



***Ensuring gender equality in capacity development –  
opportunities for rural employment and sustainable development***

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**Abstract**

Capacity development has emerged as a viable approach to getting at the crux of the need for systemic change in development processes whereby no institutional, organizational or individual responsibility for transformation is neglected. Yet, we are concerned as feminist researchers that gender equality is not explicitly addressed in the literature on capacity development. In this paper we present areas where understanding of gender issues in sustainable development and specifically, rural employment can converge with capacity development. Relevant examples from Peru, Kenya and Ghana are highlighted. Opening capacity development up to gender equality ensures that interlocking individual, organizational and system level capacities underpin good policy and strategies for sustainable development and rural employment.

## 1. Introduction

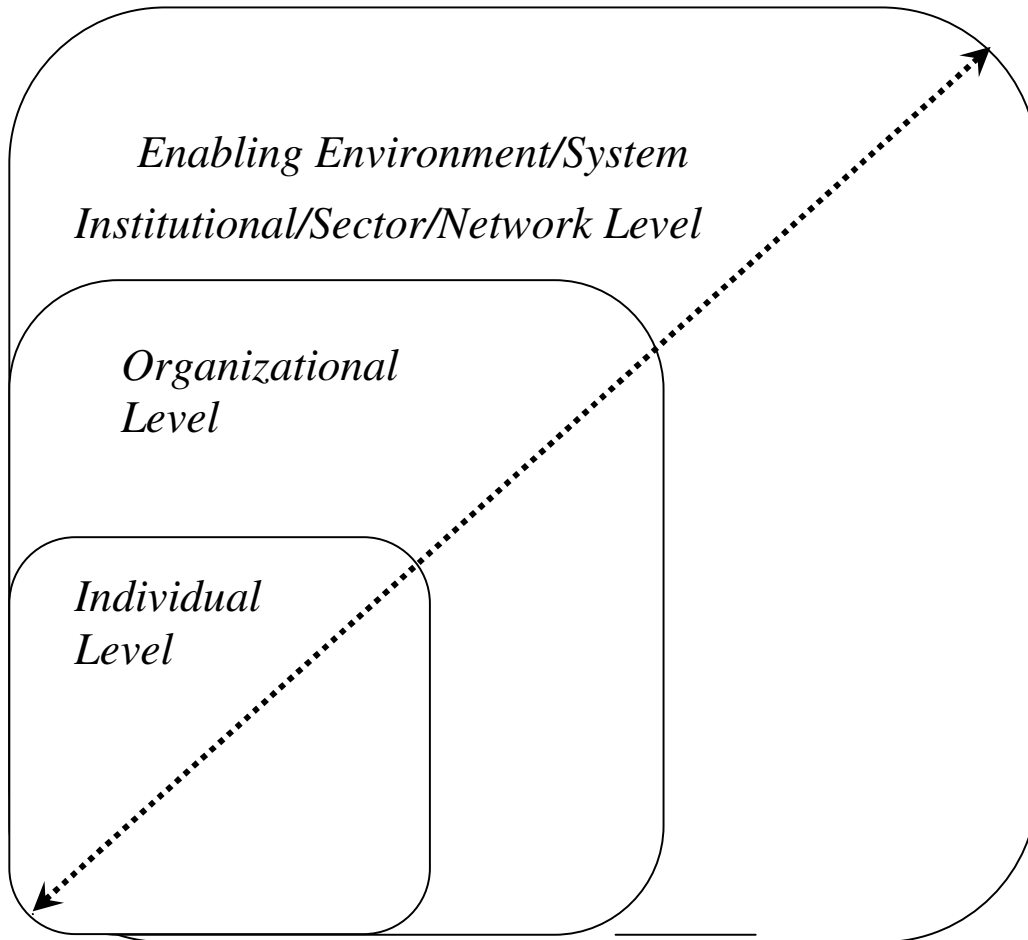
Gender disparities in rural development seem resistant to change. The *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook 2009* a compendium published by the World Bank, FAO and IFAD once again identifies the persistence of rural poverty and the fact that approximately two-thirds of the world's poor live in rural areas, and two of every three impoverished individuals are female. Worsening economic times and environmental shocks typically have more harmful impacts on women as compared to men, and on resource-poor rural women, compared to poor women living in urban areas. Especially in crisis situations, men leave to seek non-farm wage labour and women's mobility is more limited. While regional variations exist, women stay in the rural areas as the main producers of the world's staple crops including rice, wheat, and maize which provide up to 90 percent of the food consumed by the poor.

Access to non-farm activities and income sources for rural women and men are key to reducing risk and vulnerability, and supporting rural development. Poverty reduction, therefore, requires a combination of investments in farm and non-farm rural employment to support the essential productive resources of land, water, labour, know-how and capital. Furthermore, rural women's cash poverty and lack of education is known to have negative impacts on the health and education of children as well as household food security. Indeed, by reversing this negative spiral, we have one of few "best bets" or what the World Bank Group has called "smart economics" in development work today - that even in economies where wage labour is scarce, reductions in the gender gap in primary education and extension services increases productivity (World Bank, 2001:85; World Bank Group, 2008).<sup>1</sup> The continuum is that productivity improves basic needs, generates income and potentially, builds the potential for environmental sustainability and social equity, in other words, sustainable development.

