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**REGIONAL HIDES AND SKINS, LEATHER AND LEATHER  
PRODUCTS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME**

**US/RAF/88/100**

**REGIONAL AFRICA**

**Integration of women in the leather, footwear and leather  
products industries in the African region**

**Final report**

*Based on the work of Hope Chigudu, Women-in-Development expert*

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### **List of abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in this Report:

<b>DEMATT</b>	<b>Development of Malawi Traders Trust</b>
<b>ECA</b>	<b>Economic Commission for Africa</b>
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>gross domestic product</b>
<b>IDF</b>	<b>Industrial Development Fund</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organisation</b>
<b>INDEFUN</b>	<b>Investment Development Fund (Malawi)</b>
<b>MUSCO</b>	<b>Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives</b>
<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Non-governmental organizations</b>
<b>OAU</b>	<b>Organization of African Unity</b>
<b>SEDOM</b>	<b>Small Enterprise Development of Malawi</b>
<b>SEDCO</b>	<b>Small Enterprise Corporation (Zimbabwe)</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNIDO</b>	<b>United Nations Industrial Development Organization</b>
<b>WID</b>	<b>Women-in-Development</b>

## **Abstract**

The UNIDO leather project operates in seven countries of eastern and southern Africa, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Overall it aims at improving the quality of hides and skins, leather and leather products in the seven countries. Following the recognition by UNIDO that industrialization has a significant impact on the female half of the community, the project has an additional component, the enhancement of the position of women in the sector.

This report is based on the information gathered and work done in the seven countries in connection with the Women-in-Development component of the project, which lasted from May 1991 to May 1993. Chapter I presents an overview of the situation of women in the leather industry in the seven countries. Chapter II discusses their situation in each of the countries. The report focuses on sex issues, with other aspects of the project being covered in other reports.

The report provides data that enable a better understanding of the organizational culture and structures and how they constrain or facilitate the full utilization of human resources. It identifies organizational barriers to the integration and participation of women in the sector and summarizes the difficulties women have with respect to recruitment, training, wages and advancement. It also articulates the problems they face in integrating personal, political, legal and economic life because of historical sex roles and sex-based expectations. The report suggests practical, implementable solutions to increase productivity in any leather factory. It spells out ways in which individual talents can be harnessed and individual productivity increased.

It argues that women are an essential part of the labour force and that strengthening them not only serves to balance the scales of social justice but also to build capacity in the leather industry. It emphasizes that men and women have special skills to bring to an organization and that these skills must be exploited for the sake of the individuals and that of the entire sector.

At the same time as the report articulates the problems of women workers in the leather industry, it asserts that in spite of these problems, there are good prospects for women, as evidenced by the presence of a few women managers and entrepreneurs. It contends that given technical and managerial training, there are women capable not only of rising to managerial positions but also of starting their own leather enterprises.

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## Introduction

The Regional Africa Hides and Skins, Leather and Leather Products Improvement Scheme (US/RAF/88/100), a UNIDO project some portions of which are being executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/GATT), started in 1989. It is the largest technical assistance programme funded by the Industrial Development Fund of UNIDO, through special-purpose contributions from six donor countries. A special contribution for the Women-in-Development expert was made in 1990 by the Government of Germany.

The project was conceived in 1984, when the deteriorating condition of the African leather industry and its unexploited potential were recognized by the Third Consultation on the Leather and Leather Products Industry, held at Innsbruck, Austria, which recommended that UNIDO, in collaboration with the appropriate agencies and bodies, should adopt an integrated programme approach to solving the sector's problem.

The project's immediate objectives were set forth in the project proposal as follows:

- (a) To establish a regional pilot scheme and to demonstrate, in practical terms, the process of hides and skins improvement, from butchering and flaying to conservation, grading and collection;
- (b) To act as catalyst to national authorities to introduce incentives for improved quality performance;
- (c) To rehabilitate existing infrastructures and selected leather tanning and processing plants by increasing their efficiency and capacity utilization, upgrading technical standards, operational methods and skills, product quality and marketing performance, as well as knowledge of those attached to these industries at various levels, starting from primary producers.

According to the project proposal, the development of women in this sector was also taken into consideration in the project activities.

The project comprised a regional umbrella programme and eight associated country projects, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The project in Somalia was terminated prematurely owing to the political situation in that country. The activities of the regional programme and the subregional programmes are coordinated by the Chief Technical Adviser, at Nairobi, assisted by a Kenyan counterpart and national experts based in the six remaining countries. In addition, international experts provide extensive regional and national inputs in hides, skins and leather improvement; tannery rehabilitation; and the production and marketing of footwear and leather goods.

The enhancement of the status of women in the sector is very important. In the project proposal it was stated that female labour in the industry was usually concentrated in the sewing and confectionery departments and that special efforts would be made to train machinists in modern methods. It was expected that in the footwear and leather products factories to be rehabilitated, female instructors would be trained. The leather project is one of the few projects that attempt to address gender and employment issues in both the private and public sectors. This is significant in so far as the role of women in industrialization in the private sector has been a little-explored area. Considering that women carry a heavy load in the production and reproduction spheres of society but do not enjoy



the same rights as men in respect of access to resources and decision-making, the importance of a project like this one cannot be exaggerated. G. Sen and C. Grown make the following point [1]:

"It is now widely accepted that projects meant to benefit communities tend to ignore women by not addressing their concerns specifically. Thus to the extent that development projects do not specifically take women into consideration, chances are that the development impact of the project may be reduced, limited, or even have an adverse or negative impact on women and eventually the whole community. Yet if the goals of development include improved standards of living, removal of poverty, dignified employment, reduction in societal inequality, then development should naturally start with women. Women comprise the majority of the poor, underemployed and economically disadvantaged in most societies. Furthermore, women suffer from additional burdens imposed by gender based hierarchies and subordination."

It is necessary to develop the capabilities of both men and women as inseparable and integral parts of the human resource base of the industry. In line with the strategies set forth in the UNIDO medium-term plan for 1994-1999 to promote the consideration of women in the technical cooperation activities of the organization, a Women in Development component was added in May 1991.

The information in this report comes from leather enterprises in all seven countries. The enterprises that were selected were those that had received assistance from the UNIDO leather project. The data reported in the text were collected in the course of visits by the Women-in-Development expert to factories and face-to-face interviews and discussions with men and women at different hierarchical levels. The data in the tables came from information submitted to the national experts by some, but not all, of the leather factories.

Because it was assumed that management processes were influenced by socially internalized individual views, it was deemed necessary to collect the personal views of individual women and men. The views of managers were elicited on the following issues:

(a) Differences, similarities and disparities between men and women employees, with particular reference to career advancement in the leather industry and benefits and structures supportive of different sex roles;

(b) Organizational barriers to the integration and participation of women employees, with special focus on opportunities for training and career development.

Some important questions were asked:

(a) How do you account for the absence of women at the managerial level in the leather industry?

(b) How does the leather industry environment support or constrain women's career development?

(c) What do you see as the main differences in management style between women and men? How do you account for the differences?

(d) What changes do you suggest should be made in different leather subsectors to allow women to participate fully in the sector as a whole?

(e) What makes it possible for men to progress faster in the leather sector?

Women employees and entrepreneurs in the sector were also asked to identify constraints they had encountered in their careers. The discussions and interviews were seen as a way of making people examine their sex stereotypes and perceptions.

Having identified a number of constraints to the enhancement of the position of women in the leather industry, some steps were then taken to help women to realize their potential. From May 1991 to May 1993, the following activities were carried out:

- (a) A campaign was started to promote gender sensitivity in the leather industry;
- (b) Employment patterns for women and the gender ideology in the leather industry were analysed, as a basis for taking action;
- (c) Training needs were assessed;
- (d) A training course in leather goods was set up specifically for women.

In addition, a number of recommendations aimed at enhancing the status of women in the sector were made; most of the recommendations addressed to the project itself will be implemented in the second phase.

The main body of the report covers sex issues in the leather industry, based on selected leather enterprises in the seven countries.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **A. Conclusions**

The UNIDO leather project, which became operational in 1989, recognizes the importance of incorporating issues of sex in its activities. The productivity of both employees and entrepreneurs and their capacity to work are often constrained by cultural norms and practices. Women's participation is also impeded by their lack of training in relevant skills. The situation differs from country to country, but the main problem is the same: most women employees are in the unskilled category of the labour force. Moreover, women entrepreneurs in the leather industry often operate in a social, political and economic environment that has not been conducive to productive capacity.

To remedy some of these problems, the UNIDO leather project has done the following:

- (a) Started to make the industry aware that women should play a more important part in it;
- (b) Analysed the employment patterns of women in the industry;
- (c) Assessed women's training needs;
- (d) Organized a series of training courses for women in leather goods technology.

The UNIDO leather project has emphasized that enhancing productivity and profitability in an enterprise requires the full participation of both sexes. Clearly, the challenge for the industry is to create an environment in which men and women can contribute equally to and benefit equally from increased productivity.

### **B. Recommendations**

The problems of women workers in the leather industry are complex and cannot be easily tackled, nor can simple solutions be devised.

#### *1. Role of professional associations and the industry itself*

It is recommended that professional associations and the leather industry itself should do the following:

- (a) Identify issues of relevance to women at all levels in the leather industry and ensure that these issues are taken into consideration in the industry's overall policies and plans;
- (b) Ensure that the members of professional leather associations introduce gender-sensitive policies;
- (c) Sensitize industrialists in various subsectors of the leather industry to the importance of addressing gender issues;
- (d) Organize information campaigns, including in the media, for managers in the leather industry that will encourage them to work out strategies for harnessing women's talents and that will break down prejudices against women in the industry;

(e) Organize leather technology training for women in the footwear and leather goods subsectors. The training should not only teach technical know-how but should also build confidence and assertiveness;

(f) Assist women entrepreneurs who are still trying to establish themselves, by providing technical expertise and ensuring that they have access to raw materials;

(g) Act as a catalyst in linking women with emerging business opportunities until they become established;

(h) Provide up-to-date data on the employment patterns of women in the leather industry. The data should reflect the number of women employed, their qualifications, their position in the hierarchy of the firm, the kind of training they have been given, the promotions they have received and the prospects and opportunities that await them.

## *2. Role of the UNIDO leather project*

It is recommended that the UNIDO leather project should do the following:

(a) Organize study tours and exchange visits within the region for women entrepreneurs/managers;

(b) Arrange and encourage training for women in non-traditional occupations, especially in tannery work and effluent treatment;

(c) Promote apprenticeship programmes for women in established enterprises to enable them to acquire skills;

(d) Organize a guided tour for women tanners to selected modern tanneries with model effluent plants and equipment, in Africa and Europe;

(e) Publicize advances made by women in the leather industry elsewhere to demonstrate what women can achieve;

(f) Organize workshops to elaborate strategies that would assist women in the leather industry.

