



OSISA

Open Society Initiative
for Southern Africa

CONCEPT PAPER ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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**Reinvigorating and Sustaining a Vibrant
Women's Movement in Southern Africa**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years there have been a number of concerns raised about the state of the women's movement in Southern Africa. The dearth of funding and leadership, and difficulties crafting a relevant gender-wise political agenda for a new generation of post-independence African citizens, are but a few of the crises. Yet, today half of all women living in SADC live below the poverty line, and women represent close to 60 percent of all people living with HIV and AIDS. The region is also grappling with an epidemic of violence and sexual abuse against women and girls. There is a clear need for independent, well organised social movements that are able to articulate the needs and interests of their members. It is clear too that

This paper seeks to provide *inter alia*, a theoretical framework through which to understand the current crises faced by the women's movement in southern Africa, and is intended to be read in conjunction with the research report that OSISA commissioned, for the Women's Rights Roundtable meeting, held from October 9 – 11, 2006, entitled, "Reinvigorating and Sustaining a Vibrant Women's Movement in Southern Africa." As such, the paper outlines and analyses the history, development, characteristics, shape, form, functions and responsibilities of the women's movement in Southern Africa. Those characteristics of the women's movement that distinguish it from other social movements are described and the various discourses associated with the women's movement outlined. The paper then analyses critically, some of the salient issues raised in the research report, linking them to concepts and developments in the social and political contexts of the Southern African and other regions of the world.

The paper should be read in conjunction with the research report that was produced as a result of field research conducted in various SADC countries by a team of consultants commissioned by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). The concept paper is used here as a point of discussion on various issues regarding the loss of vibrancy of the women's movement in Southern Africa. This and other issues mentioned and briefly discussed, merit further and more comprehensive discussion during the October roundtable meeting. Some of the issues that were raised in the preparations for the roundtable in October, as well as those raised in the research report include:

- Women's rights in the era of HIV and AIDS;
- Leadership and inclusiveness of the movement;
- Alliances and partnerships of the movement;
- The women's movement political agenda; and
- Resources, skills and knowledge for the women's movement, among other issues.

The paper attempts to define some of the key concepts that provide a framework for the understanding the women's movement, and these include:

Social movement

A social movement is an organised and collective attempt to further a common interest or secure a common goal outside the sphere of established institutions. Participants in social movements may work and be located within as well as outside established organisations, which may or may not allow them to pursue specific issues within the contexts of their everyday jobs or occupations.

Liberal feminism can have a positive impact especially on women's lives in the short term without necessarily challenging and eradicating systems of domination such as imperialism, capitalism, racism, class and gender discrimination.

Women's movement

The women's movement is defined as a social movement constituting women who may belong to different races, classes, ethnic and age groups and who collectively decide to further interests specific to women, using perspectives that draw from and highlight their lived experiences.

Feminism

Feminism is a contested term in political vocabulary. However, feminism was originally devised by radical women as a term to refer to the collectively organised political struggle against sexist oppression for the benefit of all women AND other groups such as oppressed men.

Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism focuses its energies mainly on struggles for equality between men and women. The discourses of liberal feminism are the most dominant internationally because of the hegemony and economic, political and ideological strength of the liberal economic and political agenda globally. Liberal feminism can have a positive impact especially on women's lives in the short term without necessarily challenging and eradicating systems of domination such as imperialism, capitalism, racism, class and gender discrimination.

Radical feminism

Radical feminism takes different shades and tends to be informed by the experiences of women who question the capitalist system and liberal democracy, which is hegemonic internationally. In the radical feminist camp are socialist and Marxist feminists as well as theorists amongst racial and other minorities in the USA and Europe. Radical feminism questions the hegemony of the dominant liberal feminist agenda because it ignores the lived experiences of colonised, previously enslaved, minority and other women living under conditions of poverty and economic underdevelopment globally.

Is there an African Feminist Perspective?

In Africa, women and men have different perspectives based on their race, class, age and other characteristics. Their politics are divergent ranging from liberal, Marxist and eclectic. Many do not identify themselves as 'feminists' because of their objection to the dominant strands of feminism exhibited by predominantly middle class women in the state, party and civil sectors. Religious and ethnic issues also inform African men and women's self-identification and politics, resulting in a divergence of political positions and practices on major issues such as reproductive rights, sexuality, and family, economic and political rights.

Origins and history of the women's movement in Southern Africa

The women's movement arose from perceived common interest amongst women of various races, classes, ages and ethnicities in Southern Africa. During colonialism, there was racial strat-

ification of women's organisations. Religious women organised as mothers in unions, urban women organised as homemakers and rural women organised in farmers' and women's clubs to exchange knowledge on new forms of agriculture, preparation of new foods, furnishing of homes and managing homes, children and spouses under conditions of colonisation. Colonised women also organised in burial societies in the towns in order to ensure proper repatriation should they die in urban areas. These organisations were service and welfarist in orientation and intended to cushion women from the worst effects of colonisation such as physical, social and economic insecurity. It was only during the years of resistance to colonialism those coherent mass women's organisations and, eventually, women's movements emerged in many countries as part of the anti-colonial struggles.

Characteristics of a social movement

A social movement can be legal or illegal and may change in shape, size and areas of operation as it grows and becomes established and accepted. Social movements also differ according to their aspirations, goals and outcomes of their activities. According to Arbele (1966) the major types of social movements are transformative, reformist, redemptive and alterative movements. Social movements may, at different moments, incorporate the characteristics of transformative, reformist, redemptive or alterative movements.

How does the women's movement differ from other social movements?

The women's movement, unlike other social movements, explicitly addresses the problems of patriarchy in conjunction with or separately from other problems emanating from the operations of imperialism, capitalism, and racism, ethnic and other types of oppression. The women's movement also gives priority to women's concerns and interests, their standpoint in defining the world, its problems, and the solutions to the perceived problems. The women's movement regards women's opinions as legitimate, no less valid than those of men. It may undertake to address the structural and other inequalities between men and women, starting from the perspectives of different types of women. Globally, the women's movement is the only movement that has given primacy and validity to women's leadership and the more radical fragments of the movement have incorporated a consistent critique of patriarchy.

The shape, form and operation of the women's movement in Southern Africa

According to the research report, the women's movement in Southern Africa is quite heterogeneous and its shape and visibility varies depending on the country and issues in question. The movement is organised primarily through non-governmental organisations, most of them donor-funded, which champion visible social action around specific issues such as women and the law, women and business, women and politics, domestic and gender violence, among other issues. There are a few autonomous women's groups that fund some of their own activities but these are in the minority as indicated in the research report. Poor and working class women are also active in their trades unions, neighbourhood groups, rotating credit associations, market women's organisations, housing co-operatives and other organisations focusing on economic access, service and survival issues. In the rural areas, women organise in credit unions, farmers' groups and women's clubs affiliated to churches while political parties also organise rural women through branches and districts to secure food, land and other valued goods and services. Rural women sometimes feel sidelined by all the women's movements' initiatives which

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focus on legal issues some of which do not accord with their values and lived realities. Such women often fall under the operation of customary laws in rural areas, which middle class activist women in some Southern African countries do not often reach.

Functions, roles and responsibilities of the women's movement

The national, regional and international women's movement initially functioned as a movement that questions received wisdoms, ideas and assumptions about power and social organisation. It carved out new spaces, expanded and defended public and private space for women through questioning and challenging patriarchal privilege, recasting social questions about power and its control, economic rights and organisation and the raising new possibilities for organising social, economic and political space. It monitors abuses of women through practices such as pornography, trafficking, gender violence and gender discrimination in workplaces, ensuring that the gains made by women are not reversed as economic, social and political circumstances change. The women's movement has institutionalised, through the United Nations system, declarations and conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the world conferences on women held in Mexico, Denmark, Nairobi, Beijing and New York since 1975. While this has happened, there has been evidence of dissatisfaction over priorities as Third World women have argued that women from the developed countries have sidelined their priorities. In the Third World, state-based initiatives for women have also taken over some of the space previously occupied by the women's movement. Within the women's movement in Southern Africa, tensions have also arisen over the functions, roles and responsibilities of the women's movement as religious organisations and political parties have mobilised masses of women more successfully than the self-consciously feminist women's movement.

Discourses of the women's movement

The mobilisation of populations for independence in Southern Africa was accomplished through liberationist and nationalist dialogues and discourses. Production, distribution and delivery of the spoils of independence was articulated through a mixture of socialist, communalist and liberal, equal opportunity and market-linked language that was able to satisfy, in the short term, all possible sectors of populations, particularly the previously disadvantaged. The dominant discourses in the women's movement in the region have been those around civil rights incorporating freedom of movement, association, access to services such as health and education and good governance in which women are included. However, as poverty increased, the limits to these discourses have become evident, as inequalities by class, race and gender remained unchanged or increased. It has become more difficult for the women's movement to mobilise poor women and other oppressed groups through these equality-based discourses.

