



the *active*  
learning centre

## Annual Review September 1998 – September 1999



**The Active Learning Centre works for people's rights through education and training.**

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Building democratic societies in which people can exercise their rights is fundamental to the attack on poverty. Women are the majority of the poor in the world and the major focus of The Active Learning Centre's work in developing educational programmes that help to build civil society and develop women's role in decision making. Training for trainers is the basis of many of our projects, as this provides a sustainable strategy, with workshop curricula focusing on rights and democracy

education, equality issues, capacity building skills and policy work. We work in partnership with non-governmental organisations, trade unions, churches, political parties and governments who share Active Learning's aims and objectives.

The Active Learning Centre was started in 1994. It is a registered charity based in Glasgow Caledonian University where it works closely with The Scottish Poverty Information Unit.

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Active Learning describes the educational methodology used in the training – learning through participation.

## Women's participation in public life

Of the 1 billion poor in the world, 70 percent are women yet as the International Labour Organisation likes to sum up: women work two out of three hours, own one tenth of the money, produce half of the world's food, are the head of household in one in three homes and raise almost all the world's children. For some time development theory has promoted the idea that greater participation by women must underpin anti-poverty programmes. Without their participation, resources will be diverted to schemes that do not serve the needs of the poorest. It is an idea that is now embraced by our own Government's policy.

Since 1995 Active Learning Centre has developed four women's participation projects running in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Ghana. Each project has trained trainers to deliver education on rights and the skills for participation. Only when women are aware of their human rights and have the skills to exercise those rights, will they be able to ensure that resources are focused on development needs.

In each country the project has taken a different form but similar stories emerge: cases of women pursuing claims for maintenance and inheritance, of successful lobbying for increased educational and health resources, campaigns on better education for girls and instances of women standing for office in communities, national and local elections.

"So with this workshop some of them became open just as if they were envelopes... For them to know that the fact that I am a woman doesn't mean I am cut off in society or that I can't be part of decision making... They have got to see themselves as actual people who also have voices to be heard and who also have some importance in the community."

Ayi Abu, Trainer for Tuma Kavi Association, Tamale, Ghana

"To me it was a very special occasion... We specifically talked about human rights for women... they have madrasa (a class)... it used to be the shia telling them about their duties. Now they talk about their rights."

Riziki Shahari, Islamic African Relief, Dares Saalam, Tanzania

"Women were very shy they could not talk... they are now the pressure group... they have demanded to open a night school... we have about 80 who have already registered and are already learning."

Elizabeth Kafula, Deputy Headmistress, Basic School Chibombo, Zambia

Monitoring and evaluating women's participation projects is a complex process and Active Learning Centre has received funding from the Department for International Development to write up its experience of the African projects as a good practice guide for practitioners. This will be published in spring 2000.

## Working with local government

"A millipede trying to get all the legs moving in the same direction", is how Erica Ndiyepa Namibia's deputy permanent secretary for local government described the progress of making elected representation work. Namibia, like Uganda, has ambitious decentralisation plans for passing power to local communities.

Likewise, both countries have affirmative action programmes to ensure the representation of women in local government. In Uganda, in addition to the third of seats allocated to women, there are seats reserved for representatives of the disabled and young people. Active Learning Centre's programme in Namibia offered direct training to women local government councillors, hopefully some help to the ungainly millipede!

In Uganda, a much longer term project has focused on training a team of trainers to work with

representatives of the special interest groups. Over a year the team have trained 1200 councillors in 109 sub-counties. The results have been very encouraging with the trainers reporting instances of women councillors armed with sufficient knowledge and confidence to challenge the budget, defend the priorities of primary education and health care, and lobby for the provision of water and electricity. There have also been reports of male councillors demanding similar training! Jaber Bidandi Ssali, the Minister of Local Government, in his letter in support of AIC's application to the European Union for additional funding praised the project as an: "important contribution to the decentralisation programme."

The strategy in Active Learning Centre's work is training in generic adult education skills to create people who are flexible and can work in different settings with different target groups.



Dorothy and Hajida, plan their training for councillors in Jinga, Uganda.

"It was exciting to come up with our own training materials and the fact that we are now equipped to plan materials for any sort of training is what made the sessions very useful and rewarding."

Betty Byanyima, trainer, Forum for Women in Democracy, Uganda

"They were frightened...They didn't know how they were going to learn because they didn't know how to write. In a small group they all had a chance to give their views... these were put down on the paper and read to the whole group... so they were very impressed by the group work."

Benedicta Kolonzo, Kenyan Women Workers' Organisation

## Making Democracy Work

Forty women from 30 different countries came to Glasgow for a 'Making Democracy Work' seminar in September '98. The Active Learning Centre organised discussions around constitutional change and democracy, using Scotland as a case study. With help from Scottish women a series of workshops looked at how to get women involved in the political process. The whole event was sponsored by the British Council and a similar event will take place in East Africa next spring.

