

**WOMEN, INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT:
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE AFRICAN REGION.**

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WOMEN, INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT:
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DEFINING THE SCOPE OF WORK

Terms of Reference.

- i) Compiling a list of institution and experts throughout the region involved in research or projects relevant to women, intangible heritage and development;
- ii) Informing selected organizations in the region concerned with women and development (Universities, NGO's and other relevant organizations) of the project and requesting their expert knowledge on the subject, current activities and recommendations for future actions in this domain;
- iii) Surveying major and representative research and activities previously and currently being undertaken in this domain within the region;
- iv) Compiling an annotated bibliography of major previous and current literature on the subject to be evaluated and assessed in order to identify and prioritize further research;
- v) Identifying the major issues and problems in terms of safeguarding, preserving and revitalizing women's roles in relation to intangible heritage and development and present findings in a synopsis.
- vi) Research enquiries into the perceived role of UNESCO, Member States and local level organizations (community – based organizations, NGO's, etc.) will be central to formulating strategies and future actions to be incorporated in the draft project proposal of an international project, 'Women, Intangible Heritage and Development'.

Further clarification to the terms of reference provided by the coordinator of the project takes cognizance of the difficulties involved in undertaking research of such a broad nature as follows:

"I would like to add that we are hoping the regional coordinators understand that, the Terms of Reference have been prepared so as to request a representative survey which selects major and representative institutions, activities and research in the domain of women, intangible heritage are

development for each region. In this respect, the task may more realistically be accomplished in the given time. What will really be important is that the coordinator can offer sound and insightful synopsis (as requested in point 3. v of the terms of reference) and recommendations on future priority actions necessary to contribute to the drafting of the project which is to be submitted to the General Conference 31st session this year.”

Approach to the Study.

In preparing this preliminary study, we held discussions with eminent scholars and women activists in Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, and Kenya. (please see appendix A for details). The very mention of the phrase “intangible heritage’ tended to provoke a discussion the around the definition of the concept and the context in which such intangible heritage might be identified. Section I of this paper therefore builds on these discussions and on reading undertaken for further elucidation towards setting out the major characteristics of women’s intangible heritage in Africa.

In Section II a number of representative institutions will be presented as contexts within which certain forms of women’s intangible heritage have been created, developed, and transmitted over the years.

Section III of the paper summarizes our main findings so far with respect to the types of institutions and programmes and studies, which are foregrounding women’s intangible knowledge. This brief survey is accompanied by indicative lists of gender programmes, and studies on gender, intangible culture and development in appendices B and C respectively. The section IV of the paper provides a number of suggestions on the possible direction which the project could take and the priority areas that could be considered in the conclusion of the paper briefly looks at urgent questions, which seem to be emerging around the question of women’s intangible culture particularly as it relates to development.

SECTION I

THE CONCEPT OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Expert advice (please see appendix A sought on establishing an appropriate definition of intangible heritage and its relationship to development in Africa basically agreed with the thrust of the document entitled “Discussion Paper: Women and Intangible Heritage and Development.” It was agreed that intangible heritage would cover women’s knowledge in a number of areas, namely

a) Technology and vocations.

This would cover domains in which women have been the main actors around the continent. These include textile production, pottery, food production, processing and

preservation, healing, beauty care, fashion, housing construction, maintenance and decoration, mortuary skills?

b) Health.

Key areas under the rubric of health include family health, women's wellness, reproductive health, general and specialist knowledge of herbal medicine and pharmacopoeia, psychology and psychiatry.