The limits to more radical discourses and the emergence of neo-liberalism

Alternative discourses that manifested themselves during the years of struggle for liberation soon got stifled as virtually all the countries in the region succumbed to structural adjustment programs in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, the hegemony of neo-liberal economics and the post-Washington Consensus. Radical women's struggles were blunted by the inclusion of political women associated with the liberation struggles into governments, the civil service and other organisations soon after independence in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and other countries. There was a perception that there was no alternative to the liberal discourses and their agenda in politics, economics and social organisation. The

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women's movement took a liberal turn and many feminists moved into state structures. HIV and AIDS emerged and the women's movement in Southern Africa failed to mount a coherent and credible response to the pandemic, which increasingly became feminised. The vibrancy of the women's movement waned as women became overburdened with care responsibilities while struggling to defend the spaces they had already won.

Factors militating against a vibrant women's movement in Southern Africa

The women's movement is facing a crisis of reproduction. It is not attracting or retaining a committed cadre of activists to replace and succeed the older women in the movement. It is not able to make a significant section of those women in the movement less opportunistic, careerist and more committed to the stated ideals of the movement. It has had to scale down many of its more radical demands and focus on reforms that are achievable. It has not been able to lobby, negotiate with or mobilise women to support the movement against government and state opposition to its demands. There is little coordination of the movement at national and regional levels, resulting in fragmentation and ineffectiveness in the pursuance, protection, challenging and spearheading of feminist demands at the national and regional level.

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Generational issues

Generational conflicts are one facet of the movement's lack of vibrancy. The conflicts between younger and older generations were observed and mentioned in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Botswana to name a few countries, as one of the problems sapping the women's movement's vibrancy. Generational conflicts are common in organisations and movements where the agenda has shifted and the legitimacy of the older generation is being questioned. In the roundtable, it may be necessary to deal with the issues by assessing whether the younger and older entrants to the movement have different and more radical visions of where the movement should go. The form and content of their conflicts should be analysed to understand their substantive significance.

Crisis and stagnation: building a broader and more inclusive women's movement

The existing women's movement has stagnated in most countries and now focuses on defending existing gains. In view of the existing political architecture, defending the gains that have been won is likely to present problems as poverty rates increase and donors focus on short-term and reformist issues. For example, it is not possible for the women's movement as presently structured, to extend its activities by spearheading, challenging and monitoring the abuse of the rights of women and general sexist abuse in Southern Africa. For a start, such activities would be premised on the existence of a vast network of women's organisations on the ground, reporting, networking and sounding the alarm when new types of abuses occur and to monitor compliance by the state and other players involved in extending and safeguarding women's rights.

Confronting difficulties and moving out of the comfort zone

The question of autonomy of the women's movement not only from state machineries but also from donors has to be addressed while at the same time dealing with issues of the terms and conditions for forging partnerships with states and donors. There is little reason to consider donors as benign entities from whom autonomy is taken as given while states are considered as entirely malevolent and unable to partner with women on defined terms.

Using HIV and AIDS as one of many possible entry points

HIV and AIDS present an ideal issue from which to engage different types of organisations, donors, state and government, civil society and private business. HIV and AIDS have touched the lives of almost all populations in Southern Africa. All these entities can benefit from the reduction of infection with HIV and the resultant erosion of human and other capital associated with AIDS.

In terms of the outcomes expected from the round table, there is evidence that the challenges facing the women's movement have developed from global economic arrangements also necessitates a more coherent strategy, incorporating a coherent economic, social and political critique of the national, regional and global environments.

Conclusion

Using the results of the research report and based on the challenges identified, the need for renewed commitment from the women's movement and the need to devise a revised plan of action, this paper suggests, as the way forward, the necessity to organise broadly in order to secure the participation of the majority of women in political, economic and social initiatives that address the feminist and other concerns of the women and men of Southern Africa. In terms of the outcomes expected from the round table, there is evidence that the challenges facing the women's movement have developed from global economic arrangements also necessitates a more coherent strategy, incorporating a coherent economic, social and political critique of the national, regional and global environments. The resultant plan of action needs to incorporate activities that address these issues and to renew the commitment of the women's movement to confronting these issues, which affect the majority of women and men in Southern Africa. In this respect, building consensus, developing common agenda and forging partnerships on specific issues with as many social groups as possible may help to revitalise the women's movement and broaden its base and effectiveness.

Introduction

The women's movement in Southern Africa exists side by side with other social movements. This paper will define the major concepts used throughout the discussion, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses and applicability. The paper also outlines and analyses the history, development, characteristics, shape, form, functions and responsibilities of the women's movement in Southern Africa. Those characteristics of the women's movement that distinguish it from other social movements will be described and the discourses associated with the women's movement will be outlined. The paper will then analyse critically, some of the salient issues raised in the research report, linking them to concepts and developments in the social and political contexts of the Southern African and other regions of the world. The paper addresses some of the issues that will be discussed during the round table, namely, generational issues, men's inclusion, autonomy from state/party and donor partners, the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS and the development of a common agenda for women.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Social movement

According to Smelser (1963) a social movement can be considered to be a collective attempt to further a common interest or secure a common goal outside the sphere of established institutions. Participants in social movements may work and be located within as well as established organisations, which may or may not allow them to pursue specific issues within the contexts of their everyday jobs or occupations. This definition is at variance with that adopted in the research report, which tends to consider only women working in the civil society sector as constituting part of the women's movement, which has the characteristics of a social movement. Thus, this definition would include women in political parties, religious organisations, business and other organisations outside the state as well as women who may be civil servants attempting to push the agenda identified by women within the organs of the state.

Women's movement

The women's movement is defined as a social movement constituting women who collectively decide to further interests specific to women, using perspectives that draw from and highlight their lived experiences. Women are not a homogeneous group in class, race, age and ethnic terms. Nevertheless, because of the pervasiveness of patriarchy in the economic, social and political spheres of life, women experience life differently from men even within their own class, age, race and ethnic groups. In many SADC countries, the majority of women operate in the spaces defined as private, resulting in their near-exclusion from spaces defined as public. As a result, women recognise and use the common experiences they have to organise collectively

to advocate their rights. As, indicated in the research report, not all women are opposed to patriarchy, racism, capitalism and classism. In Southern Africa, women have built up a movement in different locations although the research report tends to exclude women in women's wings of political parties, arguing that many do not have an autonomous agenda. Nevertheless, the international women's movement has accommodated women with different personal and political beliefs in order to build a viable global movement.

Feminism is a radical political movement that affirms and legitimises anti-sexist politics, accepting the oppressed as subjects in the world, legitimising their definitions of social reality as the starting point for collectively organising against all forms of domination to defend the interests of women and other oppressed groups.

Feminism

Feminism is a contested term in political vocabulary. However, feminism was originally devised as a term used by radical political women to refer to the collectively organised political struggle against sexist oppression for the benefit of all women AND other groups such as oppressed men. (hooks, 1984) Once the term was appropriated by the mainstream liberal women struggling for a diversity of interests such as equality with men in the wage labour force, equal opportunities in education and other services, it became less radical since many of these women did not embrace a critique of patriarchy, capitalism or class-based politics or economics. In the USA in particular, African American, Hispanic and other minority women eschewed the use of that term as a label for themselves because of their antagonism to the appropriation of the term by privileged white women whose politics did not reflect anti-racist, anti-capitalist and class-conscious perspectives. This issue is alluded to in the research report when it discusses the reluctance of some women who were interviewed during the fieldwork in Southern Africa, to identify themselves as feminists. This finding tallies with the observations of feminists elsewhere (hooks, 1984) who argue that middle class women, particularly whites, benefited from capitalism as it opened up new opportunities for them in the corporate world, the academic sector and in civil society as a result of the civil rights and women's movement struggles, negating and neutralising the radical content of feminism. As a result of the differentiation of women, middle class women narrowed the agenda of feminism to focus on issues such as sexual orientation, legal rights and ignored those issues that poor women prioritised, such as jobs, secure incomes and land rights.

Feminism is a radical political movement that affirms and legitimises anti-sexist politics, accepting the oppressed as subjects in the world, legitimising their definitions of social reality as the starting point for collectively organising against all forms of domination to defend the interests of women and other oppressed groups. Feminism recognises that patriarchy generates inequality between men and women and makes a commitment to organise to remove structural inequalities and discrimination against women and transform society. Within feminism, there are different perspectives and standpoints depending on the experiences of patriarchy by race, class and political orientation. According to this definition of feminism, it is not necessarily a struggle by women only since women do not share the same social and political status. In the research report, feminism concerns itself with gender discrimination and inequality. However, by the definition of feminism in this paper, feminism goes beyond struggling around gender discrimination and structural gender inequalities and embraces other aspects of inequality such as racial, economic and cultural inequalities that may exist at the levels of nations and internationally.

