



## Liberation in finances

BY NAA DEI NIKOI

"Another of the irritating agitations of the women's liberation movement," was how the establishment of the Kenyan affiliate of the Women's World Banking Foundation was heralded by one male reporter.

In the offices of the Kenyan Women Finance Trust there are no posters or slogans indicating that the officers are card-carrying members of any feminist movements.

The principle aim of KWFT is to facilitate the incorporation of the Kenyan woman's participation in the productive process into mainstream economic thinking by the country's policy makers.

The idea for its parent organization, the Women's World Banking Foundation, originated from discussions held in Mexico City in 1975 at the International Women's Year Conference.

The consensus among delegates was that the time had come for a resource that would directly respond to the needs of the women as a group in the area of capital formation for entrepreneurial efforts. Such a resource would provide on-going financial support for female-owned enterprises throughout the world.

Women constitute half of the world's

population and one-third of its workforce, do two-thirds of its total work, earn one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.

The delegates could not see unequal distribution of economic power as being corrected overnight but did see the establishment of such an institution as making a start.

Any institution formed would operate as an independent financial organization to advance and promote the entrepreneurship of women. Its services would be made available to those (women) who have not generally had access to services or established financial institutions.

The Women's World Banking Stitching Foundation was formally incorporated in the Netherlands in 1975.

In 1981, a group of women leaders in finance and the legal professions invited women to become founder members of the Kenyan affiliate.

115 women bought shares amounting to 25 per cent of the total starting capital. A \$98,000 grant from the Ford Foundation was used as seen money. KWFT's capital base is now over \$250,000.

Of great concern to many was what KWFT's role would be in the sea of Banking institutions in Kenya. Over the past five years, the number of such non-banking financial institutions has more than doubled.

KWFT complements the banking sector by enlarging the scope of enterprises that make up the bank's lending market. It is not in competition with the banks since it cannot itself lend money.

KWFT serves as a guarantor for loans to women who either lack the necessary collateral or whose businesses are too small to be considered "bankable" on their own.

Thus far, market women, hairdressers, restaurateurs and farm women have benefited from KWFT's services.

As well as guarantor services, KWFT provides training to women in basic accounting and management and in drawing up proposals for loan requisitions.

KWFT was set up and is run by local women who are using methods best suited to their needs, not deemed so by their Western 'sisters'.

The ultimate aim of this non-profit organization is to elevate women entrepreneurs to the level of their male counterparts in terms of access to credit.

The economic development of women is a priority, not only in Kenya but throughout the Third World.

The 'irritating agitations' are spreading.



## Women will unite South Africa

BY NAA DEI NIKOI

"Women give me guts and the will to keep on. That's what I live for." These words reflect the energy South African activist Motlalpula Chabaku sees women have in the struggle against apartheid.

Chabaku, a former social worker and school teacher, was national president of Voice of Women, a multi-racial women's organization and a member of the African National Congress.

Chabaku, one of seven children, was born and brought up on the outskirts of Johannesburg and educated only up to the sixth grade, as was the case with most female children then.

From a system that seeks to quash and nullify the spirit of Black people, she emerged with the self-confidence and a steely sense of self-determination.

Her parents, both of whom suffered indignities and humiliation, toiled for years, her mother as a washer woman and her father, a clerk. They instilled in their children a strong sense of self-worth.

Her father likened them to tennis balls, saying people could squeeze them and they bounce back; people would try to throw them down, but they harder they were hit, the higher they would climb.

Growing up, she was also impressed by the women around her. They showed a great resourcefulness in keeping families together,

augmenting salaries, absorbing pain and rising above humiliation.

Living in the United States now, having been stripped of her citizenship, Chabaku has come across some misconceptions about the role of women in the home, which she finds irritating.

"It is a Western idea that native women have always been subservient. There is definitely sexism within the heritage of the people but it is not a rigid as the white government enforces it."

Chabaku sees the concerns of women being forgotten once the political struggles are over. "The impact of apartheid on all our lives creates pressures to relegate women's issues to a remote priority," she says. "Feminist issues must be dealt with concurrently as a major area of justice."

The Black Women's Federation of South Africa, of which she was a founding member, garners support from both inside and outside of South Africa. It is outlawed now, but the women "carry the membership cards in their hearts."

Chabaku strongly feels that women are the main force of reconciliation in South Africa and will be responsible for reducing the fast approaching blood bath.

"The violence is accelerating. It is unavoidable and we women have a central part to play both for ourselves and humanity, because we are more open to compassion and we tend to be more sensitive to human needs."

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