Final Narrative Report on the study

Democratic Development:
Gender Insights from the Grassroots in Nigeria

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*On the issue of handing it over to women, we must note
that governance is not an extension of the kitchen.*[1]

1. Introduction:

Over the last decade human rights, democratization and good governance programming has been one of the foci of Canada's international development assistance. Underpinning this focus is the recognition that 'equitable distribution of power and resources within and between societies, and public participation in decision-making, are critical to CIDA's vision of sustainable development.' Indeed, according to CIDA, 'together, respect for rights, democratization and good governance create the framework within which the development efforts of people ... can be effective.' The key definitions that inform CIDA's democratic development programming include *democratization, civil society* and *good governance. Democratization* refers to strengthening popular participation in the exercise of power, building democratic institutions and practices, and deepening democratic values in society – through both formal processes of government and informal practices of civil society. *Civil society* encompasses organizations and associations of people, formed for social and political purposes that are not created or mandated by government. Civil society has an advocacy, as well as a service function, both of which can have a direct bearing on the promotion of human rights and democratization. And *good governance* refers to the effective, honest, equitable, transparent and accountable manner in which power is exercised by various levels of government in the management of a country's social and economic resources.[2]

In the context of CIDA's Policy on Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance, two Canadian NGOs, Inter-Church Action and CUSO, were approached by CIDA to implement the Community Development Project (CDP) in Nigeria (October 1996 – December 2000).

1.1 Community Development Project, Nigeria

The CDP was designed to contribute to the promotion of human rights and democratic development in Nigeria. Its target group was grassroots civil society.[3] The project was established in the context of the democratic and human rights struggle against the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha (November 1993 – July 1998). The CDP provided small grants to already established NGOs and CBOs working with grassroots communities and groups. In addition, it organized workshops for grantee organizations to build their institutional capacity and enhance their awareness of human rights. Projects that highlighted women's rights and gender equality were especially sought out. Grantees included women and youth organizations, church and other faith-based groups, human rights and para-legal agencies, ethnic associations, trade unions, professional associations, amongst others, that mushroomed in the face of increasing military repression and in response to the growing impoverishment of the populous.

The CDP was premised on the notion that a vibrant, engaged civil society is a hallmark of democracy, and grassroots organizations, as part of civil society, are 'key vehicles for articulating popular concerns and channelling popular participation in decision and policy making.'[4] Grassroots organizations were deemed to be well placed to disseminate information about human rights and democratic practices, build alliances among groups through networking and collaboration, and thus,

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[1] Matthew Hassan Kukah, Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Spetrum Books, Ltd, 1999), p. 9.
[2] CIDA, Government of Canada Policy for CIDA on Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance. For a critical interpretation of Good Governance programming see, Carolyn Baylies, 'Political Conditionality and Democratization,' Review of African Political Economy. 22 (65) 1995, pp. 321-337.
[3] Grassroots is an imprecise term used in this research to refer to poor and marginalized communities, both rural and urban, who can be identified by the kinds of livelihoods their members depend on, the poor condition of their shelter and settlements, their deficient consumption patterns, their relatively low and unstable incomes and employment, their threatened nutritional and health status, and their often negative and subordinate relationship with the state.
[4] CIDA, *Ibid.*

contribute to democratic transformation, consolidation and sustainable development from the bottom-up.

At mid-point, a participatory review of the project was organized. The review revealed insights about the meaning, constraints and indicators of democracy at the grassroots, and the relationship between democracy, day-to-day life, and gender relations in Nigeria. Some of the insights are:

- the CDP interacted with different gender, ethnic and religious groups, revealing the extent to which socio-cultural systems of beliefs constitute the content of democracy, citizenship, and equity. To be effective, therefore, democratic development programming must be sensitive to context, while upholding universal principles of human rights.
- reports from organizations where there was a bias against women in decision-making positions as measured by the gender composition of board and staff, tended to develop their programs around a narrow definition of democracy, i.e., on political representation, civil and political rights, voter education, while reports from women's organizations[5] built their programs on a broader meaning of democracy at the day-to-day level, i.e., on 'daily democracy'. Here reports highlighted democratic struggles within a wide range of institutions and practices extending from the household, the community, and the local government. A key element of democracy, from the perspective of women's organizations, is gender equity across a range of institutions. To quote one participant at the review: *Democratic development involves a whole series of engagements, from the local government to the home.... There are many points of entry. Democratic development has to do with empowerment, either personal (within households) or ... with institutional capacity to do things, as they should be... Democratic development is a link between material capacity and the capacity of people to make decisions for themselves ... it could be education, micro-credit, and healthcare.*[6]
- the most effective women's organizations developed programs that combined strategies of individual and collective empowerment (literacy, health programs, micro-credit), with engagement in municipal politics, and the establishment of a culture of grassroots political participation.
- male and female participants commonly expressed their need to regain some sense of control over their lives. A major part of regaining control relates to meeting basic needs and addressing deepening impoverishment.

Clearly the review prompted questions about democratic transformation in Nigeria, in particular, gender differences in the perceptions of democratic development and grassroots civil society. One set of questions relates to the meaning of democracy at the grassroots: How is democracy and democratic development understood at the grassroots? How does gender difference inform this understanding? What is the relationship between the domestic sector/household and civil society at the grassroots? How is citizenship understood at the grassroots? What role does gender play? What is the relationship between the domestic sector/household sector and opportunities and constraints for citizen engagement?

A second set of questions relates to the experience of municipal government, the level of government most directly experienced by the grassroots: What is the experience of municipal level governance? How does gender difference inform representation and participation? What are the linkages between the grassroots, the local municipal state, and policy interventions?

And a final set of questions relates to democratic development programming: What constitutes gender-sensitive results in democratic development programming? What gender-sensitive measures of daily democracy at the grassroots take into account both success in the short-run and sustainability over time?

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[5] Woman's organizations were NGOs that identified themselves as such on the basis of their mandate and target group.

[6] Quoted by a participant from the Development Exchange Centre, Bauchi, in the CDP Report of the Pre-evaluation Workshop, Ijebu-Ode, April 22-23, 1998, pp. 30-31.

These questions are addressed here in the context of the report, 'Engendering Democratic Development: Insights from the Grassroots,' attached as a study to the CDP. The aim of the research is to develop a case study on gender and democratic development in Nigeria from the perspective of the grassroots. The objectives are to:

> ➤ design and test a gender-sensitive analytical tool to trace social and political processes in democratic development, where the grassroots is the entry point;
> ➤ explore the linkages between the grassroots, intermediary NGOs, the local state, and policy interventions, with respect to gender interests;
> ➤ contrast and compare strategies in support of gender-sensitive democratic development programming at the grassroots;
> ➤ contribute to broader research and policy discussions on democratic transformation in Africa, in particular, providing gender insights from the grassroots.

1.2 The democratic struggle in Nigeria

An assessment of the capacity of grassroots civil society to contribute to gender-sensitive democratic transformation depends on a critical analysis of the democratic struggle in Nigeria, in particular, how this struggle relates to grassroots communities, the conditions of women's lives, and the social relations around which livelihoods are organized. The CDP was established at the height of General Sani Abacha's dictatorship, instituted following a bloodless coup in November 1993. The Abacha regime was marked by gross human rights abuses, circumvention of the rule of law, state-sponsored violence, endemic corruption, and increasing destitution of the Nigerian population. After nearly thirty-five years of military rule interspersed by two periods of civilian rule, eight military coups, and at least five attempted coups, Nigerians were left with few memories of democracy.[7] Politics was a game for the few, where the winner takes all. Furthermore, as the Abacha regime increasingly narrowed the political space, many formal civil society organizations – labour, academia, the legal profession, women and student organizations that in theory counterbalance the state - were infiltrated, co-opted and divided along religious and ethnic lines. Nigeria's experience is instructive in countering the assumption of many development agencies that formal civil society organizations are necessarily (and automatically) best placed to promote democratic development. Rather, what is needed is a careful analysis of the historical struggle to identify the most appropriate agents of democratic transformation in any context. According to one author, the failure of democracy in Nigeria was 'a logical outcome of the failure of civil society.'[8] Indeed, the human rights organizations, arguably at the forefront of the democratic struggle (along with the media, which increasingly was silenced by the regime), were rendered less effective because of two basic problems: they were almost exclusively urban and south-western based, and dependent on international donors for salaries, infrastructure, etc. According to Kukah, 'the lack of home support was to prove the Achilles heel of the human rights movement in its struggle for relevance in the democratization process…. Nigerians viewed them with suspicion.'[9] In reality, human rights organizations had minimal impact at the grassroots, which in turn undermined human rights activists' efforts to sustain democratic gains. This fact should have alerted the donor community to the need to support a broader spectrum of democratic actors rather than concentrate on one, highly visible sector of civil society.

The judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, environmentalist and human rights activist, in October 1995, drew wide international condemnation. Prompted by Canada, Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth, and Nigeria and Canada, in effect, cut diplomatic relations. Canada continued to support Nigerians in their democratic struggle through a variety of means, one of which was the establishment of the CDP. Unique among international initiatives, the CDP focussed on the

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[7] The principles of democracy, however, from justice to consensus, especially at the communal level, continue to form an important part of Nigeria's tradition. The UN Fund for Population Activities, Nigeria Country Report (1998) reports there are 120 m. Nigerians, of which 63% are under 24 years [75.6 m.]. This is a staggering number of young people with minimal experience of formal democratic institutions and civic education, who are now responsible for sustaining democracy. By 2010 the projected population will be 230 m.

[8] Kukah, *Ibid*. Also, Amina Mama, Feminism and the State in Nigeria: the National Machinery for Women. (Accra, Ghana: Third World Network, 2000).

[9] Kukah, *Ibid*. p. 261.

grassroots and was sited in the Middle-belt region away from the Lagos/Ibadan hub, which tended to be over-subscribed by donors.[10]

Under the excesses of the Abacha regime Nigerians became totally alienated from the state, experiencing it only at the level of its oppression from taxation, law infringement, arbitrary detentions, various manifestations of scarcities of items of personal, domestic and national survival, e.g., unemployment, education, health care, amongst others. Although the elected government of President Olusegun Obasanjo replaced the military in February 1999, the capacity of the Nigerian state to address citizen alienation regrettably has not changed.[11] The strength and influence of the state is not measured by its coercive power but by its capacity to penetrate society and regulate social relations, and to extract and distribute resources for the common good. Against this yardstick, the Nigeria state is weak and ineffective in both political and economic terms. Filling the breach is a burgeoning of NGOs, CBOs, INGOs[12], ethnic associations, and churches/religious based agencies organized principally around welfare in the face of declining living standards and increasing poverty. According to the UNDP Nigeria Country Report, 48.5 % of the population of 120 m. now live below the poverty line, while two-thirds of that number (55 m.) live in extreme poverty (existing on US$0.27/day) – deprived, harassed and dehumanized - in a country that is the world's fifth largest oil exporter.[13] Furthermore, research demonstrates that the offspring of marginalized populations - ignored by both civilian and military regimes, and dependent on the informal and subsistence economies - experience an almost total lack of capacity to exit from poverty. The expanding informal economy has not led to an increase in per capita income; rather it attracts new people through urban migration and population growth – thus keeping the basic income in the informal sector close to the minimum.[14]

Turning to the conditions of women, gender discrimination is broad-based and evident across all UNDP indicators of nutrition, education, health care, and empowerment.[15] Moreover, even though all social groups are excluded from democratic participation under the military, the impact of military rule and culture has been most detrimental to women. No women sat on the various military ruling councils or were appointed military administrators. Whereas some of these positions were open to selected non-military men, women were effectively excluded from all positions, first, because they are

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[10] The original name of the CDP was the Democratic Development Fund. This name was correctly deemed to be too provocative under the repressive conditions of the Abacha dictatorship. Similarly, the location of the CDP in Jos, Plateau State, allowed the work of the CDP to continue relatively unnoticed by the military regime, and certainly reached social groups historically ignored by most international and domestic NGOs. Canada's 'quiet' intervention was subsequently copied by other international donors.

[11] The sudden death of General Abacha in June 1998 set in motion a process that culminated in the election of President Obasanja. The CDP responded to this change by shifting its focus to the consolidation of the fragile democracy.

[12] INGOs usually refer to international NGOs, however in Nigeria it also refers to *individual NGO* – reflecting the links between individual self-interest, a growing cadre of unemployed graduates, survival strategies and opportunities to access hard currency through international donors equally anxious to support and influence the outcome of the democratic struggle.

[13] The Gini coefficient of income inequality in Nigeria is .43, (where 0 represents absolute equality and 1 represents absolute inequality), reflecting a high level of income inequality For comparison, the Gini coefficient of South Africa is .58, Zimbabwe is .57, and Kenya is .57 (UNDP Nigeria Country Report, 1998).

[14] Kate Meagher and Mohammed-Bello Yunusa, 'Passing the Buck: SAP and the Nigerian Urban Informal Sector,'(UNRISD Discussion Paper, DP 75, May 1996).

[15] Gender discrimination is measured by the Gender Discrimination Index (GDI) which adjusts each Human Development indicator downwards for gender inequality by expressing each variable as a percentage of the male value, and multiplying the overall HDI by the average female: male ratio. This methodology imposes a penalty for inequality such that GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men go down, or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The greater the gender inequality, the lower is the country's GDI compared to its Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a composite of three variables: standard of living, which measures purchasing power based on real GDP per capita adjusted for local cost of living (purchasing power parity); knowledge, which measures adult literacy and the mean number of years of schooling; and longevity, which measures life expectancy. Nigeria has a GDI of 0.583 – the extent of the adjustment downwards for gender inequality was negative (-0.023) – thus highlighting the inadequacy of the economic and social empowerment of women reflected in differential access to, and control of resources, power and prestige. It is these differentials that are responsible for the disproportionate share of poor women in the poorest of poor segment. The mode of social organization, in particular, the gender division of labour continues to exacerbate disparity. The Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM), on the other hand, measures the use of capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life: women's participation in political decision-making; access to professional opportunities; and earnings power.

underrepresented within the military, and second, because a pre-existing gender bias disadvantages women economically and prevents their access to education and other social resources.

Local government provides a unique view of the scope of the democratic struggle at the grassroots, and of the complexity of social relations constituting civil society. It is the nexus of political and economic marginalization in relation to the state, and of interrelated traditional allegiances and economies. At that level, feelings of alienation and indeterminacy of citizen rights, obligations and responsibilities, and the weakness of the state are experienced most acutely. Popular reaction to existing local government councils everywhere in the country is, for most people, to feel that they own them no civic obligations, to try as much as possible to pay them no taxes or rates, but rather to encourage or condone local councillors to misappropriate the funds meant for local services.[16] On the other hand, those same citizens who would not pay tax to the local government strain to pay levies and contribute or donate generously to their community development association, established to make positive contributions to the welfare and security of its members. In other words, culture, ethnic or traditional associations and institutions play a critical role in shaping the lives of Nigerians, and the meaning of democracy and citizenship. Gender cuts across all these social relations, with men and women experiencing the options, constraints and opportunities at the local level in profoundly different ways.

