

Women Arise – A Dialogue on Gender Implementation

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Patricia Eyamba stands tall, holding her newborn baby, as her mother's coffin is unloaded from the Last Call Ambulance; soon she and her sisters are crying hysterically. The *harmitan* dust from the Saharan Desert softens the scene, tingeing the moment with a hue of calm. Several groups of grievors, many women, have waited for several hours in the hot sun. As the shiny blue and white coffin is placed outside of her old house, the family swarms around it followed by hundreds of villagers. The moment is overwhelming – it feels like the entire village has come out to honour Patricia's mother, the Chief Mrs. Elsie Ukpoka Umera Bassey (née Princess Ada Ijim). This is the village of Ikun in Cross River State, Nigeria, one of thousands of small villages that scatter the southeast corner of this country.

The crowd of grievors is diverse. The male chiefs wearing their regal crocheted ivory hats, the elders walking with canes that look auspicious in their simplicity, and the older women sitting in their wisdom sharing few words. The children gaze wide-eyed. Patricia says a prayer, her voice calling out across the throng of people, and cutting through the humid afternoon heat. Patricia and other family members – her sisters Myrtle and Virtue and brother Eugene – sing songs over the coffin. The church preacher and the traditional chiefs make emotional speeches in Efik, the local dialect, which cause others to burst into tears, unabashed in their grief.

The most noticeable among the crowd are several women in outfits made from the same bright yellow-green cloth elaborately patterned with green hearts. They are members of a local women's empowerment group, *Anabena Gibera*, or Women Arise, and today they are here to honour their leader and mentor. Patricia's mother founded Women Arise seven years ago when she began to recognize that the cause of suffering etched onto the women's faces was due to unjust and unfair treatment.

Patricia reminisces about conversations she had with her Mother about women's empowerment, and the visions she had for her community:

I remember my mum saying to me '*Papat*, the women in the village are suffering, they have very low self esteem, powerless, they are sex objects for men, and the men are not taking responsibility. They want to form a group. I will transfer all the knowledge I have acquired in [the city] to them through our meetings.'

Mrs. Bassey's vision was profound, borne from her own life experiences as an African woman and infused with her own passions for justice. Gazing around today and seeing the bright eyes of this women's empowerment group, their smiles wide, it is clear that her vision is becoming real.

Mrs. Bassey's life reads like a novel. Born a princess and the first daughter of a village chief in the hierarchical tribal system, she was expected to marry someone with status.

My mother was cherished, guided, and protected, because my maternal grandfather didn't have children for a long time. So when it was time for my

mother to be married, nobody was fit, nobody was good enough for my mother. My father was 60 years old and my mother was 16. That's because he had exposure, traveling all over the world, he was well educated, well informed, but after the death of his first wife, he came down to marry my mom and brought her to Calabar, to the city.

Her husband died when all four children were very young. Yet, Mrs. Bassey herself was a very young mother, with no education. When her husband died she literally had nothing. According to tradition, women are not entitled to their husband's assets, and so when the sons from his previous marriage took the land and property, she found herself with the responsibility of taking care of all four children on her own. Patricia explains how her mother sold her own homemade clothing to raise money to send her children to school. And through this dedication, eventually all four children went to university.

It is because of my mother that I have gone to school, that I have a degree. She inspires me. I call her my mentor. She stood on her own, she had [nothing] and today she is an object of envy in our community.

The funeral attendees mill around the coffin as another set of prayers and speeches are made. A woman leader stands tall, her hand on the coffin, and speaks gently but emphatically in Efik. Her words elicit a ripple of response through the crowd; many of the women in green-hearted dresses crumble into tears. The speech honoured Mrs. Bassey and her contributions to women in the village.

How has Patricia's mother had such an impact? Considering the level of need for gender equality throughout the country of Nigeria, and Sub-Saharan Africa more generally, questions on effective implementation are simply wise ones to ask.

Policy-Focus: Balancing Implementation with Donor Requirements

This story focuses around Ikun village in Nigeria, and tracks the initiatives to promote gender equality by a grassroots organization Women Arise as well as One Sky's work with the Nigeria-Canada Coalition. The following points are explored throughout the story and re-visited at the end. They provide possibilities for dialogue and sharing between donors and practitioners North and South.