## *3. Role of Governments*

It is recommended that the Governments of the seven countries should do the following:

(a) Monitor the implementation of laws that forbid discrimination on grounds of sex;

(b) Explore, publicize and address possible impediments to female workers in the leather industry;

(c) Improve the access of women entrepreneurs to credit and to physical space for their production;

(d) Organize workshops to discuss ways of increasing the proportion of women in the leather industry.

## *4. Role of international organizations*

It is recommended that international organizations should do the following:

(a) Fund women who would like to receive further training in areas such as supervision and entrepreneurship;

- (b) Inform women about training opportunities at home and abroad;
- (c) Assist in formulating policy and in building capacity for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

#### *5. Role of local and international women's organizations*

It is recommended that local and international women's organizations should do the following:

- (a) Sensitize policy makers and planners to the problems and issues affecting women in the leather industry;
- (b) Promote the exchange of information about successes and failures through local, national and international meetings and publications;
- (c) Provide information on starting businesses to would-be women entrepreneurs;
- (d) Identify additional sources of financial assistance for women and encourage conventional money-lending institutions to adopt flexible terms and affordable credit rates for women entrepreneurs.

#### *6. Role of leather institutes*

It is recommended that leather institutes should do the following:

- (a) Organize courses for women in the various aspects of leather technology;
- (b) Recruit women leather technologists as trainers in the institutes;
- (c) Ensure that women are fully represented in the various courses.

## I. Regional overview

### A. World situation and prospects

In the past 20 years, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a decline in the agricultural and industrial sectors [2]. The growth of per capita GDP has been dismal in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa compared to growth in other regions. For example, Asia has achieved remarkable economic growth, with per capita income having risen 3.6 per cent annually for the past 20 years.

In most sub-Saharan countries, 60 per cent of the exports are primary commodities. This dependence on primary commodities for export has exposed these countries to severe external and internal shocks. The economic recession in industrialized countries, which are the main markets for primary commodities, has led to dramatic declines and fluctuations in the price of these commodities. Most countries in the region are seeking to shift the focus of their production from primary (mostly agricultural) to secondary and tertiary industrial activities. In all seven countries participating in the leather project, manufacturing has been recognized as playing a crucial role in development and is now encouraged. Although data on the export of manufactured goods are incomplete, the available indicators show Africa's share of the world's total exports to be very small. Some of the problems faced by manufacturing industries include stiff competition from abroad, inferior technology, protectionism and a lack of foreign currency. The problems are caused in part by insufficient measures and experience to gain access to export markets and to attain the consistency of product quality demanded by such markets. Other causes include insufficient funds for obtaining professional and specialist services to counter the above-mentioned problems and a dependency on imported spare parts and equipment.

In many countries, hides and skins are a potentially important resource that, when tanned, can generate added value on the domestic market and earn foreign currency on the world market. However, the industry is also affected by the same problems that affect manufacturing in general. It is, in fact, more vulnerable to external and internal shocks, because the supply of hides and skins, which are a by-product of meat, milk, wool and fertilizer production, does not respond to changes in demand for leather. The leather industry therefore has no control over how many hides and skins are produced, as this depends on the slaughtering industry.

In 1990, world prices of hides fell by more than 50 per cent in many cases, and the price of sheepskins fell even more. This happened for a variety of reasons, such as the global economic recession, the crisis in the Persian Gulf, and political and economic changes in eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Africa itself. In some areas, especially southern Africa, the drought of 1991-1992 inflicted heavy damage on the leather sector. For example, in Zimbabwe cattle deaths were estimated at 500 per week [3]. Apart from the fact that cattle died in large numbers, there were shortages of water, electricity and raw materials. As a result, many people in the leather industry were laid off, including 42 per cent of the people employed in the footwear industry in Zambia [4]. Consequently, markets shrank or even disappeared as manufacturing slowed down and inventories built up.

Despite the above constraints, opportunities and prospects for Africa are expected to improve. Higher labour costs and stricter pollution controls in the industrialized countries have caused basic

tanning facilities to be shifted to developing countries. Structural changes in world markets for meat (consumers increasingly prefer white meat to red, especially in major hide-producing countries) have accelerated this shift, which is projected to continue. Accordingly, over the past three decades, the processing of hides and skins has moved from North America and northwestern Europe to the Mediterranean countries and above all to developing countries, many of which had the advantage, at least initially, of being subject to less stringent pollution controls. Many developing countries have thus been able to establish successful, export-oriented industries for footwear and related products.

Ninety per cent of the world output of goatskins is produced by developing countries, but the gains of these countries in the market for cattle hides have been relatively modest, partly because a large volume of hides continues to be wasted and damaged during slaughter. Expansion in the tanning industries of many developing countries has been hampered by a lack of technical and marketing skills, especially those needed to make finished fashion leather, and by periodic shortages of chemicals and other essential inputs, owing to insufficient foreign exchange or unreliable domestic supply. In view of this, the region's ability to respond to global demand for leather will depend on improved quality, which in turn will depend on the factors already discussed as well as the sector's ability to utilize fully the talents of all its employees. The UNIDO leather project has been assisting the leather industry by addressing issues such as markets, technology and the utilization of human resources.

#### **B. Prospects for the employment of women in the leather, footwear and leather products industries of the African region**

In the last two decades, the proportion of women in the leather industry has increased. With the breaking down of the extended family, the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and the increase in poverty and land degradation, more and more women in Africa are looking for employment in industry. For most of them, such employment has ceased to be a matter of choice; rather, it is a strategy for survival.

Working in industries in the formal sector is increasingly perceived by many women as a better alternative than, say, working in domestic service or the informal sector. Income and job security are often better in established industries. Working in the industrial sector may provide protection under the law, a reliable income, exposure to a modern social environment and opportunities to form supportive networks with other women. Yet women remain vulnerable to labour exploitation because of their social status. They are more likely to be illiterate, to be ignorant of their legal rights and to be unfamiliar with the legal agencies that might afford them protection. Hence the process of integrating women into the mainstream of the industrial sector cannot be considered in isolation from other issues that affect them in society.

In most African countries, the tanning of hides and skins using indigenous technology was a job traditionally reserved for women, but with the introduction of cash economies, export markets and modern industries, they became marginalized in this industry. Those who do work in it, however, are found in all its subsectors, especially the footwear and leather goods subsectors.

Not only are women employees in this industry, they are also entrepreneurs. Some of their enterprises are very dynamic and show promise of growth. Other women have formed cooperatives in which they make leather goods. In the footwear subsector, there are women who are subcontracted by established companies, either as individuals or as a cooperative, to stitch shoe uppers when there is a lot of demand for hand-stitched leather shoes. In some countries, there are female officers for hides and skins improvement. It should also be noted that in most African countries the work of tending animals is usually left to women and children.

The close association between the leather industry and the textile industry, where women predominate, makes the leather industry an attractive place for women.

### C. Constraints on women in the leather industry

The participation of women in the various subsectors of the leather industry varies from country to country, influenced by the prevailing cultural, legal and economic situation. However, the main issues are the same. Women are held back not only by sex-specific constraints but also by constraints that pertain to the industry as a whole. For instance, even in the leather goods subsector, where women constitute a relatively large proportion of the labour force, they remain concentrated in lower level occupations that do not fully utilize their technical skills and that offer low pay.

Data on the participation of women in different subsectors of the leather industry in six countries are summarized in tables 1-4.\* Table 1 shows that, overall, female participation is low. Women comprise only about 24 per cent of the employees. In the leather goods subsector, however, they comprise almost 50 per cent.

**Table 1. Employment in the leather industry by sex and subsector in seven countries**

<i>Subsector</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Leather goods (13 factories)	458	447	905	49.3
Footwear (41 factories)	5 342	2 122	7 464	28.4
Tanneries (22 factories)	<u>4 836</u>	<u>847</u>	<u>5 683</u>	14.9
Total (76 factories)	10 636	3 416	14 052	24.3

The participation of women in the leather goods subsector is shown in table 2. Their skill level in this subsector is low. Only a few women have access to the training and exposure required for skills development. Women constitute only 26 per cent of the professional workforce and only a little over one third of the semi-skilled workforce, yet they contribute 38 per cent of the unskilled labour.

\*Information from enterprises associated with the leather project. No information was received from enterprises in Kenya.



**Table 2. Distribution of women and men by skill level in eight leather goods factories**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	19	7	26	26.9
Semi-skilled	189	99	288	34.4
Unskilled	<u>88</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>142</u>	38.0
Total	296	160	456	35.1

As indicated in table 3, the participation of women at the professional level in the footwear subsector is low. Here, only 1.6 per cent of the professionals are women and only about 14 per cent of the semi-skilled workforce are women.

**Table 3. Distribution of women and men by skill level in 25 footwear factories**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	126	2	128	1.6
Semi-skilled	1 981	332	2 313	14.4
Unskilled	<u>893</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>1 030</u>	13.3
Total	3 000	471	3 471	14.7

Table 4 shows that as in other subsectors, female participation in tanneries is very low. Only 9.6 per cent of the employees in the professional group are women and only 8.6 per cent of those in the semi-skilled category. Although most of the unskilled employees are men, there are also many women.

**Table 4. Distribution of women and men by skill level in 10 tanneries**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	66	7	73	9.6
Semi-skilled	1 733	163	1 896	8.6
Unskilled	<u>277</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>319</u>	13.2
Total	2 076	212	2 288	9.3

## D. Discussion of constraints

According to a recent magazine article, the prejudiced attitude, whether it is focused on sex, race, ethnic background or sexual preference, is likely to result in a career set-back [5]. Women's employment patterns in the leather industry indicate that the strides made by women give reason for optimism; however, a chain of constraints continues to hold them back.

There are more similarities than differences in the constraints faced by women in the seven countries. The organizational structure of the factories, the opportunities for advancement and the attitude of employers to female employees are more or less similar in all the countries covered by the project. Most obstacles faced by women in the leather industry can therefore be generalized without regard to the particular enterprise or the country where they are working.

### *1. Tradition and culture*

Women who work in the leather industry are constrained by traditional cultural patterns and stereotyping, which are carried from the home to the workplace and which exclude them from the labour force. For example, men are generally seen as breadwinners and as heads of families. When there are retrenchments, women are the first to go. This view was confirmed by a production manager in a shoe factory, who said, "Women are considered economic dependants of men, so when there is scarcity of jobs, priority is given to men. Society's views have always been geared to the aims, aspirations and interests of the male breadwinner". It is erroneous, however, to believe that women are always the dependants of men, because there are many families in which a woman is the sole breadwinner or in which a man is present but makes no contribution to the household income.