Now let us turn to the topic of capacity, a term that features widely in contemporary development studies and policymaking, including the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action endorsed at the Third High Level Forum convened in September 2008 (ECPDM, 2008). This paper defines capacity development (CD) as *the process whereby individuals, groups and organizations enhance their abilities to mobilize and use resources in order to achieve their objectives on a sustainable basis*. Efforts to strengthen abilities of individuals, groups and organizations can comprise a culmination of i) change at the level of the individual, including human skills, knowledge and attitudinal development, ii) changes in organizations, networks and sectors, and iii) systemic changes in institutions and governance. National and international institutions have embraced the concept of CD considering it superior to approaches that were exclusively focused on human resource development and technology transfer.<sup>2</sup>

One of the challenges we caution against in this paper is that for a very long time, the three levels of capacity development have appeared and been addressed in development policy and programming as individual “blocks” of investment and activity. Policymaking and implementation would attempt to move from one block to another – for instance, starting at the individual level and then to the organizational level and then to the system (the micro to meso to macro-level of change). We may be familiar in this respect with calls for “scaling up” successful capacity building projects, or perhaps, the reverse of the “rolling out” of system level national action plans to organizational restructuring or individual training. In these contexts, it is expected that outcomes and impact at one level would inform change at another level. The challenge is that this rarely happens as sustained investment is difficult to procure, and pressures to change shift the policymaking agenda before capacity can be developed across all levels.

The logic of capacity development operates somewhat differently. In this framework the essence of decision-making activity is across the three blocks of individual, collective and system level change on a constant basis. It is argued that change at one level operates with change at another level. For example, working in the collective dimension means simultaneously expanding individual capacities; changes at the level of social groups and businesses lead to changes in household relations but also at the institutional level, and back again.



**Figure 1:** Framework for Capacity Development (adapted from CIDA, 2000)

While the use of CD has expanded, there is relatively little examination of the framework from feminist standpoints. This is noteworthy given the fact that gender and development (GAD) researchers and practitioners have long called for analyses and actions that span individual to household and community to sector, network and institutional dimensions of gender inequality. Civil society organizations have certainly raised the importance of capacity for gender equality and gender analysis in the new aid environment, but so far, they are doing so without detailed reference to capacity development frameworks (see for example, Collinson et al., 2008). An exception in the earlier CD literature is Eade and Williams (1995). It is the aim of this paper to show that developing capacities while ensuring gender equality is a potential approach to eradicate poverty and hunger, and specifically, for achieving full and productive employment which means access to land, labour, knowledge and capital, and decent work for all, including women and young people.<sup>3</sup>

This paper begins with an overview of the literature on capacity development and how gender equality opens up this analytical framework. We refer to this gender responsive framework feminist Capacity Development (fCD) following a pattern used by other scholars to speak to feminist perspectives on such fields as political ecology (Rocheleau et al., 1997), political economy (Stamp, 1989) and economics (van Staveren et al, 2007). By engendering capacity development the intent is to expose and abandon gender neutral assumptions which currently feature in this framework and strengthen the relevance of CD to contemporary policy and programming for gender equality. We are not taking an adversarial position here with the community of scholars and practitioners in capacity development, rather we are seeking to develop commitment to countless consultations on gender equality that garner support from a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders.

The final section of the paper will draw on field experience and research in three countries - Peru, Kenya and Ghana to illustrate capacity development for gender equality. In our final summary, we conclude with a summary of key points for converging gender equality and capacity development policy and programming for sustainable development and rural employment.

## 2. Capacity Development – A Background

The term capacity development is relatively new and the literature states that it should not be confused with the antecedent ‘capacity building.’ Unlike the term capacity building which was used as a synonym for training and organizational change, CD emerged from adaptive systems thinking that sought to link development management strategies with a long-term perspective and vision of social change (Baser and Morgan, 1998). In the 1990s, CD was articulated as the central purpose of technical cooperation building on earlier decades of investment in human development and infrastructure (UNDP, 1996; OECD, 2006). Indeed, most socio-economic policymakers and programming can be said to involve capacity development to some degree or another because development is about people and their societies interfacing and developing within their environment. Brinkerhoff (2007) reminds us that some societies are more fragile due to conflict and instability. As well, work in Canada reminds us that history and social exclusion has not meant that all people have access to all services, all of the time.<sup>4</sup> However, in all contexts capacity development is an *intentional process of learning at different levels* in order to achieve development. Developing capacity is intentional because of the need to ensure that change at one level complements or advances change at another level. In this respect, capacity development calls attention to “what capacities” and “capacities for whom to do what?” (CIDA, 2000).

From 2005, when the Millennium Project Report was released and several dialogues on aid effectiveness ensued, a more rigorous view of capacity development has emerged. CD is expected to move beyond training and structural improvements.