Despite a commitment to local ownership and recipient-led programming the expectations of the donor community in other areas of policy, such as gender equality, often take precedence. For development practitioners at One Sky (from both Canadian and Nigerian civil society organizations), the task of translating gender equality policy into practice is made all the more challenging by unrealistic restrictions and expectations on partners. These challenges are discussed and illustrated in this policy story.

1. Policy influences and informs actions, but will not necessarily change values

Creating and up-holding gender policy is only one of several steps to affect gender equality. In general, policy can be used to influence actions, behaviours and decisions, but it is important to recognize its limitations. Long term sustainable social change requires a deeper shift in peoples' values and policy in and of itself does not achieve this.

Simply instituting gender policy does not necessarily produce desired outcomes – to actually foster shifts in values is a more complex, multifaceted and qualitative affair, one in which people's sense of self, and sense of self-in-community, change profoundly. Often such qualitative (subjective and inter-subjective) methodologies are difficult to use. Neither is there always a causal relationship between outputs and results when the development result, or long term impact we are seeking is an internal attitude or value. Can these values and attitudes, which are internal and qualitative, be measured using quantitative, external indicators? Outcomes are difficult to describe in the more quantitative proposal and reporting frameworks provided by donors.

For example, successful results toward gender equality are often measured solely by sex-aggregated data that report x number of women present for a meeting or activity. A more important result is the degree to which those women participated meaningfully, or the process by which men honoured and validated women's input, are far more accurate measurements of gender equality. When donors ask to see numbers of women participating in development activities, this disregards the qualitative dimensions to this work, and also does not acknowledge that practitioners may have to actually work with the men in power to raise awareness about gender and development objectives.

As practitioners, the challenge is to continue to dance between meeting expectations of donors while identifying approaches to achieve effective implementation.

2. Donor agencies must recognize that changing values takes a long time to occur, and requires creating emergent conditions within existing cultural contexts

It cannot be forgotten that, to promote gender equality, we are promoting shifts in traditional institutions, cultures and mindsets which can take considerable time. While short-term projects that implement gender policies can influence behaviours around gender this does not indicate a change in the values. It also does not necessarily create the conditions for deeper, long lasting change.

Seeking approaches that create enabling environments is key to fostering long term changes in behaviour and attitude regarding gender. In Nigeria, for example, members of One Sky and the Nigeria-Canada Coalition, explain how their approaches to gender equality are multifaceted, working in, but going far beyond policy. This approach creates enabling environments, or emergent conditions, in which gender equality can be fostered. These include:

- Empowering existing and/or local change agents and providing resources to support them. This reinforces locally initiated positive shifts toward the desired development outcome.
- Emulating and providing opportunities for people to open up to new perspectives and to new modes of being, via workshops, community-led empirical studies on gender,

- education about gender, co-developing gender policies, and raising awareness through more qualitative means.
- Creating and supporting role models by hiring women in positions of power and participation who then interact with men and women, in urban and rural areas.
 - Modeling gender equality within their organization and with partners by establishing and implementing comprehensive gender policies, as well as valuing gender equality at a deeper level (e.g. a man cooking and washing dishes; women designing and delivering a workshop; high level decision-making processes by men and women working together)

3. Implementation of gender equality policy must be balanced with current development paradigms such as local ownership and recipient-led programming

One factor that particularly complicates this work to promote gender equality is the inherent contradiction of local ownership. On the one hand, the current development paradigm is moving toward local ownership and recipient lead programming. Yet, some policies (i.e. gender equality) are underpinned by cultural values that then are assumed to be universal principles. Gender as a value does not necessarily arise from beneficiaries and recipients, nor do they drive activities for implementing change.

Brian Tomlinson in his article in Reality of Aid 2002 on *Promoting ownership and gender equality* explains:

Differing perspectives on aid no doubt reflect more profound debates about the place of values – [such as,] international justice, equality and solidarity – rather than national interests. Many donor policies, including CIDA's, are increasingly influenced...by these values.