The interviews turned up several cases in which male managers and workers, because of their misconception that the man was the exclusive breadwinner of the family, viewed the woman from the standpoint of her husband's status and allocated benefits accordingly. For example, if a husband was known to be doing well and was holding a high-status job, it was assumed that the wife did not need much from her employer.

Most managers spoke of the importance of traditional African cultural sex roles and relations in the management of an enterprise. Some believed that the traditional gender hierarchy justified maintaining the sex status quo in leather enterprises. They saw traditional inequality between men and women not so much in its negative aspects but as a social arrangement that needed to be handled carefully and nurtured until it was ready, through evolution, to disappear. Most managers argued that failure to indulge it, even in leather enterprises, would plunge the African social set-up, especially the family unit, into chaos. This view shows how traditional cultural views are translated and applied in a modern enterprise.

In the hides and skins subsector, there was a general assumption that farmers were always male, so hides and skins improvement programmes have not really incorporated gender issues. Yet in most rural areas, there are many female heads of household, and animals are usually taken care of by women and their children.

### *2. Legislation*

Employers and government officials in ministries of industry in some of the countries insisted that there were equal opportunities for men and women and that their employment policies did not

discriminate. It was therefore taken for granted that no special strategies were required for enhancing the position of the women who worked in the sector.

However, existing legislative measures, e.g. equal opportunity laws, do not automatically translate into working policy programmes. Prejudice against women seems to be widespread in spite of all the laws that forbid discrimination on the grounds of sex. What this implies is that laws that seek to protect women can be hollow unless there is a machinery to monitor their implementation. For instance, in one country where labour laws do not discriminate against women, a production manager in a tannery bluntly said that it was "a company policy not to employ women".

Policy makers must recognize that women usually start from a more disadvantaged position. Thus, formal legal and legislative equality is not enough: *de facto* equality should be secured and implemented both at home and at work.

### *3. Company policy and management*

In leather firms the absence of women in management positions was conspicuous. There were few women supervisors in the industry. One manager thought that employees would not accept supervision by a female. He went on to say,

"Women are supposed to be subordinate to men. A father controls all members of the family, all property, and other economic resources, women are controlled by men as part of the property. Women are too emotional ..., too weak, too aggressive. They have no authority and are incapable of being leaders."

However, the same manager then contradicted himself by saying, "If a woman has the same qualifications as a man, no one will discriminate against her".

Almost none of the leather factories visited had an equal-opportunity company policy. Some factories insisted that tanning was not a suitable job for women; as a matter of policy, they did not employ women.

### *4. Women in the leather industry as perceived by management*

Managers gave similar reasons for other problems pertaining to women's careers in the leather industry. Their explanations may be summarized as follows:

(a) Lack of managerial and technical skills and qualifications. This was due to women's unequal access to education, which had historical roots;

(b) Cultural upbringing that discouraged women from being assertive, failed to give them the self-confidence needed to accept the challenge of top management jobs in the commercial world and made them unsuited to working late or travelling;

(c) Men's own ignorance of women's potential;

(d) Stereotyping of women. For example, while an incompetent man might be perceived as unrepresentative of his sex, an incompetent woman was often taken to be representative of hers. If one woman failed as a supervisor, then no other woman would ever succeed. These perceptions adversely influenced company policies and resulted in discriminative measures towards women employees, as for example in training programmes;

(e) Fear that if an enterprise invested in a woman she would get married and leave the job or become pregnant and go on maternity leave:

(f) Assumption in some countries that men and women could not work side by side. According to one manager, "The existing male workforce reacts adversely to having female workers alongside. Productivity drops".

### 5. *Female entrepreneurs' perception of their problems*

Women entrepreneurs in the leather industry faced a multitude of problems and constraints, some imagined, others real. The problems included the following:

(a) *Lack of facilities and other resources*. Women entrepreneurs in the leather industry lacked proper machinery, such as leather sewing and skiving machines, as well as marketing, managerial, technical and financial skills. The same problems were faced by men in similar situations, but the sex-based inequalities were such that businesses headed by women were consistently worse off than other businesses. Women usually had fewer resources than men and were impeded by lower levels of education and literacy and by restricted physical and occupational mobility. Women had fewer contacts, less idea of how to deal with the bureaucracy and less bargaining power than men, all of which further limited their productivity and profitability:

(b) *Credit*. Women entrepreneurs in the leather industry said financing was the most important bottleneck in initiating and expanding manufacturing activities. Lack of access to credit, owing to discriminatory laws or bank regulations, was a major constraint for women. In some countries, married women were treated as minors from the legal standpoint. If they wanted to obtain credit from a commercial bank, they needed their husband's permission. Moreover, most women were resource-poor, particularly in terms of land and capital. They did not own meaningful assets, and this made it impossible for them to obtain loans without security and collateral. Almost nowhere did credit institutions extend credit to women entrepreneurs easily. The institutions set up, mostly by non-governmental organizations, specifically to assist women tended not to give them enough money to start a business:

(c) *Access to raw materials*. Many women entrepreneurs in the leather industry had no access to raw materials, especially leather. They found it hard to buy in bulk, because most tanneries preferred to sell to big firms, which bought in bulk. Since most women entrepreneurs operated on a small scale, they were not members of professional leather associations (some did not even know that such associations existed) and were therefore not part of the network:

(d) *Land/working space*. Women who wanted to start their own tanneries or leather goods workshops failed to do so because they could not get working space. Existing rental space was too expensive for women going into business for the first time:

(e) *Lack of information*. Many women lacked information on how to start and run their enterprises:

(f) *Skills training*. Their lack of access to education and training opportunities meant that women started their businesses without adequate skills.

### 6. *What women need to succeed in the industry*

Women employees and entrepreneurs in the leather industry said that if their status in this sector was to be enhanced, they would need the following:

(a) A good educational background and technical training;

- (b) A supportive legal environment;
- (c) Support and encouragement from the immediate supervisor and the top executive;
- (d) Ability to develop the skills necessary for survival in the leather industry;
- (e) Ability to plan their careers strategically;
- (f) Exposure to different situations and the ability to take each situation as a learning experience;
- (g) Capacity for hard work;
- (h) Capacity to be assertive when necessary.

A few women in the leather industry had managed to satisfy the above needs. They had developed positive approaches to empowerment. More and more of them were demanding to be trained so that they could upgrade their skills and be more competitive. These were women determined to advance and to break away from traditional female stereotyping. They were women trying to exploit their potential fully.

## II. Country case-studies

### A. Ethiopia

#### *Introduction*

The Ethiopian leather industry has export potential. It has to a certain extent already made a breakthrough in both the local and international markets. With the help of the UNIDO leather project, it has made great strides in expanding, modernizing and upgrading the domestic leather industry. In only 10 years, the production of leather and leather products more than doubled, and the manufacture of finished goods, including footwear and garments, is being promoted [6].

The leather sector has opened up opportunities for women employees. Ethiopia is one of the few countries to have women leather technologists in tanneries, something remarkable in Africa. Thirty-one per cent of the employees in leather goods factories are women, although they are mainly confined to low-paying jobs. One woman is in the process of starting her own tannery.

#### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

##### *Government policy*

The Constitution of 1987 guarantees the equality of men and women. It pledges to provide women with special support in education, training and employment so that they can participate in political, economic, social and cultural affairs on an equal basis with men. Ethiopia has ratified ILO Convention No. 111 (discrimination in respect of employment and occupation). The Labour Proclamation gives women enough maternity leave and gives them a number of kinds of protection as well as job security and equal pay for equal value. The Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation of 1975, which was amended in 1982, gives women access to "enough" land.

The Government of Ethiopia does not have a women's machinery. Various ministries, however, have units for women's issues. In addition, the Government has pledged to advance the cause of women.

##### *Women, employment and economic activities*

Women in Ethiopia have little access to health care, schooling or employment opportunities. This is partly attributable to the government that was in power for more than a decade and a half.

About 46 per cent of the women live in rural areas. There are regional variations in the division of labour. For example, in the Amhara-Tigray society of the highlands, women perform the major tasks of dairy husbandry, such as caring for the cows, milking them and processing the dairy products. All these functions are performed within the domestic setting. The men perform most of the work in the fields.

Women in the rural areas work 15-18 hours a day, engaging in as many as 17 different tasks, as shown by time use studies. In some places, they are responsible for 50 per cent of the subsistence agricultural production. Regional variations notwithstanding, women participate in all agricultural activities: they keep goats and sheep and are responsible for child care. They engage in trading and contribute to household income. Despite their important role, however, rural women are still neglected by rural development structures.

Women comprise 54 per cent of the urban population. About half of them are migrants. Lacking a high level of education or skills, they are mainly engaged in the informal sector.

Wage labour employment opportunities are scarce for most women. In 1986, of the employed people in the public and private sectors, 82.1 per cent were males and only 17 per cent females. Two thirds of the women employed for wages are in manufacturing, mainly in the leather and textile sectors. According to a paper presented at a meeting of women entrepreneurs at Harare in July 1992, a survey of manufacturing industries carried out in January 1989 showed that female workers constituted 31 per cent of the total workforce: 18.5 per cent in the food industry, 19.9 per cent in the beverage industry, 34.4 per cent in the tobacco industry, 47.8 per cent in textiles, 26.1 per cent in the leather industry, 29.8 per cent in the paper and printing industry and 25.9 per cent in chemicals. The proportions of women in administrative and managerial positions in the public and private sectors are only 0.9 per cent and 4.2 per cent, respectively.

Most urban working women are found in the informal sector. They specialize in activities that require small capital outlays. Their low productivity and confinement to the informal sector is partly explained by the lack of access to production inputs, services and credit. In rural areas, women are active in knitting, basketry and spinning.

With the assistance of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Ethiopian Women's Entrepreneurship Association, founded in 1992, has launched a membership drive, encouraging businesswomen at all levels to become members. Currently there are 450 registered members. The Association's main objective is to enhance the position of women in the economy. In a country where entrepreneurship was proscribed for almost two decades because of the Government's communist ideology, this is a remarkable achievement.

Ethiopian women stand to benefit from the fact that Addis Ababa is the seat of both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ECA. Most African regional organizations that can assist women engaged in industrial activities have offices at Addis Ababa, which is recognized as the political capital of the continent. Women in the leather industry should take advantage of the presence of these organizations to strengthen themselves.