These are the conditions under which the CDP was implemented. Within this context an interlocking web of gender relations and social struggle determines the capacity of democratic development programming to expand democratic space for women and men. It is with these concrete social processes that this study is concerned.

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

2.1 Defining the problem
As noted, this study was attached to a specific CIDA program, the CDP, which was designed to strengthen grassroots civil society's contribution to democratic development. In the course of implementing the program, certain conceptual issues were identified that demanded further exploration. This study is a response to the opportunities offered by the CDP to explore those issues. Before presenting the study framework and methodology, it is useful to clarify the specific issues the study addressed from its gender and grassroots standpoint.

1.Civil society: the entry point for democratic development programming is civil society, understood as 'the zone of interaction between the public and the private.' It includes NGOs, trade unions, religious bodies, citizen's groups, the professional bodies, community organizations, etc.[17] The household is excluded and confined to a separate domestic sector where it is seen to have an important role in learning and socialization.[18] Following CIDA's lead, the CDP assumed this framework with civil society and the household as distinct entities. The experience of the CDP however, demonstrates that this conceptualization is problematic for women at the grassroots where the line between the household and civil society cannot be so sharply drawn. Clearly, a line can be drawn for definitional reasons; however, the weight of the definition has an implicit bearing on democratic development programming in the sense that it obscures a bias against women, and thus the opportunities to expand democratic development to include women more fully.

The household is not simply a site of socialization. In Nigeria, and most African societies, the household is a nexus of production, reproduction, socialization, and culture; the basic element of a kinship network that incorporates the sub-lineage, lineage, village and community/town, which is the highest closely related unit of group identity and autonomy. Gender equity and rights struggles

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[16] Akin Mabogunje, 'Institutional radicalism, local governance and the democratization process in Nigeria,' in Dele Oluwu, Kayode Soremekun and Adebayo Williams (eds.). Governance and Democratization in Nigeria (Lagos, Nigeria: Spretrum Books Ltd., 1999), pp. 1-14.

[17] CIDA, Ibid.

[18] Nancy Thede, The Democratic Development Exercise, (Occasional Papers, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 1996).

adhere to all these institutions and relationships. It is the absence of gender equity in the household, and replicated along the lineage and in traditional institutions of governance, that is the initial barrier preventing women from participating in public forums coordinated by the state. Households are the centre of grassroots civil society in Nigeria, and as such, cannot be conceptually excluded from the frameworks around which we organize democratic development programming. Indeed, our analytical frameworks (and policy interventions) need to be redesigned to reflect the essential linkages between the individual, family/household, lineage, community and the state.

The nature and the role of the household in relation to civil society have clear gender distinctions. Women's (and men's) lives are marked by their position within the gender division of labour. Women's lives, unlike men's lives, are made up of multiple roles of production, reproduction, community organization, and household survival. As a result, women are the key link in social transformation at the grassroots. In developing more effective grassroots democratic development programming that is cognizant of the central role of women, we can turn to research on gender and macro economic adjustment. This research exposes gender-blind assumptions, draws attention to the danger of excluding the household when conceptualizing and designing policy interventions, and develops models that more adequately represent the lives of men and women. These models enable an integrated analysis of the domestic/civil society/state sectors. To quote Diana Elson: *The invisibility of domestic structures in any body of knowledge is always disabling to struggles for women's rights and for equality between men and women. This is because the organization of domestic life in most instances still constrains women more than men in their participation in economic and political life.*[19]

In other words, it is the appreciation of gender relations in kinship and household organization, and links to community that enables a gender-sensitive understanding of broader political and economic processes. The grassroots provide a unique perspective on the working of civil society in Africa because it is the axis of political and economic processes mediated through kinship arrangements of household and community. The meaning of democratic development and the gender differentiated opportunities and constraints attached to this concept, are first learned, practiced and challenged at the grassroots.

2. Human rights and citizenship: Issues of human right and the role of the responsible citizen have a prominent place in recent thinking of democracy and development. The idea of the citizen as an active and decisive participant in the democratic reconstruction of society represents a departure from previous standpoints. Formerly it was the duty of the state to concentrate on development, and citizenship conveyed a passive status. Currently, driven by the failure of authoritarian states, the trend is toward individual responsibility for development led by the private sector, with the state playing an enabling role. At the political level, mass discontent and popular unrest are compelling political reform and multi-party rule in the belief that democratic political processes will make the state perform better, curb corruption, allocate resources rationally, and secure for the individual citizen a dignified place within civil society.[20]

Discussions of citizenship and human rights within democratic development programming have tended to emphasise first generation rights, that is, political and civil rights of individual citizens. Given the nature of the democratic struggle in Nigeria, this emphasis was also reflected in the CDP. However, as the CDP Committee was confronted with the increasing poverty and marginalization of grassroots communities, the entire body of human rights - social, economic and cultural rights, in addition to civil and political rights - was determined a necessary condition for fully functioning democracy. To quote a Committee member: *Democracy includes ending the crisscrossing networks of oppression (the monopoly and misuse of power by minorities, exploitation (unequal exchange in relations of production and through the market) and discrimination (unequal rights and treatment on the basis of an accident*

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[19] Diana Elson, 'The Economic, the Political and the Domestic,' New Political Economy 3 (2), 1996.

[20] Peter Anyang Nyong'o, 'Democratization Processes in Africa,' Review of African Political Economy (54) 1992, pp. 97-101.

of birth or of affiliation, such as gender, race, religion, caste, language or ethnic group.[21] Indeed, in very broad terms it can be said that the goal of civil and political rights is to ensure that people are treated with respect, and that the purpose of economic, social and cultural rights is to make sure that they can lead lives of dignity. In reality though, it is impossible to have one without the other. This shift reflects wider debates about the relationship between human rights and democracy, as discussions of democratic development move beyond a focus on formal institutions to individual and collective responsibility for social justice, equitable distribution, representation and participation.[22]

As the focus shifts to the spectrum of rights, attention is also drawn to the gender dimensions of human rights. In general, there are two broad approaches to integrating women's interests into rights discussions. The first approach is to expand universal claims to include women, while the second re-conceptualizes rights in relation to gender-based needs. Women's claims to universal rights involve expanding the opportunities for women to exercise their civil and political rights as grounded in universally agreed to human rights instruments, and women-specific instruments that draw attention to gender-based discrimination.[23] Indeed, much energy was devoted in the CDP to increasing women's capacity to claim the realisation of their individual rights. On the other hand, re-conceptualizing rights in relation to gender-based needs is concerned with reducing the barriers to women's participation in public life, and in markets. These barriers are addressed through the provision of accessible social services, such as childcare, health care, etc. Given that the gender division of labour assigns household and family reproduction to women, the denial of women's economic, social and cultural rights, and the accompanying feminization of poverty, not only affects women as individuals, but also impacts on her family and community. This is especially acute at the grassroots level. Again, the CDP supported projects that integrated human rights education with the provision of gender-sensitive services, such as health services in response to women's gender-based needs.[24]

3. Empowerment and participation: the meaning of empowerment is best captured by Peggy Antrobus of the DAWN Network: People, especially poor women, are capable of promoting their own development if their own efforts and initiatives are recognized and supported. The first steps must be to build the infrastructure, the context in which women (and men) can feel some sense of control over their lives.[25] Even those who appear to have very little control and power are still able to resist, subvert and sometimes transform the conditions of their lives. The CDP contributed to building the infrastructure of empowerment through strengthening myriad forms of community action -- from micro credit opportunities for women in Enugu, to organizing ethnic associations in Jos to strengthen representation at state level, to popular theatre on human rights in Zaria. The linkage between individual empowerment and genuine participatory democracy is contained in the notion, 'daily democracy'. This implies the creation of new forms of organization and participation; it means capacity building at the personal and organizational levels. Participatory democracy is constructed from the bottom up, with the participation of old actors as well as the encouragement of new individual and collective actors who have until now existed at the margins of institutions and parties. The new forms of organization and participation involve a plethora of NGOs, CBOs, women's groups, etc., which co-exist with traditional forms of organization, such as ethnic associations. Some argue that these latter associations, if carefully nurtured in democratic development, can become a solid base for the growth of grassroots participatory democracy. Their informal contributions towards procuring health, education and social amenities should compliment the state, while their advocacy activities should hold the state accountable.[26]

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[21] Ayesha Iman, 'Democratization Processes in Africa: Problems and Prospects,' Review of Africa Political Economy (54) 1992, pp. 102-106.
[22] Allan McChesney, Promoting and Defending Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (HURIDOCS, Washington, D.C., 2000).
[23] See, The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993.
[24] For example, the Centre for Reproductive Health & Development in Ibadan provided reproductive health services for women along with mobilization workshops on women's right to reproductive health.
[25] Quoted in Naila Kabeer Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought (London: Verso, 1994), p. 223.
[26] Kukah, *Ibid.* p. 63; Mabogunje, p. 9.

The level of the state closest to the grassroots, but where grassroots participation is marginal, is municipal government. Given Nigeria's history of political exclusion and authoritarianism, the grassroots has minimal access to state resources at all levels. Local political structures continue to replicate corrupt, authoritarian patterns of exclusion, despite municipal level reform and decentralization. With respect to women's interests, municipal politicians, as indeed all politicians, are overwhelmingly men. Political parties have become stronger with the support of women members and voters, however the roles played by women are peripheral at all levels.[27] Furthermore, women's traditional institutions, which continue to be important in addressing their welfare concerns, have been largely unsuccessful in promoting their strategic interests at the interface between the municipal state and traditional structures.

2.2 Democratic development framework
In order to trace the connections between individuals, households, CBOs, NGOs, and the municipal (and national) level of government, an analytical framework, was adapted from a tool first developed by the Inter-America Foundation.[28] The premise of the framework is that grassroots democratic development produces results on three levels, and that there are important intangible, and tangible results that need to be taken into account in six 'windows' or categories. (Fig A)

Each category in turn is defined by a set of concepts or variables that attempt to capture its essence. (Fig. B) Variables track results, not activities. All facets are interconnected and there is a constant flow among them. The interconnections are not neutral but are gendered and reflect variable power relations between men and women. The gender dimensions cannot be determined *a priori*, however.

The democratic development framework demonstrates the interconnectedness of social transformation processes, distinguishes between intermediate and grassroots organizations, incorporates the household/family, and integrates personal empowerment and responsibility with democracy and citizenship.

Fig A.   The Grassroots Democratic Development Framework

Tangible   *Intangible*

Broader Impact

**Strengthening
Organizations**

Direct Benefits

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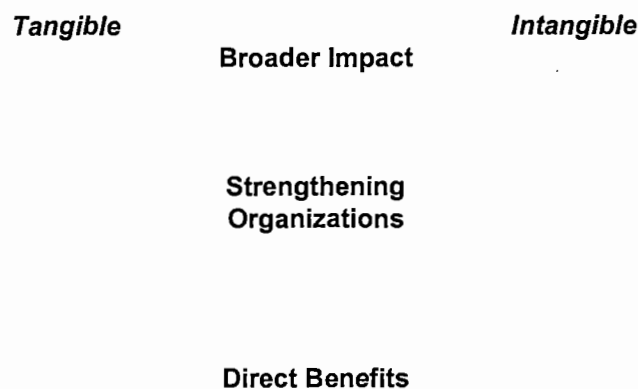
[27] Nkoyo Toyo, Gender and Political Participation of Women in Nigeria. Which Way?, (JDPC/02 Education and Public Awareness Series, Nov. 1999).

[28] Marion Ritchey-Vance, 'Social Capital, Sustainability, and Working Democracy: New Yardsticks for Grassroots Development,' Grassroots Development (20/21), 1996.

Figure B

The Grassroots Democratic Development Framework

Tangible		Intangible
	Society	
Policy Environment [1]		Community Norms [2]
	Local, Regional, National, International	
Laws		Values
Policies		Attitudes
Practices		Relations
	Networks	
Organizational Capability [3]	**NGOs**	Organizational Culture [4]
Planning		Vision
Administration	**Grassroots**	Democratic Practice
Resources	**Organization**	Autonomy
Reach/Linkages		Solidarity
Standard of Living [5]		Personal Capacity [6]
	Households/ Individuals	
Basic Needs		Self-esteem
Control/distribution of resources:		Cultural identity
Knowledge/ Skills Employment		Creativity
Income		Critical reflection
Assets		Empowerment

2.3 Methodology

The democratic development tool explores the inter-connections between context, institutions, communities, households and individuals using both tangible and intangible indicators. The underlying assumption is the gendered nature of the inter-connections reflecting variable power relations between men and women. The study has three components: analysis of the database of the 76 projects supported by the CDP, an indicative field study of 12 selected CDP projects and the 15 communities served by those projects, and 3 personal narratives of women participating in the field study.

1. Field study: The field study addresses the top half of the framework, namely the institutions, policy environment and community norms that make up the context of democratic development at the grassroots. The 12 sample projects were selected using the following criteria:

    - geographical distribution
    - project objectives include advocacy and policy work with respect to democratic development and gender at the local government level;
    - a member of a network that works on gender-sensitive policy interventions;
    - program completed within six months of commencing the research

Using the framework, the CDP Committee developed a flexible questionnaire for municipal politicians, project and community leaders, and community men and women focus groups. Questions were developed in each of the six categories or windows of the framework to track results or indicators. The tool was tested on a sample community prior to application in this study. Fieldwork was conducted between March and July 2000, and between January and May 2001, and involved an interview sample of 54 individuals, and 24 focus groups. (See Appendix 1.) The findings of the fieldwork were shared with the communities involved via three participatory workshops.

2. <u>Personal narratives</u>: Personal narratives are proving to be an essential analytical tool for feminist research. A personal narrative - or the recounting of a life over time - highlights the speaker, what is being spoken, her/his position of power, and the institutional context in which she/he happens to be situated. According to the Personal Narratives Group, a research group that has effectively utilized this sensitive tool, personal narratives: *are particularly rich sources* [of gender knowledge] *because, attentively interpreted, they illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve. Moreover, each life provides evidence of historical activity – the working out within a specific life situation of deliberate courses of action that in turn have the potential to undermine or perpetuate the conditions and relationships in which the life evolved.*[29]

The study developed personal narratives of 3 grassroots women participants, self-selected from the communities served by the 12 sample projects. The personal narratives focused on the bottom half of the Grassroots Democratic Development Tool, recording and interpreting the impact of the CDP project on grassroots women's lives. The personal narratives recorded grassroots women's lives in the context of 'daily democracy', exposed any changes in power relations based on gender, revealed the role an NGO might play in empowering individual grassroots women, and interpreted the way individuals and institutions can reshape the context of lives. The personal narratives are reported separately.

