



JASS
Feminist
Movement Building

A report commissioned by
Just Associates Southern Africa.

By Everjoice J. Win

Between Jesus, the Generals and the Invisibles

Mapping the Terrain for Feminist
Movement Building & Organizing
for Women's Human Rights

October 2013

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Layout and Design: WE Designs

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1 What this mapping is for

JASS Southern Africa (JASS SNA) has not had a comprehensive strategic planning in the region that allows for the JASS community to reflect, assess and map out what a movement building strategy in Southern Africa looks like, given the competing forces at play in the region.

As JASS SNA moves into its next phase of growth and development, we are aware that the context presents new opportunities and demands. For this reason JASS SNA commissioned a contextual mapping informed by a feminist analysis. This is a key document to feed into JASS' reflection and strategic planning process.

The mapping was designed to look at the Southern African regional context focusing on socio-economic and political dynamics / trends, challenges and opportunities as they impact women including the most marginalized (HIV+ / LBT / sex workers / market women etc.). The regional mapping is expected to highlight possibilities and opportunities for strategic engagement and leveraging of women's rights agendas in the region. The mapping has a more in-depth focus on Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (the three countries in which JASS supports work) by way of highlighting any particular trends / issues for consideration in each of these countries of operation.

2 The challenge

What constitutes the sub-region called Southern Africa has become a 'moving target' in the last decade. In the old days of the Front-Line States this was a much smaller grouping. Then with the formation of the Southern African Development Community the map was redrawn again. At present, the group expands and contracts depending on where you are at any one moment. For the purposes of this exercise, Southern Africa is defined as comprising the following countries; Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The old Front-Line States! This is not just a lazy way to make the region smaller, but there are various commonalities and key historical trends that run through this specific grouping which necessitates this definition. Countries such as the DR Congo, or Mauritius are part of SADC, however their (colonial) history and current realities tend to be so different from the group of 10, that it is often

difficult to do a collective analysis when they are thrown in the mix.

A second challenge in doing this mapping was – what to include and what to exclude. For the writer, this was compounded by my phobia of sounding like a United Nations manual! Indeed when JASS asked me to do this assignment, I wondered why this was even necessary given the plethora of documents, reports and statistics available online about all kinds of issues and trends affecting women’s rights today? Why couldn’t JASS simply cut and paste from these documents and sift out what they need? But I did realize that this is not what JASS is looking for, a bog standard context analysis.

This is why this report is written in this non-academic, non-UN, non- technical style and tone. While I did trawl through the literature that is out there, this has mostly been used as a mere backdrop to telling what I hope is a deeper and more feminist story. Some of the phenomena I describe here is yet to be studied, (hint – here are research topics for those looking to do M Phil). More importantly some of what is here, is more based on personal and collective reflections in workshops, meetings, and conversations with feminists and activists in several countries. The stuff that is not writ large in UN reports, (Disclosure – I do like the UN, I just blame them for turning most of us into technical administrators).

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3 Southern Africa in 2013

3.1 Politics and governance

Southern Africa entered the 21st century with all countries in the region finally free of colonial rule and apartheid. South Africa, hoisted the freedom flag in 1994, a few years after Namibia in 1990 and Zimbabwe earlier in 1980. The rest of the countries had become independent in much earlier decades. By the year 2000, the new era of multi-party democracy and political pluralism had also taken root in the sub-region. In Zambia Kenneth Kaunda had given up the reins of power, so had Kamuzu Banda in Malawi. In Lesotho

and Swaziland, the conversation had shifted towards making the monarchies more... ahem, BENEVOLENT. Elections and electoral politics were the major theme in national discourses at the turn of the century. This all coincided with the change in global geo-politics, with the end of the Communist/Socialist era in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the break-up of the USSR leaving the USA as the (only), super power.

As at 2013, Malawi, and Zimbabwe have (new) constitutions which generally have good frameworks to promote and protect women's rights. Zambia is yet to finalize its new constitution, a process that has been fraught with so much bickering and political power plays and women's rights are still heavily contested. Despite the big 'wahala' around Zimbabwe's elections held in July 2013, my bet is that all will be forgotten, ZANU will be in power for the next five years, Mugabe might go (from natural causes more than through the ballot box), and the opposition has to go back to the drawing board. Civil society and women's movements have to reframe their struggles and find more strategic ways of (re)engaging ZANU, given the tension and deep distrust that characterized CSO-State relations in the last 15 years. Feminist movements in Zimbabwe must in particular find a new way to still fight for fundamental women's human rights outside the narrowly defined so called democracy and governance agenda – read – regime change agenda.

In Malawi, Joyce Banda is up for re-election in 2014, and chances are not looking good for her. Kamuzu Banda's old party has regrouped and has been wheedling its way (back), into the hearts and minds of the excluded citizens. Bingu's party and people are also gunning for Joyce Banda and that election will be one of the most hotly contested in Malawian politics. In Zambia, Michael Sata continues on his (seemingly mad and often times bizarre), way. If his health holds up, he will see his full term, and might get a new constitution passed.

3.2. Not yet economic uhuru

The region as a whole was scarred by the very long and brutal armed struggles for independence. Outside of Algeria for example Zimbabwe had one of the bitterest armed struggles on the continent, a fact which is often forgotten in understanding present day Zimbabwean politics. But of that later. The struggles were led by liberation movements, all of them now in political power; ANC in South Africa, MPLA in Angola, SWAPO in Namibia, and ZANU in Zimbabwe. The movements are still as strong, as dominant and to a large

extent as popular as they were in the 1980s and 1990s. Memories of racism, apartheid and the brutalizing effects of colonialism are still very fresh in quite a large percentage of the population of the region. More significantly, some of the key reasons for waging the armed struggles have still not been dealt with;

- Access and control over land; both rural/agricultural land and land in urban areas
- Access, control and benefits from minerals and other extractives; gold, diamonds, copper
- Unequal access to education and health care;
- General economic inequality; income inequality; access to finance for black business
- Laws and their application favor those with power and money; race is still a factor; class being the new factor amongst the previously disadvantaged black populace
- The triple linkage; race, class and gender is still very visible across the sub-region where poor, geographically marginalized, uneducated, black women are at the bottom of the economic and social pile. Add to this factors such as; HIV status, disability, marital status, and age.

Thus it can safely be said, Southern African countries achieved political independence, but the vast majority of its women have not attained nor enjoyed economic, social and even political independence. Because some of the countries in the region were the centers of SETTLER colonialism, i.e. the colonialists came, saw, conquered and STAYED, the struggles for economic power are as alive and imperative today as they ever were in the past century. This is why for example Julius Malema's newly formed Economic Freedom Front will definitely pull in angry, disenfranchised young black people; Zimbabwe's indigenization program resonates with the citizens as well as other Africans across the continent and beyond; Zimbabwe's land reform was so popular and is held up by land rights activists as an example – whatever intellectuals and the (largely white owned, capitalist supported, and or Northern donor funded), media might think.

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3.3. Growth without development & increasing inequality

Southern Africa, like the rest of the African continent has been characterized as one of the fastest growing regions in the world today. The average growth rate for SADC countries was 5.2%, as at 2010.¹ Malawi's growth rate in 2013 was projected at 5.7%; Zambia at 3.2% and Zimbabwe 5.6%²

Southern Africa, like the rest of the African continent has been characterized as one of the fastest growing regions in the world today.

These rates of growth however have not necessarily translated into economic benefits for the majority of SADC's people. All MDG reports (2010-2013), are showing that the biggest emerging challenge is inequality, (economic, social, access to resources etc). For example a white male manager can earn in

excess of R500 000 a month, while a black female domestic worker earns a paltry R1 000.

3.4 One 'BRICK' and SADC

In the region South Africa is one of the so called Emerging Economies, joining countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, Argentina and Mexico (BRICSAM countries). The major characteristic that SA has in common with its fellow BRICS is the very high levels of inequality amongst citizens.

