First Lady, Mama Anna Mkapa,

Hon. Ministers,

**Your Excellencies (Ambassadors) and the donor
Community,**

Head of Aid – CIDA, Mr Brian Proskuniak,

**Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Community
Development, Women's Affairs and Children,**

Government Officials,

NGOs and Civic Societies,

Project Director TFTW,

TFTW Beneficiaries,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to stand here today to deliver a paper on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women through Education and Training. It is a subject which is very close to my heart.

This is a workshop of the TFTW Alumni, beneficiaries of the Ministry's endeavour to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. So one may wish to take it that all of us here know or ought to know what we are talking about. However, I wish to go back to these terminologies: **gender equality and women's empowerment**. Not really to test what you know or what you do not know about these, but really to recap their conceptual meaning as a build-up to future strategies. This is because, whatever programs and plans we shall put in place after this workshop will always have to pass the test: will they or will they not achieve our overall objective to empower women and to bring about gender equality. So having a conceptual understanding of these terms is, in my opinion, necessary.

What is Gender?

I wish here to adopt a definition developed by the United Nations: Gender denotes “ the social constructed roles ascribed to males and females. These roles, which are learned, change over time and vary widely within and between cultures”. It is important to note from this definition that gender is not only a socially constructed definition of women and men, it is also a socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes.

I believe in most cases we are not bothered by the constructed definition of women and men – say for instance in terms of their sex roles. By and large the move to fight for gender equality stems from the second part of the definition, namely the socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes.

This is because it is the latter that contains an unequal power relationship whereby the male dominates in most spheres of life, whereas the woman becomes subordinate. In this type of relationship men’s tasks, roles and functions are in many aspects given higher value than women’s. As such society progressively becomes characterized by this male bias: that their tasks, roles and functions are more valuable than women’s. What happens then is that the male norm is taken as the norm for society as a whole, and this then is reflected in

policies and structures. It is in that way, that policies and structures reproduce gender inequality, even though this is often unintentionally done.

Our workshop is about women's empowerment and gender equality. Just as we have looked at the definition of gender, it is now imperative that we define what gender equality is.

What is Gender Equality?

Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. However, it is important, to note that **gender equality** is only the opposite of **gender inequality**, not of gender difference.

It is necessary to note this definition because gender activists know that their work at times is hampered by lack of knowledge or understanding of these concepts. It is important to stress that Gender equality is not synonymous with sameness. Gender equality not seek to establish men or their life style and conditions as the norm, nor does it seek to attack men as the 'culprits'.

Why then do we want to talk about gender equality, why is gender equality necessary. It has now been empirically proved that gender equality is a development imperative. If

development means the improved well-being of people and the process by which this well-being is achieved, then gender equality becomes an important variable of development. The main reason is that development can only be sustainable where material benefits (of development) are fairly distributed, especially to the most in need – the disadvantaged and the most vulnerable. Women fall in one or both categories. Studies have shown beyond doubt that in societies where there is gender equality development indications have also a better record.

A World Bank study conducted in 2000 clearly showed that addressing gender issues is an important strategy in stimulating development, in alleviating poverty and strengthening good governance. It is for these reasons that gender equality is now on the agenda in many countries of the world especially developing ones.

How can gender equality be attained?

There should obviously be many ways but for purposes of this workshop I would wish to talk about women's empowerment and affirmative action as means to attain gender equality.

Generally speaking empowerment is an element of development. It has been defined as a process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles.

It especially means the collective action by the oppressed and deprived to overcome the obstacles of structural inequality which have previously put them in a disadvantaged position.

If therefore we are to attain gender equality women's empowerment is inevitable. It is a necessary process to enable them overcome obstacles, which have led to the circumstances of disadvantage or marginalization.

Education and training is one way through which women can be empowered. The TFTW has been doing just this. Providing education and training to women so that once qualified "they would occupy decision making positions in both the private and public sectors, in order to influence development strategies and long-term policy planning issues". TFTW also believed that increasing the number of qualified women decision-makers would help achieve "some semblance of gender balance in positions of influence in the county". I believe the TFTW has recorded notable achievements in increasing the number of trained women.

Your presence here today is testimony to this fact and needless to say many of you are occupying responsible positions in your different places of work. The challenge we should all face when training or taking stock of on achievements is: what is the proportion between the number of those "qualified" and the positions that they occupy it should

be understood here that I am referring to training and education very broadly, I am not only talking of the TFTW Alumni. I would wish to leave this as food for thought, please take it up in your discussions.

Let me talk of affirmative action as another way of bringing about gender equality. The government of the United Republic of Tanzania has so far done well in this. It has done so in Parliament as well as in local government authorities. I would however wish to dwell on Parliament.

Way back in 1984 when our country was still a one-party democracy the Constitution recognized the need to have a certain number of seats reserved for women. At that particular point in time fifteen seats were reserved for the women's organization of Tanzania (UWT). This was in addition to any constituency seat that women might have won or through other CCM affiliates like the Youth, Parents' and Workers' organizations. The move to have a specific number of seats reserved for women was taken against the background of poor participation of women in politics and decision-making.

This provision lasted for about a decade but it did not have a significant impact, in that for a long time it remained the only sure way of having women representatives in Parliament.

In 1992 when the Constitution reintroduced multi-party politics it also provided that instead of having fifteen women's seats their representation should be 15%. The 15% provision was applied in the 1995 general elections. Following Tanzania's commitment at regional and global levels to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies, the Constitution was once again amended now to raise the percentage from 15% to 20%. What has been the result?