2.4 Limitations of the study

The study is limited by the relatively small number of communities (15) and interview sample (54), although the addition of the focus groups (24 groups with an average of 9 people) expanded the sample considerably (270). Given the time constraints, the study is also limited by its inability to examine in greater detail kinship organization (household, sub-lineage, lineage, village, community) in relation to municipal level governance in the different sampled areas. Nonetheless, the information gathered is felt to capture important processes taking place at the grassroots with respect to gender, indicating patterns of which program planners need to be cognizant.

3. Research Findings

3.1 Database: Profile of CDP grassroots organizations

The CDP provided grants to 76 organizations (87 projects) in 26 out of the 36 states and 1 Federal Capital Territory that comprise Nigeria. Fifty-one percent (52.3%) of the grants were allocated to the north and middle-belt region, 24.4% to south and southwest states, while 23.2% were allocated to the southeast and south-south states. CDP's partiality towards the northern states parallels the general pattern of poverty distribution in Nigeria from south to north/middlebelt, as shown in Table 3.1.[30] States where the CDP was not present include, in the southwest - Kogi, Ondo, Osun; in the south – Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Bayelsa; and in the north - Taraba, Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, and Kebbi. Several issues underlie CDP's distribution pattern. First is the CDP's commitment to reach grassroots communities, especially in areas where development initiatives have been sparse. Next is the application of a human rights framework that holds the indivisibility of rights together – that it is impossible to treat people with respect without also ensuring their dignity. Hence, the CDP

[29] The Personal Narratives Group, <u>Interpreting Women's Lives</u> (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press) 1986.
[30] Because population distribution is highly contested and politicized in Nigeria, population figures among regions is unreliable, and not helpful when discussing the distribution of the CDP grants.

Committee approved poverty alleviation proposals that integrated human rights concerns. Such proposals were a feature of northern groups especially. Lastly, the political climate in Nigeria at the time of the establishment of the CDP demanded that Canada play a low-key role in the human rights and democratic struggle. The decision to locate the CDP office in Jos was part of the low-key approach. In turn, the location enabled easier identification of, and relationship with, northern-based NGOs and CBOs.

Table 3.1 Geographical Spread of CDP Grants

Region*	% of total	Poverty distribution of state	Region*	% of total	Poverty distribution of state	Region*	% of total	Poverty distribution of state
South South & South west	24.4		Southeast & South- south	23.2		North & Middle-belt	52.3	
States	% of region		States			States	% of region	
Oyo	42.8	<35%	Enugu	34.7	< 35%	Bauchi	15.5	> 49%
Ogun	19.0	< 35%	Imo	17.3	< 35%	Plateau	22.2	42-49%
Kwara	2.2	< 35%	Ebonyi	13.0	< 35%	Kaduna	15.5	< 35%
Lagos	19.0	35-42%	Anambra	8.6	< 35%	Adamawa	2.2	< 35%
Edo	8.8	< 35%	Cross River	21.7	35-42%	Kano	8.8	> 49%
Ekiti	2.2	< 35%	Abia	4.3	< 35%	Nasarawa	6.6	42-49%
			Rivers	8.6		Katsina	4.4	42-49%
						Jigawa	4.4	42-49%
						Gombe	2.2	> 49%
						Sokoto	2.2	> 49%
						Borno	2.2	42-49%
						Benue	4.4	35-42%
						Niger	2.2	42-49%
						Abuja**	8.8	42-49%

Source: CDP database, Nigeria Human Development Report 1998
* Regional groupings are for geographical reasons and do not imply political groupings. ** One project located in Abuja was a national project.

The total amount of grant money allocated was N57, 313, 282 (1998/99 exchange rate Can. $ 1 = N 69.8), for an average grant of N767, 177. The largest grant was N1.2 m awarded to a joint Development Exchange Centre/Rahama project on political sensitization of women in Bauchi State, while the smallest grant of N180, 000 was awarded to Wat CBO in Plateau State to purchase a grinding mill for women. This poverty alleviation initiative became the bedrock for women's empowerment and contribution to community decision-making in the village of Wat.

Turning to the level of intervention, 69.7% of all grants were allocated to grassroots NGOs, 19.7% to intermediary NGOs, 6.5% to CBOs, and 2.6% to other agencies.[31] Of the CBO recipients, all but one are located in the southeast and south south, reflecting the strength of ethnic associations in the south. Of the intermediary NGOs, five are research/advocacy organizations, and 10 are network organizations. These figures can be compared to the study sub-sample of 12 organizations, where 66%, 16% and 16% are grassroots NGOs, intermediary organizations and CBOs respectively.

Projects were also defined according to type of activities. The first type of activity that CDP grantees undertook were <u>workshops</u> that provided information (the *what* and *why* of democratic development) to various target groups on human rights, democracy and governance, gender and women's rights,

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[31] For the purposes of the study CBOs are defined as 'indigenous organizations based on the lines of traditional social groups, be they age-sets, clans, villages or other forms derived from the local situation and its history' (Alan Fowler, 'NGOs in Africa: Naming Them by What They Are' in Kabiru Kinyanjui (ed.) NGOs: Contributions to Development (Proceedings of a seminar held at the Institute of Development Studies, Nairobi, Kenya, Sept. 1985:17). Intermediary NGOs are defined as those groups whose reach extends beyond one state and whose mandate is to facilitate partner grassroots NGOs and CBO's.

and the constitution. Project staff generally organized several workshops on those issues within the same project grant. The next activity was defined as training and capacity building (*how* to organize and carry out activities) on voter education, election monitoring, monitoring and accountability of local governance structures, advocacy, and political empowerment at the grassroots level. The final activity is poverty alleviation projects, which included skills acquisition for employment or livelihood, micro-credit and meeting basic needs (health, literacy, and nutrition). In most cases, activities overlapped, e.g., skills acquisition for livelihood support incorporated information on human rights and the constitution. Table 3.2 outlines the distribution of activities among the defined types of the total CDP projects. Table 3.3 represents the activities of the study sub-sample.

Table 3.2 Type of activities – total CDP projects

Type	Sub-sector	% of sub-sector	
Workshops			
61 projects 102 workshops	Human rights education	21.7	
	Democracy & governance	37.3	
	Gender & women's rights	32.3	
	Constitution	.9	
	Other	7.8	
		100.0	
Training			
43 projects 49 trainings	Voter education	4.0	
	Election monitoring	4.0	
	Monitoring & accountability	12.2	
	Advocacy	12.5	
	Political empowerment	61.2	
	Other	6.1	
		100.0	
Poverty Alleviation			% of sub-sector
51 projects 37 activities	Skills (employment)	25.4	
	Micro-credit	25.4	
	Meeting basic needs:	49.2	
	Health		30.0
	Literacy		64.0
	Nutrition		6.0
		100.0	

Source: CDP database

Table 3.3 Type of activities – study sub-sample of 12 CDP-supported projects

Type	Sub-sector	% of sub-sector	% of sub-sector
Workshops			
12 grants 21 projects	Human rights education	10.2	
	Democracy & governance	33.3	
	Gender & women's rights	53.5	
		100.0	
Training			
10 grants 14 projects	Voter education	7.1	
	Election monitoring		
	Monitoring & accountability	7.2	
	Advocacy	35.7	
	Political empowerment	50.0	
		100.0	
Poverty Alleviation			
3 grants 6 activities	Micro-credit	50.0	
	Meeting basic needs:	50.0	
	Health		16.6
	Literacy		33.3
	Nutrition		16.6
	Other		16.6
		100.0	100.0

Source: CDP database

Target groups of the various types of activities included municipal (elected) leaders – 4.6% of the total sample and 5.0% of the study sub sample; community leaders/members - 75.4% of the total sample and 85.0% of the study sub sample; and NGO leaders - 20% of the total sample and 10% of the study sub sample. Projects targeted more than one group. The information is further broken down in Table 3.4 along gender and sub-group lines.

Table 3.4 Target groups – total and study sub sample

Target Group	% of total groups	Sub-group	% of sub-sector total sample	% of sub-sector study sample
Municipal (elected) leaders - total	4.6			
Municipal (elected) leaders - study	5.0			
Community leaders - total	75.4	Mixed groups (men and women)	31.3	23.5
Community leaders - study sample	85.0			
		Women leaders	34.9	52.9
		Men leaders	9.6	11.9
		Youth leaders	20.4	-
		Other	3.8	11.7
			100.0	100.0
NGOs leaders - total	20.0	Farmers' groups	13.6	-
NGOs leaders - study sample	10.0			
		Welfare associations	9.0	-
		Human Rights NGOs	13.6	-
		Church leaders	9.0	-
		Media	4.5	-
		Market associations	4.5	-
		Women NGOs	9.2	-
		NGOs general	36.6	-
			100.0	

Source: CDP database

Table 3.5 shows the gender breakdown of beneficiaries, staff and boards of the total and study samples. Overwhelmingly women are the beneficiaries of the CDP projects (71% of total sample and 71.4% of study sub-sample), yet the gender composition of CBO and NGO staff is biased toward men (60.9% of total sample and 42.8% of study sub-sample). Boards of the study sub-sample are biased toward women (50%); even so, 47.7% of staff is men in a context where 71.4% of beneficiaries are women. Clearly these figures reveal that in order to strengthen gender sensitivity and enhance gender equity in grassroots democratic development programming more thought must be given to boosting women's employment in all institutions. Interestingly, among women's organizations the gender composition of staff and boards is biased toward women.

Table 3.5 Gender breakdown of beneficiaries, staff and boards of CDP projects – total and study sub sample

Gender	Beneficiaries		Staff		Board	
	% total	% of study sub sample	% of total	% of study sub sample	% of total	% of study sub sample
Bias toward women	71.0	71.4	36.0	42.8	35.2	50.0
Bias toward men	7.8	-	60.9	42.8	47.7	16.6
Gender balance	21.2	28.6	3.1	14.4	17.1	33.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0	100.0

Source: CDP database

3.2 Field Study
The indicative field study addresses the top half of the democratic development tool exploring the inter-connections between context, institutions, communities, and households. Drawing on this framework an attempt will be made to analyse the different constraints and opportunities for women and men to practice democracy and realise their rights at the level of grassroots civil society and

within local institutions of governance. The investigation will also incorporate the findings of three workshop discussions with representatives of the sample communities. Based on this analysis the impact of the sample CBOs/NGOs on engendering democratic development will be assessed.

1.Grassroots civil society and the conditions of democratic development:
a) The meaning of democracy - After years of neglect by all levels of government – local, state and federal, both military and civilian – grassroots communities experience a deep sense of alienation. People are not sure how they belong to the entity of Nigeria, and whether they are expected to have a stake, commitment or obligation to the state. Nigeria's most recent return to democracy has done little to diminish this sense of isolation. The research affirmed that the grassroots measure democracy in terms of their well-being and the day-to-day conditions of their lives; that is, in terms of peace and security, poverty reduction and prosperity, employment opportunities created, declining inflation, infrastructure, healthcare, shelter, quality education, and national pride and leadership. Thus, the meaning of democracy at the grassroots encompasses the realisation of the whole spectrum of human rights. In very broad terms, the study verified that people perceive it is impossible to realise civil and political rights without also actualizing economic, social and cultural rights; that ensuring people are treated with respect goes hand-in-hand with making sure people can lead lives of dignity. In the words of one NGO leader: programs that combine meeting the spectrum of rights/needs tend to hold participants together for longer periods than when you base your intervention on civil and political rights only…. if you only talk about civil and political rights … in the final analysis people need something they can rely on economically. The gender dimensions of this sentiment are captured in these words: when you look at the economic and social aspects of the projects it is there that you find more women. When you approach women about human rights they ask, "what have I got to gain? I have to go to my market. I have to feed my children." So they are more interested in economic empowerment. That is why we have more women in the economic aspects of the rights than in the political aspects. [32]

After nearly two years of the present civilian administration, coinciding with Phase 2 of the CDP, 78.3% of respondents see no change in the conditions of their lives, 18.7 % see some change, in particular, in terms of freedom of speech, while only 3% believe life is better under the civilian government. Interestingly, 18.7 % of respondents (an all-women sub-group) across regions believe they experience a 'good society' within their local villages and communities, but they separate this reality from the entity of Nigeria. Increasingly, Nigerians do not trust the state, but rely more and more on their kith and kin for security and survival. In other words, for these respondents the state is irrelevant to their idea of happiness. This degree of alienation (combined with the gender specificity of the sub-group) should have implications for democratic development programming, in that such programming is predicated on citizen roles and responsibilities. If the state at all levels is considered irrelevant, or at minimum ineffective, then democratic development programming must re-examine its conceptual assumptions, and respond contextually.

b) Barriers to realising democracy - Although the research did not expose clear gender-based differences in relation to the meaning of democracy, it did expose gender-based barriers to democracy. Both women and men respondents at the community level identified poor (corrupt, self-serving, ignorant) leadership at all levels of governance as the primary barrier to democracy. However, eighty-three percent (83%) of women respondents from the communities named traditional/cultural institutions of governance as a barrier, a view not shared by any male respondent from the twelve communities.

Another area where male and female respondents differed is linking poverty with increasing violence against women, and sexual exploitation of young girls. Citing examples of people living in poverty in overcrowded conditions, women's focus groups expressed regret that poverty puts pressure on girls to earn money for their families, or for school fees, or puts pressure on parents to ask their daughters

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[32] E. Okpara, The Nigerian Concerned Group for Environmental Population and Development, CDP Workshop, March 27, 2001, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.

to fend for themselves, often resulting in sexual exploitation. Women questioned if democracy is possible in conditions of extreme poverty, or if democracy has an impact on poverty.