c) Ritual and Spirituality

Here, the leading role of women in fundamental rituals related to the life cycle were mentioned. These include birthing, puberty, marriage, funeral and mortuary rights. Furthermore, women's roles as custodians and actors in a wide range of rites marking important moments in the religious and political lives of various societies was emphasized. It was also noted that this was the area where significant marginalization of women, because of their sex and gender roles, could also be perceived. The question of women and spirituality may be addressed here. Women as religious officiants such as priestesses are quite common in traditional African religion. Also common are women as spirit mediums. African women's spirituality as relates to Christianity is worthy of mention in some parts of the continent such as Ethiopia it is of truly ancient vintage. For many other parts the intensity of participation of African women has been growing over the past 500 years with the last 150 years being the most intense. The role of women in creating the syncretism inherent in indigenous forms of Christian worship as well as the evolution of the Christian godhead and its role and characteristics have been noted but require further examination¹. In respect to religion then, questions of disenfranchisement and empowerment equally arise. This is essential when we recognize the fact that Islam and Judeo-Christian religions have been powerful invasive forces often demanding a total abandonment of the intangible heritage. The question arises as to how women negotiate these new forms of spirituality against their roles as custodian's protectors, and transmitters of intangible heritage. How have they reconfigured these realities?

d) Fundamental Social Construction:

This particular category highlights women's agency and knowledge in matrilineal societies found in countries across the continent such as Niger, Ghana, La Cote d'Ivoire,

¹ The Research of Dr. Brigid Sackey of Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana on this matter is worthy note.

Nigeria, Benin, Zaire, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania². Some well-known scholars such as Ife Amadiume of Nigeria have set out elaborate Knowledge in areas such as inheritance, genealogies, conjugal requirements and strategies and parenting arise under this rubric.

In the area of social construction is the question of genderized social spaces. At first glance social spaces seem to be clearly demarcated in the heritage of social construction in Africa. Recognition of these spaces opens a window on exclusive areas of feminine agency and self-expression. Frances Harding of the Oriental and African Studies gave us the benefit of her opinion on this matter³. While accepting the validity of seeking women within these social spaces, she cautions that the spaces should not be glorified because they are based on unequal relationships and do not represent spaces of free choice. She suggests that they are only the spaces in which women are permitted by men to operate.

e) Legal and Political Matters.

As with ritual the confined spaces to which women were restricted were noted in discussing the question of the nature of women's intangible heritage. The mainstream discussion of the law and political economy whether historical or contemporary is generally recognized to be a narrative and discourse that excludes women. Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that part of the problems of non recognition for the role of women might be traced to the cultural baggage carried by anthropologists, historians and social scientists who had not recognized women as actors in the arena of public life and had neither sought their knowledge nor traced their input.⁴

It is clear however even from the preliminary survey that we have conducted so far that the record of women as agents in the political economy of African society is beginning to fill out. We cite for emphasis systems that make room for women leaders such as the Nkomesha or Chieftainesses of the Lenje people of Zambia who sit in the National House of Chiefs and The Ahenmaa or queen mothers of the Akan. This is quite apart from individual women who have been recorded to have made their mark in leadership even if

² This is discussed briefly by Shuma and Liljestrom their chapter on "The Erosion of the Matrilineal Order of the Wamwera" Rwebangira and Liljestrom 1998: p70ff

³ . Ms Harding specializes in women and performance. She made her observations on this matter in an email message dated 19/4/01

⁴ In the introduction to their book "I Will Not Eat Stone: A Women's History of Colonial Asante," Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian discuss the historiography that has effectively marginalized women from

this was by default of those who had the mandate to do so. These include Queen Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba of Angola and Nana Yaa Asantewaa of Asante who led her people against the British in 1900. There has also been a great deal of interest in women as actors in commerce particularly in West Africa.

f) Values and Ideologies

Women as nurturers are recognized as having the role of custodianship and transmission of values and ethics of particular families, clans, societies and nations. This role is recognized to have been magnified in the process of integration of traditional economies with the colonial and global ones. Women in societies heavily affected by emigration of men such as Lesotho and Mozambique in Southern Africa and Bourkina Faso in West Africa for example, have had the added burden of resisting the marginalization and the breakdown of indigenous systems of knowledge and values and transmitting these to younger generation. This is being done in a dynamic process of reconfiguring the female reality and gender relations. Experts consulted were quick to point out the fact that much as women are custodians of positive value systems, they also carry the antithesis and are recognized purveyors of negative intangible heritage such as taboos and attitudes which debase women like female genital mutilation, child marriage, female enslavement together with their narratives.