The definition in the research report which refers to feminist movement as reformist and as '...a movement to secure legal, economic and social equality for women, otherwise called a feminist movement....' (p12). This definition falls within the ambit of liberal feminist demands

with an equalitarian content but without reference to the political struggle necessary for such a movement to acquire a transformational rather than a reformist agenda.

Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism directs its energies towards struggles for equality between men and women. It is informed by analyses deriving from women's experiences in the liberal capitalist world where welfare states predominate and are able to provide minimum levels of survival to their populations. In these countries, liberal feminists' perspectives have focused on equality and equal opportunities within existing economic, political and social institutions, which are entrenched, accepted and hegemonic. Thus equal opportunity struggles in education, health, economic life and politics have dominated the liberal feminist agenda.

The discourses of liberal feminism are the most dominant internationally because of the hegemony, economic, political and ideological strength of the liberal economic and political agenda globally. Liberal feminism can have a positive impact especially on women's lives in the short term without necessarily challenging and eradicating systems of domination such as imperialism, capitalism, racism, class and gender discrimination. In many Third World countries, liberal feminism is attractive especially to privileged women because its agenda can be accommodated in diverse organisations particularly welfare-oriented ones. According to the research report, the bulk of women's organisations in Southern Africa take the liberal feminist perspective that stresses the equality of women with men within existing or reformed socio-economic gender structures

In many Third World countries, liberal feminism is attractive especially to privileged women because its agenda can be accommodated in diverse organisations particularly welfare-oriented ones.

Radical feminism

Radical feminism takes different shades and tends to be informed by the experiences of women who question the capitalist system and liberal democracy, which is hegemonic internationally. In the radical feminist camp are socialist and Marxist feminists as well as theorists amongst racial and other minorities in the USA and Europe. Radical feminism questions the hegemony of the dominant liberal feminist agenda because it ignores the lived experiences of colonised, previously enslaved, minority and other women living under conditions of poverty and economic underdevelopment globally. Their experiences of poverty, which afflicts the bulk of their populations, compel them to link their critique of patriarchy with a critique of imperialism and capitalism, which tends to be underplayed or ignored by liberal feminists. Radical feminism has been on the defensive since the break-up of the communist bloc and the achievement of national liberation in most countries of the world. The research report does not address this variant of feminism directly. It links radicalism in feminism with addressing patriarchy but never explicitly mentions imperialism or capitalism. The research report does discuss globalisation and structural adjustment without fleshing out the economic principles and assumptions underlying neo-liberal economics and the positions of men and women within it.

Is there an 'African Feminist' perspective?

In the light of the definitional issues raised above, it is questionable whether there is such a perspective, as indicated in the research report. In Africa, women and men have different perspectives based on their race, class, age and other characteristics. Their politics are divergent ranging from liberal, Marxist and eclectic. Many do not identify themselves as 'feminists' because

of their objection to the dominant strands of feminism exhibited by predominantly middle class women in the state, party and civil sectors. Religious and ethnic issues also inform African men and women's self-identification and politics, resulting in a divergence of political positions and practices on major issues such as reproductive rights, sexuality, the family, economic and political rights. For example, in South Africa, women and men were and are still divided by ethnic and other political beliefs around the issue of former Vice President Zuma, who was accused of rape of a woman who is an activist on issues of AIDS.

Other women and men supported the woman who accused former Vice-President Zuma of rape, citing the general scepticism and disbelief that is directed at women when they go public about having been raped, especially if the accused men are powerful.

Some men and women, particularly amongst the Zulu ethnic group as well as in the youth and trades union movements supported former Vice President Zuma, alleging that the accusation was calculated to derail his bid for presidential succession when President Mbeki's term of office expires. Other women and men supported the woman who accused former Vice-President Zuma of rape, citing the general scepticism and disbelief that is directed at women when they go public about having been raped, especially if the accused men are powerful. In Malawi, there are major divisions between and within men and women's ranks on presidential politics and power sharing on ethnic and party lines. Even in the pro-democracy movements, within and between men and women's ranks, many hold different political beliefs, as is the case in Zimbabwe. Given the diversity of Africa politically, socially and in religion and ethnic bases, there is no unitary 'African feminist' perspective that is identifiable.

This is not necessarily a negative state of affairs because there is no particular benefit to be derived from defining theoretically a unitary identity and perspective that is not grounded in reality. However, in the African intellectual sector, feminist scholars such as the Women and Law in Southern Africa network, Mc Fadden (2002) and Mama (1999) have influenced discourses about feminism in Africa through their work on the social and economic conditions in which African women operate and on the legal and policy environments in which women in Africa manoeuvre in their struggles for human rights and dignity. They have also explored the epistemology of gender, the state in Africa and the places and possibilities for women's struggles under different state structures. The lived experiences of men and women in Africa show that there are major divergences between and within groups on major issues such as race, ethnicity, religion, politics, economic and other issues. This is not peculiar to Africa and has already been discussed in connection with the USA where mainstream liberal white feminism is not considered legitimate by significant sections of minority and poor communities. The challenge is to create space and recognise the possibilities for a variety of women and men to produce work and participate in initiatives that, regardless of their positionalities, cumulatively, make a positive contribution to the struggles for the social, economic, political and cultural rights of the oppressed peoples of Africa and beyond.

Origins and history of the women's movement in Southern Africa.

The women's movement in Southern Africa originated from the organised group activities of women in various parts of the region. As indicated in the research report, while there might have been women's initiatives to support and advance their causes and interests in pre-colonial kin-based societies in the region, there is scant documentation of these initiatives in most of these societies that depended on oral communications. Kin and clan wives, daughters and mothers had organised interests in most of the societies in the SADC region but these interests were not

organised and pursued across clan and kin groups. It was only after colonisation as kin groups, chiefdoms and kingdoms were linked through common experiences such as colonialism that researchers are able to identify documented cases of women organising across kin groups in heterogeneous and colonised societies in order to advance their interests. The experience of colonisation created specific problems and interests for women of the colonised groups, providing a new basis for organisation across clans, chiefdoms and kingdoms. Labour migrancy imposed heavier responsibilities on women in rural areas while in urban areas, sex-based differentials in pay, education, health and other services created disadvantage for women, necessitating their organisation to provide welfare for women in distress and support for urban and rural women trying to cope with the new circumstances created by colonialism.

The research report also described how women also organised to take advantage of new opportunities created by colonialism so that religious women organised as mothers in unions, urban women organised as homemakers and rural women organised in farmers' and women's clubs to exchange knowledge on new forms of agriculture, preparation of new foods, furnishing of homes and managing homes, children and spouses under conditions of colonisation. Women also organised in burial societies in the towns in order to ensure proper repatriation should they die in urban areas. These organisations were service and welfarist in orientation and were intended to cushion women from the worst effects of colonisation such as physical, social and economic insecurity.

Colonisation stratified these service and welfare organisations according to the occupations and social standing of the women involved in them. Southern Africa experienced the most intense forms of settler colonisation so the women's movement was shaped the character and functions of women's organisations and the women's movement. Racial and class discrimination shaped resulted in the organisation of women by race, resulting in white women forming organisations directed at furthering their causes. These causes included the reception, induction and support of new settler women into the colonies. Amongst the colonised women, the women's movement focused on caring and support for each other especially in urban areas and foreign lands because women, settler and colonised, were a minority in urban settler societies. Colonised women were migrants from rural areas and other countries and needed to forge strong links with each other to survive the male-dominated urban areas.

Race and class discrimination also produced a specific form of women's organisation amongst settler and colonised women who had some education and skills and/or whose spouses were important colonial functionaries. Thus, District Commissioners' wives, wives of religious men such as deacons and preachers, teachers, doctors, policemen and civil servants engaged in organised philanthropy directed at colonised women and girls, teaching them deportment, western cooking, cleaning and general housekeeping. In education, women's religious orders focused on educating girls amongst the colonised peoples so that these girls could become models and leaders of women amongst the colonised.

The research report also observes that the organisations of women did not necessarily constitute a coherent feminist movement in many of the SADC countries that were colonised because there were divisions amongst women by race, class, ethnicity and age, resulting in the fragmentation of interest. While the research report did not dwell on race issues to a significant extent, it is important to recognise that there were racial and class differences amongst women in settler

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It must be noted that not all colonised women were willing to actively fight colonialism although they recognised and resented its negative effects on their lives. Similarly, amongst the settler women, not all the organisations of women actively supported or acted against race and class discrimination even though they benefited from it.

communities as well as amongst the colonised. For example, women of the settler societies were granted suffrage much earlier than women of the colonised. In Southern Rhodesia for example, white women were granted the right to vote by 1919 after the First World War, resulting in a different political focus for them in comparison to the black women who only won the right to vote in 1980. Settler women were also stratified by ethnicity so that there were subtle divisions between women of Jewish, Greek, English, German, Scottish, Afrikaner and other ethnicities within the settler groups. It was the colonised women who can be considered to have organised beyond their single issues and interests by class, ethnicity and age to recognise that colonised women, regardless of their class, age and ethnicity and mainly because of their race, had common interests. The common interest was to ameliorate the worst effects of or eradicate colonialism. Thus, Christian women organised under the ambit of religion to pursue women's interests such as the right to wage jobs, equal pay, education and health. It must be noted that not all colonised women were willing to actively fight colonialism although they recognised and resented its negative effects on their lives. Similarly, amongst the settler women, not all the organisations of women actively supported or acted against race and class discrimination even though they benefited from it. Possibilities for movement building were limited by the racial policies of these settler and colonial governments. Thus, movement building could actively occur only amongst the colonised whose numbers were large and whose grievances were pronounced, sustained and resented.