Within the region, SA has become a dominant political and economic power, often times being seen and cast as the leader and spokesperson for the region, (much to the chagrin of the older more politically established "Front line states"). Of particular concern regarding women's rights are the following key observable trends;

- The tendency by SA political leadership not to be on the same side as the rest of the region on global political issues; good example SA government did not side with other SADC countries during FAO meetings on land redistribution and the need to support smallholder farmers, preferring instead to speak on behalf of 'big farmer'
- South African companies taking over markets in the region including; SA supermarkets bringing in tomatoes, and other vegetables thereby undercutting local small producers and local market women
- SA big farming corporates buying up and taking over land in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. In some cases squeezing out small holder

1. <http://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/sadc-facts-figures/>

2. <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Southern%20Africa%20Quarterly%20Overview%20and%20Analysis%20-%20Second%20Quarter%202012%20-%20Issue%205.pdf>

communal farmers, and in others, paying such poor wages to women workers in the horticultural sector.

- Ill treatment of women traders and migrants at border posts on entering into SA.

The SADC sub-region has yet to see much collective benefit from having one of its own in the BRICSAM grouping both politically and economically. Given the power and influence of South African capital in South African foreign policy as well as intra-regional trade, it is difficult to see what poor and excluded women will benefit, even in the longer term. And if Jacob Zuma's recent disparaging comments about Africa and Malawi, urging his people not to think, "like Africans generally", are anything to go by, very little regional or even sub-regional solidarity can be expected.³

4 Women's political participation – in what?

Putting this theme here is not giving it pride of place. It is simply to acknowledge the space it has occupied in women's organizing in the region, but also we need to just get it out of the way of the rest of this context analysis.

Women's participation in politics and decision making has been chosen by most institutions and actors globally as an indicator for assessing the state of gender equality.

Thanks to the MDG framework as well as the post Beijing progress assessments aided and led by women's movements all over the world, this issue has also found its way at the top of the agenda in the region.

SADC as a Regional Economic bloc to (which all the countries in the sub region belong), set a target of 50% women in all elected offices to be achieved by 2015. A lot of energy and resources have been expended by women's groups, donors, and the UN not only tracking this target, but organizing to meet it. At the same time, equal amounts of energy have been expended in SADC in particular developing norms and standards for Free and Fair elections. This has been accompanied in some cases by Gender checklists for monitoring and observing elections.

Statistics tell the full story of women's rising and plummeting fortunes in the political participation game. From the rise of a female VP first in

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3. Southern African journalists and commentators have all remarked that Zuma's comments reflect the most common thinking amongst big business, government officials and most of the general public in South Africa.

South Africa, then Zimbabwe to now a female President in Malawi – a great cause for celebration. Equally, the numbers have yo-yoed in all SADC countries individually and collectively.

4.1 Are we being sold a dud? Participation in what?

The key question that has emerged over the last decade on women's political participation is – what do these numbers translate to/for women's human rights? Current struggles are about ensuring that the women who get elected have a feminist agenda and are well linked with feminist movements. Such as they should be. Questions around the elected women's values, principles and their leadership styles are also becoming critical. However, there is an even bigger set of questions; Are we being sold a dud? Are we focusing on getting women into the right places where decisions are really made? Who makes decisions in each of the SADC countries today – decisions that have major impacts on the lives of excluded women of various kinds? Are decisions made in national parliaments and or local governance structures?

Various scholars have pointed out how the locus of power has shifted from national/local structures to more distant and oftentimes invisible centers and actors; Washington, Beijing, or the HQ of mining companies based in Australia! Multinational companies, banks, investment bankers, shadowy business cartels. All these have been identified as the power brokers and power holders. It is also increasingly clear that in countries such as Zimbabwe, the military is playing a very big role in national politics. So while they are not sitting at the table, they do sit behind the curtains and under the tables, or even more recently, remove only the uniforms but keep the titles which they bring to the decision making tables – just to make sure you know they can take out the guns at any time. As indicated above, it should always be remembered that the armed liberation movements are still literally – ARMED.

4.2 Where and by whom are decisions made? The men in uniform behind the curtains

The role played by the military in individual countries' politics and in the region collectively is something that feminists have yet to fully grasp and

grapple with. The clearest example where the military is firmly in the driving seat is that of Zimbabwe. Since the country's independence in 1980, the Zimbabwe Defense Forces, (comprising the National Army, Air Force, Police, and Prison Service), collectively and individually play quite significant roles in decision making. Examples include;

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- The Joint Operations Command (JOC), is a parallel decision making structure, literally usurping the role of Parliament, Cabinet and at times by passing even the President himself.
- It was JOC that decided to launch Operation Murambatsvina following the 2008 elections debacle, a move widely seen as punishment for urbanites voting for the opposition MDC.
- In the July 2013 elections it is alleged only a body like the military could have pulled off such a tidy election rigging job, with help from the shadowy Israeli intelligence and an Israeli firm Nikuv, which has been working with the Registrar General's office since the 1990s.
- Several national command centers of the Zimbabwean economy are controlled by former or so called Retired military personnel; the Grain Marketing Board, the National Railways, National Oil Company, to name a few.
- The Zimbabwe Republic Police has over the years criminalized civil society organizing and organizations, and has consistently thumped its defiant nose at the justice system, and human rights frameworks. Including most recently going against the new Constitution.

In this context, feminists must interrogate whether their investment in women's political participation is targeted at the rights spaces. Using the example of the Zimbabwean military above for example, it is hard to see how investing in getting more women elected into Parliament will alter the power balance in the country. In addition, the military does not sit at visible decision making tables, and neither do they ever engage civilian bodies directly. At the same time it is clear that not only does the military play an active part in domestic politics, but it is linked to its shadowy counterparts outside the national borders; arms traders, militaries of neighboring countries as well as donor countries. Again in the case of Zimbabwe, the military is heavily involved in diamond mining, both as an entity (ZDF), plus the individual military generals. However information on this is all very sketchy as diamond mining has tended to be mired in secrecy.

In Zambia the military meddled in politics with the encouragement of Kenneth Kaunda. Under his regime, senior military leaders were encouraged and did join UNIP, the ruling party at the time. It is significant to note there have been 5 attempted coups since Zambia's independence, although these were led by individuals rather than the military as an institution. Since the advent of multi-party democracy the military factor appears to have waned into insignificance, save for the occasions when the police and military are mobilized to suppress popular dissent.

4.3 Which women? What kind of women?

We must analyze what kind of principles and values guide the workings of some of these structures into which we are bringing larger numbers of women – and what this means for women's human rights? For example, should women in Angola fight for more women in a Dos Santos led government? How strategic was it for women's groups to clamor for more seats in Mugabe's cabinet after the July 2013 elections in Zimbabwe?

If anyone was ever in doubt about the power of MOVEMENTS, one has to simply look at the enduring appeal, mobilization and organizational capacities of the ANC, FRELIMO, ZANU, or SWAPO, and learn from them. Love them or hate them, the liberation movements speak to the HEARTS (as opposed to heads), of a sizeable number of citizens in their countries.

There is another dimension; In countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique where former liberation movements are (still), in power, where are decisions made? An activist lawyer from Zimbabwe likes to consistently point out that, "ZANU PF is not a political party, it is a way of life". If anyone was ever in doubt about the power of MOVEMENTS, one has to simply look at the enduring appeal, mobilization and organizational capacities of the ANC, FRELIMO, ZANU, or SWAPO, and learn from them. Love them or hate them, the liberation movements speak to the HEARTS (as opposed to heads), of a sizeable number of citizens in their countries. Their messages still reverberate and

resonate quite well even beyond their national borders. Therefore while we have seen the rise of opposition parties in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and even Namibia, it is interesting to see just how much on the back foot most of these parties still are, in terms of ideology, and mass appeal. RACE and Racism are still critical in Southern Africa, because the vestiges of colonial rule are still here, and some might say are on the resurgence, (see land grabs below). RACIAL inequality, even within civil society movements still underlies most of our realities in the region. I dare say, women's movements have not spoken loudly nor openly on race and racism.

4.4. Local governance and micro level politics; WHAT happened to devolution and decentralization?

Across the region, decentralization of governance and devolution of power were key themes in the early parts of the last decade. Surprisingly, this discourse appears to have fallen off the agenda, not only of governments and donors but of civil society as well. It has been well argued that local governance is the site of decision making closest to poor and excluded women. Thus, we have seen service delivery protests in South Africa and Mozambique, most of them at local levels. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, the devolution of power discourse was revived during the constitutional drafting processes over the last few years. Feminist groups have an opportunity here not only to raise issues of women's participation as elected leaders, but women as Citizens and residents of their own localities and their rights, (see Women in the City below).