Another angle to the question of antithetical values and ideologies. Is the discourse around perceptions of woman hood and femininity, which are translated into societal mythmaking, norms and behaviour and often accepted by women themselves. These perceptions are embodied in taboos such as those related to menstruation and rituals of various types, which render women “pollutants.” They are also embodied in the diminution of women’s capacity by association of womanhood to low strength of character such as the depiction of women in fiction and proverbs as being incapable of keeping secrets. A further example of this tendency is to associate womanhood with low

the written history of Colonial Asante while putting forward methodologies they and others have evolved to give recognition to women as actors in the colonial era of Asante

intellectual capacity such as the expression “Mmaa adwene” –female thinking. (Sutherland-Addy with Hagan /Odotei –13/3/01)⁵

g) The Arts

The arts have been set up in a separate category only for convenience because this is a very pervasive set of activities, which manifest within other contexts such as politics, ritual and technology where they carry and express and intensify the semiotic worth of behaviour and activities. The intangible aspect of life, which gives meaning, and worth the material world and routine behaviour is expressed through the arts. Within gendered spaces, the arts also take on a gendered aspect. Thus particular attire, artifacts, music and dance related to puberty rites of girls will be feature girls and women while those related to rites for boys would feature boys and men. Women’s capacity to raise the emotional and spiritual stakes through intense performance may be observed through their contribution to religious ceremonies, and gatherings of political import. In discussing the heritage of the arts we single out the spoken word and the literary arts for these literally give the woman a voice. The woman as nurturer is the first to share the fundamental humanizing phenomenon of language with the child. This also gives women the responsibility of passing on the heritage of values at the early stages of life. This fact raises real questions about the contribution of women to the perpetuation of socialization and ideologies of gender inequality.

Opinion and perspective are mediated by aesthetic and symbolic expression. Often indirection and symbolism provide women with the channels through which to participate in discourses and negotiations, which would not be otherwise possible. These range from expressing distaste for the behaviour of husbands and in-laws through work songs, to reinforcing the dominant historical and political narrative through funeral and praise poetry. The exclusive domestic scene is often the intimate theatre in which women influence emergent generations through their creativity and performance skills. This may be done through the retelling of traditional tales and the narration of oral histories.

⁵ Professor George Hagan a renowned Ghanaian anthropologist and Dr. Irene Odotei an established historian and Director of the Institute of African Studies University of Ghana held a focus group discussion with me on the project and its implications on 13/3/01

h) A Word on the Concepts of Intangible Heritage and Development.

In demarcating the above domains as the main ones to encompass women's agency with respect to intangible heritage, discussants seem agreed that the discussion of heritage and development must be nuanced in order to capture accurately the forces with which African women are contending. It was the view of discussants that neither the concept of intangible heritage nor that of development could form the fulcrum for the project without more explicit interrogation. This is because in practice both the intangible heritage and development models have inherent elements, which have been quite inimical to the well being of African women. Surely the perpetuation of ideologies which uphold Female Genital Mutilation in the context of rites of passage cannot be championed, neither can development models which perpetuate women in poverty because they end up serving the interests of big business and encouraging dependency on "development agencies." In the final section of this paper, we shall develop these ideas further as regards our suggested approach to the project.

SECTION II

THE HERITAGE OF WOMEN'S ROLES AND INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA

We have mentioned above that there is some controversy about the constraints imposed by gender streaming and also about what happens in the social spaces within which women operate. It is undeniable however that there are long-established institutions in which women have agency and control. Within these contexts, the leadership skills and knowledge of women is created, validated and transmitted. Women's perspective on life is made manifest very clearly and their feelings are clearly expressed. A few examples may serve to illustrate the point. In most African societies, puberty rites are held for girls who come of age. During these rites, young women are often expected to attend a school of life during which they are taught what woman hood implies in their particular culture. Zambia, this strong female institution it is named Chisunga by the Bemba people and Shinamwali by the Chewa people (both of Zambia). Sessions are led by the instructor called Alangizi "The One Who Shows the Way." The training given is intensive and ranges over areas such as historical traditions and norms, personal hygiene and herbal medicine Women's sexuality is celebrated in the all-night dance held exclusively for women by the Queen of the Basotho of Lesotho. Women are recognized as praise singers and custodians of history in many cultures. The singers of formal clan and state dirges among the Akan of Ghana provide nuggets of oral tradition as they chant the mournful dirges. Again, women