In terms of what this means for practitioners tasked with implementation, it again brings up the issue of balancing donor expectations with realistic outcomes. Practitioners tend to span this vast divide between different value systems, seeking to be effective in reaching development objectives on both accounts. On the one hand, practitioners seek to respect a process of recipient led and/or community-directed work, knowing that lasting effects tend to come through the empowerment and actions taken by local people, for local people. Yet, on the other hand, practitioners are also setting a bar in terms of what is morally acceptable in a globalizing world – standing up for abused women, opening up spaces for new modes of being, and recognizing that such issues are shared issues in today's world. This balance is tenuous, but if done well, practitioners can accommodate both objectives simultaneously.

These challenges need to be more clearly shared with donors, so that program and project expectations can reflect the complexities of affecting gender equality, as well as other value-based policies and requirements.

4. Donor agencies must establish country-specific strategies for achieving gender equality that reflect the range of cultural values within one country.

In order to affect change in gender equality, strategies to implement gender policies must be developed that are suitable for the particular cultural and political contexts of different geographical regions worldwide. This vast diversity requires the strategic development of relevant approaches that will create the environment for change to emerge. Numerous development practitioners from diverse parts of the world stress that there is no single approach to mainstreaming gender. Successful results have only been achieved when programs are innovative and creative and speak specifically to the traditions, customs, religions and beliefs of the constituents.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is relatively new for donor agencies, including Canada. Although Canada has had a policy on gender for two decades, it was only revised and strengthened in 1995. We now recognize that sustainable development and poverty reduction will not be attained unless we address the inequalities between men and women. We are playing a leadership role internationally in pursuing gender equality by emphasizing the importance of gender equity and women's empowerment. Gender equality is one of six program priorities and a cross-cutting theme throughout all of CIDA's policies, programs and projects. CIDA emphasizes the need for gender analyses to better understand the relationships between men and women, as well as the connections between gender, ethnicity, culture, and class. Gender analyses also help to decipher the potential effects that development policies and programs may have as a result. Large gaps in knowledge reside in how to implement gender equality.

When pursuing our goal of affecting changes in gender equality, we need to explicitly recognize our own history of addressing gender issues in Canadian society. For example, it took Canada several decades, and a concerted effort by a strong, empowered civil society to achieve the outcomes that we have today. At the same time, in comparison to Nigeria, the socio-economic and cultural starting points and settings were vastly different. In working with gender as a cross cutting theme worldwide, donor agencies need to recognize the complexity of worldviews and social norms with whom development practitioners are working.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, with a population estimated at more than 130 million people. It has relatively recently established a peaceful transition to a civilian government, adopting a new constitution in 1999. From the country profile on CIDA's website:

The new president faces the daunting task of rebuilding a petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement, and institutionalizing democracy. In addition, the present administration must defuse longstanding ethnic and religious tensions, if it is to build a sound foundation for economic growth and political stability.

Nigeria ranks 151st out of 171 countries worldwide on the Human Development Index, and 122nd for the more specific Gender Development Index. The northern part of the country is Muslim, while Christianity and traditional beliefs predominate in the south. With high cultural diversity (over 350 ethnic groups with distinct languages and a judicial system based on English common

law, statutory law, Islamic law and tribal customary law), it is challenging and complex to implement social change in Nigeria.

Despite having ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, gender analysis report that Nigerian males have a more important status than women, and male children are still regarded more favourably (CIDA website, updated 2003). A plan was presented to implement the Platform for Action following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, but like many African countries, there is still a long way to go in terms of developing appropriate institutional mechanisms and adequate capacity for implementation of such policies (African Centre for Gender and Development, Economic Commission for Africa).

The village women at the funeral today are poised between worlds – living in a society in which Hollywood film productions and DVD players are juxtaposed with traditional marriage rites and laws that forbid women to own land. The women seem to move seamlessly between pounding yam in large wooden bowls by hand to posing for digital photographs. *How can we as practitioners move as seamlessly between such different realities, bridging these diverse worldviews, as we work in gender equality?*

The Challenges of Community-Level Development Practitioners

CIDA's policy provides many examples of 'results that contribute to achieving gender equality' but little guidance exists for how to get there. As development practitioners working with several community-based NGO partners in Nigeria, One Sky has experienced the gap between the development policies on gender, and the effective implementation of these policies in development projects. At the heart of these challenges is lack of contextual understanding on how to implement gender policies while also honouring and respecting cultural diversity, traditions, value systems and worldviews.

