

Consultancy report: Consultation with Ms. Elizabeth Nzioki,
Project Leader for IDRC project "Access to Land Ownership"
(3-P-87-0330)
Nov. 8-13, 1989, Nairobi, Kenya

November 8, 1989:

On November 8th I travelled to Nairobi from Entebbe, and spent a few hours with Elizabeth discussing her general program and her proposed plan to come to Dalhousie University for a semester of study. Elizabeth has started negotiations with a professor in the sociology department of the University of Nairobi, and plans to enroll as a PhD student in that department. Elizabeth did not say this had been finalized, but seemed to feel that there was a good chance she could enroll with this particular professor. I told her that I thought this made sense, since she has found someone she is comfortable with and she has family obligations that make an extended stay away from Nairobi rather difficult. We did, however, discuss the utility of her coming to Dalhousie for a semester of study. I feel strongly that such a plan is crucial for the success of her PhD. While women's studies is beginning to get off the ground at the University of Nairobi, the library and personnel resources in this area are still weak. Elizabeth needs a semester in which she could take courses with specialists in women and development, and in order to spend time catching up on the literature, both in women's studies and the Kenya literature on land, the peasantry and women. I have suggested the fall term of next academic year (ie Sept. -Dec. 1990). There are a number of experts in her area at Dalhousie, as well as at neighboring Saint Mary's University. I have suggested a committee of four persons: Pat Connelly and Martha MacDonald from SMU and myself and Tania Lee at Dalhousie. These four persons are in history, economics, sociology and anthropology, and they are all conversant with the women and development literature. I think a semester studying under their guidance would be a great boost to Elizabeth's PhD program and to the project she is currently undertaking. Dalhousie also has a school of environmental studies which has strong international links and I am sure would be interested in Elizabeth's project. Elizabeth agreed with me that this plan seems to make sense, and I hope she pursues it. If she cannot get free by September, she can always come for the spring term.

Nov. 9, 1989

When I arrived, Elizabeth gave me chapter two of her thesis (also of the project). I spent the day reading the chapter and preparing comments.

Nov. 10, 1989

Elizabeth and I met and discussed the project proposal, the questionnaire and chapter two. The proposal is well written and organized. My main criticism of the proposal is the lack of literature review. Elizabeth relies much too heavily on one

Kenyan source. This author is a Kenyan lawyer who has extensive writings on land and the law in Kenya, but there is a wealth of literature on this and related subjects which Elizabeth should consult. I have given her a list of such authors, particularly Christopher Leo's Land and Class in Kenya, Gavin Kitching's Class and Economic Change in Kenya, and Colin Leys' Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism 1964-71 and his recent revisionist articles. No project on land in Kenya can avoid discussing these books and articles. Leo's book is particularly relevant because it discusses the possibility of a mixed economy of peasant and commercial farming, with important implications for women as they are the largest percentage of peasant farmers. At the same time, it is important to recognize differentiation among women farmers, who are not all merely subsistence producers.

We went over the questionnaire in detail. Most of the questions were well framed. I suggested some changes and additions, which Elizabeth has incorporated. I stressed the need to interview men and women separately, as experience shows that women give very different answers if men are in the room.

Chapter Two suffered from the same problems as the proposal in that it lacked many of the important sources. Since it is supposed to be a literature review, I have suggested that this chapter be rewritten after Elizabeth has read the material listed above. I also think it is going to be important to think through the developmental implications of land ownership. It is true that women in precolonial Kenya had much greater access to land and more control over the use of land. Since private ownership has concentrated land in men's hands, there is a tendency to assume that private ownership is bad. Yet it is essential to come to grips with the need to change the forces and ~~means~~ means of production in agriculture if the Kenyan economy is to produce surplus. I think we are always in danger of becoming rural romantics when assessing women's relation to land, since women have rarely benefitted from privatization of land. But if we wind up arguing for a return to precolonial land forms, we are arguing for women to remain in the sector that performs subsistence agriculture. I think we need to think through the implications of agribusiness in Africa, and women's role in that sector. This raises the issue of women and technology and also women's relation to the state and power. I have raised these issues with Elizabeth, and I am sure we will continue to discuss them as her project progresses.

Elizabeth has carried out some interviews and has some data collected. We discussed this briefly, but the data is not yet organized in a fashion that is easy to analyze. She will send me the analyzed data when she collects some more.

Nov. 11, and Nov. 12, 1989

While I did not consult with Elizabeth during these two days in Kenya, I am including a consultancy fee for the work carried out in Harare before coming to Kenya. Elizabeth sent me both the proposal and the questionnaire, and I spent two days reading these documents and making comments on them. This provided the basis for much of our discussions in Nairobi.

Nov. 13, 1989

Return to Harare.

General Comments:

I am pleased with Elizabeth's progress and her determination to carry out the project. I do think, however, that she should read the material I have listed and then rethink the proposal and questionnaire in the light of that reading. I do believe that a semester at Dalhousie would be both useful for the project and crucial to her PhD. She will not be able to defend a thesis that does not address the rich Kenyan literature on land and development. Moreover, interesting comparative literature on women, land and development is emerging and she would do well to look at that as well.

I look forward to working closely with Elizabeth when she comes to Dalhousie and to commenting on her work by mail until then.

Jane L. Pappert
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