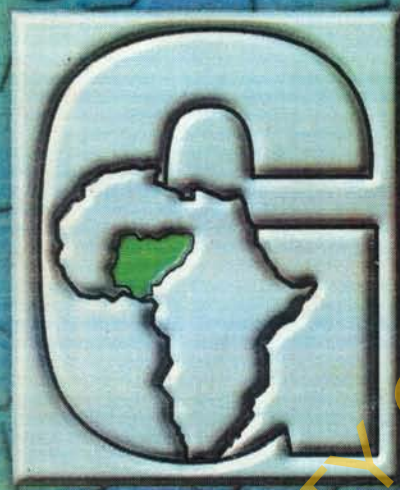


**GENDER AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
ASSOCIATION AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
29th October - 2nd November, 2000  
Abuja, Nigeria**

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NO MAN IS INFERIOR TO ANOTHER MAN  
WHATEVER THEIR COLOUR, PLACE OF BIRTH, SITUATION IN LIFE,  
THE RELIGION THEY EMBRACE  
AND POSITION THEY OCCUPY;  
THAT MAN IS NOT SUPERIOR TO WOMAN  
AND WOMAN IS NOT SUPERIOR TO MAN  
BUT THEY ARE LIKE EQUAL ARMS OF A CROSS,  
ONE VERTICAL, THE OTHER HORIZONTAL,  
AND SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING EACH OTHER  
IN A STRICTLY DEFINED DIVISION OF LABOUR ORDERING  
THAT ANY CLAIM TO SUPERIORITY BY ANY GROUP, RELIGION  
OR POLITICAL, IS THE CLAIM OF THE NARROW IN VISION.

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## FULL PAPERS

### PLENARY PAPER 1

#### LOCATING WOMEN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE WITHIN THE POLICY FRAMEWORK.

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#### ABSTRACT

Rapid changes in the way of life of local communities and the consequent loss of indigenous knowledge, coupled with the increasing awareness that indigenous knowledge can play an important role in enhancing development, have led development workers in both governmental and non-governmental organizations to collect indigenous knowledge. Rural development policies and practices are now focusing on how indigenous knowledge could be incorporated on the policy framework of development.

#### INTRODUCTION

The term indigenous knowledge is any knowledge that is peculiar to a given culture. It is also described as Indigenous Technology (IT) and as well as Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK).

Indigenous knowledge is recognized as the product of holistic systems of perceptions relationship and organizational arrangement. Quiroz, (1994) reported that there is no set of universal gendered indigenous knowledge systems. Primarily, gender is the social differentiation among adult economically above members of a society.

Fernandez (1994) noted that there are at least four ways to think about gender difference in knowledge systems namely:

- A different knowledge of similar things between men and women.
- A different knowledge of different things
- Different ways of organizing knowledge and
- Different ways of presenting and transferring knowledge.

As a result of gender specialization, the indigenous knowledge and skills held by women often differ from those held by men. Also, the kinds of relationships which exist between men and women will affect hierarchies of access use and control resulting in different perceptions and priorities, for the innovation and use of technology.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in women indigenous knowledge systems within the field of gender and the environment. It is increasingly being recognized by researchers and grassroots workers alike, that in many communities women are the primary natural resource managers, and that they possess an intimate knowledge of the environment. Many related studies have shown that in circumstances of rapid change such as environmental crisis, the out migration of men, changing economic activities and government interventions, women play a crucial role in maintaining livelihoods, cultural continuity and community cohesion.

Most of the literature has ignored the gender dimensions of indigenous knowledge systems. Like gender differences, women's indigenous knowledge is socially constructed. Women's indigenous knowledge often goes unrecognised, remaining invisible to planners, policy makers and other agents of external change.

Indigenous knowledge in development framework the efforts of locating the indigenous knowledge on the policy framework are essentially promoting the use of indigenous knowledge. This is based principally on two objectives according to Mathias (1995):

- to increase information dissemination on IKS
- to incorporate the use of IKS in development projects.

To realize the first objective there is need for record keeping and documentation of indigenous knowledge through field studies, literature studies and workshop. Ideally these studies should involve local people as partners and provides for information feedback to communities.

In addition, the collected indigenous knowledge should be validated through laboratory tests, on-station research and local people assessment. It will also involve the testing of field methodologies for recording and using indigenous knowledge. This will enhance learning from development projects that have made use of indigenous knowledge.

Lastly, in the form of documents, audio-visuals, conferences, mass media, networking databases and demo plots information should be made available.

With respect to the second objectives the following are activities for its realization:

- (1) Raising the awareness of the value of indigenous knowledge among local people, individuals and organizations, scientists, policy makers and development planners.
- (2) Provision of guidelines on how indigenous knowledge can be useful to policy makers, government officials and development planners.
- (3) Provision of tools and methods for the recording and use of indigenous knowledge in development projects.
- (4) Packaging of materials more appropriately for different audiences.

### **Indigenous Knowledge and Policy**

The perceived role of science and technology led to the formulation of the science and technology policy in Nigeria. A ministry of science and technology was erected in October 1979 with the responsibilities of formulation of policy on science and technology, promotion of science and technology research, liaison with universities and institution of higher learning and promotion and administration of technology transfer programmes.

The policy laid emphasis on basic research establishment of science and technological institutions and training of middle level technical manpower. In the pursuit of applied technological research, two prominent industrial research and development centres were established namely: Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIRO) in Lagos and Project Development Agency (PRODA) in Enugu. FIIR concentrates on post-harvest technologies for industrial processing of local food stuff; PRODA on the other hand, concentrates on the research and development of electrical power and electronic technology (Magbagbeola, 1999).

The foregoing aptly described the neglect of the indigenous knowledge systems in Nigeria. This is because it has not been located on the policy framework of the nation's development. There was a reawakening, however, as the need to make the technology culturally compatible, socially desirable, and environmentally friendly grew and the demand for indigenous technology came up.

The renaissance above led to the incorporation of indigenous technology in development plans and documentation of the same.

The history of policy shows a common pattern. Technological prescriptions are derived from controlled and uniform settings and applied widely with little regard for diverse local needs and conditions.

Policies actively encourage dependency on external inputs even when they are financially costly, environmentally damaging and economically inefficient when technologies are rejected, policy shift to seeking success through the manipulations of social, economic and ecological environments and through enforcement. To improve the policy situation on indigenous knowledge, there is need for an enabling orientation and new practice.

Policies and government representatives can be addressed in various ways. Government representatives can participate in the discussion of plans and ideas from communities and become involved in identifying priorities. They also provide information for implementing plans, constraints or other policy issues affecting the use of indigenous knowledge.

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