Other challenges we face are inadequately articulated goals, indicators and strategies fine-tuned to the individual country circumstances and the diversity of cultural contexts within which we are working; inadequate identification of priorities, challenges and most appropriate responses; inadequate capacity, expertise and resources to implement gender equality well.

The risks of not addressing these challenges are significant: potential allies will block further dialogue and discussion, others may impede the process altogether, women may be harassed, pressured or even threatened if they participate, and the process for introducing gender equality will be regressed. Another risk is that we create a climate of tokenism, where the issues are addressed at a superficial level and not truly considered or taken seriously. These risks have been manifest numerous times, but not so clearly as the new government of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s. They embarked on several important legal and policy changes, including the Legal Age of Majority Act that made all women legal adults at the age of 18. The law became mired in controversy and the opposition deepened resistance to all subsequent women's legal rights-related reforms for the following two decades¹.

¹ A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation. VeneKlasen, L and V. Miller. 2002. World Neighbours

Clearly, implementation is complicated. Implementing gender effectively, requires sensitivity, contextual understanding and thoroughness. Michael Simpson, Executive Director of One Sky explains how he has witnessed practitioners treat the gender equality superficially rather than analysing the more systemic nature of the issue.

It is not just how many women come to a meeting, but how many of them make meaningful interventions at that meeting. It is a question of empowerment and of choice, not just numbers.

He explains that when donors insist on a gender component and with insufficient expertise about gender work, the process can be set back. Some practitioners are unsure about implementation, and therefore they do not address the deeper roots of the issue. “If gender work is done at a token level then doing it is a disservice to the society,” he explains.

Some effective ways One Sky works in gender include providing role models to community women and getting gender policies into projects at the outset, so that it becomes common ground for working together. The majority of One Sky employees are women including the most senior position in the Nigeria program, which again offers a modeling opportunity. They have used South-South exchanges between gender programs in Sierra Leone and gender programs in Nigeria in the hope of providing cultural context. Most importantly they have resourced and supported existing local effective change agents like Patricia Eyamba.

These challenges and risks point to the need for further inquiry and dialogue. Particularly, how can practitioners remain sensitive and respectful of cultural realities of recipient communities, and also promote gender equality in these regions? And, how can policies on gender equality reflect the complexities of implementation?

Cultural Sensitivity and Values

Development donors and practitioners hold their own sets of values and perspectives about development, such as pacifism, egalitarianism, communalism, secularism and rationalism. The question is not *whether* to work to promote such values, but rather *how* to do so in ways that honour local worldviews. Recognizing the evolutionary context of local values, respecting cultural diversity and engaging in this work in ways that are appropriate for the local customs help in this regard.

Daniel Buckles (1999), Senior Program Officer at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada explains in *Cultivating Peace. Conflict and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management* that many donor agencies and practitioners tend to assume their principles to be universal, and then work to promote these principles in other countries with often very different cultural realities.² He notes that these principles are actually culturally based values, and questions the ethics of assuming they be taken up by other countries.

² Buckles, D. 1999 Ed. *Cultivating Peace. Conflict and Collaboration in Natural Resource Management* (IDRC/World Bank)

This brings up questions of how to promote these principles in culturally ethical ways that acknowledges local customs and context, while also respecting and fostering local ownership of the development process.

The gender mainstreaming that exists in many donor agencies is important, and yet to assume that a country like Nigeria will take on the values of gender equality easily, immediately and in the forms that the northern societies did, does not take into account the evolution of these values through history. For example, it took close to a century in North America for the concept of “gender equality” to enter mainstream dialogue, under specific historical influences and experiences, and it is still not completely stabilized as a social norm in society. This emergent concept of gender equality points to new epistemologies and worldviews, at particular levels of cognitive and moral development, which correspond to changed life conditions.

