

# The Mabati womens grassroots movement in Kenya

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Notes for lecture on African women's  
role on Development: SLU Uppsala,  
2015-09-21

# Origins, Roles, Change and Continuity

- Precolonial Marriage System In Kikuyu Society
- Kang'ei and Nyakinyua Groups
- Mutual help in farming and communal ceremonies
- Child care
- Sexual and Reproductive Health

# Colonial Interventions and Social Disruption

- Colonial Rule- land taken from the people-Settler economy established
- Separation of families- men employed in mines, urban areas and European farms/plantations

# Colonial Interventions and Social Disruption Cont.

- Introduction of man as the breadwinner- but since they were very poorly paid could not keep identity of male bread winner (traumatised masculinities see also men in DR Congo)
- Missionary activities – conversion of natives, Silencing of many native customs (Traditional beliefs and healing practices and religion, initiation rites)

# Mau Mau and Colonial Emergency Period (1950-1956)

- Detention of men or in forests as freedom fighters
- Burning of homes and displacement by colonial government

# Mau Mau and Colonial Emergency

- Forced Villagisation (Mostly women and Children and Elderly men)
- Collective Participation by women in building shelters until every family had a roof
- Colonial Interventions- Maedeleo Ya Wanwake

# Land Demarcation, Consolidation and Adjudication Policy- 1960s

- Need for new homes
- Shortage of thatching grass
- Use of Mabati or iron sheets for roofing houses

# Land Demarcation, Consolidation and Adjudication Policy

- Possibility to harvest rain water so after roofing women continued with buying water tanks
- Next came other improvements of the home- utencils, chairs, tables and beds



# Income-generating Activities-From 1970s

- Focus on women and development during the UN Declared women's decade 1975-85.
- Women group networks were identified as viable channel for development
- Government set up Women's Bureau- main focus was to involve women in income-generating activities- handicraft production, animal keeping, small scale industries such as bakeries etc

# Resilience

- Funding has not always led to economic independence for women as anticipated.
- Income-generating activities were small in scale and women ended up investing too much time and therefore excluded the poorer and more vulnerable women who could not afford to wait.

## Resilience Cont.

- New rules introduced added strain on women as they had to start eg keeping records. They needed a secretary and treasurer who had to be educated.
- Mutual activities have nevertheless continued in various forms and seem to have given birth to Kamweretho among working but mostly not married women.

# Impact of Reconstruction Policy on men and women 1970s and 80s

- Negative economic growth-1st oil shock 1974-75
- Adjustmement program followed by 2nd oil shock in 1979
- Massive layoff and retrenchment
- More men lost jobs since proportion of men in employment always high

# Response of women to crisis

- Women continued their domestic activities and joined merry-go-round groups and could access loans to engage in income-generating activities
- Through the groups they accumulated funds for education of their children

# Kamweretho Merry- go-round

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfKWSroOLic>

# Response of men

- Men returned to villages but due to gender socialization found it impossible to join informal groups
- Most were soon broke with their male ego compromised resorting to either drinking illicit brew or turned to gender-based violence
- The illicit brew affects men's reproductive system and many wives find themselves having impotent husbands- Just now major campaign against illicit brew with women in the lead.

# Some Literature

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**THANK YOU!!**