The characteristics of a social movement.

A social movement can be legal or illegal and may change in shape, size and areas of operation as it grows and becomes established and accepted. Social movements also differ according to their aspirations, goals and outcomes of their activities. According to Arbele (1966) the major types of social movements are transformative, reformist, redemptive and alterative movements. Social movements may, at different moments, incorporate the characteristics of transformative, reformist, redemptive or alterative movements.

Transformative movements tend to be millenarian, sometimes violent, long term in their orientation to change and activities. They aim to transform society from one form to a very different one usually by changing the structures, values and behaviours of people. They question the major tenets of the social structures, values and behaviours in specific societies. Revolutionary movements have such transformative goals to change economic, social and economic systems. In the women's movement, it is only a small section of the radical feminist women associated with liberation movements and Communist parties who have retained a strong transformative thrust in their feminism, going beyond opposition to patriarchy and addressing broader economic issues in conjunction with workers' and peasants' organisations. The broader women's movement has tended to focus on equal rights with men and social rights and political rights on par with men without necessarily venturing into a critique of the architecture of economic oppression at national, regional and international levels. The broader economic oppression of many peoples of the world is taken for granted and treated as the background within which women will wage struggles against patriarchy.

Reformist movements tend to be focused on changing aspects of society's thinking, behaviours and values without necessarily rejecting the structural bases of social, economic and political organisation nationally and internationally. Political parties and pressure groups often organise

through social movements to change political regimes that are dictatorial and undemocratic but they may not necessarily desired to change the structural bases of their societies, economies and politics. Thus, the focus on getting women elected into existing political structures, training women for leadership in business, academia, politics and other areas as they are presently structured, falls within this paradigm. Thus, reformist movements may incorporate or condone the very values and qualities and structures that they criticise. The research report located the women's movement within this reformist paradigm.

Redemptive movements tend to focus on personal salvation for individuals, placing the onus on the individuals to change themselves by adopting specific spiritual and religious beliefs and behaviours. Such movements tend to be future-oriented, religious and spiritual. Many revivalist religious movements have this focus and they attract many women because they pose salvation as an individual issue, doing away with the question of building a movement of and for women or linking women with others in similar situations. Such movements also manage to diffuse gender issues by displacing them into the hereafter or freezing them in their existing states or demonising gender struggles so that they do not become a problem in building movements that include both men and women. The research report was quite dismissive of such movements citing their lack of autonomous women's or feminist agenda as the reason for such a stance. This issue merits further discussion during the roundtable.

Alterative movements focus on the analysis and change of specific behaviours, which might create problems for individuals in their social settings. Such movements as Alcoholics and Gamblers Anonymous, Women Who Love Too Much and others like them do not necessarily question or reject the values, thinking and behaviours of the larger society in which they operate. These types of movements have proved very attractive to women as attested by an avalanche of books on how to change behaviours in order to accomplish specific goals such as catching a man, becoming a better mother, wife, to get rich and attract more opportunities etc. These movements may actually be incorporated into existing social movements and liberal feminist organisations. Thus, it is not uncommon to find women in the liberal feminist movement swapping alterative literature on many topics. This issue also needs to be tabled for discussion in the round table.

As indicated in the research report, social movements emerge when there are conducive structural conditions for their sustenance. For example, when there are no regulations or laws against their existence, social movements emerge as a result of the pursuance of common interests by groups of people. There are also conditions of social strain or conflicts in many societies that may result in the emergence of social movements. For example, when there are inequalities and discrimination by race, class, gender and ethnicity, social movements may emerge along the lines of the issues perceived to be generating conflict. In addition, people's beliefs about desired ways and forms of social organisation and existence may generate social movements. A good example is the environmental movement, which is informed by a desire to co-exist in a non-destructive way with the natural environment. Where stresses and strains already exist, catalysing incidents may accelerate the emergence of a social movement. For example, in the USA of the nineteen sixties, the refusal by Rosa Parks, a civil rights activist, to move to the back of a bus, precipitated the expansion of a small civil rights agitation into an international social movement.

There are also conditions of social strain or conflicts in many societies that may result in the emergence of social movements. For example, when there are inequalities and discrimination by race, class, gender and ethnicity, social movements may emerge along the lines of the issues perceived to be generating conflict.

Movements may contain people with different social, economic and political beliefs who belong to different races, classes, ethnicities, ages and genders. One or more specific interests and goals unite many tendencies and the adherents of a social movement.

While grievances, beliefs and structural conditions for the emergence of a social movement may be present, it is necessary for a focus, leadership and resources to coordinate and sustain social movement. Historically, there have been riots, rebellions and skirmishes directed against established authority but they have not necessarily resulted in the building of viable social movements. For example, in most of Southern Africa, there were protests, resistance and riots when colonisation occurred but these events did not necessarily generate social movements. It was only when a layer of people with skills, resources and who were able to formulate thinking and interest and mobilise others in disseminating their ways of perceiving the world that liberation movements emerged.

Social movements can be created by groups of people who think differently and are able to disseminate their ideas amongst others. Even when there is no visible dissatisfaction, a movement can emerge by interesting others in their way of thinking. For example, the modern international women's movement emerged from a situation where many women did not question patriarchy and male dominance. Social movements exist side by side with other movements. They might also exist in contention with state and other dominant structures. Movements may contain people with different social, economic and political beliefs who belong to different races, classes, ethnicities, ages and genders. One or more specific interests and goals unite many tendencies and the adherents of a social movement.

Social movements may change over time as their social, economic and political context changes. For example, the attainment of independence in many African countries provided the conditions for the emergence of stronger and less fragmented human rights and women's movements as racial, class and ethnic divisions became less salient in the nation-building projects of many newly independent countries. These countries such as Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania stressed class struggle, solidarity with peoples that were still colonised and the building of nations on the basis of humanism and observance of the rights of diverse peoples. Thus, many liberation movements contained different political tendencies and subsumed them under the project of gaining independence. In the aftermath of independence, as these movements such as the People's Movement, under the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, became established political parties they became more bureaucratised, hierarchical and rigid. These tendencies towards oligarchy have been noted by scholars of organisations such as Michels in his elaboration of the Iron Law of Oligarchy. Once movements change into bureaucratic organisations, their structures and functioning changes as the fluidity in decision-making, building of consensus and negotiation is replaced by rules and regulations that tend to be less flexible and accommodating of different tendencies in these organisations that originate from movements. The changes in these organisations are quite common as leaders become entrenched and organisations institutionalised. Both members and leaders desire rules, predictability and need structures within which they can contest and forge some legitimacy, acquire or earn resources and power from other organisations and movements and the state.

Social movements succeed because of their flexibility and ability to accommodate diverse opinions and to subsume specific interests in favour of one or two issues that are deemed most important. This flexibility may disadvantage the less dominant fragments of movements whose specific interests may be swamped by those of the stronger members of social movements. Again liberation movements are a good example because within them, women's interests tended to be sidelined

in favour of the broader anti-colonial struggle. The South West African People's Organisation shut down the Women's Voice because it was perceived to be interfering with the broader struggle. In these circumstances, women in these liberation movements did not have dominant voices, skills and resources that would have enabled them to contest this definition of priorities in liberation movements. Nevertheless, the contestation of priorities is often a problem in many social movements and may lead to splits and factionalism as the resentful movement partners feel disadvantaged or sidelined by the stronger segments. This issue will be examined in the context of the discussion of the women's movement and its composition by class, race, age and ethnicity.

Movements may also grow from organisations, which are thwarted legally or in other ways. Liberation movements such as the ANC of South Africa, SWAPO of Namibia and ZANU and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in Zimbabwe started off as membership organisations that depended on dues from these members. As these organisations were banned by the colonial states, these political parties changed into mass organisations by mobilising large sections of the colonised populations who had witnessed and resented the banning of these parties that fought for the social, political and economic rights of the colonised. These social movements with guerrilla sections waged armed struggles with the support of large sections of their populations, most of whom were not dues paying members. Mass movements do not necessarily depend solely on dues for their support and sustenance but also on the perceived legitimacy of their causes, which generate material, social and political support for them beyond the affected populations and members. Thus, the environmental movement started off with leadership from idealists from different countries and the popularity and perceived legitimacy of their cause generates support from other social movements and organisations, which might not necessarily prioritise issues of the environment. Today, peoples who feel that their rights to their environment are threatened can depend on the support of the international environmental movement despite not being members of these organisations or paying dues to them. Ba Sarwa in Botswana can and have called upon the assistance of international environmental movements for support in their struggles with the state in Botswana.