Nowadays, it is recognized that development of capacities is unlikely without learning that is “owned” by the learners and enables transformation that satisfies the individual and the social structures in which they work and live. Emphasis is placed on facilitating the enhancement of individual and collective capacity and strengthening the performance capabilities of individuals, organizations and societies to learn, change and innovate (ECPDM, 2008).

To date, the implementation of policy and programs for CD has garnered both negative and positive reactions. On the positive side, it is an integrated force that brings people and an enabling environment together with the conviction that this is the process of doing development; being cognizant of the resistance to change which is inevitable along the way. On the negative side, CD is critiqued as jargon, with little chance of creating sufficient movements of change and a mass of capabilities that sustains learning. It is in the context of these positive and negative reactions to contemporary capacity development work that we respond as advocates of gender equality.

### **3. The Feminist Overture**

In music, an overture literally ‘opens up’ and gives voice to the full orchestra and all of its musicians. It is a fitting analogy, to consider a feminist overture to capacity development as an opportunity to take a framework for policy and programming and open it up to the ideas of many feminist scholars and practitioners over the past four decades.

In this paper the term “feminist” is used intentionally, but not to exclude readers who associate it with ethnocentric values of excluding men and ignoring diversity among women. We apply the adjective “feminist” in an inclusive sense with deference to the substantial historical work and body of knowledge on the disproportionate access to and benefits in society and economy based on gender roles and power-based relations, including systemic barriers to education, income, health, security and general well-being for women and girls.

A framework for feminist capacity development (fCD) would also acknowledge that the term gender alone is not sufficient to make us learn from the past WID, WAD, GAD and even MAD decades of gender analysis.<sup>5</sup> Gender analysts continue their work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century conscious of the despairing words of Dutch feminist scholar Saskia Wieringa that the concept of gender “is used in such a watered down version that women’s issues have become depoliticized, that sexual oppression has been rendered invisible and that concern for women’s issues has been reduced to the socio-economic component of women’s lives” (Wieringa, 1998:5). Institutionalized discrimination, invisibility and silence are the antecedents of feminist scholarship and practice. Ester Boserup wrote in 1970 that women were “invisible” in development process. Scholar-leaders Achola Pala Okeyo of Kenya and Shimwaayi Muntemba of Zambia had already commented in the 1960s that women’s issues were silenced by colonial regimes intent on

keeping these “private matters.” As Goetz (1995), Kabeer (1995) and Cleaver (2002) have written, several writers have noted the difficulty of gender analysis when it applies to the private realm, finding it easier to address the less contentious and public dimensions of gender, but not always far enough to overturn institutional, systemic discrimination.

The most challenging dimensions of development involve allocation of roles, resources and rights based on public interpretations of human relationships which are inherently operating in the private sphere. For feminists the enduring axiom is that the *personal is political* such that one’s own behavioural attitudes and actions can be understood to either concur or conflict with social norms. Challenging public norms without attention to the private realm is impossible (Fox-Genovese, 1991). Herein lies our first feminist intervention to capacity development: enabling individuals to explore their self-concept and its influence over one’s attitudes and actions. This is a call to see *the personal* inside the notion of the individual in the CD framework.

We propose therefore to look at gender equality as including an analysis of *self*, including *self-worth* and *self-determination*. The concept of ‘self’ was taken up by the discourse of masculinity and development (MAD) to examine men’s changing gender roles and the involvement of men in relational and collective social change, especially in agriculture, health, family planning and domestic violence and it is an important concept in contemporary gender analysis (Cleaver, 2002).

A second intervention towards feminist capacity development is to emphasize the importance of collective capacity. Here we will speak to a distinction that can be described as the difference between “organizing women” and “women organizing.” Organizing women is imposed and not a process owned by women themselves. Therefore, the individual, organizational and network level of capacity development must speak to “women organizing” not “organizing women.” Gender inequality not only erodes opportunities and benefits associated with socio-economic development but deepens structural vulnerabilities and conflicts in society. The need to organize or take action as a group arises from the experiences of women who are oppressed. These lived experiences create action and provide a *raison d’être* for organizing. They are closely tied to the self-concept at the individual level of capacity development.

Thirdly, feminist capacity development is concerned with the learning and well-being of society as a whole, not just women. When structures have ceased to allow equal distribution of resources and benefits, not only for women but also for the entire population, women will not participate or be conscious of their full potential in society. Recent initiatives by United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and FAO to support adolescent girls and boys are especially important. So too must we look at both chronically underemployed men as well as abruptly unemployed men. Household relationships shaped by the concept of self and communicative actions change with the

injection of new resources and the sudden end of existing resources, a point we return to below in the discussion of microfinance.

A fourth and final consideration for the development of capacities from a feminist standpoint is that new roles, often with a basis in leadership need trying. Larger organizations such as private and public institutions can account for internal and external levels of corporate social responsibility that includes gender equality. Women leaders have to be very patient and persistent because their work will be lengthy and satisfactory results will not always be apparent in the short-term. Often societies are rigid insofar as roles are defined and women leaders in some cultures know when they can and cannot speak. Feminist capacity development recognizes that learning to break down these types of structures takes time, that at first people may not necessarily participate equally and that most importantly, it takes opportunity to enable women to try different roles.

