



Strategies for Improving the Access of Rural Women to Power

The Case of The Gambia

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Empowering Women through LAWS



Empowering women through LAW



- The Gambia's 1997 National Constitution indeed has provisions relating to gender and women empowerment. Section 28 (1) and Section 28 (2) of the aforesaid Constitution state as follows:
 - **“Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men”.** (Section 28 (1))
 - **“Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities”** (Section 28 (2)).

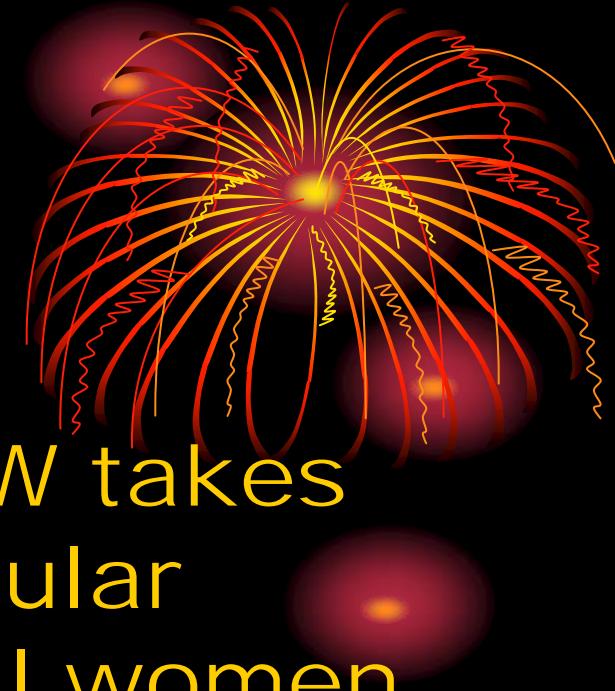
Women and LAW



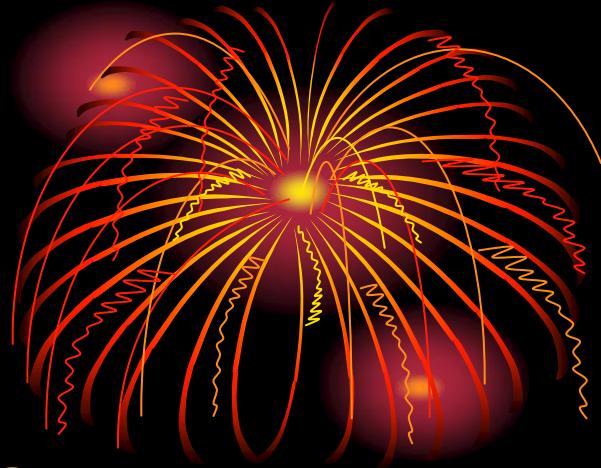
“Every Citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the Government of his Country either directly or through freely chosen representatives, in accordance with the provisions of the law.”

Strategies

- Article 14 of the CEDAW takes into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles they play in the economic survival of their families.



Strategies



- The national women's policy specifically addresses the needs of the rural women in the areas of organising self-help groups; to participate in the development and implementation of development planning. This strategy can lead rural women into leadership positions, but will not be effective in helping them achieve their development goals.

Strategies: Economic Empowerment



Economic Empowerment



- Economic empowerment is a key strategy in accessing power and leadership.
- An economically independent woman is allowed into the public sphere to participate in decision making within the community and outside the community.

Strategy: Capacity Building



- Women have leadership and Management skills which need to be improved on to enable them to get access to power.
- How will this be done?
- When women are with each other they voice their opinion.
- When women are in a group situation with men, most of the time they act as if they have no opinions

Capacity Building



- Women's confidence have to be built—confidence building sessions are important for women.
- Rural women spend the bulk of their time on household activities leaving them with little time to engage in other activities such as the one being recommended above.
- In this instance activities that bring women together should be encouraged to bolster their confidence and do mutual reinforcing

Capacity Building



Capacity Building



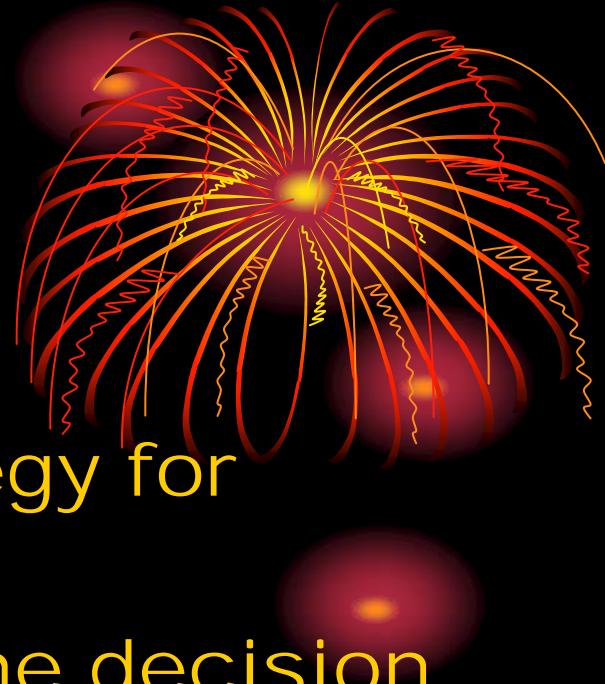
- The men have to be included in the dialogue in terms of rural women's access to power
- I always let women know that power will not be given it has to be demanded and taken.
- The men are not going to relinquish all their privileges to women but they have to be made to understand that power sharing is important