#### *Access to credit*

Legally, there is no sex discrimination when it come to access to credit. Practically, however, women are constrained by social and cultural factors. The alternative credit programmes of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies constitute a complementary source of financial assistance to women. There are, of course, banks that extend credit facilities, but they do not treat women in a special way. The most important source of loans is the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank, but only a few women have benefited from this source.

## 2. Women in the leather industry

Table 5 shows the distribution of women in the leather industry in Ethiopia.

**Table 5. Employment in leather factories by sex and subsector, Ethiopia**

<i>Subsector</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Leather goods (2 factories)	222	290	512	56.6
Footwear (6 factories)	2 314	1 742	4 056	42.9
Tanneries (8 factories)	<u>2 557</u>	<u>631</u>	<u>3 188</u>	19.8
Total (16 factories)	5 093	2 663	7 756	31.3

Female employment in the leather industries of Ethiopia is higher than in the other six countries, though still inadequate. Women form a third of all the employees. Employment opportunities are better for women in the leather goods subsector and much worse in the tanneries subsector.

### *Tanning subsector*

There are a few women technicians in tanneries in Ethiopia, mostly working in the finishing sections and in laboratories. It is generally believed that work in tanneries, especially the wet section, is too heavy and dirty for women. This assumption has been used to keep women out of tanneries. Nevertheless, one woman leather technologist, who is a supervisor in a finishing section (to qualify as a supervisor, one must have worked in all sections of the tannery), said that work in any part of the tannery was no different from other heavy and dirty work that women had always done. She said,

"Work in a tannery is heavy and dirty. However, women in their household duties have been traditionally assigned the heaviest work, for example carrying heavy loads of water for long distances, manually grinding grains ... so there is nothing unusual for a woman when she works in a tannery."

Whether or not a woman was well trained and committed to her work, diehard cultural discriminatory attitudes were still used to put her down said another woman leather technologist, who went on to say, "As a technician in the world of men, it seems that my promotional chances are limited. Tannery work will remain a journey to nowhere for most women unless there is a change of attitudes. Right now the whole structure is masculine and tends to alienate women". This was not the cry of just one woman. The same sentiments were echoed by two women technicians in charge of quality control in one of the tanneries.

Women in the tanneries complained about being discriminated against in terms of training. A woman chemist who had been in the leather industry for 12 years said that men were still accorded priority in training and promotions. Although a few women have managed to penetrate the tanning sector as technicians, one woman leather technologist insisted that most tanneries still insisted on male technicians and overtly or otherwise discriminated against women, even when they were more qualified, especially in terms of training and promotions. Her views were substantiated by a male



manager, who said, "There is a management culture in tanneries that tends to exclude women from making a career in tanneries".

Despite stereotyping in the leather industry, one woman in Ethiopia is in the process of starting her own tannery. She will need a lot of support if she is to break the barriers.

#### *Footwear subsector*

Women were mostly employed as unskilled workers in the footwear subsector. Unlike in the tanning sector, there were hardly any women at supervisory levels in the factories visited. In one shoe factory, there was a total labour force of 796 (433 of them were men and 363, women), but not one woman supervisor. At the senior management level, there was only one woman, a planning worker, who held a master's degree in industrial engineering.

#### *Leather goods subsector*

In the leather goods subsector, women predominated, at least in number. In one leather goods factory, there were 204 women working on the shop floor out of a total of 248 shop floor employees. Very few, however, were in managerial positions. According to one factory manager, "Women lack confidence and, unlike men, do not take decisions quickly. Courses in supervision for women would help". One male manager who maintained that the leather goods sector was an area suitable for women noted that women were more fashion-oriented and had the "right kind of hands" for a job of that nature. Another male supervisor said that it was important to employ women in a leather goods factory because "women are docile and usually they need the job desperately and cannot afford to resign. This is important because it means that the workforce is stable and skills are therefore retained". Another manager in the same sector argued that the leather industry, especially the leather goods and footwear factories, should really attract and interest more women than men: "The job requires patience and it goes with fashion, colour, choice and so on. I believe that these qualities are found much more in women than in men." From these comments, it is clear that sex stereotyping by both men and women is common.

Since women predominate in this subsector, it might be assumed that they would be acceptable as managers. However, this did not seem to be the case, as confirmed by a woman head of department. She said, "Some men, both senior and junior staff, have problems in accepting me as a woman head of department".

### *3. Recommendations*

The following actions are recommended:

- (a) The leather industry should facilitate the training of women in leather technology and effluent treatment;
- (b) Together with any new leather association that is established, it should organize courses in supervisory skills for women supervisors;
- (c) The Leather Productivity Centre, where most machinists in the leather industry are trained, should reserve places for women. Its training programme should include subjects like confidence-building and assertiveness;
- (d) There is need to identify alternative sources of credit that can lend money to women entrepreneurs;

(e) The Government should not only ensure that laws do not discriminate against women but should also ensure that laws protecting women are implemented;

(f) Special support should be given to women entrepreneurs in the leather industry. The support should include both material and non-material assistance, such as training and the provision of equipment;

(g) Women entrepreneurs in the leather industry should take advantage of the presence of many international organizations in the capital city to strengthen their status in the sector;

(h) Women's organizations should hold workshops for managers and officials from the Ministry of Industry to help them examine their attitude towards the employment of women in the leather industry.

## **B. Kenya**

### *Introduction*

The leather industry in Kenya is privately owned, and there is little or no government control. There are about 13 mechanized tanneries that process semi-finished products for export and a few finished products for the local market. One tannery, at Thika, that has been assisted by the UNIDO leather project is able to process corrected grain leather for the European market. None of the tanneries is owned by a woman. There are also a number of shoe factories, at least one of which is owned by a woman. There are five leather goods factories that make articles for the local market. Of the leather goods factories that are in full operation, none is known to be solely owned by a woman. However, women are employees in this subsector.

Women constitute about one fifth of the labour force in the formal sector. A few women hold managerial positions, but the majority are in low status, low paying jobs. Women occupy such jobs partly because of sex stereotyping and partly because of their lack of education.

#### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

##### *Government policy*

The Kenya Development Plan, 1989-1995, acknowledges that women have always played a central role in African economies, being the main agricultural producers and the suppliers of welfare services at the household and community level. The Plan holds colonialism partly responsible for having eroded women's economic power and social status. In an attempt to rectify this, the Kenyan Government has, according to the Plan, been working to restore women to their active role, not only in the development of the economy but also in the ownership and control of wealth arising from economic production. The role of women has been acknowledged in various official statements, but no specific policies have been designed to integrate women into the mainstream of development.

The national machinery for women is the Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, founded in 1975. Its main objective is the enhancement of the status of women. It achieves this objective by advising the Government on strategies for incorporating women's issues in development plans. It also encourages women to form economic groups. Within the Ministry, there is a non-governmental unit whose task is to coordinate the activities of all NGOs relating to women. The Women's Bureau works closely with Maendeleo ya Wanawake, the women's league of the ruling party.

### *Legal status*

In 1984, the Government of Kenya ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex). The Constitution of Kenya prohibits discrimination. However, there is no law that can give protection in cases of sex discrimination. Although there is legislation on equal pay, Kenya has not ratified ILO Convention No. 100 (equal remuneration) or No. 111 (discrimination in respect of employment and occupation).

Kenyan women lack decision-making rights within the family in matters of money, property, custody of children, maintenance, inheritance, age of marriage and reproduction. The four systems of family laws (customary, statutory, Hindu and Islamic) further complicate these problems. Each of the systems has its own views on the status of women in the family. Women governed by a system other than the statutory law system are accorded a secondary position in family decisions on such matters as the number of children and their education.

### *Participation in politics*

Elections were held on 29 December 1992. Two years earlier, some women had organized themselves into a group that campaigned for more female participation in the public sphere. Of the 180 contested parliamentary seats, only 6 were won by women. This means that women are poorly represented at decision-making levels.

### *Employment and other income-generating activities*

Soon after the Women's Bureau was set up, many women's groups and organizations were formed. Although they addressed a cross-section of women-in-development issues, most of them turned to the concept of collective labour as a means of generating income for women. The main income-generating activity has always been handicrafts. Nevertheless, the market for handicrafts tends to fluctuate, forcing many women to look for alternative sources of income in the informal sector. Other activities that women engage in, both in the formal and informal sectors, include the sale of food-stuffs and drinks, tailoring and the running of restaurants, bars and hairdressing salons. Some women who live near the borders are involved in across-the-border trade. *Jua kali*\* women are a common sight in the streets of Nairobi and other towns.

In their economic activities, women entrepreneurs are constrained by a lack of credit, training, transport and business premises.

### *Credit*

There are institutions other than banks that offer special credit facilities for women. One is the Kenya Women's Finance Trust, which was established as a part of Women's World Banking. Currently, it advises women in small-scale enterprises on business management. The Trust also guarantees loans for women who need them but have no security. It offers small-scale entrepreneurs low-interest loans through a revolving fund.

The Women's Programme in Agricultural Credit and Banking teaches women about applying for loans and developing commercially viable projects and advises on alternative sources of financing for different projects and schemes.

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\*Literally, "hot sun". The term refers to people in the informal sector who work in the open.

## 2. Women in the leather industry

### *Tanning subsector*

Women serve as improvement officers in the hides and skins subsector. The tannery that was visited was operating on a contract basis. It worked only when there were orders. The General Manager said he believed that generally women were better than men in grading hides and skins. He said that he was willing to employ more women provided that they were trained.

### *Footwear subsector*

The consensus was that in this subsector it was better to invest in women than in men, as women stitched faster and better. Three footwear factories had an equal number of men and women. In both of the factories visited, there was a woman supervisor. As much as the expertise of women was appreciated, there were hardly any women at the managerial level. One manager attributed this to their lack of assertiveness. He said, "Women have a complex. They are not keen to take up managerial posts". Further questioning revealed that the system of promotion did not seem to take gender issues into consideration.

### *Leather goods subsector*

In Kenya women were involved in the leather goods subsector. Some were in the informal sector and others in the formal sector. Almost none of the women had had any technical training, so their prospects for advancement were limited. In an attempt to correct this anomaly, three women from Kenya attended workshops in leather goods technology organized by UNIDO.

Women were also involved in leather work on a small-scale, *jua kali* basis, either making leather bags or adding leather straps to the traditional baskets.

