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INTRODUCTION

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impact on women. Such upaperglso explicitly assumes that ak'mugh the focus is rm f

women. the issues to be covered cmmt be isolated from 23mm affecting men. The

cummllchwt'erofdtepolidcd ecommy oftheregion impacts am both men and womm

but impacts diifetentl'y on each. The methods oflxbor rmcurement. iabmr participation and aces: to resources dong gender lines. and the potifni, cztlxmai and ideolcgied factors that influence these an dso impomnt.

The prospective of political mommy therefore demnds that we:

1. Assess how changes in the relations of pmduetion have transformed (a) the household division of labor (b) the social position 0: status of women within the household and in society (c) the nature, form. content '16 purpose of women's labor.

2. Recognize that these tnnsfmnation: notoniy had an effect on the political and ideological levels but that these trmsformations in social relations were sometimes a consequence of changes at the political and ideological tevel.

3. Recogniu tint these trans formations had differential effects on different groups and or chase: of women.

4. Be cognizant of the fact that the political Factice of di fferem groups and classes of women (which often determines theit position in society) is shaped by differential experiences of the mfotmation.

The comepuul model followed in this paper builds on the interrelationship between international. regional; Hmong) and local mm of change. It takes into account the chmgng form(s) of incorporation or intuition of a "dependent" th-all"regi0n into theworld economy. the changing tequirunents of the world market and thedifferenthistoticlperiodsdlof which influence theplttens emerging intheregion and in the national economies though each has int specificity. It else recognizes that social reality is founded updn cmtndictions which manifest themselves in tensions between Ind within structures in I society, which in gractice is struggle e.g. between classes or between sends groups etc.

In this region therefore it is imperative thnt the msfommom in the social

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relations of production in post independent Angola. Mozambique and Zimbabwe have a positive impact on women. The revolutionary dynamism es. in South Africa and meibiademonstntea thepmban of viewing tnnnsfonmtion as aeontinuum. No static picture emerge: and theteteaxe dynmtieswings"forwrdd 'baekwatd' and thenatme of interlinkagee cannot easily be captured. Zambia's economic moblems have left the county in a state of flux while Botswana and Swaziland have experienced the least , amount of turmoil from rapid social change.

It is not possible to discuss the specificities of all countries of the region in this' paper. Wherever possible countries will be used to illustrate clearly emerging patterns to addressthequestionsraised. In these countries. theheritageofracism and colonialism has hulsulted in racially divided societies. In some countries. the resultant problems are massive.

In an age of reconciliation. women from all racial groups need to be considered in the discussion of women and political economy. Such a task would be too wide for this paper. so the paper is limited to African women hoping to generate discussion which will touch upon what has been omitted to complete the whole picture. However. examples from South Africa. cannot ignore the different racial groups of women. This is not in otder to emphasize differences but to capture the reality of racial capitalism in South Africa and the challenges it poses. not only. for a free democratic South Africa but because of the implications it has for all the countries in the region. but particularly for

an independent Namibia. More data are necessary to illustrate some of the issues raised in this paper. but they are not available and/or accessable at this time.

#### THE ECONOMIES OF THE REGION AND LABOR

"Ute natureof the economiesof the region have been shaped by thecolonial heritage and the historical dominance of the South African economy which has such a high demand for umigrant" male labor.

Although therehas been a decrease in the number of men who migrate for employment purposes to South Africa. e.g. in Mozambique the number dropped from 115.000 to 40.000. the proportion of males moving from Lesotho. Mozambique.

Malawi and Swaziland and Botswana remains quite significant. The impact of this on these countries has been documented. (1) Most of these men originate from mral arws. But often men migrate internally from the rural arms to town centers. Conse- !quently there is a high number of mral households that are headed by women. (2) but in some urban areas. despite some urban residential laws. rules and administrative measures. large proponions'of households are also headed by women. Because the majority of African women live in rural areas. this has serious implications for the women. theirhouseholds and for national development.