#### 4. Case studies

The gender gap in rural employment and sustainable development in terms of access to non-farm employment, returns to labour and capacities strengthened through individual and collective support mechanisms such as micro-credit, insurance and non-formal education remains large in many countries. The vicious circle has been discussed in many publications, and will certainly be addressed in other papers in this conference. Briefly, let us remind ourselves that in socio-economic terms women are generally worse off than men because they lack access to cash or in-kind income and income-generating activities due to a range of constraints embedded in social, economic, political and cultural systems. The formal and informal economies are characterized by occupational segregation, pay differentials and gender time division which increase gender disparities (ILO, 2008). Women have a larger domestic work burden with unwaged household maintenance duties such as collecting fuel and water, caring for children, the sick, as well as food production, procurement, processing and cooking. Education, credit, transport and other opportunities to ease their burden of work and generate income are inaccessible, even if they are available. Improving women's productivity can contribute to economic growth, efficiency, and poverty reduction (Elson, 2005).

In this section of the paper we move from the framework of feminist capacity development to look at some examples relevant to rural employment and sustainable development in three countries. In Peru, we look at self-worth in relation to credit for female entrepreneurs and their rural micro-enterprises. In Kenya, we examine collective capacity and access to productive resources of land, labour and capital through self-help groups and their leadership. Finally, in Ghana, we examine the notion of gender equality as corporate social responsibility in public institutions that are part of a process of knowledge management for enabling rural employment and sustainable development. We have also chosen each case purposively based on our fieldwork and to address the initial contributions identified above from our feminist perspective on capacity development. It

is however, the process through which feminist capacity development integrates across the individual, organizational and system levels that appears in each case and is of greatest relevance to our discussion.

### ***Gender Equality and Microfinance in Peru***

Historically, Peruvian men and women have occupied a defined gender division of labour in which unpaid work for women and inequality in employment between women and men and between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have been a constant characteristic (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Escobal, 2004). Ever since Incan times, women usually, but not exclusively, were in charge of weaving and agricultural tasks such as weeding, processing and trade while men took care of road construction, heavier labour in agriculture and military obligations. Gose (1999) argues that the distinction between different forms of work exchange, *ayni* (balanced reciprocity) in traditional society and *minka* (hierarchical exchange) in modern Peruvian society, was seen as a point of difference between two competing economic systems, but also were related to the agricultural cycle and seasonal moves between communal planting and individual harvest. Initially, trade and commerce were performed by women and mining work was exclusively done by rural men. This type of employment and massive migration associated with it obligated women to take control of their households and often led women to get involved in social movements because the only apparent option women had, was the support from other women who were going through the same circumstances. These forms of informal networking and collective cohesion motivated them to participate in special programs in the 1980s that were subsidized by the government in order to reinforce children's nutrition and feeding in rural schools, including, for example, the program "vaso de leche" (glass of milk) and "comedores populares" (communal kitchens). On the other hand, women became concerned with the functioning of the schools. They started organizing communal group "faenas" to make improvements to the school and eventually these types of initiatives were performed in the church and the community. Women began to gather in groups and have responsibilities. They usually nominated themselves to assume any leadership role and for instance the formation of grassroots organizations. Their involvement was beneficial for women, since they have learned collectively and communally to look for other ways of providing for the household while at the same time, they have become accountable for their rights and position in Peruvian society (Sarapura, 2008).

In particular, microfinance and grassroots women's organizations have played an important role in national development but capacities developed have not yet sufficiently contributed to gender equality. Right now in Peru, there are more than 300 microfinance organizations (formal, informal and NGOs) that are reaching rural women – indigenous and non - indigenous. Unfortunately, most of the institutions only facilitate the access of rural women to capital or credit without including programs that focus in gender issues or by approaching the clients through an integrated training to support the enhancement or development of new capacities to shift the paradigm of the cultural norm and socially

constructed idea that while women work at home and/or in the fields only men represent the household. Ultimately, men and women require equal access to the decision-making processes of their communities and governments.

To understand systemic change in Peru we need to appreciate 50 years of economic and social upheaval in the country that have affected the lives of rural Peruvians whereby new activities emerged and gradually transformed a seemingly immutable order (De Soto, 2005). The agrarian reform of 1969, with failures and successes, ended four centuries of colonialism. This action created three major events. First is the restructuring of legal and political apparatus governing land tenure and labour relations. State lands and big farms “*latifundios*” were expropriated and turned over to workers and indigenous communities. The other and the most somber epoch in accordance to Seligmann (2005) was the increasing presence of a terrorist group Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) mainly in rural areas that lasted a decade and resulted in more than 130,000 deaths and disappearances that generated massive immigration from rural areas to Lima and other urban areas. And finally, the third event, and the most important, was change in national institutions that made parts of the rule of law accessible for all people to address the issue that people rebel not for being poor but for being excluded from the system.<sup>6</sup> These policies led to a reduction in the rate of inflation and also created social and economic changes in rural areas; among which was the abandonment of Shining Path.