5 Development – Have human rights gone out of fashion?

The MDGs and their new spawn (post 2015 agenda), are the only game in town. Or so it appears. The Millennium Development Goals have been the most dominant framework for development programming, analysis, funding, and in some cases organizing and mobilization. Over the last two years, focus has been on tracking progress as the 2015 deadline beckons, while at the same time crafting a new post 2015 agenda is gathering pace.

It is significant to note that, there has not been an equivalent, standalone effort to craft a post Beijing agenda. In 2010, feminist groups debated the efficacy of such an agenda and the holding of a major global conference on the scale of Beijing. Without going into the merits or demerits of the opposing arguments, what is clear is that there will not be a (re)new(ed), and robust effort at gender equality and women's rights. We will have to be content with whatever the post 2015 MDG agenda provides. This, is a major dilemma for women's organizing in the SADC region, on two levels; the lack of a new and visible rallying point for women's rights; the lack of opportunities for younger women to influence and shape an agenda of their own.

In Southern Africa, the SADC gender protocol has some similar milestones in 2015. What opportunities this provides will depend on how the feminist groups frame an agenda.

In all of this, the challenge for feminists and their movements is to REPOSITION women's rights; concepts, language, demands, etc. (see an Agenda for feminist organizing below). A bright eyed view would be to say that all our feminist demands are still valid and are part of the MDGs and or post 2015 agenda. A more politically nuanced view would be that feminist agendas got edged out of the MDGs, and have consistently fallen off the table since. It will be even harder to reposition these a decade later, when the format and frame has already been set.

Opportunities

Opportunities that can be capitalized on here include;

- Recognition and articulation of INEQUALITY, (post 2015 agenda), in which Gender Inequality is a critical component
- Appreciation by governments (and economists), that growth does not equal enjoyment of human rights by all peoples. In Southern Africa the data tells quite a story.
- Acknowledgement by governments that education is not the magic bullet for women's empowerment; there's new interest in secondary and tertiary education as more meaningful for women's empowerment.
- Women's political participation indicators are not a proxy for measuring women's human rights enjoyment in a whole range of other spheres; personal, family, etc. Time to shift the discourse on this one.
- Unless women access and control productive resources such as land, hunger and poverty will continue
- Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are at the heart of maternal and infant mortality – those things we like to measure – and we haven't made a dent on unequal sexual power relations.

It is imperative that feminist groups start pulling out the key messages coming out of MDG progress reports. Governments and donors are focusing on how they originally conceptualized the MDGs. Feminists will need to turn this around and go into a deeper analysis, leading to a more nuanced framing of a post 2015 agenda.

6 Look East – Walk and think West

Much has been written and said about the rising power of China, and its influence over economic policies, politics, human rights and general global geo-politics. In Southern Africa, relationships between the Government of China, the Chinese Communist Party and the ruling classes in the region dates back to the anti-colonial struggles. In the case of Zimbabwe, there have always been very strong bonds between both ZANU and ZAPU which were cemented by China's support to the armed guerrilla movements at a time when the West was dead set against the armed struggles. The same goes for South Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia. Thus the entry of China on the scene is not necessarily a new development. What is new, is that following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the diminishing influence of socialist ideology, the West clearly assumed it (through the USA), was the sole center of power. Enter China, and the BRICSAM bloc. Come the financial and economic crisis that has affected the PIGS, (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain), and most parts of the global North. Southern African governments increasingly turned to China as a trading partner of choice, a source of financial aid, (for the military as well as civilian needs), and a steadfast ally in global politics. China is also now a major source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), for the region. Heavy investments are in the natural resource rich countries; Angola, Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Sudan. In other cases the investment is more to do with creating markets for Chinese products, for example in Ethiopia which is not resource rich.⁴

It is significant to note that much of the critique and criticism of the role of China in the region has come from the region's former colonial masters – i.e. The UK and Western Europe, coupled with the United States. These criticisms largely center on China's policy of 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of any country with which it does business. This is in sharp contrast to these countries' paternalistic policies linking investment, trade and aid to human rights and governance conditionalities. It is also significant to note that while 'looking East', is becoming the mantra of the ruling elite in Zambia and Zimbabwe, they still largely talk, think, and dream West in terms of their personal and collective aspirations and values. Malawi still depends heavily on Western donor aid, while the other two also depend on and hanker for more aid and investment, (even as they vigorously fight with the West on governance and policy questions). This is not surprising given the unfinished

4. See; <http://www.ccs.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Final-report-CCS-March-2011-CCS.pdf>

business and pain of colonialism where African countries feel they are still owed by the former colonizers.

It is important for feminists not to get stuck into the often polarized debates which suggest, China and the East = BAD for human rights and participatory democracy, the West = Good. This is a very narrow framing of the critical issues that the region has to confront.

It is important for feminists not to get stuck into the often polarized debates which suggest, China and the East = BAD for human rights and participatory democracy, the West = Good. This is a very narrow framing of the critical issues that the region has to confront. The feminist concerns that should form part of any engagement with the China question can be summed up as;

- What do ordinary women and men stand to benefit from Chinese investment?
- How can governments in the region manage relationships with Chinese investors so there is more transparency and accountability around the deals?
- The need to put in place systems, laws and policies which ensure that the Chinese traders, workers i.e. the thousands of young men who are flocking to the region do not abuse local women, the poor, their workers, and treat black people generally with more respect.
- The need for governments to regulate and control the inflow of cheap Chinese products which are putting local manufacturing out of business and women workers out of jobs. In particular in the textile, and clothing businesses.
- How can CSOs increase people to people cooperation between Chinese citizens and Southern Africans? This would also include South-South peoples' linkages with other BRICSAM countries.

7 An Agenda for feminist organizing

In this section, we highlight some of the most critical issues that should be on the feminist agenda. These issues are encapsulated in the title of this paper; Between Jesus, The Generals and the Invisible. Based on JASS' understanding and use of the concepts of POWER, the thesis here is that feminist organizing needs to focus on the visible, hidden and invisible sites of power. In order to do this we must understand who holds what kind of power. We need to

ensure that our organizing is about building women's power to, (do xxx), and power within themselves. It is also about building movements (women's collective power with one another), that will challenge and shift existing power relations.

There are very many issues affecting women's human rights in Southern Africa today. However, here we have picked those that are; new & emerging, old & resurging, and those where power is exercised in the most insidious ways over women. These are issues deeply felt by poor and excluded women. By highlighting these, and linking them to POWER, the idea is also to provide some entry points in terms of shifting, chipping away at what can often be seen as intractable social, economic and political forces.

Note: In this section, illustrative examples given are mostly from Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the 3 countries where JASS works in the region.

7.1 Jesus, Mohammed, (PBUH) & Opium

Religion is the opium of the people, Karl Max wrote. This is generally true. When times are tough, when people are confronting forces they feel powerless to deal with, they turn to religion, the supernatural, and or their traditional/cultural beliefs. These give them a handle on what is going on, and something to believe in, which they see as more potent or powerful that will fight their battles for them. But this appears to be (relatively) too easy an explanation for why Sub-Saharan Africa, has been gripped by a wave of religious fervor in the last decade. Most visible is the rise of Pentecostal Christian churches, movements, and very retrogressive ideology. The (new) Churches have attracted middle and upper middle classes in increasingly large numbers. In Zimbabwe in particular, almost every big and successful business man or woman is a member and or a leader of a Pentecostal Church. This challenges the notion that it is mostly the poor that flock to these churches seeking economic miracles. The gospel of prosperity attracts urban middle classes with the promise that the closer you are to Jesus, the richer you will be. Participation in Pentecostal churches also provides access to networks of richer business people thereby opening up even more vistas for prosperity and consumerism.⁵

At the same time there is a visible divide between where the richer folks go and the poorer ones. At the lower end of the economic spectrum the poorer and more women are in the Traditional African Churches, i.e. those

5. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/jenny-morgan-jessica-horn/spirit-hope-money-and-dose-of-patriarchy>

that combine Christianity and or Judaism with traditional beliefs. While there has also been a (re)surgence, of Islamic movements and belief, it is definitely not on the same scale as the Christian wave.⁶

There have been very few studies on the impact of this new wave of religion on women's rights in the sub-region.⁷ However, some of the most visible implications, to the naked eye are;

