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**Women's representation in national parliaments in
Sub-Saharan Africa: an ideational framework for
investigation**

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From the mid 1990s there has been a dramatic rise in women's parliamentary representation across a range of countries, driven primarily by the adoption of quotas. One of the noticeable features of this development is the number of democratising, post-crisis and developing countries that now have a percentage of women in parliament that is at, or above, European averages. This trend is graphically illustrated by the ousting of Sweden from the top of the international league table (compiled by the Inter-parliamentary Union) by Rwanda where women now make up 48.8% of the national parliament since the election in 2003. Between 2000 and 2003 the Americas, Europe (excluding the Nordic countries), Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab states all experienced a rise in women's participation in parliaments between 2% and 2.5%, while the Nordic Countries, Asia and the Pacific region remained static. This modest overall rise masks some significant increases; for example in Costa Rica the number of women in parliament rose from 19.3 % in 2000 to 35.1% in 2003, while in Bulgaria in the same period the rise was from 10.8% to 26.2%. Within the European Union some states that had previously a poor record of women's public representation have dramatically increased the number of women in their national parliaments. Belgium for example has increased the percentage of women members of parliament from 12% in 1995 to 35.3% in 2003. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) figures show that 24% of states now have parliaments whose membership is at least 20% female, compared to 16% in January 2000, while the proportion of states where women make up less than 10% of parliament has fallen from 46% of the total in 2000 to 35% of the total in 2003.

On a global scale it appears that something significant is happening to women's political representation that cannot be fully explained by reference to the internal dynamics of any individual state or region. Illustrative of the unique character of this development is UNIFEM's celebration of the increased use of quotas in developing countries and the resulting rise of women in politics as 'the only indicator not affected by national poverty' (UNIFEM, 2002). In Sub Saharan Africa, one of the worlds poorest regions 13 out of 39 states now have parliaments that are at least 15% women, the figure that has been considered a significant minority. This statement invites the question - what makes the number of women in parliaments such a unique indicator? The answer is suggested by the caution with which the rising numbers of African women in parliaments has been greeted in some quarters (DAWN, 2000) and this criticism has been part of a more general critique of the process of democratisation in Africa. This criticism has centred on the democratisation process as a western project, using a western model, concerned with procedural democracy and ignoring the economic and social conditions considered necessary for democracy to effectively function (Kasfir, 1998). Hauser (1999: 621 and 641) points to democratisation as a major aim of donors and to the relative weakness of African countries to resist the pressures for an elite driven, 'top down' democracy. While Salo and Lewis (2002) argue that 'powerful incentives from donor bodies like the World Bank and the IMF' to adopt gender equality policies means that 'enormous' attention is 'paid to window dressing' and 'almost no attention is given to actual changes.

This paper uses an ideational model of gender regime change to explain the rise in the number of women in parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa as a result of the embedding of ideas on gender equality, and specifically the use of quotas, in key international institutions. Gender quotas have been institutionalised in the good governance program that receives Northern donor support and have therefore have become part of

the reconstruction of African states from the early 1990s. Further it is argued that the embedding of these ideas and their incorporation into the democratisation process does not mark a significant revision of the global gender regime but is contained within the ideological framework provided by second wave feminism. In arguing this perspective it is not being suggested either that this western orientated set of ideas on gender equality should provide a blue print for women's movements in Africa or that African women do not have agency. It also leaves open the question of what impact an increasing number of women parliamentarians will have in the long run. The paper argues that understanding the international rise in the number of women in parliament in this way helps identify the limits of this process as an expression of gender equality. It also points to the conflicts between elite and non-elite groups on issues of gender that are likely to emerge as a result of these changes.

The paper will first discuss how an ideational model can be used to explain gender regime change using the well-documented process of regime change that took place in Europe from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. It will do this because it is argued here that it is the ideas (and policy strategies) that were contained in this process that have been incorporated into the agendas of international organisations and that these ideas on equality are now shaping the model of democracy that is being exported to Africa. It will then examine the pattern of change in parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa, arguing that there is evidence to suggest that the degree of influence of external factors and of donors is a key explanatory factor in determining the percentage of women in parliament.

Ideational Change

Offen (2000:393) stated, in her conclusion to a history of European Feminism, that 'surveying the broad sweep of European history and geography of feminist eruptions between 1700 and 1950, it seem clear that the impulse to reposition women under male control has recurred repeatedly and each time has been more vigorously challenged'. She concluded that the history of feminist protest contained 'recurrent patterns that we are only beginning to understand'. Assuming that the recent global changes in the percentages of women in parliaments is part of this recurrent process of change a historic institutional approach, using an ideational model provides a framework in which this can be discussed. 'Ideational' literature has usefully contributed to understanding the nature of political institutions – in that it explains both why such institutions tend to produce continuity and also why the process of change takes the form it does. This is especially true when the domestic policy reform appears to be part of an international trend as is the adoption of quotas. Under these circumstances an ideational model makes it possible to link the political conditions of individual states to an international discourse that is shaping policy outcomes (Hall 1989; Blyth 2002).

The 'ideational' literature explains how ideas, 'once successfully institutionalised can affect policy outcomes' arguing that once ideas are 'institutionally embedded, policy making becomes possible only in terms of these ideas' (Blyth, 2001: 4). This model has been applied primarily to major shifts in macro-economic policy and to a lesser extent to foreign policy paradigms. Its key application has been to explain both the processes by which Keynesian economics became the dominant foundation of state macro economic policy after the Second World War, and the equally dramatic

adoption of neo-liberal orthodoxy in the 1980s. In this way it has described how a set of ideas are used to contest an existing frame work of policies and institutions, and how after a period of dissent and political regrouping a new policy paradigm emerges and creates new institutions or redefines existing ones. In this context a policy paradigm is being defined as ‘a framework of ideas and standards’ that specifies ‘the goals of policy’ and the ‘nature of the problems’ that policy in that arena is intended to address (Hall, 1993: 279). The power of a policy paradigm lies in its ability to structure the way in which actors ‘see the world and their role within it’ (Hall, 1992: 92). The implementation of a policy paradigm generates a set of institutions and policy outcomes that flow from the paradigm. Once such a regime is put in place it will structure what actions, and policy, are possible within its context. Policy outside the framework of an institutionalised policy paradigm becomes literally ‘unthinkable’, without the ideational basis of the paradigm being restructured (ref).

If a reorientation of a policy paradigm requires a shift in its ideational basis it is reasonable to postulate that such a shift would be a significant event, that it would meet with institutional resistance as well as resistance from existing vested interests. It is likely that change in the state’s gender regime, and the gender paradigm on which it is based, because it is so deeply rooted in social relations, would require substantial change at the societal level. As Legro (2000: 424) points out ‘change in societal-level beliefs requires ‘collective ideation’, and this formation of group ideas implies a need for co-ordinated and/or collective action to facilitate change’. On this basis Legro (2000: 424) suggests a model of ideational change involving two idealised stages. The first stage involves the ‘collapse’ of the existing ‘consensus’ where significant actors are able to agree that ‘the old orthodoxy is inadequate and should be replaced’. The second phase is the ‘consolidation of a new ideational structure’, which requires the existence of ‘a viable oppositional idea, the prescriptions of which correlate with socially desired results’ (Legro, 2000: 426). The process by which a coherent ‘oppositional idea’ emerges is likely to be a complex political battle involving an array of alternative ideas, interest groupings and political structures.

Arguing from a similar perspective Blyth suggests that ideas give shape to group interests and structure the institutions of the state and also its policy regime – existing political institutions are inevitably the result of past ideas that shaped the political system (1997: 233). He states that ‘this framework provides a fresh approach to understanding both the limits of state activity and how those limits can be challenged over time’ (1997: 240). Blyth’s model defines the life cycle of a structuring set of ideas suggesting three distinct phases. In the initial discursive phase definitions are contested and the political space is opened up in which new ideas can emerge. During this stage, ideas ‘alter individual and collective perceptions of interest’, that is they ‘change agents’ definition of which actions and policies are in their self-interest and thus alter their basis of identity and action’. This is followed by an instrumentalist phase in which ‘ideas are co-opted by agents attempting to ‘redefine’ boundaries and ‘reform institutional arrangements’. It also ‘facilitates new patterns of collective action’. The Third phase, the reconstitutive phase, is where ‘new ideas become embedded (or fail to become embedded) in the institutions of the state’ (1997: 234). As ideas are not static concepts but are developed and changed, as they are both used and contested, the way in which ideas become institutionally embedded is likely to be in a form that is the outcome of a negotiated bargain between the various actors in the policy process. The ‘social bargain’ between the state, labour and capital described

by Blyth can be equated with a 'gender contract' or 'gender bargain' formulated between the state, labour, capital, and women's organisations.