Social movements therefore can be quite fluid in form and content, choosing and prioritising issues according to the social and political realities of their times and may not necessarily retain the same organisational character. This fluidity is useful in keeping movements responsive to issues as they arise but at the same time, the stratification and power dynamics in movements can lead to the prioritisation of the interests of more powerful segments of social movements over those of less powerful actors in these movements. This is a problematic issue for the women's movement as currently constituted because it appears to have become frozen at the level of defending the existing gains achieved through wars and struggles for national liberation and independence in countries such as Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Lesotho. This issue will be discussed in the round table with regard to privileged women, donors and state parties and their participation in sapping or invigorating the women's movement.

How does the women's movement differ from other social movements?

The women's movement shares many of the characteristics of other social movements. It includes many kinds of women, rural and urban, young and old, poor and not so poor, educated and not so educated, white, black and women of different ethnicities, religious, and political inclinations and beliefs. The characteristics of the movement especially in Southern Africa with

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its history of race, class, gender and ethnic strife incorporates these issues into the movements in different countries. The women's movements in the countries of Southern Africa have been shaped by their history, social and economic contexts as outlined in the research report. It is important to note the differences between the women's movement and other social movements in Southern Africa and elsewhere.

Unlike other social movements, the women's movements have struggled for visibility and social power because their potential power base, members and supporters are primarily women who comprise the bulk of the disadvantaged groups such as the poor, the illiterate and the least influential members of their societies.

The women's movement, unlike other social movements, may explicitly address the problems of patriarchy in conjunction with or separately from other problems emanating from the operations of imperialism, capitalism, and racism, ethnic and other types of oppression. The women's movement also gives priority to women's concerns and interests, their standpoint in defining the world, its problems, and the solutions to the perceived problems. The women's movement regards women's opinions as legitimate as and no less valid than those of men. It may undertake to address the structural and other inequalities between men and women, starting from the perspective of different types of women. Globally, the women's movement is the only movement that has given primacy and validity to women's leadership and it has incorporated a consistent critique of patriarchy.

In Southern Africa, the women's movements have struggled for equal standing in diverse fora and initiatives such as independence negotiations in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique. Unlike other social movements, the women's movements have struggled for visibility and social power because their potential power base, members and supporters are primarily women who comprise the bulk of the disadvantaged groups such as the poor, the illiterate and the least influential members of their societies. While pro-democracy, liberation and other movements can and have drawn on many and different types of men and women from the professions, the clergy, the educated and the business community, women's movements cannot depend on the support of a broad range of skilled professional men and women because the bulk of men are actively united against, indifferent or ambivalent to the critique of patriarchy and privilege inherent in the very existence of women's movements, no matter how mild and conservative their analysis of patriarchy, economic and political structures might be. Thus, even amongst men, support for the women's movements in different countries is very low and is at best, opportunistic and at worst, exploitative. Amongst women, support for the women's movements is very common but it tends to manifest itself more markedly when the discourses and issues that are in the public domain at specific historical moments resonate with the interests of a broad range of women. It is important to understand the diversity of the women's movements and the discourses within them in Southern Africa as a way of re-invigorating the women's movement in the region.

The shape, form and operation of the women's movement in Southern Africa

The women's movement in Southern Africa is quite heterogeneous and its shape and visibility varies depending on the country and issues in question. However, from the research report, it is quite clear that class, age, religion, location with regard to the state, the economy and in physical terms stratify the women's movement, whether rural or urban. The research report indicated that the movement in almost all the countries that were visited, is organised primarily through non-governmental organisations, most of them donor-funded, which champion visible social action around specific issues such as women and the law, women and business, women and pol-

itics, domestic and gender violence, among other issues. There are a few autonomous women's groups that fund some of their activities but these are in the minority as indicated in the research report.

The women's movements are also different in terms of their visibility, spheres of activity and influence on the populace, the state, donor agencies and other women's organisations. Small rural and grassroots organisations in Zambia are less visible and not as well connected to donors as the urban ones. In Botswana, the research report indicated that there were strong feelings among some rural women, that the women's movement had become urbanised. The conditions for the building of a vibrant women's movement, namely, generalised and sustained grievances, exist amongst the women in Southern Africa. Because colonialism, imperialism and racism were such over-arching facts of everyday life amongst women, the most prominent segments of the women's movement in Southern Africa were necessarily tied to the struggles for national liberation. Once the political parties and liberation movements gained power, became entrenched and institutionalised, women in the political parties became part of the established power structures, albeit as junior partners, and were perceived by women in the civil society sector to be party to the problems created or sustained by the inaction of these parties for women.

Educated, middle class and entrepreneurial women who were within as well as outside the state-dominated sector such as the civil service or in political parties and in the civil sector, secured donor funding or used their own resources for championing the interests of women after independence. Many women's organisations and the women's movements in different countries championed access struggles in health, education, housing and other sectors. In these endeavours, they frequently found themselves in direct cooperation with women in the government and in the civil service. When resources started dwindling in the late nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties and austerity measures were as part of economic structural adjustment programs adopted by many governments in Southern Africa, conflict between women activists or professionals within and outside the state and political sector emerged. The women allied to the state and dominant political systems were perceived to be delinquent, disinterested from or incapable of championing women's interests and delivering services to women in an acceptable manner and form. These struggles centred around which women considered themselves to be more attuned to and able to defend women's interests in times of economic austerity and which ones were more feminist than others. Thus, women in the political parties whether ruling or opposition, felt that they were being stigmatised and labelled as 'sell-outs' in struggle language.

Poor and working class women are also active in their trades unions, neighbourhood groups, rotating credit associations, market women's organisations, housing co-operatives and other organisations focusing on economic access, service and survival issues. They are the women who often fall foul of the law in many Southern African countries as they contest estates, build housing in slum areas, often illegally, run markets in undesignated areas, sometimes engaging in sex work in public areas, brewing and selling beer, food and other commodities in residential areas not designated for such business according to bye-laws and regulations in urban, peri-urban areas and rural areas. Some of these women belong to political parties and pressure groups while others organise themselves in small groups and work to further their interests outside large organisations. The research report has placed the women in the women's wings of political parties outside the women's movement, arguing that they do not have autonomy and do not pursue

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issues specific to women. This is not necessarily the case because many of these women join the women's wings of political parties to further their interests as women who need market space, access to residential land, funding for small businesses and political offices and other resources which they secure through their political parties. These women often feel short-changed by both the state and the women operating within it and by the women's organisations in the civil sector because their issues around residential land, produce and other markets, housing and health are not usually taken up effectively by these women. Therefore, it may not be justified to dismiss such women as falling outside the women's movement since they too advocate agenda specific to women in ways ranging from the conservative to the radical.

In the rural areas, women organise in credit unions, farmers' groups and women's clubs affiliated to churches while political parties also organise rural women through branches and districts to secure food, land and other valued goods and services. Rural women sometimes feel sidelined by all the women's movements' initiatives which focus on legal issues some of which do not accord with their values and lived realities. Such women often fall under the operation of customary laws in rural areas, which middle class activist women in some Southern African countries do not often reach.

These issues have been raised in the research report and they merit critical analysis in this paper as well as in the round table, given the stratification of the women's movement in Southern Africa. An analysis of the functions, roles and responsibilities as well as the discourses of the women's movement will help to disentangle the different approaches to action, their assumptions and the consequences for activism and effective participation by a broad range of women in Southern Africa.

Functions, roles and responsibilities of the women's movement

The international women's movement initially functioned as a movement that questions received wisdoms, ideas and assumptions about power and social organisation. In this respect, it was instrumental in carving out new spaces and expanding public and private space for women through questioning and challenging patriarchal privilege, recasting social questions about power and its control, economic rights and organisation and the raising new possibilities for organising social, economic and political space. The women's movement has defended the spaces that women have carved out for themselves in reproductive rights and monitored the abuses of women through practices such as pornography, trafficking, gender violence and gender discrimination in workplaces. The women's movement has also taken a monitoring role to ensure that the gains made by women are not reversed as economic, social and political circumstances change. The gains made by women have been institutionalised through the United Nations system through conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the world conferences on women held in Mexico, Denmark, Nairobi, Beijing and New York since 1975.

However, these gains by the international women's movement have tended to reflect the interests and concerns of the dominant and privileged western women's agenda, which has been liberal in orientation. It has not engaged significantly with the concerns of women from the Third World who have often had to develop alternative spaces and structures to advocate their interests. For example, Development Alternatives for a New Era (DAWN) was developed as a reac-

tion to the exclusion or marginalisation of the concerns of Third World Women in international for a. The unease with donors expressed in the research report speaks to the ‘domestication’ of the political and social issues that are of concern to women in Southern Africa through prioritisation of short-term, safe and non-radical gender issues that the women’s movement is not comfortable with.