- The participation of upper and middle classes, who tend to be opinion leaders in all sectors is very disturbing. It is a matter of time before we see this translated into policies, laws, etc. already in some companies proof of your religious leanings and practice are preconditions for employment, promotion.
- Civil Society Leaders and leaders in women's movements are at the fore front of Pentecostalism. In some cases, leaders have been known to denounce fundamental rights such as LGBTI rights; SRHR particularly right to abortion; sexual rights of young women; etc.
- Erosion of secular spaces; without as much as an 'excuse me', it is now taken for granted that every meeting, workshop, gathering, will begin and end with Christian prayers. This soon pervades the entire space which converts into a religious space, replete with Biblical references, as well as outright proselytizing by workshop facilitators and leaders.
- Intolerance and or exclusion of other religions; very often it is Christians who push their prayers and rituals in multi-ethnic and or multi-cultural gatherings, without recognizing and or giving space to others; the patterns of exclusion that this breeds are not problematized nor understood.
- Radio, television, and newspapers – even the VERY few non-state owned ones devote a lot of time and space to religion and proselytizing.
- Women are getting married at younger ages, and several feminists have remarked how in their churches (even the old Evangelical and Protestant ones), the clergy are encouraging and blessing marriages of girls as young as 18, 19, with no education and or prospects. The thinking seems to be – let them marry young, before they get pregnant, and if they are marrying someone who goes to church – even better!
- Church and State connection; this is perhaps the most worrying trend which will have major implications on all women's human rights. A prime example was the dominance of Christian-homophobia tinged with traditional values that pervaded the conversation on Zimbabwe's draft constitution. Amazingly, ZANU PF managed to generate and mobilize so much anti- human rights feelings across the country, based on a clause

6. In private conversation several feminists have said though that in both Malawi and Zimbabwe, they have noted an increase in women and girls in Hijab. A departure from earlier times where hijab was extremely rare.

7. See www.awid.org Jessica Horn has done a study on the impact of religious fundamentalisms on HIV & AIDS programs in Africa, linked to PEPFAR conditionalities imposed by the (Bible-led) GW Bush Administration.

that had long since been removed from the draft. The amount of hate speech marshalled by dozens of churches was illustrative of the link between church and state to undermine human rights.

- The role played by US Based fundamentalists, the US government, and American politicians is yet to be fully studied and understood. Suffice to say, take a plane on any given day to any SADC country, you are likely to come across a group of Mormons on a mission.⁸

The rise of more backward and fundamentalist forms of religion and cultural revivalism presents an opportunity to work on some of the issues that often don't get talked about in the name of religion (and/culture), which in turn exert **invisible power** on women.

Opportunities

The rise of more backward and fundamentalist forms of religion and cultural revivalism presents an opportunity to work on some of the issues that often don't get talked about in the name of religion (and/culture), which in turn exert **invisible power** on women. In order to do this however feminists would need to partner with the more progressive forces inside these institutions. An example are the older, Protestant churches (and in some instances even the progressive parts of the Catholic Church). From the 1980s and 90's most of the churches under the World Council of Churches organized programs, departments etc. in solidarity with women. The WCC and its constituent parts led the struggle for women's participation and rights within and outside the church. In all three countries some of the Christian churches have been at the fore-front of the anti-AIDS struggles. There is need to optimize these relationships and opportunities. Granted some of the churches might be using the space to try and claw back power from the Pentecostals. It will be important to know this and devise strategies to manage such power plays in which movements can get caught up.

7.2 The future has arrived to bite us: Rural women's rights & extractivism

"Giving rural women access to land is the fastest way to end hunger. If women have more access to credit, seed, and implements, communities will be able to feed themselves. Their children will go to school. And rural development will proceed at a faster pace".

8. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-peron/whos-helping-finance-ugandas-kill-the-gays-bill-you-are_b_2229509.html

“Giving rural women access to land is the fastest way to end hunger. If women have more access to credit, seed, and implements, communities will be able to feed themselves. Their children will go to school. And rural development will proceed at a faster pace”.

The above is a quote from so many different places it has almost become the modern day mantra of many a development organization, UN agency and philanthropist. The re-discovery of rural women and their struggles for access and control over productive resources is one of the most fascinating phenomena in development in the last decade. So called “Land grabs”, in which vast tracts of land have been bought, leased out or taken over by investors, corrupt local officials and multinational companies, are an emerging theme in the region.⁹ Land is the new gold in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of the key noticeable trends from a women’s rights perspective here include;

- The future has come back to bite us! While rural populations constitute as much as 70% -75% of the national populations in all three countries, and employ up to 80% rural labor¹⁰, the feminist movement has neglected organizing women around land and rights in agriculture.
- At the same time this is one of the most researched and well documented themes in gender studies.
- Organizing and building rural women’s movements is undoubtedly a challenge. However, less effort has been put here in comparison to say organizing around political participation.
- The displacement of rural women from their land is inextricably linked to the new wave of digging for minerals and the already visible impacts of the extractive industries on soil, water and the environment; diamonds in Zimbabwe, gas in Mozambique;¹¹
- The land grabs have resurfaced, this time with much greater vehemence, questions around communal tenure versus privation of rural land. In general the capitalist-monopoly driven argument seems to be dominating, positing that individual land titling is better for productivity, better for use as collateral when farmers seek credit, and makes ‘farmers’ more secure as they know that the land is theirs in perpetuity! What this means for the rights of women as individuals, married women in particular and their longer term claims to land is what is more worrisome.
- Who is taking the land; local traditional leaders, corrupt local governance and land administrators, military officers, as well as well-connected politicians or individuals based in capital cities are some of the most cited land grabbers. These are linked to so-called international or global investors. Thus the struggle for women’s land rights is no longer just

10. Nomi Ngwira;
Gender and Poverty
Reduction in
Malawi (undated)

11.Ref: the work
that Samantha
Hargreaves is
leading with the
Women in Mining
and Women
and extractives
movement building
initiatives

about out nasty local black men refusing to give their wives a share of the (poor, non-productive), land. Although analyzing local cultures, traditions and individual patriarchal behavior is still necessary, it is no longer sufficient for understanding and tackling this most intractable of issues.

- At the same time, deeper understandings of land as a source of power for women are beginning to emerge.¹² Access to land by women is not just about growing more food and feeding ‘communities’. Just as we already knew that control over land by men and corporates was not just (if ever!), about ending hunger. The intersections with sexual and reproductive rights; citizenship, freedom from violence, and women’s power to make decisions in other areas of their lives needs to be deepened and articulated in feminists struggles.
- A major issue to contend with is that the struggle for rural women’s rights and rights to land/in agriculture has now been taken over and depoliticized by the framing around reducing hunger, poverty, and essentialist arguments around increasing growth. Needless to say it is now dominated by pro-market, capitalist notions of private land tenure as the best model.

Extractivism

Here is a word that has entered our lexicon in the last few decades. It refers to the centering of economies around the extraction, and export of raw natural resources; oil, gas, precious minerals, forest products. It also means the expansion of capitalist values, ways of relating to the environment as well the manner in which such activities displace and violate the rights of indigenous populations and the poor from their natural habitats. It also encompasses the very negative impacts on the environment and ways of living of these often excluded populations; poisoning and sucking up all the water, cutting down trees and natural vegetation, displacement and decimation of animals and peoples.

Extractivism was the hallmark of colonialism and has continued unabated over the centuries in Southern Africa. In the last two decades, extractivism has increased in scope and intensity, with the discovery of new minerals (diamonds in Zimbabwe, natural gas in Mozambique), and the intensification

Extractivism was the hallmark of colonialism and has continued unabated over the centuries in Southern Africa. In the last two decades, extractivism has increased in scope and intensity, with the discovery of new minerals (diamonds in Zimbabwe, natural gas in Mozambique), and the intensification of mono-cultivation across the continent, often on the back of large scale land acquisitions.

12. <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/marginalisation-empowerment>

of mono-cultivation across the continent, often on the back of large scale land acquisitions. Research by feminists is showing that extractivism is negatively impacting rural women's rights and poor/excluded women's rights in a variety of ways. To highlight a few;

- Marginalization of agriculture in favour of large scale mining, which in turn impacts rural women's livelihoods and food security
- Women not included in the mining sector (either as decision makers, miners, owners, or workers). Thereby not benefitting from these new 'windfalls'.
- Large scale land deals made in secret between governments and corrupt local elites, expropriating mostly communal land on which most rural women in Southern Africa depend.
- Water and air pollution. Studies already show acid mining affecting livestock, rural communities' drinking water supplies, (Ref: Case of Community in Limpopo South Africa).
- Indirect long term impacts as temperatures rise, where it is projected that by 2050 millions of hectares of farmland will be unusable due to lack of rain water.