A key difference between the models suggested by Legro and Blyth, is that according to Blyth, Legro's period of regime 'collapse' can be seen as a two-stage process. The first stage of regime collapse is dominated by an initial critique of the existing paradigm and the opening up of political space, allowing new forms of political activity to emerge and new ideas to be introduced. It is also probable during this phase that the interaction and power hierarchy between existing interest groups will be altered. In the second stage of regime collapse Blyth implies that the new ideas being employed to undermine the existing regime have become more coherent and have also resulted in new forms of collective action. It is also implied that in the debate on the redefinition of the existing regime both those groupings who seek to change that regime, and the vested interests who oppose those changes, are all forced, to a lesser or greater extent, to address the 'problems' that have led to regime collapse in terms of the new ideational framework.

It is for this reason that 'ideas' have a problematic conceptual relationship with 'interests'. To what extent can a regime change be perceived as a result of a contest between various social interests rather than because of the impact of 'new' ideas? As Blyth (1997: 231) suggests, 'ideas are more than post-hoc rationalisations for existing interests'. It can be argued that, like institutions, interests are constructed by ideas and that this is the case even when membership of a particular grouping is related to actual material conditions such as membership of a trade union or an employer's organisation. Because of this, interests do not just deploy ideas as 'weapons' (although they certainly do use them in this way); they are also shaped by them (Blyth, 2001:4). Because of this 'ideas' have two other important impacts. Firstly, they can force a reassessment on the part of individuals and groups and may even change their perception of their interests. Secondly, under conditions of regime collapse, the emergence of new ideational frameworks will almost invariably result in the creation of new interest formations.

'Ideas' that shape macro economic policy or a state's gender regime, replacing an existing policy paradigm, may contain novel elements but they will also, in part, be a reworking of pre-existing debates. Many of the intellectual ideas of neo-liberalism were not 'new' in the sense that they had been formulated in the late 1970s when they first began to make a policy impact. They had an intellectual pedigree going back to the post-war critique of Keynesianism and beyond that to the long running debate on the economic role of the state and fundamental issues of economic redistribution. These ideas were developed and repackaged at the end of the 1970s to meet the particular circumstance of that time. This represented an intellectual advance but it was one that also had a long intellectual tradition.

The models presented by Legro and Blyth, and the work of Hall on macro economic policy, explain why policy paradigms exhibit a strong tendency towards continuity. They also explain the nature of paradigm change as a relatively brief, but strenuous period of renegotiation in which both pre-existing and new interest formations are engaged. As the ideational basis of the paradigm is a key determinant of its policy output it explains why a policy regime can produce policy changes that were neither planned nor desired by the interest coalition that put the policy paradigm in place. It

also explains why policy institutions cannot produce outcomes that are outside the original ideational structure on which they are constructed.

The Gendered State and Gendered Public Policy Regimes

Bringing together the literature on ideation with the literature on the 'gendered state' allows a process of 'gender regime change' to be theorised. Literature from a feminist perspective has defined the state and its gender regime as being structured by a gender paradigm that reflects social relationships. For Connell (1990: 523) a state's gender regime inevitably reflects patterns of gender relations in wider society and is the result of past social conflicts within society that produced the current dominant pattern of relationships. This is because the state is an entity, which is constituted within gender relations, and is the central institutionalisation of gender power (Connell, 1990). In this model the emphasis is on the relationship of social relations to the form of the state, but it does contain the concept of a set of 'ideas' on gender shaping the state and its policy output. Again linking the form of the state to social relations Hirdman, (cited in Duncan, 1994: 1186-8) describes society as being based on a 'gender contract'. The 'gender contract', drawing on social contract theory, is the implicit agreement between the sexes that sets out the rules that determine gender behaviour and assigns men and women their different roles. The state's policy output reflects and simultaneously reinforces the embedded gender contract (Gottfried, 2000). This is echoed by Barriteau (1998: 188 & 191) who describes a 'gender system' as 'a network of power relations' based on 'complex systems of personal and social relations, through which women and men are socially created and maintained, and through which they gain access to, or are allocated, status, power and material resources'. Again Barriteau implicitly envisages the state, as playing a key role in the 'maintenance' and 'distribution' aspects of this embedded contract. Viewing the state as gendered in this way allows an analysis of dynamic change in the state's concept of male and female, and in the gendered relationship that underpins all social interaction and social structures (Marshall, 1994: 114).

A missing aspect of this conceptualisation of the state as gendered is a mechanism for political policy regime renegotiation other than that reflecting social change and changing social structures. This is important because social change does not produce a change in the gender regime unless it is accompanied by a political process aimed at redefining gender issues and changing policy outcomes. So although this writing on gender and the state allows for 'agency' to change the gender regime it does not theorise the process by which change happens. An ideational model can describe the process by which a change in the gender regime occurs that is compatible with the main trends of feminist writing on the gendered nature of the state.

The last major change in the gender regime of European democracies occurred from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and is associated with 'second wave feminism'. During this relatively short period there was a significant shift in the gendered basis of public policy to the extent that looking back to the early 1960s from the vantage point of 'post-second wave feminist' society, there is a clear break between the gender policy paradigm of that period and that which existed by the end of the 1970s (Connolly, 2003). The nature and timing of the pattern of gender regime change in Western European states followed a similar pattern of policy reform and furthermore that process of reform was preceded by an even stronger symmetry of discourse

across those states.¹ A brief sketch of the process of gender paradigm change associated with second wave feminism, using an ideational framework describes a two stage process of regime collapse followed by a process of regime reconstitution and consolidation. In the early stages of regime collapse the ideation basis of the existing gender regime is critiqued as inadequate and women's groups (many pre-war in their origins) experience an opening up of political space and began to lobby for improvements in women's legal status (Kaplan, 1992; Skjeie, 1991: 92; Galligan, 1998:48). In the later stage of regime collapse the critique is intensified and 'new' ideas arising from second wave feminism, and the broader context of political critique, are deployed. The gender regime is then reconstituted through a process of contested negotiation by the state, existing interest groupings, and the new interest groups that have been formed as a result of the ideational shift.

The process of gender regime collapse was part of the crisis in the 'post-war settlement' that developed in the 1960s and expressed women's dissatisfaction with their place in that social bargain. In the aftermath of the war European states pursued a greatly expanded state role in economic development and social provision while re-establishing pre-war gender norms, negating the impact of women's war time experience as workers, members of liberation movements and as heads of households. The ideas on which this gender paradigm was based still drew on the last major period of renegotiation of the gender bargain – that associated with first wave feminism. Many of the active women's organisations in this period consciously traced their roots to the early decades of the twentieth century.

The critique of the post war bargain in the 1960s was characterised by the breakdown of authority, including political hierarchies, growing sexual permissiveness and the freeing up of social roles. These events were motivated by new ideas about the relationship of the individual to society and to the state. Once the ideas of individual rights and equal citizenship became collective ideas, applied to other aspects of state policy, they were also used to undermine the hierarchical family based on male authority, women's inequality before the law and women's exclusion from many aspects of the public sphere. The questioning of established social roles and sexual relationships permitted by the freeing of sexuality from marriage and a focus on individual freedom and fulfilment provided the ideational framework for women to question gender relationships at their most fundamental and personal level. Most importantly it also allowed them to make the link between the inequality in personal relationships between the sexes and the inequality in the structures of society, economy and state (Barrett, 1980; Pateman, 1988).