The experiences of women in unified Germany have been very instructive in this regard because they exemplify the tensions that exist not only between women in developed and underdeveloped countries and but also between women of different classes within specific countries and regions. these tensions were evident in western Germany, a more affluent, liberal capitalist environment, where the women’s movement has struggled mainly outside the state to secure equal rights with men while in socialist and poorer eastern Germany, state sponsored feminism had created structural social support for women enabling them to participate in wage work in large numbers and to enjoy generous maternity leave and other benefits such as child care. The reunification of Germany created major problems for women from eastern Germany because they had not had much experience with struggles outside the state to secure women’s rights. Insertion into a market economy with market-based mechanisms for support set back the participation of eastern German women in the economy and politics and rolled back the political gains they had made under socialism. The numbers of women in parliament declined and unemployment increased.

Women from western Germany were still struggling for rights to abortion while eastern German women had already been accorded these rights, which they subsequently lost with reunification. Struggles outside the state also delayed access to many services and the enjoyment of rights by western German women. Thus women in unified Germany, with interests in different areas, often found it difficult to unite around common issues because eastern German women had to struggle for rights to employment, jobs and incomes outside the state and under conditions of discrimination by ‘western’ German society. Western German women in turn, focused on rights to abortion and other issues which eastern German women had taken for granted under socialism. Under such conditions, women’s movements would and should struggle to build bridges between women and their different interests in order to strengthen the rights of all women and create bonds with other groups such as workers, youths and others.

In Southern Africa, state-based feminism has been evident as indicated in the research report. Through donor funding, state initiatives have created mechanisms for representing women’s interests in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and other SADC countries, stealing the thunder from the fragments of the women’s movement operating outside the state. In some respects, the state took on the responsibilities at least in theory, for safeguarding and delivering rights to women. In some instances, as observed in the research report, this process was not very effective as there were insufficient resources, competence and skills in the state machineries to perform this role. However, this involvement of state machineries effectively demobilised the women’s movement, resulting in laxity in monitoring and ensuring that social and political rights were maintained or expanded. The movement of politically experienced women into the government and state sectors curtailed their effectiveness since they had to operate under bureaucratic conditions in very hierarchical structures while in the civil sector, idealism prevailed and many fragments of the women’s movement had little experience with pragmatic negotiation and implementation of common programs to further broad-based women’s interests.

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Thus, the possibilities for advancing the cause of women is complicated by the fact that those organisations that can mobilise women across class, race and ethnic divides tend to be less radical in advancing, protecting and monitoring the rights of women while those that are more elitist and radical with regard to women's rights do not have the capacity to reach a wide range of women and to mobilise them to advance and defend their rights.

Thus, only the political parties and the religious movements have undertaken the function of mobilising the broad range of women, poor, middle class and wealthy, educated and not so educated, old and young. Both of these are very hierarchical and rigid in their functioning with strong traditions of excluding women from leadership positions despite the predominance of women in these organisations. This is a very problematic issue in the Southern African women's movement because the more vocal and visible non-governmental women's organisations that are not religious or affiliated to political parties do not have the same breadth of membership although they have more radical ideological and social stances and activities to tackle discrimination against women. Thus, the possibilities for advancing the cause of women is complicated by the fact that those organisations that can mobilise women across class, race and ethnic divides tend to be less radical in advancing, protecting and monitoring the rights of women while those that are more elitist and radical with regard to women's rights do not have the capacity to reach a wide range of women and to mobilise them to advance and defend their rights.

The discourses in the women's movement

The dominant discourses in the women's movement in the region have been those around civil rights incorporating freedom of movement, association, access to services such as health and education and good governance in which women are included. These demands have been met to some extent as education, health and service delivery has improved in most of the countries of Southern Africa except those such as Mozambique and Angola, which have experienced prolonged military conflicts. While the mobilisation of populations for independence in Southern Africa was accomplished through liberationist and nationalist dialogues and discourses, production, distribution and delivery of the goods of independence was articulated through a mixture of socialist, communalist and liberal, equal opportunity and market-linked language that was able to satisfy, in the short term, all possible sectors of populations, particularly the previously disadvantaged.

This mixed discourse worked up to a point, as many independent countries were able to focus on welfarist redistribution with very little attention to the production issues. Thus, within a decade of independence, many countries with non-diverse economies such as Zambia which depended on copper and Tanzania on sisal, found themselves in trouble as production failed to match redistribution and indebtedness and donor-dependence increased. Service delivery faltered and poor people received less from the state for their taxes. Access and equality receded even further under these conditions, resulting in some disillusionment with the women's and other social movements, which were unable to halt or oppose the emerging neo-liberal policy agenda.

The welfare orientation of the post-independence era in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa, to mention a few countries, afforded the opportunity for the educated segment of the women's movement to function effectively in this liberal equal opportunity discourse that most of them had been schooled in the nineteen seventies and eighties as the European and USA mainstream liberal feminist movements grew in international prominence. This discourse informed and shaped the terms of the mainstream international women's movement by focusing on access to services and equal rights for women with men. Given the insecurity in access to food, education, health and other services, this discourse could be difficult to manage since women and men are predominantly in the categories of poor people in Southern Africa. Therefore, while this discourse was necessary in order to avoid the previous problem of sidelin-

ing women's concerns, it was not sufficient to ensure equal access to services for women without at least recognising the need for addressing access for poor men and boys too. This partly explains why liberal equal access feminist discourse focuses on legal, social and political rights which depend on changing the laws, rules for admission in public institutions, buildings, funds and other resources, activities that are relatively easy to accomplish in a short time to produce visible results and gain legitimacy.

However, ensuring equal access by sex in poverty situations where for example, in the average SADC country, poverty rates for men stand at 40% and those for women at 60% means that any activism on poverty must recognise the dire situations of poor men. Often, in these situations, the discourse of equal access and opportunities is grafted into existing situations of structural inequality and poverty, as is the case in Southern Africa. At the bottom end, equal access for poor women and girls often means equal access to poor schools, health services, jobs, housing and other services. At the top end, equal access for women means equal access to schooling, health, housing and other services enjoyed by privileged men, usually but not exclusively white in countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia which gained independence later than others in Southern Africa. This, the quality of access and equality for women with men is very different at the top and bottom ends of the social, economic and political hierarchies of privilege.

This qualitative difference in the content of access and equality explains the resentment of poor rural and urban women towards the elite women in the region's women's movement. The types of activities involved in equal rights struggles involving lobbying based on education, literacy and technical competence immediately casts middle class and educated women in the roles of leaders and spokespersons, relegating the poor and less schooled women to the roles of followers. The fact that these discourses of equal rights are articulated mainly through newspapers, books, radio, television, pamphlets and public meetings in societies that are very patriarchal obviously disadvantages those women who cannot read and write well, those with no credentials from educational and technical institutions, those who have no public speaking experience and confidence and those who do not have opportunities to be in the public domain in their own right.

The individual nature of social and political rights, rituals and practices also fragments women's efforts, privileging individual achievement and competition over co-operation and collective activities. In schooling, one is certified individually and in politics, people vote individually and are elected individually. Health is increasingly conceptualised as an individual issue regardless of the role of others in availing or denying access to the social, economic and political ingredients necessary for ensuring health. The concepts of liberal political discourse such as freedom, equality and liberty are class-linked concepts, which assume that individuals possess the capacities, have opportunities and control the space needed to exercise the freedoms and rights. The assumption in these terms and concepts that underpin the discourses of equal opportunities is that life as it is lived by the privileged is what all other people have to aim for and emulate. Thus, while poor people might aspire to acquire the wealth of the rich, they also need to interrogate the practices, rules and contexts within which this wealth acquisition occurs. Thus, for the women's movement, this issue is very problematic because equal rights discourses have very obvious limitations once the small surpluses have been redistributed and in the market economies of Southern Africa, poverty is more widely distributed than wealth even amongst men, making the equality discourse as a stand-alone discourse very difficult to pursue in the long term.

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Thus, the equal access discourse has been dominant, it has not been sufficient to mobilise the bulk of poor women who are the most obvious beneficiaries of women's struggles in the social, economic and political sectors. Alternative discourses have tended to be muted by the hegemony of liberal, market philosophies and liberal women's movement discourses emanating from welfarist social and economic contexts within capitalist countries. In countries that are poverty-stricken and with little room for welfare capitalism, these discourses usually begin to sound hollow when poverty increases as has happened in Southern Africa. When the discourses fail to match activity and achievement, the vibrancy and credibility of the equality movement is brought into question.

These trade, labour and economic policies led to massive retrenchment and unemployment amongst the working classes especially men and women who worked in the factories and men in the agricultural, manufacturing and mining sectors.