## 3. Recommendations

The following actions are recommended:

- (a) Although three women have already attended a workshop in leather technology, there are many other women in Kenya who should undergo the same training;
- (b) The professional leather associations in Kenya should sensitize their members to the need for addressing discrimination based on sex;
- (c) The Government of Kenya needs to support women entrepreneurs, especially in the purchase of equipment that is not available in the country;
- (d) NGOs should assist women involved in small-scale leather enterprises industry by teaching design and quality control as well as business organization, management, marketing and promotional skills;
- (e) Women's organizations need to study how cultural practices constrain women and to devise strategies for doing away with practices that are retrogressive;
- (f) Women's organizations should identify alternative sources of funding for women entrepreneurs;
- (g) All parties, including the Government, professional leather associations and women's organizations, should sensitize institutions to the need to employ and train women in the leather industry.

## C. Malawi

### *Introduction*

There are very few women involved in manufacturing activities in Malawi. The majority of women, 80 per cent, reside in rural areas, where they work as peasant farmers. A few are in small-scale enterprises.

In the period under review, Malawi had only one well-established tannery, which was privately owned. It is understood that this tannery was handed over to the Government in November 1991. The tannery employed only two women, both in the finishing section. (Women in Malawi constitute 52 per cent of the population.) There were hardly any women in the footwear industry. When the Superior Leather Goods factory was started, the UNIDO leather project insisted that at least half the employees should be women.

### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

#### *Government policy*

The Government of Malawi has committed itself to the advancement of women. The Government has as its main goal improving the standard of living of its rural population. To achieve this, it is committed to accelerating the industrialization of the economy by promoting small and medium-size enterprises and increasing the direct participation of women in the modern sector.

In 1984 the Government established the National Commission on Women in Development in the Ministry of Community Services. The Commission is an intersectoral coordinating body composed of seven specialized committees. Its main objective is to provide a forum for decision makers and officials of governmental and non-governmental agencies to review the situation of women, identify priority areas and work out strategies to enhance their participation in development. Women's units have also been set up in other ministries and departments. The aim is to integrate women's issues in all government programmes.

The efforts of the Commission are reinforced by those of the Women's League, which is the women's political wing of the ruling party. The League set up a developmental wing in 1986, the Women's Development Organization.

#### *Legal status*

Malawi ratified ILO Convention No. 100 (equal remuneration) and No. 111 (discrimination in respect of employment and occupation) in 1985. The Government appointed a legal committee of the National Commission on Women in Development to scrutinize all Malawian laws for evidence of discrimination against women. It is reported that so far no such discrimination has been found.

Land ownership systems vary from one area to another. Women in matrilineal societies have more access to land than women in patrilineal societies.

Since 1982 there has been a legal minimum wage and legislation ordering equal pay for equal work, but in practice women are often paid lower wages because they are clustered in unskilled jobs. This discrepancy is due to cultural norms and traditions.

### *Participation in politics*

Malawi does not have a single woman in a full ministerial position, but there are four women junior ministers. Of the 104 members of parliament, only 13, or 12.5 per cent, are women.

### *Women in employment*

An important determinant of women's income-generating activities in Malawi is the nature of the economy of this land-locked country. Malawi's development plans since independence have focused on the development of the agricultural sector. The country has also been committed in principle and policy to the development of private enterprise.

Most women who earn income in Malawi have their own businesses. The Government has been encouraging schemes by which women can generate income collectively.

A 1990 survey by the Development of Malawi Traders Trust (DEMATT) revealed that 933 Malawian women own and operate their own business. Of this total, 624, or 66 per cent, are located in the southernmost of Malawi's three geographical regions. This is not surprising given that Malawi's only commercial centre, Blantyre, is located there.

Of the businesses that Malawian women own and manage, 39.7 per cent involve textiles and 13.7 per cent, food and beverages. The next most frequent type of business, resthouses and hotels, involves services and food and accounts for 12.5 per cent of women's enterprise. There are very few women in the manufacturing sector.

DEMATT found that the minimal involvement of women in business in the past was attributable to three factors:

- (a) Women's lack of self-confidence, which made them reluctant to venture into new activities;
- (b) Their ignorance of services to support small enterprises and of opportunities for establishing new business;
- (c) Their lack of education.

### *Credit and other technical support*

In the financial sector there are three organizations: the Investment Development Fund (INDEFUND), Small Enterprises Development of Malawi (SEDOM) and the Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (MUSCO). Both INDEFUND and SEDOM provide financing and technical advice. However, since there are no special arrangements for women borrowers, very few women have benefited from the two organizations. MUSCO is the only rural institution where one can save and borrow; women make up 26 per cent of its total membership.

For technical and business advisory services, there is DEMATT, set up in 1979. In 1988, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNIDO, a business advisory service for women was set up. It targets women entrepreneurs in the small and medium-size sector.

For entrepreneurship development and technical training, there is the Malawi Entrepreneurship Development Institute and the Rural Trade School. The Institute was set up with UNDP support. It runs residential courses for potential business persons in technical skills and entrepreneurship development. Initially, it recruited only men for training in technical skills; in 1987-1988, however,

it opened its doors to women. At the end of the training, the Institute gives loans to its participants for starting their own businesses.

The National Association of Malawian Business Women was started in 1990 with the support of the National Commission on Women in Development. In June 1991, it had more than 2,000 members. The aim of the Association is to strengthen women entrepreneurs.

Considering all the organizations that offer support, especially to upcoming entrepreneurs, it might be thought that the situation of women entrepreneurs in Malawi is rosy. However, the reality is different: there are very few women in the manufacturing sector.

## 2. Women in the leather industry

Table 6 shows the distribution of women in the leather industry in Malawi. Data on the new Superior Leather Goods factory are not included in the table.

**Table 6. Employment in leather factories by sex and subsector, Malawi**

<i>Subsector</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Leather goods (2 factories)	137	0	137	0
Footwear (4 factories)	318	8	326	2.5
Tanneries (1 factory)	<u>43</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>48</u>	10.4
Total (7 factories)	498	13	511	2.5

The proportion of female employment in the leather industry of Malawi is very low. There are no women in the leather goods subsector. Women comprise only 2.5 per cent of the labour force in the footwear subsector, only 10.4 per cent in the tanneries and only 2.5 per cent of the total leather industry workforce. Thus, while supporting institutions may be available, if attitudinal problems remain, women will not benefit from that support.

### *Tanning subsector*

There were only five women working in the one tannery in Malawi; of the five, three were employed as tea girls and cleaners. The two others had not had any previous technical training, and their formal education was also limited. According to the manager, they had just been employed and were still working on a trial basis.

### *Leather goods subsector*

According to information submitted in response to the request for data, no women were employed in the leather goods subsector at any of the three levels of skill.

At the time of the visits, none of the leather goods factories employed women except as tea girls and cleaners. Factory managers and supervisors seemed to share the same opinions about the employment of women:

- (a) Employing women disrupted harmony in the factory and reduced output;
- (b) Women were first and foremost housewives. They were delicate and could not do much work;
- (c) As there was high unemployment, men should be given priority;
- (d) Women were not as good as men on the machines;
- (e) Malawian women were not employable;
- (f) If women were to be given special attention, men would be bitter.

These opinions show the degree of gender stereotyping in the leather industry.

The most recent development in Malawi was the setting up of a leather goods manufacturing factory, Superior Leather Goods, where 50 per cent of the employees are women, thanks to the UNIDO leather project. The factory obtained equipment with the assistance of UNIDO on condition that it would employ at least this proportion of women.

#### *Footwear subsector*

Although the situation in the footwear subsector is slightly better, the women are employed not in technical fields but as clerks or cleaners (table 7). There are no females in managerial or professional positions. All professional employees are men, and women comprise only 3 per cent of the semi-skilled labour force.

**Table 7. Distribution of women and men by skill level in the footwear subsector, Malawi**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	21	0	21	0
Semi-skilled	283	8	291	2.7
Unskilled	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>14</u>	0
Total	318	8	326	2.7

The difference between good policies on paper and the actual situation in the factories is apparent from the table. It is obvious that a lot of work needs to be done if policy is to be translated into affirmative action.

### *3. Recommendations*

The following actions are recommended:



(a) One of the participants in the Bulawayo leather goods workshop for women was from Malawi. She had enough formal education to enable her to train in supervisory skills. She should get further training so that if an opportunity arises she can assume supervisory duties;

(b) A course in leather goods training needs to be organized specifically for women employed in the new leather goods factory, Superior Leather Goods;

(c) The UNIDO leather project should arrange to meet members of the professional leather association in Malawi to discuss ways of enhancing the status of women in the leather industry.

## D. Sudan

### *Introduction*

At the time of the visit, most of the tanneries were in the process of being privatized. In one of the tanneries, Afrotan, 75 per cent of the employees were women. One of the supervisors in this tannery was a young woman with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. The situation contrasted greatly with that in two other tanneries, the Blue Nile Tannery and the White Nile Tannery, where there were almost no women. Hardly any leather goods factories were operational. The footwear industry had a few women. What made the Sudan unique was the number of well-educated women in unskilled jobs.

Women's participation in the leather industry is inhibited by family attitudes, expectations and responsibilities, which dictate that a woman is first and foremost a housewife. In cases where putting their skills to use would mean moving away from home and the family, women find this difficult as family responsibilities limit their flexibility. The advancement of women in their careers still depends very much on the goodwill of their husbands; indeed, many of the women interviewed cited the support of their husbands as crucial to their advancement.

### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

#### *Government policy*

The Government's development plan does not specifically mention women. Overall responsibilities for coordinating and monitoring women-in-development (WID) programmes are given to a WID unit in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Although the unit has only recently been established, it is significant that it has been assigned to that particular ministry.

The majority of people in the country are Muslims. Because of Islamic laws, men tend to be more influential in the public sphere.

#### *Legal status*

In terms of civil law, Sudanese women have a status equal to that of men. However, customary and religious laws give them a different status.

### *2. Women in the leather industry*

#### *Tanning subsector*

In two of the tanneries visited, there were hardly any women. One woman who had been employed as a junior technician for 25 years was still a junior technician. According to her, "Most

of the men I joined the tannery with are now general managers but I am still a junior technician". She attributed this to discrimination on the basis of sex. Some of the male managers thought that women could not work in tanneries because they were always absent and did not "take work seriously".

In a third tannery, there were 143 women employees and 57 men. The general manager said he had decided to employ women because they were very dependable and hard working and did not cause unnecessary problems. What was disappointing, however, was that in spite of all the compliments the manager paid women, his tannery still had only two women supervisors out of a female population of 143 and 10 male supervisors out of a male population of 57.

One of the female supervisors was a university graduate. She held a bachelor's degree in chemistry and was therefore suited for further training.

Women form only 6 per cent of the total professional workforce in six tanneries in the Sudan (table 8). Only 2 per cent of the women employed are professionals.