By the early 1970s the totality of European states' gender regimes were being effectively criticised from these two perspectives: equal rights/equal citizenship and personal autonomy. The equal rights perspective - one which was shared by long established women's organisations and the new 'women's movement', was a particularly strong structuring idea. This was because equality of rights and opportunities was becoming the basis for the reform of western political systems and women were seeking to have this dominant idea applied to issues of gender. The second critical perspective, that of personal autonomy was linked to the strengthened idea of the individual in western society. This idea encapsulated a number of issues

¹ For example see Kaplan's (1992) account of West European Feminism.

including sexual liberation and the disintegration of many aspects of the traditional family. It was used by the women's movement to promote the idea of sexual autonomy for women and to critique the dominant-subordinate nature of the most intimate male-female relationships. As a result of this critical engagement the legislative reconstitution of state gender regimes occurred in four key areas: employment law; social welfare provision; issues of sexual morality; and fertility control, including abortion.

This reconstitution of gender regimes meant that for the majority of European states there was substantial reform in the area of family law, in measures to promote the idea of equality in employment law, on fertility control and some measures to protect women and children from violence and abuse. These reforms were based on ideas of legal and procedural equality, using a male model of citizenship that was modified by state financial support and protection for women, primarily in their role as mothers. Once institutionalised these ideas continued to provide a framework for incremental reform in the following decades. However this framework of reform did not lead to an incremental increase in women's public representation, based on their rising economic and social status as many had anticipated it would and as the ideas of equality instituted into the bargain seemed to promise. For women activists this on going failure of women to break into public decision making in significant numbers has been a major issue on which they continue to campaigned and strategise. It was not until the 1990s that women made significant gains in terms of their numbers in parliament in a variety of national settings primarily because of the adoption of specific strategies aimed at increasing their representation including the use of quotas (Dahlerup, 1998, Ross 2002).

Framing an analysis of states' gender regimes in an ideational model suggests regime change is episodic and happens as a result of a period of intense political struggle over new definitions of problems and new solutions. If it is accepted that a gender policy paradigm, once established, continues to exert a strong influence over political institutions and policy formation, the explosion of second wave feminism becomes understandable as the expression of major societal force necessary to break down a long established regime. Similarly the regime put in place in the 1970s has also proved durable and following the initial wave of reform, changes have been incremental and within its ideational paradigm. The reforms that have taken place within this paradigm have in many case followed a process of 'norm generation'² that has firmly embedded them in the ideology and technical policy tools of international institutions and also made it easier for individual states to justify their adoption.

Women in Parliaments in Sub Saharan Africa

With the ending of the cold war northern donor states were able to take a new approach to Sub Saharan Africa. This included an acceptance that economic development required a competent stable state and the belief that political crisis in Africa was in part fuelled by opposition to unrepresentative repressive states. The institutions of international governance (notably the World Bank and the IMF) internalised the idea that democracy was a prerequisite for economic development.

² See Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 893) for a discussion of norm generation and the relationship between domestic and international norms.

Northern donors and international institutions adopted a narrow procedural model of democracy that focused on elections and administrative issues. The blue print they used is described by Crawford as ‘a democratic pyramid’ where an ideal of a democratic society rests on three pillars – free and fair elections; civil and political rights; and open and accountable government (Crawford, 2001: 18). In the early years of the 1990s Africa received a significant injection of aid aimed at promoting a transition to democracy based on this model in the belief that this form of democratisation would also secure a stable market-led path to development.

The blueprint of democracy that was being used by donors and international institutions alike had been arrived at through a process which saw a set of explicit and narrow ideas on what constituted democracy becoming accepted and written into the policy documents and procedures of national development agencies and also those of other key international actors and institutions. One of the ideas that were formally institutionalised in this model of democracy was that of procedural gender equality. The idea that gender equality should be ‘mainstreamed’ in all policy areas had proved a successful one – in that it had received wide spread support in national and international policy processes. However its adoption did not result in concrete policy outcomes that improved the status and welfare of women and such bureaucratic processes were widely perceived to be ‘window dressing’ measures. The idea of gender mainstreaming impacted on the area of political representation and policies to promote democracy and good governance came to include measures to achieve gender equality. Equality in this case was defined as meaning equal access to the political process and gender equal outcomes in terms of political representation. Gender quotas, both legislative and political party quotas had proven successful in a number of developed states and had been advocated by feminists for many years as a way of breaking down barriers to women’s political participation. In the model of democracy adopted by development agencies and international institutions, gender equality in terms of political representation became a goal, and gender quotas the way to achieve that goal³.

In terms of the ideational model discussed earlier, feminist activism was successful in having the ideas of political ‘quotas’ instituted in this way because the ‘aim’ of political equality was part of the gender regime that had been embedded in institutional form, from the end of the 1970s in industrialised countries and it was also consistent with ideas on democracy that became hegemonic in the post-cold war world. As such, the use of quotas did not represent a new development in political thinking but the completion of an aspect of the agenda of second wave feminism that had been long campaigned for. This institutionalising of the idea of quotas would not have had as strong an effect without the comparative weakness of the developing states, especially those in Sub Saharan Africa, compared to the collective influence of Northern Donor agencies and the international institutions. The international institutions – because they are more firmly tied to agreed, strong, international norms than are individual states - have played a key role in spreading the use of gender quotas. The *International IDEA*, for example, has made gender equality and the advocacy of quotas an integral part of the election and political support it gives.

³ See Tripp (2003) for a comment on the redirection of donor spending and the impact of international conferences.

This model of democracy, and the assumptions underlying it, has been criticised by a variety of actors, including initially the UNDP who were unhappy with both the ‘one size fits all’ approach and the implicit high level of external direction. They argued that democracy should be ‘home grown’. Subsequently fears have been expressed that the model of democracy being advocated produces a shallow form of democracy, that is essentially procedural with weak societal roots and which ignores issues of social and economic rights that many believe essential to a democratic state. Doubts have also been expressed about the beneficial impact on wider issues of women’s rights and welfare of the increase in the number of women in parliaments. As table one demonstrates, in terms of increasing the numbers of women in national parliaments, this policy has been remarkably successful since its inception in the early 1990s. Of the 39 Sub-Saharan African states listed for which figures exist, 14 have parliaments with a higher female participation than the USA, whose current figure stands at 14.3%. It is also notable that of those 14 states the majority are post conflict societies that have had a high level of external actor engagement in the process of reconstruction.

These issues can be further explored by examining a sample of seven countries in more detail⁴. South Africa, Mozambique, and Namibia all have parliaments that are over 25% female, Uganda stands at 24.7%. Kenya, Ghana, and Cameroon have parliaments that have a female membership of less than 10%. The first three countries have all come through a recent period of crisis that has resulted in a high level of involvement of external actors, while Uganda after the legacy of the Amin dictatorship, has actively embraced external actor engagement in its development process (particularly through the adoption of IMF/WB programmes). The remaining three countries have been relatively stable. The first four countries, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia and Uganda were amongst the top twenty recipients of ‘political aid’ in the world during the first half of the 1990s - South Africa and Mozambique were clearly in first and second place respectively in this league table (Crawford, 2001: 114). Commenting on the position of South Africa, Hearn (2000) described aid to that country as ‘very much a case of democratic assistance’ to the extent that it provides the best case study of ‘contemporary foreign intervention in a country’s democratisation process’. Kenya, Ghana and Cameroon did not feature in the top 20 on this list. For all seven countries there appears to be a link between levels of aid and women in parliament although this relationship is not a simple one. Political aid flows for the purposes of assisting administration and the election process tend to ‘spike’ in the two-year lead-in period prior to an election. Aid flows that are directed at ‘women in development’ (WID) projects also follow this pattern. WID aid flows are very small compared to other aid flows. The fact they also show a tendency to peak prior to elections would seem to indicate that a significant proportion of this albeit small amount of aid for women’s projects is designed to assist women in the political process. In support of this Tripp (2003: 239) points to a growing tendency for donors to promote women’s political participation, including the funding of organisations involved in advocacy around equality clauses in constitutions, and other projects that are described as non-partisan issues.