Extractivism in Africa generally is picking up at a very fast pace, and so are the myriad negative consequences that women and the poor already experience.

This has been exacerbated by the violent power that has been unleashed on those who protest and seek transparency.

Extractivism in Africa generally is picking up at a very fast pace, and so are the myriad negative consequences that women and the poor already experience. While a few attempts have been made to bring women into the center of the debates and to ensure that they benefit, these have tended to be few, and scattered (see opportunities below). This has been exacerbated by the violent power that has been unleashed on those who protest and seek transparency – the Marikana massacre in South Africa, the violence unleashed by the military in Zimbabwe's Marange Diamond fields are illustrative. Feminists and their organizations are only slowly beginning to engage with this very opaque of industries.

Opportunities

As indicated already, women's access and control over land is one area that is so well researched and documented it is not hard to hit the ground running with data, facts and figures. At the same time the current focus on hunger, rural development and rural poverty, also provides some entry points into struggles that had long been neglected. Malawi's MDG report for example shows that although the country achieved national food security, hardly a dent has been made on rural poverty levels, particularly amongst women.

In addition, the emerging new evidence of successes in Zimbabwe's land redistribution to small holder farmers provides some lessons which will resonate in South Africa, in particular.

There is increased organizing impetus by and with rural women. ActionAid, Oxfam and other players have supported the formation and capacity building of Rural Women's Movements in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Similarly, there are emerging movements of women dealing with the extractive industry and its intersection with land and agriculture. These are found in almost all the countries in the region. A SADC Women in Mining Trust is in existence and was supported by UNWOMEN. It does engage with the SADC governments collectively and individually at national levels.

SADC itself has a Protocol on Mining – February 2000. Its biggest weakness is that it reduces the role of the State to mere regulation of mining activities, creation of policies and laws, and prioritizes the role of the private sector as the key player. The protocol also suggests that the State should collect taxes from the private sector and it is from that, that the state can provide for social welfare needs. As is very clear in Zimbabwe, DRC, and Angola, the State is not collecting the taxes, local ruling elites are directly benefitting from extractivism themselves and not remitting much to the fiscus. The SADC Protocol is an entry point that can be used to engage on women and extractives by feminists and the SADC gender desk is very supportive to feminist groups.

The violent nature of the military and locally connected elites not withstanding this is an area in which feminists can make a marked difference by actively researching, mobilizing excluded women and more importantly expanding the discourse on human rights from the narrow household/tradition arenas to the bigger economic policy and resource governance from national to global levels! An example here is to keep up momentum in global discourse showing why the resource

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course is at the base of the sexual violence against women in DR Congo, (rather than the present suggestion that Congolese or African men are just so dastardly and barbaric, much more than men elsewhere).¹³

The heightened consciousness on climate change and its impact on agriculture, the environment and rural women's livelihoods provides yet another opportunity to reposition the underlying structural challenges facing rural women. For example simply pointing out that it is not within the power of a woman who does not control land to decide how to adapt her farming because of climate change – even if she gets as much education or awareness as she can from an NGO.

The many years of investment in rural development, particularly awareness raising of rights amongst women is beginning to pay dividends. Increase in confidence; participation in decision making processes; ability to speak out at mixed sex meetings, these have been some of the most visible indicators of women's empowerment documented by NGOs and movements.

The many years of investment in rural development, particularly awareness raising of rights amongst women is beginning to pay dividends. Increase in confidence; participation in decision making processes; ability to speak out at mixed sex meetings, these have been some of the most visible indicators of women's empowerment documented by NGOs and movements. Translating this power within into power to, and economic power will be the natural next step in feminist organizing.

The AU has developed a Framework and Guidelines on Land in Africa.¹⁴ Civil society groups and women's organizations played a role in crafting these policy guidelines ensuring promotion and protection of women's rights to land. This was followed by the setting up of a Land Policy Initiative, which is supporting governments in its implementation. In addition the AU adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The aim is for governments to spend more on agriculture, (at least 10% of national budgets), and raise agricultural productivity by at least 6% per annum.¹⁵ These present some opportunities for engagement with governments and donors for the realization of women's rights in these sectors.

13. <http://gwynnedyer.com/tag/africa/>

14. <http://rea.au.int/en/content/framework-and-guidelines-land-policy-africa>

15. <http://www.nepad-caadp.net/about-caadp.php>

7.3 Heterosexuality – the unfinished business

An exciting development in the SADC region has been the emergence of LGBTI movements. In almost all the countries in the region, there is now at least a group, an organization that is KNOWN, and is speaking out on the rights of sexual minorities. In Malawi the rights of LGBTI was thrown into

the spotlight when a (then assumed), gay couple came out in the open. In Zambia and Zimbabwe drafting new constitutions provided the impetus for LGBTI persons to stake their claims, supported by a few progressive human rights and women's rights organizations. Needless to say, it is this issue that has brought the Christian right out of the woodwork and in its full colors. The State, (through the dominant parties), in an attempt to regain lost ground has seized the momentum.

At the risk of sounding heterosexist, being heteronormative, hetero everything – it is my considered view that we still have MAJOR issues to deal with under the overarching, all consuming, all powerful, heterosexual context in which MOST women and girls live their lives in the region. To put it crudely, most of the problems women face in Malawi¹⁶, Zambia and Zimbabwe, can be traced down to the heterosexual nature of all societies in these countries. To put it more crudely, who one has sex with, how you have sex, who you marry, how you marry, and how that marriage/relationship is validated, and entrenched is based on the exercise of male power over women, their bodies, the children that are born from these bodies, and who feels they OWN who. A few examples from the present day;

- The fact that Jacob Zuma can still marry so many women and he sees absolutely nothing wrong with it let alone what message it sends about him personally, the women and his country is illustrative.
- Staying with Zuma; during his rape trial, Zuma told the Judge that he touched Kwezi on, “her father’s cattle kraal”, (literal translation, her vagina, from which her father should expect cattle from whosoever wants to get access to that vagina/kraal). It is not Kwezi’s vagina. It is her father’s. The implications of this thinking, which is held not just by Zuma but most people, women and men, are multiple and far reaching
- After insulting South African envoy Lindiwe Zulu during negotiations over Zimbabwe’s political stalemate, the entire SADC leadership had a good laugh as Mugabe proposed to marry Ms. Zulu. Zuma indicated he

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16. Despite many claims, there is no matrilineal society in Malawi. It is simply matrilineal. In other words, the family is literally based where the woman is geographically from. But the women do not hold POWER, visible or invisible.

will receive the cattle, (which will give Mugabe access to Mr. Zulu's cattle kraal)! And to top it all off, Mugabe kissed Ms. Zulu live in front of a regional audience. In essence reducing Ms. Zulu to the woman with a vagina that she is and the reason she exists... well... What else does one do with women?

- *Lobola*, bride price, is still a requirement to validate marriages amongst black people. *Lobola* is paid for a woman's reproductive capacity. Not her education, not her looks, nor the much vaunted, "unity between two families". As long as the principle and significance of *lobola* remains what it always has been – even if it is five cents, five thousand dollars or five hoes – women will never have control over their own bodies and make their own sexual and reproductive choices.
- Although the national incidences of HIV infections have gone down in all three countries, and a country such as Zimbabwe has been celebrated for the overall decrease¹⁷; women, and younger women still make up the majority of those affected and infected; and incidence of new infections amongst younger married women are still the majority; What does this say about gender power relations – given that the most common route for HIV infection is heterosexual sex?

In many societies it still seen as ok for a rapist to claim he love/s his victim and wants to marry her. Read: Sexual violence is seen merely as illegitimate access to a woman's father's cattle kraal, therefore paying compensation in said cattle makes it alright.

Organizing or speaking out on sexual rights is still the Achilles heel of the women's movements in Southern Africa. In earlier decades the conversations on family planning and child spacing provided entry points for raising awareness amongst women. This was followed by the era of "safe motherhood", still very much built around family planning. The arrival of HIV provided a much bigger entry point into conversations about the body, sexuality, choice, negotiation, and definitely brought heterosexual sex under the micro-scope. The amount of knowledge, evidence as well as simple information generated around gender, sexual inequality in the era of HIV & AIDS has been quite staggering. It took a pandemic to validate and get global acknowledgement of what women already knew, experienced and had tried to talk about but few decision makers listened.