**Table 8. Distribution of women and men by skill level in six tanneries, Sudan**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	44	3	47	6
Semi-skilled	1 644	158	1 802	9
Unskilled	<u>102</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>135</u>	24
Total	1 790	194	1 984	10

The above figures show that women constitute a mere 10 per cent of the labour force in the tanneries. This percentage would even be lower if it were not boosted by Afrotan, which employs mostly (75 per cent) women.

#### *Footwear subsector*

A reasonable number of women were employed in this subsector. However, there was hardly any leather work going on in most of the factories. The women were mostly engaged in trimming plastic shoes.

Again, views on the employment of women seemed to vary. For example, one factory owner remarked, "Women learn very easily and are more stable than men, they are very dependable and dedicated and they do the work they are supposed to do". In contrast, another manager complained that women thought of work as a "recreation".

In the Sudan, some of the women doing unskilled and semi-skilled work had a much stronger academic background than similarly employed women in other countries. A woman machinist in one of the shoe factories was attending a degree course at the local university part-time. There were a few other women doing various courses at the universities and other institutions in the evenings. It was obvious that most women wanted to advance themselves. In spite of this, their lack of self-assertiveness was apparent.

Data from 15 footwear factories show that there are no women employed as professionals in that subsector. Most of the women are either unskilled (25 per cent) or semi-skilled (15 per cent) (table 9).

**Table 9. Distribution of women and men by skill level in 15 footwear factories, Sudan**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	74	0	74	0
Semi-skilled	946	163	1 109	15
Unskilled	<u>295</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>392</u>	25
Total	1 315	260	1 575	17

### *Hides and skins*

Of the people interviewed who were engaged in hides and skins activities, only one was a woman. She said, "At first it was difficult for butchers to deal with me as a woman. Now most merchants do accept me." She hoped to start her own tannery.

There were, however, female hides and skins improvement officers and supervisors in slaughterhouses. In the Veterinary Department, there were 200 female and 516 male veterinary officers and 150 female veterinary technicians and 850 male veterinary technicians. There were also a good number of female agricultural officers.

Sudan is not lacking in women who can be actively involved in the hides and skins improvement programme. Accordingly, it should not be assumed that women are engaged only in the leather goods and footwear subsectors.

### *3. Recommendations*

The following actions were recommended:

- (a) Women with a good educational background working in tanneries should be targeted for further training in leather tanning and effluent treatment;
- (b) Tanneries that have received assistance from the UNIDO leather project should be encouraged to employ women;
- (c) The hides and skins improvement programme should target women as well as men;
- (d) The professional leather association should spearhead discussions on enhancing women's status in the leather industry;
- (e) The WID department in the Ministry of Finance should formulate recommendations for enhancing women's participation in the sector.

## E. United Republic of Tanzania

### *Introduction*

At the time of the expert's visits, the three State-owned tanneries were almost non-operational. Arrangements for the Mwanza and Morogoro tanneries to be taken over by African Trade Development and the Tanzania Investment Bank were in their final stages. A few women were employed in the raw hides stores and in the finishing sections of the tanneries.

Footwear factories were also operating below capacity. Some, like the Morogoro shoe factory, were virtually closed down. Private footwear factories like Liberty Leather Shoes and Laxman Shoes were operating more fully. Women were employed in these two factories as machinists.

The Morogoro leather goods factory, which had received assistance from the UNIDO leather project, was not operating as well as expected. Women formed two thirds of the employees there. The general manager was a woman, but most of the supervisors were men.

Two women who had started their own small-scale leather goods enterprises were interviewed. The two had attended a three-week leather goods workshop in Zimbabwe.

### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

#### *Government policy*

The policy of the Government calls for the recognition of women's role in the political, economic and socio-cultural development of the country. It calls for women's issues to be integrated into all the government ministries. The current National Five-Year Economic Plan and the Social Development Plan (1988-1993) incorporate specific issues and programmes aimed at the advancement of women. There are sectoral policies that address women as beneficiaries, initiators or planners.

The women's machinery on the mainland is based in the Ministry of Community Development, Women's Affairs and Children. The island of Zanzibar has a Ministry of State for Women and Children's Affairs, which is attached to the President's Office. The Ministry oversees women's activities on the island. The two machineries, one on the mainland and one on Zanzibar, aim at enhancing the status of women in the country. They work closely with the ruling party's women's wing, Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania (UWT), which not only serves as a political mobilizer but also engages in developmental activities.

#### *Legal status*

The United Republic of Tanzania has signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Constitution of the country does not discriminate against women. Despite this, women in the United Republic of Tanzania, as elsewhere in Africa, are constrained by cultural and traditional norms and values.

#### *Participation in politics*

From 1980 to 1985, there were 239 members of Parliament; of this number, 26 were women. From 1985 to 1990, there were 244 members of Parliament, of whom only 25 were women [7].

### *Women, employment and other economic activities*

Tanzanian women comprise a majority of the population. However, their participation in formal employment is very low. They are concentrated in subordinate positions, working mostly as clerks, secretaries, nurses and so forth. They are also scarce in most of the sectors. For example, although it is women who usually do the farming, there were only 47 women at the headquarters of the Agricultural Department, compared to 80 men. Most of them held very junior positions. There was not a single female principal agricultural officer.

Women in the United Republic of Tanzania are beginning to enter industry, but their participation is still limited by a lack of resources and low literacy rates. Consequently many of them are confined to the small-scale industrial sector. Even in small-scale enterprises, women face many problems, among which are the following:

- (a) Lack of suitable equipment;
- (b) Unsuitable premises or no premises at all for their economic activities;
- (c) Lack of technical know-how;
- (d) Lack of transport facilities for their operations.

### *Access to credit*

There are government and non-government organizations that offer support services to women. These include the National Bank of Commerce, the Cooperative Rural Development Bank, the Tanzania Housing Bank and Catholic Relief Services. The National Bank of Commerce provides loans and other services to entrepreneurs. In 1989, it established a women's desk. The Cooperative and Rural Development Bank provides credit and other supportive services to cooperatives and has a programme for women entrepreneurs. The Small Industry Development Organization (SIDO) was established in 1973. Its main purpose is to promote small-scale industry in the country. SIDO has established a women's desk, which has as its main function the promotion of women entrepreneurs. The desk plays an important role in helping women entrepreneurs to develop their project ideas and write up project proposals, and it provides consultancy, training and information on procedures and legal regulations.

In theory, women can borrow from any of the above institutions. In practice, however, not all of them have collateral, so very few ever use these facilities. Women's access to credit is constrained by other factors as well, such as an inability to raise working capital, fear that the project might not be viable and complicated application forms.

Having recognized the constraints women face in obtaining credit, some donors are providing credit to selected groups of women through revolving funds without requiring collateral.

## *2. Women in the leather industry*

### *Tanning subsector*

During the period under review, most tanneries in Tanzania were dilapidated and inactive. Some managers said that they would be willing to take on more women if conditions improved. In one of the tanneries, women were employed in a raw hides store, where they graded hides and skins in the wet shop section. A male manager in that tannery indicated that women were good at grading hides

and skins. They also tended to be good at laboratory work and in marketing. He identified the finishing section in the tannery as one of the areas where women could do a better job than men.

There were no trained female tanners or technicians in the tanneries that were visited.

#### *Leather goods subsector*

Women predominated in the leather goods subsector. One of the biggest leather goods factories had a majority of women and a female general manager, although women were conspicuously missing in supervisory positions. A woman leather technologist who had trained in Italy for nine months had also worked there, but she felt that her services were not being fully utilized and moved to a textile factory. Some other women had started their own leather goods enterprise.

The participation of women by skill level in leather goods factories shows that Tanzanian women are denied access to the training and exposure required for skills development and professionalism. As illustrated in table 10, women form over two thirds of the employees in one of the factories but only one third of the professional employees.

**Table 10. Distribution of women and men by skill level in one leather goods factory, United Republic of Tanzania**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	6	3	9	33.3
Semi-skilled	39	87	126	69.0
Unskilled	8	17	25	68.0
Total	53	107	160	66.8

Women also comprise the bulk (almost 70 per cent) of both the semi-skilled and unskilled labour force in this factory. Because the data are from a single factory, the finding should not be generalized.

Some of the constraints identified by a leather goods manager were as follows:

- (a) Women worked hard but lacked confidence and could not take on supervisory duties;
- (b) Women's marital and social obligations interfered with their work;
- (c) Women found it hard to lead.

The UNIDO leather project trained three Tanzanian women in leather technology for three weeks. Two of the women have their own leather goods workshops; the third is employed by a leather goods factory at Moshi. The first two showed a lot of potential and, given adequate facilities and training, are likely to do very well in this subsector. At the time of writing, arrangements are being made for them to go to India for four months of further training in leather goods technology.

### *Footwear subsector*

Of the 582 employees in three footwear factories, 153, or 21 per cent, are women. There are no female professionals in three factories, and women contribute only 22 per cent of the semi-skilled labour (table 11). Although there are only a few unskilled women, it is apparent that the lack of job opportunities for women is responsible for this low figure. Women's upward mobility seems to be limited as well.

**Table 11. Distribution of women and men by skill level in three footwear factories, United Republic of Tanzania**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	3	0	3	0
Semi-skilled	524	150	674	22
Unskilled	<u>22</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>25</u>	12
Total	549	153	702	2

### *3. Recommendations*

The following actions were recommended:

- (a) The professional leather association and the leather industry should organize a training workshop on business management for women entrepreneurs in the leather goods industry;
- (b) Apprenticeships in established leather goods factories, such as Castillian in Zimbabwe, should be organized for at least two women entrepreneurs;
- (c) An advanced course in leather goods technology should be held for women who have attended the beginner's course. Such a course could be organized at Morogoro or at Bulawayo in Zimbabwe;
- (d) Courses for potential women supervisors and mid-level managers should be organized;
- (e) A study tour to other countries should be organized for women managers and entrepreneurs in this sector to allow them to learn about other leather items and to widen their knowledge.

## **F. Zambia**

### *Introduction*

As elsewhere in Africa, the leather industry in Zambia has experienced problems. It was particularly affected by the drought of 1992. The UNIDO leather project, however, has contributed significantly to increased productivity. Two tanneries, Bata and Asaria, have been rehabilitated under the auspices of the UNIDO tannery project. When the expert visited, Bata had nine women employees

in the finishing section. They had all had at least nine years of schooling and could benefit from further training.