Inappropriate implementation runs the risk of creating more strife and social dysfunction than without the development intervention. Buckles explains:

Take the two most important...factors that community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) researchers and practitioners are constantly faced with: age and gender.... Most studies also show a concern for the widespread imbalances that exist between men and women, or between the old and the young. The *implicit assumption* is that wisdom of the elders is tainted with elements of patriarchy or gerontocracy, to be reduced or attenuated through proper participatory methods (Villareal 1996). Defining the stakeholders in a dispute is considered all the more problematic, as some parties — women, youth, the poor — may not be viewed locally as interest groups entitled to be heard in the negotiation process. CBNRM may wish to empower these voices with greater equality in view, yet this may generate new conflicts, as Castro and Ettenger (1996) remark.³

Clearly, the values and worldviews of local beneficiaries and development practitioners weave together in a complex tapestry. Seeking to be most ethical and effective in promoting principles such as gender equality puts forth several requirements for implementation. Implementation often requires longer time lines and requires work in other thematic areas first, which slowly build awareness and capacity for gender issues to be addressed later. Without taking the time and engaging appropriately in this process, traditional village structures may react to, rather than accept, gender equality. This is the type of challenge that practitioners face as they balance policies for gender mainstreaming and the realities of implementation.

Members of *Women Arise* stand proud at the funeral for their founder. Mrs. Bassey’s leadership connected with traditional village institutions in a non-threatening manner, such that the entire village exalts her today. *How did she do this?* Mrs. Bassey’s magic touch in gender equality lies silent at her side.

³ quoted in: Buckles (1999) book available on line: http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-9398-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

The inquiry into balancing gender policy with implementation as a cross cutting theme is pertinent and present for many others, and probably also for the *Women Arise* as they continue their path without Mrs. Bassey to lead them.

‘Small Small’- Mainstreaming Gender and the Environment

In December 2004, One Sky hosted a workshop on Gender and the Environment as part of an ongoing policy dialogue on gender with all its Nigerian partners. The participants are all part of One Sky’s Nigeria-Canada Coalition (NCC) and involved in a CIDA-funded program “Cross River Environmental Capacity Development (CRE)”. The goal of the project is to strengthen the management and policy-dialogue capacity of Environmental NGOs, which in turn are instruments to support the communities surrounding two key protected areas in the Cross River bioregion of Nigeria. We have come together to discuss current issues linking gender and the environment and to brainstorm a future vision on how to influence policy in this area. The hope is that what we learn together at the workshop can also be directly of use to Women Arise, and other grassroots women’s empowerment groups.

Gender and the Environment is a theme of particular complexity in a country like Nigeria, with traditional structures that are largely gender insensitive and with few women included in decision-making. The concept and movement for women’s rights simply has not yet become widespread in this region of Nigeria as it has in other countries.

When gender issues are overlaid with environmental concerns, it becomes even more complicated. Men and women have different knowledge of, and ways of relating to, the surrounding environment, and yet women are rarely included in community-level decision-making about natural resources. Ironically, however, while men may make decisions about natural resources, often it is the women who have the responsibility for carrying out the work – and so, in their own ways, they strongly influence environmental management. The take away point, here, is that it is complicated. To work for gender equality is similar to working to alleviate poverty – no one-step solutions exist.

The gap between CIDA’s high level policy descriptions and actual implementation in the field is particularly apparent with a theme such as gender. This minimal level of capacity for implementation is witnessed at all levels – within communities, NGOs, and the state government. Currently, Cross River State government is developing its gender policy, and the Ministry is seeking assistance from, and collaboration with, One Sky and their Nigerian partner NGOs.

The workshop brought together these members of the NCC, as well as a representative from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development to make policy suggestions for working in gender and the environment. These participants were some of the most central players in fostering sustainability in Cross River State, and this workshop became a venue for them to discuss and creatively inspire each other, to build capacity and recommendations for gender and the environment, and to untangle the complex questions around implementation.

Patricia starts off the workshop with a song and a prayer, asking God to guide us successfully through our two-day workshop. Although the day is hot and the room is humid, the electric enthusiasm cuts through the sticky heat.

The group is made up largely of women, with approximately one quarter of the participants men. Two participants, Lilian Ekenem and her husband Ubong founded *Women, Youth and Children Action Team* (WYCAT), a grassroots organization that uses interactive theatre performances to help empower and motivate women on current topics such as HIV/AIDS. Other participants include: Odigha Odigha, the Executive Director of the NGO Coalition for the Environment, and recent award-winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, Mrs. Mary Omaji, from the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development; and other members of environmental NGOs and community-based organizations. The group is steeped in experience working with local communities, and yet the level of understanding and capacity for the specific issue of gender equality is varied.