The three post conflict societies in this sample South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia all had strong women’s movements associated with the parties who came to

⁴ These countries are selected as representative of both those with high numbers of women in parliament and those with fairly low numbers.

power after the reconstitution of the state. Here the aims of external donors coincided with the aims of internal organised women's groups, however even under these circumstances doubts have been expressed about the beneficial impact of this external engagement. Under donor pressure quotas for women were conceded without a struggle. In Mozambique the elections are seen to have been strongly affected by 'external global forces' (Jacobson, 1994: 10) and have been 'evoked as evidence that the UN can manage a political transition which does not collapse into chaos' (Harrison, 1996). One result of the adoption of quotas with minimal debate was that women's rights issues and the question of gender equality were not political issues in the elections that followed (Jacobson, 1996). Neither does the significant number of women in parliament in some states appear to have made a commensurate impact on policy output and implementation. Goetz (1998) who supports what she refers to as this 'bureaucratic form of representation for the gender equality interest in policy making' in Uganda and South Africa, still describes the results as 'ambivalent', in that they raise awareness and produce rhetorical commitments to women's rights but do not bring substantive change. Similarly Hearn (2000) describes external support for procedural democracy in South Africa as aimed at not 'reconstructing the social order but about effective system maintenance'. It has also been claimed that the active women's organisations that existed during the conflict and immediate post-conflict phases have been weakened and have been unable to sustain their momentum after the institutionalisation of democracy (Connell, 1998).

Ghana and Cameroon, apart from an aid spike at the beginning of the 1990s associated with the initial democratisation process, have received virtually no WID aid during the 1990s. In Ghana, the level of women in parliament has remained relatively static, at 8% in 1992, rising to 9% after the 1997 election, and remaining at 9% in the election held at the end of 2000. Between 1993 and 2000 WID aid totalled only just over a quarter of a million US dollars. In Cameroon at the beginning of the 1990s women's project aid was US\$4.5 million approximately over a two year period, compared to only a little more than one million for aid for administration and elections. With women only making up 5% of the parliament after the elections in 1992 women's aid was virtually non-existent until 1999 when it spiked prior to the elections in 2002. The percentage of women in Cameroon's parliament remains at just under 9%. Unlike the situation in most African states, total aid flows to Kenya declined sharply in the early 1990s, from the relatively high levels of the previous decade, as donors became disenchanted with the Moi government. However within this general decline aid flows for administration/elections and for women's projects both show a pattern of peaking prior to elections. In 1996, women's aid peaked at the comparatively high figure of 7.5 million, with no subsequent rise in the numbers of women in parliament, after the 1998 election. Significantly women's aid did not peak prior to the elections in 2002. In this case donor funding was focused on the opposition – a coalition of anti-government groups - and no pressure was put on the opposition coalition to increase its representation of women prior to the election. The donor priority was the defeat of the incumbent government. The results of the election showed a modest increase in the parliamentary representation of women from 3% to 7%. In these three countries, because of their comparative stability, donor engagement in the internal construction of democracy has been limited, and there has been no significant rise in the numbers of women in parliament.

Conclusion

The evidence here would suggest that the widespread introduction of quotas and the rise in the numbers of women in parliament are not part of a new paradigm, the ideas about gender on which the argument for parity politics is grounded fits within the existing gender paradigm employed by donors and international institutions. Supporting this view Dahlerup (1998) argues that the idea of 'equality of results' and the strategies being adopted have been advocated by feminists 'in the last few decades'. International institutions have developed a strong discourse on good governance (Schraeder, 2002; O'Brien et al, 2002) and the foreign aid policies of Northern 'donor' governments since the early 1990s have linked 'development assistance to the promotion of human rights and democracy and good governance in Southern 'recipient' countries' and this has included gender equality (Crawford, 2001: 1-17). The developments in Sub Saharan Africa illustrate the power of policy norms once they have become institutionally embedded. It is still too early for the impact of the significant rise in the number of women in parliaments to be clear. This is true of Africa as well as other regions. However there are potential problems in such an elite and external actor driven project. A primary problem is that the focus on procedural issues will lead it to ignore crucial social and economic ones that effect the lives of the majority of women. Major sources of gender inequality such as traditional law and land ownership patterns have proved difficult to deal with because to do so would require a level of societal consensus and political will that as yet does not exist. The political climate of the 1990s made it possible for international women's networks to effectively push for the introduction of quotas and such reforms are attractive to political elites as a way of increasing the legitimacy of the political system. However without a fundamental shift in political practice greater parity in political representation does not guarantee increased equality in other spheres. Although women's greater political representation can be critiqued as window dressing for the benefit of donors, it does give women a new voice, and once quotas have been put in place their ultimate impact is an unknown factor. These changes are likely to increase the pressures on the existing paradigm because increasing the number of women in parliaments without an accompanying ideational change will not resolve fundamental criticisms of the political system, including its gender contract. The reforms will not solve the developmental problems, the lack of substantive democracy in many African states, or improve women's status – but their failure to do these things may increase the pressure for more substantial reform including a change in gender relations.

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Table 1.

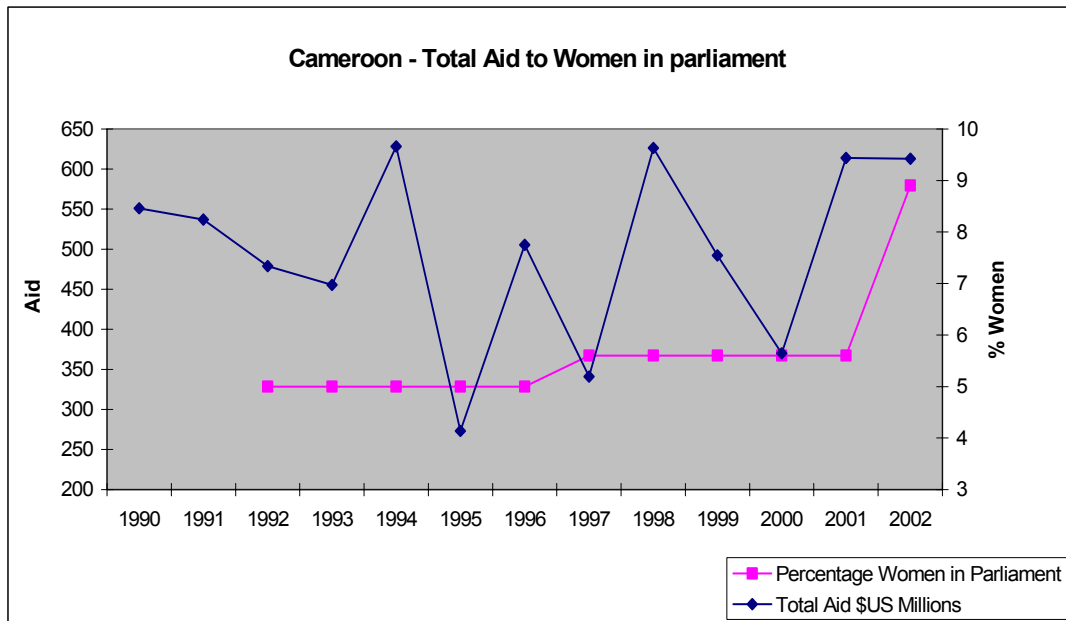
Country	% Women in Parl	Government Type	Electoral System	System Type	Gender Quotas	Pop^n	GDP per Capita
Rwanda	48.8	republic; presidential, multiparty system	first-past-the-post	plurality	Legislated - 26 seats and 30 % at local level	7,810,056	\$1,200
Mozambique	30	republic	party list	proportional	Party Quota -Frelimo 30% on lists	17,479,266	\$1,100
South Africa	29.8	republic	party list	proportional	Legislated Quota - Women must comprise 50% at local level. Also ANC party quota of 33.33%	42,768,678	\$10,000
Seychelles	29.4	republic	parallel: first-past-the-post	semi-proportional	No	80,469	\$7,800
Namibia	26.4	republic	party list	proportional	Legislated Quota - Women must comprise 30% of party lists at local level	1,927,447	\$6,900
Uganda	24.7	republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	Legislated - 56 seats for Women	25,632,794	\$1,200
Eritrea	22	transitional government	party list	proportional	Legislated - 30% Seats at national and local assemblies	4,362,254	\$700
Tanzania	21.4	republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	Reserved Seats - 20% at national level, 25% at local level	35,922,454	\$600
Guinea	19.3	republic	parallel: first-past-the-post	semi-proportional	No	9,030,220	\$2,100
Senegal	19.2	republic under multiparty democratic rule	parallel: party block	semi-proportional	Party Quota - 25%	10,580,307	\$1,500
Burundi	18.4	republic	party list	proportional	No	6,096,156	\$500
Botswana	17	parliamentary republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	Party Quota - BNF, BCP 30% on lists	1,573,267	\$8,500
Angola	15.5	republic, nominally a multiparty democracy with a strong presidential system	party list	proportional	No	10,766,471	\$1,700
Sierra Leone	14.5	constitutional democracy	party list	proportional	Party Quota - 5 Parties 30%	5,732,681	\$500
Gambia	13.2	republic under multiparty democratic rule	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	1,501,050	\$1,800
Zambia	12	Republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	10,307,333	\$800
Burkina Faso	11.7	parliamentary republic	party list	proportional	No	13,228,460	\$1,100