The momentum generated by HIV & AIDS appears to be waning as the pandemic is slowly brought under control. Funding is definitely decreasing as new flavors of the month emerge. HIV was indeed an 'entry point', but how

17. See UNAIDS reports 2012; Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe; Ministries of health/National AIDS Councils' reports.

far into the rest of the house did it take SRHR? Did feminists, governments, donors and activists get into the entire house? Into all the rooms? All cupboards? Because the heterosexual house is a MASSIVE house, made of very strong concrete and other reinforcement materials, it would appear that certainly we did enter the house, but did not go far enough. Example; A recent evaluation of a big donor project in Zimbabwe showed that the project outcomes and achievements were more to do with livelihoods and partners could measure other tangible results, and little was seen in terms of power relations.

The momentum generated by HIV & AIDS appears to be waning as the pandemic is slowly brought under control. Funding is definitely decreasing as new flavors of the month emerge. HIV was indeed an ‘entry point’, but how far into the rest of the house did it take SRHR? Did feminists, governments, donors and activists get into the entire house? Into all the rooms?

New data shows that there is a generation of young women and men, (in their teens), who were born and are living with HIV. Old messages (abstain, be faithful, etc), are no longer relevant to this group. At the same time, they have sexual needs and rights which they need to meet and exercise, while navigating the challenges of living with HIV. Data is also showing that while access to treatment is becoming easier in all countries, mobile populations such as migrant workers – both women and men find it hard to access and adhere to treatment.

Indeed, we have done it again here, fallen back into discussing sex, sexuality and reproductive rights under the rubric of HIV & AIDS! It is imperative to recast these issues outside the HIV + pain + death framework, but rather, pleasure + choice + life. As the HIV door closes, feminist movements must re—strategize and organize much more concertedly around this big basket of issues. Early marriage+ fundamentalisms+ poverty & increasing inequality challenge us to re-double efforts in this spectrum.

Opportunities

- Continue to use the entry point of HIV & AIDS to score even bigger gains while this moment (funding, donor focus, media interest), is still here;
- Articulate in a more forceful way the underlying causes of unequal gender sexual power relations building on the foundations laid by work on HIV.

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- Start now to articulate a new feminist sexual rights agenda post HIV. Because in fact we are already in the 'post-HIV era in many respects.
- reinvent the anti-HIV & AIDS movements as sexual rights movements; Women living with HIV; Care givers, Community based mobilizers; advocacy experts, researchers; the array of capacities built in the last three decades is absolutely huge and the feminist movement needs to harness this movement in the service of women's sexual autonomy and bodily integrity.
- Schools, Universities, and the mainstream mass media have become more open to education and discussion of matters sexual. Again mobilize these in the service of women and girls' rights.
- There is an emerging donor discourse on SRHR and its intersection with HIV which needs to be quickly harnessed before the mantle is taken to focus on infant mortality.
- Movements of young women and youth groups are becoming much more visible and vocal on matters sexual. Here is an agenda for them, (see section on YOUNG WOMEN, below).
- Emerging sex worker movements are already steeped in these issues. Most of them do need a lot of support; capacity building; visibility + safety + security; and linkages/solidarity from heterosexual-married women's movements.
- LGBTI stand -alone movements (without the Gs), are also slowly emerging and need support, solidarity, linkages both in terms of ISSUES as well as struggles with heterosexual women's groups.
- In all three countries a lot of attention has been paid to domestic violence; all three have an Anti-DV law; monitoring bodies have been set up; there is a lot of donor and government support to anti DV programs and implementation of laws;
- The big gap is still on SEXUAL VIOLENCE. Besides the odd occasions when sensational stories are carried in the media e.g. rape of 2 year old, rape of 89 year old woman, sexual violence broadly is not exactly on the activist and public discourse agenda in all three countries. Feminist movements need to reposition the conversations on VAW (note I am deliberately calling it VAW, and not GBV because I don't want to go there'.....). Sexual violence provides a strategic way to reframe the discourse so that it is understood, VAW is Gender 'based... and it is about POWER. It will also enable the feminist movement

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to retake the mantle and set the agenda. Including retaking ownership and leadership of the 16 days of Activism!

- For what it's worth, the post 2015 agenda needs to be infused with SRHR language, concepts, goals and specific indicators that are about power and women's empowerment.
- As indicated above, the intersections between extractivism, violence against women and militarism need to be a major focus. This will also help deepen understandings of the linkages between economic policies, capitalism, in particular the role of global capital in what are often seen as barbaric behaviors (pathologies), of individual men in the global south.

7.4 Women in the City

Is it not amazing that more than half a century into what we call DEVELOPMENT, one never hears of URBAN Development? Rural development, yes, we know all about that. That is what most 'development organizations' have been doing all along. It is a fact that the majority of people in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe live in rural areas. Agriculture is the backbone of that rural economy. Women make up the majority of workers in the agricultural sector, both as smallholder farmers or working on others' land. Rightfully, development discourse largely dwelt on the rural because that is where the majority of the poor and most excluded live. Yet current trends show that urbanization is increasing at a very fast pace.¹⁸ Climate change, droughts, flooding, poor soils – leading to poor returns, lack of development in general as well as economic opportunities have forced many a rural dweller to find their way into the cities. In Southern Africa, rare are the days when workers treated the city as a temporary place employment and residence, preferring to keep the rural home as THE ultimate home, where they would return to retire, and eventually be buried. This is despite the cities themselves failing to provide employment, housing, water, sanitation, and other social services.

Cities in Southern Africa were never designed and or built as spaces for women. History books are replete with how the colonial state actively put in place laws, policies and policing to keep black women out of urban areas. The small minority who initially moved to cities were those women 'thrown out' of the rural economy for various reasons; divorce, widowhood/refusal to be inherited, single and never married (bad women). Hence the enduring image of an urbanized black woman as a single, unmarried/unmarriageable, sex worker, of loose morals.

18. <http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/publications/aeo-1/213.htm>

Besides sex workers or wives of men working in urban areas, little is known to this day about who the urban black woman is in Southern Africa today. What does she do for economic survival? What are her social networks? Where does she live? Does she own property? How is she coping with the collapse in infrastructure which clearly was never designed to accommodate so many of HER: water, electricity, public transport, sanitation, over-crowded schools?

Besides sex workers or wives of men working in urban areas, little is known to this day about who the urban black woman is in Southern Africa today. What does she do for economic survival? What are her social networks? Where does she live? Does she own property? How is she coping with the collapse in infrastructure which clearly was never designed to accommodate so many of HER: water, electricity, public transport, sanitation, over-crowded schools? We have got glimpses of this woman only as a victim of cholera, the street hawker whose goods get taken by the municipal police, or when she is at the urban borehole because there is no water.

There is little data and even less attention in development programs to even venture suggestions.

Save to suggest that this is one area that has been largely neglected in feminist research, knowledge, and more importantly specific organizing and movement building – in all three countries. Equally it appears governments are in denial about the pace of rural-urban migration and what this means for development policy. As women have become permanent residents of cities and towns there is need for more nuanced and current understandings of who these women are, the policies that surround them and the choices they make. Some UN agencies and a few feminist organizations have started doing this analysis and this needs to be replicated in Southern Africa.¹⁹

Opportunities

Organizing and working with women in the city has become an imperative in and of itself. In addition it provides opportunities to deepen activism around;

- Young women in the city; there is now a generation born, bred and whose entire lives are urban based. What do they want? What do they do currently? How can they organize and mobilize? Trends from other countries show that women who move to the cities do so at much younger ages; with less education; less prospects for well-paid employment; with no family support; more exposed to violence and exploitation etc.

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19. http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/UNFPA_gender_March%202012.pdf

- Violence against women and girls; the Safe Cities initiatives currently implemented by UNWomen and several women’s organizations are good to link up with as program and advocacy frameworks have been developed.
- Economic empowerment; Income Generating Projects with rural women didn’t go far. Yet somehow women in cities seem to strive and sometimes thrive; What can we learn from women’s economic strategic in urban areas in Southern Africa?
- Interrogating laws, policies, and the role of the State in fulfilling women’s rights; In Zimbabwe Musasa and the Women’s Law Centre in partnership with Oxfam are undertaking a three year IDRC funded research on Urbanization, Violence, Poverty and exclusion.
- The CARE Economy; a few studies were done in the era of HIV & AIDS looking at women’s burden of unpaid care work. The burden hasn’t gone away, it simply changes shape and increases. Unpaid care provides a critical entry into the role of the State, and the urban context is a wide lens through which to advocate for Recognition, and reduction of the burden of care.