Although men and women respondents did not agree that cultural practices impede democracy for women, thy did agree that cultural practices constrain women's – but not men's – development potential. Figure 3.1 a, b, and c presents comparative data on grassroots men and women from the interviews held with municipal leaders, and grassroots leaders and focus groups (male and female). Across eight variables (financial, culture, education, self-esteem, domestic responsibilities, other women/men, religion and government policies) the three sub-groups are consistent in their view that social organization and resources are biased against women. Municipal politicians identify government policies as a variable, whereas women leaders and focus groups also respond to 'no constraints' as a male only variable.
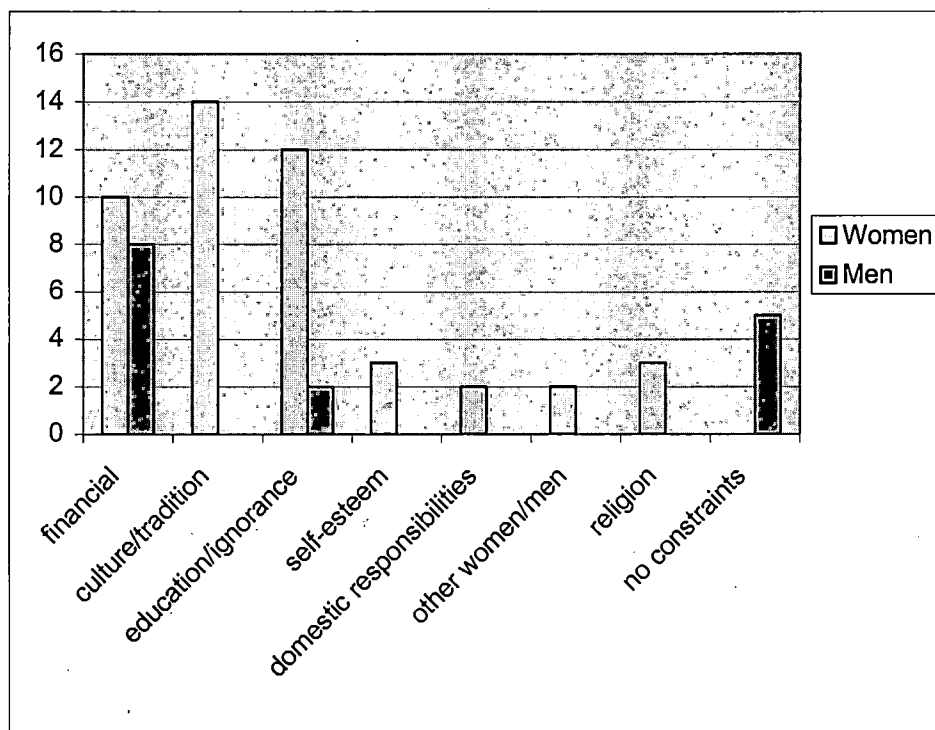
Figure 3.1 Comparative responses of municipal politicians, grassroots women and men

Figure 3.1 a   Municipal Politicians: constraints against grassroots women & men's
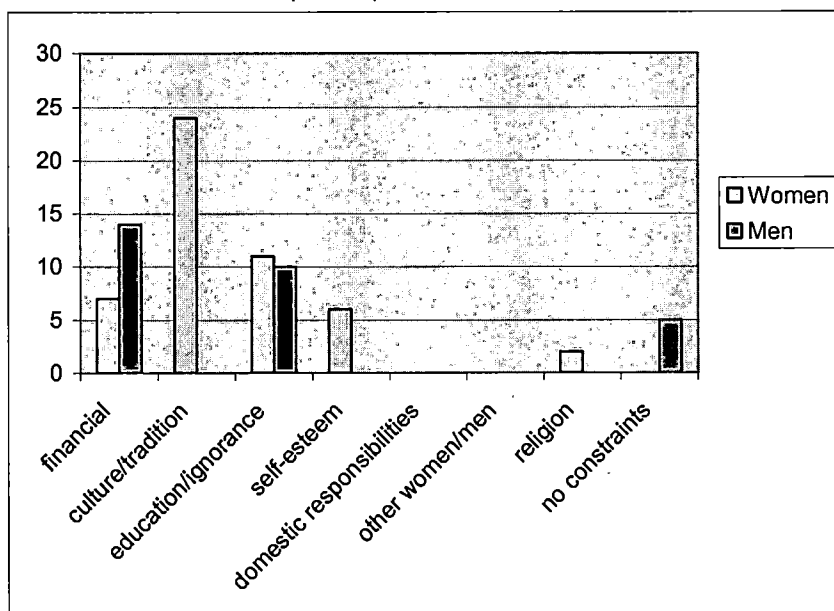   development potential
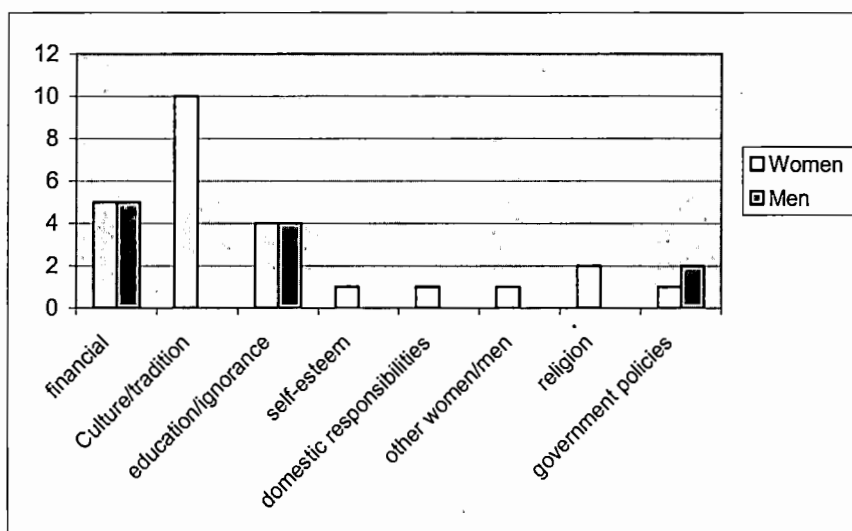
Source: CDP Database

Figure 3.1 b   Grassroots women: constraints against grassroots women & men's development potential

Source: CDP Database

Figure 3.1 c   Grassroots men: constraints against grassroots women & men's development potential
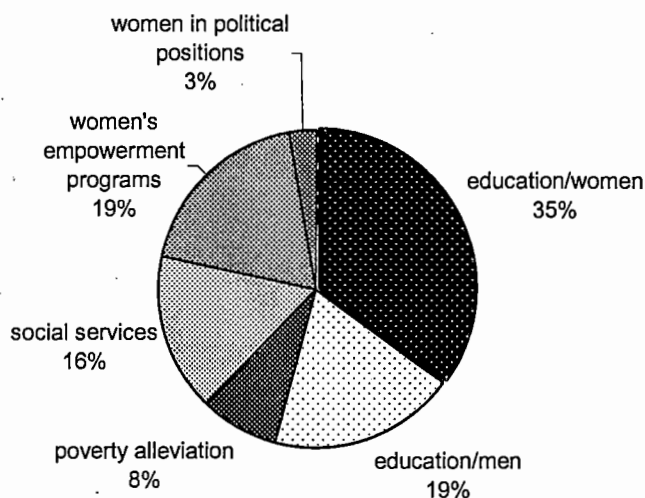

Source: CDP Database

c) Policies and programs to enhance the conditions of democracy at the grassroots - Given the constraints identified above elected leaders, NGO/CBO and community members were asked to identify some policy and program areas that would enhance the conditions for democracy for women and for men at the grassroots. The findings for women are presented in Figure 3.2. To improve the conditions for women, elected leaders identified: women's development programs (18%), job creation (18%), women's political mobilization (5%), education (40%), reserving some places for women in LGA structure (14%), and none (5%). NGO/CBO leaders identified: economic empowerment/micro credit programs for women (58%), strengthening women's leadership capacities (30%), women's literacy programs (4%), gender awareness training for men and women (4%), none (4%). Grassroots women identified: women's empowerment programs (21%), social services, especially clinics, clean water, and improved roads and markets (14%), poverty alleviation programs, including loans and credit opportunities for women (28%), women's literacy (30%), and women's leadership training (7%). Grassroots men identified: women's education (40%), enlightenment programs for men and women (24%), improving women's skills and access to loans (16%), providing social services (12%), and counselling by religious leaders (8%). Clearly, education is an issue for politicians, whereas for grassroots women poverty is the primary issue. NGO leaders, however, see education as a way to break through cultural barriers for women, and to overcome poverty. The data suggests elected politicians are not in touch with concerns of grassroots women.

To improve conditions for grassroots men, the elected leaders identified the following priorities: hold meetings with communities, build new roads, and create employment. NGO/CBO leaders named: advocating with government on development issues, adult education, and facilitating new sources of funding for the community. For men, women leaders identified: adult literacy, and support to small-scale industries to provide employment, while men leaders identified affordable fertilizer and roads.
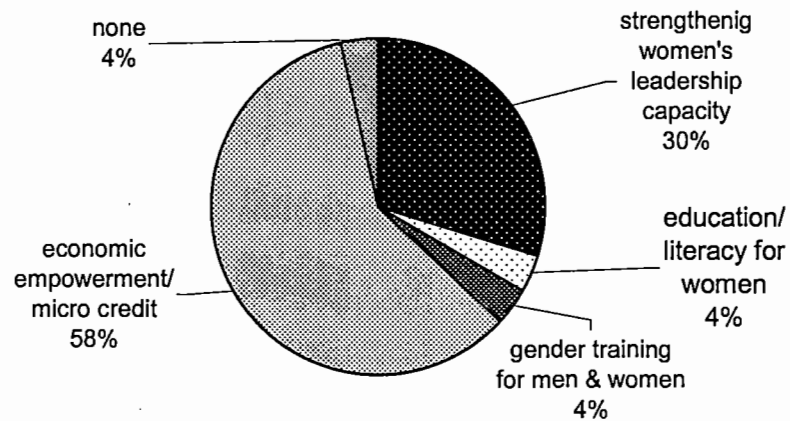
Figure 3.2 Improving conditions for grassroots women

3.2 a   Municipal politicians: policies and programs to improve conditions for women at the grassroots
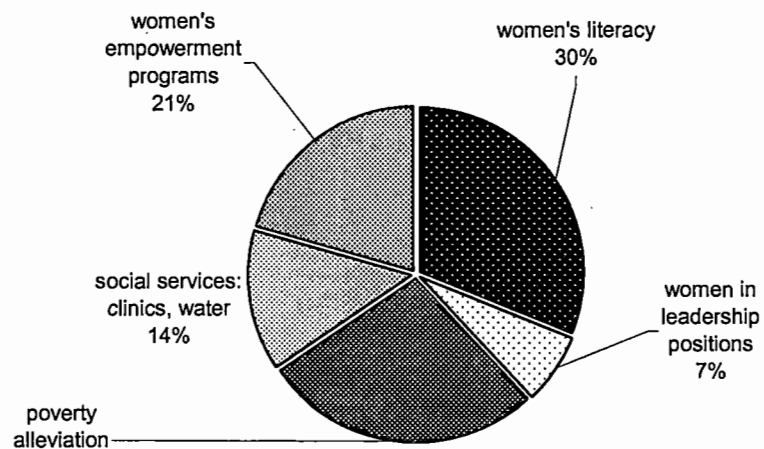

Source: CDP Database

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3.2 b   NGOs: policies and programs to improve conditions for women at the grassroots

Source: CDP Database

3.2 c   Grassroots women: programs and policies to improve the conditions for women at the grassroots

Source: CDP Database

If democratic development is about the conditions that allow grassroots democracy to flourish, it is also about political processes and the institutions of governance at the local level, considered in the next section.

2. Local institutions of governance, decision-making and representation:
a) State institutions: the third tier of governance – It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss the evolution of the third tier of government or to assess its successes and failures. That has been undertaken elsewhere.[33] Sufficient to say that the idea behind the third tier is that legislative, executive and administrative functions are locally and directly executed by elected councillors and chairpersons who also have direct control over both their local bureaucrats and finance. The 1979 constitution states that devolving governance to the local level promotes economic development, political integration and nation building from below, strengthens local action and autonomy, and enhances grassroots democracy. It is this latter rationale that the study is most concerned with, and the fact that most citizens, and especially women, continue to perceive government at the grassroots as an alien organ from which they receive little benefit, and to which they have little or nothing to contribute. The 1999 local government reforms recognized the third tier as the chief implementing agent of the various federal and state government's and multi-lateral agencies programs targeted at the poor. These include primary education, basic health care, water, rural women's programs, family support programs, economic development, and social services. It is generally agreed that local government has not fulfilled its mandate either in terms of economic and social development, or enhancing political integration and grassroots democracy.[34] In both perception and fact, grassroots politics has essentially remained the politics of social service delivery and the struggles around distribution. When local politicians cannot or will not deliver promised social services and public goods, citizens turn to primary kin allegiances for support. Bello-Imam's 1996 survey of 600 local government areas in 12 states identified the following factors underlying the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of local governments: revenue inadequacy; erosion of local functions particularly in the revenue yielding areas of State governments; inadequacy of skilled staff; and corruption. Other commentators go further in their criticism of local politics. *Local politicians are not chosen by the people. They are in fact imposed on the people by the machinery of the Federal Government taking advantage of easier access to resources to intimidate or interfere in local politics. These representatives, selected through the patronage of corrupt government functionaries, cannot be expected to be accountable to their people, but to those who put them in office.*[35]

That women especially have been marginalized from all levels of political power is well documented. For instance, in President Obasanjo's government, out of 49 ministers appointed only 6 are women (12%). This is not peculiar to the federal level as the situation in states and local governments is even worse – so far, no state has up to 3 percent representation of women.[36] The CDP study found similar patterns of segregation at the local government level, as shown in Table 3.6. In the 15 LGAs studied where the CDP sample projects were implemented, of the 133 elected councillors only 7 are women (5.2%); in addition, only 3 women have been appointed Supervisors. Supervisors are selected from both outside and inside the Council to form the Cabinet at the local level. Appointing Supervisors allows LGA Chairpersons to redress gender imbalance. Clearly this mechanism is not being used except in the South East, which in the study sample, also elected more women to local government Councils.

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[33] I.B. Bello-Imam, Local Government in Nigeria: Evolving a Third Tier of Government (Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann Educational Books, 1996).

[34] Interview with J. Ser, Director of Personnel Management, Jos South LGA. Bello-Imam, .

[35] Onoawarie Edevbie, Bala and his Rule-Book for Nigerian Politics, 2000. http://www.UrhoboHistory@waado.org

[36] Toyo, *Ibid.* See list of appointments at federal and state levels.

Table 3.6 Gender composition of LGA Councils

Region/State	LGA	Total council members	No. women members	No. women Supervisors
South West				
Ogun	Abeokuta South	14	2	-
Ekiti	Efon	7	-	-
Ekiti	Alaaye	9	-	-
Oyo	Egbeda	7	1	-
Ogun	Ijebu and Remo	15	-	-
Ogun	Obogbolu	10	-	-
North				
Katsina	Bakori	8	-	-
Bauchi	Bauchi North	11	-	-
Katsina	Ikara	9	-	-
Plateau	Jos South	9	-	-
South East				
Cross River	Calabar	6	2	1
Imo	Ihite-Uboma	9	1	1
Imo	Obowo	10	1	1
Anambra	Onitsha	9	-	-
Totals		133 (100%)	7 (5.2%)	3

Source: CDP Database

When Councilors were asked what prevents more women from being elected at the local level, or being appointed to Supervisor positions, their answers were mixed as Figure 3.3 shows. Even so, 35% of responses attribute women's absence a matter of personal choice. Given that Councilors are overwhelmingly men, this finding exposes a deep lack of appreciation of the barriers against women's participation in politics.