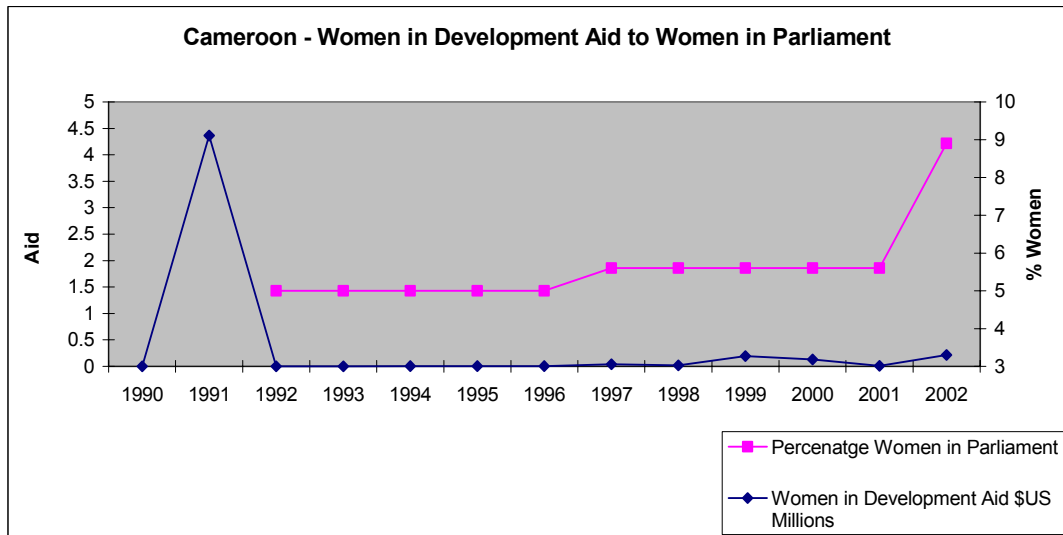
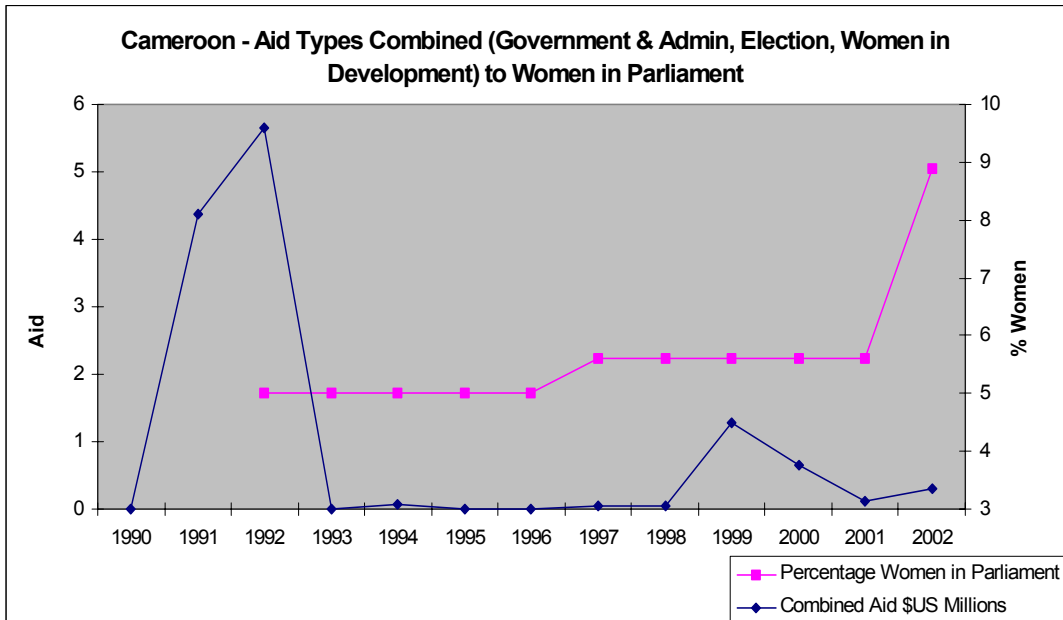
Country	% Women in Parl	Government Type	Electoral System	System Type	Gender Quotas	Pop^n	GDP per Capita
Lesotho	11.7	parliamentary constitutional monarchy	first-past-the-post	plurality	Party Quota - ADEMA 30%	1,861,959	\$2,700
Cape Verde	11.1	Republic	party list	proportional	No	412,137	\$1,400
Djibouti	10.8	Republic	party block	plurality	Legislated Quota - 10% National Parl for Women	457,130	\$1,300
Swaziland	10.8	Monarchy	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	1,161,219	\$4,800
Mali	10.2	Republic	two-round system	majority	No	11,626,219	\$900
Zimbabwe	10	Parliamentary democracy	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	12,576,742	\$2,100
Sudan	9.7	authoritarian regime - ruling military junta took power in 1989; government is run by an alliance of the military and the National Congress Party (NCP)	first-past-the-post	plurality	Legislated - 35 seats reserved for women	38,114,160	\$1,400
Malawi	9.3	Multiparty democracy	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	11,651,239	\$600
Gabon	9.2	republic; multiparty presidential regime (opposition parties legalized in 1990)	two-round system	majority	No	1,321,560	\$6,500
Sao Tome & Principe	9.1	Republic	party list	proportional	No	175,883	\$1,200
Ghana	9	Constitutional democracy	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	20,467,747	\$2,000
Cameroon	8.9	unitary republic; multiparty presidential regime (opposition parties legalized in 1990)	parallel: first-past-the-post	semi-proportional	No	15,746,179	\$1,700
Congo 0 Rep.	8.5	Republic	two-round system	majority	No	2,954,258	\$900
Cote d'Ivoire	8.5	republic; multiparty presidential regime established 1960	first-past-the-post-block	plurality	No	16,962,491	\$1,400
Ethiopia	7.7	federal republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	66,557,553	\$700
Togo	7.4	Republic under transition to multiparty democratic rule	two-round system	majority	No	5,429,299	\$1,400

Country	% Women in Parl	Government Type	Electoral System	System Type	Gender Quotas	Pop^n	GDP per Capita
Benin	7.2	Republic under multiparty democratic rule	party list	proportional	No	7,041,490	\$1,100
Kenya	7.1	Republic	first-past-the-post	plurality	6 of 12 Presidential Seats Women - Party Quota DP 30%	31,639,091	\$700
Nigeria	6.7	Republic in transition from military to civilian rule	first-past-the-post	plurality	No	133,881,703	\$900
Chad	5.8	Republic	two-round system	majority	No	9,253,493	\$1,000
Mauritius	5.7	parliamentary democracy	block	plurality	No	1,210,447	\$10,100
Equatorial Guinea	5	Republic	party list	proportional	Party Quota - CPDS no figure available	510,473	\$2,700
Mauritania	3.7	republic	two-round system	majority	No	2,912,584	\$1,700
Niger	1.2	republic	parallel: first-past-the-post	semi-proportional	MNSD - 5 seats reserved	11,058,590	\$800