The limits to more radical discourses and the emergence of neo-liberalism

Alternative discourses that manifested themselves during the years of struggle for liberation soon got muted as virtually all the countries in the region succumbed to structural adjustment programs in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, the hegemony of neo-liberal economics and the post-Washington Consensus. Radical women's struggles were blunted by the inclusion of political women associated with the liberation struggles into governments, the civil service and other organisations soon after independence in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and other countries. There was a perception that there was no alternative to the liberal discourses and their agenda in politics, economics and social organisation.

In addition, radical action was foreclosed by the problems of implementation of alternative economics since most of the parties in power were not able or willing to negotiate alternative economic, social and political practices especially in the nineteen sixties and seventies. Experiments with forms of communalism failed in Tanzania and in Zambia and Mozambique, economic support for and solidarity with liberation movements sapped these economies resulting in economic difficulties. By the nineteen eighties, the window of opportunity to alternative discourses and practices was closing as neo-liberal economics began to gain strength.

In the nineteen nineties, the strength of neo-liberalism globally was evident in politics, economics, governance and social practice in general. This shift manifested itself in the terrain of discourse that stressed individual endeavour and achievement, entrepreneurialism and competition, moving the discourse from large-scale issues of economic, social and political structures to individual advancement. The reformist economics of the neo-liberals articulated ideas of free trade, open labour and capital markets. The emphasis on liberalisation of trade and opening up of markets increased competition drove down the costs of labour through casual, seasonal, contract and short-term employment. These trade, labour and economic policies led to massive retrenchment and unemployment amongst the working classes especially men and women who worked in the factories and men in the agricultural, manufacturing and mining sectors. The scaling down of state structures increasing the costs of services in health and education, causing phenomenal expansion in the informal sector and reproductive activities associated with care for people affected and infected with HIV and AIDS. Wealth shifts occurred in favour of big business and poverty also increased as the HIV and AIDS pandemic gained momentum in Southern Africa.

The women's movement was unable to mount a coherent response to resist these economic developments because there was little competence in issues of the economy in the movement.

Apart from documenting the effects of structural adjustment programs, there was little capacity in the women's movement to mobilise women around the defence of jobs, to mount a critique of neo-liberal economics and their impact on the majority of women who became increasingly disempowered, impoverished and overburdened with reproductive labour. The labour movement had already been weakened by the assault from big multinational and transnational business entities seeking access to cheap resources, labour, markets and profit. Growing poverty sapped the strength of many social movements as jobless growth occurred in many SADC economies such as that of South Africa. Southern Africa is riddled with some of the highest social inequalities in income and wealth and these inequalities fuel social and political violence. For example, South Africa has some of the highest rape incidences in the world while crime and violence against women and children in South Africa is also very high. Thus, gross inequalities have led to lack of social cohesion within and outside the women's movement and fuelled HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa. In this context, the women's movement lagged behind other social movements in organising women and men to mount joint or sole initiatives to defend jobs, land and other economic resources that women needed to safeguard their livelihoods.

Women who had previously operated in the state sector as well as newly qualified women, moved into the private sector to earn better incomes and to operate in the non-governmental sector where discourses around democratic governance were growing. Discourses of multi-partyism and good governance were gaining ground as pro-democracy movements received generous donor support. The women's movement also participated in these governance initiatives, training women for political participation amidst growing poverty and social distress. The activism in the non-governmental sector brought women face-to-face with a diversity of tendencies in the social movements they had to co-operate with. For example, they were often helpless in the face of patriarchal behaviours and practices in the pro-democracy movements that were supposed to campaign for better governance than was in existence in the state sector from which many women activists had fled. The shrinkage of jobs in the private sector and the state sector brought many women into the non-governmental sector where careerism was rampant and employment was often the greatest motivation for participation. It is within this economic, social and political context that the findings of the research team have to be placed so as to explain them and help to indicate the possibilities for future actions that might help to revive the women's movement in the region.

Perhaps the most spectacular failure for the women's movement in Southern Africa was its inability to mount a credible response in the face of HIV and AIDS. The research report alluded to the issue of HIV and AIDS but did not elaborate it. Given that Southern Africa is at the epicentre of the global AIDS pandemic, the women's movement, in conjunction with other social movements, were unable to mount a credible response to the pandemic. On that account alone, there is need to go back to the drawing board. Regardless of the fact that Southern Africa has the best socio-economic development indicators in Sub-Saharan Africa, the women's movement failed to recognise and respond to the epidemic in ways that would have mitigated the problems of infection, living with HIV and AIDS, securing treatment and prevention. The gender problems in Southern Africa were well known to the women's movement and have been elaborated at many conferences and seminars. However, while the pandemic unfolded, decimating women more than men and becoming an increasingly feminised pandemic, the women's movement did not go into emergency mode or mobilise state parties, donors and other social

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movements to abandon or redirect new programs, restructure existing ones to accommodate prevention, mitigation and control of HIV and AIDS infection.

As a result, AIDS is increasingly decimating more women than men in Southern Africa, clearly indicating the shallow nature of development and the women's movement's effectiveness within that development. It is also ironic that it is the most economically affluent countries such as South Africa, Botswana and until six years ago, Zimbabwe, that have some of the highest rates of infection amongst women, the worst problems with orphan-hood, care burdens for women and girl children. South Africa has the second highest regional representation of women in parliament, the broadest resource base and the most engaged women's movement. Botswana, according to Selolwane (2006) is the most stable democracy in the region with the highest economic growth rate and until recently, the highest infection rate in the world. Now, Swaziland and South Africa have surpassed Botswana as the countries with the highest prevalence of HIV while in Zimbabwe, prevalence is declining but still remains high at about 18 percent of the population.

The loss of vibrancy in the women's movement has to be understood in the context of the national, regional and international social, economic and political context in which the women's movement has operated.

This pandemic exposed the structural problems with the women's movement and feminism in Southern Africa because the lack of depth of the women's movement may be partly responsible for the inability of the movement to mobilise on a mass basis to prevent and mitigate the worst effects of HIV and AIDS. In a region with some of the highest indicators for education and upward social mobility amongst women, there should have been an exemplary response to HIV and AIDS. Lamentably, this was not the case and there might be a need to turn to other parts of Africa such as Uganda, to establish the connections between vibrancy of women's movement, linkages with grassroots communities, coalition building and co-operation with faith-based and political movements and the capacity to mount credible responses to threats to women and poor people's well-being.

The loss of vibrancy in the women's movement has to be understood in the context of the national, regional and international social, economic and political context in which the women's movement has operated. This paper will analyse specific issues raised in the research report and will discuss them in the light of the foregoing conceptual analysis.

Factors militating against the sustainable vibrancy of the women's movement in Southern Africa

In conceptual terms, the women's movement is facing a crisis of reproduction. It is not attracting or retaining a committed cadre of activists to replace and succeed the older women in the movement. It is not able to make a significant section of those women in the movement less opportunistic, careerist and more committed to the stated ideals of the movement. It has had to scale down many of its more radical demands and focus on reforms that are achievable. It has not been able to lobby, negotiate with or mobilise women to support the movement against government and state opposition to its demands. There is little coordination of the movement at national and regional levels, resulting in fragmentation and ineffectiveness in the pursuance, protection, challenging and spearheading of feminist demands at the national and regional level

Generational issues

The issues of generational conflicts that were articulated in many countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho during the field research, need to be conceptualised through the analysis of the evolution of social and political movements. During the era of vibrancy, middle class women activists were in control of both the state and NGO to some extent, the local offices of donor organisations. They were dominant in agenda setting and tended to act as gatekeepers of the movement. They defined the 'right' issues to pursue and defined the terms of women's movement engagement with the state in particular. However, the shift occasioned by the professionalisation of 'gender' as an arena of donor and state activities has resulted in the influx of younger women as 'femocrats' coming out of university and college departments, donor-funded short course and other institutions that have hitched onto the 'gender' train. These young women may not even espouse a feminist consciousness as defined in this paper. However, the older generation of activists may not necessarily be engaged in feminist work either but may have also embraced a liberal agenda whose currency has waned as the reformist agenda on issues of gender has run its full course and become institutionalised.

The conflicts between younger and older generations are common in organisations and movements where the agenda has shifted and the legitimacy of the older generation is being questioned. The pro-democracy movements in Southern Africa engaged in the same politics, questioning the parties of liberation for their continued monopoly on the 'struggle' and for their use of their 'struggle' credentials as currency to legitimise their monopoly of social and political space.

In this discourse, it may be necessary to deal with the issues by assessing whether the younger entrants have a different and more radical vision of where the movement should go.

Similarly, it is necessary to interrogate whether the older activists still have a valid agenda, which can mobilise women into a mass movement and take it beyond the present state of crisis. It could well be that both the older and younger activists may not have a viable agenda for the women's movement and its future. Part of the process of dealing with this issue during the round table would be to convene dialogues that analyse visions, interrogate directions and negotiate spaces and activities that can utilise the skills of both groups. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive and these struggles over turf need to be analysed for both their form and content so that they do not consume much movement time and resources if they both hold no possibilities for the improved functioning of the and effectiveness of the movement in national and regional arena.