POSITION OF WOMEN SEATS IN PARLIAMENT (1985-2000)

YEAR OF ELECTION	TOTAL NO. OF MPs	TOTAL NO. OF WOMEN MPs	TOTAL WOMEN MPs IN CONSTITUENCIES	% WOMEN MPs Vs TOTAL NO. OF MPs	% OF WOMEN'S CONSTITUENCY SEATS Vs TOTAL WOMEN'S SEATS	% WOMEN'S CONSTITUENCY SEATS Vs TOTAL NO. OF MPs
1985	244	26	5	10.7	19.2	2.0
1990	255	28	5	11.0	17.9	2.0
1995	275	45	8	16.4	17.8	2.9
2000	295	63	12	21.4	19.0	4.1

Looking at these statistics one can only realize that had it not been for affirmative action women's representation in Parliament would be very, very marginal. Even though we have had affirmative action in its various forms either as a specific number or as percentage, that alone has not worked

as a catalyst to bring women into leadership and decision-making positions. It is a well-known fact that a good number of women MPs have been doing well, that does not seem to have convinced the rest of the society that given equal opportunity women have been and can be very good leaders. Thus, even though we have had affirmative action for twenty years now only affirmative action has been able to guarantee women's participation in Parliament and local government authorities.

While it does not seem like it was very difficult to raise women's representation in local government to 33%, the increase from 15% - 20% was fairly controversial inside and outside Parliament. I would not wish to go into the debate that preceded the amendments. There were those who thought that enough was enough, it was high time that women "contested equally with their male counterparts". There were those who thought that having women's special seats in the first place was just "undue favoritism". Let alone increasing the percentage. There were of course those who supported the increase and with very sound reasons. However, to-date the debate has not died away and I am sure it will resurface once we start the process of raising the percentage to thirty.

It is at this juncture that education and training becomes important in its broadest sense. There are people, men and

women, with high-sounding academic qualifications but with very little understanding of the forces in society which would necessitate affirmative action. These are the type that would vehemently oppose such affirmative action as women's quota in Parliament, local government or other decision-making bodies.

Only a few days ago I was one of the women MPs who attended a course on Parliamentary procedures. The Clerk of the National Assembly gave an interesting example of people of this type. In one of the conferences he had attended, a Nigerian woman senator strongly opposed the idea of reserved seats for women. She honestly thought, albeit wrongly, that special quota violated the principle of equal opportunity. However, the Clerk noted that the senator "erred in not taking into account the historical, social and cultural barriers that confront women in election campaigns and which prevent them from obtaining their fair share of parliamentary seats". It is no wonder that even after twenty good years of affirmative action in Parliament to-date we have only twelve women occupying constituency seats. Looking at statistics there is surely an improvement, the number of constituency women MPs has risen from five in 1985 to 12 in year 2000.

As we meet here today we should be able to take pride in what TFTW has done so far. It has given us education and training,

in that way it has taken an important step in empowering us. But what next? This is why I asked earlier on, is the number of qualified and trained reasonably proportionate to the number of women in positions of leadership and decision-making? Not only in Parliament but elsewhere. Affirmative action, yes, but can we go further?

Now that we know which way to go in education and training, has not the time come to “attack” other structures that would give these “trained, educated and qualified” women real, and not theoretical opportunity to take part meaningfully in decision making bodies? Let’s debate this point.

As part of women’s empowerment we might also wish to focus our attention on those women who are already in leadership positions. How do we give them training which is relevant to positions in which they currently occupy? Women MPs did have a very useful course recently on parliamentary procedures and practices. I think that is one practical way of women’s empowerment which shows affirmative action as a strategy has to go hand in hand with other empowering activities. If I may once again quote the National Assembly clerk, having a big number of women is desirable, but having them empowered through training is even more crucial. I have used the Parliament as an immediate example, but similar steps have to be taken in respect of women leaders in village

councils, local authorities, political parties, public and private institutions. Maybe as we plan for the future. Alongside other types of training we could consider “on the job training courses” specifically targeting women leaders: village councilors, local government representatives, political parties and members of Parliament.

Which Way TFTW?

I have no doubt that TFTW has been doing a good job and I think that the government of Canada and United Republic of Tanzania made a very wise decision to establish the TFTW. The strategy to have women trained either in formal institutions or through other empowering courses was a step in the right direction. You, as alumni of the TFTW are better placed to make an assessment of those plans and programs.

I would suggest that training and education is an important tool in empowering women. However, education in the sense of awareness creation and conscientization is also necessary to provide base and support for affirmative action. For indeed, if there is lack of education in that sense it will be extremely difficult for the society to accept change especially where one seeks to bring about change through affirmative action.

Thus the need for education and training in these circumstances is two-fold. In the first place women leaders at whatever level of leadership: grassroots, district, regional or national level need to be educated and trained, should like to emphasize here that education and training are used in their broadest sense possible. It is through education that they will come to learn the abc of leadership, they will increase their knowledge of current affaires national or international which will strengthen their capability in leadership or only discharge of their duties. This will in turn give them the confidence required to withstand the various attitudes and mindsets which work adversely against them.

On the other hand, even if women are educated and trained, that alone will not suffice to ensure that gender inequality is done away with. That alone is not enough to ensure that they have equal access to leadership positions or representative bodies like Parliament, councils or village authorities. There is a dire need to “educate” and “train” the society in general as well as other authorities that are key in deciding what affirmative action should be made how and for how long.