have been gaining ground as griots or Djelimoussow in Mali. Not only have they maintained their tradition of shorter texts but have slowly gained popularity in singing the longer historical texts which were originally the sole preserve of men.

Regarding the performance heritage of women, we have already alluded above to the fact that within this creative universe women give range to free self-expression and ascend to great heights of religious social and political influence. The intangible culture of the work song or chant for example, innocuous as it may seem, allows the woman to negotiate marital concessions through indirect but powerful messages to her spouse. It also enables her to unburden her mind of the effect of stresses and pressures of conjugal life involving co-wives, in-laws and so on. At another level, women as composers of song for particular groups such as the Adzewa and Adenkum and Nwonkoro bands of the Akan of Ghana, are able to engage in social and political commentary which makes them an obvious force to be reckoned with in the states to which they belong.

Essentially the heritage of women as performer within traditional institutions is a powerful one. Embedded within this heritage is also the heritage of protest and resistance. This protest is often verbalized but symbolic. It may also occur in a ritualized form as with the rituals performed by the --- of Cote d'Ivoire upon the death of a woman in childbirth. During this ritual, women perform war songs demanding the life of the deceased from the men. It also through song and ritualized performance that the women of --- in Nigeria protested the incessant migration of their people and caused them to stay in their current location⁶. {This information was provided by the Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria committees respectively of the Women Writing Africa project}

In the context of the intangible heritage, religion provides a complex arena for the discussion of women's intangible knowledge. Women as spirit mediums and religious officials are able to participate in healing, theo-politics and act as seers for their communities. The feminine principles of spirituality pertaining to the earth, deities, legendary martyrs and mythical progenitors abound in various African cultures. In these contexts, women and femininity are associated with the very essence of life as well as the well being of society. These are roles of undisputed authority and raise woman hood on a high pedestal. On the other hand women's spirituality is also viewed with suspicion and awe. They may therefore in the same breath be isolated as evil such as is found in the pervasive belief in witchcraft.

It is important to say a word on Islam and Christianity both of which have been practiced in parts of the African continent for centuries and are yet emerging in other parts. Women in general do not have the

⁶ this information was provided by the Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria committees respectively of the Women Writing Africa Project.

prominence in these religions as officials as they do in traditional religion. Particularly with Christianity however, they tend to form the bulk of many congregations. With the new wave of fundamentalism in the last two decades or so of the 20th century, there has been a great impetus to abandon the traditional heritage of religion and along with it the intangible knowledge. This may have implications for the future as regards areas such as pharmacology, the environment, healing processes, history and symbolisms of society etc.

On the other hand, women have lost ground in Africa as far as traditional roles are concerned mostly due to the fact that traditional institutions have either been replaced completely or partially by dominant colonial powers. This is particularly true of public and political positions. Thus the institution of queenmother among the Akan of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire has lost the parity it enjoyed within the ruler ship of many communities and states. A superficial demonstration of this is the fact that at public gatherings, queenmothers do not sit at the same level with kings. In a more severe case of loss of parity, the colonial government categorically replaced the powerful female authority figures of South Western and South Eastern Tanzania with men.

Section IV

THE DOCUMENTATION OF WOMEN'S CULTURE.