In Peru today 35 percent of rural employment is concentrated outside of farming and about 50 percent of rural household income is also earned outside of farming. Every second rural household in rural Peru is engaged in some kind of non-agricultural activity, and among those who are; about half of the household labour hours are dedicated to this non-farm work (Trivelli, 2008). Jonasson (2007) reports that rural non-farm employment in Peru consists of commerce (32 percent), manufacturing (23 percent), private sector services (20 percent), and public sector services and administration (14 percent). Wage labour in rural non-agricultural activities is paid much higher than agricultural wage labour. Among the self-employed, this income differential is not observed; if anything, agricultural self-employment gives higher returns than non-agricultural self-employment. Escobal (2008) suggests that non-agricultural sources of income might have been underestimated including those generated from international and national migration through remittances, transfers and rent. However, the supply of labour to activities outside agriculture remains the main component of non-agricultural income (Velazco, 2009).

It has been stated that the feminization of poverty is the tragic consequence of women’s unequal access to economic opportunities (UNDP, 1995:36). Even though, involvement in any economic activity is a necessary condition for the achievement of gender equality, it is in itself not enough. This is because not all economic activity is empowering, but also because supplementary actions and measures are required to promote gender equality in other spheres of the systemic level (cultural, legal, political

etc.) (Aldana, 2006). In Peru, microfinance has become the primary strategy for rural economic development. However, our research suggests that the socio-economic components of some microfinance institutions were not at all satisfactory for the clients – high interest rates, collateral requirements as well as the lack of training in the use of credit and money management. Knowledge of interest rates, fees and financial formalities was new to recipients of credit. Indeed, it was the first time for the majority of the clients, to attend a group meeting outside their immediate home environment (Sarapura, 2008). Training (both individually and as groups) is a challenge because most of the women are non-literate and Spanish is their second language which requires well trained trainers who speak the dialects of the women’s Quechuan communities.

FINCA Peru which operates in Ayacucho and Huancavelica is the only rural women’s microfinance initiative in the country intentionally integrating gender equality at the individual, relational and collective levels. Their programming emphasizes the development of the concept of self for building life skills by addressing their self-esteem, self-confidence and ‘life self-control.’ Rural women have become conscious that their individual capacities have been strengthened during their participation in microfinance institutions, as well as some new capacities that have evolved. Women were aware that their individual capacities were undervalued. This was demonstrated with women’s low or absent sense of the self (self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth, and selfhood) at the beginning of the program (Sarapura, 2008). They gained knowledge of possessing capacities that support their change and transformation. Evidence points to their changed roles and use of power in their households, micro-enterprises and communities.

The results of the study reveal that 95% of the women have been FINCA Peru’s clients for more than 7 years and this feature has given them the confidence to diversify their activities. They believe that focusing on more than one activity not only they are able to pay the loans easily and have money for the household and micro enterprise’s improvement; but also they are able to generate employment for themselves and members of the family all year round.

If they are concentrated in agriculture, they alternate this activity with guinea pigs’ breeding and cattle rising for milk production. Others are dedicated to informal commerce and travel from town to town getting products to be sold in Huamanga – Ayacucho’s capital. Others transport the product directly to Lima and most important cities in the region.

The integrated approach of FINCA-Peru is not that of influencing their client or imposing its programs, but that of facilitating the process to fully develop women’s capacities. Finca’s knowledge of the methods in their work has promoted and supported women’s autonomous development. The main characteristics of Finca’s programs is the total presence of female Quechuan – speaking staff “promotoras” who work as the supporters of the solidarity banks or communal banks “banquitos”. Another characteristic

is the continuous support clients have at FINCA Peru while they are involved in the programs (child care access, social activities and leadership responsibilities)

FINCA Peru has reached its objectives to develop and/or enhance women's capacities because they have succeeded in taking into account women's traditional roles, new responsibilities, and increased capacities and also evolving gender relations among women in their specific context (Sarapura, 2008).

Awareness of aspects in their lives that obstruct their personal development and relationships with others is achieved through their collective action and opportunities to share knowledge that make them more aware of being entrepreneurs but also citizens.

Microfinance is a primary gender strategic interest because it secures access to important public and political spaces otherwise incongruent with traditional feminine roles. Impoverished livelihoods are maintained when debt repayment destabilizes income generation so their capacity of self-worth and self-determination are capacities used in the credit chain to confront critical times. Microfinance in Peru has enabled communal or solidarity banks to operate as *de jure* women's organizations responding not just to women's access to productive resources but also leveraging funds for other members of the household including husbands and youth.

### ***Gender Equality and Women Organizing in Kenya***

Since Independence in 1963, the backbone of the Kenyan economy has been small-scale agriculture and the informal sector and together these sectors account for more than two-thirds of total employment. The poor make up half of Kenya's population and two-thirds of the poor are women who rely on these sectors for their livelihood. Since the late 1980s, national development policy and programming has tried to improve the productivity of people in these sectors through increased investments, innovative technologies, expanded access to support services including credit, better physical infrastructure, and a more enabling environment to reduce poverty and improve the status of women. Good governance, including ensuring rights for women and children have been considered major obstacles to productivity in Kenya, especially in the poorest areas of the country (UNDP, 1999).