The table below gives estimates of the proportion of A&icm house holds headed 21 Matsape-Casabwn'

by women. In rural areas when the proportions are larger. the implications for household survival. mental health and stress for women and the physical stress of men's labor are enormous.

TABLE 1

COUNTRY PROPORTION FEMALE BEADED HOUSEHOLDS, .

Botswana	43.0% i
Malawi (Rural)	28.4%
Malawi (Blantyre)	34.3%
Lesotho s	60.0%
Swaziland	60.70%
Zimbabwee'	37.48%
Namibia	50.0%

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Source: FAO (1986) Population and Labor Force in Rural Economies. tEstimates.

In Zambia where urbanization is unusually high, 50% of the population lives in urban areas. The female-headed household in rural and urban areas is also high. In Namibia. where 50% or more of the population live in one region of the country. almost 70% of the households in that region have male members away in distant employment. In South Africa about In of African households in metropolitan areas and 2/3 of those in Bantustan areas are headed by women. 'i

This data gives insights into the survival levels of African house holds and the locus of responsibility for household survival in significant proportions of households which falls on women. Thus women's position in the labor process is therefore critical in assessing new directions for change in order to improve conditions for the majority of people. '

The data has been presented early in the paper to illustrate that there is a great deal of work that is done. (mainly by women) that is essential in the economies of the region. which contributes in large measure to survival. However. the concept of labor as used in the social sciences has excluded this work from economic calculations. Although the

work done is purposeful planned activity to produce use value as well as some exchange value. and is physical. and contains transformative aspects. (this will be illustrated later)

it is not usually incorporated into our statistics.

The economic bases of most of the countries in region remain largely underdeveloped. The sectors that are most productive remain largely those mining sectors or some agricultural sectors which are export oriented. The industrial base: have been incapable of developing given the dominance of South Africa's industrial base! in the region. But

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even South Africa's industrial base has also suffered from the slings and mews of the international anti-apartheid pressure and the political crisis of the state as a result of the intensification of the liberation within the country, and in Namibia.

#### SECTORAL ANALYSIS IN WAGE LABOR

A sectoral analysis of women's location in wage labor in the region reveals similar patterns. Women's entry into wage labor is mainly first into the domestic service sector, and agricultural sector then into the industrial sector. A small (relatively educated) proportion enters into the professions mainly in the state sector and commerce.

##### Domestic Service Sector

Historically the domestic service sector has constituted the initial point of incorporation of the majority of African women into wage labor. Although the sector has historically not been a female dominated one, and continues to have a large male presence, in some countries like Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, its transformation to a predominantly female sector is evident throughout the region. This transformation is not accidental. The working conditions in this sector are extremely difficult, the hours are long, the wages are very low and the work very isolated. Men move out of this sector as better wage opportunities become available. The women who enter this sector tend to be poorly educated women for whom all other avenues of income generation are generally closed, or else the latter serve as an additional source of income for them. In most cases the wages earned in this sector are incapable of securing the women's household survival. The wage is often part of the multiple incomes of the household. At the political and ideological level, wage work in this sector reproduces asymmetrical relations of subordination between blacks and whites, the rich and poor, the powerful and powerless.

Although some attempts have been made in some countries to legislate labor relations and conditions of work, the sector has generally not been subjected to law and labor practices that would improve conditions or wages or to empower workers in any significant way. Organizing labor within this sector is extremely difficult because of the isolated nature of the work and the ability of employers to victimize workers, despite attempts to redress the situation.

In most countries the labor reforms that have given trade unions some measure of power have generally excluded domestic workers. In South Africa where a viable domestic workers' union has now been established, demand for an extension of full trade union rights to domestic workers under the Labor Relations Act has not been met.

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Excluded then for a long time from trade unions, women lack the experienced skills of trade union organization. The exploitative nature of the sector highlights the contribution women's labor makes to social reproduction without sufficient accounting in economic statistics. It further highlights the complete lack of economic accounting when women perform the same tasks in their own households. This omission is clearly home out when one hears many African men and women ascribe the fact that they received an education to the wage labor their mothers performed as domestic servants.

