

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Around half of Sub-Sahara Africa's human capital is under-utilized because poor people do not have the resources that would enable them to contribute to production and economic development.

Efforts to reduce poverty must tackle inequalities, which vary between countries, cultures and ethnic groups. Special attention needs to be paid to the situation of women, who often do not enjoy the same access to resources as men, despite their considerable productive potential. The contribution of women to economy remains underestimated and official statistics rarely measure this contribution.

The gender imbalance in the division of labor and in access to and control over productive resources originates in the inequality of rights and responsibilities between sexes. The crucial role played by women in economic production in Sub-Sahara Africa contrasts with the systematic discrimination to which they are subjected in terms of access to education, to finance, to basic resources and to yield - enhancing techniques.

The current status of women in Sub-Sahara Africa is generally unenviable. They are less educated than men, have less access to health care, employment opportunities and credits, and participate less in the national and local political life and decision making. Some significant improvements concerning women's living conditions are occurring in many countries, which suggest profound and irreversible qualitative changes in the short or long term.

However, this positive trend should not obscure the fact that in most African societies women remain a dominated social category, victims of prejudice and reactionary practices, often deprived of the right to speak out and a passive object rather than an active player in national political life.

Several other factors contribute to the problematic situation of African women: their status within the family as wife, mother and laborer; the value placed on having many children; ancestral practices such as excision, levirate marriages, polygamy, forced marriages and repudiation.

Adapted from Poverty Eradication: Where Stands Africa?
United Nations Development Program, pp18-24).

I- GUIDED COMMENTARY

1. According to the text, what does the author suggest to fight against poverty?
2. Referring to the text, what is at the basis of gender imbalance?
3. Relying on the text, say why the status of women in Sub-Sahara Africa is undesirable.
4. In your opinion, should women and men have the same rights? Why or why not?

II- TRANSLATION

Translate into French from "However, this positive trend,..” down to "... in national political life”.