Resource-poor women as skilled farmers in Kenya have long been recognized (Moock, 1976). Recent research suggests that capacity is eroding as poverty and education induced migration of rural youth men and women create generation gaps across the Kenyan countryside. In turn, the long-standing capacity for self-help organizing among women, often reliant on different age groups of women and men has been affected.

The right to organize has been referred to as the 'mother of all rights' and certainly for resource-poor women organizing aims to achieve collectively what is not

achieved individually (Tenga and Peters, 1997). When unable to express themselves in the private sphere, Kenyan women take their concerns to the public sphere through their self-help groups and by doing so try to leverage access to productive resources of land, labour and capital (Hambly Odame, 2002). In fact, women's group activities are viewed by the Government of Kenya as key indicators to gauge the involvement of women in national and local development (Republic of Kenya, 2008). The rapid expansion of women's groups during the 1980-90s in Kenya was largely due to government regulations requiring groups to identify as Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and register with the local district office. Women's groups operate in an increasingly complex institutional environment where they are required to maintain relations with other organizations including government agencies and national or international NGOs which seek more efficient economies of scale in the distribution of resources such as technical assistance and microcredit. There is a tendency therefore, to organize women by urging rural women to join or form groups. This approach to capacity development can run counter-active to the process of women organizing in order to build their own capacity for two reasons.

Firstly, group registration and guidelines required in this process are concerned more with activities of the women's groups than with their membership or leadership. Economic activities are considered for 'general control and oversight' while welfare activities are to be supervised by the sponsoring government agencies or NGOs. Thus, authorities limit the autonomy of women's groups.

Secondly, legislation allows up to 20 percent male membership in women's groups. Groups may evolve two layers of leadership. In the public sphere and on paper, the executive members are all women. In the "shadow leadership" are men. Closer examination of the groups may make men visible in both constructive and destructive roles. Men act as "go-betweens" with authorities as well as co-workers, useful in circumstances where the division of labour is unlikely to switch from men to women (e.g. operating an oxen-plough or tractor). Less enabling roles see men acting as opportunists who access women's unwaged or low waged labour. Another role is men as agitators who interfere with group decision-making, especially with respect to group funds and political campaigning (Hambly Odame, 2002).

Men's political and practical interests in women's groups do not go unrecognized by women members. They too have a political interest in the sense that the groups which do not collapse and succeed at managing both men as members and shadow leaders do so because they are meaningful to the women in terms of access to district authorities and productive resources such as land, labour, capital and support services. What women may not obtain as individuals they seek to obtain in their collective, public sphere of action.

The eruption of conflict following elections in December 2007 forced greater economic decline, especially in western Kenya. According to several non-profit agencies

operating in western Kenya where the greatest amount of fighting was experienced, rural women and their children were disproportionately represented among the dead, injured and displaced. Since early 2008, organized activity, once an important lifeline for subsistence households in terms of access to labour, land and capital, has been seriously undermined. Membership and leadership in collective activity is viewed with distrust and women farmers hesitate to join collective activities even if an emergency relief agency is involved. Kenya is a current example of the difficulties Brinkerhoff (2007) has identified for fostering capacity development in fragile states whereby action to develop capacities has resulted in targeting certain beneficiaries and alienating others. The situation in Kenya now calls for ensuring that hard earned capacities at the group level be recognized and not lost indefinitely. As measures to improve conflict mediation within and among farmers' groups is addressed so too must the government and NGO approaches to assisting groups enable women and men to try on different roles in the organization, to participate in and lead groups in ways that regulations and outside institutions may not yet understand.

### ***Gender Equality and Educational Institutions in Ghana***

The field of policy implementation has long struggled with the notion that “good people can make less than great policies and structures work” but that the reverse scenario of “making good policies and structures work with less than great people” is just about impossible (Najam, 1996). Capacity development through tertiary education and management training has aimed to produce good people who will go on to make good policy and strong organizations that can enable rural employment and sustainable development. To test the argument that systemic change can be motivated by transforming institutions of higher learning and research, we look to a case of University Partnerships for Cooperation and Development (UPCD) whose costs are shared by partner institutions and the Canadian International Development Agency.<sup>7</sup> The goal of the UPCD program is to enhance the institutional capacity of teaching and research institutions in developing countries to develop their human resources and address their countries' most important development needs in sustainable ways. Each program engages the partners in responding to the needs of local communities in developing countries. The UPCD program does not fund research projects. However, some research activities may be included in elements of a project, if they serve to directly strengthen the partner institution and the local communities.