One of the leather goods factories, Bimzi, is owned by a woman. Two of her female employees attended a three-week leather goods course organized by the UNIDO leather project. Women were also found in the footwear industry. One of the footwear factories is owned by a woman. Both women owners were positive about the prospects for women in the leather industry. They emphasized, however, the importance of entrepreneurship in this industry.

The enterprises set up by the two women demonstrate that women are not lacking in entrepreneurial spirit. What is needed most is an environment that enables women to participate fully in the industry without being constrained by the cultural and traditional beliefs that tend to confine them to specific tasks. Training programmes therefore need to be augmented with a supportive environment. If women show that they have entrepreneurial skills, then they should be given whole-hearted support and not be discriminated against in terms of access to resources.

### *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

#### *Government policy*

The Fourth National Development Plan (1989-1993) contained a separate chapter on women and development. It clearly stated that the Government was aware of the need to remove obstacles to women's participation in the labour force. President Chiluba, in a speech to Parliament on 29 November 1991, pledged to ensure that the Government would conform to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it had ratified in 1985. The ruling party's manifesto reiterates this pledge [8]. It states: "The Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) fully recognizes the specific oppression which Zambian women have continued to suffer. The MDD government will accord full and equal rights to women in all aspects of national life and accept the principles of affirmative action on gender issues ... The MMD government will review all discriminatory laws against women in all social and economic fields ... It will remove all discriminatory practices and fight discrimination against women in financial institutions." However, the statement of intentions has not yet been translated into action.

The governmental machinery for coordinating and monitoring women's issues consists of a department within the National Commission for Development Planning. Established in 1986, the department is responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring the implementation by sectoral ministries and other entities of any projects, planning or programmes related to women.

#### *Legal status*

In 1991, the Constitution of 1973 was repealed and a new Constitution was enacted. The new Constitution prohibits discriminatory treatment or the enactment of legislation that results in discriminatory behaviour based on sex. The Constitution of Zambia entitles everyone to equal protection and enjoyment of rights under the law.

Zambia has a dual legal system, consisting of customary law and statutory law, the latter based on English law. The two systems come into conflict only in the area of personal law, in particular in matters of marriage, land tenure, succession and inheritance. These, however, happen to be the matters that are of significance for women.



The labour legislation intended to protect women from hard and dangerous labour such as mining or night work had the effect of excluding them from various areas of gainful employment. A 1991 amendment concerning the employment of women, young persons and children, which is awaiting Presidential approval, removes these provisions and gives women the right to work in any industry.

#### *Participation in politics*

Before the elections in 1991, women formed a women's lobby. One of its objectives was to advocate women's rights and the increased participation of women in the public sphere. Despite the existence of this lobby and the change of government in 1991, women are still underrepresented in the public sphere. Indeed, in one important respect and notwithstanding the MDD promise to eliminate discrimination against women, the situation of women seems to have worsened: the Cabinet now has 23 ministers only one of whom is a woman, the same as in 1972. There are 5 women among 36 deputy ministers (13.9 per cent), 4 women out of 38 Executive committee members (10.5 per cent) and 6 women in the 125-member Parliament (4.8 per cent). There are six women permanent secretaries and three women diplomats [9]. Table 12 shows that women comprise only 4 per cent of all the judges in the country, 20 per cent of the magistrates and 11 per cent of the High Court judges; there are no women on the Supreme Court of Zambia. This lack of participation in the political life of the country, especially at decision-making levels, means that women's interests remain invisible and when they are acknowledged, they are marginalized and confined to special projects.

**Table 12. Distribution of women and men in the judiciary, 1992**

<i>Position</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Local court justice	69	3	72	4
Magistrate	64	16	80	20
High Court judge	17	2	19	11
Supreme Court judge	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	0
Total	156	21	177	12

*Source:* Registrar's Office, Supreme Court of Zambia.

#### *Employment and economic activities*

Within the formal sector, the public sector is the largest employer of women. Even so, only 15 per cent of the formal sector labour force are women. The Labour Force Survey of 1986 shows that the number of men in formal sector employment is almost six times that of women. In rural areas the average monthly earnings of women is one eighth that of men and in urban areas in the formal sector, it is one third that of men [10]. Within the public sector, women are mostly concentrated in traditional areas like nursing, teaching and community development work. The low participation rate of women in the manufacturing sector can be attributed partly to their lack of production skills and partly to the sexist views of some employers.

The Fourth National Development Plan gives manufacturing a high priority. The Plan emphasizes support to small-scale industries, particularly in rural areas. It acknowledges the role of women and

their contribution to industrial development. It also emphasizes the need to help women overcome the barriers that keep them from participating effectively in industrial development. Despite this commitment, however, supporting institutions for entrepreneurial development are very limited. The little credit available to women is usually so small that it barely makes an impact. It simply reinforces their involvement in traditional activities like sewing and basketry.

#### *Access to credit*

According to the laws of Zambia, anybody can get credit from the bank. In reality, however, this is not the case. Society still regards women as minors. A married woman is expected to obtain the consent of her husband before credit facilities are provided to her. The other constraint is that most women do not know they can go to banks on their own and obtain a loan. In addition, banks usually require collateral before advancing a loan, and most women do not have collateral since they do not own property. Most women rely on the informal sector for credit.

To alleviate the above problems, a few government departments and multilateral and bilateral aid agencies have established credit systems/revolving funds from which women can benefit. Such schemes fill a gap as they may benefit at least a few women. Several institutions and organizations provide support to entrepreneurs, among them the following:

(a) The Small Industries Development Association was formed in 1976 to promote village cottage industries with a view to creating employment, reducing rural-urban drift and raising the standard of living of rural people by means of income-generating activities;

(b) The Human Settlement of Zambia mostly promotes small-scale enterprises;

(c) The National Association of Business and Professional Women of Zambia, encourages women to participate in business. It also investigates possibilities for women to get credit and other forms of support;

(d) The Zambia Federation of Employers is an independent voluntary organization of employers formed in 1985 to provide and protect the interests of employing enterprises and organizations. In 1985, the Federation held a seminar at Lusaka on how to improve business skills. The seminar aimed at identifying ways in which women's entrepreneurial abilities could be enhanced. This was an important step. The Federation plays a leading role in promoting and developing small-scale industries, although its activities are not exclusively directed at women entrepreneurs;

(e) Women Finance Trust Fund Zambia Ltd. was registered in 1987 as an affiliate of Women's World Banking. It facilitates access to credit by giving guarantees to banks and other financial institutions for loans to women. It also provides technical advice to female guarantors.

## *2. Women in the leather industry*

The employment of women in the various subsectors of the leather industry is shown in table 13. Women comprise 17 per cent of the employees in 11 leather factories in Zambia, with only 1 per cent in the tanneries subsector but over 50 per cent in the leather goods subsector. Not all tanneries submitted employment information; Bata, for example, employs nine women in its tannery.

**Table 13. Employment in leather factories by sex and subsector, Zambia**

<i>Subsector</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Tanning (4 factories)	89	1	90	1
Leather goods (1 factory)	32	39	71	55
Footwear (6 factories)	<u>129</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>140</u>	2
Total	250	51	301	17

*Tanning subsector*

One tannery visited had started to employ women. A production manager in this tannery said that he had no problems employing women. He said that women were capable of working in any section of the tannery and that they were not confined to dry areas of the tannery, dispelling the myth that women could not work in tanneries. However, he went on to say, "Women work better when they are put in a section alone ... . When they work side by side with men, production gets lost". Nine women were employed in this factory and they all had some kind of formal training and were capable of coping with selected training courses.

One of the women employed by the Small Enterprise Development Corporation was a professional tanner, one of only a few in the region. Unfortunately, another qualified woman tanner failed to get a job in any tannery in the country. She attributed this failure to the sexist attitude of employers.

*Footwear subsector*

One of the footwear factories was owned by a woman. She employed women in her factory, and her main complaint was that husbands interfered in their wives' work: "If a man quarrels with a wife, he will come to the factory and ask us to dismiss her." That the footwear industry can quite easily utilize the services of women was confirmed by this owner and by other managers, all male, in this subsector. She said, "The shoe industry is expanding and is therefore tapping the limited human resources available. We need to train women in shoe technology as they are a more stable workforce". The woman entrepreneur had two women supervisors in her factory; both had the formal training which could enable them to undergo further training.

A male manager and entrepreneur in a footwear factory suggested as follows:

"To increase jobs for women in the footwear industry, subcontracting them to work from home might help as it would enable them to quite easily combine their reproductive and productive roles; maybe there are lessons to be learnt from Asia, as this kind of arrangement has worked well there."

*Leather goods subsector*

As in the footwear subsector, one of the leather goods factories in the country is owned by a woman. At least 60 per cent of her labour force was female. Her reaction to the issue of enhancing the position of women in the leather industry was as follows: "The question of marginalization of

women, even within projects like this one [the UNIDO leather project], needs to be examined." She also said that the issue of ownership needed to be given much more attention. There was a need to look at constraints on women within the subsector and find out if they were rectifiable. She said that because of the close association between the textile industry and the leather goods subsector, women tended to be much more attracted to the leather goods subsector than to any other subsector within the leather industry.

Table 14 shows that there are no women professionals in the tanneries of Zambia. Moreover, women comprise only 5 per cent of the skilled employees.

**Table 14. Distribution of women and men by skill level in four tanneries, Zambia**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	4	0	4	0
Skilled	19	1	20	5
Unskilled	66	0	66	0
Total	89	1	90	1

#### *Leather goods subsector*

As shown in table 15, women constitute 17 per cent of the total professional employees in the leather goods subsector, but they are only in clerical posts, not in technical or professional posts. Most of the females are employed in the unskilled and the semi-skilled categories.

**Table 15. Distribution of women and men by skill level in one leather goods factory, Zambia**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	5	1	6	17
Semi-skilled	10	8	18	44
Unskilled	17	30	47	64
Total	32	39	71	55

#### *Footwear subsector*

The six footwear factories show a pattern similar to that in the other subsectors, i.e. female representation is very low. There are no women in the professional category; indeed, all the women are in the semi-skilled group (table 16).

**Table 16. Distribution of women and men by skill level in six footwear factories, Zambia**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	6	0	6	0
Semi-skilled	56	11	67	16
Unskilled	<u>68</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>68</u>	0
Total	130	11	141	7

### *3. Recommendations*

The following actions are recommended:

(a) Two women have attended workshops in leather goods technology organized by the UNIDO leather project. Their progress should be monitored to see if they could benefit from advanced training:

(b) A workshop should be organized for women in shoe design, pattern cutting, stitching and quality control:

(c) A videotape on successful women in the leather industry in Zambia should be produced. Such a videotape would inspire potential women entrepreneurs who need models to emulate:

(d) The owner of Bimzi should be convinced to employ a few women in her factory. These should be women who are still trying to acquire skills in the sector and who can benefit from apprenticeship.