##### Agricultural Sector

In the region, the main area of women's employment outside of the state and domestic service remains agricultural. But though data from the countries in the region indicates that women do most of the agricultural work, both for wage and non-wage, the data about the nature, form, and content of the work is very scanty and very confusing as no standardized measurements are used and conceptualization of the labor varies while the concepts used are not clearly defined. However, some data from the FAO gives the following to be women's labor:

##### TABLE 2

Botswana: 75.4% of all labor for crop production

87.1% of all labor for weeding

84.4% of all labor for harvesting

82.3% of all labor for binding

89.1% of all labor for thrashing

86.5% of all labor for storage and marketing

63.7% of all labor for transportation

35.3% of all labor for planting

28.5% of all labor for ploughing

21.9% of all labor for land clearing

Data from Malawi and Swaziland given with regard to specific crop related labor - maize (as opposed to mainly setghum and millet in Botswana) shows female labor

contribution to be 54% and 55%. respectively. Female labor contribution is estimated to be more than 88% for sorghum.

In Zimbabwe at independence women's labor input in agricultural areas differed according to whether they lived in Purchase Areas, T.T.L's (Tribal Trust Lands) or in wage labor. At that time 3% of the African population lived in the first area where the so-called polygamous farmers' cultivated cash crops (mainly maize and cotton)-

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Almost half of the men in these areas were polygamous. The nature of their enterprises were highly labor intensive though they had technological inputs. The labor of the family, mainly women and children, was absolutely necessary in order to achieve the high rate of returns. Labor hours in these areas were about 3968 hours. In the T.T.L. areas labor hours were found to be much less, 2113. It was found then that on the average women spent about 72.2% of the working hours (compared to 56.2% for men) in agricultural production (Muchem 1979).

Since independent attempts at restructuring the agricultural sector/fermle labor input has not changed much. Resettlement schemes were designed mainly to various models. Land allocation for residential and production purposes were done on a household basis via permits obtained from resettlement officers. Registration of the land was usually done in the name of the head of household (who was a male). While in the traditional structures of most of the groups customary within the extended family to a household, there was always a piece of land set aside for the women to have complete usufruct and control of products on that land. (Gaidzanwa 1985). However, today this is not the automatic cue in the resettlement areas. Surveys of some of the districts reveal

that in many of the areas men still work in far away areas leaving women de facto heads of the household without the power to make major decisions. There is a difference between de jure female headed and male headed households. In those female headed households where there is no male head at all whether at home or working away, the acreage is less and the male land is also less. Such households also have less access to drought mitigation inputs such as fertilizer. (SADCC Report 1986).

In Mozambique where the most radical transformation of the relations of production obtained and where restructuring of the agricultural economy counted as a massive scale, state farms and co-operatives received priority in resource allocation. Transformation from colonial capitalism where the white farmer with a few technological inputs who had highly coerced seasonal labor forced this backward economy to a more modernized state. The state farms with enormous technological input suffered chronic labor shortages. Even some co-operatives after enthusiastic starts fell short of production targets and were disbanded. Many of the better ones joined in the majority by workers who were mostly from the poor "peasantry". The women were mainly single parents or wives of migrants. But the Mournheim cue is every good indication of how the end of the feudal system has inherited a new system of production. The state is to radically transform relations of production especially in the rural sector, and the process is being accelerated by the new members of the movement. The new system has been established. The things seem to be going well. There are still some problems. The women's movement is still in its infancy. The women's movement is still in its infancy. The women's movement is still in its infancy.