To examine the framework of feminist capacity development we are examining the case of a UPCD in Ghana that partners the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi and Sunyani and the University of Guelph in Canada. For Ghana, the topic of capacity development is tremendously relevant given the capabilities in the country, and in Ghanaian diaspora around the world. Capacity should generate more capacity. However, the Ghanaian economy is smaller than it was in the 1990s and rural poverty and unemployment has intensified. After Ethiopia, Ghana is the second largest IDA borrower in Africa and there is concern that this investment has done enough

to guarantee sustainable achievements in the nation's most important sectors: education, health, agriculture and energy. The World Bank reports that,

*Ghana possesses considerable human capacity. Talented individuals found in government, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the private sector, and at all levels—national, district and community are failing to overcome an institutional framework of under-performing organizations, poor policies and a fractious polity has often stifled their talents (OED, 2005:ii).*

Many observers in and outside Ghana believe that tertiary education plays an important role in economic development and supports the efforts of improving basic education (Lutz et al., 2008). Reform of Ghana's tertiary education system was initiated in the early 1990s to improve resource efficiency, achieve greater balance between the output of tertiary institutions and national development requirements, increase the role of the private sector in funding tertiary education, and improve access to tertiary education with an increase in the proportion of women as managers, faculty and students.

In the UPCD project between KNUST and UoG the focus of capacity development for improved rural employment and sustainable development involves transforming a technical training institute into a full-fledged campus of a university. This case study is working on several elements to ensure that gender equality is addressed through all its activities. For example, there are gender indicators for student and faculty training as well as activities that address gender disparities within local communities which are located relatively near to the campus. The use of a process of action research and fieldwork for students has integrated gender equality issues into the project activities from data collection and field events. High level support from KNUST and UoG for mainstreaming gender issues in the project has been forthcoming and consistently positive.

It is very likely that in this five-year programme we will achieve the "gender targets" in terms of the numbers of women involved in capacity development both within the institution and within the rural communities. We recognize this as "counting women" but know that the main test is whether the new skills that are acquired will be used in reforming the structures of education and ensuring improved service delivery and outcomes to rural communities on a sustainable basis.

However, in this process of capacity development, there is an opportunity to reflect on what Linda Wirth (2001) refers to as the "glass ceiling" and "glass walls" whereby women with qualifications and skills operate within their institutional context without much mobility into leadership positions. Female faculty in the project are conscious of avoiding any stigma of accounting for "gender work", being the sole proponents of gender equality in community level activities or otherwise, the voice of dissent when monitoring and evaluation of project activities. In the case of the UPCD between KNUST and UoG the project has started to realize that structural reforms from a gender equality perspective are not "input-output" because women, in this case as

teachers in tertiary institutions, experience risk differently than their male colleagues. As argued by Cleaver (2002) and Goetz (1997) gendered career paths within institutions have meant that men and women do not necessarily have the same time and resource margins to enable them to participate in institutional change in the same way. As a result, the project has directed the focus away from the internal structures of tertiary education and research towards learning from the community level where the expectations among rural women and their organizations are great. Working with rural women on various small projects and enterprises for rural employment and sustainable development the university faculty are strengthening the teaching and research capabilities needed in their own careers while at the same time contributing to knowledge exchange with the local communities. This process is also building greater social responsibility between academics and communities which is possibly a greater outcome than achieving gender indicators in the project. By addressing the organizational culture in tertiary education institutions that separates higher learning from the local community level it may be possible in turn, to respond better to national development requirements.

## 5. Key Considerations for Future Work

The examples covered here which we have drawn from our various field studies in Peru, Kenya and Ghana are too few to complete the analysis necessary to ensure that current capacity development initiatives take gender equality into account. What is apparent from a review of the literature is that the gender has not been sufficiently addressed in CD work, even by important agencies such as European Centre for Policy and Development Management (ECPDM) which has one of the oldest studies on capacity development and surprisingly, the Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank which has been at the forefront of capacity development assessments as well as gender evaluations (ECPDM, 2008; World Bank, 2008). National systems should not wait to take up this issue. Are international agencies also prepared for this work to be done?

For those of us who are engaged in capacity development initiatives we share the responsibility to show how and why gender equality is relevant to capacity development. We can see for instance in Peru, that endogenous capacity in the form of process skills among agencies such as FINCA-Peru can ensure that the personal dimensions of individual capacity are brought to the forefront but also, that the approach is embedded in microfinance policy implementation across the country.

It is also apparent that organizational learning and visible and invisible leadership roles are essential. Whether the focus is small women's groups or large tertiary educational institutions gender equality indicators must move beyond counting women, and consider gender issues in CD, including the key role of men in the development of women's leadership and organizational change.

Education and training merits some special attention since it is so closely connected to the topic of capacity development. It is in part because of the compelling argument or “smart economics” of the first and second MDGs. Education remains woefully incomplete in many countries because teachers and researchers are increasingly moving away from their social responsibility to local communities. More effort is needed, as we have tried to explain in the case of the UPCD in Ghana to engage in shared activities so that advances in training are realized at the field level. Whether training takes place in tertiary institutions or farmers organizations, learning cannot focus only on enhancing knowledge and skills. Feminist capacity development calls for more attention to the personal level of individual capacity including attitudes, autonomy and self-awareness. While training programs tend to focus on the tangible skills for rural development (e.g. microfinance) it is the intangible abilities that facilitate change across different levels of capacity. This includes the ability to learn, cooperate, self-reflect, as well as communicative and social competencies to articulate self interests, participate and peacefully resolve conflicts. These are essential skills that teachers and students, women and men work on together, not in isolation from one another. Whereas we might see the response to rural poverty as an economic overhaul, it may be instead that we are instead looking at an educational transformation that incorporates more non-formal learning and development into formal environments.