## **G. Zimbabwe**

### *Introduction*

Before independence, the industrial sector was almost wholly managed by South African whites. After independence, a few black men managed to penetrate the industrial sector as managers, but the number of women is still very limited. All tanneries are privately owned.

There are hardly any women employed in tanneries. In the three tanneries visited, there was only one woman graduate working in the factory. Four female students were attached to one tannery for training. They were being trained in a youth vocational training centre in the country. In the leather goods subsector, women were trying to establish themselves either as individual entrepreneurs or in cooperatives. They had one main problem: leather goods factories were experiencing great difficulty in obtaining raw materials. Companies were keeping good quality leather for their own outlets and selling only the remaining poor quality grades to independent plants. The poorest grades were going to women customers who had not established themselves in the sector. If the status of women in the sector is to improve, purchasing systems have to be improved.

## *1. The socio-economic situation of women*

### *Government policy*

Soon after independence, a Ministry of Women was created as the national machinery for women. It had a mandate to promote the advancement of women towards equality of opportunity with men through concerned removal of whatever constraints, impediments, barriers, frustrations, discrimination, suppression etc. that they suffered and that they still suffer.

In 1989, the Ministry was transferred to the newly created Ministry of Political Affairs as a department. In 1992, the Ministry of Political Affairs was abolished. A minister responsible for coordinating women's activities was appointed. She is based in the President's office but has no staff. In the meantime, the Department of Women's Affairs that had been attached to the Ministry of Political Affairs was transferred to another new ministry, the Ministry of Employment Creation. The Department is now a unit within that Ministry. All in all, it is very unclear what the situation is with respect to the national women's machinery.

The national plans of the Government recognize the role played by women in development. The positive steps that have been taken to improve the situation of women include those taken by the Public Service Commission, which in 1990 introduced a policy that would positively discriminate in favour of women in promotions to middle and senior management positions in the civil service until a target figure of 30 per cent for women had been achieved. The target figure was based on the fact that women constituted 30 per cent of staff at entry levels in the public service. The policy outlined measures to achieve the target, which was initially expected to be achieved within two years. It emphasized, however, that women would not be promoted just because they were women; rather, only qualified and competent women would be promoted. When the results of this policy were evaluated, it was found that diehard cultural and traditional attitudes still prevailed and that women had not benefited very much.

### *Legal status*

Since independence in 1990, many legal measures have been taken in favour of women. For example, the Labour Relations Act forbids discrimination on grounds of sex. Women employees are entitled to partially paid maternity leave. However, they are entitled to this leave only once every two years and can claim this right from the same employer on three occasions only. The Labour Relations Act is a real improvement over the former situation, in which women were not entitled to unpaid maternity leave.

The Legal Age of Majority Act, passed soon after independence, has removed most of the legal disabilities of the average Zimbabwean woman in relation to such matters as entering contracts in her own right. However, women are still discriminated against because of the prejudices inherent in society. The problem is not one of application of the law but of society's attitudes to women. For instance, a woman is less likely than a man to be given a loan or treated as a good credit risk. When it comes to granting credit or hire-purchase facilities, firms may want to deal with the husband rather than the wife. While many attempts have been made to uplift the status of women, it is evident that other areas of life also need to be improved. For example, the media continue to portray women negatively. Television dramas are predominantly about women who indulge in non-traditional, non-feminine behaviours that are linked to higher levels of education, participation in salaried work and urban existence.

### *Participation in politics*

There is no constitutional barrier to women's participation in public and political life in Zimbabwe. However, their participation is confined to voting for predominantly male candidates. To date there are 150 members of Parliament, of whom 17 are women; 37 governors and ministers, of whom 3 are women; and 9 deputy ministers, of whom 4 are women. There are 28 ambassadors, only 2 of whom are women. All the female ministers are below Cabinet rank (two are ministers of State in the President's Office and the third is a resident minister). This is a negative turn of events compared with the situation in 1980-1990, when immediately after the war of liberation, there was a greater acceptance of the legitimacy of women's demands and entitlements in society. Thus in both the public and private sector there is a poor representation of women's issues at the policy-making level.

### *Employment and other economic activities*

Soon after independence, one of the measures adopted by the new Government was the Presidential directive on the advancement of black people, who had previously been kept out of meaningful positions in the economy. Owing to years of double discrimination as women and as Africans, not many black women were able to take advantage of these directives. They were therefore unable to compete equally with their male counterparts for the new positions opening up. Besides, there was no conscious effort to identify women for advancement under this directive.

Despite all the positive measures, there is still a traditional division of labour, with women clustered in the more traditional service occupations, such as teaching and nursing, and men more likely than women to go into construction, banking and scientific and technical work. Women's enterprises, too, tend to be concentrated in traditional areas of trade and manufacturing and those that are related to their work as mothers.

Few women are in non-traditional business. The manpower survey of 1986/87 established that women constituted only 2 per cent of the employees in the professional and technical areas. Since these studies were carried out, very little has changed and women still face discrimination in employment. In 1981 the share of women employed in the formal sector was 17 per cent; by 1985 it had risen to only 18 per cent and in 1990, five years later, it was still 18 per cent [11]. The introduction of structural adjustment programmes and the subsequent retrenchment of workers means that the share of women employed has dropped.

Despite laws that call for equality in the workplace, in practice there is very little of it. Women are still discriminated against in job interviews and promotions.

### *Access to credit*

There is no law that prohibits women from obtaining credit from banks or other institutions. However, attitudinal problems remain. There is a general lack of trust of women by lending institutions. The situation is worse when women want to borrow money for business purposes. Banks and institutions do not think that a woman can run a business or pay back a loan.

There are institutions other than traditional banks that help commercial businesses, especially small-scale enterprises. In 1986 the Ministry of Industry and Technology started a section to deal with small-scale industries. This section processes licences and applications for small enterprises.

The Small Enterprise Corporation (SEDCO), set up in 1984, encourages and assists financially in the establishment of viable small-scale enterprises owned by individuals, partnerships, cooperatives and limited companies in the areas of commerce, manufacturing services and construction. SEDCO also conducts feasibility studies for possible businesses; it has a management consultancy service and an entrepreneur development programme that identifies and assists potential entrepreneurs and trains them in management skills. SEDCO has held workshops to map out strategies for assisting upcoming women entrepreneurs.

Women in Zimbabwe benefit mostly from credit institutions that have been set up to assist them. For example, the Zimbabwe Banking Corporation runs an effective credit scheme for women small-scale entrepreneurs. This scheme has enabled women to enter traditionally male-dominated businesses like manufacturing.

The Women's Finance Trust, registered in 1989 as a trust, provides loan guarantees to women entrepreneurs. Other small credit schemes target women, but most of them are so small that they do not give enough money to enable women to enter the mainstream of industrial activities.

## 2. Women in the leather industry

Only 6 per cent of the employees in the leather factories of Zimbabwe are women (table 17). In the tannery subsector, only 4 per cent of the employees are women and in the footwear subsector only 5 per cent are women.

Table 17. Employment in leather factories by sex and sector, Zimbabwe

<i>Subsector</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Tanneries (3 factories)	357	16	373	4
Footwear (7 factories)	684	38	722	5
Total	1 041	54	1 095	5.1

### *Tanning subsector*

There were very few women in this subsector. In one tannery a production manager said that it was against company policy to employ women. (Discrimination on grounds of sex is not illegal in Zimbabwe.) Fortunately, some women have been trained in tanning at the certificate level at one of the youth training centres in the country. Although the training is not of a high standard, the women can work in tanneries under supervision. Some of the female trainees were placed in an established tannery near Harare for their practical training. The production manager was impressed with their performance and said he would be happy to employ them in the tannery when they had completed their course. In one of the tanneries there was a woman tanner, who according to the production manager, was "as good as any other man in this factory". Generally though, the participation of women tanners was very low.



In spite of the low number of women in the subsector, there are prospects for women in Zimbabwe. Many vocational training centres offer leather tanning as one of the subjects. The University of Zimbabwe is also in the process of starting a leather and tanning course. All these opportunities should be used to enhance the status of women in this subsector.

As shown in table 18, one third of the professionals in this subsector are women, but only 5 per cent of the skilled employees are women. Although an overwhelming majority of the unskilled employees are men, women form a substantial portion considering that they constitute only 6-7 per cent of the total employees.

**Table 18. Distribution of women and men by skill level in three tanneries, Zimbabwe**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	5	2	7	29
Skilled	53	3	55	5
Unskilled	<u>96</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>103</u>	7
Total	154	12	165	7

#### *Leather goods subsector*

In established leather goods factories there were hardly any women, except as administrators. However, women had started forming leather goods cooperatives and a few had set up their own enterprises. Two women from a cooperative and one entrepreneur attended a three-week leather goods course held at Bulawayo.

The Leather Institute of Zimbabwe is well equipped to run courses in leather goods but has no leather goods trainer.

#### *Footwear subsector*

This subsector was dominated by men. Some factories had started employing women to stitch shoe uppers, and according to one male manager, "they are faster and neater". One large shoe factory was subcontracting women to stitch shoe uppers at home. In addition, a few women had started making sandals on their own.

The contribution of Zimbabwean women to the footwear subsector is shown in table 19.

The data, which are based on seven factories, reflect the traditional attitudes that tend to marginalize women in factory employment. Women account for only 8 per cent of professional employees and are not represented among the skilled workers. Over 90 per cent of the employed women are unskilled workers.

**Table 19. Distribution of women and men by skill level in seven footwear factories, Zimbabwe**

<i>Skill level</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Proportion of women (%)</i>
Professional	22	2	24	8
Skilled	172	0	172	0
Unskilled	494	37	531	7
Total	688	39	727	5

### 3. Recommendations

The following actions are recommended:

(a) Factories should make arrangements to apprentice some of the new women entrepreneurs in the leather goods subsector to well-established factories. This would enable them to acquire experience and establish networks;

(b) Training in footwear and leather products design and manufacture should be intensified;

(c) There is need to train and employ a woman leather goods trainer at the Leather Institute of Zimbabwe;

(d) The Institute should make an effort to sensitize members of the professional leather associations to the need for the industry to address gender issues;

(e) Discussions should be initiated between vocational training centres that offer training in leather technology and the Ministry of Industry and Technology to convince the centres to reserve a number of places for women;

(f) The UNIDO leather project should collaborate with the Department of Development Technology at the University of Zimbabwe.

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