7.5 Young Women

Statistics show that young people, those aged between 18 and 35 are now the majority of the populations in most Sub—Saharan African countries. The same is true in Southern Africa. In Zambia, close to half of its 14 million population are young people under the age of 15! Louder calls for youth involvement, participation and visibility in development policy, programming discourse, have been very audible in recent years. Again rightfully so. Societies in this region are not known for their inclusion let alone acknowledgement that the youth are ‘people’ with rights, feelings, who can speak for themselves. In women’s rights organizing, generally speaking, it has often been taken for granted that the broad category ‘women’ encompasses all ages, all social classes etc.

At the same time though, it should be acknowledged that the same patriarchy that violates older women’s rights is the same patriarchy that young/er women have to deal with. The nuance, historical period, the arena where

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it happens, and the impacts might be (a bit), different because one is at a different stage of their life-cycle. But eventually, and that is why it is a CYCLE, they are the same. Thus the approach we shall take here is that the four agenda items highlighted above apply to older women as well as to younger women. What feminists need to do is delineate and articulate the specific angles for each category of women.

The more important issue is about strategy, leadership and sustaining agendas for and by young women in Southern Africa. Over the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the number of young women and youth organizations generally in the region.

The more important issue is about strategy, leadership and sustaining agendas for and by young women in Southern Africa. Over the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the number of young women and youth organizations generally in the region. In Zimbabwe alone, where there was hardly a youth movement as at year 2000, there are now close to 120 young people's organizations, (many of them NGOs). Who the members of these organizations are, and what exactly the organizations DO, is another critical question. More

specifically, within the young women's organizations, it is safe to say most are still struggling with crafting a coherent agenda, building constituencies and achieving visible results, (in whichever way they themselves might define 'results'). An uncharitable view is that most of the young women's organizations have traded on the mantra, "young women are excluded, they must speak for ourselves". But as to what they want to be included in, when, how and what they want to speak on is less clear. Note: this is really a very broad generalization. There are a handful of organizations who have found their voice and niche; HIV & AIDS; SRHR; LGBTI; income generating activities, to name these few. At the same time, the compulsion to be all things to all young people seems to pervade another group. Hence it is not uncommon to find a young women's NGO that does – peace building, sexual rights, and youth participation in democracy and governance, while raising chickens.

An imminent danger is that some of the 'organizations' leaders are one woman shows, but who at the same time are well liked by donors and the media. When the youth flavor passes, these 'leaders' will find themselves without constituencies, or concrete activities.

Yet this momentum of young people organizing themselves and for their own rights is a critical opportunity to tackle the neglected issues affecting younger women. They will not be short of things to do. What they simply need is strategic thinking, constituency based organizing and focused leadership.

8 Twitter doth not a revolution make, but it maketh a difference

Finally, no context analysis in the 21st century would be complete without looking at how activists who are seeking to make an impact on that context are using modern means of organizing and communicating their messages – new media!

The Arab Spring was 'sprung' by Twitter, Face-book and mobile phones! So mainstream media will have us believe. Elections are lost and won, thanks to messaging via social media, again we are told. Social media and new media have become critical forces, shaping hearts, minds, and indeed whole communities. The feminist movement has not been immune to its influence, and is consistently reminded to make use of these modern communication tools to spread its message.

Cellphone usage in Sub-Saharan Africa has been one of the fastest to take root. In a context in which most citizens did not have access to landline telephony anyway, the mobile phone has been a boon to communication starved people. In addition, the fact that governance systems, processes and decision making in most African countries tend to be shrouded in secrecy and absolute opacity, social media and the internet have become the means through which citizens talk mostly about and on the odd occasion, TO their leaders.

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The most commonly used, in descending order, are;

- Mobile phone; text messaging and more recently **whatsapp** are the most popular and affordable
- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Websites (& occasionally blogs)

Little data is available on women's access to and use of new media in Southern Africa. Generally though indications are that mobile phone usage, with the

attendant paraphernalia such as **whatsapp** and **facebook** have become the tools of choice for the majority. In Kenya and Zimbabwe the fact that women in remote rural areas can also now receive cash via mobile phones has seen mobile phone popularity tripling.

A casual Google stroll through the most well-known women's rights organizations in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, by the writer showed the following disturbing trends;

- Nearly all of them have not updated their websites since 2012, some of them as far back as when they set them up five years ago!
- The few who have updates barely talk to the issues of the day, topical subjects, and or respond to issues in the news
- Very few have substantial research or new knowledge that they have generated in the last two years.
- The websites are not interactive
- The Facebook pages are more up to date, but tend to have very scanty material/information and the little there is looks frivolous
- Interestingly, the individual leaders of those organizations have very active personal Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and rarely, blogs. Read differently this implies the leaders are 'celebrity feminists' who use these spaces for personal branding.

It would appear that feminist organizing in Southern Africa has not quite modernized and is yet to find its new media voice. Most of the women's organizations still use their old spaces – which it must also be acknowledged took a long time to fight for and acquire; Women's pages in mainstream daily or weekly papers; air time on national/state owned radio and television stations. The problem with most of these, at least in the case of Zimbabwe and Zambia is that they are now very unpopular with the citizenry let alone the women they are meant to reach.

It would appear that feminist organizing in Southern Africa has not quite modernized and is yet to find its new media voice. Most of the women's organizations still use their old spaces – which it must also be acknowledged took a long time to fight for and acquire; Women's pages in mainstream daily or weekly papers; air time on national/state owned radio and television stations. The problem with most of these, at least in the case of Zimbabwe and Zambia is that they are now very unpopular with the citizenry let alone the women they are meant to reach. In all three countries, even the poorest urban dweller will fight tooth and nail to buy a satellite dish and decoder with which to pirate television from Botswana and South Africa rather than watch national TV.

While new media has presented new, faster, more interactive ways of reaching women, it has also come with a number of negative implications for women's rights. Most of these have already been documented especially in the global north, I will only recount a few here;

- Individualism, personal branding, celebrity culture at the expense of the collectives of women
- Anybody who is anybody now has the tools to spew their sexist vitriol at feminists, already seen in UK and USA where feminists were targeted by trolling and subsequent abuse.
- Anybody who is anybody can now speak on behalf of women, about women, rather than rights holders or the women affected by issues speaking for themselves.
- Abuse of young women and girls; cyber bullying; stalking; sexting; in some cases resulting in the death of the young women as happened to a 14 year old girl in UK.

Opportunities

There are lots of questions that feminist movements and their leaders need to grapple with as they seek to understand the context in which they want to reach, organize and talk to women; Who is the woman we are talking to, or about today? Where she is? What do we know about her? Her reading habits? Her communication habits? Her entertainment hobbies? What does her day look like – which determines what she can or can't listen to, watch, or even physically participate in? Is she in a rural or urban area?

New media has taken over most women's lives in the region – even as we continue to say women are excluded and or have less access than men. But they do in fact have access to something, and are actively using it. At the same time, our movements are straining to be heard above all the cacophony of voices, causes, (and more worryingly outright misogyny), that the world has become. Gone are the days when women's groups with their workshops, newsletters and radio programs had close to a monopoly over women's ears and eyes. More strategic thinking is necessary so that feminist movements can adequately seize the opportunities new media present.

9 Organizing women; it is not just what we organize for, it is how we organize

In 2006, the Open Society Initiatives for Southern Africa, OSISA facilitated an introspective process, into how women organize in the region. The process involved several pieces of research and knowledge generation, looking at the question – what is the state of women’s movements in Southern Africa and what needs to be done to reinvigorate and sustain these movements?²⁰ A key conclusion reached throughout the process was that women’s movements do indeed exist, they are in fact movements, plural, not one single and

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singular movement as the question is often framed. These movements are diverse both in terms of their strengths and capacities as well as in terms of their visions and how they organize women. Such as they should be! Again in contrast to and firmly dismissing the notion that all biological females must agree with one another and must always work together around one thing/agenda. There is a long history of women organizing in Southern Africa. From the self-help groups, good housewives clubs of the colonial period, working women in trade unions, women in liberation

movements, leading and supporting the armed struggles for independence, to religious mothers’ unions, to the latter day NGO driven group formations.