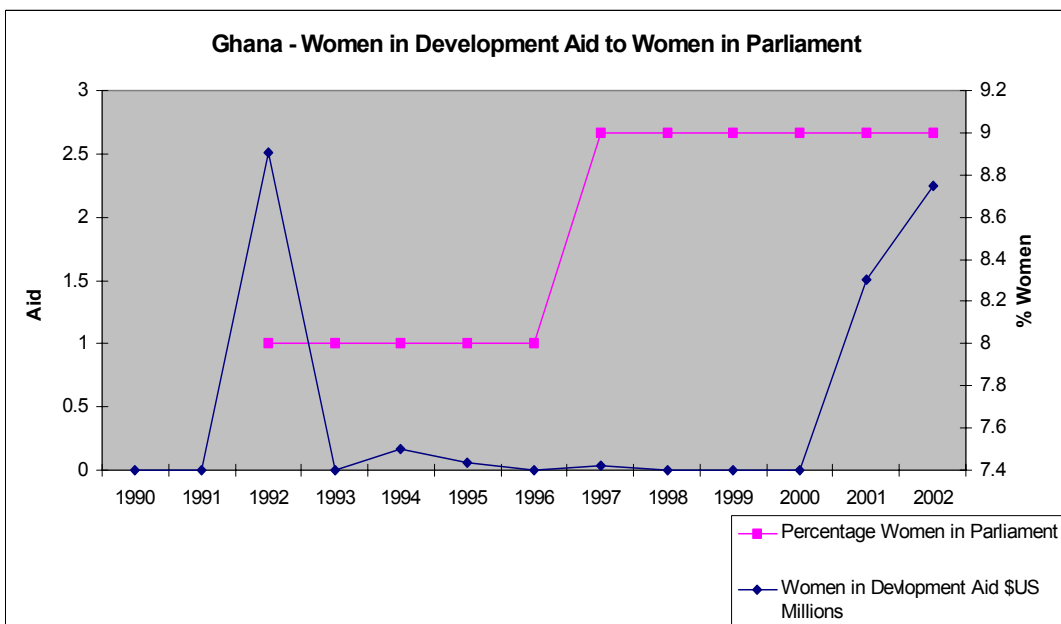
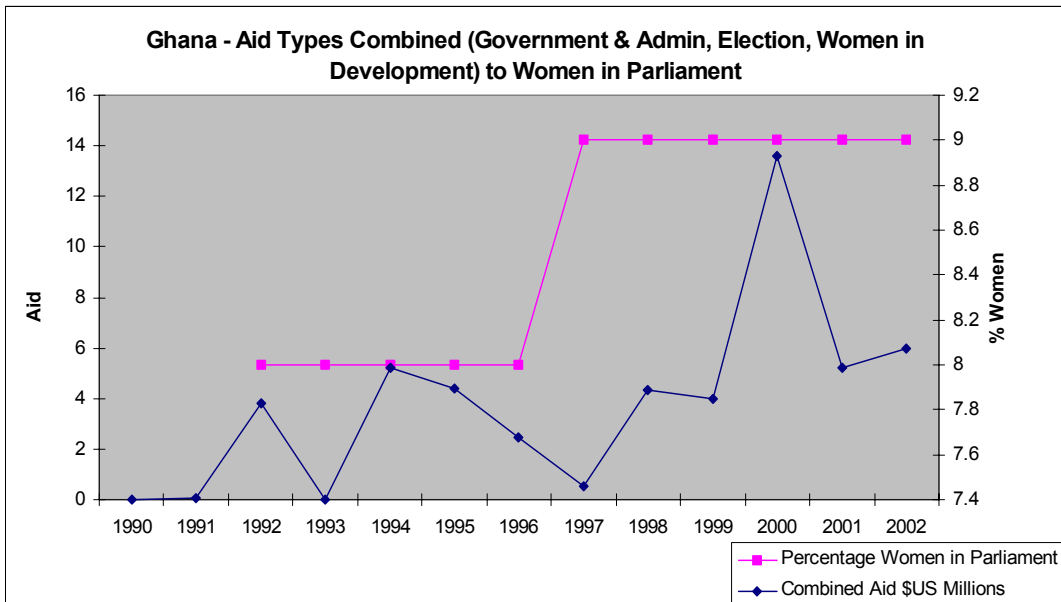
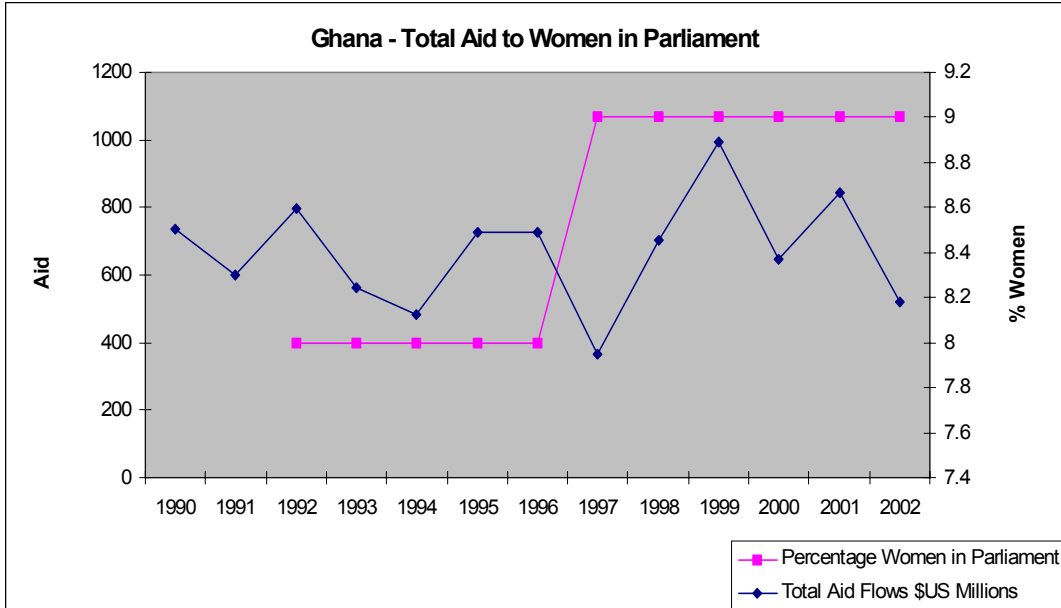
Appendix One