Decision Making

In communities where for example women have always been excluded from the decision making, it will be difficult for the men who limit the women to the private sphere, to allow them entry into the public sphere



Decision Making



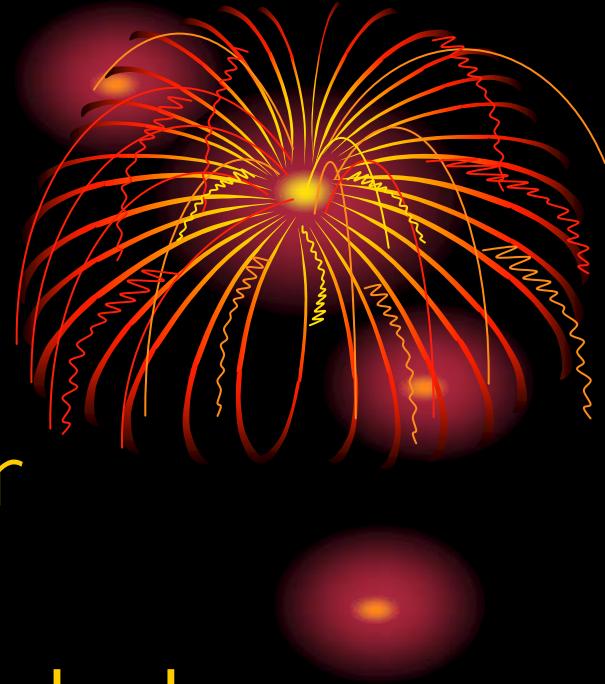
- This is an important strategy for accessing power.
- If women are not part of the decision making process then they have no access to power.
- At the level of the household men make the majority of the decisions including decisions about women's participation in public life.

Decision Making

- One strategy is to provide labour-saving devices for women to free up their time to challenge in a constructive way the status quo that will lead to dividends and give them access to power



Decision Making



- Why is access to power needed?
- Access to power is needed because it is only within the corridors of power that women's issues can be advocated for to constitute change in their lives

The role of Government



- Lobbying government is an important strategy for rural women
- National policies tend to focus more on issues of urban women more than that of rural women
- Government should recognize rural women's day - not just rural women's contribution to the economy, but the fact that they have to be part of the decision making process at the national level.

Government



- This is not enough. Some governments have instituted affirmative action to ensure that rural women have access to power through the local government set-up.
- Women need to be empowered to be elected and not nominated.
- At the moment in the Gambia both at local and national level, the majority of women are nominated and not elected.

Access to Productive Resources



Access to Productive Resources



- The third MDG aims to promote gender equality and empower women.
- For rural women who are mostly farmers there greatest need is access to productive resources to improve their production and by extension their earning power.
- This will lead them to economic independence which will eventually get them into the decision making process and to power
- At the moment men own and control most of the productive resources including the most important one land

Productive Resources

- A key strategy is advocating for land rights for rural women.
- Ownership of land will mean that women can actually invest in long term agricultural produce such as fruit trees which are more profitable than subsistence agriculture



Education



Education



- Rural women should have access to functional literacy whether it is in extension, learning to measure or following up on their production.
- Education is a key strategy to accessing power to achieve one's development goals.
- Functional literacy empowers the rural woman, especially in decision making as it gives her self confidence and allow her to be empowered.

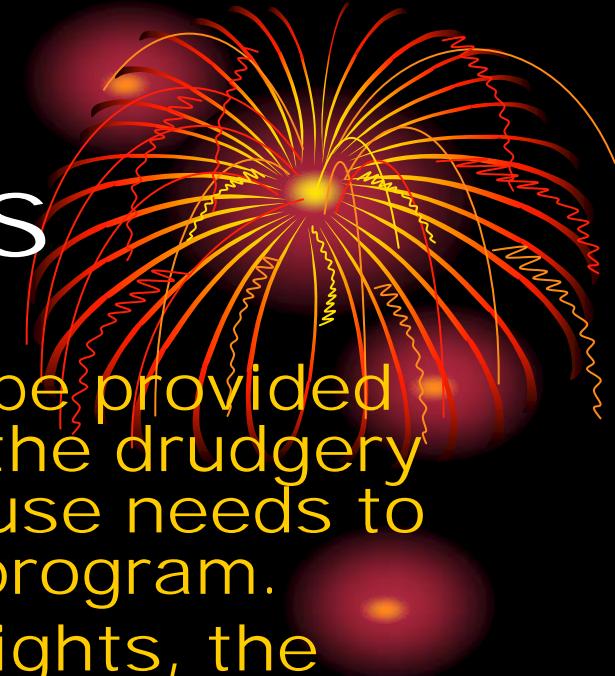
Recommendations

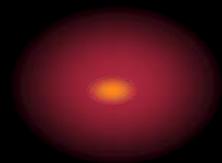
- There should be an integrated learning approach based on the suggestions of rural women and the expertise of the partners.
- There should be a comprehensive programme which all the actors will be interested in.
- An empowerment program for women dealing with socio-cultural issues, leadership issues and economic issues and the linkages between the issues is a must in any future programming.



Recommendations

- Labour saving devices should be provided for women leading them from the drudgery of housework. Women's time use needs to be critically looked at in any program.
- In order to promote women's rights, the role of women in the management of the incomes within the households and in the allocation of the resources is critical. There should be capacity building and sensitization of men.
- Consequently, support to women is necessary so that their earning power can be improved enabling them to take their rightful place in the decision making processes.





The END

Thank you, jerejef, abarka,
jarama, merci