Figure 3.3   Elected leaders: reasons why women are not elected or appointed at the local government level
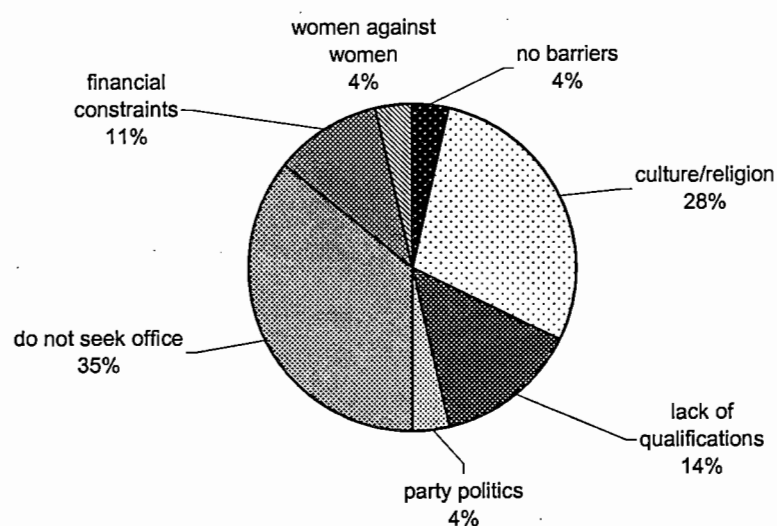
Database Source: CDP

The intention behind the devolution of power and resources to the local government level, as laid out in the 1999 local government reforms, is to enhance grassroots democracy and community participation in decision-making. Even though there are variations in the impact of this policy across the sub-sample depending on, among other things, the best practices of NGOs (as discussed in the next section), the consensus among respondents is that women are not involved in community decision-making processes. Women respondents (57% of the women sub-sample) and men (65.2% of men sub-sample) agree that women are not involved in community decision-making processes (65.8% of total sample), or are only partially involved through the electoral process (14.6% of total sample, 11.1% of women sub-sample, 17.3% of men sub-sample), and through traditional institutions of governance (24.3% of total sample, 16.6% of women sub-sample and 17.3% of men sub-sample). Two men's focus groups in the north added that, *women have nothing to add to community decision-making.*

In spite of highly visible development programming targeting rural women (Better Life Program,[37] Family Support Program) organized by military 'First Ladies', and operationalized at the local level via the chain of 'First Ladies' from Governor to Chairman's wives, the CDP study clearly demonstrates women's sense of alienation from formal institutions of governance at the local level. Women neither see themselves as political actors, nor do they see their interests served at that level. Others have suggested that traditional institutions of governance do represent women's interests at the local level. The study also examined that claim in the sample communities.

b) Peoples' institutions: traditional institutions of governance – A traditional ruler is the paramount authority or natural ruler in any Nigerian community. In some cases, he is also the spiritual leader and custodian of all the customs and traditions of his subjects. In many parts of Nigeria he is regarded as the 'father' of all the citizens within his community. Today, those that can be rightly classified as traditional rulers in Nigeria are the Alafin of Oyo, the Ooni of Ife, Alake of Egba, Oba of Benin, Emirs of Zaria and Kano, Shehu of Borno, Etsu Nupe, Obi of Onitsha, Otaru of Auchi, the Aidonogie of South Ibie, Obong of Calabar, to name some. Below the traditional rulers is another hierarchy of subordinate chiefs who are appointed by the traditional rulers, and whose status and power is determined by the size of their area of operation and the level of responsibilities vested in them. A third group of chiefs hold purely honorific titles that are bestowed on illustrious sons and daughters by traditional rulers in appreciation of their contributions to their communities. Although this category has no executive or legislative role these latter chiefs serve as channels of communication with their people and as catalysts to mobilize their people for communal effort.

Traditional rule is diverse across Nigeria - with its variable forms of patriarchy and gerontocracy among the more than 250 ethnic groups and 90,000 autonomous communities. Traditional institutions of governance both preceded colonialism, and when dysfunctional to colonial interests, were reconfigured, and were created (e.g., warrant chiefs in eastern Nigeria) to serve the colonial administration. Since independence, the power and role of traditional rulers has been diminished to that of an advisory function at the three levels of government separate from partisan politics. [38]

Traditional institutions are founded on kinship, organized around gerontocracy and patriarchy, in contrast to contractual relations characteristic of the modern state and economy. Despite fundamental economic and social changes, traditional institutions and relationships survive and continue to influence political processes and determine opportunities and constraints for engendering democratic development. In focus group interviews, the CDP study respondents identified areas where traditional institutions of governance exert influence at the local level. One area is the role many traditional rulers play in subverting democracy. To quote one respondent: *Their continued existence is based on the fact that the governments keeping them can hardly boast to any legitimate right to govern. In their perpetual bid to hold on to power, they have found the traditional rulers and*

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[37] The Better Life Program (BLP) was initiated in 1987 by Mrs. Maryam Babangida specifically to address the needs of rural women. BLP has been acclaimed nationally and internationally, but also has been subject to criticism that views it as an imposition of government on rural women, and a mechanism to channel public funds to Nigeria's governing elite. The Family Support Program (FSP) was a similar organization promoted by Mrs. Maryam Abacha.

[38] Bello-Imam, *Ibid.*

their institutions as providing them with vital supplementary support for their weak bases of power. Even in situations where government may claim some form of legitimacy by way of general elections, there is ample evidence to show that traditional rulers have often been accomplices in all sorts of abuses of the electoral process (e.g., election rigging, victimization, use of traditional institutions to manipulate the electoral process, etc.). Another area is the allocation of land. In many parts of Nigeria land cannot be procured without the approval of the traditional ruler, and if any community projects are to be undertaken it must be with his blessing. In the same manner, traditional rulers in most communities still adjudicate freely in conjugal cases and minor disputes in communities irrespective of the constitutional provision to the contrary, thus confirming traditional rulers as the custodians of culture and mores.

Community and ethnic associations are an extension of traditional institutions of governance, responsible for organizing mutual assistance, village festivals and local level development. The persistence of community associations is the peoples' response to the current crisis of democracy and development. Examples include age-grade associations and the *obodo* among the Igbos, the *ilu* among the Yoruba, the Fulani da*kace (kauye)* in the north, in addition to market associations, and *Ajo/Esusu* (informal savings and credit associations) widely found in southern Nigeria. As well, 'home' associations have 'abroad' branches that came into being during colonialism and after. Community associations operate thus: the home branch of the association takes care of local politics and ensures that the interests of the tribe or clan are well guarded. It is managed by the village head and his council of elders or some retired civil servants or military men who oversee the functioning of that local wing of the association. According to Kukah, *these retirees have some clout. They may be the first sons and daughters to see the light of modernity. They oversee land, family or other forms of dispute, and constantly plead for allocation of amenities from the government or its agencies. Those in diaspora or 'abroad' are those who are engaged in a battle at the center to seek improvement and the welfare of the community. They live in cities like Kano, Lagos and New York. They tax themselves and collect all forms of dues for the development of the community back at home. But also, they serve as a bridgehead for the welfare of their community members and a steppingstone for new comers into the city. Through this, a safety network is created by which employment or housing are secured, conflicts and disputes are resolved, financial assistance is provided for less fortunate members, etc.*[39] Kukah argues that these associations form another tier of government and state for Nigerians, and as such, should be encouraged. On the other hand, various regimes have either persecuted or banned these associations on the grounds that they undermine national allegiance and cohesion. [40]

The participatory workshops identified examples of how ethnic associations contribute to engendering democratic development. Before reporting this aspect of the study, however, Figures 3.4 and 3.5 present data on women and men's perceptions of how women's interests are represented within the community. Notably, women respondents did not identify any formal political institution; such is the depth of their marginalization from formal political processes. Rather they named husbands (27%), Chairman's wife (5%), women leaders, e.g., market women leaders (27%), traditional rulers, i.e., male and female rulers (26%), religious leaders (5%), and a newly emergent actor, NGOs (5%). Men identified similar actors but accorded more weight to husbands (49%) and NGOs (11%), and included formal political institutions (LG Council (6%)).

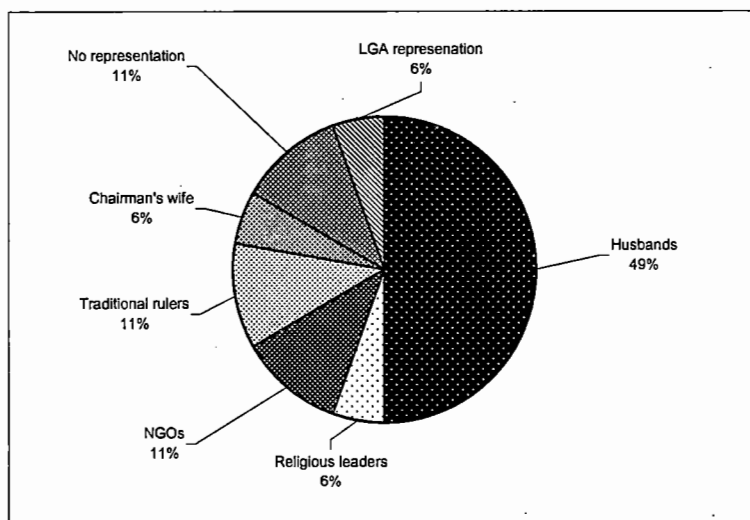[39] Kukah, *Ibid.* pp. 62-63.
[40] See Maboguje, *Ibid.* p. 8.

Figure 3.4   Women's perceptions: Women's interests represented within the community
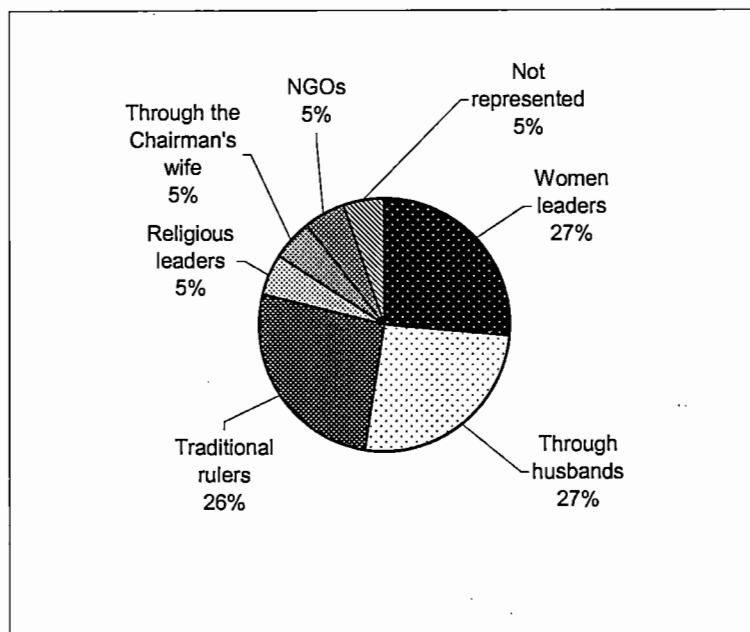
Source: CDP Database

Figure 3.5   Men's perceptions: Women's interests represented within the community

Source: CDP Database

It is useful to record some comments on these findings made by workshop participants. The general consensus is *women are really saying they have no representation. At the community level, those that control decision-making, they don't really believe that women should be part of it.*

Again: *The wives of the Chairman are not elected. Usually they lead quite different lives before their husbands were elected. They hardly summon grassroots women to meetings. So where do they derive their mandate? They are not in any decision-making body. They are only there to make their own business. This is an example of the 'First Lady' syndrome. Even where there is a photo of the President, there is a photo of his wife. Even at the LG level, you have a photo of the Chairman and that of his wife.*

Participants spoke of how women leaders are used by local politicians, with little to show with respect to making a difference in grassroots women's lives: *If we talk about women leaders, for example, market women, they only think they represent grassroots women. Because they attend workshops they think they represent women – they think that is okay for them. But they are just being used – 'come and attend this meeting, that meeting, and that's all.' Decision-making does not take place there.*[41]

These comments prompt a question about efforts to integrate formal and informal political structures into a new democratic development culture, and whether such efforts can serve the interests of women. The next section attempts to answer this question and presents new directions for engendering democratic development.

c) New democratic development culture and opportunities for women – Two workshops, organized at different points in the study, reported the findings to the CDP Committee and community representatives. This mechanism not only allowed the results to be affirmed, but also permitted a second reading of the analysis. One workshop discussed the new political conjuncture brought about by the democratic struggle, the return to civilian government and the freedom of expression these political changes allowed, as well as the general feeling of disappointment that civilian rule has made little difference to levels of impoverishment and unemployment, and to the energy supply, health care and schools. The workshops also identified new opportunities for women brought about by women's struggles. These include the Better Life Program for Rural Women, the impact of which has been mixed,[42] and as this study shows, not sustained at the local level, and the increase in the number and influence of women's organizations following the 1995 International Conference for Women, Beijing. General Babangida's (1985-1993) long drawn-out program to return Nigeria to civilian rule prompted an examination of women in politics. During Abacha's tenuous and ingenuous transition program women focused their efforts on increasing women's representation in political processes and improving their status and recognition of rights.[43] The CDP played an active role in this endeavor at the grassroots.

The workshop participants enumerated the general conditions constraining women's participation in development, decision-making and political processes: socio-cultural factors that rationalize discrimination against women, the gender division of labour assigning women the primary responsibility for family and household, and the feminization of poverty. Participants highlighted the role that women's education and literacy programs can play in enabling women break cultural barriers. They also focused on local government, arguing that few local governments are genuinely committed to engendering democratic development. To quote one participant: *the argument about lack of resources is not tenable. Local governments have funds that sometimes are used in a most reckless manner. Local politicians have not really come to see that issues about rights and gender must be priorities within the local government administration. If local politicians are politically committed to execute programs in this area, I believe that funds would not be the barrier. We have evidence from LGAs where people have really done something* (see next section). *So why can't it be nation wide? The important thing is that local politicians require re-education in this area for them to come to appreciate gender and other types of rights.*

As well, participants identified factors that prevent more women from entering politics: lack of funds for effective campaigning; lack of courage and determination to participate actively in politics; poor knowledge of the political terrain; lack of support from women; and societal attitudes towards female political activists. The constraints that women face as politicians were also named: inadequate representation in party leadership at all levels; lack of access to executive posts that really matter in decision-making; traditional gender prejudices even among party colleagues; and inadequate understanding of the workings of party politics and its role in the democratic process. To quote a participant: *I think the problem with women is even when they are elected, in most cases they fear the*

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[41] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this section are taken from CDP study Ijebu-Ode Workshop, March 27-28th 2001.
[42] Abiodun Idowu, 'The Impact of Government-sponsored Organizations and Programs,' in Clara Osinulu & Nina Mba (eds.) Nigerian Women in Politics 1986-1993. (Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse Press, Nigerian Association of University Women, 1996).
[43] See, Second Post-Beijing Women's Political Awareness Summit: *A Political Agenda for Nigerian Women*, June 1999.

party leaders. Party leaders tell you that you have to follow the laid-down party policies. "Forget about a women's agenda." They don't want you to mention a women's agenda. ... "You are representing the party. You have to follow what the party is saying." You can't say you want to advocate for women. You are not there because of women, but because of the platform of the party. So the party agenda is another constraint on the part of women.