Cameroon – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002

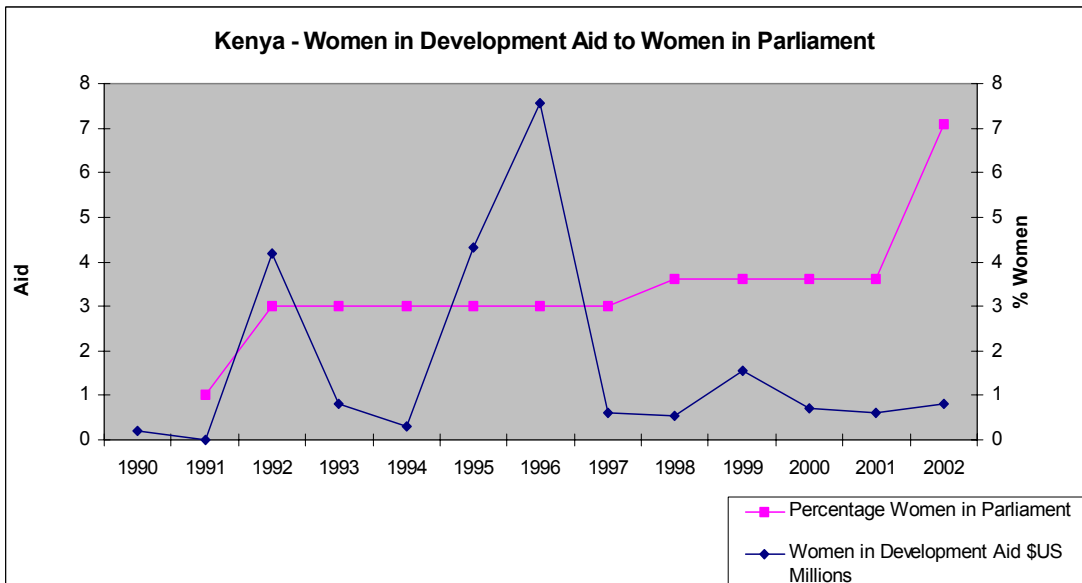
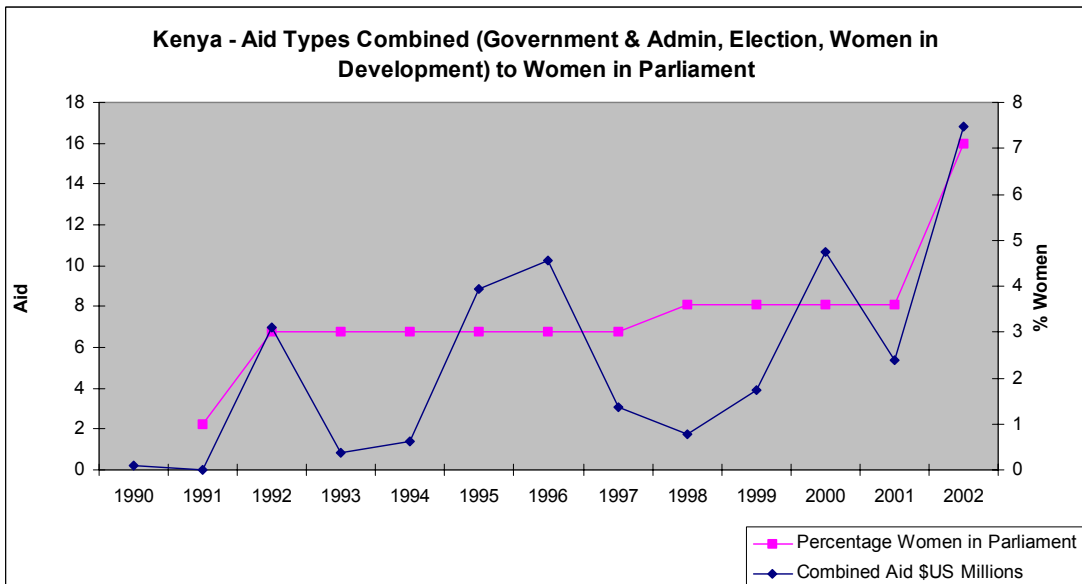
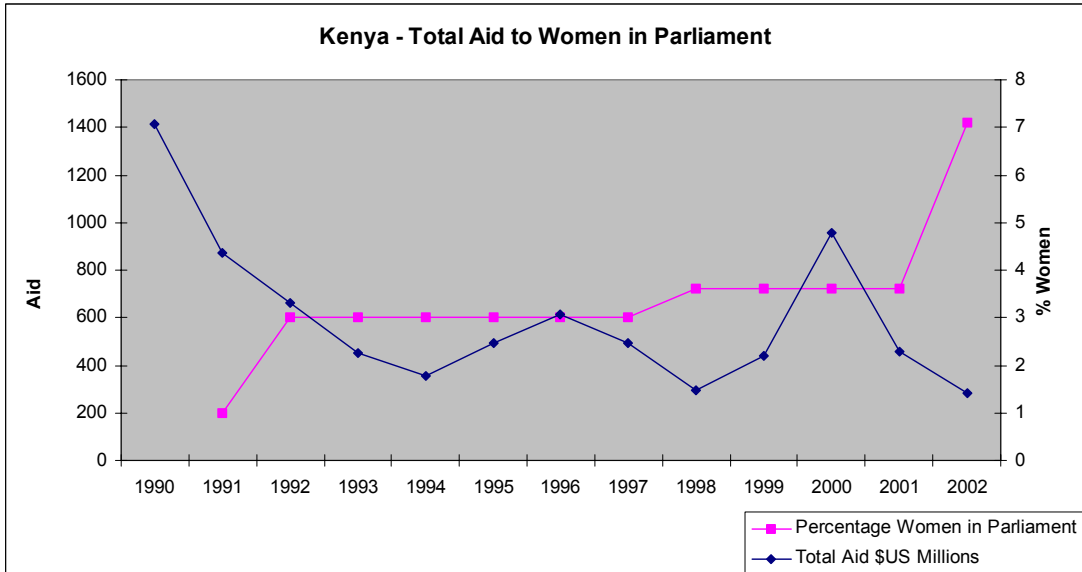




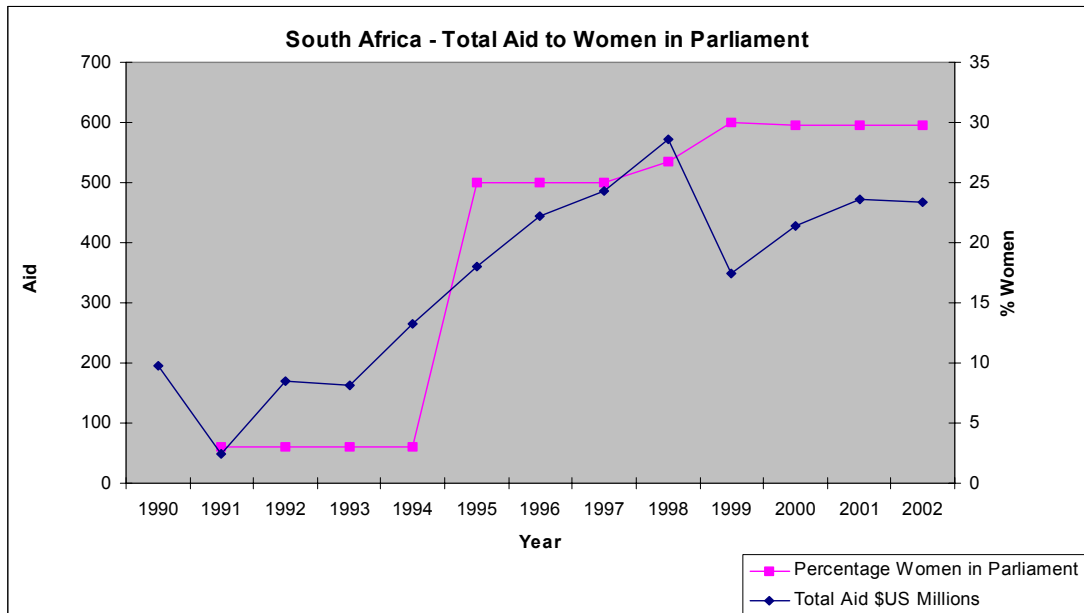
Ghana – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002

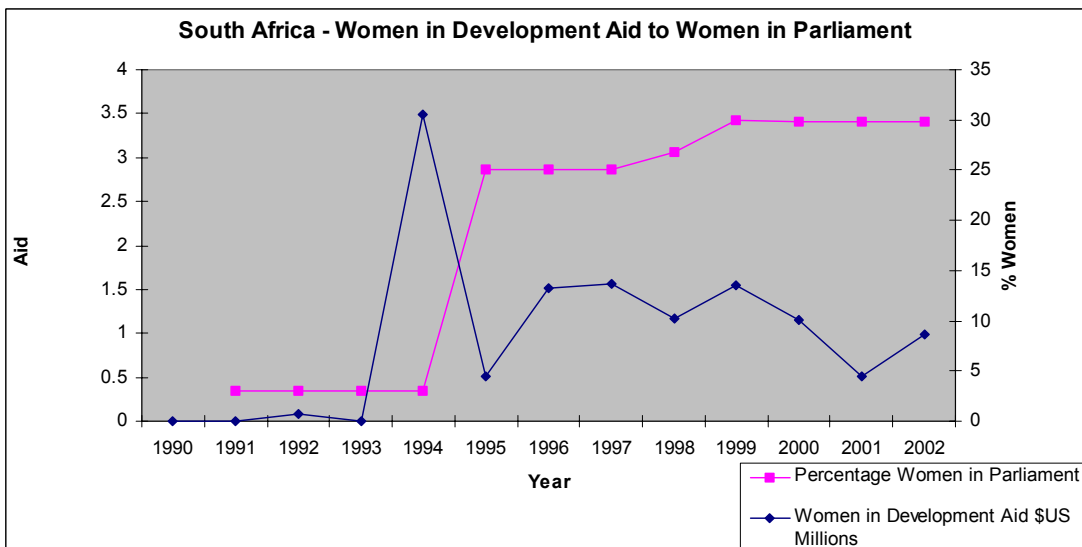
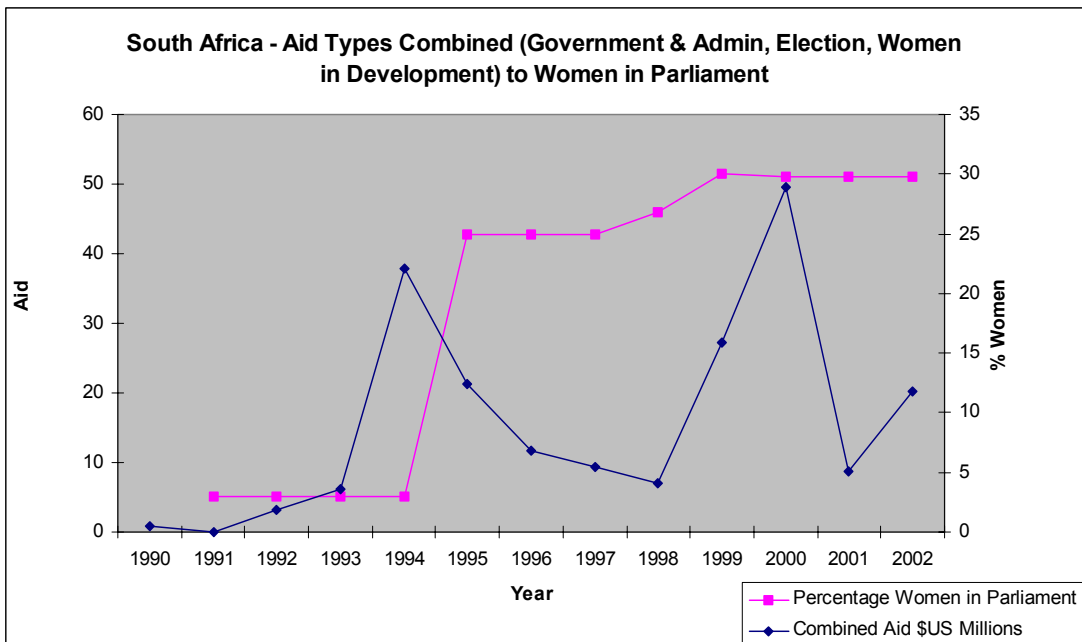