Large number of non-governmental organizations has sprung up around questions to do with women and development. In the course of their work they have accumulated a wealth of documentation of what women do and know. Organizations such as the Women's Research and Documentation Centre in Accra and Abantu for Development located in a number of African countries are dedicated to documentation of womens experiences in the area of reproductive health, sexual abuse, development and so on. Others such as Forum of African Women Educationalists and Femme Africa Solidarite seek to change the status of women and document women's achievements and knowledge as part of the process in education and peace respectively. FAWE has generated projects, which document and publish the life histories of women achievers ranging from policy makers to scientist, school heads and women leaders in traditional society. Further more, FAWE 's work in more than ½ of its 31 branches has yielded an impressive amount of creative pieces of poetry, songs drama and film created especially by young women and girls. These pieces portray quite poignantly a startling awareness among this population of phenomena, which affect them, such as the negative social environment as regards their schooling, sexual harassment and AIDS. As part of its advocacy platform to ensure that women are involved in peace making processes on the continent, Femme Africa Solidarite has made it its business to document

women's strategic involvement in peace making in Uganda, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. It is clear from the documentation that women have initiated far-reaching strategies based on their assessment of their strengths and attempted some clearly innovative interventions in situations of conflict. We will refer to this later in our discussion of areas, which require further attention as regards women's intangible knowledge and its connection to development. Associations of professional women on the continent often act within an ambit that goes beyond narrow professional interests .One organization whose work has been notable in this area is the Federation of Women Lawyers, known by its French acronym, FIDA. Many national branches of FIDA have taken up the role of spearheading changes in legislation affecting women and providing education on traditional and adopted legal systems which affect women. Recognition must be given to a number of bureaus established in policy making institutions which initiate and support programmes dedicated to a the establishment of an a women's agenda on the African continent. Important bureau of this type has been set up at the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity. It is accepted practice to document women's views and reality at the grass roots. This is often used in advocacy work.

Academic Institutions and Programmes In the 1980s a number of Women's Studies programmes were established in African universities. These include the Makerere University of Uganda, Ibadan University of Nigeria and The University of Ghana. . From the mid 1990s the discourse revolves around gender studies with course work and the establishment of academic courses in the area.

The main thrust of these programmes has been women and development. Courses have been developed in areas such as gender and development theory, sexuality and reproductive health, management, ethnology and gender, and economy and gender. Much of the research work could be termed as "impact studies" in other words; it has concentrated on the status of women and the effect of a variety of forces acting upon them. The domains of economics, production and livelihood, social relations and status, health status and reproduction, motherhood in all its ramifications have been favoured. The approach to these studies has been to review the way in which established and mutating social relations and policies have impacted on the status of women. Important quantitative data and qualitative insights have been accumulated, some of which have made it possible to put forward powerful contributions to the elaboration policy and systems aimed at monitoring and improving the status of women. It has also been used to evolve theoretical positions and research tools that contextualize the specificity of women of African origin within a global context. While tacitly recognizing women's knowledge however, these studies mainly concentrate on the impact of the context in which women find themselves. By their very nature, these studies feature women's knowledge of intangible culture only vicariously. Women are seen

here in objective conditions of poverty, or low health status for example the level and causality of which is being sought. It is perhaps instructive that there are other types of studies and institutions attempt to provide the plat form for women's voices to present themselves directly. One of these is the collection and publication of literary works by women. It is fairly obvious to state that these works being the creative productions of women give us the opportunity to hear from them directly even though they might have been to a mediated by an introduction or re-presentation or interpretation in some cases. There are several anthologies and critical works that might be cited in this regard but perhaps the landmark anthology *Daughter of Africa* edited by Margaret Busby is a reference point. In this anthology African women's voices from antiquity to the present, on the continent and across the oceans; whether originally written or orally composed, are present. Adeola James collection of interviews of African women writer *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk* represents those works, which give us an idea of the personality and history behind the writing of women. In a thorough ethnology of women and their spoken word, Karin Barber offers us a discourse surrounding women and the oral tradition entitled *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the past in a Yoruba Town*, which allows the voices of women to come through. More over, we are made privy to the symbolism, tropes and style that are most associated with women and the feminine principle.