Success in elections is contingent on party politics. Women cannot hope to be successful in politics by operating outside their official party structures. And these are the very structures that systemically discriminate against women. One activist recommends that *other women groups could facilitate* (women politicians') *success by consciously organizing into voting blocks on the basis of a well-articulated gender agenda.*[44] Furthermore, the workshop participants argued, once a woman has been successful in attaining an elected position irrespective of level, she needs to be supported by women's organizations, and held accountable by those who put her in office. *The election itself is not the end. Holding the politician – whether man or women - accountable is the major part of democracy.*

Participants also drew attention to some aspects of the 'First Lady' syndrome, that is, the tendency of the wives of elected politicians, especially at the state level, to assume the leadership of women. Even though President Obasanjo removed the authority that former Heads of State invested in the wives of Governors and Chairpersons, an unwritten competition continues between 'First Ladies' and elected women politicians. To quote a community leader: *The wives of the Governors see themselves as women leaders, as do elected women politicians. But the wife of a Governor assumes precedence in leadership over an elected Women Commissioner.* Furthermore, *many Governors' wives are establishing NGOs, and drawing down public funds. After their term, the NGO will die.* In drawing attention to these dynamics, participants are also drawing attention to areas where strategies must be developed.

Another part of the discussion focused on traditional institutions of governance and representation. The workshop participants agreed that in the past traditional institutions were very powerful. Today, women's village associations tend to function primarily as a check against women – married women checking and controlling junior wives. Indeed, according to participants, women leaders have little power in comparison to male leaders: *Women traditional leaders are there as men. When the woman who is a traditional leader wants to perform her ritual she is told to bring her son. They do not allow her to be there as a woman – they don't refer to her as a woman. They refer to her as a man. She cannot bear children (because of her age) so she is a man.* Men's organizations are biased against women as leaders, and it is this fact that underlies the scarcity of women politicians at the local level. A common Yoruba saying, quoted at the workshop, reflects the bias against women found in most communities: *oko la'san, o san ju, oko mi ti ku* (Even a useless husband is preferable to widowhood.) It is correct that women adjudicate certain issues, dependent on particular kinship and cultural arrangements, and that men cannot interfere in these issues. However, these are issues deemed to be of concern to women only; all other issues fall under the purview of men. In northern communities, women do not speak out; their husbands are the gatekeepers in most aspects of their lives, from literacy to representation.

In general, the potential for an effective dialogue on engendering democratic development between traditional and formal political institutions is not hopeful. Even though the Nigerian constitution upholds equality of rights for women and men, a fact recognized by all the elected politicians in the sub-sample, the reality is different. Custom and customary law remain powerful in the face of illiteracy, ignorance and a sense of powerlessness on the part of women to change gender inequality.[45]

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[44] Omowunmi Ogunsola, 'Women in Intra-party Politics,' Clara Osinulu & Nina Mba (eds.), *Ibid.*.

[45] Sylvia Ada Akpala, Women's Rights are Human Rights. Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners, Enugu, 1998. Legal Research and Resource Development Centre, Women's Rights as Human Rights, Ibadan, 1995.

Where there is a potential to formulate a more radicalized and engendered democratic development culture at the grassroots, one based on enlisting peoples' participation in the democratic process, is the fusion of the village and the 'abroad' ethnic associations. The examples presented at the workshops come from Igbo communities where the dominant tradition is collectivism as opposed to individualism, where the practise of 'emphasizing collective and free discussion as the means of arriving at collective will,' is strongly upheld.[46] In joint 'abroad' and village meetings, daughters gather annually in the powerful _umuada_ (first daughters meetings). To quote an 'abroad' participant: _Educated women feel humiliated attending the_ umuada, _but you cannot effect change if you are not part of them. And changes are coming. Joint 'abroad' groups and village meetings have developed into a very strong pressure group where development issues and traditional barriers are discussed. Under that umbrella women have been able to make changes. Now, if you are a widow there is no more compulsory head shaving, or wearing of black clothes for a year. However, an 'abroad' just can't come to the_ umuada _and tell people what to do. You just don't come and tell them 'this is wrong' and 'that is wrong'. You must be part of the group._ These joint meetings work through a gender framework, that is, the problem is viewed as a gender issue. The follow-up from the _umuada_ is not for women alone, but involves women and men together talking about rights and democracy.

The study next examines the impact of the sample CBOs/NGOs on engendering democratic development at the grassroots.

3. The impact of CDP-supported CBOs/NGOs:
a) _Organizational culture_ – As an indicator of organizational stability as well as the organizations' relationship to society, the ages of the sub-sample CBOs/NGOs were determined, with the oldest organization having been established in 1980, and the most recent in 1998. The average age of the sub-sample CBOs/NGOs is 8.9 years. The historical background regarding the specific circumstances that led to the establishment of the NGO or CBO were also determined with the following results: 47% were established by community leaders coming together to address a particular problem; 29% were induced by an external donor; 11% were formed as a result of the BLP; 5.8% were union induced, and 5.8% were established to increase women's participation in the Babangida and Abacha political transition programs. Eighty-two percent (82%) of organizations are registered, with the remainder in the process of registering with the state; 58% have a vision statement and a brochure publishing their activities; 29% operate through a formal Board structure of appointed leaders, while 70% are guided by an advisory Committee made up of a mixture of appointed community representatives and selected leaders. Forty-seven percent (47%) hold regular staff meetings, confirmed by written minutes of the meetings, while 53% did not hold staff meetings, or held irregular meetings. Table 3.7 presents data with respect to planning cycles, funding and community and women's involvement in organizational planning and decision-making. The table shows that most organizations do not engage in long-term planning, that is, 41.1% have no planning cycle and 11.7% are project dependent and plan only when a project is underway. Organizations draw equally on donors and members to finance programs, while 9.5% and 4.7% also raise funds through government and private consultancies respectively. Lastly, organizations depend on a variety of mechanisms to ensure women are included in decision-making processes and their interests are represented. However, 29.4% have not identified specific mechanisms to ensure women's representation and inclusion in organizational decision-making. These CBOs/NGOs depend on community representation processes. Given the findings of this research with respect to local governance, one wonders whether community representation processes are sufficient to ensure women have a voice.

With respect to CBO/NGO programming, Figure 3.6 presents data on CBO/NGOs mandate vis-à-vis local government. Thirty-six percent (36%) claim to have an advocacy and policy role on specific issues; 22% work in collaboration with LGAs; 30% monitor local government; 4% are engaged in research on local democratization issues; 4% do nothing; while 4% don't know what to do. Figure 3.7 outlines the issues that CBOs/NGOs advocate on: harmful traditional practices (34%), education

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[46] E. Njaka, Igbo Political Culture (USA: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p.11.

(27%), economic development (23%), political participation (10%), and human rights, and affirmative action (3% each).

Table 3.7   Organizational Culture of CDP sub-sample: selected indicators Percentage of total

Planning cycle	3 years	Annual	Planning cycle dependent on projects	None	
	17.6	29.4	11.9	41.1	100.0

Funding	Local gov't	Member levies	International donors	Consultancies	
	9.5	42.8	42.8	4.9	100.0

Community Contributions	Labour	Finance	In-kind	Time	None	
	16	25	43	8	8	100.0

Women included in organization decision-making	Board	Community Representatives	Women's NGO	Staff		
	35.2	29.4	11.7	23.7		100.0

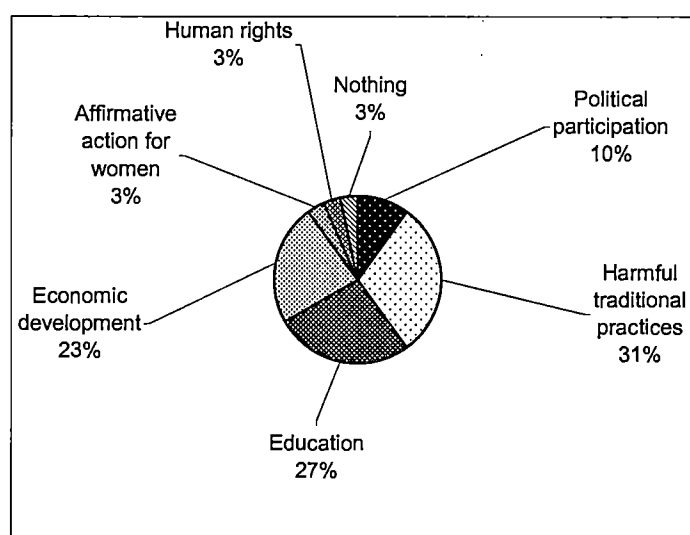| How women's interests are included in the planning cycle	Board	Women leaders	Women's NGO	Staff	No specific mechanism	
	17.6	23.5	17.6	11.7	29.6	100.0

Source: CDP Database

Figure 3.6 Sub-sample CBOs/NGOs: mandate vis-à-vis local government
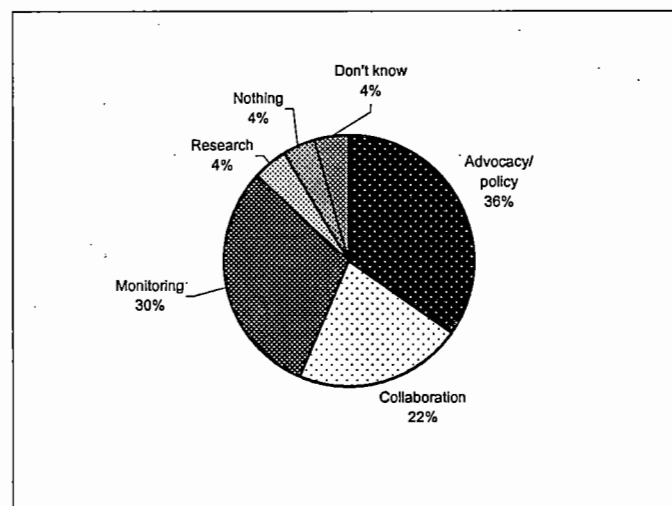
Source: CDP Database

Figure 3.7 Sub-sample CBOs/NGOs: policy issues

Source: CDP Database

b) Programming for gender-sensitive democratic development at the grassroots - Typically in Nigeria the grassroots is not the leading edge of social transformation and democratic development, given its historical marginalization from development initiatives. Yet, as the democratic struggle in Nigeria demonstrated, without grassroots support, democracy cannot be sustained and defended. The grassroots is not homogenous. In reality, as with the state, power and exploitation is also a feature of grassroots relationships. The power of the chief or elders in the community, the household head in the family, the priest or imam in the church or mosque – all are more or less authoritarian, just as the 'discussion' that accompanies the exercise of their authority is always mitigated by a potential threat of exclusion from land, household or religious community. The study has shown that gender is a critical marker in understanding how power and resources are distributed, and who participates in decision-making both in the household and public forums. At the grassroots traditional institutions of governance are largely responsible for organizing distribution and decision-making along age and gender lines. Gender-sensitive democratic development programming must seek to address women's marginalization within these processes and find the openings to expand women's participation in meaningful decision-making. Additionally, gender-sensitive democratic development programming must respond to the gender dimensions of 'daily democracy', that is, it must contribute to personal empowerment and skills building, and to organizational strengthening, capacity building, and policy-making. The democratic development framework draws the connections between individuals, households, CBOs, NGOs, and the municipal level of government. As noted above, increasingly development initiatives for skills training and micro-credit are targeted toward women, yet this effort has made limited impact on women's contribution to decision-making and political processes. It is true that the impact of the CDP projects on engendering democratic development has been varied with respect to the critical variables of traditional institutions of governance, to 'daily democracy', i.e., personal empowerment and capacity building; and to the contribution to policy making. Table 3.8 presents a profile of selected sub-sample projects in three regions assessing their impact on the three variables named above. It must be noted that the table is not an evaluation of the project measured against its objectives and activities; it is a summary of gender insights from CDP's grassroots experience. The data in the first five columns should be read in relation to the last column. The latter column is a summary of the focus group discussions, which is the baseline of attitudes, values, obduracy and struggle against which democratic development programming yields its gender insights and indicators.