Kenya – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002

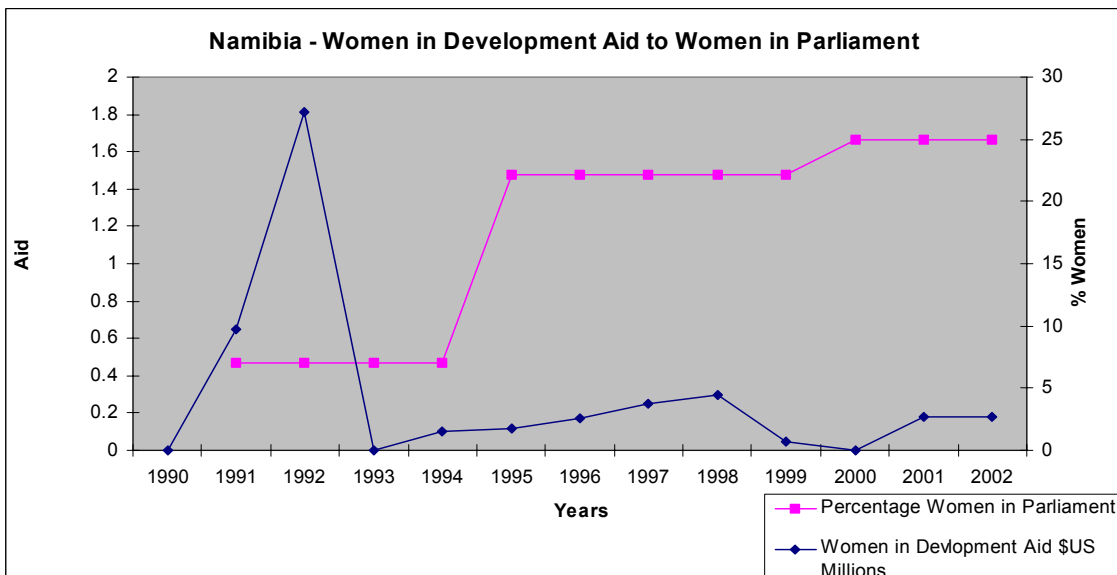
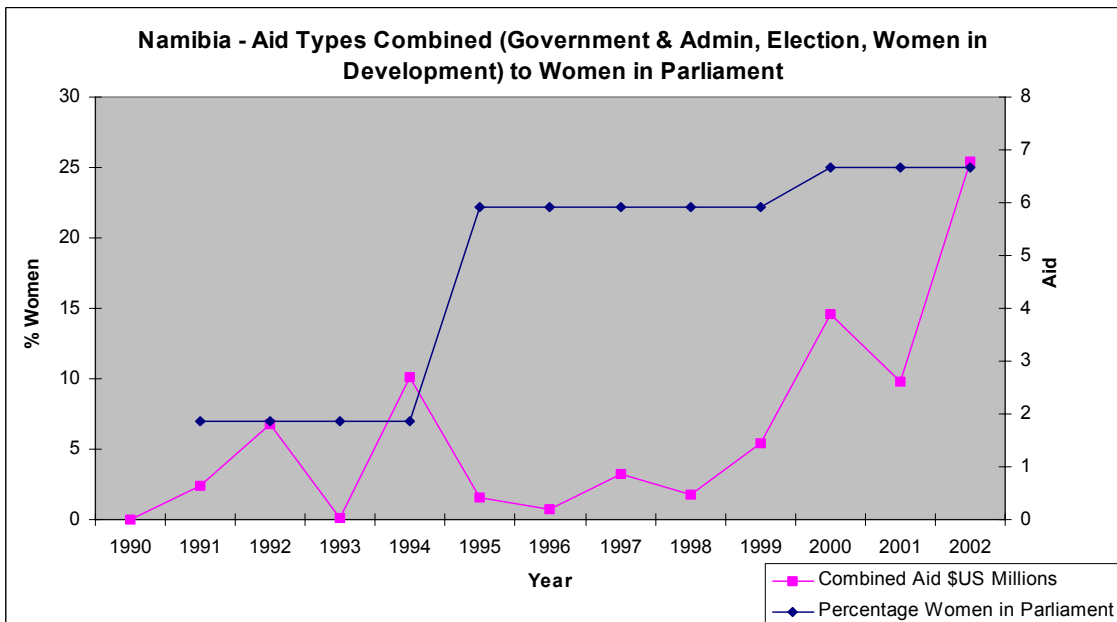
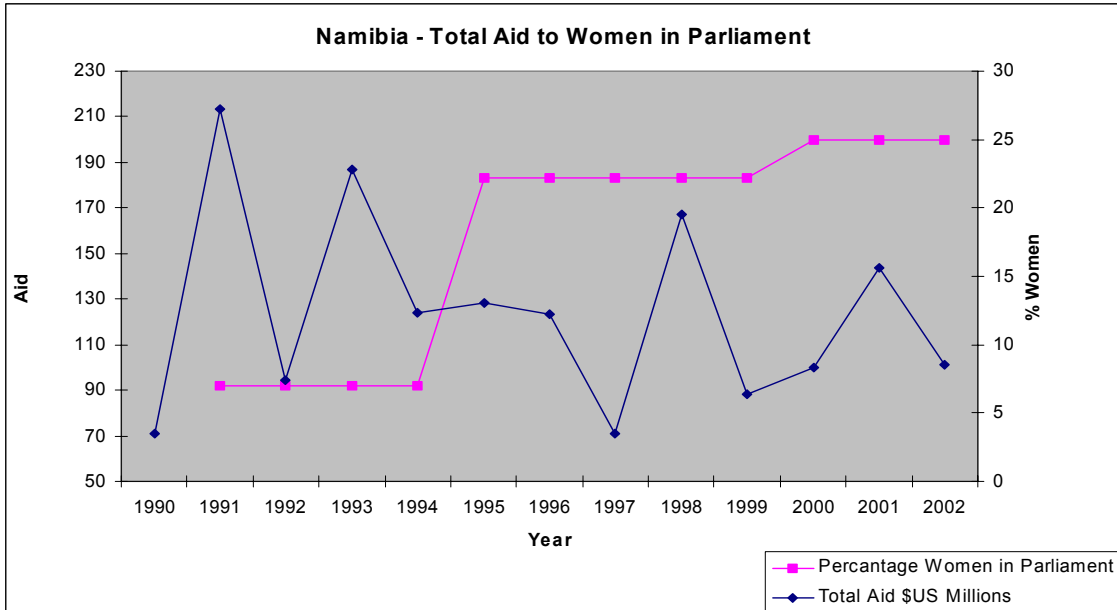


South Africa – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002





Namibia – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002



Mozambique – Various aid flows plotted against the percentage of women in parliament 1990-2002