Perhaps, one of the most encompassing projects in women's literature currently in progress is the *Women Writing Africa Project*. This project which is being undertaken for publication by the Feminist Press of New York, and supported by Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, will appear in four or five volumes and will consist of representative texts from Southern, North, East, and West Africa. Currently primary texts are being collected and selected by groups of researchers in several African countries. It is a project "of cultural reconstruction that aims to restore African women's voices to the public sphere. Through the collection of written and oral narratives----We have deliberately broadened the definition of "writing" to include songs, praise poems, and significant oral texts as well as fiction short stories. Drama, letters. And journals. *Women Writing Africa* will preserve and publish individual pieces of women's writing to allow for new readings of women's history. We know that traditionally, women in Africa have been storytellers, passing along histories of their communities from generation to generation. We also know that these stories have been commemorated in written and oral narration. In bringing together women's voices, *Women Writing Africa* will illuminate far a broad public, the neglected history and culture of African women who have shaped and been shaped by their families, societies and nations." The project is being coordinated by Florence Howe, immediate past director of

the Feminist Press, Professor Abena Busia Ghanaian Poet of Rutgers University and Dr. Tuzyline Jita Allan, Sierra Leonean scholar of Baruch College, Cuny.

This leads to another category of works, which appears to be emerging in response to the real complexity of women's material and non-material reality, both current and historical. These works fall into two categories. There are first of all those that revise past methodologies such as is being done in historiography to replace women in the historical stream and to raise consciousness about her role. (Please see Allman and Tashjian 2000) The same sort of trend may be seen in development where recognition of the role of women is being advocated. The text *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* edited by Gwendolyn Mikell is instructive in this regard.

The text mentioned above is also representative of the broad embrace of both development and the study of women's tangible and intangible knowledge. It stands to reason that a multidisciplinary approach would have to be taken to encompass the feminine reality and to identify the elements, which would bring women into their own. Three other texts should serve to illustrate this point one is entitled *Gendered Encounters: Challenging Cultural Boundaries and Social Hierarchies in Africa* (Grosz-Ngate and Kokole Eds 1997) and the other *Gender Perceptions and Development in Africa: A Socio-Cultural Approach*. (Kolawole Ed 1998) In these two texts essays on oral literature and mythology are placed side by side with those on religion, economics and sociology and the theory of gender. They constitute examples of a bold trend, which does not allow the boundaries of academically separate fields of study to fragment the vista of the African woman's world. Here the tangible and intangible aspects of women's heritage and experience are explored. The third text forms part of an innovative exhibition put up by the Musee de la Civilization in Quebec Canada entitled *Women Build Africa/Femmes Battiseurs de L'Afrique*. The exhibition as its companion text attempts to place the African woman in her contemporary context showing clearly her roots and heritage. The essays battle with is sure of intangible heritage and development. Edited by Lisette Ferera. "*Women Build Africa* is a narrative of women organizing for change. It is the story of women who are attempting to reconcile tradition and modernity in societies, which are undergoing profound transformation. Since 1991, museums and partner institutions in the North and South have been engaged in a collaborative process, working together on various projects and building long-term linkages. This publication, like the exhibition of the same name, is one result of that collaboration. Individuals, like peoples, draw the source of their heritage-natural and cultural, material and intangible heritage. The authors begin and conclude with an assessment of the role and impact of culture on development. The articles reflect diverse viewpoints,

highlight contemporary challenges and key issues facing women in development, and chart the changes that have occurred in the social, economic and political status of women in Africa”⁷

SECTION V.

EMERGING PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTIONS

In this section we shall make a number of suggestions pertaining to areas that require further investigation in the Africa region as well as possible actions that might be taken to foreground the role of women as creators, custodians, protectors and transmitters of intangible heritage.

It is suggested that a “document, show and tell” approach be adopted to ensure that the information accruing from the project is packaged in different forms for various publics such as the particular society groups from which the knowledge was solicited; young persons, academics, policy makers. This is to ensure that women’s intangible culture is validated as much as possible through the audibility of their own voices. This approach is likely to work as advocacy for the conscious re-creation of the heritage to remove denigrating aspects. This is important because of the erosion of confidence of confidence in women’s heritage and the lack of importance given to its role in sustainable development.