In this last section we look at the state of women’s organizing in the three countries. There is a whole range of issues that one could go into. The approach taken here is to focus on the way Just Associates has been working – movement building with a feminist agenda, and offer a perspective around this. The analysis is offered as answer to the question – if the above are key agenda issues confronting women in the sub-region, are our movements fit for the purpose of tackling these issues?

9.1 Guarding feminist autonomy and autonomous spaces

The broad women’s movements have to some extent been coopted by the State, and in some cases by donors and other civil society groups towards

20. http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/women/060927rg.asp?sector=GEN&year=2006&range_start=91

their own agendas. While it is important to engage and ally with progressive elements within the State, it has often been hard for women's groups to maintain their critical distance. A case in point; when the MDC in Zimbabwe joined the government, it was hard for women's groups to maintain a healthy distance between themselves and a former ally! Similarly the Ministries of Gender in all countries always feel that women's groups are an adjunct of their Ministries and get surprised when these groups criticize them publicly especially at international forums like UN-CSW, or insist on organizing their own 16 days of activism campaigns.

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In this context too, guarding feminist spaces, organizations and movements, which are led by and are focused on women and their rights becomes critical. No apologies. No long debates that wheel men into the room even when it is not necessary.

9.2 Maintaining a radical feminist agenda

In these days of 'gender mainstreaming' and the depoliticized language of 'gender is about men and women', leaving out "and the unequal POWER relations between them", feminist values, politics and ways of seeing have become marginalized and in some cases pilloried. A radical feminist agenda built around most of the issues outlined above and their intersections would powerfully reposition feminist struggles in the region. Shifting debates and policy away from the now coopted and depoliticized arenas.

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This feminist discourse needs to consistently link race, sex and gender, power, patriarchy, capitalism and extractivism.

9.3 Building the power of rights holders

That the women's movements have become so NGOized is not in question. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the NGO as an organizational form. What is problematic is the fact that most of the NGOs do not spend enough time talking to, and directly engaging the rights holders the women who are at the front line of whatever issues their mission focuses on. Once off workshops. Once a week radio programs. Technical policy briefs. Colorful

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- The issues of the moment; drafting new constitutions, electoral politics, and women's political participation, have largely not engaged the most excluded women, focusing mostly on so called advocacy, read that as lobbying, in national capitals, at SADC, AU and the UN. Thus activists have become quite adept at talking to policy wonks in Washington but less adept at knowing what not to wear when facilitating a workshop with elderly women.
- The UN and donors have not helped, aiding and abetting very technical analysis of big global documents, MDGs, AU declarations.
- Most of the older women's rights movements that used to really organize women at base level have all but collapsed. Examples of these include; Women's Clubs in Zimbabwe, the Jekesa Pfungwa type groups.

Movement building in the region should, if nothing else GO BACK TO BASICS! The basics of political education, feminist thinking and analysis, how to talk to less educated and excluded women, basic organizing skills- how to build genuine rights holder driven, led, and focused groups and movements, and communication skills.

pamphlets flying about the villages on their own. None of these are enough to build rights holders' collective power, power within and power to change things.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to this lobbying and long distance approach to working with women;

- The 2000s have seen a marked decline in participatory development 'how tos'. This is different from the 1980s and 1990s the golden age of Paulo Freire, people centred approaches and in Southern Africa the era of Training or Transformation. I always ask young NGO leaders if they have a copy of TFT and or know the way to Silveira House. Unsurprisingly, most of them don't!

As the women's NGOs become very technicist and non-feminist, so have they become more distant from the rights holders, and have lost the capacity to mobilize the collective power of the women.

Movement building in the region should, if nothing else GO BACK TO BASICS! The basics of political education, feminist thinking and analysis, how to talk to less educated and excluded women, basic organizing skills- how to build genuine rights holder driven, led, and focused groups and movements, and communication skills. There is also need to invest in building feminist

leadership skills linked to the aforementioned. Without strong individual feminist leaders then there will be no movements. And at the same time, these individuals must have the knowledge, skills and politics in CONSTITUENCY BUILDING.

9.4 Organizing at regional level

The impact of the collapse of two strong regional networks that previously played a key role in bringing women's voices together has been deeply felt in the region. Women and Law in Southern Africa, (WLSA), is now atomized into its national chapters. Women in Law and Development Africa (WiLDAF), has literally vanished from the scene in SADC region, with a few chapters still active in West and a bit of East Africa. It is these organizations that previously marshalled the voices of women at regional levels while also linking to their global feminist counterparts. Although there are some attempts by GenderLinks, and occasionally the SADC Gender Unit and UNWomen, this is well below the required visible power that needs to be brought to bear at that level. There is a desperate gap in terms of regional feminist networks. This will also help to move away from the individual based organizing where specific individuals without any constituency or accountability circulate in these regional spaces.

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9.5 Nurturing new movements and new ways of organizing

Perhaps, what has hobbled many a women's organization is the lack of knowledge about what women's lives really are like and how women are organizing themselves! Case in point; in a country like Zimbabwe where somehow women have survived the catastrophic economic and political crises that dogged that country in the last decade. What the women did? How? What support structures they counted on? Many of these are still a mystery to the NGOs of old.

Perhaps, what has hobbled many a women's organization is the lack of knowledge about what women's lives really are like and how women are organizing themselves!

While the NGOs had their eyes on the elections etc. women were getting on with their lives and finding new ways surviving, particularly in urban areas where many moved into in large numbers. Another example is there is little organizing and linkage between national women's movements in the region with women who have migrated to South Africa and Botswana. The little attention that has been paid to them is at election time or as victims of xenophobia.

It is imperative that movement builders in SADC region invest a bit more time in generating knowledge about all kinds of women, particularly those that can be called 'new women'; women in the diaspora (but at the lower end of the economic spectrum); urban traders; cross border traders, medium scale global traders (those going to China, Dubai, etc.); young women living and 'working' in urban areas; sex workers; LGBTI women; and even the more progressive elements within religious and political formations. The list is endless. The key point is that most of the interventions by women's NGOs are still largely based on old notions of who or what women are, where they live, and what they do for a living. The women of all three countries have moved, literally and figuratively.

10 Last words

The SADC region is one of the fastest growing regions on the continent. It is also the region imbued with vast mineral and natural resource wealth, which are now driving this economic growth. On the heels of growth is growing inequality along race, class and sex lines. At the same time the lives of women in the region have shifted dramatically just in the last decade. The impacts of HIV & AIDS are still visible. Colonialism is back, albeit with a new name, and with it racism, xenophobia, expropriations and expulsion of the marginalized. Behind all of this is the changing picture of POWER, who holds it, how it is exercised and who gets excluded. Invisible and hidden powerful forces

The SADC region is one of the fastest growing regions on the continent. It is also the region imbued with vast mineral and natural resource wealth, which are now driving this economic growth. On the heels of growth is growing inequality along race, class and sex lines.

are increasingly exerting unbridled power over women, poor black people and those on the economic and political margins. These invisible and hidden powers include; ruling elites, the military, religious leaders and institutions, as well as private capitalists, commonly referred to as 'the market', (making the individuals who manipulate this 'market nameless, faceless and even more invisible).

On the bright side, feminists have become more adept at recognizing, and naming these forces. What they are yet to become even better at is how to organize and mobilize their collective power to challenge and confront these powerful forces. Having technical knowledge is not sufficient is not sufficient to fight for change. Neither is so called evidence of what the problems women face by itself enough as very often even this evidence, particularly when generated by feminists gets challenged and trashed.

It is not just what we organize around how we organize that also matters. Feminist organizing, movement building and sustaining women's collective voices are the means through which to bring about change and protect the gains already made in women's rights. The women's movements in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe need to re-engineer themselves in order to face the challenges that have arisen in this region.

And on even on brighter note women from different walks of life are self-organizing in new and exciting ways that the present day NGOs have yet to fully grasp. Young women, sex workers, sexual minorities, traders, migrants, all these women are finding innovative ways of linking with each other and around new sets of issues that again some of the older women's formations and governments have yet to get their heads around.

Feminist movement building and organizing in SADC region needs to re-envision the task of challenging and confronting negative power, while building and sustaining women's power.

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