Table 3.8 Programming data: Summary of selected projects
North

NGO	Intervention	Activities	Changes (results)		
			Impact on three variables:	Indicators	Long-term social processes - focus group discussions Long-term changes reflect the slow and incremental dynamics of larger social processes to which grassroots democratic development programming contributes.
Legal Watch/ Women Centre	Intermediary NGO/ grassroots NGO	HRs: Community workshops on HRs, including women's rights.	HRs: Raised public awareness of HRs issues.	Women now discuss national issues in their gatherings, weddings, etc.	Although HRs information has been shared, the impact on improved women's rights remains minimal at the level of the household and community. Men's focus group indicates indifference and suspicion of the NGO; near-absolute trust in traditional institutions; control of women's lives. Women feel they are exploited as campaign agents of the men. Due to their poverty many women accepted gifts (soap, money, rice, oil) as campaign incentives. Husbands forced some women to belong to political parties against their choice. Religious and cultural bias block women's contribution to governance.
		Women's empowerment: Economic empowerment through skills training	Women's empowerment: Some skills transfer	Measurable impact on household income controlled by women; Improved household quality of life when women have access to resources.	
		Policy & advocacy: Invitation to municipal politicians to participate in HRs workshops.	Policy & advocacy: Minimal impact on policy makers	Municipal politicians did not participate in the workshops.	
Rahama/ Development Exchange Centre (DEC)	Collaboration between two grassroots NGOs	HRs: Women's workshops on HRs, observed and approved by traditional leadership.	HRs: Sensitization of women and traditional leadership on HRs and women's rights issues.	Increase in women's participation in the election process.	Women have some rights awareness; more women participated in the election; Younger, educated men are supportive of more rights for women; A woman has been elected to the state assembly, providing a positive role model; she reports back to women's organizations in Bauchi re: progress for women in the state. On the other hand, some male community leaders welcome the work of NGOs in enlightening women. These leaders then become positive male role models. Women are more confident in their ability to contribute to household income rather than being dependent on their husbands However, patriarchy and gerontocracy control community decision-making. Traditional leaders maintain there is no justification for women to be involved in decision-making at the local level, as this is the role of men. If women's opinions are needed, husbands can speak for their wives. Women focus groups identify poverty as their primary problem that can be overcome by loans enabling them to trade. Women also want good roads, water and electricity. Women report that men are also jealous of the focus on women, leading to more tensions in the home.
		Women's empowerment: CBO works collaboratively with NGO to coordinate micro credit in conjunction with information on HRs	Women's empowerment: Enhanced economic capacity of women	Measurable loan repayments; enhanced household income controlled by women.	
		Policy & advocacy: Collaboration with LGA; Information strategy directed toward LGA	Policy & advocacy: Joint activities undertaken with LGA on women's rights; Regular dialogue between NGO and LGA	LGA staff seconded to the NGO as seen to be more effective than LGA; LGA provides NGO with vehicle on request to carry out their activities	

Southeast

Organization	Intervention	Activities	Changes (results)		
			Impact on three variables:	**Indicators**	**Long-term social processes - focus group discussions** Long-term changes reflect the slow and incremental dynamics of larger social processes to which grassroots democratic development programming contributes.
Human Management & Agricultural Resources Development Organization (HUMARDO)	Grassroots NGO working with CBOs	HRs: sharing information through drama on the Beijing issues and HRs.	HRs: Women are more knowledgeable about their rights. Women hold their leaders accountable for women's rights issues.	Women participate in every sphere of community life; more women participated in the electoral process; the LGA Vice-Chair, a woman, is a member of the NGO; the Chair is the NGO Director.	Both men and women focus groups agree that a good society is gradually coming into existence in Obowo. Men and women now contribute, though not equally, to the community governance. Both men and women take decisions about their well- being, unlike in the past when men decided issues and later informed the women. Citizens now form co-operative societies that are organized around farming, poultry, etc., from which they raise funds for development of their community. HUMARDO provides micro-credit to co-op members, while the local government is bringing clean water. There is a positive attitude in the community, expressed equally by men and women focus groups. The direct connection between the LGA and the NGO (LGA Chair is the Director of the NGO) has enabled women's interests to be effectively brought forward. Women elected the NGO Director and hold him accountable to bring their issues forward. The LGA Vice Chair is also an NGO member. Even so, women complain they are not given adequate representation at the policy making level even in the decisions that directly affect their lives. Lack of access to credit renders women economically powerless, which in turn, impedes their participation in political processes and decision-making. Women's interests are not represented in community structures except for gatherings that are exclusively for the females. The men dominate all the offices but they do listen to the women when they have contributions to make. The fact that the Chair is the NGO Director, and the deputy chairman is a woman does not mean women's interests are adequately represented. Politicians must be seen to represent all the community.
		Women's empowerment: economic empowerment through micro-credit.	Women's empowerment: Working with the LGA, small-scale loans have been provided for women.	Quality of life in households has improved because women not exclusively dependent on men for resources.	
		Policy & advocacy: Monitoring LG re: Beijing Initiative; advocacy on Beijing issues. Direct connection between the LGA and the NGO in that the LGA Chair is the NGO Coordinator.	Policy & advocacy: Policy issues taken up by the LGA come directly from NGO advocacy: loans for small-scale business; literacy classes.	Literacy classes have been coordinated by the LGA working in collaboration with the NGO.	
Etiti Union for Community Development (EUCD)	Ethnic association	HRs: educate women on cultural barriers to realizing women's human rights, and to encourage their participation in political processes.	HRs: There is an increased awareness among women on women's rights.	Number of women's groups advocating for women's rights has increased.	EUCD is an 'abroad' association formed by a group of Etiti citizens living at Ibadan and Lagos and later extended to other Etiti citizens living in other major cities. The first motive was educational. EUCD offered scholarships to students of Etiti origin. Programs are jointly funded by individual contributions, NGO grants, and levies on the members. EUCD and the local government work closely together. The community leaders are the

| | | Women's empowerment: training women leaders; loans to women's co-operative societies. | Women's empowerment: Two women contested for political position because of EUCD sensitization. One woman was elected Councillor. The interaction with EUCD empowered her to be sensitive to her responsibilities as a female Counsellor. | Increased number of women competing for political positions at the local level. | closest to the members of the community; they present these problems to the ethnic NGO, which in turn, advocates with local government, so as to enforce a change in policies concerning women.

Village women produce foodstuffs, but because of the poor roads they cannot market their surplus. Women are disadvantaged economically and educationally, while cultural expectations are biased against them. EUCD members as indigenes of the community, exchange information between the local and abroad-based indigenes. Because they are part of the community ethnic associations have been effective in drawing attention to women's rights and cultural barriers. |
| | | Policy & advocacy: mobilize women to engage in advocacy on women's issues at the local level. | | | |

South West

NGO	Intervention	Activities	Changes (results)		
			Impact on three variables:	Indicators	Long-term social processes - focus group discussions Long-term changes reflect the slow and incremental dynamics of larger social processes to which grassroots democratic development programming contributes.
Justice, Peace & Development, Ijebu-Ode Diocese	Grassroots NGO working with local communities, and LGAs	HRs: Community leaders workshops on HRs and democracy using a gender framework. Similar workshops for elected politicians.	HRs: Community awareness of HRs and democratic practices. Community monitoring of LG. Capacity of the community leaders strengthened to challenge LG on HRs and democracy issues, including women's rights. Gender awareness among elected politicians	Formation of community monitoring committee made up of community members and traditional leadership. Women contribute to decision-making in public discussions. Politicians regularly consult with people.	Women are not significantly participating in politics. Their exclusion is strongly held by men politicians because the majority believes women should take care of the home and family, rather than entering politics. Women have not been included in decision-making in most communities, and their interests have not been represented. Women want to be recognized for their contributions and increasingly are demanding recognition. On the other hand, the majority of interviewed women belief they must in one way or the other, get permission from their husbands, fathers or brothers in order to participate in politics or attend political meetings. Changes are starting; the level of criticism and questioning is not what it was ten years ago. NGOs are continuing the work of social transformation in the context of building the capacity of civil society to ask questions, to resist corruption, and to criticize those in government. Apart from the socio-cultural constraints, poverty and lack of access to loan facilities remains the primary obstacle preventing women from competing in politics. The few women elected or appointed are as a result of pressure from few women politicians. NGOs continue to work for social empowerment and transformation: "Once the capacity of civil society is built to the point where the whole of Ijebu-Ode can turn out one morning and say, 'over our dead body will this kind of thing continue.' Then changes will start to take place. This is a continuous process of educating people; we should not relax supporting human rights and democracy, and economic empowerment because the battle has not been won yet."
		Women's empowerment: Program on micro-credit for women part of comprehensive development initiatives	Women's empowerment: Economic empowerment actively addressed by LG.	Women's vocational Centre established. Following LG –organized training, women are using their new skills; they identify and demand new types of skills development.	
		Policy & advocacy: Councilors and Chairmen regularly invited to workshops on HRs; special workshops designed for elected leaders.	Policy & advocacy: Women politically empowered to address political marginalization. LG leadership cognizant of barriers against women. To overcome the dearth of women, the LG reserved five places for women. Elected officials exposed to gender analysis and participate in gender training.	Post-workshop plans developed to regularly monitor local government. Networking with like-minded NGOs on policy issues. Formation of a state Women's Coalition successful in reversing the cancellation of the Women Commission. Women and men participate in International Women's Day. No woman contested for LG; woman appointed to Supervisory position. LG politicians participate in gender analysis workshop organized by NGO.	

Women's Issues and Development (WOMID)	Grassroots NGO working with local communities and LGAs.	HRs: Community leaders' workshop on violations of women s rights.	HRs: Traditional leaders aware of rights violations with respect to some traditional practices.	Widowhood rights abolished.	More women participate in LGA meetings Post-workshop follow-up with LGAs to monitor gender issues. Advocacy and networking Interviews demonstrate political awareness and familiarity of gender issues on the part of the community and elected politicians.
		Women empowerment: skills development on community advocacy and negotiation.	Women's empowerment: Women can identify and advocate for their rights, however, no woman competed in the last election.	Women leaders discussion Inheritance issues with traditional leaders	Women interests are being represented now in the local government through the Women's Commission, which was established after the intervention of women's groups Women who are politically empowered continue to have problems. E.g., one woman wanted to contest the last local government election. She had filled her papers. Unbeknownst to her, her husband forged her signature to say that she was no longer interested and in her place put his friend.
		Policy & advocacy: Councillors and Chairman invited to workshops, LGA offices regularly visited to promote women's rights.	Policy & advocacy: LG has introduced scholarships for female students to enable them to go to school without resorting to finding men to pay their fees. NGO networks with other organizations on women's policy issues, i.e., affirmative action, at the national assembly.	Special advisor to the Chairman on women affairs appointed after intervention by local women's groups.	LGA provided employment for 330 people, half being women. Women's groups are organizing and approaching their local councilors demanding literacy programs, small-scale industries, women's centres and funding for cooperative societies. The work of organizations such as WOMID has improved the quality of women's lives at the local level. Poor Infrastructure, health facilities, lack of water supply, lack of electricity, etc. Women lack economic power because many of them are responsible for the education of their children Husbands continue to block women's participation in politics.

c) "Best practices' of CBOS/NGOs - The 'best practices' of CDP projects, as listed in Table 3.9, provide a useful summary of the insights from the grassroots with respect to gender and democratic development.[47] (See also Appendix 2 <u>Tales from the Field ... Some of the Best Learnings of the CDP)</u>

Table 3.9 'Best Practices' and indicators Democratic Development Programming

	'Best practices' ...	Indicators
1.	- are rooted in local communities, having built up trust over a period of time with the people, their leaders, women's groups, religious leaders, community associations, etc. For example, the study researchers record that *...in Obo, we discovered that most CBOs in that community had at one time or the other contact with HUMARDO. You could see in the follow-up that what HUMARDO had put in place was working.*	- positive relationship between community/ women's groups' and the NGO using intangible indicators such as <u>reach, linkage, respect,</u> and <u>influence.</u>
2.	- are integrated, combining information about human rights and democracy with economic empowerment. In Imo State one community leader remarked that *meeting the spectrum of rights and needs holds participants together for longer periods than when you base your intervention on civil and political rights only. If you only talk about civil and political rights it is not enough ... in the final analysis women need something they can rely on economically.*	<u>- keeping the focus on poverty and on human rights,</u> as measured by indicators of meeting basic needs of all community members, and vulnerable members, women, children and the elderly. <u>- evidence of increased government and civil society respect for human rights, especially women's rights</u> <u>- civilian control of security agencies; e.g., what proportion of the national budget is allocated to defence;</u>
3.	- ensures their organizational culture values and seeks the contributions of all stakeholders; its vision and practices are democratic and responsive to locally-identified issues, and empowering of local communities, especially women. NGOs/CBOs provide the training ground for people and recruitment of political leadership at all levels.	<u>- vision, solidarity, autonomy, and respect.</u> Evidence of the level of involvement and influence exerted by citizens on the decision-making process as indicated by the level of access to political parties, media, elected representatives, and informal forms of governance. - evidence of long-term and strategic planning that increases women's participation and seeks gender balance. Gender policies in place. Gender balance in staff and community representation. - evidence of awareness of the dangers of a donor-driven agenda
4.	- develop programs for women and men's groups, and/or mixed groups. Even women's NGOs engage with men's groups, raising gender issues related to traditional practices, women's rights, violence, sexual exploitation etc. In addition to supporting a men's group, DEC also develops savings programs for young children who accompany their mothers. No opportunities are wasted for promoting economic development and women's rights. The Commission for Justice, Development & Peace (CJDP) draws on gender-sensitive men leaders to speak out on women's issues. To quote the Deputy Leader of the House, Odogbolu LGA: *I can say CJDP has educated me from the world of unknown to the world of known. Before, I never had regard for women's issues because I am a Nigerian, a Yoruba for that matter, but as a result of the various programmes I have attended, I have realized the need for me to really carry every body along in any decision making process and this has made me to extend that to the local government where I work. Everybody there knows me as a CJDP man because each time, I tell them that this is the principle and that there should be plan to carry women along in our decisions. Despite the fact that women were not elected to the Council, we make sure that whatever decision we want to take we send our people back to their various*	- the identification of <u>gender-sensitive men leaders who are influential in changing gender attitudes, and promoting gender equality within their communities.</u>

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[47] 'Best practices', recommendations, and future directions were developed at the final research workshop for researchers, NGOs leaders and representatives of communities, March 27 2001, held at Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

	wards to consult with both men and women and bring back their results.	
5.	- develop strategies for working with local governments around gender issues. This may be as simple as sharing information – inviting LGA officials to events where human rights and democratic development issues are discussed, informing LGAs of NGO actions in strengthening civil society, or it may involve joint programming. For example, DEC/Rahama (Bauchi State) works jointly with the LGA Community Development Officers (CDOs) on human rights workshops for women. WOMID (Ekiti State) collaborated with CDOs to organize gender workshops for local bureaucrats, and later formed a gender group with CDOs. The leader of HUMARDO (Abia State) was elected Chairman of the LGA, on his platform of promoting gender equity at the community level. Successful NGOs design strategies for influencing policy at the LGA level. Commenting on DEC/Rahama's program, the researcher had this to say: *the impact of the NGO could be seen in the way the staff interacted with the grassroots communities, and the way the authorities of the various local governments recognized and admitted that the NGO was really doing what it had set out to do.* DEC/Rahama can document an increase in women voters in Bauchi State because of their programs.	- evidence that <u>women's concerns have been heard, and acted on</u> by local government officials.
6.	- empower communities to hold their elected officials accountable. However, empowering grassroots women and men to think critically is a long, slow process: *In the CJDP we gather the electorate together to ask the Chairman what he has done for the people. Last week we were in __ LGA. The majority who participated were women. But you can't believe it! The women were praising, dancing and clapping for the Chairman, instead of asking questions. He organized a vocational centre for them. He gave them N5, 000. They are so happy about that. But even if no woman contested any elected position, what about the appointed positions? There are five supervisory positions, and all are men. You can't even have a woman as supervisor! 'Well,' he replied, 'that is not the issue now. I'm a politician. I cannot escape the women. Ha! Ha!' And all the women were clapping and dancing for him. And I thought, we have a long way to go.*	- grassroots communities <u>holding their elected leaders accountable for specific election promises concerning women.</u> - level of transparency, accountability and openness in the running of local government; access to 'so-called' classified documents - responsiveness of government and degree of reciprocity at all levels
7.	- empower communities and NGOs to develop advocacy plans. For example, CJDP analysed the budget of a particular local government with respect to education for women. *In the budget there was nothing on education, and even programs for women were under youth development and health. When we analysed the budget we invited some local leaders to our office to discuss it with them. After analysing it, they went back and reviewed their budget, and then they put something in the budget on education and on women.* Advocacy plans may precipitate a backlash. *Ijebu-Ode Diocese wanted to review the Ogun State agricultural policy, which had not been reviewed for ten years. We saw this as a way to engage with government on an advocacy basis, and to bring forward some issues of concern to women farmers. The Ministry sent a letter to their local counterparts to tell them not to participate in the discussion. The Ministry stopped all officials from attending the program, because the Minister saw CJDP as oppositional, and because he did not want the NGO to be credited with improving the agricultural policy… there are time in your interaction with local government when you oppose, and times when you come back to discuss.*	- advocacy plans, and the capacity of the organization <u>to engage with local government, and change strategies from opposition to dialogue according to the strategic goals.</u>
8.	- network with other CBOs/NGOs around specific issues, or to share information. For example, three CDP partners in different states joined together with other NGOs to advocate against FGM. This led to the banning of FGM in four southern states.	- <u>gender-sensitive policy change</u> brought about by a coalition of communities and NGOs working together to influence government.