"When I get back I will be using the different strategies that women's organisations have used to engender the constitutional process in Kenya."

Jael Mbongo, Education for Women in Democracy, Kenya



Ann Begg MP meets participants from the Making Democracy Work seminar. Other workshop sessions were led by: Yvonne Strachan, Rosina McCrae, Lesley Riddoch, Lesley Quinn, Ann Clark, Professor Alice Brown, Maria Fyfe MP, Tamina Rahman, Catriona Burness, Mike Donnelly, Esther Breitenbach.

## Mainstreaming gender

The gap between rich and poor in Namibia continues to widen and is closely related to the gap in decision making about resources such as: rights to land, credit, education, family budgets and employment. Lack of knowledge of basic rights holds back development especially in the provinces. During the year, Active Learning Centre undertook a consultancy with the Namibian Government to assist the mainstreaming of the National Gender Plan. This included the training of gender focal points and a series of training visits to departments to support the focal points in their role as agents of change.

Research shows that even the most basic reading, writing and mathematical skills can raise the standard of living of the poorest. In Ethiopia Wozero Yelfing Worku from the Ministry of Education is struggling with the problems that keep three out of four girls from going to school. The Government has tried

building schools nearer rural homes, incentives such as school meals, flexible school days to fit farming timetables and parent education. In the autumn, Active Learning Centre worked with the Ministry of Education to mainstream gender initiatives into education ministries in the regions of Ethiopia and develop ideas about home-school links.



Teachers from this school in the Kamba region, Kenya participated in the Women in Public Life programme.



## Implementing CEDAW

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are relatively new signatories to CEDAW - The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The human rights desk of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe have been particularly keen to encourage NGOs and government departments to adopt implementation strategies. Active Learning ran two

pilot courses in the Spring and these will be followed up in 2000. In a culture where democracy has been absent for some time, listening to others, expressing opinions freely and accepting feedback are new experiences but essential to the democratic process.

“the seminar was run in a very democratic way, - the participants felt free to express their opinions” ... “It was useful to learn to express ideas comprehensively and simply – to learn from the trainers’ behaviour – respecting one another.”



## Women in trade unions

Across Africa, trade unions are organising in a changing labour market. There are more women at work but they are still the lowest paid. Women union membership is growing but investigation of the union hierarchies reveals few women leaders. In Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, projects have focused on educating working women about their rights and democracy in the unions.

“We have to be taught to be confident...how to manage other people... we should be able to interpret the accounts so that we know what we are talking about... We will make sure we push for equal policies ... I want to make sure that the women who put us there do not get disappointed.”

Dianess Chawinga, General Secretary of the Hotel Catering and Allied Workers Union, Zambia



A shop steward for the building workers in Zimbabwe briefs her colleagues.



## Building NGOs

Economic and social development can only be built on the basis of secure and accountable government. Non-governmental organisations have a vital role to play in developing popular participation, advocating on behalf of minorities and offering alternative policies. A year long project which aimed to build the capacity of Slovakian women’s NGOs came to an end in April 1999. Thirty women took part in a series of weekend training for trainers courses interspersed by local events in which the new ‘trainers’ practised their skills by organising local workshops for the 12 participating NGOs. Learning how to practise participative methods is a new experience for many people who have been brought up in formal education systems.

One participant noted on her evaluation sheet: “I do appreciate the feedback. I like bringing theory and practice together and that the participants play an active part.” Another said: “I will use all that I have learned in my work and my private life.”

## Equality issues

Low pay, disproportionate numbers of women unemployed, discrimination in selection for jobs, promotion and training are familiar problems to Romanian women despite their high level of educational performance. Here, as elsewhere in the countries of Central Europe, the problems are compounded by the restructuring of economies and welfare and the withdrawal of family support systems. In Romania, The Active Learning Centre is working with Government, trade unions and NGOs to create a team of trainers who will carry out training on implementing equality issues. Five pilot seminars have been conducted and in the next phase a further 15 will take place in all regions of Romania.



Finding simple words to explain equality law in Romania



## Training Parliamentarians

Many of the women MPs who came to parliament in the first democratic elections in South Africa agreed that they would have benefited from training. In August 1999, following the second elections, new entrants into Parliament took part in an Active Learning Centre workshop. These MPs said practical exercises in using the media, public speaking and building a relationship with the public were very useful but one weekend was not long enough. They also identified

a need for training on bills, motions, debates and rules in Parliament. Whilst in South Africa, Active Learning Centre also trained 45 trainers to continue the work with women standing for parliamentary and local elections.

"Thank you for helping me to find my ability and instilling confidence."