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is increasing as wages in the sector relatively decline. South Africa and Zimbabwe are good examples of this emerging pattern. Farm labor demands usually vary according to the productive activities predominating in the country or in regions. Labor requirements for regular or casual workers vary according to the nature of the major farming activity. The locus of employment. Where vegetables, pigs and poultry are produced, the regular permanent labor force is high. The next is where sugar, cereal, cattle and non deciduous fruit are grown. In the former, the largest proportion of the permanent/regular labor is female while in the latter it is male. In the latter areas, the casual labor requirements are met by employing females mainly drawn from the households of the employed males. The general pattern within the farm labor process is this:

(2) males will be employed on regular basis and women on casual basis;  
(b) women will be employed on regular basis in those sectors that are labor intensive, e.g. (tobacco) with low technological input and where wages are extremely low;

(c) the labor activities of women fall mainly in three categories:

- (i) domestic work
- (ii) short day work on a daily basis
- (iii) seasonal work performing tasks like hoeing, weeding, reaping, picking, sorting, thinning etc.

Thus not only is there a division of labor by sex, the technological division of labor also exists along gender lines. Though the gender division of labor is by no means static, changing in regions or over time, ideological notions that rationalize the division often vary and make women's position more difficult. Women are employed in crop production in the most menial, tedious and backbreaking jobs; in other sectors it may be because they "are more reliable" or "can do tough jobs that don't require thinking" or because of their nimble fingers or the dexterity of their fingers/hands. But the security of these jobs is constantly in jeopardy as technological innovations in the sector

or

occur. This has serious implications for willingness of women to participate in labor unions.

But the sector has historically been a sector excluded from protection under Labor Relations Laws and where labor organization and bargaining experience is almost non-existent. The sector continues to be one in which it is difficult to organize. The responsibility for the daily maintenance of dependants saps women's strengths and has not only debilitating effect on women but has serious implications for their labor union participation,

Industrial Sector.

In industrially advanced South Africa. African women's participation in the industrial workforce has risen from 1% in 1946 to 2.5% in 1950 to 7% in 1970 to 14-18%

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in 1985. The majority of women are employed in the swim sector - 50% of them being, in domestic service

Approximately 19% of women are employed in the agricultural sector. In the professions African women constitute about 18% of the sector. Patterns of women sector show racial differences (see Table below).

participation in the industrial

TABLE 3

PROPORTION OF WOMEN OF EACH RACE IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Race Category mg M 1919

African 16.8% 27.8% 44.5%

European 48.0% 23.3% 8.7%

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Source: Mariotti 1978

(For specific sectors see Matsepe-Casaburri 1986. pp 50-53).

A broader picture of the gender and racial distribution of workers is given by the table below.

PERCENT WORKFORCE BY RACE AND SEX EMPLOYED IN DIFFERENT

OCCUPATIONS IN 1983 IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Occupation African Male Female ' A V w Coloured ' v \_ Indian

Male Female ' Male Female

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Male Female M : 11 cher

5. Textile. 25

Clothing.

Food & Drink.

Tobacco a

Lumber .

6. Metal. 63

Plastic, , 1, \_ ' 3

Building, ' ,

Furniture. ?

Glens. Canem.

Chemical.

Printing end

Other I

7. Labourers 81 1

8. Service 45 23 14 5 5 6 2

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9. Artisans & 9 - 72 2 22 1 4 !

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This table suggests the possible pattern taken by employers in the region because many of these employers in the region are South African companies or individuals. In the region the establishment of new industries by capitalist enterprise is accompanied by the constant search for cheaper labor. Hence many manufacturing industries in textile, clothing and food and beverage tend to employ women. The labor intensity and relatively low technological inputs are the rationale just as in the agricultural sector. But

these are the sectors in which state enterprises are relatively few and to which contribution of state funds is almost non-existent. Consequently using capital technology employ mainly men. State commitments to such industry are higher as a result of state investment and therefore employment is more secure and more remunerative. Female wages in this sector, while much higher than female wages in other sectors, continue to be relatively low even though many countries maintain that they have instituted the principle of equal pay for equal work. The Zambian Federation of Employers has often prided itself on this policy yet unabashedly states that women are employed mainly in the service sector: of industry "where women" maintain a dominant position at minimum levels within

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In Nunibil for example uconditions of employment differ according to employer policy. the size of the enterprise and asks performed...but female wages merely range from R50-R120 per month." (UNIN 1986)

But the economic crises many countries face. have made impossible any perceptible changes in favour of women in the industrial sector.