We begin with an animated discussion on the differences between gender and sex, and gender equity and equality. It is immediately apparent that discussing gender issues is challenging for everyone; some are honestly puzzled by the topic, others speak angrily, others say very little. One man insists that we clarify the difference between gender and feminism, concerned that we might give credence to 'extreme' or 'radical' ideas, such as the idea that women be given preference for employment opportunities. This provokes another heated discussion about whether women actually have fewer employment opportunities than men. Someone points out, that "any woman can get any job, they are the ones that limit themselves!" and, in response, another points out that "there are social, cultural and psychological barriers that are more prominent than physical ones." Another person mentions the similarity between feminism and terrorism.

This is the reality of implementing gender equality. Regardless that these participants are well informed, educated, and working for development organizations, they are also living in a complex milieu of values and perspectives about men's and women's roles. Gender issues are so close to one's sense of self, that the issue is naturally a challenging one.

For Patricia, who has been working for social change for most of her life, these strong opinions are nothing new. Inspired by her mother, she completed a Masters degree in Business Management and has worked on a variety of social issues, from HIV/AIDS and commercial sex trade workers to community development. The gender theme was always an important one to her in this work. When she began her career, gender was not a word that people used, although Patricia was always asked for advice on issues related to women.

I was attracted to help the woman not the man, because of what I saw as a child and because of what I experienced. When I see that a particular woman is affected because she is a woman, not because she [does not have the capacity], I will make sure that the woman is favoured.

Having experienced sexual harassment and discrimination first hand throughout her career, Patricia recognizes that we must work as much with men as with women.

It is not easy, this work. Talking about safer sex, for example. It is impossible for women to negotiate safer sex if the man does not change. I have seen cases where a husband will end the marriage if he sees the woman with condoms. ‘Condoms are for prostitutes’ they say. That is why we have to work with the man as well as the woman.

Patricia’s words must ring true for the members of Women Arise. To come together as a group and to stand up for gender equality is to challenge the traditional world view. How does this group of women communicate their mission to the traditional chiefs, to their husbands and sons? How have they managed to balance this challenge with respect for the existing traditions and customs?

Seeing the chiefs and men honouring Mrs. Bassey at the funeral, it is obvious that she hasn’t burned bridges but rather *built* bridges between traditional and modern approaches to gender. This is reinforced as a young man bursts into tears over her coffin, defying the “tough guy” image and instead letting tears run down his cheeks. *How did she nurture this paradigm shift without conflicts in the village?*

For a two-day workshop, the group did not get far into the topic, yet it enabled participants to dialogue on gender equality, outline which next steps are needed and identify where the remaining lack of capacity resides. It also gave the Ministry of Women’s Affairs enough content to further discuss gender policy at a state level. Further, outcomes of the workshop are being profiled in a policy paper to be presented to Cross River State government. The real success of the workshop was in the sharing of ideas and initiating a dialogue – ‘small small’ as locals would say.

Recommendations and Policy Messages

It is risky to institute gender equality immediately and across the board without a keen eye paid not only to cultural sensitivity but also the rich variety of value systems throughout a nation like Nigeria. The fact that there are so many different legal systems in the country illustrates the breadth of beliefs, morals, social norms, and worldviews. Moreover, it is challenging to balance the objective of local ownership with higher level, culturally-informed policies such as gender equality.

What did Mrs. Bassey do in the Ikun village that worked not only to organize and empower the women, but also fostered acceptance from traditional clan heads, in a locally-grown gender equality project? How can donors, such as CIDA, assist this fine balance of meeting both objectives?

We offer some suggestions and share some messages as part of a North-South, practitioner-donor dialogue.

Messages for policy-makers:

- Donors need to acknowledge that gender mainstreaming and local ownership can be contradictory, and thus need to adjust the frameworks for proposals, reports and budgets to reflect the complexity of this work.
- In particular, more appropriate measurement tools (i.e. qualitative, subjective) for evaluation are needed (along with existing tools), which balance principles of local ownership with value-based policies such as gender equality.
- Setting an appropriate time frame and strategy for gender equality activities. A 40-50 year time line for gender equality is more realistic than the time frames of single projects. True gender equality, not just in terms of actions and behaviours but also shifts in values and worldviews about gender, take much longer than the 4-5 year timeframes of single projects.
- Supporting local grassroots activities does achieve results, no matter how small; an example of this is Women Arise, which was funded through NGOCE's small grants program, part of One Sky's CRE Project.
- Profiling successes about gender equality in non-threatening ways, so as to foster inspiration, awareness and empowerment on the issue.
- In doing gender analysis, ask the right questions – questions that get at the root of the issue, that address the values that underpin gender inequitable practices, customs and institutions.
- Work towards country-specific strategies for gender equality developed for the range of values within one country, is necessary for effective policies and implementation.
- CIDA to take a lead in implementing gender equality, bringing together ways that this policy can augment, not contradict, local ownership; by profiling Canadian case studies in which these two (seemingly opposing) objectives are held simultaneously.

Practical Recommendations for Implementation

- The need for healthy traditional structures through which gender awareness and policy can emerge.
- Begin small, begin slow.
- During education and training, draw upon statistics (evidence based policy analysis) to back up statements, so they cannot be dismissed as assumptions.
- Southern partners or community people to carry-out gender analyses.
- Find other techniques where local people can “take on” other perspectives, and thus learn in an experiential manner what gender equality means.
- Study cases that have worked looking at their salient and replicable features.

- Encourage locally-designed ways to implement gender that link to the traditional cultural and social systems, rather than threaten them. Mrs. Bassey is an example of someone who was elected within the system, which lead to attracting more women to become involved.
- Grassroots organizing, with small bite size projects, works; women understand it as their own, and this helps to bring together local ownership with high-level gender mainstreaming.
- Identify women leaders with an embodied understanding of the community reality/needs. Mrs. Bassey had a foot in both the rural context and urban/globalizing culture; her vision was thus broad enough to bridge various value systems.
- Gender equality involves men and women; working with chiefs helps to meet gender equality goals.
- Create emergent conditions and healthy structures through which gender awareness can emerge, keeping in mind that gender equality is an immense shift in ways of thinking and existing values. Policies help to regulate actions; other more qualitative work is needed to raise awareness and foster changes in values. One Sky offers some suggestions for creating such conditions (listed above).
- Priority should be on raising awareness, building capacity and collecting evidence via locally-conducted gender analyses.
- What is missing from gender analysis is an understanding of how culture influences attitudes about women and how this understanding is crucial to designing specific activities within programs and projects that support gender equality.

Some Further Questions for Dialogue

- *Where does local ownership (community informed) meet gender equality (donor prescribed)?* In other words, rather than imposing gender equality on local communities and organizations, how can we create emergent conditions for gender equality to arise through the local structures that are currently not gender sensitive.
- While the principles that stem from our worldview and value system (such as promoting sustainability, fostering gender equality and alleviating poverty) is well intentioned, it is not right to assume that all others should (and can?) be like ours.
- Embedded within our worldview and value system are the metaphors and forms of how we communicate and inter-relate. A truly culturally sensitive approach works with methodologies and communication strategies that are appropriate for reaching different worldviews.
- How does gender mainstreaming at a National policy level relate to the grassroots community level?

- What is cultural sensitivity to local people?
- How do we understand gender equality and gender policy in the context of cultural evolution. In other words, how do we recognize it took Canada close to 100 years to stabilize gender equality as a mainstream value, and then address the question of gender equality in Africa?

Conclusion

The vigil lasted well through the night. The next morning weary friends and loved ones accompanied Mrs. Basseyy's coffin on a solemn funeral procession to all the significant places in her life. Her six year-old granddaughter, Miss Ibodedem Ibokette, led the procession, carrying a framed photograph of her grandmother as a young woman. At each stop, hymns were sung by one of the church choirs and the chiefs and the priests made impassioned speeches about this woman's life. We visited the house where she was born and raised, passed by the Town Hall that Mrs. Basseyy was undertaking to rebuild after it was destroyed in a strong rainstorm a couple of years before, and eventually arrived at the Presbyterian church. There was standing room only at the two hour long service.

This woman was a leader and role model for fostering gender equality in Nigeria. Although she herself has passed on, her ideas and life work continue; and her legacy is seen in the changed values and social norms in her village of Ikun.

As the mourners filed out with the coffin, again, the pathway was lined with women dressed in bright green and yellow hearts with broad smiles on their faces.