Crisis and stagnation: building a broader and more inclusive women's movement

A larger issue that was raised by the research report concerned the problem the women's movement faces in spearheading new challenges and monitoring abuses of women's rights. According to the research report, the existing women's movement has stagnated in most countries and now focuses on defending existing gains. In view of the existing political architecture, defending the gains that have been won is likely to present problems as poverty rates increase and donors focus on short-term and reformist issues. For example, it is not possible for the women's movement

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as presently structured, to extend its activities by spearheading, challenging and monitoring the abuse of the rights of women and general sexist abuse in Southern Africa. For a start, such activities would be premised on the existence of a vast network of women's organisations on the ground, reporting, networking and sounding the alarm when new types of abuses occur and to monitor compliance by the state and other players involved in extending and safeguarding women's rights. This is not happening in many countries especially in rural areas. This in itself creates the justification for building a mass movement of women to increase the effectiveness of existing activities.

However, it is critical to distinguish the rhetoric and appearances from the lived realities of women's lives because many of these women already live in economically and socially oppressive situations where they understand the politics of patriarchy in their parties and churches and families.

The research report also indicated that there are now more women's groups that are less elitist more grassroots in orientation. This appears to be a good basis to renew the movement since the general movement has reached a phase where women's politics need to move beyond the existing agenda. The question is how the women's movement initiates mass-based actions that are relevant and appealing to and mobilise the majority of women and men who are oppressed by poverty and deprivation. There is a need to dialogue with a broad range of social actors to identify viable strategies, foci and specific actions. The need for building a mass-based movement is primary given the increase in poverty in Southern Africa.

Building a mass movement of women, which responds to feminist concerns, would imply engagement between the women's movement and other social movements, religious women's organisations and political parties. To date, significant sections of the women's movement activists who consider themselves feminists have tended to take a purist line, eschewing engagement with women in political parties and in religious movements and organisations. The research report indicates that some of these religious and political women are not feminist in their orientation, do not have their own agenda and are mere appendages to men's political organisations. However, it is critical to distinguish the rhetoric and appearances from the lived realities of women's lives because many of these women already live in economically and socially oppressive situations where they understand the politics of patriarchy in their parties and churches and families. The fact that they do not articulate their politics in terms of 'feminism' does not mean that they do not engage patriarchy and resist or manipulate it in idioms that are traditional and less likely to generate reprisals against them.

On the other hand, the failure to mobilise women and the stagnation of the women's movement should call into question the effectiveness of feminism, as presently defined and practiced by the dominant sections of the women's movement in Southern Africa. In this respect, an unconditional engagement with those movements and organisations that have managed to capture the imaginations of masses of women is necessary because these initiatives cannot by any stretch of the imagination, be dismissed as lacking in feminist orientation, marginal and lacking direction. The question to ask is what kinds of feminist orientation(s) and agenda appeal and are relevant to the majority of women and men in Southern Africa? How can such these appealing and relevant feminist orientation(s) be harnessed to struggle against racist, class and patriarchal oppression? The relevant feminist orientation(s) cannot be assumed to exist *a priori* unless the assumption is that there is a section of the movement that knows and can define this orientation. In any case, given the racial, class and age and other bases of stratification in Southern Africa, it is safe to assume that there are different types of feminism and ways of constructing relevant and effec-

tive women's movements. The project for the women's movement is therefore how to embark on mass mobilisation of different types of men and women, how to identify the issues that are relevant to large numbers of people and how to make the state, donor communities and big business take notice and become responsive to the interests of the majority.

CONFRONTING DIFFICULT ISSUES AND MOVING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Engaging states and governments

The next phase of the struggle against sexism appears to be the struggle to compel institutions to make the necessary changes and restructure the ways in which they organise politics, economics and social life. There are different layers of institutions that have to be engaged in these struggles, separately or simultaneously depending on the issues. The most obvious institutions that are available and accessible and can be called to account are the states in the region. The success in mobilising women to make concerted demands on states depends on addressing the class interests of all types of women. According to the research report, leftist governments tended to be more willing to accord women's organisations visibility because of their understanding of the linkages between women's rights and democracy in Mauritius. Where governments are less willing, mass movements of women are likely to be more effective at making governments responsive to the concerns and interests of majority of women than elitist women's organisations and movements with little mass appeal. There is need to venture from the safe zone of existing activities and to venture into negotiations with different state machineries, enlisting the SADC regional machineries, donor goodwill and a broad range of women's organisations to broker modes of operation and co-ordination that can move forward popular demands. In this respect, NGOs will need to be pro-active at devising autonomous co-ordination mechanisms within which they can engage state machineries on a national and regional basis. However, the details need to be crafted on the basis of national and local realities. The round table discussions will also need to focus on these issues at length.

Engaging donors

There is need to engage donors in negotiation over the crisis in the women's movement. The research report is a good basis for re-negotiating priorities for funding. Issues such as HIV and AIDS, the need to support mass organisation of women, the funding of longer term programs which have better possibilities for succeeding, cannot be overstated. While there is need to recognise that donors also have invested in short-term, safe and 'feel-good' projects, there is need to link with other international movements in Asia and Latin America for the purposes of questioning donor priorities and shifting the terrain of activism to the broader economic issues of inequalities between nations, the role of multi-nationals the growth of poverty and in limiting the possibilities and effectiveness of the women's movement in Southern Africa. The question of autonomy of the women's movement not only from state machineries but also from donors has to be addressed while at the same time dealing with issues of the terms and conditions for forging partnerships with states. There is little reason to consider donors as benign entities from whom autonomy is taken for granted while states are considered as entirely malevolent and unable to partner with women on defined terms. In the plan of action arising from round table discussion, there has to be some room for engagement with states and donors on issues of autonomy and partnership.

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Using HIV and AIDS as one of many possible entry points

HIV and AIDS presents an ideal issue from which to engage different types of organisations, donors, state and government, civil society and private business. HIV and AIDS have touched the lives of almost all populations in Southern Africa. States and governments have an interest in engaging constructively with movements that can help control and reduce infection and mitigate the problems of affected and afflicted people. Business, local and international, also have an investment in reducing infection and ensuring that it does not erode their profits. There is scope for opening up debate on the ethical issues, intellectual property and humanitarian issues around the conduct of the international pharmaceutical business sector in regard to HIV and AIDS treatment. Donors can also be engaged on issues relating to the relative prioritisation of prevention, treatment and other interventions on HIV and AIDS in the context of the preferences of local people.

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Conclusion

This paper has defined and analysed some of the concepts used in the research report and in the discussion of the trajectory and activities of the women's movement in Southern Africa. It has elaborated the description of and the history and origins of the women's movement, discussed its shape, form and characteristics over time. The paper also analyses the differences between the women's and other social movements, the discourses within the women's movement as outlined in the research report and the responsibilities it has undertaken at national and international levels. The paper also discusses the crisis currently engulfing the women's movement, which crisis manifests itself in lack of vibrancy and declining capacity to pioneer new and less safe issue and confront neo-liberal economic and growing poverty, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and alienation of women from public life.

The paper, responding to the identified problem of lack of vibrancy in the women's movement, drew on the findings of the field work conducted in the Southern African countries in the study in order to make a contribution towards the discussions of the round table scheduled in October, 2006. Considering the history, structure and shape of the current women's movement, the paper considers some of the issues raised in the round table background paper and suggests alternative ways of conceptualising the problems encountered in the functioning of the women's movement in Southern Africa. The paper, using the experiences of HIV and AIDS, generational problems in the movement, class and other issues, suggests that the round table focus on redefining the challenges facing the movement, building a mass movement of women and crafting new modes of engagement with mass women's organisations, states and governments, donors and business. Given the handling of the HIV and AIDS pandemic by governments and the role of the women's movement in mounting an inadequate response to an increasingly feminised pandemic, the paper has explored some of the problems theoretically and indicated those areas needing continued discussion, new ways of conceptualising a more vibrant movement, the adjustments that need to be made in planning future activities with donors, states and organisations of women.

The paper analyses the effectiveness of the women's movement so far and indicates the need to organise broadly in order to secure the participation of the majority of women in political, economic and social initiatives that address the feminist and other concerns of the women and men of Southern Africa. In terms of the outcomes expected from the roundtable meeting, there is evidence that the challenges facing the women's movement have developed from global economic

arrangements also necessitates a more coherent strategy, incorporating a coherent economic, social and political critique of the national, regional and global environments. The resultant plan of action needs to incorporate activities that address these issues and to renew the commitment of the women's movement to confronting these issues, which affect the majority of women and men in Southern Africa. In this respect, building consensus, developing common agenda and forging partnerships on specific issues with as many social groups as possible may help to revitalise the women's movement and broaden its base and effectiveness.

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