Women have been relegated to that sector called the "informal sector" under numerous "development" projects called income generating activities. The lack of clear definition of this sector, the numerous debates surrounding its conceptualization and lack of clear demarcation between the informal and formal sectors present us with numerous problems. Most problematic, and relevant here is the fact that usually the concept of labor is missing and focus is placed on the conditions under which labor takes place. Much of women's labor "occurs" in this sector. but this appears to be 1 sector where unpaid labor is made up for. The sector is often characterized as "ad hoc" "not organized" or not planned. If much of the empirical data produced (even though under problematic conceptualizations and definitions) is analyzed, what clearly emerges is that the relation of this sector with the state is very problematic and hence often is marked

by struggle. But historically, labor issues within this sector have fallen outside the purview of labor relations legislation. The relative insecurity of this sector over periods

of time and its constant changeability, make organization of the producers difficult though not impossible. it may present women an arena for strong mobilization under certain conditions e.g. when dependence of the economy on this sector for production, distribution and circulation is so great that the state is unable to "regulate" its influence

it in any definite direction. But under conditions of state authoritarianism, this sector

and women's activities within this sector, can be severely circumscribed and women can be rendered extremely vulnerable.

The State Sector

One of the largest employers of women is the government sector which employs professionals mainly in teaching and nursing and secretarial/clerical work. As these sectors of government became more and more female, conditions of service deteriorated. Although in many cases legislative discrimination in wages and in promotion is done away with, administrative discrimination persists. Consequently, within government women predominate within certain lower levels of the hierarchical structure even in sectors employing mainly women. 0.- 27- i ( LC f/xAHQ on I'M He

But very importantly some of these sectors are excluded from labor relations legislation e.g. teachers and nurses who are regarded as civil servants or are prohibited to take union dispute actions such as strikes. The difficulties created by this are illustrated very clearly by the recent strike of nurses and teachers in Zimbabw. Because 29 Marm-Cmbwn'

these two sectors are service sectors touching very closely on the daily lives of people and the children, workers' action by these groups is easily borned and hence especially using the monopoly of the media which government has. Such a situation is, moreover, peculiar to Southern Africa but will be highlighted by the USINFEC Controllen' Stride Action declared illegal by the Reagan administration which led to massive loss of jobs among the public employees.

HISTORICAL CONJUNCTURE

While the paper has emphasized the structural, economic and political inequalities of women in the labor process, there are situations that could be very different given the historical conjuncture.

. While in South Africa, Bungwumth Hospital Health workers had faced in principle almost a similar situation as Zambian nurses, the historical conjuncture favoured the former. At a time of heightened political struggle, community support and a state feeling under siege, hoping to appear reformist, state action was not able to control workers and the state was inhibited from unleashing its full power against the workers.

At this historical conjuncture, the issue of women in the labor movement has never been so topical. In part this is because of events in South Africa and Namibia but also because of all the other struggles. The labor movement in context of political struggle: in South Africa and Namibia, but drawing from struggles of liberation in the region especially Zimbabwe's experience and sensitized by the UN. Decade for Women, had to face the issue of women in the political economy and the labour movement. The U.D.F. (United Democratic Front) and COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) have drawn up preliminary documents on rights and role of women which is to be debated, discussed, amended, added to, etc. at different levels and in different regions.

It is the contradictions brought forth by the struggle within the struggling groups

themselves that have accelerated the process. But what clearly emerges is that as the labor movement in the non-free areas draws from the rest of the region, it also has lessons to teach the labor movement in other countries on the gender issue.

How women will capture the historical conjuncture and use it to their advantage depends mainly on women. how they analyze the situation, the correctness of that analysis, their collective action on the basis of that analysis and how they form necessary alliances to achieve the general interests of the masses as well as the specific strategic interests of women.

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