Finally, keeping the objectives of the FAO-ILO-IFAD meeting in mind, our paper wraps up with a summary of key points that speak to the next generation of work in CD where gender equality is genuinely mainstreamed. We divide this table into the five core capabilities most often associated with the capacity development framework and we urge further work and collaboration to test and advance these policy and strategy elements.

**Table 1.** Five core capabilities for gender equality in capacity development

Core Capabilities*	Feminist Capacity Development - Policy and Strategy Elements
<b>1. to commit and engage:</b> <i>volition, empowerment, motivation, attitude, confidence</i>	develop affective domain of learning; self-determination; knowing rights and roles in public policy process
<b>2. to carry out technical, service delivery &amp; logistical tasks:</b> <i>core functions directed at the implementation of mandated goals</i>	cross-sectoral capacity development that ensures and evaluates gender equality; CD projects incorporate gender equality in management information systems
<b>3. to relate and attract resources &amp; support:</b> <i>manage relationships, resource mobilization, networking, legitimacy building, protecting space</i>	men and women gaining equal access to resources; actively participating in decision-making processes; creating critical mass for change; networks, partnerships, communication competencies for women and men, outreach enhance gender equality
<b>4. to adapt and self-renew:</b> <i>learning, strategizing, adaptation, repositioning, managing change</i>	skills for self-determination; self-worth and affective domain of learning developed; project guidelines/ tools respond proactively to gender issues
<b>5. to balance coherence and diversity:</b> <i>encourage innovation and stability, control fragmentation, manage complexity, balance capability mix</i>	resilience/consistency for ensuring gender equality in fragile states and socio-economic uncertainties; refresh analytical and practical capacity for monitoring and evaluating gender issues in CD projects

\* As identified by ECPDM, 2008.

## 6. Final Remarks

This paper has argued that feminist capacity development provides an opportunity to open up the frameworks and policies of capacity building and development to gender issues. We have cautioned against a gender=women approach to feminist capacity development so that the interplay between the private and the public spheres of people's lives are brought to the forefront of discussing the necessary capabilities for overcoming disparities. The paper draws attention to four contributions of feminist capacity development, 1) enabling the personal inside the notion of individual capacity; 2) supporting women organizing, and not organizing women; 3) stimulating learning and well-being of society as a whole, not just among women; and 4) trying new roles, often with a basis in leadership. We proposed these four contributions to show that gender equality matters to the core capabilities envisioned by capacity development strategies and assessments. Some examples were cited from a few countries but realistically, we

recognize that this work is just starting and we are going to learn as more capacity development efforts come under the gender lens.

A call to action for capacity development to address gender equality is achievable. As many different national and international agencies gathered here in this conference your work has made it possible for gender equality to remain on the agenda and to speak the “smart economics” of investing in women and girls. If all of us do not bring this achievement to bear on capacity development efforts then our work is undone. The personal is political, we live it everyday.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2007, the Bank launched Gender Equality as Smart Economics —a four-year Gender Action Plan (GAP) to increase women’s access to land, labor force, agriculture, infrastructure, and finance. Key donor partners include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations agencies have adopted the approach of capacity development. UNDP has more than a dozen reports on the topic including a Capacity Development Resource Book (1995). European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECPDM) led much of the conceptual work. Bilateral agencies such as CIDA, and other multilaterals such as OECD, CGIAR, ADB, etc. have adopted the framework. The Capacity Development Resource Center (CDRC) is provided by the World Bank Institute and CIDA has an CD intranet/extranet (<http://remote4.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cd>). Regional agencies such as the African Capacity Building Foundation and also intergovernmental commissions such as IAASTD have adopted the concepts for their analyses and networking. See also the CD web portal, Capacity.Org <http://www.capacity.org/>

<sup>3</sup> This is of course convergence between the first [Millennium Development Goal](#) and its second target as well as the [ILO's Decent Work](#) agenda.

<sup>4</sup> Here we are referring to the Accountability and Capacity Development programming of Health Canada within First Nations and Inuit communities across Canada. For more information see <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/fnihb-dgspni/bpmd-dpga/acdd-drcd-eng.php>

<sup>5</sup> Women in Development or the Harvard Model (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development or the Sussex Model (GAD) and Masculinity and Development (MAD). See Rathgeber (1990).

<sup>6</sup> In the years of 1988 to 1995, the work of Hernando de Soto and the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) were responsible for new initiatives, laws, and regulations that changed Peru’s economic system. ILD designed the administrative reform of Peru’s property system which gave titles to more than 1.2 million families and helped some 380,000 firms which previously operated in the black market to enter the formal economy through the elimination of bureaucratic "red-tape" and restrictive registration, licensing and permit laws that made the opening of new businesses very time-consuming and costly (de Soto, 2000)

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the UPCD Program see: [http://www.aucc.ca/upcd-pucd/about\\_us/mandate\\_e.html](http://www.aucc.ca/upcd-pucd/about_us/mandate_e.html)