4. Gender Insights from the Grassroots: Conclusion & Recommendations

4.1 Perceptions of democracy and democratic development
The study affirmed a pragmatic understanding of democratic development characteristic of the grassroots. Democratic development is indeed, popular participation in the conduct of public affairs

and in genuine democratic elections. It also involves the exercise of other civil and political rights: the right to life, freedom of conscience, speech, movement and peaceful assembly, amongst others, and women's rights, including protection against sexual violence and exploitation. From the perception of the grassroots democracy and rights is more fulsome, however. It incorporates adequate health care, education, food, clothing, and employment. In fact, typically, it is the latter expectations that engage grassroots communities, and it is the failure of the state to respond to economic and social needs of its citizens that lie at the heart of grassroots alienation from the state and the continuing adherence to kinship networks. Kinship emphasizes collective well being at the expense of individual claims, and the persistence of kinship/community associations is the people's response to the crisis of democracy and development. If democratization is strengthening popular participation in the exercise of power, building democratic institutions and practices, and deepening democratic values in society through formal processes of government and informal practices of civil society, then effective democratic development programming at the grassroots (in Nigeria and other African societies) must sit astride the interface of state and citizen rights, and traditional institutions of kinship and community. The Nigerian discourse on democratic development demands a shift from programming that emphasizes the individual to the collectivity, and from an emphasis on civil and political rights to embrace economic, social and cultural rights. This image is more complex and contextual than our current democratic development frameworks appreciate.

That gender is a factor in all these social processes is recognized across all the study communities. Both women and men consider that women especially are poor, uneducated, and lacking in health care for their families. Both women and men agree that the common quality of life would improve if women were better educated. However, where there is less agreement across the study sample is with respect to gender equality. Gender equality means the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between men and women, and the varying roles that they play. The research showed that gender inequality is especially, but not exclusively, pronounced in communities in northern Nigeria. It is not surprising that the majority of grassroots women focus on gender inequality – organized through traditional/cultural beliefs, practices, and identities - as a democracy issue. As expressed by a respondent: *men make all the decisions* – in households, lineage and kinship associations, and institutions of governance.[48] What is surprising is not one of the men interviewed at the community level (not the case with male NGO or elected leaders) perceived traditional/cultural institutions as barriers to women's experience of democracy. However, when respondents were asked to name constraints to women's development, both men and women made the connection between traditional beliefs and practices and the condition of women's lives. For both genders, development is impeded by women's poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and access to markets – in other words, by the absence of those goods that are perceived to be amenable to policy changes in the public sector. The difference between the responses of male and female focus groups is that women's analysis of the barriers to democracy includes gender-based power differentials that democracy in principle seeks to mediate. Women's analysis, derivative of their experience, goes deeper, crossing into kinship organization, and the ideologies and control mechanisms that sustain gender inequality in the household. The research demonstrates that for grassroots men discussions of democracy and gender equality most often remain in the public policy realm, stopping at the household door, while for women, democracy is ineffective if it does not also enter the household.

Grassroots perspectives - policy and programming recommendations:
1. *Shift from programming that emphasizes the individual to programming that is cognizant of the collectivity:* At the grassroots, kinship/descent/age/gender continues as the dominant mechanism of social organization, distribution, representation and gender ideologies, rather than individual citizenship and the state. At the local level, gender-sensitive democratic development programming must be cognizant of the role that kinship plays in relation to the constraints and opportunities for enhancing women's rights and gender-sensitive democratic development.

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[48] Mrs. Mudiare, Workshop participant, Ijebu-Ode, March 27-28th 2001. See transcript from the workshop.

2. *Dependence on the concept civil society as a starting point for democratic development programming is problematic for women at the grassroots:* Democratic development programming at the grassroots – with its generic entry point of civil society as separate from the household and family – must rethink its conceptual framework. Effective programming must seek ways to extend discussions of democracy to the household. This is best accomplished by working with men's groups, and with women and men together.

3. *Poverty is the key issue for grassroots democratic development.* Given gender bias around access to, and distribution and control of resources, the most effective democratic development programming is comprehensive, responding to the spectrum of political and civil, economic, cultural and social rights, and incorporating skills transfer, economic empowerment and income generation, especially for women.

4. 2 Institutional culture and practices
The study found variation with respect to the institutional capacity of CBOs and NGOs at the grassroots. The majority of organizations have not been able to establish an organizational culture that includes identifying the values intrinsic to democratic development, and to the vision, goals, and objectives of the organization; to strategic planning, participatory engagement with communities and other stakeholders; and to staff training, etc. This is in part, because of people's preoccupation with meeting basic needs. *When poverty is very prevalent, people tend to plan on a short-term basis. This tendency has been carried on to organizational settings.*[49] But it is also because of the inherited legacy of years of military rule, and the 'militarization' of formal and informal organizations. As well, because financial resources are not secure, many organizations operate on a project-funding basis, and/or are dependent on external donors. Only a few organizations have begun to explore alternative sources of funding, such as collaboration with local governments, or consultancies.

In addition, the study found that the dominant target group for CBOs and NGOs is women, reflecting an appreciation of women's marginalization, women's struggles and donor priorities. However, CBO and NGO staff are predominately men, raising real concerns management's commitment to gender equality. The study also found a high staff turnover.

Grassroots perspectives - policy and programming recommendations:

1. *Strengthen the institutional capacity of grassroots organizations through training at all levels:* This is best done through the existing CDP regional networks as the CDP has already established a trusted relationship with grassroots organizations across Nigeria. It is more effective to build on a relationship than to introduce new actors. Part of institutional capacity building must include a review of current hiring practices and staff training, with respect to promoting gender equality. A plan for increasing the number of women employed by CBOs and NGOs should be part of democratic development programming.

2. *Establish a social policy research centre on grassroots social transformation:* Currently, intermediary NGOs, which in general do not have linkages to grassroots communities, undertake social policy research and analysis, and speak for the grassroots. Hence, there is a significant gap in knowledge, interpretation, and voice; in gender analysis; and in research and policy discussions as it applies to the grassroots. Furthermore, repeating some of the patterns that characterized the work of the human rights organizations during the democratic struggle, intermediary NGOs most often are located in a few large urban centres, and are not in touch with the dynamics of 'daily democracy.' There is need to establish a social policy research centre that focuses on the grassroots and is based in a rural community.

3. *Document case studies of the 'best practices' of grassroots CBOs and NGOs with respect to democratic development programming:* Exchanging information about successes and failures

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[49] Quote from Danladi Musa, CDP Committee member and author of The Strategic Planning Process Jos: CAPRO Media, 1999.

of grassroots democratic development is a powerful tool to enhance grassroots contributions to democracy.

4. *Support exchange visits between grassroots communities across regions:* The CDP initiated exchange visits between grassroots communities and women's groups, across regions, exposing communities to information, new ideas, and practices. Again, this proved to be one of the most effective ways to strengthen civil society at the grassroots.

4.3 Local institutions of governance, decision-making, and representation

The study found that local Councillors are most often inexperienced and ill prepared for their jobs. Indeed, the perception on the part of community leaders and focus group members is that local government is *'politics of money', where those who get elected must spend much money to earn such positions that they end up looting the treasury to pay the debt they incurred. 'My brothers' syndrome has placed the wrong people in the LGA workforce and even cause the council to be over- staffed.*[50] Gender equality has a minimal impact at the level of local government, even though women voter turnout is high. This reflects the general pattern of women's marginalization from political power in Nigeria. Some of the factors that constrain women from entering politics include: lack of funds for campaigning, poor support of women by political parties, societal attitudes against women's participation in politics, and actual barriers mounted by male colleagues to ensure women politicians fail. At the local level, some Council positions are appointed positions; however, even this mechanism has not advanced women's representation significantly. The study showed that Councillors, overwhelmingly men, are aware that women feel oppressed and left out in most activities. In LGAs where projects have been designed especially for women, the study found that often such projects are not really needed, nor have women been involved in the planning and execution. The consensus of women's focus groups is that Councillors do not understand the barriers against women's participation in politics, or they purposely subvert women's efforts. For example, in the southwest the study found that male Councillors conspired against a woman Chairman (sic). To quote the community leaders: *they* (male Councillors) *don't want her to have power; to have control of the resources available to the local government. They have to ask her permission to use the vehicle, and they are thinking, 'How can I ask permission from a woman to use a vehicle?' So they. conspire – they are from the same party.* It is only in the southeast that women used both electoral processes and appointments to gain a minimum of political power in the study LGAs. Given the time constraints, the research was unable to explore this dynamic. The study found that women feel alienated from formal institutions of governance at the local level; they neither see themselves as political actors, nor do they feel their interests are served at that level. Furthermore, both women and men agree that women are only minimally represented, and participate in decision-making in formal institutions of governance. Increasingly, however, women are aware they need to form groups to make their needs known, rather than *wait on their leaders and on male leaders.* Women focus groups noted that radio discussions are helpful in articulating their concerns.

Grassroots perspectives - policy and programming recommendations:

1. *Seek ways to collaborate with local governments around gender concerns:* NGOs, community associations and local government should collaborate around building the capacity of local politicians and bureaucrats to be more responsive to community needs, especially women's needs and rights. This will involve using participatory methodologies and approaches to community, effectively developed by many 'best practices' NGOs. Peoples' views, experiences and capabilities are the basis of social mobilization for the promotion and sustenance of democratic governance.

2. NGOs, community associations and local government should collaborate in training local politicians and bureaucrats in gender analysis and gender-sensitive planning, and in understanding the barriers that prevent women's visibility and representation in political processes at the local level, and beyond. NGOs should facilitate a linkage between local

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[50] Interview with J. Ser. The quotations in this section are from the same source.

level politicians and grassroots women so elected officials can hear what women are saying.

3. NGOs, community associations and local government should collaborate in human rights education, including women's rights, for local politicians and bureaucrats. There should be community education around the roles and responsibilities of citizenship. Community education should be combined with economic empowerment.

4. *Provide communities and women's groups with knowledge of political processes, and capacity building to enable them contribute to those processes:* NGOs should strengthen the capacity of communities, and especially women's groups, to understand electoral processes at the local level, build the capacity of people to hold their politicians accountable with respect to gender issues, to ask questions, and to criticize those in government, where necessary. NGOs should work together with communities to advocate on issues of concern to the communities they engage with.

5. *Develop strategies to increase women's participation at the local government level:* In order to encourage more women entering politics, women's and gender sensitive organizations should explore electoral reforms that open up electoral processes to independent candidates. Another electoral reform to be explored is affirmative action. In order to support the few women politicians, women's groups should support women politicians, and demand accountability from them on issues of concern to women. Women's groups should challenge politicians to use existing mechanisms, such a Supervisor positions, to appoint qualified – not simply token - women to formal governance offices.

Turning to traditional institutions of governance, the study found that traditional institutions – although varied across the study sample – have not served women well, nor do they support women's participation in decision-making and local governance. It was agreed that in the past women's traditional institutions were powerful. This is not the case today, where social processes biased against women, strengthen inherent and overt patriarchal tendencies. Customary law can be challenged on human rights grounds, but instances have been rare in Nigeria.

Community and ethnic associations received mixed reviews among sample respondents, some arguing they should be banned because they undermine national cohesion, with others arguing they form another tier of government, more responsive to the needs of people, and should be encouraged. The study found, however, that where there is potential to formulate a more radicalized and engendered democratic development culture at the grassroots, one based on enlisting peoples' participation in the democratic process, is the fusion of the village and the 'abroad' ethnic associations. Building on a powerful sense of collective responsibility, gender-sensitive community members living 'abroad' have been able to advance women's rights vis-à-vis cultural practices, and to reform traditional institutions of governance. The key is to effect change as a community member.

Grassroots perspectives - policy and programming recommendations:
1. *Be cognizant of, and explore the potential of indigenous organizations that tend to fall outside the 'usual' list of civil society actors:* Democratic development programming should explore the potential of ethnic associations, in particular, the fusion between 'abroad' groups and community-based associations, to formulate a more radicalized and engendered democratic development culture at the grassroots, one based on enlisting peoples' participation in the democratic process. It should be noted that ethnic associations are a feature of southern Nigeria, which has a long history of community self-help. In the north, however, given the social organization, ethnic associations are rare. Those few CBOs, NGOs, and ethnic associations that do operate in the north have had an impact on women's rights and gender equality, and support for them should continue through the CDP and/or other mechanisms.

2. *Develop strategies to engage traditional leaders around gender and democratic development:* NGOs, such as Legal Research and Resource Development Centre and other gender-sensitive paralegal organizations, should organize workshops with traditional leaders to discuss gender concerns with respect to customary law and traditional courts. Women need to deepen their understanding of customary law and look for ways to use traditional courts to enhance gender equality.

4.4 Empowerment

Social transformation has an irreducible subjective aspect to it. The nebulousness of this notion is contained in the equality obscure term 'empowerment'. Yet the study found that empowerment is real; it simply means having some control over one's life. And in this sense, it is a part of democratic development. To generate the conditions of empowerment for women requires a holistic approach and involves creating an enabling environment to improve the quality of life for women, for their households, communities, and the nation. Empowerment also means awareness of women's legal, cultural and political rights and the exercise of the right to self-determination and participation. Thus empowerment has two aspects: the tangible and the intangible. The tangible aspects concerns those indicators discussed in the findings above: women's ability to create and demand opportunities, and exercise their capacity to lift themselves from conditions of poverty and self-doubt. It relates to the social conditions that enable women to raise their standard of living and exercise their rights as citizens. The intangible aspects of empowerment have to do with the formation and exercise of human values such as self-confidence, self-reliance and pride in oneself. It concerns self-esteem, cultural identity, creativity, and the capacity to think critically and challenge the conditions of life. This report is accompanied by the oral histories of three women involved in three CDP projects. The personal narratives record and interpret the impact of CDP projects on women's lives. The Narratives and recommendations are submitted separately.

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