Documentation:

- a) The bulk of documentation of African women’s intangible culture is being done by Non-Africans for academic or policy work in institutions outside the continent. A database needs to be prepared and made available in Africa.
- b) Standards for research into women’s intangible heritage need to be developed to provide a guide to assist in the assessment of documentation already undertaken and future research undertakings. Thus, samples should be taken of the research methodologies utilized to collect information on women’s intangible culture in order to share best practices with regard to the most effective approach. This exercise is important because depending on the interference of the bias and agenda of researchers; some of the data collected would be erroneous in fact and in perspective and in interpretation. This situation could occur where the words spoken by the custodians is mediated or where there is a missionary agenda

⁷ The quotation was taken from the Women Writing Africa Brochure. The writer of this paper together with Mme Aminata Diaw of Cheikh Anta Diop University of Senegal are the CO-editors of the West Africa and Sahel volume. Currently, materials have been collated from 11 countries, the result of the work of about 100 researchers.

(religious, developmental) which blinds researchers to the need to learn from the society whose heritage they are purporting to change.

c) Research both in women's intangible heritage and women and development undertaken both by academics and non academics in Africa needs to be collated because it is hiding in departments and offices all over the continent.

d) There are forms of intangible knowledge in the custody of women healers and spiritualists. This is perhaps one of the areas that is most difficult to reach and most under siege on the continent. This knowledge includes history, primordial myths, symbolism, ancient writing and speech forms, pharmacology and other forms of ethno-science, social psychology and other techniques of healing, ethics and philosophy, esoterics, governance and social organization etc. Perhaps an approach that would involve assisting these knowledgeable people to undertake their own documentation for their own use would be worth devising to ensure ownership and cooperation.

e) Women's Speech:

Literary or otherwise there is a language and discourse associated with women. A clear understanding of this should greatly facilitate an understanding of women's perceptions of reality and communication culture for the purpose of effective development work, and to give women their due as artists, social commentators and philosophers for example.

The documentation of women's literature is beginning to receive attention and should be pursued further. It is interesting to note briefly that the department of Kiswahili studies in the Dar Es Salaam University has discovered that there is a considerable corpus of Kiswahili composed by women which was put in writing by men but which does not acknowledge the original composers. There are contemporary composers of songs, poetry and narratives whose works are performed but not written. There are also written works of women which have been published in little-known magazines, newspapers etc. It would be very important to capture these voices. It would be worthwhile to consider the collaboration of UNESCO with the Women Writing Africa Project in this area.

f) Women and society in general continue to be custodians of intangible culture and ideologies which act as a powerful force to undermine women's effective

establishment of a development agenda to say nothing of their participation in one. These should be properly documented and shared with particular communities for a re-assessment.

g) An assessment should be made of those development and action-research projects, which have successfully foregrounded women's intangible heritage.

h) Identifying women's spaces. It is important to systematically search for women where they are and to sensitively encourage them to share their knowledge and skills.

i) Women as performers and artists need to be carefully studied, as this is an area in which they should rightly be seen as creative individuals who make a strong impact on their societies. This should involve individual artists as well as artistic groupings.

j) Women and history: Again women have not been given sufficient recognition either as custodians of history or makers of history. In this context it is worth assessing the effect of broad swathes of history such as slavery, colonization, modernization, independence, structural adjustment, civil strife etc. This is a wide area that permits a complete historical narrative to be told and opens the way for a projection of women's role in the making of the future.

k) Women and Work: African women have had vocations over the ages, which must necessarily have evolved technologies, skills, a culture and a discourse. This accumulated heritage should be assessed over time.

l) African Women in the globalized world:

Most African women do not feel any of the benefits of globalization but are to varying extents suffering from its negative effects such as environmental degradation and poverty. Attention should be paid to any successful efforts to bring the benefits of globalization to women who are using their intangible knowledge to better their lot. (E.g. using the Internet to market crafts; adapting cloth-making skills through technology). There is also evidence that women are in the process of self-creation in contemporary times and this is a very exciting concept particularly where these women are adding to global knowledge and creating niches. It is important to acknowledge the fact that since a lot of the intangible heritage of women is a living part of the culture, it is to a greater or

lesser extent being recreated. It is often easy to over look the daring innovations and departures from the norm, which underline the organic vibrant nature of women's culture. Projections of possible synergies between women's intangible heritage, development and the global knowledge base could be derived.

m) As indicated in the opening paragraphs of this section, it will be necessary to persuade governments, civil society organizations and governments, to be partners in this effort to enable the woman to tell her story and to take her place as a full partner in setting the development agenda. Much of the texts and data collected will speak for itself but will require packaging and, presentation. This would mean that the project should be prepared to commission multimedia studies, which make it possible for presentations to be made in audio-visual form.

CONCLUSION

The UNESCO International Project on Women Intangible Heritage and Development is one whose time has come. As we have tried to indicate there are like-minded scholars working in the areas of indigenous knowledge, intangible culture, women and development, with reference to the Africa Region. In emerging studies, recognition is being given to the woman not only as actor on the ground and subject of study but also as an individual capable of presenting her self and engaging in a discourse around the matters in which she is engaged. Further more such studies recognize the vital need for a multi-disciplinary approach in order to arrive at a comfortable familiarity and understanding of women's knowledge and life situations.

It would seem necessary to collate information on work that is already on going and to select significant projects for support and dissemination. A number of new projects suggest themselves including direct research, repackaging of materials and advocacy for the recognition of women' intangible knowledge using UNESCO's comparative advantage.

Emerging Priority Actions:

In this section we shall make a number of suggestions pertaining to areas that require further investigation in the Africa region as well as possible actions that might be taken to foreground the role of women as creators, custodians, protectors and transmitters of intangible heritage.

Appendix A

List of Responding Experts.

Dr. Frances Harding	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK
Dr. Irene Odotei	Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.
Dr. Wanjiku Kabira	University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya
Dr. Zubeida Tumbo-Masabo	Department of ki Swahili Studies, University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Mrs. Daphne Chimuka	Coordinator, Forum for African Women Educationalists. (FAWEZA) Zambia
Ms. Antonina Pongo	Yashini – coordinator, Female Education in Maths and Science in Africa. (FEMSA) Lusaka, Zambia.

Ms. Becky Clarke	Reed Educational Professional Publishing, Oxford, UK.
Ms. Karen Bakhuizen	Centre for International Research and Advisory Networks, Netherlands.
Professor Florida Karani	University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.
Professor Dickson Mwanza	University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia.
Professor George Hagan	Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.
Professor Mapopa Ntonga	University of Zambia, Department of Drama, Lusaka, Zambia.

Appendix B

INDICATIVE SAMPLING OF GENDER PROGRAMMES

<u>COUNTRY / INSTITUTION</u>	<u>TYPE OF PROGRAMME</u>
Cameroon University of Buea.	Women Studies Programme.
Ghana Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.	Post Graduate Studies in Gender and Development
Nigeria a. Amadou Bello University, Sociology Department.	Course in Women in Society.
b. WORDIC, Institute of African Studies, University Programme. of Ibadan.	Women Studies
c. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.	Women Studies Course.
d. Administrative staff College, Badagari.	Women in Management Course.
e. Agriculture and Management Institute, Illorin.	Various short courses in management for grassroots women and women in management.

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| f. Legal Research and Resource Development Centre, Yaba, Lagos. | Various programmes including Human Rights Education for Women. |
| g. Mariam Babangida National Centre for Women's Development, Abuja. | Residential Institute for Persons interested in Women's research and for workshops and short courses. |

South Africa

Africa Gender Institute
University of Cape Town

Uganda

Gender Studies Centre,
Makarere University

Gender Studies Courses and under graduate and post graduate level.

APPENDIX C

REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY OF STUDIES ON GENDER; INTANGIBLE CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

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