New member of South African Parliament



## Who's who in Active Learning

Kate Phillips and Gil Long are directors of the Centre and its two full-time employees. Kate, the founder of Active Learning, has a background in adult education and trade union development. She has expertise in civil organisations and gender issues. Gil Long is also an adult educator and has expertise in paralegal work,

poverty research and the development of anti-poverty strategies. Other consultants who work with the Centre bring expertise in equality issues, trade union education, community development, women's political representation and credit unions are Catriona Burness, Irene Kitson, Jane Mackenzie and Usha Brown.

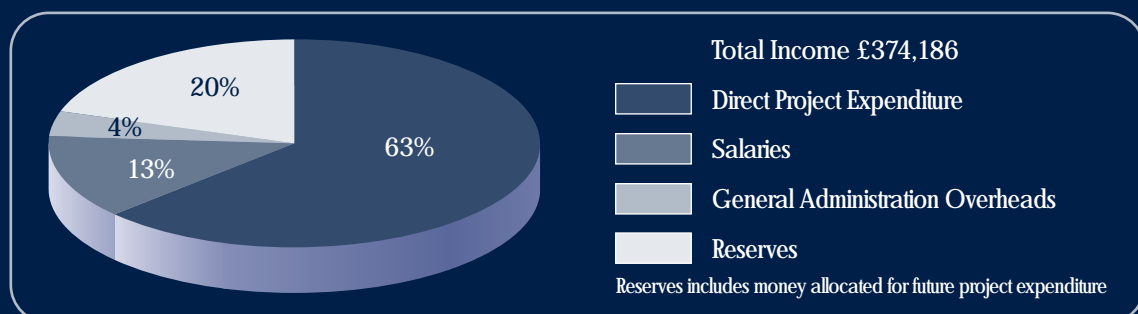


## Research and publications 1998/1999

- Making Democracy Work – a pack of training materials developed for use with the women's participation projects in Africa. This has been distributed to all British Council libraries in Africa. Requests for copies suggest that it has also been used in Central Asia, former Eastern Europe, as well as extensively in Africa.
- Evaluation of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council's women's programme in Southern Africa and development of gender policy for the Council.
- Consultancy commissioned by the BBC for work on their Speaking Out, English language programme for Africa. The BBC also made use of materials from our Making Democracy Work pack.
- Joint research with the Scottish Poverty Information Unit, Women's Issues in Local Partnership Working.
- Preparation and publication of the following for Lead (Learning Education and Disability) Scotland: The Volunteer Handbook; Good Practice Guide for Organisers and Supporting Learners, a handbook for volunteer tutors working with Lead.
- Preparation of an Equal Opportunities Policy for the International Transport Federation.



## Finances





## Into 2000 – future work

A new project in Hungary 'Implementing Gender Equality' will continue throughout 2000. Working with a team from the Hungarian Women's Association, the Hungarian Government and trade unionists, the project aims to produce a team of trainers to work on implementing equal opportunities and harmonisation with European equality standards. A similar project is continuing in Romania.

This Autumn a new project with the Kenyan Women Workers Organisation began. Kenyan Women Workers' Organisation organises in the formal and informal sectors, that is employees and people running their own small businesses. Active Learning will be conducting research and writing training materials to support best practice in organising micro-credit schemes and then providing training for trainers to support the programme.

In November, a new project in Ethiopia will come on stream. This will assist potential women politicians to contest the parliamentary elections and local government elections in 2000. A similar programme is planned for women in Kyrgyzstan fighting the parliamentary elections in May 2000 under the newly approved election code.

Together with the British Council who are supporting our projects in Hungary and Ethiopia, we are also

seeking funding for a gender mainstreaming project with the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia. This will be part of the education sector development programme funded by the Department for International Development.

In both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan future programmes are being planned in co-operation with the human rights desk of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to mount larger programmes concerned with implementing CEDAW.

The women's participation projects in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Zambia have been submitted to the European Union for new funding along with the local government project in Uganda. Match funding from DFID has been granted for Kenya and we await decisions on the others. Application is also being made for a project in Swaziland to support human rights work with women trade unionists and members of NGOs.

Materials on gender education will also be produced for the International Tailor and Garment Workers Union.

Nearer home, Active Learning has been assisting Citizens Advice Scotland to carry out some evaluations of its bureaux and will be producing a report about the evaluation process.



Practising speaking out in Zambia, Hungary, Uganda, Kenya and Slovakia

The Active Learning Centre wishes to acknowledge the support of:  
The Department for International Development in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.  
The British Council in Namibia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Hungary. The British Know How Fund in Slovakia.  
FNV Netherlands in Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya.  
The European Union in Romania, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia.  
The Organisation Security and Co-operation in Europe in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

AIC also wishes to acknowledge the support and hard work of our partner organisations: FOWODE (Uganda); CENSUDI (Ghana), NGOCC (Zambia), the Co-ordinating Committees in Kenya and Tanzania, Partners for Change (Romania), SWSDC (Slovakia) and all the women from trade unions and NGOs in Africa and Eastern Europe, whose efforts have all contributed to the success of the projects.



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